



## AfricaLics Newsletter

March 2020 – September 2020

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#### ABOUT AFRICALICS

The African Network on Learning, Innovation and Competence Building Systems (AfricaLics) was launched in March 2012, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Since the Network's launch, the Secretariat based at the African Centre for Technology studies (ACTS), in Nairobi, Kenya has been implementing a research capacity building (RCB) programme entitled "Enhancing research capacity on Innovation and Development in Africa". This has been funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The Network supports the expansion of the cadre of researchers able to conduct research on innovation and development and build institutional level capacity in African educational institutions in this field. This is towards an overarching vision of the network - supporting African countries towards developing and utilizing high quality research, conducted by African researchers, to enable more informed policy decisions to be made relating to the use of science, technology and innovation (STI) for economic and social development as well as efficient governance. To realize this vision, the Network works closely with like-minded relevant international and local researchers and research networks.

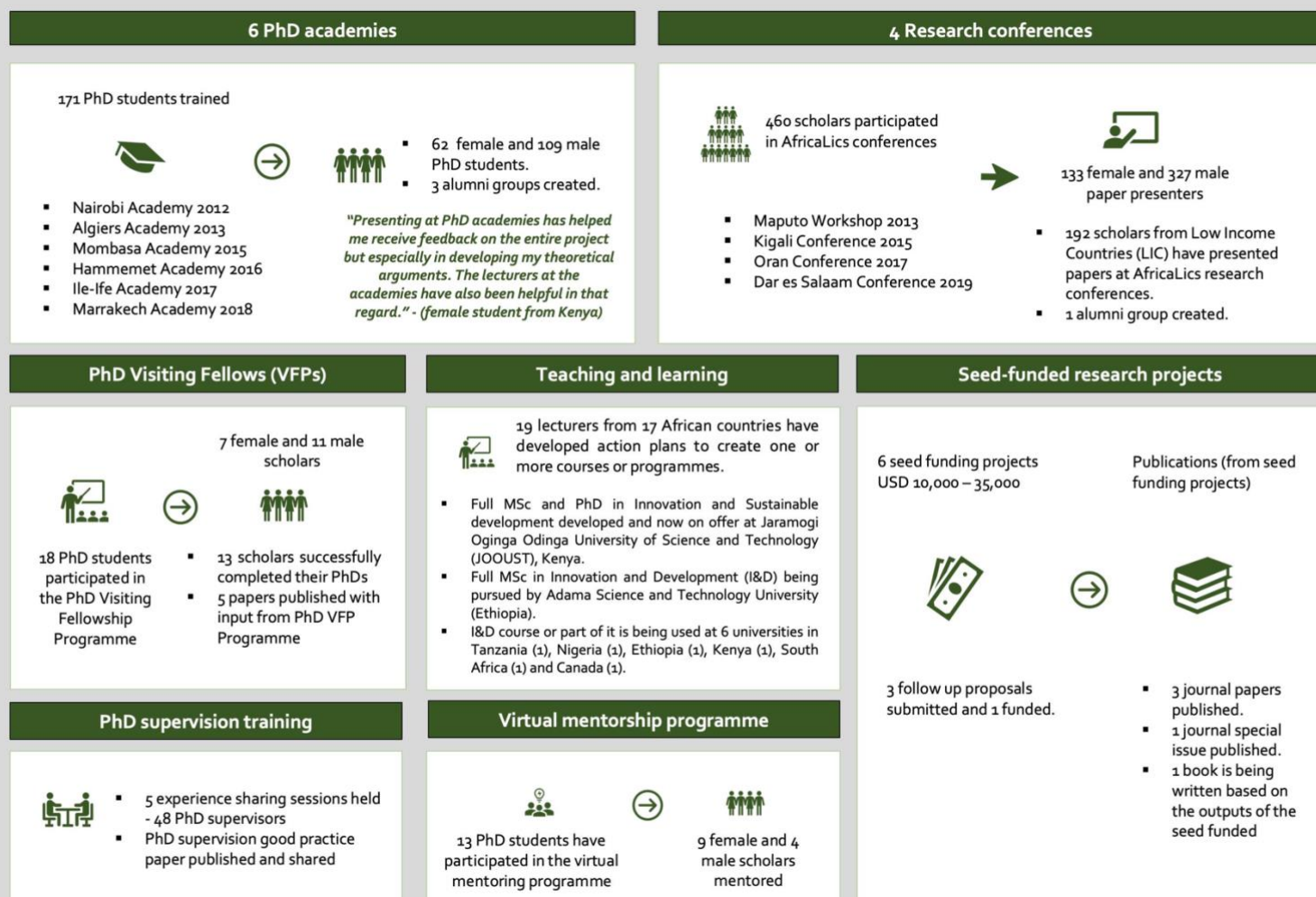
Learn more

<https://www.africalics.org>

## IMPACTS HIGHLIGHTS

## Progressive networking and research capacity building journey since 2013

Seven years ago, the AfricaLics secretariat started preparations for the first AfricaLics conference held in Maputo, Mozambique from 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The network has grown since then. A snapshot of selected impacts is highlighted here. Check out more information on impact at <http://www.africalics.org/impacts/>



AfricaLics will be undergoing external evaluation which will focus on impacts made by the AfricaLics research network to date. As part of the external evaluation, members data will be updated. AfricaLics has developed a new database which will reduce the amount of updating required from members in future years. An email will be sent to members with login details to a membership portal where they will be required to check and verify that the information held by AfricaLics is correct. Consequently, members may complete any missing sections accordingly.

Please follow and keep checking AfricaLics website and social media platforms for latest news, blogs, upcoming events and opportunities.

Website: <https://www.africalics.org>

Twitter Page || Facebook page

**IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES – SAVE THE DATE****AfricaLics and ACET webinar on accessing markets: farmers driven innovations**

**Theme:** *Improving smallholder access to markets: farmer driven innovations*

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020 **Time:** 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM (EAT)

Agricultural markets in Kenya are expanding rapidly, presenting opportunities as well as challenges. However, local production remains inadequate to satisfy local markets and food imports are on the rise, a reflection of both inability to increase productivity and emerging trends which are making it increasingly difficult for smallholders to access the markets.

Innovations that aim at removing barriers for smallholders confront. This requires building the capacity of smallholder to advocate and ensure right policies that address these barriers are formulated. To make platforms effective there is need to undertake country-level studies that can identify useful innovations and other evidence to address challenges facing smallholder farmers. African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) is partnering with AfricaLics to share findings about a study on market linkages that seeks to analyze food systems and market challenges and weaknesses, and recommendations that will be utilized by national policy platforms and regional policy platforms to inform decision making.

**Panelists**

- These are drawn from different communities of practice including academia, research, policy and farmer associations

**AfricaLics webinar on mentorship as an approach to capacity building in the field of Innovation and Development**

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> November at 3:00 PM EAT

One of the main aims of the AfricaLics network is to foster research capacity in the field of Innovation and Development studies research. Mentoring has – in different forms – been part of a range of the AfricaLics research capacity building activities such as the PhD Academies, the PhD Visiting Fellowship Programme and the dedicated pilot mentorship programme aimed at increasing the number of successful papers for Globelics conferences initiated in 2019. Informal mentoring has also been taking place in the context of AfricaLics and Globelics conferences where PhD students and early career researchers have the opportunity to present papers or posters and get feed-back from senior members of the Globelics and AfricaLics research networks. Drawing on lessons from AfricaLics and Globelics research capacity building activities, this webinar will explore the relevance of mentorship in building research capacity in the neglected field of innovation and development studies. It is informed by a survey that was conducted to understand what factors to consider in the design of an I & D mentorship strategy for African scholars.

**Discussants**

- Dr. Geci Karuri Sebina (AfricaLics Scientific Board & Associate, South African Cities Network)
- Prof. Edward Lorenz (Globelics Scientific Board, Aalborg University & University of Johannesburg)

## **AfricaLics webinar: Enhancing the capacity of women entrepreneurs in transformative innovation within the 4IR sector in Africa**

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 **Time:** 7:30 AM (PDT) - 5:30 PM (EAT)

Women entrepreneurs make significant contribution in sustaining the social and economic well being of their families and the economy at large and there is a growing body of literature focusing on their great contribution to entrepreneurial development in Africa. However, they largely lag behind in building high-growth, high impact firms; a major economic deficit that not only leads to fewer overall economic growth but also less strength in emerging industries; a vicious cycle of social and economic exclusion. Enhancing the capacity of women entrepreneurs in order to increase their effective participation in transformative innovation, especially within the 4th IR sector should therefore be a key policy focus for Africa.

### **Discussants**

- Dr. Pamela Mreji (AfricaLics PhD Visiting Fellow Alumni/Post Doc Trilateral Research Chair).
- Prof. Susan Cozzens (AfricaLics Scientific Board member/ Professor Emerita in the School of Public Policy, Georgia Tech, USA).

### **AfricaLics PhD Academy 2021**

Six AfricaLics PhD Academies have been held since the start of the AfricaLics network in 2012 (Nairobi 2012, Algiers 2013, Mombasa 2015, Hammamet 2016, Ile-Ife 2017 and Marrakesh 2018).

Due to the global emergency caused by COVID-19, the 7<sup>th</sup> PhD Academy will be held in 2021 and will be hosted by University of Gondar, Ethiopia. Before the Academy, AfricaLics will host online pre-academy events for Ethiopian and other PhD students selected for the academy. Call for paper will be posted and shared in due course with new dates for submission and review process. Please keep checking the AfricaLics website and monitor AfricaLics social media platforms for notification of the call opening.

### **Globelics Conference postponed to November 2021**

Due to the global emergency caused by COVID-19, the Globelics conference was postponed to November 2021. The Conference will be held in Heredia, Costa Rica, from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Before the conference, Globelics will be hosting some online activities that will be announced soon, in order to keep the community active discussing ideas and strategies from innovation approaches.

Authors who submitted their contributions in 2020 through the online conference management system (ConfTool), their papers will be maintained in ConfTool, but the review process will not continue. A new call for paper will be posted and shared at the end of this year with new dates for submission and review process.

### **AfricaLics Knowledge Bank**

The contents of the AfricaLics Knowledge Bank are intended to form a set of materials that provide background and a starting point for discussion and analysis on innovation and development issues facing Africa. These materials can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.africalics.org/free-materials/>



## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

### **AfricaLics promoting Innovation and Development capacity building at national and sub-regional level**

AfricaLics recognizes that country and sub-regional research and capacity building needs as well as economic and social development priorities may differ from those at a continental level. As such, the development of national and sub-regional AfricaLics hubs is encouraged. These are mostly virtual networks that are coordinated by an individual or group of individuals at one or more universities or research institutes based in the country or sub-region. They can conduct a range of activities depending on the needs, time and commitment given by hub members. Activities include but are not limited to seminars; workshops; mentorship support etc. An expression of interest to host a hub is available at:

<https://www.africalics.org/hubs/>

### **NigeriaLics - 1<sup>st</sup> AfricaLics regional hub launched**

The AfricaLics community congratulates NigeriaLics for its successful launch as the 1<sup>st</sup>

AfricaLics regional hub, about a year since the idea was conceived during the 4th AfricaLics Conference held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

NigeriaLics is the acronym for the Nigerian Network for Economics of Learning, Innovation, and Competence Building Systems. It is the Nigeria hub of AfricaLics and becomes a young Network designed to bring together scholars, researchers and policy analysts who study development, innovation, learning and competence building Systems drawing on the continental and global context. It is carefully organized to complement and synergize the AfricaLics objectives and vision. Consequently, NigeriaLics's perspective is systemic, socio-economic, institutional, evolutionary, and policy oriented. The overall vision of NigeriaLics is to facilitate the production and use of high-quality research in the field of innovation and development with a view to promote inclusive and sustainable development in Nigeria and West Africa. NigeriaLics Networks is managed on a day to day basis by a secretariat currently hosted at the Research and Innovation Unit, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.



*Figure 1: NigeriaLics pioneer members at AfricaLics conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.*

### AfricaLics Secretariat welcomes Martina Marchesotti to the AfricaLics family



Martina Marchesotti has joined the AfricaLics Secretariat team as a research intern stationed at the Aalborg University, Denmark. Martina is a masters student studying Global Refugee Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark with interest in gender, innovation and renewable energy. She is Italian from Milan and she studied International Relation and Foreign Language at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan.

### AFRICALICS PHD VISITING FELLOWS PROGRAMME (VFP) AND RELATED ACTIVITIES 2019/2020

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the VFP programme has been affected. Instead of the planned visit to Aalborg University (AAU), Denmark by PhD visiting fellows, a couple of virtual events are planned to enhance discussion of their research before the study visit to AAU can be realized. It is hoped that the fellows will get inspiration for their work prior to their visit to Denmark. In addition, this unprecedented occurrence necessitated by COVID-19 situation will enhance learning about how in future more virtual events for PhD students with an interest in the field can be organized. This notwithstanding the long-term nature of the achievements under VFP is characteristic of experience within the AfricaLics Research Capacity Building Project and takes time to materialize. This is due to the very nature of academic work and the processes related to this.

As the COVID-19 situation is monitored, AfricaLics secretariat has organized a couple of webinars with the PhD VFP alumni to discuss how the alumni might continue to support and benefit from the AfricaLics network. Ideas discussed include the following: development of joint research proposals (perhaps in collaboration with members of the AfricaLics Scientific Board); involvement of PhD VFP alumni in mentoring activities; increasing the visibility of alumni on the AfricaLics website and involvement of PhD VFP alumni in the national hubs currently being developed under AfricaLics. The latter is to broaden the outreach and hopefully improve the pipeline for future activities in the field within Africa (see more on the NigeriaLics hub on this newsletter).

### An alumni of the VFP has been elected as a postdoc under the Trilateral Research Chair in Transformative Innovation, the 4IR and SDGs



Pamela Mreji one of AfricaLics PhD Visiting Fellows 2018 at Aalborg University, Denmark, has been selected as a Postdoc under the mentioned chair where she will be focusing on gender and innovation issues.

This chair is a partnership between the University of Johannesburg (South Africa), the University of Sussex (UK) and the African Centre for Technology Studies (Kenya). The Chair aims to develop through research new frameworks to explore transformative innovation in the context of 4IR, enhance capacity building of younger scholars to stimulate the next generation of African thinkers and engage research partners and

policymakers as key stakeholders to influence policy change. The Chair complements AfricaLics research capacity building endeavors more generally.

Pamela's research revolves around gender, capacity building for transformative innovation, 4IR and entrepreneurial ecosystem. To this end, she is scheduled to make a presentation on **"Enhancing the capacity of women entrepreneurs in transformative innovation within the 4IR sector in Africa"** during an upcoming AfricaLics webinar scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

## **Mentoring as a pathway to building research capacity in the field of innovation and development in low income and low middle-income countries**

One of the main aims of the AfricaLics network is to foster research capacity in the field of Innovation and Development studies research. Mentoring has – in different forms – been part of a range of the AfricaLics research capacity building activities such as the PhD Academies, the PhD VFP and the dedicated pilot mentorship programme aimed at increasing the number of successful papers for subsequent AfricaLics and Globelics conferences initiated in 2019. Informal mentoring has also been taking place in the context of AfricaLics and Globelics conferences where PhD students and early career researchers have the opportunity to present papers or posters and get feed-back from senior members of the Globelics and AfricaLics research networks.

In 2019, the AfricaLics secretariat agreed with members of the AfricaLics Scientific Board to try to obtain more structured feedback from participants in the various types of activities on their perceptions of relevance of the mentoring - and how a more structured strategy for mentoring and dedicated mentorship programme activities within the AfricaLics network might look like. To this end, a survey of stakeholders' perceptions of mentorship and what it means for building research capacity in the Innovation and Development (I&D) field was developed and undertaken. The survey was shared with 61 potential respondents who had all been involved in one or more of the AfricaLics research capacity building activities and 31 scholars (app. 50%) responded to the survey.

The survey focused on a series of questions with regards different aspects related to designing an I & D mentorship strategy for African scholars. The survey put emphasis on relevance of mentorship in building research capacity in the neglected field of I&D studies.

The results show that mentorship is considered important in building a critical mass of scholars

in the I & D field in Africa. The study further shows that there are multiple benefits accruing from engaging in a mentorship activity in order to enhance I&D research capacity. These benefits range from personal, academic and professional development to development of soft or practical skills that enhance critical thinking. The respondents recorded a high level of agreement on suitability of the AfricaLics and Globelics events as platforms for mentorship towards building I&D research capacity. Participating in AfricaLics and Globelics conferences offers opportunities for mainly professional development and less on personal development as the conference platform is short term. For the two weeks Academies, the platform enhances personal skills development more generally as the participants get an extended opportunity to receive targeted and focused attention from peers and facilitators. The social media platform is activated by AfricaLics alumni and it serves professional development purpose through connecting the alumni and sharing of timely and relevant information that is relevant to innovation and development.

Respondents prefer a mixed program with structured and unstructured elements and a structured program. A structured program should prioritize I & D oriented methodology training, and a post training follow-up of between 3 – 6 months. A mixed mentorship program provides for a mix of formal mentoring (as in the structured program), but with flexibility to accommodate and maximize on other context specific opportunities. For more about the perspectives on mentorship, access the here:

<http://www.africalics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AfricaLics-Report-on-mentoring-in-ID-field.pdf>

**Mentorship report can be accessed through this [link](http://www.africalics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AfricaLics-Report-on-mentoring-in-ID-field.pdf)**

## AFRICALICS ENGAGEMENT IN RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS IN INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT – VIRTUAL EVENTS

The COVID-19 situation has necessitated the need to go virtual. The following are a few selected webinars that AfricaLics network has been involved in.

### PhD Academy pre-event/information meeting

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 **Time:** 15:00 Hours East African Time (EAT)

*NB: this event targeted Ethiopian PhD students. A further event will be held before the end of 2020 for PhD students outside of Ethiopia.*

#### Objective of the pre-event meeting

Ethiopia being the venue for the upcoming PhD Academy, AfricaLics aim to sensitize Ethiopian PhD students about the upcoming PhD Academy. One of the objectives of the pre-meeting is to increase the number of accepted applications from Ethiopian students in the 2021 PhD Academy. Specifically, because this is a burgeoning field on the continent, it is important that students who have a strong fit with the subject area are selected. This is to reduce the incidences of misunderstanding between students and their supervisors that may occur when a student becomes interested in bringing in new theory, concepts or methods into their PhD. The meeting was open to all interested PhD students and/or PhD supervisors from across Ethiopia.

### SIHI partners workshop: creating an enabling environment for social innovation in health

Dr. Rebecca Hanlin and Dr. Margrethe Holm Andersen of AfricaLics Secretariat attended the Social Innovation for Health Initiative's (SIHI) partner workshop being held virtually at various times across September and October 2020. SIHI is a network of passionate individuals and institutions combining their

skills and resources in support of key activities to promote social innovation in health. AfricaLics secretariat has been engaging SIHI about potential opportunities for collaboration on research and policy activities; notably in Malawi and Uganda. As part of the expected collaboration, SIHI and AfricaLics plan to hold a joint webinar and/or conference focusing on a special session on social innovation.

### NigeriaLics webinar on managing research productivity with appropriate technology during COVID-19 pandemic

This first Edition of NigeriaLics Network webinar was held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The speaker was Prof. Mammo Muchie who holds the South African Research Chair in Innovation Studies at the Management Sciences, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. Prof. Muchie has a keen interest on the challenges of building African innovation systems and he serves in the AfricaLics Scientific Board.

Prof. Muchie reflected on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on research productivity with a focus on appropriate technology. He invited conversation within African continent reflecting on a number of challenges that he perceives to be stumbling blocks for Africa to make most of the pandemic. [Learn more](#)

### NigeriaLics webinar on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) management in the era of fourth industrial revolution (4IR)

The second Edition of NigeriaLics Network webinar was held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The speaker was Prof. Edward Lorenz who is affiliated with University Côte d'Azur, Nice, France and College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Prof. Lorenz has a keen interest in the challenges of



building African innovation systems and he serves in the Globelics Scientific Board.

The webinar placed emphasis on the recent technological developments in the digital economy. The recent technological breakthroughs represent the basic building block of the 4IR which have promise for promoting development in lower-income countries in Sub Saharan Africa. Prof Lorenz argued strongly that the current digital transformation is providing a 'window of opportunity' for accelerated economic growth and catch-up in low-income countries. Latecomers economies could take advantage of the disruption that the digital transformation represents, but this will require conscious interventions from government and other stakeholders.

Prof. Lorenz noted that digital technologies can transform value chain relations supporting both finance and technology development. For instance, the installation and maintenance of stand-alone off-grid solar contributing to electricity provision on a decentralized basis (e.g. M-Kopa in Kenya). He explained further that digital technologies and analytics can be applied to mini grids being powered by intermittent renewable resources to balance electricity demand and supply and to ensure an efficient system operation. Another important lesson learnt was that digitization can be applied in microelectronics. Prof Lorenz explained how digitization clearly builds on the information communication and technology (ICT) revolution or paradigm based on microelectronics, which was the hallmark of the 3rd industrial revolution. [Learn more](#)

### PhD VFP virtual event

To help AfricaLics maintain momentum and strengthen collaboration among the PhD visiting fellows, their supervisors and mentors, a few virtual seminars will be conducted in the second half of 2020.

The first webinar took place on the 1st of October 2020. The visiting fellows presented their ongoing PhD projects to the invited participants (other PhD students, mentors and

home supervisors), as well as the AfricaLics Secretary General, Dr. Ann Kingiri and the academic coordinator of the AfricaLics PhD VFP, Dr. Margrethe Holm Andersen. The purpose of the first webinar was to welcome the new batch of AfricaLics PhD fellows and their home-supervisors to the programme, to link up the visiting fellows with their Aalborg University mentors and to give the PhD visiting fellows a first opportunity to present papers for feedback.

### Webinar - Climate information communication for local adaptations: policy dialogue

The event took place on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020. This webinar was part of the regular seminar series that involves AfricaLics and other collaborative partners. In this particular case, AfricaLics partnered with the Kenya Climate Innovation Centre (KCIC) and the Capacity Building for Information and Communication Technology Development (CB4ICTD) project. The CB4ICTD project is being implemented through ACTS by members of the AfricaLics Secretariat as a collaboration with California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), USA. Dr. Ann Kingiri is the co-PI of the CB4ICT project. The goal of the CB4ICTD program is to promote the development of institutional capacity for computing research in Kenya. The program aims to achieve this through capacity building and mentorship involving students, faculty members and industry partners towards developing research teams to undertake research in computer science and related fields.

The aim of this webinar was to contribute to the development of policy options that facilitate the uptake of climate information communication. The focus is to explore the future of how best climate information can be communicated in Kenya for the rural community; the gender factors to consider in climate information communication; and the policy implication of the dynamics on technology, and local community development in disseminating and communicating climate information. Dr. Ann Kingiri was one of the

keynote speakers where she gave a talk on gender considerations for climate information communication and policy implication of the dynamics on technology, and local community development in climate communication.

### **Virtual workshop - Towards building a future literate society: Re-imagining innovation**

AfricaLics partnered with Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM), Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT) and UNESCO Paris office to organize a three (3) day online training and dialogue from the 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, under the theme **“Re-Imagining Innovation”**. The training targeted participants from universities and think tanks, private sector, government, early career researchers and the civil society. Half of the 30

participants were drawn from the AfricaLics network.

#### **Expected outputs/outcomes**

- i. Participants were exposed to futures thinking as a complementary tool to researching and thinking about innovation systems and transformative innovation.
- ii. A research and policy agenda for driving inclusive and transformative innovation in Kenya that includes and not limited to the following:
  - a) Have a common and understanding about innovation for societal development among the policy makers, industry and researchers.
  - b) Rethink a strategic strengthening of capacity to innovate among the industry community and other stakeholders.

## **AFRICALICS SCIENTIFIC BOARD (ASB) MEMBERS CORNER**

### **Prof. Erika Kraemer-Mbula joins the University College London (UCL) Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP)**



AfricaLics community congratulates Prof. Erika Kraemer-Mbula, a member of AfricaLics Scientific Board on joining UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) as a visiting professor of practice to help lead work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and innovation.

At IIPP, Erika will help lead their work on SDGs and innovation. Questions of how to direct innovation for sustainable development, and the new economic plans, metrics and governance structures needed for these shared challenges, are vital for policymakers worldwide.

### **ASB members contribution to STI policy in Africa and globally**

Some members of the ASB have provided technical expertise towards development of the UNESCO Science Report 2020. These include Dr. George Essegbey, Prof. Erika Kraemer-Mbula, Dr. Ann Kingiri and Prof. Abdelkader Djeflat. Other ASB members have been contributing to the past UNESCO Science Reports.

Check out more information on AfricaLics impact at  
<http://www.africalics.org/impacts/>

## LATEST EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

### CICOPS scholarships 2021: The call for application is now open!

For any AfricaLics member interested in working with Roberta Rabbellotti and colleagues at Università di Pavia in Italy for a 1-3 months period in 2021.

Please note that research should be focused on issues related to innovation, global value chains, renewable energy and China presence in Africa. Details of the call can be found here: <http://cicops.unipv.it/cicops-scholarships/>

Application deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020

*If you have any academic opportunities you would like to advertise to the network, please email them to [secretariat@africalics.org](mailto:secretariat@africalics.org)*

## AFRICALICS BLOGS

Please check out the AfricaLics blog page. Here are some of the most recent blogs that have been posted:

- Reflections on the webinar “Science, Technology and Innovation Management in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution” by Prof. Edward Lorenz - Dr. Oluseye Jegede NigeriaLics Activity Committee.
- Reflections on the webinar “Managing the Impact of COVID-19 in Africa through Appropriate Technology” by Prof. Mammo Muchie - Dr. Jumoke Oladele and Dr. Oluseye Jegede, NigeriaLics Activity Committee.
- COVID-19: An opportunity for Africa’s frugal innovation - By Esther Ekong, University of Ottawa, Canada.



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