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# MAWAZO INSTITUTE

WOMEN LEADING RESEARCH IN AFRICA

As we begin the month of April, it is fair to say that few of us could have anticipated the situation we now find ourselves in. Globally, we are witnessing an unprecedented health crisis and widespread economic disruption, all while coping with the new reality of physical isolation as public life in many places comes to a standstill. For these reasons, the question '*How are you?*' is one that we find ourselves asking often. As an institution, we are coping with the unexpected impacts of COVID-19 as best we can. We suspended all non-essential travel for our staff and adopted a work-from-home policy following the first reported case of COVID-19 in Kenya. Like many of you, we have also been busy drawing up contingency plans for programme aspects that rely on in-person engagement.

When we asked our [2018 PhD Alumni Scholars](#) how they were doing, they told us that in addition to the suspension of their classes (as a result of a government directive), their lab and field-work has also been disrupted. This means delays in their research with no clear timeline for when they will be able to resume their work. For those in unsalaried teaching positions, there remains uncertainty over when they will be able to return to work, and if they will continue to receive any income during this period.

This is but a small sampling of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our unique ecosystem, which is why we are asking you—our readers and followers—to let us know how you are fairing in this new reality. We want to hear from students, academics, researchers, and those in the higher education and research sector. If you meet this criteria, please [take our short two-minute survey](#) below. You can also find it on our website at [www.mawazoinstitute.org](http://www.mawazoinstitute.org).

With your responses, we hope to better understand where the disruptions in our

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continue to serve as a resource for you in the coming months.

Sincerely,  
The Mawazo Team

[Take the Two-Minute COVID-19 Impact Survey](#)

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## **Announcing Our New Funding Partner: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**

We want to take a moment to thank our new funding partner, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation who generously committed to supporting our work over a two-year period, ending October 2021. Mawazo will be working with the Foundation to [support the next generation of female policy-oriented researchers in East Africa](#) within the development arena.

If you would also like to support Mawazo's work, you can make a donation [on our website](#) or on [M-Changa](#).

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## **We've Been Nominated for 'Best NGO' on Gender Equality!**

We couldn't be prouder to be shortlisted for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the [National Diversity and Inclusion Awards & Recognition \(DIAR\) 2020](#) in the award category for **Best NGO on Gender Equality**. The Award celebrates a Kenyan NGO that runs projects, or promotes programs that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment across the country. Mawazo was nominated for our "efforts to increase women's authority in society." An award ceremony due to be held in March, where winners were to be announced, had to be postponed.

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Here, we share some highlights from our Alumni PhD Scholars, and an update on recruitment for the 2020 Class:

Computer Scientist, **Elizabeth Benson Mutua** was announced as one of the [winners of the Women in Tech Africa 2020's Innovations Throughout Africa competition](#). Organised by Women in Tech - Africa, the initiative celebrates innovative tech achievements from across the continent. Congratulations on your big win Elizabeth! To learn about Elizabeth's research into how to tackle Nairobi's traffic congestion using data mining and machine learning, visit her Mawazo blog entry [here](#).



In February, Melisa Allela was featured as a panelist during [NOMA! An XR Experience](#); a Nairobi exhibit showcasing art developed using AR/VR technologies. Melisa participated in a panel discussion on regional perspectives on Virtual Reality (VR), where she discussed her experiences as both a practitioner and researcher in the field. Melisa is currently finalizing her PhD thesis and documenting her progress retelling African stories using VR on [her website here](#).

selected to present a paper on the impact of acute diseases on labour supply at the upcoming 2020 European Population Conference (pending travel guidance due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis). You can read more about Winnie's research into [the economic burden of poor health in Kenya](#) on our blog.



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## Update: 2020 Class of the Mawazo PhD Scholars Programme

We've received over 140 applications from young women in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania who want to be part of our programme. Now, together with a panel of expert reviewers, we are narrowing down the finalists. We look forward to making an announcement in the coming weeks. All applicants can expect to receive notification via email.

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## What's Next for the Mawazo Public Engagement Programme as it Turns Two?

In January 2018, when we launched our [Public Engagement Programme](#), our intentions were to get the work of Mawazo Scholars and other African experts into the general public. Two years on, the Programme has been successful in connecting science with the public (both within Kenya and across the region) in creative and diverse ways. This has included [podcasting](#), [blogging](#), [video content](#), [social media](#), [accessible and informative publications](#), [a variety of live events](#), and [media interviews and features](#) by our PhD Scholars and staff, including [a talk from the TED stage](#).

Public engagement has become a cornerstone of our work, making us one of a few research institutions focused on promoting engagement with science, in Kenya and the region. Along the way, we've learned a lot and made many new partners who share our passion for getting vital and potentially life-saving research into the public arena. As we look at what the next few years hold for the programme, we are taking a break to reflect on the lessons learned and opportunities for growth.

taking a hiatus from our personal favorite project, the *Nairobi Ideas Podcast*, to review the data we've been collecting and to plan for our next theme. But that doesn't mean we'll be gone entirely. Mawazo will continue publishing our *Nairobi Ideas Digest* on a regular basis as well features on [our blog](#) and [media page](#). We are also in talks to host our third Nairobi Ideas Exchange soon.

For now, you can read our latest [International Women's Day Edition Digest here](#), and if you're already feeling nostalgic, [listen back to every episode of the podcast on our website](#), and also available on iTunes, Google Play, YouTube, or wherever you find your podcasts, by searching for the *Nairobi ideas Podcast*.



We share with you some of our current favorite reads, including some features from Mawazo:

- "Gacheke Gachihi argues that this crisis has further emphasized the neglect of the poor by the government, and is therefore “a wake up call that we are on our own.” (The People vs 4G internet and other corona stories from Kenya on [Africa Is A Country](#))
- "[What have previous flu-like pandemics looked like in Africa?](#)" (by Mawazo Board Chair, Rachel Strohm)
- "The World Health Organisation (WHO) website contains no technical guidance on how African governments should approach their considerably different contexts. The advice is the same globally, but the context is not." (Why a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 could have lethal consequences on [The Conversation](#))
- "Adapting public engagement across borders is an exercise in cultural sensitivity. Even in the same language, use of slang and metaphors can be

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authored by Mawazo CEO, Dr. Rose)

- "[Let's make room for more girls and women in science.](#)" (Business Daily Op-ed by Mawazo CEO, Dr. Rose)
- "[The Power of Standing Out with Mawazo Institute.](#)" (An Ikigai Blog interview with the Mawazo Institute)



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