



ARUA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Insights. Updates. Impact.

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(July – September 2026)





VISION

To strengthen African universities through effective capacity building that comes from working together with a view to increasing significantly their research output.



MISSION

To make African researchers and institutions globally competitive while contributing to the generation of knowledge for socio-economic transformation in Africa.

ARUA MEMBER UNIVERSITIES



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ARUA Quarterly Newsletter | July–September 2026

Welcome to the third edition of the ARUA Quarterly Newsletter. This issue showcases how ARUA is advancing research excellence, developing Africa's next generation of researchers and strengthening collaboration through its growing network of institutions, partnerships and research initiatives.

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SECTION 01 | FEATURE STORY

REIMAGINING GRADUATE TRAINING IN AFRICA

Leveraging research excellence, networks and partnerships to develop Africa's next generation of researchers

1.1. GRADUATE TRAINING: THE FOUNDATION OF AFRICA'S RESEARCH FUTURE

Africa's ability to generate the knowledge, innovation and solutions required for its development will depend substantially on the researchers it is able to train, support and retain. For research-intensive universities, graduate training particularly at doctoral level, is therefore not simply another academic function. It is the foundation upon which future research excellence is built.

This imperative is embedded in the ARUA Strategic Plan 2022–2027, which identifies high-quality, research-

ARUA Graduate Training Ambition

- ✓ **Double** PhD production over the Strategic Plan period
- ✓ **1,000** PhD students supported annually
- ✓ **200** postdocs supported annually
- ✓ **100** ECRs supported annually

led graduate training as essential to developing and retaining the high-level talent Africa requires for research, innovation and technology adaptation. When the strategy was developed in 2022, ARUA member universities were collectively producing about 3,200

PhDs annually. The ambition was to double that rate over the Strategic Plan period, while working towards having as

much as 75% of faculty in ARUA universities holding PhDs. Yet increasing doctoral numbers is only part of the challenge. African universities continue to navigate constraints including limited supervisory capacity, uneven research infrastructure and funding, and differences in doctoral candidates' preparedness. These questions remain prominent in continental conversations about doctoral education, including the recent higher-education stakeholders' consultation convened by PASGR under its PhD Models Project on Research and Transformation of Doctoral Practices and Procedures in African Universities (see Section 3).

The challenge, therefore, extends beyond how many PhDs Africa produces to a more fundamental question:

“What kind of doctoral experience will produce the researchers Africa needs?”

1.2. RETHINKING PHD TRAINING: FROM A DEGREE TO A RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

• The PhD journey

For the traditional PhD training the journey is relatively straightforward:



Yet the demands placed on today's researchers extend far beyond completing a thesis. The African researcher of the future must be able to work across disciplines and institutions; compete for research funding; publish excellent research; communicate beyond academia; engage policymakers and industry; work in international teams; use emerging technologies; translate research into solutions; and eventually mentor the researchers who come after them.

• Beyond the Thesis

ARUA's graduate-training ambitions recognise this broader researcher-development journey. Its Strategic Plan envisages doctoral academies offering training in research methodology, ethics and proposal writing, complemented by international workshops and conferences, industrial attachments, increased high-impact publications and stronger communication of doctoral research to wider audiences.

Elements of this approach are already visible across the ARUA ecosystem. At the Centres of Excellence in Urbanisation and Habitable Cities and Sustainable Food Systems, postgraduate training is complemented by activities such as mentorship sessions, PhD colloquia, researcher mobility, transdisciplinary training and policy-engaged research workshops. Across ARUA's wider capacity-strengthening programmes, researchers are also developing competencies in research translation, intellectual property, science communication, networking and career planning.

What emerges is a different conception of the PhD: not simply an endpoint, but the formative stage of a research-leadership journey.

Yet providing such a rich doctoral experience within every individual university is difficult. Institutions differ in supervisory capacity, infrastructure, disciplinary strengths, funding and international connections.

This raises another question:

“What if a graduate researcher’s training environment did not stop at the boundaries of the university in which they are registered?”

That question lies at the heart of ARUA’s ambition for the African University.

1.3. THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY AS A GRADUATE TRAINING ECOSYSTEM

One of the most ambitious ideas in ARUA’s Strategic Plan is the concept of the African University—an interconnected academic space in which the collective strengths of member universities become more accessible to students and researchers across the network.

Applied to graduate training, this changes what is possible. Rather than expecting every university to replicate every capability, the network enables institutions to share expertise, infrastructure and opportunities, allowing graduate researchers to draw on a much broader research environment.

The Strategic Plan envisages mechanisms to make this possible, including harmonised doctoral admission and supervision standards, joint postgraduate programmes, joint supervision, student and faculty mobility, and degrees involving multiple institutions. It also proposes intra-ARUA and international split-site PhDs, with mentorship drawing on academics beyond a student’s home university.

The African University is therefore not another physical university. It is a shared intellectual and research space in which institutional boundaries become increasingly permeable to students, supervisors, expertise, infrastructure and ideas.

Importantly, ARUA already possesses much of the architecture from which such an ecosystem can be built.

That architecture comes into focus through the Centres of Excellence (CoEs) and Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoREs).

1.4. COES AND CORES AS LIVING LABORATORIES FOR GRADUATE TRAINING

Across its 23 member universities, 13 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) and 22 Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoREs), ARUA has assembled research communities around major African and global challenges—from sustainable food systems,

climate change, renewable energy and water to non-communicable diseases, migration, urbanisation and inequality.

For graduate researchers, this architecture creates opportunities to learn within research communities that extend across disciplines, institutions and countries. The Strategic Plan envisages collaborative PhD programmes anchored in member universities hosting the CoEs, while the CoREs extend this environment through connections between African and European research-intensive universities.

• From Network to Opportunity

For the individual researcher, the value of the ARUA network lies in the opportunities it opens beyond the boundaries of their home institution. Researchers can encounter different disciplinary perspectives, access wider mentorship and expertise, participate in collaborative research and training, and build professional networks across institutions and countries.

These possibilities are already visible across ARUA’s research and capacity-strengthening initiatives.

The Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food Systems illustrates this potential. Hosted by the University of Pretoria, with the Universities of Ghana and Nairobi as spokes, the Centre connects researchers with associated research and policy organisations. As the Africa–Europe CoRE on Sustainable Food Systems, this network extends further to European universities and other food-systems partners. The ECRs who are hosted by the center are already benefitting from the network advantage. In May 2026, they participated in a systems-thinking workshop alongside the World Universities Network engagement hosted by the University of Bristol. This is a good example of how participation in a research network can create opportunities for training, international exposure and scholarly exchange.

The MAV+ Fellowship in Vaccine Research and Capacity Strengthening similarly connected African researchers with research environments across African and European institutions and three CoREs. Alongside technical training, fellows gained wider research exposure and networks while developing outputs including product-development roadmaps, regulatory analyses and policy briefs.

Through the ARUA Early-Career Researcher Fellowship Programme, researchers select CoEs or CoREs aligned with their interests and undertake six-month placements away from their home institutions under the mentorship of experienced researchers, with opportunities in some cases for further mobility within the CoRE network.

Although MAV+ and the ECR Fellowship are not doctoral programmes, they provide practical illustrations of what becomes possible when a university network functions as a shared research and training environment.

The opportunity now is to bring more of these advantages upstream into graduate and doctoral training.

What The African University could enable

- ✓ Multiple supervisors and mentors
- ✓ Mobility and split-site PhD opportunities
- ✓ World-class research infrastructure and facilities
- ✓ Interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research teams
- ✓ International exposure and collaboration
- ✓ Stronger training, networks and career pathways

From Network to Opportunity



1.5. MENTORSHIP, MOBILITY, INTERNATIONALISATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Researcher development does not happen through formal training alone. Mentorship, mobility and exposure to different research environments help researchers build confidence, broaden their perspectives and develop the relationships that sustain research careers.

ARUA's network creates opportunities for researchers to work with mentors beyond their home institutions, participate in research exchanges and mobility, engage with international research communities, and build collaborations that can continue beyond a particular programme or project.

Strategic partnerships extend these opportunities further. Through collaboration with universities, research networks, foundations and other partners, ARUA can connect graduate and early-career researchers to specialist expertise, international training environments, collaborative research opportunities and wider professional networks.

The value of such partnerships therefore goes beyond individual activities or mobility opportunities. At their strongest, they help create an environment in which African researchers can build lasting scholarly relationships, develop international research profiles and participate more fully in global knowledge networks.

The goal is not simply to internationalise the PhD, but to expand the researcher's world.



1.6. FROM PHD TO RESEARCH LEADER: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN RESEARCH PIPELINE

The PhD is an important milestone, but it is only one stage in the development of a researcher. Africa's research future will depend not only on producing more

doctoral graduates, but also on creating pathways that enable them to remain in research, develop independence, build research teams and eventually mentor the next generation.

This requires a more deliberate researcher-development pipeline:



ARUA's evolving capacity-strengthening portfolio increasingly reflects this continuum. Graduate training provides the foundation; postdoctoral and early-career opportunities strengthen research independence and networks; while support at mid-career level can help researchers transition towards research leadership, mentorship and stronger institutional roles.

The importance of this continuum extends beyond

individual careers. Today's doctoral and early-career researchers will become tomorrow's supervisors, mentors and research leaders. Investing in their development therefore strengthens the future capacity of African universities themselves.

• The Bigger Picture: Building the African University

Reimagining graduate training is part of a much larger ambition: building the African University

At the heart of this vision are four mutually reinforcing pillars: enhanced research; graduate training and researcher development; professional research management; and research advocacy and engagement. Together, they provide the foundation for advancing ARUA's six strategic objectives:

strengthening global research excellence, developing globally competitive universities, expanding research capacity, delivering high-quality doctoral training, deepening university–industry connections and advocating greater investment in African research.

The African University: Working Together



The significance of this vision lies in recognising that research excellence, researcher development and institutional capacity are interconnected. Excellent research creates opportunities for training and innovation; strong graduate programmes develop the next generation of researchers; professional research management sustains research activities; and advocacy, partnerships and investment create the

conditions for long-term impact.

Ultimately, the African University is about transforming individual institutional strengths into collective African research capacity—building globally competitive researchers and universities that generate knowledge, drive innovation and contribute to Africa's transformation.

SECTION 02 | RESEARCH CAPACITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with



2.1. ARUA EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Andrew Carnegie
FOUNDATION

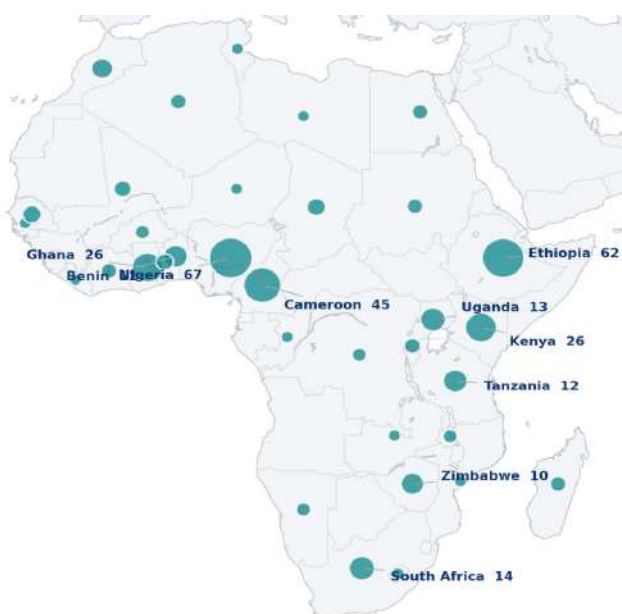
• ARUA ECR Fellowship Expands its Pan-African Reach

Recruitment and placement for the second cohort of the ARUA Early Career Researchers (ECR) Fellowship was successfully concluded in the third quarter of 2026, marking another milestone in ARUA's efforts to strengthen the next generation of African researchers.

The call attracted 352 applications, including 347 from 34 African countries—demonstrating the programme's growing visibility and continental reach. Applications were received across West, East, Central, North and Southern Africa, with particularly strong interest from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana and Kenya.

Five additional applications were received from outside Africa—three from India and one each from Pakistan and Romania.

Following review and placement by Centre Directors and Academic Leads, 16 female ECRs were recruited in the second selection round of the Mastercard Foundation-supported programme. Together with fellows already placed, this brings the Mastercard Foundation-supported Year 2 cohort to 42 fellows—28 female and 15 men. A further six fellows—two female and four male—are supported by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation (previously, Carnegie Corporation of New York). This brings the total of Year 2 cohort to 49 ECRs: 30 female and 19 male.



Circle size represents number of applications • Labels show the 10 highest application totals

ARUA ECR Fellowship applications – Distribution across Africa

Fellows are hosted across ARUA Centres of Excellence (CoEs) and Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoREs), creating opportunities for researchers to work beyond their home institutions, access wider research communities and strengthen cross-country collaboration. First-round fellows will complete their placements between September and October 2026, while the second-round fellows are expected to complete between February and March 2027.

ARUA Cohort 2 ECRs at a Glance



• Research in Motion: ECR Outputs and Engagement

ARUA Early Career Researchers continued to translate their fellowship experience into tangible research outputs during the third quarter of 2026. During the quarter, fellows produced three peer-reviewed journal papers, seven conference papers and one research blog, spanning sustainable food systems, health, urbanisation, water, agriculture, energy and other areas of continental importance.

The published research reflects both the disciplinary breadth of the fellowship and its focus on Africa-relevant challenges. In Sustainable Food Systems, Dr Naomi Chebiwot Chelang'a examined entrepreneurial orientation and the adoption of climate-smart dairy strategies among smallholder farmers in Kenya. Dr Cedrick Izere, working within Non-Communicable Diseases and Multimorbidity, contributed research on genetic factors associated with Type 2 diabetes, while Dr Hervé Nenghem Takam published research exploring the relationship between urbanisation and homicide.

Fellows also took their research into wider scholarly and public conversations. Conference presentations during the quarter addressed topics ranging from water quality, childhood immunisation and food insecurity to agricultural productivity and clean energy, with fellows participating in academic gatherings across Africa. Dr Célestine Laure Djiraro Mangué also contributed a research blog highlighting the role of universi-

Fellows translate research opportunities into publications, knowledge exchange and scholarly engagement.

ties—and specifically the ARUA Centre of Excellence in Urbanisation and Habitable Cities—in responding to Africa’s urbanisation and sustainable development challenges.

Together, these outputs demonstrate an important dimension of the ECR Fellowship: creating opportunities for emerging African researchers not only to conduct research, but also to publish, communicate their findings, engage with peers and contribute to wider scholarly and public conversations.

Q3 Research Outputs at a Glance



Peer-Reviewed Papers

- Dr Naomi Chebiwot Chelang’a**
CoE Sustainable Food Systems | University of Pretoria
Influence of entrepreneurial orientation constructs on the adoption of climate-smart dairy strategies among smallholder farmers in Nyandarua
 Springer Nature | **Read article** → <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44279-026-00696-z>,
- Dr Cedrick Izere**
CoRE Non-Communicable Diseases and Multimorbidity | University of Nairobi
Association between the TP53Arg72Pro (rs1042522) Polymorphism and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: Implications for Molecular Imaging Biomarkers
 Advances in Molecular Imaging | **Read article** → <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=152160>,
- Dr Hervé Nenghem Takam — Year 1 Fellow**
CoE Urbanisation and Habitable Cities | University of Lagos
Urbanization and homicide: evidence from selected countries
 International Journal of Urban Science | **Read article** → <https://doi.org/10.1080/12265934.2026.2723095>

Research Blog

- Dr Célestine Laure Djiraro Mangué**
CoE Urbanisation and Habitable Cities | University of Lagos
University Role in Response to Urbanisation Issues in Africa: Insight of the ARUA Centre of Excellence in Urbanisation and Habitable Cities Actions at UNILAG in Nigeria
 Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development | **Read blog** → <https://chsdunilag.org/university-role-in-response-to-urbanisation-issues-in-africa-insight-of-the-arua-centre-of-excellence-in-urbanisation-and-habitable-cities-actions-at-unilag-in-nigeria/>

Conference Papers

- Dr Saeed Ibn Idris Kofi Yeboah — Year 1 Fellow**
CoE Water | Rhodes University
Cryptosporidium and Escherichia coli (E. coli) concentrations in three southwestern rivers of Ghana
 5th International Conference on African Rivers (ICAR2026) | Rabat, Morocco | 5–9 July 2026
- Dr Thomas Chukwuma Ijere**
CoE Post-Conflict Societies | Addis Ababa University
Challenging the Americanization Thesis: Evidence from Developing Practices in Nigeria’s 2015 Hybrid Electoral Campaigns
 13th Annual Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN 2026) | Abuja, Nigeria | 2–3 September 2026
- Dr Temitope Olanike Olalude**
CoRE Health, Gender and Sexualities | University of Pretoria
Is spousal joint decision-making beneficial for improving childhood immunization in Nigeria? A multilevel analysis using 2024 NDHS data
 Southern African Sexual Health Association Conference (SASHA 2026) | Cape Town, South Africa | 18–20 September 2026

- **Dr Mercy Funke Salami**

CoE Sustainable Food Systems | University of Pretoria

Trust, Conflict, and Inclusive Rural Welfare: Evidence from Farmer-Herder Interactions in Nigeria

Impact of Food Price Volatility on Household Food Insecurity in Burkina Faso and Nigeria: Evidence from the LSMS-HFPS Data

8th African Conference of Agricultural Economists | Nairobi, Kenya | 22–25 September 2026

- **Dr Hervé Nenghem Takam — Year 1 Fellow**

CoE Urbanisation and Habitable Cities | University of Lagos

Does Infrastructure Development Improve Agricultural Productivity in African Economies?

8th African Conference of Agricultural Economists | Nairobi, Kenya | 22–25 September 2026

- **Dr Casiana Lwiwa — Year 1 Fellow**

CoE Materials, Energy and Nanotechnology | University of the Witwatersrand

Waste-to-Energy Conversion: Enhancing Biogas Production from a Mixture of Cassava Peels, Cow Dung, Lemongrass and Sawdust

Africa International Conference on Clean Energy and Energy Storage (AICCEES) 2026 | Port Harcourt, Nigeria | 24–25 September 2026

- **Dr Desta Mulu Gebeyehu**

CoE Energy | Stellenbosch University

Production and Characterization of Innovative Bioethanol Gel Fuel from Liquid Bioethanol with Vinegar and Egg Shell as Alternative Fuel

Africa International Conference on Clean Energy and Energy Storage (AICCEES) 2026 | Port Harcourt, Nigeria | 24–25 September 2026

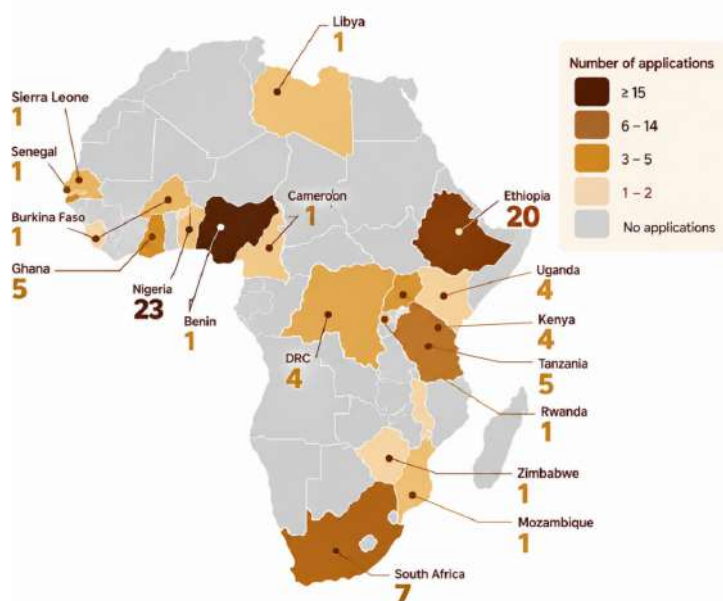
2.2. ARUA MID-CAREER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP DRAWS STRONG INTEREST ACROSS AFRICA AND BEYOND

- **A strong response across Africa**

Building on the launch reported in the Q2 issue of ARUA Quarterly, ARUA has reached an important milestone in the rollout of its Mid-Career Researchers (MCR) Fellowship, supported by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. The fellowship responds to an important gap in Africa's research career pipeline by providing established researchers with protected time to consolidate their research, strengthen collaborations

and advance their research leadership. Q2 introduced the programme as a six-month research-intensive sabbatical for up to ten mid-career researchers from ARUA universities.

The call closed during Q3 with 79 applications, demonstrating strong interest in this new opportunity. Of these, 77 applications came from researchers across 16 African countries, with two additional applications received from outside the continent (USA and Canada). Out of the 77 applicants, 44 (57%) were female and 33 (43%) were male which is a significant departure from the trend for the ECR fellowship.



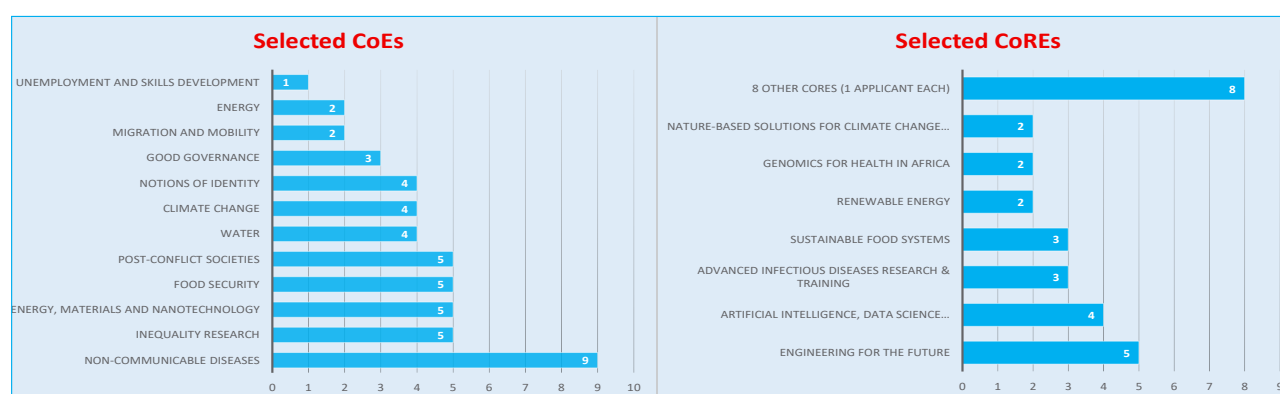
The MCR Applications at a Glance

Applications came from across Africa's major regions, with particularly strong representation from East and West Africa. The two regions together accounted for 84% (65 of the 77) of Africa-based applications.



• Connecting Mid-Career Researchers to ARUA's Research Ecosystem

The geographical spread was matched by considerable diversity in applicants' research interests. Forty-nine



The range of preferences highlights one of the fellowship's core opportunities: enabling mid-career researchers to connect with specialist expertise and research communities beyond their home institutions.

• From Applications to Fellowships

With the application phase complete, attention now turns to selection and placement. Up to ten researchers will be selected for six-month research-intensive sabbaticals hosted across ARUA universities, Centres of Excellence and Africa-Europe Clusters of Research Excellence. Wherever possible, placements will enable researchers to work outside their home institutions and countries, creating opportunities for new collaborations, knowledge exchange and wider research networks.

The fellowship is expected to support researchers to advance high-quality publications, develop collaborative grant proposals, strengthen doctoral supervision and mentorship, and increase the visibility and policy relevance of their research. More fundamentally, the initiative recognises the strategic position of mid-career researchers within Africa's research pipeline. They are not only active researchers themselves; they are increasingly

Today's mid-career researchers are tomorrow's research leaders, mentors and builders of Africa's research future.

applicants identified a preferred ARUA Centre of Excellence (CoE), while 29 selected an Africa-Europe Cluster of Research Excellence (CoRE), demonstrating interest across health, food systems, engineering, artificial intelligence and data science, energy, climate, inequalities and the social sciences.

Among the CoEs, Non-Communicable Diseases attracted the strongest interest with 9 applications, followed by ACEIR, MEN, SFS and post-conflict societies with 5 applications each. Among the CoREs, Engineering for the Future and Artificial Intelligence, Data Science CoREs had the largest number of applicants, 5 and 4 respectively. Other CoREs selected by the MCR include Advanced Infectious Diseases Research & Training (3); Sustainable Food Systems (3); Renewable Energy (2); Genomics for Health in Africa (2) and Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change (2). Eight other CoREs had one applicant each.

becoming supervisors, mentors, research-team leaders and the bridge between emerging researchers and the next generation of African research leadership.

2.3. MAV+ FELLOWSHIP CONCLUDES: FROM PILOT EXPERIENCE TO LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The MAV+ Fellowship Programme has formally concluded, marking the completion of an important phase of Africa-Europe collaboration focused on strengthening research capacity in the manufacturing of, and access to, vaccines, medicines and health technologies.



Through researcher mobility, professional development and cross-institutional exchange, the programme connected emerging and established researchers across Africa and Europe.

The MAV+ Fellowship Journey



With the inaugural fellowship cycle complete, attention is turning to capturing lessons from the MAV+ model and translating the experience into future Africa–Europe research and capacity-strengthening partnerships.

• From Fellowship Experience to Evidence

An important next step is to document the MAV+ experience and lessons in a publishable paper. The proposed publication will capture the programme’s achievements and examine the contribution of the fellowship model to researcher mobility, interdisciplinary learning, institutional collaboration and the development of relationships that can support future research and innovation.

Beyond documenting what was achieved, this provides an opportunity to reflect on what makes research mobility valuable. It is not simply an individual professional development experience, but as a mechanism for connecting researchers, institutions and complementary expertise across Africa and Europe.

• Building on the MAV+ Model

The conclusion of the fellowship also provides an opportunity to consider how lessons from MAV+ can contribute to ARUA’s broader approach to equitable, academic-led Africa–Europe research partnerships.

Central to this approach is the principle that African researchers and institutions are active intellectual partners in defining research questions, generating evidence and shaping solutions. MAV+ Fellowship Programme The MAV+ experience therefore provides a practical case from which to reflect on how mobility, mentoring and institutional collaboration can strengthen individual researchers while also building longer-term research relationships.

ARUA and its partners will explore how the MAV+ experience can be communicated more widely as an example of Africa–Europe cooperation, and how its lessons can inform future investment in researcher mobility, mentoring, capacity strengthening and collaborative knowledge production.

What MAV+ leaves behind is a legacy of expertise, networks, collaboration and future partnerships.

The conclusion of the fellowship is therefore not simply the end of a programme cycle. Its longer-term value will be reflected in the expertise strengthened, relationships established and lessons generated—and in how these assets are carried forward into future research collaborations addressing Africa’s health priorities.

The fellowship may have concluded, but the networks, expertise and partnerships it created provide a foundation for what comes next.

2.4. ARUA–PADOVA PARTNERSHIP MOVES FROM AGREEMENT TO ACTION

The partnership between ARUA and the University of Padova has moved from agreement to implementation, following the close of the first call for applications. Thirteen eligible applications from researchers at universities in Ghana and Kenya have been received and forwarded to the University of Padova for review and selection.

13 APPLICATIONS

- ✓ From eligible researchers at universities in Kenyan and Ghanaian Universities

The response marks an important first step in translating the partnership formalised in June 2026 into tangible opportunities for researchers. With the framework for collaboration now in place, attention is shifting to researcher mobility, joint research and the development of longer-term academic relationships.

• Building Research Connections

The next stage will focus on reviewing the applications and identifying successful candidates. Beyond the individual fellowship experience, the initiative is intended to enable researchers to develop new collaborations, share expertise, access complementary research environments and establish professional relationships that extend beyond the period of exchange.

These connections are particularly relevant in Digital Health and Artificial Intelligence, where the collaboration brings together complementary expertise around priority health areas including cardiovascular health, neuroscience, epidemiology, health systems, infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance and metabolic disorders. The partnership also creates a pathway for developing future collaborative research and pursuing joint funding opportunities, including through Horizon Europe.

• From Individual Opportunity to Institutional Partnership

For ARUA, the significance of the initiative extends beyond individual mobility. It demonstrates how researcher exchange can become a practical entry point for deeper institutional cooperation—connecting researchers and universities around shared research priorities, doctoral training and longer-term knowledge exchange.

As the selection process progresses, the next milestone will be welcoming the successful researchers and translating these new connections into research, training and knowledge-exchange outcomes with lasting value for participating institutions and their wider networks.

Researcher mobility opens the door – sustained collaboration turns that opportunity into lasting institutional partnership.

SECTION 3 | ARUA IN THE MARKETPLACE

Taking the African Research-University Voice into the spaces where ideas, partnerships and policy are shaped

3.1. BRINGING THE AFRICAN RESEARCH-UNIVERSITY VOICE TO THE TABLE

Across national, continental and international platforms, ARUA continued to bring the perspectives of Africa's research-intensive universities into conversations shaping higher education, research, innovation and sustainable development. Q3 engagements provided opportunities to contribute ideas, strengthen partnerships and position African universities as active participants in defining the research and higher-education agendas that affect the continent.

- **Shaping the Future of African Higher Education**

ARUA Secretary General, Prof. John Gyapong, joined higher-education leaders and stakeholders at a workshop hosted by the University of Ghana to reflect on current and emerging issues shaping African universities—from access, quality and governance to research, innovation, graduate employability and the contribution of higher education to national development. The engagement was particularly significant for ARUA, with the ARUA Board Vice Chair and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Prof. Nana Abo Appiah Amfo also participating in the dialogue.

Drawing on ARUA's experience as a network of research-intensive African universities, Prof. Gyapong underscored the importance of placing research and postgraduate education at the centre of higher-education transformation. Building universities capable of responding to Africa's development needs requires sustained investment in research infrastructure, academic staff development, doctoral training, digital systems and institutional leadership.



Prof. Gyapong, Prof. Nana Amfo and other delegates at the workshop.

A further emphasis was the power of collaboration among African universities. Stronger institutional networks can enable universities to pool expertise,

undertake joint research, share resources and build the critical mass required to address complex challenges spanning public health, climate change, food systems, inequality, technology and economic transformation.



- **ARUA at the Continental Table**

ARUA also contributed to platforms shaping the wider continental higher-education and research agenda. Prof. John Gyapong represented the Alliance at the inaugural meeting of the Higher Education and Research Innovation (HERI) Cluster, established

AT THE CONTINENTAL TABLE
Bringing the priorities and perspectives of Africa's research-intensive universities into conversations shaping higher education, research and innovation.

under the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2026–2035. The Cluster creates an important space for stakeholders to contribute to continental conversations on higher education, research and innovation and their role in Africa's development.

ARUA was also represented at the 17th Annual Meeting of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in Africa (ACU-Africa), held virtually from 29–31 July, providing another opportunity to engage university leaders and partners around shared higher-education priorities and institutional collaboration across the continent.

- **Connecting Climate, Health, Research and Policy**

ARUA's engagement during the quarter also extended to interdisciplinary challenges at the interface of research and policy. Prof. John Gyapong represented the Alliance at the launch of the Climate and Health Science and Policy Consortium in Africa, organised by KNUST in Accra. The initiative brought together researchers, policymakers, practitioners and institutional leaders around the interconnected challenges of climate change, public health, environmental sustainability and development.

Discussions highlighted climate-related health risks ranging from heat stress and changing patterns of infectious disease to food and water insecurity, extreme weather events and pressures on health systems. ARUA's contribution emphasised the role of universities

in generating locally grounded evidence, developing solutions and supporting policy responses that strengthen resilience and protect population health.



Prof. Gyapong contributing to the panel discussion.

- ### Africa–Europe Research Partnerships in Action: ALBATROSS

Dr Emmanuel Abbey represented ARUA at the Third General Assembly of the ALBATROSS Project, hosted in Ghana by the University of Ghana and KNUST. The Assembly brought together consortium partners, researchers and other stakeholders to review progress and advance collaboration around climate resilience and nature-based solutions.



Dr Emmanuel Abbey making his presentation at the ALBATROSS Project meeting.

Experiences from the project’s Keta and Kumasi hubs demonstrated how nature-based solutions “living labs” are connecting research with local realities, stakeholder engagement and policy practice. The project’s Research School adds an important capacity-strengthening dimension through doctoral programmes, thematic summer schools, fellowships and other opportunities that strengthen early-career research capacity and interdisciplinary networks.



- ### ARUA Around the Table

A number of additional engagements extended ARUA’s participation in emerging areas of continental and international research collaboration.

AI in Science

ARUA participated in an August preparatory meeting for an AU–EU workshop on Artificial Intelligence in Science, contributing to conversations around AI’s potential for scientific discovery, research productivity and innovation, alongside questions of infrastructure, skills, data access, ethics and responsible governance.

Transformative Research Collaboration

ARUA also contributed to an online consultative meeting and engagement with the Science Cluster for Transformative Research Collaboration, supporting conversations around stronger collaborative research relationships, joint research agendas and interdisciplinary cooperation between African and European institutions.

African research universities must not only participate in the conversations shaping the continent’s future, they must help shape the agenda.

3.2. FROM REGIONAL DIALOGUE TO GLOBAL STAGE: ADVANCING A NEW VISION FOR GRADUATE TRAINING

- ### Rethinking PhD Training in Africa

ARUA contributed to the PASGR PhD Models Project consultative workshop, held in Diani, Kenya, on 27–28 August 2026. The regional dialogue brought together higher-education stakeholders to examine persistent challenges affecting doctoral training—including prolonged completion times, inadequate supervision and funding, academic inbreeding and weak connections between doctoral research and societal challenges.

Representing ARUA were Prof. Jane Ambuko (Director of Research and Training); Prof. Bolanle Oboh (Immediate former ARUA DVC at University of Lagos) and Dr Emmanuel Abbey.

In her contribution to the dialogue, Prof. Ambuko argued for a shift from thinking primarily about individual PhD programmes towards building PhD training ecosystems in which doctoral researchers benefit from strong supervision and mentorship, exposure beyond their home institutions, research networks and opportunities for collaboration.

The discussion resonated strongly with ARUA’s network model. Through its 13 Centres of Excellence and 22 Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence, the Alliance provides platforms through which universities can pool expertise and create opportunities for multidisciplinary research, collaborative doctoral training, PhD supervision, mentorship, mobility and international exposure.



Prof. Jane Ambuko, Prof. Bolante Oboh and Dr Emmanuel Abbey at the PASGR Workshop.

• Taking the Conversation to the Global Stage

At the EAIE 2026 Conference in Glasgow, held from 8–11 September, ARUA joined other African higher-education bodies in engaging the international education community on the future of research, graduate training and institutional partnerships in Africa.

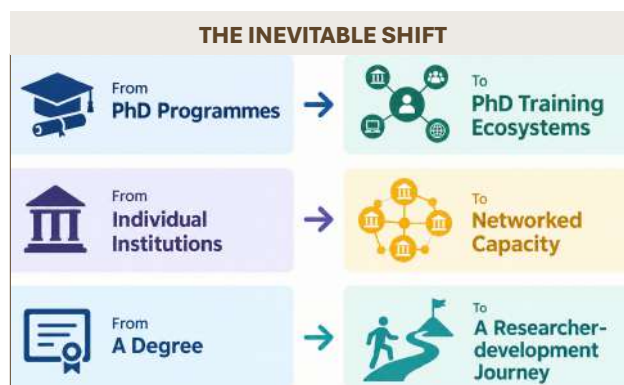
Participating under the auspices of the European Commission-funded Study and Research in Africa (SRiA) initiative, ARUA was represented by Prof. Jane Ambuko and Prof. Nelson Boniface, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Dar es Salaam.

In the presentation “Enhancing Research and Graduate Training in African Universities,” ARUA highlighted persistent constraints affecting research and doctoral education while advancing a simple proposition: no single university has all the capacity it needs—but universities working together can create the scale, expertise and opportunities required for research excellence.



Prof. Nelson Boniface and Prof. Jane Ambuko at the EAIE Conference (SRiA Booth).

At the heart of this proposition is ARUA’s vision of the African University—a connected research and training ecosystem that draws on the complementary strengths of institutions across the continent and their global partners. ARUA’s network of 23 member universities, 13 Centres of Excellence and 22 Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence provides an existing foundation for collaborative training, co-supervision and mentorship, researcher mobility and joint research.



Importantly, the Glasgow engagement also opened conversations with organisations and consortia interested in working with ARUA. Emerging opportunities included collaborative PhD programmes, co-supervision, researcher mobility, postdoctoral opportunities, joint research and innovation, and institutional capacity strengthening.

The PhD is not the destination. The ambition is to develop researchers who are connected, collaborative and equipped to generate knowledge and innovation that delivers impact.

3.3. CONNECTING ARUA’S RESEARCH COMMUNITY

• Launching the CoE-led Webinar Series

ARUA launched its CoE-Led Quarterly Webinar Series on 14 July 2026, creating a new platform to strengthen interaction across its research network. The series also seeks to increase the visibility and impact of research emerging from the Alliance’s Centres of Excellence and Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence.

The inaugural webinar brought together the ARUA Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food Systems (ARUA-SFS) at the University of Pretoria and the African Centre of Excellence for Inequality Research (ACEIR) at the University of Cape Town under the theme “Connecting Inequality Research with Food Systems Transformation in Africa.”

ARUA’s CoE-led Webinar Series is creating a regular space for Centres of Excellence, Clusters of Research Excellence and their research communities to exchange knowledge, connect disciplines and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Opening the series, Prof. Jane Ambuko, ARUA Director of Research and Training, positioned the webinars as more than a platform for showcasing research. With 13 Centres of Excellence and 22 Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence, ARUA has an opportunity to use the series to connect researchers across disciplines, exchange ideas and build relationships that can translate into joint proposals, publications, policy engagement and solutions to shared development challenges.

- **Where Food Systems Meet Inequality**

The inaugural dialogue demonstrated the value of bringing different disciplinary perspectives together. Prof. Frans Swanepoel, representing ARUA-SFS, and Prof. Vimal Ranchhod, representing ACEIR, highlighted

the complementary strengths of the two Centres. Transforming African food systems requires not only advances in production, markets and sustainability, but also a deeper understanding of inequalities in access to resources, diets, opportunities and the benefits of agricultural transformation.



The webinar also placed Early Career Researchers at the centre of the conversation. Six ARUA ECR Fellows showcased research spanning climate-smart aquaculture, carbon capture, soil nutrient mapping, traditional foods, gendered time use and educational inequality—illustrating the breadth of research being undertaken across the network.

The plenary discussion moved the conversation from sharing research towards what could be done together, identifying opportunities for joint proposals, researcher mobility, mentorship and stronger cross-Centre partnerships.

- **ARUA Global Dialogue on Food Loss and Waste: Connecting Research, Partnerships and Action**

event marked the second instalment of ARUA’s CoE-led webinar series, an initiative designed to connect researchers across the ARUA network, showcase research expertise, stimulate knowledge exchange and foster collaboration.

Held under the theme “From Evidence to Action: The Role of Research and Partnerships in Tackling Food Loss and Waste,” the webinar featured a keynote address by Professor Lindiwe Sibanda, a global food systems leader and Champions 12.3 member, complemented by contributions from experts representing research, policy, the private sector and practical innovation. Research perspectives were drawn from ARUA Centres of Excellence whose work intersects with food loss and waste, including Sustainable Food Systems, Climate and Development, and the African Centre of Excellence in Inequality Research (ACEIR).

The dialogue also provided a platform for connecting researchers, including Early-Career Researchers (ECRs), across ARUA’s Centres of Excellence and related Africa–Europe Clusters of Research Excellence (CoREs), strengthening interdisciplinary engagement around a challenge of global significance.

A central takeaway was that research evidence must move beyond academic outputs to inform policy, investment, innovation and practical solutions. The discussions underscored the importance of partnerships that connect knowledge generation with implementation and scalable impact.

For the ARUA research community, the dialogue presented a challenge to translate collective expertise into sustained action through two proposed avenues: ARUA Evidence, to consolidate and communicate research findings that inform food loss and waste reduction, and ARUA Food Loss & Waste (FLW) Reduction Champions, to mobilise researchers as advocates and catalysts for collaborative, evidence-informed solutions.



On 29 September 2026, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) joined the global community in commemorating the United Nations International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFWL) by convening the ARUA Global Dialogue on Food Loss and Waste, hosted by the ARUA Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS). The

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Connecting researchers, strengthening partnerships and translating knowledge into solutions for reducing food loss and waste

3.4. CELEBRATING AND STRENGTHENING THE ARUA NETWORK

ARUA's strength is rooted in its member universities—their research excellence, institutional leadership and commitment to transformation. During Q3, the Alliance celebrated significant achievements across the network while continuing to strengthen institutional connections and opportunities for deeper engagement.

- **Three ARUA Universities Shine at Inaugural AHEFT Prize**

Three ARUA member universities including Addis Ababa University (AAU), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and the University of Rwanda (UR), were named among the five inaugural laureates of the Africa Higher Education for Transformation (AHEFT) Prize from the Mastercard Foundation. The laureates were honoured at the Higher Education Transformation Convening in Accra on 22 September 2026, with each receiving USD 3 million to scale transformative work through initiatives agreed with the respective institutions.

AAU and KNUST were recognised in the Excellence in Research and Innovation category. AAU was celebrated for aligning research with national priorities and connecting scientific knowledge with workforce development, economic opportunity, public services and community wellbeing. KNUST was recognised for its research-to-innovation ecosystem, including the Kumasi Business Incubator, Innovation Centre and Technology Consultancy Centre. The University of Rwanda received the Excellence in Health award, recognising its growing leadership in digital health, vaccinology, biomedical engineering and health-systems innovation.

The achievement provides a strong reflection of the research, innovation and institutional capacity within the ARUA network – three of the five prizes awarded in the inaugural edition went to ARUA member universities.



- **From Membership to Engagement**

During the quarter, a delegation from KNUST also visited the ARUA Secretariat. The visit provided an opportunity for deeper dialogue on how KNUST can engage with and benefit from ARUA's research and capacity-strengthening platforms.

Discussions explored opportunities for KNUST

researchers, institutional leaders and Early Career Researchers to participate more actively in ARUA initiatives, alongside possibilities for interdisciplinary research, stronger research-management systems, collaboration and translating research into policy and development impact.



The KNUST delegation and ARUA Secretariat team.

- **Celebrating Leadership Across the Network**

ARUA was also represented at the investiture of the Vice-Chancellor of KNUST, joining the University community and other stakeholders at an important moment in KNUST's institutional journey.

The occasion provided an opportunity to reaffirm ARUA's relationship with the University and recognise its contribution to research, innovation, technology development and graduate education.



Prof. John Gyapong and Prof. Christian Agyare, Vice-Chancellor of KNUST.

- **ARUA Board Chair's Visit Reinforces Institutional Collaboration**

In September 2026, ARUA Board Chair and Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, Professor Sizwe Mabizela, undertook a two-day working visit to the University of Ghana and the ARUA Secretariat. The visit included a courtesy call on the University of Ghana's Vice-Chancellor and ARUA Board Vice-Chair, Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, and discussions with Secretariat staff on the Alliance's strategic direction and priorities. Professor Mabizela commended the team's commitment and emphasised the importance of strong institutional governance and collaborative implementation in advancing ARUA's strategic goals. The visit reaffirmed the close relationship between the Alliance, its host institution and its leadership.



Prof. Sizwe Mabizela and the ARUA Secretariat Team.

SECTION 04 | CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE SPOTLIGHT

From Evidence to Action: Advancing Africa's Response to Non-Communicable Diseases



Across Africa, non-communicable diseases are placing growing pressure on individuals, families, communities and health systems. The ARUA Centre of Excellence for Non-Communicable Diseases (ARUA CoE-NCD) is bringing together researchers across disciplines and institutions to generate African-led evidence, strengthen research capacity and translate knowledge into better policy, practice and care.

4.1. A PAN-AFRICAN PLATFORM FOR NCD RESEARCH

Africa's non-communicable disease challenge transcends national borders, institutions and disciplines. Responding effectively requires researchers to work across countries and fields of expertise, while building stronger connections between

research, communities, health systems and policy.

Established within the ARUA Centres of Excellence framework in 2019 and hosted by the University of Nairobi, Kenya, the ARUA Centre of Excellence for Non-Communicable Diseases (ACENCD) provides a collaborative platform for doing exactly that—bringing together research-intensive universities and researchers committed to strengthening Africa's capacity to understand, prevent and respond to NCDs.

• Our North Star

At the heart of the Centre is a commitment to generate African-led evidence, strengthen research capacity and ensure that knowledge contributes to better NCD policy, prevention, management and control.



• A Network Built for Collaboration

The Centre's core institutional network operates through a hub-and-spoke model, with the University of Nairobi serving as the hub and connecting Makerere University, the University of Ghana, the University of Ibadan, the University of Lagos and the University of the Witwatersrand.

This structure enables researchers across institutions and countries to share expertise, develop collaborative research programmes, strengthen emerging researchers and create stronger pathways for translating research evidence into policy and practice. The Centre's reach extends beyond the core network through international collaborators and a growing ecosystem of research, policy and implementation partners.



• Research Beyond Disciplinary Boundaries

Across its network, the Centre connects expertise spanning medicine and health sciences, public health, basic sciences, engineering, data science, social sciences, development studies, psychology, humanities, and health systems and policy.

This multidisciplinary foundation reflects a central principle of the Centre's work: NCDs are shaped not only by biological processes, but also by the social, economic, behavioural, environmental and health-system conditions in which people live.

• Aligned with Africa's Development Priorities

The Centre's work is firmly anchored in Africa's wider development agenda. Its focus on NCD prevention and control, research capacity, health systems and evidence-informed policy contributes to Agenda 2063's ambition for healthy and well-nourished citizens, while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being. Its work also intersects with SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals—reflecting the Centre's recognition that tackling NCDs is both a health and development imperative.

• Leadership for Collaborative Research

At the University of Nairobi hub, the Centre is led by Prof. Frederick Bukachi, Centre Director, together

with Dr Anne Kamau, Deputy Director, and Ms Brenda Munene, Centre Manager. The leadership team is supported by a multidisciplinary Steering Committee comprising Prof. Charles Nzioka, Dr Roseanne Njiru and Dr Peter Waweru Mwangi, together with institutional leads and researchers across the partner universities.

Together, they provide the scientific, strategic and operational leadership that connects the institutional hub with a shared African platform for NCD research, capacity strengthening and policy engagement.

ALIGNED FOR IMPACT

- ✓ **AGENDA 2063**
— Healthy & well-nourished citizens
- ✓ **SDG 3** — Good Health & Well-being
- ✓ **SDG 4** — Quality Education
- ✓ **SDG 5** — Gender Equality
- ✓ **SDG 10** — Reduced Inequalities
- ✓ **SDG 17** — Partnerships for the Goals



Prof. Frederick Bukachi,
Centre Director



Dr. Anne Kamau, Deputy
Centre Director



Ms. Brenda Munene,
Centre Manager

4.2. RESEARCH THAT CONNECTS DISCIPLINES

Non-communicable diseases are complex. Their causes and consequences cut across biology, behaviour, environment, livelihoods, health systems and public policy. The Centre therefore approaches NCD research not as a collection of isolated studies, but as a connected research continuum, bringing different disciplines and forms of evidence together to address the challenge from prevention to better decision-making.

Its research portfolio is organised around three interconnected areas – Prevention, Early Detection & Control and Big Data and Evidence for Decision Making:

Prevention

Understanding the drivers of NCDs and identifying opportunities to reduce risk before disease develops. Research in this area considers behavioural, environmental, social and structural determinants of

health and explores interventions that can support healthier populations.

Early Detection and Control

Strengthening approaches for identifying NCDs earlier and improving their management and control. This includes research that connects individuals and communities with health services and examines how health systems can deliver more effective and responsive NCD care.

Big Data and Evidence for Decision-Making

Harnessing data and analytical approaches to better understand NCD patterns, identify emerging risks and strengthen evidence for policy and practice. This area helps connect research evidence with the decisions that shape NCD prevention, management and control.

The three areas are not separate silos. Together, they allow researchers to examine NCDs across the continuum—from understanding and reducing risk, through early detection and disease management, to generating the evidence needed for stronger policies and health-system responses.

• Research Through Multiple Lenses

Across these research areas, the Centre applies cross-cutting lenses that keep people, communities and systems at the heart of NCD research. Health outcomes are shaped not only by biological mechanisms, but also by where and how people live, the resources and services available to them, and the policies and systems that influence access to prevention and care.

These perspectives help ensure that research goes beyond understanding disease to ask equally important questions: Who is most affected? What social and structural conditions shape risk and access to care? How can communities participate in solutions? And how can research evidence reach the people and institutions positioned to act on it?



• Connecting Research through Knowledge Exchange

Research has greatest value when it is shared, debated and built upon. Alongside its research programmes, the Centre contributes to scientific knowledge through peer-reviewed publications, conferences, workshops and webinars. Its researchers have published across areas including NCD prevention and control, multimorbidity, models of care, cardiometabolic health, patient-centred care, the social dimensions of NCDs and emerging applications of data and technology.



NCD team at the 2025 ARUA Biennial International Conference at Makerere University, Uganda.

The Centre also uses scientific forums to connect researchers and engage wider research and policy communities. These have included ARUA and Africa-Europe CoRE conferences, Kenya's National NCD Conference, the Palliative Care Conference, and webinars addressing caregiving and NCDs, health leadership, the economics of care and related social-policy issues.



NCD team at the 1st National NCD Conference, November 2025.

4.3. PARTNERSHIPS THAT MULTIPLY IMPACT

The scale and complexity of Africa's NCD challenge demand more than institutions working in isolation. For ACENCD, partnership is both a way of working and a pathway to impact—connecting universities, researchers, communities, health systems, policymakers, funders and implementation partners around shared NCD challenges.

- **Building a Pan-African and International Research Network**

At the heart of this ecosystem is the Centre's Pan-African Hub-and-Spoke network introduced earlier in this Spotlight. Beyond this core network, ACENCD has developed relationships with a wider group of African universities and research institutions, including Kampala International University, KEMRI, AMREF International University, Pwani University, Technical University of Kenya, University of Cape Coast and University of Dar es Salaam. International academic collaboration includes the University of Glasgow and University of Leicester.

These institutional relationships are reinforced through the wider ARUA ecosystem, including the ARUA Centres of Excellence network, ARUA Early Career Researcher network and the Africa-Europe Cluster of Research Excellence in NCDs and Multimorbidity. The Centre also participates in wider Africa-Europe, NCD, cardiovascular,

global health and health-systems research networks, creating additional pathways for research collaboration and knowledge exchange.

- **Connecting Research with Policy, Practice and Communities**



Team visit to Murang'a County Food Farmacy in May 2026.

The Centre's partnerships deliberately extend beyond academia. In Kenya, it engages the Ministry of Health (the Division of Non-Communicable Diseases); County governments and departments of health, the Council of Governors and national and county-level policymakers and health practitioners. Civil society and community relationships include NCD Alliance Kenya, Light A Candle Counselling Services (LACCS), caregiver and community organisations, community health actors and health professionals. The Centre also works with health-service providers and other implementation partners, as well as private-sector and digital-health actors relevant to NCD prevention, care and innovation.

These relationships help ensure that research is informed by real-world needs while creating pathways for communities, practitioners and decision-makers to participate in the research process and ultimately use the evidence generated.

- **Partnerships that Extend Reach and Capacity**

Regional and international partnerships have enabled ACENCD to broaden both the scale and ambition of its work. UK Research and Innovation's Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI GCRF) supported the establishment and capacity strengthening of the Centre, while the Scaling Care Innovations in Africa initiative, co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada, supports the Centre's work on unpaid NCD caregiving.

The Centre's work on continuity of cardiometabolic care in crisis-affected settings further extends this partnership landscape through collaboration with the Novo Nordisk Foundation, Danish Red Cross, Kenya Red Cross Society, Ethiopian Red Cross Society and Somali Red Crescent Society, alongside health authorities and other partners in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Together, these relationships create an ecosystem in which

PARTNERSHIP TURNS A RESEARCH NETWORK INTO AN IMPACT ECOSYSTEM

- ✓ Connecting universities, communities, policymakers and global partners to move NCD research from knowledge generation towards action.

different partners contribute complementary strengths: universities generate and connect knowledge; communities ground research in lived realities; policymakers and health systems create pathways for evidence to inform practice; and regional and global partners extend expertise, resources and opportunities for collaboration.

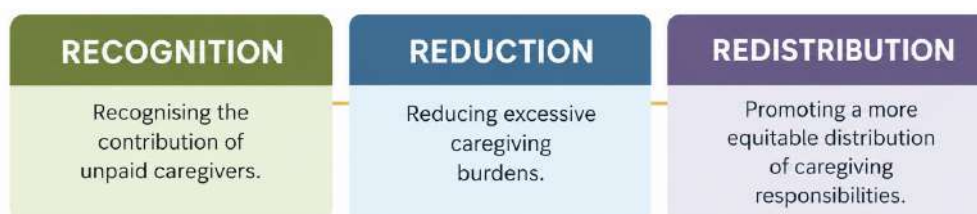
The NCD Partnership Ecosystem



The value of these partnerships is ultimately demonstrated through what they make possible. Across its research portfolio, the Centre is showing how collaborative research can respond to real-world NCD challenges and create pathways towards policy and practice.

4.4. FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

For ARUA CoE-NCD, generating evidence is only part of the research journey. The Centre is increasingly focused on ensuring that research reaches the communities, practitioners, health systems and policymakers who can use it. Two flagship initiatives at the Centre illustrate this approach best.



• From Research Evidence to Policy Engagement

The emerging evidence is also creating a pathway into policy. Through engagement with the Kenya Ministry of Health, county governments and other stakeholders—including participation in a Ministry of Health Technical Working Group—research findings have contributed to national discussions on how caregivers of people living with NCDs can be better recognised and supported.

Flagship 1 | Caring for Caregivers

Making unpaid NCD care visible in policy and practice

Behind the growing burden of NCDs is another, often less visible reality: the contribution of unpaid family and community caregivers who provide essential day-to-day physical, emotional and psychosocial support to people living with chronic conditions. Much of this responsibility falls on women and girls, often with significant social, economic and personal consequences.

Through Caring for Caregivers, implemented under the Scaling Care Innovations in Africa initiative and co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada, ARUA CoE-NCD is generating evidence on unpaid NCD caregiving and using it to strengthen engagement with communities, health systems and policymakers.



Launch of the IDRC funded Caring for Caregivers Project.

Research and stakeholder engagement in Murang'a, Makueni and Vihiga counties have brought together caregivers, community health actors, health professionals, civil society, county governments and national policymakers, helping illuminate caregivers' lived experiences and the social, financial and health-system challenges surrounding unpaid care.

Importantly, the project applies a gender-transformative approach built around the 3Rs: Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution.

Importantly, the Centre's reports that while the initiative initially envisaged development of a national policy, the process has evolved under Ministry of Health leadership towards the development of National Guidelines for Caregivers of Persons Living with NCDs.

FROM INVISIBLE CARE TO POLICY ATTENTION

- ✓ Making unpaid caregiving visible and creating pathways for caregivers' needs and experiences to inform health systems and policy.

Flagship 2 | Continuity of Cardiometabolic Care in Crisis

Building resilient NCD care when health systems are under pressure

People living with diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease require continuous access to screening, treatment, medication and follow-up. Yet conflict, displacement and other crises can disrupt these essential services, exposing people living with chronic conditions to additional risks.

The Centre's Continuity of Cardiometabolic Diseases Care in Crisis (CiC II) initiative extends its research into these particularly challenging settings. The four-year regional programme covers Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, with ACENCD responsible for the research component. The initiative is supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation and collaboration with the Danish Red Cross and Red Cross/Red Crescent partners in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

This work broadens the Centre's research agenda beyond conventional health-service settings to ask an increasingly important question: how can essential NCD care continue when health systems and communities are under severe pressure?

CARE CANNOT STOP WHEN CRISIS BEGINS

- ✓ Building evidence for resilient health systems that can sustain cardiometabolic care before, during and after emergencies

4.5. BUILDING AFRICA'S NCD RESEARCH CAPACITY

Sustaining Africa's response to non-communicable diseases requires more than strong research projects. It requires a critical mass of African researchers with the skills, networks and opportunities to lead high-quality, contextually relevant research.

Capacity strengthening has therefore been embedded in ACENCD from its inception. The Centre's initial three-year programme, supported through the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), combined collaborative NCD research with strengthening research capacity across participating African universities, developing young researchers and supporting knowledge generation and dissemination.

Today, that foundation continues through mentorship, experiential learning, fellowships, collaborative research and small research grants, creating opportunities for emerging researchers to develop their skills, expand their networks and progressively build independent research careers.

• Mentorship Beyond the Classroom

The Centre's approach to mentorship places emerging researchers in real research environments, where they work alongside established researchers and gain experience in proposal and grant development,

publications, scientific communication, career planning and policy engagement.



Ms Tabitha Avoga

learning at ACENCD at the University of Nairobi.

Her work on climate adaptation, community institutions, agricultural innovation and rural livelihoods brings a development-studies perspective into the Centre's research environment while strengthening connections between the Universities of Ghana and Nairobi.

• Nurturing the Next Generation through the ARUA ECR Fellowship

The ARUA Early-Career Researcher Fellowship Programme provides another important pathway through which ACENCD hosts and mentors emerging African researchers. Fellows benefit from structured mentorship, research and career development, interdisciplinary collaboration, networking and opportunities to communicate and present their research.

Across the first two fellowship cohorts, the Centre has hosted or selected five ECR Fellows from four African countries (Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda and Ethiopia).



Dr Mujittapha Umar Sirajo, Nigeria

Fellowship Research Topic: Transdisciplinary Approaches to Nutritional and mHealth Strategies for Preventing Neurodegenerative NCDs in Sub-Saharan Africa



Dr Onyekachi Ibe Ewa, Nigeria

Fellowship Research Topic: Tumor associated macrophages and ferritin as potential therapeutic targets in breast cancer management



Dr Harouna Diete Souleymane, Niger

Fellowship Research Topic: The use of local African plants in phytomedicines and functional foods to combat public health issues



Dr Cedrick Izere, Rwanda

Fellowship Research Topic: Strengthening Evidence for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Management in Rwanda: A Secondary Data Analysis and Policy-Oriented Research Approach.



Dr. Eden Tefara, Ethiopia.

Fellowship Research Topic: Reducing Maternal Near Miss through Interventions Targeting Hypertensive-Disorders of Pregnancy

- **From Fellowships to Research Opportunities - ARUA Mini-Grant Programme**

Capacity strengthening also extends beyond fellowship placements. Through collaborative research and mini-grants, the Centre is enabling emerging researchers to test ideas, generate evidence and build research leadership.

Examples include a mini-grant led by Dr Habil Otanga, University of Nairobi, examining the use and efficacy of peer support and social networking in diabetes

management in Kenya and Uganda, and another led by Dr Adebolajo Adeyemo, University of Ibadan, validating a low-cost auditory screening protocol for stroke survivors.

Together, these different pathways (mentorship, experiential learning, fellowships and research opportunities) help emerging researchers move beyond participation in individual projects towards developing independent research identities and sustained collaborative networks.



Creating opportunities for African researchers to learn, collaborate and lead.

- **ECR Spotlight | Dr Onyekachi Ewa Ibe**

From Research Questions to Research Leadership

For Dr Onyekachi Ewa Ibe, the ARUA Early-Career Research Fellowship has been more than a research placement—it has provided a platform to sharpen her research direction and strengthen her journey towards becoming an independent African research leader.

A Lecturer in Medical Laboratory Science at Ebonyi State University, Nigeria, Dr Ibe's research spans cancer biology, inflammation, haematological biomarkers, tumour microenvironment and women's health, with a particular interest in developing affordable, context-relevant diagnostic approaches for African populations.

Through the ARUA/Mastercard Foundation Early-Career Research Fellowship, she joined the ARUA CoE-NCD at the University of Nairobi, where she is mentored by Prof. Fred Bukachi and Dr Peter Waweru. Her fellowship research investigates the relationship between tumour-associated macrophages and ferritin in breast cancer, exploring how immune-cell populations and iron-regulation pathways may contribute to disease progression and metastasis.

The fellowship has strengthened her skills in advanced cancer research, scientific communication, networking and interdisciplinary collaboration, while helping her articulate a clear career roadmap towards independent research leadership.

At the ECR Regional Fellowship Workshop for cohort 1, she was among the top three ECRs recognised for clearly articulating her career path. Her roadmap prioritises building an independent research programme, strengthening multidisciplinary collaborations and mentoring emerging researchers, particularly women in STEM.



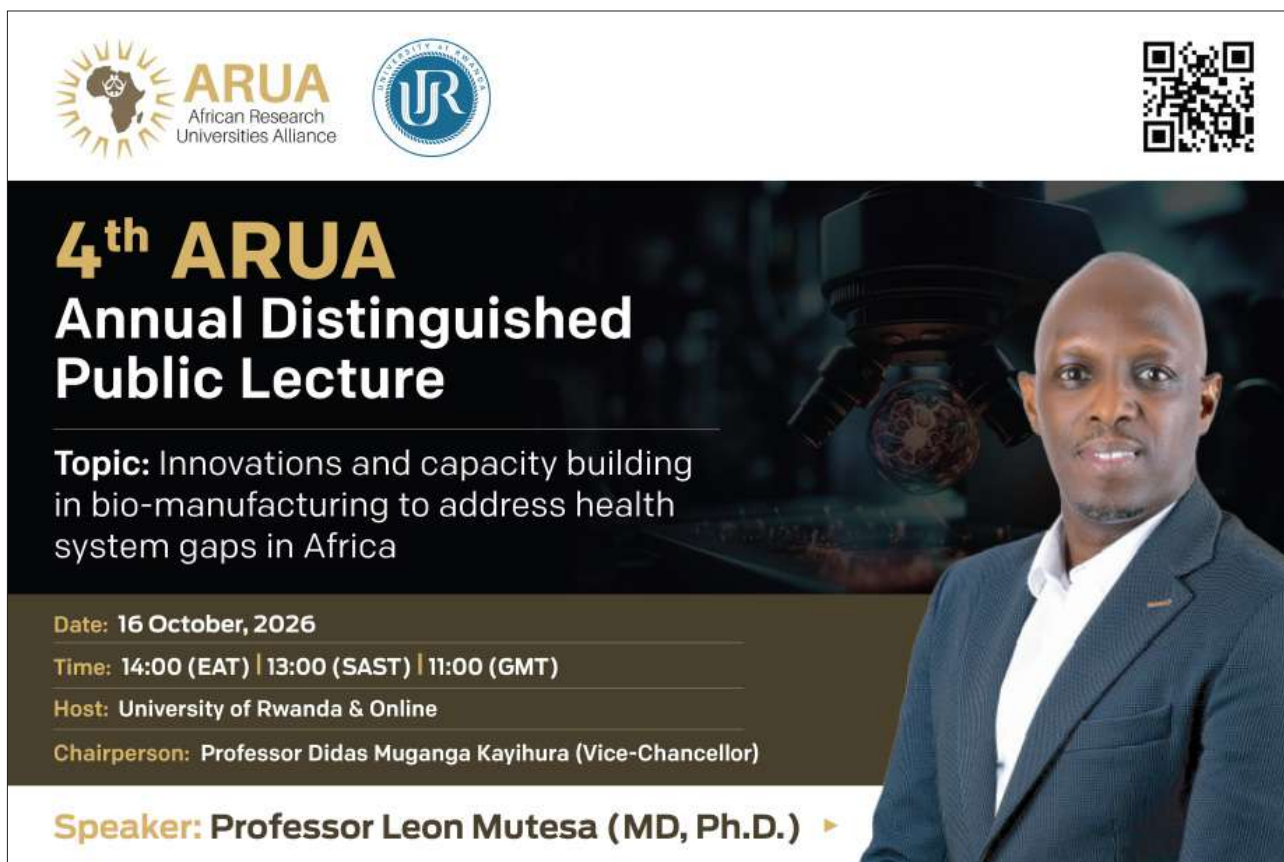
Dr. Ibe with Career Roadmap.

CONTACT US

<https://arua-ncd.org/> acencd@uonbi.ac.ke **ARUA CoE NCDs**

ARUA NOTICEBOARD

1. ARUA Public Lecture 2026



The poster for the 4th ARUA Annual Distinguished Public Lecture features the ARUA logo (African Research Universities Alliance) and the University of Rwanda logo. A QR code is in the top right. The background shows a man in a suit (Professor Leon Mutesa) and a microscope. The text is as follows:

4th ARUA Annual Distinguished Public Lecture

Topic: Innovations and capacity building in bio-manufacturing to address health system gaps in Africa

Date: 16 October, 2026

Time: 14:00 (EAT) | 13:00 (SAST) | 11:00 (GMT)

Host: University of Rwanda & Online

Chairperson: Professor Didas Muganga Kayihura (Vice-Chancellor)

Speaker: Professor Leon Mutesa (MD, Ph.D.) ▶

Register for the webinar: <https://bit.ly/4xSYKCN>

2. ARUA Webinar (Leveraging Generative AI for Accelerated Research & Discovery)



The poster for the ARUA Webinar (Leveraging Generative AI for Accelerated Research & Discovery) features the ARUA logo and MinoHealth AI Labs logo. The text is as follows:

RESEARCH WORKSHOP

Leveraging Generative AI for Accelerated Research & Discovery

An Interactive Workshop with Moremi Co-Researcher

Harnessing AI for Responsible, Efficient and High-Impact Research

Thursday, 5th November 2026
VIRTUAL • ZOOM WEBINAR

TIME: 11:00 GMT
13:00 SAST | 14:00 EAT

DURATION: 2 Hours

REGISTER: <https://luma.com/s9ohfwc0>

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ✓ Hands-on demos of Moremi Co-Researcher
- ✓ AI workflows for literature review & analysis
- ✓ Responsible and ethical AI research practice
- ✓ Live Q&A with the MinoHealth AI Labs team

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Researchers, academics, postgraduate students and research support professionals.

Scan to register

#ARUAxMinoAI | Leveraging Generative AI for Accelerated Research and Discovery

Register: luma.com/s9ohfwc0

3. Regional Workshop for ARUA Early Career Researchers

Theme: Nurturing the Competitive, Collaborative and Impactful African Researcher

Date: 19th and 20th November 2026

Venue: LECIAD building, University of Ghana



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