



ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Royal African Society




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ABOUT US

The Royal African Society is a membership organisation that provides opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas about Africa today. Through our events, publications and digital channels we share insight, instigate debate and facilitate mutual understanding between the UK and Africa. We amplify African voices and interests in academia, business, politics, the arts and education, reaching a network of more than one million people globally.

Find out more:

-  royalafricansociety.org
-  facebook.com/royafrisoc
-  twitter.com/royafrisoc

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



Dear members, partners and friends – both old and new!

I hope this finds you all in good health and high spirits. It is my absolute pleasure to write this welcome note as Chair of the Royal African Society for the sixth consecutive year. 2019 was another successful year for our small charity with the big mission of promoting and amplifying African voices and interests here in the UK and beyond.

This past year, we have been at the forefront of the debate on the UK visa regime and refusals for African visitors and have also shone a light on the neglected issue of mental health in Africa. We placed both of these pressing matters firmly on the public and policy agenda through the launch of the APPG for Africa's report, entitled *Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK*, and our landmark *Mental Health in Africa: Innovation and Investment* conference, which we delivered in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Wellcome Trust, with a personal endorsement from Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

Other highlights of the year included *Africa Writes*, which featured 30 events over a 3-day festival weekend with 88 writers and contributors from over 20 countries across the continent and the diaspora; our Annual Lecture with acclaimed British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare CBE; and our *Film Africa* Travel Grants pilot scheme, delivered in partnership with the British Council. With a long track record in disseminating academic research to the wider public, in 2019 the Society started to establish itself as a credible 'impact partner' for academic research projects and this is an area of work we hope to expand on.

At the end of March 2020, we bid farewell to our *African Affairs* Co-Editor, Professor Lindsay Whitfield, who has demonstrated great dedication to increasing the number of African authors published by the journal and maintaining the highest quality standards. We are delighted to welcome Professor Ambreena Manji as Lindsay's successor – whom we know well as the President of our sister organisation, ASAUUK – alongside Co-Editors Peace Medie and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira.

As ever, I would like to conclude by extending a heart-felt thanks to all our staff and trustees; our members and partners; and particularly to our generous donors and supporters. The Society could not exist without your continued support and we are deeply grateful.

Zeinab Badawi
Chair

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



2019 has been an important year for both Africa and the Royal African Society. But as we head into 2020, the coronavirus pandemic raises many new challenges.

In 2019, in Africa itself there were bright spots, like Senegal and Ghana; some dark spots, like Cameroon and Zimbabwe where problems are festering; and a lot of dappled spots in between, ranging from Sudan and Ethiopia, where major reforms are under way, to South Sudan where politics still looks extremely fragile, and Algeria where the people still seek a government that reflects their views.

Amidst this diversity, two important trends can be discerned.

Firstly, there are a growing number of African leaders actively tackling the challenges their countries face. In South Africa, President Ramaphosa has taken measures to reverse state capture, bear down on corruption and make the state deliver for the people. But there are no easy solutions and cleaning up is tougher work than making the mess in the first place. In Ethiopia, President Abiy is pushing political and economic reform to keep the country together, despite ethnic and political interests that threaten to pull it apart. In Ghana, an overdue reform of the financial sector is under way; and in Angola, President Lourenco is prising the state and its finances from the grip of the dos Santos family.

Secondly, Africa's citizens are demanding more of their rulers. As one Sudanese protester explained ([in a piece on African Arguments](#)): "The protests were not about the prices of bread or fuel. It was about the incompetence, the corruption and the oppression which were hallmarks of the regime." Across the continent, in Algeria, Uganda, Togo, Guinea, Ethiopia or the Congo the message from people is the same – they want to be heard. In many places they are still not listened to. But overall, the people's voice is growing louder.

One of the purposes of the Royal African Society is to give that voice a platform, in all its diversity and varied means of expression, and encourage people in this country to see and hear Africa as it really is. This has been a common thread through many of our activities this year. A record crowd at *Africa Writes* heard a wealth of wonderful and moving new writing; at the Annual Lecture, Yinka Shonibare CBE explained how he re-imagined the colonial encounter in his art; and a workshop on the African middle class brought together business and academic perspectives to illuminate the rapid social and cultural change in African cities. Our Chair Zeinab Badawi and I took up these themes in a packed lecture to the Royal Geographical Society in October.

But we are also committed to making a difference. In 2019 we focussed on two areas. With the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, we held a major international conference on mental health in Africa at the Wellcome Trust in November which helped raise the profile of this neglected issue; and with the Parliamentary APPG for Africa, we have raised the difficulties so many African visitors face in getting visas to come to the UK. We have also been working with the Government to help it understand more clearly what African people currently think of the UK itself.

The coronavirus pandemic poses grave new challenges for the continent in 2020, and the Society will be at the forefront of discussions on how to tackle them.

To enable us to do this work, we are enormously grateful to all those who have provided support during the year – to our members, the editors of our journal *African Affairs*, our corporate partners (listed at the end), our audiences, and our private benefactors. To all we express our warmest appreciation.

Nick Westcott
Director

“

Across the continent, the message from people is the same – they want to be heard. In many places they are still not listened to. But overall, the people's voice is growing louder. One of the purposes of the Royal African Society is to give that voice a platform, and encourage people in this country to see and hear Africa as it really is.

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STRATEGIC REVIEW



We kick-started 2019 with a very productive strategy day facilitated by the Foundation for Social Improvement. Attended by the whole staff team and some members of our Council, we used the day to collectively develop a new strategic plan taking us up to 2021 – the year that will mark the Society's 120th anniversary. Our new 3 – year strategy is action-driven and outward-facing, and it revolves around four key words, which encapsulate our main areas of work:

Connect, Learn, Debate And Celebrate.

Following the strategic plan, we developed a new fundraising strategy and an operational business plan for the year. All three documents were presented and adopted by our Council at a meeting in February 2019. Progress on our strategic, business and fundraising plans was subsequently reviewed monthly at staff meetings and quarterly at meetings of the Council and Executive Committee. Our main strategic achievements for the year, under each of our key areas of work, are presented below.

Connect

In 2019 we worked on improving our membership offer and streamlining our administration and external communications with a view to embarking on a recruitment drive from 2020 onwards. We also successfully completed our long-standing website revamp and CRM (Client Relationship Management) integration project, which will enable us to better manage our members and contacts and have a more engaging online presence.

Learn

African Affairs (p.12) maintained its position as the world's top-ranked African Studies journal and saw a significant increase in the number of African authors published. Our Education and

Outreach programme (p.24) continued to thrive and grow, presenting the third edition of *Africa Writes: Young Voices* across 11 London schools, working directly with 213 school children.

Debate

The APPG for Africa (p.16), which we administer, was at the forefront of the debate on the UK visa regime and refusals for African visitors through the launch of its inquiry report *Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK*; and our widely-read African Arguments online magazine expanded its coverage and readership further with the addition of a new Deputy Editor, based in Lagos.

Celebrate

Finally, we implemented our new biennial timeline for our two cultural festivals, with *Film Africa* having its first fallow year running the *Film Africa Travel Grants* pilot scheme (p.22), and *Africa Writes* celebrating its 8th festival edition (p.20). The decision to move to a biennial model was reached after a careful strategic review and in consultation with our key festival partners, with the aim of ensuring the future sustainability and long-term success of both festivals.

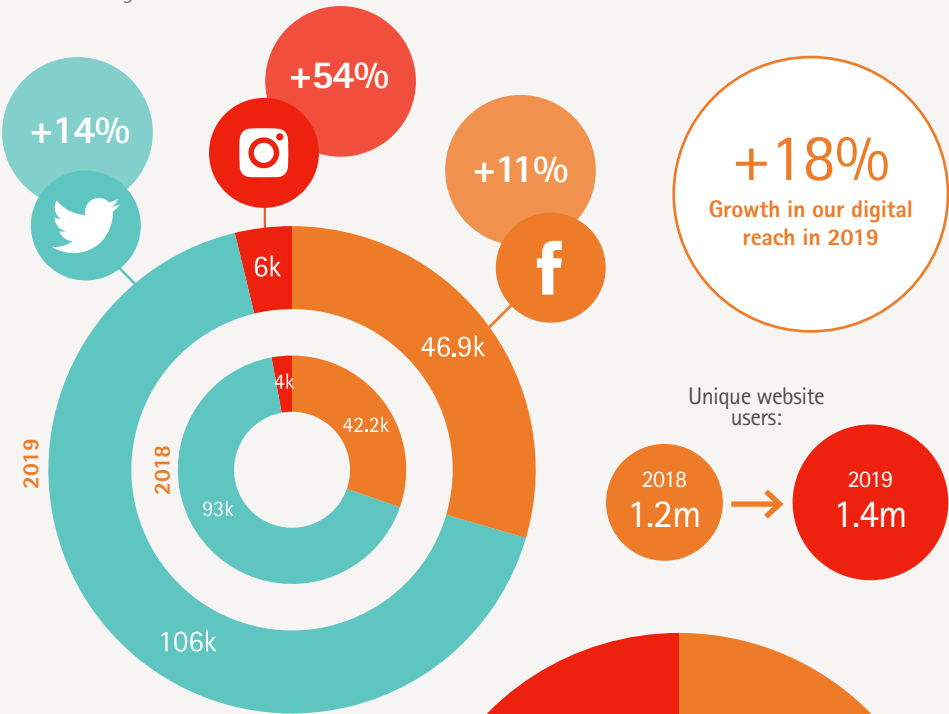
Sheila Ruiz
Deputy Director



Guests at RAS networking reception. Credit Ivan Gonzalez

OUR AUDIENCES & IMPACT

Through our events, festivals, publications and digital channels we reach 1.6 million people globally, up by 18% from 2018. Our diverse audiences reflect the continent's youthful demographic, with almost half under the age of 35.

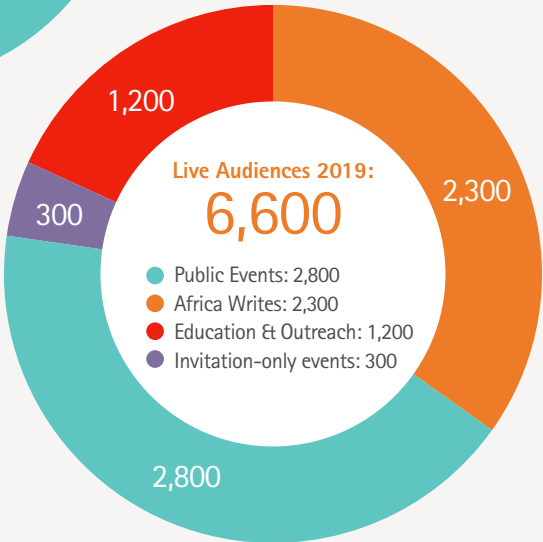


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Incredible panel discussion and questions at the end. Both highly thought-provoking and entertaining! Best £10 pounds I have spent this year.

– Audience member

”





213 school students

across 11 schools wrote and performed their own creative work in our *Africa Writes: Young Voices* programme



6,600 people engaged with our events programme, across business, politics, education, arts & culture



1 million unique visitors read the news and analysis content published on *African Arguments*



88 influential voices

from the world of African literature came to share their writing and ideas at *Africa Writes 2019*



African visitors to the UK are twice as likely to receive visa refusals as visitors from other continents – as highlighted in our report and advocacy work with the APPG for Africa



5 innovators in mental health from Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Liberia, South Africa and Nigeria showcased their work at our conference Mental Health in Africa: Innovation & Investment



New opportunities: We provided internship and training opportunities for 4 African diaspora students

2019 at a glance

OUR MEMBERS

The Royal African Society has a diverse and influential membership network made up of individuals, companies and organisations who take a proactive interest in Africa and value opportunities to connect, share ideas and develop partnerships. We offer individual, student and corporate membership packages. In 2019 we had a total of 425 members including 338 individual, 39 student, 22 ASAUUK Associates and 26 Honorary Life Members.

We asked our members what motivates them to be part of the Royal African Society network and this is what some of them shared...

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I became a member to keep in touch with affairs affecting home.

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“

I was looking for a professional organization that could help me think deeply about issues, policies and practices on the continent and the Royal African Society offered just that.

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“

I joined the Society to cultivate relationships and network with like-minded people.

”



Africa Writes audience member Credit Sushanth Chavva

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Our membership is open to all. It only takes 2 minutes to sign up via our website, so join today!

Connect

- Joint membership with the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK), the primary organisation that facilitates links between UK and African institutions and scholars.
- Opportunities to network with like-minded people interested in Africa and establish professional connections and partnerships.
- Share and receive news in our exclusive members' newsletters.

Learn

- Subscription to *African Affairs*, the world's top-rated African Studies journal (worth £82).
- Access to SOAS Library, the world's largest reference library on Africa (worth £200).
- Discounted tickets to the ASAUK Biennial Conference (worth £85).

Debate

- Free or discounted entry to our programme of public events, where we tackle some of the most pressing issues affecting the continent today.
- Opportunity to feed into the advocacy and policy work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Africa, which we administer.

Celebrate

- Priority booking and discounted tickets to our cultural festivals *Africa Writes* and *Film Africa*.
- Exclusive invitations to high-profile celebratory events, such as the reception with our Royal Patron, HRH The Duke of Cambridge, and other members-only gatherings.

Extra benefits

- Discounts on subscriptions to other journals and publications, including *The Africa Report* (30% off 1st year) and selected books with publishers James Currey and Boydell & Brewer.
- Third party discounts brokered through our partnerships.

Support our work

- Your membership is vital and helps sustain our charitable mission of amplifying African voices and interests to facilitate mutual understanding between people in the UK, Africa and the wider world.

Individual £85

Student £40

Friend £120

Corporate £2,400
inc. VAT

AFRICAN AFFAIRS

African Affairs is published on behalf of the Royal African Society and is the top ranked journal in African Studies. The latest Impact Factor (2018) is 2.188. The journal is now ranked 44 out of 176 Political Science journals worldwide.

More African and Africa-based authors

2019 saw an increase in the number of African and Africa-based authors published by the journal and in the January 2020 issue every article was authored by an African scholar. This was a first for *African Affairs* and the journal Co-Editors are keen to maintain the representation of African scholars through initiatives such as the mentoring scheme. The Co-Editors have also worked closely with the editorial board to encourage submissions from scholars based on the continent. Peace Medie, Nana Akua Anyidoho and Gordon Crawford organised a writing workshop in Ghana for 15 early-career academics from across West Africa in 2019, funded by a British Academy grant. Two other members of the editorial board, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and George Bob-Milliar, were also facilitators at the workshop.

Notable articles

The most cited article published in 2019 was 'Labour Challenges in Ethiopia's Textile and Leather Industries: No Voice, No Loyalty, No Exit?' by Hardy, Vincent and Hauge, Jostein, Vol. 118 Issue 473.

Navigating the breadth of research

The editorial team have begun developing Country Reading Lists, which are designed to assist readers in navigating the breadth of research being published in the journal, as well as to introduce topics that inform debate and advance scholarship on contemporary Africa. We hope that the lists will be a useful tool for teaching and research.

Change in Editor

Lindsay Whitfield is stepping down as Co-Editor after five years in the post, where she has worked tirelessly to support authors and to strengthen the journal. Her commitment to advancing scholarship in African studies, particularly in the area of development economics and political economy, has been critical to the success of the journal during her tenure. In 2020, Ambreena Manji will be joining *African Affairs* as its third Co-Editor. Ambreena is Professor of Land Law and Development at Cardiff University and is President of the African Studies Association of the UK. She is the author of *The Struggle for Land and Justice in Kenya* (2020) and has published widely on land law reform in East Africa.

AFRICAN ARGUMENTS

African Arguments is a pan-African platform for news analysis, comment and opinion. We seek to analyse the key issues facing the continent, investigate the stories that matter and amplify a diversity of voices.

Readership

In 2019, *African Arguments* received 1.65 million page views and over 1 million unique visitors. This was an increase of 25.9% and 35.5% respectively on the previous year. Our readership in Africa accounted for 46% of our global audience, followed by the Americas on 26% and Europe on 19%.

We published over 200 articles. Two-thirds were authored by writers of African descent and covered a wide range of issues from politics to culture to social issues and more. *African Arguments* closely covered protest movements in the likes of Sudan and Algeria, important elections in Nigeria and Mozambique, and political developments across the continent. It investigated corruption in Tanzania and torture sites in Cameroon, and shone a light on under-reported stories in Burundi, Libya and The Gambia. It provided a space for debate around topics from mental health and sexuality to art, film and literature.

Special Series

African Arguments published a special seven-part series entitled 'Living in Translation'. Curated in collaboration with guest editor Nanjala Nyabola, the series explored language and identity in Africa through personal and analytical essays by writers from across the continent.

We also published the 'In the name of the beautiful game' to coincide with the Africa Cup of Nations. The special eight-part series examined the intersection of football and politics through a combination of investigations, features, photography and a podcast.

Deputy Editor

In June 2019 the Royal African Society hired Ayodeji Rotinwa as *African Arguments*' first deputy editor, thanks to a grant of \$65,000 over two years from the Open Society Foundations.

Insiders Newsletter

The income generating newsletter doubled its number of paying subscribers to over 200 people. The newsletter continued to expand its output and launched a separate Election Watch section. In 2020, we moved to a 'Pay What You Want' model.

Football in Mogadishu. Credit: AMISOM.

AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF THE UK

Evidence on visa refusals

The African Studies Association of the UK had a busy year in 2019. It worked with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa and the Royal African Society to produce a report on Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK (p.16). The ASAUk had been collecting evidence of visa problems experienced by academic colleagues since 2016 and we were pleased to be able to contribute a robust evidence base for the report.

Writing Workshops and Fellowships

We held six successful writing workshops, supported by the British Academy and King's College London, with the aim of offering mentoring and support to early career scholars based at African institutions. Three were held alongside major Africa-based conference series: Lagos Studies Association, Lagos, June 2019; Lalibela and Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, August 2019; and the African Studies Association of Africa, Nairobi, October 2019. The other three were highly innovative capacity-building workshops held at UniLurio in Mozambique Island; Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar; and The Accra Architecture Writing Workshop.

Each workshop was shaped by the needs of the particular research community, and the agendas and content were determined in collaboration with senior Africa-based scholars and colleagues. The aim was to foster a healthy research and publication culture, and to support the establishment of networked scholarly communities across the continent. We now remain in close touch to support personal and career development.



Credit: gov.uk

The ASAUk Teaching Fellowship was awarded to Katherine Young at the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale, Ghana. The fellowship gave Young the opportunity to both lecture and assist with the development of a new arts program, the first of its kind in Northern Ghana.

Mary Kingsley Zochonis Lecture and 2020 conference

Dr Pedi Obani delivered the biennial Mary Kingsley Zochonis lecture in October 2019, entitled 'Sanitation, Human Rights and Governance: A Critical Perspective from Nigeria'. Informed by her extensive fieldwork on sanitation, infrastructure and governance, the lecture offered a critical engagement with policy initiatives and offered concrete recommendations for future action.

The 28th biennial ASAUk conference, scheduled for 8–10 September 2020 at Cardiff University, was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. ASAUk continues to support colleagues' plans for alternatives, including continuing conversations in thematic streams, new networks and outputs.

BUSINESS PROGRAMME

At the Royal African Society, we believe the private sector is a key vehicle for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in Africa. Leveraging our unique position and convening power, we curate high-level events providing a platform for in-depth and solutions-oriented debate with key decision-makers, experts and thought leaders from the worlds of business, government, civil society and academia. In 2019, our programme of business events focused on the political and economic prospects for a number of key countries, and on UK-Africa trade relations in the context of Brexit.

Prospects for South Sudan, DRC and Rwanda

Influential speakers provided valuable insight and analysis for our corporate members and partners at a series of events during the year. Ambassador Chris Trott and Alan Boswell discussed the prospects for ending the five-year conflict in the world's newest state, with the launch of the report 'South Sudan's Fragile New Peace Deal' by International Crisis Group. Across the border, after a two-year delay, the Democratic Republic of Congo finally held elections in December 2018. Businessman and 2018 Presidential Candidate Martin Fayulu joined us in April to give an exclusive briefing on DRC's first democratic vote, the country's fragile security situation and the future for democracy. We also shone a light on Rwanda, East Africa's fastest emerging hub attracting substantial foreign investment. Dr Clare Akamanzi, CEO of the Rwandan Development Board, joined us in September for an exclusive briefing as part of our 'Economies to Watch' series, giving event attendees a unique opportunity to hear about Rwanda's recent economic progress and plans for the future.



Investing with Impact CDC Dinner. Credit Ivan Gonzalez

UK-Africa Trade and UK-AIS

In the latter part of 2019, we organised three high-level events ahead of the UK-Africa Investment Summit (UK-AIS) held in January 2020 focusing on UK-Africa trade relations. In September, FCO Director for Africa, Harriet Mathews, joined us for a closed-door briefing to share insight on the UK Government's new strategic approach to Africa, through the Cross Whitehall Joint Africa Unit and an increasing number of HMG's missions on the continent. In October, we hosted another closed-door briefing with Emma Wade-Smith, the first ever HM Trade Commissioner for Africa, who briefed us on UK's ambition to become the largest G7 investor in Africa in the context of an already existing trading relationship worth more than £27bn. We closed the year with an exclusive dinner roundtable delivered in partnership with CDC Group, exploring how the UK could leverage the opportunity presented by UK-AIS to become Africa's investment partner of choice.

To find out more about the Royal African Society's corporate membership, please visit: royafricansociety.org/join-us

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR AFRICA

Visa refusals for African visitors to the UK

2019 saw the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Africa take action on the growing number of visit visa refusals for Africans to the UK, with a full parliamentary inquiry report, entitled *Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK*, which received wide media coverage in the Financial Times, The Guardian and the Independent, among other publications.

The inquiry found the current UK visit visa system was not fit for purpose, being inaccessible to many, under resourced, unaccountable and widely perceived as biased or even discriminating against Africans. It included over 20 written submissions, a public oral hearing, several written and oral parliamentary questions, FOI requests

and correspondence and meetings with senior civil servants, including the Independent Chief inspector for Borders and Immigration and the Ministers for Africa and Immigration.

The report identified the real costs to British business, academia, arts and culture from the current dysfunctional visa system, and put forward a series of achievable recommendations to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to help them respond to concerns raised by the findings. At the report launch in January 2019, then Immigration Minister, the Rt Hon. Caroline Nokes MP, spoke positively about the impact of the report. She thanked the APPG for highlighting the problems and committed her office to providing a formal written response.

APPG for Africa Visa Refusals Report Launch 2019. Credit Caitlin Pearson



Impact of the report

The APPG and Royal African Society are committed to keeping this issue high on the government's agenda, and in November 2019, we delivered an enrichment session on the report findings to Management and Entry Clearance Officers (ECOs) at the UKVI visit visa centre in Croydon. The management and staff at UKVI involved with the meeting confirmed that the report had been very helpful in identifying ways to improve the decision-making process.

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African applicants are over twice as likely to be refused a UK visa as applicants from any other part of the world.

APPG for Africa

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The APPG for Africa is currently supporting parliamentarians to put pressure on the government to take action and implement the recommendations. In 2020, the APPG will host further meetings with Ministers, UKVI senior management and the parliamentary Select Committees for Home Affairs and International Relations, as well as raising awareness amongst new parliamentarians and arranging a parliamentary visit to UKVI.

Other focus areas of the APPG for Africa

- The African Continental Free Trade Area and UK-Africa trade post-Brexit
- Mental Health Innovation and Investment
- Human and environmental rights and UK investments in Africa



Read the report: bit.ly/VisaRefusals
Email: ras@soas.ac.uk to submit evidence of visa refusals that appear unjust or inconsistent to help us keep up the pressure.

PUBLIC EVENTS AND ANNUAL LECTURE

Engaging Audiences

From mental health in Africa, to UK-Africa post-Brexit relations, to important elections in South Africa and Nigeria, our 2019 events programme offered an exciting range of topics for our members and the wider public. We welcomed audiences of nearly 3,000 across 30 events over the year, including panel discussions, briefings and debates, discussing the most important issues affecting Africa and the diaspora today.

Africa 2019: Prospects and Forecasts

The year began with our flagship events in London and Edinburgh discussing prospects and forecasts for Africa in 2019, delivered in partnership with the British Council.

In Edinburgh, academics Francisca Mutapi and James Smith highlighted global health trends and political developments across the continent. In London, the contributions moved beyond the traditional political and economic predictions to make room for a more exploratory conversation on art, activism and identity, featuring speakers Kumi Naidoo of Amnesty International, writer Nanjala Nyabola and Patrick Sam, Chairperson of the National Arts Council of Namibia.

The African Middle Class Re-examined

Bringing together social anthropologists, geographers, economists and business people, we convened a workshop to unpack the assumptions made about the 'African middle class' in conventional Western socio-economic terms, as well as to explore the future opportunities that lie ahead for this growing section of the continent's young and technology-savvy population.



Audience Member at Africa Writes 2019. Credit Ivan Gonzalez

Democracy, Money and Religion

Original research from the Rift Valley Institute brought valuable insights to our public events in 2019, with a focus on cross-border conflict in the region, the uprising in Sudan and the impact and flow of remittances to Somalia. We also launched three titles from the African Arguments book series: *Pentecostal Republic* by Ebenezer Obadare; *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics* by Nanjala Nyabola; and *South Sudan's Injustice System, Law and Activism on the Frontline* by Rachel Ibreck.

Mental Health in Africa: Innovation & Investment

Our major event of the year was a landmark conference, delivered in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Wellcome Trust, highlighting the latest mental healthcare innovations from Africa and making the case for increased investment in the sector.

Driven by the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) "Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing" and guided by the WHO Mental Health Action Plan, we convened leading researchers, innovators, practitioners, policy-makers and private sector representatives for two days, with

the aim of raising awareness, and building consensus on policy priorities and implementation. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, opened the event via a video message before speakers shared their insight on progress made in policy, investment and the latest research. Mental health innovators from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone also shared their creative solutions, including nurse training programmes, the friendship bench scheme and peer group therapy.

Art, Africa and Social Change

Acclaimed British-Nigerian artist, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA, delivered our 2019 Annual Lecture reflecting on art as a means for social change. Bringing support to African artists, Shonibare shared his reflections on his long career and his vision for a new artist residency space in Nigeria, supported by his Guest Artist Space (G.A.S.) Foundation, and dedicated to facilitating artistic and cultural exchange between Africa and the rest of the world.

“

It was one of the most engaging and informative panels I've ever attended and really increased my knowledge of the context people are living in on the continent.

– Audience member

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Listen back to the podcast archive of our public events at: mixcloud.com/royafrisoc

AFRICA WRITES 2019

We held our biggest and most ambitious edition of *Africa Writes* yet from 5 - 7 July at the British Library, welcoming more than 2,000 people to our exciting programme of book launches, discussions, performances and workshops. The festival's key themes included African cosmology, masculinity, mental health, and – in the shadow of Brexit – experiences of Africans living in London and Europe. Over the 3-day festival weekend, we brought together 88 influential voices in contemporary writing from Africa and its diaspora, hailing from 22 countries.

Highlights

The festival opened with 'Our Bodies Speak Poetry', an evening of intergenerational poetry, story-telling and movement exploring the body as a site of power, possibilities and resistance. We tucked into the latest releases with book launches from writers including Namwali Serpell, Yolande Mukagasana, Sylvia Ofili, Jennifer Nansubuga

Makumbi and Johny Pitts. To mark the publication of the *New Daughters of Africa* anthology, we held a discussion on the epic breadth and variety of African women's writing with Namwali Serpell, Ayòbámi Adébáyò, Nadifa Mohamed, Bernardine Evaristo, and Margaret Busby. As our headline event, we were delighted to present a double bill on the work of Chigozie Obioma, featuring the author in conversation and a staged reading of his novel 'The Fishermen'.

Lifetime Achievement in African Literature

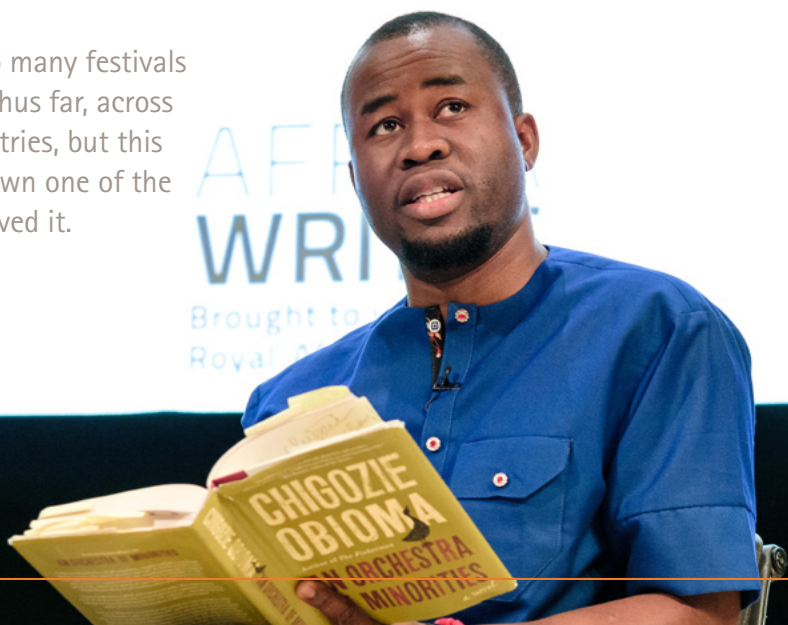
Margaret Busby OBE, Ghanaian-born publisher, editor, author and critic, was recognised with the inaugural Lifetime Achievement in African Literature award, aimed at paying tribute to those who have made a major contribution to African literature. In a moving surprise ceremony, Diane Abbott MP presented Margaret with the award after writer Ade Solanke paid tribute to her long-standing career. Busby was truly humbled and all she could say was 'Thank you'.

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I have been to many festivals in my career thus far, across some 14 countries, but this was hands-down one of the best. I truly loved it.

**Chigozie Obioma,
Headline Author**

”



Chigozie Obioma.
Credit Ivan Gonzalez

Africa Writes Bristol

In 2019 *Africa Writes* set down roots in a new city! The first full edition of *Africa Writes* – Bristol took place in June. Partnering with local organisations and venues including the Malcolm X Community Centre, St Paul's Carnival and University of Bristol, the festival welcomed 600 attendees over 7 days and 15 events, receiving great audience feedback. Buoyed by this success and the appetite for more African literature in Bristol, the producers are busy planning for the next edition, scheduled for May 2021.

Coming up!

A series of special *Africa Writes* events will take place in autumn 2020. The next full festival will return in July 2021.



Margaret Busby and Diane Abbott.
Credit Ivan Gonzalez



Bernardine Evaristo and Namwali Serpell. Credit Ivan Gonzalez

FILM AFRICA TRAVEL GRANTS

There are a plethora of international film festivals in the UK, but not many of them programme a representative selection of films from Africa. Festivals claim they receive few submissions from the continent, which results in their audiences not having the opportunity to experience the rich variety of contemporary African cinema. To address this gap, we partnered with the British Council and delivered the *Film Africa* Travel Grants pilot scheme, which enabled a select number of African filmmakers to present their work in the UK, reaching new audiences and developing new networks.

Young African filmmakers making waves in the UK

The first grantee Nyasha Kadandara, a Zimbabwean filmmaker based in East Africa, presented the world premiere of her short film *Le Lac* at Sheffield Doc/Fest. *Le Lac* is an immersive journey through change and rupture, as told by the poetic voice of Lake Chad itself, which has shrunk to a tenth of its former size in the context of the climate crisis. Kadandara's film won Sheffield's Best Digital Narrative Award, which was a great testament to her work. *Encounters*, the UK's

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The experience was amazing, I was inspired by a lot of the work I saw at Sheffield. I also made a lot of new connections that have led to future projects and met many exhibitors who were interested in showcasing my film.

Nyasha Kadandara

”

leading short film, animation and virtual reality festival based in Bristol welcomed the next set of grantees – two animators (Selorm Dogoe and Daniel Coker) and a producer (Kofi Afriyie) from Ghana. The filmmakers presented their films to sold-out audiences, met new collaborators and even had the chance to visit the legendary Aardman Animations Studios!

The last grantee for 2019 was Lagos-based filmmaker Michael Omonua, who presented his debut feature film *The Man Who Cuts Tattoos*, a powerful story about the pain and sacrifices made for love, at the eminent BFI London Film Festival.

What's Next?

The pilot scheme will be reviewed in 2020 to see whether it should continue or be reshaped. Whatever the outcome, we are delighted to have been able to facilitate the experiences of the grantee filmmakers, and to give more UK audiences the chance to see their films on the big screen.

Save the Date!

Film Africa 2020 will take place from Friday, 30 October to Sunday, 8 November!

Grantees visit Aardman Animation Studios, Bristol.



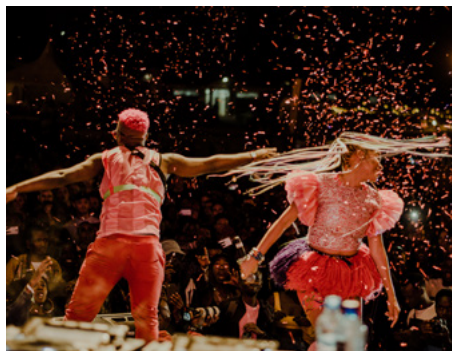
CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTS REPORT

The offer of contemporary African arts and culture currently presented in the UK is limited, but there is a clear openness and appetite amongst audiences for more. This was the main finding of our research report, entitled *Contemporary African Arts: Mapping Perceptions, Insights and UK-Africa Collaborations*, which we launched in June 2019 in partnership with the British Council. The aim of the report was to provide guidance and insight for UK programmers to navigate the African creative sectors, and to highlight the untapped opportunity to expand and improve the existing offer of contemporary African arts programmes for the UK's increasingly diverse audiences.

Africa-UK Collaborations

Our original research provides new insight and inspiration on best practice programming, successful Africa-UK collaborations and audience development strategies. We polled over 2,300 British adults and analysed their responses to see how audiences engage with, and perceive, contemporary African art. We researched and mapped out some of the most exciting festivals and initiatives across the arts spectrum that are currently taking place in Africa and the UK. We also commissioned essays and were lucky enough

Contemporary African Arts Report - Africa Nouveau. Credit Wanjira Gateri



“

There should be more opportunities for everyone in the UK to experience contemporary African arts & culture.

Royal African Society

”

to conduct 16 exclusive interviews with leading professionals across the arts spectrum, including Lola Shoneyin, Muthoni Ndonga, Molemo Moilola, Touria El Glaoui, and Wanuri Kahiu.

The research feeds into our joint strategic aim with the British Council of connecting leading African creatives and thought-leaders with diverse audiences and arts practitioners in the UK, fostering mutuality and stronger collaborative relations. We also wanted to take stock and gauge perceptions and current levels of engagement with contemporary African arts by UK audiences to set some baselines and establish sound evidence from which to work.

A Call to Action

The research results are a clear call to action: there is a huge opportunity to present more audience-led contemporary African arts programmes in the UK, based on strong collaborations with artists and programmers on the continent. Arts venues, programmers and curators can, and should, do more on this front and we hope that our research serves as a useful resource and enabler for this positive cultural shift.

Read the full report:
bit.ly/ContAfricanArts

EDUCATION & OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Our growing Education and Outreach Programme seeks to promote deeper understanding of the diversity of the African continent and the African diaspora through an exciting collection of learning experiences such as creative writing workshops, film screenings, family days, discussions and learning resources.

Africa Writes: Young Voices

In 2019 we presented our third edition of the *Africa Writes: Young Voices* programme, which involved 16 creative practitioners across 11 London schools. Our facilitators ran 38 poetry, drama and creative writing workshops, working directly with 213 school children and reaching over 1,200 pupils as live audiences. The workshop programme gave many of the students a valuable opportunity to connect with and explore their African heritage and express themselves creatively. As part of the programme, all participating schools were gifted a specially curated book list of African and diaspora titles to be kept by the school libraries, so that the engagement with African and diaspora writing would continue. As in 2018, the students' writing was then compiled into a series of digital anthologies, which are now available on our website.

Inspiration Through Creativity

For all pupils and teachers, the programme filled a gap and enriched the curriculum by bringing African and diaspora poetry, drama and creative writing into the classroom. Many pupils joined us at the *Africa Writes: Young Voices* 2019 showcase event to perform their work and open the festival. It was a joy to witness their writing being read aloud on the British Library stage. For creative practitioners, the programme enabled them

to engage with young people in a supportive environment, and use their talents to inspire and educate. We were delighted to work with some of the leading poetic voices in the UK today, including Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Momtaza Mehri, Nick Makoha, Keisha Thompson, Amina Jama and Rachel Long.

Looking Ahead: Poetry in the Primary Classroom

Running 2020–2022, our next major education project aims to investigate how we can best support teachers to work with African and diaspora poetry with creativity and confidence in the primary classroom. Building on our learning from *Africa Writes: Young Voices*, this project will offer high-quality continuing professional development training and complementary resource packs to teachers. Artistic practitioners will enhance the learning experience, working alongside trainers from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. The project is supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Africa Writes Young Voices Showcase 2019. Credit Ivan Gonzalez



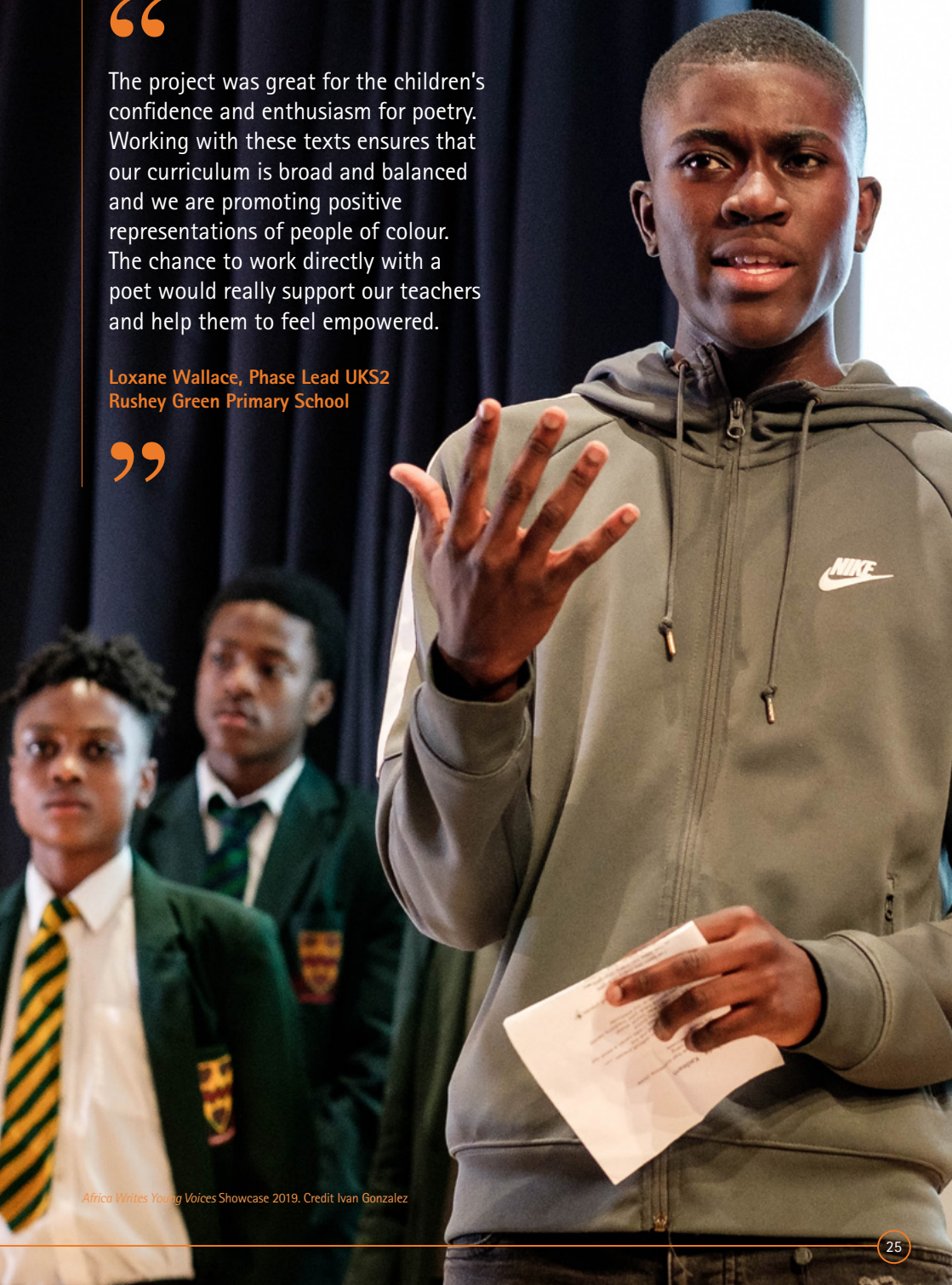
To find out more, please visit:
royafricansociety.org/education

“

The project was great for the children's confidence and enthusiasm for poetry. Working with these texts ensures that our curriculum is broad and balanced and we are promoting positive representations of people of colour. The chance to work directly with a poet would really support our teachers and help them to feel empowered.

Loxane Wallace, Phase Lead UKS2
Rushey Green Primary School

”



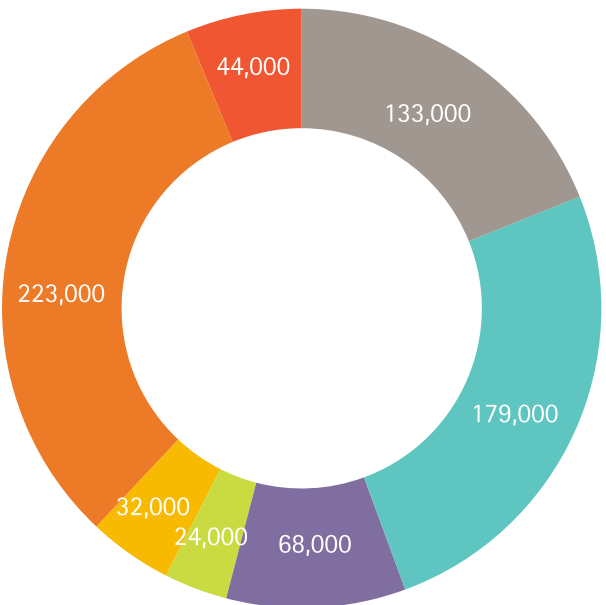
HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

2019 was another solid year for the Society. The annual surplus of £87,000 overstates the position because it reflects items of revenue received in respect of expenditure in 2020 and benefits from a £37,000 unrealised gain on the revaluation of investments. These caveats aside, the Society generated an underlying operating surplus in 2019 in line with that achieved in the previous financial year, resulting in a second consecutive year of surplus following several years of deficits.

The event held in September 2018 to welcome HRH The Duke of Cambridge as our new Royal Patron and the Mental Health conference held in November 2019 have been significant contributors to the change in financial performance in the last two years. Adjusting for revenue received for future expenditure, reserves increased from £369,000 to £413,000 during the course of the year. The Director and staff are to be complimented on the steady management of the Society's business.

As usual, the business model is sustained by the core income from *African Affairs*. The generation of surpluses in the coming year will rely on fees received from corporate members, donations and surpluses on projects. This will require focus and effort in the current climate, but we have confidence in management's ability to succeed.

Innes Meek
Honorary Treasurer



SOURCES OF INCOME IN 2019

- Income from *African Affairs*: 32% (£233,000)
- Trusts & Foundations: 25% (£179,000)
- Public Funding Bodies: 19% (£133,000)
- Corporate membership & partnerships: 10% (£68,000)
- Other Revenue: 6% (£44,000)
- Corporate & Individual Donations: 5% (£32,000)
- Individual Membership: 3% (£24,000)

Total Income: £703,000

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

For the year ended 31st December 2019

	2019	2018
	£,000	£,000
Income and Expenditure Account		
Income from:		
Donations	72	51
Charitable activities		
Connect	169	221
Learn	267	246
Debate	96	16
Celebrate	83	109
Other trading activities	8	7
Investment income	8	8
Total income	703	658
Expenditure on:		
Raising Funds	37	34
Charitable activities		
Connect	236	197
Learn	103	102
Debate	167	108
Celebrate	110	162
Total expenditure	653	603
Net operating income/(expenditure)	50	55
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of investments	37	(7)
Total net income/(expenditure)	87	48
Total Funds brought forward	369	321
Total Funds carried forward	456	369
Balance Sheet		
Investments	262	224
Current assets	261	315
Current liabilities	(67)	(170)
Total net assets	456	369

TEAM AND COUNCIL

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Zeinab Badawi

Vice Chairs

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Alistair Boyd

Professor Christopher Cramer

Honorary Treasurer

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Chi Onwurah MP

Africa APPG Chair (Ex Officio)

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Deputy Director

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Caitlin Pearson

Administrative Manager

Lizzie Orekoya

Membership Administrator

Melmarie Laccay

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Hetty Bailey-Morgan

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African Arguments Deputy Editor

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Africa Writes Producer & Project Co-ordinator

Marcelle Mateki Akita

Africa Writes Marketing & PR Consultant

Nancy Adimora

Africa Writes Intern

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Dina Selim

Education & Outreach

Programme Manager

Joanna Brown

Marketing & PR Consultant

Nouria Bah

Consultant Accountant

Brian Johnson

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Shayne Tshabalala

Matilda Mutanguha

Sammy Awami

Hannah Cooke

Ayaba Linda Arowolo

African Affairs

Co-Editors

Peace Medie

Ricardo Soares de Oliveira

Lindsay Kaye Whitfield

Book Reviews Editor

Alexander Beresford

Editorial Assistant

Busani Mpfu

Auditors

Chariot House Ltd

44 Grand Parade

Brighton BN2 9QA

Branding & Design

D237.com

OUR PARTNERS

We foster partnerships with companies and organisations which share our values, in order to enhance our events and programmes, reach new audiences and networks, and share resources and expertise. Through our partnerships we also aim to develop research and insight, amplify ideas or campaigns, and achieve sustainability. We are proud to present a selection of the main partners we have worked with in 2019:

Corporate Donors & Partners

Avanti Plc
CDC Group
Standard Chartered
Shell
Unilever

Trusts, Foundations and Public Bodies

Arts Council England
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Garfield Weston Foundation
Miles Morland Foundation
Open Society Foundations

Event and Media Partners

AFREADA
Africa Club at London Business School
British Library
Centre of African Studies, University of London
gal-dem
International Africa Institute
Nataal
Victoria & Albert Museum
Wasafiri
ZED Books

Strategic and Impact Partners

British Council
King's College London
London International Development Centre
Oxford Brookes University
SOAS
Rift Valley Institute



THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who has supported our work in 2019. To all our members, partners, donors and every individual, company and organisation whose support has had a real impact in providing opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas about Africa today. We could not do this work without you.

Huge thanks to Zeinab Badawi, who gives so generously of her time to moderate our trustees' meetings and many of our high-level events; to Baroness Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS, for continuing to house us and allowing us to be a part of the university; to Dr Insa Nolte and Professor Ambreena Manji, former and current presidents of our sister organisation, ASAUk, who have been strong collaborators in the work of the APPG for Africa on visa refusals; and to Chi Onwurah MP, Chair of the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, Co-Chair Lord Chidgey and all the parliamentarians and staff who work on Africa in Parliament and contribute significantly to our mission.

We thank the Co-Editors of *African Affairs* – Peace Medie, Lindsay Whitfield and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira; Christina Wipf Perry and the rest of the team at Oxford University Press.

Our most appreciative thanks to all our principle supporters and strategic partners in 2019 (p.29). Miles Morland of the Miles Morland Foundation and George Weston of the Garfield Weston Foundation deserve a special mention for their long-standing support and unwavering belief in the Society's mission and work.

Our 2019 corporate and public events, the Africa APPG meetings, our *Africa Writes* and *Film Africa* festivals, our news and analysis site *African Arguments* and our Education and Outreach programme were delivered in collaboration with a wide range of partners, guest speakers and contributors to whom we are very thankful.

We are deeply grateful to all our volunteers, interns and friends who have devoted their time voluntarily to help with our work in the past year. Their energy and commitment to the goal of amplifying African voices and interests in the UK is truly inspirational.





JOIN US IN 2020






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CONTACT DETAILS

Royal African Society
SOAS, 21 Russell Square
London WC1B 5EA
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7074 5176
Email: ras@soas.ac.uk

FIND OUT MORE

-  royalafricansociety.org
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