

BU holds the 9th Botho University International Research Conference (BUIRC 2021)



Botho University provides top-notch learning and teaching experience to students and an environment where research and innovation thrives. This year, the University held another successful Botho University International Research Conference (BUIRC) virtually on the 26th November 2021. The conference theme was **Embracing Covid-19 induced Change: Breakthrough Innovation, creativity, and adaptation.**

In her welcome remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of Botho University, Dr. Sheela Raja Ram acknowledged the adverse effect that Covid-19 has had across all countries in the world and the sad loss of lives. She noted that the world learned to innovate, be creative, and adapt to cope with this pandemic in many ways.



*'I am sure that everyone of us in this conference recognises that we may never entirely go back to the old ways of doing things and a great deal of innovation, creativity and adaptation will stay with us', said **Dr. Sheela Ram.***

Indeed, her speech underscored the importance of the conference theme on Covid-19 Induced change and its related breakthrough innovations, creativity, and adaptation. Many of the speakers echoed the sentiments of Dr. Sheela Ram, including the Keynote speaker, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr.M.A.Rainer Przywara, who is the current Rector of the Baden-Wurttemberg Cooperative State University Heidenheim (DHBW), Germany. In his keynote address, Prof. Przywara presented a summary of his current research on a 'Model-based analysis of the global spread of covid 19'. This insightful model supported the need for increased vaccinations, especially in Africa. It also indicated that African countries have comparably low death rates of the infected due to the young population. However, strategies aimed at achieving herd immunity should be pursued.



The following are the conference subthemes and their respective panel discussants:

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- 1. Dr. Tuelo Joseph Ntwaagae** (Chairperson of the Business Botswana Health Sector & the Medical Practitioners Group of Botswana).
Sub Theme: Challenges, Responses/Solutions and Successes for Health Care, Health Education and Health Research.
 - 2. Dr. Thabo Sacolo** (Swaziland Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre [ESEPARC]).
Sub Theme: Business Model Ecosystems, Enterprise Sustainability and Risk Management in a Dynamic Landscape.
 - 3. Prof. Anders Rosén** (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden).
Sub Theme: Paradigm shift in Education quality, relevance, inclusivity through technology, research and innovation.
 - 4. Mr. Monaheng Maoeng** (Head ICT a.i at the Ministry of Health in Lesotho, IT Manager NACOSEC).
Sub Theme: Rethinking design, development and evaluation of emerging technologies and applied sciences.
 - 5. Dr. Lord Jan Taliana Rodiris** (Dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the Divine Word College of Vigan, Philippines).
Sub Theme: Innovation, Creativity and Adaptation in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure.
- Dr. Oliver Chikuta**, the Dean, Faculty of Hospitality and Sustainable Tourism at Botho University, moderated the panel discussions.

A total of **17 papers** were presented in two parallel sessions, and attendees appreciated the technical and organisational competence of the virtual **BUIRC** organisers. The conference recorded over **1667 hits** and **533 unique participants** from **18 countries** worldwide.

In their respective vote of thanks to both the PVC (Internationalisation & Communication), Mr. Ravi Srinivasan and the PVC (Education and quality), Dr. Ivy Anish thanked all the various conference speakers and the conference delegates. They also acknowledged the excellent organisation that the BUIRC 2021 local organising committee had demonstrated and the leadership of the Library, Teaching and Research Excellence Department. Special thanks also went to the three conference sponsors: Emerald Publishing, Project Management Institute (PMI) and Gabs FM Radio.