AMANI NEWSLETTER

April -May, 2010

AWG was founded in 2004 for the purpose of enriching the educational experience of DCAR students and faculty. Since then, AWG has undergone different phases of development. Currently, AWG comprises six committees, namely; Institutionalization, Programming, Reports and Information, Events and Social, and Research and Publication committee. The functions of these committees are governed by the AWG governing document posted on AWG website.

During the Winter 2009 Residential Institute, we held a successful social for the Africa Working Group members. We successfully launched a website for the African working Group and currently working on a journal that would afford our members opportunities to publish and share their ideas with the academia. We are diligently working toward creating a more interactive website to enhance communication and exchange with our members. You can visit our website @ http://shss.nova.edu/africaworkinggroup

New Projects

AWG is introducing a number of new projects. They are as follows: Peer Reviewed Journal of Conflict and Justice Management in Africa (JCJMA) Current Affairs Africa Magazine Weekly video news postings (directed by Okosun (Ph.D) Commentary Standing Below: Erhabor Ighadaro, Ph.D. He is the current Chair of the AWG Executive Committee. He is also a graduate of DCAR and a founding member of AWG.

AWG NEWS

Spring 2010 AWG Residential Institute Social

Above: An AWG member contributes to a discussion as others listen on.
Africa’s Gift to Silicon Valley: How to Track a Crisis

Silicon Valley is not known for borrowing African innovations, even though historically, it has. Perhaps one of the latest African contributions to the Silicon Valley has been the art of ‘internet crisis mapping’. Crisis mapping was developed by a Kenyan organization called Ushahidi to map patterns of tragedy in the wake of 2007 elections. When the Haitian earthquake struck, Ushahidi went into action. An emergency texting number was advertised via radio. Ushahidi received thousands of messages reporting trapped victims. They were translated by a diffused army of Haitian-Americans in the United States and plotted on a “crisis map.” From a situation room at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Medford, outside Boston, Ushahidi volunteers instant-messaged with the United States Coast Guard in Haiti, with instructions on where to search. When the Chilean earthquake struck, Ushahidi deployed again.

Ushahidi represents not only a new paradigm in humanitarian work, but illustrates how new innovations can be born out of hardship and with limited resources. Since its initial application, Ushahidi remixes have been used in India to monitor elections, in the Middle East to map violence, and in Washington D.C. The Washington Post partnered to build a site to map road blockages and snow plows. Because it originated in crisis, it has yet to be patented. Nonetheless, it is testimony to the potential for local African technology in addressing local and global problems.

Towards a Pax Africana? The AU promises to Creole country

The Haitian earthquake elicited what was perhaps the greatest pan African response to people of African descent since the colonial times. Many countries offered generous donations to the Creole nation. Senegal even offered a region to resettle those displaced by the earthquake. The AU considered a proposal to create a separate state for them. In spite of their own internal problems, African countries appear to be reasserting themselves on the global stage, partly emboldened by economies that have grown at an average rate of 5 percent in the last decade largely fueled by foreign investments in energy. In peacemaking, IGADD was instrumental in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan, and today, the AU has the only peacekeeping force in Somalia. However, these successes do not ignore the glaring institutional weakness of continental bodies, but they indicate a shift in thinking about African problems. With Africa assuming an increasingly important role in the global economy, can she exploit her new found position as strategic economic resource?
The Rise of China in Africa

"People are not worried about saving the environment; they are worried about getting some before it all runs out. That's the mentality: 'China is just going to consume everything -- let's get it now!'"

These are the words of Clem Sunter, South Africa's leading futurist and scenario planner. The speed and extent of Chinese "resource grab" in Africa is unparalleled. Unlike her western counterparts, China is not here to spread democracy, or promote Human Rights, China wants Africa's resources to fuel the engine of its growing economy.

From Nigeria, to Ethiopia, and from Kenya to Angola, China is investing massively in energy and infrastructure with hundreds of thousands of its citizens following their government's money trail to Africa. Indeed, many African countries have benefited from the apparent easy money from the East. But with blatant disregard of human rights and good governance, the Chinese experience is bound to be one of mixed fortunes. The fundamental question is, what can Africans do to avoid the pitfalls of the African-European experience of economic subservience as well as the dangers a neocolonial Chinese domination?

The Horn of Africa: Sudan: The Election That Never Was

From its classical origins, democracy implied ‘rule by the governed’, its modern usage includes rule of law, equal rights, free speech as well as freedom of assembly and political pluralism characterized by periodic elections among others. The emphasis on periodic elections however has allowed predatory authoritarian leaders such as El Bashir of Sudan to legitimize their regimes through often sham elections under the guise of democracy. It is not surprising therefore that the Sudan elections in spite of its fraudulent character as evidenced by reports from local and foreign monitors, and which was largely boycotted by major opposition parties, will serve to legitimize the Khartoum regime. Worse still, it will reinforce a sense of apathy and disillusionment for those who have been marginalized for many years. In fact, we could argue that it further incentivizes southern inclination for secession in 2011 referendum. But even with such limited political participation, this may lay the foundation for the emergence of an active civil society that could advocate for increased political space and representation.

Umaru Yar'adua and the Politics of Delegation: Which way Nigeria?

The long illness of President Umaru Yar’adua created a political vacuum in Nigeria that was only filled after decisive Senate action that conferred presidential powers to Nigeria’s Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan. Just as his name his name goes, Goodluck is a lucky child of political providence. Yet Jonathan will need more than luck to fix Nigeria. Some of his most pressing challenges will be to reenergize the Delta peace process, contain the sectarian violence that has killed hundreds this year alone, reform the electoral commission and fight endemic corruption. For now, Mr Goodluck seems to be active on many fronts of this WestAfricas’ largest economy. While many may welcome the new functioning government as a sign of change, the acrimony that surrounded Goodluck’s assumption of executive power illustrate the unhappiness of the Northern political elite with the new leadership. In fact, the ruling party’s manifesto effectively prevents Goodluck from running for presidency next year. This not only raises questions regarding the extent to which Mr Goodluck can implement an independent if not radical agenda for Nigeria, but also raises questions about the strength of political opposition as an alternative government in Nigeria.
Congratulations to the following students and alumni for their achievements:

Joshia Osamba (Ph.D), class of 2005, has been promoted to be chair of the Department of History, Philosophy and Religion, Egerton University Kenya. He has also enabled the establishment a Peace and Security Department at the University.

Jacques Koko (Ph.D), class of 2008, has been offered a position as faculty in the Dispute Resolution Program, Salisbury, Maryland.

Recently, three DCAR students, A.K Tosu, Sophie Mamy, and Marion Jebichii passed their qualifying and comprehensive exams respectively and Solomon Losha (Ph.D) and Nadine Hankerson (Ph.D) successfully defended their dissertations.

Hamdesa Tuso (PhD) (pictured here) is an Associate Professor in DCAR. He founded AWG in 2004 and has been actively involved in its promotion. Dr. Tuso is a Pan Africanist scholar. Prior to joining DCAR, Dr. Tuso taught at Antioch University and George Mason University. During the academic year 2006-2007, he served as Distinguished Esau Professor at the University of Winnipeg (Canada).

Note from the Editor.

This issue is the first for a series of publications that we hope to release in the months and years to come. However, your contributions will be central to future publications. Please send us short stories, ideas or experiences that you may want to share or publish in our newsletter.

- This current Newsletter benefited from the advice and guidance of Dr. Tuso. Technical Editing was done by Howard R. Johnson, PhD Student.

Thank you

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