

Implementing Citizen Science and participatory research to empower communities in responsive science for social cohesion

Conventional biomedical or social science research often does not consider absolute empowerment of communities and citizens, particularly those considered as unqualified in science, in the conception, planning, implementation and evaluation of research and intervention endeavours. This has challenging implications, and hinders co-learning, co-designing, co-creation of solutions, cultural acceptability, ownership of research, and sustainment of interventions. Planned engagement of citizens in research enhances the commissioning of responsive science – where inputs from all local beneficiaries (who might not be learned in scientific procedures) are regarded and nurtured. Citizen Science, with inclusive approaches like Participatory Action Research (PAR), offers methods to increase the participation and capacity development of citizens in science. Community members are trained as ‘Citizen Scientists’ to learn about a specific social or health challenge in their communities; develop data collection tools; collect, analyse and interpret data; and advocate for change. Citizen Science and PAR have the potential to improve scientific knowledge by adding lay, local, and traditional knowledge to more typical quantitative scientific methods. Also, they can empower citizens to take social action to improve community health and support social cohesion. In this seminar, we will describe the processes and experiences in implementing community-driven participatory research, using Citizen Science, to explore cardiovascular disease risk perceptions and develop advocacy and prevention strategies. This project has enhanced participation in science and impacted on social cohesion within communities in sub-Saharan Africa.



Guest presenter:
Dr Kufre Okop

Dr Kufre J. Okop is a postdoctoral research fellow with Accelerate Hub at CSSR. He is a public health and social science researcher with expertise in participatory research and intervention evaluation. He is actively involved in collaborative research projects, and community engagement and advocacy, focusing on non-communicable disease (NCDs) prevention in low-income settings. His main research focus is in social and behavioural science. He has managed Citizen Science projects on NCDs prevention that have impacted directly on social cohesion in African communities.

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Location: Zoom, register [here](#)

HOSTED BY: The UKRI GCRF Accelerating Achievement for Africa’s Adolescents (Accelerate) Hub is a research unit based at the CSSR at the University of Cape Town, and Oxford University. The CSSR is an interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to conducting and building capacity for systematic, policy-relevant social science research in South Africa, the region and across Africa.

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