



The Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN)

Network Overview and Strategic Plan 2026-30

July 2026

Australian University Members (11)

Australian National University
Charles Sturt University
Curtin University **(Co-Chair)**
Edith Cowan University
Murdoch University
RMIT University
University of Newcastle **(Deputy Co-Chair)**
University of New South Wales
University of Queensland
University of Western Australia
Western Sydney University

Annual Membership Fee

Australia:	AUD \$10,000
Africa (excl. South Africa):	AUD \$4,000
South Africa:	AUD \$5,000

African University Members (18)

Amoud University **(new)**
Bahir Dar University
iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu
Makerere University **(Deputy Co-Chair)**
Mekelle University
Namibia University of Science and Technology **(new)**
Nelson Mandela University
Tshwane University of Technology
Université Chiekh Anta Diop
University of Botswana
University of Cape Town
University of Ghana
University of Gondar **(new)**
University of Mauritius
University of Mpumalanga **(Co-Chair)**
University of Nairobi
University of Pretoria
University of Rwanda

Leadership Team



AAUN Africa

Co-Chair

Prof. Aldo Stroebe
(University of Mpumalanga)



Deputy Co-Chair

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe
(Makerere University)



Secretary

Dr Sussy Munialo
(University of Pretoria)



AAUN Australia

Co-Chair

A/Prof. David Mickler
(Curtin University)



Deputy Co-Chair

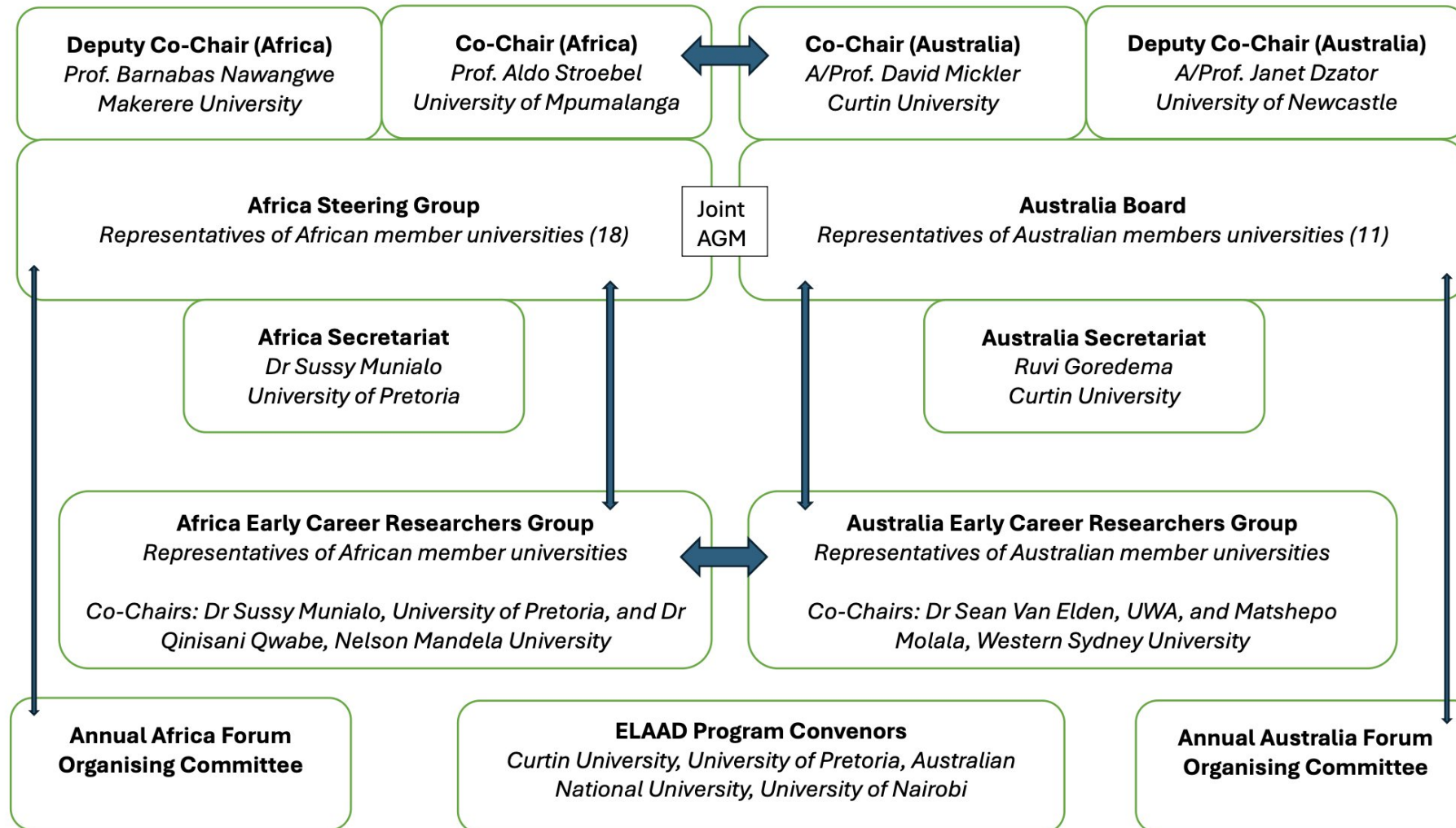
A/Prof. Janet Dzator
(University of Newcastle)

Secretary

Ruvi Goredema
(Curtin University)



Organisational Structure



AAUN Strategic Plan 2026-30



- Now in its 15th year, AAUN has undertaken a **Review** of core activities and operations over the last five years, 2021-2025.
- AAUN Member Universities have been polled on their top strategic **research priorities** for the Network over the next five years.
- The **AAUN Strategic Plan** was developed by a sub-committee of the AAUN Australia Board and Africa Steering Group during the first half of 2026 and was endorsed by the Board / Steering Group at the AGM on 8 June 2026.
- The AAUN Strategic Plan 2026-30 will be **launched on 1 July 2026**.

Vision for AAUN @ 2030



AAUN is the flagship institutional network bringing together member universities from across the Australian and African continents through equitable, innovative and impactful partnerships. Established in 2012, AAUN facilitates quality collaborative research and policy advocacy to address common and comparative challenges facing science and societies, builds knowledge and research capacity in people and institutions, and pursues academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations.

AAUN Strategic Objectives 2026-30



- 1) To serve as the flagship platform promoting equitable, innovative and impactful university partnerships between the continents of Australia and Africa.
- 2) To facilitate quality collaborative research and policy advocacy to address common and comparative challenges facing science and societies across Australia and Africa.
- 3) To build knowledge and research capacity in people and institutions across Australia and Africa, including the next generation of scholars.
- 4) To utilise academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders in academia, government, industry, and communities to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations.
- 5) To maintain network sustainability through demonstrating value and impact, securing external support and partnerships, a managed evolution of membership, and practicing collegial, inclusive, active and transparent leadership and governance.

AAUN Priority Research Themes 2026-30



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- 1) Environment, climate, and the energy transition
- 2) Equality, security, and social cohesion
- 3) Public health and human wellbeing
- 4) Sustainable food and water systems
- 5) Artificial intelligence and the digital revolution

AAUN Strategic Initiatives 2026-30



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Strategic Initiatives and Objectives		Annual Forum & AGM	PRDF	ECR Group & Prize	ELAAD Program	JHML
1	To serve as the flagship platform promoting equitable, innovative and impactful university partnerships between the continents of Australia and Africa.	X	X	X	X	X
2	To facilitate quality collaborative research and policy advocacy to address common and comparative challenges facing science and societies across Australia and Africa.	X	X	X	X	
3	To build knowledge and research capacity in people and institutions across Australia and Africa, including the next generation of scholars.		X	X	X	X
4	To utilise academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders in academia, government, industry, and communities to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations.	X			X	X
5	To maintain network sustainability through demonstrating value and impact, securing external support and partnerships, a managed evolution of membership, and practicing collegial, inclusive, active and transparent leadership and governance.	X	X	X	X	X



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AAUN Annual Fora





“Sustainable Development in Action”, AAUN Africa Forum, Mbombela April 2024



“The Just Energy Transition”, AAUN Australia Forum, Perth Sept 2024



“AI and Higher Education”, AAUN Africa Forum, Kigali May 2025



“Social License and Universities”, AAUN Australia Forum, Perth Sept 2025



“Circular Economies for Inclusive and Sustainable Futures”
AAUN Africa Forum, Gqeberha June 2026



Next Forum
AAUN Australia Forum, ECU, Perth, 1 Sept 2026

AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) grants

The AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) offers small catalytic grants to foster institutional partnerships in the network and develop research collaborations that address distinct mutual challenges.

The PRDF provides one year of catalytic seed funding with the firm expectation that funded projects will be excellent, build specialist teams, achieve outputs and impact, and be sustainable through the identification of additional external funding.

There are 76 PRDF projects currently in progress or completed from earlier rounds.

AAUN is a key enabler for cross-continental and intra-continental collaboration opportunities

PRDF grants have an average of
FOUR
collaborating partners



80% of teams from
completed PRDF projects have
CONTINUED COLLABORATING

HALF 
of the PRDF grants include partners
outside of AAUN expanding the
network's reach on both continents

**43 EXCHANGES FUNDED
IN 18 PROJECTS**

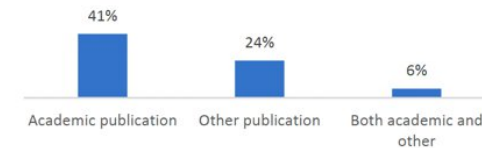
19 exchanges of Australian researchers to Africa
15 intra-African exchanges
5 exchanges of African researchers to Australia



Participation in AAUN activities improved institution's and individual's strategic thinking, access to information, and awareness about Africa-Australia relations.

AAUN funded research has been widely disseminated in Australia and Africa

24 WRITTEN OUTPUTS PUBLISHED
on academic and non-academic platforms



75% of research projects presented to at least one audience

66% of research projects presented to audiences in Australia

70% of research projects presented to audiences in Africa

MORE THAN 50 in progress in 2020.

PRDF seed grants have enabled several cross-continental research teams to leverage additional funding

AT LEAST 25% of grant holders **SUCCESSFUL** in additional collaborative funding applications.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING LEVERAGED

AUD \$492,000.00 **+** US \$302, 837.00

Ninety percent of PRDF grant holders were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience.

AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) grants – 2026 Round



- **2026 Round:** Opened 1 May and **closes 30 June 2026.**
- 8 PRDF projects to funded by AAUN (4 Australian-led + 4-African-led; at least 2 ECR-led).
- Each project must include at least 2 Australian + 2 African AAUN Member Universities.
- A maximum award of AUD 10,000 per project (matching funding).
- **Priority Research Themes 2026**
We encourage applications from natural and social scientists in the following priority areas:
 - Environment, climate, and the energy transition
 - Equality, security, and social cohesion
 - Public health and human wellbeing
 - Sustainable food and water systems
 - Artificial intelligence and the digital revolution
- **Guidelines, Templates and Webinar:** <https://aaun.edu.au/research-development/prdf-2026/>

2025 AAUN PRDF Grant Winners

1. Dr Nehemiah Latolla, Nelson Mandela University (*ECR)

“Indigenous Knowledge and Green Innovation: Co-Creating Sustainable Cancer and Environmental Health Solutions from African Medicinal Plants”

Partners: University of Ghana, Curtin University, University of New South Wales

2. Dr Sashah Mutasa, Edith Cowan University (*ECR)

“Laying the Foundations for Digital Mental Health: A Comparative Study of Emerging Models in Africa and Established Telehealth Systems in Australia”

Partners: Curtin University, Makerere University, University of Ghana, Walter Sisulu University

3. Dr Theogene Dusingizimana, University of Rwanda

“Exploring Food Waste in School Meal Programs in Rwanda: A Pathway to Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems”

Partners: University of Ghana, Curtin University, University of New South Wales

4. A/Prof. Manickam Minakshi, Murdoch University

“Bridging Continents through Clean Energy: Australia-Africa Research on Electrochemical Materials”

Partners: Edith Cowan University, University of New South Wales, University of Pretoria, University of Nairobi

5. Dr Naadhira Seedat, University of Pretoria (*ECR)

“Predictive modelling of hydrochar from food waste for the adsorption of H₂S from biogas”

Partners: Makerere University, University of Botswana, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University

6. A/Prof. Elizabeth Thomas, Curtin University

“Building a collaborative team to improve chronic disease outcomes”

Partners: University of Western Australia, University of Mauritius, University of Pretoria, University of Gondar, Victoria Hospital Mauritius, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Malawi, Harry Perkins Institute

7. Dr Deirdre Rule, University of Cape Town (*ECR)

“AI Governance in Africa and Australia: Opportunities, security, and ethical considerations”

Partners: University of Pretoria, University of Mauritius, University of Western Australia, University of New South Wales

8. Dr Gloria Odo, Murdoch University (*ECR)

“Empowering youth in rural regions through developing an educational sustainable energy”

Partners: Makerere University, Curtin University, University of Rwanda

ECR Australia Co-Chairs

Dr Sean Van Elden (UWA)

&

Matshepo Molala (Western Sydney U)



ECR Africa Co-Chairs

Dr Sussy Munialo (U Pretoria)

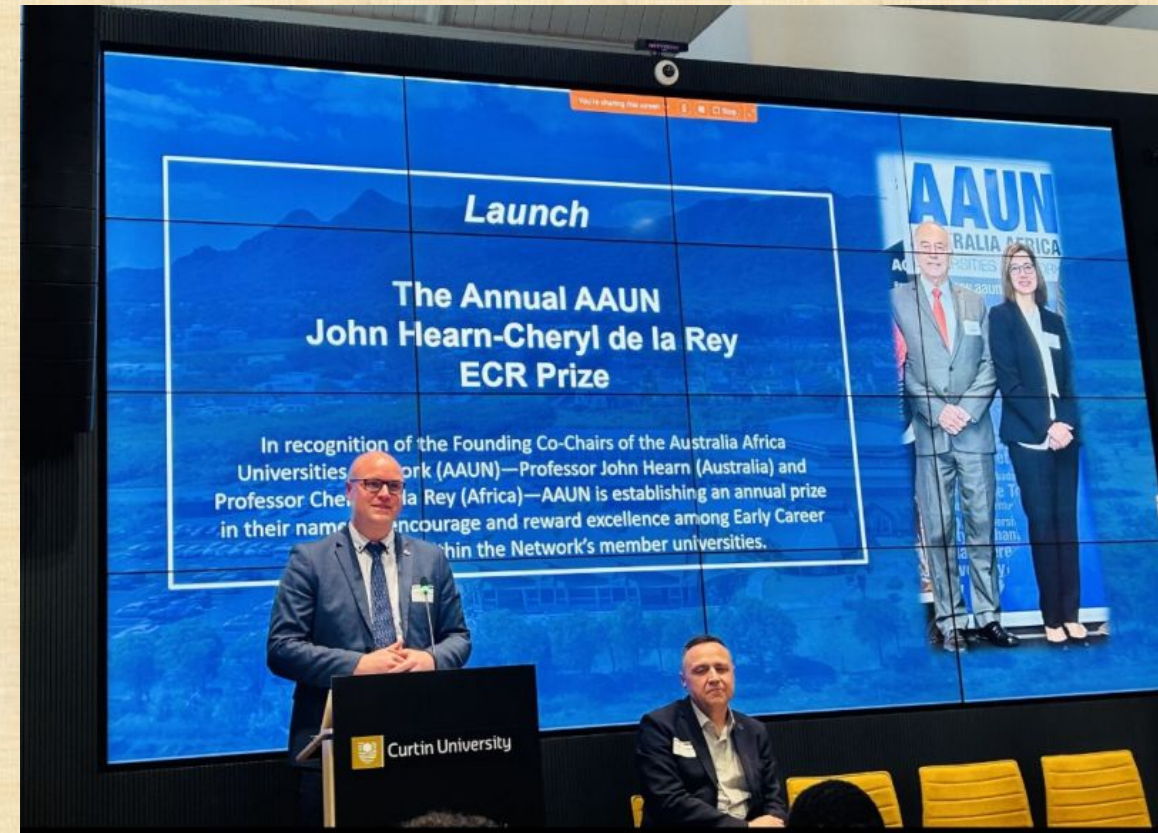
&

Dr Qinisani Qwabe (Nelson Mandela U)



The Annual AAUN Early Career Researcher (ECR) Prize

- Named in honour of AAUN Co-Founders Professor John Hearn and Professor Cheryl de la Rey
- One African ECR and one Australian ECR awardee per year from AAUN membership.
- Prize of AUD \$2,000 to each winner.
- Criteria recognize research excellence and achievement.
- Prize opened at AAUN Africa Forum 2026, **closes 15 August 2026.**
- To be announced and awarded at JHML Nov



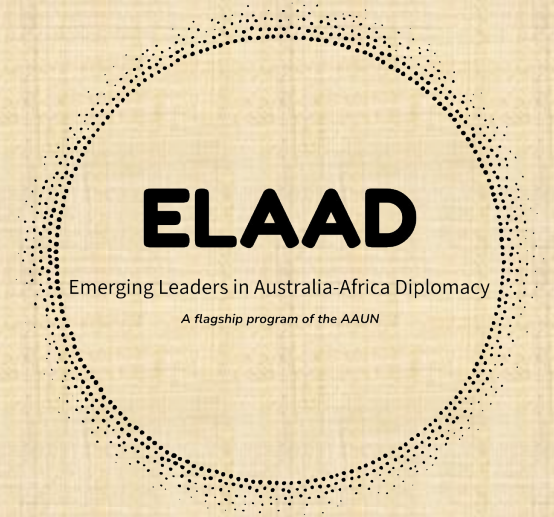
**The Annual AAUN
John Hearn-Cheryl de la Rey ECR Prize
was inaugurated in September 2024**

AAUN Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program #2



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- ❖ ELAAD Program 2 launched at University of Nairobi on 3 July 2025 and, following nominations and selections of 38 Fellows, commenced in October 2025 as a virtual program delivered fortnightly over 6 months and concluding with a face-to-face workshop at the AAUN Africa Forum 2026.
- ❖ Co-convened by four AAUN members: Curtin University, Australian National University, University of Pretoria and University of Nairobi.



The poster is for the launch of the 'Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy Program 2' (ELAAD). It features the AAUN logo at the top left. Below it, on the left, are the logos of the co-convening institutions: University of Nairobi, Curtin University, University of Pretoria, and Australian National University. In the center, it states the event is the 'Launch of the "Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy Program 2" (ELAAD)' on '2nd July 2025' from '10:30 AM - 12:30 PM' at the 'University of Nairobi Towers, Main Campus Taifa Hall'. It lists 'H.E. Jenny Da Rin' as the 'Chief Guest' (Australian High Commissioner to Kenya) and 'Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN)' as the host. 'Special Performances' by the 'University of Nairobi Choir' are also mentioned. On the right, there is a circular inset image of a stage with red carpeting and a large image of the University of Nairobi Towers building.



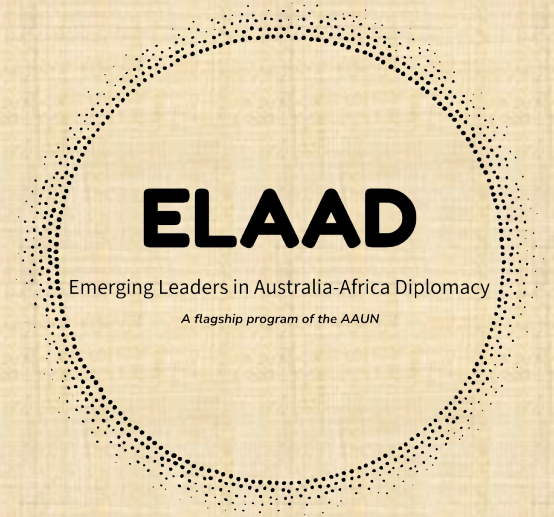
AAUN Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program #2



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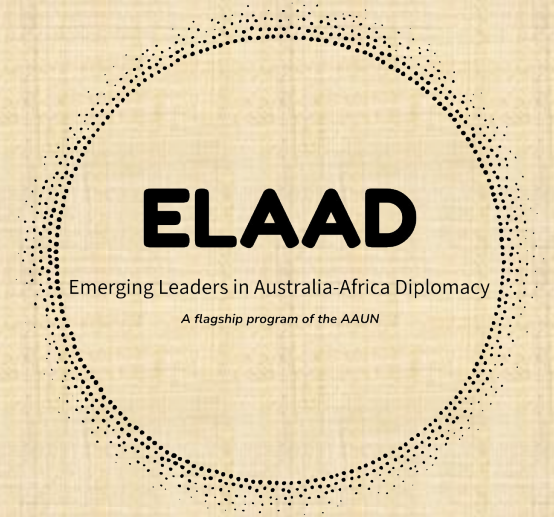
“ELAAD brings together emerging scholars and practitioners in Australia and Africa to enhance ‘Australia-Africa literacy’ and ‘academic diplomacy’ among our next generation of diplomatic leaders.”

- 1) To create a diverse cohort and ongoing network of emerging leaders in Australia-Africa diplomatic relations from among postgraduate university students and junior/mid-career diplomats across Australia and the African continent.
- 2) To provide an opportunity for this cohort to develop expert knowledge and professional skills in Australia-Africa relations through a customised and facilitated annual online program engaging with leading scholars and experts, journalists, senior diplomats and other policy practitioners.
- 3) To draw on the collective knowledge, expertise and ideas of this cohort to generate innovative policy ideas and meaningful socio-cultural exchanges for enhancing international relations between the African continent and Australia, including to develop collaborative solutions to global challenges.



AAUN Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program #2

Session	Date	Section	Topic
1	17 Oct 2025	INTRODUCTION	Welcome and program overview
2	31 Oct 2025	KNOWLEDGE	Understanding contemporary Africa
3	14 Nov 2025		Understanding contemporary Australia
4	28 Nov 2025		Australia-Africa bilateral and multilateral relations
5	12 Dec 2025	SKILLS	Diplomatic craft and careers
6	16 Jan 2026		Intercultural communication, public & digital diplomacy
7	30 Jan 2026		Policy research, analysis and writing
8	13 Feb 2026	SHARED GLOBAL CHALLENGES	Evolving geopolitical dynamics
9	27 Feb 2026		Climate change & natural resources
10	13 Mar 2026		Economic & human development
11	27 Mar 2026		Human & transnational security
12	10 Apr 2026	CONCLUSIONS	Deepening Australia-Africa cooperation
13	8 Jun 2026	POLICY REPORT WORKSHOP	"Deepening Australia-Africa Relations to 2040"





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***Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa
Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program
— Program 2 Fellows —***



Name	Position/Course	Institution
Derrick Buzigi	Student, International Trade Law	University of Rwanda, Rwanda
Joan Chepkurui Langat	Student, International Studies	University of Nairobi, Kenya
Anza Phidana	Student, Master's in Strategic Communication	Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
Mathew Ainomugisha	Student, International Relations and Diplomatic Studies	Makerere University, Uganda
Martha Taremwa	Student, Master of Science in Global Biosecurity and Infectious Disease Management	Makerere University, Uganda
Khulekani Khanye	Student, Masters in Commerce	University of Mpumalanga, South Africa
Bongani Gift Baloyi	Student, Master of Philosophy in Information	Nelson Mandela University, South Africa
Gabriel Tshekiso	Student, Master of Arts in Politics and International Relations	University of Botswana, Botswana
Gershon Edmond Mozaka	Student, MA International Relations and Diplomacy	University of Ghana, Ghana
Rahel Maegel Berhe	Student, MA Peace and Conflict	Mekelle University, Ethiopia
Keshini Vencatasamy	Student, MA Regional Integration	University of Mauritius, Mauritius
Marshet Yalalem Asmamaw	Student, Peace and Conflict Studies	Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia
Sthembile Ngubo	Student, Masters in New Testament Studies	University of Pretoria, South Africa
Anita Tshwati	Student, Master of Arts in Psychology	Walter Sisulu University, South Africa
Fatoumata Gano	Student, MA International Relations	Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal

Victo Nalule	Student, Master of Sustainable Development	Murdoch University, Australia
Faith Mulwanda	Student, Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine	Curtin University, Australia
Joel Odota	Student, Master of International Relations	Australian National University, Australia
Goldine Achudi	Student, Master of Social Work (International)	Edith Cowan University, Australia
Nomathemba Ndlovu	Student, Master of Engineering	University of New South Wales, Australia
Martha Mamombe	Student, Master of International Relations	University of Queensland, Australia
Tristan O'Brien	Second Secretary (Political) & Consul	Australian High Commission, Mauritius
Dr Janet Kiguru	Regional Political and Economic Manager	Australian High Commission, Nairobi
Rola Elkamash	Public Affairs Officer	Australian Embassy, Cairo
Faraimunashe Nkomo	Research and Events Officer	Australian Embassy, Harare
Oliver Twyford-Allen	Second Secretary	Australian Embassy, Harare
Asmaa Azehaf	Political and Protocol Officer	Australian Embassy, Rabat
Almajeed Bakare	Political/Economic Officer	Australian High Commission, Abuja
John Youhanes Magok	Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals	African Union Commission, Ethiopia
Ayantu Tamiru Ayana	Second Secretary	Embassy of Ethiopia, Canberra
Wafae Moussaid	First Secretary	Embassy of Morocco, Canberra
Chamilah Bibi Rughony	Second Secretary	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius
Mossab Ahmed	Deputy Head of Mission	Embassy of Sudan, Canberra
Evans Kipchumba Kipyatich	Finance Attaché	Kenya High Commission, Canberra
Samar Ezzat	First Secretary	Embassy of Egypt, Canberra
Maame Abena Gyamera	Assistant Director	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ghana
Adeola Aminat Lawal	First Secretary	Nigeria High Commission, Canberra
Juliana Nyamola	Foreign Service Officer	Department of Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uganda

The Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture (JHML)

The Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture (JHML) was established by AAUN to recognise and celebrate the life and work of the late Professor John Hearn, AAUN Co-Founder, and to continuing his impactful legacy.

The Annual Lecture serves as a special occasion to engage with distinguished thought leaders and knowledge partners on themes relating to Professor Hearn's passion for advancing Australia-Africa higher education and research partnerships.

The inaugural Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture was hosted by the University of New South Wales, Sydney, on 3 November 2025, where Professor Hearn and the AAUN Secretariat were housed in the latter years of his life.

The inaugural lecture was delivered by Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and Co-Founder of AAUN.

The next JHML will be convened in Nov 2026 (date and host TBC)

The Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture

**“No Ordinary Partnership –
the AAUN and Why It Matters”**

Inaugural lecture to be delivered by

Professor Cheryl de la Rey

Vice-Chancellor University of Canterbury

and AAUN Co-Founder

6-8pm, Monday 3 November 2025

**Council Chambers, Chancellery Building
University of New South Wales, Sydney**

Please register your in-person or virtual attendance [via this link](#). Places are limited and registration is essential.

For more information on AAUN, please see
www.aaun.edu.au



Collaborative Research Book Project

Australia-Africa Science Diplomacy: Collaborative Research, Policy Impact and International Cooperation

Edited by D. Mickler, C. Isike and T. Mgwebi

- Partnership between AAUN, Centre for Australia-Africa Relations at Curtin University, Future Africa at the University of Pretoria, and the South African National Research Foundation.
- Collaborative co-author model (3 per chapter) brings together experts from academia (natural and social sciences) and government across both Australia and the African continent.
- Chapters individually and collectively examine Australia-Africa science diplomacy through the lenses of research collaboration, policy impact and international cooperation. The volume is separated into respective sections examining science diplomacy frameworks, case studies in practice, and future directions.



In collaboration with



Proposal for a collaborative book project

Australia-Africa Science Diplomacy: Collaborative Research, Policy Impact and International Cooperation

Purpose

This outline is for an edited book project on Australia-Africa science diplomacy, prepared under the collaborative auspices of the Centre for Australia-Africa Relations at Curtin University, Australia, and Future Africa at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, in partnership with the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN), the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), and the Science Diplomacy Capital for Africa (SDCfA) initiative of the South African Department of Science and Innovation.

Editors

Associate Professor David Mickler, Curtin University, Australia
Professor Christopher Isike, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Dr Thandi Mgwebi, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

Abstract

This collaborative volume explores the dimensions of science diplomacy in Australia-Africa relations. Science diplomacy here refers to the various connections between, on the one hand, science, knowledge and academia, and on the other hand, policymaking, policymakers and diplomacy, in the contexts of international cooperation. Science diplomacy can be understood through at least three formulations: 'Science in diplomacy' (informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice), 'Diplomacy for science' (facilitating international science cooperation), and 'Science for diplomacy' (using science cooperation to improve international relations between countries).¹ The

¹ The Royal Society, *New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy: Navigating the Changing Balance of Power*, London, January 2010, v-vi. Available: https://www.aas.org/sites/default/files/New_Frontiers.pdf

New AAUN Branding and Communications



www.aaun.network
(from 1 July)

Email accounts

AAUN Co-Chair (Australia): aus-chair@aaun.network
AAUN Co-Chair (Africa): africa-chair@aaun.network
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AAUN ECR Co-Chairs (Australia): aus-ecr@aaun.network
AAUN ECR Co-Chairs (Africa): africa-ecr@aaun.network



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[AAUN ELAAD](#)
[Program](#)

New data management system



New AAUN YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/@AAUNetwork>