

CALL FOR PAPERS

The role of civil society in the challenges confronting Africa

3rd Conference of the ISTR-Africa Network on Civil Society

Cotonou, Benin October 3-6, 2003.

This conference will provide a forum for debate on the extent to which rhetoric, practice, activism and social engagement within Africa's civil society have yielded any outcome as far as political emancipation and people's livelihood are concerned. Beyond exploring the term civil society and its application to African historical and contemporary conditions, this conference is chiefly interested in the everyday processes of interaction through which civil society organisations and individual actors have/not managed to induce or contribute to any social transformation, and in the potential for these actors to play any significant role in the challenges confronting Africa today.

Key Challenges facing Africa today

Good Governance

Establishing or consolidating democratic systems and good governance in tune with so called universal values and in line with valuable aspects of Africa's own governance traditions. Taking into account the African context of mass illiteracy and poverty, problematic ethnic and national identities there is a need for ensuring political stability, local and regional security, and genuine mechanisms for conflict resolution.

Poverty

Eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable and gender balanced livelihood exempted from food insecurity, hunger, famine, violence, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, lack of social services, etc.

Regional Integration

Effectively achieving regional and continental integration in order, among others, to have Africa's voice heard and counted upon on the globalised, international scene;

The central question is how far civil society in Africa has responded to these challenges and the potential for significant achievement in the decades to come.

Call for papers

The ISTR-Africa Network on Civil Society invites papers on the major theme above or on any of the sub-themes listed below:

1. Civil society's experiences in poverty alleviation, relations with state organisations and the potential roles of civil society in the NEPAD project
2. Civil society in conflict situations and in contexts of institutional crisis
3. Civil society and the social transformation in the process of decentralisation: citizenship, institutional change, governance and local development
4. The African civil society and the challenge of widening and broadening the social base of the AU project through a Pan-African citizenship.
5. Research practices, conceptual frameworks and methodological challenges in investigations focussed on civil society and social transformation.

The conference committee encourages papers with conceptual elaborations based on sound empirical data and extensively documented case studies.

Participation

The conference will be of most relevance to those engaged with investigating on issues related to civil society, governance, social transformation and development as pertaining to Africa. To further the goal of building a regional network, priority will be given to African scholars, including doctoral students who are near completion or post-doctoral researchers as well as those on the continent at the start of their careers.

Registration Fee

The conference fee is US\$70. Invited participants are responsible for the costs of participation.

Scholarships

It is recognised that researchers from within the region will need assistance to attend the conference. Scholarships do not include a per diem or other payment for participation, or for personal out of pocket expenses. Eligibility for an ISTR scholarship is limited to individuals whose papers have been accepted AND are members of ISTR, which can also be obtained at the conference. Details of membership categories and subscriptions can be found on the ISTR website www.istr.org. The Society can provide letters of support for member-invitees in their efforts to secure funding in order to attend. Requests for consideration for an ISTR scholarship should be submitted to: ISTR Secretariat, 559 Wyman Park Building, 3400 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-2688 USA. ISTR will also accept requests by fax: (1-410) 516-4870.

Submission of Abstracts

Abstracts in French or English B of between 500-1000 words B must be submitted by May 16, 2003. Authors whose abstracts are selected will receive notification by July 2003.

To be considered in assessment by the academic committee, an abstract should: give a working title; summarise the argument of the paper and the issue(s) which it addresses; locate that issue within a wider literature; and refer to its empirical and/or theoretical base. It should be suitable for blind refereeing. A good abstract would include information about:

- the research question or hypothesis
- relevance to the African setting and experience
- the research method(s) employed
- findings, conjectures or issues arising from the endeavour
- cross-disciplinary or wider relevance

Brief biographical details (name, qualification, current position) should be given in an accompanying note or letter with the submission.

Abstracts should be submitted, preferably by email, to:

In English, Send to: Mammo Muchie
Middlesex University, Business School, Bramley Road, Oakwood, London N22 5AP, UK,
Phone: (44-181) 362-5665; Fax: (44-181) 441-4672
Email: mammomuchie@hotmail.com

In French, send to: Roch Mongbo
Université d'Abomey alavi (ex. Un. Nationale du Bénin)
02 BP 778, Cotonou, Benin, Phone: (229)304 139
Email: rmongbo@intnet.bj

Conference Committee

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What is ISTR?

Established in 1992, The International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) is the major international association dedicated to building a world-wide community of scholars in a broad

realm variously designated as civil society; voluntarism; the third or non-profit sector; philanthropy, social economy and non-government organisations (NGOs). Its activities include the publication of a quarterly journal "Voluntas", the organization of international conferences and networks, facilitation of affinity groups and the promotion of member-based research agendas and initiatives. ISTR maintains a website and a listserv. The Society has already held five International Conferences: Hungary (1994), Mexico (1996) Switzerland (1998), Ireland (2000) and Cape Town (2002).

The Society's mission is to promote the development of high quality research and education internationally on Third Sector related issues, theories, practices and policies; and to enhance the dissemination and application of knowledge about the Third Sector as widely as possible throughout the world. ISTR strives to broaden the participation of researchers in all countries and in all disciplines and research traditions.

What is the ISTR African Network?

The Africa network was initiated in 1996, it gathers researchers from the region engaged in the study of the non-profit sector, civil society, philanthropy, etc., who are interested in advancing academic research as well as interaction with practitioners and policy makers on these topics throughout Africa.