

**ACTION ON FUNDING FOR AFRICAN-LED EDUCATION RESEARCH
CONFERENCE SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
FUNDERS, POLICY MAKERS, UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCHERS**



July 2021

1. OVERVIEW

This report summarises key recommendations from a virtual conference organised by the charity [Education Sub Saharan Africa \(ESSA\)](#) and the [Research for Equitable Access and Learning \(REAL\) Centre](#) at the University of Cambridge on **24th June 2021**, focusing on the theme: **Action on Funding for African-led Education Research**. The conference brought together approximately **300** education stakeholders (including researchers, donors, policy actors and practitioners) from Africa and beyond to share ideas on ways forward for funding African-led education research. It provided a forum for presentations and a discussion of:

- a. Funding opportunities, requirements and expectations of funders based in and/or outside Africa.
- b. Barriers researchers face in accessing funding and the strategies they use to overcome them.
- c. How funding policies can be improved to better support researchers based in Africa.
- d. Whether/how funding is aligned to education policies and priorities in Africa.

The next sections of this report will focus on:

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2. HIGHLIGHT OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The conference provided an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in fruitful deliberations which generated valuable ideas to improve access to funding for education researchers in Africa. These ideas encompassed how different stakeholders including funders, policy makers, universities and researchers can improve their work to facilitate this process. Stakeholders reiterated the insufficient funding for education research in Africa and the need for collaborative effort to improve the situation. In particular, providing mentorship and training in grant writing and project management support for early career and female researchers, building trust in relationships, reducing government interference in the running of higher education institutions, addressing funding conditionalities that work against African institutions and including more researchers from Africa as principal investigators, were discussed. [Detailed information about recommendations can be found in Section 8, on page 19.](#)

3. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of high-quality research evidence in addressing development challenges is not in doubt. Through research - including those catalogued in the [African Education Research Database \(AERD\)](#) developed by ESSA and the REAL Centre - insights and new ideas are generated to enhance understandings of different socio-economic issues and solve pertinent problems facing communities.



Nevertheless, researchers – especially those based in Africa – are facing huge financial challenges which hinder their ability to provide evidence to inform education debates and decision-making. Evidence from the database indicates that only about 10% of education studies in this context receive funding ([Asare, Mitchell and Rose, 2020](#)). To facilitate the achievement of continental and global development goals as stipulated in policy documents such as the African Union’s [CESA 16-25](#) and [Agenda 2063](#), issues around research funding need greater prominence in national, continental and global policy discussions.

The need for greater investment in African education research was strongly verbalised at the [Leaders in African Education Research](#) workshop organised in Ethiopia by the REAL Centre in partnership with the Centre for Global Development and the University of Addis Ababa, in June 2019. This workshop brought together stakeholders from across Africa to discuss issues of research priorities and the challenges researchers were facing.

This need for additional research funding is even more urgent now, considering the educational challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The widespread closures of education institutions and the consequent effects, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, calls for increased efforts to understand these challenges and mitigate their effects, to avoid losing the considerable progress that has been made in education over the past two decades.

In this report, a summary and key recommendations from the conference are provided to facilitate improvements in funding for African-led education research. It starts with an overview of registrants, followed by the opening remarks, presentations, and interactive session. The last two sections will outline recommendations for stakeholders, including funders, policy makers and researchers, and then the conclusion and next steps.

4. OVERVIEW OF REGISTRANTS

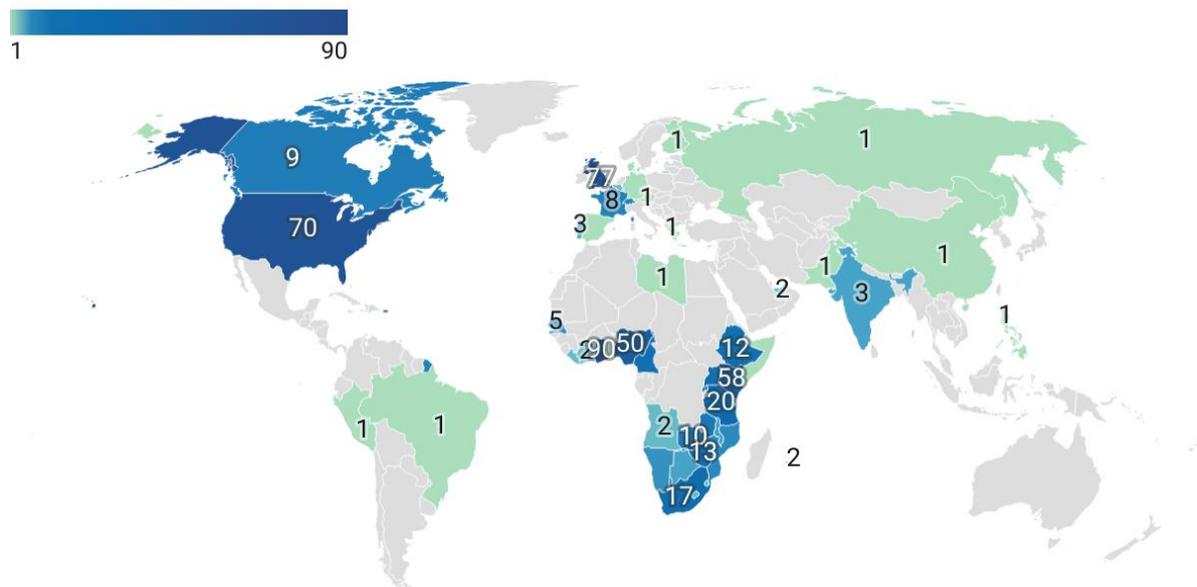
The conference attracted registrants from various institutions worldwide, including tertiary education/research institutions, funders, governmental and inter-governmental organisations, big and small non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc. (please see Appendix A for list of participating institutions).

In terms of geographical spread, it is interesting and positive to see people register from five continents including Africa, Europe, South America, North America and Asia, as presented in Figure 1. For those continents that had no or little representation, that was possibly because the different time zones restricted their registration.

It is important to stress that Ghana having the highest number of participants overall (90) is not by chance. It is the country where ESSA has the strongest links/contacts. Also, in person publicity was undertaken, including sharing information about the conference at a local workshop, posting adverts on university campuses and meeting with academics.

The high number of participants demonstrates a positive sign of what can be done through remote platforms, enabling more inclusive participation. Clearly, the conference would not have attracted such a high number of participants from across five continents if it was held in person (e.g., the time and cost of arranging for visas, flights and accommodation can be deterrents).

Figure 1: Geographical spread of registrants



5. OPENING REMARKS



Speaker 1: Dr Pauline Essah

Dr Pauline Essah, Director of Research and Insight at ESSA, opened the conference. She welcomed participants and spoke briefly about ESSA, indicating that the organisation works with universities and colleges across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to enter / create meaningful employment. The role of ESSA in this process is that of data and evidence generation, gathering and sharing, to enable these stakeholders to make decisions that will have positive impact on young people and society.

The focus on universities and colleges, according to Dr Essah, is the belief that teaching and research in these education sectors provide the knowledge, skills and innovation needed for other sectors of society. For these sectors to perform their role effectively, funding needs to be made available to researchers working in these sectors and other research institutions. However, researchers especially those based in Africa, are facing enormous financial challenges which hinder their work.

Sharing her experiences of supporting researchers to secure funding, as well as working for a UK Institute to provide UK government funding to African researchers, she acknowledged the difficulties on both sides – the frustration of researchers to get funding and the volume of work and difficult decisions that funders must deal with in awarding funds. She emphasised that the conference is not a platform to apportion blame, but to collaboratively find solutions.

In closing her remarks, Dr Essah mentioned that the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge is a key partner of ESSA, developing the AERD and co-organising the conference on funding for African education researchers.



Speaker 2: Prof Pauline Rose

Professor Pauline Rose, the Director of the REAL Centre, said the Centre conducts research that has policy relevance to improve access and learning in sub-Saharan African and beyond. To do this, members of the centre work in partnership with colleagues on the ground, including researchers, NGOs, policy makers and funders. She reiterated the collaboration with ESSA in developing the AERD which is helping to raise the visibility and use of Africa research, and has ignited the drive to do more - including making sure that funding is more available and accessible to researchers in Africa.

Professor Rose traced the theme for the conference to a workshop held in June 2019 in Addis Ababa for selected researchers whose publications feature in the AERD. According to her, a key point from that discussion was that there is funding available for research but very few researchers based in Africa are able to access these funds, hence the need for this conference on funding, to identify the barriers and solutions.

6. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

In this section, we present highlights from the four presentations.

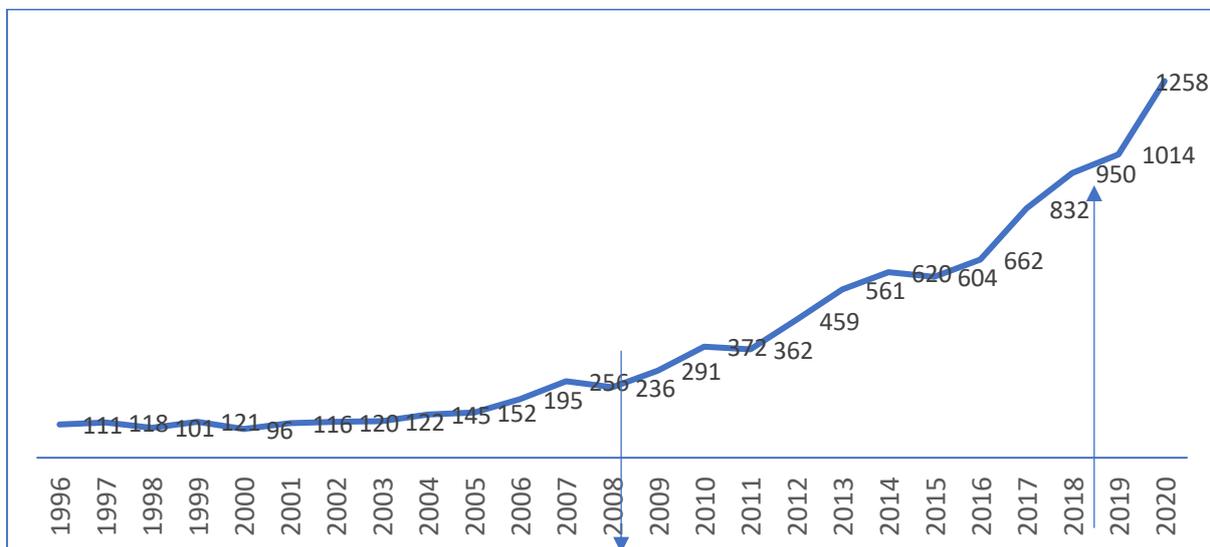
Challenges and strategies to secure funding for research



Speaker 3: Prof. Tassew Woldehanna

Professor Tassew Woldehanna, President of Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia, gave the keynote address. He indicated that AAU is a good case study, since it faces similar challenges to other universities in Ethiopia and most African countries. Providing a brief history of the University, Professor Woldehanna said it was established in 1950, is one of the oldest universities in Ethiopia, and a pioneer in research in the country. He mentioned that government support for research is quite recent. Until 2012, all funded research was supported by grants from donor organisations. When the University started receiving research allocation from government, it established 28 research thematic areas, including 5 in education. Following the funding reform, the University’s research output has improved consistently. He presented a graph which suggested that research outputs increased from 459 in 2013 to 1258 in 2020, in line with the funding reform.

Figure 2: Trend in number of Scopus indexed scholarly output of AAU – 25 years progress



Challenges

Like most universities in Africa, funding for research is very low across all disciplines and education is among those receiving the lowest. Professor Woldehanna outlined some of the reasons accounting for this:

- Policy makers' belief of the use of research to inform policy is very low, affecting the amount of investment.
- Restrictive policies on collaboration with researchers based outside Africa.
- Low industry funding for research – some disciplines do not receive any funding.
- Low staff capacity to develop grant winning proposals.
- Some international research organisations and donors do not trust African researchers because they think the quality of research is low.
- Some research funding organisations attach lots of conditionalities. These might be appropriate for universities in the Western world, but for many universities in Africa, those conditionalities are very difficult to meet.
- Consultancy companies whose roots are in developed countries dominate social science research in Africa.
- Financial procedures and procurement regulations for public servants are blanketly applied to research institutions (e.g., sometimes, they are unable to procure within project period).
- Many African universities are not as autonomous to run their own business, as they are in developed countries.

Strategies

Professor Woldehanna shared some strategies to improve access to funding by researchers from Africa, focusing on internal and external strategies.

Internal strategies

- Researchers to promote the importance of evidence-based policy to increase public funding for research.
- Universities to improve their research governance systems to ensure smooth procurement and recruitment of research support staff.
- Governments to allow universities to work autonomously, be accountable to their own board of governance and develop regulations that suit their situation.
- Public funding to increase for research development and infrastructure.
- Research institutions to develop viable and sustainable resource mobilisation strategies.

External strategies

- Removal of funding conditionalities such as matching fund, and overhead limits.
- Capacity building of researchers through training and mentoring programmes.

- Support for long term partnerships between universities in Africa and beyond.
- Strengthen and establish centres of excellence across universities (such as the African Research Universities Alliance - ARUA) and disciplines.
- Support universities to develop resource mobilisation strategies.
- African based researchers to be principal investigators for research taking place in the region.
- Management of funds should not be left to university and college authorities alone. Instead, funders should appoint representatives to such management teams, to form joint-management teams that will be involved in every step of the fund management to make sure that the funding reaches researchers who need it.

Funding for African education research – what do we know from the African Education Research Database?



Speaker 4: Dr Rafael Mitchell

Dr Rafael Mitchell (University of Bristol) and Dr Samuel Asare (ESSA) co-presented analyses of research in the [African Education Research Database](#). Dr Mitchell introduced the database by outlining its objectives:

- Increase the visibility and impact of education research from sub-Saharan Africa.
- Strengthen the use of African research evidence in education policy and practice.
- Support the community of education researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders in the region.

He encouraged researchers and other education stakeholders to use the database, which serves multiple purposes. It has been used by various international organisations, including UNESCO, VVOB, FCDO, Jacobs Foundation, etc. As an academic, Rafael not only uses the database in his research, but also in teaching (e.g., identifying texts for inclusion on reading lists). He encourages colleagues, research collaborators, students and others to use the database, as it provides a means of easily accessing African scholarship to inform education research, policy and practice.

Analysis of the database so far has led to a better understanding of the geographic and thematic focus of education research in sub-Saharan Africa ([Rose et al. 2019](#)), its quality, visibility and accessibility ([Mitchell et al. 2020](#); [Asare et al. 2021](#)), factors such as collaboration which affects its production ([Asare et al. 2020](#)), and insights on issues of substantive concern such as education of children with disabilities in the region ([Singal et al. 2021](#)).



Speaker 5: Dr Samuel Asare

Presenting the findings, Dr Asare corroborated the point made in the keynote address that funding for research in Africa is low and mostly provided by external agencies and institutions. When funding is provided, it supports collaboration between researchers from Africa and those from developed countries where most of the funders are also based (see Table 1 for top funders of research in the database and Appendix B for a full list of funders). He mentioned that there is very little support for research involving collaboration between researchers within the same country or between different countries in Africa.

Dr Asare said that most research and funding focus on primary education, while areas such as early childhood education and technical and vocational education receive little focus. He argued that the high attention given to primary education is due to poor learning outcomes among school children in recent times. He revealed the stark reality of gender inequity in research production and access to funding, with low representation of female researchers.

Table 1: Top funders of research in the African Education Research Database

Inter/governmental institution	Foundation/charity
Department for International Development (DFID, now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - FCDO), UK	Hewlett Foundation
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Carnegie Corporation of New York
UNICEF	Wellcome Trust
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, UK	Aga Khan Foundation
World Bank	RTI International
Netherlands Fellowship Programme	Gates Foundation
Irish Aid	Google
Norwegian Education Trust Fund	Spencer Foundation
Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund	Leverhulme Trust

In conclusion, four key points were outlined:

- Enable equitable access to funding – particularly for female researchers.
- Funding is needed to promote collaboration among researchers based in Africa.

- Mobilise resources from government and private sector in Africa, as well as agencies and charities based outside Africa.
- Funding is needed to build the research capacity of early career academics through involvement in research projects.

Funding opportunities for education researchers based in Africa and expectations of funders



Speaker 6: Ms Claudia Frittelli

Ms Claudia Frittelli, Program Officer for Higher Education and Research in Africa at Carnegie Corporation of New York, spoke about programmes of the Corporation in Africa and how researchers can engage funders to improve access to funding. She said the Corporation was founded in 1911 by Andrew Carnegie with a vision to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. Their Higher Education and Research in Africa program works in three main areas:

- Support for early career researchers.
- Academic diaspora linkages.
- Higher education policy.

Sharing findings from their report on activities in the last decade, she indicated that 66% of grants and 59% of total funding are made to African institutions. In terms of the type of organisations they support, the majority are universities and higher education support organisations. Sharing her experiences of working with higher education institutions in Africa, she noted the main challenge is access to data on higher education, including administrative data. Apart from South Africa, where the government requires institutions to provide data as a basis for funds allocation, this is not the case in other countries.

She outlined five points for researchers to consider in working with foundations:

- Study the strategies of foundations and align proposals or requests with their interest.
- Take opportunities to meet representatives of interested foundations at conferences and local events since many projects start from informal conversations.
- Identify niche areas and develop a strong message to project this to funders.
- Expand reach and networks and consider collaboration.
- Include operations, finance and administration early-on in partnerships, so that proposal narratives align to the budget.

Ms Frittelli encouraged participants to access information about the **Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program** via this link <https://www.iie.org/programs/carnegie-african-diaspora-fellowship-program>.

How government funds education research in a particular African country: Senegal



*Speaker 7: Prof Ndèye
Coumba Toure Kane*

Professor Ndèye Coumba Toure Kane, Rector of the University of Sine Saloum El-Hadj Ibrahima NIASS (USSEIN) and First Adviser in charge of Partnerships, Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation of Senegal, using Senegal as a case study, presented how government funds education research in Africa.

She stressed the importance of higher education in the socioeconomic development of Senegal and mentioned some of the challenges facing the sector:

- High demand for access to higher education.
- Inadequate and undiversified funding regimes to promote vibrant research and innovation infrastructure.
- Absence of private sector funding and competitive grants. Public universities and research institutes predominantly depend on dwindling public subsidies and unpredictable international donor support.
- Low internal efficiency in higher education.
- Higher education institutions operate with great autonomy, but few with responsibility, accountability or national coordination.
- The central control of the subsector has suffered from a lack of technical, logistical and human resources.
- The information management system for the sector is low.
- Lack of a formal mechanism for evaluating the quality of programmes and institutions.
- Low use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, and in steering and governance system.

Professor Toure Kane highlighted some initiatives the government is undertaking to address the challenges outlined above. Key among them is the Programme of Governance and Financing of Higher Education, which set outs a performance contract between the government and public universities in Senegal. In the contract, the government agrees to grant more funding to universities when the latter improve performance in specific areas. The performance contract has five objectives:

1. Improving the internal efficiency of universities (e.g., retention and repletion rates for undergraduate students).
2. Improving the use of e-learning (e.g., number of courses available online, trainings delivered effectively using ICT).
3. Improving the quality of education (e.g., the number of programmes submitted for accreditation to the quality assurance agency, and evidence of functional quality assurance mechanism in the university).

4. Strengthening links with the labour market (e.g., the percentage of vocational training programmes credited with a work experience, and the percentage of courses offered by professionals).
5. Improving the institution's governance (e.g., the percentage of resources generated by the institution in its overall budget, the implementation of a system to complete enrolment a week before classes start, and the implementation of a control system to reduce the number of failing students).

In addition to the general funding for universities, the government provides funding for female researchers and those involved in applied research.

She closed her presentation by laying out points that can enhance access to funding by researchers in sub-Saharan Africa:

- Mentorship programmes to build capacity of early career researchers in grant writing and project management.
- Development of transdisciplinary research to enhance collaboration and funding opportunities.
- Collaboration between universities and departments across Africa.
- Strategic involvement of alumni to support research.

7. INTERACTIVE SESSION: KEY CONCERNS OF AFRICAN RESEARCHERS AND THE KEY ACTIONS BY FUNDERS

The aim of the session, chaired by Professor Pauline Rose, was to provide space for researchers to share challenges they face and for funders to provide some initiatives they are undertaking to address those challenges. Participants responded to a poll: 'what do you see as the biggest challenge facing African-based researchers in obtaining research funding?' Three pre-selected researchers and funders shared reflections on the poll findings and what is being done to address the issues raised. The majority of respondents identified **insufficient funding focusing on African-led research** as the main barrier.

Reflections from researchers

Dr Might Kojo Abreh from the University of Cape Coast in Ghana noted that insufficient funding for African-led research resonates with other presentations and comments from participants, and shows its importance to researchers. Reflecting on the **insufficient awareness of funding opportunities**, he suggested that universities could build a database of funders and dedicate a unit to



review this database regularly and share opportunities with researchers. He also indicated that the Association of African Universities could support members by sharing information about funding opportunities.

To address **misalignment between thematic area of calls and proposals**, Dr Abreh suggested the need for researchers to engage more with funders to understand the latter's priorities. At the country level, he indicated researchers should have more engagement with policy makers directly, as well as study policy documents to identify key priority areas of government. Like previous speakers, he mentioned the need to support **early career academics** through mentorship and training programmes.

Dr Abreh concluded by stressing the need for universities to create environments that facilitate production of good quality research through manageable workload, access to good quality journals, and administrative support.

Dr Anne Marie Kagwesage from the University of Rwanda focused on **insufficient awareness of funding opportunities** and indicated that this reflects the reality on the ground. According to her, academics in her university have limited access to information about funding opportunities, which limits their chance to be involved in research.

In addition, the majority of grants target senior academics who are mostly busy and may not even see the call or see it very late so will not respond. She suggested the need to **extend funding opportunities to early career academics** to partner with experienced colleagues. This arrangement builds mentorship into the research process so that inexperienced researchers can develop skills in writing for grants and publications, as well as project management.

Finally, she acknowledged the priorities of various funders, but encouraged them to be flexible and consider related topics for support.

Dr Maurice Mutisya from the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Kenya focused on **collaboration** and mentioned that researchers based in Africa often do not have a strong consortium to apply for big grants. According to him, most grants come from external researchers who collaborate with African researchers. One area to address this is for institutions in Africa to develop a clear research strategy and support young academics to work with experienced colleagues to implement.

He acknowledged the work of foundations in supporting early career researchers and suggested that these initiations should provide opportunities for collaboration with researchers based outside Africa. Reflecting on **insufficient awareness of funding opportunities**, Dr Mutisya noted two challenges – **not getting information about the call, or getting it too late**.

He noted trust as very important and encouraged researchers from Africa to build trust with funders. To do this, he mentioned that researchers should be more accountable for resources they receive and ensure they deliver what are specified in research contracts.

Dr Mutisya also mentioned mentorship for early career researchers and a database linking researchers with one another and with funders.

Reflections from funders

Representatives from three funder organisations comprising Gates Foundation, MasterCard Foundation and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO - formerly the Department for International Development (DFID)) shared what they are doing to address some of the concerns raised by researchers.

Dr Asyia Kasmi, Global Education Policy Lead at Gates Foundation, mentioned the global education team focuses on foundation numeracy and literacy in the early grade school. The foundation takes equity, diversity, and inclusion seriously. According to her, there are ongoing conversations around analyses of who receives funding and who is shortlisted for interview. This process will help the foundation to strengthen inclusive practice in their work.

Their work with researchers from Africa has focused on practitioner applied research, asking questions around who will use the findings and how research can improve teaching and learning of foundational numeracy and literacy skills. Reflecting on her conversations with researchers and readings of work from Africa, Dr Kasmi noted limited information on issues such as evidence informed strategies at national levels and pedagogy packs to support teaching and learning at foundational level.

There is a new focus to work directly with African research institutions and organisations that are based in Africa and to provide research support to institutions in Africa. This will involve supporting proposal writing and organisation development phases. She indicated that they are working to know African researchers – their priorities, ideas and asks – through forums such as this, their website and published papers.

Finally, she mentioned their commitment to include more people of black and ethnic minority backgrounds on their management team and ask the same from research grantees (including principal investigators, first authors for publications, etc).

Ms Mallory Baxter from the MasterCard Foundation mentioned that in 2018, the Foundation launched a strategy – Young African Works – with an ambitious goal of enabling 30 million people finding dignified and fulfilling work by 2030. They have restructured the organisation to make it more African-led. For example, leadership is based in Africa, they have opened seven country offices with the vast majority of staff based in Africa and set a target to ensure 75% partnerships are with African institutions – institutions incorporated in Africa, operated in Africa, and owned/run by Africans.

According to Ms Baxter, the focus of the foundation is to promote equal partnerships and they want to challenge the existing power structure by putting African institutions at the forefront of programmes and projects. The research strategy of the foundation is built around four pillars including research systems strengthening. This strand of research promotes

understanding of underlying data systems, and knowledge creation opportunities for publications and conferences. This is meant to provide opportunities for young researchers to develop their careers.

Ms Laura Savage from the FCDO, said the office has substantially increased funding for research and evidence in the past 7 years. She noted that the conversations at the conference made her reflect on some of the things FCDO does as well as those they do not do.

In terms of what they do, she acknowledged the conditionalities associated with funding and indicated FCDO will explore better ways to communicate to researchers. They can then make it clear for example, why they demand a lot of paperwork, why they push for policy orientated research, why there is a perception that they insist on South-North partnerships.

She mentioned a new programme of the UK government on **‘the what works hub on global education’**, which speaks to some of the issues raised in the conference, such as availability of funding for research and utilisation of research. The programme will commence at the end of 2021 and will require actors in the *global south* to lead and drive it. To align the programme with the needs of researchers, she asked researchers to address two main questions:

1. What will be the easiest way to find out about this programme?
2. What forms of partnerships and procurement do you find easiest to engage in or to be a part of?

Please send your responses to researchenquiries@essa-africa.org

Discussion of questions and comments from participants

Participants engaged actively throughout the presentations by sharing insightful comments and asking pertinent questions. The engagement focused on areas including funding, research partnerships and publications, and evidence use. It was acknowledged that funding is not the only challenge facing researchers from Africa, but it is a good starting point for other issues such evidence use – we need to generate the evidence before we can push for its use, and this requires funding.



A participant suggested that stakeholders should reflect more about what funding conditionalities mean for researchers in the Global South, to improve their practice. It is mostly viewed that researchers in the Global South are familiar with the same conditionalities that are used in other contexts, particularly where the source of funding emerges. These conditionalities include prohibiting

practices in some African countries such as complicated ethical approval process and associated cost.

Another challenge facing researchers is access to funding information and programmes and opportunities for capacity development. Early career researchers, especially, need more support to develop grant writing and project management skills, as well as opportunities to connect with experienced researchers in Africa and abroad.

There was a concern about the high rejection rate of funding bids. This speaks to the fact that funding opportunities are far below demand. To address this, donors and African governments as well as the private sector should make more funding available. In addition, researchers are encouraged to build relationships with funders before submitting a proposal and be clear on funders' strategy and criteria of the call. A participant expressed difficulty in building relationships which mostly favour the well-connected and outgoing personalities. This can be addressed by attending conferences and other events for education stakeholders.

Participants were interested in ways in which the AERD could enhance access to funding. The response was that AERD does not address funding specifically, but highlights education topics/themes that receive less research and funding. This will hopefully encourage funders to direct funding to these areas and help researchers to focus on less researched, priority topics. It can also help funders to identify African researchers with expertise on specific topics.

In addition to funding, there were conversations about research partnerships and publications. Participants acknowledged the value of South-South and North-South partnerships but were concerned about issues of inequity in these partnerships. It was suggested that there should be a model that promotes equal involvement of partners from conception to publication. Identification of research idea, writing of proposal, implementation and reporting should be more inclusive. To increase research publications from sub-Saharan Africa, it was suggested institutions incentivise academics. For example, Addis Ababa University and other research universities in Africa use publications as a basis for promotion. Here, early career researchers need support to improve their publication skills through training and mentorship.

Information about 3 opportunities under the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (GEM) was shared with participants:

1. Spotlight Report series (in partnership with ADEA) on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa, which has 4 focus countries per year. Universities will be invited to bid for national reports in the second round in 2022.
2. A non-Africa specific call for background paper proposals for the global report, whose forthcoming themes are technology (in 2023) and leadership (in 2024).



3. The GEM Report fellowship offers career building opportunities for 4-5 fellows per year. For information about future calls please visit <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/fellowship>.

Other relevant information about funding include:

1. UKRI: Global Challenges Research Fund - <https://www.ukri.org/our-work/collaborating-internationally/global-challenges-research-fund>
2. The African Academy of Sciences - <https://www.aasciences.africa/call/arise>
3. African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) - <https://aercafrica.org>
4. Advance Africa - <https://www.advance-africa.com>

In closing this session, Professor Pauline Rose stressed some of the key points as **mentorship programmes for early career researchers, addressing conditionalities that work against African institutions, promoting South-South collaboration and how to build trust in relationships.**

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

This section presents recommendations from a virtual conference held on **24th June 2021** by Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA) and the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge, focusing on: **Action on funding for African-led education research**. It brought together more than 300 education stakeholders from Africa and beyond to discuss ways to enhance access to funding for education researchers based in sub-Saharan Africa.

The conference was held in response to a recommendation from an earlier workshop on [Leaders in African Education Research](#) held in Ethiopia in June 2019 by the REAL Centre, in partnership with the Centre for Global Development and the University of Addis Ababa. During the workshop, participants identified access to funding for education research as a critical challenge facing researchers in Africa.

The recommendations presented here are drawn from various activities of the 2021 conference, including presentations, twitter posts and Zoom chat. It is organised around specific stakeholders comprising funders, policy makers, universities, and researchers.

Recommendations for funders

- Address funding conditionalities that work against African institutions, such as asking receiving institutions to contribute to the project budget as a basis for funding and requesting documentation and data which are difficult for institutions to meet.
- Management of funds should not be left to university and college authorities alone, rather funders should appoint representatives to such management teams, to form joint-management teams that will be involved in every step of the fund management to make sure that it reaches researchers who need it.
- Promote equitable access to funding by making funding available specifically to early career and female academics in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Increase funding to support early career researchers through mentorships and training in areas such as grant writing, project management and writing for publication.
- Enhance interactions with researchers in Africa, to better understand their needs and challenges (**note:** ESSA and the REAL Centre can help convene such interactions).
- Support long term partnerships between universities in Africa and beyond.
- Support universities to develop effective fundraising strategies through training.
- Implement funding frameworks that put researchers in Africa as principal investigators.
- Use funding to promote collaboration among researchers based in Africa.

Recommendations for policy makers

- Universities should be given greater autonomy in their operations including constituting the board of governance and developing regulations.
- Alternative research funding models should be explored. For instance, Senegal funds higher education through performance contract – the government agrees to grant more funding to universities where universities commit to improve performance in specified areas.
- Government should proactively seek external support from partners and donors for research.
- Procurement exceptions/flexibilities should be made available to universities to facilitate easy acquisition of resources for research.

Recommendations for universities

- Improve research governance systems to ensure smooth procurement and recruitment of research staff.
- Develop viable and sustainable fundraising strategy.
- Strengthen and establish centres of excellence across universities and disciplines such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA).
- Ensure strategic involvement of alumni to support research.
- Develop a database of funders and dedicate a unit to review this database regularly and share opportunities with researchers.
- Create environments that facilitate production of good quality research, such as manageable workload, access to good quality journals, and administrative support.
- Develop a clear research strategy and provide resources for young academics to work with experienced ones to implement it.

Recommendations for researchers

- Promote the importance of evidence-based policy to increase public funding for research through closer engagements with policy makers.
- Build trust with funders by becoming more accountable for resources received and deliver what is specified in research contracts.
- Study strategies of foundations to align proposals or requests with their interest.
- Take opportunities to meet representatives of interested foundations at conferences and local events since many projects start from informal conversations.
- Identify niche areas and develop a strong message to project this to funders.
- Expand reach and networks and consider collaboration with other researchers and institutions in Africa (and beyond).
- Include operations, finance and administration early-on in partnership so proposal narratives align to the budget.
- Develop interdisciplinary research to enhance collaboration and funding opportunities.

9. NEXT STEPS

The conference provided a platform for education stakeholders including researchers, funders, policy makers and practitioners to discuss and identify ways to improve access to funding for researchers from Africa. It identified key recommendations for stakeholders. These recommendations will form the basis for further engagements with stakeholders to inform policies and practices to enhance access to funding.

For example, ESSA and REAL Centre will arrange follow up discussions with a few funders regarding implementing the practical actions and solutions suggested, for future funding calls focusing on African-led research. Also, there will be conversations with early career researchers to better understand their needs and to provide support such as training on grant writing. Furthermore, blogs will be written on the recommendations and shared through the communication channels of ESSA and the REAL centre.

ESSA will share funding opportunities, workshops and events (when available) with attendees who sign up to receive the ESSA newsletter - <https://essa-africa.org/node/7> (you can unsubscribe at any time).

10. AUTHORS

Samuel Asare, Pauline Essah, Pauline Rose, Sandra Baxter, Krista Cecillie Samson, Ekow Tachie-Mensah, Lucy Heady.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Guest speakers: Tassew Woldehanna, Rafael Mitchell, Claudia Frittelli, Coumba Toure Kane, Might Kojo Abreh, Anne Marie Kagwesage, Maurice Mutisya, Asyia Kasmi, Mallory Baxter and Laura Savage.

All attendees: Funders, education providers and researchers, policy makers and practitioners, teachers, students, NGOs, etc.

Organising team at ESSA: Samuel Asare, Krista Samson, Ekow Tachie-Mensah, Samuel Agyapong, Gemma Munday, Natalie Nkembuh, Jennifer Udeh, Lucy Heady and Pauline Essah.

Organising team at the REAL Centre: Pauline Rose and Sandra Baxter.

12. CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please contact ESSA at researchenquiries@essa-africa.org or the REAL Centre at REALCentre@educ.cam.ac.uk

13. APPENDIX A: LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Adam Smith International	Cambridge University	Department of Science and Technology Education
ADARA	Carnegie Corporation of New York	Dire Dawa University
ADARA Research and Management Consultancy	Catholic University Institute Buea	University of Lagos
Addis Ababa University	Catholic University of Mozambique	Diversity in Development
African Centre for Innovative Research and Development (AFRI-CIRD)	CCNY	Dodoma University
African Leadership University	CEAUP	Early Risers
African Population and Health Research Center	Center for Global Development	eBASE Africa
Aga Khan University- Institute for Educational Development, East Africa	Centre for Plant Medicine Research	Echidna Giving
AHRI	Centre for Plant Medicine Research, Mampong	ECMHSP
Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi)	Akuapem	EdTech Hub
Ajayi Crowther University	University of Johannesburg	EducAid Sierra Leone
AKENTEN Appiah-Menkah university of skills training and Entrepreneurial development	Chalkboard Education	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
Alfege Advisory	Chedic Associates	Education Development Trust
Ambo University	ChildHope UK	Education Partnerships Group
American University of Sharjah	Children In Freedom School	Education Sub Saharan Africa
AMPATH	Chuini secondary school	Edvant Edge Africa
Anglia Ruskin University	CITE-CPUT	Egerton University
Arsi University	COLIS CIG	Elephant Healthcare
Ashesi University	College of Medicine	emdaG Consulting Limited
Ashinaga	University of Lagos	Empower HER Initiative
Ashoka	Connected Development	ETH
Associates for Change	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	ETH Zürich
ATBU Bauchi	CORE Africa	Ethiopian Economics Association
AYWO	Coventry University	FCDO
Bayero University, Kano	CRANE-Children at Risk	FINT
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Action NETwork	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office-Kenya
Boateng Consultancy Services	CREATES-Strathmore University	Future Careers
Bobbe AG	Creative associates	Gadarif university
Bridge Africa Foundation	Creative Associates International	Gaston Berger University
Brighter Investment	Crowe Erastus & Co.	GEL
British Council	CSEA	George Mason University
Caleb University	CSU	Ghana Education Service
	Cutting Urge Consult	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
	Mekelle University, Tigray	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
	Dana pharmaceutical limited	GIMPA
	Daystar university	

Girls Education Initiative of Ghana
Girls Not Brides
Giving Evidence
Global Education
Monitoring Report, UNESCO
Global Partnership for Education
GPE
Great Zimbabwe University
GRIC
Guizhou Normal University
Hacklab Foundation
Haramaya University
Harvard University
Hawassa University
Heritage Higher Institute for Peace and Development Studies, Yaounde-Cameroon
Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde
History Society of Nigeria
Holy Angel University
Howard University Global Initiative Nigeria (HUGIN)
HSE
HUDACO
IDRC
IEPA
IFFP
Imaginable Futures
iMEDIA.proefx
INASP
INSTITUT CATHOLIC DE KABGAYI (ICK)/Rwanda
University of Cape Coast
Institute of Arts and Culture of Mozambique
National University of Science and Technology)
Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife Nigeria
Instituto Politécnico da Universidade Katyavala Bwila
Instituto Superior de Ciências da Educação

Inter-University Council for East Africa
ITU, Lahore, Pakistan
Jacobs Foundation
JET Education Services
Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
Kaonga Primary School
Kenyatta University
Kido
Kirinyaga University
KMU
Kotebe Metropolitan University
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
LAM/CNRS/IRD, Sciences Pô Bordeaux
LEGO Foundation
Life College, Inc.
Link Education International
Makerere University
Masinde Muliro university of science and technology
Mastercard Foundation
McGill University
Midland State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe
Modi University
Mott MacDonald
MSI
MTN
Multimedia Group Ltd
Mzumbe University
Namibia Statistics Agency
National Open University of Nigeria
Nelson Mandela University
Network of Early Childhood Development of Lesotho
New York University
NIEPA
NIERA
Nigeria Centre for Disease Control
Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)
Nigerian Red Cross Society

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka
NORRAG - Graduate Institute
North West University
ODUPONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE)
OECD
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
Omaorah Development Synergy
Open Dreams
Opportunity International
OSF
OSISA
Overt Development Solutions
Oxfam
Oxford University
Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
Pedagogical University of Mozambique
Pencils of Promise
PFSHC
Philanthropy Africa
Pinheiro LP
Policy Forum Tanzania
Policy Studies Institute
Postgraduate College, UI
PRB
Prime Initiatives for Development Ghana
Pungue University
RADAF
Redeemer's University
Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)
Research Beeline Limited
Researcher
Rhodes University
Room to Read
RTI International
RU
RUFORUM

S&M Educational consultants	Uganda Management Institute	University of Malawi
SABAA	UMN	University of Mauritius
SALT Analytics	UNESCO	University of Mines and Technology
SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies, Ghana	UNESCO - Regional Office of Southern Africa	University of Nairobi
SheSchools Initiative	UNESCO IESALC	University of Namibia
Sol Plaatje University	UNESCO-IIEP	University of Nigeria
Somali National University	UNFPA Ghana	University of Nottingham
St John's University of Tanzania	UNHCR	University of Oxford
State university of zanzibar	Unicaf University Malawi	University of Portsmouth
Strathmore University	UNICEF	University of Professional Studies, Accra
Support4AfricaSMEs	Univeridade Eduardo Mondlane	University of Rwanda
SuTran Limited	Universidade do Minho	University of Stirling
Taita Taveta University	Universidade pedagógica - UP	University of Technology, Mauritius
Takoradi Technical University	Université de liege	University of the Western Cape
Tangaza University College	Université de Lomé	University of the Western Cape & Eduardo Mondlane University
Tarime District council hospital	University of Bamenda	University of Venda
TEACH Côte d'Ivoire	University of Bath	University of Zambia
Teach For Kenya	University of Benin	usaid
Teach for Nigeria	University of Birmingham	Uwezo Tanzania
Teacher's Registration Council of Nigeria	University of Botswana	Uwezo Uganda
Technology for social change and development	University of Bristol	Virginia Tech
The Aga Khan University	University of Bristol Graduate	Viva
The Berkeley Institute	University of Buea	VVOB
The Co-operative university of Kenya	University of Cape Town	WACREN
The Curriculum Foundation	University of Crete	West Africa Vocational Education
The ELMA Philanthropies	University of delhi	Wisconsin International University College, Ghana
The Knowledge Institute	University of Dodoma	World Vision
The Open University UK	University of Douala	World Vision Canada
The Technical University of Kenya	University of East Anglia	World Vision Zimbabwe
The University of Dodoma	University of Education, Winneba	YOTA
The University of Nairobi	University of Ghana	Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC)
The Village Rock	University of Global Health Equity	Zawadi Africa Education Fund Ghana
Touchpoint Magna Carta	University of Gondar	Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Actors (ZINECDA)
Training Centre in Communication	University of Ibadan	ZINECDA
Uganda Christian University	University of Ilorin, Nigeria	Zizi Afrique Foundation
	University of Inringa	ZNUT
	University of Jos Nigeria	
	University of Jyväskylä	
	University of Kwazulu Natal	
	University of Lagos	

14. APPENDIX B: LIST OF EDUCATION RESEARCH FUNDERS

Academy of Finland	Eunice Kennedy Shriver	Netherlands Organization
ActionAid	National Institute of Child	for International
African Economic Research	Health and	Cooperation in Higher
Consortium, AERC	Human Development	Education (Nuffic)
African Population and	European Commission	Norwegian Education Trust
Health Research Center	European Research Council	Fund
Aga Khan Foundation	Gates Foundation	Norwegian Programme for
Agence Française de	Gates Malaria Partnership	Development, Research and
Développement (AFD)	Global Development	Education (NUFU)
American Council of	Network	NWO-WOTRO Science for
Learned Societies, ACLS,	Grow and Know, Inc	Global Development
New York	Humboldt Foundation	Oak Foundation
Association for the	International Development	Office of the First Lady,
Development of Education	Research Centre (IDRC) in	Namibia
in Africa	Canada	Okebukola Science
British Academy	Irish Aid	Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of	Japan International	Open Society Foundations
New York	Cooperation Agency	Pan African Institute for
Christian Aid	Japan International	Development–West Africa
Comic Relief	Cooperation Agency	Plan Canada
Commonwealth Education	Leverhulme Trust	Plan UK
Trust	Lolle Nauta Foundation	Rockefeller Foundation
Commonwealth of Learning,	MacArthur Foundation	RTI International
UK	National Centre of	Russia Education Aid for
Compton Foundation	Competence in Research	Development Trust Fund
Concern Worldwide USA	(NCCR) North-South	(READ TF)
Consortium pour la	National Commission for	Shell Petroleum
Recherche Économique en	Science, Technology, and	Development Company of
Afrique (CREA)	Innovations (Kenya)	Nigeria Limited Joint
Danish International	National Council for Science	Venture
Development Agency	& Technology (NCST)	Sightsavers
(DANIDA)	(Kenya)	SIL International
Department for	National Institute of Mental	Social Sciences and
International Development,	Health (NIMH), National	Humanities Research
UK	Institutes of Health (NIH)	Council of Canada
Development Partners in	(USA)	Spanish Impact Evaluation
Higher Education (DeIPHE)	National Institute of Mental	Fund
DFATD, Canada	Health (USA)	Spanish Ministry of
Early School Leaving in	Netherlands Initiative for	Education and Science
Africa Project, Netherlands	Capacity Development	Special Olympics
Elsevier Foundation	program	International
Engineering and Physical	Netherlands Institute for	Spencer Foundation
Sciences Research Council,	Advanced Study in the	Springboard Humanism
UK	Humanities and Social	Swedish International
ESRC, UK	Sciences (NIAS)	Development Cooperation
		Agency (SIDA)



Swiss Development
Corporation
The Foundation for
Research, Education and
Empowerment (FREE),
Liberia
The Google.org
The James S. McDonnell
Foundation
The Nicholas Foundation
The Partnership for African
Social and Governance
Research (PASGR)
The Sir Halley Stewart Trust,
UK
The World Bank
UK Big Lottery Fund
UNDP
UNESCO
UNICEF
USAID
Wellcome Trust
William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation
Wolfson Research Institute
for Health and Wellbeing
World Vision