Perspectives on CODESRIA

Sinto-me regozijada por ter sido escolhida como lauréat lusófona para participar no segundo instituto sobre a infância e juventude em Africa, organizado pelo CODESRIA, sob o tema "Enfance et Jeneusse au Temp du Sida". Como investigadora angolana e de um pais onde, além de carecer de condições prementes para o exercício da ciência, a investigação científica está ainda longe de ser vista como uma prática igualmente importante para o desenvolvimento do país, regozijo-me igualmente por poder discutir, em, Dakar, com investigadores de diferentes países de Africa, sobre questões comuns e de particular importância a nível deste continente.

Além de permitir um estreitamento e fortalecimento de laços entre jovens investigadores africanos, bem como o alargamento da sua rede de contactos a nível internacional, o instituto em referência permitiu aos lauréats discutirem e partilharem experiências entre si e com os personnes resources participantes. O nível do debate científico, bem como o interesse revelado no questionamento e tratamento das aspectos teóricos e práticos referentes aos métodos de investigação em ciências sociais permitiu um aprofundar e uma troca de saberes que levou os lauréats a repensarem os seus projectos com vista a melhorarem a sua prestação na análise dos problemas africanos.

Mas o mérito deste instituto é sobretudo o de aproximar os jovens investigadores africanos ao CODESRIA, deixando este de ser representado nas suas mentes como algo abstracto (porque conhecido apenas no papel ou de ouvido) e algo distante (porque sedeado num país distante ou apenas diferente daquele em que habita) para se tornar algo concreto e familiar. Com efeito, e pelo facto das actividades se desenrolarem na sede do CODESRIA, o instituto permite que os investigadores percebam o funcionamento deste organismo, conheçam os seus recursos e objectivos, interajam com o seu pessoal e se sintam acarinhados.

No meu caso particular, a participação nesse instituto foi para mim uma experiência indescritível, um grande momento para conhecer África mais de perto através dos meus colegas lauréats e de exercitar as diversas línguas através das quais nos comunicávamos. Com satisfação percebi, que muitos dos obstáculos com que me deparo no meu percurso como investigadora, de um país como Angola, são agora removidos.

Rosa Maria Amélia João Melo, PhD.
Antropóloga, Investigadora do Centro de Estudos africanos e Asiáticos do IICT (Lisboa)
Sto. Antonio dos Cavaleiros
Portugal

During August and September 2003, I participated in the Governance Institute Session on 'The African Power Elite: Identity Domination and Accumulation'. The Institute consist of eleven laureates selected from Mozambique, Kenya, Congo Republic, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon and resource persons from Algeria, Nigeria, USA, and the Gambia. The Institute was directed by Solofo Randrianja from Madagascar. Each laureate presented his research proposal and it was criticised in an academic atmosphere by other laureates, resource persons, Director of the Institute and Professor Amady Aly Dieng.

The importance of the institute to younger scholars cannot be over emphasised. Academically, it was a very enriching exercise. The resource persons who acted as mentors of the laureates were really enterprising and shared their experiences and knowledge without any economy. The 1000 page photocopy gratis that was given to me as a laureate helped me to be equipped with research materials or intellectual wealth that could be of use through out my academic life. Younger scholars (laureates equally derived a lot, from the good academic environment in CODESRIA. The entire staff of CODESRIA and the Institute injected germs of researche/scholarship in yourngers scholars.

However, I would like to proffer some suggestions for subsequent sessions. The next institute should ensure that all the resource persons must submit their papers before the institutes activities takes off from the ground. These papers must not be previous publications lifted from books, which they published a decade ago. This is to avoid embarrassing the laureates who are at a loss at having seemingly nothing to contribute to fan an already published paper, and end up as students who are merely listening to a lecture. Second, the selection of resource persons should be revisited and scrutinized, with details of what is expected of them communicated well in advance. Finally, methodology should be given priority in the next institute.

In all, from my participation at the Institute, I garnered experience from colleagues, resource persons and the entire staff of CODESRIA cannot be neglected. It drew my attention to a wealth of literature and material previously unknown to me.

Walter Gam Nkwi
University of Buea
Cameroon

Intellectual growth in Africa is fraught with several challen ges that lead many young scholars to drift away into half-baked consultants for mushrooming organisations around the continent. However, for me CODESRIA has marked a change in my intellectual life. After finishing a Masters in Women Studies at Makerere University, Uganda, I was very excited to be part of the 1997 Gender Institute on Gender and Violence in Africa. Other than being an event to meet permanent friends, it was a refreshing moment to discover that questions of relevance both to theory and practice were being discussed in this institute. Another value was that for me from an Anglophone country, this was an opportunity to learn more about francophone literature and debates in social sciences.

In 1998, I was privileged to be part of the University of Legon –Northwestern University fellowship on Slavery in Africa. This was a very revealing exercise because other than being able to conduct a learning tour of all the slave routes in West Africa, the fellowship in Ghana raised questions about Africa, slavery and its Diaspora – questions that we continued to explore in Northwestern University.

I was also honoured in 1999 to participate in a Governance institute on State and Taxation in Africa. Here we were able to interrogate categories and narratives on taxation from a sociological perspective. This was a very intriguing time in terms of building myself academically in the realm of analysis of what for long has been a territory of economists, and I have continued with this work in my current research interests into the political economy of poverty policies.

CODESRIA for me is therefore an intellectual mother and nothing less.

My suggestion is that future institutes should try and develop innovative ways of bringing back some former laureates to present papers in an institute as a mode of continuity and intellectual evidence of growth. Shorter papers based on research proposals at the beginning of the institutes could also be published to add to the range of publications that come out of institutes and also boost the morale of the laureates who may be publishing for the first time.

CODESRIA is in many ways a textual institution but I believe that introducing non-textual methods of evaluation like short video clips done in one institute and shared with another would increase the innovativeness of what can be learned.

Finally, I think CODESRIA should continue to host institutes especially because these are the few times when intellectuals in Africa come together under their own umbrella and agendas. Alluta continua and long live CODESRIA!

Richard Ssewakiryanga
Center for Basic Research
Kampala, Uganda

Many thanks for a wonderful workshop in Dakar. To CODESRIA colleagues, Bayo, Jean-Bernard and Francis thanks for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend the workshop and share ideas with us. A special thanks to Owen, Charles, Kit and Abu for contributing so much& Thanks to Virginie and Ada for organizing all the logistics. Last but not least, a big thank you all the fellows Antoine, Kawango, Monisha, Peter, Ayalew, Nthabi, Donald, Margarida, Martha, Richard, Rotimi and Stella – for the friendly discussions and the energy you put into trying to improve each others work. It was a real pleasure being with you all in Dakar and discussing these exciting projects.

Warmly,

Alcinda Honwana
Program Director
Children and Armed Conflict & Africa Programs
Social Science Research Council
New York

Having made my way to the office and looking at mails in between too many meetings I have been delighted to receive warm-hearted news that everyone has returned well and has had similar experiences as myself of the workshop: thank you all so very much for a thoroughly interesting workshop – in particular, to the resource persons who made this happen (by their presence and by selecting people who are wise as scholars and socially).

I am very grateful that I was able to participate in this initial stage of the fellowship grants – and I hope that I will be able to also participate when the fellows will present their findings.

Warm regards from a cold place.

Catrine Christiansen
Nordic Africa Institute
Uppsala, Sweden

I participated as laureate in the Child and Youth Institute of CODESRIA, 2003. In my opinion, the CODESRIA institutes are important in the following ways:

* It provides a forum for African young scholars to interact and think creatively about major African contemporary concerns such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

* It is very educative in terms of various research methodologies for proper investigation of sociological and anthropological phenomena such as the impact of HIV/AIDS on African populations and socio-economic development.

* It fosters and strengthens networking among African scholars across diverse socio-demographic and developmental boundaries. The laureates would hopefully continue to interact and share ideas and experiences in problem-solving through scientific research and development.

* The Institutes serve as periods of exposure of the laureates to copious literature in various areas of social concerns, each one targeting themes of special interest, example the problems of HIV/AIDS, governance and gender issues in development. Thus laureates are exposed to considerable codified indigenous knowledge about Africa and African concerns.

* A number of laureates became computer literate and developed the necessary skills to access the internet for research information and documents during the 4-week Child and Youth Institute 2003. Thus there was improvement in not only the research skills of the laureates but also in their knowledge and attitudes to research. Every laureate apparently gained knowledge in research proposals writing and appropriate methodologies for their effective implementation.

* By building the capacity of young African scholars, the Insitutes are very strategic in the empowerment of African scholars for the production of authentic indigenous African knowledge and improvement of skills. If sustained and improved, the Institutes are capable of de-colonializing the African mind which is presently dependent and consumer oriented.

* CODESRIA Institutes have often resulted in the floating of Multinational Working Groups (MWGs.) focusing their effort collectively on critical areas of research and development needs of African countries. If support of such MWGs. is sustained, they may become able to induce irreversible positive change in the ways African problems are handled at the political and socio-economic levels. In this way it could be possible to bring about political stability and sustainable economic growth to the continent.

* My participation has generally improved my research capability especially in the areas of demography and anthropology. Also my network of African researchers has increased considerably.

* To improve future Institutes, all the presentation of resource persons should be prepared in good time and translated as appropriate so that the laureates can follow the lectures easily and more fruitfully.

Dr. Z.C. Njoku
Research and Publications Unit
Institute of Education
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Nigeria

I participated as a laureate in the Child and Youth Institute, on the theme The African Child and Youth in the Era of HIV/AIDS, which lasted from 6th October to 31st October 2003.

I can say that the Institutes are of great importance to young scholars in the social science research in Africa. First, it gives young scholars a chance to interact with one another, with the resource persons and the director. This provides an opportunity for one to get varying views and perspectives on a variety of topics that are discussed. This in turn greatly helps enrich the participants knowledge, attitude and orientation in academics, more so in research. This is because it brings together scholars from different academic background and orientation.

As a young scholar, it has provided me with a chance to improve on my skills in research; both methodological and theoretical perspectives. The institute has also exposed me to several journals and research organisations that fund and publish research reports. This is an area that many young researchers find difficult to penetrate. Many journals usually want contributions from renown scholars forgetting that 'a child must crawl before starting to walk and finally run'. Young scholars must also start from somewhere' a chance that CODESRIA has provided.

Funding research has become anathema to many African Universities. Few that still do, only give money to senior members of the academic fraternity. In this regard, the exposure provided by CODESRIA is greatly welcome. Above all, giving a chance to young scholars to come together and start a Multi-national Working Group in collaboration with senior scholars like the one we have informally launched.

However, to ensure that the apropriate level of discussions are maintained at the sessions, I recommend that CODESRIA organise the sessions in a way to allow all the resource persons to attend all the sessions like the laureates. That way the resource persons are aware of the degree and levels of debates before making their own presentation.

The opportunity is greatly appreciated. It should be extended to more young scholars.

Julius Jwan
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Department of Communication Studies
Institute of Human Resource Development
Eldoret
Kenya

Thirty years ago the Council for the Development of So cial Science Research in Africa took that journey and was on its first step to promote research based and appropriate to the African context with the aim of improving the general welfare of the African people.

Africa's problems are myriad: ranging from droughts, floods, diseases, wars etc. Faced with these situations, many governments in Africa merely survive from hand to mouth and have none or limited funds allocated to research in their budgets. CODESRIA is the light at the end of the tunnel for Africa's young scholars. They are given opportunities to discuss, debate, research and publish their work. CODESRIA to the young budding African scholar is the spring board to research and academic excellence. The Council gives hope to many scholars who would otherwise have remained unknown and unutilised.

The Child and Youth Studies Institute 2003 on the theme The African Child and Youth in the Era of HIV/AIDS was of paramount significance to me at personal and professional levels. I have witnessed and been affected by HIV/AIDS through the prolonged sickness and eventual death of close family members who left behind young grieving children not old enough to fend for themselves. From the monthly statistical returns I receive in my office two teachers on the average die a month, they too leave behind young children as most die in the age bracket of 30-40 years. Through the Institute l have been greatly enriched and enlighten from the shared experiences on HIV/AIDS in Africa from the Director of the Institute, the resource persons , and from fellow laureates. The presentations; discussions and debates have challenged and motivated me that through my work I will help make a difference to the children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS as the youth are our future.

Like the mustard seed the Child and Youth Institute must continue to grow into a big tree and continue to bear fruits, this can be done through the multi-national working groups for the production of comparative information and knowledge. Problems of Africa can best be solved by Africans themselves. CODESRIA has a big role to play in the facilitation of the network programs for the Child and Youth Institute so that the one-month workshop is not dumped on the academic shelves and forgotten once each laureate goes back to their respective country. Presentations by resource persons should be translated in CODESRIA's working languages to enable laureates have access to the useful research work and presentations. This is due to the fact that some of the materials were written in either French or English yet the laureates came from both Anglophone or Francophone countries. More computers should be put at the disposal of the laureates. It was otherwise an academic session that has left an impact in my life. I sincerely thank the CODESRIA team for the opportunity accorded to me to interact with other scholars from Africa to highlight on the plight faced by the youths and to seek for solutions to these problems through my research findings.

Merci beaucoup

Beatrice Afandi Lukalo
District Staffing Officer
Busia, Kenya

I had an opportunity to participate in the 2002 governance session on the theme "Infra-state mobilization" I must confess that as a historian it was the first time to be confronted with techno-issues of political sciences and just discovered how necessary those imperatives of the discipline are necessary for any student of social science? Both our directors, professors Tukumbi and Mustapha loaded us with theoretical and conceptual tools necessary for the analysis of the infra-challenges to the African state. This therefore gave me skills that enabled me to have a clear vision over my paper titled: "From Mau Mau to Mwakenya and Now Mungiki? Rebels and Saboteurs in the Nation State in Kenya." Whereby I examined strategies, of protests against the state which aimed at constructing alternative political, social and economic mechanisms that could replace or tame those imposed by the state.

Babere Kerata Chacha
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Egerton Univerity
Njoro, Kenya

The type of intellectual exchange and social interaction that African young scholars need between and among their peers, as well as their resource persons. It sensitises African young scholars to the problematics of 'catastrophic governance' that is prevalent in the continent and how they can contribute towards stemming the tide – by way of research.

No doubt, my participation in the Governance Institute has enhanced my analytical skill, research capability and my teaching career.

In view of the uncertainties that characterise air transportation in Africa, adequate allowance should be made between the date that participants would arrive Dakar and the time when the indispensable

To open up the opportunity for armies of African young scholars yearning to have a stint of the Institute, it is hereby modestly suggested that 20 Laureates (instead of 15) be selected for every Session. As a corollary to this, those who have participated in the Institute once should not be given a second chance. Since there are four resource persons for each Session, it is also modestly suggested here that there should be two Directors for each Session; for all that it is worth. Thank you.

Funso Adesola
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Faculty of Administration,
Obafemi Awolowo University,
Lagos, Nigeria

The strength and resolve of the 2003 Gender Institute on Gender, Science and Technology lay in its diversity of Laureates, resource persons and the vision for Gender science and Technology in Africa funnelled by the Directors. The pertinent, Gender concerns addressed were in areas of Education, Philosophy, Agriculture, Development, Psychology, Medicine and Information, Communication and Technology. Therefore as a young scholar, participating in this Institute was a boon. The proposal call for the Gender Institute 2003 was well thought out and thus even writing a proposal worthy for selection presents a first step to the world of research.

The theme of Gender, Science and Technology enabled one to debate, reflect and engage in varied theoretical implications of this theme for Africa and especially for women. The one-month session, helped unravel and echo the common, yet varied gender concerns of Science and Technology in Africa. This interaction probed and prompted by the Directors and Resource personnel sharpened my perspective and "excavation" into gender concerns in and for Africa. The vital inter-cultural dialogue encouraged by the Directors, brought to surface the commonness of Africa in present times, and her future through young scholars, bringing our Gender, Science and Technology concerns to the Global Arena. The concerns debated were; Patenting rights, Production and Manufacturing of goods, access and equity in education, communication technologies, African indigenous herbal treatments and the link between the North and South hemispheres in terms of Science and Technology.

These different experiences (hard to come by!) presented the background to the critical day-to-day discussions and new perspectives, experienced at this Institute. To augment the debates was the availability of the CODESRIA staff (always ready to assist) library facilities, meeting sessions with the Directors or resource personnel, lecture sessions, Internet facilities and photocopying services. All this demonstrated the commitment with which CODESRIA put in the Institutes work, laureates, academic development of Africa, mentoring and nurturing young African scholars. Collaboration with each other in Africa is vital as participation in the Institute demonstrated by presenting the laureates (from Morocco, Cape, Verde, Senegal, Benin, Niger, Cameroon, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya) with the opportunity to meet renowned scholars like Josephine Beoku-Betts. The Director engaged us in defining our own understandings and nuances of Gender, Science and Technology in Africa and developing further areas of investigation. Consequently, I have been able to join various list serves, visited many Science and Technology Centres in Kenya, met female scientists and I aim at facilitating a seminar on Gender, Science and Technology for my undergraduate students .The Gender Institute 2003 is kept alive by our on-line discussion group facilitated by CODESRIA, where we share our challenges, aspirations achievements etc. As a 17 Laureates we are on course to publishing a world-class book on Gender, Science and Technology in Africa. Bienvenue!

Suggestion: To facilitate quicker publication of the laureates papers, Institutes should perhaps welcome paper drafts for improvement during the Institute. A Gender Institute on Feminist writing would enhance the production of more scholarly work on and out of Africa.

Ms Fibian Kavulani Lukalo,
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El-Doret, Kenya

As a laureate in 1994 and 1998 respectively, the relevance of small grants for thesis writing cannot be under estimated. This is because the programme has helped a lot of scholarly African researchers to fund their research work.

In addition, it has contributed to socio-economic and political development of African countries. This is as a result of relevant data generated by the research that helps African nations in formulating or propounding innovative policies for sustainable development.

However, while the management of this programme has in many regards been praiseworthy, it is disheartening to note that the release of grants has not always been timely. Therefore, my humble suggestion for improvement is that CODESRIA should overhaul the administrative system so as to facilitate the release of results and funds, as well as create more research programmes for PhD students in African Universities.

Dialoke Ikechukwu
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University of Nigeria, Nsukka,
Nigeria

The Small Grants for Thesis Writing is important because it provides the much needed financial support to African (post) graduate students in the efforts to carry out research leading to the award of degrees. It has, in no small way, promoted and developed the social science research in Africa. In terms of its contribution to social science scholarship in this area, we may not be able to quantify it.

CODESRIA needs to fine tune the administration of the grants so as to avoid situations where winners of the grants are perplexed trying to get the grants. More often than none, nothing is heard about the Book Donations component of the grant.

CODESRIA can improve if it can overhaul the management of the grants and its accounting system. By and large, the Council has been invaluable in its contribution to the development of younger African social sciences/ humanities scholars. Kudos to CODESRIA.

Abiodun Salawu, PhD.
Dept. of Mass Communication,
University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Attending CODESRIA's Child and Youth Institute in the greatest thing that has ever happened to my budding career as a social scientist and has more than ever before, given me the confidence that I have unexplored potentials which can contribute towards establishing an African social science. At the age of 25 years, young scholars like myself fade off the academic ladder without having the opportunity to prove their potential, or bring to the forefront the many ideas they are developing in their minds. Suppressed by many 'elitist' or 'conservative' academics, swallowed up and continuously exploited by older academics, young scholars like myself will hardly ever rise to the academic podium, let alone, build an academic career, as we continuously have our thoughts and ideas oppressed, suppressed and further plagiarised by our academic seniors. Through the Child and Youth Institute, CODESRIA provided me with the unique opportunity to freely and limitlessly explore the potentials of my academic prowess.

I was most elated by the continuous efforts made by CODESRIA towards encouraging social science in Africa, and especially towards ensuring for continuity and above all, bridging the gap between young and old African scholars. Unlike many African leaders who hardly groom a replacement, CODESRIA's interest in developing young African social scientists instilled hope in me that the African youth is still the walking stick to the old. Being a debut in my international career, CODESRIA imbibed in me an ever-soaring desire to actively and continuously participate in the purification and establishment of an African social science. Exposing younger scholars to a wider group and broader horizon of, especially African researchers, which will certainly enrich their academic pursuits and further allow them to put their thoughts into perspective. Meeting with young, old, experienced and inexperienced scholars from different parts of Africa, including those from outside the continent, I have been able to learn about the realities and contextual differences of certain phenomena in these varied places and have opened up my mind to how much young African scholars can benefit from such events. After the Child and Youth Institute, I have committed myself to establishing networks with other young African scholars whose environments give them little opportunity to introduce their arguments and perspectives in the academic podium.

With the humility and profound respect expressed by the driver right from the airport, the organised reception at the hotel, the warmth and smile from CODESRIA's gatemen and the encouragements from all of CODESRIA's staff, not mentioning their availability to personally assist me in all my undertakings in Dakar, one can only be tempted and forced to make it a duty to return such red-carpet treatment, especially by continuously participating in CODESRIA's activities, especially by contributing to its various publications. And if the institution has to score another point in history, then its Documentation and Information Centre (CODICE) is worthy of praise. Indeed, I found it to be amongst Africa's best academic collections and thought that every young African scholar should be given the opportunity to consume the wealth of that library, where staff members make it a duty to serve you even out of schedule. Merci CODESRIA. I am quite certain that you will emerge Africa's leading research institutions and I continue to pray that many young scholars like myself are given the opportunity to mount the academic podium like you did to me.

Divine Fuh
Gaborone, Botswana

CODESRIA's major achievement in the last 30 years is the creation of the different institutes (Gender, Governance, and Studies) which have a direct impact on the training and redirecting of social sciences African Researchers.

I participated in the Child and Youth Institute from in October 2003. Institutes have an essential importance for the training and redirecting of researchers. I have taken much advantages of literature on HIV/AIDS and on methodological studies on children.

I would recommend that the duration of the Institute be reduced to a maximum of 2 weeks and that the problem of funding field research projects in the should be looked into.

On the Small Grants Programme aimed at helping students to finalise the writing of their research reports or theses, the successes of the initial years may have been hampered by the huge number of applications he Council receives yearly, thus affecting the effectiveness of the Council to better manage the programme. I would suggest that the programme should be reformed by trying to limit the applications in order to manage the programme better. It is very difficult to manage all applications from every student in Africa writing research reports. It is therefore important for CODESRIA to give the programme a specific theme every year. Students whose subject corresponds with the theme could send an application. So that, CODESRIA will have less applications to work on and will be more efficient in the selections.

CODESRIA's various research programme allow African researchers to create networks or comparative research groups. The Publication programmes serves the important purpose of disseminating the results of research more widely. The publication programme has published a lot of works during the past 30 years and thanks to it CODESRIA research is well known in most of African countries. However, there is a limited distribution in all countries. CODESRIA's representative should be determined in every country to ensure a wider distribution of its publications.

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