

A MEETING OF MINDS: The Journey to A New Field of Study

The official launch in New York of the African Centre on Philanthropy and Social Investment (ACPSI) in January was a milestone in a long and exciting journey through unexplored territory.

It all started about twenty years ago when a group of African foundations started talking about the need to create a platform that would bring together pan-African voices in philanthropy. They recognised that philanthropy - and the practice of 'gifting' in Africa - is as old as the continent itself, but that there was no formal body of knowledge on the subject.

As Dr Bhekinkosi Moyo, Director of the ACPSI, says: "In Africa there are many, many people with a wealth of experience in philanthropy, but the knowledge is in their heads. This is a field that has not been studied or researched anywhere in Africa. It is imperative that we ensure that this information, these experiences, are documented so that we can understand the role that philanthropy can play in both the economic and ethical transformation of our continent."

Another milestone in this journey took place back in March 2016, when a group of academics and practitioners met at a symposium at Wits Business School in Johannesburg to discuss, for the first time, a new centre for research in the fledgling field of 'African philanthropy.'

This meeting gave rise to the first Chair in African Philanthropy, a collaboration between the University of the Witwatersrand ('Wits' University) and the Southern Africa Trust, with Professor Alan Fowler as interim director.

Fast-forward nearly three years to New York City and the official launch of the ACPSI, hosted by funding partner the Carnegie Corporation. The launch, which took place on 17 January 2019 drew together participants from all over the globe: academics, funders, non-profit organisations and policy makers. By then the field of African philanthropy has been widened to include social investment, in all its guises.

"In Africa, it is uniquely befitting that philanthropy be studied alongside social investment," says Moyo. "The private sector is a key player as an engine for economic growth and, as is normally the case, philanthropy gets its financial muscle from this sector. It will be



ISTR Board Members (past and present) celebrate the Centre launch in New York City. (l to r) Bheki Moyo, Adam Habib, and Kathleen McCarthy

the role of this Centre to influence how this money gets ploughed back into communities."

Africa is poised for an exciting period of convergence of opportunities and challenges in the 21st century, along with unprecedented growth in urban populations, as well

as a substantial increase in the number of high net worth individuals (HNWIs) on the continent. At the same time, extreme poverty and inequality are on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa. This begs the question: how effective is philanthropy, and by extension social investment, in Africa? How can philanthropists give to communities in more effective and innovative ways?

"No doubt this century belongs to the African philanthropists, whose capital, influence, local knowledge, and moral authority have the power to address these pressing challenges," says Moyo. "Philanthropy, in all of its various forms, engages stakeholders from the private, public, non-profit, and religious sectors. It nimbly cuts across geographies, social classes, and demographic groups in a way that governments and businesses often cannot. But what is the impact of African philanthropy? And what role can academia play in helping to facilitate more effective giving?"

In a nutshell, the ACPSI, which is housed at the Wits Business School, aims to advance the field of African philanthropy by filling the current gaps in teaching, research, and publication. Dedicated to interpreting the philan-



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thropic and donor landscape in Africa, it is both a teaching/research platform and a repository of recorded knowledge.

“It is the first institution on the continent that will bring together business and public policy makers, academics and practitioners, to identify solutions to challenges affecting the continent. In this way, it is where academia meets practice,” says Moyo.

The next milestone in the Centre’s journey takes place on 16 and 17 May 2019 with the first annual ACPSI Conference at WBS. This will be a two-day workshop which aims to explore key themes in African philanthropy and social investment and to formulate a coherent framework for the future. The Conference will address a number of themes,

including private sector giving, impact investing, sustainable development goals, philanthropy and civil society.

Alongside the conference is a PhD Seminar, co-hosted with ISTR, taking place on 14 and 15 May for more than 20 PhD students at all stages of their doctoral research related to the Third Sector, i.e. civil society, the non-profit sub-sector, philanthropy, social investment, venture philanthropy and corporate social investment (CSI). Candidates chosen to participate hail from all parts of Africa as well as other parts of the world, including the UK and Australia.

For more information on the Conference or the PhD Seminar, please contact: Katiana Sandra Ramsamy, email: katiana.ramsamy@wits.ac.za

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Regional News

ISTR/Wits African Phd Seminar



ISTR and the newly launched **Africa Centre for Philanthropy and Social Investment** at Wits Business School are co-hosting an African PhD Seminar May 14-15, 2019, two days prior to the First Annual Conference on Philanthropy. We were thrilled to have received 43 applications, far exceeding expectations! Of these, a diverse group of 23 were accepted into the program. Of the accepted students: half of female, 5 are from West Africa, 4 are from East Africa, 8 are from Southern Africa, and 6 are from outside of Africa – 2 of these are Africans studying abroad.

Six core faculty have been recruited to facilitate the small group discussions and lead professional development workshops that will offer the state of the art in research methodologies, writing, and publishing in third sector studies. The faculty committee includes senior scholars from both Africa, the US, and Europe, including ISTR and ACPSI board members.

ISTR’s PhD Seminars are designed to both support students in the Third Sector and to strengthen the network for the next generation of scholars. Building on the success and increasing popularity of the PhD Seminars we



John Mohan, Conference Co-chair and Mentor (left) with Albert Kagande, PhD Student and Mentee, at the Amsterdam Conference.

host at our international conferences, ISTR is expanding access to these PhD Seminars for emerging scholars across the globe, especially in regions like Africa where students face significant barriers. We are grateful that together with ACPSI we have raised enough funding to support the travel of all 23 students attending the African PhD Seminar.

Related content: **Read the reflections** of *Titilope F. Ajayi* (Ghana) and *Albert Kagande* (South Africa) on their experience participating in our International PhD Seminar in Amsterdam.