

Concept Note

AAS EU IRD CNRS Millennium University

Scientific Showcasing Event

Securing Holistic Wellness through Scientific Cooperation in Mental Health Interventions and Research

[Register Here](#)

Date	Friday, 4 September 2026
Time	9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Venue	Millennium University, Blantyre, Malawi
Format	Hybrid

1. Background

The African Academy of Sciences is a Pan-African, nonaligned and nonprofit organization headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, with a mandate to transform lives across the African continent through science. Through its Science, Technology and Innovation programmes, the Academy supports research excellence, strengthens scientific leadership and promotes evidence-informed solutions to Africa's development challenges.

One of the Academy's flagship programmes is the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence, implemented in partnership with the African Union and funded by the European Union. ARISE supports early- and mid-career African researchers to conduct high quality research that addresses national, regional and continental development priorities. The programme currently supports 47 grantees from 38 African countries, while also providing capacity strengthening, research leadership development and opportunities for international collaboration.

The European Union is a strategic partner of the AAS through its support to ARISE. In addition to funding the programme, the EU continues to promote scientific cooperation, research mobility and Africa-Europe partnerships in line with shared priorities on innovation, sustainable development, human capital development and inclusive growth. In October 2025, AAS and the European Research Council signed an agreement to facilitate mobility between ARISE grantees and ERC fellows. Similar cooperation and mobility agreements have also been signed between AAS and leading European research institutions, including CNRS, CSIC and IRD.

The Institut de Recherche pour le Développement is an internationally recognised multidisciplinary research organisation that advances scientific knowledge through partnerships with institutions in the Global South. Its engagement in this showcasing event reflects the growing importance of equitable scientific cooperation between African and European institutions.

The AAS, in partnership with the European Union Delegation and IRD, will therefore host a scientific showcasing event at Millennium University in Blantyre, Malawi. This will be the fourth in a series of showcase events designed to create a platform for scientific exchange among ARISE grantees, European research centres, and EU-funded or affiliated researchers.

The Malawi event will showcase the work of Dr. Sandra Jumbe, an ARISE grantee whose research focuses on the implementation of a Mental Health Literacy e-Curriculum in

Malawian universities. Her work aims to improve mental health literacy among young people by using university and community settings to strengthen public understanding of mental health, reduce stigma, promote early help-seeking behaviour, and contribute to improved wellbeing.

2. Rationale

Mental health remains a major public health and development concern, particularly among young people. Depression, anxiety, conduct disorders and other mental health conditions affect learning, relationships, productivity and overall quality of life. When left unaddressed, mental health challenges among adolescents and young adults can persist into adulthood, undermining educational outcomes, employment prospects, social participation and national development.

Universities and youth serving institutions are critical spaces for early intervention. They provide an opportunity to reach young people at a formative stage, equip them with knowledge, reduce stigma and connect them to appropriate support systems. Mental health literacy interventions are therefore essential because they improve understanding, encourage timely help seeking and strengthen the ability of peers, educators and communities to respond appropriately.

The ARISE programme is designed to build a critical mass of African scientific leaders capable of addressing the continent's most pressing development challenges. By supporting researchers such as Dr. Sandra Jumbe, ARISE demonstrates how African led research can generate practical, contextually relevant and policy relevant solutions. The Malawi showcase will therefore provide an important platform to connect research, practice, policy and institutional collaboration in the area of mental health.

The event will also contribute to broader continental and global development agendas, including SDG 3 on good health and wellbeing, and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa, which recognises the importance of human capital, youth innovation and research led development. By bringing together scientists, policymakers, practitioners, universities and development partners, the forum will strengthen the role of science in shaping more effective mental health interventions in Africa.

3. Objective

The forum will provide a strategic platform for scientists, mental health practitioners, policymakers, university leaders, development partners and other stakeholders to exchange knowledge on mental health research and interventions, strengthen Africa-Europe scientific cooperation, and promote evidence-informed approaches that improve youth wellbeing and advance sustainable development.

4. Expected Outcomes

1. Increased strategic visibility and policy recognition

The event will enhance the visibility and understanding of the ARISE programme, the European Union and IRD among Malawian and regional stakeholders, including policymakers, universities, researchers, development partners and research institutions. It will also position ARISE fellows as emerging African scientific leaders contributing to solutions for major development challenges.

2. Strengthened research partnerships and scientific collaboration

The forum will support new and strengthened linkages between ARISE fellows, ERC, IRD, CNRS, CSIC researchers and Millennium University. It is expected to catalyze follow up engagements, including joint research proposals, co supervision arrangements, research

mobility, mentorship, exchange opportunities and possible participation in Horizon Europe and other international funding mechanisms.

3. Improved mental health awareness and evidence informed policy dialogue

The event will improve understanding of mental health literacy and related interventions, especially in university and youth settings. It will also generate practical recommendations to inform national and regional policy discussions on mental health, youth wellbeing, research translation and the role of African institutions in advancing holistic wellness.

5. Proposed Participants and Speakers

The event will bring together senior government officials, university leaders, researchers, practitioners, development partners and representatives of African and European research institutions. Proposed participants and speakers include:

- Minister for Health, Government of Malawi (TBC)
- Minister for Education, Government of (TBC)
- Dr Alexon Chiwaya, Vice Chancellor or representative, Millennium University
- European Union representatives in Malawi (TBC)
- Mahaman Bachir Saleh, African Union
- Prof. Kenneth Ozoemena, AAS Vice President for Southern Africa (TBC)
- Dr. Boniface Ushie, Programme Manager, AAS
- Dr. James Mushori, Senior Programme Officer, AAS
- Dr. Laurent Bocheureau, EU Science Counsellor to the African Union
- Dr. Benoît Hazard, Director, CNRS Regional Office in Nairobi
- Dr. Laurent Vidal, Director, CNRS, IRD and CIRAD Regional Office for Southern Africa & South Africa
- Dr Gift Kadzamira, Director National Council of Science and Technology
- Amisa Rashid Ahmed, Mental Health Practitioner and Executive Director, Nivishe Foundation, Kenya
- Inès Schmitt, Cooperation Attaché ((based in Malawi), Embassy of France in South-Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi
- Dr. Sandra Jumbe, ARISE Fellow, Millennium University, Malawi
- Dr Bessie Malila, ARISE fellow, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
- Dr. Olivia Matshabane, APTI Fellow, Stellenbosch University
- Dr Annette Uwineza, ARISE Fellow, University of Rwanda
- Dr Emmanuel Cohen, CNRS
- Dr Josiane Tantchou, CNRS
- Dr Maëlen Guerchet, IRD
- Dr Emma Motrico, University of Seville, Spain, ERC grantee

6. Proposed Programme Structure

Opening Session

The opening session will provide institutional framing for the event. It will include welcome remarks from Millennium University, opening statements from AAS, the EU and IRD, and presentations on ARISE, AAS, Horizon Europe and existing Africa-Europe research cooperation mechanisms.

Session One: Mental Health Interventions

This session will focus on practical and research-based approaches to mental health literacy, youth wellbeing and community-based interventions. It will feature Dr. Sandra Jumbe's work on the Mental Health Literacy e-Curriculum in Malawi universities, alongside contributions

from mental health practitioners and researchers from ARISE, IRD, ERC, CNRS and CSIC networks.

Session Two: Scientific Presentations

This session will showcase related scientific work on mental health, neuroscience, neuroethics and developmental disorders. It will provide a platform for African and European researchers to present emerging evidence, share methodological approaches and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Session Three: Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable will explore the contribution of mental health research and interventions to Africa's science, technology and innovation priorities. It will draw out key messages for policy, research collaboration, institutional strengthening and youth centered development. The session will conclude with a summary of recommendations and closing remarks.

7. Proposed Agenda

Time	Activity	Speaker/Lead
<i>Opening session – Moderator Millenium University</i>		
09:00 – 09:20	Malawi national anthem and welcome remarks	Dr Alexon Chiwaya, Vice Chancellor, Millennium University
09:21 – 09:50	Opening remarks	Government, AAS, EU and CNRS, IRD representatives
09:51 – 10:00	Keynote speech	Ministerial representative / Guest of Honour
10:01 – 10:10	Presentation on AAS and its Fellows	Prof. Kenneth Ozoemena, AAS Vice President for Southern Africa
10:11 – 10:20	Presentation on the ARISE programme	Dr. Boniface Ushie, Programme Manager, AAS
10:21 – 10:40	Presentation on Horizon Europe	Dr. Laurent Bochereau, EU Science Counsellor to the African Union
10:41 – 10:50	Introduction to IRD	Dr. Laurent Vidal, Director of CNRS, IRD and CIRAD Regional Office for Southern Africa & South Africa
10:51 – 11:00	Group photo	All participants
<i>Session One: Mental Health Interventions -Moderator: Dr Boniface Ushie</i>		
11:01 – 11:15	Implementation of a Mental Health Literacy e-Curriculum in Malawi universities	Dr. Sandra Jumbe, ARISE fellow, Malawi

Time	Activity	Speaker/Lead
11:16 – 11:30	Use of language in mental health literacy	Amisa Rashid Ahmed, Mental Health practitioner & Founder of Nivishe Foundation
11:31- 11:45	Modernity, Urbanization and Youth Mental Health Globally	Dr Emmanuel Cohen, CNRS, UMR 7206 "Eco-anthropologie", Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France ; IRL 3189 "Environnement, Santé, Sociétés", UCAD, Dakar, Sénégal
11:46 – 12:00	Black Holes in Youth Mental Health: Where Prevention and Advocacy Fall Short	Dr Josiane Tantchou, CNRS-IRD, UMR PRODIG 8586-Institute of African Studies (IAS, University of Ghana)
12:01-12:15	AI-powered clinical decision systems that integrate perinatal mental healthcare into routine maternal care	Dr Emma Motrico, University of Seville, Spain, ERC grantee
12:16 – 12:45	Q&A	Audience
<i>Lunch break</i>		
<i>Session Two: Scientific Presentations-Moderator: Dr. Laurent Vidal</i>		
13:30 – 13:45	Genomic and environmental factors of neurodevelopmental disorders in sub-Saharan African children	Dr. Annette Uwineza
13:46 – 14:00	Establishing a culturally relevant neuroethics framework for neuroscience in Africa	Dr. Olivia Matshabane
14:01-14:15	Neurocognitive disorders in Africa: evidence from population-based studies	Dr Maëleann Guerchet, IRD, EpiMaCT Epidémiologie des Maladies Chroniques en zone Tropicale, France & LEMACEN Laboratoire d'Epidémiologie des Maladies Chroniques et Neurologiques, Faculté des Sciences de la Santé, Cotonou, Bénin
14:16-14:30	Development of a secure 5G and beyond digital health test bed for modelling telemedicine systems, mHealth applications and smart hospitals.	Dr Bessie Malila, ARISE fellow, South Africa

Time	Activity	Speaker/Lead
14:31 – 14:45	Presentations by ERC researchers	Dr Veli-Matti Karhulahti - <i>ORE</i> (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) TBC
14:46-15:00	Presentations by IRD, CNRS, ERC and CSIC researchers	Selected speakers
<i>Session Three: Roundtable Discussions -STISA priorities and uptake of research by private sectors and industries. Moderator: Dr. James Mushori</i>		
15:01-15:30		Gift Kadzamira, National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST), Malawi (TBC)
		Sandra Jumbe, ARISE fellow
		Annette Uwineza, ARISE fellow
		Bessie Malila, ARISE fellow
15:31 – 15:40	Summary of roundtable recommendations	Sandra Jumbe, ARISE fellow
15:41 – 15:50	Vote of thanks and closing remarks	Dr Alexon Chiwaya, Vice Chancellor, Millennium University
15:50 – 16:00	Refreshments and networking	All participants

8. Key Contacts

Institution	Contact	Email
Millennium University	Dr. Sandra Jumbe	sjumbe@mu.ac.mw / s.jumbe@qmul.ac.uk
European Union	Dr. Laurent Bochereau	laurent.bochereau@eeas.europa.eu
African Academy of Sciences	Dr. Boniface Ushie	b.ushie@aasciences.africa
IRD-CNRS	Dr. Laurent Vidal	laurent.vidal@ird.fr