



MTAWA

Mentoring Network for African Women in Academia



Mentoring African
Women in the
Diaspora and on the
Continent

**2022
MTAWA
Meeting**
July 9, 2022

Event Schedule

11:00 am – 11:15 am: Mentees Café

Dr. Mercy Okezue

11:15 am – 11:25 am: Introductions & Opening Remarks

Prof. Margaret Gitau

11:25 am – 11:45 am: Invited Speaker

Speaker: Dr. Phyllis Kalele

Science and Technology Specialist, U.S. Government

11:45 am – 12:15 pm: Breakout Sessions I

(I-A): Building Resilience and Coping with the Unexpected

Dr. Senorpe Hiablie

(I-B): Preparing for the Future of Work

Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo

12:15 pm – 12:20 pm: Bio-Break

12:20 pm – 12:50 pm: Breakout Sessions II

(II-A): “Do I Stay or Do I Go?” Deciding whether or not to stay abroad

Dr. Tabitha Mwangi

(II-B): Building Meaningful Collaborations with Partners on the African Continent

Dr. Jacqueline Kariithi

12:50 pm – 1:00 pm: Open Discussion

Dr. Christine Adhiambo

1:00 pm – 1:05 pm: Closing Remarks

Prof. Clare Muhoro

1:05 pm – 1:10 pm: Bio-Break

1:10 pm – 2:00 pm: General Business Meeting

Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo

Meet the Event Team



Cecilia Wangari
KU Leuven, Belgium



Wairimu Nzoka
E3 Capital, Kenya



Amina Naliaka
Southern Illinois
University, U.S.



Mercy Okezue
Purdue University,
U.S.



Abigail Ekeigwe
Purdue University,
U.S.



Pauline Welikhe
Phospholutions, Inc,
U.S.



Clare Muhoro
Towson University,
U.S.



Margaret Gitau
Purdue University,
U.S.



Christine Adhiambo
University of
Nairobi, Kenya



Event

Key Take Aways



On Building Resilience:

Many of us encounter challenging situations at some point(s) in our lives. The situation maybe a financial crisis, family emergencies, personal trauma, or professional hardship. We can we equip ourselves to safely navigate life's rough waters.



On the Future of Work:

Prepare and engage in analytical and innovative thinking. Improve knowledge and use of technological resources and relevant skills by upskilling and reskilling. Improve self-management and self-motivation.



On Staying Abroad or Not:

Staying abroad does not mean that you cannot give back to the continent. Think about the meaningful contributions and collaborations that can be made whether or not one is physically present on the continent.



On Building Partnerships:

There is competitive advantage in having partners on the continent. Find ways to leverage the diverse professional backgrounds of former classmates and colleagues. Think about priorities and what is important to you.

Invited speaker

Dr. Phyllis Kalele
Science and Technology Specialist,
U.S. Government

Dr. Phyllis Kalele is a research and programme management professional, currently working with the United States Government as a science and technology specialist. Previously, she was the head of the African Collaboration sub-programme at the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) where she directed strategic projects in Africa with the aim of strengthening science diplomacy and promoting the use of evidence-based science in policy making. Dr. Kalele was also the Africa regional coordinator for Gender in Science Innovation Technology and Engineering (GenderInSITE), where she led initiatives to enhance the participation of women in SITE and promote the consideration of gender in SITE. She holds a BSc. degree in Botany and Zoology, a MSc. degree in Environmental Sciences and a Ph.D. in Science and Technology Studies.



Relationships exist between receiving mentoring in:

- fundraising and receipt of research funding
- introduction to research networks and research output
- the form of introduction to research networks, and frequency of intra-institutional and national collaboration

Breakout Session (I-A): Building Resilience and Coping with the Unexpected

Facilitator: Dr. Senorpe Hiablie, Shell International Exploration and Production, Inc
Rapporteur: Gugulethu Khumalo, Griffith University Australia

In life, unexpected changes, transitions, adversity, trauma, failure, or other pressures may happen. Many of us encounter challenging situations at some point(s) in our lives. The situation maybe a financial crisis, family emergencies, personal trauma, or professional hardship. What if we can we equip ourselves to safely navigate life's rough waters? Simply defined, Resilience is the ability to bounce back from a challenging position. It is the "capacity to rebound, to "bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility"[1]; or, "a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event"[2] . In this breakout session, participants discussed ways to build resilience with resources from The American Psychological Association and examples from women including Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Maya Angelou, and Sheryl Sandberg. Five tools to help move forward:



Build connections



Look for opportunities for self-discovery



Nurture a positive and healthy view of yourself



Move towards your goals



Know when to seek help

Breakout Session (I-B): Preparing for the Future of Work

Facilitator: Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo, U.S. Centers for Disease Control
Rapporteur: Nancin Dadem, Ohio University

Future projections for 2027 indicate a greater freelance workforce [3]. This major shift comes with challenges. Employees will see: intrusion of privacy/micromanagement resulting from greater digital monitoring of work; greater self-management needed to deliver on assignments; erosion of work-life balance as a result of the difficulty in separating life and work time/space; more sedentary lifestyle resulting from the use of same space/prolonged computer screen time, etc. Employers will need to: recruit persons with critical skills and competencies; cultivate and inspire company culture amongst employees; establish and maintain trust between employees and employers; conduct performance management, like on time spent completing a task, etc.

1

Prepare and Engage

in analytical and innovative thinking. Improve knowledge and use of technological resources and relevant skills by upskilling and reskilling. Add new skills, increase knowledge, and repackage yourself.

2

Take Care of Yourself

engage in yoga, take walks, etc. to bridge the shortfall from less physical mobility and maintain health. As a result of Covid-19 and working remotely, some organizations currently engage employees in online physical activity sessions.

3

Improve self-management, self-motivation

more health and wellness jobs could emerge in the future as a result of the need to keep the workforce physically fit and cater for a larger aging population.

There is no true and tested model for future work. We will have to keep learning from our experiences on the go.

Breakout Session (II-A): “Do I Stay or Do I Go?” Deciding whether or not to stay abroad

Facilitator: Dr. Tabitha Mwangi, University of Cambridge

Rapporteur: Nancin Dadem, Ohio University

Many students who seek higher degrees from institutions abroad stay and settle in the countries in which they studied. Many return to their home country, while others choose to settle elsewhere in the world. In most cases, this is a major life decision.



Am I contributing to brain drain by staying to work abroad ?

Staying abroad does not mean that you cannot give back to the continent. Think about the meaningful contributions and collaborations that can be made whether being continuously physically present or not on the continent.



Do you have a goal of returning to work on the continent in the future?

Think about your personal situation and factors: family dynamics, sense of belonging, safety and security, job opportunities, funding opportunities, etc.

- Have your children adapted abroad and remaining would be in their best interest? Are you a critical care-giver of aged parents back in Africa? If partnered/married, has your spouse gotten a job that moving would be disadvantageous to them?
- What is the current safety and security situation where you want to go?
- What job opportunities in your specific career field are out there for you and where? Corporate or academia? Decide based on your response.
- Funding for research, lab work, innovation, and intervention is difficult. Are you able to access research funds and the likes when you go back? Make collaborations with professionals and institutions back home: teach virtually in globalized classrooms, and visit from time to time to share knowledge and work on projects.



How do you know that you got your decision right?

- Are you stagnating or growing?
- Are you perpetually engaged in post-docs or are you advancing in your career?
- What is your measure of success?
- Do you have access to equipped labs?
- Are you being able to deploy the skills that you acquired to your work?
- etc.?

How can you make your choice work?

- Be intentional. Know what you want next and begin to set it in motion.
- Envision your career and progression, then identify the organizations that fit. What does it require to get jobs in your organizations of interest especially for mentees?
- If you go back, listen to local knowledge and make suggestions that are possible.
- Connect and build networks at in-person conferences and professional meetings, and online like on LinkedIn. Look for mentors and peer mentors to guide you.
- Search for job opportunities early.

Breakout Session II-B: Building Meaningful Connections on the African Continent

Facilitator: Dr. Jacqueline Kariithi El-Koony Center, Kenya

Rapporteur: Caroline Marete Purdue University

There is competitive advantage in having partners on the continent, making building partnerships a strategic move. Participants had opportunities to share ideas and ask questions on topics related to developing meaningful partnerships in academia and industry in Africa.

01 Think about your goal(s)

What areas are important and immediate to you? As a mentee know where you want to be in 5/10/15 years: What is the process of getting to your goals? A mentor may be able to help in goal setting and planning for the future. Think about what you are passionate about. However, be realistic and consider personal obligations that may help to guide your path. For instance, think about financial sustainability and how to manage finances while pursuing your career goals.

02 Maintain connections

And build new relations. Think about how you can reconnect with high school and college classmates, and former colleagues. Find ways to leverage on the diverse professional backgrounds of former classmates and colleagues. Engagement will help you to stay updated on developments in your field and other disciplines. Look for opportunities for collaboration.

03 Build an online presence

Show case your work. Think of useful professional networking resources such as LinkedIn. Such online presence should be approached with caution because not everyone is comfortable with social networking.

04 Prioritize

On work-life balance, think about priorities and what is important to you. Build a support system – partners, family etc. Ask for help when needed.

Special Thanks

Invited Speaker

Dr. Phyllis Kalele

Science and Technology Specialist, U.S. Government

Facilitators & Rapporteurs

Senorpe Hiablie (Shell International Exploration and Production, Inc, U.S.)

Margaret Okomo - Adhiambo (United States Centers for Disease Control, U.S.)

Tabitha Mwangi (University of Cambridge, U.K.)

Jacqueline Kariithi (El-Koony Center, Kenya)




Gugulethu Khumalo (Griffith University, Australia)

Nancin Dadem (Ohio University, U.S.)

Caroline Marete (Purdue University, U.S.)

Cecilia Wangari ((KU Leuven & Africa Museum, Belgium)

Abigail Ekeigwe (Purdue University, U.S.)

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