

Mobilizing the African Research Community to Respond to COVID-19: **Toward the Establishment of the Pan-African Scientific Research Council**

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the stark need for African institutions of higher education that can efficiently generate and transmit knowledge in times of crisis. Now more than ever, scientists and social scientists must come together to generate policy-relevant research.

To fill this vital need, African researchers are forming a **Pan-African Scientific Research Council** on the premise that “Research is not a luxury, but rather a survival strategy.” The Council was initiated by Leonard Wantchekon, a Professor of Politics at Princeton University and the Founder and President of [African School of Economics](#) (ASE), as part of his contribution to the ongoing global campaign to generate a robust and enduring international response to the Pandemic, including the letters to G20 country leaders on [March 26](#) and [April 7](#) by several economists and world leaders. From the building block of ASE’s strong institutional partnership with the [Institut Pasteur of Côte d'Ivoire](#), we are establishing a network of scholars and institutional partnerships across Africa and the Diaspora.

In the short run, the Council will conduct original scientific and social science research focused on helping governments and societies respond to the novel coronavirus. We have already set up collaborative research initiatives involving epidemiologists, biochemists, biologists, and biostatisticians on one hand, and sociologists, economists, and other social scientists on the other. Research topics include the epidemiology and spread of the virus; the short- and long-term economic impact of the coronavirus on households, firms, and labor markets; and the implications for social cohesion, violence, and governance. The goal is to develop research-driven recommendations that address both the health risks posed by the pandemic and its externalities for African economies, social cohesion, and governance. The multidisciplinary research will strive to identify policies that build long-term resilience and focus on vulnerable groups, including workers in the informal sector, women and children. Public and policy engagement strategy with governments, civil society organizations and the general public will maximize the impact of these findings.

Because the need for synergies between the sciences and social sciences is not episodic but enduring, the Pan-African Scientific Research Council will be a lasting body capable of responding to future crises. In the medium- and long-term, the Council will expand its activities to address a range of current and potential challenges requiring science-driven responses, including food security, climate change, threats to biodiversity and political conflicts. An endowment will be built to support cutting-edge, and policy-relevant research led by Council affiliates. Capacity building efforts will focus on increasing the qualifications and gender diversity of the next generation of African scholars.

We would like to invite all active Africa-focused **scientists and social scientists to join** these efforts. A Zoom-based launch meeting will allow for the finalization of the mission statement, election of Council leadership, and the coordination of subsequent activities.

To apply for participation in the **June 6, 2020** kick-off meeting, please indicate your interest using this Google Form: <https://forms.gle/uZpHrKVyFCnJyWE68>.