



THE MAWAZO INSTITUTE  
**STRATEGIC  
PLAN**  
| 2023 - 2026



Image: Gender Lens Investing, 2022

## Overview



**Our Vision** is a world in which the voices and big ideas of African women researchers shape the future of the continent and the world.



**Our Mission** is to support the big ideas of early-career women researchers and thought leaders in Africa to strengthen their research, public engagement, and influence on the development of the continent.

### Our Values

- Respect
- Purpose
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Independence
- Innovation
- Curiosity

## Who We Are

The Mawazo Institute is a women-led<sup>3</sup> African organisation supporting early-career African women researchers as they work to find solutions to local and global development challenges.

## What We Do

**1.** We support the professional development and thought leadership of early-career African women researchers.

**2.** We increase the public utility, visibility, and impact of evidence-based, locally-produced, and women-led research in Africa

## Our Programmes

**Mawazo Fellowship:** Facilitates training, professional development, mentorship, and financial support to African women researchers pursuing PhDs relevant to Africa's development at an accredited African university.

**Mawazo Voices:** Elevates public and policy engagement for our beneficiaries through strategic communications and partnerships to transform them into thought-leaders in critical fields and sectors that can provide solutions to Africa's most pressing needs.

1 early-career includes researchers who are current PhD candidates or have completed their PhDs within the last 5 years  
 2 woman/women includes cisgender women, transgender women, femme/feminine-identifying, genderqueer and nonbinary individuals, who have historically been excluded from decision-making spaces.

3. women-led means majority of the senior leadership (CEO; Directors; Managers and Leads) are women

# Executive Summary

The Mawazo Institute's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is the result of over 18 months of brainstorming, discussions and decision-making.

A key strategic assumption behind the new strategic plan is Mawazo's belief that African women conducting PhDs are driven, creative, analytical and critical thinkers who bring a unique perspective to research and development, and that thinkers with these strengths are key to driving innovative, holistic, sustainable development on the continent and beyond.

By equipping them with essential non-technical skills, mentorship, and funding support ([Mawazo Fellowship Programme](#)), and using public engagement as well as strategic communications and partnerships with both academic and non-academic partners ([Mawazo Voices Programme](#)), we create and facilitate opportunities for our beneficiaries to become thought-leaders and change-makers in critical fields and sectors.

Mawazo also successfully developed, implemented and completed the inaugural cohort of the Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx) Fellowship Programme between February 2021 and June 2022, with an in-person graduation event in November 2022, which made use of our online [Mawazo Learning Exchange \(MLEx\) e-learning platform](#) to deliver the majority of the training. The success of the MLEx Fellowship Programme, including the use of the MLEx e-learning platform and the lessons learnt around e-learning, has given us the confidence to expand our network of support to include all African women based at accredited universities across the entire continent for future cohorts.

Going into 2023 and beyond, the Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx) Fellowship Programme will be simply called the Mawazo Fellowship Programme, decoupling it from the Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx) platform, giving the platform more freedom for future development as an expanded e-learning platform to be utilised beyond the **Mawazo Fellowship Programme**.

By 2026, Mawazo aims to:

- 1** Grow our network of Mawazo Fellows to 130 African women researchers representing 15 African nationalities
- 2** Award at least US\$500,000 in research and professional development grants
- 3** Grow our network of official partners to 10 organisations representing industry, public policy, research and higher education, development sector, science communication and media
- 4** Raise at least US\$5 million to support our programmes and operations



**MAWAZO BELIEVES THAT AFRICAN WOMEN CONDUCTING PHDS ARE DRIVEN, CREATIVE, ANALYTICAL AND CRITICAL THINKERS WHO BRING A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND THAT THINKERS WITH THESE STRENGTHS ARE KEY TO DRIVING INNOVATIVE, HOLISTIC, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON THE CONTINENT AND BEYOND**



Image: The Mawazo Institute Office

## Background to the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

We are proud to present Mawazo's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The development of our new strategic plan began in June of 2021 when we were able to bring on board a strategic planning consultant, On Think Tanks (OTT), thanks to an operational capacity-building grant from the Hewlett Foundation.

OTT carried out an intensive "listening tour" of Mawazo with key stakeholders and staff to better understand underlying issues, strengths, and contextual factors as well as a "brand review" building on the draft strategy, past board discussions, and other documents. They also conducted a programme analysis to better understand our current activities and use of staff time and budget.

OTT also supported the organisation as it underwent a change in key leadership when co-founder and then-CEO Dr. Rose M. Mutiso stepped down as CEO. Dr. Fiona W. Moejes, then Director of Programmes, was tapped to act as the CEO in August 2021. Mawazo's Board confirmed Dr. Moejes to the position in June 2022 after an intensive selection process.

Under Dr. Moejes' guidance, Mawazo continued to develop its strategic plan. With support from grants from the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation as well as FCDO, Mawazo brought on board a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Consultant, Charles Warri. Between February and September 2022, Charles supported the strengthening of our MEL and data management frameworks which included several intensive brainstorming sessions with Mawazo staff to get a clear picture of our Theory of Change and logical framework.

The result of over one-and-a-half years of transformation, brainstorming, and internal reviews has led to the creation of Mawazo's new Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. This plan consolidates Mawazo's programming and vision for a world in which the voices and big ideas of early career African women shape the future of the continent and the world.

# 1. Who We Are

The Mawazo Institute is a women-led African organisation supporting early-career women researchers as they work to find local solutions to global development challenges.

At Mawazo, we seek to support the generation and uptake of homegrown evidence-based solutions to pressing development needs. Mawazo targets individuals as important agents of change. We focus on early-career women researchers, who are significantly underrepresented in academia and research, and can contribute important knowledge and perspectives to issues affecting Africa's development. We particularly focus on African women conducting PhDs at African institutions. Our key assumptions are 1) completing a successful PhD requires them to be driven, creative, analytical and critical thinkers, and; 2) their lived experiences as African women provide integral and unique perspectives critical to driving innovative, holistic and sustainable development on the continent. We work to unlock their potential by equipping them with the skills and networks to conduct high quality research.



Image: Nairobi Ideas Quiz Night 2022

We also provide training and platforms to support their public engagement skills and policy influence, which fills gaps left by many local higher education institutions. We aim to prepare them to be future thought leaders and public scholars who have impact and visibility within and outside the academy.



**Our Vision** is a world in which the voices and big ideas of African women researchers shape the future of the continent and the world.

**Our Mission** is to support the big ideas of early-career women researchers and thought leaders in Africa to strengthen their research, public engagement, and influence on the development of the continent.

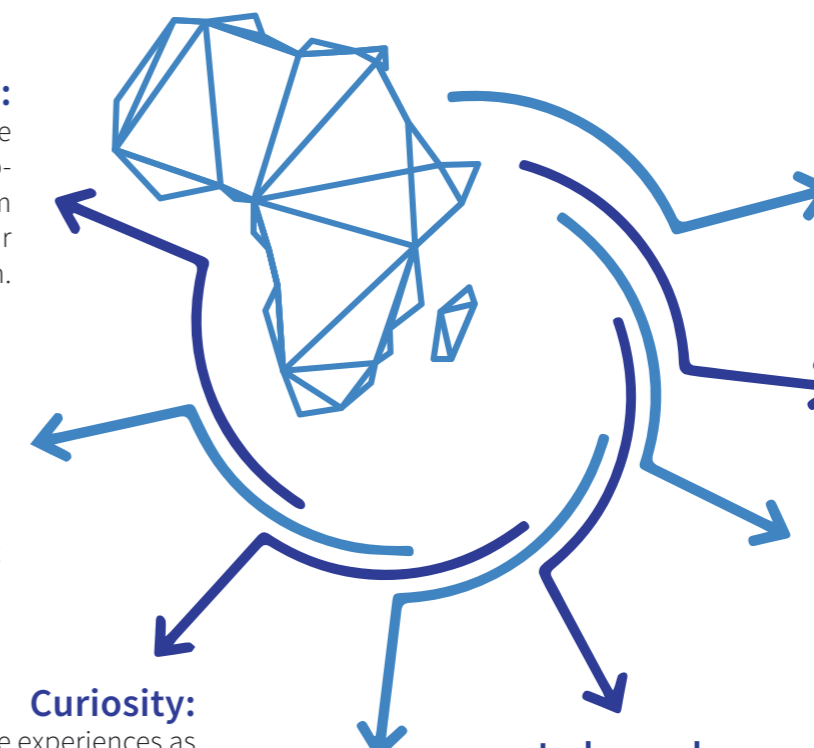
At its core, Mawazo holds the following **Values**:

**Collaboration:**

We are collaborative and partnership-driven - as a team and within our ecosystem.

**Purpose:**

We are bold and ambitious. We work hard and with conviction in pursuit of meaningful impact.



**Curiosity:**

We use experiences as learning opportunities and encourage questioning to ensure analytical and critical thinking.

**Respect:**

We treat everyone with compassion, respect and dignity

**Independence:**

Our beneficiaries set their own research agendas and their findings are not influenced by funders or others.

**Excellence:**

We raise the standard through creativity, innovation, and rigour. We are dedicated to ongoing learning and impact.

**Integrity:**

We are principled, transparent, and consistent in all we do.

**Innovation:**

We encourage out-of-the-box thinking, inclusion of personal experience and perspectives in research, and transdisciplinary approaches to finding solutions to global challenges - with our team, our beneficiaries, and within our ecosystem.

These values are a springboard for how we act, as individuals and as an organisation. In line with these values, we strive to foster a culture of inclusion, diversity, equality, and belonging. This is reflected in our work culture where we always listen to the teams' needs to create a safe environment that encourages the sharing of ideas and where everyone is included.

We are registered in the US as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The Kenya branch office was opened in Nairobi in 2017.

**THE MAWAZO INSTITUTE WORKS TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG WOMEN WHO ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN ACADEMIA BY EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE SKILLS AND NETWORKS TO CONDUCT HIGH QUALITY RESEARCH.**

## 2. Why We Do What We Do



Image: Falling Walls Science Summit 2022

Our focus on research and women's empowerment is informed by the evidence of significant systemic challenges in these areas in Africa, as well as lessons from across the globe on the importance of both. Globally, higher education and research are generally positively correlated with development outcomes and most African countries have set policy priorities to develop these sectors.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, full participation of women in the labour force has been shown to have a number of positive impacts, including boosting growth and productivity.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Africa's research output is the lowest in the world and women are significantly underrepresented in academia and research<sup>6</sup> due to a severe leaky pipeline in higher education: they face high attrition rates in higher education<sup>7</sup>, make up 31% of researchers<sup>8</sup>, 27% of permanent staff at leading universities<sup>9</sup>, and 10% of members in national science academies on the continent<sup>10</sup>. And with some reports stating that it would take 140 years for Africa to reach gender parity<sup>11</sup>, it is crucial to start creating an ecosystem that supports the ideas of women so they can inspire the solutions needed to tackle the deep socio-economic challenges facing Africa, particularly having more policy- and publicly-engaged thinkers, scholars, and experts.

Evidence shows that higher education and research contribute to positive development outcomes (Africa only has 97 researchers per million inhabitants compared to a global average of 1,342<sup>12</sup>), and

4 British Council. The role of tertiary education in development: A rigorous review of the evidence. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/tertiary-education-development>

5 International Monetary Fund. Economic Gains From Gender Inclusion: Even Greater Than You Thought. <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2018/11/28/blog-economic-gains-from-gender-inclusion-even-greater-than-you-thought>

6 UNESCO. UNESCO Science Report: The race against time for smarter development. <https://www.unesco.org/reports/science/2021/en/download-report>

7 World Inequality Database on Education: <https://www.education-progress.org/en/articles/equity>

8 Women in Science Fact Sheet No. 60, 2020: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs60-women-in-science-2020-en.pdf>

9 Bunting, I., Cloete, N., & Schalkwyk, F. V. (2014). An Empirical Overview of Eight Flagship Universities in Africa 2001-2011. 3916815 Bytes. <https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.1150442>

10 Ngila, D., Boshoff, N., Henry, F., Diab, R., Malcom, S., & Thomson, J. (2017). Women's representation in national science academies: An unsettling narrative. South African Journal of Science, 113(7/8). <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2017/20170050>

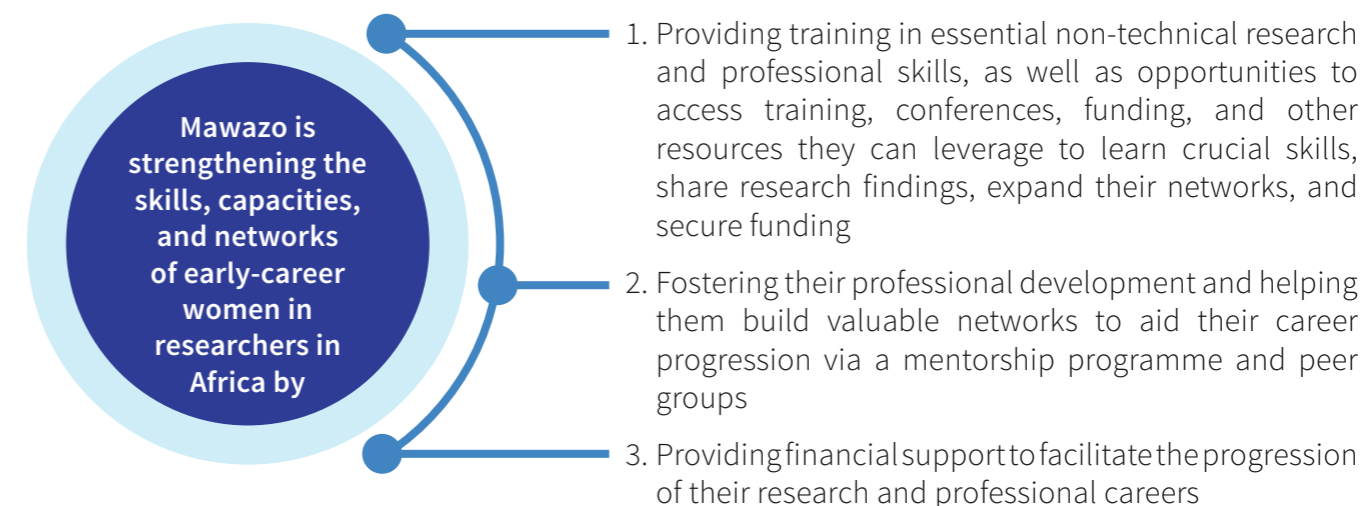
11 McKinsey Global Institute. The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in Africa. 2019 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-africa>

12 Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=3685>

that accelerating progress toward gender parity could boost African economies by the equivalent of 10 percent of their collective GDP by 2025<sup>11</sup>. Mawazo is concretely working towards this through its programmes, directly building a holistic and sustainable African future.

Mawazo partners with women with ideas and helps them to develop and share them broadly. We provide professional development and training in non-technical skills (including personal leadership, budgeting and financial management, policy engagement and science communication), access to mentorship and networks, platforms for policy outreach and public engagement, and access to pathways to implement their ideas for maximal impact. Through these combined efforts we are building a network of African women experts who are poised to influence policy and public discourse in academia and beyond, increasing the application and implementation of practical, evidence-based ideas - all derived from the perspective of the African woman - to drive Africa's development.

Through our various programmes and activities, Mawazo is:



Taken as a whole, these outcomes advance our overarching long term goals by equipping African women to participate more fully in shaping the future of research, policy, leadership and development across a range of sectors on the continent.

### 3. What We Do To Fulfil Our Mission

Mawazo’s strategic priorities are informed by the thorough strategic planning process as well as a deep understanding of the needs of the needs of our beneficiaries, both of which are supported through research and learning. Mawazo’s team then works collectively and collaboratively to decide how best to get there through its programmes and activities.

Our **strategic priorities** are:



Guided by our strategic priorities, we are currently running two programmes. The first programme is the **Mawazo Fellowship Programme** which provides training and professional development, mentorship, and financial support to African women researchers pursuing their PhDs. Our second programme is the **Mawazo Voices Programme**, which uses public and policy engagement as well as strategic communications and partnerships with both academic and non-academic partners (including industry, development organisations, investment firms, and policy makers) to create and facilitate opportunities for our beneficiaries to become thought-leaders and decision-makers in critical fields and sectors. Mawazo Voices is supported by research and learning activities that improve our understanding of the various ecosystems in which our beneficiaries operate.

**THE MAWAZO INSTITUTE BELIEVES THAT FRESH IDEAS AND NEW APPROACHES ARE NEEDED TO TACKLE THE DEEP SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA.**



Image: Mawazo Connects 2022

#### 3.1 Mawazo Fellowship Programme

Mawazo complements the discipline-specific research training beneficiaries undergo in their PhD courses with training and platforms for them to conduct high quality research on issues affecting African development. We provide them with a package of support that builds essential non-technical research and professional skills, deepens their networks, and helps them access mentorship from both peers and experts. Importantly, we support fellows to develop their leadership potential, including personal leadership and wellbeing, and visibility within and outside the academy. This includes support to strengthen their public engagement and policy influence. Mawazo complements the discipline-specific research training programme beneficiaries receive in their PhD programmes with training and platforms for them to develop their public engagement skills and share their findings.

The inaugural (2021/2022) cohort of Fellows are all African women PhD students at East African institutions, representing eight nationalities. To ensure broader continental representation, we will open up the fellowship to African women PhD students based at any accredited university in Africa from 2023 onwards. This will be possible through the use of the [Mawazo Learning Exchange e-learning platform](#) coupled with at least one in-person meeting per cohort. A strategic recruitment process targeting Mawazo’s network outside of East Africa will allow us to attract potential Fellows from across Africa from 2023.

In the second half of 2023, we will begin working on how to include potential Fellows based in Francophone and Lusophone Africa by translating our training material and identifying partners and mentors who are fluent in French and Portuguese to support this.

##### **Training and Professional Development**

Training is provided via a combination of tailor-made on-demand virtual courses through our in-house MLEx e-learning platform and virtual live sessions, which are complemented by a virtual Leadership and Career Retreat. MLEx Courses are developed in-house by a mix of Mawazo staff and external expert contributors, and are grouped into two categories: **MLEx CoreCourses** that cover core academic and professional competencies (e.g., research budgeting and financial management, academic publishing, grants writing, policy engagement, public engagement and

science communication, career and leadership) and **MLEx MicroCourses** that expose Fellows to new concepts that will enhance their research and professional development (e.g., research ethics, internet and data security, participatory action research, and applying gender lens to research). The MLEx e-learning platform will host all courses which are available on demand. The Software Engineering and Technology team will manage the technical aspects of the platform and offer support to both the Mawazo team, external teaching assistants and the Fellows. This may include uploading new courses and course material, troubleshooting technical difficulties and onboarding the named parties to the platform when the programme begins.

### **Mentorship and Networking**

Our **Mentorship Programme** will match each Fellow with an experienced mentor for a year-long mentorship relationship. Detailed questionnaires are used to match Fellows with the most suitable mentors and the relationship is guided by a mentorship agreement outlining expectations, goals, and communication modalities. Past mentors have included [Dr. Kathryn Toure](#), [Dr. Helmut Blumbach](#), [Dr. Barbara Burmen](#), [Dr. Rocio Diaz-Chavez](#) and [Dr Nkatha Kabira](#).

Mawazo also aims to connect Fellows with established professionals in the wider **Friends of Mawazo**<sup>13</sup> network through virtual events, panel discussions, and direct introductions.

Fellows aimed at increasing peer interactions, mentorship, support, and networking among them. The peer groups are supported by facilitators from the **Mawazo Connects**<sup>14</sup> network where past fellows and scholars of Mawazo's Fellowship programmes come on board to provide additional support and mentorship to current Mawazo Fellows. Support varies from technical support (e.g., preparing proposals; reviewing academic manuscripts) to essential non-technical support (e.g., advice on how to handle critical conversations with supervisors). The Mawazo Connects network facilitates long-term engagement between Fellows.

### **Mawazo Fellows Fund**

Mawazo Fellows are eligible for funding on a quarterly basis for research activities, conference travel, specialised training, and research translation. We also encourage our beneficiaries to utilise the fund to secure work placements at reputable institutions in academia, research, and the public and private sectors that form part of our Friends of Mawazo network of partners (part of the Mawazo Voices Programme). Fellows and alumni are eligible for grants that support time-bound activities (to be completed within 6 months) with demonstrable benefits for their research and professional development.



Mawazo aims to leverage its internal tech expertise to incorporate technological tools to better facilitate the fund management process - from the initial application phase to the final reporting. Ultimately, Fellows should be able to apply for and log the utilisation of the granted funds in a more refined way that would then facilitate better tracking, logging and reporting for Mawazo and promote accountability on the part of the beneficiaries and improve their project budgeting and documentation skills.

<sup>13</sup> Friends of Mawazo consists of partners with whom Mawazo has a close working relationship. Please see our Strategic Partnership section under Mawazo Voices for more information on our approach to building up the Friends of Mawazo network. It also includes experts and advisors who have been crucial to helping develop and implement our programmes.

<sup>14</sup> Mawazo Connects network consists of all alumni of the MLEx/Mawazo Fellowship Programme as well as the PhD Scholars Programme. Alumni will still be referred to as Fellows post Fellowship. Please see our Mawazo Connects network section under Mawazo Voices for more information



Image: Mawazo Connects 2022

## **3.2 Mawazo Voices**

The overall aim of the Mawazo Voices programme is to elevate the big ideas and voices of African researchers and thought-leaders, with a focus on African women researchers. This is done through public and policy engagement as well as facilitating their crossover into non-academic sectors where solutions are developed to address critical societal issues on the continent and beyond.

### **Mawazo Connects Network**

The Mawazo Connects network consists of all African women PhD researchers who have completed our fellowship programmes. Fellows automatically graduate into the network upon completion of the Fellowship Programme, where we expect that they will become initiators and proactive agents in Mawazo's research, public and policy engagement activities. The Fellowship Programme will serve as preparatory grounds for our Fellows to carry out such engagements to the best of their ability.

Members of the Mawazo Connects network will be exposed to opportunities for public and policy engagement, strategic communication and partnership, and research and learning. This includes encouraging them to engage in collaborations, partnerships, internships, placements, pilot projects, and other engagements with partners and institutions with which Mawazo has built relationships and are members of the Friends of Mawazo network.



As they journey through their careers, Mawazo will work with our Connects network to provide tailored solutions that enhance the outcomes and impacts of their engagements. This includes the launch of the Mawazo Connects Fund in the second quarter of 2023 that will support members of the Mawazo Connects network to access funding to support their public and policy engagement activities as well as collaboration with members of the Mawazo network who represent fields and sectors critical to Africa's development.

During this strategic period, Mawazo will begin exploring the creation of expanded Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx) Platform that will act as a digital platform where members of the Mawazo Connects network can stay connected to each other, hold forums amongst themselves, and network. This could include features such as priority access and notifications via the platform on any new opportunities identified by the Mawazo Team. It would also make it easier for them to search within the network for other Fellows who can provide them with resources and/or peer mentorship as they work on different projects within and outside of the fellowship programmes.

### **Public and Policy Engagement**

Our in-house platforms such as the Nairobi Ideas Podcast, Nairobi Ideas Nights, and Nairobi Ideas Exchanges will be used to share stories about our beneficiaries and their big ideas for addressing Africa's future needs with a wide and diverse demographic. We will also leverage our strategic partnerships to further spotlight these researchers on their platforms.

We lean in on our strategic partnerships to strengthen the policy engagement efforts of our beneficiaries, encouraging collaboration between policy-influencing organisations and our beneficiaries.

We also elevate the events, briefs, and other policy engagement activities that our Fellows are engaging in, and explore and implement unconventional, unique, and novel ways of carrying out public and policy engagement to ensure reach beyond academia. These activities will amplify the voices of our Fellows across different spaces as well as continue to strategically position the Institute.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

Mawazo's current partnerships have focused more on events and content development, sharing content, and amplifying communications. Going forward, the development of a strong strategic partnerships framework will help increase our impact by establishing and building partnerships

with critical strategic actors to build, support, and anchor the voice of Mawazo and the women we support. Prospective partners will be informed by our research and learning outcomes and will include: (1) communication and media partners (e.g., newspapers, radio channels, science magazines); (2) civil society partners (including local and international NGOs); (3) industry partners (including impact investors); (4) research and innovation partners; (5) government and public policy actors; (6) universities and higher education institutions, and; (7) donors and funders whose strategies align with ours.

We facilitate the engagement of the women we support with non-academic sectors (e.g., through internship programmes; collaborations and consultancies; engaging in roundtable discussions) to ensure the big ideas and voices of early-career African women researchers are heard in places where solutions are developed to address critical societal issues.

As part of our strategy for the Mawazo Voices programme, we have begun conversations for collaboration and possible partnerships (for both Mawazo and our beneficiaries) with organisations that represent research institutions, public policy spaces, development organisations, venture builders and impact investment organisations, and media organisations that can support our training, capacity building and public and policy engagement activities.

We will continue building our network of Africa-based collaborators and partners to broaden the range of sectors represented and support the successful collaboration between these partners and





our beneficiaries. Mawazo also maintains strong links to local universities and research institutes through our programme beneficiaries. It also has networks of local academics and researchers who support our work as expert application reviewers, implementers, and advisors.

All partners, including experts and advisors who have been crucial to helping develop and implement our programmes, with whom Mawazo has a close working relationship, form our **Friends of Mawazo** network. The partnerships will have varying degrees of interactions - from official Memorandums of Understanding to informal sporadic interactions - but all partnerships will be closely monitored and engagements thoroughly documented.

### **Strategic Communication**

This strategic period will include the development of an expanded strategic communications framework that will be closely linked to all of Mawazo's activities with an aim to: (1) highlight the research and big ideas of our Fellows, including their accomplishments, (2) highlight the realities of being an African woman in research, (3) disseminate our research and learning about the short-term benefits of the type of training and support we provide, including how it impacts the skills, accomplishments, and opportunities available to early-career African women in research, and; (3) disseminate our sector- and country/region-specific research and learning outcomes.

We will utilise a range of media to accomplish this, including events (virtual and in-person), video and audio, websites (blogs, news pages, pressers), social media, email pushes, influencer marketing, digital marketing (including regular newsletters), as well as popular media (through our Strategic Partnerships activities).

Mawazo will continuously explore and implement novel ways of sharing our work, including improving our storytelling skills to achieve the aims mentioned above.

### **Research and Learning**

Mawazo will expand its internal research activities to increase the number of research outputs (including white papers) over this strategic plan period.

This will also improve our understanding of the contexts in which our beneficiaries will be functioning post-Fellowship and post-PhD (including sector-specific and country/region-specific research and learning). We will also use research and learning to understand Africa's big issues in the next 5-10 years. This data will be used to inform key research areas to prioritise while recruiting future cohorts of Mawazo Fellows and to improve Mawazo's impact as a higher education support actor.

Our research and learning also gives us insights that allow us to keep strengthening our programmes, meaning better, evidence-based support for our Fellows who form the core of our work and our beneficiaries. Mawazo also maintains strong links with local universities and research institutes through our programme beneficiaries.

All partners, including experts and advisors who have been crucial to helping develop and implement our programmes, with whom Mawazo has a close working relationship, form our **Friends of Mawazo** network. The partnerships will have varying degrees of interactions - from official Memorandums of Understanding to informal sporadic interactions - but all partnerships will be closely monitored and engagements thoroughly documented.

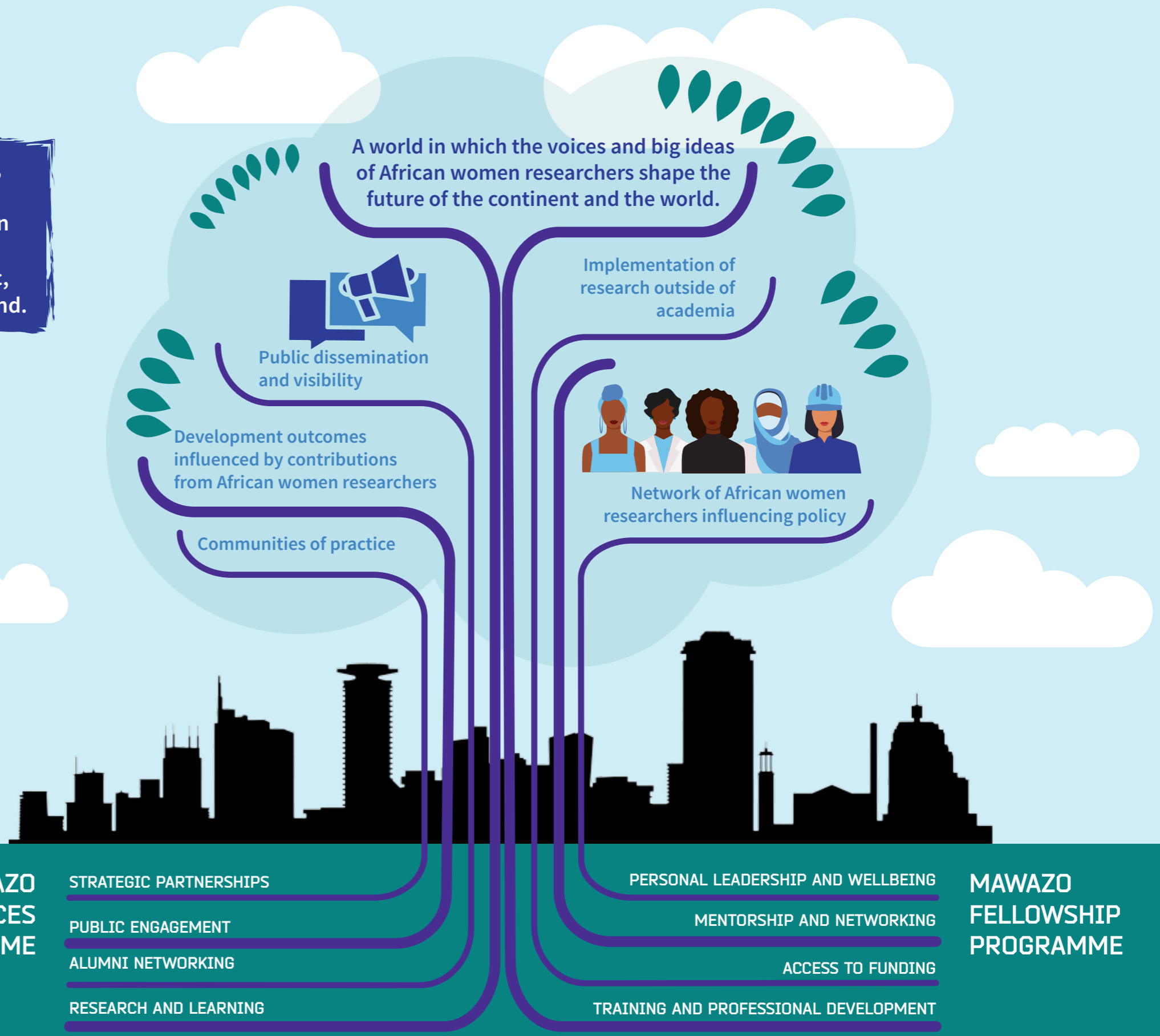


Image: Nairobi Ideas Exchange: Gender Lens Investing, 2022

### 3.4 Mawazo Institute's

# THEORY OF CHANGE

African women conducting PhDs are driven, creative, analytical and critical thinkers who bring a unique perspective through their lived experiences as African women to research and development. Thinkers with these strengths are key to driving innovative, holistic, sustainable development on the continent and beyond.



## MAWAZO VOICES PROGRAMME

- STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
- ALUMNI NETWORKING
- RESEARCH AND LEARNING

## MAWAZO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

- PERSONAL LEADERSHIP AND WELLBEING
- MENTORSHIP AND NETWORKING
- ACCESS TO FUNDING
- TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Women researchers not equipped to develop evidence-based research

Women-led research is less visible within the research and innovation ecosystem

Shortage of African researches, particularly early career women

Women academics less likely to explore opportunities across sectors

## 4. What We Need To Deliver This Mission



### 4.1 Governance and Management

Mawazo is led by a CEO assisted by team members supporting operations (finance, administrative, and Human Resources) as well as the Mawazo Fellowship and Mawazo Voices programmes. Please see the updated list of staff, interns, and consultants on the website. The team is guided by a board composed of seasoned public and private sector experts who serve a renewable two-year term. The board is responsible for overseeing institutional growth, ensuring we meet our mission, and providing oversight and guidance to the Mawazo's Executive Team. The board forms committees to support Mawazo's strategy and governance, including a Finance, Legal & Operations Committee, Programmes & Impact Committee and a Fundraising Committee.

Between 2018 and 2022, Rachel Strohm, Mawazo's co-founder, served as the Board Chair. Kim Andree Potvin has been the Board Chair since September 2022.



### 4.2 Financial Resources

Mawazo's operations are wholly funded by charitable donations from philanthropic foundations and private individuals. To help prevent disruptions in our programme delivery, Mawazo is engaged in active fundraising throughout the year and regularly works to seek out and develop innovative partnerships that offset the costs of our programmes. Our fundraising activities are driven by a Fundraising Strategy, the internal fundraising committee as well as the board's fundraising committee, and led by the CEO.

Mawazo anticipates an overall expenditure of approximately US\$5 million between 2023-2026, and will work towards ensuring at least 75% of that is spent on programme costs and 25% on operations, administration, and fundraising.



### 4.3 Digital Technologies and IT

Mawazo launched the Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx platform) at the end of 2020. This is a digital platform specifically developed to deliver our training and professional development material for the Mawazo Fellowship Programme. So far, we have delivered training to 40 women researchers between 2021 and 2022, with an average of 79% giving a 'very good' to 'excellent' score on the content, responsiveness, and overall user experience on the platform in programme exit surveys.

We view our experience with the MLEx Platform as an opportunity to be at the forefront of e-learning. Through this platform, Mawazo is able to test novel ideas on the delivery of e-learning

in Africa and continuously try to improve our platform, including exploring the building of a custom site. Mawazo also uses digital communications to effectively engage the public and reach potential donors and beneficiaries. Therefore, investment in our digital footprint and new digital tools, platforms, and skills for our staff remains a priority.

During the 2021/2022 cycle of the Fellowship Programme, we also delivered a MicroCourse on Internet and Data Security, guiding our Fellows on the proper and optimal use of digital technologies in their various areas of expertise.

Within Mawazo, we are moving towards automating all our departments with technology in order to improve efficiency and also make our processes more seamless for the running of all internal and external activities including the onboarding for both new team members and Fellows, data efficiency, consistency and security, centralised communication, team and Fellow technical support, and any other area that we identify as needing improvement.



### 4.4 Communications

Mawazo's two programmes, Mawazo Fellowship and Mawazo Voices, are supported by strategic communications that include digital and broadcast communications. Strategic communications involves the innovative use of multiple channels and tools to maximise impact in a dynamic and creative manner. See our Strategic Communications (under Section 3.2) for more details.

We will improve our branding material (including improving our website, pitch decks, flyers, and annual reports) to increase our visibility (online and offline) to help us achieve our goals, including our fundraising targets for this strategic period.



### 4.5 Human Resources (HR)

Mawazo has effective HR systems in place to streamline its processes and regularly undertakes decisions around insourcing versus outsourcing of personnel. Mawazo has grown from a team of three full-time team members at the start of 2018 to a team of 16 at the end of 2022, and we anticipate the recruitment of three more full-time team members in 2023. Fundraising efforts will help to continue to secure and support these full-time roles.

The work culture at Mawazo is critical to its success. We work hard to create a space where we are always listening to the needs of our team to create a safe environment that encourages the sharing of ideas and where everyone is included. This is reflected in the provision of flexible working hours, ability to work from home as needed, competitive remuneration package, medical insurance, as well as parental leave, sick leave, annual leave policies and a professional development fund. We also provide a bi-annual wellness fund, and are among one of the first organisations in the region to have fully implemented a four-day work week to further support the wellbeing of our team, avoiding burnout and providing headspace for ideation.

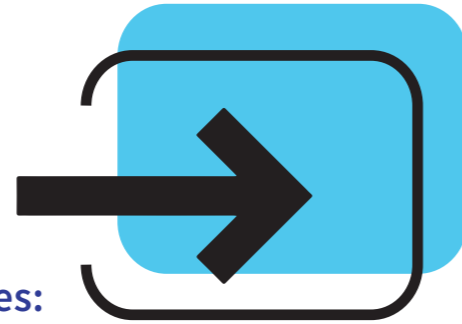
We foresee Mawazo being an example of how a healthy, compassionate and caring work culture leads to more productive and content team members. We will utilise the communications tools and platforms mentioned in previous sections to highlight our work culture.

## 5. How We Will Know We Are On The Right Track

Mawazo undertakes monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities to track six different levels:

### Inputs:

Mawazo monitors its budget and staff time for various activities to continuously assess how things are working and their cost effectiveness.



### Immediate feedback on programmes:

Mawazo Fellows are consistently asked for feedback via a range of methods, including surveys and one-on-one interviews. This feedback helps adjust programmes in the immediate, medium, and long term.

### Fellows' medium term trajectories:

Mawazo reaches out to all Fellows (current and past beneficiaries) to gather information on their current work and reflections on Mawazo's programmes.

### Communications reach and response:

Mawazo has strong strategic communications and tracks a suite of indicators related to these, such as event attendance, responses to social media posts, etc.

### Review of progress on strategy:

At the institutional level, our CEO and board will lead annual reviews of our strategic plan, to ensure that our activities are fulfilling our mission and long-term goals.

### Personnel review:

At the level of personnel, learning and growth are cultivated through weekly team meetings, one-on-one check ins, and bi-annual performance reviews that encourage both personal and task-oriented reflection.



A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Lead was onboarded in November 2022 to further strengthen our evidence base. A Data Insights Associate was onboarded in December 2022 to provide additional impact tracking support.



## 6. Risks, Barriers and Challenges

### **Pandemic interruption:**

Mawazo responded to the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of digital platforms, including the new Mawazo Learning Exchange, to provide content, community, and resources to fellows. Staff started working remotely, and Mawazo gave up its office lease for a time. As the pandemic situation has improved, Mawazo has returned to a hybrid working environment, offering an office work space and a work-from-home option. More digital and hybrid learning and working is already taking hold globally, and Mawazo is already building on this trend.

### **Programme expansion into e-learning:**

Given the expansion of our training programme into e-learning, we have much to learn in terms of implementing such training systems, as well as the response and uptake by target audiences. We continue to roll out our e-learning programme in a modular sequence, improving and updating each module as we go. A thorough curriculum and implementation review will be conducted at the end of each cycle, carefully documenting our successes and failures to inform improvements and ensuring the content remains relevant and informed for subsequent cycles.

### **Structural and cultural barriers for women:**

Mawazo is focused on achieving gender parity in the uptake and participation of girls and women in the sciences. However, pervasive sexism and cultural biases persist in dissuading girls and women from the sciences and denying them positions of leadership and responsibility, even with the right credentials. To help address this, Mawazo remains a vocal advocate for women's rights across all our platforms and as part of our speaking engagements.

In addition, the disproportionate share of family responsibilities that women are traditionally burdened with continue to present barriers for their full engagement in the sciences and in leadership. In our programmes, we help address this by offering flexible terms for our beneficiaries in case of interruptions due to family obligations such as maternity and childcare. Mawazo also provides our beneficiaries with small discretionary grants, which many may use to offset household and childcare costs. During our latest in-person event, we provided support for our Fellows to travel with young children as well as caregivers so that they were able to attend to their core activities. As the programmes grow, we hope to increase funding for childcare and related support in future cycles.

### **Socio-political events:**

The socio-political environment in many African countries is dynamic. Events beyond Mawazo's control, including higher education policy changes, recurrent lecturer strikes, election cycles, governmental crackdowns on civil society, and other such incidents have the ability to impact the delivery of Mawazo's programmes. To combat this, Mawazo will stay apprised of evolving situations, develop contingency plans, and remain flexible in delivery of programme aspects.

### **Team Capacity**

We are a young team (average age of 32.6) who punch far above their weight. Mawazo hopes to be able to provide leadership and management training for all management and executive team members in 2023/2024 to strengthen the management capacity of the team. We will continue to regularly fundraise to support and secure all full-time team members, particularly in senior management positions, to strengthen expertise balance on the team.

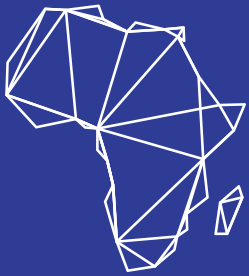


Image: unsplash.com

### **Competition:**

Rather than viewing competition as an inherent challenge, in a small sector such as academic capacity building, there are ample opportunities for collaboration. Mawazo stands out for its unique, women-led, women-centred branding, as well as building strong programmes that not only support Fellows, but also peer-to-peer mentorship structures that ensure these women's voices are amplified in various spaces. We centre all our activities around our Fellows, equipping them with intellectual and policy-driven tools that ensure they make a difference that is felt beyond the academy.

Mawazo has identified other local and international organisations that also provide training and mentorship to women researchers including the Organisation for Women in Science in the Developing World (OWSD) and African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), as well as from a range of others that provide support to African researchers regardless of gender, such as the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR), Social Science Research Council (SSRC), the University of Pretoria's Future Africa Institute, and International Support Network for African Development (ISNAD-Africa).



contact@mawazoinstitute.org  
www.mawazoinstitute.org

The Mawazo Institute,  
P. O. Box 856-00606,  
Nairobi

Kofisi Riverside Square,  
9th floor, West Wing,  
Riverside Drive, Nairobi, Kenya



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