

## Media Monitoring: Extract of Press News on Higher Education in Africa

### 1. University World News

#### **Social responsibility MOOC for universities launched (Africa-Global)**

Universities in Africa will benefit from a massive open online course (MOOC) that has been launched by the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN), which aims to promote understanding of how universities could better fulfil the societal expectations of higher education teaching and research. Speaking during the University Social Responsibility Summit 2021, which has been organised virtually by the University of Pretoria and will take place until 5 February, Dr Fernando Palacio, a member of the organising committee and a senior lecturer at Kyoto University in Japan, said the MOOC will lay the theoretical framework of how universities globally could go about community engagements. “The course will examine how universities on all continents could create innovative new ways to increase their footprint on social responsibility in their respective communities,” said Palacio. According to Palacio, and his associate Dr Nikan Sadehvandi, the project manager of the new MOOC at the Centre for the Promotion of Excellence in Higher Education at Kyoto University, more is required of the universities, beyond their historical functions of academic responsibility. The five-week course, “The Introduction to University Social Responsibility”, first mooted in 2018, was developed through the joint effort of six universities that are members of the USRN. Those universities are: Hong Kong Polytechnic, Manchester University, Sao Paulo University, New South Wales University, Kyoto University and the University of Pretoria. The course will be embedded on the edX.org platform. The MOOC, expected to take off on 17 February, will be a flagship initiative of the network as it will explore the foundations of the new mission of social responsibility in higher education in matters of societal and community partnership. Launching the project during the first day of the summit, Professor Toru Iiyoshi, the director of the Centre for the Promotion of Excellence in Higher Education at Kyoto University, said it was a big day for the network, whose aims include providing fresh ideas about social responsibility in universities. “Our key message through the new MOOC is that university social responsibility should be adopted as a progressive management system for pursuing sustainability,” said Iiyoshi.

Read more [here](#)

### 2. Euractiv

#### **EU-Africa partnership must reflect ‘realities of African agriculture’ (Africa)**

Future agrifood partnerships between the EU and Africa take into account the realities of farming in Africa, especially in the context of a drive for a greener transition, agrifood stakeholders have warned. The comments come in the context of talks between the two continents aimed at agreeing a new EU-Africa ‘strategic partnership’. Although discussions between the European Commission and African Union have stalled in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the pandemic has also underscored the need for stronger cooperation between the bloc and the African continent, highlighting both the growing urgency of the climate crisis and food security, and the interdependence of the two continents. Portugal, which holds the rotating EU Council presidency until July, is keen to push the agenda, with a Portuguese diplomat stressing back in January that “Africa should and could be a key partner of the EU”. Agriculture is one of the key focus areas of the partnership, with the EU’s focus being on facilitating a green transition in line with its Green Deal ambitions. However, visions for a green transition must be keeping with the specific circumstances on the African continent, stakeholders highlighted during a recent event on sustainable food systems and trade. “It is important that the strategy and partnership areas are adapted to the reality on our continent. We need an African green transition that takes into account the ongoing yield gap and the lower use of modern innovative practices and instruments in Africa,” Antonie Delpot, head of South Africa and strategic

partnerships for Africa and the Middle East for Syngenta, highlighted. “Compared to Europe, we need an African green transition that enables Africa to make the most of technology and innovation, but in a sustainable way and in partnership with the different parts of society, including the private sector,” he said. Delpot highlighted that Africa’s main trading partner is the EU, with trade with the EU accounting for 31% of Africa’s exports and 29% of its imports, and stressed the importance of regulation impacting both continents being “fit for purpose” in order for to maximise the potential for free trade agreements.

Read more [here](#)

### **3. Worldbank Blogs**

#### **Realizing the returns to schooling: How COVID-19 and school closures are threatening women's economic future (Africa)**

Returns to schooling for women are high – so says Bono and the research. A couple of years ago, in an essay in Time magazine Bono wrote: “Give girls just one additional year of schooling and their wages go up almost 12 percent.” He said the same thing a year before that at the Munich Security Conference. The source of that quote was a 2014 World Bank paper and a recent update confirms this is still the case. At the same time, girls are staying in school longer and learning more. However, these gains are at risk as COVID-19 is presenting a crisis within a crisis for girls’ education. On average, one additional year of schooling increases women’s returns to education by 12 percent compared with 10 percent for men. The gap in favor of women has increased by a percentage point over the last decade. Returns at the primary level are about the same for men and women but then diverge at the secondary level – 9 percent for women versus 7 percent for men – and at the tertiary level – 17 percent for women and 15 percent for men. These returns are higher for women than for men in all economies and all regions. At the higher education level returns have increased overall, but particularly for women. The longstanding disadvantage for girls in terms of enrollment has been declining over time, which has led to a reversal of the gender gap in educational attainment. Nevertheless, in terms of the number of expected years of schooling, girls are still disadvantaged in some contexts, including in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, and in fragile and conflict-affected states and low-income countries. The quality of education received by boys and girls is an important determinant of their access to higher levels of schooling and their future earnings. Girls have caught up to boys in many dimensions in recent decades and, in high- and middle-income countries, now outperform boys in terms of learning achievement. This has led to a “reverse gap” where girls outperform boys in both enrollment rates and learning outcomes – a female learning premium. Nevertheless, girls’ outcomes remain lower in some contexts, including in low-income countries. COVID-19 may put a temporary halt to this progress. COVID-19-induced school closures may slow or reverse these gains and may further prevent girls and women from realizing the potential returns – representing a “hidden” future cost. The World Bank is forecasting lower levels of schooling, learning, and future earnings because of school closures due to COVID-19. Learning poverty is expected to increase significantly. A growing body of studies from high-income countries including Belgium, Netherlands and the United Kingdom have already found losses of learning as well as growing inequality.

Read more [here](#)

#### **4. University World News**

##### **New continental platform for open access publishing (Africa)**

A new continental platform for the open access publishing of journals, monographs and textbooks in Africa has been developed by South Africa's University of Cape Town (UCT) through its library service.

The platform allows the African research community to share their scholarly content, which could advance the growth and development of local research aimed at benefiting African society. "The major publishing houses have inadvertently northernised the publishing landscape," said Dr Reggie Raju, the director of research and learning at UCT Libraries. "These publishing houses are driven by the fundamental principles of economics; that is, they will publish that which will be bought. It is the Global North that has the buying capacity." The "unintended but systematic" 'northernisation' of the publishing landscape has marginalised the research voices from the Global South, Raju told University World News. He added that the inequalities in publishing for and by marginalised voices are compounded by economic circumstances: the inability of Global South authors to pay exorbitant article processing charges in an environment in which there is a push via the openness movement for the free sharing of research output. "There is a desperate need for the democratisation and de-northernisation of the publishing landscape – a publishing process that promotes social justice and the inclusion of African researchers and research output into mainstream research processes," he said. Raju further explained that the creation of the platform is meant to dismantle structures that perpetuate information poverty. "It is common cause that access to research is critical for the production of new research. This vicious cycle contributes to information poverty. "The platform is meant to provide greater opportunity for the sharing of research with the positive effect of leading to the production of new research, thus dismantling structures that support information poverty," said Raju. He envisions enhancing the discoverability, visibility and accessibility of African research, thereby providing an opportunity for the improved distribution of African scholarship. The platform will apply a formal publication process and would include some peer review process as some of the articles on the platform could end up in a formal journal. He said that, when viewing other open access platforms such as pre-print publishers, "my contention is that the pre-prints have the potential [for] carrying poor science".

Read more [here](#)

#### **5. Africa Oil and Power**

##### **Africa Business Forum 2021 Calls for Enhanced Gender Diversity in African Energy (Kenya)**

Energy remains one of the least gender-diverse sectors globally, in which women only account for 22% of the traditional workforce. Taking into consideration senior management positions, this figure is even lower, demonstrating not only the lack of representation, but also of upward mobility within the industry. As the global energy sector undergoes a process of structural transformation – with a global environmental push toward low- or net-zero carbon developments – the current climate presents a pivotal opportunity for the sector to transform its approach to gender diversity, as well. Speaking at the virtual 4th Africa Business Forum 2021, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta shared insight into the role that women must play in Africa's energy industry and positioned the elimination of the gender gap as vital to industry progression. According to the International Energy Agency, women represent key drivers of innovative and inclusive solutions, and consequently, Africa must draw on all talents to deliver a secure, affordable and sustainable energy future for all. Women have a critical role to play not only in the growth of the energy sector, but also of African economies at large. The benefits of female participation go beyond the provision of additional labor and extend to key business success factors. Women – and diversity in general – offer the ability to expand the industry through innovation, success and progression. According to the Energy and Economic Growth Applied Research Program, a correlation exists between business performance and gender diversity in the workplace. Studies have shown that companies with strong female leadership deliver a 36% higher return

on equity and outperform those with male-only boards. “If you leave out women, who compose 50%, if not more, of the population, you have locked out 50% of the workforce and reduced your capacity for growth by 50%,” said President Kenyatta. “One of the key and fundamental things we need to recognize is that we have to include women. Women should be at the center of our developmental agenda.” One of the primary challenges that inhibits female participation in the African energy sector concerns education. Statistics show that more than 49 million girls and young women leave education at the primary or secondary school level in sub-Saharan Africa. The gender gap is perpetuated by unequal access to education, and in conjunction with limited access for women regarding technical skills and training opportunities, the other half continues to lag as the industry evolves. “We have to assure access to education,” said President Kenyatta. “No girl should be absent from education. As a government, we must encourage women and young people. and have done that by setting aside 30% of our government procurement to be assigned to this demographic, in order to give them an edge and interpoint into the mainstream economy by ensuring that they are active players and participants.” Through the establishment of initiatives that seek to expand female participation in energy via training and education, Africa can advance the sector by leveraging the talents and skills of its female population. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), for example, has established the Energy2Equal initiative that aims to empower women in Africa’s renewable energy sector. The IFC works with both large companies and small firms to close the gender gap by helping companies to improve their business performance, foster innovation, attract better talent and strengthen engagement with local communities. “Women have been denied the opportunity to present and showcase their capacity,” Kenyatta continued. “We need to do everything we can to ensure that women in the country get the same opportunities, if not more, than their male counterparts. Women have the power to drive development and the growth of society.”

Read more [here](#)

## 6. University World News

### Ugandan universities to reopen in ‘phased manner’ (Uganda)

Universities and higher education institutions in Uganda will reopen using a staggered system at the beginning of March, with strict adherence to COVID-19 prevention measures. This decision was announced by Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni during his 4 February address to the nation.

The Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports (MES) later added that this staggered approach “will enable institutions to conform to the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in lecture rooms, halls of residence, dining halls and on-campus generally”. The 2020 academic year will end in July this year and, thereafter, a comprehensive school calendar and a strategy for the recovery of lost time will be issued and implemented, the MES said, and noted that “progression to the next class will be based on attendance and continuous assessment of classwork and assignments”. Different groups of students will be reporting to universities on different days and will be required to wear face masks at all times. The ministry will also establish a medical team to support institutions that will be affected.

Speaking to University World News, Professor Barnabas Nawangwe, vice-chancellor of Makerere University, Uganda, who has proposed the implementation of a staggered and phased opening for universities to Uganda’s MES, said this proposal would “ensure a holistic experience of university life for all university students, particularly the freshmen and women and would allow for observance of the Standard Operating Procedures of the ministry of health against the spread of the coronavirus”. “The freshmen and women would report to campus first for proper in situ orientation, while the rest of the students commence lectures online,” Nawangwe added. “After a month or so, the second-year students would replace the freshmen and women on campus while the latter revert to online learning, together with the rest of the students,” he pointed out. “Finally, after another month, the finalists would replace the second-year students on campus,

study in situ for one month and write their examinations for two weeks, after which the freshmen and second-year students would return to write their examinations,” Nawangwe said. “This way, all the students would complete their semester studies, including practical work, without disruption,” he concluded. Uganda closed all higher educational institutions in March last year as part of wider efforts to halt the communal spread of the coronavirus but, on 15 October, they were reopened for tertiary and university students to complete their studies with health and social distance measures in place. According to UNESCO, 165,395 university students have been affected by closures of higher learning institutions in Uganda.

Read more [here](#)

## **7. University World News**

### **COVID deaths in Africa higher than official count, Zambia study suggests (Zambia)**

A study of corpses in a Zambian morgue suggests that deaths from Covid-19 may have been routinely undercounted in the country, and by extension possibly elsewhere in Africa, challenging the view that the continent has avoided the worst effects of the pandemic. According to official records, just over 90,000 people have died from Covid-19 in Africa, which equates to about 4 per cent of the global death toll in a continent that makes up 17 per cent of the world’s population. Several explanations have been advanced for Covid’s apparently low impact, including the continent’s youthful population, its relative isolation and swift measures to contain the pandemic taken by health authorities. However, research by Boston University School of Public Health, which has not yet been peer reviewed, offers an alternative thesis: that many Covid deaths have simply not been registered. Researchers, who took nose and throat swabs from the bodies of recently deceased people at the University Teaching Hospital morgue in Lusaka, found a far higher incidence of Covid-19 than expected. Of 364 bodies tested, Covid-19 was detected in 70. Lawrence Mwananyanda, who led the research, said it cast doubt on the view that Covid-19 had “somehow skipped” Africa. “If our data are generalisable, the impact of Covid-19 in Africa has been vastly underestimated,” the authors of the paper wrote. While it was possible the first wave had been relatively well contained a second wave was proving more deadly. “In Lusaka now, everybody knows someone who has died of Covid or who is in the hospital with Covid,” he said. Dr Mwananyanda estimated that Zambia’s official Covid-19 death toll of 723 might underestimate the true level by as much as tenfold, a pattern that he said could be replicated in many African countries where Covid-19 testing is limited and the cause — or even the fact — of death goes routinely unrecorded.

Read more [here](#)

## **8. University World News**

### **Minister blocks proposed hikes in university tuition fees (Zimbabwe)**

The Zimbabwean government has refused to approve proposed fee hikes by local universities and colleges, at least until the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic has receded. Professor Amon Murwira, the minister of higher and tertiary education, innovation, science and technology development, made the announcement. Murwira said earlier, in January, that the purpose of the country’s universities was not to generate profits, and insisted that the current fee structures must be maintained, citing affordability, reasonability and sustainability as the three factors that determine fee hikes. “The fee structure we are maintaining at universities is even lower than those being charged by most boarding schools in the country. But, we know that parents are hard-pressed and no fee hikes will be approved until such a time when the economic conditions have relatively improved,” he said. Students welcomed the announcement, but hoped the minister had not made an empty promise. Speaking to University World News, the Zimbabwe National Students Union secretary-general, Tapiwanashe Chiriga, said students who were already under severe financial pressure would obviously welcome a tuition increase freeze in 2021.

“But then, an interview with the media saying fees won’t be hiked is not enough; we have seen this before. We had assurances from the minister early last year that fees were not going to be hiked but still [we] ended up having fee hikes. “As we speak, fees for polytechnics, industrial training colleges and teachers’ colleges have already been hiked to astronomical levels,” he added. “The ministry also needs to find ways to make education more and more accessible even during this lockdown,” said Chiriga. On average, a Zimbabwean undergraduate university student is currently paying about ZW\$20,000, equivalent to about US\$200 per semester. Fees hikes of up to ZW\$80,000 (US\$800), which were being proposed by universities, would have likely triggered fresh protests from students as the average civil servant in Zimbabwe earns about ZW\$18,000 (US\$180) a month. The majority of the populace rely on the informal sector, which has been closed in the government’s attempts to curb the spread of the coronavirus. So far, COVID-19 has been responsible for about 32,000 infections and just over 1,000 deaths in the country.

Read more [here](#)

## 9. Time

### **Agnes Kalibata, the UN's Food Systems Chief, on How Science Can Transform Farming to Help Save the Planet (General)**

Agricultural systems are one of the biggest contributors to climate change, producing about 20% of total global emissions. At the same time, the single biggest threat of climate change is the collapse of global food systems. As the world population grows, the climate heats up and resources become more scarce, how will we ensure we have enough food to go around? Science is being combined with agriculture to develop new crops that can withstand the impacts of climate change. A group working at the forefront of this collaboration is CGIAR System Organization, formerly known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the world’s largest publicly-funded agricultural research partnership. But this area needs to be scaled up; CGIAR says double the amount of the current level of investment is needed to slow down the food and climate crises facing the planet by 2030. On the side-lines of the UN’s 2021 Climate Adaptation Summit, TIME speaks with Agnes Kalibata, the Rwandan-born agricultural scientist and policymaker who was recently appointed as UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ special envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit. The summit will call for bold action to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, while providing solutions and delivering progress on Sustainable Development Goals. Kalibata, a former minister for agriculture in Rwanda, played a large role in bringing food security to the mostly agricultural country. In an interview edited for length and clarity, Kalibata discusses new food technologies, the future of farming, and why eating insects, while good for human and planetary health, is likely to remain a fringe idea for the foreseeable future. We’ve seen huge impact on food in countries that are in marginal areas [such as the Sahel, on the fringe of the Sahara Desert], where farming systems depend on rainfall and rainfall has become less predictable. So for these communities that are living on the edge, [climate change] has impacted food security. We’ve seen average losses of 20%. That reduction takes away everything a farmer would have in term of income.

Read more [here](#)

## 10. University World News

### **Industry-academia collaboration tested during COVID-19 (Africa)**

Africa’s research institutions have not been missing in action at proffering solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, industry partnerships required to support these efforts through opportunities for further validation and commercialisation have not been widely available. This reflects the huge divide in industry-academia relations that have long existed on the continent. The success of the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca in the development of a vaccine to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus is a testament

to the immense possibilities from industry-academia collaboration in the developed world that needs to be replicated in Africa. In Senegal, researchers at the DiaTropix facility of the Institut Pasteur de Dakar leveraged their AIDS and Ebola experience to develop an immune-based \$1 diagnostic kit that can test for COVID-19 in 10 minutes. Engineering students at the Ecole Supérieure Polytechnique in Dakar have also built a multifunctional medical robot to lessen the workload of healthcare workers. Nigeria had an early start as the first African country to sequence the SARS-CoV-2 genome, made possible through the collaboration of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, independent research institutions and others based in universities across the country. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana has partnered with a diagnostic start-up to develop a rapid test that detects COVID-19 antibodies.

Despite the successes recorded by Africa's institutions, the scale of collaboration with the industry that takes headline-making innovation beyond the walls of an institution is conspicuously missing. These collaborations can also provide an opportunity for further validation, and a path to widespread adoption and commercialisation. The collaboration between DiaTropix at the Institut Pasteur de Dakar and the UK-based Mologic for the manufacture of co-developed diagnostic kits is one of the rare exceptions on the continent, yet more of that is needed. Industry-academia collaboration in Africa has the potential to unleash a new era of innovation in research and development that proffers solutions and develops the institutional capacity of both faculty and students. It can also contribute to the revenue streams of companies in the local and developed markets through reverse innovation.

Read more [here](#)

### **11. WorldBank Blog**

#### **Agriculture as a buffer in COVID-19 crisis: Evidence from five Sub-Saharan African countries (Africa)**

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have not been spared from the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Articulating a policy response to the impact of COVID-19 requires understanding how and which households have been impacted and if households may have been able to rely on or move into specific activities that may act as a buffer in crises. Governments of five SSA countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda), in collaboration with the World Bank, are implementing several rounds of COVID-19 high-frequency phone surveys (HFPS) to monitor the socioeconomic implications of the pandemic. Agriculture is one of the focus topics included in these surveys. The sample included in the HFPS were interviewed face-to-face in 2018/19 as part of the Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Survey on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) project, making comparison possible. Given that HFPS data collection coincided with the 2020/21 pre-harvest season, this piece focuses primarily on pre-harvesting using data collected from April-August 2020. The data show that agriculture continues to be the main source of livelihood of smallholder households in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the share of households involved in agriculture increasing since the start of the pandemic. Prior to the outbreak, 76% of Nigerian households were involved in agriculture (either crop or livestock farming), but the share has increased to 84% since the start of the pandemic. Similarly, in Malawi and Uganda, 91% and 79% of households are involved in agriculture now, compared to the pre-pandemic levels of 84% and 76%, respectively. These changes are products of the net effect of households moving into and out of agriculture; in most cases, entries are larger than exits, with the exception of livestock in Uganda. In general, the share of households that have entered into agriculture since the start of the pandemic is higher than those exiting. For instance, in Malawi, about 9% of households who were not involved in agriculture before the pandemic are doing so now, compared to about 2% that have stopped. Similarly, the share of Nigerian households who have gone into agriculture is higher (12%) than those exiting (4%). At the subsector level, the share of households that have gone into crop farming appears higher than those that have exited. About 16% of Ethiopian households that were not involved in crop farming before the pandemic are doing so now, compared to about 3% are not cultivating crops in the 2020 agricultural

season. In Nigeria, about 19% of households who did not own/raise livestock pre-pandemic are doing so now, compared to about 15% that owned/raised livestock last year but are not doing so after the outbreak. In Uganda, however, we find more households exiting livestock production (17%) than those entering (10%). Across countries, the percentage of households going into livestock production appears higher than those transitioning into crop farming. This can possibly be explained by the seasonal nature of crop production compared to livestock farming.

Read more [here](#)

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