

Report of 2017 AROCSA Conference

Organized By

**ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH ON CIVIL
SOCIETY IN AFRICA (AROCSA)**

**In Collaboration
With**

**ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH ON NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND
VOLUNTARY ACTION (ARNOVA)**

**On the theme
“Africa in a Changing Global Context: People, Production and Politics”**

**Held at
School of Governance, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
South Africa
27th – 29th July, 2017**

INTRODUCTION

2017 AROCSA Conference was framed to interrogate the delicate fault-line between People (human rights, human security, injustice, etc), Politics (elections, corruption, etc) and Production (economy, service provision, natural resource management, etc) and the role they play in shaping the Africa's collective development.

Box 1: Objectives of the Conference

- i. Promote an active learning and exchange of information and ideas between researchers and practitioners of civil society organizations;
- ii. Establish key recommendations that inform policy on the way forward in African development; and
- iii. Promote experience-sharing and networking amongst academics, researchers, civil society practitioners, development practitioners and policy makers.

The overarching purpose of the Conference was to identify strategies that are driven by empirical research and conceptual analysis undergirded by practitioners' insights. In other words, the theme was predicated on the desire for robust intellectual analysis of contemporary issues in the global community and how to re-position Africa in the changing global context.

Box 2: Desired Outcomes

- ✚ A new look at theoretical models and frameworks that explain, describe and predict African agency in a global context;
- ✚ An opportunity for practitioners to see reality by exploring what is working elsewhere outside of their immediate domains;
- ✚ New intellectual and practical conversations that will influence African Philanthropy and safeguard socio-economic governance.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The Conference drew large pool of participants from academic, labour/trade unions, non-profits, human rights activists, civil society and development practitioners from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, Zambia, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, United States of America, Europe, Latin America and Asia. The development Research and Projects Center (dRPC-

PACFaH) delegation which was led by Distinguished Senator Olanrewaju Tejuoso, Chairman Senate Committee on Health comprise of Dr. Aremu Fatai (Policy and Legislative Advocacy Consultant, dRPC-PACFaH) and Dr. Jake Dan-Azumi (SA to D-G, NILS).

Day 1 – 27th July 2017

David Gordon Auditorium

A workshop on “The Art of Storytelling: Communicating Academic Information to Non-Academic Audiences” kick-started the Conference programme. At the workshop, strategies, techniques, skills and tools for effectively communication research outputs to diverse audiences were discussed. In particular, the use of innovative techniques such as cartoons, infographics and other user-friendly audio-visuals to simplify otherwise complex research findings were examined and encouraged.

Opening Plenary

David Gordon Auditorium

Remarks by Wits University management and addresses by ARNOVA, Ford Foundation and AROCSA marked the official opening of the Conference. Professor Michael Bratton, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and African Studies, Michigan State University and Co-Founder, Afrobarometer delivered a keynote on the changing political and civic contexts in Africa.

Day 2 – 28th July 2017

David Gordon Auditorium

The major highlight of the Morning Plenary was the keynote paper delivered by Dr. Kumi Naidoo, South African Human Rights Activist and Director of African Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity. Drawing from extensive background experience in civic activism, he emphasized the need for researchers and practitioners to close ranks in holding the government and markets to account. There were 6 parallel sessions on civic affairs and activism, media and citizen journalism, government and civil society organizations, natural resource management and social entrepreneurship. A Roundtable Discussion on African Philanthropy which was chaired by Dr. Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima of Ford Foundation capped the day’s proceedings.

Day 3 – 29th July 2017

David Gordon Auditorium

Morning Plenary commenced with a keynote speech by Bhekinkosi Moyo, Executive Director of Southern African Trust. His presentation centered on innovative social entrepreneurship and virtual staff management. He emphasized the need for a proper conception of Non-profit organization. To him, nothing precludes non-profits from

making profit out of their investment. However, the profits of a non-profit organization must not be distributed among Board members or stakeholders in form of dividend.

The Plenary was followed by parallel panels on Models of Good Governance, Public Policy and Public Sector Reform and Collaborative Engagements with CSOs. The plenary resumed with Roundtable Discussion which was chaired by Ms. Colleen duToit, Consultant and former Director of Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). The highlight of the Discussion was the presentation by David Kode (CIVICUS Monitor) on “Civic Activism and Civil Society’s Response to Human Rights Violations in Africa.” Using evidence drawn from cross-country data, he drew attention to the shrinking civic space in Africa while noting that it is a reflection a global trend.

Closing Plenary

David Gordon Auditorium

The Closing Plenary was anchored by Esi Ansah, AROCSA Board Chair and Shariq Siddiqui, Executive Director of ARNOVA. The highlight of the closing plenary was a speech delivered by the leader of Nigerian delegation to the 2017 AROCSA Conference, Senator Olanrewaju Tejuoso who is the Chairman of Senate Committee on Health. He emphasized the need for closer partnership, cooperation and synergy between government and civil society organizations in order to improve the quality of lives of African citizens.

Photos



Dr. Aremu Fatai Policy and Legislative Advocacy Director at the development Research and Projects Center (dRPC)



L-R: Percy Terfa (Wits), Dr. Aremu Fatai (dRPC-PACFaH), Mrs Josephine Chukwuma (Project Alert), Senator Olanrewaju Tejuoso (Nigerian Senate), Hussain Abdu (Plan International), Dr. Jake Dan-Azumi (NILS)



Senator Olanrewaju Tejuoso delivering a speech at the Plenary Session



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