



*In Search of Better Health*

# KEMRI BULLETIN

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## All Set for the 3rd Health and Climate Change Scientific Conference at Machakos County



KEMRI, Board Chairman, Dr. Addullahi Ali, Ag. DG, Prof. Elijah Songok, Board Directors, Dr. Luka Chemwolo and Dr. Damaris Maweu, PI Dr. Sophie Matu and other guests outside the Machakos convention centre.

**BY KEMRI BULLETIN WRITER**

Machakos County is set to host the 3rd Health and Climate Change Scientific Conference at the Machakos International Convention Center (MICC) in Mikuyu, from Tuesday, 15th, October to Friday, 18th, October 2024.

The event, jointly organized by the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), the Ministry of Health, the Machakos County Government, and other key partners, aims to address the critical intersection of climate action and universal health coverage (UHC).

The Chairman of the KEMRI Board of Directors, Dr. Abdullahi Ali and Ag. Director General Prof. Elijah Songok will grace the conference.

This year's conference will focus on bridging the gap between research, policy, and implementation, as experts and policymakers converge to discuss innovative

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solutions to health challenges exacerbated by climate change, while also fostering resilience within affected communities.

Following last year's successful event in Kwale County, which highlighted health and climate issues within the blue economy, Machakos—a region known for its rich history and scenic landscapes—will now take the spotlight. The county is fully prepared to breathe life into the 2024 theme: **"Advancing Global and Regional Health Climate Action – Bridging Research, Policy, and Implementation for Universal Health Coverage."**

The event promises insightful plenary sessions led by world-class scientists with deep expertise in climate and health issues, offering practical interventions to address these challenges. Special exhibitors will showcase

innovative research, while oral and poster presentations will reflect contemporary efforts around this year's theme.

The Machakos Conference serves as a unique platform for collaborative knowledge exchange. It will allow implementors, beneficiaries, researchers, policymakers, and others representing health, environment, energy, and climate change to showcase successful initiatives and brainstorm solutions.

This exchange will focus on how various commitments can be utilized collaboratively to improve and sustain primary healthcare. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) while ensuring healthcare resources aren't diverted to respond to climate threats and that the systems are resilient enough to withstand the evolving threats posed by climate change.



## The conference will pursue four broad objectives:

1. Translate and outline practical strategies for integrating climate considerations into Kenya's UHC plans, in response to the COP26 climate and health commitments and the World Health Assembly's WHA77 climate and health resolution.
2. Develop actionable recommendations for financing mechanisms that support climate-resilient health systems and UHC strategies, aligning with the upcoming COP29 discussions on climate finance.
3. Explore low-carbon healthcare strategies, in line with the WHA76 resolution on the impact of chemicals, waste, and pollution on human health, as well as the UNEP/EA.6/L.13 resolution on air pollution.
4. Foster collaboration across sectors and countries, contributing to the goals of the African

Inter-ministerial Declaration for ACS 23 and ensuring Kenya's active role in a unified African response to climate and health challenges.

As the global community grapples with the realities of climate change, the urgency of addressing its impact on health has never been clearer. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and shifting disease patterns are straining healthcare systems worldwide. This conference aims to raise awareness among the public and healthcare professionals on how climate change, air pollution, and environmental factors influence health outcomes, and how policy and consumption choices can create healthier, more resilient communities.

Ultimately, the 3rd Health and Climate Change Scientific Conference serves as a pivotal platform for shaping climate-responsive health policies that will safeguard both present and future generations.





# KEMRI Secures Land for Expansion of Sports Centre in Uasin Gishu County

BY LISPER MOKAYA

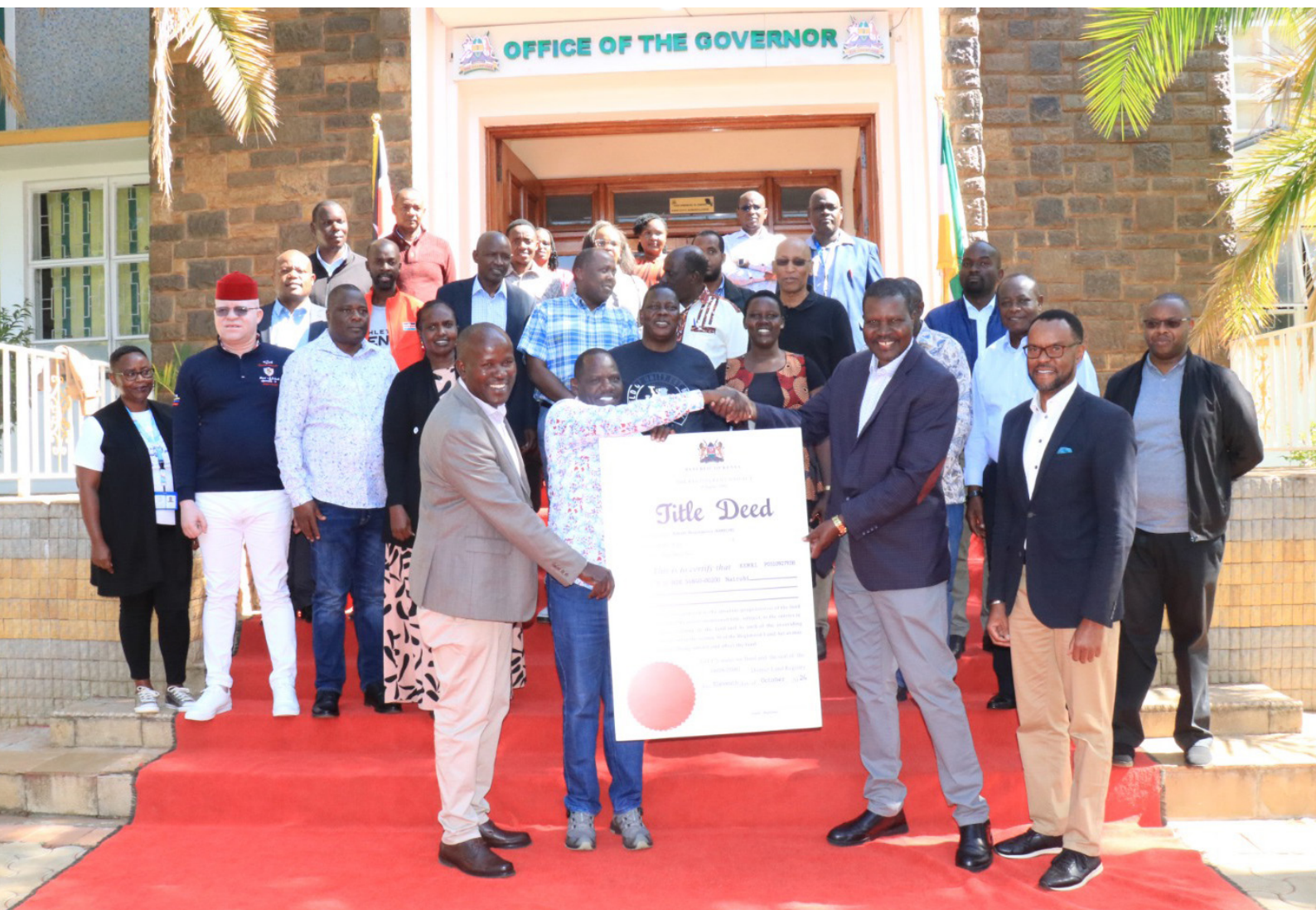
The Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) has made a significant milestone in its efforts to expand the Sports Science Research Centre in Eldoret, following the handover of a title deed for a prime parcel of land in Uasin Gishu County.

In a successful meeting led by the Acting Director General, Prof. Elijah Songok, and Uasin Gishu County Governor, Hon. Dr. Jonathan Bii, the county fulfilled its commitment, clearing the way for KEMRI to advance the development of the sports centre, which had been launched earlier. Also present were Board Director, Dr. Luka Chemwolo, along with other county officials.

The KEMRI Sports Science Centre aims to enhance research in sports science, promote health and wellness through physical activity, and serve as a regional hub for athletic development.

A feasibility study on the newly allocated land is set to commence immediately, marking a crucial first step toward the development of this innovative facility.

Both parties are looking forward to formalizing their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which will drive future advancements in healthcare and sports science research.



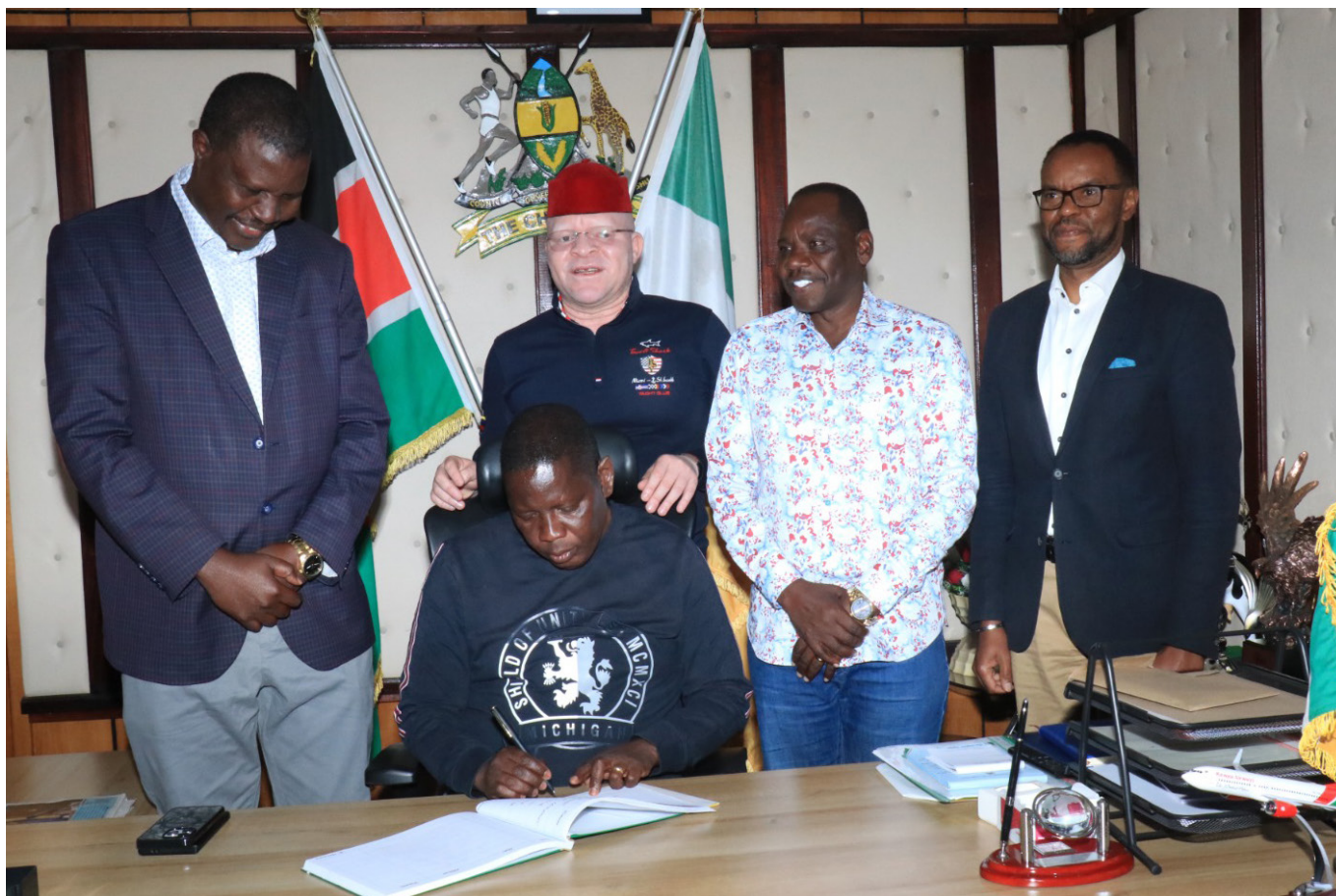
Ag. Director General, KEMRI, Prof. Songok (right), receives the title deed from the Governor, Uasin Gishu County, Hon. Dr. Jonathan Bii. They were flanked the Members of, Parliamentary Committee on Health led by Chair Robert Pukose and the Biovax Kenya Chairman, Mugo Kibati and Biovax Kenya CEO Dr. Michael Lusola.





KEMRI Secures Land in Uasin Gishu in photos





TOP: Parliamentary Health Committee chair, Dr. Robert Pukose signs a book at the Governors office. From left is Ag. DC, KEMRI Prof. Elijah Songok, Member of the National Assembly for Webuye East, Hon. Martin Wanyonyi, Uasin Gishu County Governor, Hon. Dr. Jonathan Bii and Biovax CEO, Dr. Michael Lusiola  
BELOW: Uasin Gichu Governor Dr. Jonathan Bii addresses members of Parliamentary Health Committee



# Stakeholders Gather for High-Level Workshop on Climate Change and Health in Kisumu

BY BRIAN OTIENO

On September 25, 2024, experts from different fields gathered at the Acacia Premier Hotel in Kisumu for an important workshop focused on climate change and health. Organized as part of the ongoing GDAR (Global Diet and Activity Research) study, the event brought together specialists in health, environment, agriculture, and urban planning. Their goal was to discuss how Kisumu's communities can strengthen their ability to cope with the challenges posed by climate change and rapid urban growth.

Key stakeholders convened at a Kisumu Hotel recently for a pivotal workshop addressing the intersection of climate change and health under the Global Diet and Activity Research (GDAR) study.

The experts, who brought together from various sectors including health, environment, agriculture, and urban planning on 25th, September 2024 sought ways through which Kisumu's residents can build resilience in the face of climate and urbanization challenges.

The workshop, a follow-up to a similar event held in June, was attended by representatives from the Kisumu County Directorates of Climate Change, Health, and Urban Planning, alongside researchers from Maseno University, KEMFRI, KALRO, the Kenya Red Cross Society, KEMRI, KEMRI, among others. It focused on validating and disseminating the preliminary findings of the GDAR study, which examines the impact of climate change and urbanization on health, particularly in urban settings like Kisumu.



Experts from different fields gathered at the Acacia Premier Hotel pose for a photo

Officially opening the event, Deputy Director in charge of Center for Global Health Research (CGHR) in Kisumu Dr. Erick Muok, emphasized the significance of transdisciplinary research in addressing global health challenges. **"Research must impact the community—that's what qualifies it as global health research,"** he stated, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts between research institutions, devolved health ministries, and local communities to drive meaningful change.

Dr. Muok also highlighted the growing challenges posed by rapid urbanization in Kisumu, particularly the rise of **"high-rise slums,"** which put immense pressure on infrastructure, social amenities, and health services. He pointed out how climate change exacerbates these issues, increasing the risk of flooding, disease transmission, and other environmental hazards. Community resilience, he stressed, is critical for adapting to these challenges and ensuring a sustainable urban future.

The GDAR study, led by Principal Investigator Prof. Charles Obonyo, seeks to prevent non-communicable diseases by exploring the complex interplay between climate change and health in urban environments. **"Our goal is to inform policies and provide solutions to pressing community health issues, but for our research to have an impact, we must work closely with all stakeholders,"** said Prof. Obonyo during his presentation.

Dr. Vincent Were, the study's Co-Principal Investigator, presented the preliminary findings, which revealed key insights into how Kisumu's urban communities respond to climate-induced disruptions. He emphasized the importance of understanding community resilience in order to better prepare for future risks, stating, **"Exploring resilience allows us to build stronger systems to withstand the impacts of climate change and urbanization."**

The workshop provided a platform for dynamic discussions, with stakeholders from different sectors offering diverse perspectives on how to address the intertwined challenges of climate change and health. One of the central findings

was the urgent need for policy interventions that address the health impacts of climate change, particularly in vulnerable urban populations. Participants recognized that while climate change poses serious risks, it also presents an opportunity for collaboration across sectors to build resilient communities.

As the GDAR study progresses, the insights gathered from this workshop will continue to inform policy decisions aimed at creating a healthier and more resilient Kisumu. Dr. Muok lauded the active participation of stakeholders and reiterated KEMRI's commitment to working alongside state, civil society, and non-state actors to improve lives through impactful research.

The workshop marked a significant step in Kisumu's journey towards understanding and mitigating the health risks posed by climate change and urbanization. With continued community engagement and cross-sector partnerships, Kisumu can lead the way in sustainable development that prioritizes both human and environmental well-being.



Dr. Erick Muok





Prof. Charles Obonyo



GDAR (Global Diet and Activity Research) study workshop in photos





**GDAR (Global Diet and Activity Research) study workshop in photos**



# Tackling Suicide: Developing a Training Module for Clergy to Enhance Awareness and Prevention

**BY AMOS PESI**

Suicide remains a serious public health challenge worldwide, with alarming statistics of approximately 800,000 people dying through suicide each year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Of these, 77 percent occur in low- and middle-income countries. In response to this growing crisis, global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WHO's suicide prevention strategies aim to reduce global suicide rates by a third by 2030. Kenya, as a member state, has adopted a National Suicide Intervention Strategy that seeks to cut suicide cases by 10 percent by 2026.

On 9th October 2024, Dr. Linet Onger, a mental health researcher, led a consultative session with religious leaders from the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK), alongside youth and women leaders in the clergy. The session, organized by KEMRI in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and other stakeholders, focused on the development of a training module to equip clergy with the knowledge and tools necessary for suicide prevention and awareness.

The discussions highlighted critical gaps in mental health care, including the lack of adequate funding and resources. Mental health receives less than one percent of Kenya's healthcare budget, severely limiting early detection and intervention. Additionally, very few health facilities are equipped to provide the essential care and treatment for individuals struggling with mental health issues. Stigma surrounding mental health further compounds the problem, preventing many from seeking the help they need.

Given the clergy's unique role in Kenyan society, engaging religious leaders in suicide awareness and prevention was seen as crucial. "The clergy often serve as the first point of contact for people facing mental health crises, as many turn to them for spiritual guidance," explained Dr. Onger. "Our goal is to collaborate with you to create a training module that will empower the clergy with the knowledge and skills needed to promote suicide awareness and prevention."



The first phase of the project involves gathering insights and perspectives from clergy members, which will inform the development of the training module. After the module is crafted, it will undergo pilot testing and evaluation before being rolled out on a larger scale. Dr. Ongeri emphasized that suicide is preventable, and raising awareness is essential to saving lives.

This collaborative effort represents an important step toward addressing mental health issues in Kenya, with religious leaders playing a vital role in the fight against suicide. By equipping the clergy with the right tools, the project aims to foster community-based prevention and create a supportive environment where individuals can seek help without fear or stigma.



Mental Health Expert Dr. Linet Ongeri



Ministry of Health Representative, Dr. Peris Wambui



Chair, Kenya Interfaith Youth Network Mr. Philbert Aganyo asking a question during the interactive session (Middle), while CCR Officer Tele Kapkiwor (Left) and Accounting Officer CCR, Fred Okuto following the proceedings.





# KEMRI Graduate School Hosts Students Qualitative Data Analysis Workshop

BY CHARLES SYENGO

In its ongoing efforts to equip researchers with cutting-edge skills, the KEMRI Graduate School (KGS) recently conducted a five-day Qualitative Data Analysis Training Workshop aimed at empowering students with the essential tools needed to successfully complete their dissertation projects. The workshop, held at the KGS Annex Conference Hall from 30th, September to 4th, October 2024, provided 19 students with practical skills in qualitative research methodologies and data analysis techniques.

Acting Deputy Director in charge of Trainees Welfare Department, Dr. Elizabeth Matey, officially opened the workshop, emphasizing its importance in enhancing the students' research capacity. "The workshop is designed to provide students with an applied approach to qualitative data analysis, focusing on multiple methodologies," she remarked during her opening address.

Over the course of the training, participants were exposed to a comprehensive curriculum that covered key areas

such as qualitative research designs, data collection methods (including Focus Group Discussions, In-Depth Interviews, and Key Informant Interviews), and how to effectively communicate findings. They also received hands-on experience with qualitative data analysis software, including NVivo, Dedoose, MAXQDA, and ATLAS.ti. The workshop also addressed the intricacies of code development, data coding, and report writing skills that are essential for producing high-quality research outputs.

Participants are expected to apply these new skills to enhance the quality and timeliness of their research work. By the end of the workshop, students should be able to import transcripts into NVivo or Dedoose, develop a codebook, code qualitative data, write narrative summaries, and produce comprehensive reports. These capabilities are crucial in translating raw data into impactful research findings that can effectively inform both academic and non-academic audiences.



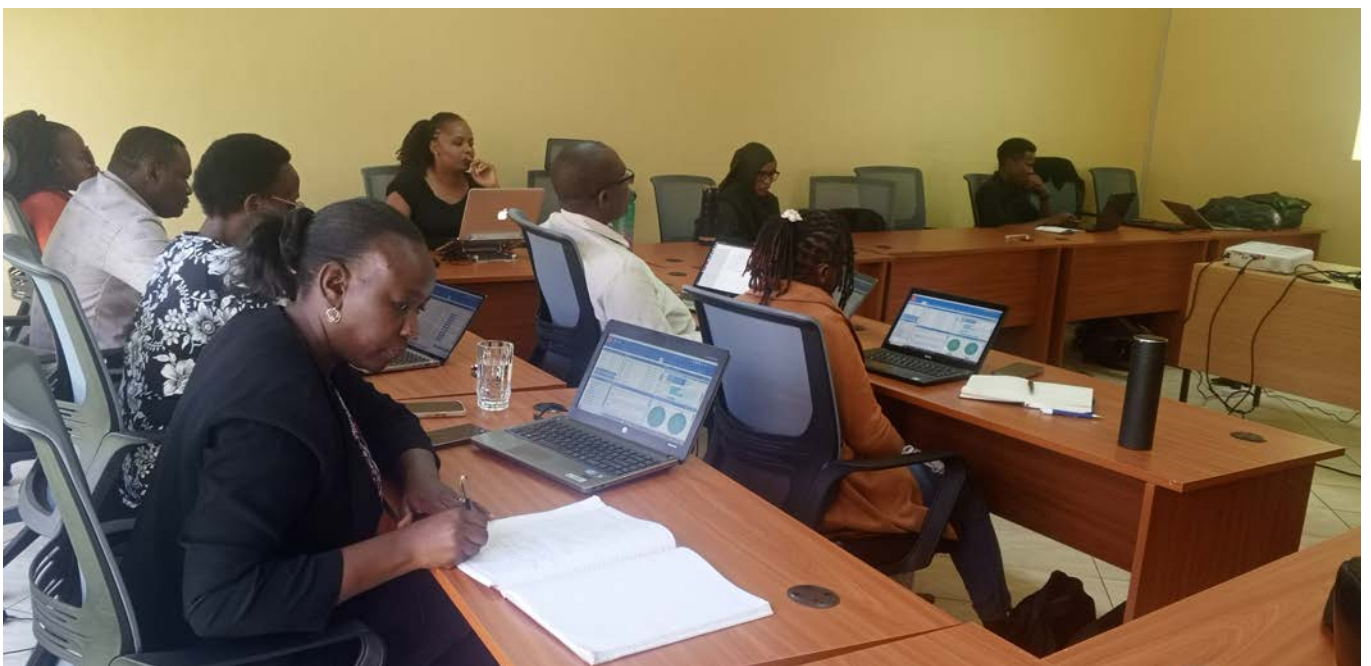
Qualitative Data Analysis Training Workshop participants and facilitators in a photo

During the closing ceremony, Dr. Matey awarded certificates to the participants and encouraged them to integrate their newly acquired skills into their dissertation work and professional environments. "The knowledge you've gained here should not only be used to advance your own research but also to uplift your workplaces and communities," she said.

Ag. Director, Research Capacity Building, Dr. Martin Bundi echoed Dr. Matey's sentiments. "As the first cohort of this training initiative, you are now pioneers in advancing qualitative research within the KEMRI Graduate School community. I encourage each of you to take on the role of

peer mentors and trainers for your colleagues, spreading the knowledge and skills gained during this session. Your contribution will be instrumental in building a strong culture of research excellence," he stated.

Dr. Bundi urged the students to apply their newly acquired skills to guide their research projects and data analysis processes, ultimately producing well-analyzed and insightful research findings. This initiative represents KEMRI's commitment to fostering research excellence and capacity building among emerging health scientists in Kenya and beyond.





# KEMRI Staff Receive In-depth Sensitization on Pension scheme

**BY MARION KATEI**

The Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) Staff Retirement Benefit Scheme (KSRBS) successfully concluded a week-long sensitization programme aimed at educating its members on retirement planning. The initiative, held across various centers within the Institute, culminated in a three-day session at KEMRI's headquarters in Nairobi.

The programme sought to enhance employees' understanding of their financial security post-retirement. Topics covered included the structure and differences between defined benefit and defined contribution pension plans. Financial experts provided insights into how each plan operates, equipping employees with the knowledge needed to assess their options and make informed decisions.

Additionally, the sessions emphasized the importance of early enrollment in pension schemes, practical steps for retirement planning, and strategies to secure financial independence. Participants also learned about their rights and responsibilities within the pension framework, the necessary documentation, and how to safeguard their retirement benefits.

Employees lauded the programme, noting that it empowered them to take charge of their financial future. The initiative underlines KSRBS's commitment to employee well-being, fostering a culture of financial literacy and improved retirement planning across the Institute.



KEMRI Staff Retirement Benefit Scheme (KSRBS) members listening to the presentations



Ms. Rebecca Chege making a presentation



Chairman of the Pension Scheme Mr. Edwin Bett making his remarks during the training



# KEMRI and Tonix Pharmaceuticals Forge Partnership for Mpox Vaccine Trials and Local Production

BY WAMBUI NDIRANGU

On 7th October 2024, Tonix Pharmaceuticals held a collaborative meeting at KEMRI to discuss the development and clinical trial plans for a new mpox vaccine. This partnership could mark a significant step in advancing vaccine manufacturing within Africa, with Kenya potentially playing a key role in combating mpox.

Dr. Seth Lederman, Co-Founder, CEO, and Chairman of Tonix Pharmaceuticals, led the delegation, which included Dr. Zeil Rosenberg, Executive Vice President of Medical Affairs, Mandy Ng, Director of Regulatory Affairs, and Mr. Judah Arap Bett, Kenya Projects Manager. The team was warmly received by Dr. Vera Manduku, who represented KEMRI's leadership on behalf of the Ag. DG, Prof. Elijah Songok, Dr. Serah Gitome, representing Ag. Director of Scientific Programmes, Partnerships, and Grants Management, Dr. Mariciannah Onono and senior clinical research scientists Dr. Bernhards Ogotu, Dr. Simon Njenga, Dr. Samson Limbaso, and Dr. Joseph Mwangi.

Dr. Vera Manduku, speaking on behalf of the Ag. DG Prof. Elijah Songok, expressed her gratitude for the collaboration, stating, "We are thankful for the opportunity to collaborate and discuss the potential impact of the mpox vaccine. You are always welcome back to KEMRI."

Tonix Pharmaceuticals presented their single-dose, live-replicating mpox vaccine based on horsepox, which promises long-lasting immunity and reduced transmission. The vaccine is set to undergo a Phase 1 clinical trial with 60 participants aged 18-49, focusing on safety and immunogenicity. If successful, local manufacturing of the vaccine in Africa is on the horizon, with possible collaborations involving the Kenya CDC and other local partners.

Dr. Seth Lederman, highlighting the company's progress, said, "Our journey in vaccine development began with research on PTSD, but we have since pivoted to mpox



Dr. Seth Lederman makes his remarks while Ag. Director Research and Development, Dr. Veronica Manduku listens. Dr. Vera Manduku listens.

vaccine development. He continued, "We're also open to exploring local manufacturing in Africa if the vaccine is successful, and Tonix is willing to help build local capacity."

Kenyan Tonix Vaccine Study and clinical studies expert, Prof. Matilu Mwau also gave a presentation in support of the collaboration, stating, "Our relationship with Tonix began in 2020 during the development of a COVID vaccine, and now we are focused on the mpox vaccine." He elaborated on the challenges faced, saying, "developing the mpox vaccine has come with its fair share of challenges, including resource constraints and the need to pause and resume work." He assured the attendees that the team is ready to begin the Phase 1 clinical trial once the protocol and necessary approvals are finalized, adding, "There is potential for Phase 2 trials in 2026, depending on the success of Phase 1."

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with a commitment from both sides to continue their collaboration. Dr. Bernhards Ogutu from KEMRI expressed optimism about advancing Africa's capacity for local vaccine production, while Dr. Lederman reiterated Tonix's dedication to the project. The next steps include finalizing the clinical trial protocol, visiting key research facilities in Western Kenya, and preparing for local manufacturing opportunities if the trial yields positive results.

As both parties look forward to a fruitful collaboration, they emphasized the importance of coordinating with the Ministry of Health and ensuring transparent communication with stakeholders. The meeting ended with shared optimism for the success of the mpox vaccine trial and the broader potential of local vaccine manufacturing in Africa.



The group pose for a photo shortly after the meeting.





01

PIC 1: Prof. Matilu Mwaу makes a point while Dr. Seth Lederman, Dr. Vera Manduku and Dr. Serah Gitome listen keenly.

PIC 2: Executive VP Medical Dr. Zeil Rosenberg making his presentation

PIC 3: Research Scientist; Dr. Bernhards Ogutu, Research Scientist; Dr. Joseph Mwangi, Head of Clinical Trials Division, CCR; Dr. Simon Njenga & Research Scientist; Dr. Samson Limbaso.

PIC 4: From LtoR: Kenya projects Manager Mr. Judah Arap Bett, Executive Vice President, Medical; Zeil Rosenberg Director, Regulatory Affairs at Tonix Pharmaceuticals; Mandy Ng, Co-Founder, CEO & Chairman; Dr. Seth Lederman.



02



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04



Prof. Matilu Mwaу

# KEMRI Celebrates Customer Service Week 2024: Going Above and Beyond

**BY WAMBUI NDIRANGU**

In line with this year's Customer Service Week theme, "Above and Beyond," the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) marked the occasion with a series of heartfelt celebrations.

The week, globally recognized for honoring the role of customer service in organizations, saw KEMRI embracing its service-driven ethos, with key events and cake-cutting ceremonies symbolizing the appreciation of both clients and service providers.

The main highlight of the week was a cake-cutting ceremony at KEMRI's main reception, led by the Dr. Mariciannah Onono on behalf of the Ag. Director General, Prof. Elijah Songok. Jointly organized by Corporate Communication and Commercial Enterprise departments, the event was a moment of reflection on the crucial relationships built through consistent service and excellence.

In addition to the in-house celebrations, KEMRI's partners also contributed to the spirit of the week. GenAfrica Asset Managers presented a cake to the KEMRI Staff Retirement Benefits Scheme, as a token of appreciation for their longstanding collaboration. Safari Park Hotel, a cherished partner due to hosting the annual KASH conference for several years, also joined in with a cake, symbolizing the depth of the relationship forged over time. KCB Bank, with whom KEMRI banks, added to the festivity by providing a cake, recognizing the valuable partnership between the institutions.

The spirit of giving didn't end at KEMRI's gates. As part of its commitment to going above and beyond, KEMRI extended the celebrations by presenting cakes to two of their esteemed clients—Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) and the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA). This



Ag. Acting Director General, Dr. Mariciannah Onono, Director Corporate Services, Mr. Jones Otupe, Deputy Director, Commercial Enterprises, Carolyn Wandra shares a cake with Customers and Staff during the customer service week



gesture was a recognition of the vital collaborations that drive KEMRI's service to the health sector.

KEMRI's celebration of Customer Service Week was a fitting tribute to the importance of collaboration and service excellence, reminding everyone involved of the significance of nurturing client relationships, which ultimately contribute to the success of the organization.







**Customer Service  
Week 2024 in  
Pictures**





# KEMRI's Participation at the Inaugural Mazingira Day Celebrations

BY AMOS PESI

The Institute took a leading role in championing environmental conservation during the first-ever Mazingira Day on 10th, October 2024, a national event aimed at promoting environmental awareness and action.

The celebrations, held at the Nairobi Arboretum, were presided over by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Hon. Aden Duale, who underscored the importance of environmental stewardship in combatting climate change and its effects.

Mazingira Day, established to advocate for environmental protection and tree planting efforts, replaces the formerly known Utamaduni Day, which was rebranded in 2023 from the Moi Day. In his keynote address, CS Duale emphasized the critical link between a clean environment and public health, urging citizens to take responsibility by keeping their surroundings clean and planting trees. **"As a country, we have witnessed long droughts, flooding,**

**and unpredictable weather patterns—all a result of climate change. I want to encourage every citizen to make deliberate efforts to clean our environment and plant as many trees as possible,"** said Duale.

During the event, Duale led participants in a clean-up of a section of the Nairobi River at the Arboretum. He also issued a stern warning to individuals and industries polluting the river and other water sources, announcing that over 20,000 youths have been enlisted to clean the Nairobi River over the next 18 months.

This initiative aims to restore the river, which the CS likened to a "sewer line" due to its current state. In addition, Duale hinted at upcoming policies that will require households to segregate waste into organic and non-organic categories to promote better waste management.



Environment Cabinet Secretary Hon. Aden Duale watering a tree during the event



KEMRI's active participation in Mazingira Day highlights the institution's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability. The KEMRI delegation not only took part in the clean-up exercise but also distributed free samples of Kem-Rub hand sanitizer to the participants, further emphasizing the importance of hygiene in maintaining a healthy environment.

The KEMRI team included representatives from its Commercial Enterprise department, Hemma Konini, Simon Kibet, and Anne Mania, as well as Senior Corporate Communication Officer Duke Isaboke together with Marion

Katei, and Amos Pesi from the department. Reflecting on the event, the team noted, "We all have a responsibility to ensure we live in a greener, cleaner, and healthier environment".

The Cabinet Secretary concluded by highlighting Kenya's progress in environmental conservation, noting that the country has planted over 480 million trees this year, a significant step towards reversing the impacts of deforestation and climate change. The inaugural Mazingira Day has set the tone for sustained national efforts in environmental conservation and public health.











# Cybersecurity Awareness Month: Protecting Our Digital Lives Together

In today's fast-paced digital world, October stands as a crucial time to reflect on the importance of protecting our online presence. Cybersecurity Awareness Month, observed annually, highlights the growing threats in the cyber landscape and encourages everyone—whether you're an IT professional or a casual internet user—to take steps toward a more secure digital life.

This initiative, supported by both government and private organizations, aims to combat the increasing frequency and sophistication of cyber-attacks. With the widespread use of smart devices, Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and the rise of remote work, cybersecurity has become more critical than ever before.

The theme for this year's Cybersecurity Awareness Month, Secure Our Digital Lives Together, calls for a collective effort to address these challenges. Here are some key focus areas for this year's campaign:

## 1. Recognizing Phishing Scams

Phishing scams remain one of the most persistent cyber threats, where attackers use deceptive emails, messages, or websites to steal sensitive information. These scams often imitate trusted institutions like banks or well-known companies. Warning signs include unexpected requests for personal information, urgent language, and suspicious email addresses or URLs. Using anti-phishing tools and educating users on how to identify these scams are essential defenses.

## 2. Strengthening Passwords

Passwords are your first line of defense against cyber-attacks. Strong passwords should include a mix of letters, numbers, and special characters, avoiding easily guessed information like birthdays or common phrases. A password manager can help organize and store complex passwords securely. Adding multi-factor authentication (MFA) provides an extra layer of security by requiring something only the user possesses, such as a smartphone, along with a password.

## 3. Updating Software

Regularly updating software is crucial for keeping your systems secure. Updates often contain patches that fix vulnerabilities cybercriminals might exploit. Ensuring that your operating system, applications, and antivirus software are up to date helps protect against potential breaches. Many devices allow for automatic updates, ensuring you stay protected with the latest security enhancements.

## 4. Backing Up Data

Backing up your data regularly can save you from catastrophic data loss due to cyber-attacks, hardware failure, or accidental deletion. Cloud storage, external hard drives, or network-attached storage (NAS) devices are popular options. A common backup strategy, the 3-2-1 rule, recommends having three copies of your data—two stored locally on different devices, and one kept offsite. This ensures that your data is secure even if one backup fails.



## 5. Educating and Training

Staying informed about new cyber threats and the latest security practices is essential. There are many resources available, such as workshops and online courses, to help individuals and organizations stay up to date on emerging risks. Continuous education is a critical tool in improving collective cybersecurity awareness.

## Conclusion

Cybersecurity Awareness Month serves as a vital reminder of the growing need to protect our digital lives. By recognizing phishing scams, strengthening password security, keeping software updated, backing up data, and committing to continuous learning, we can collectively strengthen our cybersecurity defenses. As technology advances, so too must our approach to security, ensuring we stay ahead of potential threats.

This October, let's join forces to secure our digital world, creating a safer and more resilient online environment for everyone.



# CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

