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UCT professor to make an impact on African climate risk research

After being awarded the research chair in African Climate Risk by the [AXA Research Fund](#), University of Cape Town's Professor Mark New aims to use his new position to make a significant change in the research field of African climate risk.

Prof New, who is the director of the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI), has been awarded the first Chair in African Climate Risk. This is the first of three successional Chair appointments, which are worth ~€1.35 million over 15 years.

The launch is scheduled for Thursday, 6 April at 17h00 in the New Lecture Theatre, Upper Campus, UCT (please see [the invitation](#) for more details).

"The focus of my tenure as AXA Research Chair is extreme climatic and weather events," Professor New comments. "These cause some of the most damaging social and economic impacts, and are a key mechanism through which some the impacts of climate change are already being felt. Understanding how extremes are changing and how to respond to them is crucial to finding the near-term responses that we need in the face of a changing climate."

African countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change. Existing developmental challenges, such as high levels of poverty, underinvestment in infrastructure and technology, increasing ecosystem degradation, and weak governance systems aggravate the burden of climate variability and change.

Adverse impacts of global warming in southern Africa have already been detected. They include decreases in water availability, reduced agricultural production and food insecurity, and increased social and economic costs of extreme weather events.

Assessing the impacts of climate change in southern Africa is of the utmost importance to economic and social development. However, the task is complicated by the disparity of climate model projections and the complexity of natural and societal systems. Much more expertise is needed across a wide range of areas, but the community of professionals and researchers working on climate change is relatively small throughout Africa.

In the context of these challenges, the AXA Research Chair aims to produce scientifically innovative and cutting-edge research related to the intersection of climate change risks with African development issues. The research will focus on quantifying and understanding the changing risk of climate on water and food security in southern Africa and determining how extreme events like floods, droughts and heat waves are changing with global warming.

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