

£10 Million Investment in Health Research Towards Empowering African Genomic Discovery

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On 24 November, the Science for Africa Foundation (SFA Foundation), the African Population Cohorts Consortium (APCC), and the African Bioinformatics Institute (ABI) announced the launch of a landmark £10 million investment to establish Project Genomics-led Impact on African Population Health (GEN-IMPACT), a pioneering, Africa-led initiative designed to advance health through genomic discovery.

This five-year investment is expected to catalyse a proof-of-concept platform that demonstrates the scientific, health, and equity value of African genomics. GEN-IMPACT aims to address the glaring human genomic data gap in Africa and harness the continent's unparalleled genetic diversity to improve health outcomes.

According to Dr Evelyn Gitau, Chief Scientific Officer at the SFA Foundation, "With GEN-IMPACT, we are catalysing a truly Africa-led genomics platform that will amplify African voices, data, and institutions in discovery science and health equity. For too long, the continent's genetic richness has been invisible in global datasets, yet it holds the key to unlocking new insights for humanity."

This strategic collaboration will be led by the SFA Foundation, leveraging its experience in managing large-scale research programs across Africa. SFA Foundation will oversee grant administration, ethical oversight, program coordination, and stakeholder engagement. The APCC will provide access to its network of established cohorts, facilitating the collection and analysis of genomic and phenotypic data, while the ABI will lead capacity-building efforts, developing training programs, infrastructure, and tools for genomic data analysis.

According to Dr Kobus Herbst, Chair of the African Population Cohorts Consortium, by nesting GEN-IMPACT in and linking it with APCC's network of deep, longitudinal data from communities across Africa with genomic and environmental data, this initiative could facilitate the uncovering of ancestry-specific disease mechanisms and create evidence that truly reflects African populations. "GEN-IMPACT gives us the power to translate this science into better health outcomes for our people," he added.

Prof Nicky Mulder, Interim Director of the African Bioinformatics Institute, said that, "Building Africa's genomic future depends on training, infrastructure, and trust," adding that the ABI is "developing the next generation of bioinformaticians and data governance tools to ensure African scientists drive discovery and that data from Africa remains in Africa, serving African priorities."

Funding has been provided by Wellcome, building on a commitment to a more equitable genomic future, including work on the ethical, legal, and social dimensions of genomics and our global review of genomic data and diversity.



Rachel McKendry, Executive Director of Discovery at Wellcome, said, “GEN-IMPACT will strengthen Africa’s genomics ecosystem, advance equity, and accelerate new discoveries by integrating diverse datasets across APCC cohorts. We’re delighted that our support for the programme brings together three organisations, and long-standing Wellcome partners. This is an important milestone with GEN-IMPACT building on exciting momentum in African-led genomics, which will help to address regional health priorities and improve lives across the continent.”

Project GEN-IMPACT is a bold step towards genomic equity; it represents a transformative opportunity to advance genomics research in Africa in regions with gaps in data and infrastructure, address critical health challenges, and empower African scientists. By leveraging the strengths of the APCC, ABI, and SFA Foundation, this program will generate new knowledge, build capacity, and ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of African populations.

The above announcement can be found here <https://scienceforafrica.foundation/media-center/ps10-million-investment-health-research-towards-empowering-african-genomic-discovery>

About the Organisations

Science for Africa Foundation

The SFA Foundation is a pan-African, non-profit, and public charity organisation that supports, strengthens, and promotes science and innovation in Africa. The SFA Foundation serves the African research ecosystem by funding excellent ideas in research and innovation, enabling interdisciplinary collaborations, and building and reinforcing environments that are conducive for scientists to thrive and produce quality research that generates new, locally relevant knowledge.

Africa Populations Cohorts Consortium

By bringing together close to 70 cohorts in 24 African countries, the vision of the APCC is the sustainable development of African populations towards good health and well-being by enhancing African population cohorts through a consortium to harness the continent's unique diversity and research capabilities. This facilitates scientific breakthroughs, builds the African evidence base, and strengthens policy and practice towards attaining equitable universal health coverage.

Africa Bioinformatics Institute

The ABI aims to lead the bioinformatics field on the African continent by developing sustainable research infrastructure and streamlining related work. One of its many benefits will be facilitating genomics research that could lead to advancements for human health.