



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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 three million people globally.

### Find out more:

- [royafricansociety.org](https://royafricansociety.org)
- [facebook.com/royafrisoc](https://facebook.com/royafrisoc)
- [twitter.com/royafrisoc](https://twitter.com/royafrisoc)
- [instagram.com/royafrisoc](https://instagram.com/royafrisoc)

Cover image: Johnnie Carson. Credit: Wilson Center.

## A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



### Dear members, partners and friends,

I hope this welcome as Chair of the Royal African Society finds you and your families well and healthy. Of course 2020 was an extremely challenging year for the world and the difficulties continue in so many ways. The impact of the pandemic on the not-for-profit sector has been severe.

It has not been easy for us at the Royal African Society but thanks to the dedication of our staff, partners, and donors we have so far managed to negotiate our path through this ongoing crisis and in 2020 we were able to continue meeting the objectives of our core mission. As we celebrate our 120th anniversary this year we can say with pride that we are still fulfilling our historic mandate.

The pandemic and consequent social isolation means that connection and a sense of belonging has become ever more important and the Society provides a means for all those interested in Africa, whether in the UK or elsewhere in the world, to communicate with one another and to stay in touch.

Through our different platforms, projects and programmes, we responded to the key issues of the time, including the impact of Covid-19 in Africa and the disproportionate loss of life amongst African diaspora communities in the UK; UK-Africa trade after Brexit and debates arising from the Black Lives Matter movement, such as curriculum reform.

To round off the year, our Annual Lecture was delivered online by Ambassador Johnnie Carson, former US Assistant Secretary of State, who examined past, present and future relations between the USA and Africa – and gave fascinating insights into what we can expect for Africa from the new US administration.

There is much to be proud of in our accomplishments at RAS: we successfully mounted our Film Africa festival despite the obstacles and difficult circumstances, and African Arguments became a go-to site for in-depth and high-quality coverage of the pandemic in Africa which helped to hugely increase our reach. We also managed to hold our events virtually, maintained our membership numbers, the APPG for Africa activities, and our support to ASAUK, our sister organisation.

All of these achievements would not have been possible without the hard work of our wonderful team and the continued support of our funders, partners and members. We also thank our Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Cambridge for his vital support.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped the Society go from strength to strength and very much look forward to marking our 120th anniversary in 2021 with you all. As part of our celebrations, we aim to increase our membership base. We would particularly encourage our new and existing members to commit to Lifetime Membership to ensure that we can continue the important work of amplifying African voices and interests for many more decades to come.

**Zeinab Badawi**  
Chair, The Royal African Society

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**The story of 2020 has been one of survival in the face of adversity, both in Africa and for the Society.**

Africa has been one of the continents least affected in terms of the number of cases of Covid-19, but most affected by the economic fallout. At the time of writing, the pandemic is far from over: infection rates are still rising in some parts of Africa, the death toll is almost certainly higher than that officially recorded, and African governments are struggling to secure adequate supplies of the vaccines needed to hold the virus in check. But those governments deserve credit for their swift response to the pandemic, locking down quickly, giving clear public guidance, and preparing their medical services as best they could. Whatever the reasons (and they are still debated), Africa's mortality rates have been significantly lower than most other continents.

Nonetheless, the economic consequences have been dire. Falling commodity prices, reduced exports and the collapse of tourism have seriously impacted government revenues and people's incomes. After the initial shock, domestic economic activity largely resumed, and many countries realised that their home and neighbouring markets may be the best basis for revival. Progress on the continental free trade area (AfCFTA) continued, technological innovation spread, and investors remained active. But debt burdens continued to mount, and negotiations are continuing with lenders and donors to find an equitable way to share the burden.

Politically in 2020, African countries began to diverge between those where democracy was consolidating, like Malawi and Ghana, and those where autocracy seemed to be making a comeback. Several leaders seemed reluctant to leave the scene (in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire), and others took drastic steps to avoid losing an election (in Tanzania). Civil conflict in Ethiopia risked destabilising both the country and the region, and the situation in the Sahel and northern Nigeria remained very fragile. But young people are increasingly impatient with ageing and unresponsive leaders and – as the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria demonstrated – are increasingly willing to not only speak out, but act. We are likely to see more of that in the year ahead.

The Royal African Society faced its own challenges in 2020. Our staff, who have all continued to work remotely throughout the crisis, have done an outstanding job in moving our activities online, sustaining our work, and keeping focussed on the Society's mission. Our online meetings and reports on African Arguments brought African perspectives on the Covid-19 pandemic to a wide public audience, our advice helped businesses navigate the challenges, our support enabled the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Africa to continue examining critical African issues, and our Film Africa festival gave UK audiences access to the best recent African films both in the cinema and from their own homes.

The Black Lives Matter protests in the summer awakened a debate about how Africa and people

of African descent are covered in the school curriculum, which we are taking up in the year ahead. The cancellation of the biennial ASUK conference in September was a blow, but many of the Africanist community used online meetings to stay in touch and discuss their latest research.

Our members, funders and partners have proven especially loyal and supportive throughout this particularly tough year. We extend our warmest thanks and appreciation to all of them for standing by the Society in its hour of need, as to our staff and our audiences, in Britain, Africa and around the world. We have survived, and as we launch into our 120th year, we do so with confidence, enthusiasm and anticipation.

**Nick Westcott**  
**Director**



Men playing drafts in Kibera, Kenya.  
Credit Gordwin Odhiambo.



# STRATEGIC REVIEW



We launched 2020 with our annual Strategy Away Day taking stock of our achievements and lessons learnt in 2019, as well as setting priorities for the year ahead and exploring ideas for our 120th anniversary in 2021. In March 2020, when the world came to a halt due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we quickly adapted our plans to continue delivering our mission.

**Sheila Ruiz**  
Deputy Director

## COVID-19 Impact

As with all crises, the pandemic presented major challenges for our charity, but also unexpected opportunities to do things differently. In March 2020, we conducted a 'Covid-19 Financial Impact Review', which proved that we could withstand the most acute financial impact without compromising our minimum reserves policy nor needing to lay-off any staff. Thus, we quickly adapted our programmes, pivoting to online and continuing to deliver our mission. This enabled us to meet our strategic objectives whilst developing our audiences beyond London and the UK. Our highlights for the year are presented below under our four pillars of 'Connect, Learn, Debate and Celebrate'.

## Connect

Meaningfully engaging our members and wider audiences was our main focus in 2020. Our Public Events programme (p. 20) continued to offer a valuable platform to discuss critical issues affecting the continent and the move to online allowed us to feature a growing number of African speakers based on the continent. We were also delighted to welcome our second Lifetime Member in July 2020 and hope to see many more join in the coming years.

## Learn

*African Affairs* (p.14) maintained its position as the world's top-ranked African Studies journal and continued publishing an increasing number of African scholars. In response to growing demand from schools for support in their teaching of African and diaspora literature, we developed and successfully launched the 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom' project as part of our Education Programme (p. 25).

## Debate

The APPG for Africa (p. 15), which we administer, saw its report recommendations positively contribute to changes in UK Government policy on visas and overseas development assistance; and our African Arguments (p. 16) news and analysis site had an exponential increase (185%) in readership mainly thanks to its timely coverage of the pandemic and launching the first 'Coronavirus in Africa' tracker.

## Celebrate

As part of our focus on building audiences and creating a sense of community in a time of isolation, we celebrated the ninth and first biennial edition of Film Africa (p. 22), which presented a new hybrid programme of online and physical events. We also hosted a special series of online Africa Writes events (p. 24) during the festival's first fallow year, whilst exploring future regional partnerships.



Film Africa Opening Night. Credit Ivan Gonzalez.

# THEORY OF CHANGE AND FUTURE PLANS

At the start of 2021, the Team and Council jointly worked on a new Theory of Change, supported by two expert consultants from NCVO. This new Theory of Change outlines the key outcomes and overall impact the Society aims to achieve, and it will inform the development of our next strategic plan for 2022–2024.

## TERMINOLOGY

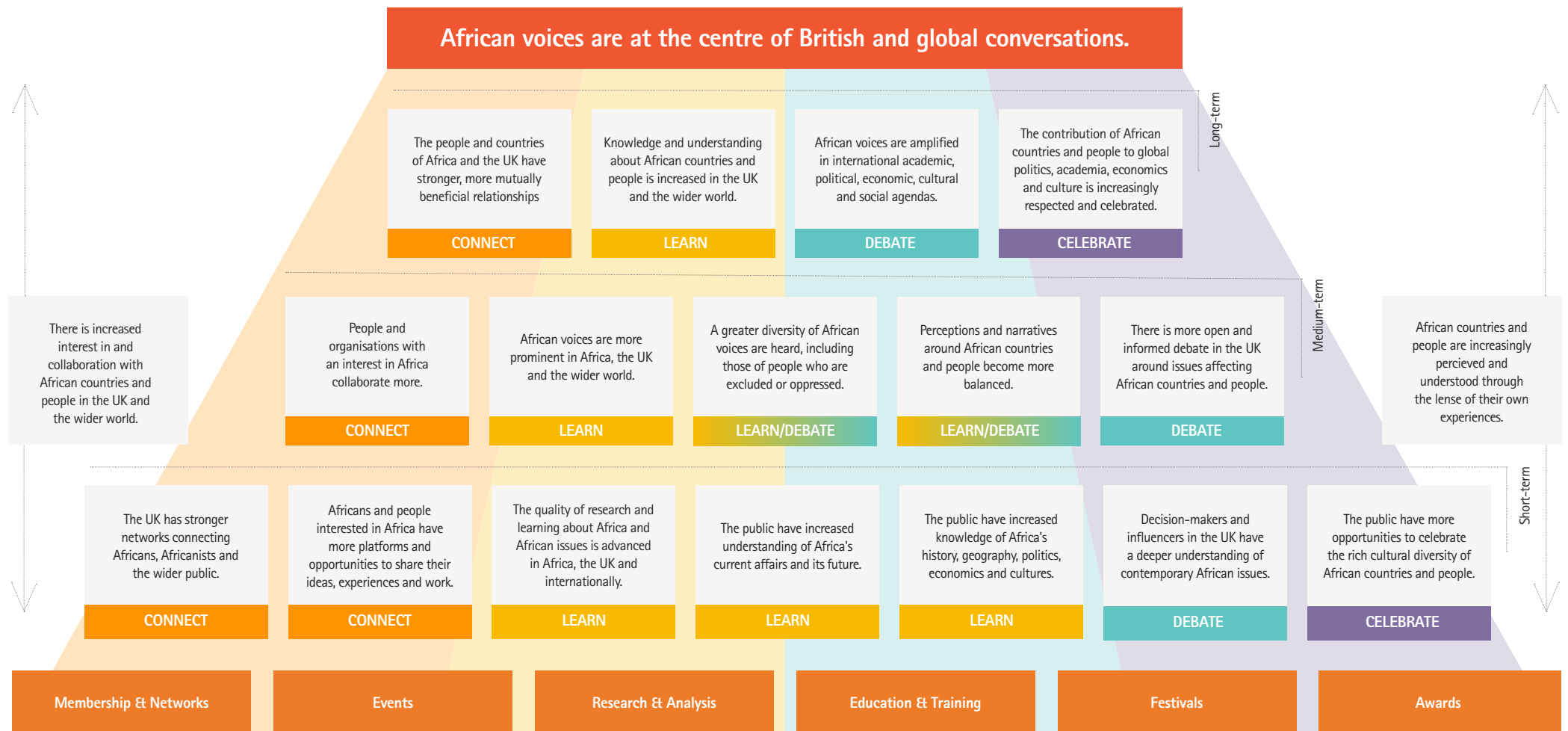
**African people:** all people of African origin, including continental Africans and people of African descent.

**Africanist:** a specialist in African Studies.

**People of African descent:** Africans living outside Africa, consisting of both the Continental Diaspora (people with an identifiable African country of origin born and/or residing outside of the continent) and the Historical Diaspora (people of African origin born outside of the continent who were historically displaced by the transatlantic slave trade or other means).

## KEY

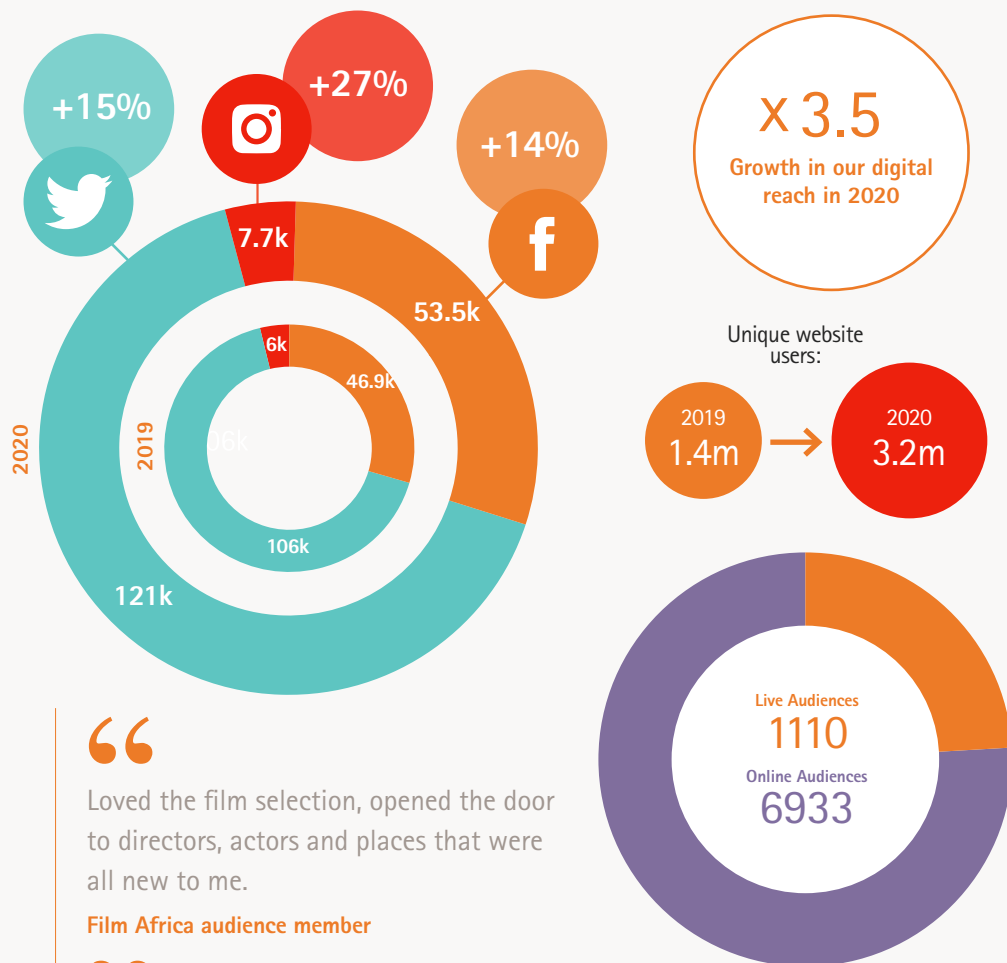
● Impact ● Outcomes ● Outputs



# OUR AUDIENCES AND IMPACT

In 2020 our digital reach nearly quadrupled – we reached 3.2 million people globally. Many of these were visitors to African Arguments who wanted to read the reliable, high-quality journalism that we were publishing at the outbreak of Covid-19 in Africa.

We held some live public events and Film Africa festival screenings, when restrictions allowed. However, the pandemic also represented an opportunity to welcome more audience members from across the UK and the world to our digital events. Our diverse audiences reflect the continent's youthful demographic, with almost half under the age of 35.



“Loved the film selection, opened the door to directors, actors and places that were all new to me.

Film Africa audience member

”



## We moved online

to adapt to the pandemic – providing informative publications and digital events for our members and followers



**46 films** from 14 African countries were screened in cinemas and online during Film Africa 2020



**3 million unique users** accessed our reliable and timely reporting on African Arguments, covering issues such as Covid-19 and #EndSARS



**Community** we provided a space for people to connect through our events while in isolation



**8212 people** engaged directly with our events programme in person and online, across business, politics, education, arts & culture



**15 filmmakers** from the world of African cinema presented their films to our audiences at Film Africa 2020

## 2020 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 2020 we had a total of 381 members, including 293 Individual, 8 Friend, 31 Student, 9 Associate, 1 Lifetime and 39 Honorary Life Members. In 2021 we encourage longstanding members to join as Lifetime members.

Now more than ever, connecting with others, sharing knowledge and feeling part of a community is so important. Some of our members shared what motivated them to be part of the Royal African Society network in 2020:

“

Connecting with like-minded professionals and individuals who want to challenge the narrative about how Africa is perceived and advance an alternative narrative.

”

“

I joined to develop connections and have access to new knowledge on Africa.

”

“

To join the vibrant community of academics and non-academics interested in/working on issues that focus on Africa.

”

Participants of 'African Solutions, Global Challenges'.  
Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.

[royafricansociety.org/join-us](https://royafricansociety.org/join-us)

[/RoyAfriSoc](https://www.facebook.com/RoyAfriSoc)

[@RoyAfriSoc](https://twitter.com/RoyAfriSoc)

## 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 events.

### 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 (2019) is 2.145. The journal is now ranked 50 out of 181 Political Science journals worldwide. Under the editorship of leading academics Peace Medie, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira and Ambreena Manji, the journal publishes cutting-edge research on many of the important issues affecting Africa today, and is valuable for anyone with an interest in the continent.

### Prizes

The journal awarded two prizes in 2020. The African Author Prize was awarded to Ngala Chome for his article, **'From Islamic Reform to Muslim Activism: The Evolution of an Islamist Ideology in Kenya'**. Fred Nyongesa Ikanda won the Stephen Ellis Prize for his article **'Somali refugees in Kenya and Social Resilience: Resettlement Imaginings and the Longing for Minnesota'**. Both articles are now open-access.

### Notable articles

Blessing-Miles Tendi's article **'The motivations and dynamics of Zimbabwe's 2017 military coup'** 2020 Vol. 119, Issue 474 was the most cited article published in this year. Tefera Negash Gebregziabher's article **'Ideology and power in TPLF's Ethiopia: A historic reversal in the making?'** 2019, Vol. 118, Issue 472, had the most full-text views online. The article with the most citations

in 2020 was **'Africa in the world: A history of extraversion'** by Bayart, JF, 1998, Vol. 99 Issue 395.

### Reading Lists

The editorial team have expanded the **Country** and **Thematic** Reading Lists, which were introduced in 2019 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. The 13 Country Reading Lists now include the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Rwanda. The 11 Thematic lists include: Health, Education, Neopatrimonialism and Political Settlements, Religion and Politics. The editors are open to suggestions for new themes.

To get the latest and past issues of *African Affairs*, join the Royal African Society today: [royalafricansociety.org/join-us](https://royalafricansociety.org/join-us)

## ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR AFRICA

### Policy Impact

Recommendations from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Africa are contributing to changes in UK Government policy. Following our report on Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK (2019), **UKVI has implemented some of the recommendations**, such as cutting contact fees, increasing availability of digital applications, and changing guidelines for visa officers and applicants.

In January, the **Mental Health in Africa Briefing** recommended that DFID implement a Theory of Change for mental health, and a **plan** was then published in August by the newly formed FCDO.

### UK-Africa trade after Brexit

In January, the APPG held a landmark event looking at the future of UK-Africa Trade, in partnership with Oxford Brookes University. Parliamentarians participated alongside over 170 external guests. Speakers included Dr Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank and Vera Songwe, Head of UNECA, among others. In December, a **policy report** drawing on the findings of the symposium was submitted to the UK Government for a response.

“

The APPGs will continue to monitor progress on the implementation of an improved service [including] reducing waiting times and improving decision making quality and consistency.

Chi Onwurah MP, Chair of the APPG

### Widening our engagement

The move to remote meetings has allowed parliamentarians to engage with a wider diversity of individuals. 2020 highlights include meetings with the WHO Special Envoys for Covid-19, Malawi's Health Minister, and a webinar on introducing human rights legislation for UK supply chains in which Wampis indigenous leader Wrays Perez shared the experience of his community in Peru.

Humanitarian crises call for greater parliamentary attention and understanding. In 2020, the APPG arranged meetings on food insecurity in East Africa, conflict in the Sahel, the violence in Tigray in Ethiopia, and a webinar on the #EndSARs movement.

Closer to Westminster, the group hosted the Minister for Africa, the Independent Commissioners for Aid Impact and a joint public webinar exploring the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on UK BAME communities. The findings informed the **APPG submission** to the Women and Equalities Committee.



UK Africa Trade after Brexit. Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.



# 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 2020, African Arguments received 5.12 million page views and 3 million unique visitors. This was an increase of 210% and 185% respectively on the previous year. Our readership in Africa accounted for 58% of our global audience, followed by the Americas on 19% and Europe on 14%. The age demographics of our readers were 18-24 (18%); 25-34 (32%); 35-44 (22%); 45-54 (12%); 55-64 (10%); 65+ (7%).



## Coverage

The huge increase in readership was largely due to African Arguments' extensive coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic. We published around 70 timely articles authored by leading experts and journalists on the impact of the Coronavirus. These covered a wide range of angles from epidemiological analysis, to the political repercussions of the pandemic, to the effects of lockdowns on mental health, the economy and cultural sectors. We also launched the first tracker of Covid-19 cases in Africa, which featured daily updates and an interactive map.

While responding to the pandemic, African Arguments maintained its coverage of elections, protests, social issues, cultural developments and more, publishing upwards of 200 articles overall. In October, we launched a special series on the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, publishing a series of 13 in-depth articles on the movement at a time when domestic coverage was restricted and international coverage was limited.

## Debating Ideas

In March, the Debating Ideas sub-section launched on African Arguments. It is run independently of the main site by the International African Institute (IAI) and supported by the World Peace Foundation (WPF). It offers debates and engagements flowing from the African Arguments book series. It published nearly 100 articles in 2020 and accounted for 4% of African Arguments' overall readership.

“

Our Covid-19 coverage included epidemiological analysis, the political repercussions of the pandemic, and the effects of lockdowns on mental health, the economy and cultural sectors.

”

AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF THE UK

ASAUK is a scholarly network that facilitates linkages between UK and African institutions, and between scholars in Africa and the UK. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, our regular biennial conference scheduled to take place in Cardiff was cancelled. While the proposed writing workshops scheduled to take place over the summer were unable to run, some panel and workshop organisers were able to create online writing and reading groups, and at least 3 of these networks have led to special issues of journals.

## New President & future plans

At the AGM, ASAUK's outgoing President Professor Ambreena Manji gave her 2020 biennial lecture (now available to watch on the ASAUK website). The new committee is now led by Professor Ola Uduku and includes Dr Carli Coetzee as Vice President, Dr David Kerr as Honorary Secretary and Dr Louisa Uchum Egbunike as Honorary Treasurer.



Bibi Bakare-Yusuf. Credit: Ostyn Aimz.

The pandemic and the likely restrictions on travel have led to the committee to explore the plan to run the 2022 biennial conference as an online event with collaborating institutions in Africa. We are currently working on a bid for funding to the British Academy to support this.

We expect to run all meetings online and explore hybrid meetings once there is an easing of the current restrictions, as we believe this will also allow better attendance from colleagues in different regions, and contribute to our goal of facilitating scholarly links between Africa and the UK.

## Recognising excellence in African Studies

We adapted to circumstances and held the ASAUK AGM and biennial awards ceremony as virtual events, which were successful in higher than usual attendance and our ability to welcome colleagues from all over the world.

The distinguished Africanist Award was given to Emeritus Professor Alfred Babatunde Zack Williams and to publisher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf. The winner of the 2020 Fage and Oliver Prize was *The Man Who Killed Apartheid: The Life of Dimitri Tsafendas* by Harris Dousemetzis. The Audrey Richards Best Thesis Prize was awarded to Jacinta Muinde for her dissertation titled "An Economy of (Dis)Affection: Women-Headed Households, Cash Transfers and Matrilineal Relations in Kenya's South Coast".

# BUSINESS PROGRAMME

Our business programme aims to give our corporate members both a general overview of developments across Africa and detailed information and discussion on some of the key countries through the 'Economies to Watch' series. It also gives African policymakers the opportunity to interact with some of the main British investors on the continent. Some of the open meetings are also of interest to the Society's wider membership.



## Economies to Watch

In January President Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire gave an exclusive briefing to our corporate members. He looked forward to the presidential and legislative elections set for October, set out the country's economic and political prospects in the coming year, and responded to specific questions on a wide range of issues. Cote d'Ivoire has been one of the best performing African economies in the past five years, and offers big opportunities for investment in infrastructure, financial services, extractives, agriculture exports, agribusiness and manufacturing expansion.

In July, we welcomed Namibia's Minister of Finance Ipumbu Shiimi who briefed our members on the first phase of an economic stimulus and relief package, and explained how the country had coped with the impact of Covid-19 on the health sector, employment and household livelihoods.

Responding to Covid-19 was also the focus of our meeting in October with Malawi's Health Minister, Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda. Malawi's presidential elections earlier in the year hit the headlines when the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the initial result enabled the opposition candidate to win an overwhelming victory in the re-run.

## Covid-19 in Africa

In April, the Society organised a major online event to examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on African trade, travel, finance and future growth strategies. Former African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka, and speakers from UNECA and business explained that, though less severely affected in health terms, African economies were heavily impacted by the trade, investment and fiscal effects of the pandemic. UK Minister for Africa James Duddridge said international partners should help through debt relief, lending, and aid.

African elections in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Tanzania and the Central African Republic were also the subject of briefings, and especially the impact of Covid-19 in those circumstances.

To find out more about the Royal African Society's corporate membership, please visit: [royalafricansociety.org/join-us](http://royalafricansociety.org/join-us)



# PUBLIC EVENTS AND ANNUAL LECTURE

## A Space to Debate

We offer a valuable forum to discuss critical issues affecting the continent, which in 2020 included peace and security, mental health, and agriculture. We welcomed 433 attendees to our public events before the onset of the pandemic in March, and then pivoted our programme online, welcoming a further 1,577 during the course of the year with an increasing number of speakers and attendees from African countries. Tackling isolation in the pandemic, we provided a valuable space for connection and debate, and an important connection to Africa when travel was restricted.



'African Solutions, Global Challenges'. Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.

## Art, Activism & Diaspora

We began the year with our flagship event, Africa in 2020, in partnership with the British Council. In London, the panel explored what it means to be an artist and an activist in Africa today. African creatives have propelled a global boom in music, film, fashion and contemporary art, driving social change and shifting narratives both at home and abroad. The panel – Boitumelo Motsoatsoe; Makhtar Fall AKA Xumman; Valerie Asimwe Amani; Ahmed El Attar and Jenny Mbaye – gave their insights into how creatives responded to political contexts, especially those operating under oppressive regimes. A parallel event also took place in Edinburgh, looking at the wider prospects and forecasts for the continent.

In March, we explored the role of the African diaspora in the continent's development, in partnership with the IE Africa Centre from Madrid and the Legatum Centre for Development & Entrepreneurship at MIT. We held a roundtable and a public forum, which showcased great examples of entrepreneurial innovation and other success stories.

## Covid-19, Black Lives Matter, #EndSARS

In May we looked at the significant and disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the African diaspora and other BAME communities in the UK. With AFFORD and UK parliamentarians in the APPG for Africa, we discussed the underpinning factors in health and social inequalities evidenced by the Public Health England inquiry. Other key events looked at the impact of Covid-19 on African economies, democracy and security.

In July, the global Black Lives Matter movement and debates over national symbols and statues highlighted the importance of how Britain's colonial history is taught in schools and universities today. Lavinya Stennett of The Black Curriculum joined Lord Paul Boateng, Professors Justin Willis and Samuel Adu-Gyamfi to discuss ways forward in transforming the UK school curriculum. This work will be taken forward in 2021 with an inquiry led by the APPG for Africa. In November, we convened a major discussion on the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria, the role of the diaspora and the UK government.

## Africa and the US: past, present and future

In December, ambassador Johnnie Carson, one of the US's most distinguished diplomats, delivered our first online Annual Lecture. Drawing on his long experience at the heart of State Department policy-making, he provided a historical perspective on relations between the US and African countries, as well as discussing recent developments under the Trump administration, and opportunities in the post-Trump era.

To catch up, find podcasts on Mixcloud and videos on Facebook @royafrisoc

“

Everyone was so warm and funny, we got to hear a lot of interesting anecdotes about the writers' craft and it really brightened up my day. I felt almost like I was in someone's living room and it was a real privilege to be there.

Audience member at Africa in 2020

”



Panelists at Africa in 2020.  
Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.



# FILM AFRICA

The ninth and first biennial edition of Film Africa took place from Friday 30 October to Sunday 8 November 2020, showcasing 46 titles from 14 different African countries, including 26 premieres, and attracting 4,146 attendees.

## A Hybrid Programme

Film Africa 2020 consisted of a hybrid programme of socially distanced screenings at the Rich Mix and BFI Southbank and an online offering of eight fiction and documentary features, which were available on the BFI Player throughout the 10 days of the festival. Some of our titles did so well on the player that their run was extended until the end of November.

This new online access enabled audiences across the UK to enjoy Film Africa for the first time and our online events were free and open to people around the world, reaching over 36,000 views up to the end of November. We hosted a total of 30 filmmakers and guest contributors who brought the programme to life; and as part of our ongoing commitment to make the festival more accessible, our opening and closing galas featured BSL interpreted Director Q&As.

## Special Strands & Partnerships

Our special strands included BEYOND NOLLYWOOD, celebrating new wave audio-visual content from Nigeria; and HERE / NOT HERE, presented in partnership with Deaffest, the UK's leading Deaf-led Film and Arts Festival. We also partnered with Leeds International Film Festival to present the 10 shorts vying for our Baobab Award, which were streamed via their new Leeds Film Player between 4-19 November. Ahead of our 2020 festival and to mark Black History Month, we joined forces with the rest of the UK-based African film festivals,

collectively known as 'Tano' ('five' in Swahili), to host "WE ARE TANO" from 1 to 21 October - a free curated season of 10 of the best contemporary African features from the previous decade, which attracted 1,142 online attendees.

## Festival Awards

We continued to recognise and support African filmmaking talent through our festival awards. The jury-selected Baobab Award for Best Short Film (longlisted in partnership with NFTS) went to HENET WARD by Egyptian debut filmmaker Morad Mostafa; and our Audience Award went to FOR MARIA EBUN PATAKI, an emotive debut feature from Nigerian writer-director Damilola Orimogunje.

## New Website & Future Strategy

At the time of writing, the Film Africa website is being rebuilt and we are also developing a new strategy to guide future festival editions from 2022 onwards.

“

I would like to thank everyone at Film Africa for a warm and lovely festival despite the current madness in the world and dedicate this award to everyone that has suffered postpartum depression.

”

**Damilola Orimogunje,**  
Director of FOR MARIA EBUN PATAKI, winner  
of the Film Africa 2020 Audience Award for  
Best Narrative Feature



Still from FOR MARIA EBUN PATAKI. Nigeria. 2020.

## AFRICA WRITES

Our festivals have now switched to a biennial model so 2020 was the first fallow year for Africa Writes. We researched and developed partnerships in different parts of the UK, and offered an online events programme in response to Covid-19 to share new writing and ideas with the festival community.

### Partnerships across the UK

With the support of Arts Council England, we carried out research and development to find new locations where there is an appetite for African literature programming. We met with festivals and cultural organisations to find places where we could build relationships, develop audiences, and establish models of working to lay the foundation for future programming. We are delighted to have established links in Swindon, Leeds and Birmingham, where we will hold events in 2022.

We supported the Africa Writes Exeter Bookclub series which offered writing craft workshops for writers based in Nairobi and Devon and featured book talks with Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and Maaza Mengiste. Behind the scenes, we also brokered relationships which resulted in poet Tjawangwa Dema appearing at Swindon Spring Festival's finale in May and Birmingham & Durham festivals hosting poet Caleb Femi.

“

Really nourishing and inspiring experience, thank you. It was stimulating on multiple levels and I am left with a sense of aliveness about what is possible.

### Masterclass participant

”

### Online book events and writing masterclass

Our physical events were cancelled, but to facilitate connection and community, we presented a free online events series which was attended by many new audiences from across the UK, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. We hosted the finalists for the 2020 AKO Caine Prize for African Writing, Paul Mendez and Yomi Sode in conversation, family storytelling in Somali and Ga, and a symposium on writing Yoruba with the British Library. In partnership with Arvon, we held a writing workshop masterclass facilitated by Minna Salami, and based on her debut book *Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone*. Black British writers were encouraged to attend and concessions were provided as part of our efforts to improve access.



### Save the date!

The next Africa Writes festival will take place in September 2021

## 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.

### Taking our Education Programme further

Since 2011 our Education work has gone from strength to strength. After securing funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Miles Morland Foundation we recruited an Education Programme Manager in September 2020 to oversee the new Poetry in Primary Classroom project. This is an opportunity to introduce primary-aged children to African and diaspora poetry and the poets themselves. It will also equip primary teachers with the tools needed to diversify their curriculums and embed artistic practice in the classroom. We hope to embed the learning from this training into our wider Education Programme offer.

### Poetry in the Primary Classroom

From **working in schools** over the past 3 years, we have learnt that pupils are provided limited opportunities to access and participate in the arts, and to express themselves creatively. The UK school curriculum has a conspicuous absence of texts by authors of African heritage, a gap compounded by a significant lack of ethnic minority representation in children's books, both in character content and as creators. To address these issues, we have partnered with the Centre for Literacy and Primary Education (CLPE) to offer a 5-day training programme that will run in 2021 to support primary school teachers to work with African and diaspora poetry in the primary classroom. In 2020, we worked closely with the lead trainers at CLPE to plan and design the training and teaching resources.

### Working with poets and primary schools

Year 4 and Year 5 teachers were invited to take part in the training programme, which covers various National Curriculum requirements including ways to approach African and diaspora poetry, the importance of reading poetry aloud, and poetry as a vehicle to explore identity. Teachers will also have the opportunity to work with three professional poets during the course of the training programme to enhance their understanding of the work, and to encourage their own self-learning in teaching African and diaspora poetry.



Read more about our parliamentary inquiry into Africa in the curriculum.



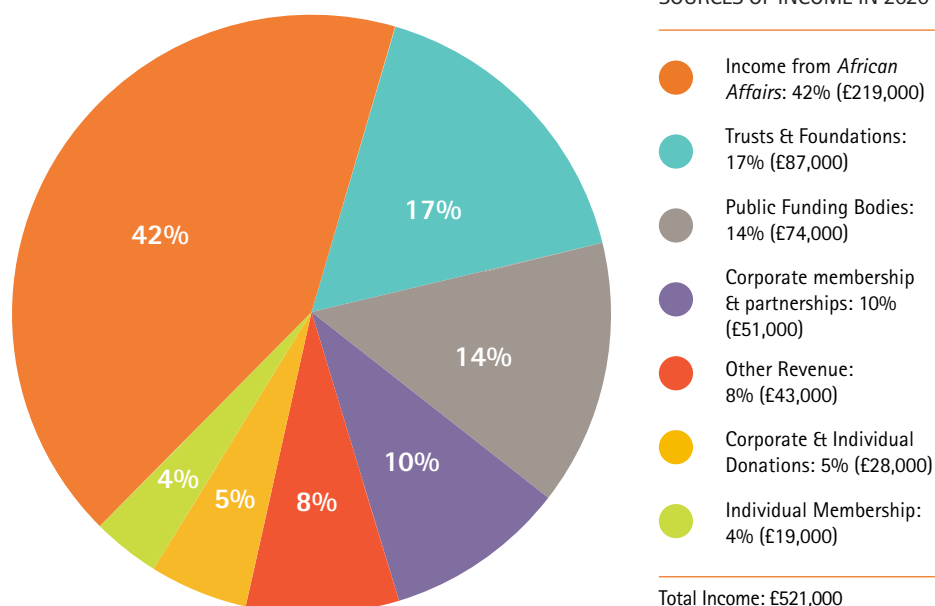
## HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

As for most charities in the United Kingdom, 2020 was a difficult year for the Society. Events had either to be postponed or held remotely, with a consequent impact on revenue. Though major donors continued to support us, grants and donations overall were down, as was project income. By dint of effort from the staff, revenues from corporate members were maintained at 2019 levels. Costs were also held steady. Management is to be commended on its careful husbanding of resources, thereby restricting the deficit in 2020 to £27,000, compared with a surplus of £87,000 in 2019.

Two significant adverse trends manifested themselves in 2020. First, income from individual memberships was at a historically low level, partly as a result of the impact of the pandemic. This will need to be addressed in 2021 and subsequent years. Secondly, the move in academia towards open source publishing represents a threat to revenue from the Society's journal, *African Affairs*. The journal once again had a good year in 2020 and generated substantial revenues for the Society, but we are budgeting for a slight reduction in income from this source in 2021. This trend is likely to continue.

Fortunately, the Society has adequate reserves to buttress itself against unpredictable times. Management is working on a series of events and projects, which will enable it to navigate its way out of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic in the short term and to adapt its model to changing times in the longer term.

Innes Meek  
Honorary Treasurer



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### For the year ended 31st December 2020

	2020	2019
	£,000	£,000
<b>Income and Expenditure Account</b>		
Income from:		
Donations	44	72
Charitable activities		
Connect	76	169
Learn	267	267
Debate	44	96
Celebrate	70	83
Other trading activities	12	8
Investment income	8	8
<b>Total income</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>703</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>		
Raising Funds	34	37
Charitable activities		
Connect	176	236
Learn	78	103
Debate	157	167
Celebrate	119	110
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>653</b>
Net operating income/(expenditure)	(43)	50
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of investments	16	37
<b>Total net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>87</b>
Total Funds brought forward	456	369
<b>Total Funds carried forward</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>456</b>
<b>Balance Sheet</b>		
Investments	278	262
Current assets	270	261
Current liabilities	(119)	(67)
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>456</b>



## TEAM AND COUNCIL

### COUNCIL

#### Chair

Zeinab Badawi

#### Vice Chairs

'Jide Olanrewaju

Professor Christopher Cramer

Dr Titilola Banjoko

#### Honorary Treasurer

Innes Meek

#### Elected Members

Susana Edjang

Boko Inyundo

Obi James

Nike Jonah

Razia Khan

Joel Kibazo

Gregory Kronsten

Anne McCormick

Andrew Skipper

Geetha Tharmaratnam

#### Co-opted Members

Baroness Northover

Miles Wickstead

Ola Uduku

ASAU President (Ex Officio)

#### Appointed Members

African Affairs Co-Editors

(see below)

### TEAM

#### Director

Dr Nicholas Westcott, CMG

#### Deputy Director

Sheila Ruiz

#### Fundraising Manager

Caitlin Pearson

#### Administrative Manager

Lizzie Orekoya

#### Membership Administrator

Melmarie Laccay

#### Africa APPG Policy & Advocacy Manager

Hetty Bailey-Morgan

#### African Arguments Editor

James Wan

#### African Arguments Deputy Editor

Ayodeji Rotinwa

#### Corporate & Public Events Manager

Hoda Dahir

#### Africa Writes Producer & Project Co-ordinator

Marcelle Mateki Akita

#### Education & Outreach Programme Manager

Joanna Brown (until January)

Olivia Danso (from September)

#### Film Africa Producer

Sarah Wechselberger

#### Film Africa Interns

Anthony Lee

Umloda Ibrahim

#### Marketing & PR Consultants

Beth O'Connor

Nouria Bah

#### Consultant Accountant

Brian Johnson

#### RAS Intern

Samia Amoa

#### African Affairs

##### Co-Editors

Peace Adzo Medie

Ricardo Soares de Oliveira

Ambreena Manji

##### Book Reviews Editor

Akin Iwilade

##### Editorial Assistant

Busani Mpofu

##### Auditors

Chariot House Ltd

44 Grand Parade

Brighton BN2 9QA

##### Branding & Design

D237.com

## OUR PARTNERS

We partner with companies and organisations that share our values 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 2020 below.

### Corporate Donors & Partners

Avanti Plc

CDC Group

Standard Chartered

Shell

Unilever

### Funding Partners

Arts Council England

British Film Institute Audience Fund

Garfield Weston Foundation

Miles Morland Foundation

Open Society Foundations

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

### Strategic and Impact Partners

British Council

Oxford Brookes University

SOAS, University of London

University of Edinburgh

### Event and Media Partners

Africa Confidential

AKO Caine Prize for African Writing

Arvon

BEYOND NOLLYWOOD

BFI Player & BFI Southbank

BSL Zone

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)

Centre of African Studies, University of London

Colourful Radio

Crisis Group

Deaffest

Eat Ethio

IE Africa Centre, Madrid

International Africa Institute

Nataal

National Film and Television School

Screen Worlds

South London Gallery

Rich Mix

ZED Books

Zoe's Ghana Kitchen



## THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who has supported our work in what has been a particularly challenging year. 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 have adapted to online delivery and continued to do the work we do 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 Professor Adam Habib, new Director of SOAS, for continuing to house us and allowing us to be a part of the university; to Professor Ambreena Manji and Professor Ola Oduku, former and current presidents of our sister organisation, ASAUUK, 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 at Parliament and contribute significantly to our mission.

We thank the Co-Editors of African Affairs – Peace A. Medie, Ambreena Manji and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira; and the team at Oxford University Press.

Our most appreciative thanks to all our supporters, strategic and principal partners in 2020 (listed on 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 2020 corporate and public events, the Africa APPG meetings, our Africa Writes and Film Africa festivals and activities, 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 2021

CONNECT | LEARN | DEBATE | CELEBRATE

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