

## **2nd African Conference on EID and Biosecurity**

### **Science Communication & PLUS Faculty**

#### **Background of the Science Communication and PLUS Faculty**

The Science Communication and Public Learning and Understanding of Science (PLUS) Faculty are a major pillar and key strand in the programme content of the **2nd African Conference on EID and Biosecurity**.

Science communication and the Public Learning and Understanding of Science (PLUS) has been a growing and emerging framework since the 1980's, particularly in the developed world, where it is 'mainstreamed' as a key plank of the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy and outreach strategy for the advancement of society and entry into the economy of discovery.

A key driver of this development has been the growing recognition of the critical role of STI in the development trajectories of nations and thus, the imperative to enhance the scientific knowledge base and capacity of citizens. Despite this, the African continent continues to lag behind in the domain of science communication and the PLUS.

The Post-2015 Global Sustainable Development agenda encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals have elaborated in much more detail than the Millennium Development Goal's (MDG's), the complex interlinkages between the multi-level development challenges across the globe. These challenges are profound, and nowhere more so than on the African continent. Science communication and the public learning and understanding of science should help to overcome Africa's myriad and intractable development challenges by highlighting and promoting the pivotal role of science, through developing innovations and solutions. This is evident in the area of health where the very dismal levels of scientific literacy in African countries is a big challenge in addressing public health pandemics and pathologies, such as Ebola, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, high maternal and infant mortality rates and childhood vaccination programmes.

The **2nd African Conference on EID and Biosecurity** is ambitious in aiming to achieve a re-imagined and re-fashioned landscape of transformative science communication and the PLUS for sustainable development in Africa. Hence, the strategic partnership of ***African Gong*** and the **Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET)** on the **organisation of the Science Communication and PLUS Faculty**, working to enhance scientific literacy, community engagement and scientific outreach in Africa, with the aim of reducing

knowledge gaps at the individual, policy, institution, government levels and at socio-economic (gender, social class, age, etc.) levels and reduce the knowledge gaps in legislation and implementation.

**African Gong**: is an emerging Pan-African network for the Popularization of Science & Technology, and Science Communication in Africa. It is developed with the strategic support of the UNESCO Africa Region. It aims to create a strategic platform from which Africa can contribute to global structures and institutional capacities for the advancement of science communication, science and society studies and the public learning and understanding of science. It also contributes a uniquely relevant and inclusive African-centred paradigm and community of practice to the global development agenda and addresses the critical need for transformation in the science communication and the PLUS sector. **African Gong** also facilitates and enables the strategic positioning of science and its applications at the heart of the African sustainable development framework.

**The Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET)**: is a Pan-African consortium of experts in the fields of infectious diseases, various sub-specialities of pathology, physicians, bio-informatics, bio-banking, ethics, social science, community engagement, patient advocates, engineers and government administrators. GET aims to promote high level advocacy necessary for ensuring political will is focused on the appropriate commitment to research and development necessary to safe guard Africa from the devastating effects of emerging, re-emerging, dangerous and highly infectious pathogens. In so doing, empowering the people and institutions of the continent to harmoniously and effectively mitigate and adapt using advancing technologies and the knowledge economy to define robust strategies and capacity endowments to proactively respond to early warning signs. Through research, collaboration, support, information and service, GET will respond with holistical expertise, appropriate communication and strategic interventions to crises in health and humanitarian issues in Africa; developing complete frameworks and promoting political buy-in to accelerate capacity transfer and application of new technologies and effective communication to minimize risks arising from the emergence and re-emergence of dangerous pathogens and neglected infectious diseases in Africa, in accordance with the Global Health Security Agenda and **One Health** paradigm.

There is a strategic rationale for the development of science communication and the public learning and understanding of science capacity, expertise and innovative good practice in Africa, based on African-centred approaches. Despite major advances in the field of science communication and the PLUS in the global north, and in parts of the developing world such as Latin America, the Caribbean, India and some Asian countries, science communication and the popularization of science and technology on the African continent has woefully failed to take off and is very marginalized in the scientific landscape. That marginalization is due to certain factors, such as the lack of policy and institutionalization of the science communication and the public learning and understanding of science agenda by African governments, and science and technology institutions in Africa. There is thus, increasingly a growing understanding

of the rationale for the strengthening of the science communication and PLUS agenda within STI policies at African national levels, Regional Economic Communities (REC's) and within continental development frameworks such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the AU/NEPAD Science, Technology & Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024.

### **Science Communication & PLUS Faculty Members**

- Dr. Elizabeth Rasekoala (Faculty Chair) President – *African Gong*, South Africa
- Prof. Godfrey Tangwa (Faculty Co-Chair) Chair of CASE – GET, Cameroon
- Dr. Chux Daniels, SPRU - University of Sussex, United Kingdom
- Prof. Akin Osibogun, University of Lagos, Nigeria
- Dr. Judith S. Gbenoudon, The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research & The University of Abomey-Calavi, Republic of Benin
- Dr. Samuel Ujewe, University of Pretoria, South Africa
- Mr. Rodrick Sambakunsi, Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust, Malawi
- Dr. John Amuasi, KCCR, Kumasi, Ghana
- Ms. Funmi Tsewinor, Ecological Society of Nigeria, Nigeria

### **Science Communication & PLUS Faculty Expected Outcomes**

The **Science Communication & PLUS Faculty** of the **2nd African Conference on EID and Biosecurity** will aim to achieve strategic and far-reaching outcomes which will have substantial impact on policy, practice and the capacity development footprint for science communication and PLUS in Africa. Key conference outcomes envisaged are as follows:

1. Provide a networking platform to shape the future of Science Communication and PLUS Policy, Practice and Capacity-building in Africa.
2. Raise awareness and prompt action in the promotion of Science Communication and PLUS Policy, Practice and Capacity-building in Africa.
3. Contribute to the principles of sustainable development and the role of Science Communication and PLUS in the prevention, containment and management of EID's in Africa.
4. Engender and grow the pan-African network and interest group in Science Communication and PLUS which will facilitate the transfer and sharing of knowledge and good practice amongst practitioners.

5. A comprehensive **Conference Outcome document** outlining the concrete resolutions, declarations and recommendations from the discussions, plenaries and thematic deliberations and engagements of the Faculty.
6. A **Call for Action document** highlighting key programmatic action plans based on each of the three thematic focus topics of the Science Communication and PLUS Faculty– with specific initiatives conceptualised to address the way forward in each thematic area.
7. A **dissemination strategy** to ensure that the comprehensive Conference Outcome document and the Call for Action are shared with strategic policy-makers and stakeholders at national levels, REC's, and African continental frameworks such as those of the African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Multi-lateral development agencies.
8. The Production of a **Conference Compendium** of peer-reviewed academic papers presented by academics and researchers in the Faculty sessions at the Conference.

## **Main Themes & Sub-Themes for the Science Communication & PLUS Faculty**

The **2nd African Conference on EID and Biosecurity and it's Science Communication and PLUS Faculty** aims to reflect and take stock on the state of science communication and the public learning and understanding of science policy, practice, 'mainstreaming' and capacity development within national, Regional Economic Communities (REC's), and African regional STI realms, and agree on the next five years' programmatic action and systematic implementation strategies at the various levels. It also aims to achieve a consensus position on the dynamics of the African science communication and PLUS development agenda. There is a need for new ways of approaching the craft and delivery mechanisms of science communication and PLUS, in order to maximize impact and enhance development gains in Africa.

The Science Communication and PLUS Faculty is predicated on transformative and inclusive Multi-disciplinary and Trans-disciplinary discourses, deliberations and contributions. In this regard, we welcome contributions from across all the science disciplines (Natural, Life and Physical), the Humanities, Social Sciences, Anthropology, etc.

This will be achieved through engaging on the following themes and sub-themes:

### **1. Science Communication & PLUS in Africa: Policy Development Challenges and Opportunities**

This theme will focus on the policy landscape for science communication and PLUS on the African continent, and assess the policy space in terms of available frameworks, interventions and gaps at national levels, Regional Economic Communities (REC's) and the continental level. It will also focus on the knowledge gaps for policy development as regards levels of awareness, sensitization and understanding amongst African policy-makers. These discussions will be fully elaborated in the two further sub-themes as follows:

- a. Science communication & PLUS in Africa: Defining the Agenda and knowledge development processes
- b. Science communication & PLUS in Africa: Policy sensitization strategies

## **2. Good Practice programmes and projects implementation – African Models for Science Communication and PLUS as a containment strategy for EID**

This theme will focus on the skills and capacity-building landscape for science communication and PLUS on the continent, and address the challenges inherent in delivering this capacity. It will also focus on identifying, showcasing and highlighting good practice initiatives in science communication and PLUS across diverse stakeholders and practitioners, particularly regarding the development of innovative African models for Science Communication/PLUS and its role in preventing and curtailing public health crises emanating from EID's. These issues will be fully elaborated further via the two sub-themes as follows:

- a. Capacity and skills development for science communication & PLUS
- b. Outputs on successes, challenges and opportunities for Science Communication/PLUS and EID prevention

## **3. Strengthen evidence base through sharing of research, information and Capacity-building**

This theme will focus on the research and development landscape for informing on policy development and good practice on science communication and PLUS. It will also address the challenges of bridging the research/researcher-policy divide and the effective and cohesive networking of African practitioners in science communication and PLUS, in order to engender enhanced partnership working, increased programmatic delivery and innovative good practice development. These issues will be fully further elaborated in the two sub-themes as follows:

- a. Strengthening partnerships for Science Communication & PLUS – Policy interfaces

- b. Strengthening partnerships and networks amongst practitioners: Inclusion & Innovation