



OUR  
**Success**  
STORY



# OUR Success STORY

## Introduction

Unique to the African landscape, the Mopane tree is hardy and can withstand the harsh African heat and often dry habitat. In order to flourish in a tough environment, its 'butterfly' leaves open and close to protect it from moisture loss. It is also resistant to termites but home to the Mopani worms after the rainy season and eaten as a staple food in some African cultures.

*Much like the Mopane tree, the SRLA started as a seed, grew roots and started to flourish in challenging and often tough environments - working together to bear fruit (legumes) to be enjoyed by all SADC member states.*



1<sup>st</sup> Meeting held in Gaborone, Botswana sponsored by PTB where Dr Oswald Chinyamakobvu originates SRLA idea

3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee meeting held in Malawi

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Johannesburg, SA

First workshop held in Johannesburg, SA<sup>1</sup>

6<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Pretoria, SA<sup>1,2</sup>

8<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Pretoria, SA<sup>1</sup>

Method Validation - Microbiology training, Pretoria, SA<sup>1</sup>

9<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Pretoria, SA<sup>1</sup>

10<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in Namibia<sup>1</sup>

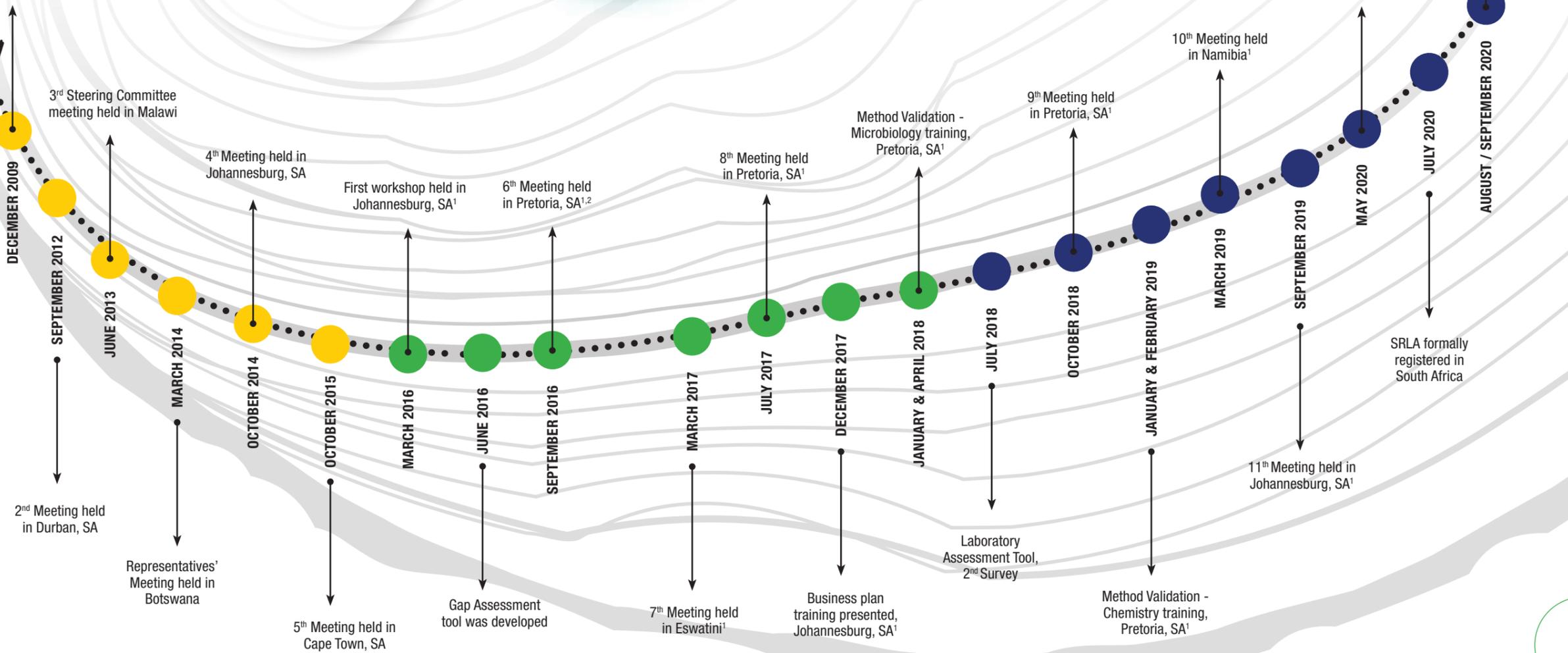
1<sup>st</sup> Online meeting held due to COVID-19 Margaret Ngobeni Achiever Award presented

Finance for Laboratory Managers Course

## Timeline

The SADC Regional Laboratory Association (SRLA) was established over a decade ago in order to support, assist and empower member states by providing them with a regional platform and voice.

Furthermore, the intention is to promote the importance of laboratories in the SADC economy; to strengthen both management and technical capacity through training and interventions; to build and broaden skills; to strengthen the capacity of food and water testing laboratories and to assist members with accreditation in their respective laboratories.



<sup>1</sup> Activities sponsored by UNIDO

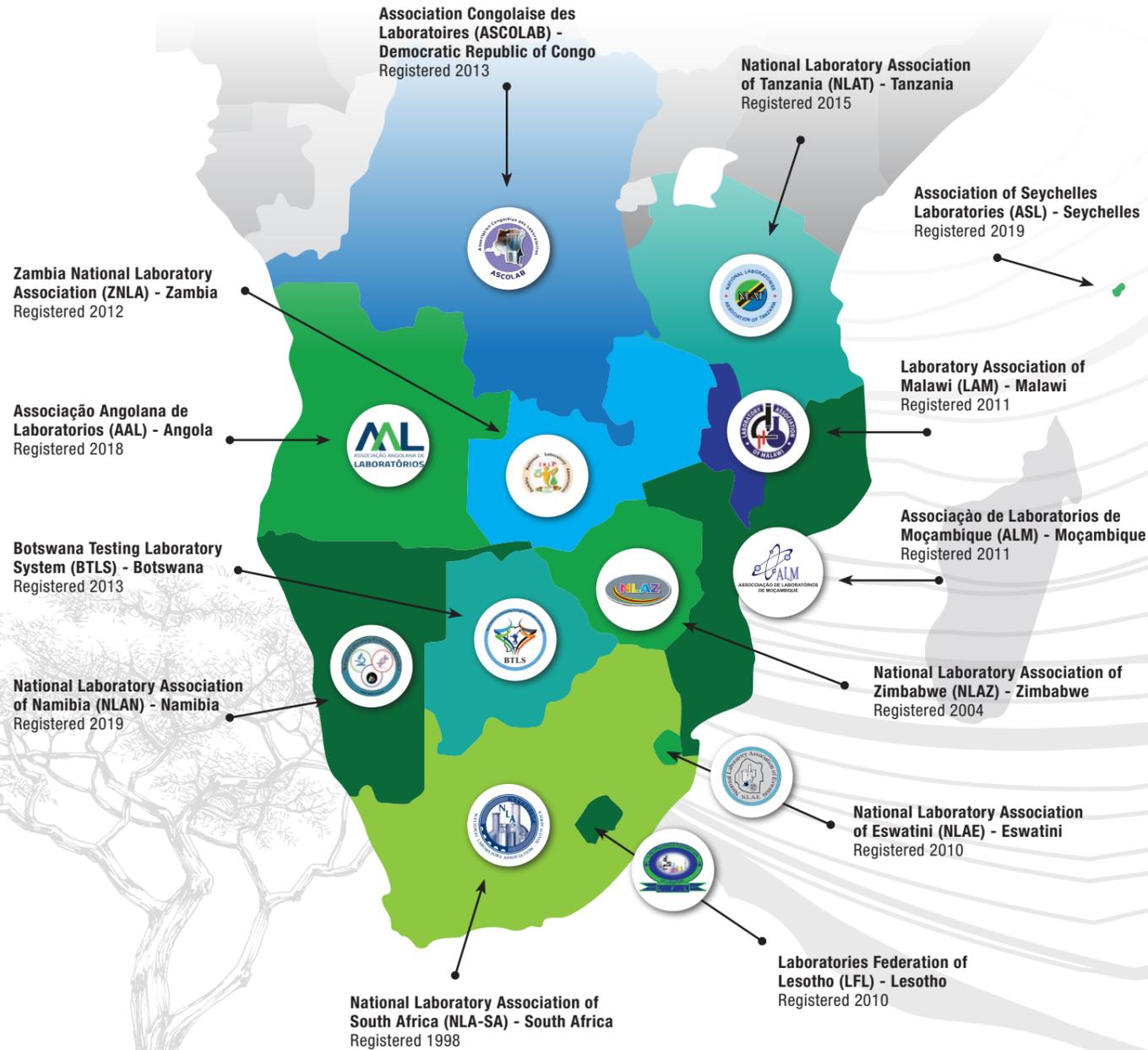
<sup>2</sup> Activities sponsored by PTB

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**Member States**

Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The SRLA represents an overall membership of more than **500 laboratories** within the SADC region.



**International Cooperation Partners**

Just as the Mopane tree's roots anchor this unique Southern African tree, so do the National Laboratory Associations (NLAs) of the SADC Member States which comprise the SRLA. The idea was first conceived by Mr Steve Sidney and Dr Oswald Chinyamakobvu who then took further initiative in forming what is today known as the SRLA.

At the heart of the SRLA is the secretariat, a position currently held by the NLA-SA. With the resources and facilities already in place and having long been involved in driving the establishment of the SRLA, the NLA-SA is well positioned to be the regional association's first secretariat, responsible for the vital administrative functions crucial to its success. These range from co-ordinating meetings and facilitating training, through to liaising and interfacing with International Cooperation Partners.



The SRLA would not have come this far had it not been for our International Cooperation Partners who have generously supported our efforts throughout the years. The funding received from PTB in the early stages of the Association was pivotal in the SRLA's establishment. Furthermore, UNIDO has since become the primary sponsor and has been instrumental in the development and sustainability of the SRLA.

The fruits of our  
labour so far



**Training Workshops (Business Plans)**

- Value Proposition
- Business Model
- Marketing and Sales
- Budgeting and Financial Reporting
- Competitor Analysis

**Capacity building**

- Participation in T & M Conference, participation in annual SADC TBT meetings.
- Collaboration with National Accreditation Focal Points in SADC Member States.
- Role of SRLA at regional and international forum - representing SADC laboratories in regional technical cooperation structures such as SADCA, SADCAS or any other.
- Virtual Gap analysis: Laboratory assessment in preparation for accreditation currently under way.
- Finance for Laboratory Managers Course.

**Building Skills & Capacity**

In June 2016, a Gap Assessment tool was developed where a survey was conducted to evaluate additional needs that may exist within the SADC region in the area of Testing, Calibration and Medical laboratories.

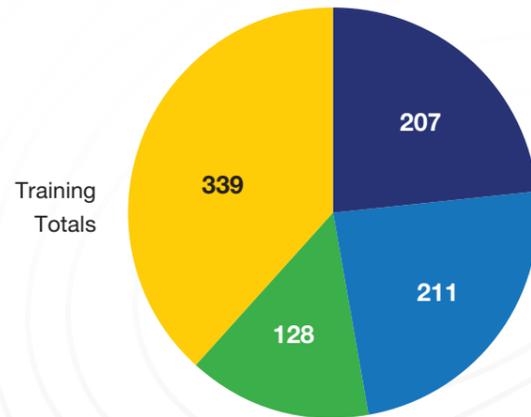
Then, in 2018 and 2019, two training courses were presented in order to upskill members in Method Validation. One for Microbiology laboratory personnel and one for Chemistry laboratory personnel, both sponsored by UNIDO.

Later that year, a second survey was conducted under the Laboratory Assessment tool in order to evaluate the progress that had been made since the first survey was conducted in 2016. Additionally, the survey was also used to identify food and water testing laboratories' readiness for accreditation preparation under ISO 17025.

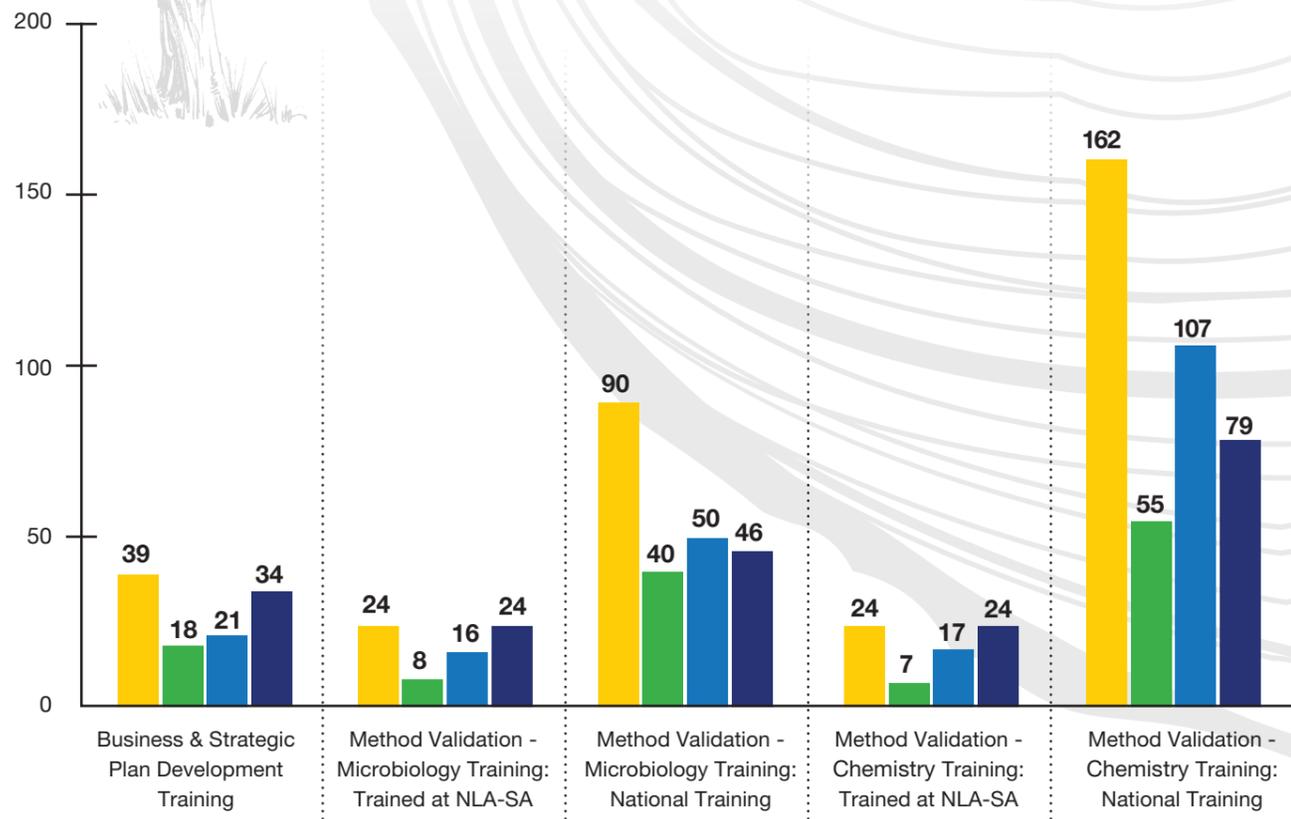


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Building Skills  
& Capacity



- Participants Trained
- Female
- Male
- Organisations



Best Performing SRLA Member

The first SRLA award was made during the first virtual meeting held on 27 May 2020.





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Success Stories

Lesotho:



1

What would you say is the most significant contribution that the SRLA intervention has made to the capacity of the MS-NLA to support its members?

*The training offered to member states through the SRLA intervention has culminated in one of the Lesotho laboratories acquiring accreditation in January 2020.*

Please describe what membership of the SRLA has meant to the MS-NLA?

2

*The membership has contributed hugely to the development of the laboratories in Lesotho towards accreditation.*



Tanzania:



1

*The significant contribution the SRLA intervention has made to support the NLAT is the training of trainers on Method Validation for Chemistry and Microbiology laboratories. This has enabled duplication of trained personnel in the laboratories and addresses the challenges of method validation.*

2

*Membership of SRLA of SADC-TBT and SADC MET is very meaningful to the MS-NLA as the interest of the laboratories can be raised to and heard at those levels.*



Angola:



1

*The Training Project provided by the SRLA has assisted Angolan laboratories prepare for accreditation.*



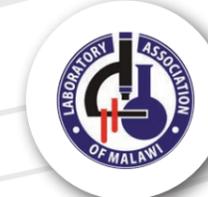
*Some images of training in Validation of Methods in Microbiology.*



2

*The membership has enabled our participation in the conference and meeting.*

Malawi:



1

*The biggest contribution of the SRLA to the NLA, is building capacity for our laboratories in terms of training (microbiology and method validation), building capacity for the management (strategic business planning for members) of the NLA in order to achieve self-sustainability, and exposure of the NLA to international conferences. This has brought the NLA closer to the latest research work, while also providing the opportunity to learn from others.*



2

*The membership of the NLA to the SRLA has served as a platform from which to accelerate our laboratories' efforts to attain accreditation. Currently we have more than five laboratories.*

Namibia:



1

The training of directors on the business plan for NLAs allowed the NLAN to properly position itself with regard to its stakeholders and also internally formulate a sustainability plan. The second significant contribution was the training provided to MS-NLA Experts, which has been well received in Namibia by the NLAN stakeholders. It has contributed to a growing awareness of quality assurance implementation in laboratories as well as at the support services who the laboratories provide services to, such as the food processing quality controllers.

2

Exposure to other MS-NLAs has been of great significance as it has afforded the NLAN the opportunity to network with other MS-NLAs and to learn from the experience of MS-NLAs on overcoming the challenges unique to and common within the SADC environment.



Botswana:



1

Since the NLA, the Botswana Testing Laboratory System (BTLS), was established, it has struggled to achieve its key objectives. However, as a result of the SRLA bringing on board UNIDO as a partner to build capacity among NLAs, the BTLS has been able to develop skills in method validation within the testing laboratories in the country.

2

Being a member of the SRLA, the BTLS benefitted from programmes initiated by the SRLA, such as those on funding and capacity development. The BTLS utilised these programmes to realize some of its objectives, including the development of our Business Plan and training of laboratory personnel on method validation.



Mozambique:



1

The SRLA is of great importance for SADC laboratories, because it will improve knowledge transfer between laboratories and contributes to the standardization of requirements, procedures and policies across regional laboratories.

To reduce trade barriers, it is necessary that all members of SADC laboratories have standardized export and import laboratory requirements accepted by Member States.

2

The growth of human capital is the key to the success of the laboratories in our countries. The SRLA has made a major contribution to the development of laboratory associations' members in the SADC Member States, both at the level of the staff who lead the associations and for employees of national member laboratories.

Several trainings for laboratory technicians were given, including business training and the chemical method validation course.

Continuing training for member laboratories in the SADC region is of vital importance in harmonizing work protocols for the provision of analysis services.



Zambia:



## Eswatini:



**1** To the National Laboratory Association of Eswatini (NLAE), having a business strategy, and initiating programs to help with the association's revenue has been the most significant contribution of the SRLA.

**2** Membership to the SRLA has meant that we have connected with other sister associations, shared our struggles and achievements with them, whilst also learning from their challenges and achievements. (This has enabled us to better position a good business continuity strategy for the association).

It has also seen the association capacitate some of their members to be future trainers and assessors for the association, and also form strong bonds with key local stakeholders like the NAFP. This, in years to come will go a long way in ensuring we remain relevant in the ever changing world of Science.



## Democratic Republic of Congo:



**1** The most significant contribution made by the SRLA was to enable the DRC-NLA, ASCOLAB to support its members in the building of three local experts' capacity. This was achieved through the training of trainers course on method validation and measurement uncertainty in microbiology and chemistry. As a result, 12 people were trained in the national roll-out by two of the experts.

**2** ASCOLAB has learnt from the SRLA intervention to be more organized compared to three years ago by using the Business Plan as a dashboard.



## Zimbabwe:



**1** The SRLA intervention has resulted in strengthening of technical expertise in the areas of management of the association, laboratory techniques and statistical analysis of laboratory data.

**2** NLAZ's membership of the SRLA has meant sharing and exchange of ideas and capacity building in all areas of laboratory activities. Through the chemistry method validation and measurement uncertainty course, seven laboratory practitioners were trained. Through the microbiology method validation course, 12 practitioners were trained.



## Seychelles:

**1** The most significant contribution of the SRLA intervention to the Seychelles SADC Member States Laboratories in general is the provision of a platform for cooperation and mutual assistance, through the sharing of scientific knowledge and experiences.

SRLA input is important in the process of establishing the Seychelles NLA (ASL). Four Seychelles laboratories' personnel in microbiological and chemical test methods validation were trained.

**2** SRLA membership is a great window of opportunity for collaboration, training and technical capacity building in laboratory-related matters (including accreditation).





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MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



UNITED NATIONS  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

[www.sadcrla.org](http://www.sadcrla.org)

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