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Welcome to the Cambridge-Africa Spring 2024 Newsletter

Cambridge-Africa Day 2024

We are delighted to announce that the Cambridge-Africa Day 2024 will be held on **18th June 2024** at Downing College, Cambridge. This will be an in person event but with online access for those based outside of the UK. We will be opening registrations at the beginning of April with a link to registrations on the [Cambridge-Africa website](#).

This year we have many exciting speakers lined up. The event will have four

sessions - with a focus on health, social sciences, conservation and sustainability and education. The theme will be Cambridge and Africa Working Together. We will also be awarding the Amit Bhasin Prize to an outstanding African scholar in Cambridge. We are thrilled to have Professor Refiloe Masekela and Professor Eric Danquah as the keynote speakers. Professor Masekela, of the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, is the first African woman to hold the prestigious NIHR Global Health Fellowship. Professor Eric Danquah is the Director of the West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) and recipient of the 2022 Africa Food Prize.

Please put the date in your diaries!

New Funding for Collaborative Research on Climate Resilience and Sustainability

In January 2024, the Management Board of the University of Cambridge Mastercard Foundation Programme agreed to the establishment of the Cambridge-Africa Funding Scheme for Research on Climate Resilience and Sustainability to be run by Cambridge-Africa. The scheme aims to develop innovative, integrated and interdisciplinary responses to sustainability and climate challenges, and help shape the African continent's response to these challenges through research, innovation and skills for the next generation. The fund will allocate £7.7 million to research grants between 2024-2030, with two types of awards:

- Research Catalyst Grants of up to £20,000
 - Research Project Grants of up to £100,000
- (applicants for project grants will need to demonstrate evidence of previous successful collaboration and research outcomes).

Each application will need to be a collaborative research project co-created by the African and Cambridge Principal Investigators.

This is advance information so that eligible researchers can start to develop

ideas for proposals for research collaborations prior to the call opening. We will launch this funding call in the coming months and look forward to receiving your application for funding. We thank the Mastercard Foundation for the generous funding of the scheme.

Ugandan Medical Electives Students Coming to Cambridge in 2024



Pictured above are Stella Nakaye and Yvonne Nakibirango who undertook medical electives in Cambridge last year.

We will be welcoming two medical students to Cambridge in June to undertake electives in oncology and haematology. This is part of the collaboration

between the Uganda Cancer Institute, The University of Cambridge and Addenbrookes Hospital.

A few years ago we were delighted to host the Director of the Uganda Cancer Institute, Dr Jackson Orem, on his visit to Cambridge. One of the priority areas he identified was a medical electives programme for Ugandan medical students to inspire them to pursue careers in cancer care. There is a rising burden of cancer in Africa and oncology is not a field that many medical students in Africa consider pursuing. With funding from a charitable Foundation, Cambridge-Africa is again able to sponsor these 2 places on the University of Cambridge medical electives programme. We thank the oncologists and haematologists at Addenbrookes Hospital for supporting these electives and Makerere University, Uganda in selecting the students.

As part of the wider UCI-Cambridge cancer collaboration, aspiring scientists from Uganda have been participating on the CRUK Cambridge Institute Summer Programme., We recently posted a blog by Gideon Nsubuga who attended the last CRUK Cambridge Institute Summer School. Dr Maïke de la Roche was awarded funding from CRUK to enable two places to be reserved for Ugandan students to participate in the Summer school. Gideon spent 8 fruitful weeks in Cambridge and undertook a research project in Maïke's lab.

[**Read Gideon Nsubuga's blog**](#)

Changes to the Cambridge - Africa Team

There have been a number of recent changes to the Cambridge-Africa Team. At the end of December, Dr Tabitha Mwangi was appointed as the Programme Director, Mastercard Foundation Scholars programme at the University of Cambridge. This an exciting role and the programme is enabling many talented African Scholars to undertake Masters courses in Cambridge related to climate resilience and sustainability. We were sorry to say goodbye to Tabitha as a member of the Cambridge-Africa Team but wish her well in her role and we

continue to work closely with her.

Corinna Alberg was appointed to the post of Programme Manager of the Cambridge-Africa Team in January 2024. Corinna had been in this role during 2023, 4 days a week alongside Tabitha who worked with the team one day a week. Corinna has had a long standing role in the Cambridge-Africa Team and between 2016-2021 was the MUJI and THRIVE coordinator.

Sadly, Kess Rowe will be leaving the Team at the end of March. Kess has supported many of the activities of the Cambridge-Africa programme including organising the African Postgraduate Research Symposium held in June 2023 and more recently conducting a survey to evaluate the outcomes from the Cambridge-Africa ALBORADA Research Fund (more on this next time).



Pictured above Cambridge-Africa ALBORADA Research Fund awardees participating in a co-creation workshop for development of a “quality toolkit” intervention for health care conflict affected settings of Cameroon and Nigeria .

Kess Rowe's Work on Sequencing Training in West and

Central Africa



Pictured above researchers visiting WACCBIP for two months to receive intensive bioinformatics training.

Kess joined Cambridge-Africa in September 2022 to work with Professor Ian Goodfellow's group (part of the [ARTIC Network](#)) on a capacity building grant for [SARS-CoV-2 sequencing training](#) in West and Central Africa.

The project focused on strengthening the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens ([WACCBIP](#)) as a hub for Oxford Nanopore sequencing in the region. The Next generation sequencing lab was provided with equipment like a GridION and OpenTrons, and then trained in the ARTIC protocol. Later, both ARTIC and WACCBIP staff trained 21 staff from seven institutes in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria.

While this initially focused on SARS-CoV-2, the priority has shifted to sequencing amplicons for resistance genes in *Plasmodium falciparum*. Currently one researcher from each group is at WACCBIP for 2 months to receive intensive training in bioinformatics. There have been many challenges, like supply chain delays, but groups are soon to receive reagents for malaria sequencing and will provide a great contribution to the knowledge base and expertise in the region.

12 Remarkable African Life Scientists: Passion, Patience and Progress - by Tabitha Mwangi

Book Launch in Kenya

Tabitha Mwangi has recently published a book profiling 12 health researchers from the African continent. The book was launched in St Thomas Girls' Secondary School in Kilifi, Kenya, on the 16th February 2024. About 50 students from 7 secondary schools in Kilifi had received a story from the book and were asked to interpret the story in their own way for the launch. They presented poems, skits, a rap song and engaged wonderfully with the stories.

'I was so moved at how the students engaged with the stories. I was especially taken away by the way students from the Pwani School for the Deaf translated Christian Happi's story. They gave characters in the story a different angle that showed a deep engagement with it. Amina Abubakar's story was a real hit with Muslim girls. It was wonderful to see students so inspired by the stories,' said Tabitha.

About 2,000 copies have been printed with support from the Wellcome Trust and will be distributed to secondary school children in Kenya.



Pictured above pupils from St Thomas Girls' Secondary School, Kilifi, Kenya

Tabitha hopes to raise money through book sales (paperback and kindle book available on [Amazon](#)) and other events so that more books can be printed and distributed free to secondary school children on the African continent.

We also publish blogs on Cambridge-Africa ALBORADA research projects on the [Cambridge-Africa website](#).

Recent blogs include one on researching foreign language acquisition in anglophone and francophone Africa by Dr Hafissatou Kane, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Senegal. Hafissatou examined adult foreign language acquisition where English is the first foreign language learnt as in The Gambia and where English is a second foreign language as in Senegal. Multilingualism is the norm in Africa and Hafissatou and her Cambridge collaborator, Professor Henriette Hendricks, investigated whether English is acquired differently if it is the first or second foreign language for students.



Professor Hafissatou Kane at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Senegal

[Read Hafissatou Kane's blog](#)

Another ALBORADA Research Fund project focused on identifying habitat management options for controlling fall armyworm outbreaks in Nigeria. Fall armyworm is invasive in sub-Saharan Africa, and since 2016 has become a major pest of maize, sorghum, sugarcane, vegetable crops and cotton causing substantial losses in yield. Chemical insecticides are the usual form of control, but these can harm the environment.



The team addressing the farmers on fall armyworm in the Elekuru/Alabata area of Nigeria

[Read Sarah Luke, Edgar Turner and Mobolade Akinbuluma's blog](#)

Upcoming events in Cambridge



Professor Christian Happi

"Genomic Surveillance and Characterisation of Microbial Threats Facilitates Early Detection and Containment of Disease Outbreaks in West Africa"

 14 March 2024

 15:30 pm – 16:30 pm

We are delighted to announce that Prof Christian Happy will be giving a lecture

'Genomic Surveillance and Characterisation of Microbial Threats Facilitates Early Detection and Containment of Disease Outbreaks in West Africa' on **Thursday 14th March 15.30 -16.30** at the Lecture Theatre, Department of Pathology, Tennis Court Road, Cambridge, CB2 1QP

Christian Happi is a Professor of Molecular Biology and Genomics in the Department of Biological Sciences and the Director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases, both at Redeemer's University. He is known for leading the team of scientists that used genomic surveillance to identify a single point of infection from an animal reservoir to a human in the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. His research focus is on infectious diseases, including malaria, Lassa fever, Ebola virus disease, HIV and SARS-CoV-2.

If you are in Cambridge you are invited to attend.



Professor Caroline Ncube will be giving a lecture on '**African perspectives on governing science, technology and innovation to advance the SDGs**' on **18th March 17.30** at King's College, Cambridge, Provost's Drawing Room, King's Parade Cambridge CB2 1ST. Please register using the [eventbrite link](#).

Prof Ncube from the University of Cape Town and the OpenAIR (Open African Innovation Research) network are co-leading the [GOCIA \(Governing Climate Innovation – Africa\)](#) project. GOCIA asks how the South-South and South-North

dissemination of Africa-led climate adaptation innovation can be maximized and how its intra-continental societal benefit can be preserved – aiming to generate knowledge governance insights that serve African climate innovators and evidence that serves African climate policy-makers

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