1. University World News

**Advance science in Africa through open access journals (Africa)**

Researchers and scholars want publishers to increase the volume of available free-access journals to boost research and knowledge production during the COVID-19 pandemic. This, they say, will particularly benefit poor institutions and budding scientists from low-income countries. They also want the restricted journals to urgently waive publishing fees to give early-career scientists and young scholars the opportunity to publish in prestigious and reputable publications. While noting that many publishers had turned their journals into open-access publications since the outbreak of COVID-19, panellists at the virtual Global Gathering of the Next Einstein Forum, from 8 to 10 December, want this temporary waiver extended beyond 2021. “We have seen [free temporary access to] more peer-reviewed journals. However, to publish in them, one has to pay. This should be addressed urgently to allow more access to information and encourage young researchers to work harder,” Dr Zaheer Allam, a research associate at the school of architecture and building at Deakin University in Victoria, Australia, said during a session on the role of science in informing recovery from global crises such as COVID-19. Allam said there is a need to support young African scientists by allowing them exposure and opportunities to learn. These scientists should also get access to knowledge wherever it is published or stored. This would help them contribute in the search for solutions to a variety of local challenges, he said. “Governments across the world are preparing post-COVID-19 economic stimulus packages. It is critical that African states factor in the needs of scientists in the budgets to build their capacity in facing future pandemics,” Allam said. The COVID-19 pandemic cemented the place for science in guiding policy decisions all over the world and has given rise to new fields of medical research. According to Allam, it had also highlighted the need for an interdisciplinary approach to research. Professor Agnes Binagwaho, the vice-chancellor at the University of Global Health Equity in Rwanda, agreed with Allam and called on poor institutions to fight for open-access policies for critical health research publications. These journals should consider extending operating under a free access policy for at least 10 years to the benefit of poor research institutions, including universities, Binagwaho said.

Read more [here](#)

2. The Conversation

**How sub-Saharan Africa can rethink its approach to agriculture (Africa)**

African governments should have a fresh look at agriculture. This involves embracing technology (information technology, mechanical and biotechnology) and also private sector partnerships. There also needs to be confidence in the citizenry to manage their land parcels. This will involve the granting of title deeds or tradable long-term leases in various African countries. And in the case of better seeds, the evidence from South Africa is there for many countries to observe and learn. The economic recovery from the pandemic therefore presents an opportunity for governments to explore available technologies that could help in the registration of land rights. These include global positioning systems, mapping and blockchain technologies. This will help solve disputes and also with the tradability of land rights. This process can be piloted on agricultural land. The proper recording and confirmation of land rights will encourage individual entrepreneurs to invest in their farmland and thereby trigger the commercialisation and growth of the agricultural sector.

There are also examples of technologies that various countries could use to document land. Examples include the use of drones in India, and aerial photography in Rwanda. This would help change the troubling
statistic that roughly 90% of rural land in Africa is not formally documented. The overall intention is to ensure formalisation of land rights, with the objective of attracting investments in the agricultural sector and unlocking its potential. Africa has, indeed, a history of disadvantaging women on land matters. Any strategy for the formalisation of land rights will have to be well thought out and transparent. The aim should be to ensure that there isn’t bias towards men and politically connected individuals as has been observed in land reform cases in South Africa. To date, South Africa is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa that has embraced biotechnology. This is primarily because it’s the only country in the region that has adopted the use of genetically engineered cotton, maize and soybean seeds. Other countries that have done so include the US, Brazil and Argentina. In these countries, the use of the genetically engineered seeds has seen lower insecticide use, more environmentally friendly tillage practices and improvements in crop yields.

Read more here.

3. The Guardian

**Africa’s largest COVID treatment clinical trial launched by 13-country network (Africa)**

A network of 13 African countries has joined forces with global researchers to launch the largest clinical trial of potential Covid-19 treatments on the continent. The Anticov study, involving Antwerp’s Institute of Tropical Medicine and international research institutions, aims to identify treatments that can be used to treat mild and moderate cases of Covid-19 early and prevent spikes in hospitalisation that could overwhelm fragile and already overburdened health systems in Africa. The clinical trial will be carried out at 19 sites in 13 countries and led by doctors from African countries. The initiative emerged after calls for responses to the coronavirus better tailored to the developing world and the challenges of often underfunded healthcare systems. “There is a need for large clinical trials in Africa for Covid-19 to answer research questions that are specific to an African context,” said Dr John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. “African countries have mounted an impressive response so far to Covid-19 and now is the time to prepare for future waves of the disease. It will help answer one of our most pressing questions: with limited intensive care facilities in Africa – can we treat people for Covid-19 earlier and stop our hospitals from being overwhelmed?” The study will test the efficacy of treatments in 2,000 to 3,000 mild-to-moderate patients in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Sudan, and Uganda, with the aim of identifying treatments that can prevent progression of coronavirus to severe disease and also limit transmission. The study will be an adaptive platform trial, an innovative type of clinical trial pioneered for cancer drugs that allows for several treatments to be simultaneously tested. Adaptive platform trials enable rapid decisions to be made, including adding, continuing, or stopping treatment arms based on ongoing analysis of results.

Read more here.

4. University World News

**Inter-University Council for East Africa looks beyond 50 years (East Africa)**

It is hard to find another word to define 2020. It is the year that the COVID-19 pandemic struck and, as a result, the world will never be the same again. In East Africa, the first confirmed case was in Kenya in March 2020 – just as the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) started to plan the celebrations for its 50 years of existence. Higher education in East Africa dates back a little further than 1970 to 1963 when the University of East Africa – now Makerere University – was established in Uganda to serve Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. At the time it was a constituent college of the University of London. In 1970, the University of East Africa was dissolved to make way for the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Nairobi and Makerere University. Allow me a brief reflection of the past 50 years because, in the time of COVID-19, it feeds into the future the IUCEA is envisioning. Desirous of continuing collaboration between them, the vice-
chancellors of Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Makerere universities decided in the early 1970s to form what they called the Inter-University Committee (IUC), operating under the then East African Community (EAC) established in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The community, however, collapsed in 1977 but the Inter-University Committee soldiered on. In 1980, the vice-chancellors of the three universities, in consultation with the permanent secretaries in charge of higher education in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania signed a memorandum of agreement transforming the Inter-University Committee into the Inter-University Council for East Africa or IUCEA. In 1999, the East African Community was revived and, in 2000, the IUCEA was recognised as a surviving institution of the EAC and a legal framework was put in place entrenching it into the EAC treaty. In spite of the comparatively young higher education landscape in East Africa, the inter-university council felt there was enough to celebrate in 2020. First was the fact that, in spite of the turbulence experienced by the original East African Community, IUCEA had survived. During the period between 1977 when the EAC collapsed and 1999, when it was revived, the council received only minimal state support, mainly from Uganda, and yet had remained intact. The council had, therefore, demonstrated the power of education for regional integration. Secondly, the council had worked hard towards, and achieved, the declaration of the EAC as a common higher education area. This was given the nod by the heads of state of the partner states of the EAC in May 2017 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. As a result, the region can now move towards a more harmonised higher education system that facilitates mutual recognition of qualifications, comparability, compatibility and credit accumulation and transfer. The EAC council of ministers had also pronounced themselves on uniform fees, stipulating that any citizen of the regional community, studying outside the country of nationality, but within the community, would be charged the same fees as those charged to the citizens of his or her country of study.

Read more here

5. Vanguard News

Kenya to reopen schools, universities in January 2021 (Kenya)

Schools and universities in Kenya will fully resume on 4 January 2021, for on-site learning after almost a year-long shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic, President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Saturday. Speaking at Nyayo National Stadium during celebrations marking Kenya’s Independence from British rule in 1963, the President also asked schools to admit pregnant girls back to school. President Kenyatta asked parents and guardians to facilitate their children to resume learning when schools reopen. "In line with the policy of the Government on universal and compulsory basic education for all children up to 18 years, all parents and guardians are required to facilitate their children to resume learning in January 2021,” said Kenyatta. To ensure compliance with the directive and guarantee that no child will be left behind, President Kenyatta ordered the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, through chiefs and their assistants, to ensure that all children report back to school next month. At the same time, Kenyatta instructed the Ministry of Education to re-issue and publicise the Education Policy on School Re-Entry to facilitate the re-admission of all learners who may not be able to report back due to pregnancy. On containment of coronavirus in schools, the President said the ministries of Education and Health have developed specific protocols and guidelines to facilitate the re-opening of all learning institutions. While paying tribute to Kenya’s founding fathers for laying a solid foundation for socio-economic and political development, Kenyatta said the Presidential economic strategy, the Big 4 Agenda, builds on the intentions of the previous state administrations. “Each generation of leaders in this process understood that Kenya was a work in progress. They built and improved on the platforms left by the previous leader. They had to make better what others had done. “And this is the logic behind the Big 4. It is not a project, it is a process. It is a framework, which I have used to organise the delivery of Government services in order to improve on what previous Presidents did,” Kenyatta said. The President said the Big 4 Agenda boosts aspirations that run
through the country’s history, focusing on four intents of the liberation struggle and the aspirations of the nation’s founding fathers. The Big 4 Agenda aims at improving manufacturing, agriculture, industry, and housing among other economic sectors. Read more [here](#).

6. **University World News**

**Systems critical amid COVID-19 academic corruption (Africa)**

Academic corruption linked to the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of strengthening transparency and accountability efforts at African universities, seeing that traditional anti-corruption policies are insufficient in crisis situations such as the current outbreak response. Such corruption, or irregularities, includes research malpractice, questionable research management, mismanagement of research funds and procurement fraud. “The need to take urgent and immediate measures to address the academic and research challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic has contributed to increasing corruption at some African universities,” Professor Juma Shabani, director of the doctoral school at the University of Burundi and former director of development, coordination and monitoring of UNESCO programmes with a special focus on Africa, told University World News. For example, by hiding behind the emergency, several university officials bypassed the public procurement procedures required for the purchase of materials and equipment for carrying out urgent coronavirus research, Shabani said. “African universities have also suffered from the production of low-quality COVID-19 research studies due to the rush to publish coronavirus data, and possible mishandling of funds. “The extent of academic COVID-19-related corruption is not yet known, but university authorities must draw the necessary lessons from this crisis situation and impose appropriate transparency measures to stop it,” said Shabani. In line with Shabani’s views, senior integrity expert Mihaylo Milovanovitch from the Center for Applied Policy and Integrity in Bulgaria, told University World News: “Under the guise of urgency and emergency, the coronavirus pandemic crisis seems to have neutralised most of the mechanisms of university participatory governance and higher educational public control, as the present accountability arrangements were never meant to function as safeguards in a context of social distancing, virtual decision-making and a virtual education environment,” he said. Shabani’s and Milovanovitch’s views are supported by several studies. A September 2020 study entitled “Correcting the pandemic: Analysis of corrections to journal articles on COVID-19 and Ebola” found one article from Africa (Ethiopia) was corrected out of 78 corrected or retracted research articles worldwide in the first five months of 2020. Read more [here](#).

7. **University of Cape Town News**

**From Ugandan child soldier to PhD graduate (South Africa)**

It was Thursday, 9 April 2020, at 05:47, hardly dawn. At his home in Uganda, Julius Okello was woken by the ping of an email on his phone. In the half-light he scanned the heading and then fetched a glass of water. Back in his bedroom, he prayed before opening the email. Three external examiners’ reports confirmed the message he’d been hoping for: he was a PhD graduand. “I jumped up and I danced in my house,” Julius said in an interview from Kampala. “I praised God, just like David did in the Bible. I was so excited!” The news was a victory over adversity. Julius’s life has been a journey through wilderness. Forced by rebels to take up arms in the Ugandan Bush War in 1986 at the age of nine, it was the memory of his mother and sister – both raped and killed by guerrillas near his home in Pingire in the Soroti District as he was herded into civil war – that delivered him from despair. Thirty-four years later the former child soldier will graduate from the University of Cape Town (UCT) with a doctorate in social development from the Faculty of Humanities. It’s nothing less than a miracle, he said.
Julius has a remarkable story. Child soldiers were widely used by the National Resistance Army (NRA), the military wing of Yoweri Museveni’s National Resistance Movement (NRM); first as small, mobile guerrilla units and later as soldiers when the NRM seized power in Uganda in 1986. Julius was one of an estimated 3,000 children taken by the NRA, fighting to depose President Tito Lutwa Okello. Most were forcibly conscripted, wrenched from families and communities. Many never returned. The memories of that time remain vivid, he said. Julius still has shrapnel lodged in his head and legs, a legacy of war in the bush, when he wore overlarge boots and uniform and shouldered a sub-machine gun too heavy for his slight frame. The tall grass of north-eastern Uganda saved him many times. He also experienced unexpected kindness; a soldier who acted as his guardian and a missionary at Kalongo who taught him about care and love. By the end of 1986, the NRA had defeated the last government resistance, and Museveni came to power. As president, he determined that all child soldiers should be demobilised and return to school. Julius was among them. In 1992 he returned to school as an adolescent. He worked hard but was plagued by post-traumatic stress and recurring nightmares. And he was living in limbo with no home to return to. But he excelled, completing high school in 1992. He was accepted at Makerere University and later graduated with a bachelor’s degree in economics. Learning that he was still alive, Julius was reunited with his family — his father, 71-year-old Papa Peter Engwau; a brother and sister; uncles and aunts — at his master’s graduation in 2010. Though Julius had secured a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship in 2005 for a master’s in peace and conflict studies at Makerere University, economics was his background. It was this that brought him to the Department of Social Development at UCT where he excelled under the supervision of Emeritus Professor Viviene Taylor and Dr Khosi Kubeka. He has the highest praise for their efforts, especially Professor Taylor, who was also a mentor and “put her foot down” when needed.

Read more here

8. The New Vision

Enrolment in public universities grows in Uganda, new report (Uganda)

The enrolment of students in public has gone up, according to the latest education sector review report by the ministry of education. The report shows that there has been a 17% increase in enrolment in nine public universities from 90,359 in the financial year 2018/19 to 105,988 in the financial year 2019/20. The number of students includes both government and private students. This has been a great jump from the handful of students who joined the original scratch of the start of the country’s biggest public university; Makerere University. Late in 1921, local education advocates had established a school to teach basic carpentry and mechanics in a temporary location on Makerere Hill in Kampala, which was the colonial capital. Then the British governor of Uganda Robert Coryndon also proposed building a technical school for Africans. It was accepted by the Colonial Office and the Imperial Treasury in London. The British colonial government then decided to make the carpentry and mechanics school site established earlier, the permanent location of Makerere College School. By the end of 1922, the first class of 14 students began their training — seven in carpentry and another seven in auto mechanics. By 1925, there were 76 students enrolled in Makerere College to receive vocational training. It was between 1935 and 1940 that British governor Philip Mitchell proposed moving Makerere beyond vocational training and expanding it to become the centre for higher education in British East Africa.

Read more here
9. **Business Ghana News**

*Do not deviate from your mandate, VC urges technical universities (Ghana)*

Technical universities in the country have been urged not to deviate from their mandate and concentrate on quality entrepreneurs to fill the middle to high level manpower that the nation requires for progress. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana gave the advice during the first session (virtual) of the 13th congregation for Bachelor Technology programmes of the Sunyani Technical University (STU). She said the traditional universities thought about employable skills that they could infuse, when introducing new programmes, saying "you already have that, and you don't have to lose it". A total of 389 graduates were awarded Bachelor of Technology degrees in Engineering, TVET, Applied Science and Technology, Applied Arts as well as Business and Management disciplines at the ceremony held under the theme "Technical and Vocational Education Training: the key to sustainable job creation in Ghana". Nana Amfo called on the government to recognize graduates of technical universities in their placement and create the enabling environment that would allow private persons to create sustainable jobs. "Believe me, successful entrepreneurship is not as dependent on our course structure as is on the business environment. Now that it is abundantly clear that it is impossible for the public sector to absorb all the graduates that we are producing, the government needs to move the entrepreneurship talk to the next level of practicalization", she stressed. "We need to walk the talk and put our money, where our mouths are" Nana Amfo added, and reminded the graduates that "life of a technical graduate can be unpredictable, strenuous and exhausting. But all these provide moments of opportunity to bring true change and valued service to our communities and the world". Professor Kwadwo Adinkrah-Appiah, the Vice Chancellor of the STU, explained the university had obtained accreditation to run seven new four-year BTech programmes, which would be rolled in January, 2021. They include; BTech Mechanical Engineering, BTech Civil Engineering, BTech Construction and Technology, BTech Hospitality and Tourism Management, BTech General Agriculture and BTech Fashion Design Technology. Read more [here](#).

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