



The South Africa I know, the home I understand

Conference Daily

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From 5th ISibalo Conference of African Young Statisticians June 2016 to the 28th International Population Conference, October 2017



Saying bye with a bang



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The next step is for African young statisticians to prepare their research to join the world as it gathers at the Cape Town International Conference Centre (CTICC) in October 2017 at the 28th International Population Conference (IPC) of the International Union of the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP). - **Dr Miranda Mafafo**

Wednesday, the 15th of June, representatives from eight countries were gathered in a breakaway room at the Saint George hotel to present their research of choice using population-based HIV impact assessment (PHIA) data sets. Despite the stress of presentations and posters required for the Isibalo Conference of Young Statisticians, delivery of research was of an exceptional quality.

As we reach the end of the 5th ISibalo Conference of African Young Statisticians, everybody is tired and just wants to go home and rest. It has been a gruelling week ... but a fantastic week of learning.

Young Statisticians were grouped according to their country, within these groups PHIA data sets were distributed. Groups were expected to develop a model in order extrapolate certain information about a problem they found in their respective countries. A member from each group was chosen to present their efforts. In each presentation, groups had to report back on their research topic of choice, indicate and explain variables that would be studied, and also provide hypotheses for their research.

We have hardly started the journey, as Deputy Director-General for Social and Population Statistics, Ms Keflloe Masiteng points out in her conference closing remarks.



Presentations began with team Malawi, looking at individuals' decision to get tested for HIV. Their dependent variable being HIV testing, and independent variables being: gender (being male), stigma and discrimination, health status, quality of counselling/approach, age, education, knowledge of HIV, one's risky sexual behaviour, prior HIV testing, "fear of someone knowing" and the influence of religion.



Team Uganda then followed, presenting a model for HIV treatment adherence and retention for post-natal mothers. Due to the few number of people present at the training workshop from Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, members from the two countries collaborated to discuss HIV testing, more specifically the decision made by a person prior to PHIA to get tested for HIV.

With us this week was Dr France Mesle (left) and Dr Mary Ellen Zuppan (right) pictured here with Linda Mogale. The two doctors represent the IUSSP Secretariat in Paris and were here to meet with Stats SA on preparations for the 28th IPC. They also travelled to Cape Town with Linda and Aneen Jordaan to meet CTICC officials ahead of the conference.

Despite being French-speaking, team Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon both presented in English on the determinants of HIV status: does alcohol play a key role and patient attrition from the HIV ARV respectively. Team Zambia spoke on PMTCT cascade. Lastly, team Lesotho spoke on the attitude of HIV and pregnant women of HIV-free new-borns.

And that was it, the end of PHIA training workshops at the 5th Isibalo Conference of Young Statisticians. - **Manala Tyobeka (Young Statistician)**

Highlights from the Minister's address



Minister Jeff Radebe welcomed all guests, dignitaries and Young Statisticians highlighting the important timing of the conference for several reasons.

June is a significant month, as the worldwide commemoration of children's rights take place during this period. The Minister emphasised that youth are of paramount importance as they are custodians of the future. 40 years ago, thousands of students lost their lives in pursuit of their right to education. Being a democratic country, South Africa has contributed to the ratification of the African Youth Charter, which was adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in 2009. The Charter provides a platform for the youth to contribute towards the continent's development. It is this mandate that contextualised the 5th ISibalo Conference of African Young Statisticians.

The Minister then went on to illustrate the pivotal role statistics play in our society, facilitating African government plans and monitoring the impact their policies.

In wishing all the Young Statisticians well, he ended off the wise words of Amilca Cabral: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anybody's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children..." - **Nomaxabiso Tata (Young Statistician) and Manala Tyobeka (Young Statistician)**

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Making Sense of Data for Policy Analysis By Prof D Tevera

Making Sense of Data for Policy Analysis By Prof D Tevera On the second day of the 5th ISibalo Conference of African Young Statisticians, Prof D. Tevera explained how to make sense of data for Policy Analysis.

Prof D Tevera began his presentation by saying that when Research questions are posed, they contain little information making the research question blank. We hardly understand what the study is all about as there is no reflection of analysis of data and its interpretation. It is important to have a precious research data questions, that way no one will expect you to have achieved things you don't intend to do. He continued that it is important to add credibility to your research by dealing with poor quality of data.

He urged users of data to participate in the process saying that although data can't be perfect, one can make it as perfect as they can. He emphasised that policy makers see things differently.

He stated that there is a problem when it comes to research design and data collection because the users do not know how to go about this process. He mentioned that during data collection we experience presentation errors, misleading average and misleading charts therefore there is value in using graphic. Titles in graphs are important and should indicate clear units of measuring data so it can be easy to follow and accessible.



Prof D Tevera, Dr L. Thabane and Mr Mohoto explained Secondary data: this is data that has been collected by someone other than the user. Common sources of secondary data for social science include censuses, information collected by government departments, organisational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes and the challenges we are facing with the secondary data. Question we suppose to ask ourselves when using, does the data affect your weights and the validation of the data.

Lastly these are process to follow when preparing the research:

Data	Analyse	Process
Prepare	Find Patterns	Make decisions
Ask question	Find Relationships	Share Results
Collect Data	Filter data	Visualise data
Organise data	Calculate formulas	
Cleanse data	Create Charts	

- **Christina Jiyane (Young Statistician)**



It always seems impossible until it's done

Ms Sarah Mulwa, Young Statistician, who is originally from the beautiful country of Kenya, currently based in Gambia.

"I work as a Statistician at the Medical Research council. Being part of the conference, I have learnt that the future of the continent lies in the youth; the role of Young Statisticians is ensuring that statistics is implemented, and the vision of the continent is achieved. Well, my expectations for the conference were extremely met, when I came here I thought it was just an ordinary conference but it actually turned out to be a beautiful event, how it structured, it is a learning opportunity to know what specific roles that



I need to play to ensure the vision of the conference. In terms of the contribution to the sustainability of the program, I will try to introduce the concept to my country, I will spread the information to the people in particular Young Statisticians in Gambia who never got the opportunity to be part of the programme, make them know about the ISibalo programme. I will work with local organisation to try see if we can come with programs to enhance the Young Statisticians mentorship." - **Buthanani Mda, Young Statistician**

ISibalo bridging the gap in the continent



“Education is a key component for bringing solutions to the African continent”

Beneficiary of the ISibalo, Dr Jesmen Chintsanya displayed both a sense of achievement and gratitude as he relayed what the program had done for his development and that of his nation. Hailing from Malawi, Dr Chintsanya is one of the first participants of the ISibalo Conference of African Young Statisticians.

In 2008 he realised the opportunity when there was a call for submission of papers. He applied to be part of the conference in 2008 and submitted an abstract. This was followed by the abstract being accepted and he then received an invitation to partake, which he grabbed with both hands.

During this period he was a lecturer with a Masters degree, teaching in the Department of Population Studies in the

University of Malawi. This learning journey has granted him the opportunity to be invited by Dr Mafafo to present at this platform. He is joined by seven of his students. He made a presentation to conference on Tools on Demographic Estimations, this course is important as it gives an understanding to measuring data, most importantly with analysing the Demographic Dividend and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Dr Chintsanya was elated to be welcomed as a mentor, because he himself received great guidance when he was starting out. Now he has established as one of the leaders in Demography and Social Statistics, because he used the opportunity to learn effectively. He said that he gained confidence through the program, which drove him to utilise the skills obtained, and went on to write numerous abstracts to be presented internationally. There are wide benefits to ISI-

balo, but one may not recognise these from the onset. The environment is conducive; encouraging learning and exchange. Peers are able to review each other’s work openly, but it is also not an intimidating space, therefore one is allowed to apply their skills.

Speaking of what makes him who is today, he explained that education is a key component for bringing solutions to the African continent. He believes that we are on the right path as demonstrated by South Africa, and the commitment it has displayed in building a literate youth in Africa. He is encouraged by the broad representation of African countries, noting that the program has grown exponentially from inception to where it is today, observing the commendable effort by Statistics South Africa making an unprecedented effort in “showing heart for Africa”.

Back to plough a seed – Chintsanya was excited to impart knowledge, so that his students and other scholars can be in a position to contribute and invest in providing solutions towards the demographic dividend. Elaborating on the sustainability of the conference, he said it was important to prioritise funding, so that the program allows for an interaction between high level professors, doctors and leaders in their fields to bring a wealth of information to young statisticians who are willing to learn. This is what makes it a credible conference with a vision of giving, playing a role towards the achievement of SDGs.

Advising other youth statistics going forward, he stated that it was important for them to harness this opportunity, and run with it with a positive outlook and mindset in order to advance their technical skills. ISibalo is fertile ground for growth focusing on the quality of data and obtaining the know how to reduce data quality errors, so that after analysis there can be reliable results which will contribute to social and economic policies. In closing Chintsanya said it brings him joy to see others succeed. - **Nomaxabiso Tata (Young Statistician)**

A moment with Dr. Miranda Mafafo

Please describe Dr. Miranda Mafafo in just three words

Unconventional, bold and not one to unquestioningly go with the crowds - more than three words!

What drives you to do what you do and stay passionate?

I am driven by a passion to see a better future for South Africa and a better future for this African continent. Much sacrifice has been made by others in the liberation history of South Africa and in the struggle for independence in Africa. That sacrifice must not come to nought.

I am driven by a passion to see Africans hold their own - stand on the world stage and speak on equal terms. If our generation and generations before have failed to do that, always bowing to the command of more superior authority on matters of knowledge, decision and hope for our future, then young people are the ones to change that. Back in 2006, it was precisely this vision that drove me - that why should South Africa spend millions catering to Western intellectuals at the ISI 2009? Where is Africa and South Africa’s intellect? If there is none, we will create in our young.

I remember writing an email to a host of people I did not even know ahead of ISI 2009. One of them, an Australian, had written a patronizing proposal to UNESCO to seek funding to train maths teachers at the ISI 2009 in Durban. She never consulted us. She does not know the KZN landscape or teachers there or the problems they face.

Funds secured, she turned to us for help. I completely lost it! Why? What right did she have to decide she knows the problems of South African education and challenges that our maths teachers face? Who gave her the right to seek funding to fix a problem she knows nothing about? What nerve did she have not to consult South Africans on the matter? I guess from that day I become extremely unpopular with ISI Executives.

In retrospect, I agree I could have done some things differently or said things differently, but popularity unfortunately is not my goal.

Do you have spare time? Alternatively, do you try to make spare time to be with family?

Yes, I do have spare time. Old school thinking perhaps, but I do still believe you must make a clear boundary between your professional life and personal life. Many of our children suffer at the expense of our work. It is not right and will never be right. I do believe some work related issues can wait when you are with family and that the world will not fall apart because you did not attend to them

Any advice for young statisticians in this program

Dare to be different. Dare to rise up above the usual, the conventional and make a mark. Not for fame, glory or recognition, but because this country needs young people and leaders who are selfless, who do what needs to be done because it must be done, and not to because there is potentially something in it for them. One day when I return to Swaziland old and grey, I would love to look back



and say yes, I played a part in these young lives and in make their beautiful country a better place. - **Letshabo Maoba (Young Statistician)**

The conference in pictures . . .







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