

## **New research announced with leading African Universities – 9 July 2020 (10:00 UK GMT)**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is delighted to announce the outcomes from its African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) partnership research programme to tackle global challenges such as disease, poverty, climate change, fragile states and food insecurity.

The awards being made through this research programme are a key part of UKRI's three-year partnership with ARUA, developed through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), to strengthen pan Africa-UK collaborations across all disciplines, mobilise excellence and build robust research ecosystems across Africa.

**Professor Andrew Thompson, UKRI's International Champion**, said: "To sustainably address global challenges, we need a genuinely global response and that means forging stronger partnerships, that are fair, equitable and fully reciprocal between researchers in the northern and southern hemispheres. This exciting research programme with ARUA is supporting research that transcends national boundaries and will produce different ways of thinking about challenges and different solutions to tackling them."

This ARUA-UKRI research programme has two strands: capacity building to support the 13 ARUA Centres of Excellence and research excellence to support four multidisciplinary and multinational projects addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The awards for the Centres of Excellence will enable them to develop into expert hubs where leading researchers, alongside a new generation of researchers, collaborate and undertake world-class research across priority themes including energy, water conservation, urbanisation and food security (see full list below). While the four joint research excellence projects will help forge new relationships and synergies between the ARUA Centres of Excellence and UK-based GCRF researchers, who together will build on existing activities to develop new proposals and projects aligned to the SDGs. Both aspects of the research programme will help strengthen and expand Africa's crucial research base.

**Professor Ernest Aryeetey, ARUA Secretary-General** said: "I would love to see a world where discussions about global health are influenced by work done in Africa, where discussions about climate change are influenced by African researchers and where African Governments and the international academic community listen to African researchers, ARUA's partnership with UKRI and the new research as part of this, is an important stepping stone to realising this vision."

The 13 **ARUA Centres of Excellence** being supported through capacity building grants are:

Climate Change – University of Cape Town, South Africa

Energy – Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Food Security – University of Pretoria, South Africa

Good Governance – Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Materials, Energy and Nanotechnology – University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Migration and Mobility, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Non Communicable Diseases – University of Nairobi, Kenya

Notions of Identity – Makerere University, Uganda

Post-Conflict Society - Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Poverty and Inequality – University of Cape Town, South Africa

Unemployment and Skills Development – University of Lagos, Nigeria

Urbanisation and Habitable Cities – University of Lagos, Nigeria

Water – Rhodes University, South Africa

The four cross-cutting **research excellence awards** are:

**Migration, Urbanisation and Conflict in Africa (MUCA), Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia  
Dr Fana Erda**

Despite the widespread consensus that urban sustainability and inclusion are now crucial for future stability and wellbeing in most African countries, the ways in which migration feeds into current urban challenges is poorly understood.

MUCA will address this gap, providing an evidence base to facilitate a better understanding of the conditions under which migration combines with other factors to worsen urban conflict - or indeed to alleviate it. This project will involve nine cities covering three very different kinds of migration-affected cities spread across Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda

**Transforming Social Inequalities through Inclusive Climate Action (TSITICA), University of Cape Town, South Africa, Professor Mark New and Professor Murray Leibbrandt**

Africa has some of the highest global poverty rates, levels of inequality, climate vulnerabilities, and shortfalls in energy access.

This project will explore how African societies can design and implement climate action to improve sustainable livelihoods, and reduce both poverty and inequality, working across Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and the UK. This project will involve close collaboration with leaders in policy and practice, and also with communities, so that their needs and priorities inform our research, and so that our research in turn shifts their thinking and actions.

**Unlocking resilient benefits from African water resources, Rhodes University, South Africa, Professor Carolyn Palmer**

Water is fundamental to thriving human life and society, and people are inextricably part of the natural environment but with growing demands on water across Africa, and increasing constraints on supply there is an urgent need for new research, methodologies and practice in order to meet the SDGs and realise the Africa Water Vision 2025.

This collaboration will do just that, bringing together researchers from South Africa, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and the UK, to form an African water research cohort, addressing water-related SDGs, with community engagement to catalyse change.

**Food Systems Research Network for Africa (FSNet-Africa), University of Pretoria, South Africa, Professor Frans Swanepoel**

Africa is faced with the challenges of poverty, malnutrition, inequality and unemployment and in many African countries, large proportions of the population rely on agriculture not only for their food – but also for their livelihoods. A transformed agricultural and food system is essential to address these challenges. This project will strengthen interdisciplinary food systems research and

the translation of this evidence into implementable interventions in support of the SDG goals related to food systems across Africa. Through a structured fellowship, early career researchers will work with mentors in Africa and the UK to co-design research that yields climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive, poverty-reducing solutions through engaging policymakers, private sector role players and grassroots level organisations in six African countries – Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.

### **About ARUA**

The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) is a network of universities from different countries and different historical backgrounds, but with a common vision. ARUA aims to enhance research and graduate training in member universities through a number of channels, including the setting up of Centres of Excellence (CoEs) to be hosted by member universities.

<https://arua.org.za/>

### **About GCRF**

GCRF is a £1.5 billion fund supporting cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses global issues such as: the sustainability of natural resources, flooding and famine resulting from climate change and rapid urbanisation. It harnesses the UK's world-leading research base and expertise from within developing countries enabling challenge-led interdisciplinary research, strengthening capability, innovation and knowledge exchange, and providing an agile response to emergencies. The fund is delivered through nine UK partners.