ISTR Africa workshop continues to inspire

As the ISTR Africa Network grows, it continues to attract greater interest at what is becoming one of the major workshops convened during the International Conference of the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR). The 2012 workshop was held on 9 July, a day before the official opening of the 10th ISTR International Conference in Siena, Italy. Presenters included ISTR regulars, as well as first-time presenters such as PhD student Beyene Tessema. The workshop attracted audience from the University of Siena students, as well as other participants from the 10th ISTR International Conference. Thanks to the generous support of Trust Africa, we were able to provide travel grants to five presenters.

Themed ‘Economic Spaces and Political Opportunities for African Civil Society Organisations’, the workshop had three broad sub-themes that included: i) impacts of economic and political developments on collective mobilisation strategies; ii) social action and the composition, identity and nature of civil society; and iii) accountable civil society. The call for papers attracted 26 abstracts from African and Africanist scholars and research practitioners. Fifteen papers were ultimately accepted after peer reviews. Due to logistical challenges (including the late confirmations of the travel grant in time for visa applications) only the nine papers described below were delivered during the workshop, as some of the potential participants did not make it to the conference.

Shauna Mottiar and Alan Fowler’s paper, Social Protest, Contentious Politics and ‘Uncivil’ Society in South Africa – Researching Processes and Outcomes, raised a conceptual and methodological conundrum faced by researchers around Gatherings Act incidents in South Africa, especially because little is known about the nature and influence of ‘uncivil’ agency on social, economic and political challenges. The paper argued that if civil society is understood as additional rather than residual to the state and market, research needs to examine ‘uncivil’ society with regards to deepening democracy, transforming power relations and altering market economies, as well as the potential of collective action.
Workshop participants from the left Alan Fowler, Precious Nwachukwu, Hilary Yerbury, Frederick Claeye, Jacob Mati, Susan Wilkinson-Maposa, Mwanja Ng‘anjo, Ronelle Burger, Tessema Beyene’s

to create or promote alternative solutions to socioeconomic challenges. The paper proposed a possible approach in analysing and contextualising contentious politics in South Africa by drawing on the notion of micro politics and self-organised propagation of ‘unruly’ political engagement that signal deep-lying discontent with existing political dispensations.

In his paper, Possibilities within Limitations or Limits to the Possible? Kenyan Social Movements and Counter-Hegemonic Struggles to Transform an African State Through Constitutional Reforms (1990-2010), Jacob Mati looked at the struggles that delivered a new constitution in Kenya. The paper argued that these struggles and processes have been complex and have involved multiple players who have at times had contradictory goals. The paper addressed the question of how a unified collective action movement can emerge from diverge social groups/actors, even in a divided society such as Kenya. The paper argued that the confluence of the different forces was made possible by ‘shared systems of reference’ in the form of collective outrage over an economically predatory and anti-democratic state. It also argued that the plurality of actors and issues has been the reason for the frequent disagreements between different socioeconomic groups and, in the process, frequently derailed reforms.

Tessema Beyene’s paper, Charity Laws and their Impacts in Democratisation: Examining the Ethiopian Charity Law, focused on the role and effectiveness of CSOs in the advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of equality, protection of the rights of children and the disabled, and the promotion of the efficiency of justice and law-enforcement agencies. The paper argued that there is an ongoing backlash against democratisation, as civil society is facing serious threats characterised by a pronounced shift from outright repression of democracy, human rights and civil society organisations, activists and groups, to more subtle governmental efforts to restrict the space in which CSOs operate, especially those working on the promotion of democracy and human rights. The backlash is orchestrated through sophisticated legal or quasi-legal obstacles that discourage the formation of CSOs or restrict organisations’ ability to secure the resources required to carry out their activities.

Marco Tavanti’s paper, From System Failures and Systemic Famine to Sustainable Human Security: The Political Opportunities in Somalia from a Diaspora and Global Civil Society Perspective, offered insight into the historical and current systemic challenges and political opportunities represented by the constitutional reforms, upcoming elections, and international cooperation, specifically from Somali civil society organisations in diaspora. Drawing on the analysis of the role of the International Development Law Organisations (IDLO), along with other key intergovernmental and international organisations, the paper highlighted practical political opportunities emerging from the Somalia Strategy Forum and other international civil society initiatives directed toward building governance capacity and guaranteeing a blueprint for a sustainable human security in the country and the region. The paper further analysed the role of the African Union, along with the re-engagement of the United States government and other countries in the region. The paper suggested that a comprehensive human security framework is needed in finding lasting solutions to the Somali problem.

Susan Wilkinson-Maposa’s paper, Regulation by Another Name? Improved Coordination for Development Assistance to Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVC&Y), tackled the pertinent issue of the emergence of regulatory laws and policies, especially the more subtle but more effective ways of policing civil society. Drawing on empirical work, the paper examined the use of coordination mechanisms – policy frameworks and the move toward pooled funding mechanisms and national budgets – as part of a state’s regulatory repertoire. Maposa argued that there is a relationship between institution type – government, non-governmental organisation (NGO) and community based organisations (CBO) – and an associated theory of change.

Bev Russell’s paper, titled Exploring the Nature of Civil Society in Africa, the Results of an Empirical, Exploratory Research Study, was presented by Susan Wilkinson-Maposa as Bev did not make it to Siena. Bev’s paper calls for the need for a more endogenous and appropriate methodology to guide the study of civil society in Africa. The paper reviewed endogenous African literature, supplemented by
consultations, debates and interviews with researchers and academics involved in civil society in a range of African countries, to propose a draft framework for understanding civil society in Africa.

Hilary Yerbury’s paper, *Using ICTs in Civil Society: Some Observations from Young Rwandans*, was based on an exploratory study of the role of information and communication technologies, particularly the mobile phone and the internet, in fostering engagement in civil society and encouraging the development of social capital among young Rwandese people. The study findings suggested that telephone use was significant both for young people’s projects and their personal lives. In their personal lives, they placed an emphasis on what could be interpreted, creating and maintaining bonding capital. However, in civil society the phone was used for instrumental purposes – to ensure that a fellow volunteer is well briefed or that a task is done – and there was no evidence that they were attempting to create bridging capital.

Frederik Claeyé and Nathalie van Meurs’ paper, *Becoming More Business-like? Marketisation and Its Impact on the Construction of NPO Identity in South Africa*, shows how, driven by a need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, managing for development results has become a central element in the international discourse on aid effectiveness. Using an interpretive framework, Claeyé and Van Meurs examined how managers and team leaders in NPOs in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa construct organisational identity through a two-pronged strategy – managerialist and the ‘best practices’ – in order to obtain legitimacy as ‘proper’ organisations (and thus access donor funding). The paper offered a critique that blends postcolonial, critical management and critical development approaches.

Mwanja Ng’anjo’s paper, *The Role of Citizen Action in Mitigating the Negative Impacts of HIV and AIDS*, makes a case for the need for interventions on HIV and AIDS to include ordinary citizens in solving problems they face, as governments and experts cannot tackle this on their own. It needs citizens to help frame the problem, propose solutions and to be actively involved in addressing the effects of HIV and AIDS in their communities (see further details on the paper below).

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**INSIGHTS FROM THE ISTR 10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

By Mwanja Ng’anjo – IDASA, South Africa

The 10th International Conference of the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR), which was convened in Siena, Italy, in July 2012, brought together scholars, researchers and participants from around the globe. Needless to say, as the world becomes more globalised, the problems that transcend disciplinary, sectorial and geographical boundaries also increase. The ISTR Conference therefore provided a rich forum from which participants from different parts of the world could focus on the developments in the Third Sector. The topics covered ranged from human rights, philanthropy and social entrepreneurship to accountability, networking and marketisation of the sector, amongst others. One of the themes that resonated with the paper on *The Role of Citizen Action in Mitigating the Negative Impacts of HIV and AIDS* (presented at the workshop on the African context, which was held on 9 July at the University of Siena), was that of enhancing participatory approaches.

**The Role of Citizen Action in Mitigating the Negative Impacts of HIV and AIDS**

The discussion paper features a few selected accounts of individual and collective citizen action in combating the negative impacts of HIV and AIDS on their own lives and the lives of others in their communities. Some implications for the broader AIDS discourse from the cited examples on citizen action are also given. The fight against HIV and AIDS has been recognised as a global fight which no country can fight singlehandedly. Indeed most countries’ AIDS budgets are made up largely of donor funding from global funding houses such as the Global Fund and various UN agencies (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Mukotsanjera, 2008). This, however, does not mean that citizens do not have a major and indispensable role to play in challenging the effects of HIV and AIDS in their lives and the lives of citizens in their communities.

The current HIV and AIDS debate has largely excluded ordinary citizens. They regard the conversation about HIV and AIDS as a conversation between experts in which their contribution either does not count or could not be useful. Citizens need spaces where they can define the problem as they experience it in their communities and where they can propose solutions as equal, resourceful and talented governance partners with government and civil society (Strom, 2005). The HIV and AIDS discussion must become inclusive of citizens so that their needs can be reflected in policy design at every level of government. When citizens become active in facing up to problems such as HIV with policy makers and planners, they develop capacity and confidence to take ownership and responsibility for common concerns in public life.
In many instances, citizens may not necessarily take any action in their lives or communities to ameliorate negative situations, due to varied reasons. Some, for instance, may become discouraged when they see the amount of resources needed to spend on campaigns or legal machinery. Others simply play the blame game and attribute their woes to politicians or poor leadership in societies, while others may simply have no trust in their fellow citizens, or may feel that they will not find enough people in their communities who are concerned about the same problem (Kettering Foundation, 2008). This is especially true when it comes to dealing with the many challenges that HIV brings upon individual lives and society as a whole.

Nevertheless, citizens need not necessarily feel powerless. From a policy perspective, more citizen-oriented action needs to be encouraged and citizens themselves need to hold their governments accountable in protecting their rights and mobilising local resources in fighting AIDS in a transparent, effective and efficient environment.

**Plenary**

The closing session in plenary was held on Friday 13 July, with a keynote address by Rami Khouri (American University of Beirut), who presented on *Citizen Revolts and Historic Transformations Across the Arab World: Why Civil Society Now Faces its Greatest Test*. His presentation also highlighted the need for encouraging participation from citizens and pointed out that civil society can intervene in the following areas:

- Articulate ideas by the majority and encourage participatory input, for example into parliaments.
- Assist in figuring out how to translate the broad goals and grievances of citizens into plausible policies and policy interventions or mechanisms.
- Help to shape constitutions and mechanisms that guarantee the rights that are on paper.
- Reduce the possibility of a return to the old ways of power.

He reiterated that civil society can make contributions in the Arab world on development challenges, citizen priorities and by addressing exclusion. This presentation was particularly useful as it was stressed that in addressing the many challenges in the Third Sector, including the Arab world, citizens need not be excluded. The same can be applied to redressing the ills brought about by HIV and AIDS, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where citizen action can go a long way towards fighting the scourge.

In conclusion, the 10th ISTR International Conference also proved to be a sound platform for debate and critique on research and new developments in the Third Sector. Although the majority of the participants were scholars, the sprinkling of “practitioners” shed light on current practicalities in civil society, such as philanthropy and accountability, as well as the measurement of our work and the emphasis of the donor community on efficiency and effectiveness, which was particularly useful. In this light, the ISTR Africa Network can play a significant role in acting as consolidator for research produced by its members on the continent.

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**Call for Papers for a Special Issue of Development in Practice**

Lessons from Endogenous Approaches to Development in Africa and Elsewhere.

This special issue of Development in Practice moves from the rhetoric of aid effectiveness and local ownership toward examining endogenous development practice at the community and national levels. Articles in this issue will explore a) definitions, understanding and theories of endogenous development; b) the evolution and incorporation of indigenous cultural practices and leadership into local development practice; c) national policies that encourage and reflect endogenous interests; and d) challenges for endogenous led development in a globalizing world. The focus of the issue is on Africa. We especially invite proposals for papers or practical notes on the following: 1) endogenously driven national policies (on, for example, natural resource management, agricultural policies, HIV and AIDS, human rights, management of trade or FDI; 2) Local, endogenously led and informed innovations with potential for wider application; 3) Donor practices and endogenous development; 4) Knowledge management and endogenous approaches in a digitalized era.

Please submit abstracts (250 words) of proposed paper or note by 15 of February to Guest Editors Chiku Malunga at cadeco@sdnp.org.mw and Susan Holcombe at shholc@brandeis.edu.
Religious institutions are key structural components of civil society. The historical and future development of modern Africa is intimately tied to the forces of belief and religion with some of the most prominent manifestations of civil society on the African continent being Faith Based organisations (FBOs). Faith and belief featured in both colonial penetration and in anti-colonial struggles in the continent. Moreover, FBOs often fulfil critical functions in social service provision in areas such as health and education, in influencing government policies, as well as in advocating on behalf of poor people and marginalized. FBOs have also featured prominently in recent African socioeconomic and political history, in human rights crusades and democratization struggles. Framing their demands on the basis of a liberation theology, for instance, FBOs teaming with other civil society actors and opposition political parties played a huge role in organising and mobilising people to act against socioeconomic and political injustices in society as well as in the agitation for new constitutional order in Kenya. In Northern African countries, they have recently been instrumental in electoral outcomes. In short, FBOs are critical constituent elements of social development and in Africa’s politics. Arguably therefore, besides ethnicity, faith is a significant variable influencing governance, conflict, and the nature of the African nation-state.

Despite increasing recognition of faith – for good or ill – as an inescapable factor in the continent’s development, in social scientific analysis, faith has not been accorded adequate attention. To redress this relative neglect, at a conference to be held in Nairobi in 2013, the ISTR Africa regional network conference shall be examining manifestations of faith and its influence to civil society, governance and development in Africa.

Specifically, we seek papers that address the broad question of how faith has affected group and individual relations, civil society, governance and the process of development on the African continent. Papers should broadly focus on the many, often contradictory, roles faith plays at both national and transnational levels with a view to addressing the following subthemes and questions:

- **Faith and governance in Africa.** How has and does faith affect the mechanics and trajectories of governing in Africa?
- **Religion/faith and democracy in Africa.** How is faith influencing the processes of democratization either positively or negatively on the continent’s states? Does faith add to or mollify the suppression of the individual needs of social groups (e.g. women and immigrants) and dissenters in the public and political sphere?
- **Faith and conflict in Africa.** To what extent has faith contributed to social cohesion and integration or been a source of conflict and divisiveness in Africa? How has faith induced challenges to state stability, equality and development in Africa? To what extent have conflicts in African countries including but not limited to Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, and Sudan been influenced by faith and religion? How has faith influenced the generation, responses and resolution of conflict and attendant humanitarian crisis on the continent?
- **Faith and the political economy of development:** How has the political-economy of faith based development aid in Africa shaped patterns of social organisations and development in Africa?
- **Faith and values in Africa:** How has faith shaped values in civil society and society in general? What does a faith lens reveal about the nature of civil society in African countries?
- **The relationship between Faith Based civil society and secular civil society in Africa.** What is the nature of relationship(s) between FBOs and secular civil society in Africa? What determines the nature of the relationship? Are there differences in development outcomes driven by religious based civil society and the secular civil society?
- **Faith and social capital in Africa.** How has faith contributed to social capital in both its bonding and bridging forms and what are the implications for state stability in Africa?
- **Faith and class formation in Africa.** How have beliefs and faith been mobilized in the interest of class in Africa?
- **Faith and the public sphere in Africa.** Obadare (2007) has observed an uneasy and unstable relationship between religious forces and the public spheres as religious forces simultaneously complement but also undermine the public domain. To what extent do observations made of Nigeria cascade to the rest of African nation states? Is faith marginal even in the so-called secular states in Africa?
- **Faith, philanthropy, giving and volunteerism in Africa.** Does faith inspire and inform patterns of giving and receiving assistance between Africa’s populations?
- **Faith and service provision.** What would access to social services look like on the continent if it were not for the presence of faith based organisations and why?

Abstracts of between 500 and 700 words should be submitted to Dineo Seabeat 17275539@sun.ac.za by 15 February 2013.