

AfricaLics

# NEWSLETTER

December / Issue No 10

## ABOUT AFRICALICS

The African Network on Learning, Innovation and Competence Building Systems (AfricaLics) is an Africa-wide network focused on developing the field of African Innovation and Development Studies, since its launch in 2012. It is part of Globelics - a global research network established in 2002 ([Globelics Website](#))



AFRICALICS

In line with the overarching vision, AfricaLics supports African countries in 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. The network works closely with like-minded relevant international and local researchers and research networks to realize this vision.

The AfricaLics Secretariat is based at the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), in Nairobi, Kenya and provides general support to the network and the AfricaLics Scientific Board (ASB).

Since its establishment, the network has received substantial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through the research capacity building (RCB) Programme entitled “Enhancing research capacity on Innovation and development (I&D) in Africa”

In addition, many universities in Africa and abroad have supported the network by housing key events (notably the research conferences, PhD academies and the Visiting Fellowship Programme), providing mentorship for young scholars, reviewing papers and applications for events, and providing lectures free of charge.

# Newsletter Highlight

The 6th AfricaLics International Conference 2024, themed "The Africa We Want: Leveraging Innovation and Digital Transformation," was held from November 13th to 15th at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. For more details, see page 4 of this issue.

## 6th AfricaLics International Conference



6th AfricaLics International Conference group photo

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- Impact Dashboard
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- Opinion piece: What are some of the successful strategies for PhD students to stay motivated?
- Impact Stories
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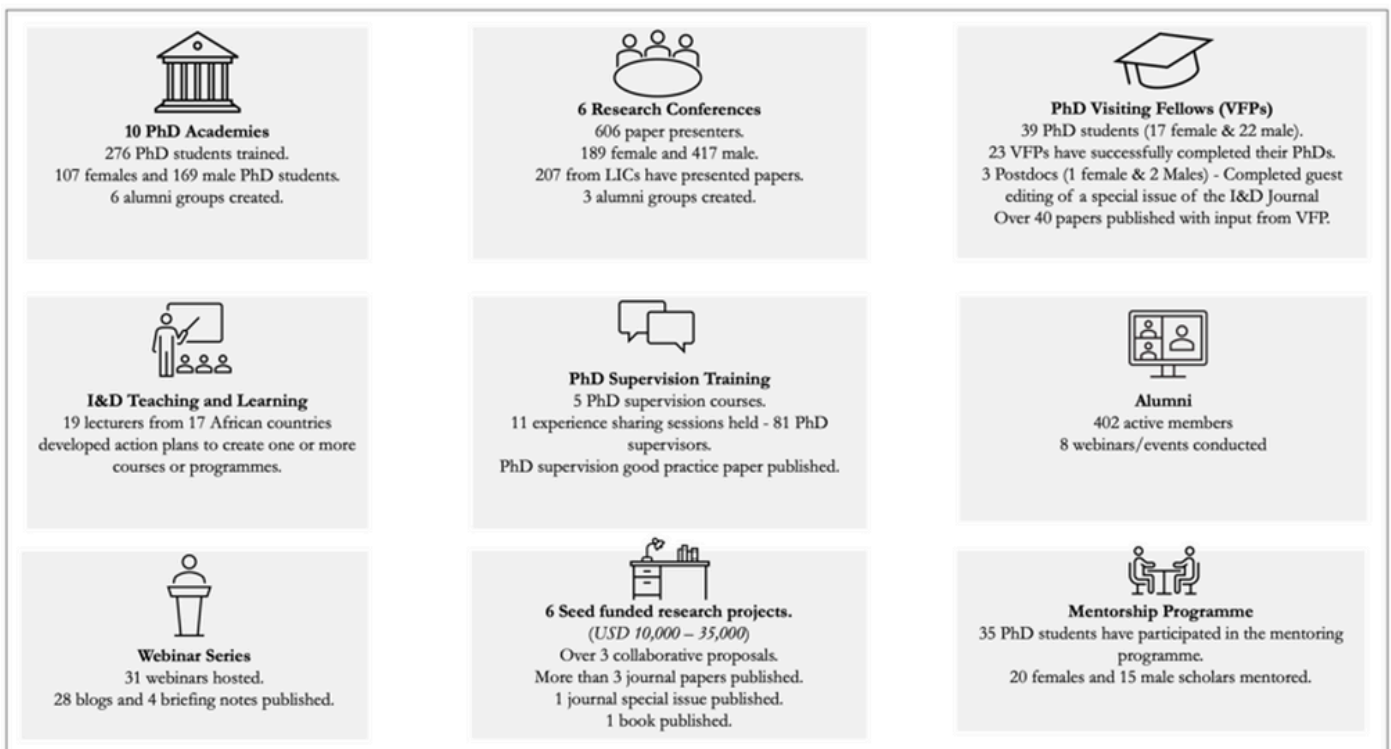




# IMPACTS DASHBOARD



The dashboard below presents selected high-level cumulative data illustrating AfricaLics' activities and achievements in the field of innovation and development in Africa since its inception. The dashboard is updated every six months. For information on specific impacts by year, please view our annual reports. For general enquiries, please email: [secretariat@africalics.org](mailto:secretariat@africalics.org)



Specific achievements and associated impact of our activities has been documented through various pathways like videos with former PhD students that have attended our Visiting Fellowship Programme, PhD academies and conferences. Further evidence is also documented in external evaluations and tracer studies available on AfricaLics website.

The network continues to expand, and therefore three national networks have been established namely the NigeriaLics in Nigeria, FasoLics, in Burkina Faso and EthiopiaLics, in Ethiopia. This is evidence to the relevance of the network and the felt need for joint activities in the field of African Innovation and Development studies.

# KEY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## Africalics International Conference 2024

13<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Theme:** *The Africa We Want: Leveraging Innovation and Digital Transformation*

**Venue:** University of Illorin, Nigeria

The 6th AfricaLics conference took place in Ilorin, Nigeria and had a special focus on leveraging innovation and digital transformation. It served as a platform for discussion of relevant research and action-oriented initiatives aimed at charting a course for Africa's future growth and prosperity in a sustainable manner.

A total of 223 papers were submitted, of which 81 were accepted. Among these, 38 papers were presented in paper presentation sessions, and 13 were showcased as posters. Most paper presentation sessions, along with the poster session, featured engaging papers and facilitated valuable discussions.

The keynote sessions brought together leading experts to explore critical themes at the intersection of technology, sustainability, and digital transformation in Africa and beyond.

- Prof. Geci Karuri-Sebina

**Session Title:** Seeing Like the Market: Unmasking the Politics of AI and Data-Driven Economies in Africa

Prof. Geci explored the political implications of artificial intelligence and data economies, particularly within African markets, revealing the challenges and opportunities of data-driven transformations.

- Prof. Williams O. Siyanbola

**Session Title:** Technological Innovation and Digital Economic Transformation for Sustainable Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

Prof. Siyanbola addressed the role of technological innovations in driving sustainable development in Africa, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges faced in achieving digital economic transformation.

- Prof. Rasmus Lema

**Session Title:** The Green and Digital Transformations: Are There Windows of Opportunity?

Prof. Lema discussed the interplay between green and digital transformations, focusing on identifying opportunities to foster sustainable growth and innovation.

Proceeding from the conference will be updated in Early January. Check our website for updates.



# FACES AT THE 6TH AFRICALICS CONFERENCE













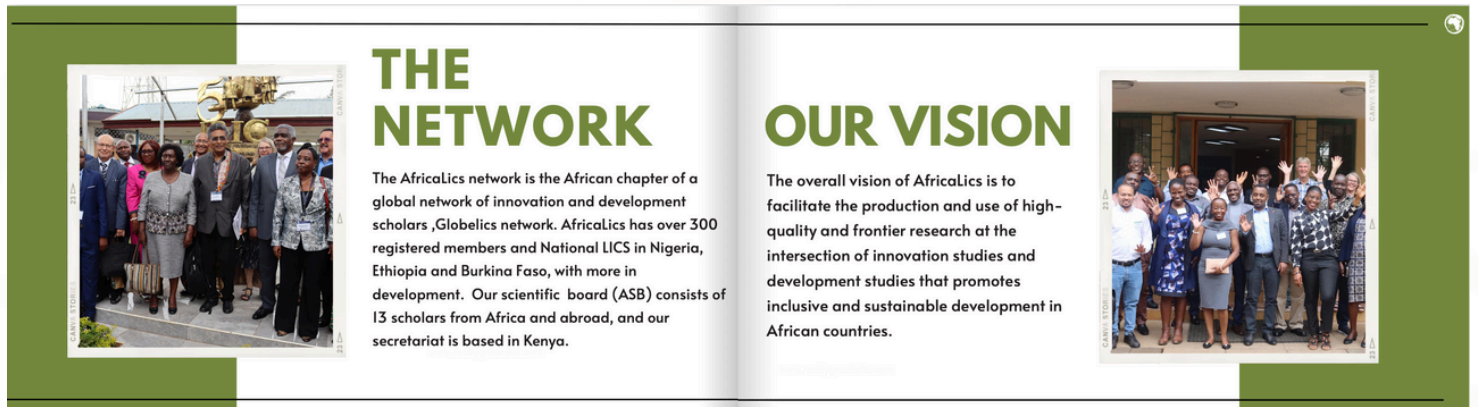
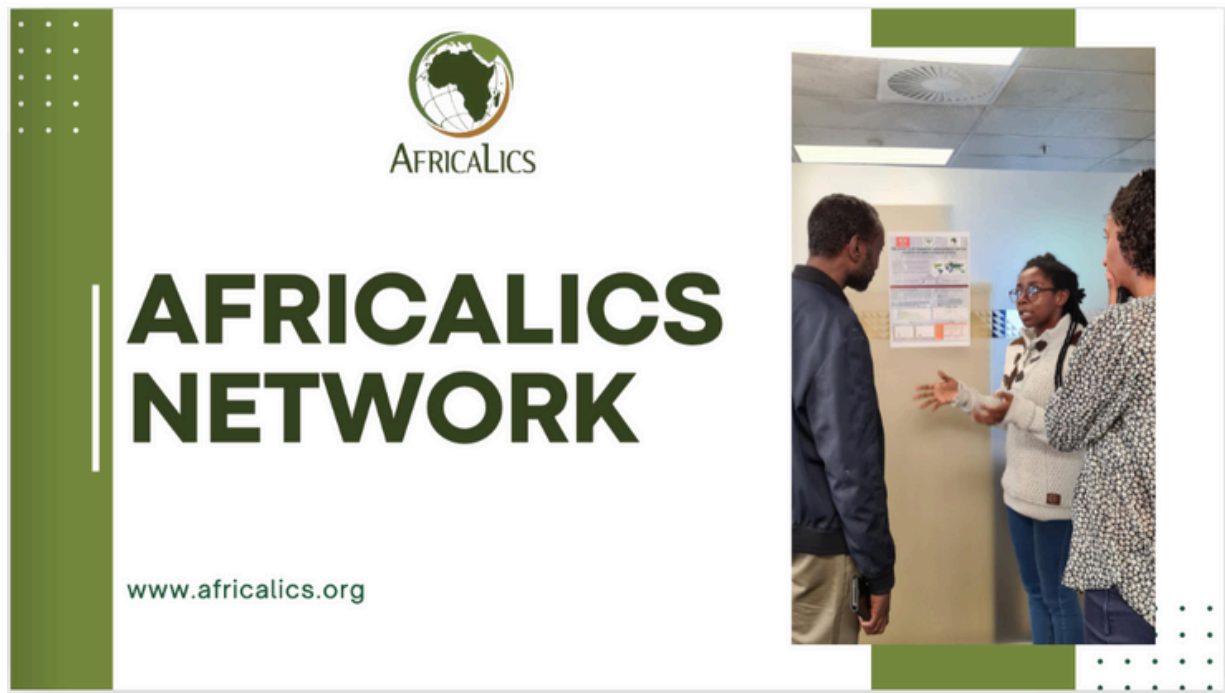
# Launch of the AfricaLics Flipbook

AfricaLics has launched an interactive flipbook to spotlight its journey, initiatives, and impact in fostering innovation and development in Africa. This digital resource chronicles the network's key activities, achievements, and inspiring stories from its work with researchers, policymakers, and institutions.

## Features

- **Visual Storytelling:** Engaging multimedia format for an immersive experience.
- **Comprehensive Insights:** Overview of AfricaLics' contributions to building innovation systems and advancing socio-economic development.

Explore the flipbook to learn more: [Flipbook](#)



Screenshots from the Recently Launched AfricaLics Flipbook

# STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC COLLABORATIONS: THE 2024 AFRICALICS PHD VISITING FELLOWS WORKSHOP

The University of Johannesburg recently hosted the 2024 AfricaLics Visiting Fellows Programme (VFP), aimed at enhancing academic collaboration across Africa.

This initiative, part of the DSI-NRF Trilateral Research Chair in Transformative Innovation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and Sustainable Development, welcomed four PhD candidates from various African countries for a three-month mentorship and training program.

Running from September 1 to November 30, 2024, the workshop featured a week-long series of activities from September 16 to 20. These included structured courses on PhD supervision and mentoring, bilateral meetings, and a day dedicated to research presentations. The event was designed to foster collaboration among participants, allowing them to engage with peers, mentors, and supervisors while discussing key challenges in their research journeys.

## Opening Remarks and Purpose

The workshop commenced with welcome speeches from Prof. Erika Kraemer Mbula of the University of Johannesburg and Dr. Ann Kingiri, Secretary General of AfricaLics. Prof. Mbula highlighted the importance of the trilateral chair in strengthening innovation systems in Africa through global partnerships. Dr. Kingiri traced the evolution of AfricaLics as a network dedicated to fostering research and capacity building in innovation studies across the continent. The primary goal of the seminar was to create an interactive platform for students and supervisors to discuss effective supervision practices, share challenges, and enhance the overall PhD experience.

## Key Sessions and Discussions

The workshop included several focused sessions aimed at improving PhD supervision and mentoring:

- **Students' Session:** Participants shared their experiences with supervision, identifying challenges such as limited feedback and misaligned expectations. Strategies were discussed for fostering better communication with supervisors and developing independence in their research.
- **Mentors & Home Supervisors Session:** This session allowed supervisors to reflect on effective mentorship practices. Key points included the importance of constructive feedback, setting clear expectations, and creating an inclusive research environment that encourages open dialogue.
- **Effective Planning and Prioritization:** Participants learned about essential strategies for effective planning, deep work techniques, and prioritization skills necessary for academic success.

- Feedback Strategies: The significance of timely and specific feedback was emphasized as crucial for nurturing students' independence and academic growth.
- Communication Strategies: Effective communication was identified as vital for productive relationships between students and supervisors. Key strategies included active listening, clear expression of ideas, and conflict resolution techniques.



## Conclusion

The 2024 AfricaLics VFP workshop successfully brought together emerging scholars from across Africa to enhance their academic journeys through mentorship and collaborative learning. By addressing key challenges in PhD supervision and fostering open communication between students and supervisors, the program aims to strengthen research capabilities within the continent's academic landscape. This initiative not only promotes individual growth among PhD candidates but also contributes significantly to building a robust network of scholars dedicated to advancing innovation for sustainable development in Africa.



# IMPACT STORIES

**In Their Words:** A select group of Testimonials and Reflections of both Students and ASB members on their experience with AfricaLics and how it has impacted them in different ways.

## PAMELA MREJI

Participating in the AfricaLics VFP (2018 cohort) was a transformative experience that connected me with internationally renowned I&D scholars like Prof. Ned Lorenz and Prof. Bengt-Åke Lundvall at Aalborg University. It also allowed me to attend the DRUID conference in Copenhagen, where I established collaborations with UK scholars on innovation projects, leading to ongoing publications. These interactions fostered extensive networking, synergies, and partnerships that have greatly shaped my career trajectory.

Since completing the program and successfully defending my PhD in 2018, I have held several leadership roles, including Director of a management program at Strathmore University Business School, Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Johannesburg, Queen Elizabeth Emerging Scholar, and Director at the Technical University of Kenya. These opportunities, along with securing grants and advancing my research, stem from the connections and skills gained during the fellowship. I attribute much of my professional success to AfricaLics, whose support has been instrumental in my journey as a scholar.



## SEGUN FABIYI

I enjoyed the mentorship from senior I&D scholars during the VFP Programme which exposed me to important knowledge on areas of innovation and technology relevant to my PhD Program.

“My participation in the AfricaLics VFP exposed me to important knowledge on areas of innovation and technology relevant to my PhD Program.

I gained knowledge on complex data handling and particularly the use of SmartPLS. AfricaLics writing workshops helped me improve my article writing skills. I was able to use the knowledge gained in paper writing, and particularly in my PhD write-up.







## ANN NUMI

I am honored to have been awarded a scholarship to participate in the AfricaLics VFP, which has significantly enhanced my academic and research capabilities while advancing my career development.

The program provided invaluable opportunities to refine my work through feedback, engage with a diverse scholarly community, and reflect on the societal impact of my research, particularly in addressing food security challenges in Kenya. Sharing experiences with peers improved my time management and work-life balance, while expanding my professional network for future collaborations.

I am deeply grateful to the AfricaLics team, VFP coordinators, UJ faculty, and my mentors for their support and for making this experience transformative and memorable.

## MOGES TUFA

I am thrilled to share the joy of successfully completing my PhD journey, a milestone made possible with AfricaLics invaluable support and contributions.

My dissertation, titled “Essays on Firm-Level Industry Policy Incentives and Capability Building in the Context of Developing Countries,” aligns with the Africalics research thematic area.

I am deeply grateful for the guidance and encouragement I received through the Africalics network during this challenging yet rewarding journey.

I look forward to continuing our collaboration and contributing to the network in every way I can.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart!



# AFRICALICS ENGAGEMENT AND WEBINARS ON INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The following are a few selected webinars that AfricaLics organized/co-organized in the first half of 2024



*Bridging the Gap and Strengthening Connections Between Academia and Policymaking webinar held on 18th July 2024*

**Bridging the Gap and Strengthening Connections Between Academia and Policymaking**

**Date:** 18th July 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Rebecca Hanlin

Communicating research findings to policymakers is crucial for bridging the gap between academia and real-world impact. This webinar explored effective strategies, best practices, and case studies to bridge the gap between research outcomes and policymaking processes.

During the discussions, the speaker explored the importance of effective communication strategies in conveying complex research insights to policymakers.

The focus was on maximizing engagement, relevance, and actionable outcomes to influence policy agendas for meaningful societal impact.

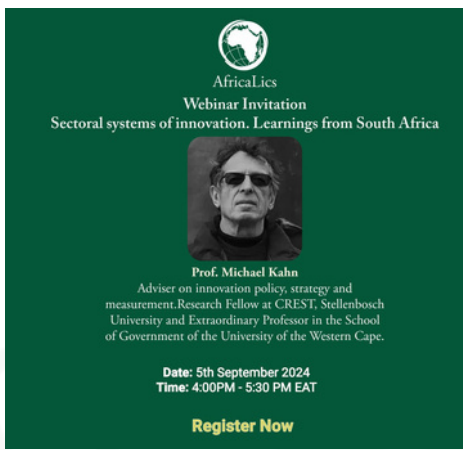
The webinar spoke on the valuable insights and how to enhance ones' ability to effectively communicate research to policymakers. The discussion addressed the following questions:


1. What are some of the common challenges researchers face when communicating their findings to policymakers?
2. How can researchers ensure that their research findings are effectively communicated to policymakers in a way that resonates with their needs and priorities?
3. What role do interdisciplinary collaborations play in enhancing the communication of research findings to policymakers?
4. How can researchers leverage digital tools and platforms to enhance the reach and impact of their research on policymakers and the broader community?




**AFRICALICS**





  
 AfricaLics  
 Webinar Invitation  
 Sectoral systems of innovation. Learnings from South Africa

  
**Prof. Michael Kahn**  
 Adviser on innovation policy, strategy and measurement Research Fellow at CREST, Stellenbosch University and Extraordinary Professor in the School of Government of the University of the Western Cape.

**Date:** 5th September 2024  
**Time:** 4:00PM - 5:30 PM EAT  
[Register Now](#)

**Webinar Series:** Sectoral systems of innovation. Learnings from South Africa

**Date:** 5th September 2024

**Speaker:** Professor Michael Kahn is a policy analyst and evaluator in the fields of research and innovation.

In this webinar Prof. Khan examined the evolving nature of research and innovation policy and associated outcomes in South Africa. It critiqued research and innovation policy starting at the micro level of the firm, through to the aggregate level of STI indicators.

Prof Khan used case studies to elicit the nature and origins of four innovations locating these in their respective sectoral systems according to the Malerba (2002) formulation. SSIs advance the much earlier work of Marshall (Rosenthal and Strange, 2004) with a more nuanced understanding of innovation, focusing on specific sectors, incorporating actors beyond the firm, the dynamics and trajectories of knowledge flows and institutions in shaping innovation processes.

Each case started with a concise PESTE analysis followed with bibliometric analysis and publication co-authorship, and patent statistics including patent awards in multiple jurisdictions, the use of government incentives and the management of intellectual property.

All cases demonstrated high levels of path dependence on the part of one or more of the primary actors. Selection bias acknowledged, none of the cases arised from the direct intents of STI policy. The cases spoke to industry needs rather than government push.



  
**WEBINAR INVITATION**  
 THEME  
 Paradigm transition, geopolitics and innovation paths:  
 Challenges and Opportunities for Africa

  
 Guest Speaker  
**Prof. Raphael Kaplinsky**

**7th November 2024**   
 16:00-17:30hrs EAT

ZOOM   
[www.africalics.org](http://www.africalics.org)

**Webinar Series** -Paradigm transition, geopolitics and innovation paths: Challenges and Opportunities for Africa

**Date:** 6th November 2024

**Speaker:** Raphael Kaplinsky is Honorary Professor at the Science Policy Research Unit, and is also an Emeritus Professor at the Institute of Development Studies and at the Open University.

Policy is generally pursued with temporal blinkers – What can we do to build on what we already have and does not require too great a reframing?

In ‘normal times’ building on the past, adjusting and speeding up, makes sense. But occasionally the world around us changes in non-marginal ways and this demands a structural reset to policy in general and to innovation trajectories in particular.

Prof Kaplinsky noted that we are in just such a transitional period now. The mass-production techno-economic paradigm which dominated development strategies over the past 70 years is in crisis. The new ICT paradigm is deploying rapidly. Because it offers both threat and opportunity, imparting directionality is the critical challenge.

Each techno-economic paradigm is not just characterised by its core general-purpose ‘heartland’ technology and the accompanying socio-economic order. It also has associated geopolitics which play a major role in the character of global production and trade. So it is that we are witnessing a significant change in the global order, a transition from a unipolar world dominated by western powers to a world of multipolar hegemony, with China, India and other Asian economies playing increasingly important roles in framing directionality and innovation paths.

Prof Kaplinsky concluded with a question to the audience: In this context, what are the implications for more sustainable and equitable growth strategies in Africa?



**Webinar Series** -AfricaLics Network – End of the-Year Celebrations  
**Date:** 13th December 2024

Since the Covid 19 pandemic struck in 2020, the AfricaLics Secretariat has been organizing an online, annual event to celebrate achievements mainly of PhD students in the network, including former participants in the PhD academies and visiting fellows on the AfricaLics VFP.

This year's celebration attracted 55 participants. Dr. Ann Kingiri introduced the overall achievements of the AfricaLics network and extended a warm welcome to the new members of the AfricaLics alumni network: the participant in the AfricaLics PhD Academy and VFP Cohort.

The Alumni Network Coordinator, Dr. Oluyemi Adeosun, chaired the event. As we celebrated the individual and collective achievements in 2024, we also reflected briefly on the activities planned for 2025.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR PHD STUDENTS TO STAY MOTIVATED?

Pursuing a PhD can be a long and challenging journey, often filled with moments of self-doubt and fatigue. Staying motivated throughout this process is crucial for success. Here are some effective strategies that can help PhD students maintain their motivation:

### **Set Clear Goals and Deadlines**

Establishing clear, achievable goals is fundamental. Break down your research into smaller, manageable tasks with specific deadlines. This approach not only makes the workload feel less overwhelming but also provides a sense of accomplishment as you complete each task. Regularly revisiting and adjusting these goals can keep you focused and motivated.

### **Create a Structured Routine**

Developing a daily or weekly routine can help manage time effectively. Allocate specific hours for research, writing, and relaxation. A structured schedule reduces feelings of chaos and helps maintain a balanced work-life dynamic, which is essential for sustaining motivation over the long term.

### **Celebrate Small Wins**

Recognizing and celebrating small achievements along the way can significantly boost morale. Whether it's completing a chapter or receiving positive feedback from a supervisor, taking the time to acknowledge these milestones reinforces motivation and encourages continued effort.

### **Build a Support Network**

Having a strong support system is vital. Engage with peers, mentors, and advisors who understand the challenges of the PhD journey. Regular discussions with them can provide encouragement, fresh perspectives, and constructive feedback, all of which are essential for maintaining motivation.

### **Stay Informed and Inspired**

Keeping up with the latest research in your field can reignite your passion for your work. Attend seminars, read relevant articles, and engage in discussions within academic communities. Exposure to new ideas and innovations can inspire you to think creatively about your own research.

### **Practice Self-Care**

Prioritizing mental health and well-being is crucial for sustaining motivation. Incorporate regular breaks into your schedule to recharge physically and mentally. Activities such as exercise, hobbies, or simply spending time with friends can alleviate stress and prevent burnout.



## Reflect on Your Journey

Take time to reflect on why you embarked on this journey in the first place. Reconnecting with your initial motivations—whether personal fulfillment or professional aspirations—can help you push through difficult periods. Keeping a journal to document your thoughts and progress can also provide valuable insights into your journey

## Be Flexible and Adaptable

The PhD process often involves unexpected challenges. Being open to change and willing to adapt your plans can foster resilience. Viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks can help maintain a positive outlook during tough times.

In conclusion, staying motivated during a PhD program requires intentional strategies that focus on goal-setting, self-care, community support, and personal reflection. By implementing these approaches, students can navigate their academic journeys more effectively while maintaining their passion for research.

# Season Greetings: Message from the Secretary General

Season's greetings!

As the year comes to a close, we find ourselves in a time of reflection, gratitude, and celebration. Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or simply the arrival of the New Year, it's a wonderful opportunity to connect with loved ones and embrace the spirit of joy and togetherness.

May this festive season bring you warmth, happiness, and peace, and may the coming year be filled with prosperity and new beginnings. Enjoy the festivities and cherish the moments with those who matter most!





AFRICALICS SECRETARIAT  
WISHES YOU  
*Happy holidays and a  
prosperous 2025!*

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