



UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education



Regionalizing the UNESCO Knowledge for Change Consortium: K4C at the ESC!



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Preamble

This report, ably curated by Nkatha Mercy; a Kenyan Doctoral Candidate at West Virginia University in the USA and founding member of the Nyerere K4C Hub in Arusha, Tanzania, shares the story of the participation of members of the Knowledge for Change Consortium in the Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference at Michigan State University October 2-5, 2023. Representatives of the K4C Consortium included: Irma Flores (Colombia), Margie Maistry (South Africa), David Monk (Uganda), Mahazan Mutalib (Malaysia) Rene Oosthuizen (South Africa) and Budd Hall (Canada). The UNESCO Chair acknowledges the generous support from the Engagement Scholarship Consortium and Michigan State University for making it possible for our group to travel to and take part in the proceedings of the ESC.

Introduction

A global consensus has emerged that, in order for higher education institutions to best contribute to meeting the many global challenges as articulated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Climate Crisis and other challenges, changes in the ways in which knowledge is understood, created, managed, validated and used needs to happen. This is evidenced by the [2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) and the various reports which emerged from the [2022 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education](#). The call for community engagement, transdisciplinarity, openness to Indigenous knowledges, openness to community knowledges and community-based learning are all to be found in the numerous global reports now circulating. The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education has risen to the challenge of filling this gap by establishing the Knowledge for Change Global Consortium for Training in Community-Based Participatory Research

UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (UNESCO CBR -SR) was created in 2012. This was at the request of UNESCO, with whom the present co-Chairs had worked during the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. Based at the University of Victoria (UVic) and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), this Chair is co-directed by Dr. Budd L Hall and Dr. Rajesh Tandon. This Chair supports North – South - South and South - South partnerships that build on, and enhance the emerging consensus in knowledge democracy. The Chair

strengthens collaboration between the Higher Education section in UNESCO, the Global University Network for Innovation, the Global Alliance on Community - University Engagement and other regional and global networks. It co-creates new knowledge through partnerships among universities (academics), communities (civil society) and government (policy makers). The overarching goal of this extensive collaboration and partnership includes generation of new capacities and new solutions to pressing problems related to sustainable development, social and economic disparities, cultural exclusion, mistrust and conflict. Further, it aims at creating awareness among policy makers, enhancing scholarship of engagement and engendering social responsibility in higher education.

The Knowledge for Change Consortium – K4C

To ground these efforts, the Co-Chairs established the Knowledge for Change Consortium (K4C), a global consortium on training for Community-Based Participatory Research. K4C was launched in 2017, in response to training needs revealed by state-of-the-art global studies on community-university research partnerships including:

- <https://brill.com/edcollbook-oa/title/59847>;
- <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/6509>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309155372_Knowledge_Engagement_Building_Capacity_for_the_Next_Generation_of_Community_Based_Researchers

The K4C Consortium is a strategy for building institutional capacity in the field of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in the Global South and the Excluded North. This is done through the Mentor Training Programme.

K4C Methodology: Mentor Training Programme.

The Mentor Training Programme (MTP) is a 21-week course consisting of 3 components: online learning activities, a two-week face-to-face learning residency, and a field work component that is carried out locally under the guidance of a local supervisor. The MTP is designed for experienced practitioners and community-based participatory researchers within and outside academia. The certified Mentors play a key role in the development of a local Hub. This includes the creation of teaching curriculum and pedagogy and the development of research capacities. A K4C Hub is a formal partnership between a community organization and a higher education institution whereby, the partners agree to work together to provide learning opportunities to both community workers and university students. The Hubs are aligned with one or more of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, both as contribution to the UN's Higher Education Sustainability Initiative and, as localization of the Goals towards community engagement in their attainment.

Since 2017, there have been eight cohorts which have supported the creation of 25 Hubs in 16 countries. 150 mentors have been trained through a 21-week on line, field work and face to face 'training of trainers' programme. Each of these Hubs is now offering opportunities for younger university and community workers to learn about CBPR. The MTP was designed and led by Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall. University of Victoria, Canada and PRIA India, provide centralized global administrative support for the Hubs. Costs are covered from fees paid by the Mentor's institutions

This model of building institutional capacity to produce locally contextualized and actionable knowledge within a framework of justice and sustainability that the K4C Global

Consortium has adopted, has proven to be effective. The interest in expanding the K4C Consortium is clear given the countless expressions of interest that the Chair has received over the past period. It is for this reason that the Co- Chairs have resolved to move forward the idea of regionalization. The move towards regionalization of the Consortium will not only enhance responsiveness to this increasing demand, it will also mainstream effectiveness rooted in context, towards the call to action by global higher education policy for social responsibility and just sustainability.

Regionalizing the UNESCO Knowledge for Change Consortium – K4C

Post consultative meetings held with K4C Hub Coordinators, higher education heads of institutions with an interest in the K4C and UNESCO colleagues, in May of 2022, a decision was taken in Barcelona to regionalize the K4C mentorship training programs. As a first step in the regionalization process, the Co-Chairs’ have been and continue to be in conversations with the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM), Gulu University in Uganda and the University of Los Andes in Colombia.

Justification

- Regionalization is in keeping with the philosophy of knowledge democracy of the K4C Consortium, in which new understandings and innovative solutions have been shown to be catalyzed through co-construction of knowledge carried out in respectful partnerships with local communities.
- A desire for course content and curriculum that is based as much as possible, on specific contexts and differences found in each region.

- Cost considerations: While not entirely doing away with global convening or inter-regional exchanges, there is need to reduce costs of bringing people together for residencies by making them regional - centric.
- In line with UNESCO's goal of knowledge democracy, the Chair would like to offer more mother tongue language possibilities. While this is more possible in Latin America, the diversity of languages in Africa and Asia remains a challenge.
- Regionalization is the best possible response to the on-going increased interest in the K4C model of institutional CBPR capacity-building.
- With this growth, it is no longer feasible for a centralized K4C Consortium to continue to offer centralized global training.
- The idea is to begin with three regional centres: Africa, Asia and Latin America while continuing to work with Europe and North America and venturing into the Caribbean, Arabic and French-speaking countries as options emerge.

Since the decision was made in May 2022, team leads from Asia (Malaysia), Africa (Uganda) and Latin America (Colombia) have been working on, and have made significant progress in formalizing their regionalization planning.

On October 2, 2023 at a meeting held in Lansing Michigan, these team leaders apprised the Chair about their progress in the regionalization planning process.

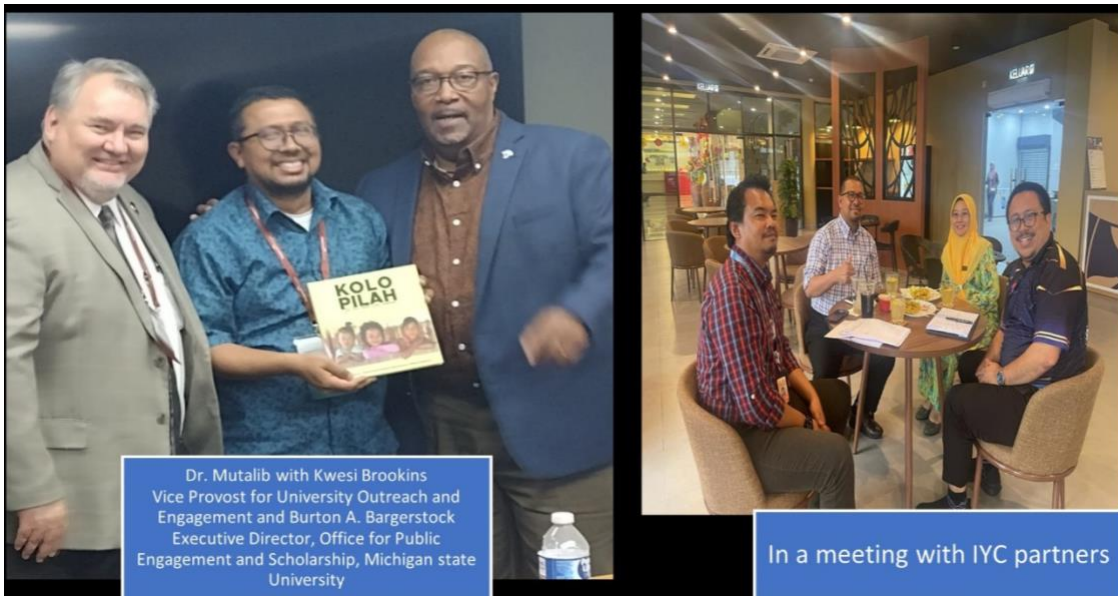
K4C Consortium Regionalization: Planning Updates



Region: Asia

Country: Malaysia - Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) – Mizan Hub

The Hub continues to work closely with CoChair Rajesh Tandon in Dheli, India. Dr. Mutalib is currently receiving reports from various partners with whom he has been working with. He plans to collate a report from the same to inform possible pathways for collaboration. As part of preparations for the launch of the regional Hub, Dr. Mutalib has been undertaking managerial and administrative work. This includes: updating the Mizan Hub website, solidifying partnerships in the community, in the university and in the wider



ASEAN region. The Hub’s primary work this far has included projects in public health and environment. Mizan’s partner, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UniMAS) continues to build on Indigenous knowledge systems, with specific focus on environmental management in the face of global climate change. To this end, there are plans to launch an Indigenous Knowledge scholarship, the first of its kind in the university. The Hub also hopes to continue working with the Open Science library and to use the UNESCO CBR -SR principles to mainstream their regional Hub’s work. They are still on course for their inaugural MTP in April 2024.

Both Dr. Mutalib and the Mizan Hub continue to receive support from their university's highest level. The regional Hub will potentially be housed within the Office of the Vice Chancellor. As at now, the lead and contact person for the Asia Region will be Dr. Mutalib. He will also be collaborating with longtime partner, the International Youth Centre, with whom they are in the process of an MoU agreement. Mizan Hub also plans to work with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Malaysia. Dr. Mutalib is hoping to continue making inroads into the ASEAN regional overall, and to that end, is planning a presentation scheduled for mid- 2024. The estimated initial fees to cover their teaching and facilitation costs will be \$1,350.



Region: Africa

Country: Uganda – Gulu University Uganda and Rhodes University, South Africa



Gulu University Hub is reconvening slowly but surely as everyone is still recovering from covid. Community – university engagement is embraced broadly

within and across the university. This has led to ongoing conversations about where to situate the K4C Hub, given the multiple actors engaged in community – university collaborations at Gulu university. Dr. Monk reported having been actively involved in the design of Gulu’s community – university engagement policy as well as in mainstreaming it within the university’s strategic plan. However, while this policy is now in place, the resources to operationalize it are yet to be mobilized. An opportunity to harness resources to drive the work of the Hub lies in the possibility of regionalizing it and offering the MTP. In addition to the aforementioned policy work, the Gulu Hub has been working in collaboration with the UNESCO Chair in Youth and Work in Uganda, to develop the Open Distance Electronic and Lifelong Learning programme (ODELL). They are in the final stages of setting the program up. Increasingly, it appears to be that the K4C Regional Hub will be domiciled at ODELL.

Seeing as the Government of Uganda does not allow certificate courses at the university level, the Gulu Hub is still thinking through how to navigate awarding certification to those

that undertake the MTP. The Gulu Hub also enjoys administrative support at the highest levels of university administration

Rhodes University reported that they continue to see growth in calls for the CBR program from across other universities in South Africa. The Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) Division under the leadership of their Human Research Ethics Chair, is pioneering engagement in the space of ethical community-university engagement in so far as it concerns human ethics in research. Their Open Access Knowledge project includes co creation and co -development of a joint curriculum between the university, post graduate students and community partners. They have also embarked on a series of workshops on CBR with members of the community.

RUCE has also established the African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement (AJHCE), one of its kind in the African continent. All of these undertakings have support from the highest university level. This Hub also has institutional budget support. In addition, community engagement is being systematically institutionalized at Rhodes University by the administration e.g at the Deans Forum, Heads of Department Forum, the Residency etc.

Gulu and Rhodes have been working together and plan to continue the partnership. For now, the regional Hub will be situated at Gulu University. They anticipate the initial cost of offering the program to be \$1,350. The designated Hub lead and contact person will be Dr. Monk, Gulu University, Uganda.

Notable is that, for all the three Hubs, the mentorship training is attracting it's majority of learners from the natural sciences.

Region: South America

Country: Colombia - University of Los Andes



At present, this Hub is working on the Global Citizenship Laboratory Project, a participatory action research project that is being conducted with students. Dr. Flores noted that they anticipate the second cohort training to happen in October. The Colombia Hub has a bit of streamlining work to do in their efforts at collaboration with the Mexican Hub. They are also facing some challenges as they work towards institutionalizing the Hub. However, the UNESCO CoChairs continue to lend their support and are expected to visit the Colombia Hub later this year. The Regional Hub contact person remains Dr. Flores of the University of Los Andes



Engagement Scholarship Consortium International Conference 2023

Introduction

The Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) traces its roots to 2001, when three American universities initiated a meeting to exchange ideas about their community based programs. Since then, their stated goal has become to, “work collaboratively to build strong university-community partnerships anchored in the rigor of scholarship and designed to help build community capacity.” Today, the Consortium is made up of member institutions from across North America and around the world.

Their 2023 Engagement Scholarship Consortium International Conference was based on the theme: **Mobilizing Change through Engaged Scholarship.**

The presentations revolved around the following subthemes:

1. Mobilizing people: who is involved in the process for mobilizing change and, how do we work toward partnerships in which all voices are heard
2. Mobilizing institutions: how to intentionally consider the needs and priorities of all stakeholders involved and what are the strategies for balancing different organizational perspectives?
3. Mobilizing ideas: how to come together to implement, evaluate and celebrate strategies for working toward the public good.

ESC and K4C Consortium

In an effort to connect work similar to that of the ESC happening in the global majority, an abstract for a panel presentation to showcase this during the 2023 International conference was submitted to the ESC. The K4C Consortium proposed a high visibility plenary session with panelists from Africa, Asia, South and North America. The idea was to have the Panelists in conversation with one another, in order to bring critical global majority perspectives to the ESC, the largest and primarily North American community engaged scholarship platform. It was proposed that the UNESCO Chair would speak to overarching global education policy frameworks underpinning engaged scholarship. They would also introduce the newest UNESCO CBR – SR initiative, the Community Scholars Fund.

The abstract was accepted. Support was then mobilized from the Executive Director, Office for Public Engagement and Scholarship Michigan State University Professor Burton A. Bargerstock. He very generously fully funded the participation of panelists from Malaysia (USIM -Mizan Hub), Uganda (Gulu Hub), South Africa -Rhodes University Community Engagement Hub), Canada (Victoria Hub) and the USA. Also funded to participate from South Africa, was the Editor of the newly launched African Journal of Higher Education and Community Engagement.

ESC 2023 International Conference: Select Sessions Overview

K4C was present at the ESC 2023 International Conference to deliver on three fronts:

1. **K4C pre – conference open house** – Held on Tuesday, October 2nd, this session was led by the Gulu Hub. It was an interactive session. Art was used to facilitate a conversation about why Community Based Participatory Research is important in realising community development, and how it can enhance university engagement, relevance, and impact. The session had the privilege of hosting both the Provost and the Executive Director, Office for Public Engagement and Scholarship at the Michigan State University as well as one of the key sponsors of the conference, GivePulse. The K4C team also had an exhibition table at the conference where they displayed material from the different Hubs and information about the Community Scholars Fund.



K4C OPEN HOUSE

Main Photo

Fourth from the left;
Kwesi Brookins. Vice
Provost for University
Outreach and
Engagement -MSU

In grey suit: Prof. Burt

Burgerstock. Executive
Director, Office for
Public Engagement and
Scholarship -MSU

Between the Provost and the Executive

Director: George Luc
Co-Founder and CEO of
GivePulse

Second photo

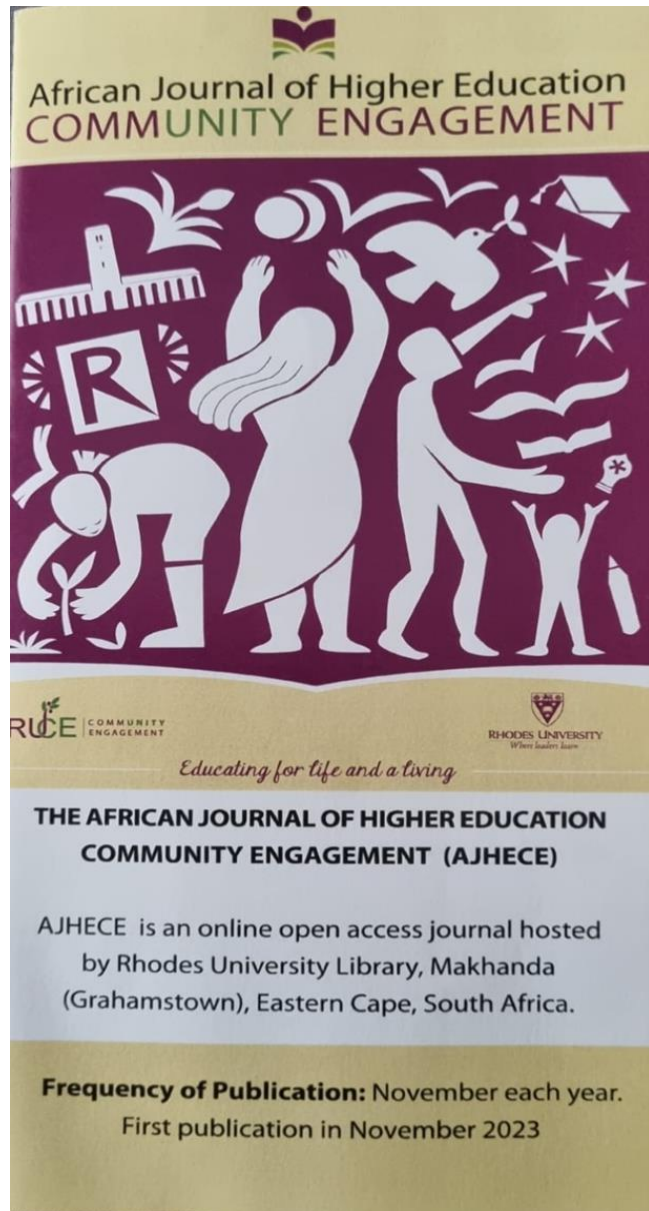
ESC 2023 International
Conference Sponsors

Third photo

Promotional materials
exhibition hall

2. Journal Editors Panel

This panel discussion brought together editors of journals publishing community-engaged scholarship. The editors discussed the mission and scope of their journals. They also offered insights into publishing and scholarship in professional and academic journals. The UNESCO K4C Consortium was represented by Prof Savathrie Maistry. She is the Editor, African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement (AJHCE). The AJHCE is an



online open-access journal hosted by Rhodes University Library, Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa. It originated from a need for an African-based academic journal on Community Engagement. The journal has the potential to herald the significance of the three core functions of universities and to further embed community engagement in learning, teaching and research activities.



3. **Plenary Session: Community-University Engagement: Perspectives from the Global Majority**

This plenary session, the third of three in the entire conference, was held on Thursday, October 5, 2023. It brought together Panelists

doing the work on engaged scholarship from Africa, Asia, South America, and North America. Speaking to the conference sub themes of mobilizing institutions to mobilize ideas, it drew from reflections about what universities are good for. The panelists variously addressed themselves to questions such as:

What are we, as universities in the global majority and the excluded north, good for? What is our social responsibility as actors in higher education and lifelong learning? In which ways are we innovating towards meaningful community engagement? How are we relevant for society?

In contemplating their diverse experiences, they spoke to similarities, differences, best practices, and place-based innovations that they are presently advancing within community-university engagement toward building sustainable community partnerships. They spoke to co-construction and co-production of knowledge, and how this approach is generating and sustaining social centric solutions from within communities themselves.

Through their different approaches to community-engaged research, the panelists gave real examples of their universities' efforts to embed the community into the university. Responding to a question by the audience, they offered alternative scholars and scholarship by subaltern voices who write, teach and carry out community engagement. In so doing, the panelists brought to life the reality of knowledge democracy as a critical approach to higher education. The UNESCO CoChair concluded by linking all that was discussed by the Panel, to the role of open science and transformation of higher education.

ESC/K4C/Aspen Global Change Institute

While at the ESC Conference in Michigan, the K4C Consortium representatives had the pleasure of hearing from the other half of the UNESCO CBR – SR Chair. Dr. Rajesh Tandon was in Washington DC leading another K4C team at the Aspen Global Change Institute for the “*Assessing the Impacts of Engaged Research and Its Use: Evidence and Opportunities*” workshop. Dr. Rajesh had in his team, Dr. Mwemezi from the Nyerere Hub in Tanzania, Dr. Sonajharia from India, and Dr. Asyirah, from Malaysia. This Aspen workshop, co-hosted in partnership with the Transforming Evidence Funders Network, sought to identify opportunities to advance the evidence base about the behavioral and societal changes associated with research processes that engage people with lived experience and evidence users i.e engaged research. One of the activities during this workshop was that participants were asked to help identify the actions funders could take to build out and improve the use of evidence – specifically, evidence about the impacts and outcomes of engaged research.

Conclusion

This multi-pronged approach and engagement by the UNESCO Chair, deploying their leadership to canvas a diverse and broad global audience and the efforts by K4C Hubs to regionalize for more effective reach and place based learning, is indicative of the potential for growth that this Chair is yet to fully realize. It also speaks to the relevance, timeliness and growing need to fulfil calls for community engagement, transdisciplinarity, openness to Indigenous knowledges, openness to community knowledges and community-based learning. By such engagements, and through its calls for democratization of knowledge through and by community engagement, the UNESCO Chair in CBR – SR, presently stands at a pivotal moment to provide leadership in the way higher education institutions can best contribute to meeting the many global challenges as articulated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, to address the Climate Crisis and other challenges.