BEAP

BUILDING EQUITABLE AFRICAN PARTNERSHIPS

Building Equitable Partnerships in Africa

By

Parvati Raghuram
Melis Cin
Ashley Gunter
Manu Lekunze
Wyclife Ong'eta
Ruan Schoeman
Leani van Vuuren

Acknowledgments

This report results from a collaborative effort by the BEAP team in Kenya, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. We are very grateful to the participants of the workshops held in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kamukuywa, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Bushbuck Ridge. Their insights, experiences, and reflections have been invaluable in shaping the direction and substance of this report. Many thanks to Gunjan Sondhi for her comments on an earlier draft. We also thank Sarah Miller and Jess Miller for their thoughtful input and consistent support throughout the project.

We are grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for funding this report. In the spirit of Ubuntu, we recognise that this report is the collective outcome of all involved.

Executive Summary

Purpose

This report presents practical recommendations for establishing equitable partnerships among national funders, research institutions, researchers, and local communities in Africa. It identifies future research funding priorities through thematic analyses focused on Conflict, Peace and Security; Women, Girls and Youth, and the Creative Economy, highlighting the critical role of equitable partnerships in addressing societal challenges.

Context

UK strategy aims to build particularly strong relationships with Africa. This is particularly important in the current geopolitical climate where many countries in Africa are seeking to shift away from centering Europe in their partnerships to focus instead on partners like China, Saudi Arabia and India. These countries speak the language of mutuality and emphasise that they too gain from partnerships.

Some of these countries also leave behind visible legacies of their partnership that improve the wellbeing of communities and encourage the mobility of partners in Africa. UK funders, research institutions and researchers need to engage with a revised version of partnership that is globally attuned. This report offers recommendations and action points regarding this.

Methods

The findings are grounded in insights gathered from nine regional workshops held in Kenya and South Africa, which engaged 113 participants from 15 African countries. This diverse participant group included rights holders, societal members, NGOs, artists, and institutional stakeholders. The workshops explored three key themes: Conflict, Peace and Security, Women, Girls and Youth, and the Creative Economy.

The methodology is rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu and implemented through culturally relevant practices such as Lekgotla, Isintu, and Harambee. These methods prioritise equity, relationality, and cultural relevance in research partnerships. Thematic analysis of the data focused on identifying action points at different levels in the research ecosystem: research funders, institutions, researchers and communities. Uniquely, it also focused on what Global South partners can do to facilitate equitable partnerships.

Small groups collaboratively analysed data relating to the thematic foci Conflict, Peace and Security, Women, Girls and Youth, and the Creative Economy to guide future research agendas. The workshops' collaborative design, consistent methodologies and co-facilitation, and regional reach contributed to the development of unified recommendations and action points across our two fieldwork sites, Kenya and South Africa, and to bring them into a single report.

The 13 Recommendations

Overview of Findings

The approach needs to recognise that issues in Africa are interconnected to issues beyond the continent. The methods must address the 'research-wellbeing' gap. This gap occurs where research is not accompanied by outcomes such as improved wellbeing of researchers and communities. It then has no sustained and locally visible impact in Africa.

The essential actions are at three levels:

1. **Funders**
2. **Institutional and Research Organisations/Researchers**
3. **Communities**

The thematic analyses on Conflict, Peace and Security; Women, Girls and Youth, and the Creative Economy, not only identify future funding priorities but also stress the significance of equitable partnerships in tackling societal challenges.

Key findings encourage the research ecosystem to move beyond a developmentalist viewpoint, avoid siloed approaches where community benefit is separated from research benefits, actively engage local communities, employ methods which recognise diversity in Africa, and implement clear action steps for Global South partners.

Approach

Funding research in Africa is important because it is affected by current geopolitics and the scramble for resources with many big players such as Russia, France, China and India. It has also been unduly affected by climate change.

These problems in Africa therefore often arise from outside Africa so all research on Africa must recognise global culpability. It must also enable researchers in Africa to research the UK, just as UK researchers undertake research in Africa. There is good research happening in the continent both through local investment and through collaborations, but these need to be scaled up. However, all researchers must be careful to avoid coloniality which is apparent both in UK-Africa relations and within Africa. There is a tendency to simplify African complexity and to see Africa or Africans through static traditionalism rather than the dynamicity usually ascribed to Europe or America, for example. This should be avoided at all costs.

Outcomes

Finally, the report also highlights the need to distinguish aid from research. However, research impacts should be locally beneficial and visibly improve the wellbeing of researchers and communities if such research is to generate good will towards funders. In doing so, we should recognise the agency of both researchers and communities in Africa who have learnt how to play the game of UK research to try and obtain some benefits for themselves.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 2
Executive Summary 3
- Purpose 3
- Context 3
- Methods 3
- Overview of findings 4
  - Approach 4
  - Outcomes 5

1. Introduction 7
1.1 Methodology 8
1.2 Practical Applications of Philosophy in Action 9
2. Recommendations: Understanding Partnerships Across Scales 10
2.1. Funder Level Recommendations 11
2.2. Institutional Level Recommendations 17
2.3. Community Level Recommendations 32
3. Future Funding Priorities with Locally Anchored Mechanisms 40
3.1. Conflict, Peace and Security 41
  - Current Challenges 41
  - Areas for Further Research 41
  - Key Requirements 42
  - Stakeholders 42

3.2. Women, Girls and Youth 43
  - Current Challenges 43
  - Areas for Further Research 43
  - Key Requirements 45
  - Stakeholders 45

3.3. The Creative Economy 46
  - Current Challenges 46
  - Areas for Further Research 46
  - Key Requirements 47
  - Stakeholders 47

Conclusion 48
References 49
Appendices 49

1. Introduction

> *"We don't work alone; we work with people, in our languages, in our places, with our histories. If we don't include those histories in the partnership, then what are we really building?"*
> **Kenya Stakeholder Workshop Participant.**

> *"How do you get the communities that you work with… to feel like they have a voice and this project isn't just you finding out stuff from them and disappearing?"*
> **South Africa Elders Lunch Participant.**

This report explores the principles of equitable partnerships among national funders, research institutions, researchers, and local communities. It highlights the importance of equitable research in creating a shared global good and in fostering positive relationships that drive progress at both local and global levels. By establishing research as a mutual exchange that benefits all parties involved, equitable partnerships help ensure that research activities are not exploitative or extractive, thereby reducing reputational risks for countries, funders, institutions, and researchers.

Additionally, prioritising equity in research can strengthen diplomatic relations in the regions studied, particularly in Africa, where nations are actively working to break away from colonial legacies. Given the rising influence of global powers such as Russia, China and India, it becomes crucial for the UK to demonstrate a clear and positive impact on the continent—an objective that research can significantly contribute to achieving.

However, many collaborative research efforts, often referred to as 'science,' fail to embody these principles of equity.

This imbalance in partnerships can directly compromise the well-being of those involved, resulting in a significant gap between research outputs and tangible benefits to African researchers and communities. Without equitable relationships, the research process risks becoming extractive rather than collaborative, leading to distrust and tension between researchers and the communities they aim to serve.

Addressing the disconnect between research outputs and local well-being is not merely a best practice; it is an ethical necessity that aims to alleviate the extractive nature of research activities. Despite ongoing efforts to tackle inequitable partnerships, challenges persist in ensuring that research conducted with Global South partners genuinely improves their well-being—an aspect that encompasses physical and mental health, dignity, inclusion, safety, and opportunity.

To effectively address these issues and close the research-wellbeing gap, we present actionable principles for building equitable partnerships, informed by insights from national funders, research institutions, and local communities across East and Southern Africa. This report aims to add value to existing research in five ways:

1. **Beyond the Development Gaze:** Recognises that challenges are global can only be addressed collaboratively, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. **Without Silos:** Integrates findings from multiple constituencies across 15 countries and across scales, funder, research institution, researcher and community.
3. **With Societal Engagement:** Develops principles with active societal involvement, particularly in Kenya and South Africa
4. **Methods**: Uses methods, moving beyond colonial languages and Western philosophies.
5. **Action Points for Global South**: Suggests steps for Global South partners to ensure that the partnerships are equitable.

1.1 Methodology

The report is based on data co-created with participants at 9 workshops held in Kenya and South Africa. These workshops took place across 5 towns and cities, engaging 113 participants from 15 countries in Africa. The attendees included both rights holders, such as societal members, NGOs, CSOs, artists, and ordinary citizens, and key stakeholders, including academics, representatives from funding councils, museum leaders, librarians, and university administrators.

The methodology employed an African-centred approach, grounded in the philosophy of *Ubuntu* and operationalised through practices such as *Lekgotla* (inclusive dialogue), *Isintu* (cultural rootedness), and *Harambee* (collective effort). This approach prioritised equity, relationality, and cultural relevance, with participants leading the conversations.

This project methodology builds on methodological innovations developed through the Decolonising Education for Peace in Africa (DEPA) project—a multi-country initiative that provided the conceptual and practical foundation for participatory, arts-based, and decolonial approaches to knowledge co-creation. Drawing from this base, the workshopping model was co-designed by partners from Kenya and South Africa during a two-day meeting in South Africa and implemented in collaboration with UK colleagues with whom the South African team has built a ten-year partnership with a shared commitment to equitable research practice. Both Raghuram (Raghuram and Madge, 2006; Raghuram and Sondhi, forthcoming) and Cin (Mkwanazi and Cin 2021) have also published on the topic.

The African-centred methodology uses local practices—such as storytelling, image theatre, and collective dialogue. Importantly, although the workshops were physically held in Kenya and South Africa, they drew participants from 15 countries (Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe) across East and Southern Africa. As a result of this, the collaborative nature of workshop design, shared methodology, and consistent use of facilitators the report adopts a regional framing and offers joint recommendations. However, we also recognise differences between Kenya and South Africa some of which are given below. These differences have been considered in our overall analysis.

The higher education sector in Kenya is highly privatised, unlike in South Africa. South African HE has a highly organised reward structure and promotion system that recognises research, especially international collaborative research. As a result, research engagements are conducted through the university and lead indirectly to the researcher's career aspirations. In Kenya, this link is weaker, and many researchers establish consultancies in order to undertake research. This means that they avoid the university bureaucracy and get direct payments through grants, but this financial uplift exists even if there are no publications. The decolonisation discourse is much stronger in South Africa but is looked at suspiciously especially by the higher echelons of government in Kenya.

The workshops centred on three key themes: *Conflict, Peace, and Security; Women, Girls and Youth*, and the *Creative Economy* bringing together individuals actively working within these areas.

They were guided by the following principles:

1. **Ownership by Rights Holders**: While researchers facilitated the process, ownership of the discussions and outcomes remained with the participants.

2. **Grounded in Everyday Practices in Africa**: Group activities were embedded within familiar cultural settings, including shared meals and informal evening discussions, allowing participants to reflect on workshop themes through the lens of their daily experiences.

3. **Rooted in African Philosophies:** The methodology drew on the Ubuntu philosophy, emphasising interconnectedness and shared humanity. Practices such as Harambee (collective responsibility), Lekgotla (inclusive decision-making), and Isintu (cultural identity and heritage) informed the collaborative spirit of the workshops.

1.2 Practical Applications of Philosophy in Action

Rightsholders and stakeholders were placed at the same level to show how each was invested in research and knowledge in different ways.

> *"This was the best workshop I ever attended. It pushed the spirit of Ubuntu"*
> **South Africa Stakeholder Workshop Participant**

Fire Pit Conversations *(Ubuntu)* – Created safe spaces for honest dialogue and reflection.

Matatu Stop Exercise (*Harambee)* – Used storytelling and listening as collaborative tools.

Embodied Understanding Through Image Theatre *(Ukubona)* – Explored equity through non-verbal communication.

Journalist and Politician Role-Play *(Lekgotla*) – Encouraged critical reflection on knowledge production and power.

Story Telling *(Isintu)* – Visual storytelling to unpack power dynamics.

"What we've done here, what's happening right now in this workshop is actually an eye opener and we hope that this project that is being spearheaded by the AHRC will be used globally to show the world how things. How approaches in research should be."
Kenya Stakeholder Workshop Participant

The analytical process involved close reading of the workshop transcripts by several members of the research team, with all readers trying to answer the research question: How do we build equitable partnerships? We analysed existing literature both theoretical (Nyamnjoh 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) and practical and identified the gaps in how this question has been answered thus far. We also drew on insights from our previous research. We identified three scales at which partnerships could be improved: macro (funder), meso (research institutions and researchers) and micro (communities). We also identified specific factors that will influence partnerships such as geopolitical, financial, socio-cultural and interpersonal. Geopolitical factors impact international political relationships, financial factors relate to the availability and management of research funding, socio-cultural factors involve the customs and norms that shape partnerships, and interpersonal factors focus on the communication dynamics between individuals in collaborative efforts. This framework was used by the whole team in order to identify recommendations and actions for all the different actors who can bring about equitable partnerships. Data on the three thematic domains of Conflict, Peace, and Security Women, Girls, and Youth and The Creative Economy were also processed to identify agendas for future research.

2. Recommendations: Understanding Partnerships Across Scales

This report proposes 13 Recommendations: three at the funder level, six at institutional level and four at the community level. These principles envision ways of going beyond traditional hierarchical collaborations, emphasising shared leadership, local agency, and long-term impact.

2.1 Funder Level Recommendations

The principle of reciprocal agency highlights the fact that researchers in the UK and Africa both benefit through partnerships.

There is often a persistent stereotype within funding bodies that Africa is a continent facing challenges. This positions the UK as a benevolent funder, rather than equitable partner. When funding bodies view Africa solely through the lens of need, they risk marginalising the expertise of Africans.

Funder actions for Reciprocal Agency emphasise equitable collaboration, mutual benefit, and diversity in research initiatives between the UK and Global South partners

Action	Description
Devise Equitable Funding Calls	Ensure that research initiatives highlight the commonalities between the UK and Global South contexts, recognising that Global challenges are not exclusive to the Global South.
Recognise Mutual Benefit	Create funder-level partnership agreements that outline the roles, contributions, and benefits for each party involved. This includes specifying the expected outcomes for both Global North and Global South partners, fostering transparency and understanding.
Reverse the Gaze	Enable researchers from the Global South to explore issues within the UK, fostering a reciprocal exchange of insights and perspectives that enrich understanding and collaboration on shared Global problems.
Develop Mobility Scheme	Set up mobility schemes to ensure reciprocity in building sustainable relationships and mutual knowledge exchange.
Encourage Diversity in Research Teams	Encourage diversity in research teams of race and gender so that, for instance, Global South researchers who now live and work in the Global North are better represented across the research environment.
Facilitate Mentorship	Facilitate mentorship opportunities that allow capacity-sharing rather than capacity-building.

Inclusive Funding Practices	Get input from researchers and societal leaders in Africa to identify relevant criteria and provide application workshops tailored to help underrepresented researchers navigate the funding process effectively.

Specific Actions for Global South Funders

Action	Description
Advocate for Equitable Funding Frameworks with Diverse Funders	Actively participate in policy dialogues hosted by funding agencies, governments, and international organisations to present data and case studies that illustrate the contributions of Global South researchers to global challenges. Advocating for the inclusion of equitable funding frameworks and the recognition of local expertise can influence funder priorities and decision-making processes.
Establish Co-Funding Models	Develop co-funding agreements with Global North partners that ensure both parties contribute resources equitably, facilitating shared ownership of projects and outcomes.
Negotiate Terms of Collaboration	Prioritise the participation and input of Global South researchers in project design and implementation to ensure their expertise is valued and utilised effectively.
Launch Regional Funding Initiatives	Initiate funding programs that specifically support research collaborations between local institutions and Global North partners, focusing on projects that address regional challenges and promote local capacities.
Ensure Equity in Research Partnerships	Implement mechanisms to assess and monitor equality in partnerships, ensuring that Global South voices are not only included but also have authoritative roles in decision-making throughout the research lifecycle.

There is a need for sustainability in funding. Many projects are inherently time-limited and lack built-in mechanisms for long-term impact, leading to fleeting benefits and a lack of evidence of benefits to local communities.

1. **Short-Term Focus of Funding:** Many research projects are time-limited, leading to a lack of long-term planning and sustainability, which affects the effectiveness of research and the visible impact of such research.
2. **Breaking the Cycle of Over-Research:** Research funding follows fashionable academic trends which can result in repetition of studies using the latest terms or paradigms rather than focusing on how to advance what has been done before.
3. **Sustainability in Ensuring Equitable Partnerships:** Both UK and Global South funders must show a collective commitment and endorse this principle in their institutional guidelines, recognising the importance of fostering long-term, meaningful collaborations that benefit all parties involved.

Sustainability actions focus on establishing long-term research hubs, direct funding allocation, and fostering equitable partnerships to ensure lasting impact and societal engagement.

Action	Description
Establish Long-term Research Hubs	Establish long-term research hubs within communities, ensuring knowledge production remains embedded in local contexts.
Earmark Direct Funding	Allocate a significant share of funding directly to local institutions, researchers, and community partners who know what research needs to be done next and can advise on how to take both the next steps and the great leap forward in terms of research agendas.
Reserve Partnership Building Budget	Ensure that a portion of the grant budget is reserved specifically for societal engagement, building partnership building activities and dissemination of research findings, and facilitating deeper connections with local audiences.
Provide Infrastructural Support	Support infrastructure and systems that allow communities to sustain research initiatives beyond external funding cycles. This will increase the visibility of UK's research funding.

Implement Multi-year Funding Models	Develop and use multi-year and follow-up funding models that allow for sustained impact rather than short-term project cycles.
Embed and Reward Sustainability in Equitable Partnership	Embed equitable partnerships into REF or research excellence agendas to encourage universities to commit to this. Showcase and reward projects and institutions which display good equitable partnerships.

Specific Actions for Global South Funders

Action	Description
Promote Equitable Partnership Principles Among African Researchers	Launch initiatives and programs to raise awareness among African researchers and institutions on principles of Equitable Partnership.

Mutual decision-making, resource-sharing, and adaptive partnerships is needed to establish a framework for shared governance in international collaborations.

1. Co-Ownership of Research Agendas: Establishing co-ownership of research agendas is crucial for ensuring that the interests and needs of institutions in Africa are prioritised.

2. Sustainability of Collaborative Efforts: Without a clear framework for shared governance and mutual accountability, many partnerships risk being short-lived. The absence of ongoing investment and commitment from both parties can lead to a reliance on temporary funding sources rather than sustainable, long-term cooperative relationships.

3. Strategic Misalignment: There may be a lack of strategic alignment between UK and Global South institutions, with differing priorities and goals leading to ineffective partnerships. Without shared objectives and clarity of purpose, cooperative efforts can become disjointed.

4. Promoting Academic Mobility: Addressing visa restrictions, funding limitations, and awareness gaps can enhance academic mobility for African researchers and students. Shared governance models with clear mobility pathways, mutual degree recognition, and streamlined exchange processes can facilitate this. Exchange programs between institutions in Africa and UK universities can provide valuable international experience for students and researchers.

Actions for Shared Governance focus on two key areas: **Agreements and Funding calls**, ensuring collaborative decision-making and equitable contributions from all partners involved.

Actions for Shared Governance Agreements

Action	Description
Collaborative Workshops for Defining Bilateral Agreement Terms	Set up workshops and meetings to create joint policies that define the terms of bilateral agreements, ensuring that both Global North and Global South partners have input in shaping the governance structure and operational guidelines.
Establishing Co-Funding Models for Joint Research Decision-Making	Develop co-funding models where both the UK and international partners contribute to the funding and co-decide on research areas to be funded.

Action Plans at the Funder Level Throughout the Grant Lifecycle

The table below outlines the action plans at the funder level at different stages of the grant process: pre-grant, during the grant, and post-grant. Each stage includes specific actions to be taken to ensure effective management and collaboration throughout the grant lifecycle.

Specific Actions for Global South Funders

Action	Description
Fund Training for Global South Institutions in Grant-Readiness Through Skills Development	Training in negotiation skills, academic partnership development, and project management can enable Global South institutions to be 'grant-ready' concerning governance.
Creating Dialogue Platforms for Global South Researchers and Funders	Establish platforms that enable ongoing dialogue between Global South researchers and funders, allowing for sharing local insights, challenges, and opportunities that can inform research priorities and funding strategies.

> *"Partnerships begin with connections."*
>
> **South Africa Stakeholder Workshop Participant**

2.2 Institutional Level Recommendations

All collaborative research faces challenges due to differing operational requirements and institutional systems. Participants in the workshops in Kenya and South Africa stressed the importance of ensuring that mutual understanding of institutional systems is prioritised early on.

1. **Recognise and Mitigate Knowledge Asymmetry**: partners in Africa often struggle to adapt to UK research protocols, investing significant time and resources, while UK researchers may be unaware of the diverse systems in research institutions in Africa. This one-way adaptation creates emotional and administrative burdens, as discussed by participants in Johannesburg and Nairobi.
2. **Acknowledge Differences in Preferred Research Methodology:** In many countries, quantitative research dominates, while qualitative and arts-based methods are less common. It's important to explain and learn these methods, encouraging Global South partners to adopt and use them. Ensure both data collection and joint analysis are included in collective methodologies.
3. **Institutional Barriers:** Both UK institutions and those across Africa navigate complex bureaucratic landscapes but there are differences in infrastructure, resource availability, and organisational hierarchies. Neither side is open about their barriers and difficulties as they try to save face, limiting shared problem solving and transparency.
4. **Linguistic Power and Knowledge Access:** Recognise the global valency of English language publication: Preserve cultural knowledge but recognise that English language publications have valency and can improve local career pathways. It also makes available vast amounts of knowledge in English to Africans so focusing only on local languages can mean that they are cut out of these knowledges. Recognise language imperialism but also recognise that there are reasons for encouraging and enabling English publications.
5. **Address Ethical Dilemmas:** Ethical guidelines reflect cultural norms. These guidelines should align with local cultures, where trust may replace formal documentation. Imposing paper-based systems can oversimplify issues and miss the point. Ethical research practices and their meanings can differ, with UK institutions potentially overlooking the importance of societal involvement and consent. In Nairobi, failing to honor oral traditions was noted to severely damage community trust.
6. **Legal and Geopolitical Complexities:** Researchers navigate distinct local legal policies and geopolitical concerns that can impact research initiatives. These may include restrictions on research topics, data governance issues, and regional security concerns. UK partners often lack familiarity with these dynamics, which can lead to oversights in ethical approvals and research planning. Participants in Nairobi and Mombasa spoke of funding being withdrawn due to political mis-readings by UK partners.
7. **Negotiating Resource Disparities:** The disparity in resources between and across institutions in the UK and Africa creates additional challenges. While UK institutions often have access to substantial research funding, some institutions in Africa struggle with limited resources, affecting their capacity to engage in collaborative research.

Mutuality actions aim to foster long-term institutional partnerships, streamline collaborative agreements, and enhance training and collaboration between research administrators from both the Global North and South.

Action	Description
Develop Long-Term Institutional Partnerships	Foster ongoing dialogues by ensuring research offices and administrators develop long-term institutional partnerships beyond individual relationships.
Develop Inter-institutional MOUs	Use Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to streamline collaborative agreements, accounting for local contexts and making processes more efficient.
Provide Training for Research Development Office Staff on Both Sides	Offer training to researchers and administrators on effective collaboration strategies that integrate diverse research cultures and practices.
Establish Research Administrator Collaboration and Sharing of Process Pathways	Create designated points of contact within both institutions for cross-regional collaboration. Share document pathways and expected timelines after grant awards.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Hosting Workshops to Enhance Northern Researchers' Understanding of African Research Contexts	Organise workshops to educate Northern researchers of understanding research contexts in Africa, covering legal systems, ethics, and cultural perspectives, while empowering partners in Africa.

Collaboration agreements are intended to be legal safeguards for participating institutions, transforming suspicion into trust. However, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of these agreements..

1. **Power Imbalance and Unequal Expectations:** Some researchers in Africa often feel reluctant to challenge terms or breaches of agreements. This can lead to partners in Africa accepting unfavourable conditions and hesitating to assert their rights, resulting in an imbalance in accountability. During the Johannesburg Elders' Lunch, one participant noted that "agreements are not discussed; agreements are imposed."
2. **Protracted Negotiation Processes:** The negotiation and finalisation of collaboration agreements can be lengthy and bureaucratic, especially for partners in Africa who may face additional layers of institutional hierarchy and regulatory compliance. These delays can obstruct research progress and cause financial strain on institutions in Africa.
3. **Financial Implications of Delays:** The slow pace of establishing collaboration agreements can lead to significant financial outlays for some institutions in Africa, as they may need to fund initial project activities without certainty of reimbursement. These delays can strain already limited resources, impacting the sustainability of research efforts and potentially jeopardising the partnership.
4. **Lack of Ongoing Monitoring of Equitability Principles:** Despite efforts to create equitable agreements, there is often a lack of ongoing monitoring and communication once the agreement is in place. Without regular check-ins, both parties may overlook their responsibilities or fail to address emerging issues, leading to unresolved conflicts and diminishing the collaboration's effectiveness. A participant in South Africa suggested quarterly reflective dialogues between legal and research leads across institutions.

Actions for drafting trustworthy collaborative agreements emphasise joint contributions, equitable templates, clear communication, and regular reflection to ensure shared values and effective collaboration.

Action	Description
Draft Collaborative Agreements	Draft agreements jointly, with both partners contributing legal, financial, and research insights. Ensure they reflect not just legal safeguards but shared values.
Co-create Equitable Collaboration Agreement Templates	Co-develop template agreements that streamline processes while embedding local context and equitable recommendations for authorship, benefit-sharing, and leadership.

Provide Digestible Collaboration Recommendations	Create one-page briefs or infographics that explain the main components of collaboration agreements to all research participants.
Monitor and Reflect	Build in regular reflection checkpoints during project cycles to assess adherence to agreements and provide space to renegotiate when needed.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Articulate Institutional Needs in Collaborative Negotiation Processes	Take an active role in the negotiation process by clearly articulating your institution's needs and expectations. Prepare a list of key points to address, including resource allocations, publication rights, and responsibilities, ensuring a balanced approach to the agreement that reflects the local context.
Advocating for Clear Adjustment Clauses in Collaboration Agreements	Advocate for the inclusion of clear adjustment clauses in the collaboration agreements that outline how changes or breaches should be addressed.

Due diligence by UK institutions ensures financial stability and regulatory compliance but can be intrusive and inequitable.

1. **Imbalanced Documentation Requirements:** Partners in Africa are frequently required to provide extensive documentation to demonstrate their financial viability and regulatory compliance to their UK collaborators. This can include audits, financial statements, and proof of legal registrations. However, the reverse is rarely true; Global South partners typically do not have access to similar documentation from their UK counterparts. During the Pretoria workshop, participants stressed the emotional toll of one-sided scrutiny and the symbolic weight of distrust it carries.
2. **Vulnerability in Funding Agreements:** UK partners may face funding cuts or shifts in organisational priorities, which can lead them to renege on previously established commitments to support collaborative projects in Africa. Unfortunately, there are often no robust mechanisms in place to protect African institutions from the financial fallout of these decisions. The resultant instability can severely hinder the progress of joint initiatives and disrupt the livelihoods of researchers and support staff involved in these projects.
3. **Rigid Budgeting Constraints:** Many collaborative agreements stipulate rigid budgeting frameworks that do not sufficiently account for the realities of operating within diverse African contexts.
4. Restrictions on budget allocations can limit the flexibility required to navigate unpredictable local conditions, such as currency fluctuations, inflation, and varying costs of living.

Recommended actions to revisit due diligence focus on implementing reciprocal arrangements for document sharing and revising processes to be respectful and minimally intrusive, particularly for small NGOs and independent artists.

Action	Description
Implement Reciprocal Due Diligence	Explore reciprocal due diligence arrangements for document sharing between institutions. Explain the purpose, storage, and post-grant handling of collected documentation.
Revise Due Diligence Processes	Conduct due diligence respectfully and minimally intrusively. Restrict requirements for small NGOs and independent artists to allow direct recruitment without standard administrative burdens.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Clarify Due Diligence Requirements Through Conversations with Northern Partners	Initiate conversations with Northern partners to clarify due diligence documentation, its purpose, usage, and storage. Create a checklist of both parties' requirements for mutual understanding.
Negotiate Equitable Access to Information for Transparency in Collaborations	Negotiate for equitable access to information and advocate for provisions in collaboration agreements to access financial and operational information from Northern partners, promoting transparency and trust.

Achieving financial equity between institutions in Africa and their counterparts in the UK is fraught with challenges stemming from an uneven funding landscape. Most research funding currently flows from the UK to the Global South, primarily through prominent research institutions, perpetuating a cycle of dependency that undermines local capacities.

1. **Currency Disparities and Inflation**: Researchers in Africa face currency volatility and high inflation, impacting rewards, project costs, and research sustainability. An early-career researcher in Nairobi noted that a project lost 20% of its budget due to inflation within six months.
2. **Irregular and Delayed Payments**: African researchers often receive irregular or delayed payments, disrupting financial planning and commitment to projects. Several participants discussed how delayed funding from a UK institution prevented timely payment to research assistants.
3. **Inequities in Indirect Costs and Expenditure**: Institutions in Africa often do not get the infrastructure, administration, and other overhead costs that are typically covered in more formalised funding systems in the UK. This lack of adequate indirect cost recovery can place an undue financial burden on partners in Africa.
4. **Reporting Requirements**: The reporting requirements of funders are complex and the purpose opaque, adding stress and undervaluing their contributions.
5. **Transactional Differences**: Financial transactions in the UK are more formalised, while in Africa, transactions may be less documented, creating accountability and transparency issues.
6. **Lack of Transparency**: Budgeting and compensation practices often lack transparency, making it difficult for African researchers to understand the financial landscape of collaborative projects and advocate for fair compensation and resource distribution.

Financial Equity actions can help ensure fair compensation, transparent budgeting, timely payments, realistic risk assessment, and flexibility in financial management for all research partners.

Action	Description
Fair and Equitable Rewards for All Researchers and Research Supporters	Implement compensation structures that fairly reward all partners, ensuring that researchers from both the Global North and Global South are fairly rewarded for their efforts and expertise. This includes compensating for field access, local knowledges, and time spent administering grant money. Ensure Southern administrative offices, including finance departments, receive fair salaries and acknowledgment for their vital role in the success of collaborative research.

Develop Standardised and Transparent Budgeting Guidelines	Standardised budgeting guidelines promote transparency in funding allocation, ensuring that all partners have a clear understanding of financial resources and how they will be shared.
Ensure Timely Payments	Make timely payments so that researchers in the Global South do not have to depend on trust from vendors, research assistants or suppliers to obtain services before the money is transferred.
Assess Proportionality of Risk Realistically	Leakages and inappropriate use of money are a risk when money flows from high-resource environments to low-resource environments. It is important to safeguard against these, but measures need to be assessed individually and not 'en bloc', i.e. a blanket rule that disregards varying local contexts.
Accept and Defend Flexibility in the Budget	Research funders recognise the different research environments, but institutions wary of audits enforce financial rules in strident ways. Finance officers and legal services need to be trained to understand the nature of global research and variations across countries so that they can accept and defend flexibility, which is properly accounted for in the case of virements, for example.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Establish Clear Financial Agreements with Northern Partners for Timely Funding	Create clear financial agreements with Northern partners that delineate funding allocations and expectations for currency conversion rates. Ensure these agreements address the need for timely payments to reduce disruptions in project implementation.
Engage in Financial Transparency Discussions for Mutual Accountability	Proactively engage Northern partners in discussions about financial transparency and mutual accountability. Propose regular meetings to review budgets, expenses, and financial practices to ensure that both parties are aligned and informed.

Pursue Local Funding Opportunities to Support Researchers and Institutions in Africa	Explore and apply for local and regional funding opportunities that prioritise African researchers and institutions. Building relationships with local grant agencies can provide alternative funding streams that support research initiatives without dependency on global funding.

The aim of situated ethics is to recognise that all ethics is socio-cultural and legal and ethics in collaborative research requires cultivating the sensibilities of what ethics means for all partners, UK and African.

1. **Recognition of Cultural Practices:** Ethical frameworks are always intertwined with cultural values, religious beliefs, and societal practices. As a result, practices around consent, community involvement, knowledge sharing and intellectual property will vary between the UK and Africa, as well as within Africa. Situated ethics advocates for interrogating UK ethics to see what needs to be edited out in the research context and what needs to be added in so that it is more reflective of local values and norms. This can be done by engaging with societal members, NGOs and stakeholders, ensuring that they have leadership roles in the research lifecycle.
2. **Addressing Historical Extractive Relationships and Mistrust**: Historical exploitation and power imbalances in research practices have resulted in scepticism towards external and internal researchers in Africa. Acknowledging these historical injustices will enable ethical frameworks that foster trust and restorative justice. In the Elders' Lunch in Johannesburg, a participant reminded others that mistrust in ethics stems from generations of extractive and dismissive research experiences.

Situated ethics actions focus on the importance of respecting local governance, adhering to community-based ethical guidelines, and creating joint ethical review boards to ensure culturally sensitive and respectful research practices.

Action	Description
Recognise Locally Sensitive Ethics	Ethical considerations must respect the governance of research in both the study location and the funding country. Recommendations should align with the values and needs of the involved communities and adhere to in-country ethical guidelines to ensure globally beneficial outputs do not cause local harm.
Follow Community-Based Ethical Guidelines	Encourage projects to use an ethical advisory group before devising the methodology to ensure sensitivity to global variations in ethical behaviour.

Create Joint Ethical Review Boards	Create ethical review boards that include representatives from Global South organisations to advise UKRI on variations in ethical standards across contexts to ensure that ethical considerations are relevant and respectful of local norms.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Embed Ethical Practices into Research Design for Societal Respect	Identify and integrate ethical practices and frameworks that exist within local cultures. Use these practices as guiding recommendations in research design, emphasising methods of consent, participation, and knowledge sharing that respect societal norms.
Advocate for Local Ethical Review Boards to Ensure Culturally Relevant Oversight	The creation of local ethical review boards staffed by individuals knowledgeable about community contexts can provide culturally relevant oversight and approval processes, ensuring that research adheres to local ethical standards.

Successful collaborations in research are fundamentally rooted in trust and interpersonal relationships. However, these relationships must be bolstered by equitable institutional processes that recognise and respect the unique challenges faced by African researchers. Researchers across Africa, operate within distinct academic, financial, and logistical systems that often differ from their UK counterparts.

1. **Power Imbalances in Research Collaborations:** Researchers in Africa often find themselves in positions of vulnerability within collaborative partnerships. The historical context of power dynamics stemming from colonial legacies continues to influence how research is conducted and perceived. This power imbalance can result in decision-making processes where the voices of partners in Africa are marginalised or overlooked. In Nairobi, several participants highlighted that setting the research agenda in collaboration with local partners made a critical difference in feeling valued.
2. **Differences in Institutional Infrastructure:** Many institutions in Africa face significant infrastructural challenges, such as inadequate access to technology, limited funding, and fewer administrative resources. This disparity can hinder their ability to engage on an equal footing with UK institutions. As a result, African researchers may struggle with logistical issues that their UK counterparts take for granted, such as project management.
3. **Cultural Nuances in Communication:** Differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. UK academics often set the agenda for meetings or define processes and are explicit about laying the ground early, which African researchers may feel pressured to conform to. A participant in the Limpopo Workshop explained that in some cultures, people may give feedback in a subtle or indirect manner as a sign of respect or humility.
4. **Funding Disparities:** There are a lot of differences in access to research funding both within the UK and Africa. Researchers in smaller institutions and poorer areas may have limited access to resources, which can impede their ability to participate fully in collaborative projects.
5. **Recognition and Credit for Contributions:** African researchers often face challenges in receiving proper recognition for their contributions in collaborative research. UK institutions may unintentionally overlook the value of local expertise, resulting in African researchers being sidelined in authorship or acknowledgment on publications, thereby reinforcing inequities in academic visibility.

Actions for Equitable Researcher Engagements aim to ensure fair collaboration by addressing publication equity, bibliometric and currency volatility awareness, pre-funding grants, diverse costing models, racism and unconscious bias, and inclusive communication practices.

Action	Description
Develop Publication Equity	Produce a publication protocol as part of the collaboration agreement that encourages co-authorship models that fairly reflect intellectual contributions from all partners. Avoid practices where Global North researchers dominate authorship despite collaborative work.
Create Bibliometric Awareness	Acknowledge that Global South institutions may not place the same emphasis on certain metrics and processes and adjust expectations accordingly in joint outputs.
Rasie Currency Volatility Awareness	Recognise that exchange rate fluctuations can impact Southern budgets significantly and recognise what is achievable with differences in currency values; build in buffers or contingency funds to accommodate financial risks.
Pre-fund	Where possible, structure grants to allow upfront disbursements to Southern partners to avoid delays due to reimbursement models which are unsustainable in lower-resource contexts.
Devise Diverse Costing Models	Respect differences in institutional overheads and staff remuneration structures. Avoid imposing Northern financial models onto Southern institutions.
Recognise Differences in Affordability	Be aware that travel and subsistence costs differ for Southern and Northern academics. Southern academics may prefer extra cash over spending on higher quality food or accommodation.
Acknowledge Racism and Unconscious Bias	Northern researcher interactions with Southern researchers are often shaped by racism and unconscious bias through discourse and worldviews. Recognising that the baseline of racism as the underpinning context in which these interactions are staged means that you always have to start by assuming racism, conscious or unconscious, and address it.

Rotate Agenda Setting	Let different people take turns to set the agenda and lead meetings. No one partner or organisation should control the agenda or the style of the meeting.
Recognise Different Styles of Communicating	Recognise that styles of communication and working will vary between people and that your way is not necessarily right or correct. The notion of collaborative practice will itself vary between people, with some emphasising the collaborative process, and others the intent.
Learn to Listen and Attune	Northern academics need to learn to listen and attune. Northern academics often exude an inherent sense of superiority, that they know how things ought to be done and know the right way. Partnership means recognising that there are many 'right ways'.
Recognise your Power	Often individuals keep quiet as a way of defending themselves in meetings as they feel powerless or unimportant. Northern researchers need to recognise their power and redress its perpetuating effects.
Ensure Language Accessibility	Ensure that working documents, grant applications, and key communications are accessible in clear, non-jargon-heavy English and translated where possible to allow meaningful participation across linguistic backgrounds.
Coordinate Calendars	Align project timelines with both partners' academic calendars, including summer holidays in different hemispheres, exam periods, breaks, and teaching loads, which vary significantly across institutions and regions. Recognise national holidays and working hours across regions; avoid scheduling key meetings during periods when Southern partners may be unavailable.
Use Informed Planning	Account for mobility challenges, such as traffic congestion, limited public transport, or visa complexities. Avoid scheduling multiple site visits or short-notice travel that disregard on-the-ground realities.
Acknowledge Infrastructure Constraints	Be mindful of uneven access to fast internet, office facilities, or uninterrupted power supply, which may affect meeting participation and research timelines.

Specific Actions for Global South Institutions

Action	Description
Negotiate Authorship and Recognition Criteria Early	Early discussions about authorship and recognition criteria at the beginning of the collaboration can clearly outline expectations regarding contributions, credit, and publication rights, ensuring that all partners agree on how authorship will be determined so that there are no misunderstandings and there is equitable recognition for all contributors.

2.3 Community-Level Recommendations

Communities are often relegated to the roles of beneficiaries or stakeholders in research projects initiated by external entities. However, positioning local communities as rights holders, i.e. those who have entitlements and rights to their own knowledge, and must be compensated for sharing it, shifts communities centre-stage. This can result in recognition of these communities' inherent rights as active contributors to research and decision-making processes.

1. **Incorporating Local Knowledge:** Communities in Kenya and South Africa have valuable local knowledge that can enhance creative and cultural initiatives, but their voices are often overlooked in research. To ensure their inclusion, collaborate with local stakeholders from the start and recognise their religious and cultural values in partnerships, including academic settings.
2. **Creating Equitable Benefit Distribution with People Repaid in their Own Currency:** Research projects should recognise that communities may want specific outcomes from the research. This may include knowledge, visibility, financial returns or networks, amongst others. Researchers need to identify what forms of compensation are appropriate. These should also have longevity so that evidence of impact is evident after the researchers have left.
3. **Early Engagement in Research Processes:** Early engagement with communities in the research process is crucial for establishing genuine partnerships. Researchers should involve local communities from the outset, collaborating with societal members, artists, and cultural experts to define research questions and appropriate methods.
4. **Sustainable Societal Engagement:** Sustainable societal engagement that extends beyond the duration of funding or grant periods. Chinese partnerships often leave behind lasting infrastructure and this notion of partnership shapes expectations and demands around partnership. Having visible lasting impact is essential for people to value partnerships.

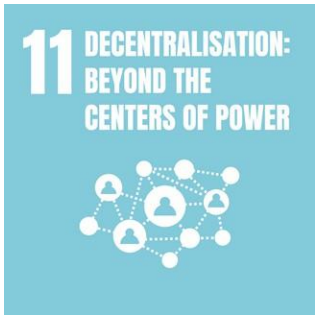
Actions here emphasise the importance of recognising and empowering community voices, valuing local knowledge, and establishing sustainable, community-aligned research practices.

Action	Description
Recognise Rights Holder Agendas and Research Questions	Recognise and enable rights holders by ensuring that community voices, values, and local knowledge shape research agendas, and that local communities help to set research questions, ensuring that research uses locally appropriate methodologies.

Seek Knowledge, Not Data	The interconnected nature of knowledge, its ownership, and the position of the outside researcher become more evident when you do not reduce knowledge to data, a research artefact, and instead see it as a whole way of life.
Recognise and Reward Local Knowledges	Ensure that local knowledges are considered as expertise and validated, both in the research process and through appropriate financial reward.
Establish Sustainability Plans	Establish a sustainability plan ensuring that it aligns with the society's specific needs and aspirations. Implement a system for ongoing support, where researchers maintain communication and provide guidance through follow-up visits or virtual check-ins, allowing communities to adapt initiatives as needed.

Specific Actions for Global South Communities

Action	Description
Encourage Early Engagement and Discuss Sustainability Before Grant Awards	Ensure that sustainability is addressed before awarding grants. Conduct workshops to equip societal members with the skills needed to understand their rights and effectively participate in research processes. These workshops could cover topics such as research methodologies and negotiation skills.
Draft Community Benefit Agreements to Ensure Fair Sharing of Research Benefits	Draft community benefit agreements that clearly outline how research project benefits will be shared with local communities. Involve societal members in the negotiation process to ensure their interests are represented. For example, when collaborating with local artists and cultural practitioners in South Africa, agreements could stipulate financial compensation for their contributions and intellectual property rights for their work. Additionally, these agreements might include plans for sharing research findings with the community, such as creating educational workshops on art preservation techniques or digital archiving methods.



Research is frequently concentrated in capital cities and major academic hubs. In South Africa and Kenya, this centralisation limits the diversity of voices in global conversations and decision-making processes, resulting in a narrow representation of knowledge and perspectives. Engaging with knowledge produced outside these centres of power can create a more diverse understanding of the issues faced.

Decentralised actions hone in on understanding local political sensitivities, establishing regional research networks, allowing flexibility in due diligence, and navigating political dynamics to build effective and equitable research partnerships.

Action	Description
Be Familiar with Geopolitical Sensitivities	Researchers should familiarise themselves with local political sensitivities and internal hierarchies to foster effective partnerships. In South Africa, understanding the politicisation of race is crucial, as it shapes societal dynamics influenced by the country's apartheid history. In Kenya, ethnic differences were more salient.
Create Regional Hubs to Connect Partners	Create or participate in regional research networks that connect institutions and researchers located outside major urban centres. These networks can facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and resource pooling among universities and organisations in rural areas.
Apply Flexibility in Due Diligence	New partners are unlikely to have the research pathway diagrams or all the documents required to obtain due diligence. Enable people to develop the documents before application or allow 'expansive projects' with partners in areas with little history of partnering to partner without the full due diligence documentation.
Understand Political Dynamics	In Kenya, researchers should understand political patronage dynamics and advocate for transparent governance to ensure accountability in funding, as collaborations with UK organisations are often viewed as opportunities to address local inequities. Involving societal members in financial decisions enhances trust and ownership. Committing to financial transparency and clear reporting dispels mismanagement concerns. Collaborate with local leaders to empower communities and navigate political sensitivities, fostering equitable partnerships.

Specific Actions for Global South Communities

Action	Description
Advocate for Policy Changes for Strategic Partnerships	Smaller regional institutions should collaborate with more central ones to gain access to international networks. Researchers can join email groups and other online networking platforms to establish connections. Additionally, engage in advocacy efforts to influence national research policies that promote decentralisation.

Aims: There is a lot of diversity within and across global South contexts. Recognising and respecting these differences, and attuning to local power hierarchies, ideas of equality and injustices is inherent to equitable partnership. Address inequalities that are between countries and within countries.

1. **Diversity and Distinctiveness**: South Africa and Kenya exemplify immense diversity in socio-economic conditions, historical trajectories and ethnicity. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has created complex dynamics among various racial and ethnic groups. Likewise, Kenya's diverse ethnic landscape, with more than 40 distinct groups, illustrates the importance of recognising each group's unique perspectives and experiences.
2. **Power Hierarchies and Inequities**: Both countries are influenced by historical injustices. In South Africa, the shadows of colonialism and apartheid still affect socio-political relationships, often privileging certain voices. In Kenya, patronage systems influence access to resources and representation, affecting how local groups engage with research initiatives. Understanding these hierarchies is vital for fostering equitable partnerships.
3. **Language as a Cultural Lens**: Language plays a crucial role in shaping identity and worldview. Research intermediaries, such as academics, may not always share the same language or cultural background as local communities, creating barriers to effective communication. Researchers must consider language as both a communication tool and a gateway to understanding local customs and values.
4. **Integration of local Knowledge:** It is important to recognise that local knowledge systems offer insights that can be helpful in Western knowledge systems. However, this knowledge should not be appropriated or misappropriated without due recognition and reward.

Action	Description
Community-Led Research Agenda	Organise workshops to open space for relevant societal members to articulate their own research priorities and agendas. They should be allowed to inflect, if not entirely set the research question and to use methods so that the research is relevant, accurate and effective.
Knowing *and* Doing	Ask yourself not only what you need to know but also what you need to do.
Those Who Live It, Lead It	Draw researchers from local groups or empower local groups to undertake their own research. At a minimum, ensure that they are part of the advisory board and in the management group of the research. Employ local community members as research assistants and translators. Involve rightsholders in the analysis of the material.

Power Hierarchies	There are fractures and tensions between groups within the global South, as in the North. Research needs to be respectful of these hierarchies while also helping to subvert them when they are harmful.
Knowledge Creation: Recognise and Represent	Ensure that local concepts, books, authors and knowledge making systems are recognised, cited, their work taken on seriously and built on, and where consulted they are rewarded during research. Interrogate concepts and theories and try to use Africa as a site for theory development and not just empirical research
Inclusive Knowledge Circulation	Involve community members in knowledge circulation. Communicate the results in forms and ways that connect with people.
Equitable Resource Distribution	Equitable partnership requires that financial equity is not just considered at the national, institutional or researcher levels but also at the level of communities. Ensure that resource distribution is equitable and given to the right people. Equitable distribution means sharing the funding.
Institute a Financial Advisory Group	Institute a group that ensures that the funding is channelled to the right people.

Specific Actions for Global South Researchers

Action	Description
Showcase Local Knowledges	Recognise and defend the importance of local knowledge, concepts and theories. Ensure that community wellbeing measures are agreed before any research begins. Be proactive in recognising your rights.

The aim of data sovereignty is to uphold the principle of community-owned knowledge, ensuring that data collected within local contexts remains under the control of those groups.

1. **Community Ownership of Knowledge**: Every country has knowledge which is communally owned. This type of knowledge needs to be recognised as valid knowledge rather than looked down upon through terms such as 'folklore'.
2. **Intellectual Property (IP) Rights**: There is increasing recognition that indigenous knowledge needs to be brought under IP rights. For example, in Kenya, the Traditional Knowledge Protection Bill aims to safeguard indigenous knowledge, yet the implementation faces challenges due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of awareness among local communities about their rights.
3. **Avoiding Knowledge Appropriation**: Community knowledge should be recognised as a resource that has to be paid for in people's own currencies, i.e. what they value and want to get as payback for sharing their knowledge.

Actions for Data Sovereignty focus on ensuring community access to data, establishing clear agreements on data ownership and use, equipping communities with tools to manage their data, and creating local data repositories for secure and accessible storage.

Action	Description
'Our Knowledge, Our Data'	Ensure that data remains accessible to communities, with clear agreements on ownership, storage, and long-term use. These agreements should be co-designed with community representatives to ensure alignment with local values and interests.
'Data About Us, With Us'	Research proposals must include clear agreements on data ownership, storage, and long-term use, ensuring that knowledge does not disappear into distant institutions.

'Data For Our Futures'	Equip communities with user-friendly tools and platforms to effectively manage and engage with their own data. Present data in accessible formats that foster genuine interaction and use, rather than just placing it in a repository or website. Projects should utilise tools and resources based on community knowledge to enhance well-being and address specific local needs. (Nyamnjoh 2012). Additionally, researchers should prioritise face-to-face sessions to publicise these resources, ensuring societal members are informed and can actively participate in utilising their data.
Create Local Data Repositories	Facilitate the creation of community- or nationally owned data repositories where collected data can be securely stored and easily accessed.

Specific Actions for Global South Communities

Action	Description
Institute Ethical Review Processes Involving Rights Holders:	Create a local advisory board that reviews research proposals.

3. Future Funding Priorities with Locally Anchored Mechanisms

This section outlines future funding areas and is underpinned by the following principles:

- Funding research in Africa is important because it is facing the unequal effects of climate change. It is also a resource base for other global players such as Russia, France, Saudi Arabia, China and India, making UK investment in the region imperative.

- Problems in Africa are usually interconnected with global problems. Research needs to focus on how problems in Africa arise from, or are connected to, issues beyond the continent.

- There is plenty of good research and practice, but funding should be concentrated to scale up and connect good practices and to embed them in government and inter-governmental organisations.

- Research should not be confused with aid but must have visible impact on the ground. This requires engagement with local researchers and CSOs in research design.

- Art in Africa is diverse, rich and complex. There is a tendency to consciously or unconsciously highlight art that meets colonial imaginations. The research and higher education community needs to align with global audiences that fill the largest venues in the world to engage with African art.

- Colonialism created a culture where Europe is the site of ideas and Africa is the ground for experimentation. Research that pays more attention to what is happening in Africa to shape ideas and concepts, especially in the art world, is critically necessary.

- Similarly, theory-making that centres on African examples, especially the universality of certain phenomena first observed in Africa, is an important area for future research. The particularisation, objectification, 'specialisation', and 'othering' of Africa remain a stubborn tradition in the arts and humanities.

The priorities are organised into three core areas:

1. **Conflict, Peace, and Security**
2. **Women, Girls, and Youth**
3. **The Creative Economy**

Each section highlights thematic focus areas, practical mechanisms, and suggested stakeholders, while drawing on real community needs and practices.

3.1 Conflict, Peace and Security

Current Challenges

External actors and factors such as international power struggles, economic programmes and debt, as well as climate change fuel many of the conflicts in Africa. These feed into other challenges like inter-communal, political violence, high levels of unemployment, and gender-based violence. As a result, there are many challenges around conflict, peace and security in Africa. The arts can become a source of financially rewarding employment, a recreational activity, and inspire people to build social order.

Areas for Further Research

1. **Recognising The Role of External Factors in Conflict in Africa:** Research and education in Africa often begin with Africa as the problem. The focus is generally on something in Africa that is going wrong, like corruption poor governance and incompetence of the elite. However, like all other parts of the world, local problems can have global causes, and global problems can have local causes. How can arts be used to teach about these global connections as they relate to wars, climate change and economic exploitation and how these can be resisted?

2. **Inter-communal Violence, National or Cross-National:** Inter-communal violence has been a major issue across Africa. Its causes are complex, ranging from the implication of the exploitative international political economy to identity and manipulations by local politicians and faith-based groups. How can arts be used to resist such identity politics and manipulation?

3. **Role of Social Media in Violence and Peace:** Social media plays an increasing role in perpetuating violence by creating echo chambers and inciting fixed mindsets. What is the role of global media discourses and foreign powers in this? How can arts be used to mitigate such risks, for people across all age groups?

4. **Cross-Border Curriculum:** Curriculum usually follows national boundaries and government priorities. How can cross-border curriculum be used in educational settings to support education across divided communities, and across states where communities have been divided by colonial boundaries?

5. **Political Violence:** The arts can play a crucial role in addressing violence related to party politics. This type of violence usually involves young man who are often easier to engage using popular arts like pop (R&B) music. Youth groups trained in digital storytelling can play a strong leadership role in this space as research in Sierra Leone found. How can this be scaled up to limit electoral violence and what are the outcomes? More attention needs to be placed on the value of the arts in helping build societal resilience to this episodic violence as part of wider democratic processes.

6 **Everyday Peace-Making Through Local Arts Methods**

Research in South Africa shows that art forms such as storytelling can be used in everyday peace. More research is necessary to find ways to make art forms which are already widely used in Africa like storytelling play a more formal role in conflict resolution, justice and everyday peace.

7 **Nomadism, Pastoralism, And Cultural Conflict in the Context of Climate Change**

Projects should explore how climate-related changes affect cultural identity and relationships between groups. Mobile research methods are needed to reach and understand pastoralist communities who are often on the move due to environmental stress.

8 **Cultural Industries as Peacemakers**

Africa has influential musicians who can change the narrative of violence. What role can they play in limiting violence? What is the role of lyrics, performances and public engagement of such luminaries in shaping peace and how can this be amplified across different arts? What are the risks to such artists and how can this be mitigated?

Key Requirements:

- Artist engagement and legal and technical support for them.
- Agreements from local governments or curriculum heads to work across borders.
- Support from regional organisations like COMESA or AU who can support such projects by opening doors and connecting national governments.
- Safe spaces for dialogue and storytelling and trained local facilitators.
- Investment in mobile and digital tools.

Stakeholders:

Local Level:

- Artists and curators
- Teachers and social workers
- Faith-based organisations
- Youth media trainers, musicians, and influencers
- Governments/national and local

National Level:

- Ministries of Interior, Security, Defense, Women, Children, Youth, Justice, Health and Education.
- Higher education institutions for skill-building and research.

Regional Level:

- **African Union (AU)** to encourage peace education and support security focused interventions.
- **Regional Economic Communities like ECOWAS/EAC/SADC/COMESA** to encourage country governments to cross-border curriculum.

Global Level:

- **UKRI/AHRC** and UK funders for equity-aligned partnership models

3.2 Women, Girls, and Youth

Two key areas are receiving significant funding for gender research. The first is Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which, despite considerable funding, remains a global issue. The second is Leadership and Empowerment for Women, which aims to enable women to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence.

Current Challenges

Although GBV has received substantial funding, it remains globally widespread, including in Africa. Current research often focuses on behavioural change rather than a victim-centred perspective. Using the term GBV instead of rape or sexual violence depoliticises the issue, and there is a tendency to attribute GBV to cultural rather than structural causes. Sexuality-based violence and violence against young boys should be separated from GBV because their causes and solutions differ.

The widespread withdrawal of various types of funding in Africa has exacerbated structural factors like conflict and insecurity, leading to an increase in GBV. Existing research often focuses on single services, perpetuating the notion that GBV is cultural and failing to recognise the current politicisation of gender and its impact on GBV.

The rise of digital and online violence and the issue of online safety for women and young people also require urgent attention.

One solution to GBV and broader gender inequality is engaging women in leadership roles. How can women in Africa actively improve their economic opportunities, especially given the high unemployment rates across the continent? How can they find employment within the current economic context and take up more leadership positions, particularly in sectors like cybersecurity and IT? What can be learned from countries like India, where many women are in these sectors?

Areas for Further Research

1. **Addressing GBV:** Victim-centred GBV research that brings together legal, economic, mental and physical health and housing such as shelters is required. Funding must also prioritise initiatives that raise awareness among men and engage them in deconstructing harmful masculinities that contribute to violence.

2. **Mental Health:** The extent and quality of provision of mental health and psychosocial support for GBV survivors must be understood not only through quantitative analysis but through arts-based methods which allow expressions of distress. What is the role of arts therapy in GBV? How can findings from such research relate to other research on GBV to produce comprehensive solutions? Key research questions include: What are the key mental health needs identified by survivors of GBV, particularly within their own communities? How can artistic practices, led by those affected, be leveraged to address their needs and support emotional healing?

3. **Local Gender Role Models:** How is women's empowerment understood in Africa, and how do we define this beyond the Western lens? Research is required into existing ideas and aspirations of success and how they can be fulfilled.

4. **Digital Agency and Safety for Young Women:** The online environment presents significant challenges for young people, especially women. This require institutional responsibility such as establishing regulatory frameworks and developing online tools so that online safety is not an individual burden. At the same time research is required to investigate the efficacy of mobile media labs for provide training to address online harm and boost women's confidence.

5. **Climate Crisis and Women and Young People**: The climate crisis disproportionately impacts women in Africa, exacerbating existing inequalities related to access to resources, livelihoods, and health. Women are often the first to experience the adverse effects of climate change, such as food insecurity and water scarcity. How does the climate crisis uniquely impact the livelihoods and adaptive capacities of women in rural and urban communities across Africa? In what ways are they responding and adapting to the challenges posed by climate change? How can education be used to highlight the structural and global causes of climate and how can this kind of education be scaled up? What role does parenting and schooling play in climate change mitigation and adaptation? How can locally relevant pedagogies and materials be integrated into education to challenge and address colonial narratives about climate change present in some educational texts?

6. **Women's Economic Participation:** Employment sectors such as cybersecurity have high labour shortages but low female participation. How do we enable women's greater participation in male dominated sectors and what can be learnt from countries such as India, where sectors like IT are cracking this problem. How can women find well paid employment in resource processing industries? Participation in arts-based economic initiatives can also provide women with livelihoods. What are the key barriers to women's success in creative enterprises? What legal and market access support is required?

7. **Engagement with Education Systems:** Behavioural change through education has to be part of the mix in addressing gender inequalities. How do you work together with local educational authorities, parents, teachers and children to produce gender-responsive curricula? How can the structural causes of gendered inequalities be addressed alongside behavioural ones?

8. **Creating Equitable Learning Environments:** What support do teachers need in order to increase gender equality? How can local stories and authority figures be used to overturn gender inequality through the school environment? What pedagogies are required and how can teachers be trained in these methods? How can this be scaled up through government participation and how can these success stories be advertised to create a change in culture?

9 **Innovative Educational Resources for Young Girls:** Developing educational resources specifically for young girls is crucial, especially in areas related to teenage pregnancy and sexual health. What creative strategies can enhance educational resources for these young girls? How can these approaches be designed to reflect their needs and aspirations so that they can pursue realistic goals?

Key Requirements:

- Working with national and local governments, authority figures including men, and teachers.
- Long-term, culturally informed funding.
- Try community-based dialoguing practices.
- Supportive mentorship structures.
- Trauma-informed, safe digital tools.
- Gender-sensitive budgeting.

Stakeholders:

Local Level:

- Women's groups and grassroots
- Women NGOs
- Young leaders, school clubs, teachers, government education departments
- ICT teachers and youth creatives
- Local governments

National Level:

- Ministries of Women and Child Development, Justice, Health and Education
- Higher education institutions (for skill-building and research)

Regional Level:

- **African Union (AU)** to drive regional policies supporting creative equity
- **African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)**

Global Level:

- **UN Women, UNDP**
- **UKRI/AHRC/FCDO** and UK funders for equity-aligned partnership models
- **NRF** and Global South funders
- **Global Fund for Women**

3.3 The Creative Economy

This theme focuses on the power of creative practice to strengthen identity, generate income, and shift narratives, particularly in rights holders' communities.

Current Challenges

The Creative Economy has increasingly been recognised as a significant contributor to economic growth and innovation. What remains under researched is the market alignment of the creative economy, i.e. get people to produce goods that have a large market, is profitable and reaches high quality so that it can lead to employment generation.

Areas for Further Research

1. **Creative Economy Markets**: Creative products are often sold in overcrowded markets, competing with each other and targeting the tourism sector. How can these products align with market needs, especially those of the internal market, rather than catering to tourists? How can the products be adapted to be useful in everyday life while retaining cultural integrity and community meaning?

2. **Creative Value Chain**: There is significant exploitation across the creative value chain, particularly in traditional arts, with museums and retailers profiting at the expense of producers. How can the value chain be rebalanced, and the quality of products improved to meet international standards, allowing them to be sold in high-end outlets and reduce precarity?

3. **Indigenous Knowledge**: Many countries recognise the value of indigenous knowledge in medicine, arts, culture, and science, and the need to protect it. How can community knowledge be brought under intellectual property rules to protect it, and how will this affect sole traders using this knowledge?

4. **Regulation and the Creative Economy**: Some parts of the creative economy are lightly regulated as the work is done informally. While this offers flexibility, there are risks of intellectual property theft and lack of finance for scaling up or innovating. Research should focus on these issues.

5. **From Training to Cultural Brokerage**: In artisan-focused projects, fund research into incubators and the role of local brokers in connecting rural creators to galleries and markets. Ensure fair pricing, IP protection, and rights-holder-led representation as core funding conditions.

6. **Networking to Create Regional Markets in Africa**: The creative economy often centers around products that may not be marketable during economic downturns. Research is needed on market needs in sectors such as food, which may thrive even during lean times, and on building regional alliances to market these through digital platforms.

It should also focus on diversifying products and services to include the creative production of essential goods

7. **Creative Hubs**: Participants expressed the need for physical spaces where creative enterprises could thrive and sell their wares. Research should focus on the types of local governance and advisory groups, gender-inclusive plans, and long-term sustainability strategies required to create such hubs.

Key Requirements:

- Seed corn funding for new creative economy projects that are marketable, locally and regionally.
- Participation of local and national governments regarding regulatory mechanisms.
- Templates for community-held IP rights.
- Platforms that connect producers with buyers locally, regionally, and internationally reducing dependency on brokers.
- Local legal support for cultural producers.

Stakeholders:

Local Level:

- Elders, youth clubs, community archivists
- Local councils, cultural practitioners, teachers

National Level:

- Ministries of Arts & Culture
- National Creative Economy Commissions
- Higher Education Institutions (for skill-building and research)

Regional Level:

- **African Union (AU)** (to drive regional policies supporting creative equity)
- **ECOWAS/EAC/SADC** (to implement and enforce regional intellectual property protections)
- **Pan-African creative collectives** (e.g., Africalia, Arterial Network)

Global Level:

- **UNESCO Creative Cities Network**, **UN Women**, **UNDP**
- **UKRI/AHRC** and UK funders (equity-aligned partnership models)
- **NRF** and Global South funders
- **Ethical fashion, tourism, and media companies** supporting global market access

4. Conclusion: Towards Truly Equitable Partnerships

This report has set out to reframe how equitable partnerships are approached and practiced in order to achieve visible impact among researched communities and researchers. It aims to redress some of the deeper structural inequalities that persist across global, institutional, and community levels. The insights drawn from the themes of women and girls, peace and conflict and the creative economy, underscore the urgency of the need for this shift and for new areas for research.

Equitable partnerships require a shift away from benevolent research to mutuality in research which recognises that this research benefits all partners. It means stepping away from the coloniality of research in Africa which often positions the continent as traditional and recognising the diversity, dynamicity and agency of Africa and Africans. It also requires that we recognise the current geopolitical conditions under which this research is being conducted. This means seeing how issues in Africa are globally connected and using Africa not just as a site for empirical research but also for conceptual development and theorisation. It also requires visible impact on well-being that runs parallel to the research. This means that funding structures must support long-term engagement, and foster relationships that continue beyond project timelines.

The message from participants across workshops and thematic discussions is consistent: "If the research doesn't shift power, then what is its purpose?" Real change comes when partnerships are not only equitable in name but embedded in practice, when knowledge production reflects the lived experiences of those who contribute to it.

As this report concludes, the work of building equitable partnerships must continue beyond the pages of this document. It requires ongoing reflection, sustained commitment, and the willingness to challenge established systems of power. Only then can partnerships evolve from being transactional arrangements to becoming meaningful collaborations.

> *"Through dialogue, artistic expression, and Pan-African solidarity, participants reaffirmed the importance of equitable partnerships in Africa are rooted in Indigenous values and decolonial methodologies. The workshop also reinforced the significance of advancing sustainable, inclusive, and Afrocentric networks for research, artistic collaboration, and knowledge production. Moving forward, it is crucial to amplify these efforts, ensuring that partnerships in Africa are built on unity, equity, and the collective advancement of the continent's creative and intellectual landscape."*
>
> **South Africa Stakeholder Workshop Participant**

Achieving equitable partnerships requires investment of time and resources from funders and institutions, as well as a shift in attitude from researchers in both the Global South and the UK. It requires a desire to achieve such partnerships, i.e. intentional partnerships. Such intentional partnerships are essential for wellbeing in communities, among researchers, and across institutions and for strengthening the UK's geopolitical position.

4. References

Mkwananzi, F., and M. Cin. (2021). “Equal Research Partnerships Are a Myth–But We Can Change That.” Times Higher Education 6. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/equal-research-partnerships-are-myth-we-can-change.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2018). Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization. Routledge.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2012). 'Blinded by Sight: Divining the Future of Anthropology in Africa'. Africa Spectrum, 47(2–3), 63–92.

Raghuram, P., & Madge, C. (2006). Towards a Method for Postcolonial Development Geography? Possibilities and Challenges. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 27(3), 270–288.

Raghuram, P. and Sondhi, G. (forthcoming) ‘Decolonising This, Decolonising That: Beyond Rhetorical Decolonisation in Migration Studies’, in Dahinden, J and Potts, A. (ed.) Reflexivities and Knowledge Production in Migration Studies. Springer International Publishing (IMISCOE Research Series).

5. Appendices

Appendix A

List of Workshop Participants

- Abair Lual: South Sudan
- Abdgaham Gure: Lancaster University
- Abebcor Y Adams: Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia)
- Alex Cann: Chief of Plan, African Union Transition Mission (Nigeria)
- Amal Amin Ibrahim: National Research Centre (Egypt)
- Ambassador Joao Samuel Caholo: ICGLR - Burundi
- Anthony Ezeoke: Market Theatre Foundation (South Africa)
- Appendix A
- Atieno Odhiambo: Mama Sarah Obama
- Bianca Peter: Peace Ambassador – South Sudan
- Bonginkosi Ngweya: HSRC (South Africa)
- Brian Muchiri Ole Kihara: Intercounties Progressive Society
- Byakatonda John: High Court Judge
- Charle Kitula: MIFEST
- Chiku Abdulmujib (Aisha): Umma Hat Charity
- Collins Mangicho: Little Theatre Club
- Cornelius Omuse: NRF Kenya
- Danielle Nel-Sanders: University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- Dorcas Makena: MTG
- Dr Charity Meki-Kombe: Mulungushi University (Zambia)
- Dr Doyne Mugambi: Kenyatta University (Kenya)
- Dr Grace A. Murithi: Chuka University (Kenya)
- Dr Hande Stephen: Kenyatta University (Kenya)
- Dr Milissao Nuvunga: Executive Director, Centro de Estudos de Paz Conflito e Bem-estar (Mozambique)
- Dr Nokuthula Mchunu: National Research Foundation (South Africa)
- Dr Palesa Sekhejane: Executive Head, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (South Africa)
- Dr Salome Nyambura: Kenyatta University
- Edia Estella Filbert: South Sudan
- Etapukan Moses Isura: VDO

- Francis Kirimi: Kenyatta University
- Grace Waithira: Judiciary
- Isabella Aboderin: African Charter (UK)
- Jaideep Gupte: AHRC (UK)
- James Davis: AHRC - UKRI
- Jared Otieno: Kenyatta University
- John Lokor: OPU
- Justus Nguran: Kenyatta University (Kenya)
- Kabue Priscilla: Kenyatta University
- Kelvin Nyaga: Oasis Peace Web Organisation (Kenya)
- Kenneth Mogane: British High Commission
- Kristine Faidi: UKRI AHRC (UK)
- Kristine Zaidi: AHRC (UK)
- Leani van Vuuren: UNISA (South Africa)
- Lenin Kazoba: Tanzania Youth
- Lilian Cheptopot: Potuma (Kenya)
- Loice Alusala: Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (South Africa)
- Lulu Tsheola: State Theatre (South Africa)
- Luyanda Ndombela: Artist (South Africa)
- Lydia Mulibana: UNISA (South Africa)
- Mamello Tsaoane: HSRC (South Africa)
- Mala Daniel: Kariobangi SJC
- Margaret Njeri: Her Dignity Her Pride
- Martha Amadaco: Musimbi & Company Advocates
- Mathabo Lifero: UNISA (South Africa)
- Mbali Pewa: UNISA (South Africa)
- Melis Cin: Lancaster - UK
- Millicent Ongweng: Empower 2 Care
- Mogaka Saboke Brian: Kenyatta University
- Monica Kinyua: CPI Kenya
- Nerhene Davis: University of Pretoria (South Africa)
- Natuch Christine: VDO
- Olivia A. Opere: Kenyatta University
- Parvati Raghuram: Open University (UK)
- Paul Nangoria: VDO Vision Development Organisation
- Peter Tarach: VDO Vision Development Organisation
- Peterlis Okuu: Kenyatta University
- Puleng Segalo: UNISA (South Africa)
- Ruth Mweta: Dreams Program
- Samson Limaruk: VDO Vision Development Organisation
- Sandra Shenge: Executive Director, Aegis Trust (Rwanda)
- Sarah Miller: Senior Instructional Designer (South Africa)
- Scholastica Juma: Hope Worldwide
- Sebastian Powers: AHRC (UK)
- Sheneika Smith: British Academy (UK)
- Silke Blohm: British Academy (UK)
- Sima Diar: Nisaa Institute for Women's Development (NISAA)
- Susan W. Warimu: Inspire Teens FDN
- Tali Nates: Director, Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre (South Africa)
- Thato Molaudzi: Artist (South Africa)
- The Honourable Judge Salva Numaio: Children’s Court Judge and Social Activist, Lawyer (Mozambique)
- Theresa Ress: Children Peace Initiative (Kenya)
- Tsakane Baloyi: Artist (South Africa)
- Volley Nchabeleng: Sebeitainment Production (South Africa)
- Wyclife Ongeta: Oasis Peace Web Organisation (Kenya)
- Zingisa Nkosinkulu: TUT Creative Academic (South Africa)

Appendix B

Workshop Reflections: Questions About Equitable Partnerships

As part of the participatory workshops that informed this report, one exercise involved a role-play in which the facilitator acted as a politician addressing the topic of equitable partnerships. This format allowed participants to pose questions directly, challenge assumptions, and raise concerns in a dynamic and reflective space. The questions captured here offer valuable insight into the themes that matter most to participants and highlight the tensions and expectations around partnership structures and practices. Below are the questions, grouped by theme, with a short explanation.

1. Approach

These questions reflect concerns about how partnerships are introduced and whose voices are given priority in discussions. It challenges the one-directional flow of information and questions the lack of visible collaboration in practice.

- "How does Africanness look like or should look like in the contemporary Westernised world?"
- "We need to define partnership in all Africa languages"
- "Equitable partnerships continue to be critical in how knowledge production can be envisaged. However, within systems that are not supportive and where priorities or investments are not aligned, we may not reach our goal. We therefore need to rethink our processes, challenge ourselves, rebuild institutions in ways that accommodate the multilayered nature of partnership (be open to plural understanding of the world)"

2. Implementation

Participants used the role-play to question how equitable partnerships would be operationalised in practice, focusing on methods, accountability, and ethical safeguards. Their questions highlight the importance of concrete mechanisms that ensure mutual benefit, transparency, and cultural sensitivity in partnership design and delivery.

- "What methodologies would your government use to ensure collective engagement that ensures reciprocity for both nations involved?"
- "What are the checks and balances that your government has put in place to improve on equitable partnership?"
- "How are you planning to safeguard against possible negative impacts of your donation?"
- "How will you ensure that the extraction processes are not exploitative?"
- "How do we reflect on these sort of stereotypes and the way we interpret one another in these types of relationships and we interpret levels of power?"
- "Could you share about how partnerships are built and managed? The criteria that dictate eligibility?

3. Financial

Participants raised critical questions about how financial decisions are made within partnerships, especially around allocation, transparency, and the risk of mismanagement.

- “What are your priorities for allocating funding?”
- “What mechanisms will the minister put in place to promote transparency and accountability?”
- “It is evident that there is uncertainty in partnerships. Equitable partnerships become an area of concern because of uncertainty in having the right channels to meet expectations due to corruption and misrepresentation of funds.”

4. Equitability

The questions under this theme reflect a strong call for partnerships to actively address structural inequalities and include those most often left out.

- “How do you ensure that you're looking at the rights of the marginalised, the immigrants and the people that are very low in the city? “
- “How will you ensure that the communities become centre stage?”
- “How do we tackle tribalism, xenophobia and political divisions that hinder unity? These systematic issues tied to colonial legacies require more than acknowledgement - they demand action. Participants hope these challenges will guide future discussions.”

5. Corruption

Participants raised direct concerns about the risks of corruption and misuse of funds within partnerships, reflecting a historical distrust rooted in past experiences.

- “So partnerships usually involves funding and development plans and since time memorial, our continent has been associated with corruption and embezzlement. Now how are you planning to foster the implementation and also check on accountability?”
- “How will you ensure that the socially distributed is equitable and it is given to the right people? “

6. Effects

This question reflects frustration with repetitive conversations that fail to result in meaningful change. It calls for a shift in how partnerships engage with long-standing issues-urging a move beyond dialogue to action and a deeper questioning of the narratives and intentions driving development efforts.

- “The thing that we often see is we have these conversations, and then we have them two years later and five years later and 10 years later and nothing's really changed. So how do we push the boundaries where we actually start asking the right questions and start having these types of conversations about the narrative and what we're trying to put out there?”

Appendix C

Holding Difference and Common Ground: A Note on Context

This report's findings bring together reflections, and provocations drawn from collaborative workshops and engagements in both Kenya and South Africa. While the work is framed through a regional lens, spanning across both East and Southern Africa, it is critical to recognise that Africa represents a large and diverse geography of over 54 countries each with its own histories, languages, cultures, governance systems, and lived realities.

This report focused on two countries, Kenya and South Africa which are often grouped together in broader continental strategies and donor initiatives. However, their contexts are not interchangeable. Although both experienced the violence and disruption of colonial rule, the forms and legacies of colonisation diverged significantly, leading to individually distinct socio-political and institutional outcomes.

Kenya underwent British colonisation marked by land dispossession and the brutality of the Mau Mau uprising. Its post-independence era has been characterised by ethnicised politics, periodic unrest, and the construction of a devolved state. South Africa, endured the long and formalised regime of apartheid, embedding racial segregation into every aspect of social, spatial, and economic life. Its transition to democracy came later, through a negotiated settlement, but the spatial and economic inequalities of apartheid remain deeply entrenched. These legacies directly shape how research is conducted, how communities engage, and how knowledge is co-created in each country.

Despite these differences, our workshops surfaced shared concerns across both contexts: the need for locally grounded ethics, for community-led partnerships, and for the decolonisation of research practices. Philosophies like Ubuntu in South Africa and Harambee in Kenya reflect overlapping values of solidarity, care, and collective effort, even if their institutional expression differs.
In choosing to frame this as a joint report, we are not erasing difference but rather, foregrounding the similarities that emerged organically through the process. The decision to focus on commonalities comes from a desire to build pan African learning without collapsing complexity. It also reflects the aspirations of our participants, who, while grounded in specific regional realities, expressed strong interest in cross-border exchange, mutual learning, and a shared agenda for equitable partnerships in Africa.

This serves as both a reminder and a clarification: the regional scope of this work is not intended to homogenise the continent. Instead, it recognises that while contexts vary, many structural issues, such as extractive research practices, unequal funding relationships, and the marginalisation of local knowledge, are experienced across borders. Thus, our approach is one of searching space for difference and similarity, for local nuance and regional solidarity.
As authors and collaborators, we remain committed to this dual approach, listening closely to the specifics of place while working toward shared principles that can guide equitable partnerships across Africa, without assuming sameness.

Appendix D

Action Plans at the Funder Level Throughout the Grant Lifecycle

The table below outlines **the action plans at the funder level** at different stages of the grant process: **pre-grant, while evaluating applications, during the grant, and post-grant**. Each stage includes specific actions to be taken to ensure effective management and collaboration throughout the grant lifecycle.

1. Before Funding Call

Action	Description
Conduct Pre-Funding Visits	Organise visits for funders to engage with potential partners in the Global South, understanding local practices, cultural contexts, and operational challenges.
Launch a Mini-Network Fund	Offer small seed funding to gather community input, identify local challenges, and set the agenda before larger grant applications.
Build Initial Community Relationships	Allocate resources for relationship-building within communities through exploratory projects or workshops, establishing trust and collaboration.
Organise Terminology Workshops	Host workshops to address terminology and nomenclature differences, enhancing mutual understanding and aligning project objectives.
Establish Guidelines about Rights and Responsibilities	Develop and disseminate clear guidelines outlining the rights and responsibilities of funders and researchers, ensuring transparency and balance.
Implement Feedback Mechanisms	Create channels for ongoing feedback from communities and researchers, integrating lessons learned into future funding calls and practices.

2. Evaluating Applications

Action	Description
Diversify Evaluation Panels	Recruit diverse members, including Global South researchers and non-academic partners, to improve assessment relevance and context.
Establish Equitable Partnership Evaluation Criteria	Apply equitable partnership as an evaluation criterion.
Train Evaluators on Equity Recommendations	Train evaluators on equitable partnership recommendations for grant assessments.
Assess Societal Impact	Strengthen the evaluation of societal benefits and impacts of research.

3. During the Grant

Category	Action	Description
Financial	Develop Globally Attuned Open Financial Reporting Tools	Create user-friendly tools for direct data upload, ensuring transparency and accountability. Incorporate Global South inputs for relevance.
	Provide Financial Training Modules	Offer training on financial tools, grant management, and reporting procedures.
	Facilitate Direct Payments	Implement direct payment processes for project leads and partners in the Global South to reduce barriers.

Training and Mentoring	Form an Equitable Partnership Advisory Committee	Establish a committee for guidance and support to grant-holders. Second representatives to project advisory boards.
	Mandate Training in Equitable Partnerships	Require applicants to complete training on equitable partnership recommendations before proposal submission.
	Increase Visibility of Unconscious Bias Training	Enhance the visibility of unconscious bias training resources on funding agency websites.
	Limit Use of Prescriptive Language	Avoid top-down language like "monitored" and "evaluated" in evaluation materials, focusing rather on collaborative and constructive terms.

4. Post-Grant

Action	Description
Integrate Equitable Partnership Checks	Include parameters in the ResearchFish reporting system for grant recipients to report on equitable partnership implementation.
Communication Strategy to Share Local Benefits	Develop a mandatory communication plan to share research benefits with local communities through diverse mediums.

Foster Collaborative Content Creation	Encourage partnerships with local artists, journalists, and community leaders to co-create content reflecting research impacts.
Promote Diverse Publication Formats	Require dissemination of research findings in various formats to ensure accessibility and engagement with diverse audiences.
Highlight Success Stories	Collect and highlight success stories focusing on tangible community benefits to emphasise the value of equitable partnerships.

Action Plans at the Institutional Level Throughout the Grant Lifecycle

The tables below outline the **action plans at the institutional level** at different stages of the grant lifecycle: **pre-grant, during the grant, and post-grant**. Each stage includes specific actions to be taken to ensure effective management and collaboration throughout the grant lifecycle.

1. Before the Grant

Action	Description
Facilitate Cross-Institutional Research Visits	Ensure that the proposed research aligns with the broader strategic objectives of both the institution and its partners in order to enhance understanding of different research cultures and share expertise.
Align Research Objectives with Institutional Strategies	Ensure that the proposed research aligns with the broader strategic objectives of both the institution and its partners to enhance relevance and support for the project within the institutional framework.
Diversify Advisory Boards	Establish an advisory committee that includes community members, established scholars, and sector experts who can provide insights and guidance during the proposal development process.
Jointly Identify Potential Partnership Opportunities	Explore partnerships with local organisations, academic institutions, or NGOs that can provide additional support and resources for the research project.
Develop a Budget that Reflects Community Contributions	Ensure that the budget includes line items that compensate local community members for their time, expertise, and participation in the research, recognizing their vital role in the project.
Prioritise Cross-Disciplinary Approaches	Encourage collaboration across different disciplines to enrich the research proposal. Forming interdisciplinary teams can bring diverse perspectives and solutions to the research questions.
Explore Funding Diversification	Identify multiple potential sources of funding to reduce reliance on a single grant.

2. During the Grant

Facilitate Cross-Institutional Research Visits	Researchers and research development officers should meet regularly to build long-term relationships. This helps institutionalise partnerships and makes them less dependent on individuals.
Use Flexible Budgeting	Simplify invoicing and receipting. Ensure that these processes are transparent and can be seen by both Global South and North partners.
Improve Administrative Support Systems	Provide dedicated administrative staff to assist with financial management, reporting, and compliance related to the grant, ensuring that researchers can focus on their work without getting bogged down by bureaucracy.
Document Best Practices	Establish a system for documenting best practices and lessons learned throughout the grant period. This documentation can inform future projects and enhance institutional learning.
Strengthen Institutional Partnerships	Strengthen relationships with partner institutions by facilitating joint initiatives, exchanges, or collaborative events focused on the aims of the grant.

3. Post-Grant

Establish Follow-Up Mechanisms	Set up mechanisms for ongoing communication with community partners after the grant ends, including regular updates on new developments, additional research opportunities, and potential future collaborations.
Reflect and Revise Partnership Approaches	Analyse the partnership model used during the grant to identify what worked well and what did not, revising approaches to equitable partnerships based on these reflections for future projects.

Action Plans at the Community Level Throughout the Grant Lifecycle

The tables below outline the **action plans at the community level** at different stages of the grant process: **pre-grant, during the grant, and post-grant**. Each stage includes specific actions to be taken to ensure effective management and collaboration throughout the grant lifecycle.

1. Before the Grant

Action	Description
Co-design the Research with Communities	Set up meetings with communities and rights holders on the ground once the call is out to discuss the most pressing issues and needs and how the grant can address the local realities of the people. Create safe spaces and co-design the methodology, aims, and approaches together with the community.
Host Community Dialogues with External Stakeholders	Organise events where community members can engage with policymakers, researchers, and NGOs to encourage dialogue about community needs and aspirations, ensuring that the grant is covering diverse perspectives emerging from the grassroots. The Research should be useful and enhance the well-being of the communities. Use funds to build community first and get to know how to work together before you can apply for the grant

2. During the Grant

Action	Description
Establish a Community Advisory Board	Form a board comprised of local community leaders, stakeholders, and rightsholders who can provide ongoing guidance, feedback, and oversight throughout the grant period. This ensures that community voices remain central to decision-making.
Share Ongoing Findings and Benefits with the Community	Ensure that the ongoing findings and results of the grant project are shared transparently with the community throughout the project. Organize community meetings to discuss findings, celebrate successes, and outline how the outcomes will benefit the community.

Share Ongoing Findings and Benefits with the Community	Ensure that the ongoing findings and results of the grant project are shared transparently with the community throughout the project. Organise community meetings to discuss findings, celebrate successes, and outline how the outcomes will benefit the community.
Encourage Local Leadership	Identify and support potential local leaders who can champion the project within the community. Provide training and resources to help them advocate for the project's goals and mobilize community support.
Employ Local Researchers	Work with local community members as researchers in the project to leverage their unique insights and understanding of the local context. Involving individuals who are intimately familiar with the community's culture, values, and needs can facilitate trust-building between the project team and the community, ensuring that the research process respects cultural nuances and fosters genuine collaboration.
Pay for the Contribution of Community Members or Leave Something Behind	It is important to pay or compensate community members for their time at a comparable level. In some cases, you may also consider leaving behind a service that the community could benefit from, such as a psychologist or counsellor if working in conflict areas to value the contributions of community members and ensure that the partnership is mutually beneficial.

3. Post-Grant

Action	Description
Follow-Up Engagement	Schedule follow-up meetings with community partners to discuss the outcomes of the project and gather their feedback on the overall experience. This ongoing dialogue can strengthen relationships and identify areas for improvement.
Create Sustainability Plans	Work with community partners to develop plans that address how successful aspects of the project can be sustained beyond the grant. This might include securing ongoing funding or developing community-led initiatives.

Document Best Practices	Collaboratively document the success stories, lessons learned, and best practices from the project. This can serve as a resource for both the community and other researchers, helping to inform future projects.
Recognise Contributions Publicly	Acknowledge the contributions of community members in final reports, presentations, and publications. Highlighting their involvement reinforces their importance to the project and fosters a sense of shared ownership.
Evaluate Impact Together	Collaboratively evaluate the long-term impact of the project on the community. Engage local partners in assessing outcomes and collecting data, ensuring that their perspectives are included in the evaluation process.
Support Local Advocacy Efforts	Help community members leverage the outcomes of the project to advocate for their needs with local policymakers or other stakeholders. This may involve providing guidance on advocacy strategies or connecting them with relevant resources.