

COVID-19 literature, where a large majority (66.1 per cent) of authors were not from Africa.³ The same pattern exists in academic publications focused on politics, society and international relations as they relate to the African continent,⁴ as well as in Africa-focused public health research.⁵

This systemic underrepresentation of African scholars has profound consequences that extend beyond academia. It has direct and severe implications for how development challenges are understood, framed and addressed. Growing evidence indicates that intimate knowledge of and ongoing presence in a country are likely to provide vital insights into the framing of research questions, the formulation/application of methodologies and the interpretation of research results.⁶ The marginalization of African perspectives in global discourse means that the policies designed to address Africa's challenges are often shaped by distant viewpoints, reinforcing rather than dismantling outdated frameworks.

The underrepresentation of African academics in the scholarship that informs development policy contributes to an ongoing imbalance, where non-African, predominantly Western, researchers often have a stronger presence in areas where African scholars bring valuable firsthand knowledge. The underrepresentation of African perspectives in key academic and policy discussions reduces the diversity of global dialogue and limits the effectiveness of policies designed to address Africa's development challenges.

Against this backdrop, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is convening the 2024 Academic Conference on Africa under the theme

. The conference aims to bring African scholars and policymakers to the forefront of discussions, fostering collaboration and generating African-led solutions to critical issues surrounding the rule of law and human rights on the continent.

In an effort to strengthen African representation in global development scholarship and ensure that African voices are heard in the debates that help to shape the continent's future, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa launched an annual academic conference in 2023, with the aim of providing a platform for African scholarship that addresses the wide-ranging scope of Africa's development, with particular emphasis on the quadruple nexus of development, peace and security, humanitarian work and human rights.

change that -- An in-depth analysis of the continent's research reveals promising developments – and strategies for continued improvement By Charon Duermeijer, PhD, Mohamed Amir, and Lucia Schoombe March 22, 2018 (<https://www.elsevier.com/connect/africa-generates-less-than-1-of-the-worlds-research-data-analytics-can-change-that>)

³ Naidoo AV, Hodkinson P, Lai King L, Wallis LA. *African authorship on African papers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *BMJ Glob Health*. 2021 Mar 6

⁴ Briggs, R. C. & Weathers, S. (2016). *Gender and location in African politics scholarship: The other white man's burden*. *African Affairs*, 115(460), 466–489.

⁵ Ambimbola, S. (2019). *The foreign gaze: Authorship in academic global health*. *BMJ Global Health*, 4(5), e002068. And Mbaye, R., Gebeyehu, R. & Hossmann, S. (2019). *Who is telling the story? A systematic review of authorship for infectious disease research conducted in Africa, 1980–2016*. *BMJ Global Health*, 4(5).

⁶ *Innis Lecture: Rethinking Economic Development*
1349–1373.

The academic conference brings together African scholars, policymakers, and practitioners from different sectors and disciplines to engage in high-level interactive dialogue on the most pressing issues facing African communities.

The 2024 iteration of the conference will address critical themes, particularly:
