

The Indigenisation Project SARIMA Community of Practice for Research Ethics and Integrity Initiative – South Africa

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Who we are...

The authors of this manuscript and study are part of the **SARIMA Community of Practice (CoP) for Research Ethics and Integrity professionals in Southern Africa.**

The COP aims to cultivate a platform and forum for RMPs to network and engage with peers, sharing best practices and creating new knowledge for common professional purposes. The indigenising project is a priority focus for the CoP. Previously we were also involved in the development of the SADC Research Ethics Guidelines & Toolkit on the Nagoya Protocol.



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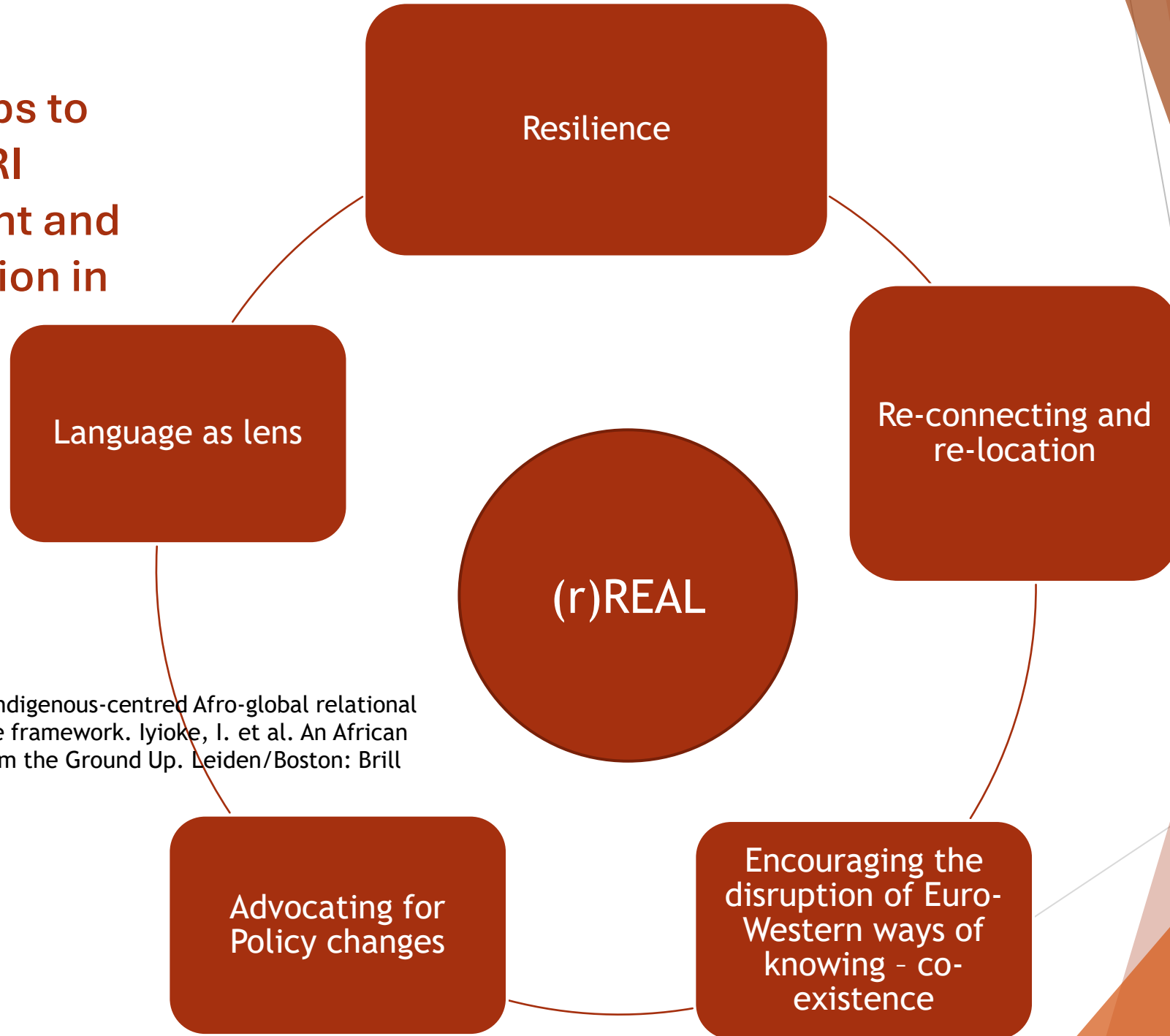
Self-location

Africa is not one thing; it is a million things compressed into a vast geopolitical entity. As such, Africa lends itself to a multiplicity of meanings, interpretations, and controversies. This dimension of cultural, political, social, geographical, and religious diversity should inform how we understand ethics and the moral questions confronting ethicists and laypeople alike in Africa (Orabator 2011, p. 3).

We are allies advocating for discourse on how RMAs should become part of the debate and lead the change

We are from Africa, but we do not claim to speak for every RMAs, researcher or community in Africa ...

Modest steps to Indigenise RI management and administration in Africa



Visagie, RG (in Press). An Indigenous-centred Afro-global relational research ethics governance framework. Iyioke, I. et al. An African Research Ethics Reader from the Ground Up. Leiden/Boston: Brill Publisher.

As an emerging profession in the Southern African landscape, **Research Management** can critically address these challenges through fresh ideas and solutions.

Research Management is defined as “embracing anything universities [and other research-focused organisations] can do to maximise the impact of their research activity”.(Drennan, 2018, pg. 1).

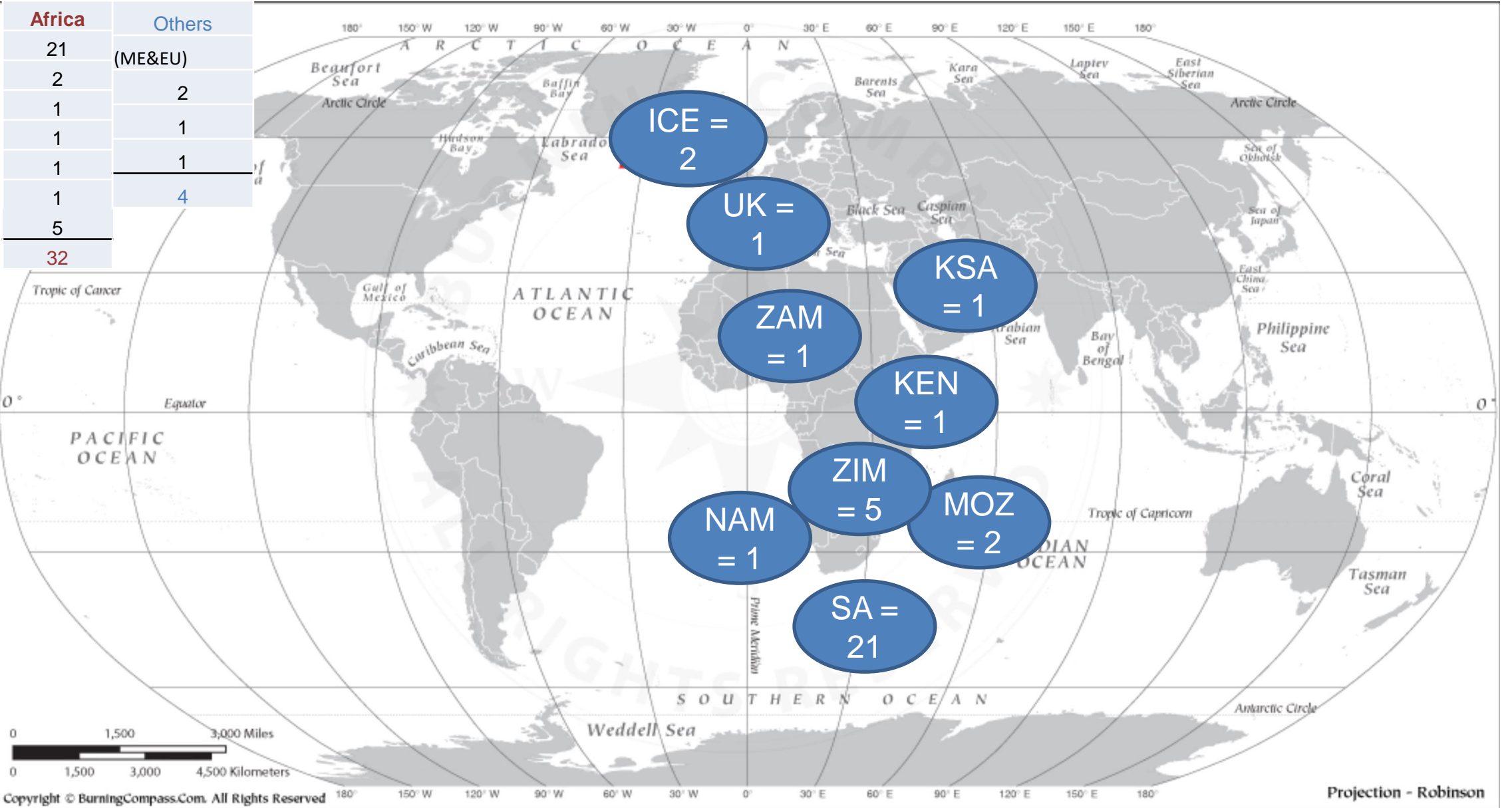
Research Methods - Qualitative Study

Two open-ended questions were asked to the purposively selected Research Managers and Administrators who participated in a pre-conference workshop at the 2023 International Network of Research Management Societies Congress (INORMS) in Durban, South Africa, on 30 May 2023:

1. What does "indigenisation of research management and administration" mean to you?
2. Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA. Motivate each principle.

Analysis: Open Thematic Coding





Findings - 1

What does the indigenisation of research management and administration mean to you?

Indigenisation requires a paradigm shift from research stakeholders to resisting the uncritical adoption of Euro-centric research practices, as evidenced by two themes:

- Decolonising the mind
- Advocating for preserving local knowledge and context in research practice

Theme 1: Decolonising the mind

- *“But that is the whole idea of indigenisation. We need to change how we go about these things that have been taken for granted for so many years.”*
- *“We need to find out what other words explain this word, like tradition, community, culture, right, inclusivity, transparency, respect, responsibility. Those are all words that, prior to this awakening of indigenisation, wasn't really featuring in the South relationship. There was no respect. Where is the respect? Where is the transparency? Where is the impact”?*

Findings - 2

What does the indigenisation of research management and administration mean to you?

Theme 2 - Advocating for preserving local knowledge and context in research practice

- *“... I think the challenge maybe is we are too much westernised, such that we start doubting those things that have brought us up. Because for some of us, growing up in the villages, we knew how to survive. When you are bitten by a snake, what is it that you're supposed to use? When a snake spits in your eyes, where do you rush to? You don't go to the clinic. In the bush you are taught, touch this, do this, do that. But when you bring up such a thing to the fore, because of the pharmaceuticals, they have to make money”.*

Findings - 3

Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA?

The following four themes concerning the core principles emerged:

- Singing from “the same hymn” – reciprocity and relationality
- Standing your ground - inclusivity, diversity and justice
- Cultural humility (maturity)
- Integrity, responsibility and transparency

Findings - 4

Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA?

(a) Singing from “the same hymn” – reciprocity and relationality

- *“As we were discussing all these issues, I've realised that there's a bigger gap between the research administrator and the researcher. The issue of sensitisation is (about) engagement. It has to be done, you know, maybe to sing from the same hymn. And based on that, you would then agree that a guiding document would be useful to have at the end to reflect on these things that will aid you in making, you know, advancing this indigenisation, this process at your university.”*
- *“I think, assumption of the north to have an agenda that they want to follow without consultation.*

Findings - 5

Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA?

(b) Standing our ground – inclusivity, diversity and justice

- *“You are so excited to get the money. You are so happy to just accept the grant conditions, whatever that is”.*
- *“I think, the assumption of the north to have an agenda that they want to follow without consultation. They spend so much time on LGBTQ while the problem here is poverty”.*

Findings - 6

Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA?

(c) Cultural humility (or maturity)

- *“To say, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what you look like. We will still respect you in a variety of ways. We will respect your culture, we will respect your language, we will respect your views, we will respect whatever. For me, and probably because I'm constantly learning about these conversations, we have a space of humility.”*
- *“So we need to grow in maturity of understanding and polarising”*

Findings - 7

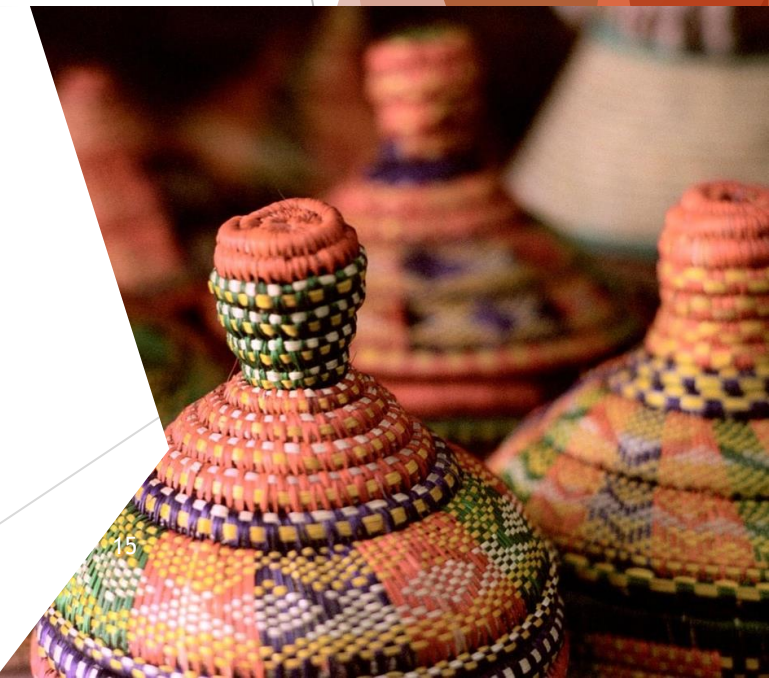
Identify five core principles that should guide the Indigenisation of RMA?

(d) Integrity and transparency

- *“In terms of responsibility, yeah, it's a core principle here to guide research. Definitely, whatever, being the design, whatever they're going to be doing in terms of research, be responsible maybe for the intended outcome, or for the outcome of this community, and be accountable for the result, rather than leaving the results to chance”.*
- *“... the indigenisation of research management, there should be this element of honesty from the research managers, the element of integrity and also transparency on how they are going to use that map. Because many times we realise that institutions, for instance, they have been tendons of misusing the money. And sometimes they have been embezzled the money for those researches. So another core principle would be that of honesty, integrity and transparency.”*

Recommendations

- **Indigenising RMA must be infused in all management aspects throughout the research life cycle** - integrity is not limited to a specific area in research; it starts from conceptualisation and ends with disseminating the results (and beyond).
- **RMAs must be open to change on all capacity levels and from different roles from the bottom up.** They need a bottom-up approach to include the community, especially their voices, in setting the agenda. They need to have tolerance, accept differences, and adapt to a culture of change.
- **RMAs must practice sensitivity to local knowledge, beliefs, customs, and values.** They need to emphasise the meaning of words and enable the identification of a communal or collective understanding of words in policies and practices to instil an institutional culture that embraces differences.
- **RMAs must maintain public trust in science and research practices at higher education institutions** (practising transparency)
- **RMAs must practice and promote honesty and be real in embracing change and enabling local contexts in policy and procedures** (practising integrity).





Conclusive thoughts

Who is indigenous?

In the end, we realize that we are only at the beginning.

Indigenous Peoples (2013, pg. 8) applies:

“... one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference.”

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Thank You!

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Acknowledgements:

- ▶ Prof Mari Manjoro
- ▶ Mr Siyanda Manqele
- ▶ Mr Winston Beukes
- ▶ Ms Thando Mdaka
- ▶ Ms Clarissa Graham

