Africa in a Highly Globalized World

Taladidia Thiombiano
Ouagadougou University
Ouagadougu, Burkina Faso

I welcome the initiative of the Executive Secretariat which will help to conduct a mini review of CODESRIA and especially to lay new foundations.

To map out the main priorities of CODESRIA over the next few years, it is important to think first of the major changes that will take place in the world and particularly in Africa over the next decade. In this regard, we have first the political problems in the world and the new economic policies that will result from the financial crisis.

The evolution of the socio-political situation in the world

Over the next few years, globally, we will observe a redeal of cards, so to speak. In fact, with the arrival of Barack Obama, who will implement a less warlike policy than his predecessor, we observe new alliances. The issue of the Middle East remains a central and its resolution will lower tensions in the world. If this comes to pass, there may be greater security so that the focus can be laid on economic and environmental issues.

In another sense, we will see the emergence of Russia, China, Brazil, India, and South Africa as competing powers, internationally. These countries will weigh more in major international decisions. Pressures will be made on the role of the United Nations and its Security Council. The UN will have to find a place for these countries in its Security Council as well as Germany and Japan. There will be a review of the role of the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank) with a greater role given to emerging countries. In the same vein, the dollar can no longer have the place it has kept for decades. Finally, the supremacy of the United States will be reduced.

Moreover, with the new French policy of Euro-Mediterranean alliance, an alliance that includes part of North Africa, what impact can be expected for the building of an African Union?

From this point of view, CODESRIA should focus on the following topics:

(i) The new strategic challenges in the world and the impact on Africa;

(ii) The impact of the Euro-Mediterranean alliance on the future of Africa;

(iii) The new policy directions of Africa in a globalized world.

Evolution of the World Economy

The current international financial and economic crisis will continue at least until 2010, and the recovery can truly begin only in late 2010 at the earliest. Africa will experience, with some delay, the effects of the crisis and its persistence will last longer. From this perspective, CODESRIA can study the socio-political and economic implications of the crisis in the world, including:

(i) The impact of the crisis on African economies;

(ii) The financial crisis and agricultural policy in Africa;

(iii) The current integration policies in Africa.

Retrospective on CODESRIA and new directions

CODESRIA has over thirty years of existence and has structures for social science research and training in Africa. It has overcome many difficulties and has managed to maintain its independence despite all the turmoil globally and in Africa. It has also gained the confidence of donors. It has conducted research relevant in most social science areas and has produced many publications. However, in many areas, CODESRIA has failed to carry out prospective studies to anticipate situations in Africa. It has not yet managed to find a place with policy makers in order to influence their decisions. The new directions should be on the following priority areas.

Influence with decision makers

One of the strategies of CODESRIA should be to have a technical role within continental and sub-regional organizations: African Union, sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS, SADC, etc. For this purpose, it must be able to conduct discussions on topics such as:

(a) Economic issues and the new directions of economic policies worldwide;

(b) Prospects for the construction of a United States of Africa: myth or reality;

(c) The ways to the construction of the United States of Africa.

In the current context, we see that democracy in Africa seems to be a myth. There is even a tendency to challenge some republican gains. What role should CODESRIA play? The following should be conducted in the political and legal areas:

(a) The state of democracy in Africa;

(b) The causes of the violations of constitutions and the resurgence of coups;

(c) The trend towards constitutional monarchies.

The relationship between Africa and the rest of the world

With global geopolitics, it is obviously important to understand the changing world and its impact on the continent. Thus, research can be considered on the following:

(a) The new relationships of Africa with former colonizers;

(b) Africa and Europe;

(c) Africa and emerging countries: China, Russia, India and Brazil. In this case, each emerging country must be the subject of a specific study related to the strategy that must be developed by the African continent.

Internal solutions within CODERIA

The mobilization of intellectuals

In the current situation, CODESRIA has made a sizeable mobilization of African

researchers for many years. However, it is worth conducting a qualitative and quantitative assessment on the following:

(a) Geographical and country coverage;

(b) Linguistic mobilization;

(c) Disciplinary representativeness;

(d) Gender.

The type of research over the last twenty years

There was a major effort in terms of diversification of research areas. But it can be noted that prospective research remained very low. Moreover, this research could not fundamentally influence policy makers on the continent. This means that, perhaps, it remained too academic or its dissemination was too low with policy makers; hence the need to consider, as we mentioned above, themes that may influence decision-makers and then develop a more effective strategy for communication and dissemination of research results.

We must reflect on the role that National Working Groups have played in the development strategies of national policies. We can also reflect on how multinational groups have contributed to the mobilization of young researchers and in what areas of the disciplinary research?

Dissemination of research results

CODESRIA has for thirty years published many works in the form of books, journals, monographs, etc. Despite this intense publication, we note that in some areas there is a little dissemination. What new policy should be implemented by the executive body for this dissemination to be as broad as possible and help influence policy makers? In the field of textbooks, so far, there have been few publications by CODESRIA which proved to be reference books. Yet, this is one way to make the institution more influential and known to young intellectuals. Dissemination has for long been a weak point for CODESRIA it should be addressed urgently.

The place of private universities and research centres

When CODESRIA was founded, there were very few private universities. However, we note that this trend should be reversed and there will be a time when public universities will be outnumbered by private universities. Under such conditions, will the current research directions respond to this new situation? It is worth reflecting in this question so as not to be caught in an unpredictable situation. The following themes could be considered:

(a) The role of private university in training and research in Africa;

(b) Private university and the development strategy of CODESRIA.

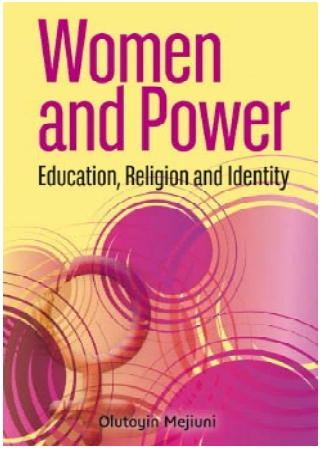
The role of the African Diaspora in financial investment on the continent

In other parts of the world (Israel, Ireland, etc.), migrants have spearheaded the development of these nations through investment. However, Africa has increasingly has many valuable people in the Diaspora (intellectuals, businessmen) capable of investing in Africa. These men and women also have valuable expertise. CODESRIA could consider working on:

(a) The place of the African Diaspora in the development of the continent;

Institutional reforms

It is necessary to conduct a true diagnosis of the current operations of CODESRIA. Consider the number of activities and in the context where the number of researchers is increasing. We henceforth would like the institution to position itself as a partner in terms of political and economic policies in Africa. Will the current structures be operationalized to meet such new requirements?



Women and Power: Education, Religion and Identity

Olutoyin Mejiuni

Education is an important tool for the development of human potential. Organizations and individuals interested in development consider knowledge, skills and attitudes, obtained through formal, non-formal and incidental learning, as invaluable assets. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on fundamental elements that shape the process through which education is attained: How do people learn, and what are the conditions that facilitate effective learning? Answers to these questions demonstrate that no education can be politically neutral, because there is no value-free education.

The traditional or indigenous education systems in Nigeria, which covered (and still cover) physical training, development of character, respect for elders and peers, development of intellectual skills, specific vocational trainings, developing a sense of belonging and participation in community affairs, and understanding, appreciating and promoting the cultural heritage of the community were, and are, not value-free. In other words, the goals and purpose of education, the content, the entire process and the procedures chosen for evaluation in education are all value-laden.

This book attempts to show that the teaching-learning process in higher education, and religion, taught and learned through non-formal and informal education (or the hidden curriculum), and other socialization processes within and outside the formal school system, all interface to determine the persons that women become. This education enhances or limits women's capabilities, whether in the civic-political sphere or in their attempts to resist violence. Hence, education and religion have ways of empowering or disempowering women.