



CONCEPT NOTE

19th Africa Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) Conference | March 2025, South Africa



About the Africa Young Graduates and Scholars Conference

The Africa Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) conference, initiated by the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA), an institute within the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), serves as a vital platform for young scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to collaborate and exchange research-based insights on Africa's development challenges. The 19th AYGS Conference, set to take place in March 2025 in South Africa, will be hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council in collaboration with the National Research Foundation's (NRF) Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre, the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR), and other key partners. This event will offer a unique opportunity for emerging scholars from across the continent to present their research and share their perspectives on achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development, in line with the aspirations of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063.

Conference theme and call for abstracts

Enabling Africa's Inclusive and Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities

One of the key aspects of Agenda 2063 is ensuring that Africa's growth and development are inclusive and sustainable. This means that the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably among all segments of society and that development is carried out in a way that preserves the environment for future generations. However, Africa's growth remains below the 7 to 10 % annual target, which is essential to achieve the vision and aspirations of Agenda 2063, generate decent jobs, and lessen inequalities and poverty. Therefore, Africa needs to create a more inclusive and sustainable development path by identifying and addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality, lack of access to education and healthcare, and environmental degradation. This can improve living standards, economic growth, and social cohesion for all its citizens. Additionally, Africa needs to further enhance its development trajectory by seizing opportunities such as technological advancements, renewable energy sources, and sustainable agriculture practices and leveraging the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to address some of the most pressing challenges and unlock new opportunities. Therefore, more research and scholarship are needed to generate new knowledge, inform policy decisions, and foster innovation to address the multifaceted challenges hindering steady progress toward achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa.

Contributing to this developmental trajectory, the 19th African Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) Conference aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of Africa's inclusive and sustainable development. The conference will delve into critical challenges that impede progress, such as socioeconomic disparities, environmental degradation, and governance issues. Simultaneously, it will highlight the vast opportunities in leveraging technological advancements, harnessing the continent's rich natural resources, and fostering regional cooperation.

Young African scholars are invited to submit and present scientific papers that explore key topics related to Africa's inclusive and sustainable development from various academic and policy perspectives. To be considered, prospective participants should submit an abstract on any conference sub-topics, demonstrating a solid theoretical understanding of the subject matter and the potential to use available empirical data to develop a comprehensive paper to be presented at the conference.

Prior to the conference, a series of online masterclass lectures will be conducted by experts in each subtheme. These masterclasses are designed to equip emerging scholars with an in-depth understanding of the topics, as well as practical skills and techniques that can be directly applied to their research. This preparation aims to ensure that participants are well-prepared and confident in presenting their work at the conference.

Conference sub-themes:

(1) Governance, Peace, and Security in Enabling Africa's Inclusive and Sustainable Development

Effective governance, peace maintenance, and security establishment remain foundational pillars for inclusive and sustainable development in Africa. The submissions in this sub-theme should focus on the importance of **good governance, peacekeeping efforts,** and **security measures** in ensuring that development in Africa is inclusive and sustainable. These pillars are essential for creating a stable and conducive environment for economic growth, social progress, and overall well-being of the continent.

(2) Sustainable Agriculture and Transformed Food Systems

As outlined in the Malabo Declaration adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2014, sustainable agriculture and resilient food systems are pivotal for Africa's inclusive growth and sustainable development. By adopting environmentally friendly farming techniques, enhancing access to resources for smallholder farmers, and tackling critical issues such as climate change, soil degradation, and food waste, we can secure a stable food supply while fostering economic growth and social development across the continent. The submissions under this subtheme should delve into the most effective **agricultural practices** and **policy interventions** that **promote sustainable agriculture** and **transform food systems**. Topics may include innovative farming technologies, agroecological methods, climate-smart agriculture, equitable resource distribution, and strategies to reduce post-harvest losses.

(3) Climate Change Action and Just Transition

As climate change's impacts become more evident, the urgency for action in Africa is critical. The continent faces extreme weather, rising sea levels, and changing rainfall patterns, affecting agriculture, water resources, and food security. This sub-theme focuses on **strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation**, ensuring a just transition for all. Submissions should explore innovative policies, technologies, and practices, such as climate-resilient agriculture, transitioning to renewable energy, sustainable water management, and sustainable urban planning. Contributions could also address the socioeconomic impacts, education, international cooperation, and funding mechanisms.

(4) Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Drive Africa's Development Priorities

The African Union (AU) has adopted a Continental AI Strategy to leverage artificial intelligence to address key healthcare, education, agriculture, and governance challenges, among others. The strategy focuses on fostering innovation, maintaining ethical standards, minimizing risks, and seizing opportunities for sustainable development. Submissions are encouraged to explore enhancing AI infrastructure, building a skilled AI workforce, creating diverse datasets, implementing AI innovations, and promoting collaboration among various stakeholders to advance AI capabilities in Africa.

Submission guidelines for AYGS 2025

The AYGS Conference 2025 invites contributions from emerging scholars and young African graduates passionate about driving inclusive growth and sustainable development across the African continent. The targeted participants are those currently enrolled in master's or PhD-equivalent programs or who recently graduated with a PhD in the past three years. Submissions should foster innovative thinking and stimulate fresh debates that align with Africa's developmental vision and aspirations as outlined in the AU Agenda 2063. This is an opportunity to contribute to the discourse on how Africa can achieve its long-term goals of prosperity, integration, and sustainable development.

To ensure inclusivity, applicants from Francophone Africa are highly encouraged to submit their abstracts.

All abstract submissions should have the following format:

- **Abstract:** Maximum of 300 words
- **Keywords:** 5 Keywords
- **Author info:** Provide affiliation information for the presenting author, including email address

Conditions for participating at the conference:

- Selected candidates will be required to submit their full paper manuscript (8,000 words max) before attending the conference
- Masterclasses will be conducted online to assist participants in refining their paper content in alignment with the conference's sub-themes. These sessions are designed to provide in-depth guidance and valuable insights from experts in the field. Consequently, shortlisted candidates must attend at least 80 % of these masterclasses to ensure they receive the necessary support and feedback before submitting their final draft manuscript.
- Candidates should be willing to travel to participate physically at the conference.
- All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer-review process coordinated by the Scientific Committee.

Important dates and deadlines

Deadline for submission of abstracts:

16 September 2024, 23:00 SAST

Notification of accepted abstracts:

27 September 2024

Submission of full draft manuscripts:

20 December 2024

Masterclasses attendance:

Dates to be confirmed

Conference dates:

March 2025

Please submit your abstracts to: https://hsrc.ac.za/aisa_aygs_2025_rsvp.php

For any further information or clarity regarding submissions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Rodney Managa at RManaga@hsrc.ac.za or +27 12 316 9717.

For more information and updates on the AYGS conference, please visit <https://aygs.hsrc.ac.za/>