

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

## CONNECTEDNESS

Exemplifying The Power of  
African Changemakers

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## Letter from the CEO

Dear Friend of Mawazo,

**If 2024 had a flavour, it would be bold and deeply layered** - a blend of sweet triumphs, peppery challenges, and earthy wisdom. It was a year of stretching - of going further, deeper, and broader than ever before. And like any unforgettable dish, it was crafted with care, collaboration, and just the right amount of spice.



**Dr. Fiona Wanjiku Moejes**  
CEO, Mawazo Institute

This year's theme

### **CONNECTEDNESS**

echoes through every chapter of our work. And to bring it fully to life, we chose the language of spices and cooking to share the story of Mawazo in 2024. After all, food is where science meets culture, where tradition meets innovation. Cooking connects us - across borders, generations, and ideas. So does the work of our Fellows.

In 2024, we proudly graduated our third cohort of Mawazo Fellows, representing

# 16

**countries across the continent.**

Their research was as diverse as the landscapes they came from:

1. Investigating gaps in Parkinson's rehabilitation in Ghana;
2. Developing affordable HPV screening tools in Kenya;
3. Advancing autism education in Tanzania;
4. Optimising off-grid energy supply to rural communities in Namibia.





These brilliant women are changing lives. And through the Mawazo Connects Fund, Ideas Digest, Podcasts, and national media across Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Nigeria, we've worked hard to ensure their stories - and their bold ideas - are seen, heard, and funded. In fact, 19 Fellows had their work featured in news outlets, and several received additional funding for their research as well as seed funding for their innovations.

Personally, this was also a year of deep transformation and connection for me. I spent three months on maternity leave, embracing a new season of life, love, and growth. In my absence, our talented leadership team - Ashley Muthaka (Operations), Dr Caroline Mose (Programmes), and Elizabeth Ngala (Finance) - stepped into a bold experiment: a co-leadership model. Not only did they hold the fort with grace, they navigated challenges with empathy and wisdom, showing that caring leadership isn't just nice - it's strategic.

And there's more to celebrate.



This year, we proudly supported 21 women researchers in the Connects Network (our alumni network) to collect and analyse further data, 25 researchers published their work in academic journals, 17 shared their ideas with the public through traditional media, and 14 crossed the finish line with their PhDs in hand. These are not just numbers - they're flavours, each adding depth to the grand dish that is African innovation.

We raised US\$2.6 million to power our work - adding the essential ingredients to our pot. We reconnected with trusted funders, the long-time staples in our kitchen, and welcomed new allies who brought fresh flavours and bold aromas. Together, they've helped us turn up the heat on our vision: an Africa led by women researchers, innovators, and leaders.

We also brought people together in powerful ways. On International Women's Day, the Mawazo Ideas Exchange bridged the worlds of research and venture capital. We sparked vital conversations on gender in academia and policy, joined major forums like Going Global Africa, and contributed to key reports including INASP's Status of African Women in Research and DANIDA's More Women in Research manifesto.



And to wrap up the year with intention, we published Volume 2 of the Mawazo Ideas Digest, themed: Leadership the World Needs: Radical Optimism and Care in Action. From thought pieces on empathy-driven leadership to field stories from our 2023 Fellows, it's a window into the soul of Mawazo.



So yes, 2024 stretched us. But in that stretch, we found new strength, new connections, and a new rhythm. Like the perfect slow-cooked dish, the results are nourishing, rich, and deeply satisfying.



*Karibu Mezani - Chakula Rimeiva!*

*\*Welcome to the table - the meal is ready.*





21  
researchers

We supported 21 researchers in our Connects Network (alumni network) with funding for data collection and analysis.

25  
academic  
journals

25 were published in academic journals.

13  
journal  
articles

13 journal articles came from researchers in Benin, Cameroon, Kenya, Eswatini, and Uganda.

29  
mawazo  
fellows

29 Mawazo Fellows have now earned their PhDs - including Dr Emily Ngeno, whose chemistry work in bioremediation is changing how we think about water safety in Kenya.

## About Mawazo

**The Mawazo Institute is a women-led African organisation based in Nairobi, Kenya supporting early-career women researchers as they work to find solutions to local and global development challenges.**

Mawazo believes that (1) African women conducting PhDs are driven, creative, analytical and critical thinkers, and (2) as African women they bring a unique (and often forgotten) perspective and voice to research and development. We believe that they hold the key to driving innovative, holistic, sustainable development on the continent and beyond.

By equipping early-career African women researchers 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 them to become thought-leaders and change-makers in critical fields and sectors.



### 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.



“ At the end of the year, Fiona led the whole team through a moment of reflection on the plans we made for 2024. It was an introspective moment that allowed us to review and make an even better 2025 plan. It was also a good reminder of the work we do and how different departments mesh together like a body and its organs, where the leadership cements the vision and the team trusts in itself and the impact of our work. ”

Shirley Irungu, Data Insight Associate



### 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.

## Mawazo's Culture of Care

To promote prevention, Mawazo has instituted several initiatives including a flexible work arrangement, a 4-day work week, an organisational-wide slowdown period in August, and a work culture that emphasises care and compassion.

To encourage and facilitate the treatment of mental health disorders, Mawazo extends sick leave not only for physical ailments but also mental health issues. The organisation also provides a wellness fund that employees can use for therapy, physical fitness activities, or any other endeavours that positively contribute to their mental health.

Mawazo believes that supporting mental health fosters a culture of empathy and well-being, where employees feel seen and heard. This leads to stronger team dynamics, increased morale, and a more collaborative environment. This approach also helps destigmatize mental health issues by encouraging open conversations and normalising the act of seeking help. Ultimately, when an employee's wellness is prioritised, they become a more effective worker. As a result, Mawazo has observed a decrease in absenteeism, and an increase in efficiency and engagement.

Mawazo is at the forefront as an organisation that centres the mental health needs of its staff members, with the hope that it will eventually inspire many other organisations in the region to follow suit. As it continues to support innovation and research by its Fellows and Alumni, Mawazo remains committed to being innovative and responsive to the needs of its staff.

**Broadly, there are two ways to address mental health concerns in the workplace:** prevention, and access to treatment. Mawazo has been very purposeful in catering to both aspects for its staff members.

**In 2024, the team prioritised their mental, physical, and emotional health by fully utilising their leave days to rest, recharge, and refocus. Additionally, Mawazo increased the wellness and professional development funds which led to a higher uptake of both resources.**

Ashley Muthaka, Director of Operations



Ginger: Holistic healing; Often the base foundation of a dish that significantly impacts the outcome;

## The Physiotherapist Treating Parkinson's Disease

“*I want to see my patients recover,*”  
 says physiotherapist and 2023 Mawazo Fellow Mary Agoriwo.



Ever since she was a little girl growing up in a mining town in Ghana, Mary Agoriwo has been fascinated by the idea of working in the medical field, as well as helping people. Born with a knack for mathematics, she fondly recalls tutoring her classmates to help them catch up academically.

Initially, aspired to become a medical doctor. However, once she learnt about the hands-on nature of physiotherapy, and the opportunity it provides to care for patient until they achieve full recovery, she redirected her efforts towards becoming a Physiotherapist.

Today, Mary is a trained Physiotherapist who specialises in caring for individuals with Parkinson's Disease. She has valuable experience from running and operating her own clinic. Parkinson's Disease is the second fastest growing condition in Ghana, yet there remains a significant lack of knowledge regarding rehabilitation for the disease, with very few practitioners in Ghana focusing on it.

The allure of teaching, a passion that began in her childhood when she helped her classmates with their math homework, has remained a driving force in Mary's professional career. This passion ultimately motivated her to pursue her PhD. A serious concern for her, has been ensuring that a legacy of care and rehabilitation exists for those suffering from PD in Ghana.



Nkyekyerewa: Cooked Maize and Peanuts mixed and prepared meticulously; Anchors Mary to home, even when she is far away



Beyond the budgeting training and financial support that Mawazo provided for two research studies, including often-overlooked financial burdens such as fuel money for transportation, what will remain with Mary from her time in the Mawazo Fellowship Programme, are some of the less tangible aspects of the Programme. She highlights the importance of learning how to fairly and effectively assess her own progress, and the encouragement derived from sisterhood in perseverance.



Mary's research has involved conducting a scoping review to assess the status of access for Ghanaians with PD. She believes that "examining the structures and processes is the most effective way to understand the reasons behind the low utilisation and access to rehabilitation services for people with PD." Drawing from her experience as a physiotherapist, Mary aims to uncover the root causes of these issues.

For example, she questions why so few individuals are accessing the available rehabilitation services. Are patients with PD satisfied with the treatment they receive? What is the average cost of treatment for these patients, including transportation expenses? What is the existing level of expertise in PD rehabilitation among Physiotherapists?

Her action plan, based on her research findings, is two fold: firstly designing new training programmes for PD rehabilitation both for home care and clinicians; secondly, lobbying policymakers to address structural changes in the accessibility and affordability of speech and occupational therapy, as well as accessibility issues in transportation.

Mary's work has taken her around the world, and is pioneering on the continent in examining how to meet the needs of people with PD. Furthermore, she focuses on enhancing services that seek to accommodate individuals with mobility issues and long-standing conditions.





## The Fellowship Programme

In 2024, as the fourth cohort of Mawazo Fellows completed the Fellowship and prepared to join our Connects Network, they utilised the Fellows Fund a total of 21 times. The primary purposes for accessing these funds included: funding their research data collection and analysis, attending relevant conferences, and publishing in academic journals. These activities reflect the commitment of the Fellows to further their research goals and contribute meaningfully to their areas of expertise.

“ As a member of the Fellowship team, it was deeply rewarding to witness firsthand the impact of Mawazo’s support – whether through research funding, mentorship, or other capacity-building initiatives – all working together to equip our fellows with essential tools.

Dorsila Ogola; Fellowship Programme Officer ”



**The Mawazo Fellowship Programme is a 15-month, non-residential fellowship aimed at cultivating a network of African women experts.** It is designed to support our Fellows to influence policy and public discourse in academia and beyond. The programme focuses on increasing the application and implementation of practical, evidence-based ideas that are crucial for driving Africa’s development. In addition to providing capacity building courses, the programme also provides funding opportunities that enable Fellows to advance their research goals.



Turmeric: Functionally diverse and widespread use; a game changing, healthy ingredient and source of energy

*Here are some of their stories:*

**Aune Tuyoleni Angobe, Namibia**

Namibia University of Science and Technology

**Focus: Evaluating potential of various plant species for animal consumption**

Aune conducted a nutritional content analysis on plant samples as part of her PhD research. This analysis aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the nutritional profiles of various plants of interest. These insights are crucial for assessing the suitability of these plants as fodder for animals or as grazable vegetation.



**Rehemah Gwokyalya, Uganda**

University of Pretoria

**Focus: Understanding the role of symbiotic bacteria in the relationship between Host and Parasitoids in invasive fruit flies**

Rehemah attended the 27th International Congress of Entomology (ICE) where she participated in the symposium titled "Comparative immune signalling between insects and other organisms: from recognition to effectors" During this event, she presented her research findings. The Congress served as an important research dissemination platform and provided an opportunity for valuable feedback from fellow researchers.

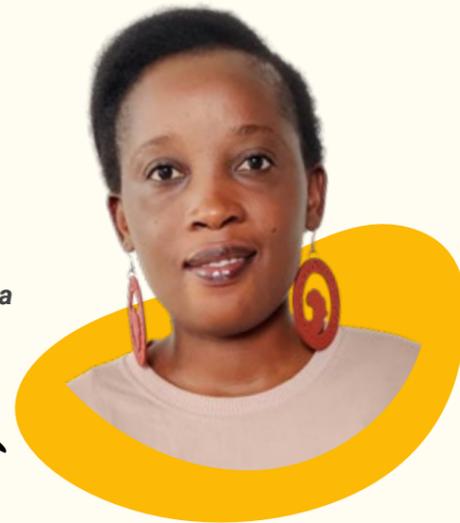


**Focus: Investigating landslides in Kivu Catchment, Rwanda**

Ma-Lyse conducted a field visit to the Kivu catchment in Rwanda with an aim to enhancing landslide monitoring and early warning systems. This initiative is designed to improve community awareness and understanding of landslide mitigation strategies in areas prone to such events, ultimately contributing to the protection of livelihoods.

**Ma-Lyse Nema, Rwanda**

Université Félix Houphouët Boigny



**Focus: Assessing the aetiology of measles disease and measles-like illness in Uganda**

Prossy collected data from previously confirmed measles IgM-positive cases in Hoima district located in Western Uganda. The data collection focused on obtaining vaccination and the clinical history of the measles confirmed cases. This information was obtained at the district level, from health facilities and directly from the homes of the confirmed measles patients.

**Prossy Namuwulya, Uganda**

Makerere University



## Felicia Ikpokonte, Nigeria

University of the Witwatersrand

**Focus: Understanding the environmental legal framework in the Nigerian petroleum sector**

Felicia collected data on petroleum-related environmental disputes handled by the Federal High Court in Yenagoa Judicial Division. She identified and extracted relevant data from thousands of files and documents in the institutions' archives.

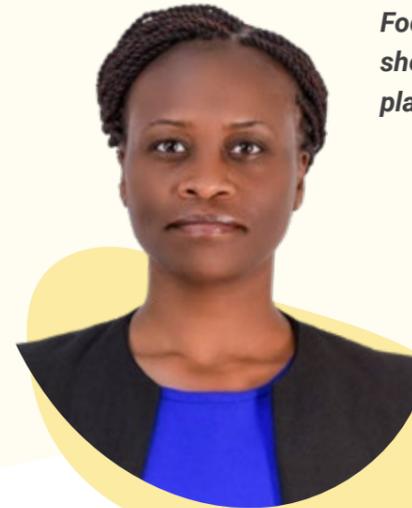


## Stellah Bonareri, Kenya

University of Nairobi

**Focus: Modifying macadamia shells for biodegradable plastic packaging**

Stellah extracted and analysed cellulose from macadamia shells and converted it to Cellulose Acetate through alkaline treatment. When reacted with a plasticizer, cellulose acetate produces a gel-like substance that can be molded to produce various packaging materials.



**Focus: Assessing Climatic Forecast Methods and Skills over Sahelian Region**

Aissatou conducted on-farm demonstration experiments to illustrate to farmers the benefits of using seasonal forecast information to encourage more uptake from them on information that helps mitigate the effects climate change on agricultural production.



## Aissatou Sita, Niger

Federal University of Technology, Akure



## Fellowship Graduation

In a ceremony that was both emotional and deeply inspiring, we gathered with our 40 Fellows from 16 different countries. The event brought together their loved ones, the entire Mawazo team, our partners, and numerous supporters who believe in the power of African women researchers to drive lasting change for Africa and beyond. Through the computer screens, a true sense of community and sisterhood was formed. Together, we applauded the remarkable efforts of these phenomenal researchers.



“ A major highlight from our department was the graduation of the 2023 Fellowship Programme Cohort. This milestone celebrated the fellows’ hard work and achievements while also reinforcing the impact of the programme in advancing women in research. ”

Damaris Ndua, Fellowship Programme Lead



The occasion was profoundly celebratory and supportive, highlighted by the insights of our phenomenal powerhouse feminist speakers. Kicking off the event was Professor Myriam Sidibé, Founder of Brands on a Mission, who quickly instilled a sense of purpose in the Fellows. She stated, “Research findings are not just supposed to sit on a page; they should create real, lasting change.” She encouraged them to ensure that their research leads to meaningful improvements in real-world contexts, whether it is to inform policies, enhance practices, or initiate community projects.

The research I did became a foundation for a global health movement. Think of how crazy your research can transform the world because that is what research has been designed to do.

Prof Sidibe.



Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi, the Executive Director of the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), shared a significant challenge with the Fellows during her address. "There are so few of us African researchers; we can't just be unicorns," she asserted, centering the need to advocate for increased representation and support within the research community.



As African PhD holders, we are one in a million. In a sea of green apples, we are the one single red one. What are we doing with that? How do we use that for good?

Dr. Kyobutungi.



Finally, feminist activist Hope Chigudu emphasised the capabilities of the Fellows and encouraged them to view their careers as a series of opportunities to navigate. "When you find yourself in a challenging situation, focus on the opportunities that arise from it," she stated, urging the Fellows to embrace challenges as pathways for growth.

**Congratulations once more to our 2023 Mawazo Fellows for crossing another milestone!**

# The 2023 Mawazo Fellows



## Agriculture and Food Security



I, *Darline Dize*, commit to contribute to the management of **neglected tropical diseases** in Africa by discovering new drug candidates to treat these diseases. **(Cameroon)**



I, *Monique Ainyakou*, commit to the **biotechnological recovery of poultry** slaughterhouse waste by 2030. **(Ivory Coast)**



I, *Dr. Rehemah Gwokyalya*, commit to promoting **biological pest control** for gender-inclusive regenerative agriculture and food security across Africa by 2030. **(Uganda)**



I, *Souand Tahi*, commit to developing an AI-powered application to **optimize crop yields** in West Africa by December 2025. **(Benin)**

## Climate Change, Natural Resources, and Environment



I, *Aissatou Sitta Adamou*, commit to assisting Agricultural communities in Sahelian West Africa with **reliable climate services**. **(Niger)**



I, *Felicia Enoch Ikpokonte*, commit to developing a **data repository of court-adjudicated petroleum-induced environmental disputes** in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. **(Nigeria)**



I, *Jacinta Kinyunzu*, commit to developing and implementing a **biochar-based water purification system** by the year 2035. **(Kenya)**



I, *Josephine Mwafuka*, commit to engage in **reforestation and afforestation** by mid-year 2026 **(Zimbabwe)**



I, *Lydia Dzedzorm Senanu*, commit to developing a **water treatment technology** that is affordable and easily accessible for vulnerable communities in Ghana by June 2026. **(Ghana)**

*Commitments To Action*

**Climate Change, Natural Resources, and Environment**



I, *Ma-Lyse Nema*, commit to conducting a comprehensive study on **landslide risk assessment**. (Rwanda)



I, *Nanchin Winifred Kazeh*, commit to formulating conservation actions that address the growing threats posed by **climate change and human-driven land use**. (Nigeria)



I, *Nqobizitha Ndebele*, commit to ensuring that poor communities in Matabeleland have **access to clean water** by providing bio-based, affordable point-of-use water treatment units. (Zimbabwe)



I, *Dr. Thandile Tanzile Gule*, commit to finding innovative and cost-effective solutions for **water related issues** in Africa. (Eswatini)

**Education and Pedagogy**



I, *Dr. Miriam Elisha Loivotoki*, commit to researching and advocating for **educational support systems** for learners with Autism. (Tanzania)

**Energy and Engineering**



I, *Dr. Firehiwot Girma*, commit to implementing a **hydropower generation** and operation planning tool by the end of 2025. (Ethiopia)



I, *Johra Said Ali*, commit to commercialize the **production of Biodiesel** across Africa. (Kenya)



I, *Kemi Jegede*, commit to address the issue of **food, energy, portable water, and sanitation** in Tsumkwe, Namibia by 2033. (Namibia)



I, *Letta Mahlohonolo Ntuli*, commit to the development of highly accurate, accessible, and **affordable diabetes diagnostic tests** by 2025. (South Africa)



I, *Stellah Oirere*, commit to providing a **sustainable plastic packaging** alternative product into the market by 2035. (Kenya)



*Commitments To Action*



Gender Rights and Governance



I, Esther Gimono Munira Ali, commit to advocating for the fundamental human rights related to **sexual and reproductive health rights** of deaf women and girls. (Uganda)



I, Lilian Tunai Mulati, commit to developing and implementing vocational training programs, establishing **peer support groups and advocating for policy** changes for urban refugees in Kenya by December 2034. (Kenya)

Information and Technology



I, Dr. Aminata Dembele, commit to developing innovative, AI-driven cybersecurity solutions to **enhance cybersecurity and mitigate network intrusion attacks** across Africa. (Mali)



I, Iyanu Adegun, commit to developing AI-driven systems for **forecasting infectious disease outbreaks**. (Nigeria)



I, Mbithe Nzomo, commit to establishing a collaborative research network at the intersection of **technology, climate change, and infectious diseases** in Kenya by September 2025. (Kenya)



I, Mercy Mawia Mulwa, commit to advancing an Explainable AI Approach on **Sensor-Based Human Gait Analysis** for Assistive Device Model Prediction and 3D Design by March 2026. (Kenya)

Life and Health Sciences



I, Adedoyin Adeboye, commit to finding innovative and **affordable diagnostic solutions for bladder cancer** in schistosomiasis-endemic populations across Africa. (Nigeria)



I, Caroline Ochieng, commit to generating data that for developing targeted remedies and **build models for disease prediction** by 2026. (Kenya)

Commitments To Action

Life and Health Sciences



I, *Celia MJ Matyanga*, commit to developing **African medicines** for Africans by 2030. **(Zimbabwe)**



I, *Loise Nthambi*, commit to introducing **self-sampling cervical screening** options by 2027. **(Kenya)**



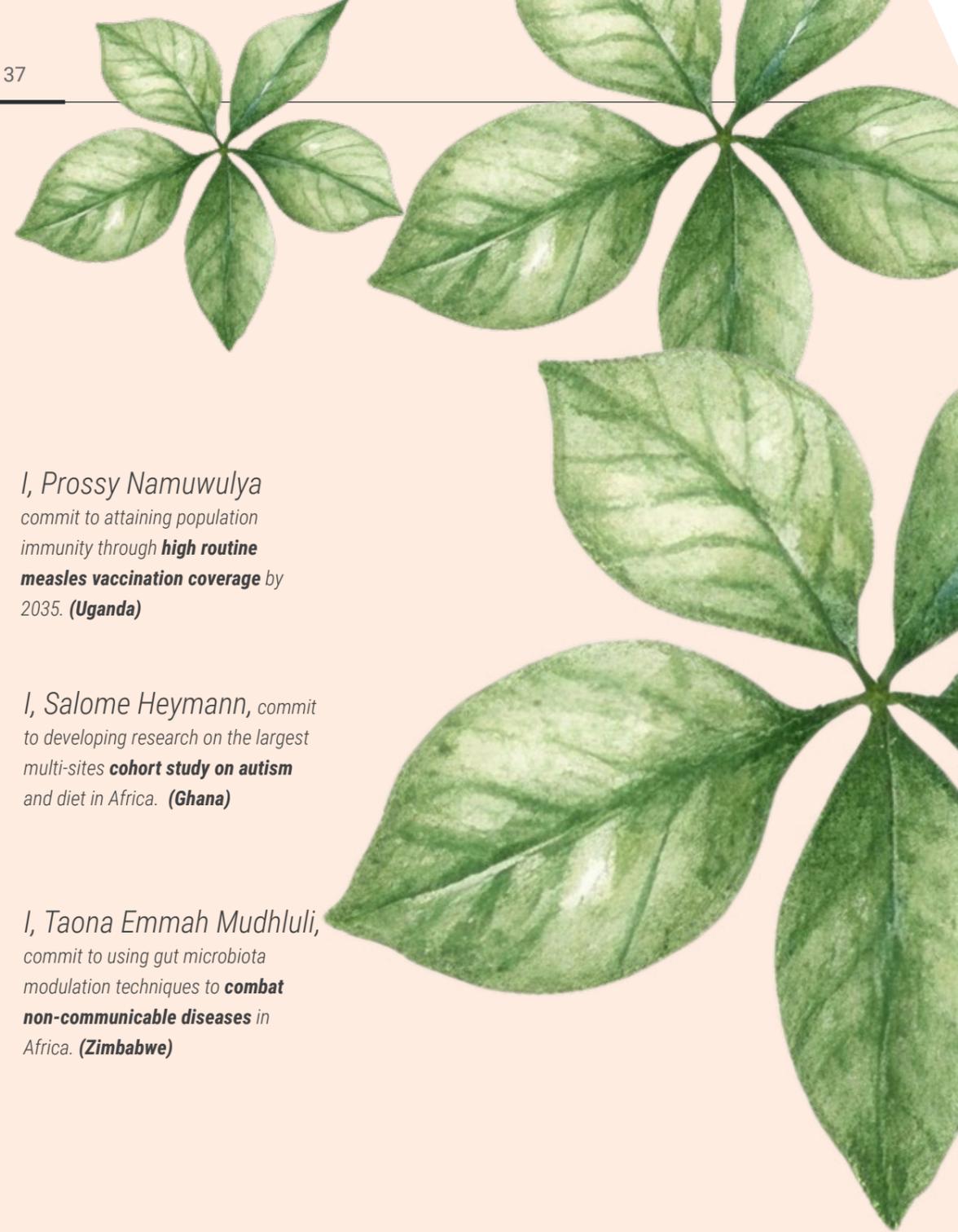
I, *Clarisse Dete*, commit to developing personalised survival models to **optimise cervical cancer treatment** in Africa by December 2028. **(Benin)**



I, *Nono Vanessa Ninkeh* commit to **fighting against isoniazid-resistant tuberculosis** within the population of Cameroon. **(Cameroon)**



I, *Mary Wetani Agoriwo*, commit to promoting the use and delivery of **rehabilitation** in the management of persons with **Parkinson's disease** in Ghana within the next 3 years. **(Ghana)**



I, *Prossy Namuwulya* commit to attaining population immunity through **high routine measles vaccination coverage** by 2035. **(Uganda)**



I, *Salome Heymann*, commit to developing research on the largest multi-sites **cohort study on autism** and diet in Africa. **(Ghana)**



I, *Taona Emmah Mudhluli*, commit to using gut microbiota modulation techniques to **combat non-communicable diseases** in Africa. **(Zimbabwe)**

*Commitments To Action*

## The Policy Changing Nurse

*"I yearn to see healthcare models that come from Africa, and that work for Africans,"*

Ugandan nurse practitioner Mercy Mwanja.



Mercy Mwanja, a passionate Ugandan nurse from a big family, and loves being a nurse. She believes that the time has come for nurses to take centerstage as vital figures in health care system. "The entire healthcare system depends on us, because we impact patients directly," she explains.

Despite this, Mercy finds that negative stereotypes about the roles and effectiveness of the nursing profession persist. In Uganda specifically, she identifies a significant need for more professional nurses; as one progresses higher up in the academic pipeline, the number of nurses decreases considerably. In Doctoral Studies, there are only a handful of nurses like Mercy, who are dedicated to using research to positively impact the profession.

As a young student, Mercy was not sure about her career path. She initially pursued the sciences, but was ultimately drawn to nursing due to the hands-on experience it offered in patient care. Her decision to focus on maternal healthcare, stemmed partly from a desire to engage in a field that celebrated joyous moments, as well as from a personally harrowing experience during the birth to her first child.

Matoke with peanut sauce: is a dish made from steamed cooking banana with a rich peanut sauce made with onions, tomatoes, and mushrooms. This meal is not only healthy but gives Mercy energy she needs to thrive in her demanding work. It is also easy to make.

In maternal healthcare, Mercy sees the opportunity to humanise the quality of care provided for women. She believes that “we have over-medicalised pregnancy and forgotten that it is a social, cultural event.” According to the standards of care recommended by the World Health Organization, Uganda constantly falls short of the expected standards of maternal healthcare.

Mercy’s research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Uganda’s current standards of care, assess issues related to access, and propose strategies for improving the incorporation (rather than mere adoption) of these standards.

Her study in Western Uganda shows that only 3% of postnatal women received care that met established standards. Mercy believes that Africa’s strategy of adopting ‘universal’ standards of care, which are often based on western models, contributes to these disappointing ratings. She questions the feasibility of applying the same standards of care to resource-constrained public hospitals, as well as to well-funded private hospitals. Instead, her vision is “to see resource-constrained public hospitals develop and implement their own models of care.”

“Perinatal care is context specific,” Mercy explains. She believes that awareness should begin at home, where both men and women need to be educated on the importance of robust maternal healthcare. In addition, she advocates for paired programmes that address men’s health alongside women’s health. Her research has shown that most Ugandan women, regardless of where they live in rural and urban settings, are accessing healthcare services, with the support of their male partners, who often serve as the primary

means of transportation. The exclusion of male education from sensitisation campaigns focused on women’s healthcare has led to a severe lack of prioritisation among many men on the importance of regular check-ups for pregnant women.

Another significant gap in healthcare is the low retention rates of staff. This issue arises partly from inadequate salaries, but is also exacerbated by a lack of opportunities for internal promotions and insufficient support for professional development. For Mercy, addressing these factors present cost effective ways to enhance staff retention within the medical field.

Mercy is set to graduate with her PhD in 2025; however her journey in maternal healthcare policy is just beginning. She credits the Mawazo Institute for helping her tailor her ideas to various audiences, and effectively engage with media, and other stakeholders to advocate for policy change. Above all, being part of Mawazo’s network of women researchers has inspired her, and continues to encourage her to claim her space, and drive meaningful change.



## Mawazo Voices Programme: Mawazo Ideas

At Mawazo, we believe that ideas are the essence of creativity, the spark of innovation, and a call to research. This belief drives our commitment to investing in getting good ideas into the public domain.



“ In 2024, I experienced a steep learning curve in leadership as our Programmes Team grew. I’m proud of what we achieved together from developing podcasts, creating digests, completing the Fellowship programme with a moving graduation ceremony, and starting the onboarding process for a new cohort. It took a lot of behind-the-scenes work, with some sleepless nights, but we truly coalesced as a team.

Dr. Caroline Mose, Director of Programmes

”



To achieve this goal, we organise a variety of events under the Mawazo Ideas platform. Among these events is the Mawazo Ideas Night, a recurring public event that provides local researchers, scholars and self-identifying nerds an informal and engaging platform to present their ideas to the public. We also host the Mawazo Ideas Podcast, which serves as a public platform for Africans making an impact with their Big Ideas. Other initiatives include the Mawazo Ideas Digest, and the Mawazo Ideas Exchange, both designed to facilitate deep discussions on pressing issues within various fields of practice.

In 2024, Mawazo Ideas saw significant engagement, here are some snippets from the year:

#### **Mawazo Ideas Exchange: International Women's Day Workshops**

In honor of International Women's Day 2024, Mawazo organised a series of events from Tuesday, March 05, 2024 to Thursday, March 07, 2024. The workshops aimed to highlight the importance of recognising women researchers as innovators and to celebrate their contributions to the innovation landscape.

The discussions during these events focused on understanding the challenges faced by African women researchers in engaging with the innovation ecosystem. Participants explored unmet research needs and sought to create synergies between various players in the research and innovation ecosystems. The goal was to encourage the uptake of research innovation outputs by women, fostering an environment where their contributions can be fully realised and appreciated.



#### **Mawazo Ideas Night: Her Research Reality**

During this edition of Mawazo Ideas Night, Mawazo hosted an event aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of African women in research and academia. This critical issue was explored through presentations from four teams, each focusing on these thematic areas: Environment, Gender, Technology, and Indigenous Knowledge. These teams showcased innovative solutions designed to tackle the challenges faced by women in these fields. The event also featured interactive trivia questions to engage the audience and encourage participation. This approach not only made the event more dynamic, but also fostered a sense of community among attendees. The goal is to document emerging ideas, identify cross-sectoral innovations, and promote the integration of co-created knowledge into research practices. By doing so, the initiative aims to strengthen the collaborative processes and enhance the impact of research efforts within academia.

#### **Season 7 Mawazo Ideas Podcast**

The seventh season of the Podcast explored the research ecosystem in Africa focusing on how historical contexts shape the contemporary academic landscape. Titled *Navigating the Present: Deconstructing the reality of African Academia*, this newly audio-visual edition delved into the critical issues affecting academia and highlighted the experiences of marginalised groups, particularly younger researchers.

The season featured a diverse array of guests with varying careers and research backgrounds. Notable participants included Dr. Obiageli "Oby" Ezekwesili a Senior Economic expert in Nigeria, Professor Wandia Njoya an Associate Professor of Literature at Daystar University, and Dr. Moses Ngware from the African Population and Health Research Center. Additionally, young academics Chebet Koske and Dorcas Mwirereri contributed their perspectives to the discussion.

Season 7 emerged as Mawazo's most popular season, achieving a peak viewership of 10,000 on Episode 3 alone. This impressive engagement underscores the relevance and impact of the topics discussed throughout the season.

### Mawazo Ideas Digest

The second edition of the Mawazo Voices Digest focused on the theme of leading with care and radical optimism. From the Leadership Desk, our feature article explored the concept of empathy-driven leadership as the key ingredient in developing sustainable strategies and solutions for both individuals and communities.

We also included a policy brief that addresses the promotion of Somali women's progress in higher education. The brief was authored by from 2021 Policy Fellow, Sahra Ahmed Koshin , who provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Somali women in academia. Additionally, our 2023 Mawazo Fellows, Adedoyin Tinuade Adeboye, Johra Said Ali and Firehiwot Girma Dires shared stories from the field and their journeys as African women scholars. Adedoyin Tinuade Adeboye, Johra Said Ali and Firehiwot Girma Dires shared their personal stories from the field. They reflected on their journeys as African women scholars, providing unique insights into their research experiences and discussing how they have navigated various challenges along the way.



## Partnerships at Mawazo



**If there has been a singular guiding principle behind Mawazo's partnership decisions, it is that our Fellows must always be at the center.** As such, our strategy to forming partnerships has consistently been proactive and tailored to align with the initiatives undertaken by our Fellows and Alumni. In 2024, two significant partnerships further advanced this mission:

“

**At Mawazo, the beneficiaries are always at the heart of everything we do. When we build new partnerships, our foremost priority is to ensure that they benefit our Fellows and Alumni.**

Elaine Mungai, Strategic Partnerships Lead ”



The first was a partnership established in February with the Fishbowl Challenge, during which five Mawazo Fellows participated in a knowledge-sharing event aimed at enhancing social enterprises through the expertise and guidance of our Fellows.

The event not only underscored the importance of research and development for start-ups, but also encouraged our researchers to explore commercialisation opportunities for their research outputs.

Secondly, in June, Mawazo co-hosted a roundtable discussion with INASP that focused on the experiences and perspectives of African women researchers within the research and higher education ecosystem. This event brought together women from across the continent, including several Mawazo Fellows, as well as key stakeholders from the research ecosystem.

The gathering was a significant demonstration of the importance of bringing together women researchers to not only share their stories of perseverance but also to support them in taking a leading role in future planning and solution-finding.

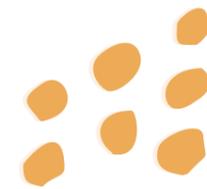


Garlic: sweet undertone; contributes a holistic, tangy, and irreplaceable base to several recipes.



Mai Skovgaard, Senior Programme Specialist in Gender at INASP, stated:

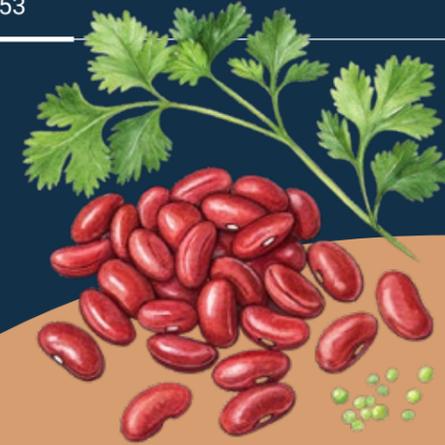
“To get the most relevant and rigorous knowledge for communities, we must ensure that both women and men are able to participate in and undertake research. Partnerships with like-minded organizations that share our values and vision of creating a more equitable knowledge ecosystem are key for INASP. The joint roundtable solidified our shared aims and ambition to strengthen our partnership to further support women researchers to lead change.” belief drives our commitment to investing in getting good ideas into the public domain.



# The PanAfrican Clean Water Champion

*“My dream would be for everyone in Africa to have safe access to clean water.”*

Dr. Thandile Gule; 2023 Mawazo Fellow and Water Management Expert



Driven by a deep sense of curiosity and a PanAfrican environmental ethos, Dr. Thandile Gule is on a mission to ensure that everyone has responsible access to clean water. Born and raised in the small country of Eswatini, she recognised early in her career that achieving her ambitious goals, she would probably need to emigrate.

Her journey led her to pursue a Master’s degree in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, followed by her doctorate in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Addis felt like a natural fit as Dr.

Thandile is fascinated by the intersection of urban planning and its impact on the natural environment. She explains, “Changing a city means changing the natural environment, which will always impact water.”

The rapid expansion of African cities, many of which are situated near water bodies, has irrevocably influenced the access to water for urban residents. As populations grow and infrastructure evolves amid challenges such as urban heat and climate change, effective water management is increasingly becoming a critical issue. Poor water management adversely affects public health, economic development, sanitation, and the capacity to mitigate risks associated with natural disasters like flooding.



Umngcushu: Samp and beans; a warm, comforting meal on cold and rainy days

Dr. Thandile's research on water management in Addis Ababa revealed that the challenges do not stem from a lack of relevant policies; rather, they arise from issues related to policy implementation, insufficient public awareness on sanitation practices, and relevant government operating isolation. For Dr. Thandile, the key to addressing these challenges lies in collaboration among various stakeholders. "Lawmakers, engineers, researchers like me, and all the other stakeholders must work together in addressing the public, and creating the solutions," she explains.

The concept of collaboration is one that Dr. Thandile feels was particularly fostered during her time as a Mawazo Fellow. She is especially grateful to the Programme for instilling a sense of community in her work as a researcher and for encouraging her to connect with women outside of her own field of study. While the training on practical skills such as budgeting, and communicating with a non-scientific audience were extremely relevant, the most significant impact for Dr. Thandile has been the impetus to be bolder in her role as a woman researcher.

This newfound boldness has led Dr. Thandile, now post PhD, to pursue opportunities in industry and development as a consultant for several organisations including the World Bank. For her, the interdisciplinary nature of water management requires a holistic research perspective that encompasses economics, geography, history, engineering, health, and culture. She cautions that in our rush to progress and grow quickly, "we neglect our local realities".

Although her work may take her around the world in urban planning and water management, her heart and purpose always remain in Africa, "I must always come back home, to the continent."



# Press Coverage in 2024



**STANDARD MEDIA: Kenyan Research needs more State Funding and investment - December 2024**

On December 23rd 2024, Standard Media published an article by the Mawazo Institute's Communications Officer Naliaka Odera, on the need for increased government investment in research in Kenya.



**THE STANDARD: Low-cost biodiesel can help to tackle climate change, pollution - October 2024**

On Friday the 11th of October 2024, The Standard, a Kenyan national newspaper, ran a digital opinion piece by 2023 Mawazo Fellow, Johra Said Ali on the importance of her work in lowering the cost of production of biodiesel by using waste cooking oil.



**THE STANDARD: Elevate Africa's indigenous knowledge to achieve sustainable development - September 2024**

On the 17th of September 2024, Standard digital, a Kenyan based publication, ran an opinion piece by Mawazo Communications Lead, Carolyne Tunnen and Mawazo Communications Officer Naliaka Odera on the critical role of Africa's indigenous knowledge systems in driving sustainable development.



**KTN News: Wanafunzi wa vyuo vikuu waonyesha ujuzi wa kutumia AI - August 2024**

On the 29th of August 2024, KTN News, a news channel broadcasting across Eastern Africa, featured 2018 Mawazo Fellow Dr. Elizabeth Benson and her co-organisers from IndabaX Kenya for hosting a hackathon and workshop at Dedan Kimathi University, Nairobi, Kenya.



**NATION: Are you a woman-owned start-up? Here's how to get funding - MAY 2024**

On May 23, 2024, the Daily Nation published a news feature article in their nation.africa portal showcasing Dr. Elizabeth Wafula, a 2021 Mawazo Fellow, and her entrepreneurial journey in establishing a business that processes legume-based products.



**NATION: Malaria's gendered burden: Recent floods heighten risk for women, girls - May 2024**

On the 14th of May 2024, the Daily Nation, headquartered in Kenya, ran a feature news digital article, derived from an interview with, 2021 Mawazo Fellow, Dr. Trizah Milugo. The piece was in light of the recent events of flooding in the country with Dr. Trizah's research playing a role in highlighting the increased risk of malaria transmission to women and girls in the Kenyan community.

“The remarkable increase in media coverage of Mawazo and our women researchers rose by 200% in 2024, compared to a 100% increase in 2023. This growth spans national, regional, and international platforms, significantly enhancing our credibility and boosting the visibility of our female researchers. As a result, their contributions gained broader recognition, reaching a direct readership and viewership of over 5 million people, along with an indirect audience of more than 10 million globally. I am also encouraged by the increasing number of media requests aimed at highlighting their impactful work. As more women contribute written pieces, our media advocacy efforts continue to expand. This heightened engagement informs public discourse and amplifies the voices of our women researchers, showcasing their vital contributions across various fields.”



Carolyne Tunnen, Communications Lead



**NATION: PhD candidate advocates for urine test to screen for cervical cancer - March 2024**

On March 25th the Daily Nation with a readership across the East African region, published a feature interview of Loise Nthambi, a 2023 Mawazo Fellow, on her research promoting urine testing as a method to screen for cervical cancer in women.



**NATION: Dr. Ronoh, the don combating HIV with 'Beshte', a Sheng speaking AI chatbot - March 2024**

On Wednesday the 13th of March 2024, the Daily Nation ran a feature news piece on 2018 Mawazo Fellow, Dr. Marilyn Ronoh and her brainchild 'Beshte', the HIV & AIDS chatbot.



**KTN News: Africa Speaks International Women's Day: Recognizing Women Researchers - March 2024**

On Thursday the 7th of March 2024, KTN News hosted a panel interview featuring 2023 Mawazo Fellow Dorcas Mwirigiri and 2021 Mawazo Fellow Margaret Muriuki, as part of the discussions centered on International Women's Day 2024 and the role that professional career women have in the development and innovation space in Kenya.



**NATION: Africa needs to re-energise investment in women start-ups - March 2024**

On Tuesday the 5th of March 2024, the Daily Nation ran an opinion piece by Mawazo Communications Lead, Carolyne Tunnen. As a run-up to the International Women's Day, 2024, the piece centers the IWD theme of the year "Count her in: Invest in women. Accelerate progress."



Cardamom: Aromatic, distinct, and slightly sweet taste; Creates a depth of flavour in both sweet and savoury dishes

# Nigeria

Bird Distribution in Nigeria: Impact of climate and anthropogenic activities



**[THE GUARDIAN NIGERIA: Bird Distribution in Nigeria: Impact of climate and anthropogenic activities - September 2024](#)**

On the 25th of September, the Guardian Nigeria published an Opinion piece by 2023 Mawazo Fellow Winifred Nanchin Kazeh on her research on bird distribution in Nigeria and the impact of climate change and human activities on bird distribution in urban and rural areas of Nigeria.

Need for radical reform in legal framework resolving environmental disputes in Niger Delta



**[THE GUARDIAN NIGERIA: Need for radical reform in legal framework resolving environmental disputes in Niger Delta - September 2024](#)**

On 25th September, the Guardian Nigeria published an Opinion piece by 2023 Mawazo Fellow Felicia Ikpokonte on the legal framework addressing petroleum related environmental disputes in Nigeria.



# Tanzania



**[THE CITIZEN: Tanzania needs to increase support for autistic learners in schools - March 2024](#)**

On Friday the 1st of March 2024, The Citizen Tanzania ran an opinion piece by, 2023 Mawazo Fellow, Miriam Elisha Loivotoki, on the need for the country to increase institutional and systemic academic support for learners on the spectrum.



**[AZAM Media: Radio Interview with Miriam Elisha Loivotoki - April 2024](#)**

On April 5th 2024, 2023 Mawazo Fellow Miriam Elisha Loivotoki, from Tanzania, was interviewed by Azam Media in Swahili, to commemorate Autism Awareness Month. Miriam's research looks at autism from an educational perspective with a special focus on solutions that enable learners with autism to obtain maximum educational outputs while schooling in an inclusive educational setting.



**[THE CITIZEN: Increasing biosecurity in poultry farming could save farmers money - MAY 2024](#)**

On Wednesday the 15th of May 2024, The Citizen, a Tanzania based newspaper, ran an Opinion Piece by 2021 Mawazo Fellow, Rogia Gomez, on the importance of increasing biosecurity in poultry farming as a means for farmers to save money.

# Uganda



**[MONITOR: Measles outbreak: What needs to be done - JULY 2024](#)**

On July 8th 2024, Prossy Namuwulya, a Laboratory Scientist at the Uganda Virus Research Institute and 2023 Mawazo Fellow was featured in a piece by The Monitor, a Uganda based national newspaper highlighting measles as a highly contagious disease affecting young children, particularly in low-income countries.

Breaking barriers for women with hearing impairment



**[THE MONITOR: Breaking barriers for women with hearing impairment - November 2024](#)**

On 11th November, 2023 Mawazo Fellow Munira Gimono published an opinion piece based on her work on Ugandan women with hearing impairments in The Monitor, a Ugandan newspaper.

# Rwanda



**[NewsPaper Africa: Why Govts must chart course on tackling emerging disease threats - January 2024](#)**

Dr. Thérèse Umuhoza, 2021 Mawazo Fellow and current Associate Director at Global Public Health and Development, Africa at Holden Fitzgerald published an OpEd in the Rwandan online newspaper Newspaper.Africa on Dr. Thérèse's expertise as an epidemiologist as she forecasts African governments response to future epidemics.



**[NewsPaper Africa: Oral health affects overall health, it should not take a back seat - January 2024](#)**

Dr. Peace Uwambaye, 2021 Mawazo Fellow and Senior Lecturer at University of Rwanda's College of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Dentistry, published an OpEd in Newspaper.Africa, a Rwandan online newspaper calling attention to Africa's worrying state of oral healthcare and stresses the importance of research as a means to plan and conduct methods of intervention."

# South Africa



[CNBC AFRICA: Collaboration & policies for an effective higher education ecosystem - November 2024](#)

On 29th November, CNBC Africa's Akinkumi Obakeye caught up with Dr. Fiona Wanjiku Moejes, CEO of The Mawazo Institute, to discuss collaboration and policies for an effective higher education ecosystem, along with key outcomes from the British Council's Going Global Africa 2024 conference in Abuja, Nigeria.

# Global



[THE ASSOCIATED PRESS: To make water last year-round, Kenyans in dry regions are building sand dams on seasonal rivers - March 2024](#)

On 25th March, the Associated Press published a story citing 2021 Mawazo Fellow Dorcas Benard as an water resources and irrigation expert on how Kenyans living in drought stricken regions of the country have resorted to constructing sand dams on seasonal water bodies.



**The highlight of 2024 for me was initiating the recruitment process for more finance staff members within the department. As our work has evolved with Mawazo, bringing in an extra team member has enhanced our ability to deliver the department's mandate.**

Mark Kimani, Finance and Grants Associate

**A key highlight for Ops/HR was the launch of the Employee Welfare Assistance Program, which represents a crucial step in enhancing employee well-being and engagement. Additionally, the work on salary benchmarking along with ongoing discussions regarding job evaluation and skills gap analysis reflect a strong commitment to fostering a fair and structured workplace.**

Eva Wanjiru, HR and Admin Associate



**2024 marked my first full year at Mawazo, providing me with an incredible opportunity to immerse into various activities. I have found it exhilarating to participate in the Voices Public Engagement activities such as Mawazo Ideas Night (where I have officially been tagged as the Mawazo Timekeeper/Stage Manager!). In addition, my involvement in the Mawazo Ideas Podcast placed me directly in the action alongside the Voices Team offering valuable insights into the development and production of a podcast. I have thoroughly enjoyed acquiring new skills that may not traditionally fall under 'research' but have immensely enhanced my ability to disseminate my research from Mawazo and to the world.**

Aisha Mugo, Research Officer



## Team Leader



**Dr Fiona Wanjiku Moejes**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Directors



**Ashley Muthaka**  
Director of Operations



**Elizabeth Ngala**  
Director of Finance



**Dr Caroline Mose**  
Director of Programmes



## Leads



**Carolyne Tunnen**  
Communications Lead



**Damaris Ndua**  
Fellowship Programme Lead



**Kari Mugo**  
Voices Programme Lead



**Patrick Atandi**  
MEL Lead

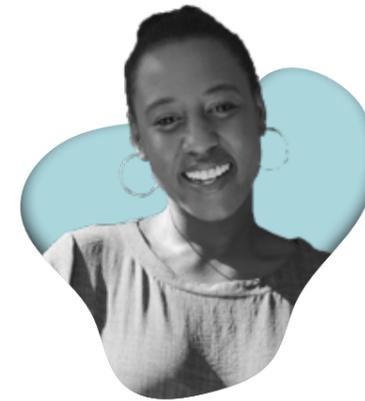


**Elaine Mungai**  
Strategic Partnerships Lead



**Ray Wanjiru**  
Software Engineering Lead

## Officers



**Naliaka Odera**  
Communications Officer



**Silvia Mwendia**  
Voices Programme Officer



**Roylex Kinigi**  
Grants Officer



**Aisha Mugo**  
Research Officer



**Angela Mwangi**  
Graphic Designer



## Associates



**Shirley Irungu**  
Data Insights Associate



**Mark Kimani**  
Finance and Grants Associate



**Eva Wanjiru**  
HR and Admin Associate



**Catherine Amayi**  
Voices Programme Associate



**Dorsila Ogola**  
Fellowship Programme Associate



**Rose Kairu**  
Software Engineering Associate



**Alvin Wandabwa**  
Strategic Communications Associate



## Letter from the Board Chair



It was an incredible honour be nominated as the Board Chair of the Mawazo Institute in 2024.

The Mawazo's dedication to supporting African women in research is a cause deeply personal to me. Too often, our perspectives, lived experiences, and expertise are missing from academia and policy, not because of a lack of brilliance, but because the spaces that should amplify our voices remain inaccessible.

This gap is not just a personal frustration; it is a profound disservice to the world, which loses out on the transformative contributions of African women scholars. I understand some of these challenges firsthand, having long aspired to pursue a PhD but struggling to see a clear path as a single mother and sole income earner. Yet, our incredible Fellows have faced and overcome even greater barriers, making Mawazo's work not only deeply meaningful to me but also truly inspiring.

The power of Mawazo lies in its ability to connect, across disciplines, geographies, and generations. In 2024, the organisation expanded its reach further than ever, linking more African women researchers from all corners of the continent to the resources, networks, and opportunities they need to thrive.

This momentum is only set to grow with the 2025 cohort, strengthening the bonds between research and policy, and ensuring that knowledge is not just generated but also applied to directly shape the world we live in. I am truly excited to witness and support another year of impact, innovation, and, above all, deeper connections that will continue to propel African women forward.

**TOGETHER IN PROGRESS!**

**Astrid R.N. Haas**

Board Chair, Mawazo Institute



# Financial Report



“ From a departmental perspective, one of our major achievements was successfully enhancing our financial and grant management systems. We implemented stronger processes, policies, and controls that have improved efficiency and accountability across the organization.

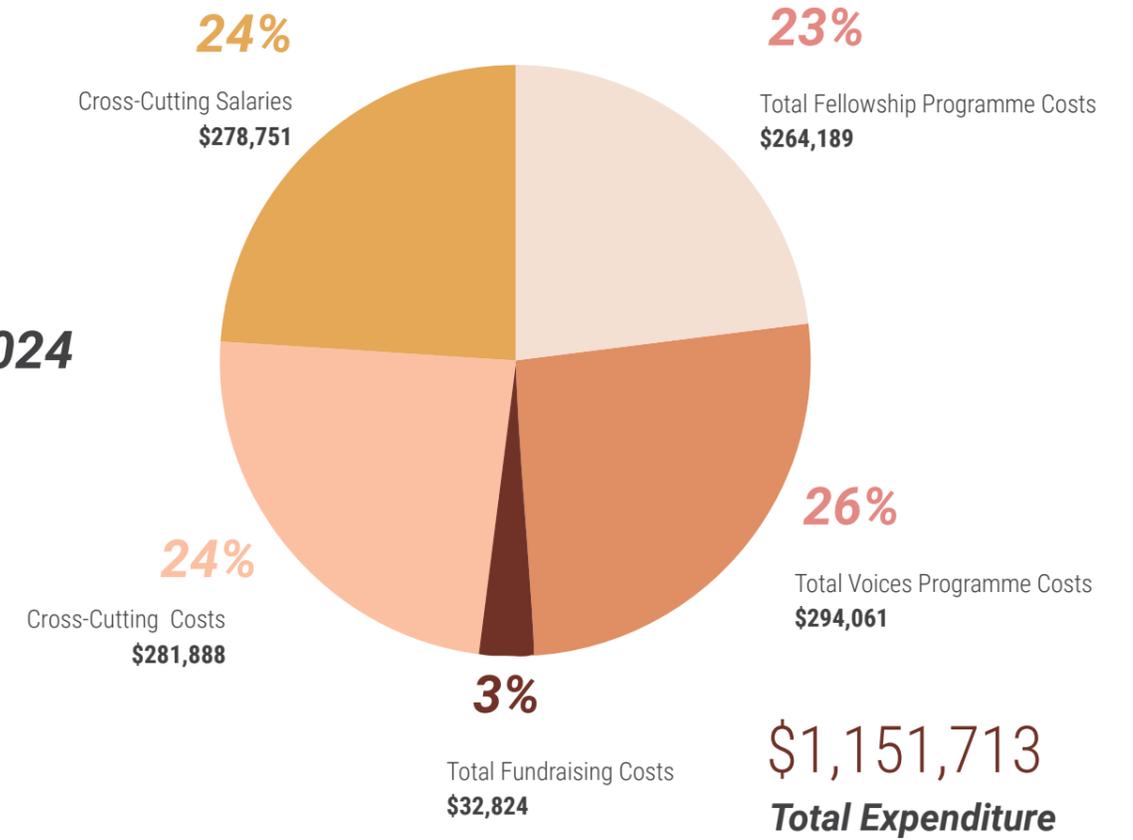
These advancements have been instrumental in ensuring that Mawazo’s exceptional programmes continue to thrive with sound financial and grants management, and sustainability. 2024 was a year of growth, learning, fun, and impact, and I look forward to even greater milestones ahead!

Elizabeth Ngala, Director of Finance ”

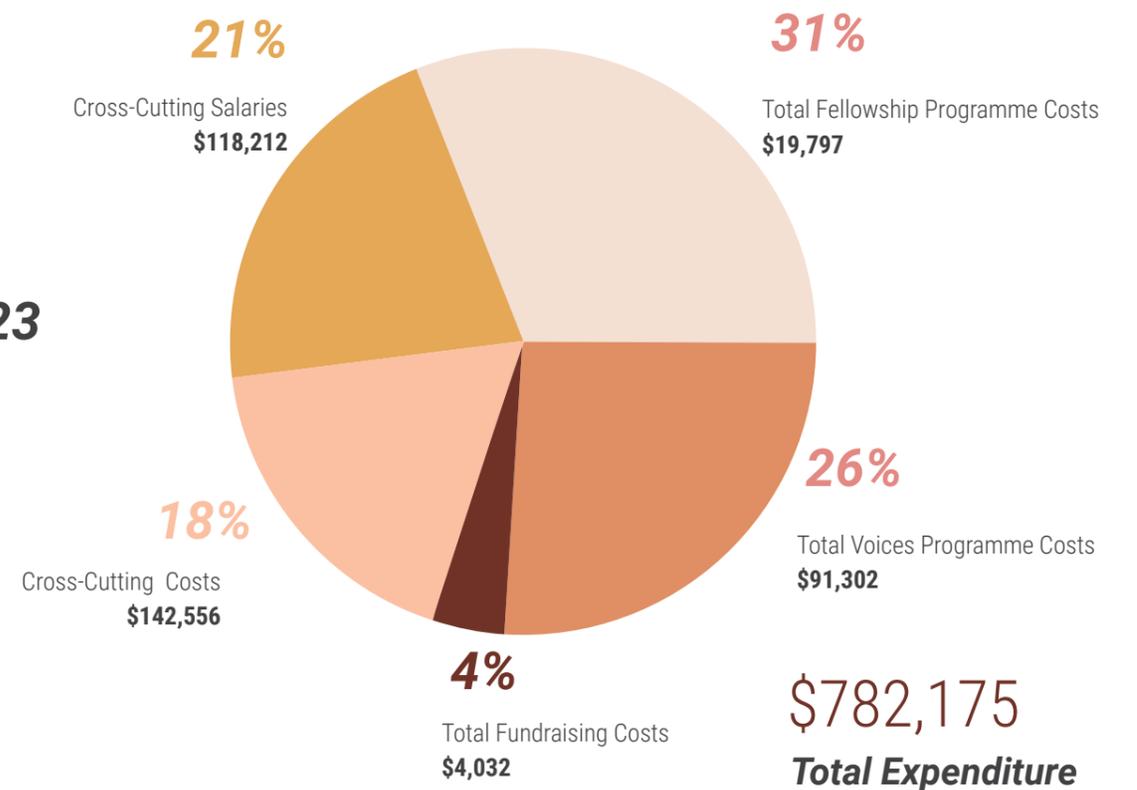


Cumin: Earthy, nutty flavours; Accentuates sweetness

2024



2023



## Funders



### Hear From our Donors!

*"I once read that 'mathematical ability is randomly and uniformly distributed', and I believe that African women have just as much ability in mathematics and sciences as anyone else. Unfortunately, opportunity is not evenly distributed, causing the world to miss out on the contributions that African women can make. Given the scale of global challenges, it is crucial to use all available talent, including African perspectives, to address Africa's specific issues rather than relying on outsiders who may not fully understand the realities involved. I advocate for Mawazo Institute because it focuses on nurturing and developing women's talent across Africa, enabling them to contribute to scientific advancements and ensuring their insights are recognized and integrated into practice."*

**Caroline Fiennes, Director, Giving Evidence**



*"Mawazo's work in 2024 has been transformational! By championing women researchers and strengthening pathways to commercialization, the institute has set a high standard for impact-driven research and innovation support in Africa."*



*The next step? Scaling these successes regionally and globally, while continuing to advocate for sustained funding, stronger policy advocacy, and deeper cross-sector collaborations to drive even greater impact in 2025 and beyond!"*

**Cecil Kang'ara, Country Technical Lead-Kenya/Rwanda RISA Fun**

## How to get involved

By supporting the Mawazo Institute, you'll be supporting the next generation of women driving research for development in Africa. Your support will help us to provide a range of resources to the promising young women we support.

### Individuals

To donate by check, please mail your contribution to:  
Mawazo Institute 1440 W Taylor St PMB 4094 Chicago, IL 60607 USA.

The Mawazo Institute is registered 501(c)(3) non-profit in the US. All donations are tax deductible for US donors.

To donate by Card, Paypal or M-changa log in to: [mawazoinstitute.org/donate-to-us](https://mawazoinstitute.org/donate-to-us)

### Strategic Partners

Mawazo is always looking to partner with organisations and institutions with complementary values and visions. Partners can represent any sector, including, but not limited to: (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; and (6) universities and higher education institutions.

As a partner, we shall work together to ensure that African women researchers and their big ideas are influencing a range of sectors where solutions are developed to address critical societal issues on the continent and beyond.

### Donors

The Mawazo Institute has been fortunate enough to have had support from a range of international donors and philanthropic organisations. We are always looking to forge new relationships with other donors and philanthropic organisations whose strategies align with Mawazo's mission and vision.

Please reach out to Mawazo through [contact@mawazoinstitute.org](mailto:contact@mawazoinstitute.org) to speak with a member of our team and see how you can join us and support our journey to create a sustainable and holistic future built by the big ideas of African women researchers.





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