

Story of Change

From Kenyan Research Labs to the Commercial World



From left to right, Dr. George Kosimbei (Project Lead, Research to Commercialisation (R2C) and former Director Innovation Incubation and University-Industry Linkages at Kenyatta University; Prof. Jayne Mugwe (Registrar, Division of Research, Innovation and Outreach at Kenyatta University); Dr. Tonny Omwansa (Chief Executive Officer, Kenya National Innovation Agency) and Mr. Cecil Kang'ara, Senior Administrator, Technology Transfer Office, Directorate of Innovation Incubation and University-Industry Linkages, during the launch of the R2C project in Nairobi, Kenya.

Kenyatta University, R2C Project Milestones

- Developed Research to Commercialisation (R2C) training curriculum and implementation plan.
- Developed nine interactive modules on the R2C training curriculum.
- About three-hundred and fifty researchers attended a bootcamp to coordinate and acquaint stakeholders with the R2C training curriculum.



About the RISA Fund


The Research and Innovation Systems for Africa (RISA) Fund is a programme to support and strengthen research and innovation systems in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Ethiopia. The programme runs from 2021 to 2024 and is funded by UKAid.

About Research to Commercialisation Project by Kenyatta University

Kenyatta University (KU) is one of the leading public universities in the region based in Nairobi, Kenya. The university implemented the Research to Commercialisation (R2C) project through the Division of Research, Innovation and Outreach.

The RISA funded R2C project is aimed at building the capacity of researchers, including those from less privileged backgrounds, using targeted recruitment and admission methods to strengthen the commercialisation of research output and intellectual property (IP) in all institutions - including those that are underserved.

The project was implemented by Kenyatta University in collaboration with the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA). The aim of the R2C Project was to contribute to building an interactive long term collaboration between researchers and the innovation industry, through the development of a training curriculum to train researchers on how to move their technologies from university labs into the commercial world.




"You realise in this part of the world commercialisation of research is very low and that's why R2C came in to fill the gap. The project will increase the rate of transition of research output and intellectual property in the market," states Dr. George Kosimbei, project lead, Research to Commercialisation (R2C).

About Kenya National Innovation Agency and R2C Project

The Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) is a state corporation established under the Ministry of Education, mandated to coordinate, promote, and regulate the Kenyan innovation ecosystem.

Working with partners, the institution strengthens interrelationships between actors to promote innovation and enterprise development by supporting the identification, recording, and protection of innovative ideas. KeNIA works with Kenyan universities and research institutes with elaborate mechanisms with which to engage the industry.

The R2C project is domiciled at KeNIA to maximize the outcome of the project, given that it is the institution mandated to drive research commercialisation in Kenya.



"We have about thirty public Universities in Kenya. The reason why we decided to mount the R2C project at KeNIA is because of what we call universities competition risks," says Dr. George Kosimbei.

The Training Curriculum

The main objective of the R2C project was to develop a training curriculum to increase the rate of commercialisation of research in Kenya and the region. The R2C team, with the help of experienced consultants, developed and delivered nine curriculum training modules to effectively enhance the R2C initiative.

The modules reveal a unique training programme that has never been mounted by any institution in Kenya targeting researchers. The R2C training plugs the capacity gaps identified in the research commercialisation space (lack of guidelines and curriculum for R2C) and improves research uptake through its commercialisation.

The curriculum covers the following areas: business modelling and customer care development, technology-market-revenue-fit, sales and marketing for commercialisation project/start-ups, commercialisation strategies, monetisation of intellectual property, finance and accounting, the perfect pitch, and venture capital funding and commercialisation to generate revenues and orders.

"The RISA Fund enabled us to get experienced practitioners/consultants of international repute like Dr. Kenny Karanja who helped us deliver the nine modules. We were able to afford them because of the RISA funds," says Dr. Kosimbei.

Mapping, Piloting, and Launch of the R2C Training Programme

The research team shared a report on resource people and targeted participants in preparation for the pilot training. The eligible cohorts to the pilot training registered through the online credentials for Kenyatta University Learning Management System. About three-hundred and fifty researchers attended the online pilot training and a face-to-face mentorship programme. A meeting was then organised to interpret feedback and comments from the pilot training.

The R2C training curriculum and implementation plan was launched on April 22, 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya, and attended by key stakeholders.

"We had a call out even before the launch of R2C which attracted many people, that's why we are looking for funding to support at least one or two cohorts. Private organisations including Safaricom are interested in the R2C curriculum. Kenya National Research Fund has agreed to support some researchers in this venture and in the long term they will start paying up the cost of research work for R2C. We have rallied research institutions around commercialisation hence, there is more understanding. Honestly, people feel there is need for R2C," adds Dr, Kosimbei.

To facilitate demand creation and registration for the first cohorts, the R2C team developed a landing page at the Kenya National Innovation Agency website. In addition, a boot camp was held to familiarise stakeholders with R2C training curriculum.

"Moving forward it is important to implement and to build a market for R2C project. This means that researchers should pay for themselves, and organisations should pay for their researchers to build an effective market. Funding agencies should pay for their researchers by granting money for research that includes R2C training fee if they are interested in translating their research or IP into products," says Dr. Kosimbei.

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