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Editorial - Why Diamond Open Access in the Global South?

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In a recent interview, a PhD candidate who published with *Dhaxalreeb* reflected on how this development has reshaped doctoral publishing options. He described the earlier situation as “a prison with no exit”: universities required publication in international journals, at least of two articles, but offered no guidance, while supervisors discouraged submissions to potentially predatory outlets or to journals requiring Article Processing Charges (APC), which they viewed as ethically problematic. He added that supervisors themselves had articles ready for publication but lacked access to appropriate and trustworthy platforms. He noted that the materialisation of Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) platforms, including *Dhaxalreeb*, has significantly improved this environment by providing credible, ethical, and fee-free publication options that ensure both scholarly integrity and broad dissemination. *Dhaxalreeb* has recently been recognized by Ethiopian universities as an internationally indexed and accepted journal, and on the one hand, this journal and other Diamond OA platforms have provided a practical solution to a challenge faced by PhD students in the region.

On the other hand, a lot has been recently written about challenges in knowledge production in the Global South (GS), including systemic, structural, and global inequalities that severely hinder African researchers' ability to publish. These challenges are caused by several factors including underfunded research systems, colonial legacies in knowledge production, linguistic fragmentation, and a bias toward the Global North (GN) in publishing. Added to this are limited collaboration opportunities and infrastructural constraints in African institutions, which make it extremely difficult for African

Cite as: Jama Musse Jama, 2025. Why Diamond Open Access in the Global South? *Dhaxalreeb*, 21 (2), pp. 13-20. DOI: 10.13169/Dhaxalreeb.21.2.0013



researchers to capitalize on the knowledge produced on the continent. The devastating consequences are a weakening of local research capacity and uneven academic production across Africa. These challenges extend far beyond the African continent, encompassing many countries globally, and over the past decade, this issue has been extensively debated within academic and epistemological circles.

Adebisi et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive account of the structural constraints confronting African researchers, highlighting entrenched systemic impediments at both institutional and national levels. The implications of the continent's academic language divide—spanning English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese—for knowledge production, publication, scholarly visibility, and regional intellectual exchange are examined in depth by Mazrui and Mazrui (2018). The language issue is still more challenging for the languages of the continent, and a 2024 scoping review covering 670 journals (2010–2020) found “only 57 journals accepted submissions in African languages—and just 26 articles were actually published in them, among these, the most represented are: Kiswahili, Chichewa/Nyanja, Amharic” (Naidoo et al. 2024).

Although the OA movement initially promised to democratize scholarly dissemination, persistent challenges such as inadequate internet infrastructure, prohibitive APCs, and institutional capacity limitations continue to impede meaningful participation by African scholars (Mboa Nkoudou, 2016). These constraints are similarly evident in Somaliland, where limited research funding¹, underdeveloped academic infrastructure², and weak research governance frameworks restrict scholarly output.

¹ The 2025 national budget approved (November 2025) reduced further the already meagre resources for education in general from \$25,536,102 in 2024 to \$25,466,356 which makes 0.3% reduction, this impacts within the subject, also the research funding (see slmof.org/budget).

² Of the 43 registered higher education institutions in Somaliland (24 universities, 13 university colleges, and 6 colleges), only five (Hargeysa, Cammuud, Burco, Gollis and Burco) have a research department or center, while the others focus on teaching services (source: Somaliland Higher Education Commission).

This has been the case for the last decade³ and a compelling figure reported in the 2025 national budget indicates that only 0.07% of the national budget is allocated to research, which is far below than the already small average of African countries⁴. Comparable pressures are observed in Ethiopia, where as has been mentioned above, several universities now require doctoral candidates to publish in internationally recognized and indexed journals as a condition for graduation—an expectation that, while intended to enhance research quality, has created substantial barriers for students lacking access to robust supervision, research funding, and reputable publication outlets (Teferra, 2016). Early-career scholars across the Horn of Africa (HoA) face similar constraints, navigating competitive publishing environments and persistent structural inequities within global academic systems (Adebisi et al., 2023; Teferra, 2016).

Against this backdrop, the emergence of locally grounded research institutions such as the Somaliland Centre for African Studies (SCAS) is particularly significant. This peer-reviewed journal *Dhaxalreeb*, selected as part of the first cohort of the African Journals Initiative (AJI)⁵, represents a major advancement in regional scholarly infrastructure by strengthening editorial standards, enhancing digital accessibility, and integrating local research into continental and global knowledge networks (SCAS, 2023). In doing so, *Dhaxalreeb* provides a credible and accessible publication avenue for doctoral students and early-career researchers in Ethiopia, Somaliland, and the wider HoA, thereby helping to mitigate longstanding structural barriers to scholarly dissemination (SCAS, 2023; Teferra, 2016). But this is not enough.

So, what is the next?

Diamond OA is a publishing model where neither authors nor readers pay any fees to publish or access scholarly articles. It is

³ For further details on this, see Academy for Peace and Development, 2015; and Ministry of Education and Science Somaliland, 2020.

⁴ See The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data release on SDG 9.5 (Research & Development expenditure as a proportion of GDP).

⁵ See <https://brittlepaper.com/2025/11/african-journals>. See also Jama Musse, 2025, 'Editorial', *Dhaxalreeb*, 21(1), p. 13-16.

typically funded and supported by academic institutions, research communities, and non-profit organizations, distinguishing it from "Gold OA" which often requires authors to pay an APC.

While OA has made significant progress in increasing access to knowledge, it did not prove as a lasting solution to the above-mentioned systemic inequalities and the structural imbalance in knowledge access, production, and sharing, particularly for scholars in the GS. The digital divide still limits access to the internet and digital resources in many parts of the world, preventing true openness. Additionally, knowledge produced in the GS often remains unknown globally. However, Diamond OA represents an important step forward, enabling more scholars from the GS to publish and let the world access to the knowledge they produce without the barriers and obstacles they have traditionally faced including controls, predatory attitudes, and other structural obstacles. But also, as in the case of Ethiopia, upcoming scholars can fulfill their educational requirements for graduations.

In our case, with *Dhaxalreeb*, the key goals are to ensure community ownership of knowledge, increase the visibility of GS publications, and promote OA- all in pursuit of epistemic justice. The strict double-blind peer-review process ensures high editorial standards, while the infrastructure provided by ScienceOpen through AJI streamlines the workflow. This allows the Editorial Board to reach decisions promptly. Furthermore, the availability of articles on JSTOR and the provision of DOIs significantly enhance the discoverability of the publications. There is a clear path forward, as the visibility of publications and knowledge in the GS is still competing with an established and unbalanced system, such as the dominance of the GN: be it a platform, invisible control, a structured system of access to one's community, and mutual promotion among the GN scholars. While collaboration with the GN is still necessary, the focus is on recognizing and elevating local knowledge systems that have historically been overshadowed by the dominant, imbalanced global academic landscape. With this, the ownership of our knowledge is now at an acceptable stage, where we are pushing for recognition of local knowledge production, sharing, and global visibility, and promoting Diamond OA is part of this fundamental effort for the epistemic justice we seek to create.

The push for Diamond OA, which offers free and immediate access to academic publications without cost to authors, is critical in the GS as it has been stated. This model aims to address the structural barriers that researchers face in accessing and publishing academic literature, promoting a more equitable sharing of knowledge on a global scale.

In the context, this issue of the journal is of particular significance. It directly responds to the needs expressed by regional universities, as outlined above, with three of the contributors being PhD candidates whose articles form part of their dissertation requirements—two enrolled in Ethiopian universities and one at the University of Sharjah (UAE). Equally noteworthy is that eight of the ten authors featured in this issue are women early-career researchers, placing them within a demographic that faces the compounded challenges associated with being both female and most of them based in the GS.

This issue brings together original research on heritage preservation across built, written, and oral traditions. The first article, by Nasra Dahir⁶, examines Ottoman and British architectural legacies in Berbera, while Marwaad Kayse⁷ explores a rare archival discovery from *The Somali Horizon*, an underground diaspora-led journal from the mid-1980s resistance to Mohamed Siad Barre's regime.

The central section features contributions by Halgan Dahir⁸, Kidist Dorigatti⁹, Mirea Gabry Del Bianco¹⁰, and Tirsit Yetbarek¹¹ on Somali oral literature and language, highlighting the role of orality in sustaining cultural memory. The final articles, by Nuraddin Aman, Fatuma Hussein Abdulkarim¹², and Rameta Muzeyen¹³, focus on Ethiopia's Islamic manuscript heritage, emphasizing its significance for understanding the region's intellectual and cultural history. Together, these studies offer a

⁶ Nasra Dahir Mohamed (2025).

⁷ Marwaad Kayse (2025).

⁸ Halgan Dahir (2025).

⁹ Dorigatti (2025).

¹⁰ Del Bianco (2025).

¹¹ Tirsit Yetbarek Seme (2025).

¹² Fatuma Husein Abdulkarim and Nuruddin Aman (2025).

¹³ Rameta Muzeyen and Nuruddin Aman (2025).

concise yet rich view of both tangible and intangible heritage preservation across the Horn of Africa.

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