



**openAIR**

AFRICAN INNOVATION RESEARCH



# The Ascent of Open Innovation

**Annual Report**  
2024-25

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Open AIR activities are carried out with financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Government of Canada’s New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF), and the Rideau Hall Foundation’s Queen Elizabeth Scholars – Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) programme. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of Open AIR’s funders. We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada’s New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF), [NFRFR-2022-00498].

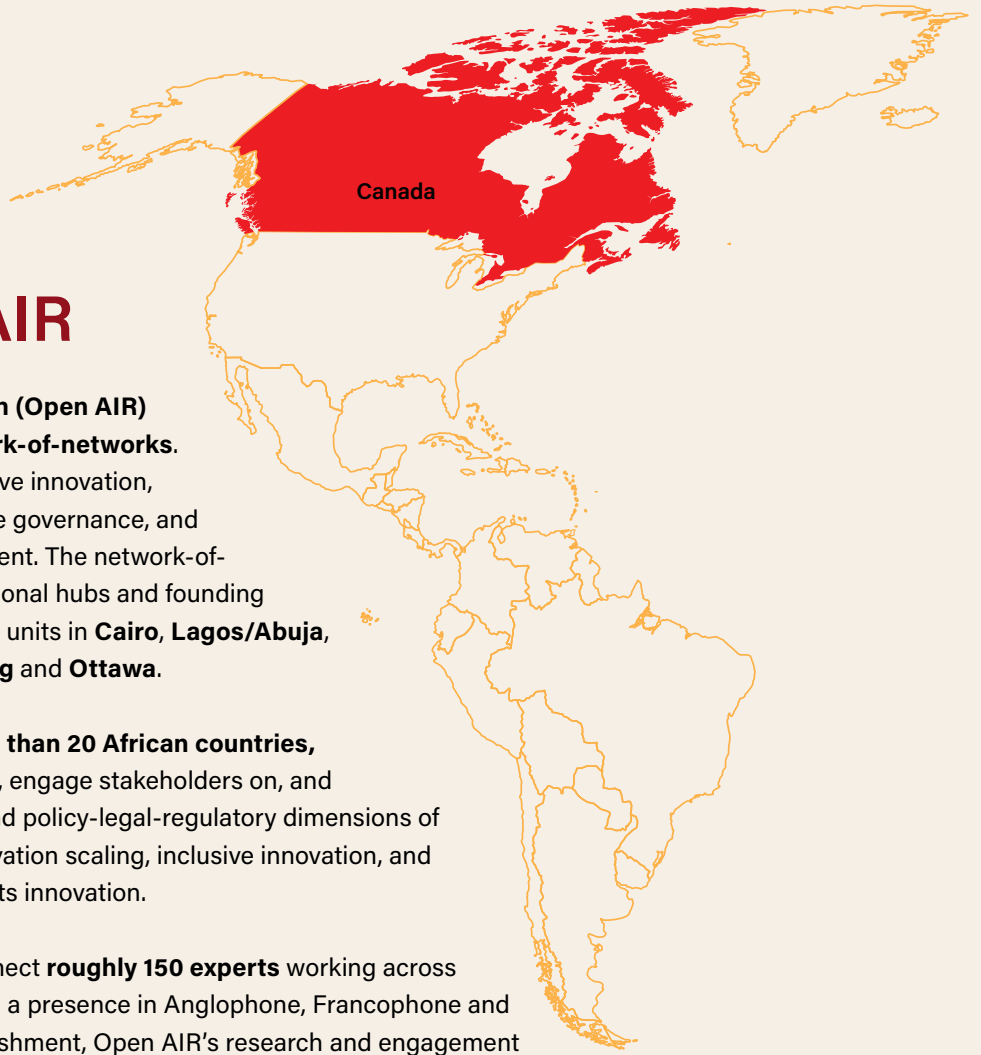
# Executive summary

This annual report sets out the activities and outputs of the Open African Innovation Research (Open AIR) network between mid-2024 and mid-2025.

Open AIR works via a portfolio approach, with the portfolio comprising overlapping, mutually reinforcing projects. During the period covered by this report, we continued our **Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs** project, which is focused on improved African stakeholder participation in policy-legal-regulatory processes influencing innovation; optimal use of African continental-regional-national utilisation of intellectual property (IP) flexibilities in support of innovation; and increased deployment of openness-oriented collaborative models of innovation that can operate outside regulatory constraints. We also continued our **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation** project, which is exploring how IP rights, technology transfer, and access and benefit sharing (ABS) of gene sequence data can be governed and managed in ways that provide more equitable access to health technologies. Additionally, in support of the forward-looking aspects of the Regulation for Innovation and Inclusive Biomedical Innovation projects, we carried out the **Signposting to Future Scenarios** project, which examined (1) the elements that have shaped African innovation and knowledge governance over the past 10 years and (2) the elements likely to shape the next decade.

The period under review in this report also saw Open AIR receive funding for two significant new projects—the **Canada–Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action** and the **Catalysing AI’s Potential in Africa through IP Innovation**—both of which are briefly introduced in this report. These projects, whose activities commenced in late 2025 and early 2026, will be discussed in greater detail in the 2025-26 annual report.

Open AIR’s wide range of activities and outputs between mid-2024 and mid-2025 are set out in this report in three categories: **rapid-response interventions**; **field-building studies**; and **momentum-catalyst events**. Our activities and outputs are guided by network Steering Committee members at the network’s six institutional hubs—in **Cairo, Lagos/Abuja, Nairobi, Cape Town, Johannesburg** and **Ottawa**. This decentralised structure allows for compelling research, policy engagement and knowledge mobilisation to take place, as featured in this report, in **four African regions** (North Africa; West and Central Africa; East Africa; and Southern Africa) and in **Canada**.



## About Open AIR

### **Open African Innovation Research (Open AIR)**

is an international, scholarly **network-of-networks**.

We conduct research on collaborative innovation, intellectual property (IP), knowledge governance, and inclusive and sustainable development. The network-of-networks is anchored by six institutional hubs and founding partners, which comprise academic units in **Cairo, Lagos/Abuja, Nairobi, Cape Town, Johannesburg** and **Ottawa**.

Open AIR has **researchers in more than 20 African countries, Canada, and beyond**. We research, engage stakeholders on, and mobilise knowledge on, practical and policy-legal-regulatory dimensions of open collaborative innovation, innovation scaling, inclusive innovation, and knowledge governance that supports innovation.

Open AIR's six hub institutions connect **roughly 150 experts** working across disciplines and continents, and with a presence in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa. Since our establishment, Open AIR's research and engagement activities have focused on generating insights into the balance between control over, and access to, knowledge. We aim to solve a problem at the heart of IP and innovation policy: how to reconcile tensions between appropriation and access, between excluding and sharing, and between competing and collaborating.

Open AIR's network-of-networks has developed, and is embedded in, a broad, international **community of practice** composed of entities and individuals sharing Open AIR's focus on inclusive knowledge governance, open collaborative innovation, and regulation of innovation in support of sustainable development. This multi-nodal networked community of practice allows for mutually beneficial research and policy engagement partnerships, knowledge co-creation, and intensive global dissemination of our research findings. Through its international, networked community of practice, Open AIR is fostering greater recognition of the innovation and knowledge governance modalities present in African settings; Africa's role in the global knowledge economy; and the need for African interests and perspectives to be mainstreamed in forums where norms for innovation regulation are negotiated.

Our network-of-networks takes a **portfolio approach to partnership**, supporting interconnected projects that address shared themes across intellectual property, innovation, and development. Each cornerstone initiative contributes distinct insights while reinforcing the network’s collective aim of advancing inclusive and evidence-based governance of knowledge and technology. Open AIR’s core projects during the period covered by this report were:

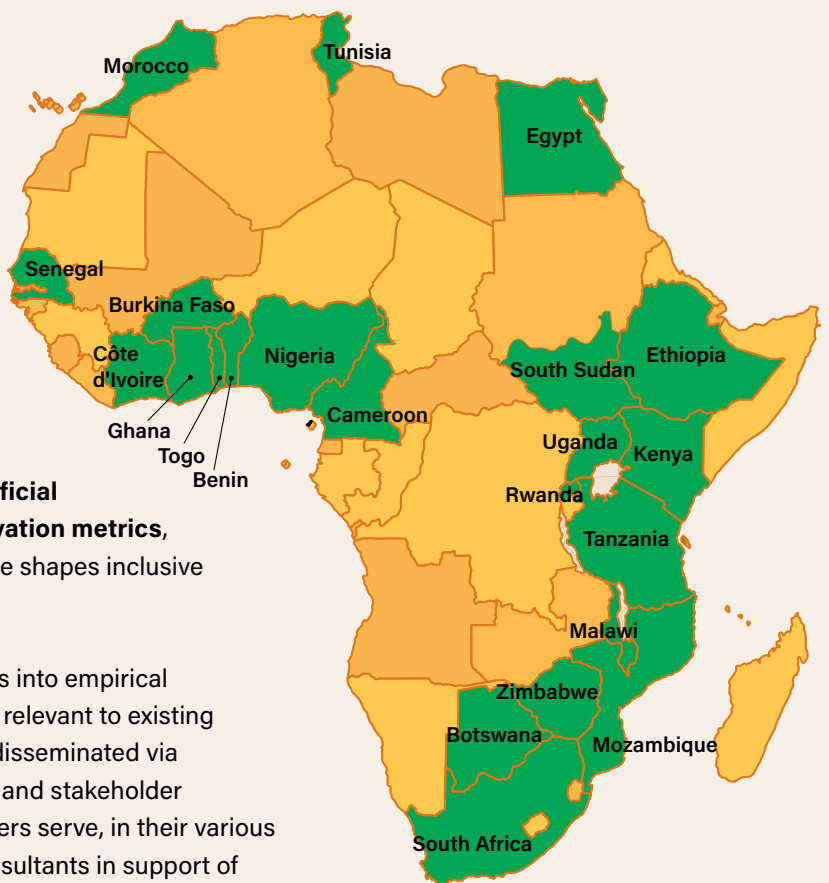
- **Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs**
- **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation**
- **Signposting to Future Scenarios**

As well, two additional projects received funding during the period covered by this report, with these projects set to begin in earnest in late 2025 and early 2026:

- **Canada–Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action**
- **Catalysing AI’s Potential in Africa through IP Innovation**

Open AIR’s work is currently aligned to three themes—**technology hubs, Indigenous knowledge, and informal innovation**—and our research spans cross-cutting topics that link the network’s projects and themes, connecting the research portfolio together. Through work on **laws and policies, gender and equality, artificial intelligence (AI), maker movements, and innovation metrics**, the network explores how knowledge governance shapes inclusive and sustainable innovation.

The findings of Open AIR studies provide insights into empirical and policy-legal-regulatory realities, and insights relevant to existing and new theoretical models. These insights are disseminated via publications, web content, social media content, and stakeholder engagements. Several Open AIR network members serve, in their various areas of expertise, as policy-legal-regulatory consultants in support of representation of African interests. The network builds the capacity of early-career researchers through the activities of its New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG), which includes provision of fellowships to Master’s students, PhD students and Postdoctoral Fellows—all of whom participate in the network’s research and knowledge mobilisation.



# Governance, management and funding

## Steering Committee and hubs

Open AIR's governance is provided by its Steering Committee, composed of leading academics at its **six hub institutions**:

- Access to Knowledge for Development Center (**A2K4D**), School of Business, The American University in Cairo (AUC)
- Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (**NIALS**), Lagos and Abuja
- Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (**CIPIT**), Strathmore University, Nairobi
- Intellectual Property Unit (**IP Unit**), Faculty of Law, University of Cape Town (UCT)
- Trilateral Research Chair in Transformative Innovation (**TRCTI**), College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg (UJ)
- Centre for Law, Technology and Society (**CLTS**), Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa (uOttawa)

The Steering Committee provides guidance to project management on expenditure; priorities for research and knowledge mobilisation; alignment of research ethics protocols across the hubs; appointment of members of the New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG); and implementation of the network's planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL) framework. The Steering Committee members also conduct research; supervise Master's, PhD and postdoctoral researchers in the NERG programme; lead engagement with policy-legal-regulatory and practical stakeholders; and mobilise knowledge through conference and seminar presentations, blogs, and publications (books, book chapters, journal articles, reports, briefing/working papers, policy briefs).



Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies



**Strathmore University**

Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law



**ip unit**  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY UNIT

**SARCHi**  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
INNOVATION, AIR  
AND SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT



uOttawa

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## Management

Project management and administration are led at the network's uOttawa hub, by Dr. **Yvonne Ndelle**, who is the Open AIR Program Manager and a Research Associate. For management and administration of certain research and NERG support monies, responsibility is devolved to other hubs.

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### Steering Committee

Open AIR's Steering Committee members, based at our institutional hubs, are as follows:



Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**, at the uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS), holds the University Research Chair in Sustainable Bio-Innovation, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Global Knowledge Governance, and is, at international level, a foremost legal authority in these domains. Oguamanam also leads the Access and Benefit Sharing Canada (ABS Canada) project at uOttawa and participates as a legal expert in the work of WIPO's Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC).



Prof. **Jeremy de Beer**, also at the uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS), holds the Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Innovation and Intellectual Property Law. De Beer is a globally recognised authority on intellectual property, technology innovation, and international trade and development. In addition to his scholarly outputs, de Beer continues to contribute to non-academic forums—in Canada at the Supreme Court of Canada, the Senate, and the House of Commons, and internationally at UN and other intergovernmental forums.



Prof. **Caroline Ncube** holds the DST/NRF SARCHI Research Chair in Intellectual Property, Innovation and Development (IP Chair) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Faculty of Law. Ncube is also affiliated to the department's Intellectual Property Unit (IP Unit), which is the Open AIR hub unit at UCT. Ncube's work and the work of her Research Chair are influential in both scholarly and policy circles. Ncube has served as an expert for WIPO, SADC, UNECA and the AU. She is currently a member of UNECA's African Policy, Research and Advisory Group on STI and the AfCFTA Trade and Industrial Development Advisory Council.



Dr. **Tobias Schonwetter** is Director of the Intellectual Property Unit (IP Unit), and its iNtaka Centre for Law and Technology, at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Faculty of Law. Schonwetter is a prominent participant in African, Southern African and South African policy-legal-regulatory work on IP matters, including South Africa's protracted Copyright Act amendment process. The IP Unit has a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO), the Harare-based intergovernmental body with 20 Member States in Anglophone and Lusophone Africa.



Prof. **Erika Kraemer-Mbula** holds the DST/NRF SARCHI Trilateral Research Chair in Transformative Innovation (TRCTI) at the University of Johannesburg's College of Business and Economics. Kraemer-Mbula is an internationally renowned expert on innovation systems. Her Research Chair's trilateral structure includes the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Nairobi and the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at Sussex University. Kraemer-Mbula plays a leadership role in the Globelics and Afrilics scholarly networks.



Dr. **Melissa Omino** directs the Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) at Strathmore University in Nairobi. CIPIT is a Policy Centre in the AI for Development (AI4D) initiative, and launched the East African AI Policy Hub in 2025. Omino brings specific expertise on IP and access to medicines, digital copyright, and AI. Omino oversees the work of CIPIT's Data Governance Centre, represents the centre in the Digital Trade Alliance, and has done extensive research into US-Kenya negotiations towards a free trade agreement.



Prof. **Nagla Rizk** is Founder and Director of the Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) in the School of Business at The American University in Cairo (AUC). A2K4D celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2025. Among other things, A2K4D serves as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Observatory on Responsible AI, coordinates the MENA region's participation in the Global Index on Responsible AI, and serves as the MENA hub for the Fairwork project. Rizk is an influential voice on numerous economic and innovation matters at global, MENA and Egyptian levels.

The Steering Committee also has three **ex officio members**:



Dr. **Yvonne Ndelle** is the Open AIR Program Manager and a Research Associate at the uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law Technology and Society (CLTS). Ndelle has conducted research, in collaboration with the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) in Ghana, on AI and economic policymaking in Africa. Ndelle serves on the Scientific Committee of the Multidisciplinary Laboratory for Applied Responsible AI (RAI-MultiLab-UYII) at the University of Yaoundé II in Cameroon.



Dr. **Ghati Nyehita** is the Open AIR New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG) Lead, based at the DST/NRF SARCHI IP Chair at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Department of Commercial Law. In addition to her Open AIR work and work for the Chair as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Nyehita is Editor of the WIPO-WTO Colloquium Papers: Africa Edition, and an Editorial Assistant at the *South African Intellectual Property Law Journal (IPLJ)*.



**Khadiga Hassan** is the Open AIR New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG) Deputy Lead, based at the Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) in the School of Business at The American University in Cairo (AUC). As a Research Assistant, Hassan has, among other things, been part of the team conducting the centre's research, as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) hub of the global Fairwork network, on AI and the future of work.

## Participating research caucus

The network's institutional capacity is greatly enhanced by a caucus of renowned researchers at institutions in Canada and Africa.



Dr. **Bassem Awad**, an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Law, is Founder and Faculty Director of the Western Intellectual Property and Innovation Legal Clinic (WIPILC) at Western University in London, Ontario.



Dr. **Teshager Dagne**, an Associate Professor in the School of Public Policy and Administration at York University in Toronto, holds the Ontario Research Chair in Governing Artificial Intelligence.



Prof. **Florian Martin-Bariteau**, a tenured Associate Professor who directs the uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS), holds the University Research Chair in Technology and Society.





Dr. **Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou** is an Assistant Professor in the uOttawa Department of Communication and a Faculty member at the university's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS).



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Dr. **Alexandra Mogyoros** is an Assistant Professor in the Lincoln Alexander School of Law at Toronto Metropolitan University.



**Lincoln Alexander  
School of Law**



Dr. **Chijioke Okorie**, an Associate Professor in the University of Pretoria (UP) Faculty of Law, is Founder and Director of UP's Data Science Law Lab (DSLL).



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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



**DATA SCIENCE  
LAW LAB**



Dr. **Desmond Oriakhogba** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Private Law at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.



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# Funding

## Core funding

Open AIR had four **core funding partners** during the period covered in this report:

- International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
- Government of Canada's New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF)
- Rideau Hall Foundation's Queen Elizabeth Scholars – Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) programme

The table below provides the timeframe, funder, project/purpose, Canadian dollar (CAD) amount, and grant number for the contributions by these four core funders.

Year(s)	Primary source Project / Purpose	Amount (CAD)	Grant No.
2024	International Development Research Centre (IDRC): Signposting to Future Scenarios	64,500	109875-002
2023-26	IDRC: Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs	1,918,700	IDRC 109930-001
2024	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC): Partnership Grant – Stage 1: Canada-Africa Partnership on IP for Climate Action	20,000 (refereed)	895-2024-0072
2023-24	SSHRC: Impact Award	50,000 (refereed)	782-2023-0002
2015-24	SSHRC: Partnership Grant	2,499,999 (refereed)	895-2015-1017
2023-25	New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF): Knowledge Governance Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable African Innovation	500,000 (refereed)	NFRFR- 2022-00498
2021-25	Rideau Hall Foundation's Queen Elizabeth Scholars - Advanced Scholars (QES-AS); Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships – Advanced Scholars – West Africa	293,225.48 (refereed)	N/A
2025-32	SSHRC: Partnership Grant: Canada–Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action	2,497,550 (refereed)	895-2025-1012
2025-28	IDRC: Catalysing AI's Potential in Africa through IP Innovation	744,300	110729- 001



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Open AIR is supported in part by funding from the  
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Fondation  
Rideau Hall  
Foundation

## Co-funding

In 2024–25, the Cape Town hub at the UCT IP Unit continued its role as a consortium member, on behalf of Open AIR, in the **African European Maker Innovation Ecosystem (mAKE) Project**, <https://makeafricaeu.org>, which was funded by EU Horizon 2020. The mAKE Project, which ran from 2022 to 2025, supported the work of, and interactions between, African and European Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) and makerspaces. Through its involvement in mAKE, Open AIR was able to continue its work, begun in 2016, exploring the activities of African maker communities.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 101016858.

Another co-funding avenue in 2024–25 was the **Digital SkillShare Project**, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and driven by Open AIR institutional collaborator the **LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)**, Johannesburg, <https://www.wits.ac.za/linkcentre>. Open AIR participated via the LINK Centre in the project, which researched and advised on strategic and programmatic challenges, identified by the BMGF, related to African digital transformation.



# Talent development

Open AIR continues to mentor scholars in the network’s New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG), which is designed to build the capacity of current and future young researchers in Africa and Canada.

## New and Emerging Researchers Group (NERG)

The NERG Fellows comprise Master’s students, PhD students, and Postdoctoral Fellows. With a growing community of 185 existing members and alumni, the “NERGs” (as they are affectionately known) have a rotating leadership and its two leaders, the NERG Lead and NERG Deputy Lead, serve as ex officio members of the Open AIR Steering Committee. The current NERG Lead is Dr. **Ghati Nyehita**, who is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Open AIR’s University of Cape Town hub, supported by Deputy Lead **Khadiga Hassan**, who is a Research Assistant at the network’s hub at The American University in Cairo.

NERGs are located across the Open AIR network’s hubs, and receive training and mentoring to develop their talents and to allow them to build lasting international, interdisciplinary relationships. NERGs are encouraged and supported to conduct their own original research, under the direction and mentorship of Steering Committee members and other collaborators, and they frequently receive authorial credits on publications.

## NERG QES-AS Fellows



Since 2016, funding support from the **Rideau Hall Foundation’s Queen Elizabeth Scholars – Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) programme** has complemented Open AIR’s core IDRC and SSHRC funding to support close to 40 NERGs. QES-AS Fellows are required to participate in research data collection at a non-academic site as part of their Fellowships, which provides crucial fieldwork experience for NERGs and expands Open AIR’s network-of-networks to the entities that host QES-AS Fellows during their fieldwork.

**Seven new PhD and postdoctoral scholars** joined the NERG community in 2025 with funding from the QES-AS West Africa programme, thus becoming **QES-AS West Africa Fellows**. These scholars (see p. 15) commenced research placements—in Senegal, Togo, Cameroon and Canada—to deliver on aspects of Open AIR’s Regulation for Innovation programme.



**Abdelhamid Benhmade**

*Exploring the role of Senegal’s capital Dakar and other African cities in strengthening Afro-Canadian economic relations*

**Marie Laure Belomo Onguene**

*Investigating how AI use in higher education interfaces with gender inequalities*



**Yobare Yentiare**

*Examining how digital literacy shortfalls affect women’s access to justice in Togo*

**Volviane Mfogo**

*Building a community of practice for responsible AI by connecting grassroots innovators in West African countries with Canadian networks*



**Norris Erhabor**

*Collaborating with student teachers in Canada and Nigeria to co-create low-cost environmental education materials*

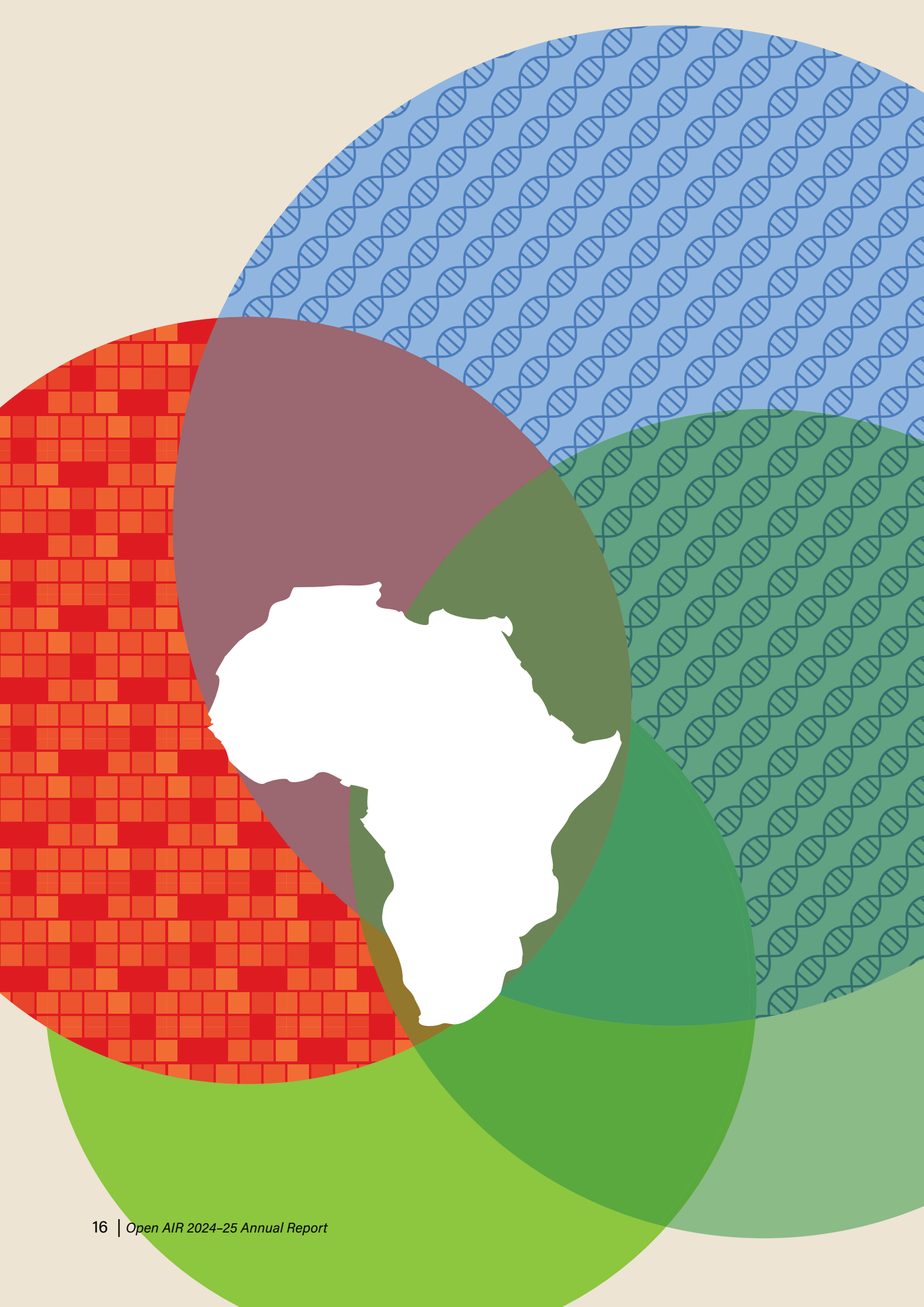
**Anthony Oguguo**

*Examining how IP governance innovations such as patent pooling can foster equity in access to vaccines and health technologies*



**Emile Salomon Zambo Assembe**

*Developing a curriculum that will aim to enhance Cameroonian policymakers’ capacity in matters of IP and AI innovation*





# Core projects, 2024-25

Open AIR's main foci in this reporting period were the following three mutually reinforcing projects:

- **Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs**
- **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation**
- **Signposting to Future Scenarios**



## Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs

This **Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs** project emerged from growing recognition that innovation depends as much on governance as it does on research or entrepreneurship. Across lower-income country contexts, regulatory systems often remain fragmented, outdated, or misaligned with development priorities. In many sectors, the same frameworks that were designed to protect investment or promote competition can inadvertently slow the diffusion of beneficial technologies. For example, overly restrictive IP or data regimes can constrain knowledge sharing, while weak competition policies can entrench dominant global actors. By contrast, more adaptive regulatory approaches (such as open licensing, flexible trade provisions, and inclusive data governance) have the potential to stimulate innovation that addresses local needs and supports sustainable development.

Inequitable access to COVID-19 vaccines revealed how global and national regulatory systems can fail to support innovation that serves everyone. The problem extends beyond health. **Rules for IP, trade, investment, and competition often hinder innovation that could advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** The pandemic demonstrated that scientific breakthroughs alone are not enough. Without effective and equitable regulation, even the most advanced innovations may fail to reach those who need them. The same structural barriers that limited access to vaccines continue to affect access to other technologies vital for development, from digital infrastructure to clean energy and agricultural innovation.

A **four-year initiative (from 2023 to 2026) funded by the IDRC**, this project is administered from the Open AIR hub at the University of Cape Town, under the direction of Dr. **Tobias Schonwetter** and Prof. **Jeremy de Beer** and with support from the rest of the Open AIR Steering Committee: Prof. **Erika Kraemer-Mbula**, Prof. **Caroline Ncube**, Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**, Dr. **Melissa Omino** and Prof. **Nagla Rizk**.

The project explores how regulation can work as a foundation for innovation rather than a constraint on it. It builds on Open AIR's long-standing research on knowledge governance, IP, and innovation policy, applying those insights to new contexts. The term "regulation" is understood broadly. It includes formal laws and policies that govern markets as well as multi-level governance, informal norms, and community-based practices that shape how innovation occurs. By examining these overlapping systems, the research identifies where regulatory reform could improve outcomes for health, digital transformation, and environmentally sustainable technologies.

The project focuses on **three key areas**:

- In **global health**, it examines how IP, licensing, and competition policies affect access to medicines and vaccines, drawing lessons from the pandemic for future regulatory preparedness.
- In **digital governance**, it analyses how data regulation and cross-border trade shape participation in the digital economy, particularly in light of the growing importance of digital public goods and regional data frameworks.
- In **sustainable and inclusive economies**, it assesses how regulatory systems can encourage low-carbon technologies and green innovation under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Each of these themes connects to wider questions of regulatory coherence and institutional capacity in achieving the SDGs.

The project uses a combination of **comparative legal analysis**, **policy review**, and **collaborative fieldwork with policymakers and practitioners**. It draws on Open AIR's extensive community of scholars and institutional partners across Africa and Canada.

Research methods are designed to ensure that academic and policy knowledge feed into one another. Case-based inquiry and participatory **knowledge co-production** workshops create opportunities for shared learning among researchers, government agencies, and private-sector actors. Consequently, the project both synthesises existing evidence and generates new insights to guide future research and reform. This integrative approach allows the team to identify practical entry points for change—where legal and policy adaptation can make innovation systems more inclusive and effective.



## Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation

In this project, **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation**, Open AIR researchers have been investigating root regulatory causes of vaccine inequity and looking towards open innovation for solutions that can provide more inclusive and sustainable ways to promote global health equity. A cluster of field-building studies has focused on comparing regulatory and ownership frameworks for publicly funded research and open science in the biomedical research domain.

In 2013, Open AIR published foresight research findings that set out scenarios for futures shaped by shocks like a catastrophic global pandemic. During the decade that followed, Open AIR posited that open innovation, and strategically addressing IP rights, were pathways for promotion of equitable access to knowledge-based technologies including vaccines to fight known and new diseases alike.

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, the models Open AIR empirically studied and consistently championed were put into use to vaccinate huge sections of the world's population. But the African continent still bore the brunt of vaccine inequity during the coronavirus pandemic. A core aim of this project's research is to address global health inequities, on the basis that publicly funded science partnerships with the private sector and civil society offer hope for mRNA-based vaccines for malaria and even cancer, not to mention new pandemics. With that objective in mind, we have explored how open science works in practice to research and develop mRNA-based vaccines locally in countries including Kenya and South Africa. And we are mapping and bridging divergent viewpoints between high- and low-income countries about IP, technology transfer, and access and benefit sharing in the context of international treaty negotiations.

uOttawa's Prof. **Jeremy de Beer**, and Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam** are the Co-Principal Investigators, with UCT's Prof. **Caroline Ncube** and Strathmore University's Dr. **Melissa Omino** leading the internationally comparative research in South Africa and Kenya respectively. The project is supported by a grant from the **Government of Canada's New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF)**, which, through its Research for a Postpandemic Recovery initiative is mobilising Canadian-led research efforts in support of a more equitable, sustainable and resilient post-pandemic reality. The NFRF is overseen by the Canada Research Coordinating Committee.

## Signposting to Future Scenarios

The core activities of this one-year project, whose full title was **Signposting to Future Scenarios: Reflections on Knowledge and Innovation in Africa**, took place in the second half of 2024. The project revisited Open AIR's scenario-building research findings of 2013. Core project activities comprised participation in the UN Summit of the Future and convening of an Open AIR knowledge co-production scenarios retreat. The project supported the forward-looking elements of the Regulation for Innovation and Inclusive Biomedical Innovation projects.

In September 2024, Open AIR representatives went to New York to participate in the **UN Summit of the Future**, which was a milestone event that brought together world leaders, policymakers, and thought leaders to adopt the Pact for the Future, a forward-looking framework designed to reinvigorate multilateral cooperation. Key areas of focus included sustainable development, climate action, and digital cooperation. Open AIR's participation underscored its commitment to ensuring that African perspectives and priorities are embedded in global dialogues about innovation, technology, and development.

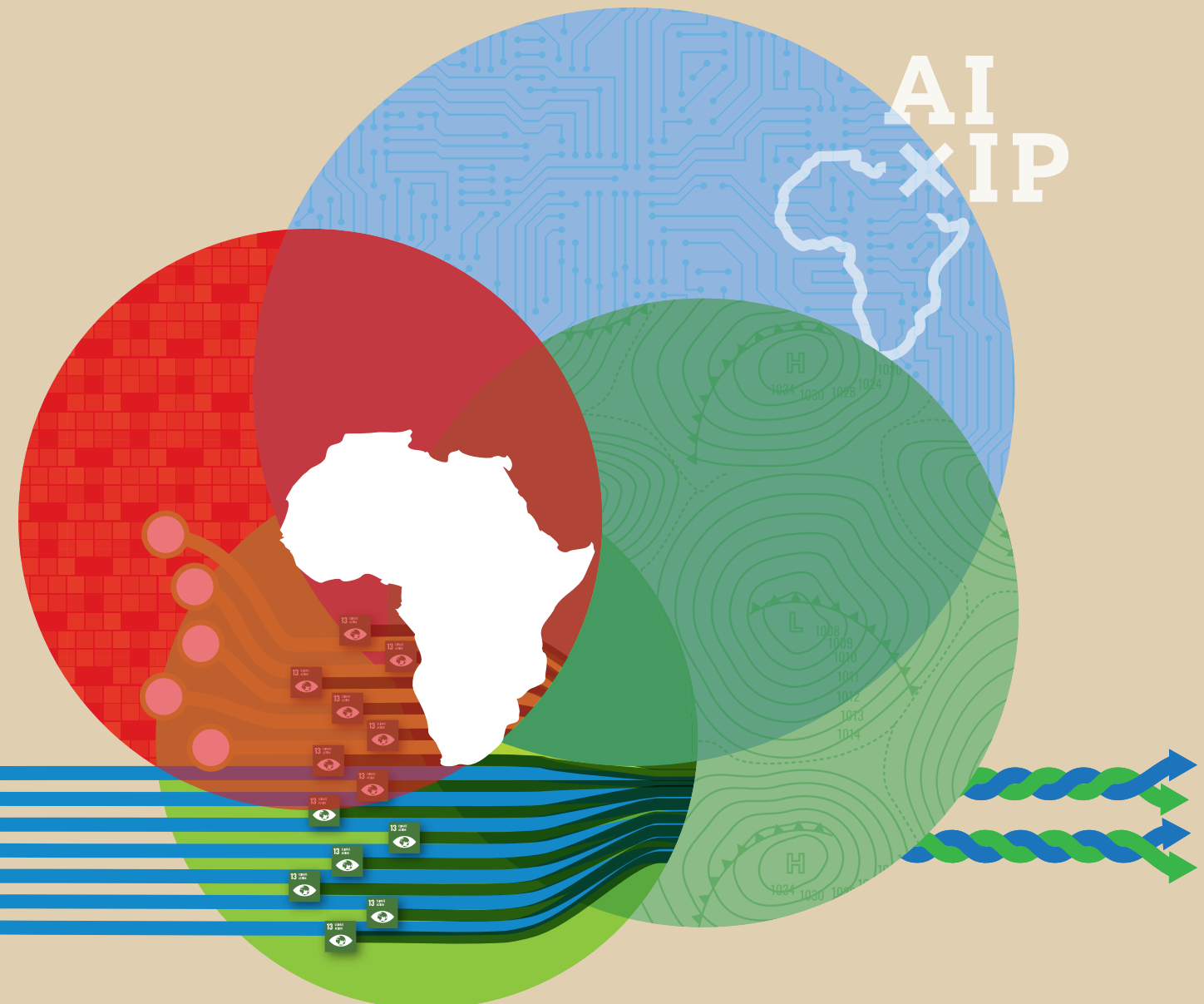
Building on insights gained from the UN Summit, Open AIR hosted the **Signposting to Future Scenarios workshop** in October 2024 at Wakefield Mill near Gatineau Park, Quebec. The three-day retreat convened a select group of nearly two dozen participants from Africa and Canada, including members of the African diaspora in Canada. The workshop revisited the scenarios first developed in Open AIR's 2013 report, **Knowledge and Innovation in Africa: Scenarios for the Future**, which outlined three plausible futures for Africa's innovation landscape by 2035. This workshop offered a critical midpoint reflection on the original scenarios, analysing the drivers of change identified a decade earlier and assessing their relevance in the current context. Participants examined key trends, emerging challenges, and unforeseen developments that have shaped Africa's innovation and knowledge governance environment. The workshop aimed to identify pathways for navigating the next decade, and to refine the foresight methodologies used in development of the three original scenarios.



# New projects confirmed in 2025

Open AIR received funding awards in mid-2025 for two new projects that will complement, and take forward the momentum built by, the other projects (as outlined above) in the network's portfolio. The two new projects are:

- **Canada-Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action**
- **Catalysing AI's Potential in Africa through IP Innovation**





## Canada–Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action

The global response to climate change depends on the rapid development and equitable diffusion of clean technologies. Achieving these objectives requires innovation systems that not only stimulate technological progress but also ensure that the benefits of innovation are shared widely. Yet existing IP regimes are often poorly aligned with this goal. The **Canada–Africa Partnership (CAP) on IP for Climate Action** will investigate how IP frameworks can be better designed, interpreted, and implemented to support climate action and equitable development. This seven-year project (2025–32) is funded through a major Partnership Grant from SSHRC, with additional contributions from partner institutions in Africa and Canada.

Climate change represents a defining challenge for innovation and governance. The technologies required to mitigate and adapt to its effects—such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, carbon capture, and green manufacturing—are emerging rapidly. However, the pathways through which these technologies are created, owned, and shared are governed by systems of law and policy that were designed for a different era. The classic assumption underlying IP regimes is that exclusive rights provide necessary incentives for innovation, with social benefits accruing over time. Experience has shown, however, that this model often reproduces inequities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, exclusive control over vaccine technologies constrained equitable access and undermined global solidarity. Similar patterns can already be observed in climate-related innovation. The CAP on IP for Climate Action responds to this tension by asking **how IP can contribute to, rather than inhibit, the development and diffusion of clean technologies**. The project’s central hypothesis is that IP systems, when governed effectively and inclusively, can be harnessed to accelerate innovation while ensuring that its outcomes are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly **SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**.

The project’s **overall objective** is to generate and mobilise new knowledge about the role of IP in inclusive, sustainable innovation for climate action. The work proceeds from the recognition that the global IP system is complex, multi-level, and contested. Its rules are not neutral but embedded within broader political and economic structures that shape innovation outcomes.



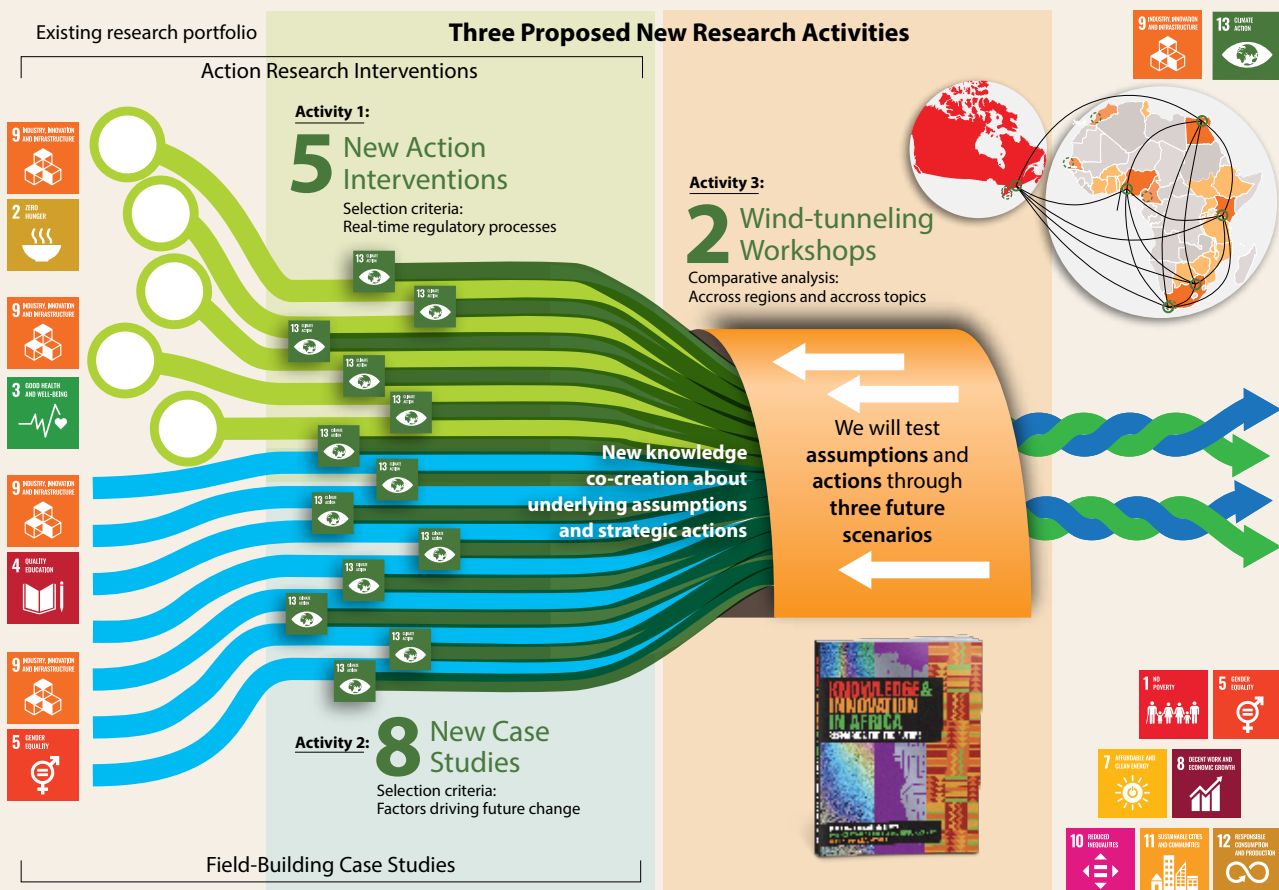
Building on more than 15 years of Open AIR research, the CAP on IP for Climate Action explores **three interrelated pathways for reform and experimentation**:

1. **Working within IP systems** to improve their operation and alignment with climate objectives, including through more effective licensing practices, policy coherence, and institutional capacity.
2. **Working around IP systems** to identify and strengthen alternative models such as open licensing, collaborative innovation, and community-based knowledge sharing.
3. **Working despite IP systems** to address circumstances in which existing rules and institutions systematically block equitable access or inhibit innovation, and to propose policy options for change.

These pathways are connected by a cross-cutting emphasis on **openness, equity, and collaboration between Canada and African partners**.

The CAP on IP for Climate Action will employ a mixed-method, comparative design linking empirical research, policy analysis, and collaborative experimentation. Three primary research activities structure the work:

- **Action-research interventions:** Five real-time interventions will engage directly with policy processes in international and regional fora. These will include collaborations with organisations such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Each intervention will co-produce research and policy recommendations with decision-makers, ensuring that findings inform practice as they emerge.



- **Case studies:** Eight multi-disciplinary case studies will examine clean technology innovation in different sectors and contexts, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste management. The focus will be on innovation that occurs around and despite the constraints of the existing IP system, documenting how local actors adapt, negotiate, and transform rules to achieve social and environmental goals.
- **Wind-tunnelling workshops:** Comparative, forward-looking workshops will bring together project partners and stakeholders to test assumptions, evaluate policy options, and model potential impacts. Building on Open AIR's continuing work with strategic foresight tools, the "wind-tunnelling" exercises will apply these methods to explore future scenarios and chart options for adaptive governance.

Administered and managed by Open AIR's Canadian hub at the **uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS)**, the project's Directors are uOttawa Professors **Jeremy de Beer** and **Chidi Oguamanam**. The work will involve other principal investigators and co-investigators based at partner institutions in South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, and Canada: Prof. **Caroline Ncube** and Dr. **Tobias Schonwetter** (University of Cape Town), Prof. **Erika Kraemer-Mbula** (University of Johannesburg), Dr. **Chijioke Okorie** (University of Pretoria), Dr. **Desmond Oriakhogba** (University of the Western Cape), Prof. **Nagla Rizk** (The American University in Cairo), Dr. **Melissa Omino** (Strathmore University), Prof. **Florian Martin-Bariteau** and Dr. **Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou** (University of Ottawa), Dr. **Teshager Dagne** (York University), Dr. **Bassem Awad** (Western University), and Dr. **Alexandra Mogyoros** (Toronto Metropolitan University).



## Catalysing AI's Potential in Africa through IP Innovation

AI has the potential to transform societies through new forms of knowledge creation, data use, and technological capability. Realising this potential requires legal and policy frameworks that support innovation rather than restrict it. The **Catalysing AI's Potential in Africa through IP Innovation** project investigates how IP law and policy can be integrated into the governance of AI in ways that advance Africa's development priorities. This initiative, running from 2025 to 2028 and funded by the IDRC, addresses a pressing need for evidence-based approaches to the regulation of AI and IP that are inclusive, context-appropriate, and grounded in African realities. The project's overall goal is to develop inclusive, sustainable, and evidence-based IP laws, policies, and business strategies that can advance AI innovation and governance across Africa. The **specific objectives** are to:

- Examine how IP and related regulatory frameworks influence the creation, diffusion, and commercialisation of AI technologies in African contexts.
- Build legal and policy models that reflect African values of equity, diversity, and shared prosperity in data and AI governance.
- Strengthen institutional and regulatory capacity in African countries to integrate AI innovation within development planning and knowledge governance systems.



The research will be structured around **three thematic areas**:

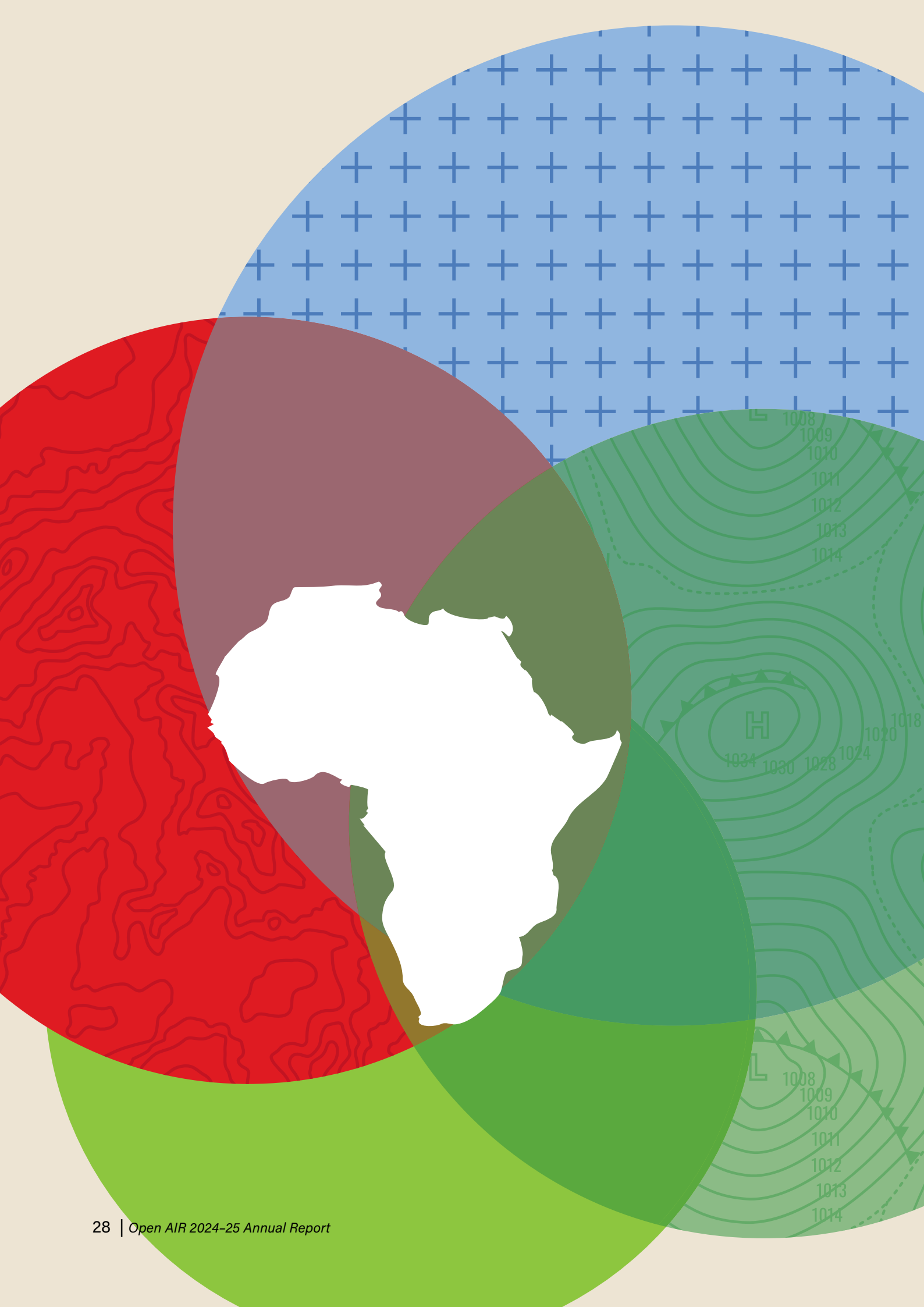
- **AI and IP law-making and application:** mapping and analysing IP and AI laws, regulations, and practices at national, regional, and continental levels; examining questions of ownership, authorship, inventorship, and the use of data in training AI models.
- **AI and IP in community contexts:** addressing the implications of AI for community-based knowledge systems and local data governance, including indigenous and traditional knowledge; identifying culturally grounded and sovereign approaches to data sharing and protection.
- **AI and IP in innovation and business models:** assessing how IP frameworks affect the scaling of AI-driven innovation in sectors such as health, agriculture, education, and climate adaptation; supporting African IP offices, research institutions, and start-ups to engage with AI-related opportunities and challenges.

The project will employ **elements of action research** and will combine doctrinal, socio-legal, and comparative analyses. Its approach integrates field-based case studies, policy experimentation, and collaborative learning across diverse institutional and national contexts. Research activities are organised into **three interlinked components**:

1. **Legal and policy analysis** to examine how existing frameworks shape AI innovation and to identify entry points for reform.
2. **Participatory stakeholder engagement** to co-create models of AI governance with policymakers, IP offices, innovators, and civil society.
3. **Strategic support for innovation scaling** to translate research findings into practical tools and institutional reforms.

The funding grant for this project is to the **University of Pretoria (UP) Faculty of Law's Data Science Law Lab (DSLL)**, and project management will be led by Dr. **Chijioke Okorie**, who is a UP Associate Professor and head of the DSLL. UP's role in administration and management of this grant provides valuable decentralisation, and further expansion, of the network's institutional functions, thus growing the reach of Open AIR's networked community of practice. This project's co-lead will be Dr. **Teshager Dagne**, who holds the Ontario Research Chair in Governing Artificial Intelligence of Toronto's York University. This prominent role for York's Ontario Research Chair also fosters decentralisation and expansion of the network. Okorie and Dagne will work closely on this project with UCT's Prof. **Caroline Ncube**, uOttawa's Prof. **Jeremy de Beer** and Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**, University of the Western Cape's Dr. **Desmond Oriakhogba**, and Western University's Dr. **Bassem Awad**.







## Core network outputs, 2024-25

The three core initiatives described earlier—**Regulation for Innovation Supporting SDGs, Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation, and Signposting to Future Scenarios**—generated numerous outputs. These outputs included those fully funded by Open AIR and others substantially associated with Open AIR and its researchers through cash or in-kind funding and/or individual or institutional affiliations. The outputs can be grouped into three main types of deliverables:

- **Rapid-response interventions:** Strategic interventions to impact policy, legal and regulatory norm-setting, including: taking a seat at the table where new rules are being set; embedding experts into negotiations to support teams from low-income countries; hosting side events linked to negotiations; and convening knowledge co-production action-research focus group discussions (FGDs) that bring together Open AIR researchers and policy-legal-regulatory stakeholders.
- **Field-building studies:** Studies that aim to generate relevant and practical insights to support the work of policy-legal-regulatory stakeholders.
- **Momentum-catalyst events:** Participation in, and/or co-hosting of, events that bring together Open AIR researchers and policy-legal-regulatory stakeholders to determine opportunities and where possible, to engage in knowledge co-production via action-research FGDs.

# Rapid-response interventions

## 2024 WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK)

Open AIR Steering Committee member Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam** was closely involved in the processes leading up to adoption of the GRATK Treaty by Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in May 2024. Oguamanam has served for many years as an expert advisor to the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC). This strategic positioning allowed Oguamanam and other Open AIR researchers to present and publish rapid-response inputs related to the treaty and its implementation.



Chidi Oguamanam (2024)  
***The WIPO Treaty on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GR-ATK): Perspectives, Preparedness and Future***

Presentation to Roundtable Discussion, WIPO Nigeria Office, Abuja  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/45JgWCI>



Chidi Oguamanam (2024)  
***The New WIPO Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge Treaty: A Symbolic and Modest Step Toward an Inclusive and Just IP System***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/3BhuNnJ>



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***Information Systems and Digitization of Traditional Knowledge: Trends in Cultural Heritage and Memory Institutions and The WIPO Genetic Resources Treaty***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jwip.70005>



Photo: WIPO

## 2025 WHO Pandemic Agreement

World Health Organisation (WHO) Member States adopted the Pandemic Agreement at the World Health Assembly in May 2025. The Agreement is a response to the treatment inequities between rich-world and developing nations during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to ensure equitable, cooperative international responses to future pandemics—including equitable approaches to sharing of IP linked to life-saving innovations in vaccines/treatments, mitigation measures, and prevention measures. Based on findings from research conducted under the **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation** project (see p. 20) and other hub-led initiatives, Open AIR researchers were able to make contributions to present and publish responses (see table below) to the policy-legal-regulatory and implementation questions that emerged in the run-up to, and after, adoption of the Agreement.



Jeremy de Beer and Rosa De Koker (2024)

***Negotiation of New International Health Law on Intellectual Property, Technology Transfer, Open Science, and Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing: A Textual and Contextual Analysis***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjph-2024-001467>



Chidi Oguamanam (2024)  
***Governance of Public Health Innovation in the Shadow of COVID-19***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4rkU9Gq>



Nelly C, Rotich, Doreen Aoko Abiero, Josephine Kaaniru Reuben, Chebet Koros and Melissa Omino (forthcoming)

***Kenya and the WHO Pandemic Agreement***



Omowamiwa Kolawole and Caroline Ncube (2025)

***IP, Global Health Justice and Vaccine Contracts: Public Interest Litigation as a Pathway to Vaccine Access Equity***

Paper presented at ATRIP Congress, University of Copenhagen



Governance of Public Health Innovation in the Shadow of COVID-19

Chidi Oguamanam

Working Paper 18  
July 2024



Photo: WHO / Pierre Albouy

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## African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The African Union (AU) AfCFTA Agreement, signed in 2018 and in effect since 2021, continues to be a central focus of African continental engagement with trade matters—including, with direct relevance to the work of Open AIR, intersections between trade and IP rights, STI (science, technology and innovation), Indigenous knowledge, plant variety protection (PVP), and cyber law. Several Open AIR researchers are well-placed, via their long-standing connections to African continental, regional and national policy-legal-regulatory fora, to present and publish rapid responses to elements arising from the ongoing work regarding the AfCFTA Protocols and their Annexes. One of the network's most influential voices on AfCFTA matters is Steering Committee member Prof. **Caroline Ncube**, who sits on the AfCFTA Trade and Industrial Development Advisory Council.



Caroline B. Ncube (2025)  
***Continental Harmonisation of Cyber Law in Africa: Players, Priorities, and Prognosis***

Keynote at the African Cyber Law Conference, convened by Wits School of Law and UNISA College of Law, Johannesburg



Caroline B. Ncube (2025)  
***Food Security and Plant Variety Protection: Seeding Hope for the African Continental Free Trade Area?***

In *IIC - International Review of Intellectual Property and Competition Law*, 56, 64–90.

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40319-024-01556-3>



Caroline B. Ncube (2024)  
***The Protection of Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Cultural Expressions, Expressions of Folklore and Genetic Resources Within the African Continental Free Trade Area - Alignment with International and Regional Developments***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/44qgtEH>



Caroline B. Ncube (2024)  
***Building African Trade for Development: The Legislative Architecture of the AfCFTA***

Presentation to 2nd Afronomicslaw Academic Forum Conference



Chidi Oguamanam (2024)  
***Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights***

Presentation to AfCFTA Brown Bag Webinar Series: Engage with the Future of African Trade

Online at: <https://bit.ly/3ZqEB9o>

# Field-building studies

## Equitable mRNA vaccine production and access

The **Open Opportunities for Globally Inclusive Biomedical Innovation** project (see p. 20) generated valuable field-building studies linked to international efforts, in response to vaccine inequity during the COVID-19 pandemic, to support mRNA vaccine development and production in the Global South. Open AIR research focused on the mRNA vaccine hub established by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Cape Town, with the research comprising a desktop scoping study and an interview-based empirical case study.



Omowamiwa Kolawole, Caroline B. Ncube, and Jeremy de Beer (2024)

### ***Open Science, Intellectual Property and the South African mRNA Vaccine Hub***

Open AIR Briefing Paper

Online at: <https://bit.ly/3Dbtszn>



Omowamiwa Kolawole, Caroline B. Ncube and Jeremy de Beer (2025)

### ***Challenges Implementing Technology Transfer as a Viable Pathway for Equitable Vaccine Production and Access: A Case Study of the mRNA Vaccine Hub in South Africa***

In *Global Public Health*, 20(1), 1–17.

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2025.2504698>



## Governance of climate-innovation knowledge

In collaboration with University of Cambridge innovation scholars, Open AIR researchers conducted field-building case studies—in Uganda, South Africa, and Nigeria—to identify knowledge-governance solutions suitable for inclusive sharing of benefits from African climate innovation. The findings of the studies were published in three articles in the *South African Intellectual Property Law Journal*.

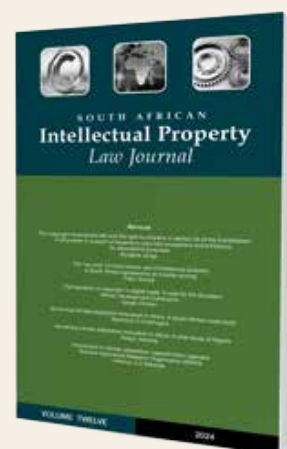


Anthony C.K. Kakooza (2024)

### ***Innovations in Climate Adaptation: Lessons from Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO)***

In *South African Intellectual Property Law Journal*, 12(1), 134-157.

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.47348/SAIPL/v12/a6>





Desmond O. Oriakhogba (2024)  
**Governing Climate Adaptation Innovation in Africa: A South African Case Study**  
 In *South African Intellectual Property Law Journal*, 12(1), 81-104.  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.47348/SAIPL/v12/a4>



Titilayo Adebola (2024)  
**Governing Climate Adaptation Innovation in Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria**  
 In *South African Intellectual Property Law Journal*, 12(1), 105-133.  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.47348/SAIPL/v12/a5>

## IP modalities in ARIPO Member States

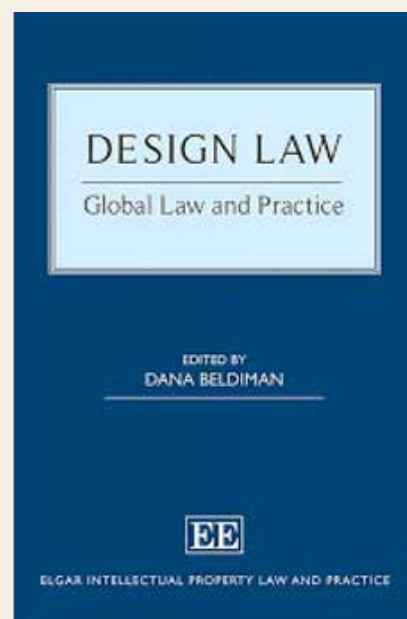
A key sub-continental norm-setting body on IP matters is the Harare-based African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO). Open AIR researchers have established links with this body via, among other things, an MoU between ARIPO and the network's hub at the University of Cape Town IP Unit (UCT IP Unit). In the period under review, Open AIR researcher Dr. **Tobias Schonwetter** published a field-building study on ARIPO Member States' treatment of matters of unfair competition; Dr. **Chijioke Okorie** published a study of ARIPO functions with respect to industrial-design registration; and Okorie combined efforts with Dr. **Dick Kawooya**, Dr. **Desmond Oriakhogba**, and Dr. **Anthony Kakooza** to collect situational-analysis data on ARIPO Member States' approaches to public-interest copyright imitations and exceptions (L&Es), competition among copyright collective management organisations (CMOs), and facilitation of digital preservation of information and knowledge materials by libraries, archives and museums (LAMs).



Chijioke Okorie (2024)  
**The Functioning of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO) for Industrial Design Registration: Realities and Possibilities**  
 In D. Beldiman (Ed.), *Design Law: Global Law and Practice*  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800886520.00025>



Dick Kawooya, Desmond O. Oriakhogba, Anthony Kakooza and Chijioke Okorie (2025)  
**Fostering Information and Knowledge Access in the Digital Environment: A Situational Analysis of Legal-regulatory Frameworks in ARIPO Region**  
 Online at: <https://bit.ly/4p3GWjU>



## Africa's innovation futures

The **Signposting to Future Scenarios** project (see p.21) generated knowledge co-production outputs that formed the core of an Open AIR Working Paper.



Jeremy de Beer, Shirin Elahi and Yvonne Ndelle (2025)  
**Foresight Research on African Innovation: Reflections on Pathways to 2035**  
 Open AIR Working Paper

# Momentum-catalyst events

## Copyright and the Public Interest: Africa & the Global South conference

This conference was convened in February 2025 over three days at three venues: the Mandela Institute, Law School, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; the University of Cape Town (UCT) Library; and Cape Town's Innovation City in conjunction with the UCT IP Unit. The event brought together scholars, policymakers, and civil society actors to engage on public-interest dimensions of copyright in relation to AI governance, knowledge equity, and Indigenous/traditional knowledge. Several Open AIR researchers were key participants.



Chijioke Okorie (2025)  
***Licensing African Works to Ensure Support for African AI***  
Presentation to session on: AI for Good – Case studies from the African Continent  
Online at: <https://youtu.be/MfT-Si635ec>



Desmond O. Oriakhogba (2025)  
***The Copyright Amendment Bill: A New Vista for Fair Remuneration for South African Creators and Performers?***  
Presentation to session on: The Copyright Amendment Bill (CAB) in South Africa and Human Rights – Beating the Constitutional Challenge  
Online at: <https://youtu.be/fnZW0oPJC6w>



Caroline B. Ncube (2025)  
***Issues, Priorities and Opportunities for Balanced Copyright Reform in Africa***  
Presentation to session on: Copyright Reform in Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Namibia  
Online at: <https://youtu.be/4mAhhIFcp5g>



Tobias Schonwetter (2025)  
***Opening remarks***  
Opening of day 3 on: An African Agenda for Knowledge Equity and Traditional Knowledge  
Online at: <https://youtu.be/y95q8EH3DCo>



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***The Cradle Principles on Knowledge Equity and an Agenda for Traditional Knowledge***  
Keynote address to session on: Accessing and Protecting African Knowledge Knowledge Systems and Knowledge Equity, Combatting Data Colonialism, and Recognising Traditional Knowledge: A Global South Agenda  
Online at: <https://youtu.be/isaXCHzS1MU>

## COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa

Hosted in June 2025 by Open AIR's East Africa hub, the **Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT)** at Strathmore University in Nairobi, the 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa (COSAA) was convened under the theme of Shaping Responsible and Ethical AI Governance, Policy, and Regulation in Africa. Numerous Open AIR network members participated (see table below). A key moment for CIPIT during COSAA 2025 was its launch of the **East African AI Policy Hub**.



Melissa Omino (2025)  
**Conference Opening Remarks**  
Online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIRDmCOe9XY>



Chijioke Okorie (2025)  
**AI and Intellectual Property: Protecting Innovation in Africa**  
Keynote address



Caroline B. Ncube (2025)  
**Forging an Effective AI Governance, Policy and Regulatory Toolkit for the Africa We Want**  
Keynote address  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/3LW7yEL>



Chebet Koros (moderator) with Anthony Kakooza, Jake Okechukwu Effoduh and other participants (2025)  
**Fostering Local AI Innovation through Intellectual Property Laws**



Melissa Omino, panel moderator (2025)  
**Charting the Path: Understanding the Kenya National AI Strategy for Advancing AI in Kenya**



Melissa Omino and other speakers (2025)  
**Launch of the East African AI Policy Hub**  
At COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa, convened by CIPIT, Strathmore University, Nairobi  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/46p2QXe>



Desmond Oriakhogba and other panellists (2025)  
**Contextualising AI Regulatory Approaches in Africa**

## MAPC/ABS Canada Workshop: Reconciliation and the UN Declaration Act: Indigenous IP in Canada and International Developments

Open AIR researchers played key roles in this two-day April 2025 workshop hosted by the **Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council (MAPC)** and the uOttawa-based **Access and Benefit Sharing Canada (ABS Canada)** project. The event convened members of Indigenous communities, policymakers, and legal experts to assess how the Canadian Department of Justice's UN Declaration Act Action Plan aligns with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's (ISED's) existing Intellectual Property Strategy. Open AIR Steering Committee member Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**, who heads the ABS Canada project, was the lead Open AIR participant, joined by Prof. **Jeremy de Beer**, Prof. **Caroline Ncube**, Dr. **Titilayo Adebola**, and lawyer and Open AIR NERG alumnus **Meika Ellis**.



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***Indigenous Peoples' Fear of Technological Opportunism over the Interface of Mandatory Disclosure and Information Systems in the 2024 WIPO Genetic Resources Treaty***  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4rhKrEI>



Caroline B. Ncube (2025)  
***Indigenous Intellectual Property in South Africa: A Hybrid Approach***



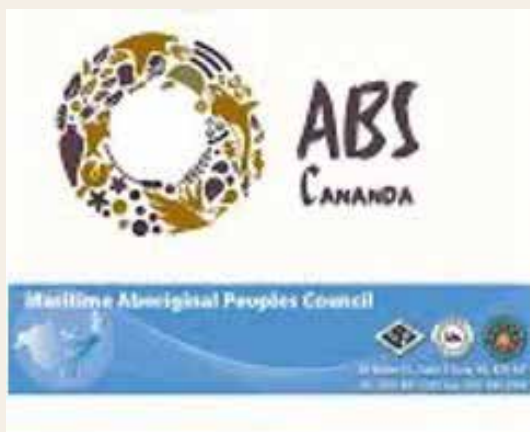
Jeremy de Beer (2025)  
***Implications of the New WIPO Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge Treaty on Patent Law and Practice in Canada and Beyond***  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4rja9Zt>

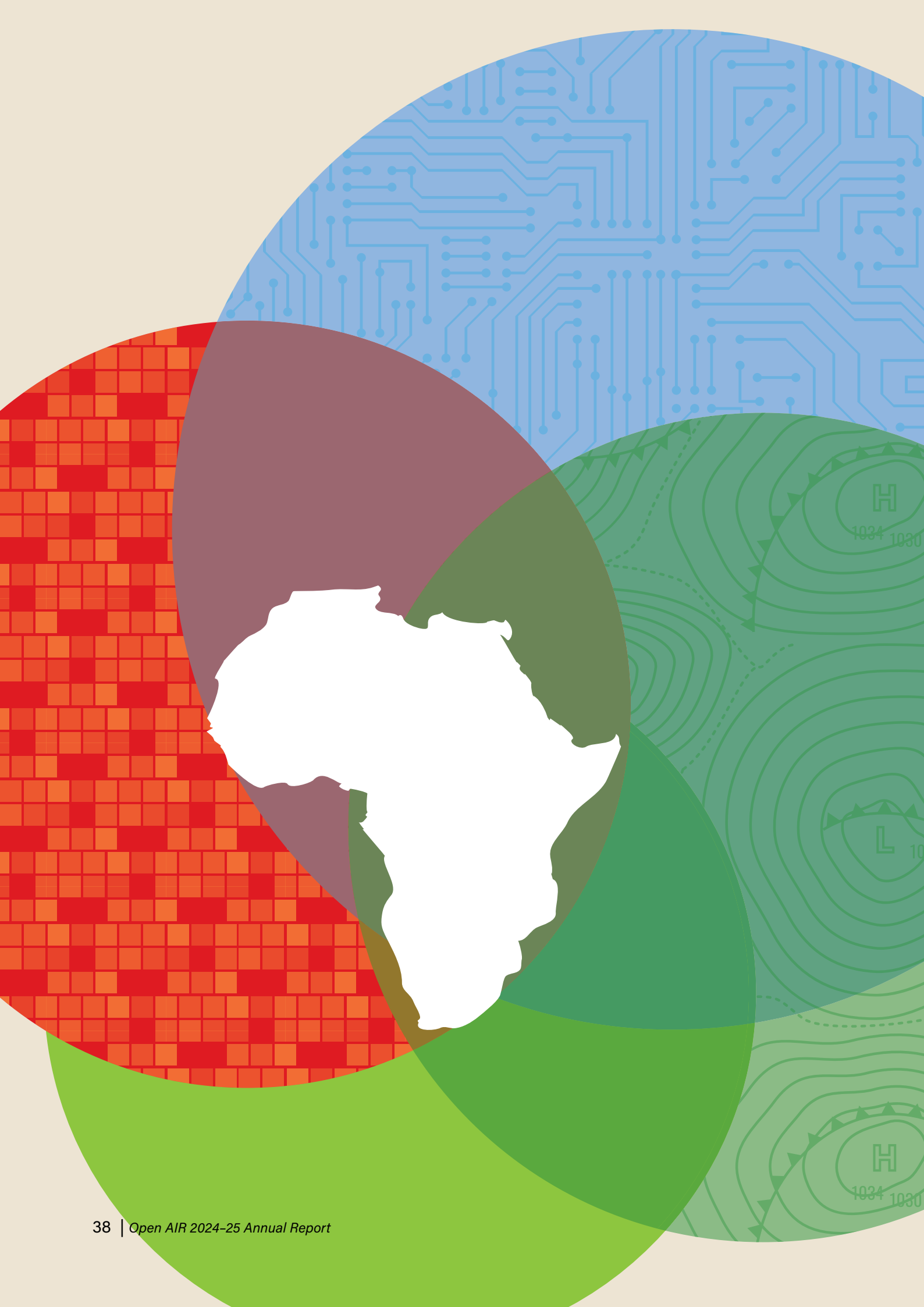


Titilayo Adebola (2025)  
***Repositioning Intellectual Property Rights in Nigeria to Advance Indigenous and Local Communities' Interests: National Gaps and International Developments***  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/47YGpto>



Meika Ellis (2025)  
***How Canada is Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Expressions through its IP system***  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/3M7fJhV>







## Regional highlights, 2024-25

The next five sub-sections provide highlights from Open AIR's activities in North Africa; West and Central Africa; East Africa; Southern Africa; and Canada.

## North Africa

Open AIR's North African hub institution, the **Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D)** in the Onsi Sawiris School of Business at The American University in Cairo (AUC), celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2025. A2K4D marked the milestone with a roundtable event, held at the AUC Tahrir Campus, entitled *The Role of Research in Impacting Policy and Practice: AI, the Future of Work, and Development in the MENA Region*. The event was led by A2K4D founding Director Prof. **Nagla Rizk**, who serves on the Open AIR Steering Committee. Participants comprised researchers, academics, civil society actors, and entrepreneurs. The workshop reaffirmed A2K4D's mission to amplify the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's voice in global debates on data governance, social justice, and the digital economy.



A2K4D continued its work as the **MENA Observatory on Responsible AI**, which generated several notable achievements, including: recognition of the Observatory, by the Paris AI Action Summit, as one of the world's top 50 AI initiatives; partnership with the African Observatory on Responsible AI to host a collaborative webinar series on AI governance; and coordination of the MENA region's participation in the **Global Index on Responsible AI**.



**MENA OBSERVATORY  
ON RESPONSIBLE AI**

مرصد الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا للذكاء الاصطناعي المسؤول

Looking ahead, the MENA Observatory will launch a **MENA Feminist AI Hub**, dedicated to integrating gender equality into AI practice and policy. A2K4D also continues to examine **new forms of work** in the digital economy, focusing on gig work, platform labor, and women's informal digital entrepreneurship. This research has influenced development of **Egypt's Labor Law of 2025**, advanced regional advocacy, and produced research papers and policy briefs.

Other A2K4D highlights in 2024-25 included the hosting of two **Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable** events focussed on Egypt's AI Bill, and a project, in partnership with Birzeit University (BZU), on **Governing Responsible AI and Data in MENA**. This project built a regional research network on AI data governance for women's health and food security across six countries, and produced several research papers and policy briefs, including the Rizk (2025) paper entitled AI Applications for Food Security in Egypt: Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges.



Nagla Rizk, Steven Kenney, Mariette Awad, Thomas Basikolo, and Dario Garcia de Viedma (2025)  
**Artificial Intelligence Futures for the Arab Region**  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4pswfpP>



Nagla Rizk and Nagham ElHoussamy (2025)  
**Women Informal Digital Entrepreneurs in Egypt: Skills Development and Capacity Building**  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4a8V3OC>



Nagla Rizk (2025)  
**AI Applications for Food Security in Egypt: Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges**  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/481cUHp>



Nagla Rizk (2025)  
**Gender Rights in AI Governance: Insights from the Global Index on Responsible AI**  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4rhWkKU>



Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) (2025)  
**AI, Gender and Work: Perspectives from MENA and Africa**  
Webinar convened by A2K4D in collaboration with the African Observatory on Responsible AI  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/3KaEh8L>





Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) (2025)

**Governing Responsible AI and Data in MENA**

Project in partnership with Birzeit University (BZU)

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4aaXnWK>



Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) (2025)

**Charting Egypt's Path to Responsible AI: Insights from the Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable Hosted by the MENA Observatory on Responsible AI**

Online at: <https://bit.ly/48IAZHL>



Nagham El Houssamy (moderator) with Nadine Weheba and other panellists (2025)

**Enhancing Inclusion in the Digital Economy: A Mediterranean and Bottom-up Perspective on the Human Dimensions of Work**

Panel at Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) Forum 2025: From Knowledge to Action: Redefining Dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, Tirana, Albania



Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) (2025)

**Access to Knowledge for Development: 15 Years of Driving Inclusive Innovation in the MENA Region**

Online at: <https://bit.ly/48ithhJ>



Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) (2025)

**The Role of Research in Impacting Policy and Practice: AI, the Future of Work, and Development in the MENA Region**

A2K4D 15th Anniversary Roundtable at The American University in Cairo



Nagla Rizk (2025)

**10 Years of CopyrightX @AUC**

Presentation to IPX Summit, Harvard Law School



Nagla Rizk and Tobias Schonwetter (2024)

**Governance of Data and Data-driven Technology**

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4kKufsZ>



Nagla Rizk and other panellists (2024)

**Implementing Africa's AI Vision: Insights and Engagement with Industry, Academia and Civil Society**

Panel at OECD-African Union AI Dialogue 2.0, Cairo

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4ombBCZ>



Nagla Rizk, with other panellists (2024)

**Establishing an Inclusive Euro-Med Foundation for AI Access**

Panel at Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) Policy Debate: Enhancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in AI for a Sustainable Euro-Mediterranean Ecosystem, at Université Mohammed Premier, Oujda, Morocco

Online at: <https://bit.ly/41vnhjU>

## West and Central Africa

Open AIR's work in West and Central Africa in 2024-25 included significant activity in Cameroon, Senegal and Togo—in line with the network's objective of ensuring strong Francophone African dimensions in our research and engagement. A key milestone was Open AIR's participation in the April 2025 launch of the **Laboratoire Multidisciplinaire d'IA Responsable Appliquée de l'Université de Yaoundé II (RAI-MultiLab-UYII)** in the Cameroonian capital Yaoundé. The lab is a collaboration between University of Yaoundé II and the Centre d'expertise internationale de Montréal en intelligence artificielle (CEIMIA), with support from Open AIR. Our representatives in this initiative, both from the uOttawa hub, are Dr. **Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou**, who serves as the lab's Permanent Secretary, and Open AIR Program Manager and Research Associate Dr. **Yvonne Ndelle**, who sits on the lab's Scientific Committee. The lab's launch was marked with a two-day symposium, at which Ndelle delivered a keynote on Scaling Innovation and Mboa Nkoudou participated in a panel on the theme of Public Policy, Law and Artificial Intelligence: Building a Normative Framework for Scaling Responsible AI in Africa.



Ndelle also participated in the fifth **Conférence Internationale sur l'Écosystème Entrepreneurial (CIEE 2025)** in Cameroon's economic capital Douala. Representing Open AIR, Ndelle led a session on Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Africa.





**Dr. Titilayo Adebola**



**Kow Abekah-Wonkyi**



**Dr. Angela Yeboah-Appiah**

In Nigeria, Open AIR's West African hub, the **Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS)**, continued its work from its offices at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and at the Supreme Court of Nigeria Complex in the federal capital Abuja. Among other things, NIALS and Open AIR convened a one-day seminar in Abuja to examine Nigerian preparedness for the global IP transformation that is expected to result from the 2024 WIPO Treaty on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK), with Open AIR's participation led by Steering Committee member Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**. Oguamanam also participated in another Abuja event focused on the GRATK Treaty: a roundtable discussion hosted by the WIPO Nigeria Office (see "2024 WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK)" on p. 30). Open AIR's Dr. **Titilayo Adebola** was active in researching Nigerian IP realities, conducting, among other things, a case study of Nigerian governance of climate-adaptation innovation (see "Governance of climate-innovation knowledge" on p.33).

Another focal country in this region in 2024-25 was Ghana. uOttawa NERG and PhD candidate **Kow Abekah-Wonkyi** conducted a study of the history of the Ghana's collective management of copyright in musical works. Another Ghanaian study, by Oguamanam and Dr. **Angela Yeboah-Appiah**, was a gender-based exploration of cultural heritage embedded in the Kente weaving of the Akan and Ewe peoples, and the implications of such heritage for implementation of UNESCO's 2023 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Also advancing Open AIR's presence in West and Central Africa was the commencement of research projects by seven **QES-AS West Africa Fellows** in 2025, supported by the Rideau Hall Foundation's Queen Elizabeth Scholars - Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) West Africa programme. Three studies include focus on innovation modalities in Cameroon; one includes data collection in the Togolese capital Lomé; one includes data collection in the Senegalese capital Dakar; and one study has a Nigerian focus (see the "NERG QES-AS Fellows" section of this report on p. 14-15).





Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou and other panellists (2025)  
**Public Policy, Law and Artificial Intelligence: Building a Normative Framework for Scaling Responsible AI in Africa**  
 Panel at launch of Laboratoire Multidisciplinaire d'IA Responsable Appliquée de l'Université de Yaoundé II (RAI-MultiLab-UYII), Cameroon



Chidi Oguamanam and other participants (2024)  
**The New WIPO Treaty on GR and Associated TK: Gauging Nigeria's Preparedness for Global Transformation in IP**  
 One-day seminar in Abuja, convened by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) and Open AIR



Kow Abekah-Wonkyi (2025)  
**From Colonial Emancipation into the Fourth Republic: Lessons for Ghana's Collective Management for Musicians and their Works**  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jwip.12362>



Yvonne Ndelle and other participants (2025)  
**Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Africa**  
 Session at the Conférence Internationale sur l'Écosystème Entrepreneurial (CIEE 2025)



Yvonne Ndelle (2025)  
**Scaling Innovation**  
 Keynote at launch of Laboratoire Multidisciplinaire d'IA Responsable Appliquée de l'Université de Yaoundé II (RAI-MultiLab-UYII), Cameroon



Chidi Oguamanam and Angela Yeboah-Appiah (2024)  
**Kente Weaving Among Akan and Ewe Peoples of Ghana: A Gender-Based Insight into Embedded Intangible Cultural Heritage and Implications for the Implementation of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention**  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0940739124000213>

## East Africa

Open AIR's work in this region continued to be led by our East African hub institution, the **Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT)** at **Strathmore University in Nairobi**. Key events for CIPIT were its hosting of **COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa**, and, during that conference, its launch of the **East African AI Policy Hub**. Both the conference and the launch were led by CIPIT Director Dr. **Melissa Omino**, who serves on the Open AIR Steering Committee. (For more on COSAA 2025, go to "COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa" on p. 36 of this report.)



Chebet Koros

**Chebet Koros** and other CIPIT team members were active in processes linked to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR). CIPIT also engaged with the **Global Initiative on AI for Health (GI-AI4H)**, which is a collaborative project of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and WIPO.

Key CIPIT research outputs included the 2025 edition of ***The State of AI in Africa Report***, a paper on Cross-Border Data Flows in Africa, and a research collaboration by CIPIT Director Dr. **Melissa Omino** with another Open AIR team member, Dr. **Chijioke Okorie** at the University of Pretoria, to develop the **Nwulite Obodo Open Data Licence (NOOL)**, which is an alternative open licence for sharing African datasets. CIPIT also delivered AI and IP training to two cohorts, equipping policymakers, researchers, and practitioners with practical skills to navigate the intersections between IP, data, and AI governance. Other studies by Open AIR researchers that included an East African element were Dr. **Teshager Dagne's** exploration of an Ethiopian legal framework for geographical indications (GIs) and Dr. **Ghati Nyehita's** work on regulation of remuneration for Kenyan musical artists.



Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) (2025)

***The State of AI in Africa Report***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4ogYKqQ>



Chijioke Okorie and Melissa Omino (2025)

***Addressing Inequitable Openness in Licences for Sharing African Data and Datasets Through the Nwulite Obodo Open Data Licence***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.5204/lthj.4001>



Chebet Koros, Wilfred Lusi, Analo Kanga and Benjamin Webi (2025)

***Celebrating World Intellectual Property Day 2025***  
Webinar convened by Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT), Nairobi



Melissa Omino and other speakers (2025)

***Launch of the East African AI Policy Hub***

At COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa, convened by CIPIT, Strathmore University, Nairobi

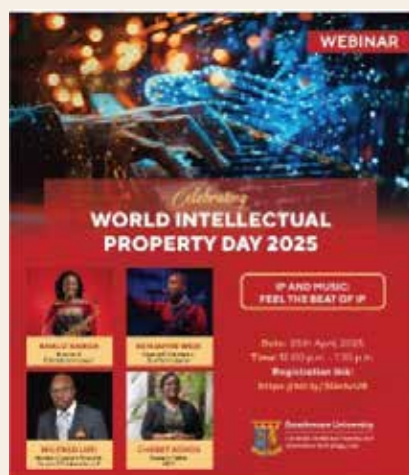
Online at: <https://bit.ly/46p2QXe>



Chebet Koros and other speakers (2025)

***Promoting AI for Good in the Global South***

Side event during meeting of WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR), Geneva  
Online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA9A2MYc2bM>



Natasha Karanja and Chebet Koros (2025)

***Artificial Intelligence (AI) Training Data and The Copyright Dilemma: Insights for African Developers***

Online at: <https://cipit.strathmore.edu/artificial-intelligence-ai-training-data-and-the-copyright-dilemma-insights-for-african-developers> (bitly URL)



Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) (2024)

***Cross-Border Data Flows in Africa: Exploring Legal Frameworks and Regional Importance***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4rc15qR>



Chebet Koros, Florence Ogonjo, Natasha Karanja and Cynthia Nzuki, with Sharon Chahale Wata (KECOBO) (2025)

***Training on Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property: Challenges and Opportunities***



Teshager W. Dagne (2025)

***Geographical Indications in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategic Implementations in Tailoring a Legal Framework in Ethiopia***

Presentation to Global Perspectives on Geographical Indications (GI) conference, Rome

Online at: <https://bit.ly/3M5vKV4>

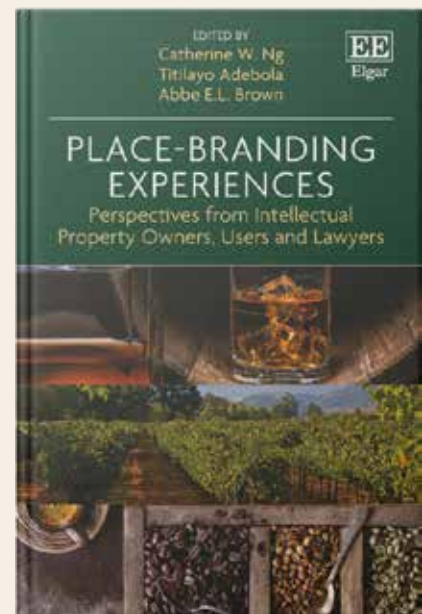


Chebet Koros and Melissa Omino (2024)

***IP Law in Practice: The Case of Kenya***

In In C.W. Ng, T. Adebola, & A.E.L. Brown (Eds.), *Place-Branding Experiences: Perspectives from Intellectual Property Owners, Users and Lawyers*

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035311071.00024>



Ghati Nyehita (2024)

***Regulating for the Equitable Remuneration of Music Artists in Kenya***

Paper presented to Intellectual Property in Africa Conference, Harvard Law School



Calvin Mulindwa, Leonard Mudachi and Perpetua Mwangi, with KIPI presenters (2024)

***Navigating Intellectual Property and Innovation in Kenya: Insights from Industry Experts***

Webinar convened by Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT), Nairobi

## Southern Africa

In 2024-25, Open AIR's work in Southern African continued to be led by its two South African hubs. The Cape Town hub is the **Intellectual Property Unit (IP Unit)** in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town (UCT) led by Dr. **Tobias Schonwetter**, in collaboration with Law Faculty's **DSTI/NRF SARCHI Research Chair in Intellectual Property, Innovation and Development (IP Chair)**, led by Prof. **Caroline Ncube**. The Johannesburg hub, in the **DST/NRF SARCHI Trilateral Research Chair in Transformative Innovation (TRCTI)** at the University of Johannesburg's College of Business and Economics, is led by Prof. **Erika Kraemer-Mbula**. In addition, a third Southern Africa institutional focal point emerged, at the University of Pretoria (UP), with the awarding in 2025 of a three-year grant to the UP Faculty of Law's Data Science Law Lab (DSLL), led by Dr. **Chijioke Okorie**, to lead the **Catalysing AI's Potential in Africa through IP Innovation project** (see pp. 26–27 of this report).

A key event in 2025 was the UCT hub's hosting of the Cape Town portion of the **Copyright and the Public Interest: Africa & the Global South conference** (see p. 35 of this report).



On the global stage, the head of the UJ hub, Prof. Kraemer-Mbula, participated in two panel discussions—entitled Redrawing the Geography of Jobs and Flexibility 2.0 at the **2025 World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos. Also significant was a collaboration between the UCT and UJ hubs in their participation in the 2024 Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) Annual Forum in Gaborone. At the meeting, UCT’s Prof. Caroline Ncube and UJ’s Prof Erika Kraemer-Mbula presented a co-authored paper and facilitated masterclass.



In addition, several South African Open AIR team members played prominent roles in **COSAA 2025: 2nd Conference on the State of AI in Africa**, hosted in Nairobi by Open AIR’s East Africa hub at the Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) at Strathmore University (see p. 36 of this report). Other events where Open AIR’s South African team members were prominent were the **WHO-ITU-WIPO AI for Good Summit** (Geneva), the **Workshop on Intellectual Property and Human Rights** (Sydney), the **ATRIP Congress** (Copenhagen), the **International Conference on Geographical Indications** (Rome), the **WIPO SCT Information Session on Geographical Indications** (Geneva), and the **WIPO Worldwide Symposium on Geographical Indications** (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe). Key publications looked at household sector innovation; collective IP rights in small-business clusters; fair dealing/fair use in relation to AI and computational research; and potential remuneration avenues for South African creators and performers in terms of the country’s Copyright Amendment Bill.



The UCT hub also reached out to the Open AIR West Africa hub, the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS), through a visit to NIALS by the IP Chair’s Junior Researcher, Dr. **Tebogo Lefifi**. The visit focussed on future collaborations, including plans for AfCFTA-focused academic exchange, legal training and research.



Tobias Schonwetter and other participants (2025)  
***Enabling AI for Health Innovation and Access***  
Workshop at WHO-ITU-WIPO AI for Good Summit, Geneva  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/3O3638N>



Caroline B. Ncube and other panellists (2025)  
***Predicting the Future of IP***  
Panel at Workshop on Intellectual Property and Human Rights, Sydney



Photo: UJ



Erika Kraemer-Mbula and other panellists (2025)  
***Redrawing the Geography of Jobs***

Panel at World Economic Forum (WEF), Davos  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/4aa2NQ4>



Erika Kraemer-Mbula and other panellists (2025)  
***Flexibility 2.0***

Panel at World Economic Forum (WEF), Davos  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/3Z5jjvV>



Larry Onyango and Erika Kraemer-Mbula, with co-authors Jeroen P.J. de Jong, Maz Mulhuijzen and Daniel Cowen (2025)  
***Household Sector Innovation, Diffusion Failure, and Business Ownership: Evidence from South Africa***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scaf009>



Chijioke Okorie (2025)  
***The Fair Dealing/Fair Use Landscape for Artificial Intelligence Innovation and Computational Research in Africa***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2025.2557640>



Chijioke Okorie (2025)  
***It's the NOODL License - Awesome and Amazingly Geeky!***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5339254>



Charlene T. Musiza (2025)  
***Transforming Small Businesses via Clusters and Collective Intellectual Property Rights***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4if6Oqp>



Ngonidzaishe Gatora (2025)  
***Leveraging Intellectual Property Protection Frameworks to Address Climate Change-Induced Environmental and Health Challenges in The Four Corners of Africa***

Presentation to ATRIP Congress, University of Copenhagen



Ghati Nyehita (2025)  
***Intellectual Property as a Tool for Reparative Justice and Economic Empowerment for Refugee Women in Africa***

Paper presented to ATRIP Congress, University of Copenhagen



Caroline B. Ncube, moderator (2025)  
***Geographical Indications and Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions***

Session at WIPO Worldwide Symposium on Geographical Indications, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



Charlene T. Musiza (2025)  
***From Vineyards to Fields: The Evolution of Origin-linked Protection in South Africa***  
 Presentation to 2nd International Conference on Geographical Indications: Worldwide Perspectives on Geographical Indications, FAO Headquarters, Rome  
 Online at: <https://bit.ly/47XE1TD>



Tobias Schonwetter and Bram Van Wiele (2024)  
***The Many Facets of Borrowing and Creativity in South African Music***  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5032521>



Chidi Oguamanam and other participants (2024)  
***Workshop on Intellectual Property and Ethics in Maritime and Indigenous Research***  
 Hosted by South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI), Port Elizabeth, South Africa



Desmond O. Oriakhogba and Eunice O. Erhagbe (2024)  
***The Copyright Amendment Bill: A New Vista for Fair Remuneration for South African Creators and Performers?***  
 Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/grurint/ikae080>



Ghati Nyehita and Ngonidzaishe Gotora (2024)  
***Legal Semiotics and Trademark Law: Protecting and Preserving Culture***  
 Paper presented to Law, Literature and Humanities Association of Australasia Conference, Hong Kong



Tshimangadzo D. Mukwevho and Desmond O. Oriakhogba (2024)  
***Situating Liability for Patent Infringement by Artificial Intelligence Systems in South Africa***  
 Online at: <https://bit.ly/3NQx676>



Caroline B. Ncube, moderator (2025)  
***Turbulent Times: Navigating Property, Innovation and Development in a Fragmenting World***  
 Panel at the IGLP 2025 Global Scholars Academy, Stellenbosch, South Africa



Charlene T. Musiza (2025)  
***The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Advancing Sustainability Through the Reconciliation of Farmers' Rights and Plant Breeders' Rights***  
 Paper presented to ATRIP Congress, University of Copenhagen



Caroline B. Ncube and Erika Kraemer-Mbula (2024)  
***The Role of Innovation Agencies in Enhancing Africa's Innovation Ecosystems: A Deep Dive into Intellectual Property***  
 Paper presented to 2024 Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) Annual Forum, Gaborone



## Canada

Open AIR's Canadian hub at the uOttawa Faculty of Law's Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS) continued to be highly active in 2024-25. The hub team includes holders of three prestigious research chairs: Prof. Jeremy de Beer's **Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Innovation and Intellectual Property Law**, Prof. Chidi Oguamanam's **University Research Chair in Sustainable Bio-Innovation, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Global Knowledge Governance**, and Prof. Florian Martin-Bariteau's University Research Chair in Technology and Society. Also boosting Open AIR's work in Canada is team member Dr. Teshager Dagne's **Ontario Research Chair in Governing Artificial Intelligence** in the School of Public Policy and Administration at York University in Toronto.

At the uOttawa hub, key highlights during this reporting period were a visit by a delegation from **South Africa's Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI)**; the Open AIR Annual Lecture delivered by Prof. **Obiora C. Okafor**, who is Edward B. Burling Chair in International Law and Institutions at Johns Hopkins University; and a seminar presentation by Dr. **Elvis Avenyo**, who was visiting from Open AIR's University of Johannesburg hub.

An important Canadian momentum-catalyst event was the **Reconciliation and the UN Declaration Act: Indigenous IP in Canada and International Developments workshop** convened in Moncton, New Brunswick by the Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council (MAPC) and uOttawa's ABS Canada, which is led by Prof. **Chidi Oguamanam**. Both Oguamanam and Prof. **Jeremy de Beer** were prominent speakers at the event, along with other Open AIR researchers from South Africa, Nigeria and Canada (see p. 37 of this report).



Oguamanam and de Beer were also prominent in the network's rapid-response activities connected to the **2024 WIPO GRATK Treaty** and the **2025 WHO Pandemic Agreement** (see pp. 30–31 of this report). Further afield, Open AIR's uOttawa-based Program Manager/Research Associate Dr. **Yvonne Ndelle** teamed up with uOttawa's Dr. **Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou** at the launch of the **Laboratoire Multidisciplinaire d'IA Responsable Appliquée de l'Université de Yaoundé II (RAI-MultiLab-UYII)** in Cameroon (see p. 43 of this report).



Jeremy de Beer and Rosa De Koker (2024)

***Negotiation of New International Health Law on Intellectual Property, Technology Transfer, Open Science, and Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing: A Textual and Contextual Analysis***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjph-2024-001467>



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***How Can Indigenous Knowledge Be More Fairly Included in International Law?***

Interview on Just Access podcast  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/488qeZb>



Jane Ezirigwe and Chidi Oguamanam, with co-authors Madeleine Fairbairn, Hilary Oliva Faxon, Maywa Montenegro de Wit, Kelly Bronson, Zenia Kish, Sarah-Louise Ruder, Selamawit Abdella and Matthew A. Schnurr (2025)

***Digital Agriculture Will Perpetuate Injustice Unless Led from the Grassroots***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01137-8>



Jane Ezirigwe and Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***Equitable Governance of Agri-food Data Is Imperative for Global Food Security***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/47Y6ed9>



Obiora C. Okafor (2025)  
***Poverty, Agency, and Resistance in the Future of International Law: An African Perspective in a Time of Global Ferment***

Open AIR Annual Lecture, uOttawa  
Online at: <https://bit.ly/49BL8SX>



Kow Abekah-Wonkyi (2025)  
***Open AIR Welcomes South Africa's Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/4roskNB>



Teshager W. Dagne (2025)  
***Unseen Hands, Stolen Rights: Copyright, and Justice in Artificial Intelligence's Invisible Workforce***

Paper presented to Race + IP Conference, University of Pittsburgh



Jane Ezirigwe, Jeremy de Beer and Chidi Oguamanam (2024)  
***Power Contestations in the Use of Agri-food Data: Towards a Sustainability Governance Approach***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.5204/lthj.3357>



Oguamanam (2025)  
***Regime Complex in Life Sciences Innovation: Disclosure of Source, Traditional Knowledge and Shifts in Intellectual Property and Knowledge Governance***

Online at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40319-025-01616-2>



'Damola Adediji (2025)  
***Indigenous Knowledge and Intellectual Property in Africa: Reflections on the Utility of a Critical Law and History Approach***

Paper presented to Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS) Conference, University of Toronto



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***How Is Intellectual Property an Access to Justice Issue?***

Podcast interview with Just Access Online at: <https://bit.ly/3LU2QY6>



Florian Martin-Bariteau and Jake Okechukwu Effoduh, with co-authors Catherine Régis, Juan David Gutiérrez, Gina Neff, Carlos Affonso Souza and Célia Zolynski (2025)  
***AI in the Ballot Box: Four Actions to Safeguard Election Integrity and Uphold Democracy***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/483deFu>



Elvis K. Avenyo (2025)  
***Bridging Innovation, Green Transition, and Digital Transformation in Africa: Emerging Issues for Structural Change***

Seminar presentation, uOttawa Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS)



Teshager W. Dagne (2024)  
***Bridging AI Divides: Questions on AI Governance Challenges for Inclusive, Sustainable, and Equality-driven Futures in the Global South***

Paper presented to AI Governance in Global Dynamics at the Crossroads of Geopolitics and Technopolitics, York University, Toronto



Chidi Oguamanam (interviewee) (2024)  
***A Critical Examination of the African Legal Framework for Indigenous Knowledge***

Video of Interview with Faculti Media Online at: <https://bit.ly/3LRxEZA>



Chidi Oguamanam (2025)  
***WIPO-IGC 51st Sessions Breaks Jinx, Recommends Mandate Renewal***

Online at: <https://bit.ly/49BHAKa>



Teshager W. Dagne (2024)  
***Protection of Traditional Knowledge in Intellectual Property Law: Embracing the Differentiated/Tiered Approach***

Paper presented to IBA Annual Conference: Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge, and Its Intersection with IP Rights, Mexico City

## Network Hubs

### North Africa

Access to Knowledge for  
Development Center (A2K4D)  
The American University  
in Cairo  
Cairo, Egypt  
[cairo@openair.africa](mailto:cairo@openair.africa)



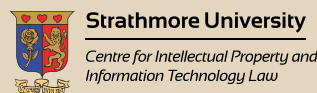
### West Africa

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Legal Studies (NIALS)  
Lagos and Abuja, Nigeria  
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### East Africa

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Transformative Innovation  
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### Canada

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QUEEN  
ELIZABETH  
Scholars



Fondation  
Rideau Hall  
Foundation



Afrinnovation



@Afrinnovation

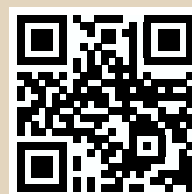


africaninnovation



Open African Innovation Research

For more information about Open AIR,  
visit our website or contact our Program  
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<https://openair.africa>