

ACADEMY OF SCIENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

HISTORY

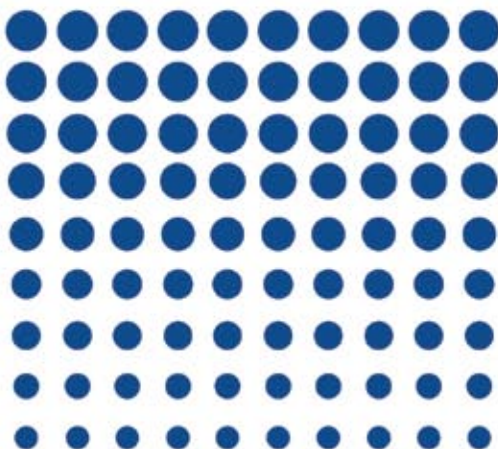
The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) was inaugurated in May 1996 by the then President and patron of the Academy, Nelson Mandela. It was formed in response to the need for an academy of science congruent with the dawn of democracy in South Africa—activist in its mission of using science for the benefit of society.

The mandate of the Academy encompasses all fields of scientific enquiry and it includes the full diversity of South Africa's distinguished scientists.

The Parliament of South Africa passed the Academy of Science of South Africa Act, Act 67 of 2001, which came into operation in May 2002.

ASSAf is the official national Academy of Science of South Africa and represents the country in the international community of science academies.

Since its inception, ASSAf has grown remarkably from a small, emergent organization to a mature and well-established academy.



OBJECTIVES

As an engine of excellence in scholarship and intellectual cooperation, ASSAf aims to be the apex organization for science and scholarship in South Africa, internationally respected and connected, with its membership the aspiration of the country's most active scholars in all fields of scientific enquiry. The Academy enables the generation of evidence-based solutions to national problems.

RELEVANCE

The strategic priorities of the Academy are closely matched to those of the nation, focusing particularly on the need for the greatly enhanced availability of high-level human capital and an increased use of the country's best intellectual expertise in generating evidence-based policy advice that is practical and feasible.

The Academy is aligned to national policy as dictated in the *White Paper on Science and Technology* and the national research and development strategy. It also seeks to meet other national priorities, such as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa and the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition.

MEMBERS

The Academy's 292 members (in 2008), are categorized into 11 science discipline categories, namely earth, economic, life, health/medical, agricultural, mathematical, physical, engineering and technological sciences, education, humanities, and social sciences.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

International activities include active ASSAf participation on:

- InterAcademy Panel (IAP)
- InterAcademy Council (IAC)
- African Science Academy Development Initiative (ASADI)
- Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) (founder member and vice-president)
- The Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS)
- InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP)
- G8 plus 5 Academies
- Bilateral agreements with the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Uganda National Academy of Sciences and is in the process of signing agreements with India and Nigeria

National ASSAf activities to promote science in South Africa include:

- Science-for-Society gold medals
- Annual symposium
- Annual visiting lecturer
- Sydney Brenner Fellowship
- (TWAS) ASSAf Young Scientist Award
- Regional public lectures
- Partnering on joint projects with other organizations, such as higher education institutions and science councils

The Academy pursues the following flagship projects:

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCE (SAJS)

The Academy publishes the *South African Journal of Science*, a leading multidisciplinary research journal in Africa that features a diversity of original work by researchers throughout the country and abroad. The journal is over 100 years old, appears six times a year, and is accessible online.

QUEST: SCIENCE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The Academy publishes a quarterly national science magazine, *Quest: Science for South Africa*, that serves as a platform for communication about scientific research done in South Africa. It showcases South

African science in action and is aimed at the broad scientific community, decision makers, the public, students, and especially the senior grades at secondary schools.

SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Scholarly Publishing Programme is aimed at the implementation of the 10 recommendations developed in the 2006 Academy report *A Strategic Approach to Research Publishing in South Africa*. This programme is aimed at enhancing the country's research productivity and capacity.

Consensus and Forum Studies

CLINICAL RESEARCH AND RELATED TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA

This study aims to contribute toward building a national culture in which clinical research is seen as essential and clinical trials are widely accepted; to improve the level of funding; to ensure that the rights and safety of individuals are protected while simultaneously acknowledging the needs of industry and funders; and to promote a favorable and enabling environment in which government, public institutions, academia, and industry can interact more constructively.

HIV/AIDS, TB, AND NUTRITION

In August 2007, ASSAf released its consensus study, *HIV/AIDS, TB and Nutrition: Scientific Inquiry into the Nutritional Influences on Human Immunity with Special Reference to HIV Infection and Active TB in South Africa*. The study reviewed scientific evidence relating to the influence of nutrition on the course of HIV/AIDS and TB.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The objectives of the committee are to:

- oversee a managed forum to assist the national mission of harnessing new developments in science and technology for economic growth and sustainable development;
- address a series of selected problem areas by bringing together, in a carefully planned, multidisciplinary workshop mode, leading national (and some international) researchers from a variety of disciplines; and
- generate new insights that can assist government policy makers and others, on the basis of properly debated scientific and technological findings, in the fight to alleviate poverty in South Africa.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Follow-up to the Completed Consensus Study on HIV/AIDS, TB, and Nutrition

A second consensus study on improved nutritional assessment will follow the 2007 consensus report on *HIV/AIDS, TB and Nutrition* and will focus on modern nutritional assessment methods, particularly tests of micronutrient status that are reliable, affordable, and practically helpful. The study will seek to identify the best assessment modes to contribute to prevention and treatment of these pandemic infectious conditions in the country.

A SADC-Region Forum Study on the Potential Value-Added Functions That National Science Academies Can Contribute in Relation to Universities

ASSAf will convene a workshop where existing national science academies based in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and representatives from universities in the SADC countries, which do not (yet) have such academies, jointly explore ways in which academy functions may add significant value to the university system in each country and the region.

Ph.D. Study: The National Capacity for the Production of Highly Trained, Top-Quality Postgraduate Students

For South Africa to be a serious competitor in the global knowledge economy, both the quality and quantity of Ph.D.s need to be expanded quite dramatically. This ambition to escalate the number of well-trained Ph.D.s in South Africa raises fundamental questions about national capacity, critical partners, innovative programmes, strategic investments, and cross-sectoral cooperation. A consensus study is planned to generate evidence-based national advice to deliver on these goals.

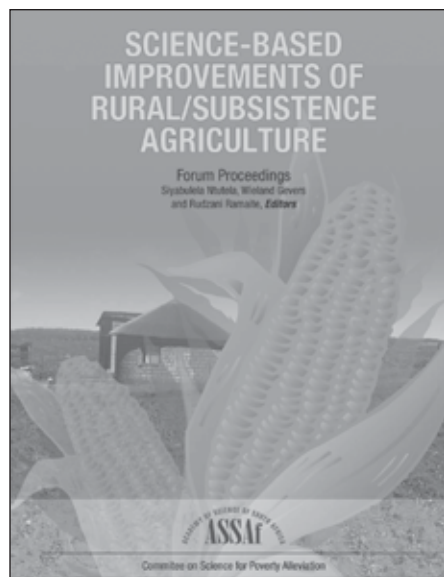
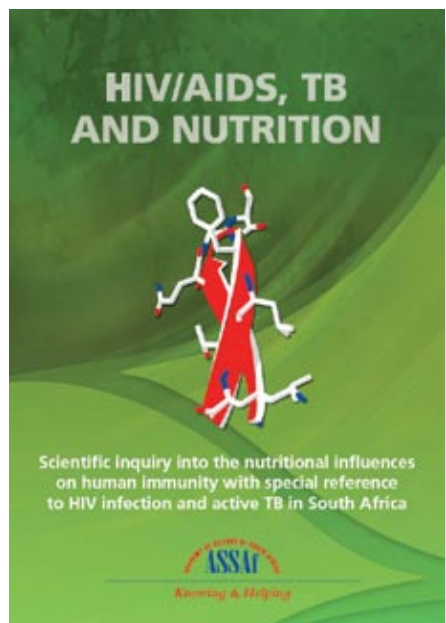
Other Activities

Standing Committee for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education: Advises the Academy on critical issues pertaining to STEM education in the country.

International Best Practice on Science Education (A Regional Study): Focuses on identifying and promoting best practices in science education (SE) in sub-Saharan Africa to improve the teaching and learning of science.

The State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, Prospects, and Strategies: Aims to provide a detailed survey on the state of the humanities in South Africa, to profile the status of humanities graduates, and to generate strategies that would strengthen the humanities.

ASSAf Committee on Biosafety, Bioethics, and Biorisks: Aims to possibly establish a Committee on Biosafety, Bioethics, and Biorisks to develop measures to monitor new and emerging epidemics in a timely fashion.



ACADEMY LEADERSHIP

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