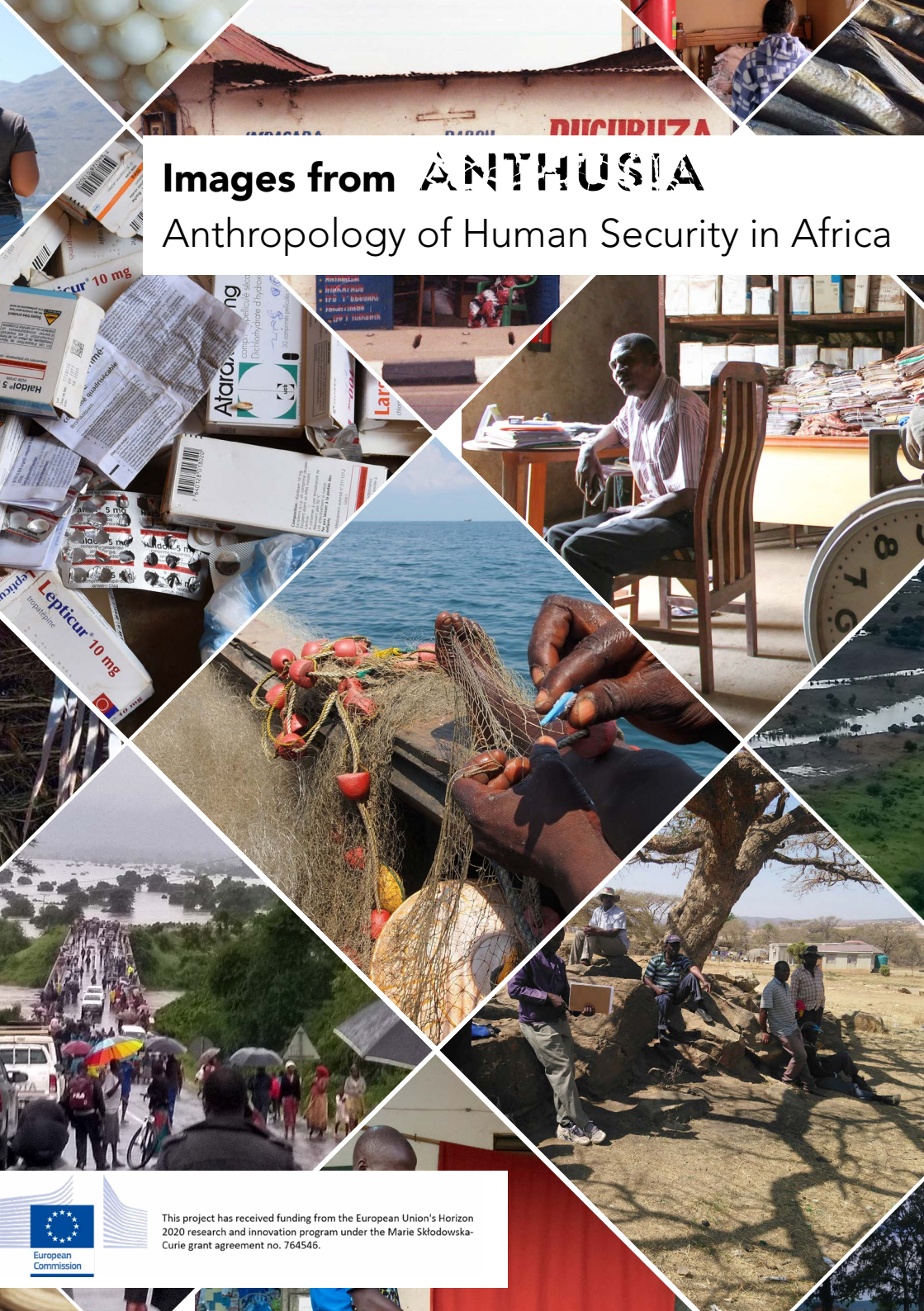


Images from ANTHUSIA

Anthropology of Human Security in Africa



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Welcome to ANTHUSIA

A PhD Program on the Anthropology of Human Security in Africa

This booklet presents visual snapshots from the research projects done by a cohort of PhD students – Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) – who have been working on a wide range of relevant and pressing issues across Africa, including:

Mental troubles in Ouagadougou
Infrastructure and speculation in land in Maputo
Fishing livelihoods in Sierra Leone
Railway livelihoods and infrastructure in Bamako
Realities of health care reform in Kenya
Youth livelihoods in Hangberg
Electrification in Northern Uganda
Food safety and toxicity in Western Kenya
Community-based nature conservation in South Africa
Pesticides and Growth in Western Kenya
Young people's politics in Windhoek
Cross border sex workers in East and Central African borderlands
Civil servants and disaster relief in Malawi
Pastoral Economy in the Ethiopian borderlands
South Sudanese refugee homes in Uganda

Each of these projects provides a wealth of knowledge about everyday life in specific places, and sectors at a particular historical time, based on long-term anthropological fieldwork and secondment to partner organizations. Please check out more about the individual projects and the overall program on our web site: <https://anthusia.eu>

ANTHUSIA is an EU-funded EJD (European Joint Degree) program, focused on the anthropology of human security in Africa, running from 2018 to 2023. It is a multi-disciplinary research network conducted by a consortium of four universities in **Aarhus** (Denmark), **Edinburgh** (United Kingdom), **Leuven** (Belgium) and **Oslo** (Norway).

Combining competencies from Anthropology, Human Security and African Studies, the project has fostered talent development relevant to current challenges and potentials of developing safe societies in Africa. By exploring different areas from a human security perspective, the research projects have provided insights into current problems and potentials.

ANTHUSIA's two main objectives have been 1) to produce academically excellent, policy-engaged and critical research that is relevant to current problems and possibilities in Sub-Saharan Africa; 2) to train a new generation of thinkers who will initiate critical inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary dialogue and engagement and take up future leadership and positions in academia, policy and implementation.

The network recruited 16 ESRs who conducted fieldwork for one year intersected by a secondment period to one of ANTHUSIA's partner organizations. The ESRs have been publishing articles and book chapters, created films, policy briefs and photos (as you will see in this folder) and they have been or will be awarded a joint doctoral degree from the two universities, where they have been based.

ANTHUSIA has convened PhD summer schools, workshops, writing retreats, and courses and the many young and senior researchers and practitioners involved have created strong networks which will last into the future.

Enjoy some small peeps into the research...

Lotte Meinert, PI of ANTHUSIA, Aarhus University

Annigje van Dijk

KU Leuven & Aarhus University

Living with mental troubles in Burkina Faso

My research follows the lives of a number of people who are making their way while dealing with (past) symptoms of mental troubles in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. They do so in relation to a space that was also the starting point of my fieldwork – a psychiatric ward – as well as other therapeutic spaces and the different forms of knowledge and religious experience that the city offers. They also do so in relation to other people – family, friends, acquaintances, healers and doctors – and (changing) ideas about themselves and the lives they wish for. Mental trouble appears as both an event upon which people reflect and a structure in relation to which they make their lives. I focus on the singularity and the dynamic nature of my interlocutors' experiences. Following one of them who told me "I am also doing research", I turn to the different questions and experiments that an experience of mental illness gives rise to. His and others' stories show the ways in which people live with uncertainty, the space they create for agency in the search for their own understanding, while staying with the complexity of their situation.

Figur 1 "Do you want to see my medication?"

Figur 2 A line of men waiting to receive a blessing from a healer



Carla Mirella de Oliveira Cortês

Aarhus University & University of Edinburgh

Speculative belonging Territories, powers and citizenship

Global agendas targeting infrastructural improvements place high demands for compliance with planetary urbanization. Therefore, African cities strive to create these global commons by readjusting political, economic, social, and customary systems. Drawing on ethnographical research in Maputo City, Mozambique, this paper examines the ways in which the state, subjects and civil society respond to the metropolitan question under the 2030 Agenda for sustainable cities. I will show how speculative engagements with the urban land create new forms of citizenship while producing forms of abjections. To do so, I introduce the notion of *'speculative belonging'* which opens conversations about urban scales, political belonging, housing investments, citizenship, and engagement rules with urbanization processes in contemporary Africa.



Cecilie Baann

Aarhus University & University of Edinburgh

Fish, bodies and vocational knowledge: Making a life by the sea

How does being with water shape our being with other beings, be they human or other-than-human? The fishermen in Sierra Leone make use of small visible signs on the water's surface to find fish. Dark shadows, small ripples moving differently from the ripples caused by the weather and currents, and weak sounds of fish breaking the water's surface, all tell us of life below our wooden keel. The embodied knowledge of life below the surface, and of connections to schools of fish, other fishing fleets and foreign interests beyond the hazy line on the horizon, shape categories of engagement both at sea and on land. At times, immediacy rules our every move, as choppy seas dictate our balance on board the boat, or a school of spotted fish makes us rush to capture it. At other times, we patiently wait for the fish, for the sun, for the tides. Spotting a trawler, or hauling out a sea urchin in the nets prompts stories and longer temporal trajectories, as well as concern over the global networks of interests that all converge in the 300 km² Yawri Bay.

With global attention on the decreasing fish stocks in the Gulf of Guinea, and national and international policies of economic development through the use of marine resources, this PhD project shows how people navigate in a shifting social, ecological and economic landscape to sustain themselves, their families and their communities. At its core, it is a project about what happens – socially, economically, and ecologically – in a fishing community when there are less and less fish in the sea. Building on the literature on relationality in West Africa, I argue for an incorporation of shifting material environments and other-than-human beings, like fish, to understand how the embodied skills of the fishermen and fish processors are shaped through their relations with moving fish, the smoke they use, and the profits they earn, as well as how these skills inform their continued navigation.



Charline Kopf

University of Oslo & University Edinburgh

Care and curation of the archive, Bamako 2020

Youssef is the guardian of the railway archives in Bamako. Despite the lack of salary, he perseveres in filing documents that tells the story of his country's railways, and with it the history of Mali. The sky-blue collections were those of the Régie ferroviaire after independence, and the white ones corresponded to Transrail, the company that took over after the privatisation. He showed me photo albums, as well as record books with headshots and details of former rail employees, whether French citizens, or the subjects of the French colonies: from engineers, technical advisors, the rail police to the manager of the buffet de la gare (figure 2). While he did not currently have the means to continue the archiving process, he had been responsible for deciding what, from the past, was important enough to keep, and what would be discarded. He explained that the archives were in danger – from the ravages and wear of time and weather, but also due to a lack of political will. People didn't grasp the archive's importance: 'None of our actual bosses have ever visited us and our archives. But we are here. This is our struggle.' (On est là. C'est ça notre combat.) The stopped clock, disassembled on the floor (figure 1), stayed with me and struck me as symbolic of the tension between old and new that my interlocutors were navigating, between the inertia of their current moment and their hope for the future.



Edwin Ameso

Aarhus University & University of Oslo

Navigating Care in Kenya

Health care reforms are an on-going concern notably in developing countries as health crises rise and leave ordinary citizens with unmet needs. As ordinary citizens improvise care to overcome the impoverishing burden of health financing, governments are scrambling for a utopian clarion call in 'health for all'. At the heart of the clarion call, are promises of coverage and access to care. My ethnographic insights juxtapose the promises and realities of 'health for all' experimentations in Kenya with the endless social navigation that persists in health care trajectories of ordinary citizens. From the promises of available, affordable, and quality commodities for the management of therapeutic concerns to the realities and lived experiences of networking and social navigation in what seemingly is a much denser forest of care complicating access for ordinary citizens.



Evelien Storme

KU Leuven & Aarhus University

“Landscapes of Youth at Work: Places, Practices and Livelihood Opportunities in South Africa” is a study of what “youth at work” means in a context of scarce employment. In addition to portraying the broad spectrum of activities that young people undertake to generate an income, their involvement in social relationships and the interplay of the immediate and imagined opportunities to sustain a life come into the picture. I also pay attention to the spectacular landscapes surrounding the community of Hangberg, and how youth navigate their physical features and layouts, often guided by aspirations of social mobility and social becoming yet facing unequal access to natural resources. My research findings challenge the government’s ongoing portrayal of employment as the way out of insecurity, inequality and poverty. Instead, they highlight various domains beyond employment in which the skills, knowledge, access and participation of youth can be further strengthened and supported to improve young people’s livelihoods and well-being.



Kirsten Nielsen

University of Oslo & University of Edinburgh

Unstable Electricity in Northern Uganda

Influenced by global initiatives such as 'Sustainable Energy for All', the state of Uganda is expanding its electricity infrastructure to rural and remote areas in the country to connect previously unsupplied households and businesses. My ethnographic research concerns this infrastructural expansion. Located in a village in rural northern Uganda, my research focuses on the promises and realities of the electric grid. More specifically, it shows what happens when the grid turns out to be an unstable source of electricity from the very beginning of its introduction. In the context of unstable electricity, the economic benefits that are otherwise associated with electrification are jeopardized. In response, people invest in back-ups to the grid including solar panels and diesel generators to stabilize their access to electricity and carve out livelihoods that still appear more appealing to them than other alternatives.



Konstantin Biehl

University of Oslo & University of Edinburgh

Practices of Food Safety. Confronting Toxic Uncertainty and Aflatoxin in Kenya

Aflatoxins are toxic substances produced by fungi of the *Aspergillus* genus and a worldwide concern for food safety. They can, among other harmful effects, cause liver failure and liver cancer in humans and animals. Detecting the substances is only possible through techno-scientific practices and testing because they are invisible to the human eye, odorless and tasteless. The ability to protect is largely unavailable for farmers in upper Meru, Kenya as the lack access to laboratory testing. Their ability to protect their food and retrospectively themselves relies on hands on investigation of plants and crops and the separation of mouldy maize. During harvesting, drying, threshing, and grinding, farmers inspect cobs for signs of mould. Sometimes the mould is easily spottable when large greenish blobs overtook the cob, sometimes small fungal colonies hide between grains and stem. During my fieldwork, I took part in long and repeated sessions of separating grains from stems and mouldy maize from good maize, considered sage for human consumption. These pictures illustrate my informants' and my perspective during these sessions and the careful interactions between humans, mould and maize necessary to produce safe food.



Lindokuhle Khumalo

University of Oslo & Aarhus University

The Conservation Encounter

Ranking as the third most biodiverse country, South Africa is obliged to prioritize conserving its natural habitats. The limited scope to enlarge state-owned protected areas means that conservationists are increasingly appealing to landowning communities to assist in reaching global conservation targets. Land restitution beneficiaries are particularly targeted for participation in such voluntary community-based conservation initiatives that encourage members to protect and manage land in biodiverse areas, thereby contributing towards the expansion of protected areas. Focusing on two communities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, I explore how this voluntary initiative is experienced by communities whose land rights have recently been restored and whose new role is that of “biodiversity stewards.” My ethnography raises important questions about the meaningfulness of voluntariness as a model of community-based conservation in light of the prevalent marginalization of ordinary community members in local conservation efforts and the legacy of landlessness.



Miriam Waltz

Aarhus University & University of Oslo

“When You Become Afraid of Chemicals” Pesticides and Growth in Western Kenya

Smallholder farmers increasingly rely on synthetic pesticides to maintain subsistence agriculture in many places across Africa, despite widespread concerns about the effects of these substances on human bodies, plants, insects, and soils. Why are farmers choosing to treat their fields with pesticides when most of them fear they are toxic? Based on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2019, I argue that this apparent contradiction offers an inroad into understanding contemporary Western Kenya, providing crucial insights about how people think about and make their lives, from kinship and livelihood to health and aspiration. In a context marked by mounting economic precarity and indebtedness, climate change, and novel pest infestations, different visions of growth, of crops and humans, community and welfare, accumulation and ‘development,’ are layered onto one another. Local notions of flourishing are sustained and undermined by the modernist, consumptive logic of growth that pesticides embody. In this thesis, I explore how a conjunction of historical trajectories of growth and flows, mutating landscapes, the non-knowability of pesticides, the withdrawal of government agricultural extension officers, the growing presence of NGOs, and changing approaches to diet and eating create ambiguous agricultural landscapes. I connect historical landscape changes and economies of scale to new pest invasions, and the implications that these have for increasingly precarious livelihoods dependent on agriculture. With a focus on the practices, affects, and materialities of pesticide use, I show how farmers sustain and change landscapes, and intervene in relations between people and other species, in an attempt to secure the growth of families, food, and economies.



Rune Larsen

KU Leuven & Aarhus University

Between Arts, Politics and Spirituality: Young adults and their everyday politics in post-apartheid Windhoek

Politics is often seen from a dichotomous perspective of political parties and organisations versus opposed activist groups seeking to counter the agenda of the establishment. However, during my research on young peoples' politics in Windhoek, Namibia, I found more complex dynamics at work. Being increasingly tired of conventional political and social action, and the small gains that such activities seem to yield, a rising number of young Namibian adults have taken matters into their own hands. Through everyday (inter)actions they change their, and their country's current predicament. However, they do this, not by joining forces with, or directly opposing, the political establishment. Instead, they engage in what Hage (2015)¹ describes as "alter-politics", referring to peoples' efforts to impact social and political change through alternative and organically developed means grounded in everyday experiences and interactions. The above pictures all illustrate different forms of alter-politics in action.

1. Hage, G. (2015). *Alter-politics: critical anthropology and the radical imagination* Melbourne, Melbourne University Press



Suvi Lensu

University of Edinburgh & Aarhus University

Cosmopolitanism from the margins – embodied migrations, beauty and belonging amongst Rwandan cross-border sex workers

This thesis examines Rwandan cross-border sex workers' embodied migrations in East- and Central Africa. Based on ethnographic and anthropological visual methods, I study how the female and trans sex workers used their access to transnational space, international connections and material goods (cosmetics and second-hand fashion) as a means to construct cosmopolitan identity, thus gaining and recreating social and cultural agency at home and abroad. Against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions in the East and Central African borderlands, I trace the sex workers' skilful navigations through tightening custom regimes and the Ebola outbreak.



Tanja Hendriks

University of Edinburgh & University of Oslo

The Malawi State in Relief

Dealing with the intensifying impacts of climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time. My research focused on the everyday practices of civil servants working for the Malawi government Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA), as they coordinated and implemented ad hoc responses to disasters in parallel to planned annual humanitarian interventions to combat food insecurity in the aid-dependent country. In wondering why the Malawi state is central to disaster governance despite its lack of resources and actual capacity to deal with them, I studied how district-based civil servants instantiate the Malawi state in this context of dependency, destitution and disaster. In interactions with displaced citizens during displacement camp visits, food distributions and recovery interventions, I saw how civil servants tried their best to fulfil their duties under adverse conditions. As such, my ethnography highlights how civil servants rely on their sense of duty to instantiate the state, which becomes more visible during times of disaster and thus throws the state itself into relief.



Yayi Zheng

Aarhus University & KU Leuven

Enacting more-than-human kinship: cattle and landscape in Borana, Ethiopia. Ceremonies

Since I was a student in anthropology, a local man said I should go to observe these name-giving ceremonies. I clarified that I did not intend to research these rituals and ceremonies. However, I had a curiosity. I was also warmly welcomed and invited as a guest to attend these ceremonies. I went from one to another, asking people questions that caught my attention at the time. Why did people call the bull sacrificed for the ceremonial feast an ox (oxen were the castrated cattle)? Why did women contribute milk as gifts while men did so with cash? I thought I was like a tourist. I did not take any particular notes for the events. Little did I know the puzzles and surprises I collected from these ceremonies became to shape my attention to the field-work and eventually became the focus of my research project. Amidst the intensive interactions during the ceremonies, I also learnt to hang out with people in my field village, while they also got used to my presence. These ceremonies were wonderful memories in many ways.



Nicholas Rowland Wainman

Aarhus University & University of Oslo

Making and Connecting home: Understanding local perspectives from South Sudan

Border crossers from South Sudan arriving in Palabek refugee settlement are given small plots of land, where it is expected that the border crossers will build their own houses and grow their own food. Finding materials, negotiating with the host community and learning how to build in the context of displacement are difficult challenges. People bring with them a diverse array of building experiences and housing expectations. Shelter is an important part of what makes us human and finding places to stay is a high priority for people seeking to stay in the settlement. The house building process and the houses themselves become more than the simple aggregation of materials. The projects are events that people aim for and the houses often become sites of self expression. During my fieldwork, I spent a long time planning, building and decorating houses. These photos show some of houses in different stages of the housebuilding process.



The ANTHUSIA consortium

Supervisors

Aarhus University

Lotte Meinert, PI and Professor of Anthropology

Michael Eilenberg, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Christian Gade, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Heather Swanson, Professor of Anthropology

Anna Tsing, Professor of Anthropology

Line Dalsgård, Professor of Anthropology

Morten Nielsen, former Associate Professor – now Professor at the National Museum of Denmark

Oslo University

Paul Wenzel Geissler, CO-PI and Professor of Anthropology

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Professor of Anthropology

Ruth Prince, Professor of Medical Anthropology

Knut Gunnar Nustad, Professor of Anthropology.

University of Edinburgh

Gerhard Anders, CO-PI and Senior Lecturer in African Studies & International Development

Jose-Maria Munoz, Senior Lecturer in African Studies and International Development

Paul Nugent, Professor of Comparative African History

Andrew Bowman, Lecturer in Africa and International Development

Sarah Jane Cooper-Knock, Senior Lecturer in Criminology (now with University of Sheffield)

Ayaz Qureshi, Senior Lecturer in Medical Anthropology

KU Leuven

Filip de Boeck, CO-PI and Professor of Anthropology

Ann Cassiman, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Steven van Wolputte, Professor of Anthropology

University of Copenhage

Susan Whyte, Professor of Anthropology

Expert Advisory Board

Professor Jean Comaroff, Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University

Professor Peter Redfield, Department of Anthropology, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Professor Susan Reynolds Whyte, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Professor Dame Henrietta Moore, UCL Institute for Global Prosperity, University College London

Associate Professor Stephen C. Lubkemann, Department of Anthropology, George Washington University

Associate Professor Richard Vokes, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, The University of Western Australia

Professor Jane I. Guyer, Department of Anthropology, John Hopkins University

Professor James G. Ferguson, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University

Professor James Fairhead, Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex

Professor George Ulrich, Doctoral Programme Director, Riga Graduate School of Law

Partner organizations

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Institut de Sciences et Sociétés, Burkina Faso

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Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia

Mac Alister Elliott & Partners Ltd.

Nationalmuseet Denmark

NORAD – Norwegian agency for development cooperation

Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI)

Promundo US

Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)

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University of Malawi

University of Nairobi

Wits School of Governance, South Africa

