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*Note: The AfRO Annual Report 2021 is for internal circulation only*
After the initial pandemic-related shocks of 2020, we began to see the longer-term impacts in 2021. The Africa Regional Office (AfRO) therefore continued to support grantees working on COVID-19, trying not only to realise greater access to vaccines in the short term but also to seize the moment by advancing African capacities for vaccine-related research and development (R&D) and manufacturing into the longer term. We also continued to invest in economic recovery. The renewed urgency to reimagine African futures beyond the pandemic was evident. The time to leverage opportunities to invest in African knowledge production and alternative strategies towards more resilient economies of scale is now.

Democracy has continued to be threatened. The guns were not silenced and, instead, coups d’état and conflicts seemed to proliferate. In the Great Lakes region, military operations against the Allied Democratic Forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were ramped-up by the Ugandan Defence Force. We saw reversals in the Horn of Africa region (the war in Tigray and the coup d’état in Sudan that saw Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok relieved of his duties). In southern Africa, the insurgency in northern Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado region prompted interventions by both Rwanda and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). In west Africa, there were coups d’état in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. The African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were put to the test and their limitations exposed. The need to effect their normative frameworks and treaties was stark in 2021.

Our Advisory Board Chair, Professor Funmi Olonisakin, summed up the continent’s conundrum and needs around leadership and institutions as she delivered the 11th Annual Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture on May 25. Themed ‘Retrospecting to prospect: Quo Vadis, Africa?’, her speech reflected on Africa’s blueprint for peace and how wavering from this blueprint has exposed flaws in our continental leadership and institutions. The continent has become a site for vultures as external actors scramble for ‘re-engagement’. She urged us to take stock, learn and revisit the blueprint for our collective pursuit of peace, development and prosperity.

The future can only hold possibilities for Africans if we intentionally rebuild and collectively act.

AfRO continued programming (grantmaking and advocacy) towards that collective action – on regional integration, international criminal justice and economic justice as well as responding to the crises in the Horn, southern and west Africa. Our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the AU was (finally!) signed, allowing for more institutionalised engagement.

Internally, 2021 was focused on the African transformation. The work of bringing five entities together cannot be understated. It culminated in the One Africa Strategy and Structure, aiming at achieving cohesiveness, effectiveness and impact at all levels – national, sub-regional and continental. We welcomed Titus Gwemende to lead our economic justice work and we said goodbye to four colleagues through the Voluntary Separation Programme – Erlin Ibreck, Fnot Gebremichael, Yaye Ndiaye and Yvonne Thomas. Our short-lived Advocacy Manager left us for greener pastures. And, sadly, Thierno Kane, a member of our Africa Advisory Committee (AfRAC), passed away on March 28. An accomplished civil society leader in Senegal as well as the pan-African and global spaces, also served as the Open Society Foundations (OSF)’s African Ombudsperson. We remain grateful for his invaluable contributions.

I take this opportunity to thank Team AfRO as well as all the leadership and colleagues in the African foundations for their commitment and dedication in 2021. The work co-creating the One Africa Strategy and Structure for what is to be OSF-Africa was an enormous lift. We look forward to bringing OSF-Africa to life in 2022 and beyond. I’m eternally grateful to the African Senior Leadership Team, our formidable AfRAC members and our supportive African foundations Advisory Board members for their advice, thought leadership and contributions through 2021.

As we work to transit to OSF-Africa in 2022, we look forward to turning our energies outward, to our raison d’être – building free, just and open societies in Africa – and towards the Africa we want to see and live in. Forward!

L. Muthoni Wanyeki, PhD
Regional Director for Africa
AfRO
AFRICA’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19
Africa CDC’s COVID-19 response

AfRO’s contribution to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to coordinate regional efforts on prevention and diagnosis of COVID-19 in AU member states was modest yet impactful. Our investments enabled the procurement and distribution of 12,000 boxes (of 25 tests each), including 300,000 tests for the detection of SARS-COV-2 infection; and 322,580 three-ply surgical masks were also procured and distributed to AU member states. AfRO was an early mover with respect to the Africa CDC and participated in the Virgin Unite-convened Africa Donor Collective (ADC) to coordinate and leverage further philanthropic support to it.
African capacities for vaccine R&D and manufacturing

The pandemic was characterised by ‘vaccine nationalism’, with developed countries hoarding global vaccine stocks, leaving underdeveloped countries scrambling for limited supplies. Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) procured enough vaccines to vaccinate their citizens more than five times over. The United States (US) alone administered more boosters than the total vaccine coverage in Africa. The majority of African countries (70 per cent) missed the World Health Assembly (WHA)’s goal of vaccinating at least 10 per cent of their populations by the end of September, while 90 per cent of the developed world met the target.

This context brought to the fore the need to advance African self-sufficiency with respect to diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. Africa accounts for about 25 per cent of the global disease burden and global vaccine demand, but our research accounts for only about two per cent of global research. To explore opportunities for advancing African R&D and manufacturing, AfRO and the African foundations, together with the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), hosted a two-day event, bringing together diverse continental stakeholders for a conversation around COVID-19 vaccines. Speakers included: Dr Mohga Kamal-Yanni, co-Chair of the policy group of the People’s Vaccine and senior advisor to Winnie Byanyima; Achal Prabhala, founder of AccessBSA, a tri-continental project to expand access to and speed up the discovery of new drugs in the developing world; Dr Ebere Okereke, Senior Public Health Advisor with the Africa CDC; Engr Mansur Ahmed of the Pan-African Manufacturers Association (PAMA); and Gita Sen, Coordinator, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). Recordings of the event can be found here: Session 1 (November 30) (Passcode: PN&0&N%L) and Session 2 (December 1) (Passcode: H9Tpr&QM).

We also supported the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) to build capacity for African vaccine development, focused on researching the genome specificity of COVID-19 in Africa and facilitating cross-border research into host-pathogen interactions influencing clinical outcomes in Africa. With our support, ARUA’s East Africa hub at Makerere University procured state-of-the-art equipment (a Cytek Aurora flow cytometer), and the West Africa hub at the University of Ghana strengthened the sequencing facility at the West Africa Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP) through the procurement of the Illumina NextSeq 2000.

Towards achieving the research objectives of the project, a mapping exercise was conducted to collate all ongoing vaccine research amongst the West Africa hub members and to establish an inventory of existing equipment, thus identifying major equipment needs. Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 is ongoing as part of national surveillance, and the data is being shared with national policymakers and uploaded to the Global Initiative for Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) website for global access. Virus neutralisation assays using pseudo virus were established and those with live virus were optimised. In 2022, the West Africa hub will complete the installation of accessories for the NextSeq 2000 to enable single-cell transcriptomics and human genome sequencing.
DEBT AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
Africa’s vulnerability to inequalities inherent to the global economy was also foregrounded by COVID-19 and the related economic impacts and sovereign debt pressures.

As part of the network-wide global campaign on debt and financing recovery, AfRO worked with the African foundations’ Economic Justice teams on Africa-specific advocacy around the proposition to increase near-term liquidity for underdeveloped countries through the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights, tied to an accountability mechanism to ensure judicious expenditure. The design of the accountability mechanism, with a particular focus on Africa, commenced and work is underway to finalise and deploy it through existing AU mechanisms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and certain elements of the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC). President Lazarus Chakwera of Malawi was identified as the SADC Champion and a workplan was submitted to his team for finalisation and deployment. Funding was given for a consultancy to be completed by April 2022 on the design of an accountability policy to be adopted by the AU for implementation by AU member states.

On the demand side, support was given to the pan-African Stop The Bleed (STB) consortium. The campaign seeks to mobilise African economic justice actors to demand tax justice while addressing the power imbalances of different relationships such as between citizens and the state, low-to medium-income countries and high-income countries, debtors and creditors, the African and global financial architecture, and the patriarchy. The consortium includes the Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA), Trust Africa (TA), Third World Network Africa (TWN-A), the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), and the International Trade Union Confederation Africa (ITUC-A). The campaign brings on board networks with diverse membership across Africa’s five regions and with a history of involvement in policy research, advocacy and campaigning on the continent and beyond.

The campaign addresses the debt following our COVID-19 experience that reinforced the urgency of building-up social protection towards greater equity and resilience. In addition, the campaign is premised on:

- **Ideation and alternatives** to win minds and create a pan-African response to the impacts of debt on the social contract;
- **Narrative change** at the AU. Agenda 2063 remains the continental blueprint and envisions structural transformation. The campaign challenges neoliberal orthodoxy and proposes alternative feminist macro-economic models and analysis;
- **Citizen action and activism** on renewing the social contract and addressing debt, connecting to the real day-to-day struggles of Africans;
- **Political engagement** with national to global processes, with a common AU position on debt to achieve better outcomes for African member states and Africans.
AfRO grant numbers decreased in 2021 due to the African transformation. However, significant grants were made to the COVID-19 response, including the vaccine and debt campaigns. Apart from that, AfRO invested USD2,690,690 in support of:

- Strengthening partnerships with continental actors on vaccine-related R&D and manufacturing;
- Growing civic capacities for continental policy engagement;
- Consolidating past human rights gains through national and continental litigation;
- Enabling democratic transitions and advancing access to justice; and
- Building alternative economic models and challenging orthodox ones.

Engagement with the AU

Institutionalising the relationship with the AU

The MoU that institutionalises the relationship between the AU and OSF was finally signed. We audited OSF's engagements with the AU (and its mechanisms) over the last five years. This has provided an internal overview of all of OSF’s work with the AU (beyond AfRO's) and will allow for robust engagement going forward.

‘One Million by 2021’

As pledged by OSF’s Vice-Chair, Alex Soros, at the launch of the AU Commission (AUC) Chair’s Youth Initiative, AfRO supported the initiative with USD1 million towards building a critical mass of young people actively contributing to the continent’s development. Highlights include:

- **The AU’s youth leadership and mentorship programme**: leadership training was delivered through the AU’s Youth Empowerment and Development Toolbox, a one-stop platform for blended, interactive and self-paced learning through virtual classrooms and other training tools. There are over 21 modules to address the priorities of young Africans.

- **The AU’s Youth Volunteers Corps (AU-YVC)**: a flagship programme promoting youth capacity-building, participation and engagement. The 2020–21 call received 9,295 applications from 53 member states, with 238 young people eventually being selected.

- Between 2020 and 2021, 169 (74 male and 95 female) AU-YVs from 47 countries were deployed across 19 institutions, including the AU and other multi-lateral institutions such as SADC, the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP).
Regional integration

AfRO’s regional integration work includes previous work on citizenship and intra-African migration, as well as new work on the future of the AU’s human rights mechanisms commissioned by the AUC. In collaboration with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), additional focus was placed on the impact of technology on human rights protection. We also supported the AUC in drafting a common African position on the restitution of African cultural heritage.

Reform of AU human rights mechanisms

Following the mandate given by the Assembly of Heads of State in July 2016 to the then AU Chair, Rwandan President Paul Kagame presented a report prepared by his pan-African advisory team on reform of the AU titled ‘Building a more relevant AU’, which was formally adopted by the Assembly in January 2017. The report recommended adjustments in AU priorities and structures to allow it to be more responsive to continental and global challenges and opportunities.

Since then, AfRO has collaborated with the AU Institutional Reform Implementation Unit. We commissioned a consultancy on the revision of roles and responsibilities of the AU’s judicial organs and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). The AU leadership is expected to engage on the report’s recommendations in January 2023.

Continental digital identity

The development of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and other emerging technologies has far-reaching consequences for human rights, including the right to privacy and economic, social and cultural rights as provided for in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, including the right to health, education, work and social security.

With AfRO’s support, the ACHPR commissioned multidisciplinary research to assess the ethical, legal, safety and security impacts posed by AI, robotics and other emerging technologies in Africa. Expected outcomes include ensuring that their use in Africa is contextualised and does not infringe on human rights.

AfRO and the Justice Initiative also supported the research Laboratory for the Analysis of Societies and Powers/Africa-Diasporas (LASPAD) of the University of Gaston Berger in initiating multidisciplinary research on personal data protection in Africa. The aim is to introduce into the university’s curriculum a course on the governance of personal data in Africa. Working with academics in Kenya, Senegal and South Africa, the research is expected to generate knowledge on digital identity rights and increase civic capacities to engage on personal data protection policy and regulation.
Intra-African migration

The intra-African migration work was re-calibrated to support vulnerable populations in crisis situations, while continuing to work towards the longer-term ambition of free movement within the continent. This work registered key gains in 2021 – the revision of Kenya’s draft migration policy in line with the longer-term ambition (to which AfRO provided technical assistance).

In response to the threatened closure of the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, we awarded USD260,000 to the Kenyan Human Rights Commission (KHRC) to litigate on the citizenship rights and integration of qualifying refugees.

We continued engaging with the ACHPR on the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees in the context of the COVID-19 response. A comparative continental study, commissioned by AfRO and conducted by the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) and the Institute for Human Rights and Development (IHRD) on the inclusivity of social policies, was adopted by the ACHPR in October.

AfRO also supported the AUC in drafting the AU Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, the draft Guidelines for the Preparation of Bilateral Labour Agreements and the holding of the 6th Pan-African Forum on Migration (PAFOM) in Dakar in September.
Restitution of African cultural heritage

In recognition of the role that arts, culture and heritage play as a catalyst for development and continental integration, the AU adopted ‘Arts, culture and heritage: Levers for building the Africa we want’ as its 2021 theme. The AU proposed that member states develop a policy framework for negotiating the return of cultural heritage stolen from the continent and to adopt a common African position statement on the importance of cultural heritage restitution.

AfRO and the AUC agreed to support the drafting of this common African position and mobilise member states and RECs to speed up the process of cultural heritage restitution to Africa. Internal OSF conversations continued on this through 2021. The draft Common African Position on Restitution of African Heritage is at an advanced stage and will now be adopted in 2023.

African peace and security

The second year of our support to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) registered some achievements. The IPSS raised its profile among think-tanks working on African peace and security. It created many platforms (including social media ones) for stakeholders to discuss current peace and security issues and contributed towards crafting indigenous solutions. In 2021, the Tana High-Level Forum (The Tana Forum) was held in a hybrid format, as were policy dialogues, including:

• A pre-Tana Forum Regional Multi-stakeholders’ Dialogue on Emerging Technologies and their Impact on Peace and Security in Africa on September 14;
• An event on ‘Rethinking the AU’s approach in the Sahel’ on September 23.

While the bulk of our support goes towards the annual flagship Tana Forum, it was also used for peace and security publications (the Conflict Insight reports, policy briefs and the AfSOL Journal). The IPSS also began short courses for AU staff and officials.
The future of democracy

AfRO’s work on the future of democracy focused on contributing to new thinking on contemporary challenges to democracy that included contesting various assumptions on which support for democracy is based. AfRO issued grants for the following projects.

Effective demand for democracy

- A comparative continental study on the capture of public finances and resources by public officers, private individuals, national oligarchs and foreign actors, and how this leads to illegitimate elections, poor service delivery and non-accountability. We published nine reports on democracy capture and the shadow state in Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, the DRC, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe that provide the basis of advocacy for national and continental reforms. The African Centre for Open Governance (AfriCOG) and the SIVIO Institute received grants to develop policy documents pushing back against democracy capture and the shadow state;

- Supporting citizen demand for inclusive democracies, accountability and sovereignty, AfriCOG and the SIVIO Institute are building in narrative change around what makes democracy legitimate and effective;

- Democracy Capture Index: the methodology for a democracy capture index was developed, which was then peer reviewed and validated by experts including those from the RECs and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Research tools (research questionnaires and a data collection framework) for the Democracy Capture Index were also developed.

Review of norms and standards safeguarding critical democratic processes

Democracy is anchored on processes such as credible elections and accountability mechanisms for those entrusted with power and resources. There is a need for citizens to analyse changes to processes related to: minimum standards (for candidate and voter freedoms, electoral campaigns, tallying integrity and so on) to deliver what then qualifies as a legitimate regime; and minimum standards of accountability (on freedom from democracy capture and the shadow state) that would then qualify a state as genuinely responding to the will of the people. AfRO therefore supported the following:

- The Pan-African Parliament (PAP)’s review of AU election observation guidelines to make recommendations for changes that will reduce the risk of AU election observation missions being used to legitimise flawed elections;

- Citizen demands for accountability and sovereignty free from capture at the national level, including petitions/submissions to the RECS and the AUC on creating, improving and applying mechanisms to address the challenges prioritised. AfriCOG developed four expert papers on: public administration and procurement capture; public economic planning and finance capture; security capture; and electoral capture. These papers will provide the basis for a panel of experts’ review of relevant AU norms and standards.
International criminal justice

Sanctions on the International Criminal Court

In 2020, seed funding was granted to the Centre for Law and Policy in Africa (CILPA) to generate knowledge to be used by African civil society organisations in their advocacy on the International Criminal Court (ICC) reform process. They prepared expert papers and held expert workshops to provide the authors and invited participants the opportunity to engage in focused dialogue, which generated recommendations on reforming the ICC from an African perspective (see here).

The Donald Trump administration in the US then engaged in a campaign to discredit the ICC. It launched a legal assault through Executive Order 139281, imposing sanctions on (African) persons associated with the ICC such as Gambian Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who had sought and received authorisation to open an investigation into actions of US personnel with respect to detainees in and relating to Afghanistan. AfRO, in collaboration with the Justice Initiative, worked together with justice actors to contribute to the ICC sanctions debate. A series of articles were published,1 including:

- ‘The ‘legacy’ of the US sanctions against ICC Prosecutor Ms Fatou Bensouda and Mr Phakiso Mochochoko’, by Sharon Nakandha, AfRO Programme Officer, and Owiso Owiso, a doctoral student of Public International Law at the University of Luxembourg;


Forensic work in the Central African Republic

Civil war in the Central African Republic (CAR) led to thousands of persons going missing. Through a grant to Equipo Argentino de Antropologia Forense, AfRO supported work to deepen knowledge and the use of forensic sciences in the CAR towards accountability for grave crimes and the rights of families of the missing. The work builds on existing truth and justice efforts and supports the development of national forensics expertise.
Economic justice

Our economic justice work adjusted in response to COVID-19 and the related debt and economic recovery needs. Our 2021 grants focused on challenging dominant, neoliberal models by fostering African ideation on decolonising fiscal and monetary reform. We supported organisations working on African economic theory and applied policy alternatives.

Support to the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) continued in 2021. ACET has had success with its analysis, advice and advocacy − influencing continental economic transformation policies. We funded its flagship Africa Transformation Report, comprising comparative studies on smallholder farmers, financial inclusion and regional public goods. Current funding contributed to the Africa Transformation Forum (held virtually in 2021), the Africa Transformation Index, the production of two country-level inception reports (Ghana and Senegal), the completion of data collection and analysis in both countries, as well as draft country reports for both countries. Given the negative economic impacts of the external shocks created by COVID-19, ACET revised its strategy to support African countries with their post-pandemic recovery agendas. The strategy includes a Gender and Economic Transformation programme focused on assisting governments to craft and implement gender-responsive economic policies in partnership with organisations that specialise in gender equality.

The contribution to the CoDA work continued in 2021 towards domestic resource mobilisation and regional integration. CoDA provides a platform for dialogue and engagement on issues of importance to the continent’s future. CoDA supports Africa’s regional integration and facilitates cooperation among stakeholders towards the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In 2021, CoDA launched its public health initiative in response to the need for equitable distribution of and access to COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, aiming to reduce Africa’s dependence on imports of the same.
Advocacy

AfRO participated in the global advocacy working group towards OSF’s global transformation. There was deepened collaboration across the African foundations, including developing a shared advocacy vision for integrated advocacy under the One Africa Strategy and Structure. The advocacy ecosystem document was also revisited in collaboration with the Africa foundations’ communications teams.

Countries in crises continued to take up significant advocacy time and work. Working with the African foundations’ advocates and communications teams, AfRO responded to crises in Ethiopia and Sudan in eastern Africa; Gambia, Guinea and Mali in west Africa; and Cabo Delgado, Mozambique and Eswatini in southern Africa.

Responding to crises

**Ethiopia:** with thousands dead and over 4.2 million people internally displaced, the conflict in northern Ethiopia escalated through 2021. It was difficult to make progress on pathways to peace. Throughout the year, the AU, the Government of Kenya, the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) tried to secure the cessation of hostilities, unfettered humanitarian access and a negotiated settlement of the conflict, without success. Nevertheless, we continued to engage, working with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) on:

- Accountability for human rights violations and grave crimes through support to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to build its capacity for investigation and reporting; (b) media reporting on and to enhance public pressure for the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and a political solution; (c) the ACHPR’s Commission of Inquiry; and the UN’s International Commission of Human Rights Experts;
- Civic (including women’s) and media capacities to engage the national dialogue process;
- Direct advocacy engagement with various interlocutors.
Sudan: a Horn response team comprising our partners (African Atrocities Watch [AWA], the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR] and the Pan-African Lawyers Union [PALU]) coordinated an African solidarity effort, including:

- Organising dialogues for African civic actors and the media to better understand both countries;
- Developing internal briefs on the two countries;
- Developing advocacy asks to accompany our Horn response. An African common position was developed and agreed to around sanctions for both countries.

Gambia: we continued our leadership and convening role with partners engaged in transitional justice, focused on the outcomes of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), which AfRO supported both technically and financially. The TRRC issued its report in late November and the government accepted its recommendations through a White Paper, which the National Human Rights Commission, with support from AfRO, is charged with taking forward (monitoring implementation and obtaining justice for survivors and victims).

Mozambique: the conflict in Cabo Delgado continued, although levels of violence waned. The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) provided grants to partners to conduct investigative reporting on the conflict and to write advocacy pieces and op-eds. We had no traction with SADC. Other targets included: Botswana, South Africa and Tanzania, all of whom directly influence security in Mozambique and sit on SADC’s Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

Eswatini: in June, protests erupted and escalation by the state resulted in over 50 deaths, hundreds of arrests and calls for King Mswati III to usher in a democratic dispensation. OSISA was at the forefront of the response. We supported their work through expanding media coverage, amplifying the protesters’ voices, engaging back-channels to the South African government and engaging SADC missions to the country. Eswatini’s reports to the ACHPR were technically supported by AfRO.

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: we supported the African foundations and partners in their engagement with the ACHPR’s 69th Ordinary Session. Statements were made on:

- Eswatini: as the country’s reports were tabled, bringing the ACHPR’s attention to the ongoing human rights violations;
- The Gambia: raising transitional justice with the ACHPR;
- Guinea and Mali: bringing human rights and transition concerns to the attention of the ACHPR.
Africa’s place in the world

The AU-EU partnership: we produced a study in both English and French to inform civic advocacy around renewal of the partnership. Related policy briefs were completed, with publication earmarked for early 2022.

China in Africa: A China in the World Reserve Fund application was developed with the Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO), Eurasia programme, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) programme, the Latin America Programme (LAP) and the US programme in May. AfRO convened a call with the African foundations to discuss how work should collectively be taken forward.

Israel in Africa: further to our previous work on Israel’s diplomatic offensive in Africa, we supported a grant made by the MENA programme through Open Society Foundations for South Africa (OSF-SA) for an advocacy response to the granting of Observer Status at the AU by the AUC Chair. Involved partners are still working to ensure that this decision is revisited.

Russia in Africa: in partnership with the Eurasia programme, grants were given to investigative journalists, The Elephant and the Southern Africa Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) to explore Russia’s re-engagement with Africa. A first set of research papers was produced. Below are highlights from SAIIA’s reporting on this work:

- SAIIA created a webpage for the project, which is among the top five results in Google searches for ‘Russia Africa’, attracting 1,200 visits to date. The webpage increased the project’s profile and has become a valuable resource for African and foreign governments, the research community and journalists;

- Two opinion pieces by Cayley Clifford on the themes of the scoping workshops were published in the Daily Maverick on July 8 and August 25: ‘The Bear is back: Russian re-engagement with Africa is picking up with Putin in the driving seat’ and ‘Russia’s efforts to promote cyber norms that serve its interests gain traction in Africa’;

- A Policy Insight by Priyal Singh and Gustavo de Carvalho from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), was published on October 26 and has been downloaded 210 times to date. It examined the interaction between Russia and the three African countries serving on the UN Security Council from 2014–20. An accompanying opinion piece was published in ISS Today and the Daily Maverick and on the SAIIA webpage;

- A webinar highlighting the work was held on November 17. Speakers included Samuel Ramani, Cayley Clifford, John Githongo, Khadija Sharife and Dzvinia Kachur. Over one hundred people participated, and the webinar recording has been viewed almost two hundred times to date on SAIIA’s YouTube channel. The audience was diverse and far flung, with representation from Austria, Belarus, Burundi, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. There was diplomatic representation from Argentina, Finland, Japan, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the EU, the Philippines, the US, Ukraine and Zambia.
African women in public leadership

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Centre for Women and Development

The Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Centre for Women and Development was supported with a presidential grant managed by AFRO. Its flagship Amujae Initiative brings together women leaders from more than 16 African countries and provides training, mentorship and coaching. 2021 Amujae leaders include:

- Bogolo J Kenewendo (Botswana), appointed to the Group of Seven (G7)’s Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), tasked with leading the UK’s gender equality work at the G7. Kenewendo is a feminist and former Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry;
- Dr Adaeze Oreh (Nigeria), listed among Nigeria’s 100 Most Inspiring Women for 2021 by Leading Ladies Africa, is a consultant family physician and Country Head of Planning, Research and Statistics for Nigeria’s National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS).

Work on the Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Presidential Library and Archives continued through 2021. The Centre began archival training, arranging the records and equipment to digitise the collection that will ultimately be made available accessible to the public for posterity, research and education.

Write2Speak: A collection of stories by African women leaders

The experiences of African women’s struggles for social, political and economic freedom for justice and peace, cannot be complete without reflecting on and acknowledging that all generations of women have resisted the ideologies of sexism, racism and many forms of gender-based violence and femicide.

– Excerpt from the foreword by Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of United Nations (UN) Women

From September 4–15, 1995, the UN convened the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Beijing Platform For Action (PFA) was hailed as an ambitious roadmap for women’s rights, re-affirming the Vienna Declaration and PFA adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights the year before. 2020 marked 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing PFA. Many African women demonstrate the values shared and expectations raised in Beijing. This grant was to help document their stories and achievements.

AFRO contributed towards Write2Speak, launched in South Africa in August (observed as National Women’s Month, celebrating the women who marched for South Africa’s freedom in 1956).

The women who contributed chapters to the book are leaders in all sectors. They are also multi-generational and multi-cultural. The youngest was 17 and the oldest over 80. Some of our OSF colleagues, Board members and partners featured, including Mary-Jane Morifi (Board Chair, OSF-SA) and Aya Chebbi (former Youth Envoy of the AUC’s Chair).

The experience inspired the women to write more (including their own biographies). It also created a network of women writers keen on initiating more collaborative projects in the future.
Narrative-building

#AfricaNoFilter (#ANF)

OSF is one of the few organisations that understands the importance of narrative change. ANF’s work is cross-cutting and underpins much development work so I think AfRO’s funding of our work has been impactful as it allowed us to do what we do.

– #ANF

#ANF was launched in 2020 through the support of a philanthropic collaborative convened by the Ford Foundation and including Bloomberg, Comic Relief, Facebook (Meta), Luminate, the Mellon Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and OSF. #ANF invests in African artists, creatives and storytellers as well as media platforms. It drives disruption campaigns using research and advocacy to build the field of narrative changemakers. Highlights from its two years of existence include:

- A total of 21,856 subscribers for the monthly #ANF newsletter and plans to grow its media and French communities. Its French community newsletter now has 769 members;
- Teaching journalists how to write about Africa by partnering with the Thomson Foundation to deliver a disruptive journalism course. The course has 1,320 enrolments and 171 completions;
- Establishing its first Storify Africa cohort of four female journalists from Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe to create compelling content about reproductive and sexual health and rights across Africa.
OSF-AFRICA: NEW HORIZONS AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES
Throughout 2021, the African entities worked through various working groups, guided by the African Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Regional Director, to produce the One Africa Strategy and Structure and draft a transition plan. It was a participatory process that engaged over one hundred colleagues across the African foundations and AfRO, with support from Bridgespan and the Transformation Team, in co-creating the future OSF-Africa. In November, the SLT met to sign off on the transition plan, review the risk mitigation plan and develop an implementation plan for 2022.

Across the four pillars of the new OSF-Africa strategy – Expression and Participation; Justice and Accountability; Opportunity and Equity; Security and Rights – and the two cross-cutting pillars – Women’s Rights; and Policy and Engagement – guiding questions were posed on the opportunities the transformation of Africa presents (that is, what is truly new about working as one team around which to focus): what can be de-colonised; what can be amplified; what can be replicated; which capabilities can be leveraged; and which global spaces we now better occupy.

In 2022, we will roll out OSF-Africa’s grantmaking and advocacy as a single entity across priority countries, the sub-regions and continentally. It will be a year of the old co-existing with the new as we carefully close down the African foundations and AfRO and morph into OSF-Africa. The future is exciting as we aim to do more for our continent in our efforts to advance free, just and open societies.
Annex 1: Acronyms and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>artificial intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#ANF#</td>
<td>Africa No Filter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACET</td>
<td>African Centre for Economic Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACHPR</td>
<td>African Commission on Human and People’s Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACMS</td>
<td>African Centre for Migration and Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFCFTA</td>
<td>African Continental Free Trade Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>AfRAC</td>
<td>Africa Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa CDC</td>
<td>Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
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<td>AFRO</td>
<td>Africa Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFRODAD</td>
<td>African Forum and Network on Debt and Development</td>
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<td>AFSOL</td>
<td>African-Centred Solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>APRO</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARUA</td>
<td>African Research Universities Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU-YVC</td>
<td>African Union Youth Volunteers Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU-YV</td>
<td>African Union Youth Volunteer</td>
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<td>AWA</td>
<td>African Atrocities Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beijing PFA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform For Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>CILPA</td>
<td>Centre for Law and Policy in Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoDA</td>
<td>Coalition for Dialogue on Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>Corona Virus Disease-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSVR</td>
<td>Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAWN</td>
<td>Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>EHRC</td>
<td>Ethiopian Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEMNET</td>
<td>African Women’s Development and Communication Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEAC</td>
<td>Gender Equality Advisory Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GISAID</td>
<td>Global Initiative for Sharing all Influenza Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Criminal Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHRD</td>
<td>Institute for Human Rights and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPSS</td>
<td>Institute for Peace and Security Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITUC-A</td>
<td>International Trade Union Confederation Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>KHRC</td>
<td>Kenyan Human Rights Commission</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: List of grantees, as of December 2021

Grantees/Partners

African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET)
African Leadership Centre Trust (ALCT)
Amani Africa Media and Research Services
Amnesty International Limited (AI)
Association for Inclusive Peace (AIP)
Centre for International Law and Policy in Africa (CILPA)
Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (CEACHPR)
Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense
Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD)
Haki na Sheria Initiative
Kenya Editors’ Guild
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)
Royal African Society (RAS)
Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies (SMAIAS)
Tax Justice Network-Africa (TJN-A)
This is Africa Trust (TAT)
TrustAfrica (TA)