

# Regional virtual research and publication workshop

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## INTRODUCTION

The Southern Africa TB and Health Systems Support (SATBHSS) project has emphasised rolling out a standardised package of occupational health services and mining safety standards across the four project countries of Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zambia. Project countries have, in this regard, spearheaded studies in different areas of occupational health and safety, with a view to creating and sharing regional knowledge and supporting evidence-based policies and interventions. Publication of study results in peer-reviewed journals is an important step for communicating findings while, at the same time, providing an opportunity for the findings to be evaluated by the research community. Furthermore, development and dissemination of policy briefs communicate research findings to a diverse group of stakeholders, for better translation of research into the improvement of occupational health and safety (OHS) and tuberculosis (TB) policies and services.

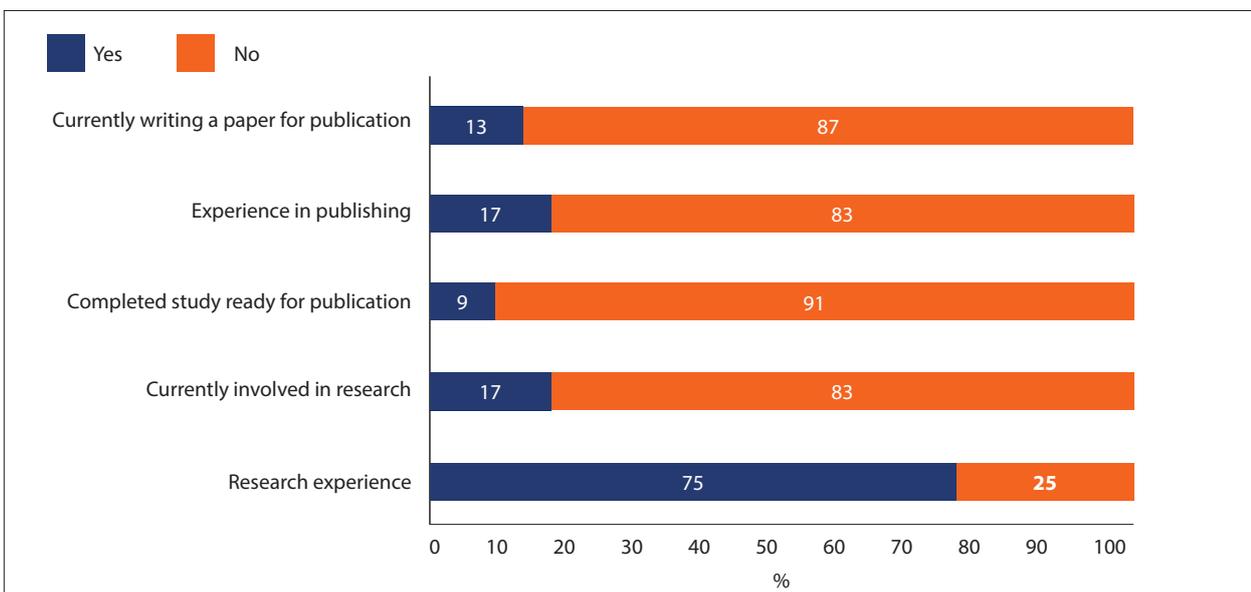
It is therefore fundamental that focus is given to improving research and publication writing skills for increased knowledge exchange and utilisation to address OHS challenges. This will increase project scalability and influence the OHS and TB policy landscape, not only in southern Africa, but in the continent and worldwide.

The project countries, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), East, Central & Southern Africa-Health Community (ECSA-HC), and the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* journal editorial team have collaborated to conduct a series of training sessions to equip member states with skills in research and manuscript publication. The first session was convened from 16 to 20 November 2020. Approximately 70 participants from the project countries attended the training.

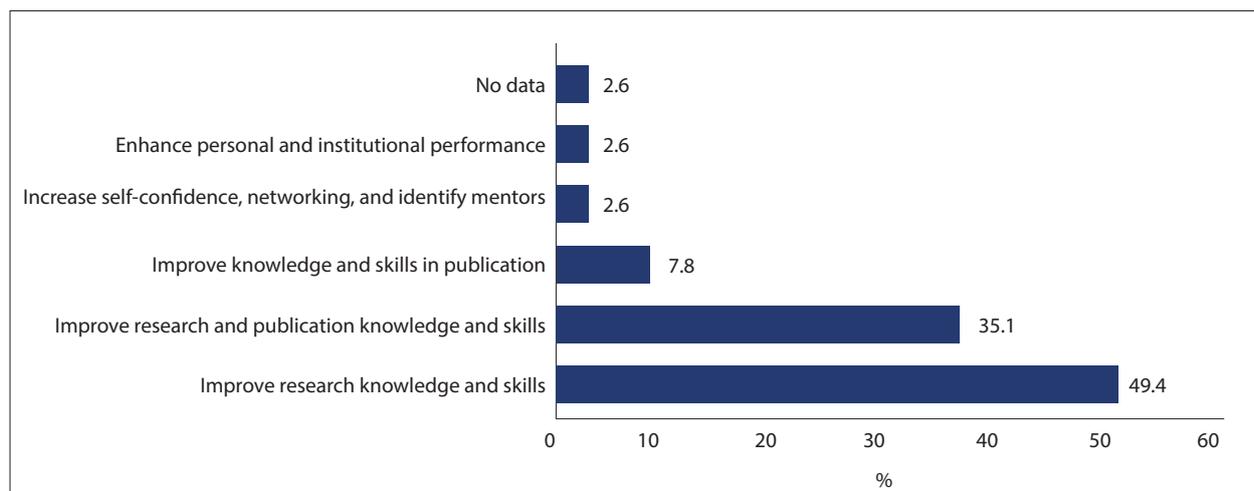
## PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY

Seventy-five percent of the 77 participants who responded to the pre-workshop survey had experience in undertaking research. The majority (83%) were not currently involved in research but were in the process of registering for their master's degrees or wanting to publish their research. A handful of the participants had completed studies that were ready for publication (9%), had experience in writing manuscripts (17%), or were in the process of writing manuscripts for submission to scientific journals (13%). Results of the survey are shown in Figure 1.

The regional research and publication workshop participants expected to improve their research and publication knowledge and skills, networking and finding publication mentors, etc. (Figure 2).



**Figure 1. Workshop participants' experience in research and writing, and publishing research**



**Figure 2. Expectations of workshop participants**

## PROCEEDINGS

The research and publication workshop was facilitated by the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* journal under the leadership and guidance of the editor-in-chief, Prof. Gill Nelson, assistant editor, Dr Zodwa Ndlovu, and their colleagues, Prof. Eustasius Musenge (Wits School of Public Health), Mr Braimoh Bello (Centre for Statistical Analysis and Research (CESAR)), and Mr Kevin Beaumont (*Occupational Health Southern Africa*). The journal is accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in the Republic of South Africa. The main outcomes of the workshop were the training of at least 30 participants, and identification of draft manuscripts that will result in the submission of four papers for publication by May 2021. The training was undertaken as part of the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* journal's quest to increase writing skills and knowledge in the region.

The first phase of the training focused on writing research papers, as the majority of the project countries have concluded several local studies that need to be published. For more information on the customised training content covered, refer to Table 1.

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

At least 15 viable draft manuscripts were developed through either individual or group writing, as part of the workshop activities. These provisional manuscripts are only for country-completed studies and exclude regional studies. The organisers (ECSA-HC and AUDA-NEPAD) are currently planning a phase 2 workshop, which will entail face-to-face regional training for those who have reached an advanced stage in the writing of their manuscripts. The main aim is to assist them to finalise and submit their manuscripts to the journals that they have selected. The second training workshop will involve identification of national research priority areas, research funding applications and development of policy briefs for policy reforms.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The project is fully funded by the World Bank, Project numbers: P155658 and P173228.

**Table 1. Training content of regional workshop on publication skills**

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<b>Mr Norman Khoza<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Dr Mohamed Mohamed<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Dr Khalide Azam<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Mr Brian Ngandu<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Ms Nomsa Mulima<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Workshop overview, objectives purpose and key outcome</b> AUDA-NEPAD: Mrs Chimwemwe Chamdimba	<b>Research development</b> Introduction section: Background/literature review; Problem statement and rationale; Research questions and objectives <b>Dr Zodwa Ndlovu</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Methods section: Statistical analysis <b>Prof. Eustasius Musenge</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> From the research report to the manuscript <b>Dr Zodwa Ndlovu</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Front matters; Abstract; Title; and Key messages <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>
<b>Research development</b> Identifying research priorities <b>Mr Braimoh Bello</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Choosing a journal, and journal expectation <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Results section: Presentation of results <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Discussion section: Recommendations and conclusion <b>Dr Zodwa Ndlovu</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Peer-review process <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>
<b>Research integrity</b> Overview and authorship <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>	<b>Research development</b> Methods section <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>	<b>Research integrity</b> Plagiarism and referencing <b>Prof. Gill Nelson</b>	<b>Manuscript writing</b> Finalising the manuscript <b>Mr Kevin Beaumont</b>	<b>Introduction to Phase 2</b> A–G of research <b>Mr Braimoh Bello</b>

<sup>1</sup>Session moderator