

PERIVOLI AFRICA RESEARCH CENTRE FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

With profound gratitude to the Perivoli Foundation

This report outlines PARC's key achievements in 2023 and provides an overview of its first four years.





FOUR YEARS OF PARC

With the groundbreaking support of the Perivoli Foundation, PARC has progressed towards its vision in four areas, as detailed in this report:



Inquiry and thought-leadership on transformation in research partnerships

- We co-developed a novel conceptual and analytical argument and framework for transformative Africa-global North research collaborations, going beyond 'equitable research partnerships'
- We galvanised an Africa-led alliance to co-create the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations. The Charter was launched on 5 July 2023



Building capstone programmes of collaborative research to demonstrate transformed partnership working

- We supported the identification of Africa-centred priority agendas for inquiry by African strategic partners, which provide starting points for joint proposal development with University of Bristol colleagues
- Africa-led seed-corn projects, supported through the PARC Partnerships Fund, which can grow into larger collaborative work
- The pursuit of a full Africa-led project focused on care systems and economies

2023 saw major developments in PARC's work to transform research partnerships with Africa and rebalance the global knowledge ecosystem, including the high-profile launch of the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations.

WHAT WE DO

Established in 2020 thanks to a generous grant from the Perivoli Foundation, the Perivoli Africa Research Centre (PARC) represents the University of Bristol's cross-disciplinary commitment to transformation in research collaborations with Africa, aiming to advance global scholarship and the achievement of the continent's own aspirations.

Our vision is a rebalanced, richer global scientific ecosystem in which African scholars, institutions and knowledges take their rightful place. Our mission is to champion transformation in research collaborations between Africa and the global North.

The first four-year phase of our work (2020-2023) is now complete, and this report details some of the key milestones, and looks at future plans to achieve the potential for real, transformative change within the University of Bristol, the UK and globally.

PARC TEAM

- | | |
|--|---|
| Professor Isabella Aboderin
Director & Chair in Africa Research and Partnerships | Heather Child
Communications Officer |
| Dr Susan Jim
Manager | Dr Eyob Balcha Gebremariam
Research Associate |
| Dr Robert Crowe
International Research Partnerships Officer | Hilda Owii
PhD Student |



Mutual capacity strengthening on transformation in research partnerships

- We designed and delivered, together with partners, a first seminar series and training short course aimed primarily at early career researchers
- By nurturing an institutional link between the University and the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF), we established an important platform for future joint capacity strengthening of Bristol and Africa climate-science focused PhD students, including a cohort of visiting RSIF students to Bristol



Community of interest - to stimulate wider debate

- We convened and contributed to a wide range of high-level internal and external forums to foster engagement with the Charter
- We published blogs and reflection pieces, and redeveloped the PARC website as a place for information sharing and engagement
- We forged connections and plans for further joint engagement with cross-University initiatives, including the Reparative Futures programme, the Inclusive Research Collective, Decolonise the University of Bristol, and the University's wider Research Culture effort

PARC's work is understood as an important research pillar and element of the University's strategic global civic ambition.

TOP 10 ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS 2023

Over the course of 2023, PARC and its partners have introduced the Africa Charter at numerous gatherings of higher education leaders, funders and policy makers, including:

1 Establishment of the Africa Charter steering group

At the first formal consultation with representatives of key Africa higher education constituencies including UNISA, HUMA, AAU, ARUA, AAS, INHEA, CODESRIA, IUCEA, AWAU and AU ESTI we formed a groundbreaking new steering group for the Africa Charter.

Jan

2 Africa Week 2023: Open Africa, Open Science

Together with our partners at UCT and UNISA, we engaged high-level African and global academic leaders at Africa Week 2023.

May

3 Joining the All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa (APPG-A)

We brought the Charter initiative to the attention of UK policy-makers with a roundtable at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa.

Jun

4 The Africa Charter is launched in Windhoek, Namibia

More than 400 Vice-Chancellors from universities across the world came together on Wednesday, 5 July at COREVIP, a continental conference hosted by the Association of African Universities, at which the Africa Charter was officially launched.

Jul

5 Times Higher Education (THE) World Academic Summit in Australia

The Africa Charter was presented at a fringe event with representatives from the University of Bristol including the Vice Chancellor Professor Evelyn Welch.

Sep

6 Equitable Partnerships Programme training event

At the Equitable Partnerships Programme event run by the Medical Research Foundation and Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) at the African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, there were useful recommendations for researchers.



7 Bristol and the Africa Charter

City leaders and senior figures at the University of Bristol joined forces to make Bristol a city that models the principles of the Africa Charter.

Oct

8 Towards change: realising aspirations of the Africa Charter in the UK

Together with the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR), PARC convened a dialogue of major UK HEI, university networks, publishers, research funders and science governance bodies on ways to realise the ambitions of the Africa Charter.



9 UNISA and University of Bristol partner on Charter principles

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA), Prof Puleng LenkaBula, visited the University of Bristol with other leaders to further the aims of the Africa Charter and sign an MOU.



10 ARUA 2023 Biennial International Conference

Vice Chancellor Professor Evelyn Welch delivered a keynote address on the "The Africa Charter for Transformative Research Partnerships: A New Approach to Research Relationships".

Nov

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Development of the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations

A bold, transformative plan for Africa to take its rightful role in research alliances, driving forward social justice, advancing science, and supercharging global scholarship.

Together with Africa's major higher education bodies, PARC and partners developed a framework that goes beyond existing 'equitable research partnerships' efforts to pursue a transformative mode of Africa-global North research collaborations.

Working with the Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair at the University of South Africa, and the Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA) at the University of Cape Town, PARC galvanised and facilitated an alliance comprising the continent's foremost higher education constituencies – specifically the Association of African Universities (AAU), African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), African Academy of Sciences (AAS), Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA) and regional bodies – to co-create the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations.

Key goals of the charter include:

- Creating a radically new approach to research collaboration which redresses deep-seated divides in the generation of scientific knowledge. This is an entry and leverage point for advancing a rebalancing of the global scientific knowledge production system overall.
- Championing this reformed equitable way of working as standard and best practice.
- Introducing an Africa-centred framework setting out guiding principles and measures of success and accountability.

LAUNCHING THE CHARTER

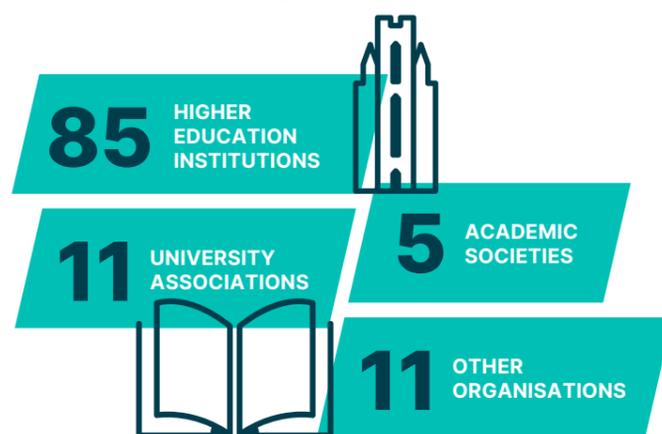
The culmination of this work was the inspiring launch of the Africa Charter in Windhoek, Namibia in July 2023, at a gathering of around 400 Vice Chancellors and higher education leaders at COREVIP. This launch was widely covered in the media, and immediately attracted 86 higher education institution signatories to the Charter.

This was followed by the publication of two scientific journal articles that capture the Charter's underpinning intellectual argument.

PARC has since presented the Charter at countless higher education forums.

100+ SIGNATORIES

The principles and aspirations of the Charter have already been endorsed by more than one hundred major African and global North higher education bodies. Most signatories are higher education institutions, but there are also academic societies and major university associations such as the Coimbra Group, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, ARUA and the Australia-Africa University Network.



Images: Charter launch at Windhoek in July 2023



SECTOR-SPECIFIC WORKING GROUPS

We have convened a first set of discussions with high-level UK funder, publisher, Higher Education Institution and Research Assessment stakeholders, to consider a structured process determining what specific changes their sector will need to make – in terms of policies, priorities and practical action – to incentivise and promote transformative research partnerships with Africa.

SMALL TALKS FOR BIG CHANGE

Together with the Inclusive Research Collective, we ran a series of six short talks to introduce the multiple layers of imbalances between global North and South that affect research collaborations. These gatherings also began to engage a constituency of supportive, interested researchers.

THE AFRICA CHARTER AND BRISTOL

In October last year, PARC brought city leaders and senior figures at the University of Bristol together to explore how the city could model the principles of the Africa Charter.

PARC joined Research Culture, Inclusive Research Collective, Centre for Black Humanities, Anti-Racism Working Group, Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures and University decolonisation initiatives, fostering wide, open and critical engagement with the Charter.

To celebrate the event, a poem was commissioned from educator, activist and poet Dr Lawrence Hoo, entitled *A Journey of Discovery*.

Images: The Africa Charter and Bristol event in October 2023



CAPSTONE THREE

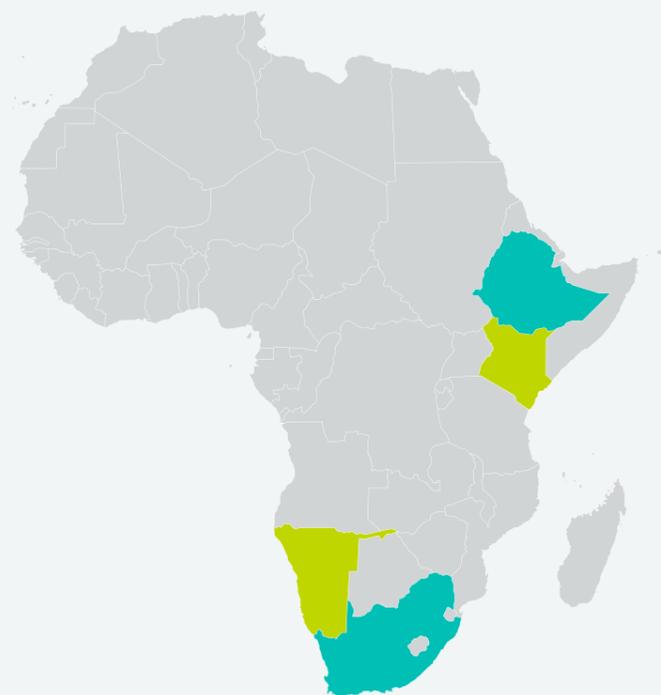
WATER MANAGEMENT, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Africa-centred innovation in water management, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) - *South Africa*

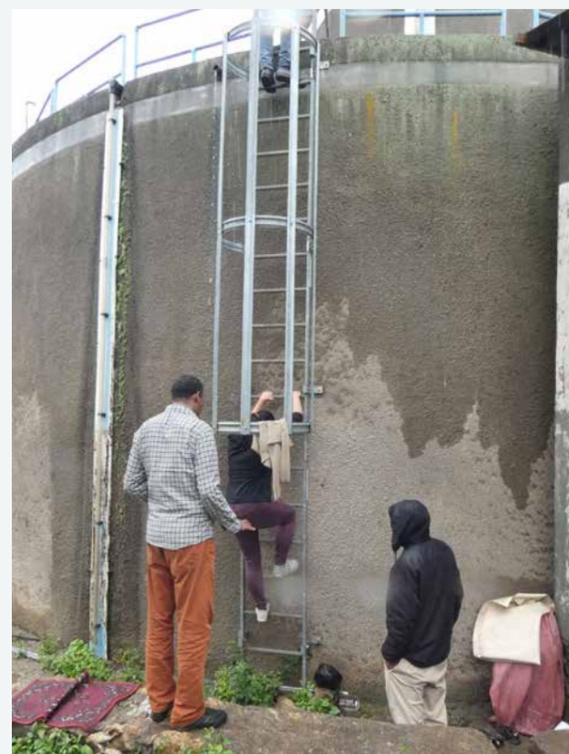
Identifying African priority areas for research on WASH included a co-creation workshop bringing together key stakeholders, a range of data analyses, further stakeholder workshops to pinpoint region-specific African WASH Research priorities, and the development of an annotated bibliography of literature on identified priorities. Current work involves considering relevant funding opportunities and formation of Africa-led consortia to develop proposals to address the identified research priorities.

Climate resilience of water supplies - *Ethiopia* SEED-CORN

The Government of Ethiopia is building multi-village, piped-water supplies managed by professionalised rural utilities. These systems have the potential to address the low levels of safe water access and the vulnerability of existing water supplies to erratic rainfall. Having secured support from the Ministry of Health and Water Development Commission to test this framework, our outputs will be used to inform national monitoring of climate-resilient water supplies. Regional and national dissemination workshops took place in 2023, which also led to the creation of a new WASH forum, linking researchers and implementing organisations.



Images © Tedros Lishan Shiferaw



CAPSTONE FOUR

CLIMATE CHANGE

Microplastic pollution in Lake Victoria - *Kenya* SEED-CORN

The study attempts to identify the extent of microplastic pollution in the lake water as well as the nature and extent of pollution from additives in the plastics. The effect of microplastics on phytoplankton, which are essential in carbon drawdown, will also be evaluated. Currently sampling and preliminary sample processing is being done at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, while sample analysis is being carried out at the University of Bristol.

Twelve additional climate change-related projects, led by the University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) - *Namibia*

Final reports from these projects will be compiled into a shared UNAM-PARC publication in summer 2024. This will provide the basis for further research meetings and webinars, bringing together UNAM and University of Bristol researchers later in the year.

LAND

- Assessing the impact of bush control on soil carbon sequestration, soil fertility and groundwater recharge in Namibian rangelands
- Ecological restoration as an Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) approach to addressing the impacts of desertification and climate change in Namibia
- Assessing the carbon sink potential of camel-thorn trees in semi-desert areas

WATER

- Assessment of the hydrological processes in wetland-groundwater ecosystems in semi-arid environments

ALTERNATIVE FOODS

- An analysis of Facultative Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM) photosynthetic plants as a novel agricultural production system in drier climates
- Mushroom cultivation using harvested bush encroachers
- A study of indigenous succulent plants as carbon capture machines

Image: Lake Victoria, sampling a plankton net which gets dragged through the water and collects particles of plastic. © Fred Lisouza, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology



ANIMAL CONSERVATION

- An assessment of the clinical effects of water-based perphenazine on the behaviour of boma-kept Impala
- Phosphoric dynamics in semi-arid protected areas under changing climate: Towards climate-adaptive waterpoint management in Etosha National Park, Namibia
- The geographical origin of pangolin specimens confiscated in Namibia

RENEWABLE ENERGY

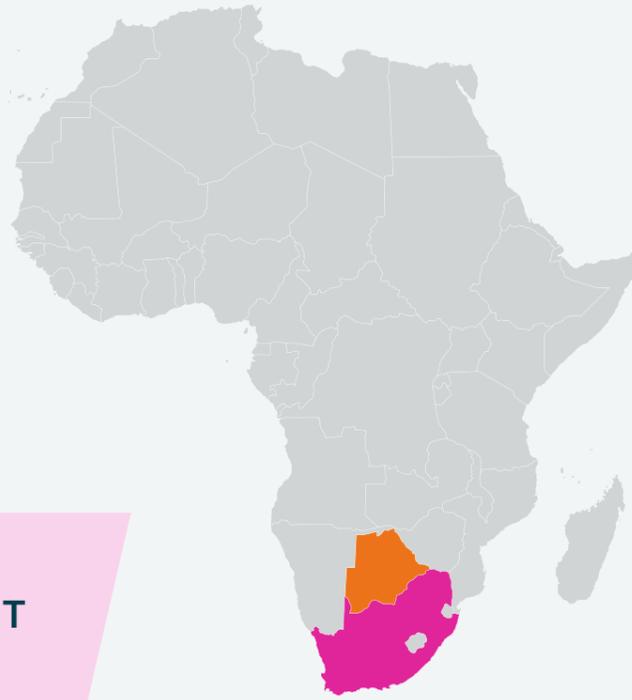
- Demonstration of small-scale biogas generation from succulents

CARBON DRAWDOWN

- A baseline study of giant kelp (macrocystis pyrifera) at the Kelp Blue Farm off the coast of Luderitz to assess its carbon sequestration potential

Developing an indigenous model of crisis-sensitive educational leadership - Botswana SEED-CORN

This study aims to develop an indigenous model of crisis-sensitive educational leadership in Botswana which can inform education, training and support for those involved in school leadership. A paper entitled 'An indigenous perspective on school leadership in Botswana during the COVID 19 pandemic' has been submitted for publication, and the research report has been received with appreciation by the Ministry of Education.



CAPSTONE FIVE / FEATURED PROJECT
HIDDEN HISTORIES

Sounding East Africa: Music, Technology and Ideology - South Africa SEED-CORN

Using archival research and oral history, this project seeks to ask how East African audiences across gender, ethnicity, class and age have understood the sounds of this musical canon, popularly referred to as *Zilipendwa* / *Zilizopendwa* (the ones that were loved). We also seek to understand what happens to music when it travels across history and how genres are recast in the process.

In 2023, we held an in-person workshop in Dar es Salaam, presenting research which will form a special issue of *The Journal of Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, we also created a track at the Block 41 studio. There are plans to expand the project to help preserve the history of this music, to create resources in Swahili and in accessible formats, and to inspire a new generation of artists. Our follow-on funding includes an International Science Partnerships fund (£10K) award to develop artists and make sample packs for artists in Tanzania.



Images © Justin Williams, Sounding East Africa



CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

PARC seeks to equip the current as well as the next generation of scholars at the University of Bristol and beyond to lead transformative research collaborations.

AFRICA-LED RESEARCH CAPACITY STRENGTHENING – WITH PASET

PARC has worked with the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology – Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (PASET – RSIF) to develop an Africa-led ‘sandwich’ PhD guest student scheme, specifically in the areas of climate change, big data and agribusiness.

In collaboration with the Cabot Institute we have selected the first cohort of visiting scholars, who are expected to join the University of Bristol research community for part of their PhD (six months from September 2024). Together with their Bristol peers, they will develop mutual learning on the theory and practice of transformative research collaborations.



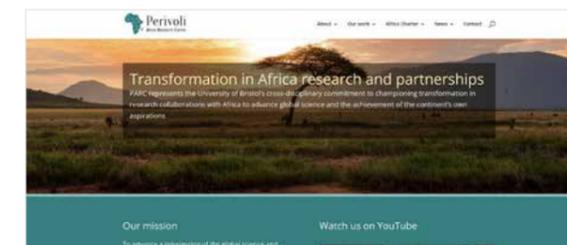
COMMUNITY BUILDING

PARC seeks to provide space for people who are working on African issues to come together and to support and stimulate critical debate on questions regarding Africa-global North research relations.

To do this we convene discussion forums and seminars, publish blogs and articles, and operate the PARC website as a place for information sharing and engagement.

A COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

A key achievement of 2023 was building up a community of more than a hundred signatories who endorse the principles of the Africa Charter and who will participate in the next stage of its journey. We have begun working with this ‘community of interest’ by engaging with them at events, sharing information via our website and social media, and encouraging other organisations to get involved.



TOWARDS A TOOLKIT FOR REVIEWING BRISTOL-AFRICA PARTNERSHIPS

Working with a cross-disciplinary team at the University of Bristol, PARC is analysing two Africa-facing networks (CONNECTED and TESH) as well as other Africa-facing projects, reviewing collaboration modes and examining impacts. The resultant learning is being gathered together into a framework and resources that will help benchmark future Bristol collaborations in line with the Africa Charter, and may be useful to other signatories in time.

This project is supported by a Strategic Impact Award, funded by the University of Bristol EPSRC-ESRC Impact Acceleration Account in 2023-2024.

A WEBSITE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

To support the launch of the Africa Charter, a more modern and functional website was developed to convey PARC’s messages and approach, and to work as an information hub. Key sections of the Africa Charter area include:

Signatories – see at a glance who has signed up for the Charter, plus statistics regarding type of organisation and location, and an interactive map

What people are saying – higher education leaders speaking about the Charter and why it is important, plus media coverage

Get involved – read the charter and sign up to be a part of its community of interest

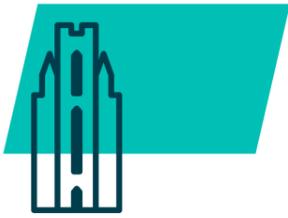


Image left: London ACU workshop

LOOKING AHEAD

PARC's first-phase work has created the foundation for real, transformative change within the University, the UK and the wider global North, for consolidated intellectual leadership, and for an overall strengthening and widening of the University's research and engagement with Africa. Our ambition for 2024-27 is to build on this foundation.

Anchored in our strategic partnerships, we will work at different levels:



UNIVERSITY

We will be working within the University, to bring together and leverage its large community and portfolio on Africa-facing research and, together with an internal Africa Charter steering group, to effect institutional policy and culture change.



CITY

In Bristol we will be working with city leaders on intersections between the Charter and the city's civic ambition.



UK & WIDER EUROPE

In the UK and wider Europe we will continue to work with funders, scholars and other key stakeholder groups to support the review of existing policy and practice and build bespoke tools and action plans to advance strategic Africa Charter aligned innovation across the sector.



GLOBALLY

Globally, and as mandated by the steering group for the Africa Charter, we will work with our partners to advance the implementation of the Charter's principles and aspirations, aiming to turn our current Community of Interest into a Community of Action.



AS PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL'S GLOBAL STRATEGY

As well as contributing to the University's ambition to drive world-leading research and innovation with impact locally, nationally and globally, PARC's work will form a major component of its strategic global civic ambition.

PARC expects to establish the University as a unique model and champion for the principles and aspirations of the Charter, and as a centre of scientific excellence in the field.







University of
BRISTOL

Founding Funder

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