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## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AFRICA

[CLICK HERE](#)

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### 5 FUN FACTS ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Occupational therapy has its roots in mental health and basket weaving.
- "Occupation" does not necessarily refer to jobs.
- OT rehabilitation is not just limited to upper limbs.
- OTs use a variety of assistive devices

## EDITORIAL MESSAGE: NAVIGATING NEW HORIZONS

Dear OTARG Community,

As we embrace the pages of another edition of our newsletter, I am filled with gratitude for the resilience and commitment that defines our community. The Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG) continues to navigate new horizons, facing challenges head-on and celebrating the remarkable milestones that shape our collective journey.

In this edition, we delve into the heart of our recent activities, sharing the triumphs and learnings that have colored the canvas of the past months. From the resounding success of our collaborative efforts with esteemed partners to the inspiring initiatives that underscore our commitment to growth, each story unfolds as a testament to the strength of our community.

The challenges posed by the ongoing global circumstances have not dimmed the spirit of OTARG. If anything, they have ignited a renewed sense of purpose and adaptability within our ranks. We address these challenges not as roadblocks but as opportunities to innovate, collaborate, and strengthen the bonds that define us.

Our focus on marketing and awareness takes center stage as we revamp our online presence, weaving a digital tapestry that reflects the vibrant diversity and expertise within OTARG. Education and training initiatives stride forward, promising a future where occupational therapy in Africa is nurtured, elevated, and firmly rooted in excellence.

Research and evidence-based practice stand as pillars in our commitment to advancing the profession. The leadership training and capacity-building programs underscore our dedication to nurturing the leaders of tomorrow, ensuring a sustainable and impactful future for occupational therapy in our region.

As we turn the pages, let us not only see the challenges but also the opportunities they present. Let us celebrate not just the milestones but the collective effort that propels us forward. Together, we are not merely flipping through a newsletter; we are authoring a narrative of resilience, innovation, and unwavering dedication. Thank you for being an integral part of OTARG's story. Your passion, insights, and contributions breathe life into these pages. May this edition inspire you, inform you, and deepen our sense of community.

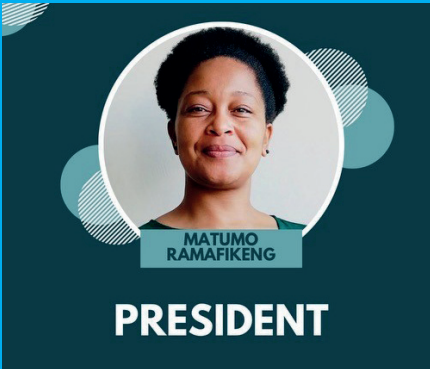
Here's to navigating new horizons together.

Warm regards,



**Nana Serwaa Akrofi**  
Newsletter Editor, OTARG

# MEET YOUR EXECUTIVES

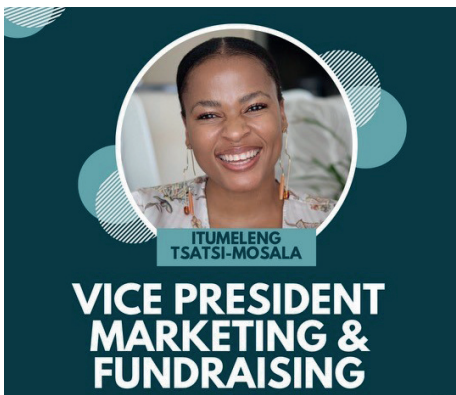


Dr Ramafikeng completed undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Cape Town where she obtained her PhD in Education in 2018. Her thesis focused on how students that are African language speakers navigate

practice education in occupational therapy curriculum. She worked as an occupational therapist in mental health practice in Lesotho before joining the University of Cape Town as an educator. Her areas of expertise include; teaching for diversity, providing academic support in higher education, and design and delivery of occupational therapy curriculum that is contextually relevant. Dr Ramafikeng is the current President of the Occupational Therapy in Africa Regional Group (OTARG) elected in 2019. Although no longer at the University of Cape Town, she continues to work as an educator.



Munyaradzi Chimara is the Vice President – Programmes for OTARG. He is an occupational therapist and lecturer at the University of Namibia, and he graduated with a BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy from the University of Zimbabwe in 2004. Currently Munya is pursuing PhD studies in Occupational Therapy with Stellenbosch University. He was the chairperson for the Local Organizing Committee of the 12th OTARG congress that was held in Namibia in 2023.



Itumeleng Tsatsi-Mosala is an occupational therapist whose passion is in mental health and community reintegration of long-term mental health care users, including the promotion of occupational justice with mental health care users. She is currently a lecturer in the occupational therapy department at the University of Witwatersrand. In 2018, Tsatsi-Mosala was recognized as an influential young South African by the Mail and Guardian 200 young South Africans as a trailblazer in the Occupational Therapy profession. Following this, in 2019 she

was recognised by News 24 as part of 100 Young Mandelas of the Future under the category vision, for her contribution in occupational therapy mental health research. She now serves in the Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG) executive committee as a vice president for marketing and fundraising and the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA) occupational science committee as secretary. She is a fellow of the WITS chancellor's female academic leadership fellowship. She is a founder and host of Occupational Perspective, a podcast that celebrates occupational therapy trailblazers across the globe.

Tsatsi-Mosala aims to market occupational therapy in Africa across the globe and raise funds for the organization. She encourages occupational therapists across Africa to become members of OTARG and gain access to unique opportunities across the African landscape.

As OTARG Vice President-Programmes, Munya will work on revolutionizing and transforming occupational therapy in the African region to a contextual and decolonized profession. He will take a leading role enabling excellence in occupational therapy training in Africa by establishing an OTARG education coordination committee to work with WFOT in ensuring contextual training programmes. More so, the VP-Programmes portfolio is instrumental in WFOT agenda for fostering a global quality of practice that is relevant and sensitive to African context and cultural realities. Capacity building for future leaders in the profession is essential, and this portfolio shall facilitate workshops for training future leaders of the occupational therapy profession in Africa.

# MEET YOUR EXECUTIVES



ERASTUS SHUMA

## SECRETARY

**Erastus Shuma** is the founder, Owner of Pwani Occupational & Hand Therapy Services Clinic (Private practice). He's a Clinical specialist Occupational Therapist & Fellow Trained Hand Therapist, USA. He is the Kenyan Orfit Product Specialist Physical Rehab for Orfit Industries, Belgium. He is a part-time Lecturer in the Division of Occupational Therapy at the Kenya Medical Training College, Mombasa Campus. He is the Visiting clinical consultant in Occupational & Hand Therapy for Mombasa Hospital & Pandya Memorial Hospital. His area of expertise includes; Hand Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Train the Teacher Course Instructor (ORFIT Industries, Belgium) for hand therapy workshops in Kenya. He currently serves as the Secretary for OTARG (Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group)



MUNIRA HOOSAIN

## TREASURER

**Munira Hoosain** is the OTARG Treasurer and representative for South

Africa. She works at Stellenbosch University in the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. Her research interests are workplace-based rehabilitation, pain management, and mental health.

Munira has been Treasurer of OTARG since 2019. In her next term, she plans to continue smooth financial management for the organisation, particularly during the 2025 Congress. We will also be looking at improving access to OTARG membership across Africa over the next two years.



ZELALEM DEMEKE

## WEBMASTER

**Zelalem Dessalegn Demeke** ( BSc PT, MSc, OT) is an occupational therapist from Ethiopia with years of experience working with children with neurodevelopmental disabilities, particularly those with cerebral palsy. He's the founder and director of the Grand Assistive Technology Center in Ethiopia. Zelalem's research and clinical interests are within areas related to cerebral palsy rehabilitation and Assistive technology in low - and middle-income countries.

The Webmaster's role is a pivotal role responsible for managing and optimizing the Organisation's online presence. As a webmaster, Zelalem plans to ensure the OTARG's website's optimal functionality and ensure the website adheres to accessibility standards, making it inclusive and user-friendly for individuals with diverse needs.



DOMINIQUE JAMIE

## SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

**Dominique Jamie** is a South African representative for OTARG. Dominique graduated from the University of Cape Town in 2017 and completed her Community Service in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 2018. Having worked and lived in multiple provinces within South Africa, she has found herself passionate about critically viewing the role and practice of occupational therapy in the country and how to actively uphold Afrocentric ways of doing.

Being exposed to different ways of doing, cultures, and perceptions of occupational therapy, Dominique felt compelled to think more and dig deeper into what it means to be an occupational therapist in South Africa and what exactly is Occupational Therapy in the country. This inspired her to take on volunteer opportunities within the Western Cape and Mpumalanga to further develop her understanding of contexts, culture, and people to add to her clinical skillset. This led to the start of her Master's journey in 2020. She has completed her Master's coursework and is currently writing up her thesis alongside Elelwani Ramugondo and Frank Kronenberg as her supervisors. Dominique enjoys the challenge of tackling topics that question the dominant culture within the profession and is excited by working with people who share the same values and beliefs.



Nana Serwaa Akrofi, OTD, OTR/L is a Ghanaian occupational therapist. Her clinical interests include working with children, autistic people and marginalized disability groups. She is currently pursuing her PhD at New York University. Her research interests include improving services for marginalized populations, occupational justice, and promoting culturally appropriate occupational therapy services.

In her capacity as the Newsletter Editor, Nana Serwaa is committed to enhancing accessibility to pertinent information for occupational therapists throughout Africa. Her goal is to provide a platform that not only disseminates valuable insights but also spotlights noteworthy achievements and addresses issues of significance. By doing so, she aspires to cultivate a sense of unity and collaboration among occupational therapists across the continent, fostering a shared community that transcends geographical boundaries.

Teamwork  
Makes the  
Dream Work!



## FAREWELL TO DISTINGUISHED OTARG EXECUTIVES



*Emmanuel Muwonge Kalanda (Webmaster) on the left, and Eleyinde Temitayo (Secretary) on the right*

As the curtains closed on the 2023 OTARG Congress, we took a poignant moment to bid a heartfelt farewell to three remarkable individuals—Clement Nhunzvi (Vice President - Programs), Eleyinde Temitayo (Secretary), and Emmanuel Muwonge Kalanda (Webmaster)—who served with unwavering commitment on the OTARG EXCO 2019-2023.

As we express our gratitude for their invaluable service, we recognize the enduring impact of their leadership. The positive changes they implemented and the visionary strategies they pursued will continue to influence the trajectory of OTARG for years to come.

May the next chapters of their journeys be filled with continued success and fulfillment. OTARG is richer for having had them at the helm, and their influence will undoubtedly endure.

**Thank you for your service!**

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AFRICA REGIONAL GROUP (OTARG): NAVIGATING CHALLENGES, CELEBRATING MILESTONES

As we reflect on the journey of the Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG) under the leadership of Dr. Matumo Ramafikeng, it is essential to examine the achievements made and chart the course for future endeavors. The collective efforts of the organization have propelled occupational therapy in Africa forward, with significant accomplishments and ambitious goals for the future.

### Major Activities

In 2020, OTARG concluded the year by publishing the call for abstracts in preparation for the Biennial Congress in Namibia, scheduled for August 23-26, 2021. Noteworthy was the remarkable support through abstract submissions, a testament to the hard work of the Namibia Local Organizing Committee and the OTARG Exco. To enhance students' involvement, the OTARG Student Representative, Miss Aloise Shapumba, played a pivotal role in coordinating the design of the congress poster by students from the University of Namibia. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted OTARG's main activity—the hosting of the congress. Initially rescheduled to 2022, it had to be postponed again to avoid coinciding with the WFOT congress. In 2022, planning for the OTARG congress resumed, and the Namibian Association of Occupational Therapists (NAOT) graciously agreed to host the congress in August 2023. A very successful congress was hosted in Namibia in 2023. Collaboration with OT Without Borders, an affiliate member of the WFOT and OTARG, was another highlight in 2020. The organization, led by Mr. John Chacksfield, raised funds to support the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for occupational therapists in Africa. Nigeria was awarded funding through an application process.

A significant achievement in 2021 was the collaborative effort with the WFOT and Elizabeth Casson Trust to develop and promote the Trust's first International Development Award. This award aimed to financially support occupational therapists from four East African countries to upgrade from a Diploma to a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy. The Trust received an overwhelming number of applicants, awarding support to six individuals, with two from Uganda and four from Tanzania.

OTARG's media team played a crucial role in consistently improving the organization's online presence through social media and newsletters. Additionally, 2021 marked the celebration of OTARG's 25th anniversary, a momentous milestone in the organization's journey.

Furthermore, OTARG, through the Vice President Programs, is providing advisory support to Cameroon as the country develops its first occupational therapy training program.

### Noteable Commendations

- **Marketing and Awareness:** In the realm of marketing and awareness, OTARG has successfully revamped its website, providing an enhanced user experience. Social media platforms have been effectively managed, accumulating a substantial following. Quarterly newsletters have served as a vital tool in keeping members informed about ongoing activities.
- **Research and Evidence-Based Practice:** OTARG's commitment to research and evidence-based practice is evident through the formation of a research coordination committee, the launch of a research database on the OTARG website, and contributions to global occupational therapy evidence.
- **Leadership Training and Capacity Building:** The organization has successfully organized workshops for future leaders

and engaged in the Elizabeth Casson Trust review panel for Africa upgrade fellowships.

- **Education and Training:** In the domain of education and training, OTARG has made strides by developing a database for external examiners, initiating contacts with diploma programs for upgrading assistance, and actively supporting Cameroon in OT curriculum development and WFOT accreditation.

### **Challenges**

- The COVID-19 pandemic's effects, including natural disasters, political unrest, increased living costs, poor working conditions, and job losses, led to a considerable number of occupational therapists leaving their home countries. This brain drain poses a potential threat to the improvement of OT services on the continent.
- Participation in OTARG activities, beyond interest in the congress, remains marginal. The organization faces challenges in planning the congress due to the increased cost of living and the difficulty in securing sponsorships as businesses recover from the post-COVID era.
- Limited recognition from other African countries, overwhelming workload, and non-response from some diploma programs.

### **Projections**

- Looking ahead, the organization aims to strengthen partnerships with healthcare organizations, expand fundraising initiatives through grants and corporate collaborations, increase awareness through targeted marketing campaigns, and enhance communication channels for more robust member engagement.
- Establishing an education coordination committee, upgrading diploma-level training schools to bachelor's level, and facilitating exchange programs and mentorship initiatives.
- Developing an OTARG research fund/fellowship, and aligning with WFOT for a global quality of practice.
- Facilitating leadership training workshops, leading an African state-of-the-profession study and maintaining a database of strategic partners

In conclusion, the journey of OTARG is marked by achievements, challenges, and a resilient spirit to advance occupational therapy across Africa. As the organization navigates the future, the commitment to collaboration, innovation, and cultural relevance remains unwavering, promising a bright future for the profession on the African continent.







# CONGRATULATIONS TANZANIA!

Congratulations to Tanzania Occupational Therapy Association for winning the bid to host the 2025 OTARG Congress! See you in Tanzania!



## Join the OTARG Virtual Community today!

Get instant updates on all OTARG activities and updates, interact with OT's across Africa & the world beyond. OTARG seeks to build a massive hub to foster cooperation, knowledge sharing & the promotion of all things OT. Get on now! You'll fit right in.



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