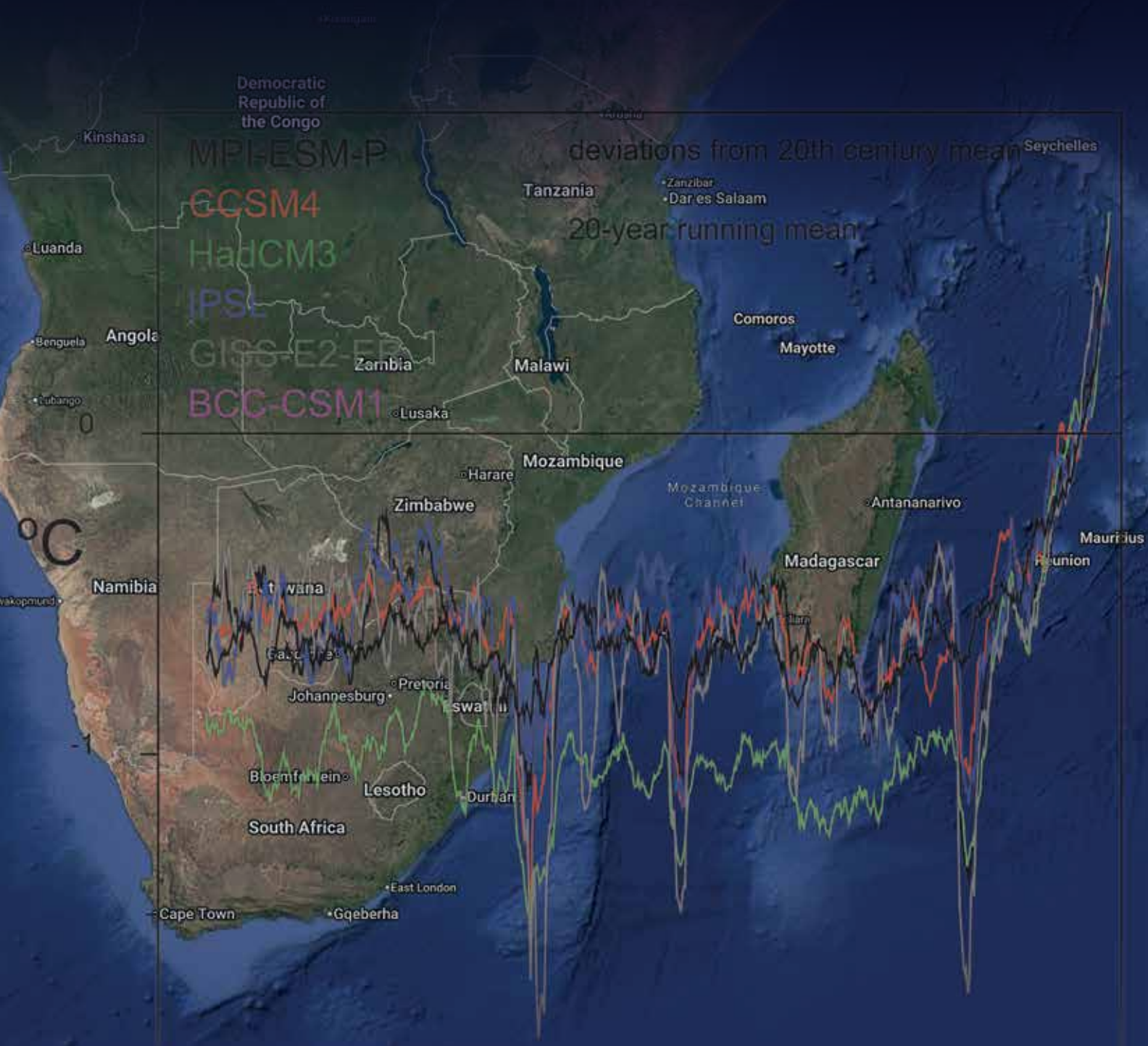


# SADC Science Journalism Training Workshop

Science Forum South Africa

3 December 2024

CSIR International Convention Centre, Tshwane



# Welcome

Welcome to the third annual SADC Science Journalism Training Workshop at SFSA 2024!

This is the place to be for aspiring science journalists in the region to up their science writing skills and network with fellow journalists, scientists, and policy- and decisionmakers from the SADC region.

## Presented by

Southern African Development Community (SADC)  
Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI)



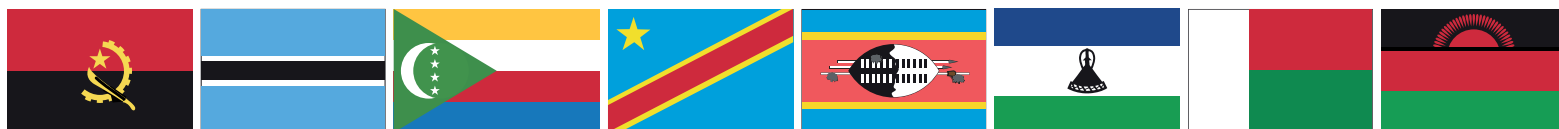
## In partnership with

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Office for Southern Africa (UNESCO-ROSA)  
National Research Foundation – South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (NRF-SAASTA)  
Stellenbosch University (SU)  
South African Science Journalists' Association (SASJA)  
AU/NEPAD Southern African Network of Water Centres of Excellence (SANWATCE)  
Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)  
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)



On the cover, near-surface annual mean air temperature averaged in southern Africa as simulated by a suite of climate models from the Climate Model Intercomparison Project CMIP5 for the period 850–2005 (Taylor et al. 2012). The time series represent deviations from the 20th century mean temperature and have been smoothed with a 20-year running-mean filter. The warming trend simulated during the 20th century stands out compared to the trends in all other centuries, with the possible exception of the 19th century (which was strongly impacted by the two first decades of intensive volcanism). Further back in time, the models produce temperature variations that can be attributed to the impact of external forcings such as the very strong eruption in Samalas (Indonesia) in 1258, the series of eruptions in the early 19th century, one of them the famous Tambora eruption in 1815, which caused “the year without summer” and serious societal disruptions in Europe. After 1800, the current warming trends set in, mainly caused by an increase of solar output during the 19th century and by the increase of greenhouse gases in the second half of the 20th century.

Source: Zorita, E. et al. 2024. Past Climate Variability in the Last Millennium. In: Van Maltitz, G.P. et al (eds). 2024. *Sustainability of Southern African Ecosystems under Global Change. Science for Management and Policy Interventions*. Springer, Ecological Studies, Volume 248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10948-5>



# Why do we need more science journalists?

We face a critical juncture in journalism in general and in science and technology journalism specifically, the latter having been largely neglected in Africa over decades in journalism newsrooms. With specialist beats diminishing around the world, the space for journalists to do their jobs is closing rapidly – and yet, seldom has humankind faced such a huge need for voices that can explain, demystify, analyse, and critique. Fake news abounds – from politics and celebrities to science-based topics on broad health issues such as vaccination, climate change, HIV/Aids and evolution.

Investigative journalists and those on beats such as science and the environment are people trained (on the job or formally) as super fact-checkers and explicators. Facing special needs, great opportunities, and devastating disasters, African countries would benefit from a well-prepared, trained and resourced cohort of journalists to keep both public and policyholders informed. With

well-equipped and confident journalists, the public is also empowered to make responsible decisions and comments regarding fake news and misinformation about various issues, as well as instances of pseudoscience and dangerous quackery that could have an impact on their well-being.

The media as watchdog have a critical role to play in terms of enabling, organising and structuring debate, and alerting the public to matters that might otherwise have been ignored. We trust that, through your participation in this workshop, your capacity, and skills to communicate complex scientific issues will be strengthened. Our aim is to achieve an important public good: an informed and engaged citizenry with access to credible sources of information in a post-factual world. We look forward to working with you this week and beyond, building a community of science journalists in the SADC region and Africa.

## Background

In June 2023, SADC Joint Meeting of Ministers responsible for Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation (ET-STI) commended the SADC Secretariat in partnership with UNESCO-ROSA, DSI and SU for coordinating and hosting a successful capacity building workshop on science communication for journalists and media representatives in the region. The workshop was hosted on the margins of the World Science Forum. The Ministers directed the Secretariat to work with UNESCO to host regular annual capacity building events and seminars on science communication to improve the communication and reporting on STI activities and initiatives in the region and to also train the national SADC Media coordinators on science communication.

It is against this background that the SADC Secretariat in collaboration with DSI will host the third annual SADC

Science Journalism Training Workshop in the run-up to Science Forum South Africa, 4-6 December 2024, at the CSIR International Convention Centre. Participants include young journalism graduates, science journalists, regional media coordinators and relevant policy makers and researchers.

This hybrid workshop will provide participants with an in-depth understanding of complex scientific issues facing Africa; sensitise participants to ethical dilemmas in science and science journalism, especially from a social justice perspective; and provide guidance to participants working in environments where science and research outcomes need to be made accessible to the general public and to science policy audiences.





# Programme

TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024		
8:30-9:00	Welcome and registration	
9:00-9:15	Official welcome	<b>Reaboka Morakabi</b> , Southern African Development Community (SADC)
		<b>Koki Selepe</b> , Deputy Director: Science Promotion, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
		<b>Dr Martiale Zebaze Kana</b> , UNESCO Regional Office in Africa (UNESCO-ROSA)
		<b>Mandi Smallhorne</b> , South African Science Journalists' Association (SASJA)
9:15-10:00	<b>Extreme weather events and disaster-risk reduction in the SADC region</b>	Guest lecture by <b>Prof Sosten Chiotha</b> , Regional Director for Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Southern and Eastern Africa
		Moderated by <b>Muchaneta Munamati</b> , UNESCO-ROSA
10:00-11:00	<b>Science journalism and social justice</b>	<b>Pascalinah Kabi</b> ( <i>Uncensored News</i> ), <b>Sibusiso Biyela</b> (freelance science journalist), <b>Dr Konosoang Sobane</b> (Human Sciences Research Council), <b>Thabo Leshilo</b> ( <i>The Conversation Africa</i> ), <b>Prof Sosten Chiotha</b> (LEAD)
		Moderated by <b>Mandi Smallhorne</b>
11:00-11:30	Coffee/tea break	
11:30-12:30	<b>Exposing the invisible – an introduction to social justice journalism</b>	<b>Pascalinah Kabi</b> , co-founder managing editor of <i>Uncensored News</i> , Lesotho
		Moderated by <b>Zamuxolo Matiwana</b> (NRF-SAASTA)
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-14:30	<b>Science journalism at the coal face</b>	<b>Sinethemba Witi</b> (SABC), <b>Monique Lewis</b> (SABC), <b>Selomina Phekelela</b> (News24), <b>Siphumelele Zondi</b> (Power FM), and <b>Avhaphani Munyai</b> (SABC)
		Moderated by <b>Zamuxolo Matiwana</b> (NRF-SAASTA)
14:30-15:30	<b>Pitching science and environmental stories from the SADC region</b>	<b>Leonie Joubert</b> , science writer and environmental journalist
		Moderated by <b>Wiida Basson</b>
15:30-16:00	<b>Do you have a story idea to pitch?</b>	<b>Lynne Smit</b> , senior editor, <i>Nature Africa</i>
		Moderated by <b>Sibusiso Biyela</b>
16:00-16:30	<b>Handing over ceremony:</b> Certificates of Participation and group photo	<b>Prof. Sibusiso Moyo</b> , Vice-Rector and Deputy Chancellor: Research and Innovation, Stellenbosch University

# Speakers and facilitators



## **Wiida Basson**

Wiida Basson is an experienced science communicator and science journalism trainer, currently working as science writer for the Faculty of Science, Stellenbosch University, where she covers research-related news in the physical, mathematical, and life sciences. She is also a part-time science journalist writing primarily for Nature Africa. She holds a Masters in Communication and a Masters in Philosophy (Applied Ethics).



## **Sibusiso Biyela**

Sibusiso Biyela is a freelance science journalist writing for publications such as Nature Africa and Research Professional News. He is also a senior producer at SABC News where he specialises in data visualisation and news graphics. He was a digital science communicator at ScienceLink for 8 years where he helped scientists and research institutions make their work accessible to the public. He is a writer at SciBraai, and co-producer and co-host of the Ilukuluku podcast which discusses scientific topics in isiZulu.



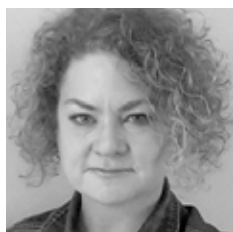
## **Prof Sosten Chiotha**

Prof Sosten Chiotha is a specialist in environmental sustainability, public health and climate change. He is a graduate of the University of Malawi (B.Ed.), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (MSc Medical Parasitology), University of Maryland, USA (PhD in Marine, Estuarine and Environmental Science) and University of Dundee (LLD honoris causa). He was first to report on the complete drying of Lake Chilwa, Malawi's second largest lake in 1995, subsequently coordinating a seven-year research and development climate change adaptation programme across the Lake Chilwa basin. He was first to report on emerging issues of tornadoes in Malawi in 2017. His latest research examines maize yield gap by integrating ground and remote sensed data, models and household surveys as well as modelling health impacts of climate change.



## **Pascalinah Kabi**

Pascalinah Kabi made history as the first female investigative journalist in Lesotho to author and publish a book. With an extensive background in reporting on environmental, health, and political matters, Kabi is a co-founder and managing editor of *Uncensored News*, a Lesotho-based publication specialising in in-depth reporting on health and environmental issues.



## **Leonie Joubert**

Leonie Joubert is a Cape Town-based science writer grappling with many of today's tough environmental and social justice issues: climate collapse, environmental change, energy policy, cities as development and inequality hubs, and why today's food system leaves many hungry, heavy, and sick (the hunger-obesity poverty-paradox). She has recently embarked on a major climate change story-telling project called *Story Ark*.



## **Thabo Leshilo**

Thabo Leshilo is Commissioning Editor: Politics for *The Conversation Africa*. He is a journalist and editor with 30 years of experience. He is the former editor of the *Pretoria News*, *Sowetan*, *Sunday World*, and *Business Times*. His main areas of interest are human rights, politics, labour, transport and small business development. He is a past winner of the Sanlam Business Journalist of the Year Award (small business section). He was a 2008/2009 Nieman Fellow (Harvard University). Thabo holds a Masters in Philosophy (Applied Ethics).

**Monique Eunice Lewis**

Monique Eunice Lewis grew up in the small town of Umtata in the Eastern Cape. She obtained a diploma in Journalism at Damelin College and is currently a science journalist intern at the SABC in Johannesburg. Here she has gained valuable knowledge and skills to be an excellent journalist, delivering worthy and informative news to the community.

**Zamuxolo Matiwana**

Zamuxolo Matiwana is coordinator of the Science Journalism Community Service Project at the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA), a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF). He is passionate about indigenous languages and the role that they can play in making science communication accessible in South Africa.

**Muchaneta Munamati**

Muchaneta Munamati is a Project Coordinator currently overseeing UNESCO's Be-Resilient Zimbabwe Plus Project funded by Adaptation Fund. She is responsible for planning and coordinating the project's implementation. Prior to her current position, she served as Regional Project Coordinator for the Governance of Groundwater Resources in Transboundary Aquifers (GGRETA) project from June 2020 to December 2022, where she managed multiple extra-budgetary projects and coordinated with national and international experts to ensure effective project execution. Since 2022 she has been the interim Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) Regional Coordinator, focusing on water security and disaster risk reduction across Southern Africa. Muchaneta earned her PhD in Water and Sanitation Engineering from the University of Zimbabwe and has published a number of peer reviewed articles in high-impact journals and book chapters.

**Avhaphani Munyai**

Avhaphani Munyai is a science journalist intern at SABC News in Polokwane, Limpopo Province. He holds a degree in BA Media Studies from the University of Venda. At the SABC he is responsible for interviewing experts, researchers and other news makers and writing-up those stories. The stories are broadcasted on the SABC flagship television station Channel 404 and on 19 SABC radio stations.

**Selomina Phekelela**

As an NRF-SAASTA science journalist intern in the News24 Climate Futures section, Selomina Phekelela has already made an indelible mark through her contributions to simplifying complex environmental and cultural issues. She was recently awarded the Golden Shield Heritage Award in the Heritage Journalism category and has been nominated as a Kudu Awards finalist. Her passion for climate reporting is evident in her hard-hitting articles, as well as the invitations she receives for radio interviews, further amplifying the impact of her work.

**Nomathemba Tasha Siziba**

Passionate about making science accessible to everyone, Nomathemba is a seasoned science journalist dedicated to unravelling the wonders of the world and bringing complex scientific concepts to a broader audience. She has honed her skills in translating intricate scientific jargon into engaging and understandable narratives. As a science journalist, her mission is to bridge the gap between scientific experts and the general public.

**Mandi Smallhorne**

Ms Mandi Smallhorne is a freelance science journalist, president of the South African Science Journalists' Association, and vice-president of the World Federation of Science Journalists. With more than 20 years of experience in media and journalism, Mandi has developed and presented training courses and workshops in South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia.

**Lynne Smit**

Lynne Smit is a senior editor at *Nature Africa*. As a science journalist and editor, she enjoys understanding and translating the most complex and technical of subjects. She has worked for several international organisations, including as a senior writer for the World Health Organisation in Africa, and has provided communication services to UNESCO, the EU, and international conferences mostly in the health, technology and innovation areas.

**Dr Konosoang Sobane**

Dr Konosoang Sobane is a science communication and health communication specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa. She holds a PhD in Linguistics from Stellenbosch University, with a specialisation in Healthcare Communication, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Science Communication. Her research interests are on the role of science in shaping people's behaviours and attitudes and the science-policy interface.

**Sinethemba Witi**

Sinethemba Witi comes from a small rural town of Middledrift in the Eastern Cape. She is a graduate in Journalism and Media Studies from Rhodes University where she worked as a multimedia reporter and a freelance journalist for campus and community newspaper in Makhanda. She currently works at the SABC as a science and general news reporter.

**Siphumelele Sanele Zondi**

Siphumelele Sanele Zondi was born and bred in the deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal in Ulundi. She obtained her qualification in journalism at Walter Sisulu University and is currently working as a NRF-SAASTA science journalist intern stationed at PowerFM.



**A special word of thanks to the members of the technical organising committee under the guidance of Mandry Ntshani (DSI). They are:**

Mandry Ntshani (DSI); Reaboka Morakabi (SADC); Sigfried Tivana (DSI); Thabang Setlhare (DSI); Thabo Tema (DSI); Zamuxolo Matiwana (NRF-SAASTA); Zimasa Nqabeni (DSI); Lumka Lozipho (HSRC); Wiida Basson (SU); Mandi Smallhorne (SASJA); Martiale Zebaze Kana (UNESCO); Muchaneta Munamati (UNESCO), Mcnally Patrice Patirishu (UNESCO).

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