ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFRICA

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4th AROCSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 2019

Theme: Leveraging Technology for Effective Government and Civil Society: A Review of Africa's Digital Renaissance and Innovations in Civil Society

CALL FOR PAPERS: GUIDELINES

PARTNER & LOCATION: **Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya**
DATES: **July 22nd – 24th, 2019**   WEBSITE: **www.arocsa.org**

ABOUT AROCSA

The Association for Research on Civil Society in Africa (AROCSA) was established in September 2015 in Accra, under the auspices of the Association for Research on Non-Profit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), and the Ford Foundation, West Africa, to promote and advance a community of excellence in research and practice on civil society in the service of African development. One of AROCSA's main operational areas is to convene an Annual Conference which seeks to bring together scholars and practitioners for networking, learning and skills-building. AROCSA is driven by the vision of an Africa where knowledge generation and dissemination on civil society by scholars reflect global excellence standards and propels development.

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE THEME

The adoption and use of technology across the African continent has created an ecosystem that cuts across sectors and industries, and proactively facilitates: economic transactions; the building of social networks; the fueling of political movements; and the facilitation of education, trade, governance, and workplace efficiency.

One of the major roles of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is drawing attention to social issues or state action and inaction in a manner that generates a corrective response from public institutions (Brynard & Mukamunana, 2002). A society in which CSOs adequately fulfill this role will also in effect have a transparent, accountable governance environment. Fulfilling this role would require the adoption and utilization of technology as a tool and an enabler, and technology driven data as both input to and output of transparent governance.

The slow or non-integration of technologically-driven data creation and consumption into practices of many African CSOs illustrate that such organizations are operating in a manner that might have been adequate for past, but not for future challenges. This is because such a deficiency limits African CSO's ability to deliver on their basic role of holding government institutions accountable. It also makes them ill prepared to exploit new opportunities provided by the recent global technological advances. Furthermore, measurable, trackable and verifiable information, generated through technologically-driven processes also has the advantage of creating knowledge that could be shared, studied and debated. Information and communication technologies have opened up spaces of power, influence and association to new configurations of actors, leading to a significant growth of online civil society activity, and enabling networks to be built across geographical, social and physical divides (World Economic Forum, 2013).

In a rapidly digitizing world, to contribute to, and benefit from initiatives like the ones mentioned above and to deliver on their most basic mandate requires that CSOs in Africa position themselves to become more efficient producers and consumers of technologically-driven data. This would lead to the production of identifiable patterns of information in a format that could be modeled. This is a goal that could be met through the integration of even the most rudimentary internal and external documentation practices.

Although examples of good practices in countries like Kenya and Ghana, as well as organizations like BudgIT and Nigerian Electoral Monitor abound, the potential of large-scale utilization of technologically-driven applications for data creation and consumption remains an inadequately tapped resource by African CSOs. Uptake is more likely among non-CSO organizations run by younger persons. Such organizations are also beginning to take on the traditional roles of NGOs - at least in the technological space. More traditional CSOs seem to be stalled by the question of whether supply (production and utilization) of data will create its own demand (more opportunities to beneficially consume and generate data). To get Africa to rise to the challenges and opportunities created by the information age, there seems to be an urgent need for CSOs to increase their participation in the space of data and technology.

References

Brynard, P., & Mukamunana, R. (2002). *The role of Civil Society Organisations in Policy Making Process in Rwanda* (Masters). University of Pretoria.
World Economic Forum. (2013). The Future Role of Civil Society, (p. 6).

CONFERENCE GOALS

The purpose of this conference is to accomplish two key goals-

- Embark on an analysis of governance gaps in Africa, particularly those gaps that are the result of, or could be better plugged by increased and improved use of technology and data by CSOs.

- To showcase how technology has and could positively transform the governance environment in Africa by improved CSOs monitoring of governance, as well as CSO self-monitoring.

Undergirded by empirical research and conceptual analyses as well as practitioners' insights, we hope to first, encourage the intellectual analysis of contemporary issues concerning data and technology consumption and production by CSOs in Africa. And second, highlight existing best practices, as well as the challenges of, and opportunities for data and technology uptake by Civil Society. We also hope to identify and showcase examples of how civil society organizations across the African continent have used innovative data and technology approaches to achieve results in their work.

DESIRED OUTCOMES
- *Connecting key actors who wish to advance civil society's role in Africa in demanding that governments live up to their obligations, and that people have a say in how they are governed;*
- *Highlighting the critical role of civil society in African governance assessment initiatives;*
- *Identifying specific ways to enhance the involvement of civil society in both the production and use of governance data;*
- *Taking stock of and critically reflecting on African experiences in conducting civil society assessments, and to provide recommendations on how to make them more relevant and valid locally;*
- *Introducing selected social accountability tools and provide a 'reality check' from field practitioners on how best to use them, with a specific focus on innovative tools which make use of new technologies and social media;*
- *Understanding of theoretical models and frameworks using technology to address governance challenges;*
- *Showcasing what is working well elsewhere, and beyond sharing of best practices, encouraging uptake and replication;*
- *Promoting active learning exchange of information and ideas between researchers and practitioners of civil society organizations;*
- *Establishing key recommendations that inform policy on the way forward in African development;*
- *Promoting experience-sharing, learning and networking amongst academics, researchers, civil society practitioners, development practitioners and policy makers.*

We welcome research roundtables, practitioner lightening panels, and poster submissions that conceptualize the use and production of technologically-driven data in the work of civil society organizations, examine theoretical models and frameworks that explain, describe, predict and highlight determinants of successful application of technology as well as use of technologically-driven data to improve governance. Ultimately, the discourse should lead to new research that is relevant to the theme.

We look forward to providing an opportunity for practitioners to share their lessons, especially concerning how they, as civil society actors, have adopted digitization and technology driven knowledge production. We are interested in learning about the myths, failures and successes of digitization and technologically-driven data to improve good governance. We will also engage in conversations about the challenges in leveraging technology in CSO efforts towards problem-solving.

SUB-THEMES

We are coordinating content presentation options that address the following sub-themes in the context of TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT in Africa:
1. Innovations in digital systems in the sciences, and digital governance for development;
2. CSOs monitoring government and self-monitoring as part of the digital innovation;
3. Collaboration of CSO/CSO and CSO/government.

While the conference will highlight these general themes, we also HIGHLY ENCOURAGE presentations and content (paper presentation, roundtable discussion, poster presentation, film screening) from all scholars and practitioners that focus on philanthropy and civil society in Africa.

IMPORTANT DATES
February 22th, 2019:   Deadline for Submission of Summary Paper
May 25th, 2019:   Final Submission of all Conference Papers
July 22nd – 24th, 2019:   Conference

FORMAT OF THE CONFERENCE
The conference program will include the following:
- **Opening Plenary** with a keynote speaker
- **Breakout sessions** with presentations by 3 speakers
- **Roundtables** discussions focusing on practitioner experiences
- **Poster exhibitions** showcasing work done by CSOs
- **Pre-conference Skills Development Workshop** for early career scholars
- We will make room for a **film screening** on a relevant video documentary, or a **Debate** on a relevant issue if there are compelling submissions.

AROCSA is particularly interested in empirical academic research papers, conceptual academic papers, especially those done in collaboration with civil society practitioners, and poster presentations to showcase work being done by CSOs. Please specify your preference of presentation when submitting the summary paper.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF SUMMARY PAPERS
Please contact the AROCSA office with your questions by e-mailing aokaomee@arnova.org.

Steps on How to Submit a Summary Paper
1. Visit https://www.arnova.org/page/arnova_africa
2. Register to become a member of AROCSA, if you are not a registered member*
3. Submit a **600-word summary paper**: Deadline for Submission – February 22th, 2019
4. IF ACCEPTED, final submission of paper according to the guidelines/format by: May 25th, 2019
Please note that you do not need to be a member of AROCSA to submit a paper. However, we encourage all authors who are not registered members of AROCSA to first register to be members of AROCSA, before submitting a summary.

The 600-word summary should include the following:
1. A title that clearly identifies the conference theme being addressed;
2. Problem or issue that will be addressed in the presentation;
3. Topic's relation to the state of knowledge in the field (including relevant literature);
4. Methodological approach (including analytical strategy and data sources);
5. A brief account of conclusion and its significance to an international audience.

The online summary submission will be open one month before the deadline.

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