

AfOx Highlights





Welcome

AfOx creates an ecosystem for African students, entrepreneurs and researchers to collaborate and flourish while addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges

AfOx students, researchers and innovators are improving livelihoods and safeguarding our future. They are uncovering hidden histories of our past and finding new sources to create energy for the future. They are solving real world challenges and accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals.

A hub for all things Africa in Oxford, supporting the next generation of African leaders, innovators and researchers, the Africa Oxford Initiative initially started out as a conversation between researchers based at the University of Oxford and African institutions.

Fundamental to those conversations was the importance of positioning Africa as a strategic priority for the University of Oxford. Africa is one of the most rapidly changing continents, and its economic and demographic growth will have a major influence globally. The innovations and research emerging from the continent are already addressing climate change, infectious diseases and human rights.

What initially started as a mission to 'build equitable research collaborations between researchers based in African institutions and the University of Oxford' has evolved into an inventive model delivering world class scholarships, nurturing entrepreneurial leaders and accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

AfOx is uniquely placed to support talented and determined African leaders as they shape our global future. As part of the University of Oxford we connect our members with cutting-edge infrastructure and resources. At the same time, we connect with our large community of thought leaders and practitioners across the continent to co-create programmes that maximise our collective impact in Africa and beyond.

Our scholarship, innovation and research programmes are designed to contribute towards four themes: Healthy People; Integrated Societies; Green Futures; Innovation for Prosperity.

Thanks to the support of the Mastercard Foundation and their commitment of \$50m to support over 400 African postgraduate students over seven years, we are one step closer to our aim of markedly increasing the number of African graduate students in Oxford.

Recognising the importance of experiential learning for meaningful impact, we have started the Ubuntu year of service that allows AfOx graduate scholars to work alongside our partner organisations across Africa after the completion of their studies. The Ubuntu year of service encourages AfOx graduate scholars to explore how their careers will contribute towards the AfOx themes.

Continued support from our partners across Africa and the UK, including investment from the Oxford-Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund enables the AfOx Health Innovation Platform to connect African innovators with industry to solve intractable health challenges. So far 60 innovators have participated in the AfOx Health Innovation Platform to turn their ideas into solutions.

Our flagship research fellowship programmes have led to the creation of new artificial intelligence platforms, new antibacterial compounds to combat antimicrobial resistance and behaviour interventions to limit the spread of malaria.

Our virtual and hybrid events have featured leaders in government, business, humanities, medicine and social sciences who have been generous in sharing their wisdom with members of our community worldwide.

The start of this decade has changed the world irrevocably. At the same time, it showed how our strength lies in evidence-backed research, ingenuity and strong collaborations.

As we continue to grow and break barriers in academia and research, we are still rooted in our core values of equity, collegiality, and community.

We hope you draw insights and inspiration from this report, and join us in cultivating the next generation of changemakers and entrepreneurial leaders.



“While we can’t really place a date on the start of AfOx, 28 October 2016 is as close as we get to a ‘birthday’. The outcomes of our launch in October 2016 laid the foundations for AfOx’s approach to equity and sustainability in research partnership as well as its programmatic focus on education, research and innovation.”

Prof Kevin Marsh, Co-director and Co-founder, Africa Oxford Initiative

At a glance

Scholars:
next generation leaders

**Locally
rooted
globally
minded
leaders**

15

African
countries

20

courses

44

Scholars

**Innovation:
research to
industry**

25

ventures

60

entrepreneurs

15

Countries

View our database:

[https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/
afox-researcher-database](https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/afox-researcher-database)

Research: ground breaking discoveries

250
Catalyst Grants

120
African
institutions

77
Visiting
Fellows

Network: equity and impact

32
African
countries

3,000
global members

330
Oxford
academics

07**Education: Supporting the next generation of leaders****08**

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

12

Targeted support for African graduates

14**Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions****14**Health Innovation Platform
Showcasing AfOx HIP ventures**16****Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs****17**

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

18

AfOx Catalyst Grants

19

Research Development Awards

20**Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford****20**

Insakas

22

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

23

Future of Archeology Globinars

24**Looking to the future****24**

Reflections on AfOx Aspirations

25**Thank you****26**

AfOx partners

27

AfOx Team

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Education: Supporting the next generation of leaders



“The AfOx scholarship programme has an ambitious mission to develop skills in exceptional leaders across the African continent. It provides the University of Oxford with the opportunity to take part in this exciting initiative and contribute to the future of our global society.

“We are delighted to have partnered with AfOx to support these extremely talented and driven scholars in their education.”

Professor Lionel Tarassenko,
President of Reuben College



“Africa is the continent of the future, with 250 million youth on the continent today and 840 million expected by 2050, African graduates will play a key role in contributing to the future of not just the continent, but the world.

“The AfOx scholarship programme is more than just a scholarship. It is a forward looking approach to give the next generation of leaders the confidence and skills to break barriers and make the most of their potential.

Dr Jane Hoverd, Senior Tutor,
Linacre College



AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Locally rooted and globally minded: supporting emerging African leaders



The AfOx scholarship programme started at the peak of the pandemic in 2020 with six students and has grown exponentially over the course of three years. New partnerships with colleges in Oxford allowed us to offer 9 scholarships in 2021. With the generosity of the Mastercard Foundation, we supported 30 scholars in 2022 and will be welcoming over 400 scholars over the next 6 years.

AfOx provides a holistic programme that supports African graduate students to thrive before, during and after their time at Oxford, while also giving them the opportunity to develop life skills beyond academia and the confidence to meet Africa's challenges and opportunities.

A master's degree at the University of Oxford usually lasts 9 months, and demands academic rigour and attention. The AfOx scholarship is a unique two phase programme that allows students to translate their academic learnings in the first phase to real world application in the second phase.

The first year allows scholars the opportunity to focus on their academic learnings, along with a range of support programmes to help them settle into and thrive at the University of Oxford. During this time, they also receive a bespoke Leadership and Impact training programme which is delivered in partnership with the Skoll Centre for

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Social Enterprise. The leadership programme has been designed with the needs and aspirations of the scholars in mind.

The second phase, called the ‘Ubuntu year of service’, gives scholars the opportunity to work with partner organisations on the continent and translate their academic learnings to real world action.

The Ubuntu year of service serves a dual purpose. It helps fill some skill gaps in African organisations and provides an opportunity for experiential learning for AfOx scholars. The feedback from the scholar and host organisations allows us to maintain a curriculum that relevant and useful for the African context

The AfOx scholarship is a culmination of engagement with prospective and current African students, alumni, and researchers. This engagement has helped us understand experiences of African students in Oxford including the challenges they may face, their expectations from a graduate degree and their ambitions post-graduation.

Based on feedback from this engagement, we have developed a range of programmes to ensure successful applications by prospective students, academic and social support programmes to enable students thrive during their time at Oxford and mentorship and networking opportunities for career development.



“My research interest in forced displacement began when I fled persecution in Ethiopia and started working with refugees, I witnessed first-hand the challenges displaced people face. This experience has inspired me to pursue the MSc in Refugee and Forced Migration. I hope pursuing this course will equip me with the knowledge and skills I need to contribute to making a difference in the lives of displaced people.”

Mohammed Abdella, Ethiopia, MSc in Refugee and Forced Migration, Somerville College, 2022

Meet the AfOx scholars: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/afox-graduate-scholars>

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team



“Being an AfOx scholar, I can say that I was fortunate to have a support system around me. People who were always there for me and provided me with overwhelming support that pushed me through the hard times. They made me see potential in myself that I never knew existed. The AfOx family has made the Oxford roller coaster smooth and enjoyable.”

Buthaina Eltigani, Sudan, MSc International Health and Tropical Medicine, Reuben College, 2022



“Coming from a system where most student-lecturer interaction took place in the lecture room, I felt the lecture room interaction was limited. Then, I noticed that this was compensated by direct engagement with professors and doing independent research. This has made me independent in many regards and has helped me acquire knowledge and develop many skills throughout the academic year.”

Ndume Ibrahim, DRC, Mst Linguistics, Philosophy and Phonetics, St Hugh's College, 2022

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Scholar journey

Crystal Okwurionu, Nigeria, MSc in Law and Finance, Wadham College, 2022

'Nigeria is a country that really depends on crude oil extraction. I grew up in southern Nigeria, and saw the impact of this extraction on the environment around me. I knew that there was a commercial element as our government relies a lot on oil export proceeds, but growing up in those surroundings, I began to think: is there a better way to do this? Why do we have to let this happen?'

Crystal's early experiences led her to study law at River State university where she graduated second in her departmental cohort and went on to join a leading Nigerian law firm, advising multilateral agencies and syndicates of lenders on landmark energy projects. She has also been a legal consultant on several World Bank-funded renewable energy projects in Nigeria and Ghana.

"The overarching theme for me was that whatever I did, it needed to have impact beyond the boardroom or my computer"

To achieve this goal, Crystal decided to apply for Oxford's MSc in Law and Finance- a course that is taught jointly by the Faculty of Law and the Saïd Business School. The MSc is designed to give law graduates the chance to develop an advanced interdisciplinary understanding of relevant economic and financial contexts.

While in Oxford, she also joined the Oxford Saïd Finance Lab, which offers students the opportunity to understand key theoretical concepts, processes, instruments and models that are required to be successful in financial services.

Completing a joint degree was both challenging and rewarding for Crystal. She describes it as 'like being part of two homes'; it was demanding, but she was able to create a 'family-like bond' with her classmates and fellow AfOx scholars.

"How can businesses operate sustainably and be governed responsibly?"

Energy and finance lawyer, Crystal Okwurionu had been asking these questions since a young age while witnessing the harm oil extraction had caused her surrounding environment and communities in Nigeria.

'If I look back, I'm not the same person now as I was nine months ago. It was a really challenging time for me but ultimately, I wouldn't trade it for anything. It has been an enriching experience and I'm just really grateful to the Africa Oxford Initiative for helping to make it happen.'

Crystal's longer-term career plan is to join a multilateral agency involved in financing developing nations.



'I want to work beyond borders and in countries where I can have an even greater impact.'



Targeted support for African graduates

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Studying for a graduate degree at Oxford is a journey that starts at the application stage and continues till the day a student graduates. Many graduates have shared how this journey can seem overwhelming and at times terrifying.

AfOx student support programmes are co-created with former and current students with the aim of sharing experiences and supporting each other in facing challenges.

In partnership with the Oxford Africa Society, we have developed holistic approach in supporting a graduate's journey from the start of their application process, preparing to arrive at Oxford, during their time at Oxford and beyond their graduation.



A holistic approach to scholarships and development for all African graduates in Oxford

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

AfOx Graduate Scholarship Program

Targeted support for African graduates

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Application process

Virtual open days: answering commonly asked questions by graduate applicants.

Application support and mentoring: assisting prospective applicants in making a strong graduate application.

On course support

Holistic welcome and orientation program for new students

Eassy writing workshop: giving student's the confidence to translate their ideas on to paper in the 'Oxford way'

Research roundtable: share guidance and best tips in undertaking a PhD in Oxford.

Thrive fund: helping African students meet unexpected financial needs

Social mixer

Post graduation support

Ubuntu Career Transitions

Alumni network

Career development and networking

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Innovation: Translating ideas into real world solutions

Early-stage entrepreneurial activity in Africa is considerably greater than the global average. This was evidenced by Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where 13% of the new innovations developed worldwide to fight the crises were developed in African countries.

The AfOx Health Innovation Platform (AfOx-HIP) supports emerging entrepreneurs who are developing new innovations to tackle Africa's health challenges.

So far we have supported over 60 innovators from 15 African countries to develop their skills in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Selected entrepreneurs receive personalised training, practical workshops and one-to-one mentoring provided by business leaders, investors and practitioners around the world. They are encouraged to start their own venture or scale their existing enterprise.

The training aims to equip participants with key skills to successfully navigate their entrepreneurial journey. It provides participants with the skills to go from the development of ideas, through the



**Spread of ventures
in the first AfOx
HIP cohort**

understanding of the core entrepreneurial abilities required to succeed, to launching a venture. The scheme helps participants position themselves in order to realise their full potential and broaden their impact as innovator-entrepreneurs.

The AfOx-HIP has been curated specifically for the Africa context. It has been developed in partnership with the Saïd Business School in Oxford, Science for Africa Foundation, Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Royal Academy of Engineering, Oxford Foundry, The Institute of Biomedical Engineering, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) and Reuben College.

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Capacity enhancement

Up to 50 African innovators per year to receive expert innovation and entrepreneurship training to ensure that their vital ideas and critical local insights into health solutions do not meet an impasse for lack of resources.

Up to 15 health solutions per year catalysed within globally-leading ecosystems for health and innovation and guided through the complex hurdles between research, prototype, market and bedside.

Inclusive, sustainable development promoted by bringing together researchers, change leaders and other key players in industry and government including entrepreneurs, investors, technologists and policymakers.

Better health outcomes

Strengthened African health systems thanks to the creation of solutions towards disease prevention, diagnosis, management and treatment.

Upswing in innovation for particularly urgent African health priorities including improvement in mortality and morbidity outcomes for maternal and neonatal care.

Other health challenges tackled, ranging from detection and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases to streamline health systems for better access to care – for case studies from Cohort I of the AfOx HIP programme, please see innovator profiles here (link missing)

Establishing SDG pathways

Our ultimate ambition is to build AfOx HIP into a model for subsequent expansion across life science projects that sustainably address a number of African development challenges beyond health.

By continuing to connect African research and entrepreneurial talent to Oxford's networks and to industry, future AfOx innovation platforms will **promote solutions to intractable societal challenges**, such as access to quality education, sustainable agricultural and energy systems and effective delivery of public services.

Research: Accelerating progress towards the SDGs

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

AfOx Catalyst Grants: kick-starting new collaborations

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Our world currently faces multi-faceted crises including climate change, food insecurity and the spread of infectious diseases. As we address these challenges there are exciting possibilities for new scientific discoveries and developing novel social and technological solutions.

AfOx researchers are committed to accelerating these solutions and creating a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Their interventions range from pioneering new medical cures to creating new energy sources; from interrogating what African ethical principles can teach us about the environmental to developing technologies for detecting stroke in low income settings.

AfOx research programmes are designed to support equitable collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange between researchers based in African institutions and colleagues at the University of Oxford.

AfOx research programmes have resulted in new publications, policy interventions and public engagement. They have been a catalyst for further funding, expanded professional networks and new projects.



“Our programmes aim to support researchers in Africa while recognising how much colleagues in Oxford have to gain from engaging with African research and innovation. Through AfOx programmes African researchers have had opportunities to engage with the range of resources, knowledge and expertise at the University of Oxford. At the same time African scholars have made important contributions to the intellectual life of Oxford.”

Dr David Kerr, Programme Manager, AfOx

Whether researchers are exploring an idea for a new research project, strengthening an existing collaboration or ready to translate their research to new medicines, policies or technology, we offer a range of research programmes to enable researchers based in Africa and in Oxford to collaborate and advance their research.

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

AfOx Catalyst Grants: kick-starting new collaborations

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

Designed to enhance academic mobility and network building, the AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme provides exceptional African researchers an opportunity to build international networks and focus on a project of their choice, away from teaching and administrative duties at their home institutions.

Combining both online and in-person elements, the fellowship enables African researchers to collaborate with an Oxford partner and benefit from the resources available at Oxford including library access to support strengthening research leadership skills.

The growing community of AfOx Fellows stands at 77 research leaders from 56 institutions across Africa working in a range of fields such as astrophysics, conservation, economics, law, marine science, mathematics and the humanities.



Previous Fellows have gone on to win prestigious awards, published their research, received further research funding from external sources, and extended their global networks.



“During my tenure, I had unrestricted access to institutional resources, expertise, internet services, and library platforms. I completed a structured study analysing the suitability of implementing genomic research in Liberia—the first study of its kind for Liberia.

“I collaborated with a colleague at the University of Oxford to submit two competitive grant applications on public health emergencies and outbreak response. Most importantly, I was able to explore and identify common research priorities and capacity strengthening opportunities for collaborations among my colleagues from Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily West Africa. We intend to continue the engagements in order to harness those opportunities for the growth of effective and sustainable research space.”

Dr. Stephen B. Kennedy, Senior AfOx Visiting Fellow

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

AfOx Catalyst Grants: kick-starting new collaborations

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

AfOx Catalyst Grants

AfOx Catalyst Grants provide funding for the development of new collaborative research between researchers based in African institutions and at the University of Oxford. Catalyst Grants are open to all disciplines and applications can be made throughout the year. Partly in response to climate impacts of academic travel, the catalyst grants have been expanded to include both travel grants and starter grants that support new partnerships without the need of travel.

The AfOx Travel Grants programme was established in 2016 with the aim of supporting new collaborations between researchers based in African institutions and the University of Oxford by allowing researchers to meet either in Oxford or an African institution to work together on an emerging research area of mutual interest.

The AfOx Starter Grants fund activities such as the early-phase development of ideas, feasibility studies, public engagement, and conducting of primary research with the aim of developing sustainable partnerships and strengthening applications for longer-term fellowships and funding.



In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme

AfOx Catalyst Grants: kick-starting new collaborations

Research Development Awards

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Research Development Awards

From developing new antibacterial compounds to combat antibiotic resistance to exploring the origins of humankind, 16 AfOx Research Development awardees are creating a more sustainable future for all.

The AfOx Research Development Awards are a competitive pump-priming fund aimed at supporting previous Travel Grant recipients and Visiting Fellows to stimulate larger collaborative projects that will strengthen Africa-Oxford partnerships and make the collaborating partners competitive for future major awards.

So far, we have awarded 8 AfOx Research Development Awards of up to £50,000 each to previous AfOx Visiting Fellows and Travel Grant recipients.

Each project has a lead researcher from an African institution and a University of Oxford collaborator. The awards address at least one Sustainable Development Goal through their research and aim to generate societal benefits from their research.

AfOx Research Development Award: Childhood Cancer Surveillance in Southern Africa by Mazvita Muchengeti and Maxwell Parkin

The Childhood Cancer Surveillance in Southern Africa project established national childhood cancer registries in five Southern African counties- Eswatini, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. With the aim of recording additional information on stage at diagnosis, treatments and follow up in these centres.

As part of the project Funded by ReDA cancer registrars in the five countries received special training on childhood cancer registration and staging. This training made a significant impact to the completeness and quality of the database by increasing the information on stage at diagnosis registration and contribution to revealing the childhood cancer profile within these countries. Following this initial support, two of the five countries (Mozambique and Zimbabwe) have been able to secure funding from the Bloomberg Data for Health Initiative to continue their effort on childhood cancer registration, among other cancer control programmes.

Ms Natasha Abraham, SA NCR the project manager was recognised by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a regional expert on childhood cancer registration.

Discussions, debates and networking

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Insakas

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

Globinars on the Future of Archaeology in Africa and the Diaspora

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

We believe conversations and sharing of knowledge are essential to translate research excellence to action and real world impact.

AfOx is home to a range of events that bring together researchers, students, alumni, the wider university community and guests from around the world to share ideas and knowledge about Africa-focused research.

We are tremendously proud to have hosted events in the UK and in Africa with heads of state and leaders in businesses, humanities, medicine and social sciences who have been generous in sharing their wisdom with members of our community worldwide.

Insakas

One of our goals when we first started AfOx in 2016 was to bring everyone in Oxford interested in Africa under one platform to exchange ideas and meet each other. We also wanted to give researchers focussed on African research a platform to share their ideas and grow their networks.

An AfOx insaka typically features speakers from completely different disciplines who come together to present their research with members of the AfOx community.



Book launch for 'Daughters of Africa' by Gina Din Kariuki graced by HE Manoah Espisu Kenya High Commission and Arumna Oteh former Vice President of the World Bank.

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Insakas

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

Globinars on the Future of Archaeology in Africa and the Diaspora

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Inspired by the Bemba term for a 'place to gather', the AfOx insakas are a home for lively discussions and networking.

The COVID-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to host the insakas in the virtual world and expand the number of speakers and participants. We have now transitioned to Hybrid events with participation across the world.

Insaka highlights



Dr Machilu Zimba, Policy Advisor at the University of Oxford presenting at an AfOx insaka

October 2022

Colonialism and Equitable access to Education



Watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/BKDmZhcjwN0?feature=share>

December 2022

Prospects of Just Transitions in Africa



Watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/SN4ClrNy4l?feature=share>

January 2023

Storytelling by Africa Women and Africa's development



Watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/y4hLt-3kyzo?feature=share>

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Insakas

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

Globinars on the Future of Archaeology in Africa and the Diaspora

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

The Focus on Research Africa (FORA) Conference provides a multidisciplinary platform for researchers and students across African countries and the UK to share ideas and solutions on a wide range of challenges and opportunities facing the continent.

Along with talks and panel discussions by leading researchers and practitioners around the world, FORA also provides a platform for African graduate students to showcase their research in the form of poster presentations.



“It was great to get questions and feedback on my work with wildlife rangers and elephant poaching in Zimbabwe. The comments and questions from people in completely different fields were particularly useful in helping me think about how best to communicate research to a wider audience.”

Timothy Kupier, DPhil Candidate in Zoology, winner of the FORA poster competition



<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzDTIen1TPsIXZRRGWxf8IWEIbENgIE1E>

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Insakas

Focus on Research Africa (FORA)

Globinars on the Future of Archaeology in Africa and the Diaspora

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Special features

Archeology Globinars

In the wake of global debates on the restitution of African cultural heritage, we have partnered with institutions across the world to explore how archaeology can be reframed to provide models of alternative knowledge that could advance sustainable development goals.

So far we have hosted 5 Globinars.

The Globinars are going beyond virtual events and are being studied in classrooms by postgraduate students at Turkana Basin Institute in Kenya and at Rice University, Texas, USA.

Following the Globinar discussions about the challenges faced by early career archaeologists to fund costly archaeology procedures such as carbon dating, a group of senior archaeologists are in the process of setting up a fund to support archaeology students and early career researchers to access labs and expensive equipment.

Redefining Democracy conference series

Redesigning Democracy facilitate conversations that pushes normative discourses on African politics towards alternative narratives that incorporate creative dissidence, popular culture, histories and emergent forms of everyday innovative social change.

The conference adopts an expansive view of (electoral) politics in hope of shifting the parochial binary discourses of power often articulated around masses vs elites by critically centring otherwise marginal voices and actors.



“The globinars engage experts from around the globe about fundamental issues at the heart of archaeology and its role in society. They are reflective and innovative interventions providing direction for the future of archaeological research. Over the next few months, they will continue to foster global academic exchanges, planting the seeds of collaborative research topics and at the same time, providing material to rethink and reshape the curriculum.”

Prof Shadreck Chirikure, British Academy Global Professor, School of Archaeology, University of Oxford & Professor of Archaeology, University of Cape Town

Catch up on the
Archeology globinars here:
[https://www.youtube.com/
live/bNbjX51Wb_I?
feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/live/bNbjX51Wb_I?feature=share)

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

AfOx partners

AfOx Team

Looking at the future

When the ideas that led to the formation of AfOx were first being discussed in 2016 we quite deliberately avoided the idea of ‘developing a strategy’ ‘at an early stage. At least in the sense of laying out what Oxford could ‘offer’ to colleagues across the continent. Rather, we wanted any strategy to emerge from conversations with African academic colleagues and research leaders and for it to reflect the principles of co-creation and equitable partnership. Over the last seven years we have worked with an ever-increasing number of friends and colleagues to develop the ideas that emerged from these conversations and some of the results are summarised in this document.

One big idea that was always going to be more difficult to deliver on, because of the resource implications, was the plan to markedly increasing the number of African graduate students in Oxford. Nonetheless, once we were up and running we began to work on this with colleagues across the university and further afield. We are thrilled that this has come to fruition this year with the announcement of a major investment of around 50 million dollars to support the AfOx Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme. Through this we aim to bring over 400 African masters students to Oxford over the next six years.

Looking forward the ambitious plans for the scholarship programme will be an immediate priority. However, we will not rest on our laurels, rather we will continue to work with colleagues in Oxford and across the continent to look for new opportunities to deliver on our major long-term vision of making Africa a strategic priority for the university as a whole. This is not primarily based on the idea of global good citizenship, important though this is, but rather on a recognition that the rapid demographic, economic and technological transitions to come will mean that what happens in Africa will have a profound influence on the whole world and any global institution must recognise this. Immediate areas of focus will be on expanding our support to innovators and entrepreneurs from our initial focus on health to all areas relevant to the continent flourishing. We will work with the increasing number of AfOx alumni, including by expanding the Ubuntu Careers Transition Program, to develop a vibrant network committed to building exciting African futures. Finally, we will continue to expand our reach with an aim of eventually supporting collaborations in every country in the continent.

We look forward to working with our many wonderful colleagues across the continent and in Oxford to realise the vision of Africa truly becoming a strategic priority for the whole of the University of Oxford.



Dr Anne Makena

Co-director and co-founder, AfOx

In this section →

Education: shaping the next generation of leaders

Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

| AfOx partners

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Thank you

To our partner Colleges, AfOx Steering Committee members, partner institutions and friends across Africa, Oxford and elsewhere - thank you for your support, time, expertise and participation in our programmes and events.

Ngiyabonga

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āmeseginalehu

Obrigado

shukraann

Asante

Merci

wazviita

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Innovation: translating ideas into real world solutions

Research: accelerating progress towards the SDGs

Discussions, debates and networking on all things Africa in Oxford

Looking at the future

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