

MEDIA RELEASE

The O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative: Meet the team aiming to contribute to transforming the African research landscape

Pretoria, South Africa: The O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative (ORTARChI) is pleased to announce that it has selected the Initiative's first ten host institutions and individual research Chairholders. ORTARChI is an initiative of South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), in partnership with the Oliver & Adelaide Tambo Foundation (OATF), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and seven councils of the Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI).

“For the next five years, the Chairs at these public universities in seven countries across the African continent will conduct research and support high-end skills development on a diverse range of topics including climate, public health, entrepreneurship and youth employment. Aligned to the global concept of research Chairs, these world-class researchers will not only lead multidisciplinary research teams, but also train the next generation of researchers,” said Dr Molapo Qhobela, Chief Executive Officer, NRF.

ORTARChI provides five years of funding amounting to approximately US\$15million, granted after a rigorous review process and in recognition of institutional excellence and capacity in identified disciplines; commitment to supporting high-quality research leadership; and talent; as well as to individual, internationally-recognised researchers.

In addition to the support provided through the grant for postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows, funds will be provided by the NRF and the OATF for 55 African female doctoral students studying under the supervision of the respective Chairholders. “Through international and regional strategic partnerships, the Chairs will contribute to the development of long-term, mutually beneficial, research collaboration on the African Continent,” said Dr Jean Lebel, President, IDRC.

The Initiative

This initiative builds on the work of Oliver Tambo, a prominent South African and pan-Africanist with a science education background, who believed in creating change through education and in cooperation and solidarity among African nations.

“This is an important new chapter in the ORTARChI story. The initiative was first announced in 2017 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the most important leaders of South Africa's liberation struggle, O.R. Tambo, who led the

African National Congress during the years of exile. Tambo was not only a committed pan-Africanist but also an advocate of science and technology,” said Zengeziwe Msimang, Chief Executive Officer, OATF.

The ORTARChI is an opportunity to promote the values for which O.R. Tambo stood. These values include integrity, courage of conviction, diplomacy and humility. The initiative also recognises African excellence in the fields of study about which he was so passionate. Tambo not only believed in Africa as a centre for excellence, but also that it was and would continue to be the home of innovation and brilliance.

“Building on this legacy of O.R Tambo, ORTARChI will enhance the higher education system, promoting research and development in Africa. Of significance is the Initiative’s contribution to the development of mutually beneficial medium and long term partnerships between and amongst countries within and beyond Africa. As a collective, the Research Chairs will also leverage partnerships with the civil society, private sector, and government, a highly commendable approach to implementing excellent research,” added Prof Vitória Langa de Jesus, Executive Director of Mozambique’s National Research Fund (FNI).

Media Invitation

Members of the media and the public are invited to the official launch of the Chairs on 27 October, as part of the 2020 Tambo Month Celebrations. The virtual event will be a panel discussion led by South Africa’s Minister of Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande and will be held on what would have been O.R. Tambo’s 103rd birthday.

Details of the O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative Launch:

Date: Tuesday, 27 October 2020

Time: 14:30 – 16:30 SAST (12:30 – 14:30 GMT)

To register for the event, please go to:

http://nrf.ac.za/or_tambo_africa_research_chairs_initiative_launch

The Research Chairs

Below is the full list of the 10 research Chairholders and host institutions:

Research Chairholder	Institution and Country	Thematic Area	Research Focus of Chair
Prof Gizaw Mengistu Tsidu	Botswana International University of Science & Technology, Botswana	Climate Change	Climate change and adaptation in water, vegetation and livestock resources
Prof Almeida Siteo	Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique	Climate Change	Ecosystems for arid and semi-arid zones
Prof Olga Lompo and Dr	Université Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso	Health Sciences	Cancer and public health

Research Chairholder	Institution and Country	Thematic Area	Research Focus of Chair
Samiratou Ouedraogo			
Prof Kwesi Firibu Saalia	University of Ghana	Food Security	Food safety and quality
Prof Nathaniel Boso	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana	Humanities and Social Sciences	Entrepreneurship and youth employment
Prof Gerald Misinzo	Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania	Food Security	Livestock health
Prof Noble Banadda	Makerere University, Uganda	Food Security	Sustainable agriculture
Prof Stephen Syampungani	Copperbelt University, Zambia	Environment and Development	Environmental management
Prof Imasiku Nyambe	University of Zambia	Water Research	Water quality and catchment protection
Prof Hulda Swai	Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Tanzania	Nanotechnology	Anti-malarial drug delivery

What Are Research Chairs?

Research Chairs are normally granted in recognition of individual leadership and talent and recognise the commitment of universities to supporting high-quality research. Chairs foster prestige and visibility for individuals to catalyse expertise in a given area and train the next generation of scholars, as well as attract and retain the best research talent at a given institution. Chairholders are expected to meet set targets for staff development, and additional funds are provided for supporting post-doctoral and postgraduate students under the supervision of the respective Chairholders. Such research hubs have a catalytic impact on the development of research infrastructure in host countries; as well as contribute to knowledge production and high-end skills in alignment with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024).

Canada's pioneering Canada Research Chairs programme began in 1997 and has funded almost 2000 research chairs to date. The successful South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) was established in 2006, as a strategic intervention of the South African government to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at South African public universities, Research Councils and National Research Facilities. In particular, the SARChI funding instrument is aimed at increasing scientific research capacity through the development of human capacity and stimulating the generation of new knowledge. SARChI is also intended to support and advance transformation of South African society in terms of demographics and the knowledge economy, so that there is equitable and inclusive participation in the generation of knowledge and the generation of such knowledge translates into socio-

economic benefits. The implementation of ORTARChI is aligned to SARChI, providing a platform for sharing of experiences and further collaborations amongst top researchers on the continent.

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