

2026 SARIMA Conference | WORKSHOP:



— RMA'S ROLES IN ADVANCING EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN AI RISKS, AUTHORSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE AI USE

- Tuesday, 8 September 2026
- 13:00 – 17:00
- NH Hotel Johannesburg Sandton, South Africa

— **TARGET AUDIENCE:** This workshop is designed for research management and administration professionals across the SADC region, including: Research Ethics Committee managers and administrators, Research directors and deputy vice-chancellors for research and innovation, Grants' managers and research innovation and technology transfer officers, Postdoctoral and early career researchers interested in research governance, Academic staff with research ethics oversight responsibilities, Government and national research council representatives

Facilitators & Contributors:

- Retha Visagie – University of South Africa
- Eleni Flack-Davison – University of the Witwatersrand
- Sidney Engelbrect - KAUST
- Marizvikuru Manjoro – University of Venda
- Siyanda Manqele – North-West University
- Winston Beukes – Stellenbosch University
- Jacintha Toohey – University of KwaZulu-Natal
- Tanya Coetzee – University of the Witwatersrand
- Fesiwe Mseleni - North-West University

Moderators:

- Leonie Louw – University of South Africa
- Melody Shana – Stellenbosch University

Aim and Learning Outcomes:

This workshop aims to equip Research Managers and Administrators with the knowledge, frameworks, and practical tools to advance equity, inclusion, and diversity in AI governance, ethical authorship, and indigenous research ethics, thus moving deliberately from critical dialogue to institutional practice.

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Contextualise epistemic justice and Ubuntu as foundational principles that guide equitable research management practice in the SADC region.
- Critically analyse the risks posed by AI systems to indigenous knowledge systems, data sovereignty, and research integrity, and identify practical mitigation strategies for RMAs.
- Apply the principles of equitable authorship to institutional policies and dispute resolution processes.
- Utilise Ubuntu as a practical governance philosophy to design inclusive research management systems.
- Develop institutional tools, including an AI risk-screening checklist, authorship equity principles, and policy frameworks, that embed epistemic justice into everyday research administration.

DRAFT Programme Layout:

Time	Session	Activity Type	Facilitator
13:00 – 13:15	Opening & Welcome Setting the tone: From dialogue to practice	Welcome address; Scene-setting video clip	Leonie Louw & Melody Shana
13:15 – 14:00	Session 1: Reframing the Challenge for SADC: Epistemic Justice, AI, Indigenous Knowledge & Ubuntu	Panel provocations + facilitated discussion (include reference to the SADC research ethics guidelines)	Retha Visagie, Sidney Engelbrecht, Jacintha Toohey, Winston Beukes & Feziwe Mseleni
14:00 – 14:45	Session 2: AI, Indigenous Knowledge and the RMA: Navigating Risk, Data Sovereignty, and Governance	Mini case study + small group work	Eleni Flack-Davison, Jacintha Toohey
15 min	TEA BREAK		
15:00 – 15:45	Session 3: Authorship, Credit and Equity: Strengthening Authorship Equity and Citational Justice	Mock authorship dispute + authorship equity charter drafting	Siyanda Manqele & Sidney Engelbrecht
15:45 – 16:30	Session 4: The RMA as Institutional Architect: Building Equity into Research Infrastructure	Rapid prototyping: 3 Institutional frameworks for Equity	Marizvikuru Manjoro & Tanya Coetzee
16:30 – 17:00	Reflection, Closure and Way Forward Commitments to practice	Plenary reflection; take-away pledges	Melody Shana & Leonie Louw

Call to Action

The workshop concludes with a call to action. Each participant completes a brief pledge card: a call to action to advance epistemic justice in their institution. The moderators close with a call to sustain the dialogue through the SARIMA Community of Practice on Research Ethics and Integrity, and through ongoing SADC regional collaboration.

Workshop Background and Rationale

The Wider Context: Epistemic Injustice in the Research Ecosystem

Epistemic injustice, the unfair treatment of persons as knowers, was formally theorised by Miranda Fricker (2007) and has since become a foundational concept in decolonial research ethics. For SADC research institutions, this injustice is not abstract: it manifests daily in whose knowledge counts and which voices shape institutional policy. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Forum on Transforming Knowledge for Africa's Future (2024) called explicitly for a paradigm shift, urging institutions to value diverse knowledge systems, including indigenous and local knowledge, as foundational to Africa's research future. This broader epistemic crisis is now intersecting with rapid technological change and an ever-increasing demand to publish in high-impact, international journals.

The Role of RMAs: Invisible Custodians or Active Architects?

Engelbrecht et al. (2024) identified a growing need for targeted training in research ethics across the SADC region, noting that RMAs are often expected to navigate complex ethical terrain without adequate institutional support. This workshop responds to that gap. It argues that RMAs are not merely administrators of compliance; they are institutional architects with the capacity to embed equity, inclusion, and diversity into the very infrastructure of all forms of research through standard operating procedures, data management plans, authorship policies, and AI governance frameworks.

Ubuntu as the Ethical Driver

Ubuntu philosophy, encapsulated in the maxim 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through others), offers an indigenous African ethical framework that naturally aligns with the relational, community-centred values at the heart of equitable research practice. This workshop draws on Ubuntu as a practical governance philosophy: one that can guide RMAs in building research management systems that are relational, inclusive, and accountable to communities.

The SADC-Specific Imperative: Towards Harmonisation

The SADC region encompasses 16 member states with significant variation in research ethics regulatory frameworks, AI policy development, and indigenous knowledge protection mechanisms. SARIMA and SANBio (2021) undertook a landmark initiative to develop regional Guidelines on Research Ethics for Access and Benefit Sharing under the Nagoya Protocol, a direct effort to address this lack of harmonisation. However, the challenges persist, particularly in AI governance and authorship equity, not addressed in this guideline document. In addition, this work remains largely unknown to many RMAs, and its integration into institutional SOPs and application templates is inconsistent.