



ISAAA AfriCenter

ACCELERATING AFRICA'S BIOTECH TIPPING POINT

**ISAAA AFRICENTER
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**



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AFRICENTER'S MANDATE

VISION

A food secure Africa
free of hunger and
poverty

MISSION

To share knowledge
on agricultural
biotechnology
and biosafety
through strategic
communications and
outreach for informed
policy and choice

APPROACH



1) Communication and Knowledge Sharing

Improving awareness and knowledge on crop biotechnology



2) Capacity Building

Strengthening capacity for effective science communication



3) Policy Engagement

Creating a favourable environment for crop biotechnology development



4) Media Engagement

Enhancing more balanced and accurate reporting on agri-biotechnology and biosafety



5) AfriCenter's New Initiatives

Repositioning AfriCenter to meet new challenges in the biosciences landscape



6) Strategic Partnerships

Creating synergies to maximize impact and optimize resources



Message from the Director

*Dr. Margaret Karembu, MBS
Director, ISAAA AfriCenter*

Unprecedented success illuminated the story of agricultural biotechnology in Africa over the last one year. Africa made remarkable progress with the number of countries planting biotech crops more than doubling – from three in 2018 to seven in 2021. Four others continued to show promise through field trials focusing on crops and traits of high relevance to challenges facing the region. This significant advancement has positioned the continent for increased adoption. To accelerate progress towards this tipping point, the Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication (ABBC 2021) symposium facilitated a rich exchange of experiences from more than a decade of biosafety, biotech research, outreach and advocacy.

The environmental release approval of two food crops – disease resistant cassava in Kenya and TELA maize in Nigeria – marked a milestone in Africa's agricultural biotech in 2021. ISAAA AfriCenter led the first-ever virtual public participation for an environmental release application in Africa, which contributed to the approval of a genetically modified (GM) cassava in Kenya, the first-ever approval of a biotech cassava globally. We shared our unique experience with the Golden Rice project in the Philippines, ahead of their public participation process.

In our continued quest to serve information needs of various stakeholders, we developed several simplified knowledge products. We also stayed ahead of the misinformation curve by promptly highlighting Africa's early take-off in genome editing through a Brief that continues to capture lead projects in the region. The DrumBeat, our monthly e-newsletter, kept a pulse on Africa's progress in biosciences, and consistently

updated close to 5,000 subscribers. We exposed over 100 stakeholders to biotech advancements in Africa through our pioneer seeing-is-believing study tours to Bt cotton farmer fields and GM cassava field trials. The study tours are playing a fundamental role in building stakeholder confidence, sustaining political goodwill, and bolstering farmers' support and capacity in commercial cultivation of biotech crops.

In our efforts to build public engagement capacity of those who shape society's opinion on agricultural innovations, we held five science communication training workshops targeting close to 150 participants, representing more than 20 countries covering Africa, south Asia and southeast Asia. The trainings have equipped recipients with requisite skills to engage non-technical audiences in order to translate science into policy and/or practice.

The Center continued to engage policy and decision makers towards aligning agricultural biotechnology with key government agendas. For continued and balanced reporting on agri-biotech issues, we continued to engage the media using various strategies including science cafes, study tours, and

commissioning of biotech stories, while incentivising accurate coverage through the OFAB Kenya media awards. Our efforts garnered over 50 million media impressions.

COVID-19 pandemic has made things difficult for all of us. We have all had to adjust to the new-normal by finding innovative ways of engaging stakeholders and sustaining momentum in this radically altered world. At AfriCenter, we hosted 12 webinars on various topical issues, ranging from animal biotechnology, sustainable and equitable food systems, to addressing myths linking agricultural innovations to non-communicable diseases. These webinars have reached close to 2,000 participants from over 20 countries, and contributed significantly towards curbing the infodemic. In light of the pandemic, several stakeholder engagement workshops happened virtually.

AfriCenter is now repositioning itself to meet new challenges in the biosciences landscape, aggravated by politicization of science and rising scepticism of emerging tools.



ISAAA AfriCenter led the first-ever virtual public participation for an environmental release application in Africa, which contributed to the approval of a genetically modified (GM) cassava in Kenya, the first-ever approval of a biotech cassava globally."

ISAAA AfriCenter Unveils New Board

The AfriCenter family is excited to welcome a new [Board of Directors](#). The Board comprises a team of eight eminent personalities representing developing and industrialized countries, public and private sectors, and various professional interest groups. Made up of an eclectic blend of both young and time-honoured, the new Board represents a wide range of expertise in science, technology and innovation (STI), research and academia, food security, advocacy, and, leadership and management. They bring expansive experience and expertise, important ingredients in our quest to ensuring our continent is an equal player in development, acquisition and commercialization of biosciences for prosperity.

The Board will be chaired by Dr. Robert Karanja, the co-founder and Chief Innovations Officer at Villgro Africa, an early stage business incubator and impact investor that seeks to support start-ups with a global social impact focus in the African region. Robert enjoys impeccable record in donor engagements having successfully developed and built extensive relationships with development partners at Villgro over the years. His invaluable entrepreneurial and networking skills are an important addition to a rich pool of capabilities that the board is bringing along.

The Board will oversee programmatic, organizational, and policy strategies of ISAAA AfriCenter. Specifically, the new directors will provide indispensable guidance and strategic direction as AfriCenter repositions itself to meet new challenges in the biosciences landscape. We assure the new Board of our unwavering support.

ISAAA AFRICENTER BOARD 2021

SECRETARY

Dr. Dianah Ngonyama
USA

BOARD CHAIR

Dr. Robert Karanja
KENYA

TREASURER

Dr. Jenny Molloy
UK

MEMBERS

Prof. Ratemo Michieka
KENYA

Prof. Kazuo Watanabe
JAPAN

Dr. Appolinaire Djikeng
CAMEROON/UK

Dr. Charity Mutegi
KENYA

Dr. Canasius Kanangire
RWANDA

Dr. Margaret Karembu, MBS
Director, ISAAA AfriCenter

Dr. Mahaletchumy Arujanan
Global Coordinator,
ISAAA/BioTrust

Prof. Jeniffer Thomson
SOUTH AFRICA
(*ex-officio*)

Prof. Paul Teng
SINGAPORE
(*ex-officio*)

COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

AfriCenter continues to take pole position in increasing knowledge and awareness on agricultural biotechnology in Africa. Communication and knowledge sharing facilitates informed policy and choice. The Center's knowledge sharing initiative is driven by a strategic communications and outreach strategy. AfriCenter serves information needs of different stakeholders and quenches the developing world's thirst for science-based information. Provision of science-based information empowers stakeholders with knowledge and builds public's trust in biotechnology.

OUR INTERVENTIONS

Development of Simplified Knowledge Products

Sensitization Forums and Seeing-is believing Study Tours

Convening and Hosting the Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication (ABBC2021) Symposium

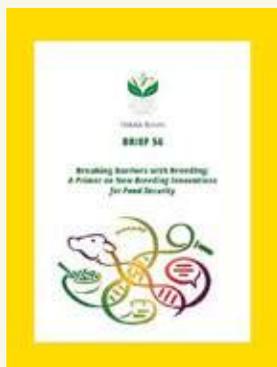
Development of Knowledge Products

Repackaging technical scientific information into easier to understand knowledge products is crucial in accelerating adoption of agricultural innovations. Over the years, AfriCenter has developed simplified information, education and communication (IEC) materials that address information needs of different stakeholders.

The following products were produced in 2021

Brief 56

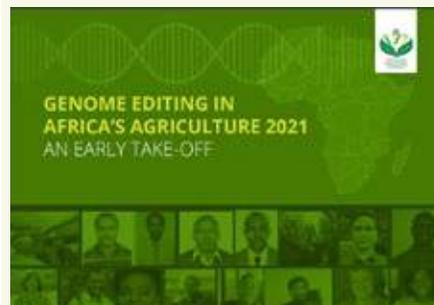
ISAAA's annual report, commonly referred as the Brief, is ISAAA's flagship product for knowledge and information sharing. The report for the year 2021, titled 'Breaking Barriers with Breeding: A Primer on New Breeding Innovations for Food Security', exclusively explored the potential of new breeding innovations on food security.



ISAAA Brief 56

Booklet on Genome Editing in Africa's Agriculture Kenya

The purpose of this booklet is to highlight genome editing projects and experts that are making use of this technology in Africa.



Booklet on Genome Editing in Africa

Short Impact Videos

AfriCenter has carved out a niche in highlighting agri-biotech innovations in Africa and bringing them to the public domain through short videos capturing important voices and milestones. In 2021, more than [15 short videos](#) on crop biotech and other innovative gene technologies were developed and disseminated.



Short impact videos

The DrumBeat e-newsletter

The DrumBeat is a monthly e-newsletter that tells the African bioscience story. The publication amplifies bioscience development on the continent and nurture a favorable policy environment. In 2021, AfriCenter published and shared 12 publications of the DrumBeat. The publication has over 5,000 subscribers comprising policy makers, media, development partners, scientists and academia..



DrumBeat front page

IMPACT



Enhanced public understanding and appreciation of crop biotechnology.



Increased awareness and knowledge about VIRCA Plus among select stakeholders for realistic expectations.



Increased confidence in the adoption of agricultural biotechnology in the continent as a result of factual information about the technology.

Sensitization Forums and Seeing-is-believing Study Tours

Public and stakeholder sensitization through forums and tours has increased knowledge and appreciation of agricultural biotechnology in Africa. These outreach activities have instilled confidence and facilitated adoption of biotech crops. Seeing-is-believing study tours to biotech crop fields have provided key stakeholders with experiential opportunities on the benefits of biotech crops.



Study tour: KALRO Director General Dr. Eliud Kireger (right) participates in a study tour of a GM cassava CFT site in Alupe, Western Kenya.)

4

BIOTECH
STUDY TOURS
CONDUCTED



150+

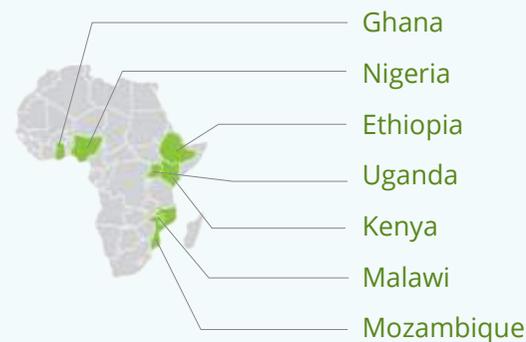
STAKEHOLDERS EXPOSED;
THESE INCLUDED:



Farmers Policy makers Regulators Journalists and media editors

7

AFRICAN
COUNTRIES
REACHED



Ghana

Nigeria

Ethiopia

Uganda

Kenya

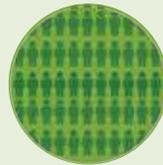
Malawi

Mozambique

Organizing the Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication (ABBC2021) Symposium

AfriCenter held the fourth edition of **ABBC2021** Symposium from 20th-24th September 2021 in a hybrid format with in-person attendance in six African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda) and virtual participation from the rest of the world. It was themed 'Accelerating Africa's Biotech Tipping Point: Taking Stock and Celebrating the Gains'. The Symposium also provided an opportunity to highlight the advancements and prospects of using genome editing in Africa following ABBC 2019 resolutions. The participants comprised policy makers, biosafety regulators, science communicators, media practitioners, technology developers (scientists), private sector players, farmers and development partners.

KEY IMPACT



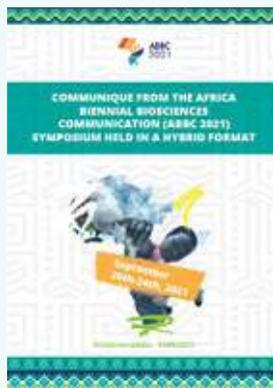
More than 1200 delegates actively participated in ABBC 2021 Symposium



Key recommendations for enhancement of Africa's agri-biotech and biosafety development were captured in a communique to be presented to the African Union for action.



Official launch of the African Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing with great support from heads of regional science academies and vice-chancellors across four African universities.



*ABBC2021
Communique*



*ABBC2021 Symposium
Proceedings*



I just re-read this pamphlet on Top Ten Facts about VIRCA Plus in Kenya. It is very thoughtfully designed. Special kudos to ISAAA AfriCenter. A model for others.



*Lawrence Kent, Senior Program Officer,
Agricultural Development, Bill & Melinda
Gates Foundation.*



*Top 10 Facts about
VIRCA Plus*

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EFFECTIVE AGRI-BIOTECH AND BIOSAFETY COMMUNICATION

Capacity building remains key in advancement and adoption of science technology and innovation. AfriCenter places capacity building at the core of her functions. At the Center, we continue to strengthen the capacity of those who shape society's opinion on agricultural innovations.

In 2021, the Center and her partners conducted ten science communication trainings for about 250 participants from different African countries. The trainings targeted scientists and journalists from various agricultural research institutes and media organizations.

OUR INTERVENTIONS

Science
Communication
Training

Stewardship
Training





50+

Livestock researchers equipped with Science Communication Skills

AfriCenter in partnership with ILRI equipped livestock researchers from different African countries with skills to communicate their research findings to key stakeholders. This will contribute towards adoption of evidence-based decisions and informed choices on research investments.



38

Farmer Leaders Trained on Bt Cotton Stewardship

ISAAA AfriCenter, through OFAB Kenya, held a virtual training for farmers on Bt cotton stewardship in August 2021. The training of trainers (ToT) brought together farmer leaders from 20 cotton-growing counties to equip them with skills on Bt cotton stewardship; proper agronomic practices, seed access and multiplication. The trainees will cascade the skills to other farmers within their counties. An interactive biotech crop e-learning platform, that will be instrumental in supporting stewardship efforts, was launched.



Group work during science communication training for ILRI fellows



Bt cotton stakeholders visit Kitui County Textile Center in 2021



A screenshot of biotech crop e-learning platform

KEY IMPACT



A critical mass of African researchers that can effectively engage with non-technical audiences.



Enhanced farmer skills on Bt cotton stewardship and proper agronomic practices.



Linkages among diverse groups of scientists established

“

Science communication training by ISAAA has imparted me with skills and confidence to **pitch my research idea to policy makers.** I've also gained confidence to engage the media about my work.



*Dr. Mestawet Taye, Asst. Professor,
Hawassa University, Ethiopia*

POLICY ENGAGEMENT FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

Evidence-based policy-making is the fulcrum that creates a conducive environment for advancement of science, technology and innovation. Enabling policies spur development and facilitate realization of science agenda. Empowering policy makers with credible, simplified and factual scientific information forms a strong basis for creating a favorable policy environment. Over the past year, AfriCenter has actively engaged policy makers to ensure they are well informed on crop biotechnology and biosafety.

OUR INTERVENTIONS

Seeing-is-believing
Study Tours

Peer-to-peer
Learning

Policy-round
Table

Simplified
Knowledge
Products e.g.
information
briefs, and white
papers



Policy Advocacy towards Lifting GMO Importation Ban in Kenya

AfriCenter offered support to Kenya feed manufacturers in engaging legislators on the importance of genetically modified products for the feed/food sector in the country. AfriCenter and the Association of Kenya Animal Feed Manufacturers (AKEFEMA) petitioned legislators to allow importation of GM feeds to cushion shortage and unprecedented increase in the price of animal feed in the country. Feed shortage had led to closure of some millers and subsequent loss of thousands of jobs along the value chain.

Biotech Policy Discussion during ABBC2021

AfriCenter facilitated an interactive policy discussion among policy makers from six African countries – Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana and Malawi. This was during ABBC2021 held in September 2021. They discussed factors that affect agri-biotech adoption in Africa and proposed measures and actions to mitigate the identified constraints. All the six countries indicated the need for appropriate communication and stakeholder inclusivity. Some of the specific recommendations included the need to have a biotechnology week to create awareness and engagement in biotechnology.



Kenyan legislators during a policy dialogue with animal feed manufacturers

Seeing-is-believing Study Tour for Mozambican Delegation

AfriCenter and OFAB Kenya, in July 2021, engaged Mozambican government delegation through consultative meetings and a study tour to a biotech cassava field trial site. The aim of this visit was to acquaint the team with OFAB Kenya biotech policy outreach model as Mozambique was preparing to launch its OFAB chapter.



A Mozambican delegation in Mtwapa, Coastal Kenya, during a field visit of GM cassava CFT site

Policy Outreach and Sensitization on Biotech Cassava

AfriCenter continued to engage policy and decision makers to ensure they stay updated on VIRCA Plus' project progress in order to create an enabling environment for product development and deployment. The Center engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture, through the Root and Fibre Crop Directorate, as well as with select members of KALRO's Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCSAP). Simplified knowledge products about biotech cassava were shared with these stakeholders.



GM Cassava FAQs

Engaged

33

policy and decision makers



From

7

African countries



Through

4

roundtables



1

study tour



KEY IMPACT



Sustained political goodwill and support in commercial cultivation of Bt cotton



Approval for environmental release of GM cassava and completion of Bt maize national performance trials in Kenya



Progress towards lifting of GM ban in Kenya.



Commitment by local governments to allocate funds for Bt cotton seeds.



The Government of Uganda will continue to work with the responsible ministries and agencies including the Ministry of Agriculture to **resolve pertinent issues around regulation of biotechnology and biosafety**. We will take a decision to **re-table the Genetic Engineering Regulatory Bill in Parliament** after consultations.

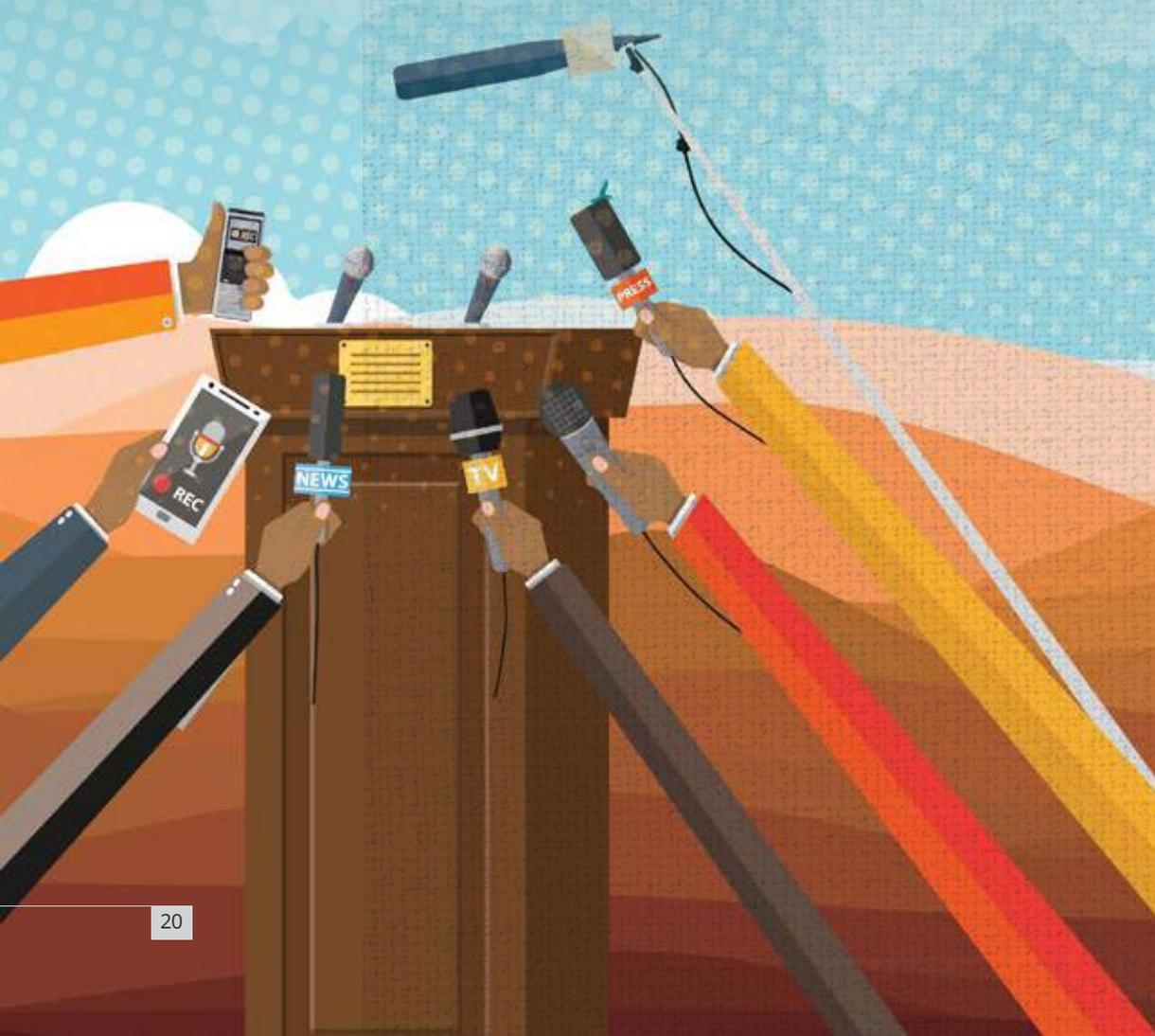
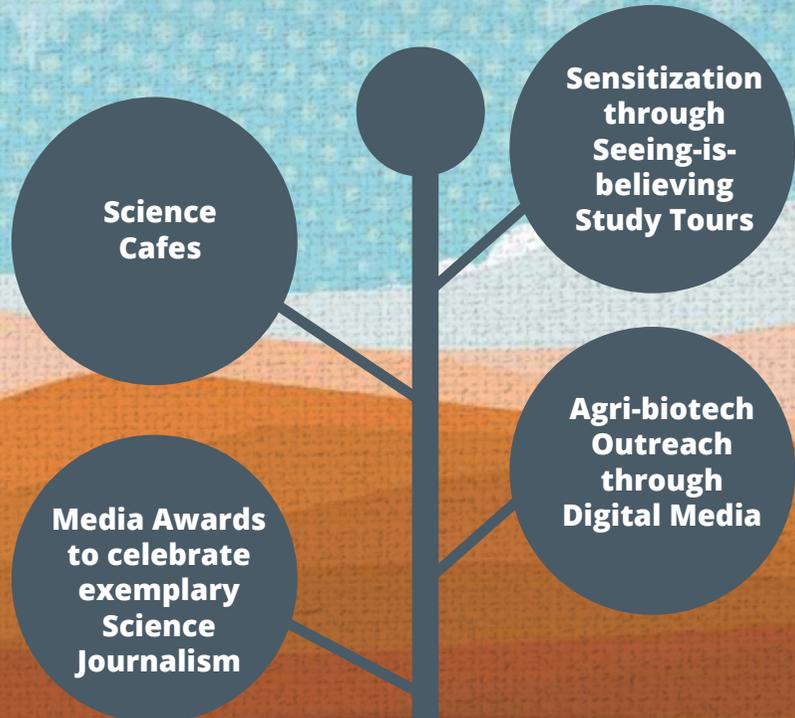


Hon. Fred Bwino, Uganda's Minister for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT FOR INCREASED COVERAGE OF AGRI-BIOTECH AND BIOSAFETY ISSUES

The media is a crucial stakeholder in shaping public opinion on science topics such as crop biotechnology. It sensitizes and educates the public on complex scientific issues hence stimulating dialogue on safe use and relevance of various innovations. Through several engagement opportunities, AfriCenter continues to equip members of the fourth estate with factual knowledge on agricultural innovations and biosafety.

OUR INTERVENTIONS



Science Cafes

20 journalists sensitized on Bt COTTON cultivation and the value chain

AfriCenter held a media sensitization meeting on Bt Cotton cultivation and the value chain in September 2021.

58 media practitioners from six African countries engaged through ABBC2021

Journalists and media editors from six African countries exchanged experiences and discussed strategies that can enhance effective and more accurate media reporting of biotech and biosafety.

23 journalists sensitized on sustainable and equitable food systems for Africa

In October 2021, twenty-three African journalists were sensitized on the role of modern science, technology, and innovation in making food systems more sustainable, equitable and gender transformative.



Journalists interviewing Kenya's Industrialization minister during a Bt cotton study tour

Sensitization through Seeing-is-believing Study Tours

12 journalists and editors from 10 Kenyan media houses sensitized on GM cassava

AfriCenter and partners held a study tour of a biotech cassava field trial site in October 2021. The study tour comprised media editors and reporters. It provided an opportunity for the members of the fourth estate to witness harvesting and performance between conventional and GM cassava varieties.

Contributing towards combating COVID-19 Infodemic

AfriCenter trained over **80 African journalists** on effective health and science reporting. The training enabled journalists to understand complex relationships between pandemics, agriculture, environment and health, and empowered them with skills to unravel disinformation.

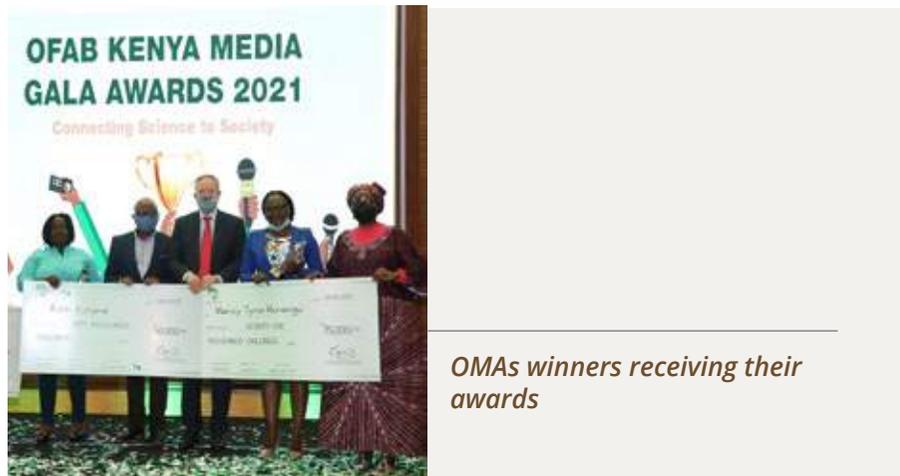


Closing ceremony of a media training on health reporting. The training was organized by ISAAA AfriCenter and the Africa Check with support from UNESCO and EU.

Media Awards to celebrate exemplary Science Journalism

Three journalists feted for consistent reporting on biotech

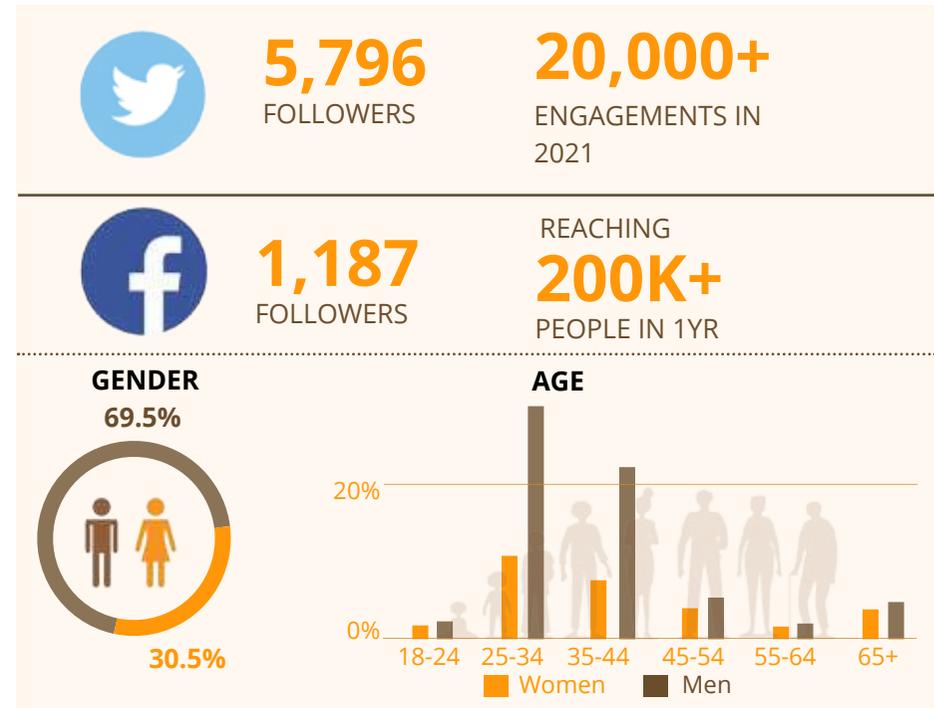
AfriCenter and OFAB Kenya held the annual Media Awards Gala in October 2021. The Awards sought to acknowledge journalists for their consistency in reporting on agriculture biotechnology. The Gala was attended by 50 participants



OMAs winners receiving their awards

Agri-biotech Outreach through Digital Media

AfriCenter continues to engage with stakeholders through social media – Twitter and Facebook. This has resulted in a continued rise in virtual engagement with messages running under the #FarmShujaaz and #MakeScienceCount online campaigns.



KEY IMPACT

- Increased and more accurate reporting with close to 50 million media impressions.
- Stronger linkages and networks between journalists and other stakeholders that include scientists and policy makers
- Improved understanding and confidence in media reporting on agri-biotechnology, biosafety and COVID-19.



Most **journalists** work with **only one source of information**. Journalists have to be much more robust and should always cross-check facts. We should build linkages and work in networks. I **applaud ISAAA's efforts in helping forge linkages** between journalists and science experts.



*Pa Louis Thomasi, Director,
Federation of African Journalists*

AFRICENTER'S NEW INITIATIVES

AfriCenter is responding to the changing bioscience landscape aggravated by politicization of science and rising scepticism of emerging tools. The Center, which is now a fully independent entity with its own governing board, is expanding its communications, policy advocacy and knowledge sharing activities beyond crop biotechnology, and extending to livestock, environment and One Health approach.

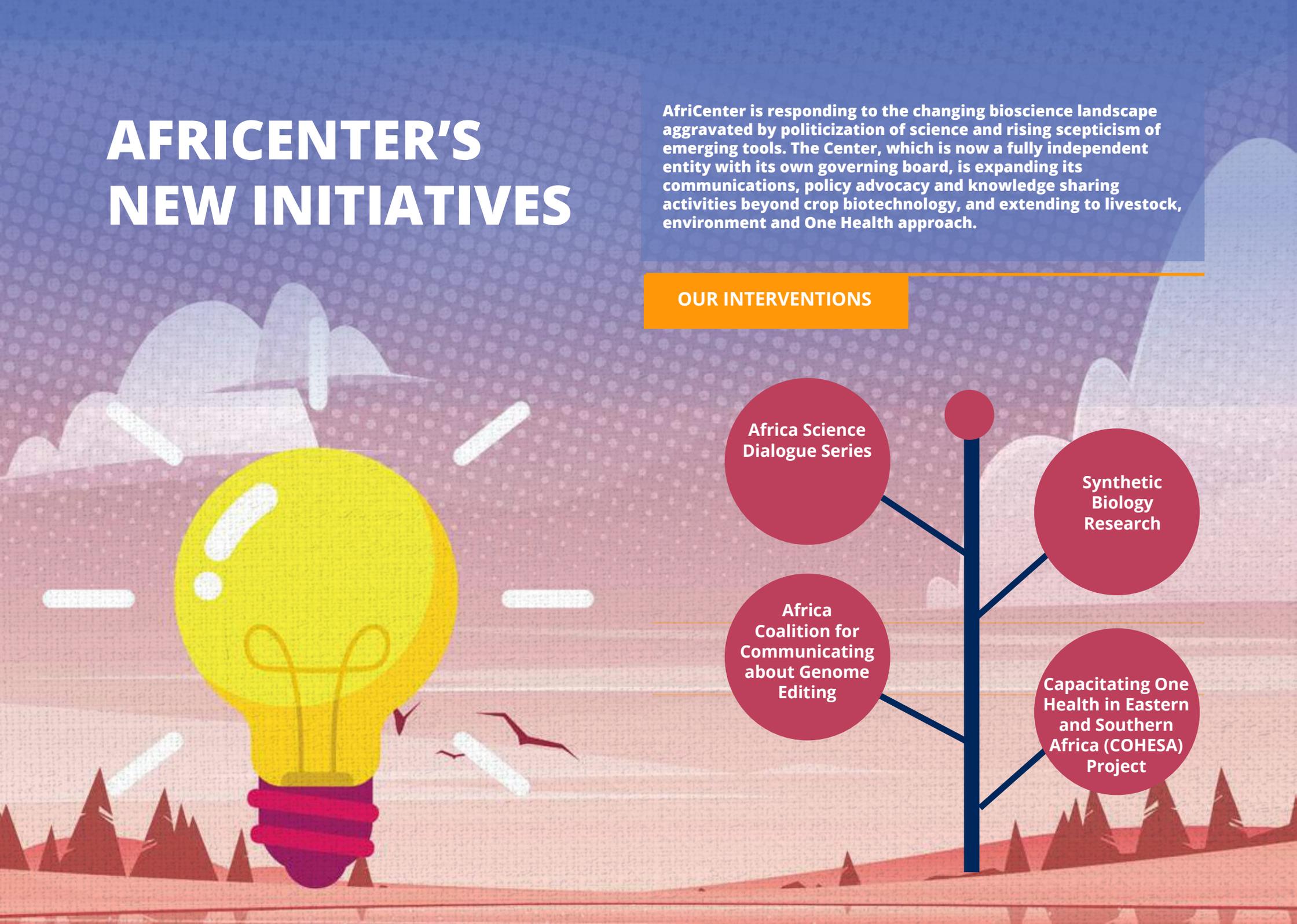
OUR INTERVENTIONS

Africa Science
Dialogue Series

Synthetic
Biology
Research

Africa
Coalition for
Communicating
about Genome
Editing

Capacitating One
Health in Eastern
and Southern
Africa (COHESA)
Project



Africa Science Dialogue Series

AfriCenter initiated the Africa Science Dialogue Series, an African-led science series that provides timely interventions in correcting any misinformation on non-communicable diseases and COVID-19 pandemic. The series is hosted under the Africa Life Science Knowledge (ALSK) hub.

- **83 journalists**, communicators and bloggers from 14 African countries successfully completed a course on strengthening the capacity of Africa journalists on fact-checking and communication about health sciences
- **Two science** dialogue series on crop protection, new breeding tools and NCDs held.



Kenya's Health Minister Hon. Mutahi Kagwe presiding over the launch of the Africa Science Dialogue Series

Africa Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing

In October 2021, during ABBC 2021, AfriCenter launched the African Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing, a platform that fosters open and transparent dialogue on genome editing on the continent. The launch was presided over by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Industrialization and Trade Hon. Betty Maina. Guided by the philosophy of "Positioning Africa for an Early Take-Off", the Coalition responds to the fact that the voice of African scientists has for long been very low and almost unnoticed by the world outside the walls of their laboratories.



CBU article detailing the launch of the Coalition

Synthetic Biology Research

AfriCenter and partners are conducting research on Synthetic Biology in Kenya. The project, funded under the Government of Kenya's National Research Fund (NRF), is using synthetic biology innovations to address intractable challenges in food security and healthcare by developing low-cost diagnostic kits and biosensors for improving disease surveillance.



Dr. Margaret Karembu and partners unveiling synthetic biology project

COHESA Project

AfriCenter has joined a consortium of partners comprising ILRI and CIRAD in a four-year project dubbed Capacitating One Health in Eastern and Southern Africa (COHESA). The project aims to generate an inclusive Research & Innovation ecosystem, facilitating rapid uptake, adaption and adoption of solutions to issues that can be dealt with using a One Health (OH) approach.



KEY IMPACT



Launch of the African Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing with support from African universities and regional science academies.



Development and operationalization of ALSK portal, a one-stop source of credible information on COVID-19 and NCDs.



Appreciation and improved understanding among African journalists on the impact of COVID-19 on NCDs in Africa.



I understand the **African Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing** will address an important niche of building skills and confidence of **African researchers** to get out of their comfort zones and help society appreciate the value of Science, Technology and Innovation **through effective communication**. At AUDA-NEPAD, we look forward to working with the Coalition.



Prof. Aggrey Ambali, Head of Science, Technology and Innovation Hub (NSTIH) at AUDA-NEPAD

(Photo of Prof. Aggrey Ambali)

EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

AfriCenter recognizes the power of partnerships in leveraging skills and expertise for maximum impact. The Center continues to expand its partnership by establishing and strengthening collaborations with like-minded institutions in crop biotechnology and other fields of science. Our partnership efforts are driven by the need to maximize impact on various science, technology and innovation outputs while optimizing resources.

OUR AREAS OF PARTNERSHIP



OUR PARTNERS

- African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF)
- Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) of COMESA
- Alliance for Science
- Australian High Commission in Kenya
- Bayer Kenya - Crop Science
- Biosafety South Africa
- CropLife International
- Donald Danforth Plant Science Center
- Ethiopian Biotechnology Institute (EBTi)
- ILSI Research Foundation
- Imperial College London
- International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)
- Ghent University
- Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)
- Kenya National Academy of Sciences (KNAS)
- Kenyatta University
- Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Kenya
- Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives Kenya
- National Biosafety Authority, Kenya
- National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)
- National Research Fund
- New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency
- Pioneer Hi-Bred Kenya Limited
- Program for Biosafety Systems of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
- The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United States Department of Agriculture
- US Embassy in Kenya
- US Grains Council
- US Soybean Export Council
- VIB-International Plant Biotechnology Outreach (IPBO)



CHALLENGES

1. Overlapping Regulatory Mandates

There is an overlap of biosafety regulations in Africa, a situation that negatively affects GMO research, development and deployment process on the continent.

2. Ban on GMO Food Imports

With the 2012 ban on importation of genetically modified foods in place in Kenya, commercialization of GM crops has been considered on a case-by-case basis, slowing delivery of biotech crops to farmers. Accordingly, in times of emergency, feed manufacturers in the country are unable to import safe and cheaper GM raw materials for animal feed.

3. Negative Activism against GM Crops

Co-ordinated and well-funded anti-GMO activism in Africa continues to hamper speedy commercialization of GM crops on the continent. Organic Farmer Groups and Agro-ecology movements are consistently promoting unbalanced and uncorroborated stories to stigmatize the use of biotechnology tools in agriculture.



OPPORTUNITIES

1. Increased adoption of biotech crops positioning Africa towards the tipping point

Africa made remarkable progress with the number of countries planting biotech crops more than doubling – from three in 2018 to seven in 2021. Notably, the environmental release approval of two food crops – disease resistant cassava in Kenya and TELA maize in Nigeria – marked a milestone in Africa's agricultural biotech in 2021. This significant advancement has positioned the continent for increased adoption.

2. Increased policy support and political goodwill

Increased policy support for crop biotechnology has propelled the continent for greater adoption of GM crops. The environmental release approvals of disease resistant cassava in Kenya and TELA maize in Nigeria fuel optimism and open a favorable environment for more research, adoption and commercialization of biotech crops in Africa.

3. Increased partnerships for more synergies and maximum impact

Over the last one year, more collaborations have been witnessed in agricultural biotechnology and biosafety sector. The success of ABBC 2021, for instance, can be attributed to amazing partnerships and great support from many institutions. Partnerships ensure efforts are synergized, skills are leveraged and expertise shared for increased research, development and adoption of biotech crops in Africa.

4. New breeding technologies present bigger opportunities

The launch of the African Coalition for Communicating about Genome Editing places the continent in a prime position to reap big from the benefits of genome technologies especially in areas of food production, medicine and animal improvement.

COURSES AND SERVICES WE OFFER

At ISAAA AfriCenter, we offer various courses and services to diverse organizations, particularly focused on enhancing smooth translation of agricultural research into products. The courses are structured in one and two-day training modules rich in hands-on experience, that are tailored for specific agricultural research groups.



Science Communication Training: Translating Research for a Lay Audience

Science communication is a practice that aims to help the lay-public understand research results or the scientific process. We are a leading organization with vast experience in training scientists on how to effectively communicate their research. Our world-class experts empower scientists with the skills needed to transform them into communicators that can effectively engage a non-technical audience.



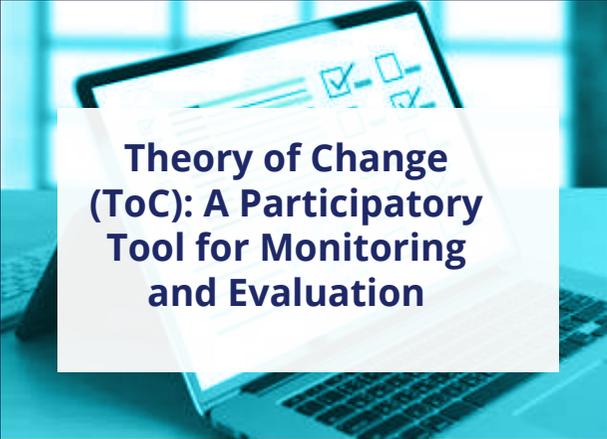
Stakeholder Netmapping Training Course

Stakeholder Netmapping helps researchers and project managers understand, visualize and improve situations in which many different actors influence a desired outcome. More specifically, the tool enables managers to determine which actors are involved in a given network, how they are linked, how influential they are, and what their goals are. This course will ensure you understand and break down complex multi-stakeholder governance, hence attainment of your milestone.



African Short Course on Agro-biosciences (AfSCA)

AfSCA is a regional training program hosted by ISAAA AfriCenter, focusing on emerging bioscience technologies with potential application in agricultural transformation. The course offers a platform for diverse stakeholders to dialogue on appropriate use of agro-bioscience innovations.

A laptop screen displaying a flowchart or diagram, likely representing a Theory of Change, with a teal overlay.

Theory of Change (ToC): A Participatory Tool for Monitoring and Evaluation

Theory of change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens. By using a theory of change approach, we can articulate how we expect outcomes to be achieved. We do this by exploring the real-world setting in which a specific project is being implemented. This short course will enable you to understand what it means to “manage for results” and to be “accountable”. It will also equip you with requisite skills to run a more results-oriented programming process and collaborate with partners based on comparative advantage to bring about desired impact.

A background of various communication-related icons like a heart, speech bubble, and network, with a teal overlay.

Communication Support Services

ISAAA AfriCenter has carved out a niche in providing communication support services for science projects to effectively communicate and engage stakeholders in the research process. This entails development of a communication strategy, stakeholder-mapping, media engagement and coordinating seeing-is-believing study tours. We also develop high-impact short videos, photography and simplified communication materials that include; policy briefs, frequently asked questions (FAQs), infographics, a series of project Top Ten Facts and special reports.

A close-up of a microphone, with a teal overlay.

Science Cafés

Science cafés are regular informal interaction sessions between scientists/researchers and journalists meant to foster close working relations and build capacity for improved and factual reporting. The aim of these sessions is to provide project researchers with an opportunity to share the benefits and opportunities of their research work and the intended societal impact to the public through media coverage.



The DrumBeat is a monthly e-newsletter that brings absorbing stories on Africa's latest bioscience development and cutting-edge scientific innovations, as well as expert views and recommendations on optimizing science and technology to steer the continent forward. The newsletter has gained popularity in the region and across the globe, with over 4,000 subscribers comprising policy makers, media, development partners, scientists and academia.

When you become part of the DrumBeat, you become part of success. Our partnership is an opportunity for our team to exclusively feature your organization's programs and highlight your achievements. The newsletter will amplify your project's key findings and the recommendations may attract the attention of policy makers for action. By telling your story in the DrumBeat, you will have your work boosted and your effort recognized and rewarded.



Policy Engagement Support Service

This policy engagement support service is aimed at creating a facilitative political environment for acceptance and adoption of the partner's project eventual product. The support entails; outreach to policy makers through seeing-is-believing study tours, capacity building workshops as well as pairing of scientists with journalists to ensure accurate and balanced reporting of the for increased policy interventions.

For more information and inquiries on any of the above courses or services, contact Dr. Margaret Karembu, Director ISAAA AfriCenter at mkarembu@isaaa.org.

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