



Botswana–South Africa STI Roundtable Series

Join the
Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and Botswana Academy of Sciences (BAS)
in a discussion on

African Traditional Medicine in the Policy Landscape: Strengthening Legislation and Research Partnerships

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are central to advancing sustainable, inclusive and resilient development across Africa. Addressing interconnected challenges such as public health, climate change, food and water security, biodiversity loss, energy transitions and inequality requires stronger regional cooperation and collaboration among science academies, governments, universities, research institutions, traditional health practitioners, industry and civil society.

African Traditional Medicine is an important part of the continent's health, cultural and knowledge landscape. It offers opportunities for health innovation, local manufacturing, medicinal-plant cultivation, biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic development. Realising this potential requires appropriate policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks that support quality, safety, efficacy, ethical research and public confidence.

Against this backdrop, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the Botswana Academy of Sciences (BAS), in partnership with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (South Africa), the Ministry of Communications and Innovation (Botswana) and the National Department of Health (South Africa), will convene the inaugural Botswana–South Africa STI Roundtable under the **2026 ASSAf–BAS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**.

The Roundtable will translate the MoU’s commitment to cooperation into practical action by identifying shared priorities, opportunities for joint research and knowledge exchange, and areas where scientific expertise can inform policy and practice. It will bring scientific evidence into dialogue with Indigenous Knowledge Systems, exploring how African Traditional Medicine can contribute to equitable health innovation, local value creation and the protection of Africa’s knowledge heritage.

Date:
7 October 2026

Time:
14:00–16:00 SAST

Platform:
Zoom

RSVP:
[Click here](#)
to register

Programme Director: Prof Tholene Sodi,
ASSAf Member & Chair-holder of the SAMRC/DSI-NRF/UL Research Chair in Mental Health and Society at the University of Limpopo

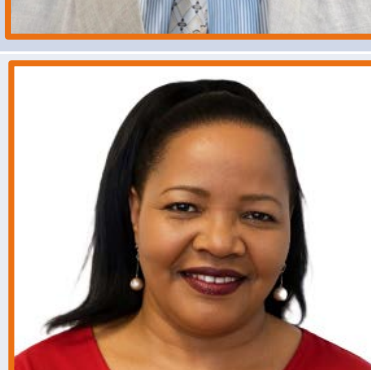
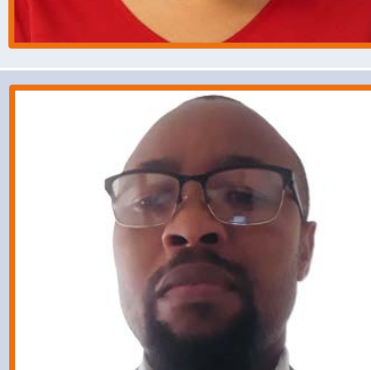
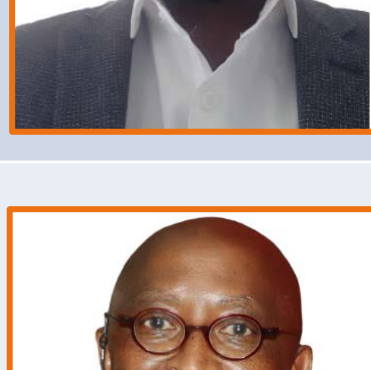
14:00–14:05	Welcome	Prof Tholene Sodi
14:05–14:20	Remarks on the ASSAf–BAS Memorandum of Understanding	- Prof Ishmael Masesane, President, BAS - Prof Himla Soodyall, Executive Officer, ASSAf
Keynote Addresses		
14:20–14:35	African Traditional Medicine in the Policy Landscape	Mr Bruce Mbedzi, Director for Traditional Medicine, National Department of Health, South Africa
14:35–14:50	Perspectives from Botswana: Policy and Practice	Prof Kerstin Andrae-Marobela, Researcher on African traditional medicine, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, natural-product research and drug discovery, University of Botswana
Respondents		
14:50–15:30		- Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa, Director of the IKS Programme at the University of the Free State, South Africa - Dr David Tanyala Takuwa, Director of the Centre for Scientific Research, Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation, Botswana - Prof Martha Pinkoane, Researcher, Vaal University of Technology, South Africa - Mr Abraham Mathodi, Acting Director, Ministry of Communications and Innovation, Botswana
15:30–15:50	Interactive Session with the Audience	Panel members and participants
15:50–16:00	Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks	Dr Audrey Masizana, Vice-President, BAS



science, technology
& innovation

Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SPEAKERS	
	Prof Ishmael Masesane holds a PhD in organic chemistry and has taught chemistry at University level for the past twenty six (26) years. He has successfully supervised a significant number of MSc and PhD students. Further, Prof Masesane has extensively participated in science advocacy and science in policy. Due to these interests, he has risen to the positions of President of the Botswana Academy of Science (BAS) and Secretary General of the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC). He has also served in the inaugural Board of Commonwealth Chemistry. Prof Masesane is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Science and the Liberian Academy of Science.
	Prof Himla Soodyall is the Executive Officer of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). An ASSAf member since 2003, she was elected to the ASSAf Council in 2011 and appointed general secretary in 2014. Prior to joining ASSAf on 1st November 2018, she was employed as a Principal Medical Scientist in the Division of Human Genetics at the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) and University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Her research focusses on using molecular genetic tools to reconstruct the evolutionary history and affinities of sub-Saharan African populations. She has been the recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including the Order of Mapungubwe (Bronze Medal), by President Mbeki in 2005.
	Mr Fhatuwani Bruce Mbedzi is the Director responsible for Traditional Medicine in the National Department of Health. He is responsible for facilitating the inclusion of Traditional Medicine in the National Health System through development and implementation of policy and legislative frameworks. He joined the Traditional Medicine Directorate in 2007 and worked for the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice previously. He holds a master's degree in public management from Regenesys School of Public Management. He is the current Acting Registrar of the interim Traditional Health Practitioners Council of South Africa. He is serving as the Deputy Chairperson of the National Initiation Oversight Committee appointed by Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in terms of the Customary Initiation Act.
	Prof Kerstin Andrae-Marobela is a molecular cell biologist at the University of Botswana whose work focuses on African traditional medicine, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, natural-product research and drug discovery. At the Centre for Scientific Research, Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation (CESRIKI), Prof Andrae-Marobela has played a central scientific and operational leadership role, including serving as Acting Director from 2017 to 2024. She is also Associate Director of the pan-African Natural Product Library (p-ANAPL), a major African-led initiative that collects, catalogues and virtualises chemical compounds derived from African medicinal plants for biological screening and drug-discovery research.
	Prof Tholene Sodi is a Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Limpopo, where he holds the SAMRC–DSI/NRF–UL SARCHI Chair in Mental Health and Society. His research focuses on youth mental health, suicide prevention, mental health policy, behavioural medicine, culture and mental health/illness, and African psychology. He is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), where he advises the Council and serves on the Standing Committee on Health. He is also the co-founder and co-chair of the Pan-African Mental Health Research Network (PAMHRN), a collaborative network linking researchers from more than fifteen universities across Africa, the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean. He has held several national leadership positions, including President of the Psychological Society of South Africa and Vice President of the Health Professions Council of South Africa.
	Prof Martha Pinkoane is a distinguished healthcare professional whose expertise spans 45 years across the health and research spectrum, with national and international exposure. She was the first Head of Department of the established Health Sciences Department at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT). She conducts novel research in traditional medicines, working closely with Traditional Health Practitioners (THPs). Prof Pinkoane designs and develops health sciences curricula, including a short learning programme to teach THPs biomedical techniques for recording vital signs, based on the primary healthcare principles of the National Department of Health. She has received accolades and certificates in education and research, most recently in July 2026, when she was recognised as a Trailblazer in Research. She serves on the National Department of Health’s WHO Task Team on African Traditional Medicine (ATM) Expert Working Group.
	Dr David Tanyala Takuwa is the Director of the Centre for Scientific Research, Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation (CesrIKi) at the University of Botswana and a Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry. He holds a PhD in Analytical Chemistry from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA, an MSc in Chemistry jointly undertaken at the University of Botswana and the University of Oslo, Norway, and a BEd in Science from the University of Botswana. Dr Takuwa is a member of the Dingaka Baporofiti Association and works at the interface of scientific research, traditional healing practice and Indigenous Knowledge. He contributes a practical perspective on collaboration between researchers and traditional health practitioners, validation of traditional medicines, protection of Indigenous Knowledge, product development and the responsible integration of African traditional medicine into research, innovation and healthcare discussions. He serves as Technical Advisr to Takuwa Natural Products, an enterprise named in his honour for his role in natural product innovation in Botswana.
	Dr Audrey Masizana is a distinguished computer scientist, academic leader, with research interests in Scientific Application of Data and Infrastructure for Intelligent Decision-Making including application of Data Mining and Warehousing technologies. She is the former Head of the Department of Computer Science at University of Botswana. She currently serves on the Executive Committee of CODATA Of the International Science Council (2021–2027), is Vice President and Fellow of the Botswana Academy of Sciences conferred in 2021, Fellow of Liberia Academy of Sciences conferred in 2026, a Global Health International Scholar at University of Pennsylvania, USA, conferred in 2023 and a member of the founding committee of the African Open Science Platform Technical Advisory Board (2017-2019). She is a strong advocate and passionate of the adoption of Open Data and Open Science Policies and Supporting Infrastructures and currently spear heading the development of the Botswana Open Data and National Policies
	Mr Abraham Mathodi is a registered Professional Technologist with the Engineers Registration Board. He holds an MSc in Construction Management and a BEng in Construction Engineering and Management. Mr Mathodi currently serves as Acting Director for the Ministry of Communications and Innovation. He pioneered Botswana's Research and Development and Innovation surveys in 2012, which established national indicators for assessing the country's research, science, technology and innovation landscape. He also coordinated Botswana's implementation of UNESCO's Global Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments programme. Botswana became the first country to complete the programme, and its report supported the programme's launch at the 2017 UNESCO General Conference in Paris. He serves as Botswana's focal point or national coordinator for several regional initiatives, including AUDA-NEPAD's African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative, the Science Granting Councils Initiative, the SADC STI Indicators Expert Committee and the UNESCO Science, Technology and Innovation Committee.
	Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa is a Professor of Pharmacology and Director of African Medicines Innovations and Technology Development at the University of the Free State. He is also a Visiting Professor at Busitema University, Uganda. He co-chairs the Complementary Medicines Committee of the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority and serves on several national and international advisory bodies, including the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine. He also chairs the WHO Afro-Regional Expert Committee on Traditional Medicines. An internationally recognised scholar, Prof Matsabisa has extensive expertise in traditional medicines research, product development, commercialisation, policy, benefit-sharing and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. He has supervised numerous postgraduate students and led major national and international research initiatives and collaborations.