



African Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN) newsletter, no. 33, April 2026

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If anyone has any **information that they would like included in the next newsletter** (to be circulated the week of 4 May 2026) please email ajrn-network@warwick.ac.uk. Similarly, if you have suggestions of people who we should contact about joining the network or would like to unsubscribe from the newsletter please email ajrn-network@warwick.ac.uk.

Workshops & conferences:

Transformative Equality Jurisprudence in Africa Conference, Nairobi, 30-31 March 2026

Together with the International Commission of Jurists, University of Nairobi, and South African Research Chair in Equality, Law and Social Justice, the AJRN organised a two-day convening in Nairobi on Transformative Equality Jurisprudence that brought together judges, civil society, and academics from numerous African countries including Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda. It was a packed but fruitful two days and the AJRN is looking forward to the continuing conversations and actions. <https://www.icj.org/icj-hosts-an-african-regional-convening-in-kenya-on-transformative-equality-jurisprudence/>. The event was supported by funding from the British Institute in Eastern Africa, ICJ, South African Research Chair in Equality, Law and Social Justice, and University of Warwick.



Third Sino-African Legal Forum, “Governing the Digital Future: State Power, Data Flows, and Rights Protection”, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria, 30-31 July 2026, Call for Papers

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the most significant forces reshaping governance, economic development, and social relations worldwide. Advances in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital platforms, and data-driven systems increasingly influence how states function, how economies integrate, and how rights are understood and protected. Both African and Asian countries are navigating complex opportunities and challenges as they adapt their regulatory frameworks to keep pace with rapid technological change.

While digital technologies offer enormous potential for innovation, efficiency, and socio-economic development, they also raise profound questions about the distribution of

regulatory authority, the governance of cross-border data, and the mechanisms required to safeguard individual and collective rights. Many of these questions cannot be resolved by national actors alone; they require comparative reflection, shared learning, and cooperation across jurisdictions with diverse legal traditions and institutional capacities.

Against this backdrop, the Third Sino-African Legal Forum will bring together scholars, regulators, policymakers, and practitioners to examine the evolving intersections between state power, data governance, and rights protection in the digital age. The Forum aims to provide a platform for constructive dialogue and collaborative research between African and Chinese institutions on emerging legal frameworks, regulatory innovations, and shared challenges in governing digital transformation. For further details on the forum including the sub-themes and registration costs see <https://www.chr.up.ac.za/latest-news/4257-call-for-papers-third-sino-african-legal-forum-governing-the-digital-future-state-power-data-flows-and-rights-protection>. The deadline for submitting abstracts is **30 April 2026**. The abstracts should be no less than 600 words and be submitted to abdulrauf.la@unilorin.edu.ng, weifeng@ecupl.edu.cn and rammid@unisa.ac.za but copy cheng.mai@ecupl.edu.cn and Charles.fombad@up.ac.za.

Bergen Exchanges on Law & Social Transformation, Bergen, 17-21 August 2026

Join scholars, activists, legal professionals, and artists from around the world for the 2026 Bergen Exchanges on Law & Social Transformation, a five-day international conference exploring the intersections of law, power, and resistance. Hosted across Bergen's vibrant cultural venues, the Exchanges feature cutting-edge debates, keynotes, roundtables, exhibitions and social gatherings. For further details see <https://www.lawtransform.no/news/bergen-exchanges-2025-program/>.

African judiciaries stream, African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) conference, Durham, 10-12 September 2026

The AJRN is organising a stream of panels on African judiciaries at the ASAUK biannual conference on 10-12 September 2026. If you would like to submit an abstract or panel, please go to the submission portal and select the "African judiciaries" stream.

<https://pay.durham.ac.uk/event-durham/abstract/eyJpdil6lkxESklOU01UWFpDQzJsa3U4UWQ5UWc9PSIsInZhbHVlIjojWjJhNTRpLzQrM014Tzd6MytaOTROQT09IiwibWFjIjojNWQxNjA1MGM2MTNiYTU1NmUyZTcwM2U2ZWwWVjg4NzJkOTkzNjA2NDRmYjZkNzU4ZGY1YjE5Mjc1M2E0NWVhNCIsInRhZyI6IjI9>. The deadline for individual paper and panel submissions is **30 April 2026**.

Stream abstract: African politics and societies are becoming increasingly judicialized. How judicial actors deal with cases and litigants, whether they act independently and impartially, why different stakeholders bring cases, how they argue them and how they respond to controversial rulings, and whether justice is seen to be done, will help to determine the future of African judiciaries, democracy, and stability. Despite their importance, African judiciaries remain relatively understudied. This stream welcomes papers on any aspect of African judiciaries. This includes the history of courts, judicial reforms and current practices; how judges behave both in and out of courts and explanations of their decision making; the

ways in which different actors – from governments to lawyers and litigants – engage with, use and respond to the courts; the relationship between different legal systems; and public opinion. The stream is organised by the African Judiciaries Research Network in collaboration with the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

Grant opportunities:

British Institute in Eastern Africa Grant Opportunities 2026-2027

The BIEA annual grant programme 2026-2027 is now open for applications! The BIEA has opportunities for Writing Fellowships, Thematic Grants, Dissemination Grants, Workshop Grants, Impact Grants, and a Graduate Attachment Scheme. Find the grant that best fits your project (you should only apply for one grant in this annual call), then download an information/application form [here](#). Please note that the BIEA understands Eastern Africa as including the eighteen countries that span from Sudan to Mozambique. Applications should be submitted by **Friday 1 May 2026 at 5pm (BST) and 7pm (EAT) by email to grants@biea.ac.uk**.

Postdoctoral Writing Fellowships

This three-month fellowship supports recent postdoctoral scholars to produce publication-ready research articles within the humanities and social sciences, focused on Eastern Africa. Articles should be based on PhD research completed within the last two years, at the time of application, and prepared for submission to either *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* or the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. Fellows will work independently to complete the article by the end of the fellowship agreement and may be based at home, their own institution, or use BIEA library in Nairobi. The fellowship provides a stipend of £1,200 per month for three months, at the end of which the article must be submitted to the relevant journal.

Applicants must confirm that they will not undertake more than 15 hours per week of other employment during the period covered by the writing grant. Fellowships can be commenced at a convenient time for the successful applicants, providing that the contract is completed by 31 January 2027. BIEA does not provide production, proofreading or language checking support; these will remain the responsibility of the authors. In addition to the article, fellows must supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in the publication. They must also be prepared to give a public presentation at the BIEA (either in person, or online), upon request, at a mutually convenient time. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

Thematic Grants

This grant supports original research projects in or about Eastern Africa from any discipline in the humanities and social sciences. Applications are welcome from postgraduate students; researchers who have not followed conventional academic careers, but whose local knowledge or contacts enable them to conduct high quality research; and collaborative projects involving established scholars, where resources are ring-fenced for early career or Africa-based project partners. The grants may be used to catalyse new research agendas, provide seed funding for small projects that lay the groundwork for larger projects, or build

on existing research. Priority is given to researchers based in the UK or Eastern Africa (defined broadly), and to excellent proposals from researchers or research teams who have limited access to other sources of funds. All funds must be used directly to support research. Research projects must engage with one or more of the BIEA research themes Africa in the World; Retelling the Past; Changing Environments; Urban Lives; Technologies of Knowledge; Next Generations (further information on these themes is available [here](#)). Grants are normally between £500 and £1,000, but up to £1,500 may be awarded.

Successful applicants will be expected to complete the research by 31 January 2027. They must supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in any outputs. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

Dissemination Grants

This grant offers postdoctoral researchers in the humanities and social sciences an opportunity to 'bring research home' to any research site in Eastern Africa. It supports scholars to return to the location of their PhD research up to three years after the successful completion of their doctorate. The aim is to enable postdoctoral scholars to share their findings with research participants and stakeholders, while exploring potential future research, collaboration, policy engagement or practice-based agendas. The maximum grant available is £3,000 per scholar. Successful applicants will be expected to complete the dissemination by 31 January 2027. They must supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in any outputs. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

Workshop Grants

This grant supports international research workshops for humanities or social sciences scholars working in or on Eastern Africa. All workshops should include academics from both Africa and the UK, coming together for a minimum of one day. Workshop grants can be used to facilitate participation either by covering the cost of travel for participants or contributing towards event space hire costs. Suitable outputs include a funding application for collaborative research, a collaborative publication, a journal special issue or similar. The maximum amount available is £2000, with up to £4,000 per workshop available in exceptional circumstances, requiring specific justification. Applicants may either hold the event at the BIEA in Nairobi or make appropriate alternative arrangements. The workshop must be completed by 31 January 2027. They must supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in any outputs. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

Impact Grants

Impact grants support scholars at any stage of their postdoctoral career to translate academic research findings into policies or practices that benefit people and places in Eastern Africa. Applicants should submit a proposal rooted in previous or ongoing research in the humanities and social sciences and clearly designed to achieve impact – creating positive change in society, culture, the environment, or the economy. Standard grants are available up to £2000; if an exceptionally strong case is made, we may award up to £4000.

Proposals must demonstrate:

- Viable collaboration with partners in the Eastern African beyond academia, for instance with policymakers, civil society organisations, activists, artists, museums, cultural institutions or enterprises.
- Clear pathways to impact and methods for evaluating outcomes.
- Alignment with the BIEA mission and research themes.
- Contributions to global or regional policy agendas to promote sustainable development, peacebuilding, human rights, justice, cultural heritage or historical understanding.

Successful applicants will be expected to complete the impact activity by 31 January 2027. They must supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in any outputs. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

The BIEA Graduate Attachment Scheme (GAS)

Graduate attachments offer recent graduates with an interest in further studies in any discipline in the humanities and social sciences in Africa, the opportunity to gain practical research experience and develop their networks in a three-month enrolment at the BIEA in Nairobi, Kenya. BIEA graduate attachés will: Develop their research interests in the region using our well-stocked library to work on a literature review; Gain practical experience of conducting research in Eastern Africa, including using archives, visiting potential research sites, and working as a research assistant for innovative historical, archaeological, anthropological, political science or legal projects Establish international networks with early career and established researchers; Gain administrative skills and experience by assisting the BIEA in the organisation of events and in the day-to-day activities of the institute; and Enrol for beginner, intermediate or advanced Kiswahili classes (if needed).

The BIEA will cover the cost of travel to and from Nairobi, and a visa if required for the period of the attachment. Graduate attachés will also receive a monthly stipend for the duration of their attachment, and the BIEA will assist in identifying suitable accommodation if needed. The GAS scheme will run in two cohorts: July – September and September – November 2026. Applicants should indicate their preferred cohort although this cannot be guaranteed. Successful applicants will be expected to supply a blog/ short report for BIEA's Annual Review (with photo); make a post on LinkedIn; and acknowledge BIEA support in any outputs. To download the form go to: <https://biea.ac.uk/forms/>. Apply by 5pm BST / 7pm EAT, Friday 1 May 2026.

PhD success

Congratulations to Dr Christine Olando for successfully passing her PhD viva at the University of Warwick Law School for her dissertation on "The Right to Higher Education and Certification: A Case Study of the Provision of Higher Education in Kenya in the Law Discipline".

Publications

The African Journal of Judicial Science, Call for Papers, Inaugural issue to be published in September 2026.

1. About the African Journal of Judicial Science

The African Journal of Judicial Science (AJJS) is a premier, peer-reviewed, multi-lingual, open-access journal dedicated to advancing scholarship and policy dialogue on African judiciaries. The journal focuses on studying the totality of African judiciaries, by examining their emerging jurisprudence on the one hand, and judicial systems, reforms and practices, on the other. The journal seeks to promote interdisciplinary research, and provide actionable insights into judicial administration and access to justice.

African judiciaries and judicial systems of governance are increasingly playing a pivotal role in Africa's governance processes. They continue to navigate various challenges, including old and emerging issues that impact on judicial governance and access to justice. However, the current level of scholarly inquiry on the state of African judiciaries does not generally reflect this new reality.

AJJS seeks to provide an African platform for judges, judicial officers, judiciary staff, scholars, jurists, practitioners, policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders in Africa's justice systems to explore topical issues regarding judicial systems and administration of justice. AJJS will be managed and published by the Kenya Judiciary Academy.

The AJJS welcomes submissions from authors for its inaugural issue, which will be published in September 2026.

2. Submissions to the journal

AJJS welcomes submissions on the general area of African judicial systems, practice, and any themes and topics related to the judiciary in Africa. Submissions to the journal may be on any of the following areas:

- Studies and themes in 'judge-craft' and court practice
- Judicial institutional reforms and innovations. This may include: Technological advancements in judicial processes, such as: e-filing, virtual courts, case tracking systems, court transcription systems; Judiciary Enterprise Resource Planning systems; Institutional capacity building; and; Structural reforms.
- Emerging issues in technology and justice. This may include: human rights in the digital space; artificial intelligence and justice processes; digital privacy and protection; use of digital evidence in court adjudication; equity and inclusiveness in technological solutions to administration of budgets; institutional assessments of judicial transformation and technological uptake; and the emerging impact of technologies in access to and administration of justice, among other related topics.
- Judicial responses to human rights, democratic consolidation, and social justice, and other human rights related issues, such as gender equality, socio-economic justice.
- Judicial independence and accountability, which may include: institutional independence and the accountability of judiciaries; individual accountability, disciplinary processes and ethics of judicial officers; and any other emerging issues.
- Formal and informal justice systems, including indigenous and alternative systems of justice

- Court and registry administration and management processes
- Assessing judiciary performance and outputs, measuring the performance of judges/judicial officers as well as administrative offices of African judiciaries.
- Comparative judicial studies, which may include transnational and regional judicial issues, such as, regional courts and African judicial processes, international justice systems, and cross-country analyses
- Decolonization of judicial systems and promoting of Afrocentric judicial frameworks and approaches
- Applied research and institutional collaboration in practical-oriented judicial governance themes
- The state, standards, style of judicial practice of the Bar: perspectives from the Bench
- The state, standards, style of Bench practice: perspectives from the Bar
- Any other relevant topics or issues that fall within the general scope of judicial systems and practice, jurisprudence, and judicial governance in Africa

3. Instructions to authors and contributors:

All submissions to the journal must be original and should not be pending or undergoing consideration elsewhere for publication elsewhere.

Any relevant information regarding the submitted work (including research funding, institutional affiliation or other relevant information) must be disclosed during submission/review stage of the paper.

The African Journal of Judicial Studies is a multi-lingual journal that is published in three languages (English, French, and Portuguese) and contributions are welcome in the three languages.

AJJS accepts manuscripts that range between 8 000 and 10 000 words for articles.

Contributors are required to include a 300 word abstract that provides a summary of the article, including the contribution of the article to knowledge and practice, and findings.

Manuscript should be submitted together with the abstract by e-mail to ajjs@kja.go.ke. The Journal does not charge any fees and the published journal is freely accessible to readers.

All articles will be taken through the following steps immediately after submission:

- Checking for plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated content, using appropriate software and a thorough review of the submissions.
- Initial check of content for relevance to the journal, quality of content and editorial compliance. Authors will be informed at this stage if the article will proceed to full review.
- Each article submitted to the journal will be subjected to a double-blind review process by at least two subject matter experts.
- Contributors will revise the articles based on the comments from the peer review process as well as the comments by the editor-in-chief and the AJJS editorial team.
- The contributor will be informed whether the paper has been accepted for publication, based on the comments from the peer reviewers and the editor-in-chief. Where an article is rejected, the contributor can revise the article to address the issues raised and re-submit in the same manner.
- The Journal reserves the right to edit the content and structure of articles submitted to align the same to the journal's style guide and editorial policy.

4. Contributions

- Original peer reviewed articles 8,000 – 10,000 words
- Case notes (analyses of landmark judicial decisions) 2,000 – 3,000 words
- Policy briefs (actionable policy recommendations targeting judiciary policy makers and practitioners in the region) 2,500 – 3,500 words
- Book reviews (reviews of recent publications in judicial studies) 1500 - 2,000 words
- Commentaries (reflections on judicial conferences, reforms, and relevant emerging/topical issues to the theme of judicial governance theme) 2,000 – 3,000 words
- Forum section (invited essays, debate, and replies on contentious issues in judicial studies) 3,000 -6,000 words

Guidelines for submissions. Initial submissions to the AJJS will adhere to the Oxford Standard of Citation for Legal Authorities (OSCO-LA) accessible here

https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/oscola_4th_edn_hart_2012.pdf

Date of submission. All articles and submissions for the inaugural issue should be sent to ajjs@kja.go.ke by 30 April 2026.

Recent publications by AJRN members

Trésor Muhindo Makunya (2026) *Between legal tradition and transformation: Constitutional interpretation of fundamental rights by the Constitutional Courts of Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa*. Pretoria University Law Press. Available open access here <https://www.pulp.up.ac.za/monographs/between-legal-tradition-and-transformation-constitutional-interpretation-of-fundamental-rights-by-the-constitutional-courts-of-benin-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-and-south-africa>

Christine Olando (12 March 2026) *Breaking the hierarchy: Tackling power dynamics in Kenya's law schools*. <https://lacuna.org.uk/justice/kenyas-law-schools/>.

Network information:

AJRN member profile of the month



Nebert Chirwa is a Lecturer in Private Law at the University of Malawi. His teaching and research span legal theory, property law, equity and trusts, and customary law. His scholarship focuses on the role of law in structuring social and economic relations, with particular attention to property rights, informality, and law and development. He is particularly interested in how African courts engage questions of land, resource governance, and distributive justice within conditions of institutional constraint.

Nebert has presented his work at several regional and international forums, including the AJRN Conference on Equality Jurisprudence in Africa, AJRN/SAIPAR Conference on Judiciary and Democracy in Africa, and the Manenga Ndulo Conference on Economic Development in Africa. He is an alumnus of the IGLP Harvard Global Scholars Academy. His recent work examines constitutional interpretation in Malawi, the formal–informal divide in property law, and housing informality as a response to urban pressure.

He holds an LLB (Hons) from the University of Malawi and a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Political Leadership from the Catholic University of Malawi. He previously worked as a research consultant in the development of the Africa Governance Report 2025 for the African Union Peer Review Mechanism, in legal practice and research, including environmental law advisory and litigation, and has served as a Judicial Research Officer at the High Court of Malawi.

Beyond academia, Nebert works in advocacy on social protection, climate justice, and public health. His current research explores the intersection of property law and informality, and the role of legal institutions in advancing equitable development outcomes in Malawi and across Africa.

AJRN webpage

The list of members is now included on the AJRN website (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/ajrn>). **If you want to be included in the list of network members on the website, then please send a photograph and a bio in the standard format** with details of positions and institutional/organisational affiliation, up to 5 keywords on relevant research interests, and contact email/social media handle to ajrn-network@warwick.ac.uk.