

## Global Africa Group

### Summary report on activities since May 2017 AGM

8 May 2018

#### Background

The Global Africa Group was established by WUN in late 2015 as a cross-cutting regional group and is now comprised of 14 WUN members. The Group is Co-Chaired by the University of Cape Town (Prof. Maano Ramutsindela) and the University of Western Australia (Dr David Mickler) and meets quarterly via its Steering Committee. The Group facilitates research collaboration at the intersection of the UN *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the African Union's *Agenda 2063* and existing WUN expertise. GAG has focused its work on five priority research themes: environmental change and food security; public health; governance, inequality and social inclusion; higher education and research capacity; and natural resources for inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Group's *Strategic Plan 2016-18* outlines how, given the imbalance in African/non-African universities in the Network, the Group supports its three African university members—Cape Town, Ghana and Nairobi—as regional research hubs for Southern/West/East Africa, respectively. It does this by concentrating GAG activities on these hubs, promoting researcher mobility, aligning with like-minded research networks, and linking local, national, regional and global research and development priorities. GAG's activities over the past year have been supported by a small WUN Sustainability Grant.

#### Workshops & Events

GAG convened its launch workshop on 8-9 June 2017 in Accra, Ghana, with University of Ghana Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ebenezer Owusu formally launching the Group. The workshop, attended by over 50 WUN members from 12 member universities (and five non-member universities), heard a number of presentations by senior researchers and leaders in the Network, including a keynote address by UG's Prof. Chris Gordon. Participants then split into the five priority research themes to discuss mutual interests and to generate ideas for collaborative projects. These ideas were refined and presented back to the whole group on the final afternoon, with the aim of further developing the ideas into grant proposals for seed funding. Participants then enjoyed a group cultural tour on 10 June to historic Cape Coast Castle, the University of Cape Coast, and Kakum National Park.

On 12-13 June 2017, four members of WUN, including GAG Co-Chair Dr Mickler and WUN Coordinators Group Chair Dr Susan Jim, visited the University of Nairobi, Kenya, to welcome UoN into the Network and GAG as the third African university member. The WUN delegation met with leaders and researchers from a number of UoN colleges and faculties before meeting in roundtable with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Mbithi and members of the university's senior executive. The delegation presented the structure and opportunities for collaboration within the Network and GAG, while learning about the research and development priorities for the University of Nairobi and Kenya more broadly.

At the University of Cape Town, South Africa, authors participating in the GAG collaborative book project *Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Springer, forthcoming) met for a book workshop on 2 December 2017. The workshop featured presentations of draft chapters by co-authors and discussion by other participants, including guest experts not involved in the project. The workshop concluded with a group dinner at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town.

Side meetings of participating GAG members have been held at meetings of the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) in Perth (September 2017) and Cape Town (December 2017), and in addition to AAUN the Group has discussed collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU).

## Research Projects

The principle research project undertaken by the Group is to produce the edited volume *African and the Sustainable Development Goals*, co-edited by GAG Co-Chairs Prof. Ramutsindela and Dr Mickler, which will be published in Springer's Sustainable Development Goals series in late 2018/early 2019. A call for Eols to submit chapters was made in early 2017, with the Accra workshop serving to develop collaborative chapters and the Cape Town workshop providing an opportunity for accepted chapter drafts to be presented. The project will feature 25 chapters covering all of the 17 SDGs under three sections: (i) Africa's sustainable development: approaches, institutions, agendas; (ii) Scientific evidence and critical thinking on the SDGs in Africa; and (iii) Africa and the SDGs: the role of collaborative research. It features some 70 contributing co-authors from WUN and beyond, including both academics and expert practitioners. The rules included that each chapter must be co-authored by at least one Africa-based author, and at least one WUN-member-based co-author, with the co-editors seeking overall gender balance and balance between senior and early career researchers (including postgraduate researchers). The publisher has agreed to feature the WUN logo on the book's cover.

The Accra workshop was designed to facilitate bottom-up research collaborations among participants with an objective of forming research teams that would develop and submit seed grant applications, such as the WUN RDF 2017/18 scheme. We were delighted that there were three successful Africa-related projects in the RDF 2017 round, including: (i) Resilient Peace: Exploring resilient peacebuilding actors, cultures and policy transfer in West Africa (led by University of Bristol); (ii) African Solutions to African Problems-Translating Indigenous Systems, Plants and Microbial Biodiversity into Drug Candidates for Neglected Tropical Diseases (led by University of Ghana); (iii) An Intersectional Exploration of Religion and Gender-Based Violence: A Case Study of Accra in Global Context (led by University of Ghana). The GAG Steering Committee is working to support each project where possible.

## Upcoming Activities

1. 25 May 2018: GAG public panel event "Africa and Sustainable Development Agendas", as part of WUN Conference & AGM 2018 in Perth, Australia, and to celebrate Africa Day 2018.
2. 22-26 October 2018 (tbc): proposed GAG 2018 annual research workshop at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, alongside 6<sup>th</sup> African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Conference.
3. Development of GAG *Strategic Plan 2019-21*.