

STRATEGY 2017–2021  
NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE

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# 1. Vision

The Nordic Africa Institute shall be a centre of excellence for knowledge on Africa.

## 2. Mission statement

The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) houses a **combination of high-quality research, skilled communication and an extensive library collection on contemporary Africa, all under one roof**. At NAI, cutting-edge research intersects policy dialogue and a full-service library, resulting in a unique setting for Africa studies in the Nordics. As a Swedish public authority, and the beneficiary of several Nordic governments as well as of the international community, NAI offers an unmatched position in its field in terms of contributing to the Africa policy agenda of the Nordic countries engaged in the Institute. The Nordic countries long-standing commitment to critically analysing and stimulating academic, policymakers' and practitioners' discussions on global political discourse and pressing policy descriptions makes the Institute an ideal platform for reflection informed by research.

## 3. Introduction to Strategy 2017–2021

With this Strategy, NAI will consolidate its status as an internationally recognised research institute in Africa studies. Within the framework of this vision and mission, the Institute will re-confirm its identity as a centre for the production, dissemination and documentation of knowledge on Africa. The Strategy will guide NAI's work in the coming five-year period and communicate to partners and stakeholders what the Institute is and what it aims to become.

The Strategy concerns the Institute as a whole. Its preparation followed a joint consultative process with the participation of NAI staff and main stakeholders, as well as benefitting from the expertise and advice of the Programme and Research Council. The Strategy shall also be complemented by strategies for the different functions of the Institute, as well annual action plans and budgets that serve as operational guidelines, as shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Planning framework of the Nordic Africa Institute**



## 4. The Nordic Africa Institute: past, present and future

Africa studies in the Nordics stem from a tradition of international solidarity and engagement in the decolonisation movements of the twentieth century. An increasing involvement in development work on the continent required high-quality research to guide the Nordic governments. NAI was founded in 1962

and since then has provided knowledge in the form of high-quality research, timely information and extensive documentation on Africa. The Nordic character of the Institute has been emphasised from its inception, while it remains a Swedish public authority in form, funded by official development assistance (ODA). Over more than half a century, NAI has been committed to being a hub for research, documentation and information in the Nordic region on a changing Africa, serving universities, research centres, governments and civil society, as well as the private sector. NAI has followed the trends and development of Africa studies in the Nordic region and in African continent, and also actively initiated new ideas and forms of engagement to fulfil its mission as the main centre for African knowledge in the Nordic countries and to serve its stakeholders in the Nordic countries and globally. To date, NAI has benefitted several thousand Africa experts and students around the world, and maintains an extensive network of partners internationally. NAI became a member of AEGIS (Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies) at its inception in 1991, and contributes to the resources and research potential available within Africanist institutions of the European Union (EU). NAI was also instrumental in supporting the establishment and building the capacity of the Council for the Development for Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), based in Dakar, Senegal, with which it has a long-standing partnership arrangement.

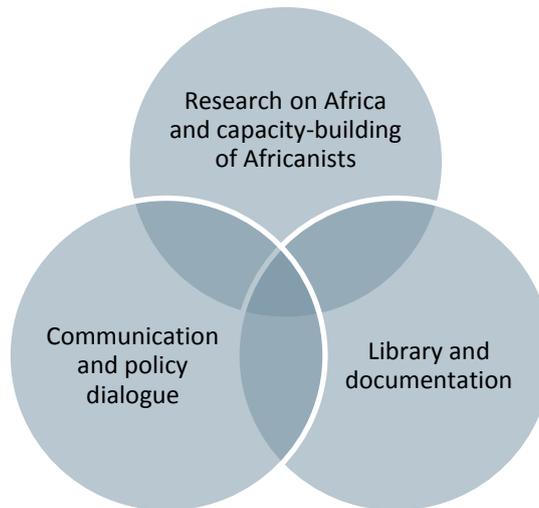
Africa studies have continued to be relevant to the Nordics in the past half-century. In fact, an increasingly global interdependence makes the production and dissemination of high-quality academic research more essential today than ever. NAI shall enhance its work to promote African knowledge production and contribute to its dissemination in Africa and in the Nordics, as well as globally. The Institute shall also continue its long-term collaborations and partnerships with and between the Nordic and African academic communities with strong links to policy and practice.

#### 4.1 The Nordic Africa Institute by instruction and governance system

NAI is organised around three core functions: research, communication, and library and documentation. Together, these functions contribute to the instruction of the Institute, which is to:

1. **Promote** research on social, political and economic developments in Africa by conducting its own high-quality research, to act as a focal point and catalyst for Nordic research on Africa, to stimulate research on Africa in the Nordic region, and to promote cooperation and contacts between Nordic and African researchers;
2. **Disseminate** advanced and relevant information based on research about modern Africa and African conditions. The Institute is to conduct an active policy dialogue and the information to be made available to decision makers in the Nordic region; and
3. **Monitor** and make available literature and other electronic and physical media, which are of relevance to research, study and information about modern Africa. NAI is to provide a library with lending, reference and information services.

**Figure 2: The core functions of the Nordic Africa Institute**



The Institute is headed by a director, appointed by the Swedish government. The Institute is advised and monitored by the Programme and Research Council. Each of the Nordic countries funding the Institute has two members of the Council – one from the research community and one from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and/or aid administration. Uppsala University library also holds one seat in the Council due to its close collaboration with NAI. As mentioned above, the Institute is organised into three core units, which are supported by the administration and research support unit and head of human resources. The heads of units, together with the director, form the Management Group. The internal organisation of NAI is guided by the laws and regulations of the Government of Sweden and instituted by its Rules of Procedure and Formal Work Plan.

As a Swedish public authority, NAI is committed to adhering to the values associated with the civil service: democracy, legality, objectivity, freedom of opinion, respect and efficiency, as well as service.

#### **4.1.1 Synergies within the Institute**

The three core functions of NAI are intimately interlinked, and support and enhance each other. The research conducted at the Institute and elsewhere in the Nordic region, as well as in collaboration with African institutions, is stimulated by the extensive library collection on the study of contemporary Africa. Research results and informed analysis by NAI staff and affiliated experts reach the academic community and beyond through planned communication activities such as events, workshops and conferences. External research results are disseminated through the bibliographical work of the library function at the Institute.

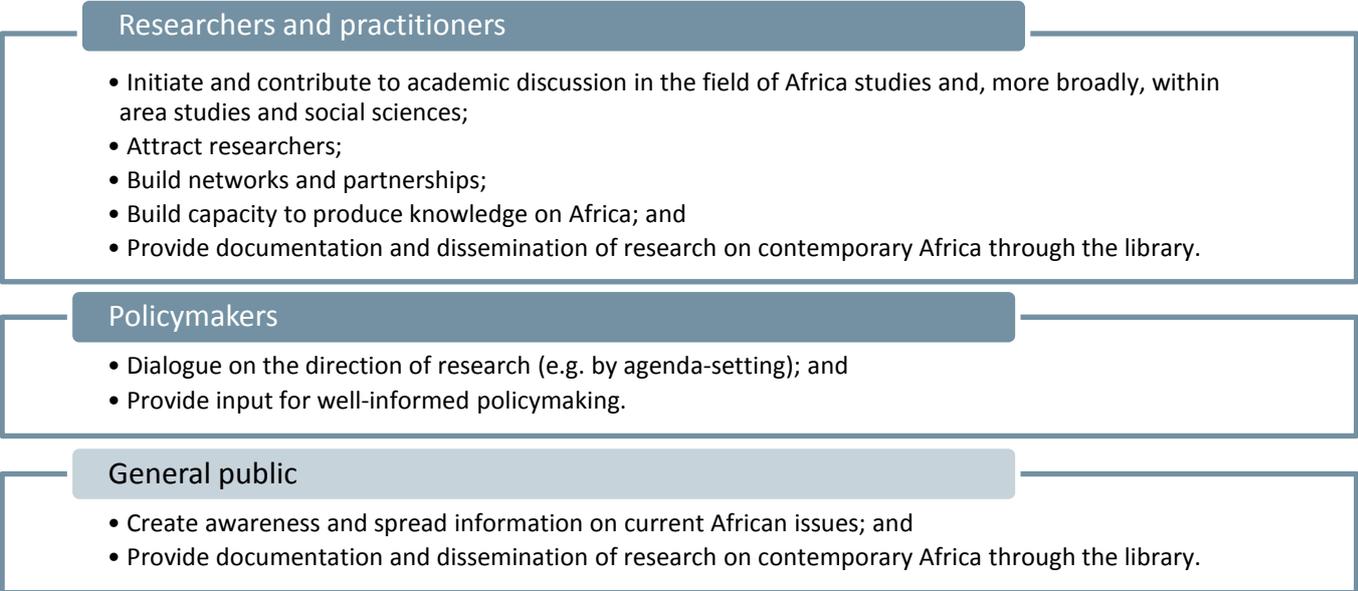
Identifying and enabling productive synergies between the various functions and activities of NAI is essential to unlocking the full potential of the Institute. The integration and harmonisation of the work of the different functions is of high priority to NAI, supported by the belief that this process strengthens the capacity of the Institute in fulfilling its mandate. Indeed, part of what makes NAI unique in its field is the combination of high-quality research, skilled communication and an extensive library collection, all under one roof. Therefore, the Institute must prioritise its activities to enable synergies that will fulfil its vision. This is the responsibility of the director and the Management Group, but also of every employee at the Institute. Everyone contributes to the greater goals and vision of the Institute.

Synergies can be explored in different ways, either through joint actions between units, or by one unit using another as a resource. The Institute organises events such as the Nordic Africa Days conference, which is a

joint coordination effort and an expression of how synergies can be explored. This flagship event which takes place every two years, provides a forum for scientific exchange on current research thematic for Africanists – academics and experts – around the globe, an introduction to library resources for distance users as well as an opportunity to gather and produce knowledge and articles for communication and policy advice. Moreover, synergies also manifest themselves in the everyday work of the Institute, where the different units use the expertise or resources of the other units to fulfil their mandates. To further explore and take advantage of synergies within NAI, it is important that internal communication works well and that there is regular coordination between the units.

### 4.2 Target audiences

NAI strives to be a natural partner and source of information for academic researchers as well as policymakers. With many of its research activities, NAI has a global reach, publishing articles and books, which go beyond the Nordic region. However, the primary target group for the Institute is researchers and practitioners operating in the Nordic region, as well as in Africa. Concerning policymakers, NAI’s primary target audience is in the Nordic countries that finance the Institute. Furthermore, many of NAI’s activities – for instance, library services and the information disseminated by the Institute – also reach the general public, who form the secondary target audience.



### 4.3 Resource portfolio

NAI is a Swedish public authority and dependent on public funds for its core activities and administration. The Swedish funding of the Institute comes from the national budget for Official Development Assistance (ODA) and constitutes the largest source of income for the Institute – approximately 80 per cent of total funding. The core funding of NAI has varied over the years. During the past decade, core funding from the Nordic countries has averaged at around 36 million Swedish krona annually. Additionally, 20 per cent of funding comes from external sources, such as research funding agencies and institutional cooperation, which contribute to the Institute’s research projects and other external activities.

The level of ODA funding is subject to political and economic fluctuations, which affect the ability of organisations such as NAI to plan their operations in the long term. For the past few years, the funding commitment of the Nordic countries has fluctuated greatly, yet the demand for NAI services among Africa scholars and policymakers has remained the same or even grown. The economic downturn and recession in Europe and reallocation of funds to respond to the global migrant crisis can be mentioned among the

causes of decreased allocation of funds towards development cooperation in the Nordic context in 2015. An important task for NAI in the 2017–2021 period will be to secure and mobilise resources to widen and diversify potential sources for funding and is one of its strategic goals.

#### 4.4 Overall mission

To achieve its vision of being a centre of excellence for knowledge on Africa, NAI produces **research** and knowledge relevant in a Nordic policy context as well as globally, and communicates information and research results on contemporary African issues using channels that reach researchers and policymakers as well as the public. Furthermore, the result of the work of NAI is not only seen in the research the Institute produces, but also in the **advancement of the field of Africa studies** in general. By contributing to academic discourse, building networks and partnerships, providing literature resources, awarding scholarships and hosting guest researchers, NAI stimulates and promotes further research and builds capacity on knowledge production on Africa.

NAI provides a unique research environment where researchers can fully commit to their research processes and policy advice without the obligations usually associated with employment at a university. NAI offers opportunities for young Africanists in the Nordics and Africa to spend time at the Institute, thus contributing to the **capacity building** of Africa knowledge production. Such opportunities include scholarship programmes, such as the African and Nordic Guest Researchers' Scholarship Programme, Travel Grants, as well as internships and hosting postdoctoral scholars at NAI, all of which enable Africa scholars to interact with senior Africanists and use library resources.

Research at NAI is conducted in close collaboration with the Institute's **library**, which adds value to research and to the library. Experts at the Institute and in its networks collaborate to build up the library collection; at the same time, researchers can use library resources. A large share of the library collection is unique to the Nordics, as well as in European and international contexts. The NAI library's contribution to the information landscape in the Africa studies field is substantial – not only from a South–North perspective – because the library sources, provides access to and distributes resources written and published in Africa as one of the only libraries that specialise in Africa-related materials in northern Europe.

Furthermore, the Institute has a special function in **facilitating dissemination of outcomes and findings** from research on Africa within and outside NAI. Therefore, NAI research staff, guests and associates are also trained in communications and public relations, and have the privilege to work together with a team of professional communicators as well as research administrators. As an ODA-funded public authority linked to Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and with funding from other Nordic governments, NAI has a close connection to policymakers in the Nordics that **provides an opportunity to communicate research results directly to decision makers**. The Institute's library collection and its specialised librarians also provide a service to researchers that is unmatched in the field.

#### 4.5 Strategic goals for the Nordic Africa Institute in 2017–2021

The Institute exists in a changing environment, both in terms of global events and developments and in terms of institutional and organisational preconditions. To respond to these circumstances, it is important to remain flexible and adaptive to change. At the same time, NAI's work during 2017–2021 will be guided by **six of overarching strategic goals** to ensure that the Institute's activities contribute to achieving its vision and fulfilling its mission for 2021. These strategic goals in turn break down into specific goals for each of the core functions of the Institute, which are listed under the function-specific chapters of this Strategy.

**1. The Nordic Africa Institute shall conduct, support and encourage academic and policy-relevant research on contemporary Africa.**

NAI will continue to be a world-leading producer of top-quality research on Africa. The Institute houses an intellectual environment that enhances the skills and experience of NAI researchers – core staff, associates and guests – and the Institute’s rich and robust networks and partnerships. The key to the success of NAI is in its multidisciplinary approach, which focuses on alternative voices and perspectives from Africa. Since much of NAI research is based on empirical evidence gathered from the ‘ground’, the Institute can provide policymakers with critical perspectives on the effects of major policy changes and programmes. Furthermore, this approach allows new issues and development challenges on the continent to be easily identified. This proactive and novel capacity makes the Institute a crucial partner for policymakers, so that they can be informed about new trends on the continent.

As a unique centre for the study of Africa with capacity for academic research and policy analysis, the Institute will scale up its research activities and policy engagements, as well as crafting, communicating and documenting information and knowledge on Africa. In this regard, activities at NAI will continue to strengthen the nature of NAI as a research institute in Africa studies. During 2017–2021 NAI will develop relevant research programmes around specific thematic areas in response to the challenges of development, and in particular as they affect Africa. In pursuit of its vision and mission, NAI plans to attract and recruit highly qualified researchers, including African scholars of international repute; facilitate and organise academic events and policy dialogues; produce scientific publications and policy papers on current topical issues in contemporary Africa and facilitate popular transmission of accumulated knowledge.

The global development agenda – including that of Nordic countries – will inevitably be guided by the priorities of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted in September 2015. The SDGs formulate a global development agenda, with priorities that hold strong relevance for African countries. Likewise, the direction for future research and policy advice efforts of the Institute will reflect the SDG agenda. Furthermore, longer-term African development is directed and shaped by African Union’s Vision 2063, ‘The Future We Want’ which will also guide knowledge production and research on Africa.

The SDGs emphasise the role of developing countries in shaping and determining their own future, highlighting the need for North–South and South–North collaboration and exchange. NAI is already at the forefront of this approach. Long-standing collaborations with African universities and scholars, as well as relations with African policymakers, are fundamental to NAI’s present and future, having been built up over the course of the Institute’s existence. NAI also has an extensive and unique collection of African titles in its library and makes deliberate efforts towards making African research and literature available to Nordic and African researchers.

**2. The Nordic Africa Institute shall aim to support positive development in African countries based on North–South and South–North dialogue.**

Dialogue and collaboration with African partners has always been essential to NAI. All efforts at NAI have and will continue to be guided by the aim of supporting positive development on the African continent. In other words, research conducted at NAI should be timely and applicable to African communities in helping them to shape their own future. This requires maintaining existing networks with academics, civil society and policymakers in Africa, as well as building new networks and being perceptive and up to date with current events and discourses in African countries. The Institute’s library ensures that knowledge developed and produced by African scholars on the African continent is accessible to audiences in the Nordic countries and internationally. Dedicated communication and documentation allow better interplay and exchange of best practices for analysis and policy advice.

**3. The Nordic Africa Institute shall contribute to the Africa policy agenda in the Nordic countries.**

It is important that the research conducted at NAI continue to contribute to policymaking in the Nordic states. This requires ongoing and close collaboration between NAI and representatives of the Nordic governments and other development actors, where mutual exchange and dialogue are essential. It also requires NAI to continue in the tradition of independent academic research, as well as collection and communication of knowledge and resources about Africa, to remain at the forefront of the study of contemporary Africa, raising awareness about new issues and being ready to inform policymakers when new priorities arise. The balance between policy relevance and academic freedom can be a delicate one, but nonetheless the intersection of the two worlds of politics and academia is essential to produce relevant research and well-informed decision-making. Indeed, NAI has over the years specialised in precisely this balance and aims to continue promoting this unique format, convinced of its success and necessity.

**4. The Nordic Africa Institute shall contribute to building capacity in the production of knowledge about Africa.**

The results of NAI's activities go beyond the research produced at the Institute in Uppsala. Through its activities, NAI aims to build capacity in Africa knowledge production among researchers in the Nordic countries, in Africa and globally. The research agenda of the Institute will be designed with the intention of improving competencies and skills of researchers and invited guests, individually and collectively. Furthermore, the scholarship programmes will continue to build capacity among African and Nordic researchers by providing the opportunity to relocate their research to NAI, where they can take advantage of the expertise available at the Institute and its extensive library resources. The library contributes to capacity-building as a source of documentation on contemporary Africa that is unavailable or difficult to access otherwise. The expertise of the librarians' 'embedded librarianship' contributes to building capacity among researchers visiting the Institute, as well as Africa scholars in the Nordic countries, by providing services in literature searching, citation and publishing. In addition, the Institute contributes to building capacity in communication skills among researchers at the Institute by training and assisting in the packaging and dissemination of research results and policy messages.

**5. The Nordic Africa Institute shall secure and diversify its resources.**

As political and economic fluctuations may cause ODA funding to decrease or become increasingly unpredictable, it is important that NAI secures, widens and diversifies its resource portfolio through conscious efforts. Steps that need to be taken towards creating a stable and secure financial situation for the Institute include:

- Make the impact and policy relevance of the Institute's activities even more visible to its stakeholders, the governments of the Nordic countries that are funding NAI;
- Seek to diversify sources of funding for all core functions – research, communications and the library – by exploring opportunities from, for instance, the EU, non-governmental organisations and the private sector;
- Seek to develop partnerships for joint funding operations with partners in the Nordics, Europe and Africa; and
- Develop and implement an internal strategy for resource mobilisation.

**6. The Nordic Africa Institute shall be a values-based organisation.**

As an extension of the common values of the civil service, NAI shall strive to be known, internally and externally, for the following values:

- **Involvement**, which requires teamwork, responsibility, preconditions, participation, leadership and direction;
- **Communication**, which should be credible, timely, transparent and strategic;
- **Trust**, which grows out of mutual respect, empathy, integrity and loyalty; and
- **Transparency**, which results in quality, accountability and openness.

The Institute and all its members of staff shall promote these values, which will be visible internally and in the external work and activities of NAI.

## 5. Research on Africa and capacity-building of Africanists

### 5.1 Current and future trends

The world is changing rapidly and facing new challenges. On a positive note, governments worldwide have reached internationally binding agreements aimed at slowing down climate change, and agreed on the SDGs. More renewable energy sources are being developed and brought into use. Scientific and technological innovations in general are promising new ways to deal with environmental threats. However, the complex, emerging global insecurity call for further joint solutions and action, which have become harder to find.

Increasing insecurity across the globe is related to many different, but partly interconnected phenomena. Greed and grievances over inequality in the distribution of power and scarce resources cause conflicts and intensify the global refugee crisis. Discontent due to local and international political solutions fuel extremism and terrorist movements. Serious contagious diseases and natural disasters are also causing death and suffering, while making us more aware that the threats we face today do not respect national borders. Similarly, some effects of climate change can already be felt across the world and they are increasing global migration. In the past decade, economic shocks across the globe have also made it harder to reach agreement on solutions and achieve efficient international cooperation to deal with the volatile situation.

The countries most seriously affected by conflicts, climate change, and natural disasters are still often the poorest. Many of them are in Africa. While Africa has during the past decades been rising economically, this has not diminished inequalities or brought an end to poverty. It also appears that the widespread optimism over stronger economic development in Africa was somewhat premature. The current external economic shocks, such as plunging commodity prices, China's slowdown, diminishing foreign direct investments by multinational oil and gas industry are now making many African countries struggle with debt, inflation, unemployment, and sinking value of their currencies.

The influence of emerging powers, including the BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – and the Middle East has been increasing in Africa. This, for its part, affects global political alignments as well as trading environment and business partnerships. The gradually changing world order is also challenging the Northern – and more widely European – ideal for development that historically has been based on democratic development and respect for human rights. Different models of governance and alternative political ideologies have been introduced to compete with Western liberal humanism. Simultaneously, the EU is struggling to maintain its unity in amid its own economic and security challenges and in handling the refugee influx within its borders.

To understand the complexity of these global issues collaborative, international research is essential. In search of most suitable solutions to these challenges, broad cooperation between Nordic, European and

African researchers is indispensable. Comprehensive and in-depth, impartial, academic research is increasingly needed in guiding national, regional, and international policymaking. The role of NAI in this world situation is fundamental because its core task is to provide original, high-quality and policy-relevant research on Africa – research that reflects current political and socio-economic realities and trends on the continent and beyond.

However, the above-mentioned economic challenges and changing political landscape have affected Nordic development policies and research funding, and the budget of the Institute. Thus, while NAI recognises its central role in providing critical Africa-related information and knowledge, it also notes that it has to do this in a context of reduced funding. Despite this challenge, the Institute will nevertheless continue to maintain its functions in the most cost-efficient ways possible, to produce high-quality and objective research on Africa, and facilitate the dissemination of research outputs and outcomes, as well as supporting information exchange on Africa and increased accessibility to literature on Africa.

## 5.2 Research agenda and thematic areas for research and policy engagements

Africa reflects rapid global changes. To understand the global complexity, a more forward-looking research strategy is required. For instance, broad and mutually beneficial intellectual cooperation between researchers in the Nordic and African regions is indispensable to finding the most appropriate and sustainable solutions to the current development challenges in Africa. The task of mapping out the best ways to do this requires comprehensive policy-oriented and development-centred research to guide policymaking at various levels – be it national, regional or global. The mandate of the Institute to provide original, high-quality, policy-relevant research on current political and socio-economic realities and trends in Africa continues to be significant even in the changing contexts. Developments and trends in research on Africa, and in global currents as part of the overall environment for development research, have significant impacts on how NAI carries out its research functions and meets the demand of its mandate and achieving its vision. The following principles and values guide all the research and learning activities at the Institute:

- a) **High quality:** conscious efforts are made to ensure that research process and outcomes meet high standards. The principle and practice of peer review is not compromised at any level or stage in research at the Institute.
- b) **Policy relevance:** the design, process and outcomes of research endeavours at NAI should take into consideration policy relevance. In this case research activities at the Institute are conceived and implemented not only as “knowledge for knowledge’s sake” but primarily for the benefit of larger community of stakeholders in terms of added value to their well-being through appropriate development policies and programmes at national, regional and global levels.
- c) **Capacity-building:** research activities at NAI have, among other elements, capacity-building objectives. Research agendas are designed and executed with the intention of improving competencies and skills of researchers individually and collectively.

In addition, the Research Unit ensures that the Institute’s research priorities and agendas pay attention to concerns expressed by and feedback from critical stakeholders such as the governments and people of the Nordic countries. These are reflected in official policies and communications, such as the Appropriation Letter of the Government of Sweden, and in the deliberations of the Programme and Research Council.

Research activities at the Institute are managed under the following broad arrangements:

- **Thematic research areas and priorities:** these are research projects designed and executed by researchers whose positions the Institute fully funds. These activities are based on the Institute’s thematic focus and research priorities. Researchers in these research projects are usually employed into positions to undertake research activities within these thematic areas and priorities.

- **Externally funded research activities:** these are research projects that are externally funded but are based at the Institute. Researchers involved in these activities are often partly employed by the Institute and enjoy the benefits of a conducive working environment, administration of their research grants, and other forms of institutional support. Over the years this arrangement has provided opportunities for researchers from the Nordic region to enhance their research skills and competencies, and also advance their careers. External researchers also broaden NAI's scope of expertise.
- **Guest researchers' activities:** the guest researcher programme provides opportunities for Africanists from all over the world to relocate their research work temporarily to Uppsala and take advantage of NAI's resources, notably the expertise and competencies of NAI researchers and the library. The return on investment for this programme has been quite impressive, as shown by the published works with full attribution to the Institute, coupled with the spread of networks of Africanists linked to the Institute and fast-growing NAI alumni network.
- **Activities of associate researchers:** These are researchers in Nordic countries and on the African continent with special duties and privileges who promote the vision, mission and strategic goals of the Institute by their academic work, networking or participating in Africa-related events, which provide visibility to NAI. An association is valid for a limited period of one year. (no direct cost)

The Strategy 2017–2021 identifies the research agenda presented below, responding to current and future trends in Africa, including global dynamics and development agendas such as the SDGs. In addition to its focus on trends and development in Africa, NAI offers easy entry points to strengthen the achievement of global development agendas and the SDGs. In effect, within the framework of the Strategy, research programmes and other related activities will be designed to address the following broad areas of concerns in African development discourse.

### 5.2.1 Inclusive growth, poverty and inequality in urban and rural Africa

Significant strides towards eliminating poverty have been made in the past decades, and extreme poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 1990. This trend is also notable in Africa; statistics show how African poverty has been on a declining trend over the past 15 years. However, poverty reduction is slower in Africa than on any other continent, and the high level of economic inequality implies that the poverty-reducing impact of growth is less straightforward than what was believed, due to the poverty and inequality traps. There is thus no automatic one-to-one relationship between economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Alleviating poverty and reducing inequality in Africa are essential to ensuring sustainable livelihoods on the continent. Inequality and declining rural livelihoods also contribute to other trends such as urbanisation. Urban planning and urban and rural development have implications for poverty alleviation and for inequality, and are thus also relevant in this context. Poverty entails more than a lack of income; it also causes malnutrition, limits access to education and health care, and leads to social discrimination and exclusion, as well as deficient democratic processes. Understanding the causes, current state and consequences of economic inequality and poverty in Africa is key to promoting economic, social and political development.

### 5.2.2 Climate change and sustainable development

The challenge of climate change has no borders. Human activities worldwide entail consequences for the way we all live and for the future of our planet. The effects of climate change are not a matter of speculation; people's lives are being affected by rising sea levels and extreme weather. The UN has called for urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts in the sustainable development agenda.

The impacts of climate change are likely to strike Africa more severely than any other continent. Many African countries and regions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, given their limited

adaptive capacity, due to their geographical location, widespread poverty and low development levels. Water stress is projected to affect between 75 million and 250 million people on the continent by 2020. The high dependency on agriculture also implies that a large share of the African population risk malnourishment in the face of global warming.

Promoting sustainable development for Africa entails exploring the crucial challenges for adaptation to climate change, in which urban development and natural resource management will be among the most essential issues to address.

### **5.2.3 Conflict, security and democratic transformation**

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of which the SDGs are a part, is dedicated to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. Societies affected by violent conflict often suffer from flawed democratic institutions and processes, human rights abuses and low levels of economic growth, as well as lack of access to education and health care. Furthermore, there is a dominant international agenda to find solutions to the threats of terrorism and organised crime.

Armed interstate and intrastate conflicts, civil wars and terrorism are major challenges in many African regions. Understanding the driving forces behind conflicts, and exploring the many challenges of post-conflict transformation are imperative to promoting security and sustainable development in all aspects of life. Studies analysing the reconstitution and rebuilding of societies in the aftermath of conflicts, and exploring different preconditions for peace-building and state-building with effective and functioning institutions – including the role of civil society and the international community – are essential to understanding and promoting democratic transformations, as well as building and supporting sustainable societies.

### **5.2.4 Mobility and migration**

Understanding Africa's migratory movements is equal to the challenge of understanding the social, economic and political developments on the continent. Migration can take many shapes and forms: internal movements such as rural-urban migration (and in some regions urban-rural); and cross-border and intercontinental migration due to conflict, ecological or economic downturns.

As part of their goal to reduce inequality, the SDGs call for orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. In the face of increasing intercontinental mobility, African migration has become a global concern, not least for the EU and the Nordic countries.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the need to understand the complexity of migration has increased at the same time as numbers of migrants have grown. However, international research on migration-related issues as regards the African continent has been unable to provide adequate and sufficient analysis of the whole spectrum of issues that need to be addressed. Despite excellent statistics collected by many governments, international agencies and researchers, major disparities exist in methodology, for example, which hamper comparative analysis and far-sighted policymaking. The current state of the migration field points to a number of areas requiring more research, not least within areas related to migration in the developing part of the world.

### **5.2.5 Gender equality**

The sustainable development goals aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender inequality is a global problem, causing social progress and economic growth to stagnate worldwide. Inequalities for girls and women can follow them through life, entailing deprivation of access to health care, proper nutrition, education and job opportunities.

For Africa, gender inequality slows down the process of poverty alleviation both through the loss of potential growth that could have come from women who are excluded from the growth process; and by excluding women from education and health care, hindering their rise out of poverty. Despite many successes for African women and girls in the past decades, women still constitute the majority of the continent's poor, are more likely to drop out of school than boys and are less likely to be employed in the formal sector. Furthermore, maternal mortality rates remain high in many African countries and many women are victims of domestic violence. Ending all forms of discrimination against girls and women, and ensuring equal access to health care, education and participation in political, economic and public life is key to Africa's development.

Furthermore, promoting gender equality also means addressing equal rights for LGBTIQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex) people, as well as creating awareness of the interaction of masculinity and tradition in different African societies. With its unique partnership model, NAI holds a key position in promoting contemporary research and analysis on gender, its concepts and understanding in different cultural settings, to pave the way for better understanding of challenges to and manifestations of gender equality.

### 5.3 Mission of research

At the core of NAI is the research conducted by employed, associate and visiting scholars, on social, political and economic developments in Africa. NAI also aims to be a hub for Nordic research on Africa by continuing to build networks in the Nordic region as well as in Africa and globally, and to build capacity on knowledge production in the academic community. The mission for the Institute's research on Africa and capacity-building of Africanists is formulated as follows:

- 1. Conduct its own high quality research:** NAI has for several decades been committed to conducting its own high-quality research on social, political and economic developments in Africa. Research activities will remain at the core of the Institute's work. The themes by which the research will be organised will be guided by the strategic goals, and trends and challenges outlined above, addressing salient developments and challenges on the African continent, while holding relevance for policymakers in the Nordic countries engaged in the Institute.
- 2. Promote the study of Africa in the Nordic region by supporting the process of knowledge production and information exchange on Africa:** by conducting, publishing and disseminating its own research on Africa and partnering with the community of Africa scholars in Nordic academia, NAI contributes to stimulating further research efforts in the field. NAI is a leading research centre on contemporary Africa in the Nordics. The Institute aims to uphold and develop this position by remaining at the forefront of its field, publishing its work in academic journals, as well as communicating research results through a number of channels, reaching academics, policymakers and development practitioners as well as the general public in the Nordic countries. These efforts have to be conducted in close cooperation with the communications unit at NAI.
- 3. Promote international cooperation on research and studies on Africa through intellectual cooperation, contacts and exchanges between Nordic and African scholars:** an ongoing exchange and dialogue between NAI researchers and scholars in Africa is essential to identifying new developments and challenges on the African continent, as well as ensuring that research produced at NAI remains timely and applicable to African communities. NAI will continue to build up the collection of Africa-published research in the library, and develop its networks and partnerships with African research institutions and universities. The scholarship programmes are a more institutionalised way for Nordic and African scholars, among others, to relocate their research work temporarily to Uppsala and take advantage of NAI's resources, notably the expertise and competencies of NAI researchers and its library. Through these programmes, NAI also contributes to building capacity among African researchers by indirectly strengthening academia in African countries.

## 5.4 Strategic objectives

**NAI shall be an internationally leading research centre on contemporary Africa that produces innovative, multidisciplinary, rigorous and relevant research for scholarly debate and reflection, as well as for policy advice and other applied purposes.**

**Specific strategic objective I:** carry out high-quality research within areas relevant to a Nordic policy context, for African communities and globally.

**What to look for:** peer-reviewed publications by NAI researchers including publications in African journals and books; in-house publications.

**Specific strategic objective II:** communicate high-quality research to the following target audiences in the Nordics, Africa and globally: 1) researchers; 2) policymakers; and 3) the general public.

**What to look for:** conferences, seminars and workshops organised by NAI; policy activities organised by or with the active participation of NAI; policy briefs and other publications.

**Specific strategic objective III:** stimulate and contribute to more high-quality research within the field of Africa studies by strengthening and initiating networks and collaborations in Africa, the Nordics and globally.

**What to look for:** research networks that NAI is a member of; institutional partners and links; conferences; seminars and workshops organised by NAI; guest researchers hosted by NAI; scholarships granted by NAI.

## 6. Communication and policy dialogue

### 6.1 Current and future trends

NAI is dedicated to communicating information on contemporary Africa to the general public as well as researchers and decision makers. Ensuring public access to information is part of the SDGs, which mention it as a means of promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Spreading informed analyses on contemporary African issues to the public, especially targeting Nordic and African communities, NAI contributes to ensuring inclusive and democratic societies. Public access to information is also the basis of any representative democracy and a necessary precondition for participatory decision making.

The way that NAI communicates must relate to an ever-changing environment. When the Institute was founded, the demand for information on Africa was vastly different from today. In a time before the Internet, basic information on Africa was scarce in Nordic countries. Today, the fast flow of information and existence of a plethora of communication channels, whereby anyone can have his/her voice heard, demands more advanced and initiated analyses. Moreover, this flow and abundance of information makes the need for critical perspectives and critical source evaluation even greater. Here, NAI has an important role to play, questioning and nuancing common perspectives on contemporary Africa.

## 6.2 Mission of communication and policy dialogue

To inform policymaking, research needs to be made available and understandable. Through deliberate and skilled communication activities, research conducted at NAI is made relevant, available and accessible to policymakers, researchers and the general public in the Nordics and in Africa as well as globally. NAI also plays an important role in the context of the information age, where nuanced and critical perspectives imply an increasing demand for trusted sources of information. The communication and policy dialogue activities are not only the responsibility of the designated communications unit, but rather a core activity and a shared responsibility for the Institute as a whole. The mission of the communication function at NAI is formulated as follows:

- 1. Disseminate advanced and relevant information based on research about contemporary Africa and African conditions:** effective dissemination of research means tailoring communication to the needs of various audiences. The communications unit aims to work closely with NAI researchers to identify and formulate messages from the research conducted at the Institute and elsewhere. This work should be seen as an ongoing collaboration between researchers and communicators, wherein researchers are gradually trained in communication skills during their employment or residence at NAI. The communications unit will also work closely with the library in promoting its collection and services, to increase accessibility and enhance the dissemination of externally produced research. Furthermore, NAI will continue to publish its own research and debates. Various channels can be used to disseminate relevant and timely information on contemporary Africa, allowing for flexibility in identifying new channels through which NAI can reach its target audiences.
- 2. Conduct an active policy dialogue with, and make information available to, decision makers in the Nordic region:** it is crucial that policy dimensions are identified in the initial stages of the research process, and further refined as work progresses. As research findings are made, these need to be translated into policy messages and communicated in forums and platforms where they reach policymakers. Policy dialogue should be conducted directly with politicians and desk officers of the Nordic governments engaged in the Institute, as well as indirectly through visibility in the media. It is important that the Institute maintains good relations and a strong network with journalists and policymakers.

## 6.3 Strategic objectives

**NAI shall be a gateway to knowledge on Africa in the Nordic region and a natural dialogue partner for policymakers in the Nordic countries engaged in the Institute.**

**Specific strategic objective I:** communicate research findings and library resources to academia and the general public in the Nordic region and in Africa.

**What to look for:** followers on social media channels; visits to the NAI website; downloads of NAI/DiVA publications; media training sessions for NAI staff.

**Specific strategic objective II:** promote and uphold a constructive policy dialogue with decision makers in the Nordic countries engaged in the Institute; and provide platforms for policy dialogue in Africa and globally.

**What to look for:** policy activities organised by or with the active participation of NAI; policy briefs; and media visibility.

## 7. Library and documentation

### 7.1 Current and future trends

The increasing digitalisation of printed documents is a trend that most libraries must accommodate. Within the field of Africa studies, the trend is also towards digitalisation, but at a significantly slower rate than in most other areas. Only about 4.5 per cent of the world's digital repositories are based in Africa. It is important to adapt to the increasingly electronic nature of documentation, while at the same time securing a space for the still mostly printed repository of material from Africa.

Furthermore, as documentation increasingly becomes electronic, it is important to ensure access to these information carriers. The digitalisation of books, for instance, does not necessarily mean that they will become more accessible. On the other hand, electronic books (e-books) are commonly not available for interlibrary loans due to license restrictions. The NAI library is one of the few libraries worldwide that has been successful in negotiating access to licensed resources for external users.

The digitalisation trend, coupled with overall budgetary constraints at many university and other research libraries, might lead to a decreased presence of on-site librarians, as well as depleted library collections. However, at the same time demand is increasing for the expertise of librarians in navigating library resources. Moreover, the model of 'embedded librarianship' is generating interest among researchers, whereby librarians are involved in the research process from the outset, helping researchers with everything from navigating resources to reference management and increasing visibility for the research once it is completed.

### 7.2 Mission of library and documentation

The NAI library houses a unique collection of research and documentation on contemporary Africa. As the only specialised library on contemporary Africa in the Nordics, it plays an important role for scholars, students and policymakers in the field by providing a gateway to resources on Africa, from Africa. The mission of the library function is formulated as follows:

1. **Monitor and make available literature and other electronic and physical information carriers of relevance for research, study, decision making and information on contemporary Africa:** based on the expertise and experience of the librarians, and their close cooperation with researchers, the NAI library aims to provide a collection that is wide in its scope and provides in-depth information on a variety of issues and countries, from various perspectives. The library's acquisition policy will serve to guide it in selecting relevant resources.
2. **Provide a library with lending, reference and information services:** the NAI library provides a collection on site at the Institute in Uppsala, as well as online services and interlibrary loans for distance users. The library aims to increase the part of the collection that is available to download. Africa studies literature and research published in Africa are, however, to a large extent still published in print and the print collection will continue to be of importance to keep and to develop.
3. **Apply the concept of embedded librarianship:** as a tool to strengthen NAI research. The library aims to increase support to NAI researchers and African scholars linked to NAI to facilitate their research process.

### 7.3 Strategic objectives

**NAI shall be the main source of research and documentation on contemporary Africa in the Nordics, and available to researchers, students and the general public in the Nordics and Africa.**

**Specific strategic objective I:** provide a rich and unique library collection that contributes to NAI as a centre of excellence on Africa knowledge.

**What to look for:** acquisitions and cataloguing of information carriers according to the library acquisition policy.

**Specific strategic objective II:** increase visibility of and accessibility to library resources.

**What to look for:** on-site and distance library users and loans/downloads.

**Specific strategic objective III:** increase library support to NAI researchers and African scholars linked to NAI.

**What to look for:** individual support and meetings with NAI researchers; inclusion of the library's contribution in research funding applications when applicable.

## 8. Administration and research support

NAI's Administration and research support unit provides services that are essential for the core units to fulfil their mandates. The unit has a twofold mission: to provide general office administration including financial administration and IT/telephony, maintain an archive, official registry and office inventory, and provide office supplies and maintenance services; and to provide support for management and researchers in specific areas such as the scholarship programmes, visits, conferences, lectures and other events organised by the Institute. This means that the Institute shall work to streamline administrative activities and processes through efficient public management and looking to collaborate with other public authorities.

## 8.1 Strategic objectives

**The administration and research support unit aims to support the fulfilment of the Institute's mandate by providing efficient office administrative services and management/research support within specified areas.**

**Specific strategic objective I:** provide and enhance general office administration services; for instance, through increasing digitalisation efforts.

**What to look for:** functioning IT systems; functioning and improved official registry and archive; improved address and contacts register; functioning caretaking.

**Specific strategic objective II:** provide and enhance management and research support for the organisation, including coordination, assistance and development of the Institute's scholarship programmes.

**What to look for:** events and meetings organised and supported; assistance for visitors; minutes; applications received and scholarships disbursed; evaluations of events and by guests.

**Specific strategic objective III:** coordinating the hosting of guests and visitors in collaboration with head of human resources and other units.

**What to look for:** applications received and scholarships disbursed; feedback from guests.

## 9. Human resources

The NAI human resources function plays a key role in ensuring that the Institute has the right competencies to fulfil its mandate. It is important that the head of human resources works closely with NAI Management Group to make certain that people with the necessary competencies to fulfil the mandate and strategic objectives of the Institute are recruited. As a Swedish public authority, NAI's employment policy is based on Swedish public employment law. Accordingly, when recruiting new staff, NAI must base its decision solely on the applicants' skills and experience, wherein skills have more weight than experience.

Moreover, NAI aims to be a gender balanced and diverse workplace, with staff who bring experience from African and Nordic societies, and beyond. The rapid changes taking place in the world make it important for NAI to be able to adapt to circumstances that arise in the future. This poses challenges for the Institute in terms of research focus and recruitment of researchers. The Institute complies with Swedish labour regulations; however, it is important that, the Institute poses a menu of different forms of employment (permanent, temporary employment of varying duration, short-term assignments) when recruiting researchers from Nordic and African countries, and globally. The Institute shall also strive to ensure clear, safe and attractive employment conditions for the employees.

The head of human resources also has an important role in promoting good working conditions for all employees. This involves promoting a transparent organisation where staff are well informed about organisational development issues, as well as conducting ongoing dialogue with staff representatives to resolve issues connected to the workplace. Furthermore, an important task of the Head of human resources

is to develop innovative solutions to maximise the diversity of human resources. The Institute also considers feedback from employees ending their employment period as an important to improving its working environment and human resources processes.

Furthermore, NAI will comply with Swedish Agenda 2030 by setting and implementing ambitious environmental and climate-friendly goals. The Institute's work shall prevent and mitigate climate change and implement environmentally friendly practices that will contribute to the SDGs in Sweden and globally. NAI will follow its own environmental strategy that, among other things, aims to reduce the Institute's carbon footprint and use of non-renewable energy resources. This is done, for example, by reducing reliance on air transport and increasing meetings using modern technology like virtual meetings, publishing on environmentally certified paper, ensuring lower energy consumption on the Institute's premises, and procuring environmentally certified products and services.

## 9.1 Strategic objectives

**The NAI human resources function aims to create an efficient organisation that provides innovative strategies to host a diverse human resource group, where every employee's competencies are used in the most appropriate way.**

**Specific strategic objective I:** drive and develop just and fair recruitment processes that ensure that NAI has the right competencies to fulfil its mandate.

**What to look for:** gender balance among staff; diversity in terms of experience among staff; adequate competencies to fulfil mandate.

**Specific strategic objective II:** offer good employment conditions that take into account the needs of the individual, working group, and Institute as a whole.

**What to look for:** competency development; number of days' sick leave staff take; employee satisfaction (employee survey, feedback); regular staff meetings; regular meetings with trade unions.

**Specific strategic objective III:** contribute to Sweden's Agenda 2030 by implementing the Institute's environmental strategy

**What to look for:** improved scores in environmental auditing report.

## 10. Monitoring Strategy 2017–2021

A structure for monitoring the Strategy is crucial to guaranteeing its implementation and continued relevance to NAI over the coming five-year period. Given that external and internal factors may change, it is important to ensure that Strategy 2017–2021 is a living document, guiding management and staff in their continued work.

### 10.1 Relation to the Annual Action Plan

NAI will continue to conduct planning on an annual basis through the Annual Action Plan and budget, published at the end of each year, concerning the following year. The Annual Action Plan will relate to the

long-term strategy by implementing the vision, strategic goals and specific strategic objectives as short-term goals and outputs with indicators, and specifying activities to achieve these. Figure 3 illustrates how the Annual Action Plan relates to the long-term strategy.

**Figure 3: Monitoring framework of the Nordic Africa Institute**



**10.2 Indicators for monitoring**

The Strategy 2017-2021 will be monitored based on the indicators listed in relation to the strategic objectives. Regarding objectives in the research function, the Institute expects to increase the number of externally peer-reviewed and in-house publications. Furthermore, the Institute aims to enhance its research communication work by conducting and participating in conferences, seminars, workshops and other academic and policy activities, as well as by publishing policy briefs and other publications. In relation to the capacity-building work of the Institute, NAI’s membership in research networks, the number of institutional partners, and hosted guest researchers will indicate successful development.

In addition to this, the Institute’s communications efforts are expected to result in media visibility, as well as an increased number of followers and interactions on social media – for example, Facebook and Twitter – and visits to the NAI website. Communicating the library resources is also expected to lead to an increased number of downloads of NAI/DiVA publications and loans/downloads. In addition to the indicators mentioned above, the work of the library is assessed by acquisitions and cataloguing of information carriers according to the library’s acquisition policy.

A successful administration and research support should be seen in a functioning IT system, functioning and improved archiving, an improved address and contacts register, and functioning caretaking. The administration and research support activities are expected to result in well-organised and supported events and meetings, an increase in applications received and scholarships disbursed, as well as positive evaluations of events and by guests. Prepared and approved applications for external funding of also count as indicators.

With regards to human resources-related work, a gender balance among the staff is expected, as well as diversity in terms of experience among staff, and adequate competencies to fulfil the mandate of the Institute. Furthermore, success can be measured in terms of a decreased number of days of sick leave among staff, increased employee satisfaction according to feedback and survey results, as well as regular staff meetings and meetings with trade unions. Feedback from employees who are ending their employment period at NAI is an important way of assessing the working environment. NAI’s compliance with environmental goals will be measured by indicators in environmental auditing that NAI as public authority subjected to.

**10.3 Mid-term review**

The Strategy 2017–2021 will also be evaluated and revised half-way through its implementation period. In spring 2019, NAI will examine how the Strategy has been implemented thus far and whether or not any changes in the organisational or financial preconditions of the Institute, or global developments, prompt a revision.