



# CARTA News

## Research to Impact

Equipping African Researchers and Institutions to Influence Policy, Practice, and Society

## Welcome Note



**By Angeline Wairegi**  
CARTA Program Coordinator, Training

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 22nd issue of the CARTA Newsletter, covering the period January - June 2026. Centered on the theme **Research to Impact**, this edition celebrates the achievements of our **fellows** and **partner institutions** as they ensure research responds to Africa's pressing challenges. It also highlights the program's initiatives, capacity-strengthening efforts, and collaborative partnerships that enable research to inform policy, strengthen practice, and deliver meaningful impact across the continent.

This focus is particularly timely. As shifting geopolitical dynamics reshape global research and development financing, African institutions are strengthening domestic research and knowledge systems. These efforts align with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2034), which envision Africa as a knowledge-based, innovation-driven continent.

Enhancing Africa's research capacity is central to this vision. By fostering locally led, evidence-informed solutions, researchers across the continent are contributing to stronger public health systems, higher education, and sustainable development. Across the CARTA network, partner institutions are strengthening their policies and institutional practices, drawing on CARTA's capacity-strengthening model to create environments where high-impact research can flourish. At the same time, CARTA fellows are influencing health

policy, service delivery, and decision-making at national and regional levels. These efforts cultivate an ecosystem that supports the production of high-impact research.

The stories featured in this issue illustrate how research is translated into meaningful impact. From CARTA initiatives that strengthen evidence uptake and societal engagement to fellows and partner institutions whose work influences policy, drives innovation, strengthens institutions, and improves the lives of communities across Africa, our contributors demonstrate that research can be a powerful catalyst for change. Together, these stories remind us that capacity strengthening is far more than training; it is a long-term investment in African research leadership, institutional excellence, and sustainable societal transformation.

As we celebrate these achievements, I extend my sincere gratitude to our fellows, partners, funders, and the entire CARTA network. Your commitment, collaboration, and shared vision have shaped CARTA into the vibrant community it is today. The progress reflected in these pages is a testament to what we have accomplished together, and it would not have been possible without your unwavering support and dedication.

**Thank you.**

# Building Pathways for Research to Real-World Impact

By Rita Karoki

CARTA Program Officer

Every year, African researchers generate evidence with the potential to improve lives. Their work informs responses to infectious diseases, strengthens health systems, improves maternal and child health, advances gender equity, and helps universities prepare the next generation of scholars. Yet, too often this evidence remains confined to academic journals and conference proceedings, never reaching the policymakers, practitioners, and communities who could use it to shape decisions and improve lives.

The challenge is rarely the quality of the research. More often, it is the absence of the systems, skills, and opportunities needed to connect evidence with action.

CARTA was established on a simple but ambitious idea: strengthening research in Africa requires more than supporting individual scholars. It requires investing simultaneously in researchers, institutions, and the broader research ecosystem so that knowledge not only advances science but also informs policy, strengthens institutions, and responds to society's needs. This philosophy underpins every stage of the CARTA model. Rather than treating research uptake as something that happens after a study is complete, the program embeds engagement, communication, leadership, and collaboration throughout the research journey.

## Developing Researchers Who Think Beyond the Research

For many doctoral students, success is defined by completing a PhD, publishing papers, or securing funding and projects. These are important milestones, but they are only part of the story. From the beginning of the doctoral journey, CARTA encourages fellows to think beyond publication and ask a different question: who will use this research, and how can it contribute to change?

This mindset is cultivated through CARTA's Joint Advanced Seminar (JAS) series, which provides structured sequential learning throughout the PhD journey. Alongside advanced research methods and academic development, fellows explore leadership, stakeholder engagement, community engagement, policy processes, research uptake, and knowledge translation. These discussions encourage researchers to understand the broader environment in which evidence is produced and used, helping them identify the people, institutions, and systems that influence decision-making.

The JAS curriculum is complemented by strategic partnerships that deepen fellows' engagement skills. Through a collaboration with the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), for instance, CARTA delivered a policy engagement Training of Trainers (ToT) that equipped fellows and facilitators with practical approaches to engaging policymakers while preparing them to transfer these skills to other researchers.

Partnerships with The Conversation Africa and SciDev.Net have similarly strengthened fellows' science communication skills, enabling them to write for broader audiences, engage effectively with journalists and the media, and participate more confidently in public discourse. These opportunities have been instrumental in strengthening African researchers' capacity to go beyond producing robust research and engage effectively with the audiences who can use it.

## Creating Opportunities for Engagement and Visibility

Research gains momentum when it is shared, challenged, and discussed. CARTA supports fellows to participate in regional and international scientific conferences, dissemination events, and community engagement activities through financial and logistical support. These opportunities enable early-career researchers to present their work, receive feedback from peers, build collaborations, and increase the visibility of African-led research.



CARTA graduate Alice Muhayimana, University of Rwanda, presenting her PhD research findings during the International Confederation of Midwives Congress (Lisbon, Portugal, June 2026). Source: Alice

The program also creates its own platforms for dialogue and knowledge exchange. Through initiatives such as the CARTA Conference and webinar sessions, the program brings together fellows, partners, researchers, funders, and development actors to share evidence, discuss emerging issues, and explore solutions to challenges facing health, higher education, and research systems across Africa.

Beyond its own convenings, CARTA works through strategic partnerships to connect fellows with broader research and policy communities. Participation in platforms such as the Gender Summit, the Amplifying African Voices for Strategic Action (AFSA) Conference, and other regional and international forums has enabled fellows and partners to contribute African perspectives to conversations shaping research, health, and development.

CARTA has also invested in communications infrastructure that supports research visibility and knowledge sharing across the consortium. Through its website, social media platforms, the **CARTA Evidence** platform, newsletters, and other digital communication products, the program showcases African-led research, highlights fellows' achievements, shares emerging evidence, and creates opportunities for collaboration across institutions and countries.

*"I would like to thank CARTA for making me aware of this opportunity through the monthly newsletters. I believe that the skills I acquired through CARTA's capacity-building initiatives were instrumental in my successful application and selection from approximately 3,000 applicants."*

**Samuel Mwaniki**

**Cohort 8 graduate, University of Nairobi, after graduating from the Kofi Annan Global Health Leadership Fellowship**

CARTA's commitment to strengthening the broader research ecosystem also extends to improving how research capacity and impact are measured across Africa. In April 2026, CARTA hosted a two-day workshop in Nairobi as one of five partner initiatives leading the development of the Capacity Building and Scientific Impact Tracking System for Africa (**CB-SITS Africa**).

The workshop brought together partners from the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (**AIMS**), Building a New Generation of Academics in Africa (**BaNGA-Africa**) at the University of Ghana, the African Research Universities Alliance (**ARUA**), and **POSSIBLE-Africa** within the Science for Africa Foundation to validate the platform using real program data, co-develop a shared evaluation framework, and explore a sustainable model for its rollout. The initiative is creating a robust, data-driven system that enables institutions, funders, and policymakers to better track research capacity investments and understand how they contribute to scientific excellence, institutional strengthening, and societal impact.



Representatives from CARTA, AIMS, ARUA, BaNGA-Africa, and POSSIBLE-Africa during the CB-SITS Africa Validation Workshop (Nairobi, Kenya, 2026)

### **From Researchers to Research Leaders**

The impact of this approach is increasingly reflected in the careers of CARTA fellows and graduates. Across Africa and beyond, they are leading research programs, supervising postgraduate students, strengthening graduate education, serving on technical working groups, contributing to national and regional policy processes, and providing leadership within universities, governments, and research institutions. Their influence extends well beyond individual research projects, strengthening the institutions and systems that support evidence-informed decision-making.

These contributions reflect one of CARTA's defining strengths: its investment extends beyond individual researchers to the broader environments in which research is produced, disseminated, and applied.

### Research To Impact, By Design

Meaningful research impact rarely happens by chance. It requires researchers who can navigate the spaces where evidence meets policy, practice, and public dialogue. It requires institutions that value engagement alongside scientific excellence. And it requires sustained investment in the people and systems that connect research with decision-making.

**This is the philosophy that underpins CARTA.**

By integrating research excellence with leadership development, communication, stakeholder engagement, and opportunities for collaboration, CARTA is helping build a generation of African researchers who are equipped not only to produce knowledge but also to ensure that knowledge contributes to stronger institutions, better policies, and healthier societies.

As Africa continues to confront complex health and development challenges, the continent needs more than excellent research. It needs researchers who can turn evidence into action. Through its intentional approach to research capacity strengthening, CARTA is helping make that possible, one fellow, one institution, and one partnership at a time.



## Research to Innovation: Advancing Smarter Solutions for Mosquito Control

By Chinenyenwa Maria Dorathy Ohia  
CARTA Graduate, University of Ibadan

Mosquito-borne diseases remain a significant public health challenge, particularly in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) where malaria, dengue, and other vector-borne diseases continue to place a heavy burden on health systems and communities. My research journey has been driven by a commitment to understanding the environmental and biological factors that influence mosquito transmission and translating scientific evidence into practical solutions for disease prevention. As a CARTA PhD graduate in Environmental Health, my doctoral research focused on mosquito vector control and the evaluation of innovative approaches to reducing mosquito populations. By combining environmental health, vector biology, and translational research, I sought to address gaps in existing mosquito control strategies, generating evidence that could inform more effective and sustainable interventions.

Although conventional interventions such as insecticide-treated nets, indoor residual spraying, and other vector control programs have saved millions of lives, they continue to face challenges related to effectiveness, sustainability, accessibility, and user adoption. The

emergence of insecticide resistance, changing environmental conditions, and rapid urbanization have further highlighted the need for innovative approaches that complement existing public health interventions.

As my research progressed, I began to see my role differently. Understanding the science behind mosquito transmission was important, but I realized that generating evidence alone would not address these challenges. The greater opportunity lay in translating that evidence into practical innovations that could strengthen existing mosquito control efforts and improve public health. That realization has since shaped every step of my career.

Following my CARTA Fellowship, I expanded my work beyond traditional academic research into translational public health innovation. This led me to the inaugural World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) [Global Health Innovation Fellowship](#), where I am based at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, through the Department of Biotechnology's Biodesign Program. The two-year fellowship brings together scientists, engineers, and innovators from Africa and Asia to develop health

technologies for resource-constrained settings while strengthening expertise in innovation, product development, and intellectual property.

Working within this multidisciplinary environment has enabled me to collaborate with engineers, clinicians, product developers, and entrepreneurs, broadening my perspective on how research can move beyond the laboratory and into real-world application. Today, I work at the intersection of public health, engineering, and entrepreneurship to develop scalable solutions for mosquito control and healthier indoor environments that are relevant to Africa and other LMICs.

My current project focuses on developing an intelligent mosquito control device for indoor environments, particularly in hospitality settings and workplaces where mosquito exposure affects both public health and user experience. The project represents a shift from identifying public health problems to designing practical solutions.

Our device's greatest advantage is its ability to convert research evidence into intelligent action, delivering adaptive, data-driven mosquito control rather than the fixed, one-size-fits-all spraying used by conventional dispensers. By responding to changing conditions, the device is designed to optimize mosquito control while improving efficiency and user experience.

Moving from research to innovation has required me to think differently. Scientific evidence remains the foundation, but transforming research into solutions also demands interdisciplinary collaboration and an understanding of user needs. Working alongside engineers, product developers, and public health specialists has broadened my perspective on how research can move beyond the laboratory and into real-world application.

Our work has progressed from concept development to prototype design and intellectual property protection. We have submitted two patent applications covering the device technology and dispensing mechanisms, alongside a design patent application protecting the product's appearance and user-centered design. While the journey is still unfolding, these milestones demonstrate how research can evolve beyond publications to generate innovations that can strengthen public health.

Looking back, I recognize the important role CARTA has played in preparing me for this journey. The program provided much more than doctoral training. Through its structured seminars, mentorship, and interdisciplinary learning environment, I strengthened my skills in research design, scientific communication, leadership, grant development, and collaboration.

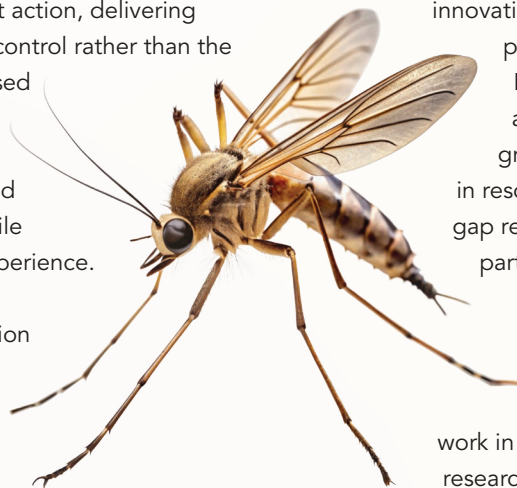
Perhaps more importantly, CARTA challenged me to think beyond my individual research project. It encouraged me to consider how research could contribute not only to scientific knowledge but also to innovation, stronger health systems, and better health outcomes for communities. Being part of a diverse network of African researchers reinforced the importance of collaboration and demonstrated that solving complex public health challenges requires expertise that extends beyond any single discipline or institution.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned is that impactful research requires intentional pathways to translation. Publications are essential for advancing scientific knowledge, but lasting impact depends on partnerships, innovation, communication, and engagement with the people who will ultimately use the research.

Bridging the gap between research findings and implementation remains one of the greatest challenges in public health, particularly in resource-limited settings, and addressing that gap requires researchers, policymakers, industry partners, and communities to work together.

As I look to the future, I hope to continue building on the strong foundation that CARTA has provided by expanding my work in translational public health innovation and research leadership. My ambition is not only to generate new evidence but also to transform that evidence into practical solutions that reduce the burden of mosquito-borne diseases and contribute to healthier communities across Africa and beyond.

For me, research impact is not measured solely by the knowledge we generate but by the difference that knowledge makes in people's lives.





## Research to Policy: Shaping Better Care for TB Survivors in Malawi

By Tumaini Malenga

CARTA Graduate, National TB and Leprosy Elimination Program, Ministry of Health, Malawi

Early in my career, I thought good research spoke for itself. Today, much of my work takes place around policy tables, where I have learned that evidence only creates change when researchers engage with the people and systems that make decisions. That shift in perspective began during my time as a CARTA fellow.

My CARTA-supported doctoral research was embedded within the Majete Integrated Malaria Control Project (MMP), a multidisciplinary implementation research program that sought to evaluate integrated malaria control strategies while strengthening local capacity and informing malaria policy in Malawi. Working within a project that brought together researchers, government institutions, health practitioners, and communities gave me an early appreciation of how evidence is generated, tested, and translated into real-world solutions. CARTA built on that experience by equipping me with the research, leadership, and interdisciplinary skills to think beyond generating evidence and towards ensuring that it informs policy and practice.

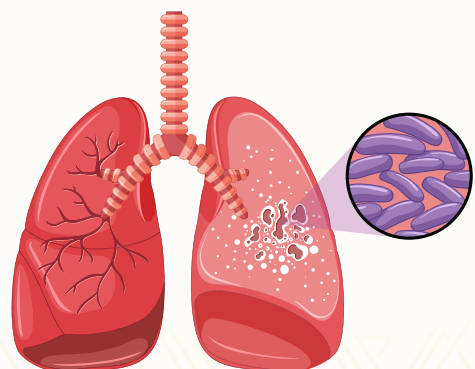
One of the earliest opportunities to apply this perspective came through my contribution to the development of Malawi's post-tuberculosis (TB) care guidelines under the National TB and Leprosy Elimination Program (NTLEP) in 2025/2026. Developing the guidelines required far more than technical expertise. It involved working closely with clinicians, program managers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations were not only evidence-based but also practical and responsive to the realities of Malawi's health system. Through the experience, I came to appreciate that successful research depends as much on collaboration and stakeholder engagement as it does on scientific rigor.

This approach continued to shape my work through a Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation-supported study developing lung cancer screening protocols for Malawi. The project reinforced that technically sound interventions are only effective if they fit within existing health system structures. Working alongside clinicians, program managers, and policy actors helped ensure that the proposed screening protocols would align with referral pathways, service delivery systems, and the country's healthcare priorities.

My understanding of how evidence influences policy was further strengthened through the European University Institute School of Transnational Governance's Young African Leaders Program. Engaging with policymakers, practitioners, and scholars from across Africa and Europe broadened my perspective on health governance and strengthened my ability to communicate evidence in ways that resonate with decision-makers.

Building on these experiences, I am currently developing an integrated people-centered model that aims to transform how TB survivors, especially those with associated impairments and disabilities, are cared for in Malawi. While the country has made remarkable progress in treating TB, many survivors continue to live with a wide range of TB-associated disabilities (lung damage, musculoskeletal, neurological, and mental health impairments, etc.) that remain largely unrecognized within routine health services. The proposed model integrates disability screening, referral pathways, rehabilitation, non-communicable diseases (NCD) management, and community-based follow-up into routine TB care, shifting the focus from microbiological cure to long-term functional recovery.

Advancing this work has involved sustained engagement with a range of stakeholders, including colleagues across NTLEP, the Malawi Ministry of Health, practitioners, and other partners, to co-design a model that can be implemented within existing health system structures and aligned with national priorities. My participation in Malawi's TB Technical Working Group has further supported this process by providing a platform to engage in discussions that inform national policy and guideline development.



Alongside research and policy engagement, I remain committed to strengthening research capacity in Malawi. I have supervised and mentored postgraduate students, facilitated training in qualitative research methods, and supported young researchers in developing the skills needed to generate and translate evidence into action.

When I reflect on my research and career journey, I realize how profoundly CARTA shaped the way I approach research and opportunities. The program laid the foundation by teaching me to see research as both rigorous and relevant, and by giving me the confidence to engage beyond academia. That mindset has enabled me to contribute to the translation of research into policy and

practice. Seeing this reflected in my contribution to Malawi's post-TB care guidelines, where evidence was transformed into guidance to strengthen care for TB survivors, has been one of the most rewarding moments of my career. It reinforced that a researcher's responsibility does not end when the findings are published; it continues until the evidence is used to improve people's lives.

CARTA did more than support my doctoral studies. The program has not only shaped the researcher I am today but continues to influence how I approach every research question, every partnership, and every opportunity to turn evidence into action. For me, this is what research leadership looks like.

## Transforming Graduate Supervision, One Institution at a Time

By **Naomi Njenga**, CARTA M&E Officer, **Ann Waithaka**, Senior Communications Officer, and **Christopher Joseph Odhiambo**, Professor, Moi University



File photo: Participants during a CARTA Supervision Workshop Training of Trainers at Moi University. Since institutionalizing the workshop, Moi University has built internal facilitation capacity and gone on to support universities including the University of Embu and the University of Eldoret to strengthen postgraduate supervision (Eldoret, Kenya, 2024)

Doctoral supervision is one of the strongest determinants of postgraduate success. Effective supervision supports timely completion, strengthens research quality, and prepares the next generation of researchers. Yet across many African universities, postgraduate programs continue

to face challenges including inconsistent supervision practices, varying departmental processes, unclear expectations between supervisors and students, and, in consequence, low completion rates.

Recognizing that strengthening graduate education requires more than training individual academics, CARTA has invested in institutionalizing good supervision practices within partner universities. Through its Supervision Workshop intervention, the consortium equips universities with practical approaches to improving supervision while supporting institutions to adapt and sustain these practices within their own systems.

One institution demonstrating this approach is **Moi University**. After institutionalizing the CARTA Supervision Workshop and embedding structured, student-centered supervision practices, Moi has become a regional resource for strengthening postgraduate supervision. CARTA-trained facilitators from Moi have since supported neighboring institutions, including the **University of Embu** and the **University of Eldoret**, to strengthen their own postgraduate supervision systems.

At the University of Eldoret, the training came at a time when the institution was examining persistent challenges in postgraduate completion rates. Discussions with both supervisors and students revealed a combination of institutional and individual factors affecting timely completion, including delayed supervisor appointments, inconsistent supervision practices across departments, limited progress monitoring, and financial constraints faced by many self-sponsored students.

Drawing on the CARTA supervision model, the University of Eldoret introduced several reforms to strengthen the postgraduate experience. Departments began assigning supervisors within the first month of students' enrolment, enabling research discussions to start much earlier in the program. Supervisor–student agreements were introduced to clarify expectations and responsibilities, while departments committed to holding regular progress meetings to monitor students' academic journey and identify challenges before they became barriers to completion.

The university also reviewed how supervisors are allocated, moving towards a more transparent process that better aligns students' research interests with supervisors' areas of expertise. At the institutional level, discussions initiated through the workshop have informed ongoing efforts to harmonize postgraduate processes across departments and review university rules and regulations to remove unnecessary bottlenecks.

These changes are already showing encouraging signs. According to the Director of the Board of Postgraduate Studies in Eldoret, the university is seeing more master's

*“People think supervision does not require skills, but it does! Through the CARTA training, we introduced changes such as assigning supervisors earlier, strengthening progress monitoring, and setting clear expectations for both students and supervisors. We are already seeing more students completing their master's and PhD programs within the expected timelines, which was very rare before.”*

**Prof. Samuel Lutta**  
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies  
University of Eldoret

and doctoral students completing their programs within the expected timelines—an outcome that had previously been uncommon. Departments that had experienced significant delays have also reported increased thesis submissions, while supervisors have embraced opportunities to exchange experiences and reflect collectively on effective supervision practices. The momentum has extended beyond individual interventions. University leadership has incorporated postgraduate completion into institutional performance monitoring, committed to supporting future supervision workshops, and endorsed continued review of policies and regulations to sustain the reforms.

The University of Eldoret's experience illustrates the broader value of CARTA's institutional capacity strengthening approach. By equipping one university to become a resource for others, the program has created opportunities for peer-learning and the transfer of effective practices across institutions. Rather than remaining a one-off training intervention, the CARTA supervision model is helping universities strengthen the systems, policies, and practices that support high-quality doctoral education.

As African universities continue working to improve research training and postgraduate outcomes, experiences such as those of Moi University and the University of Eldoret demonstrate that strengthening graduate supervision is not solely about developing individual supervisors. It extends to building institutional systems that enable supervisors and students to succeed, and creating a culture of continuous learning across universities.



## From Individual Responsibility to Institutional Commitment: Embedding Stakeholder Engagement in Research as a Core University Function in Africa

By Violet Naanyu

Associate Professor, Moi University; CARTA Facilitator

In mid-July 2026, I will spend time in one of the Kenyan counties, sharing research findings on factors associated with maternal vaccine uptake and working closely with diverse stakeholders to co-create prototypes of tools and communication strategies aimed at increasing confidence in vaccines and vaccine trials during pregnancy. I have worked within university settings since 1996, but it is only in the last decade that I have truly learned how to design and implement stakeholder-engaged research initiatives that produce scientific evidence for greater impact.

African universities are increasingly expected not only to produce research that is methodologically sound, ethically conducted, and relevant, but also to ensure that such research is developed and shared in partnership with the stakeholders who can translate evidence into meaningful societal change. Governments, funders, industry, and communities increasingly expect research to be impactful by addressing pressing societal challenges, informing public policy, improving practice, and contributing to sustainable development. Consequently, research impact has become an essential measure of academic excellence, and at the heart of it lies stakeholder engagement, a deliberate involvement of individuals, organizations, and communities who influence, contribute to, or are affected by the research undertaken by the university faculty and students.

True, stakeholder engagement enables the identification of relevant research questions and methodologies, co-creation of knowledge, and application of research evidence. Yet, across many African universities, stakeholder engagement remains largely dependent on the initiative and personal networks of individual researchers. This is disadvantageous in several ways.

First, the engagement is variable and inconsistent across faculties and research programs. Secondly, partnerships often disappear when researchers change institutions, retire, or complete funded projects. Without institutional systems to preserve relationships, universities lose valuable networks and institutional knowledge. Lastly, engagement requires significant investments of time and resources. University-based researchers have to balance teaching, student

supervision, grant writing, publishing, administrative responsibilities, and community service. Without dedicated institutional support, stakeholder engagement in research is perceived as additional work rather than an integral component for social change.

Africa faces complex and interconnected development challenges that no single sector can solve alone. Universities are uniquely positioned to convene researchers, policymakers, communities, industry, and development partners to co-create, test, and scale evidence-informed solutions. However, fulfilling this role requires a fundamental shift in institutional culture. Stakeholder engagement should not be regarded as an optional activity undertaken by a few academics. Institutionalizing stakeholder engagement is key as it enhances uptake of research evidence, strengthens public trust in universities, fosters innovation, and improves the contribution of African research to the national and global development agenda.

Traditionally, universities were viewed as responsible for teaching and knowledge generation. Today, they are also expected to contribute directly to solving societal challenges by informing policy, improving livelihoods, and contributing to national and regional development. This evolving role has accelerated the shift towards implementation research and transdisciplinary research, which integrates knowledge across disciplines and incorporates the values, expertise, and lived experiences of non-academic stakeholders. The result is knowledge that is not only scientifically robust but also relevant, actionable, and capable of driving social change.

Increasingly, funders require researchers to demonstrate how their findings will be disseminated for impact and how stakeholders will be engaged throughout the research cycle. Governments seek evidence to inform policy decisions, while communities and industry expect research to generate practical solutions to societal challenges. Universities that respond effectively to these expectations attract funding and strategic partnerships, and enhance their contribution to society.

Institutional commitment requires practical support to ensure coordination of a coherent, trusted interface between the university and external partners. For example, universities can establish offices for coordinating stakeholder engagement, knowledge translation, and research for impact. These units can help researchers identify relevant partners, organize policy dialogues, prepare policy briefs, facilitate community consultations, and evaluate research impact. The research support offices can expand their mandate to include stakeholder mapping, partnership development, science communication, and knowledge translation.

Furthermore, institutions ought to invest in developing research stakeholder engagement skills. For instance, graduate schools should integrate stakeholder engagement into doctoral education by providing training in science communication, policy engagement, participatory research methods, partnership development, knowledge translation, and research impact evaluation. Early-career researchers who develop these competencies are more likely to produce research that addresses societal needs and influences decision-making.

Professional development opportunities for academic staff should similarly strengthen engagement skills throughout researchers' careers. One of the most important drivers of institutional change is the incentive system, and researchers are likely to prioritize stakeholder engagement if it is recognized and rewarded by their institutions. The universities must therefore find ways to recognize stakeholder engagement, research uptake, policy influence, community partnerships, and societal impact alongside traditional indicators for promotion and annual awards.

Across Africa, encouraging examples demonstrate the value of institutional approaches to stakeholder engagement in research. Universities are establishing innovation hubs, community engagement offices, and policy engagement platforms, while regional institutions and initiatives such as the [African Academy of Sciences](#), [African Population and Health Research Center](#), and CARTA demonstrate the importance of creating platforms that facilitate knowledge exchange, evidence-informed policymaking, and collaborative research.

The future of research excellence in Africa will be determined not only by the quality of scientific work but also by the extent to which resultant research evidence improves people's lives. This requires universities to build institutional systems that make stakeholder engagement an integral part of academic work.

If African universities are to strengthen their contribution to national development and the continent's research agenda, stakeholder engagement must evolve from being an individual responsibility to becoming an institutional commitment. Embedding stakeholder engagement as a core university function is therefore both a strategic necessity and a moral imperative. African universities ought to create an environment in which research stakeholder engagement is perceived as an essential pathway through which useful co-created data is generated for meaningful and lasting societal impact. In doing so, universities will strengthen their role as engines of innovation, trusted partners in development, and catalysts for evidence-informed policymaking across the African continent.

## Why Research Uptake Requires More Than Good Science

By **Ann Waithaka**, Senior Communications Officer, and **Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu**, Communications Manager, African Population and Health Research Center

***"CARTA was the foundation... the starting point from which a chain of opportunities emerged, linking local knowledge to global impact."***

These are the words of [Godwin Anywar](#), a CARTA graduate based at [Makerere University](#), whose research began by documenting indigenous medicinal plants used by traditional healers in Uganda to support people living with HIV/AIDS. Today, his work has earned international recognition, informed scientific understanding of traditional

medicine, attracted global collaborations, and even reached communities through a traveling mobile museum.

Reflecting on his journey, Godwin is clear about one thing: producing good research was only the beginning. Visibility, communication, engagement, and opportunities to share his work were equally important in transforming locally generated evidence into global influence. Godwin's story reflects a broader lesson for African research.



CARTA Graduate Godwin Anywar, Makerere University, during the mobile museum exhibition showcasing medicinal plants documented through his research with traditional healers in Uganda (2025).  
Source: Godwin

Across Africa, researchers are producing increasingly rigorous and relevant evidence that can address the continent's numerous and persistent development challenges. Yet much of this research never reaches the policymakers, practitioners, communities, and institutions that could use it to improve lives. The challenge is not a lack of good science but ensuring that the good science is understood, shared, trusted, and ultimately used.

For decades, research success has largely been measured by publications, citations, grants, and conference presentations. These remain important indicators of scientific excellence, but they do not automatically translate into societal impact. A published paper does not change national policy simply because it appears in a reputable journal. Research findings do not improve healthcare unless practitioners can understand and apply them. Communities cannot benefit from evidence they never encounter. Research creates impact only when it moves beyond academic audiences.

This requires a fundamental shift in how research institutions think about success. Publication should not be viewed as the end of the research process but as the beginning of a wider journey, one that connects evidence with decision-makers, practitioners, communities, and society.

Research uptake is often reduced to a dissemination workshop at the end of a project or the publication of a policy brief after a paper has been accepted. In reality, it starts much earlier. It begins when researchers ask who their work is intended to benefit, which stakeholders should be involved, what policy questions the research can help answer, and how different audiences are most likely to engage with evidence.

### This is where knowledge translation becomes critical.

Knowledge translation is the deliberate process of synthesizing, communicating, exchanging, and applying evidence in ways that increase understanding, strengthen policy, improve practice, and inform decision-making. At its core, knowledge translation is about moving evidence from laboratories and academic journals into the hands of people who can use it to make decisions and improve lives. It recognizes that different audiences require different forms of evidence, and that timing, relationships, and context often determine whether research is used. And because different audiences have different needs, each stage of this journey may require different approaches and forms of engagement or a cocktail of approaches for maximum impact.

One of these is **research communication**, perhaps one of the most misconstrued functions in academia, often reduced to simply promoting published work. In reality, it is much more than that. Research communication helps translate complex evidence into language that policymakers can act on, journalists can accurately report, practitioners can apply, and communities can understand. It creates opportunities for dialogue rather than one-way dissemination, enabling researchers to explain their findings, respond to questions, and build trust with the people their work is intended to serve. Importantly, communication also creates visibility for both the research and the researcher.

For many researchers, visibility leads to opportunities that cannot be planned for e.g. new collaborations, invitations to contribute to policy discussions, editorial appointments, speaking engagements, funding opportunities, and international partnerships. As Godwin Anywar's experience demonstrates, these opportunities often build upon one another, extending the reach and influence of research far beyond its original publication.

However, making research accessible is one level of the knowledge translation pathways. The second level is **policy engagement and advocacy**, where evidence is actively linked to decision-making processes. This involves collaborating with policymakers, government institutions, professional organizations, and other key stakeholders to ensure that research informs policies, guidelines, legislation, and investments. Effective policy engagement requires more than just presenting evidence: it involves building relationships, understanding policy priorities and timing, participating in policy discussions, and presenting evidence in ways that address the realities decision-makers face. The goal is not merely to communicate research but to enhance its potential to influence policy and practice.

The third level of research involvement is **community engagement**, which ensures that research benefits the people whose lives it aims to improve. Community engagement acknowledges that knowledge translation is a two-way process. Researchers not only share evidence with communities but also listen to local knowledge, experiences, and priorities. This approach ensures that research remains relevant, culturally appropriate, and responsive to societal needs. Through dialogue and collaboration, communities become active participants in the research process rather than passive recipients of information. This engagement strengthens trust and increases the likelihood that evidence will be adopted in practice.

These three dimensions (research communication, policy engagement and advocacy, and community engagement) are distinct yet interconnected. Together, they form a pathway that transforms research from academic knowledge into evidence that informs decisions, shapes policies, changes practices, and ultimately improves lives. Research uptake is not a single event; it is a continuous process that links knowledge generation with knowledge use.

If research impact is to become the norm rather than the exception, universities and research institutions must invest intentionally in the systems that support it. This means strengthening researchers' skills in research communications and engagement with policymakers, communities, and key stakeholders. It means creating institutional communication capacity that makes research visible and accessible. It means developing platforms that showcase evidence, supporting policy dialogues, encouraging public engagement, and recognizing these activities as integral to research excellence rather than optional extras.

**Africa does not lack talented researchers nor does it lack important research questions. So why does so much valuable evidence still struggle to influence the decisions it was intended to inform?**

The next frontier is ensuring that the continent's growing body of evidence is translated into better policies, stronger institutions, improved programs, and healthier communities. Achieving this will require universities, research institutions, funders, and governments to broaden their understanding of research impact. Scientific excellence must remain the foundation, but it should be accompanied by equal investment in the systems that move knowledge into action. Programs such as CARTA demonstrate what this investment can achieve by embedding research communication, policy engagement, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge translation throughout doctoral training, equipping early-career researchers with the skills and opportunities to move evidence beyond academia and into policy, practice, and society.

Research changes lives not simply because it is published. It changes lives because it is translated, communicated, debated, trusted, and used. The future of African research will therefore depend not only on producing excellent science but also ensuring that it reaches the people who can turn evidence into meaningful change.

## Voices of Impact: Reflections from Fellows and Focal Persons



**Kudus Adebayo**

Cohort 6 Graduate, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

*Looking back, I realize just how much CARTA has shaped my research career and how I think about leadership and institutional change. The program gave me the confidence and perspective to invest in strengthening research ecosystems, from contributing to the now institutionalized and digitized Doctoral Academy at the University of Ibadan and supporting early-career researchers through the University's Research Management Office to serving as Research Coordinator of the flagship TETFund Center of Excellence for Diaspora Studies. I cannot point to a single CARTA experience that made this possible; rather, it is CARTA's integrated approach to developing research leaders that has influenced how I contribute to research practice and institutional development.*



**Catherine Musyoka**

Cohort 7 Graduate, University of Nairobi, Kenya

*Since receiving CARTA's doctoral training support in March 2017 and later a postdoctoral re-entry grant in May 2024, CARTA has provided opportunities that have significantly strengthened my capacity to generate evidence, secure research funding, and contribute to institutional and community impact.*

*CARTA has also strengthened my ability to influence practice and institutional change. As a lecturer and researcher at the University of Nairobi's Faculty of Health Sciences, I now mentor postgraduate students and emerging researchers, helping to build the next generation of African scholars. I have integrated evidence-based approaches into teaching, supervision, and mental health programming, contributing to improved research capacity within my institution.*



**Christopher Joseph Odhiambo**

Professor of Literature and Applied Drama, Moi University; CARTA Focal Person

*CARTA has been transformative for both our researchers and our institution. Through its PhD and postdoctoral fellowships, our fellows have strengthened their research capacity, generated pilot data that attracted NIH funding, and produced evidence that has informed HIV care guidelines. Beyond research, the program has enhanced skills in scientific writing, grant development, leadership, and postgraduate supervision, leading to stronger research productivity, curriculum development, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Our graduates are now leading initiatives, mentoring the next generation of researchers, and engaging more effectively with policymakers and other stakeholders. Together, these contributions have strengthened our research culture, institutional capacity, and ability to generate evidence that addresses national and regional priorities.*



**Christine Mbindyo**

Cohort 8 Graduate, University of Nairobi, Kenya

*CARTA has changed the way I see my role as a researcher. Through its doctoral and postdoctoral capacity strengthening, continuous mentorship, and collaborative networks, I have learned to translate research into policy, practice, and institutional change. Today, I am mentoring the next generation of researchers and leading collaborative One Health initiatives. These opportunities have enabled me to engage with policymakers, practitioners, and communities in ways I never*



**Lilian Ayiro**

Lecturer, Moi University; Participant of CARTA Grant Writing Workshop

*My engagement with CARTA came at a time when I was trying to understand why my grant proposals were being rejected. I attended their [CARTA] grant writing workshop, and after applying what I learned, I secured a research grant under the Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA) initiative that became a defining moment in my career. This support enabled me to lead a study on literacy development among children with sensory impairments, focusing particularly on the role of parents in supporting children with hearing and visual disabilities.*



**Apatsa Selemani**

Cohort 10 Graduate, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Malawi

*CARTA transformed the way I contribute to research. I moved from supporting researchers through library services to generating evidence, training researchers in systematic reviews and scientific writing, and contributing to discussions that strengthen research dissemination and evidence-informed policy in Africa.*



**Caroline Sawe**

Cohort 4 Graduate, Moi University, Kenya

*CARTA has strengthened my ability to translate research into impact by enhancing my research, leadership, and collaboration skills. As a result, I have, for instance, contributed to the development of Moi University's Nutrition Curriculum, mentored postgraduate students, and currently lead research under the Planetary Health and One Health (PHOH) initiative. These experiences have strengthened my capacity to generate evidence that informs teaching, institutional change, and public health practice in Kenya.*

## Program Highlights

By Topistar Karani, CARTA Communications Officer

### New Cohort, Shared Vision for Research Excellence



In March 2026, CARTA welcomed its twelfth cohort of PhD fellows, marking another significant milestone in its mission to strengthen research capacity and cultivate the next generation of African research leaders. Selected through a highly competitive process, the 22 fellows are drawn from CARTA partner universities and research institutions across the continent. They join a growing network of scholars committed to advancing research excellence and addressing Africa's development challenges.

The fellows began their doctoral journey at the first Joint Advanced Seminar (JAS 1), held from 2–20 March 2026 at the Makerere University School of Public Health. Comprising four residential seminars, JASes are CARTA's flagship doctoral training program and are delivered sequentially at key stages of the PhD journey. As the foundation of this program, JAS 1 equips fellows with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate doctoral training successfully through intensive sessions on research conceptualization, academic writing, critical thinking, and research proposal development.

Beyond strengthening technical competencies, JAS 1 serves as an important gateway into the CARTA community. The seminar creates opportunities for fellows to build lasting connections with peers, mentors, supervisors, and technical experts from across Africa. Between the residential JASes, learning and engagement with the fellows continue through Inter-JAS activities, which include online academic writing, virtual communities of practice, and peer-to-peer mentoring that support fellows' academic progress. CARTA also partners with ESE:O to offer advanced academic writing and critical thinking workshops, further strengthening fellows' capacity to produce high-quality research and communicate it effectively. The successful onboarding of Cohort 12 underscores CARTA's continued investment in nurturing a critical mass of highly skilled researchers who are well-positioned to generate evidence, influence policy, and contribute to sustainable development across the continent.

### **CARTA Partners Convene to Shape CARTA's 2026–2030 Strategy and Governance**

CARTA partners from African and international institutions convened virtually on April 22, 2026, for the Partners' Forum to review progress and help shape the Consortium's strategic direction for 2026–2030. Discussions focused on the implementation of the new strategic plan, governance transitions, associate membership guidelines, and progress toward strengthening institutional systems across the consortium.

Partners also reviewed progress toward Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) certification among African partner institutions, financial accountability, and partner reporting, identifying actions to accelerate certification, strengthen management systems, enhance data use, and deepen partner engagement. The meeting reaffirmed CARTA's collective commitment to strong governance, institutional excellence, and sustainable research capacity strengthening as the consortium embarks on its new strategic phase.

Building on the outcomes of the Forum, CARTA's Board of Management met on May 20, 2026, to endorse the implementation of the Consortium's new governance structure, approve the 2026 budget, and advance the rollout of the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. The Board also emphasized long-term sustainability, highlighting the importance of diversifying funding sources and strengthening engagement with local and national partners to support CARTA's continued growth and impact.

### **Strengthening Research Support Systems Across African Universities**

On May 4–6, 2026, CARTA convened an Academic, Professional, and Administrative Staff (APAS) workshop, bringing together more than 40 participants from partner institutions across Africa. Hosted at Moi University, the workshop brought together finance officers, graduate school deans, academic deans, librarians, procurement officers, registrars, and other staff supporting institutional processes. The training strengthened participants' understanding of the complementary roles these professionals play in fostering an enabling environment for research excellence and effective doctoral training.

Participants engaged in discussions on how institutional policies, systems, and operational processes contribute to strengthening research ecosystems and supporting high-quality research and training across African universities. The training provided practical instruction on leadership capabilities within research institutions, governance and research management, the role of AI and information systems in advancing research in Africa, grant financial management, and the complementary roles of academic, professional, administrative, finance, ICT, library, and project management staff in driving institutional research agendas and strengthening doctoral training systems.

During the engagement, the CARTA Secretariat paid a courtesy call to Prof Kiplagat Kotut, the acting Vice Chancellor of Moi University, where they engaged in discussions on strengthening and expanding collaboration and advancing the institution's progress toward attaining GFGP certification as part of broader efforts to strengthen research management and grant accountability systems.



## Fellows News

### PhD Completions



#### Patience Shamu

Cohort 10, University of the Witwatersrand

**Thesis:** Perceptions of Long-acting HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis and Preferences for Service Delivery Among Young Women in Tertiary Institutions in South Africa



#### Apatsa Selemani

Cohort 10, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences

**Thesis:** Journal Indexing and Scientific Impact of Africa's Public Health Research: Current Status, Barriers, Facilitators, and Opportunities

### Promotions



#### Sonti Pilusa

Cohort 7, University of the Witwatersrand

Promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Health Sciences. In this role, she will continue to advance research in disability and cancer rehabilitation at the University.



#### Enock Chisati

Cohort 7, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences

Promoted to full fellow of the [interRAI](#) research network effective April 6, 2026. Until his promotion, Enock was serving as an Associate Fellow of interRAI (International Resident Assessment Instruments), a collaborative network of researchers and practitioners in over 35 countries committed to improving care for persons who are disabled or medically complex.



#### Eniola Cadmus

Cohort 7, University of Ibadan

Promoted to the rank of Reader in the Department of Community Medicine, College of Medicine

### Appointments



#### Godwin Anywar

Cohort 6, Makerere University

Appointed Regional Representative (Eastern Africa) for the Society for Medicinal Plant and Natural Product Research (GA) for 2026.



#### Beryl Maritim

Cohort 10, KEMRI-Wellcome Trust

Appointed Lead of the Health Financing Research Stream at the Health Economics Research Unit (HERU) of the KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Program.



#### Mpho Molete

Cohort 6, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)

Appointed by the Office of the Minister of Health as a Board Member of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

## CARTA in Numbers

### A. Early Career Researchers

#### Fellows

287

130



157

#### Publications



6000+

(Source: CARTA Evidence)

#### Graduates

196

86



110

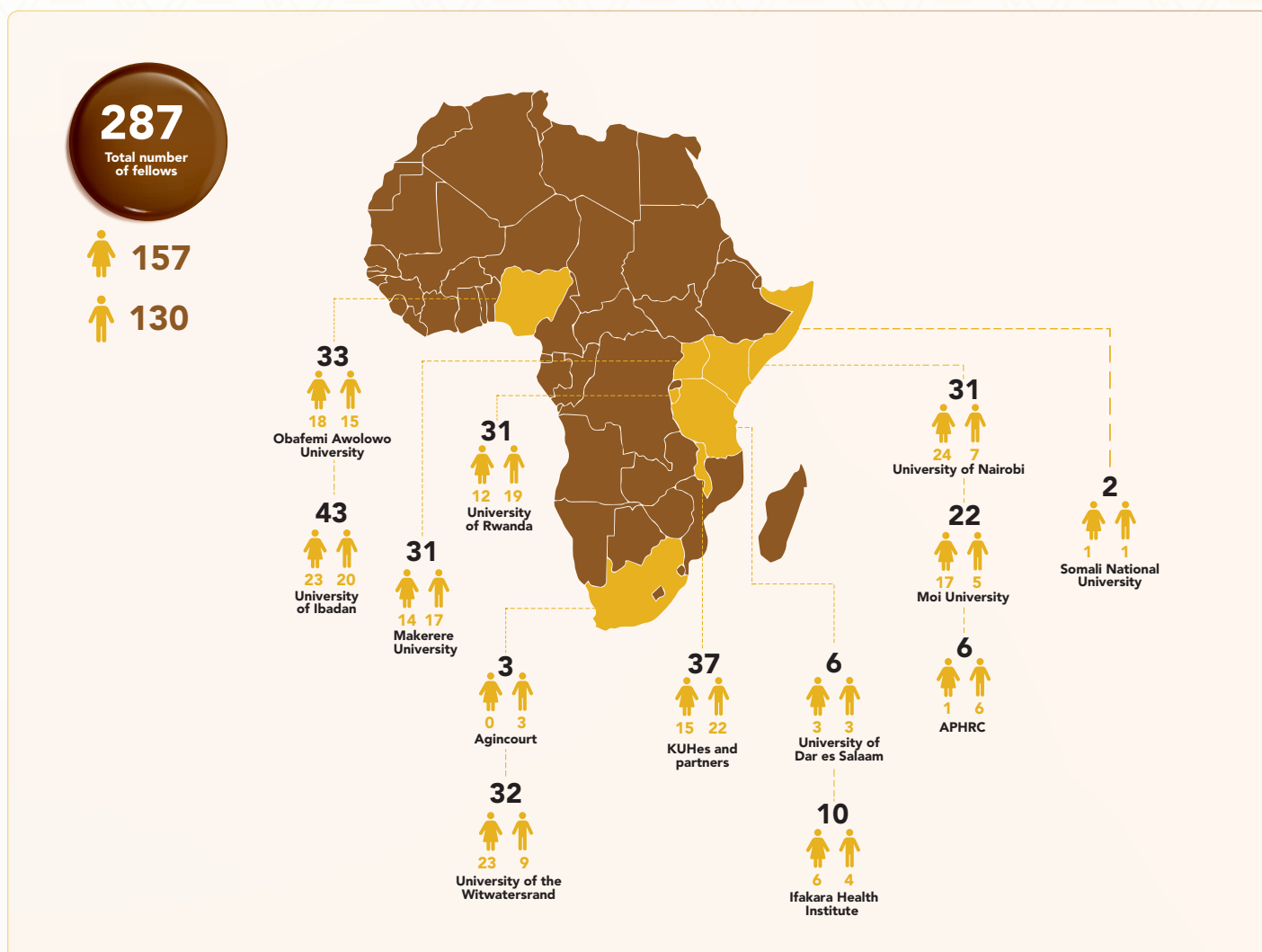
#### External grants



USD 45+ Million

(Source: Fellows' Self-Reports)

## CARTA Fellows by Institution of Employment at the Time of Registration



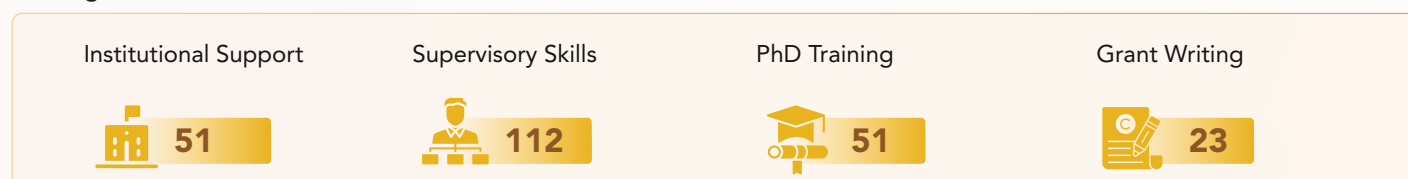
## B. Institutionalization Indicators

### CARTA Trainings and Training of Trainers

#### CARTA Trainings



#### Training of Trainers



Institutional Trainings and Training of Trainers

Trainings



Training of Trainers



© **Cover Photo:** CARTA Graduates Christine Mbindyo (L) and Winnie Mutai (R) from the University of Nairobi during a World AMR Awareness Week Commemoration (Nairobi, Kenya, 2024). Source: Christine

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UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
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