

ARUA Partnerships in Africa for sustainable and equitable food production

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Main Message

- ARUA's emergence is hinged around the understanding that challenges are transnational and efforts towards addressing them should be pursued collaboratively
- ARUA has demonstrated that this is possible through some of the initiatives it has pursued in the last few years.
- ARUA's view on equitable and sustainable partnerships evolves around the objectives of *shared visions and goals, local ownership of knowledge and building clusters of excellence*



Outline of Presentation

- An overview of the ARUA Network
- ARUA's Current Partnerships
 - UKRI, the Guild of European Universities and OSF
- New Conversations about Partnerships



An Overview of the ARUA Network

- ARUA was formed in 2015 to serve as a catalyst for aggregating institutional capacity across the continent to build indigenous research excellence that positions Africa as a powerful global force.
- The 16 Vice Chancellors who came together agreed it was necessary at that point in history to collaboratively harness institutional capacity and human capability to address the common challenges
 - No single university has the capacity to make a difference in research and PhD production on the continent
 - A collaborative effort that is not rhetorical, but a true partnership of teaching, learning, research and knowledge production was needed



An Overview of the ARUA Network

- Vision: make **African researchers and institutions globally competitive** while contributing to the generation of knowledge for socio-economic transformation in Africa.
- Mission: **strengthen African universities through effective capacity-building** that comes from working together as leading institutions to increase research output.
- The means to achieving these outcomes is through **working together** and this is what Africa needs to solve its numerous challenges of which **the need to improve food security is key**.



ARUA's Current Partnerships

- ARUA has fostered relationships with some institutions to enhance '**research collaboration**' on the continent, and push the limits towards ensuring '**research equity**' around the SDGs
- Some institutions ARUA is collaborating with include:
 - the **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**
 - the **Guild of European Universities**
 - the **Open Society Foundation (OSF)**



ARUA and the UKRI

- In 2018, ARUA entered into an agreement with UKRI:
 - To build significant capacity for science and research across African universities
 - To provide opportunities for African research teams and GCRF grant-holders to co-create new projects that build on current investments by GCRF and ARUA
 - To build equitable collaborations to strengthen the capacity for research, innovation and knowledge exchange in both the UK and developing countries.



ARUA and the UKRI

- This partnership is part of UKRI's ongoing efforts through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) to:
 - build robust research systems across developing countries, enabling the best researchers from across the world to collaborate to find fair and sustainable solutions to the most pressing global issues that require global solutions – across nations and disciplines

ARUA and the UKRI

- The partnership led to the development of a new research programme with two key strands:
 - the **Capacity Building** strand
 - the **Research Excellence** strand
- Sustainable Food Systems: FSNet-Africa aims to design and implement food systems research in partnership with stakeholders to identify solutions that can bring about sustainable change in African food systems.

New Conversations about Partnerships

- A successful transformation agenda requires inclusive and *equitable partnerships* — at the global, regional, national and local levels — built upon principles and values, and upon a shared vision and shared goals placing people and the planet at the centre (SDG 17).
- A **new** business model – a complete rethinking & reorganisation of the approach towards research partnerships with the global south
- Research centres must be **jointly worked and jointly owned**; **laboratory capacity should be co-owned**; **objectives must be co-authored**.



New Conversations about Partnerships

- Research centres need to be embedded within the institutions of the global south to engender the needed capacity enhancement
 - The integration of local research capacity building must form part of the conversation right from the beginning

New Conversations about Partnerships

- Research partnerships should not be divorced from teaching
 - institutional partnerships must be grounded on instruction, through joint courses, co-teaching, co-supervision, and co-credentialing at scale
- A departure from short-term project-based funding of research partnerships toward long-term collaboration
 - **Clusters of research centres of excellence** that provide world-class infrastructure for institutions, robust doctoral and post-doctoral programs, opportunities for career development



New Conversations about Partnerships

- For **sustainable** partnerships:
 - Address the support system around the research
 - Support the institutionalisation of local (seed) funding via matching funds or grants
 - Make a deliberate effort to place universities from the global south & their potential contribution at the centre of the discussion



Conclusion

- Local problems easily become transnational/global and the need for coherence as a human community cannot be overemphasised
- For the sake of our collective future, we need to rethink the principles and approaches to north-south research collaboration
- An effective response requires a strong commitment to global partnerships not just from research institutions and academia, but also other sectors outside academia from all over the world.
- This is where ARUA seeks to make a difference

