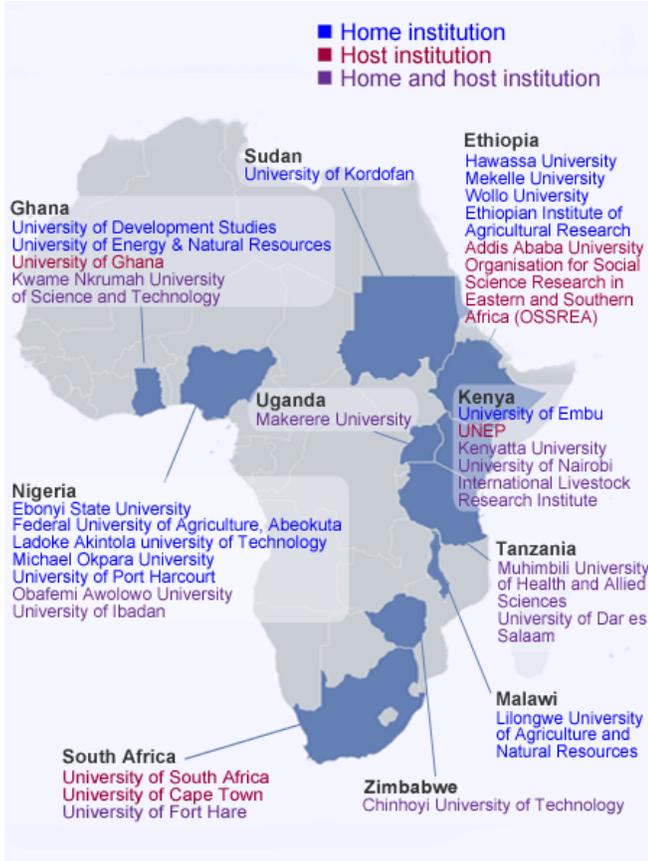




# UCT AND CIRCLE FELLOWSHIP REPORT (2015 – 2017)

## DETAILING THE COLLECTIVE LEARNING JOURNEY OF CIRCLE VISITING FELLOWS (CVFs) AT UCT FROM 2015 – 2017

The African Climate and Development Initiative ([ACDI](#)) has coordinated the involvement of the University of Cape Town (UCT) as a Host University in the **Climate Impact Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa programme** ([CIRCLE](#)). The CIRCLE programme provides support for Visiting Fellows (**junior academic staff**) from African universities to come to UCT for one year only, to undertake a research project related to climate change. Once they are back in their home institutions, the research project will continue via collaboration. The programme runs from 2014 to 2018, with fellows visiting UCT in 2015, 2016, and 2017. This document seeks to report on the fellows’ experiences.



### Background:

The Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa ([CIRCLE](#)) programme was an initiative of the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) to develop the skills and research output of early career African researchers in the field of climate change and its local impacts on development. The programme also worked with institutions to develop a coordinated and strategic approach to supporting early career researchers. CIRCLE was allocated GBP 4.85 million over 5 years (2014–2018), and was managed by the ACU and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS).

## CIRCLE Programme key elements:

- **100 CIRCLE Visiting fellowships (CVFs)** were funded over three years: **40 post-Masters** and **60 post-Doctoral CVFs**
- Prospective fellows were nominated **from and hosted by selected African universities** and research institutions (see image)
- The CVFs were **tenable for one year**
- The CVFs specifically targeted **early career researchers**
- The programme will provide support and training to develop the **institutional research capacity** of participating institutions, especially in relation to their early career researchers

The University of Cape Town hosted nine CVFs from various African institutions from 2015 – 2017. Below is a list of all the fellows, past and present:

## CIRCLE Visiting Fellows and UCT Supervisors

<b>Student, Year and Home University</b>	<b>Host Supervisor and Department</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Justin Nyaga</b> (2015) Embu University College (EUC)	Prof Michael Cramer Department of Biological Sciences	“Role of transpiration-driven mass-flow on growth and nutrient delivery to roots of C <sub>3</sub> and C <sub>4</sub> crops, and consequences of changing atmospheric CO <sub>2</sub> concentration”
<b>Amon Taruvinga</b> (2015) University of Fort Hare	Prof Martine Visser School of Economics	“Research on Small Scale Farmers and Climate Change in the Eastern Cape”
<b>Miss Kidist Abera</b> (2015) Ethiopian Institutes of Agricultural Research (EIAR)	Dr Olivier Crespo Climate System Analysis Group	“Ethiopian maize production under projected future climate”
<b>Olushola Fadairo</b> (2016) University of Ibadan (UI)	Prof Janice Olowoye Department of Public Law.	“Broaching research on corruption in ecological fund management for climate change mitigation”.
<b>Faridah Nalwanga</b> (2016) Makerere University (MU)	Prof Merle Sowman Department of Environmental and Geographical Science	“Environmental change and emergent livelihood outcomes in natural resource dependent communities in Queen Elizabeth National Park”
<b>Portia A. Williams</b> (2016) Science and Technology Policy Research Institute of the CSIR (STEPRI-CSIR)	Dr Olivier Crespo Climate System Analysis Group	“Assessing the impact of climate change on agricultural production: the case of pineapple production in Ghana”
<b>Esther Mvungi</b> (2017) University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)	Dr. Deena Pillay Department of Biological Science	“Investigation of the effects of ocean acidification on productivity and biochemical characteristics of tropical seagrasses”.

**Ayinde Adefunke Fadilat Olawunmi** (2017)  
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB)

Dr. Peter Johnston  
Department of Environmental and Geological Science

“Adaptation of Arable Crop Farmers to Climate Change/Variability in Derived Savannah Ecosystems”

**Nana Ewusi – Mensah** (2017)  
Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)

Dr. Samson Chimpango  
Department of Biological Science

“Exploiting biochar and rhizobial inoculants as climate – smart agricultural options in enhancing soybean productivity in smallholder farms in Ghana”



*2016 CIRCLE Fellows: P Williams, F Nalwanga and O Fadairo at induction meeting in Nairobi. Photo credit: O. Fadairo*



*2017 CIRCLE Fellows: F Olalwunmi, N Ewusi–Mensah and E Mvungi at induction meeting at UCT’s Research Office. Photo credit: L. Cobban*

### **CIRCLE Fellow feedback:**

CIRCLE fellowship has been a rewarding experience for all the fellows involved. The fellows got exposure to high calibre of academics and internationally acclaimed researchers and platforms during the fellowship. They could attend lectures, seminars, workshops, fieldtrips, and training in research and fund raising.

Fellows reported that UCT as a host institution was: Very supportive, helpful, integrated, beneficial, and has had long lasting impacts into their futures and current work. Fellows agree that they had numerous opportunities for personal and professional development. Feedback also touched on the friendships, professional relationships and networks they created with possibilities of future collaborations. They received benefits that were above and beyond those intended by the program, such as to tour Cape Town and experience the city outside of academia, research and the fellowship.



*“The experience and skills learned have been useful in the discharge of my new responsibilities as Postgraduate Study Programme co-coordinator in my home institution and also as the coordinator of Sustainable Integrated Rural Development Programme in Africa (SIRDA) programme in my university. I have also organised many workshops for different purposes in my university where I have used the experiences garnered from CIRCLE workshop activities.” (Dr Olushola Fadairo)*

### Impacts and Lessons learnt from the CIRCLE Programme:

The CIRCLE programme had a big impact on the students and supervisors. CVFs have gone on to continue in different career paths such as coordination, research and academia. One fellow, Portia Williams, remained at UCT to continue her studies and is currently registered for a PhD in the Department of Environmental & Geographical Sciences. Ms Williams even received another exchange opportunity, the [UCT-UEA Newton PhD Partnership](#) which she will be completing in 2018. This shows that CIRCLE opens up new opportunities.

**8 out of the 9 fellows felt the fellowship timeframe was too short** given the amount of work and activities they were supposed to complete. One fellow from 2016 captures this well *“...if the fellowship lasted for about one and a half years, most fellows would make the very best from it. With individual differences, some people find it difficult to adapt to a new environment, settle, conduct research and make up their best in just a year”*.

ACDI learned lessons from its role as coordinator and how to resolve them in future:

- Some supervisors felt that they had a lack of information and knowledge about what they were meant to do. In future programmes, we need to ensure a rigorous training and preparation of supervisors.
- Communication between supervisors and fellows tended to be challenge too. In future programmes, ACDI could facilitate an MoU between supervisors and fellows that includes frequency and type of communication.
- English language is not a medium of communication in all home institutions, some students struggled with reading, writing and presenting in English which impeded on their communication and work. In future when we accept students into similar fellowships, ACDI could help fellows access more UCT language and writing support.

Despite these challenges, many fellows were able to attend and present at international conferences in countries such as the USA and Namibia with some even going on to publish their research in high calibre journals which they co-authored with their UCT supervisors. **Three out of nine fellows have published their CIRCLE research.**