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Executive Head

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The Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) is part of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). It produces and disseminates knowledge that contributes to policy options and programmes on poverty alleviation, solutions to reduce inequality, and innovations for employment creation. More than just a research generator, the HSRC's divisions and centres work towards research use for policy and impact. Collaborations and partnerships are mission critical and include local, regional and international public, private and community entities.

Founded in 1960 and incorporated into the HSRC in 2014, AISA takes its lead from Agenda 2063 as well as South Africa's National Development Plan: Vision 2030, the Department of Science and Innovation's Strategy for Africa, and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation's African Foreign Policy objectives.

Our work

AISA undertakes basic and applied policy-relevant research that focuses on the development challenges and opportunities facing the African continent. It seeks to provide leadership and harness African agency in the drive for the transformation of African societies into dynamic, peaceful, prosperous spaces.

The institute:

- Is a hub for Africa-centred knowledge production and dissemination, policy engagement, and implementation support;
- Provides thought leadership on key questions facing the continent and is a catalyst for transformation;
- Drives the intellectual project for a 'Better Africa';
- Collaborates with and convenes African scholars, practitioners, policymakers and civil society, amplifying African voices, and leveraging existing capacities to improve knowledge, policy and practice; and
- Builds capacity and trains young scholars, future leaders and women in Africa.

AGENDA 2063 is Africa's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development. It is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

The AISA team must have a handle on a broad range of issues – from regional integration to peace and security, and science and technology as well as cultural issues.

Research focus areas

Alleviating poverty and inequality	Conducting studies and interventions that address poverty and inequality in Africa. Assessing the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.
International and regional architectures	Considering the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN) peace and security architectures, among others, are on the agenda.
African international relations	Analysing South Africa's engagement with other African countries and Africa's engagement with the international community.
Gender relations in Africa	Topics on the research agenda include women, peace and security, and women in science and technology; the latter with the aim to start a hub for knowledge generation.
Culture and development	Looking at how culture can be used in a post-conflict context. This includes looking at how historical artefacts and sites could be used in the post-conflict phase to develop a culture economy.

Project snapshots

- Projects are diverse and include knowledge production on the above focus areas, creating platforms for dialogue, disseminating research, and building capacity through interventions such as the African Unity for Renaissance Conference, the African Young Graduates Conference, the Archie Mafeje Memorial Annual Lecture; Diplomatic Conversations, and many other seminars and workshops. Engaging with key stakeholders include the African Union, the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Southern African Development Community, the Department of Science and Innovation, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), the international community, universities, science councils and research organisations and civil society.
- AISA is working on a baseline study for food and nutrition security in South Africa for the DALRRD. This will provide much needed data on levels and places of food insecurity that can inform future policy and planning.
- AISA produces relevant analysis for regional integration in Africa – with a focus on implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. The African Union and South Africa have prioritised regional integration as a means for growing intra-African trade and Africa's economies. Many barriers exist to successfully implement the agreement. AISA focuses on the opportunities and challenges for implementing this agreement and provides policy advice for improving effective realisation of the goal. It also looks at the agricultural sector in southern Africa and what kind of trade could be forthcoming in terms of this agreement.
- AISA produces research and policy advice on 'Silencing of the Guns in Africa'. It held engagements on violent extremism in southern Africa, conflict in the Tigray region and reflected on 20 years of implementing the women, peace and security agenda.
- AISA is engaged with research and knowledge dissemination on vaccines and pharmaceutical innovations to fight COVID-19, including a focus on traditional medicine.
- AISA produced reports on Science Diplomacy in Africa (after engagements with six African countries) and on alcohol abuse in Mpumalanga. The Executive Head was part of a Ministerial Task Team looking at Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in the Department of Defence and the lead drafter of the recently adopted South African National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. AISA also interviewed a number of women peacekeepers in southern Africa with the aim of profiling women peacekeepers as part of the celebration of 20 years of implementing the women, peace and security agenda.
- AISA conducts research into culture and development, particularly how culture can be a lever to consolidate development. Research also looks into principles, policies and practices of heritage resources management.

● *AISA is there to provide innovative ideas and solutions for Africa's biggest challenges.*
● ~ Prof. Cheryl Hendricks, Executive Head