

CIVIL SOCIETY AND A RENASCENT AFRICA: A STOCK TAKING AN ISTR AFRICA NETWORK (ISTRAN) CONFERENCE

Date: September 16-18, 2015

Venue/Hosts: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

BACKGROUND

Two decades ago, the 'discovery' of civil society was heralded as the key, theoretically and practically, to a renascent Africa, expected to reconstitute the state and contribute to development and democratization objectives on the continent. This expectation, more so, was based on a hypothesized potential of civil society to provide the missing key, at both theoretical and policy levels, to sustained political reform, legitimate states and governments, and viable state-society and state-economy relationships, and to prevent the kind of political decay that had undermined African development in the past.

Two decades later, to what extent has civil society lived up to those expectations? Is civil society the missing key to a renascent Africa? Specifically to what extent has civil society contributed to the triple imperatives of African development, democratization and integration? More basic, has an African civil society that is organically embedded in and responds to African realities and aspirations, emerged? If so, what is its nature and contours? What influences its development and contributions? How representative is it, in nature, agenda, operational modalities, location of operations, of the preoccupations of the ordinary men and women who constitute the majority of Africa's citizenry? And how can the civil society sphere in Africa, and the organizations therein, be sustained?

These questions, and more, will be explored at the 2015 International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) Africa regional network conference. Specifically the conference will take stock of two decades of civil society praxis and its contributions to the imperatives of a renascent Africa.

To be hosted by the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, the conference will be organized around keynote addresses and a number of paper presentations. Keynote Speakers will provide historical assessments of different dimensions, and roles, of civil society.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite abstracts and papers from researchers working on these issues. Abstracts should be received by **March 15, 2015**, and the completed papers by **July 1, 2015** at the latest.

Papers are invited that addresses the following sets of issues:

- The Making of Civil Society in Africa
- Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Africa
- Civil Society and the Challenge of African Development
- Civil Society and the African Integration project
- Civil Society and the Donor System in Africa
- Civil Society and the Aid System in Africa
- Researching Civil Society in Africa
- Civil Society and Philanthropy in Africa
- Civil Society and Economic Neoliberalism in Africa
- Civil society Strengthening and Sustainability in Africa

Only those who will have submitted completed papers by the deadline will be allocated presentation time in the timetable.

A limited number of scholarships may be availed to facilitate the participation of graduate students in

African institutions working on civil society related topics.

CONTACT PERSONS: Abstracts should be submitted to Dineo Seabe: dineoseabe@gmail.com
By March 15, 2015.

Selection of abstracts will follow ISTR's review process guidelines.

Select high quality papers presented in this conference may qualify for publication in one of the various ISTR publications.

ABOUT ISTR

The International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) is a global membership association of scholars, researchers, and practitioners with the goal of keeping them abreast of changes and participate in a dialogue with on matters related to civil society, philanthropy and the non--profit sector, otherwise known as Third Sector (after Government and Business). Founded in 1992, ISTR is recognized and valued for its special role as a convenor of scholars and policy makers on third sector issues from around the world. ISTR's role is in advancing scholarship and research on civil society. It has active regional network hubs in Africa, Asia and Latin America who hold regional research conferences every two years. The ISTR Africa Regional Network specifically supports emerging African scholarship in civil society by holding conferences and professional development workshops once every two years. It is a community of over 120 scholars both working and living in African countries, but also includes members of the African diaspora in other parts of the world. ISTR Africa Regional Network remains true to the global network's core mission, which is to increase, share, and apply knowledge about the third sector in all countries of the world. The specific goals and objectives of the African Network are to develop a critical mass of African scholars dedicated to the field of third sector research.