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# MAWAZO INSTITUTE

WOMEN LEADING RESEARCH IN AFRICA

Since the onset of the crisis, we have been working on innovative ways to cope with the unexpected impacts of COVID-19. [In this statement from our CEO](#), Dr. Rose M. Mutiso, we summarise the actions we are taking to meet our obligations to our staff, our commitment to our beneficiaries, and to ensure our continued engagement within the regional academic and higher education ecosystem.

Among the key changes, are a postponement of our much-anticipated PhD Scholars Programme due to continued uncertainty around the re-opening of universities in East Africa, as well as changes in global philanthropy that have seen a shift in funding to COVID-19 responses. We are however excited to announce the upcoming launch of the new Mawazo Learning Exchange (MLEx), a programme which has been under development since late 2019. An outgrowth of our former [‘Training and Resources Programme,’](#) the Mawazo Learning Exchange will be a virtual professional development platform for African researchers that includes dedicated online training courses for early-career African women, covering wide range of academic and professional skills. The Mawazo Learning Exchange will also provide a growing library of resources tailored to the African context and available to researchers everywhere, regardless of their nationality or gender.

We believe that higher education has been on the cusp of a technology-enabled revolution for some time, and COVID-19 has only accelerated this transition around the world. The Mawazo Learning Exchange is our way to help ensure that African researchers are not left out of the digital migration to online learning, and we look forward to launching the site and welcoming our first cohort of MLEx Fellows in the coming months.

To find out more about what stakeholders can expect from us for the rest of the

Sincerely,  
The Mawazo Team

## The Mawazo Institute's 2020 COVID-19 Response

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### Mawazo Responds to the Issue of Systemic Violence

After the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Mawazo joined many others in denouncing systemic racism in the US and elsewhere. We also took the opportunity to reflect on the impacts of other forms of systemic violence, including gender-based violence, which has seen a sharp rise during the pandemic. We urgently call for solidarity in putting an end to the various forms of state-sponsored and structural violence that many across the world still face.

You can [read our statement on systemic violence here.](#)

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### Helping us Understand the COVID-19 Crisis

- In [this article published in the Daily Nation](#), 2018 PhD Scholar **Marilyn Ronoh**, a mathematician, explains the role of mathematical modelling in beating the pandemic. To learn about Marilyn's research, which uses computational models to improve health outcomes, you can visit her Mawazo blog entry [here.](#)
- **Peris Ambala**, 2018 PhD Scholar, is a molecular virologist who has been studying zoonotic viruses on the Kenyan front long before

know about zoonotic viruses.

## National Research Fund Grantees

- The Kenya [National Research Fund for postgraduate students](#) is intended to help build a critical mass of skilled human resource within the country. **We are proud to announce that two of our PhD Scholars, Judith Koskey ([left](#)) and Peris Ambala ([right](#)) were selected as 2020 NRF recipients.** The grants will be used to further their ongoing research in their respective fields. You can read more about Judith's approach to environmental science on [the Mawazo blog](#).



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**Melisa Allela** continues to break barriers in virtual storytelling and was recently selected as a DLA#4 Winner in Immersive Realities for her Virtual Reality project, *Sigana Tales of Lawino*. The competition is hosted by Digital Labs Africa 4 and you can find [a link to their Facebook announcement here](#).

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Melisa also recently completed her dissertation, which has been submitted to her PhD supervisors, bringing her one step closer to attaining her PhD degree. Melisa wrote a short article about storytelling with virtual humans and how this connects to her PhD research. You can [read this on her blog](#).

**Jacqueline Owigo, a 2018 PhD Scholar in International Relations, authored a policy brief** with Omar Yusuf that discusses *Return and (Re)Integration in Fragile Contexts: The Experiences of Somali Returnees*. You can read (or download) the brief published on the Africa Portal [here](#).



Surveying the impact of COVID-19 on Africa's higher education and research sector: [Read the Mawazo Brief](#)

"Most of the focus so far has been on western countries, leaving major gaps in our understanding of how Africa's own centres of knowledge production are faring in this crisis. We know that the state of research and higher education on the continent has long been a cause for concern even before the COVID-19 crisis and early indications show that the virus is exacerbating these vulnerabilities. Now, more than ever, a reckoning with these structural issues is required."



**We share some of our other current favorite reads (videos, and podcasts) below:**

- ["Are women publishing less during the pandemic? Here's what the data say"](#) (*Nature magazine*)
- ["African Countries and Researchers Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#) (*Nairobi Ideas Digest Issue 4 published by Mawazo*)
- [Women and Science in Africa](#) (A panel discussion hosted by **Mawazo** following the screening of the documentary, *Women and Science in Africa: A Silent Revolution*)
- ["A novel idea: integrating urban and rural safety nets in Africa during the pandemic"](#) (Opinion piece co-authored by **Mawazo Board Chair, Rachel Strohm** for The Conversation Africa)
- [Diversity and Think Tanks](#) (A webinar featuring **Mawazo CEO, Dr. Rose M. Mutiso**. Hosted by On Think Tanks)
- ["Best in Class: COVID-19 Responses"](#) (Opinion by **Next Einstein Forum**)
- ["Research and Development goals for COVID-19 in Africa"](#) (Report by **African Academy of Sciences**)



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