




ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Royal African Society

www.royalafricansociety.org/annualreport

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ABOUT US

We like to think of ourselves as a 'Big Tent' for everyone interested in Africa, in the UK, and beyond.

We promote a better understanding of Africa through our publications, websites, annual film and literature festivals, and our regular public events, which are mostly free and open to the public.

Our membership is open to all and is made up of people and organisations from a wide range of cultural and professional backgrounds. Join us to become part of a network of individuals and organisations committed to Africa's advancement.

Find out more at: www.royalafricansociety.org

 www.facebook.com/royafrisoc

 www.twitter.com/royafrisoc

 Join our group, search Royal African Society

Join the RAS as a corporate or an individual member

When you join the Royal African Society, you become part of a vibrant network of individuals and organisations committed to promoting a better understanding of Africa in Britain.

To find out about joining visit
www.royalafricansociety.org/join-us

RAS TEAM

Team

Director
Richard Dowden

Deputy Director
Richard May

Communications & Editorial

Managing Editor,
African Arguments
James Wan

Communications Manager
& Editor, What's on Africa
Dele Meiji Fatunla

Membership & Administration

Corporate Relations
Manager
Sandra Hrachova

Office Manager
Gemma Haxby

Membership & Contacts
Administrator
Melmarie Laccay

Events, Festivals & Meetings Programme

Programme Manager
Sheila Ruiz

Programme Officer
Shushan Tewolde-Berhan

Policy & Parliament

Policy & Research
Co-ordinator
Africa APPG
Hetty Bailey

Marketing & PR

Marketing Consultant,
Africa Writes & Film
Africa 2015
Ogo Okafor

PR Consultant, Film
Africa 2015
Ladis Bapory Site

Festivals

Film Africa

Festival Producer
Rachael Loughlin

Festival Programmer
Isabel Moura Mendes
Jacqui Nsiah

Shorts Programmer

Sheila Ruiz
Silja Frey

Festival Intern
Emilia Melossi

Submissions Advisor
Robin Steadman

Programme Advisor
Katarina Hedren

Africa Writes

Festival Producer
Kate Haines

Festival Intern
David Coughlin

RAS Interns 2015

Lucy Doggett
Daniel Acheampong
Josette Joseph

RAS Council

Chair
Zeinab Badawi

Vice-Chairs
Alistair Boyd
Prof. Christopher Cramer
Phillip Alier

Honorary Treasurer
Innes Meek

Council Members

Prof. David Anderson
Dr. Titilola Banjoko
Susana Edjang
Razia Khan
Gregory Kronsten
Robert Molteno
Dr. Mpalive Msiska
Prof. Stephanie Newell
Jide Olanrewaju
Elsie Owusu
Mark Rose
Camilla Toulmin

African Affairs

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Dr. Lindsay Whitfield

Book Reviews Editor

Dr. Lotte Hughes

Bibliographer

Terry Barringer

Editorial Assistant

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A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



Dear Friends,

To those of you who are long-standing friends and members, thank you for being with us in 2015. If you are new to the RAS then welcome and we look forward to seeing you online and at as many of our events as you can manage! It's always a great pleasure to share our activities with members and to give you a taste of some of the exciting things for the year ahead.

2015 was a memorable year for us with some fantastic successes and also some challenging changes. Our work has grown from strength to strength, and we've developed some wonderful partnerships, notably with the African Union Foundation with whom we've partnered to deliver our annual film festival, Film Africa. And we have great plans for our future collaborations.

Our events programme and publications continue to provide robust focus on the continent, and our influence through conversations and networks in the 'Africa' sphere has never been greater.

On a sorrier note, we were sad to see the departure of our Deputy Director Richard May after five successful years of shepherding the RAS to growth in line with our strategic plans. However we have taken the opportunity to reshape our dynamic team under whom our plans for further development are secure.

In order to deliver and improve on our successes each year, we are reliant and grateful to our members and friends. Your commitment and support ensures we remain a powerful voice for keeping Africa high on the agenda in the UK and beyond. For those of you who have not joined us yet – I urge you to become members, support our work and join the conversation.

Zeinab Badawi

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



2015 was a crucial year for Africa. After a decade and a half of reasonable economic growth, Africa's growth rates slipped back to a modest 4%-5%. The 'Africa Rising' period was an opportunity for Africa's leaders to encourage the creation of manufacturing industries. Services grew but little value was added to Africa's commodities by manufacturing and processing

The Africa Rising vision was built on the assumption this opportunity would be taken. Rapidly developed infrastructure and energy would lead to the development of industries and services. But the 'Africa Rising' enthusiasts mistook a carthorse for a racehorse. The continent's biggest economies: Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa all performed below par.

2015 was also the year when China's thirst for Africa's resources was slaked after a decade and a half of buying up Africa's minerals and oil. China has been the most important driver of African economic growth in the last decade and a half but towards the end of the year China announced it was cutting back its demand for African commodities and investment in Africa. That opportunity for Africa to start processing and adding value was missed.

The population of the continent will double from a billion today to two billion by 2050. This rapid rise will lead to a large, ambitious and competitive generation that will, I suspect, be far less tolerant and passive towards acceptance of the status quo than any generation since independence.

However Africa is certainly doing better than we think. Africa's has made huge strides in areas such as infant mortality which has fallen by 25% recently and improving by between 4% and 8% a year.

New energy and infrastructure projects are linking up the continent, speeding up transport and communications. Transformation at this pace will soon liberate the dynamism and energy of this young population. And under the surface and often unrecorded there is huge economic activity.

The outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was terrifying. The very nature of the so-far incurable disease horrified humanity. Of course the TV pictures of white foreigners to the rescue reinforced the old paradigm that Africa is somehow cursed with an inability to manage its own affairs. The media coverage was, on the whole, an improvement on previous Africa disasters and everyone was impressed at the courage of African doctors and nurses who risked their lives to help victims. The outbreak showed more than much else the failure of the World Health Organisation. In the long view – many African institutions did respond well. The African Union (AU) mobilised

people; Nigeria prevented Ebola's spread; Senegal quickly isolated the cases it had. The only places where the crisis was prolonged were in fragile, post conflict states.

The other game-changing event of the year was the victory of Muhammadu Buhari in the Nigerian elections. This was the first time in Nigeria that an election had resulted in a change of power from one political party to another and the change was – on the whole – peaceful. That contributed to the view that democracy and well-run elections are becoming the norm in Africa.

At the RAS 2015 was a year of consolidation. Our projects and ventures have moved from the experimental to the established and the numbers of visitors to our meetings and websites are rising rapidly. Our cultural activities, the book and film festivals: Africa Writes and Film Africa, have growing numbers of audiences; Africa Writes 2015 was attended by approximately 1700 people during the course of the weekend and audience attendance for Film Africa 2015 was around 3,900.

“

...The media coverage was, on the whole, an improvement on previous Africa disasters and everyone was impressed at the courage of African doctors and nurses who risked their lives to help victims.

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Richard Dowden

Our Business Programme continues to grow with 7 Business Breakfast meetings in 2015 and we gave several briefings to companies trying to find a way into the African market. The highlight speakers this year were Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, Dr Carlos Lopes and Jim O'Neill.

At Parliament the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group now has about 200 members, elected and elected its first British African Chair, Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central.

I would like to thank our exceedingly hard-working and dedicated staff. Special thanks go to Richard May, Deputy Director, who left at the end of the year. During his 5 years at RAS, he not only reorganised the internal structures of the RAS but also drew up a Strategic Plan for many years ahead.

I would also like to thank Zeinab Badawi, our Chair, and the Council for supporting the team and taking clear brave decisions that have allowed the Society to grow and flourish.

Richard Dowden,
Director

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S STRATEGIC REVIEW 2011 - 2015



By the time you read this, I will have left RAS after five wonderful years with the organisation. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to have had the opportunity of working with all of you, our members and friends, as well as our talented and committed staff team and of witnessing the growth and development of RAS at first hand.

The last five years have been a period of major growth and development for RAS. In 2011, we sat down and developed a plan for expanding and extending our programmes and activities so that we could really say that we covered our four focus areas of academia, business, politics and arts and culture. Looking back, I can tell you that we were very successful in implementing this plan. Let the few paragraphs below tell the story.

Our annual festivals of Film and Literature are now firmly part of the London scene. We launched Film Africa in November 2011 to fill a gap and shine a light on African cinema and bring all its talent and brilliance to a new audience. Despite concerns over funding year in, year out, we celebrated Film Africa's fifth anniversary in 2015. In July 2012, we introduced Africa Writes, our annual literary festival, now held at the British Library, to showcase contemporary African writing. This continues to be a great success, drawing in big crowds who come for the lively panel discussions, readings, workshops and performances.

Our engagement with parliamentarians through the All Party Parliamentary Group on Africa has grown stronger with membership of the Group quadrupling over the last four years to 200. The Group plays a vital role in raising the profile of Africa and African issues in Parliament. Our Events programme has gone from strength to strength. Our Annual Lectures started in 2011 with former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, have been highlights of each year. Of particular note are the Prospects and Forecasts panel discussions, which we hold in January every year, and our themed event series, for example, the How to Fix Nigeria debates, co-produced with acclaimed Nigerian broadcaster, Funmi Iyanda. These meetings attract audiences well in excess of 300.

African Affairs, our academic journal, continues to be cited number one in the world in Area Studies, and provide in depth analysis and inform debates about the continent. Our 1,100 individual members of the RAS receive copies of the journal each quarter.

Our business programme has grown in popularity and we now have over 80 corporate members and donors supporting RAS. The Africa Business

Breakfasts remain a firm favourite with them, mainly because of the high calibre and profile of the speakers that we invite.

We have developed a number of exciting new websites over the last few years. We launched the African Arguments website in May 2011 as a serious but accessible commentary on political events and developments on the continent. It now attracts 90,000 visits per month with a global audience including 30% from Africa. Our listings website was launched in 2012, first as Gateway for Africa and then after a refresh, as What's on Africa, featuring Africa related events in the UK and beyond.

To do all this we have doubled our turnover, run larger projects and developed more partnerships. We have also invested in staff recruitment and development and, as a result, we now have a brilliant team in place to manage the next phase of our development.

During 2015, we spent quite a lot of time consulting and thinking about what has and hasn't worked over the last few years and what direction we want to take in the future. The fruit of all this thought and analysis is our new strategic plan, which will take us up to 2020: our 2020 vision.

This plan involves us focusing on a number of different areas. We aim to invest in our digital resources, going digital and increasing our online audiences in the UK, Africa and elsewhere in the world. In 2016, we will revamp our websites and develop new branding. We will further develop our Africa networks, particularly those on the continent, so that we have a better understanding of what the issues are on the ground and are able to involve more African voices in our events and programmes.

We will look at issues affecting Africa in greater depth, drawing on our research and extensive networks across the political, academic, business and cultural sectors to paint a nuanced picture of Africa's reality and developments. Finally, we will develop more strategic partnerships and engagements so that we can sustain and expand our flagship programmes and festivals into the future.

Sheila Ruiz has been appointed as Head of Programmes, Partnerships and Operations, to oversee the implementation of this plan, in support of the Director, Richard Dowden, and Dele Meiji Fatunla has taken up the post of Head of Communications, to manage our digital expansion, and they are supported by an excellent staff team.

Richard May
Deputy Director

“

...We will look at issues affecting Africa in greater depth, drawing on our research and extensive networks across the political, academic, business and cultural sectors to paint a nuanced picture of Africa's reality and developments.

”

Richard May

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

The full audited accounts are contained in the Report of the Trustees, which is sent to the Charity Commission. Copies are available to members on request and at the Annual General Meeting. Shown here is a Financial Summary.

The 2015 financial result for the RAS shows a deficit of £28,331 compared to one of £13,428 in the previous year. Despite an expected fall in income from publications following significant non-recurring revenue streams in 2014, overall income was 6% higher than in the previous year as a result of a significant 30% increase in grants and sponsorships to finance the programmes of events and festivals. Donations were also 10% up on last year.

The RAS is extremely grateful to its corporate and individual sponsors, donors and members for their continued support. The RAS would also like to thank SOAS for the provision of office space at a reduced cost and, therefore, providing a gift in kind of £15,870 per annum.

Expenditure in 2015 went above £700,000, a 7% year-on-year increase. The additional income to support the literary and film festivals, Africa Writes 2015 and Film Africa 2015, enabled, particularly for Film Africa 2015, more extensive and more ambitious programmes to be delivered. Despite the reduction in income for publications, unused reserves accumulated in previous years were used to invest more in the Society's websites, African Arguments and, particularly, What's On Africa.

As a consequence of the annual deficit, total funds have fallen to £472,741, which is the equivalent of about 8 months expenditure. The Trustees are therefore of the opinion that the assets and reserves of the Society are adequate to support its immediate on-going activities and obligations.

However, there are risks. The Society has no endowment funding so it is entirely reliant upon continuous annual support from its members, sponsors and donors. The overall African economic downturn, due to decreasing commodity prices, threatens to impact the Society. This has already translated into the loss of core sponsorship for the Business Breakfasts and Annual Lecture, which are central to the programme of charitable activities. Further, despite an increase in donations and subscriptions during 2015, the prevailing economic climate could lead to a decline in corporate membership and donations as the traditional supporters come under increasing financial pressure. The Trustees are well aware of these risks and the management team is actively developing new programmes to attract new partners and to secure existing supporters so that income continues to flow into the Society to sustain and expand the valued activities it carries out.

Innes Meek

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

For the year ended 31st December 2015

The Royal African Society	2015	2014
		£,000
Income and Expenditure Account		
Incoming resources from Generated Funds		
Donations and legacies	115	105
Charity Activities		
Publications	253	279
Events and Festivals	201	156
Advancement of Knowledge	92	84
Other Trading Activities	6	6
Investment		
Income	9	7
Total Incoming Resources	676	637
Resources Expended		
Raising Funds	59	48
Publications	237	195
Events and Festivals	260	244
Advancement of Knowledge	149	170
Total resources expended	705	657
Net outgoing resources	-29	-20
Gain/Loss on revaluation of investments	1	7
Net movement in funds	-28	-13
Funds received through merger with FCT	0	184
Net movement in funds after transfer of FCT funds	-28	171
Total Funds brought forward	501	330
Total Funds carried forward	473	501
Balance Sheet		
Investments	195	194
Current assets	413	486
Current liabilities	135	179
Total net assets	473	501

BUSINESS PROGRAMME

Uniquely placed between business, academia, governments and the policy-making community, the RAS Business Programme continued to produce an engaging, hard-hitting and nuanced series of discussions. We held high profile briefings where first-class speakers explored key trends shaping contemporary business environments in African economies, providing unique networking opportunities, brand exposure and government relations for our corporate members.

We were delighted to welcome the African Union Foundation as one of our corporate members and lead supporter of Film Africa 2015. We look forward to working with African initiatives and companies in 2016.

Business Programme Highlight

In the lead up to his election as President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in May 2015, the RAS hosted Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, formerly Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Named Forbes Africa's 'Person of the Year' in 2013, Dr. Adesina shared his vision for the bank in a roundtable discussion titled 'Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth in Africa.' Dr. Adesina explored the role of the AfDB in driving inclusive and green growth for Africa, drawing on his wealth of experience creating and implementing effective development finance programmes across the continent.

BUSINESS BREAKFAST LIST



Jim O'Neill, economist and creator of the acronym 'BRIC' – now Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, UK

Theme: *World Economy and its impact on Africa*
21.01.2015



Hon César Mba Abogo, Secretary of State for the Monitoring of the Horizon 2020 Program

Theme: *Equatorial Guinea: New horizons & investment opportunities*
27.02.2015



Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria – now President of the African Development Bank

Theme: *Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth for Africa*
22.04.2015



Rob Hersov, CEO & Founder of Invest Africa

Theme: *The Two Africas: Between fragility and dynamism*
19.05.2015



Nick Westcott, Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service (EEAS)

Theme: *Opportunities for growth in Africa – What Europe can do*
22.09.2015



Ashish Thakkar, CEO & Founder of Mara Group and Mara Foundation

Theme: *The Lion Awakes: The next wave of opportunities on the continent*
19.11.2015



Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Theme: *Investing in Africa's wealth to fuel transformation*
03.12.2015

AFRICA ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

2015 was the 12th year of the Africa APPG, during which the group elected a new Chair, Chi Onwurah, Labour MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central, who was profiled in The UK's Guardian newspaper as one of the women who shaped the year 2015. Since the general election there has been an influx of new members and membership is now over 200 parliamentarians. Lord Chidgey has become Co-Chair from the House of Lords. The group also elected several new officers including Patrick Grady, SNP MP for Glasgow East and SNP Spokesperson on International Development, and Lord McConnell as a Vice Chair.

Meetings & Roundtables


The APPG held 16 meetings in 2015, varying from roundtables with John Vine, Former Independent Chief Inspector of Borders & Immigration and the Minister for Immigration to discuss ongoing problems African visitors face in securing UK visas, to a parliamentary business breakfast with Dr. Carlos Lopes, the United Nations Economic Commissioner for Africa. The APPG continues to enjoy good relationships with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) and with ministers frequently participating in the group's meetings. The APPG has held two policy forums bringing parliamentarians together with ministers

and senior officials to facilitate consultation and feedback on policy approaches.

Africa APPG & the Sustainable Development Goals

The International Development APPGs of which the Africa APPG is a key member, continued to host high-level meetings including a preview briefing before the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed at the UN with Amina Mohammed, The Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Post 2015 Development Planning (*pictured below with Lord Loomba, Lord McConnell and Stephen O'Brien*).





APPG Enquiry: Lessons from Ebola Affected Communities

The APPG concluded a joint enquiry Lessons from Ebola-affected communities: being prepared for future health crisis. with the student-led, health think-tank, Polygeia. The enquiry received over 31 written submissions and held 5 evidence gathering meetings including with Dr. David Nabarro, the UN Special Envoy for Ebola. 23 key informants were interviewed ensuring that the voices of affected communities were represented in the report. In Sierra Leone, interviews were conducted by Restless Development and in Liberia, they were conducted by the Public Health & Development Initiative. A summary of the report was submitted as evidence to the International Development's Committee Ebola enquiry. The chief finding was that efforts to curb the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa were most effective when local leaders of affected communities led the demand for assistance from their governments and the international actors, and also played an essential leadership role in the management of that assistance.

The group continues to meet with visiting delegates from African countries to better inform the APPG's agenda and aims to develop and establish connections with African Universities, Think Tanks and NGOs as well as diaspora groups. The group also encourages smaller organisations to get more involved by submitting evidence to their enquiries.

You can follow the Africa APPG on Twitter @AfricaAPPG to keep up to date with the group's work.

AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Overview

African Affairs continued to go from strength to strength in 2015. The journal received 197 articles, down from the record-breaking number of 246 articles submitted in 2014. This is largely due to African Affairs' strong reputation. The journal remains the world's top-ranked African studies journal by frequency of citation, according to the Social Science Citation Index. In 2014, the Impact Factor was 1.945, which put African Affairs in the rankings as 1st in Area Studies (1/66 journals) and 16th in Political Science (16/161 journals). Preliminary estimations of the 2015 Impact Factor of African Affairs calculated at OUP point to 1.981, which is another annual increase for the journal and continues to make it the number one journal in African Studies by a long lead. There have been many exciting events at the journal in 2015. African Affairs gained a new editor, Carl Death. The journal also launched a new type of publication called the Research Note, and created the Stephen Ellis Prize for the most innovative article in African Affairs to be given out every two years.

Carl Death Joins African Affairs as Co-Editor

Dr. Carl Death joined as co-editor, to replace Dr. Nic Cheeseman, from March 2016. Carl is a Senior Lecturer in International Political Economy at the University of Manchester and his research is primarily located at the intersection of three fields: African politics and development, environmental politics and sustainable development, and critical theories. He has published a monograph on Governing Sustainable Development with Routledge in 2010, and a second monograph, *The Green State in Africa*, is under contract with Yale University Press. We are particularly excited to bring Carl on board because in addition to being a thorough and insightful editor, he possesses a wealth of knowledge on some of the most pressing issues facing the continent today, such as the relationship between the environment and development and the impact of climate change.

The Stephen Ellis Prize for the Most Innovative Article

Stephen Ellis (1953–2015) was a greatly respected editor of African Affairs, who played an important role in making the journal the success that it is today. He sadly passed away on July 24th 2015. The Stephen Ellis Prize for the most innovative article in African Affairs is intended to highlight and promote the kind of thought provoking, politically engaged and pathbreaking analysis that Stephen Ellis pioneered throughout his hugely influential career. The prize will be awarded to the article published in African Affairs that does the most to challenge existing preconceptions, raise issues of contemporary political importance, render complex topics accessible to broader audiences, or to introduce new ideas (whether theoretical, empirical or methodological) into African studies and the public understanding of Africa.

The prize, which comes with a cash award of £100 and one year's free subscription to African Affairs, will be awarded every second year, for the most innovative article published in the previous two-year period. The inaugural prize winning article will be chosen from those papers published in the calendar years 2014–2015, and will be presented at the ASAUK conference in Cambridge in 2016.

Research Notes are a new type of publication that we hope will foster debate and analysis of new methodological and ethical issues in African studies, with a view to enabling researchers to share their experiences. In other words, they are papers on research methods for the study of Africa, covering recent developments, controversies and debates. The key features of Research Notes are that they should address an issue of particular methodological or ethical importance to African studies and make a contribution to our understanding of how Africa can be studied, and highlight the pros and cons of different approaches. The Notes are shorter than full articles, falling between 4,000 and 6,000 words. The first Research Notes will be published in the January and April 2016 issues: 'Mistakes, crises, and research independence: The perils of fieldwork as a form of evidence', by Christopher Cramer, Deborah Johnston, Carlos Oya, and John Sender; and 'Africa by numbers: Reviewing the database approach to studying African economies', by Morten Jerven.



AFRICAN ARGUMENTS ONLINE

Readership

In 2015, African Arguments continued to increase its audience, reaching a peak of 90,000 unique visits in a single month. Hits from Africa grew particularly strongly and accounted for the largest portion of African Arguments' readership across the year. African Arguments articles also reach a wider audience through syndication in prominent international outlets such as The Guardian, Courier International and AllAfrica as well as several national papers across the continent.

Special projects

While covering the whole continent, African Arguments has a number of special focuses. The Nigeria Forum and Making Sense of the Sudans continued to run in 2015, while The Central Africa Forum started up. All three dedicated projects publish in-depth analysis and commentary from leading experts, researchers and journalists on the ground. The Africa Journalism Fund, which is earmarked for African journalists working on the continent, also expanded its network and reach.

Multimedia

African Arguments started new multimedia projects in 2015. The African Arguments podcast is now broadcast fortnightly covering a different topic each episode and has attracted several highly-esteemed guests. Meanwhile, the site also hosted a ten-part free online course in African Political Thought that featured weekly video lectures by Professor Stephen Chan.

New Editor

After nearly five years of service, founding Editor Magnus Taylor left African Arguments to take up a position at International Crisis Group. He was replaced by award-winning editor and journalist, James Wan.

African Arguments is a core project of the RAS but was generously supported in 2015 by Humanity United, United States Institute of Peace, Miles Morland Foundation and the Expertise for Central Africa forum.





WHAT'S ON AFRICA

We successfully re-launched the RAS event listings blog on culture, business and development, with a new name, What's On Africa – and a redeveloped website. We published a wide variety of content focused on Africa-related events and themes and appointed a listings consultant to support the growth of the site.

Cultural Journalism Mentorship Programme

As a result of an RAS trip to Nigeria undertaken in November 2014 by Dele Meiji Fatunla, Communications Manager, we were able to develop and run a cultural journalism mentorship programme in partnership with the British Council. This provided opportunities and mentorship to 29 African writers and journalists.

The site attracted approximately 18,000 visits, and grew engagement on social media channels, with 500 followers on Facebook, 170 followers on Twitter and 1000 followers on Instagram.

In 2015, What's On Africa was supported by a grant from the British Council (Nigeria) and matched by a grant from the RAS. You can follow [@WhatsOnAfrica](#) on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

COMMUNICATIONS

We continued to make an impact on our social media channels in 2015 as in previous years. Our audience continues to grow across various platforms with over 5,760 'likes' on Facebook. We have 4,811 followers on Twitter. Our main website www.royalafricansociety.org maintained a steady level of traffic with 70,000 visitors over the year. In 2015, we also began the process of re-freshing the RAS brand and messaging, with surveys sent to our various stakeholders including our business contacts and public audience and RAS staff and Council. In late 2015, following an extensive research process we began the acquisition and implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management system that will function as a database of information, and a system for managing our work.

Media Coverage in 2015


We garnered significant coverage throughout the year. We co-ordinated major interviews for our event with former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, during the London launch of his autobiography 'My Watch' – with coverage from the London Evening Standard, Vice News, BBC Africa and a wide-range of international outlets. Throughout the year, particularly during our festivals we attracted press attention from The Telegraph, Open Democracy, Daily Maverick, OkayAfrica, The Guardian, The Independent, The Africa Report, CNBC Africa, CNN, New York Times, AllAfrica.com, International Business Times, and many others.

PUBLIC EVENTS & MEETINGS

Our public events programme continued to thrive in 2015; we attracted a total of 8,932 attendees across all of our activities which were made up of a diverse mix of panel discussions, roundtable meetings, book launches, our flagship event the Annual Lecture and our popular annual cultural festivals, Africa Writes and Film Africa.

Reflecting the RAS's four main subject areas, the events programme explored business, politics, academia and arts and culture. Our vibrant membership and audiences continued to actively engage in these subject areas, exploring contemporary African issues and challenging prevailing narratives. Our events continued to have an online legacy through social media and our audio podcasts, enabling global audiences to experience our events and participate in the debates.

Drawing on political analysis from African Arguments and the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, and blogs on culture, creative economy, business and development from What's On Africa, the RAS events programme continued to respond to current affairs and topical issues. We held several roundtable meetings on elections in African countries including Sudan, Burundi and Ethiopia with briefings from experts and partners such as the International Crisis Group.



Young African Diaspora

The RAS convened two events exploring the role of young African diasporas in contributing to Africa's growth and development.

The Bridge Series: Inspiring Africa's Greatest Asset

Conceived by Royal African Society interns, Daniel Acheampong and Josette Joseph, 'The Bridge Series: Inspiring Africa's Greatest Asset' was hosted by the Africa APPG. It began with a powerful discussion on how young African diaspora in the UK can invest in African contexts through innovation and leadership. Chaired by interns, a panel of experts led an interactive discussion on ways attendees could turn their passion, path and career choice into a success, giving practical advice on how this can contribute to Africa's growth and development.

FCO & RAS Think-in with Young African diaspora

In collaboration with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Africa Directorate, we organised a 'think-in' which was attended by young African diaspora from different backgrounds and expertise. They shared their insights on how the British Government could refresh its relationships with African stakeholders within the continent as well as African diaspora communities, offering creative and innovative ideas for future engagement.

PUBLIC EVENTS & MEETINGS: HOSTING FORMER N

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo launched his three-volume autobiography "My Watch" with the Royal African Society in February 2015, ahead of Nigeria's closely fought presidential election. Controversially banned in Nigeria due to an accusation of libel at the time, Obasanjo discussed his memoirs from his early years to his tenure as a civilian president on Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 and his subsequent completion of the country's first civilian-civilian handover. This lively event was attended by 300 people and was hosted by our Chair Zeinab Badawi and Director Richard Dowden.

How to Fix Nigeria

We also continued to explore Nigeria's contemporary challenges through the 'How to Fix Nigeria' series conceived by Funmi Iyanda, award-winning producer and broadcaster at Creation TV and Oya Media. Focussing on the fourth democratic elections which took place in March 2015, 'The 2015 Elections & Beyond' and 'Prospects for Change' brought together a broad range of speakers to explore the rhetoric which dominated the election campaign and prospects for ground-breaking and lasting change following the victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC). These events attracted 335 attendees, with press coverage from 'BattaBox', the Nigerian News and Entertainment Channel and Channels TV and the London Evening Standard; interviews with our speakers and audience members were viewed by over 10,000 people online and #HowToFixNigeria trended on twitter.

IGERIAN PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO



2015 RAS ANNUAL LECTURE

The Royal African Society was delighted to invite Mmusi Maimane to speak at our Annual Lecture 2015. Leader of South Africa's opposition party The Democratic Alliance, Mmusi Maimane delivered a compelling speech entitled Africa: It's potential and prospects. The lecture was held on Tuesday 15th September 2015 at the Royal Society of Medicine in Central London, and chaired by Zeinab Badawi, Chair of the Royal African Society.

Maimane's rise to national attention began in 2011, when he was elected to be the DA's Johannesburg mayoral candidate in the Local Government Elections. Since becoming the youngest leader of the DA in May 2015, he has been aggressively expanding the party's reach to poor black townships and rural areas. He has been criticising the African National Congress (ANC), which has dominated South African politics since the end of apartheid, on issues such as widespread corruption and an ineffective foreign policy. As the DA's share of the national vote rises, it secured 22% of the vote in the last election; the popularity of the ANC is wavering.

Maimane is passionate about solving youth unemployment and the skills-shortage among black youth that resulted from the unequal education policies of Apartheid. He strongly believes that the route to reaching South Africa's potential is through education, and growing the economy to create jobs and decreasing dependence on social grants.

Maimane eloquently communicated his passion for the beauty and potential of Africa to an enaging audience.

Maimane shared his insightful ideas on everything from micro enterprising, migration, and inter-regional economy, to the polarisation of foreign investment, and

the mobilising of a bold new generation of Africans:

"In Western Europe, inter-regional trade is roughly 60% of the total trade. In Africa, the same figure is only 10%. We must do more to trade amongst ourselves.... millions of young Africans must roll up their sleeves and do for themselves what their governments cannot deliver. A continent of resourceful and creative entrepreneurs will require a modern fast thinking Africa that has found place in the world, and doesn't hesitate to act in its own interest."

He had little to say however to a question about British Weather.

The 2015 RAS Annual Lecture was generously supported by Diageo and held at the Royal Society of Medicine, Wimpole Street, London.



“

"We [Africans] must do more to trade amongst ourselves...millions of young Africans must roll up their sleeves and do for themselves what their governments cannot deliver"

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Mmusi Maimane

Mmusi Maimane speaking after his lecture to the Royal African Society, Credit: Joyee Nicholls

AFRICA WRITES 2015: MEDITATIONS ON GR

“

The place of black people in the world is still fragile and wracked with wrong perceptions. It seems that enlightened power is the only way by which the image of black people can change radically for the better in this world.

”

Ben Okri

Ben Okri: Meditations on Greatness

Africa Writes 2015 was honoured to have the Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri OBE FRSL headline the festival and share his reflections on the theme 'Meditations on Greatness', before being in conversation with editor and critic, Ellah Wakatama Allfrey.

Ben Okri has published ten novels, including the Booker prize-winning 'The Famished Road', as well as collections of poetry, essays and short stories. Born in Nigeria and currently living in London, Okri has been awarded numerous international prizes and has had his work translated into 26 languages. His most recent novel 'The Age of Magic' was published by Head of Zeus in 2014.

Okri, speaking with gravitas and fervour, asked the audience: 'Do we [black and African writers] have the right to talk about greatness?' And they roared back in response: 'YES!' Here are some of the most striking highlights of his remarks:

"Our lack of confidence is not a thing of colour; it is a thing of images – of association of images. I believe our greatest liberation will come from liberation from images. I believe we have to see ourselves as human beings first, then all history, all achievements of men and women become open to us as part of our human inheritance.

The place of black people in the world is still fragile and wracked with wrong perceptions. It seems that enlightened power is the only way by which the image of black people can change radically for the better in this world.

Prodigies fascinate us but prodigy is not greatness. Greatness has something sustained about it. Greatness sustains itself; it wills itself, it dreams itself, it surpasses itself. Greatness is always for us a stupendous and audacious act of freedom....

....To dream of a novel for me is to think about it intensively as well as to plan and make notes, to make diagrams, to assemble ideas... For me, to do is to dream and to dream is to do."

The essay 'Meditations on Greatness' is available to listen to on our RAS mixcloud: [royafrisoc](#).

AFRICA WRITES

AFRICA WRITES 2015

Africa Writes 2015 – the fourth edition of the Royal African Society's annual literature festival promoting contemporary African writing – took place in the British Library in London from 3rd to 5th July, featuring an exciting three-day programme of book launches, readings, talks, panel discussions, live performances, children and young people's workshops and an international book fair. Some stats and figures, which measure the festival's success, are below:

Africa Writes 2015 brought together over 75 contributors from the world of contemporary African literature – ranging from novelists, poets and playwrights to publishers, journalists, academics and critics. They took part in an exciting three-day programme of book launches, readings, talks, panel discussions, live performances, children and young people's workshops and an international book fair.

Approximately 1,700 people attended Africa Writes 2015 over the course of the weekend. The festival's two headline events, which were the only ticketed events at the festival, were sold-out to audiences of 255.

Launched in 2012, the festival continues to attract new audiences every year. This year, 72% of respondents said they had not attended Africa Writes in previous years.

Africa Writes 2015 attracted a diverse audience: 50% described themselves as Black African, 16% as Black Caribbean, 11% as White British, 8% as mixed and 4% as Asian. Approximately 78% of those who filled in the evaluation form were female and 20% male and 43% were aged between 20–30 years.

The festival also attracted a significant number of new visitors for the British Library: 19% of respondents said they had not visited the British Library before. For 45% of attendees, the festival was the first time they had heard of the Royal African Society and 96% of attendees said they planned to attend future RAS events.

Audiences expressed a high level of satisfaction, with 95% of attendees rating their experience as 'good' or 'excellent' and 100% stating they would attend Africa Writes again.

Principal Partners

Africa Writes 2015 was made possible thanks to the generous support of the following funders and supporters:

Arts Council England, The British Library, Miles Morland Foundation, and the Centre of African Studies (University of London).

Other Partners

Afrikult., Africa39, African Poetry Prize, The British Museum, Bookshy, Brunel University Caine Prize for African Writing, Chatto & Windus, Commonwealth Foundation, English Pen, Grange Hotels, Granta Publications, Hay Festivals, Jacaranda, Journal of African Cultural Studies, Kwani?, The Literary Consultancy, Numbi, Pelican Post, SIDENSI, TEDx Euston, and Zed Books.

AFRICA WRITES



Nuruddin Farah: In Conversation

Ahead of Africa Writes, on Friday 29th May, we hosted acclaimed Somali novelist and playwright, Nuruddin Farah, in partnership with Kayd Somali Arts & Culture. Farah, the author of eleven novels that have been translated into more than 20 languages and the winner of numerous awards, discussed the role of culture in Somali identity and what it means to be Somali. Speaking to a packed audience hall, he also talked about his novel 'Hiding in Plain Sight', a modern-day story about family, freedom and loyalty and the ways gender and sexual preference define us, and the unexpected paths by which the political disrupts the personal. Nuruddin Farah was in conversation with Richard Dowden, Director, Royal African Society.

FILM AFRICA 2015

Film Africa 2015 took place over 10 days between 30 October – 8 November, across 11 London cinemas and venues. For the fifth edition, the festival hosted 56 screenings and events, including appearances from leading African filmmakers and industry experts offering Q&As, panel discussions, talks and workshops.

The 2015 programme presented five special strands that highlighted different areas of interest and relevant socio-political issues: **Lusophone Liberty: 40 Years On** signalled the 40th anniversary of independence of African countries that were once Portuguese colonies; **From Africa, With Love** presented stories of passion from across the continent; a spotlight on a new generation of filmmakers in **New Narratives: Ethiopia in Transition**; and **Music On Film: Sounds of the Continent** celebrated Africa's

wonderfully varied musical landscape, with live music events bringing the films to life.

The Baobab Award for Best Short Film

returned for its fifth year and was awarded to Tunisian filmmaker Selim Gribaa for the quirky comedy, *The Purple House*. 2015 saw the introduction of a new Film Africa audience award, supported by the African Union Foundation gives our audiences a voice for the first time. The winner was *Stories of Our Lives* from Kenyan filmmaker Jim Chuchu – a beautifully rendered and timely collection of narratives about the LGBTI community. Banned by the Kenyan government, the film has been making waves at festivals around the world.

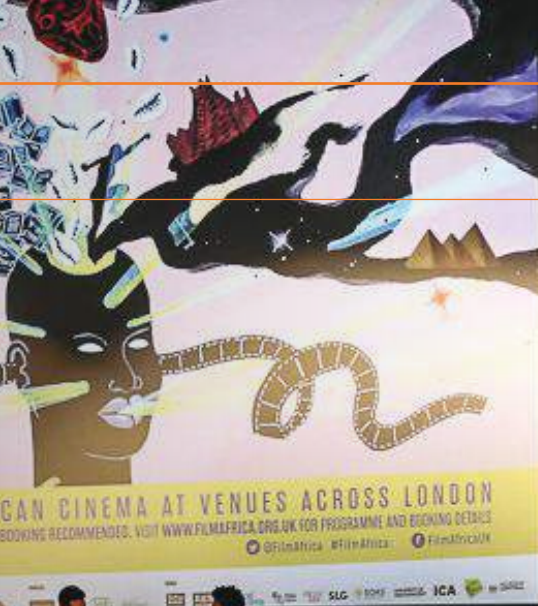


FILM AFRICA 2015

Below are some statistics and figures, which demonstrate the festival's success:

- Film Africa 2015 presented a diverse and entertaining programme of 65 films from 27 different African countries, including 41 features, 21 shorts and 33 premieres.
- Audience attendance was 3,900 with an eighth of the screenings sold out.
- All films featured introductions by a festival programmer and 53% (26 out of 49) of screenings were contextualised with post-screening discussions and/or director Q&As.
- The festival hosted 25 visiting filmmakers and talent from the continent and diaspora and another 38 industry experts and guest contributors, who took part in panels, talks and the Film Africa Industry Forum.
- 50% of the complementary events programme was free, enabling festival access to school children and young people, those on low incomes and the unemployed.
- Monitoring and evaluation data show that our audiences are predominantly young (36% were 20-35), ethnically diverse (34.5% described themselves as Black African, 27.5% as White European, followed by 38% as mixed) and serious about African film - the primary reason for audiences attending the festival was their interest in African film.
- Audiences, made up of both repeat (34%) and new (66%) attendees, expressed a high level of satisfaction - 95% of attendees said they would attend Film Africa again and 98% would recommend the festival to a friend. A further 96% stated they would be keen on watching more African films in the cinema year-round, should they be on offer.
- Our festival's audience are connected to Africa, 66% stated that they visit the continent - 42.5% less than once a year, 16.5% travelled twice a year and 7% quarterly or monthly).
- Widespread coverage on national and international media was secured, further consolidating the Film Africa's profile as the key platform for African cinema in London and the UK.
- Social media was a vital tool for the Festival. The Film Africa Facebook page now has over 4,000 likes and had a reach of 138,000 over October and November 2015. Our Twitter page has over 6,000 followers and engagement was high over this period, with 19,800 page visits and 890 mentions of the Festival.





AFRICAN CINEMA AT VENUES ACROSS LONDON
 BOOKING RECOMMENDED: VISIT WWW.FILMAFRICA.ORG.UK FOR PROGRAMME AND BOOKING DETAILS
 @FilmAfrica #FilmAfrica FilmAfricaUK



Sponsors and Partners

Film Africa 2015 was made possible thanks to the generous support of the following funders and supporters:

Our lead supporter: The African Union Foundation.

Major supporters: Miles Morland Foundation, BFI Film Festival Fund, BFI Film Audience Network, and BFI Love Season.

Supporters: Ethiopian Airlines, MOFILM and the Centre of African Studies (University of London).

Sponsors: Aduna, Brockmans, Divine Chocolate and SABMiller.

Cultural Partners included:

Africa in Motion (AiM): Film Festival in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Afrika Eye in Bristol, British Council, the Cambridge African Film Festival, Film London, TEDx Euston, The New Black Film Collective, Open The Gate, UK African Film Festival Network, Watch Africa in Wales.

Media Partners: D237, The Africa Channel and Wiriko.

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