CODESRIA STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2027

The Social Sciences in Africa in a Context of Global Transitions and Transformation

COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN AFRICA

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The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums for critical thinking and exchange of views among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research in the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest-standing Africa-based social science journal; the *African Sociological Review*; *Africa Review of Books;* and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; and the *Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. All CODESRIA publications are accessible online at www.codesria.org.

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Abbreviations

ARUA	The African Research Universities Alliance
AU	African Union
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DES	Deputy Executive Secretary
EC	Executive Committee
ES	Executive Secretary
EU	European Union
G/A	General Assembly
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRI	Meaning Making Research Initiatives
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RBM	Results based Management
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SC	Scientific Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
ToC	Theory of Change
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USD	United States dollars

Introduction: Recapping the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan

The 2023–2027 Strategic Plan for CODESRIA is built on two core foundations. The first is the historic mission and core accomplishments of the Council to 2016. In recent times, these have been documented in various Council evaluation reports. But there is a longer and more enduring tradition of institutional growth backed up by sound programming, innovation and carefully designed interventions to build the capacity of researchers and invest in basic research, which reflects the Council's relevance leading up to the celebration of its 50th anniversary this year. The second foundation is the internal reform process that the Executive Committee mandated in 2015, which culminated in three reports and a Roadmap to Reform that were implemented from 2017 to 2021. For the purposes of linking the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan to the previous one, while also taking note of the auspicious moment of the Council's 50th anniversary, an understanding of the internal reform agenda must be the starting point.

CODESRIA Reforms Agenda

In 2015, the Executive Committee (EC) commissioned a self-assessment of CODESRIA's institutional structures. This led to an exercise in self-reflection that sought to understand the main institutional pressures that confronted CODESRIA as it formulated the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan. The EC established three review committees: the Membership and Governance Review Committee (to review the membership structure and governance of CODESRIA); the Management Review Committee (to review the management of CODESRIA); and the Intellectual Agenda Review (to review CODESRIA's intellectual agenda). The three committees submitted their reviews in 2016, and the Roadmap to Reform was designed, against which the implementations of the recommendations of the committee reports would be assessed. From 2017 to 2019, the reform process to streamline the operations of the Council and re-vitalise its programmes was undertaken. In 2019, Sida commissioned a 'major review of the management system and the internal control mechanism of CODESRIA', which concluded that the 'Council has made major improvements in organisational capacity and management and internal control'.

The key targets for reforms relevant to this new Strategic Plan were in the intellectual agenda of the Council. The Secretariat undertook a rigorous review of the agenda with a view to strengthening the programmes, improving programme delivery and enhancing their quality, while upscaling the intellectual impact of the Council. Priority was placed on ensuring

greater clarity in programming, managing research projects and ensuring timely completion. The Meaning-making Research Initiative (MRI) was introduced as the principal vehicle for mobilising research. The resources allocated to MRI groups were increased while the expected outputs were reduced in order to achieve quality and ensure timely completion by the successful applicants. Further, the number of publications that CODESRIA supported, especially the journals, was reduced, and partnership agreements were reviewed to make sure that the Council committed to only those it could effectively excute and in which it could achieve mutually shared goals. Greater interprogramme synergy was strengthened, and important interventions were put in place to make sure that the selected projects were properly executed with an eye to conceptual and methodological rigour. The methodological workshop and the writing workshops at the start and end of the MRI projects were aimed to improve the quality of the research output.

To improve the work of the Council, renewed emphasis was placed on funding partnerships. The EC mandated that CODESRIA's funding partnerships be revitalised to expand the Council's resource base. This was with specific reference to existing funding partners, some of whom had downscaled their funding. By strengthening the operations of the Council, improving on reporting obligations and ensuring that the Council's commitments to the intellectual community were met, it was expected that the Council could make a better case for mobilising resources.

Implementation and Key Achievements

A preliminary evaluation of the 2017–2021 strategic plan confirms that significant progress was made in the reform process and that a culture of rigorous intellectual work was restored at CODESRIA. Key activities of the just concluded programming cycle were accomplished within the stipulated time frame. Although a number of expected outputs have not been achieved, nonetheless the success rate is very high and forms a good basis for enhanced programming in the new strategic planning cycle. Also, new initiatives which emanated from the 2017–2021 strategic plan will be retained to form a basis for growing the agenda of the Council in the new plan.

Key Achievements of the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan

The reform process yielded a number of achievements and lessons that have transformed programme delivery and re-affirmed the value of the Council to its community of scholars, to the policy sectors on the continent, and to partners—including funding partners—whose support is crucial for enhancing the institutional strength of the Council. Among these achievements are the following:

1. *A significant improvement in CODESRIA's support for research*, as evidenced in the massive rise in the percentage of funded projects. These projects were completed on time. Not only were feedback on the manuscripts and revision and review of revised manuscripts concluded on schedule but decisions regarding which would be forwarded to be considered for publication, and which would not, were also taken and communicated to researchers timeously.
2. *Improvement in the quality of work published by African scholars,* from the MRI research process, the training institutes and from unsolicited submissions. The MRI manuscripts that were forwarded to the publications pipeline received timely publication decisions. They were published in *Africa Development* or *Journal of Higher Education in Africa* or are scheduled for publication in 2022–2023. The authors of unpublishable manuscripts were notified. The Council received feedback from some researchers acknowledging that the publishing process had been transparent and competitive and that it assured quality.
3. *Greater discoverability of the Council and its work* on different platforms, including—most urgently—on social media. This expansion became a key strategy in ensuring that Council and its outputs are visible where they are most likely to be seen or needed. The Council also deliberately shifted a number of its publications from print to online format, and this resulted in easier access to its outputs and further enhanced the Council's visibility . As a result, several institutions in Africa, the US and Europe have sought partnership with CODESRIA generally, but more specifically around CODESRIA's publications.[1]
4. *Greater visibility of CODESRIA's work*, as evidenced in reduced enquiries from funding partners about what the Council does. This is the consequence of embracing and implementating of new programmes for mobilising research, like the MRI. In addition, the number of applications increased.
5. *Better and more timely reporting, monitoring and evaluation*. This is evidenced in the timely and better reporting on agreements to funding partners. During the period of the Strategic Plan, the Council received positive feedback on improvement on reporting. Indeed, the Council reduced the schedule of Annual Review meetings from two-day meetings to sessions lasting three to four hours.
6. *Improved involvement of female scholars in the life and work of the Council*. The participation of female scholars in MRI, the EC and SC achieved gender parity. Although the increased number of female scholars in MRI was due to affirmative action at the level of calls for applications, the parity achieved within the EC was based on competitive elections at the General Assembly. In addition, the Secretariat took the decision to ensure gender parity at all levels of any organ nominated or selected by the Secretariat. This was achieved in the SC and the Editorial Boards of all the Council's journals. There has also been a general growth in the number of women at senior and middle management levels of the Secretariat.

Framing the Focus of the 2023–2027 Strategy

Decades after formal independence in Africa, African voices still make little contribution to understanding and addressing the important challenges that face the continent. [cite Zeleza] This is, in part, a consequence of the continued dominance of conventional social science

frameworks of conducting research in African research institutions and universities. In addition, gains made by several research institutions in Africa and social science centres within universities to indigenise social science research have been eroded in recent decades by the defunding of social sciences and humanities (SSH) research in African universities and research centres**[cite]**. This is the result of a misconception, often driven by external non-African actors, that the social sciences and humanities are not critical to African development. This view is likely to further entrench the absence of African voices in framing development research, and enable the continued dominance of dysfunctional Western perspectives and experts in driving development discourses for the continent. The theory of change that underpins CODESRIA's strategy assumes that supporting individual and institutional research and enhancing the capacity of researchers and institutions through appropriate research training ultimately will result in the growth and proliferation of African voices in understanding, explaining and designing appropriate interventions to address the continent's development challenges.

Note

1. This includes *The Elephant*, which is published in Nairobi, Kenya and on Columbia International Affairs Online, by Columbia University Press.

Transitions and Transformation

A World in Transition; a World on the Verge of Transformation

The conceptualisation of this new Strategic Plan occurs at a moment of significant global transitions. These transitions have enormous implications for Africa and for its ability to understand the consequences and deal with them. Not only is the challenge of understanding the transitions one of scale but also of complexity, given that some of the transitions intertwine in multiple ways. There are manifold transitions in the political and economic spheres, with serious social consequences. These include demographic shifts; environmental and climate change; intensifying poverty and growing inequality; the expansion of the informal sector; the increasing financialisation of the world and its implications for trade, labour and the precarity this engenders for labour relations; the retreat of the state and the expansion of private social service delivery, with major consequences in the health and educational sectors; the rising influences of China; and the infrastructure revolution. In the political sphere, there is the retreat of internationalism and the questioning of Western liberal democracy. The social implications of these transitions are not yet clear, but some of them are creating conditions for a major transformation in society.

Over the last decade or so, there have been frequent challenges to democratic transitions. This is a global problem with different manifestations in different regions. In Africa, this has spiralled into never-ending transitions that have failed to achieve the added goal of democratic consolidation. In other parts of the world, what seemed an old question of democratic stability has given way to struggles to sustain a culture of democracy. Thus, the political transitions underway have thrown open questions of how to conceptualise and understand democracy, and how the practice of democracy globally refracts in regions of the world that remain vulnerable to antidemocratic tendencies, partly due to their status as less developed economies. In Africa, this challenge is reflected in struggles to consolidate democracy and link it to substantive issues, such as the livelihood needs of citizens.

There is a general despair associated with the experience of democratisation since the second coming of uhuru in Africa, in the 1990s. The despair emanates from the realisation that the struggle for democracy in the 1990s may have focused on procedural matters at the expense of substantive ones. As such, there are important questions about the limited capacity of democracies to deliver on people's substantive expectations, including—among other things—greater prosperity, more accountable governance and reduced inequality. There is increasing weariness over the fact that procedural democracy does not necessarily lead to all of the other good things

that people desire. What is more, democratic competition, in certain contexts, may in fact be entrenching a class of benefactors; it may be antithetical to substantivist democracy and instead, be fuelling greater corruption, intercommunal violence and transnational organised crime. All these factors connect the exercise of power to the challenge of peace and security on the continent. For those posing this second set of questions—how democracy refracts in developing economies—the issue is not so much that procedural democracy is not being consolidated, it is whether democracy understood in its purely procedural form is likely to deliver on the expectations of people around the continent for a better life.

Key questions arise, too, around the potential of a major transformation at the economic level and the role of the social sciences in facilitating a better understanding of prevailing economic trends. Among these questions are the possibilities of prevailing economic policies catapulting people out of debilitating poverty and squalor in many places. The despair regarding the failure of procedural democracy to guarantee basic needs has economic origins and suggests an intricate link between economic and political transitions. The desire for an alternative that could emerge from this link could be better understood if the Council were able to mobilise research to examine the root causes of and means by which current struggles to sustain meaningful livelihoods are conducted, what outcomes have been attained and what future to expect.

Africa occupies a central place in rethinking economic policy generally. Leading economists have nurtured ideas that have led to 'award-winning' contributions to economic thought, by studying Africa.[1] This is the case even though economics, as a discipline, continues to have 'an Africa(n) problem'. The influence of leading economists in shaping economic policy is notable by the impact their ideas have on current policy frameworks. However, contestations persist about the relevance and suitability of prevailing policies in addressing the despair alluded to above. Consequently, where economic policy thinking is involved, there is a desire for a heterodox alternative to challenge existing orthodoxy. The continent has a central part to play in rethinking economic policy and the role that heterodox understanding has in the study of transformations in African economies. This Strategic Plan will invest in better conceptual tools for understanding economic policy and, where possible, use them to shape better policy outcomes for Africa.

While transitions develop all around, it is not clear if they bear the capacity for a major transformation. For this Strategic Plan, this is an invitation to work with a prospective aanalysis of trends by supporting research undertakings that will contribute to shaping the future. Some of these projects will take the form of applied research that explicitly seeks to address existing policy challenges. Others will be basic research, even if they focus on studying the policy process as a means of contributing to understanding the multiple facets of policy.

Transitions and transformation are therefore a key basis for organising CODESRIA's strategic thinking for the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. The plan focuses on the social sciences in an era of transitions. While it acknowledges that a transformation is yet to occur, reading from

the multiple transitions occurring globally and how some are often refracted locally on the African continent, the Plan anticipates that the shifts that these transitions initiate, cause or accelerate are of such magnitude and importance that they require the keen attention of the African SSH community.

Unfortunately, decades after formal independence, African voices still make little contribution to understanding, interpreting and addressing the continent's key challenges. That this situation persists, long after formal independence, is the product of a global intellectual division of labour that does not favour Africa, and an internal African hesitancy or refusal to prioritise local knowledge as a competent contributor to comprehending the world around us. The goal of the plan, therefore, and the central basis upon which support to CODESRIA is sought, is to increase the contributions of Africans to the agenda of understanding, interpreting and addressing the challenges of the African continent. These challenges, and the opportunities they bear, are summarised in this Plan in the notion of transitions and the effect they might have on the shape of Africa's transformation.

Note

1. https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/economics-geographic-diversity-problem-by-dani-rodrik-2021-08

The Social Sciences in Africa in a Shifting Higher Education Environment

The Social Sciences

The SSH are devoted to the study of humanity. While their foundational methodologies are different, with the humanities utilising critical and analytical approaches, there has been an increasing rapprochement between the humanities and the social sciences in terms of methodology because of their orientation towards interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. This orientation carries greater benefits for a holistic understanding of human phenomena. The coupling of the two disciplines has, however, meant that, in Africa in particular, they have suffered the same fate, especially when contribution to knowledge is judged on empirical research outcomes. In recent times, the contribution of the SSH to human wellbeing has been questioned and the weight that governments and funding agencies give to the SSH compared with the physical and biological sciences is very much in favour of the latter two.

In general, the SSH have been seriously affected by economic globalisation and the increasing commercialisation of knowledge production. The index of determining what is taught and researched within universities has quickly focused on expectations of measurable outcomes and a demand for immediate value and application of knowledge. The intrinsic value of knowledge has ceased to be of major interest; more than ever before, value is now also legitimised by who produces the knowledge, their institutions of affiliation, who funds the research process and where it is published. These developments have had devastating consequences for the SSH disciplines, with market-based interests influencing shifts in resource allocation from the SSH to STEM disciplines and, in some cases, restructuring the SSH in ways that their contribution to theoretical knowledge has been undermined.

Other major institutional transformations have occurred in the higher education sector that affect the SSH. For instance, a tripartite system has emerged in which governments provide funding to universities, universities and donor agencies sponsor long-term basic research, and the private sector prioritises applied research. This has led to unintended consequences. Not-for-profit organisations are involved in policy and advocacy research, and the private sector—seeking to understand human behaviour—doubles its focus on basic research, originally the turf of universities,[1] with adverse consequences for the make-up of the SSH in universities. For example, it has forced the SSH disciplines, where they still exist, to minimise their focus on basic research and reorient their teaching and research obligations to align with market demands.

As a result, they aim to generate research that is applicable in market-driven contexts and graduates who are employable. These, in turn, have become the new yardsticks for measuring the relevance for the SSH, contrasting as the employable and relevance outcomes often are. On the positive side, the SSH have been forced to adopt or be sensitive to a problem-solving orientation. The SSH disciplines have come closer in search of an interdisciplinarity that promotes problem-centred research. On the adverse side, the compromises to their original commitment to basic research means that the very foundations of the SSH disciplines have been undermined.

After a period of undervaluing scholarship in the SSH in preference for the STEM disciplines, governments are now reassessing and appreciating the contribution of the SSH disciplines, especially in addressing the major social challenges facing the world. Central to this reassessment has been the realisation of the critical role of the SSH in understanding society, especially the multiple dimensions of social inequalities and how to tackle them.[2] The context of Ebola in West Africa and the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the inescapable social dimension of disease, and as inequality has grown so too has this become starkly visible. It has become clearer how much disease is a societal challenge that can never be understood and addressed as only biological. The necessity of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic as a socioeconomic and political reality has brought home the value of the SSH, especially because they facilitate an understanding of the many-sidedness of any reality.

Consensus seems to be emerging among higher education researchers and policy-makers that vibrant SSH programming is core to the realisation of the twenty-first century concept of a globally relevant research university.[3] The SSH, therefore, are not to be seen as supplementary to STEM disciplines but as contributing in equal measure to a holistic understanding of society and its problems. Research and scholarship in the SSH contribute the tools and knowledge that will help manage the many current significant risks, which include: the global economic fragility and demand for financial austerity and how people respond to these; extremism in its diverse expressions and the complex mechanisms that sustain virulent fundamentalist ideologies; generational shifts and the issues they raise, including an ageing population and population decline in some parts of the world, and a youth bulge in other parts; growing global poverty and growing inequality; the changing significance of nation-state formations; climate change and the needs for climate justice.

Solutions based on STEM disciplines' knowledge alone will be insufficient to tackle existing problems. The essence of adequately understanding human needs, values and motivations can never be dismissed offhand. The effective use of new technologies as diverse as genetic engineering, nuclear power, stem cells and cybermonitoring all depend on the acceptance, understanding and the willingness of individuals to change their behaviour, knowledge of which is core to what SSH disciplines study. What, how and why people believe, behave and change are questions that the SSH disciplines answer, and the answers are critical to implementing interventions of STEM disciplines.

The benefits of SSH knowledge have persuaded policy-makers to review the previous substantial shifts in resource allocation from SSH to STEM. Instead, governments—at least in developed countries—now require research universities to commit themselves to developing strong SSH programmes. A report of the American Academy of Sciences, for example, argues that a broad-based education in the SSH is a stimulus to innovation and social cohesion, because the disciplines provide an intellectual framework and context for thriving in a changing world, foster a society that is innovative and competitive, and enable a participation in the global economy that requires an understanding of diverse cultures and sensitivity to different perspectives.[4] It is in appreciation of the critical knowledge provided by the SSH that the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, has embedded the SSH into its research focus, and organised its programmes around 'challenges' rather than disciplinary fields of research.[5] Yet, at least in some African contexts, outdated recommendations prevail, with a general preference for and key policy actors insisting on the disciplinary superiority of STEM. This persistence is injurious to knowledge production, and the understanding and interpretation of society.

Further, the SSH have not escaped the tyranny of measurable outcomes, which informs the preference for STEM and imposes almost the same standards of proof on SSH departments in universities and research centres. The preferred word is impact. But impact, understood as immediate, measurable outcomes, is a shortsighted standard. The associated indices for measuring impact are too narrow to appreciate the long-term value of knowledge. The emergence of bibliometric analysis that incentivises what can be measured means that knowledge from the SSH that is not measurable is undervalued, even if useful.

The Social Sciences in Africa

As a consequence of the weighting of disciplines based on a notion of measurable outcomes, SSH research in Africa operates under conditions that are seriously constrained and underresourced. The SSH disciplines in Africa have been in chains, to borrow Thandika Mkandawire's phrasing, since their introduction to the continent.[6] Whether seen from the context of colonial universities or the subsequent phases of 'developmentalism' adopted by independent African countries, or during the neoliberal phase of structural adjustment and post-adjustment, the SSH in Africa have been constrained by circumstances that are designed to limit their capacity to better analyse and articulate the African condition. This constriction has negatively affected the quality of SSH knowledge precisely by limiting the overall capacities of higher education and other tertiary institutions. The more recent experience with the liberalisation of higher education institutions amid expansion in enrolments, and the subsequent crisis of graduate employability, have all impacted the SSH in various ways.

Since its founding, CODESRIA has been committed to the mission of breaking African SSH and African social scientists from the historic chains that deny or minimise their voices in global discourse generally, and discourses about Africa specifically. The coupling of the

SSH in CODESRIA's intellectual agenda and programmes is deliberate. It ensures that the disciplines complement each other in giving voice to indigenous and endogenous ways of analysing and understanding the African condition. The coupling is also an assertion of the imperative of interdisciplinarity, or transdisciplinarity, that promotes a way of thinking that is more effective in understanding the human condition better than frameworks cast from a limiting disciplinary orientation. The creative, imaginative, critical and analytical skills derived from combining the SSH are important in nurturing new generations of researchers in Africa who will pursue further the mission of unchaining African social sciences.

But the challenges that the Council's programmes face are many and pose new obstacles. As implied in the theme of this Strategic Plan, ongoing global transitions and the possibilities they offer for transformation have had adverse implications for African higher education and on the vitality of the SSH in African universities. The liberalisation of the higher education sector on the continent launched higher education institutions into another murky phase characterised by crisis before they had fully recovered from the vagaries of the SAP era. In this murky context, external pressure has been exerted on African governments to reduce funding the SSH in universities and research institutions, in preference for STEM, ostensibly because the SSH are not critical to African's development. External pressure is normally pegged to external multilateral requirements and finds an easy entry point in times of public expenditure crisis. This has been the case in a number of African countries recently.

The promotion of STEM over the SSH has resulted in three trends that further undermine knowledge production in Africa.

1. *It promotes or generates policies that undervalue and underfund the SSH.* Combined with the continued questioning of the relevance of knowledge from the SSH, this imposes limitations on the capacity to deepen theories and methods around which we expect to ground relevant knowledge production in the SSH in Africa. Not only has this deterred students, it has also skewed their study choices away from the SSH and further legitimised the shift in institutional spending from the SSH to academic programmes that are perceived to be more directly linked to careers and employable skills. There is anecdotal evidence from a select number of countries where data is available which shows declining enrolments and/or graduation rates in core humanities disciplines.

2. *The persistent questioning of the relevance and impact of SSH programmes*, as currently constituted, to the development requirements of Africa. Mapping these programmes against the SDG has become the index of measuring impact. The SSH are expected to produce measurable outcomes that confirm their contribution to development. This yardstick for gauging the relevance and impact of the SSH is, however, slightly misplaced. In other words, if the SSH cannot demonstrate instrumental value, they are deemed as undeserving of the kind of support that has been extended to STEM disciplines. For example, indices for measuring relevance include collaboration with industry to enhance the relevance of skills and knowledge gained. The problem here is in the comparison, not in the validity of the argument. The value of the SSH does not need to be demonstrated in the same instrumental manner as that of the STEM

disciplines. The value of the SSH is normative and defined in terms of social good; it rests in the knowledge generated about society through quality research and teaching, which serves as a medium for society's reproduction.

3. *The underfunding and lack of public support for the SSH.* Consequently, this has worsened Africa's already bad situation regarding its contribution to world science. There has been a steady decline in African research as measured by papers published in ISI indices over the last two decades.[7] In a world where knowledge is power, the decline in Africa's share of world science indicates how little knowledge from Africa is influencing discourse on many issues, even when these touch on Africa. Secondly the lack of public support for SSH in Africa translates into very little support for research institutes and centres dedicated to the SSH. This has left many SSH research centres in a precarious state and contributes to their decline as the task of producing social science knowledge for policy is taken over by transnational research networks and think tanks, many of which are driven by external needs and requirements and aggregate findings through consultancy approaches. The consequence is the de-institutionalisation of indigenous social science capacities. The failure to support the SSH in African institutions brings into question the nature of policy knowledge that African governments and institutes consume. It further raises the challenge of policy sovereignty. In the long term, underfunding the SSH forces African governments and related agencies to rely on 'foreign experts' in ways that, implicitly or explicitly, undermine the endogenous thinking that ought to underpin their development aspirations.

These developments have implications on the important role that resilient institutions, such as CODESRIA, need to play in supporting SSH research and social scientists on the continent. They also open up the space for a clear-headed discussion on how investment in basic research can translate to policy impact in the longer term. With transformations in higher education institutions, CODESRIA will need to take on a more critical role in training a new generation of critical social scientists who can invest in basic and applied research that is relevant to the needs of the continent. The intellectual interventions of the Council will also need to assume more multidisciplinary collaboration with academics, making a more compelling case for the SSH in addressing Africa's key challenges.

The Higher Education Sector in Africa

The higher education sector in Africa is dynamic, experiencing and managing different levels of stress as it seeks to survive a context of adversity and remain relevant to its national and pan-African contexts. However, there is a major demographic transition that is key to understanding this sector. Africa has the largest percentage of young people who are seeking access to higher education institutions but the number of institutions available to them remains limited. In 2018, there were 1,682 universities in Africa, up from 784 in 2000 and 294 in 1980. Even so, Africa's share of the world's higher education institutions is low, at 8.9 per cent, compared to 37 per cent for Asia, 21.9 per cent for Europe, 20.4 per cent for North America and 12 per cent for Latin America and the Caribbean.[8]

Higher education institutions in Africa, as elsewhere, are under pressure to be accountable to and help address societal challenges. The continent's development blueprint, the African Union's Agenda 2063, focuses on achieving 'A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development'. This implies and requires a commitment to investing in higher education. Yet, while the AU has a Science and Technology Strategy, none exists for SSH, the assumption being that science and technology will be adequate in developing the requisite human and social capital necessary to revolutionise skills and innovation. The need for an agenda of conscientising the continent around history and culture, and the role these play in development, is taken for granted.

Higher education institutions have pursued two strategies in response to pressures for accountability and relevance. One, they have explored alternative funding streams to compensate for reduced public funding. As a result, undergraduate programmes have dominated enrolments in the institutions to the detriment of research-based postgraduate studies. Recent data from the thirteen universities that constitute the Alliance of African Research universities (ARUA) shows that the proportion of doctoral enrolments across the thirteen universities in their cohort was below 10 per cent of the total student enrolment, with an almost even distribution of enrolments across the disciplines, but with fewer female students compared to males at Masters' and doctoral levels.[9] Doctoral enrolments are critical to producing the next generation of researchers and the next cohort of CODESRIA's community. The fewer enrolments at this level against an expanding higher education sector imply likely shortages at the doctoral level in the short term. This calls for interventions to increase not only enrolments at this level but also the number of female students.

In terms of relevance, higher education institutions have been engaged in curriculum reform and/or review to align the academic programmes to perceived societal needs. The focus has been to strengthen higher education systems for greater economic competitiveness, producing high-level skills in the workforce. But these reforms have led to the generalised conclusion that the quality of the higher education system has been compromised by the nature of the curriculum reforms and the rapid expansion of institutions. Further, notable concerns have arisen about the relevance of university qualifications to the labour markets, graduates' sense of alienation from contemporary society, and the inadequacy of the education system in equipping learners with the needed competences, especially critical thinking and social skills. Unfortunately, this criticism exists side by side with minimising the contribution of the SSH, even though it is clear that some of the skills the graduates are lacking are better secured through proper teaching of the SSH.

The key focus of the higher education institutions should be how to position themselves to better produce SSH knowledge that is relevant to addressing various challenges, including the current major transitions in society. These include the transitions cited above, in demography, environment, climate change, inequality and poverty, informalisation, increasing financialisation of the world and its implications for trade and labour, the retreat of the state,

the peace and security consequences, the general privatisation of the social services, with major consequences in the health and educational sectors, and the rising role of China in Africa. Good SSH in these institutions will help articulate the actions that are needed to engage with broader segments of society on matters that are germane to them, including exploring society's contribution to the realisation of the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063.

Notes

1. Social Science Research Council (2018).To Secure Knowledge: Social Science Partnerships for the Common Good (Report of To secure knowledge taskforce of the social science research council).
2. World Social Science Report, 2016, Challenging inequalities: Pathways to a just World, UNESCO/IDS/ISSC.
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Shaping the Future of Higher Education and the Social Sciences and Humanities in Africa

It is a foregone conclusion that Africa needs its own universities, which ought to derive their legitimacy from within the continent and, though drawing from universal fonts of knowledge, prioritise the intellectual needs of the continent. At the moment, the idea of an Africa-oriented university is counterchecked by external programming that is promoted via a flawed notion of internationalisation. This can never be a sufficient substitute for an African university. African universities and research centres need to be the authors of their own SSH that stem from and are responsive to African needs. There seems to be agreement that knowledge from the SSH is critical for societies but it has always been overlooked. The 2021 UNESCO Science Report notes that:

> The relationships between science, society, policy and politics have always been complex and contested, … but … too often, in the past, perspectives from the social sciences and humanities have been overlooked, despite the reality that human behaviour and sociological dimensions are key to successful decision-making, as demonstrated by the debates on both the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

If knowledge from the SSH remains important, the production of such knowledge by local institutions should be strengthened. This challenge of local knowledge production invites four responses from CODESRIA.

1. *CODESRIA should strengthen its linkages with African universities*. As a pan-African Council, CODESRIA can help protect the higher education space in Africa and entrench its place as embodying the continent's aspirations. This means strengthening and deepening research on higher education as a field of study on the continent for it to constantly provide data and knowledge on higher education dynamics in Africa.
2. *Broaden interventions in strengthening SSH scholarship in universities and other tertiary institutions*. The low levels of doctoral enrolments in the universities, especially in the SSH, mean that the future of the higher education space in Africa is at stake. Africa cannot afford to enter the first half of the twenty-first century with non-African academics dominating its higher education spaces and policy discourses. To be sure, this isn't just about identity politics or domination by foreigners. It is a logical reality that no society has developed based on knowledge and policy produced for it by others.

3. *Link post-doctoral training and Africa's policy sovereignty*. The two go hand in glove with the local production of knowledge. Supporting research at the doctoral level is an integral intervention and contribution to advanced research and thinking, as well as nurturing the next generation of African intellectuals. But this support should be imagined as a pipeline, which starts with targeted support to emerging researchers at the postdoctoral level to deepen their skills in basic and applied research in the SSH.
4. *Provide leadership by infusing SSH perspectives into research that addresses key challenges in society*. As the premier pan-African social science research council, CODESRIA will need to build strong and lasting partnerships, network with other research centres on the continent and beyond, upscale the outputs of the Council and position its voice as indispensable to understanding, interpreting and addressing the key challenges of the continent.

CODESRIA
IN 2020 AND BEYOND

During the 2017–2021 Strategic Planning period, the Council focused its work on three core thematic areas and six cross-cutting issues. By minimising the areas of focus and introducing cross-cutting issues, implementation was more effective and more rewarding, not only to the Secretariat but to the community of scholarship. The new Strategic Plan will build on the previous plan by identifying and focusing on four core thematic areas and four cross-cutting issues. The additional core theme is split from a previous theme precisely because it is now an area of greater intellectual curiosity and policy interest given the major changes that are occurring in the global economy.

2023–2027 Thematic Priorities

For the 2023–2027 programme cycle, CODESRIA has identified four core thematic areas:

Higher Education Dynamics in Africa

Over the last two decades, renewed faith in higher education and acknowledgement that it is a major driving force for improved standards of living, economic development and forging national cohesion in Africa has resulted in an increased push to revitalise and expand higher education institutions. At a continental level, the AU Commission has tied the realisation of the objectives of its development blueprint, Agenda 2063, to the effective functioning of the higher education sector. The reform of African higher education along with the challenges of uncoordinated and uncontrolled growth in enrolments that challenge quality, the proliferation of 'private' as well as public institutions of higher education, the increased crisis of graduate employability, and the lack of differentiated institutions as well as programmes within each institution to cater for different types of learners and needs of the continent, will be subjected to critical investigation. The financing of institutions of higher education, recruitment of students, the recruitment and promotion of faculty, the question of STE[A]M and the SSH in these institutions all constitute important areas of reflection. The critical challenge of crafting curricula and stimulating and supporting research that addresses the continent's needs remains a thorny one and CODESRIA's attention to this will continue given its longstanding programming to revitalise African higher education.

But an analysis of the education sector also presents new or recurring challenges that need to be understood, if not addressed. The issue of academic freedom continues to raise important questions about the environment in which intellectual work is conducted in Africa. The changing associational life within institutions of higher learning is pushing for a different lens through which to manage institutions, how to plan for research, and teaching and understanding the policy process before deploying effective policy interventions. These matters connect to the role of intellectuals in securing and safeguarding democracy as an integral part of the drive for democracy. The role of the state in the matter of academic freedom has either been superseded or reinforced by other actors whose actions or lack of it impact the environment of knowledge production. Further, the health and education sectors are among the key sectors of the African economy that have been hit hard by the outmigration of professionals. The Strategic Plan will therefore facilitate a broad engagement on higher education dynamics. Priority will be given to four core sub-themes. These are:

i. Higher education sector in transition: Beyond reforms
ii. Governance and academic freedom
iii. Diaspora engagements with African universities
iv. Valorising Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The State and Democratisation in Africa: Trends and Prospects

For over three decades, the dynamics of democratisation in Africa have formed a core area of research in CODESRIA. They have been central to the Council's strategic plans, which have included supporting researchers within the various research programmes to study specific aspects of the unfolding dynamics in Africa's democratic evolution, and holding an annual institute on democratic governance. However, the Council has not mounted any major research project on the state and democratisation since the 8th General Assembly in 1995, the theme of which was 'Democratisation Processes in Africa: Problems and Prospects'. Since then, the Council has not supported any sustained programme of research and publishing that substantively assesses democratic transitions in Africa, in order to probe the origins, context and evolution of the transitions, examine their status, question the depth of the impact of democracy on the people and on the nature of the state, and analyse prospects for democratic consolidation in Africa.

The Council needs to reconnect with the historic work it conducted, which above all was driven by a desire to comprehensively study the state to illuminate the context of the evolution of politics, the deployment and use of power, the resulting impact on citizens and the implications for citizenship. Further, the Council plans to conduct an assessment of the current state of democracy in Africa, generating in the process a typology that might be useful for comparative work on the state and democratisation, but bearing in mind that such comparative work necessarily requires a study of the trends in global democracy processes.

This work is urgent and necessary, given the general despair associated with the experience of democratisation since the second coming of *uhuru* in the 1990s. The despair emanates from the realisation that the struggle for democracy in the 1990s may have focused on procedural matters at the expense of substantive ones. As such, there are important questions about the limited capacity of democracies to deliver on people's substantive expectations including, among other things, ensuring greater prosperity, facilitating more accountable governance and managing the challenge of increasing inequalities. There is increasing weariness over the fact that procedural democracy does not necessarily lead to all of the other good things that people desire, and that democratic competition in certain contexts may in fact be entrenching a class of benefactors that is antithetical to substantivist democracy and is instead fueling greater corruption, inter-communal violence, and transnational organized crime in some contexts; all these being factors that connect the exercise of power to the challenge of peace and security on the continent. For example, an exploration of the Sahel will be undertaken in order to illustrate the failure of procedural democracy to address key livelihood challenges in the region, acknowledging the ecological context, which is susceptible to environmental stress, to answer the question: What kind of state would address the needs of the people? For those posing this question is whether democracy understood in its purely procedural form is likely to deliver on the needs, hopes, and expectations of people around the continent for a better life.

Three important conceptual pillars will guide this work, for CODESRIA to carry a stronger, pan-African, interpretive voice. First, the dynamics of politics and exercise of power in Africa are neither different nor unique from elsewhere in the world. Second, though the exercise of power and the management of public affairs occurs within state forms today, the state form itself necessarily varies from place to place, which invites us to study and understand its contexts as a basis of understanding how power is exercised and its implications. Third, history and context are important to the study of the state, and a process-led approach to understanding democratisation is critical for grounding research in this area.

Transformations in African Economies

Economic policy is central to shaping Africa's future. Yet, the terrain of economic policy-making is currently the subject of intense debate and contestation among economists and between other interdisciplinary traditions that are challenging economic orthodoxy and aiming for more heterodox approaches. The contestations are driven, among others, by the low levels of structural transformation in society and the persistence of old challenges relating to the dependency of African economies. Further, the persistence of inequality, the high levels of poverty, the continued export of raw materials mixed with a diminishing ability for local manufacturing and the effect of this on industrialisation, the continuing informalisation of economies coupled with diminished room and capacity for labour to unionise, the enhanced retrenchment of the state as it cedes room for policy-making to multilateral and bilateral partners, all speak of a need to rethink the logic of economic growth.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the weaknesses of contemporary economic policy, questioned the idea of planning in current economic thinking and made a case for revitalising heterodox traditions that historically informed policy centred on the welfare and wellbeing of people. In this Strategic Plan, the Council commits resources to grow or expand scholarship that is interested in a more diverse set of economic theories that can:

> better comprehend the structural and institutional challenges of development while generating improved tools and strategies to deal with these challenges. None of this is easily conceptualized in the neoclassical paradigm that currently dominates [economics] as discipline in Africa; one that narrowly focuses on a world of marginal changes, retracted states, and trade between countries based on static comparative advantage.

Further, the Council seeks to invest in an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary conversation which appreciates that economic policy-making requires more than the input of economists, and which aims to mobilise a network of researchers interested in centring policy-making on sound transdisciplinary traditions. This approach offers much richer possibilities of addressing Africa's challenges than when emphasis is on the orthodoxy that might itself be a part of the problem. At the heart of the contention is a desire to reclaim spaces of policy sovereignty for Africa.

Ecologies and Society in Africa

This thematic cluster will focus on the interaction of human populations with the environment in Africa, the forms it takes, its histories and trajectories, and its impact on a broad set of sectors, including the continent's burgeoning economies and their new capacity to turn ecological inheritance into commercial assets. These are properly understood as phenomena that are embedded in societies, which informs the decision to focus on ecologies and society. The issues of land, food security and poverty in the developing world, and especially in Africa, have dominated public debate and are of global concern. Exacerbating them are the complex subjects of climate change and population growth. The evolving nature of rural and urban zones and the complex interactions between these is also of importance in throwing up challenges as well as suggesting possibilities.

Africa's mineral wealth and the recent transformation of natural habitants into conservancy zones is worth serious study. Some of these zones have been commodified and are spaces for ranches amidst pastoral communities who hunger for land and pasture. The means through which the most vulnerable populations can acquire the capacity to withstand catastrophes and even transform them into opportunities for advancement will command attention, as will the ability of societies to plan and work towards long-term visions. The roles of technological innovation in addressing societal challenges will be the subject of research. Attention will also be paid to the possibilities for African structural transformation (including agricultural development and industrialisation) and the challenges of ensuring sustained growth and high employment that can lead to the reduction of poverty and more equitable societies.

Cross-cutting Issues

For the 2023–2027 programme cycle, CODESRIA has identified four cross-cutting issues:

History, Memory and Archive

For For every issue under focus in the new Strategic Plan, context matters perhaps more than anything else. Context gives meaning to the conceptual tools we have developed to understand, interpret and address society's challenges. Therefore, history and memory will be key to every thematic issue studied under the new plan. The ways in which history and memory are constructed and fostered as resources for differentiation and conflict as well as co-operation and collaboration, and the important roles that they play in the regulation of social life and the fashioning of futures, will influence the work that is carried out.

Gender

Society is gendered and every reality we study is lived and processed through a gendered experience and dynamic. The studies supported within this programme cycle will engage with the implications of social constructions around masculinities and femininities in social processes and the varied forms and sites of struggle for gender equity and equality. The Council aims also to tap into radical work that is already being undertaken using a feminism lens and to seek to understand the interdisciplinary methodologies that African feminists bring to the table.

Generations

The specificities of age groups and the complex ways in which they interact with each other and with others outside their cohort will be a focus. The generational question is often reduced to a youth issue, without an appreciation of the linkages involved as people age. This is not to set aside the value of the youth question, rather it is to suggest that work within this programme cycle needs to engage with the youth as part of the larger concern about the generational question. It is important to emphasise that the youth category is also gendered, and reflecting on generations is an extension of the gendered analysis described above.

Rurality and Urbanity

The specificities of rural and urban spaces, their interactions and how they influence policies, institutions and lives will be of prime importance. The rurality and urbanity pair has to be understood as a dichotomy but these phenomena have to be considered on their own terms as well as in relation to each other. Given CODESRIA's long history of work on rurality, urbanity and urbanisation, their interactions with the rural and with questions of citizenship, migration, inequality and poverty will be given particular attention.

Resourcing the Plan and Sustainability

The 2023–2027 CODESRIA Strategic Plan will cost approximately USD35million. Of these, the Council anticipates securing a total of USD22,950,811 through ongoing discussions with key funding partners. Already, the Council has secured (if we include the current submission to Sida) a total of USD10,422,070 out of the USD22million cited above from Norad, Carnegie Corporation of New York and special support for a project on reparations from OSF. The new cycle also includes funds from existing agreements with some partners but these will come to an end midway in the strategic planning cycle.

The framework of the new plan is guided by a re-organised budget that is clearly assigns specific expenditure to budgeted items. It contains a global budget that includes funds secured from all funding partners, a consolidated 5-years budget for core funding partners like Sida and Norad, and a disaggregated budget per each specific objective that breaks down further the budgetable items. The aim is to ensure that we clearly disaggregate the administrative costs from programme and programme-support costs. The target is to make sure that programme costs remain above 60 per cent while programme-support costs do not exceed 30 per cent of the overall budget. Administrative costs will remain below 20 percent of the overall expenditure. For the USD10 million we have secured or anticipate a commitment, the ratio of programme to programme support and administrative cost is 77 per cent to 10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

The new plan will be bolstered by the Council's decision to review its resource mobilisation framework. This initial focus is to increase allocation by some of the current funding partners. There are however major challenges on this given the shifts in funding partner priorities given the Russia-Ukraine war and its implications to budgetary support for overseas development. The second will be to expand the list of funding partners. We aim to increase funding from traditional overseas development assistant (ODA) partners and foundations and explore other sources the Council has not fully tapped. The third focus will be finding sources that the Council can draw from that have not previously fallen within our resource mobilisation framework. The fourth focus for this plan will be internal revenues. These admittedly raise minimal resources but if properly organised they can absorb some operational costs.

For the purposes of sustainability, the Council will start rebuilding the CODESRIA Endowment Fund. The establishment of this fund was approved by the General Assembly in 2005, but attempts to formalise it have been held in abeyance due to internal challenges and major cutbacks on funding. However, the infrastructure for the establishment of the fund is ready and the Council aims to reconstitute the committee in charge of the fund and proceed with mobilising resources for it. The fund is meant to be independent of the CODESRIA Secretariat and managed by an independent committee. The aim is to ensure that profits emanating from the fund are used only to support programmes.

CODESRIA Governance and Management

The General Assembly is the apex decision-making organ at CODESRIA. It meets once every three years. This strategic planning period will see the General Assembly (GA) gather for its 16th session in December 2023 (postponed from December 2021 due to Covid-19 considerations) and 17th session in December 2026. The GA has become a permanent feature of the Council and is indispensable as a governance event and as a scientific gathering. It has grown into the largest triannual gathering of African social scientists and humanities scholars on the continent.

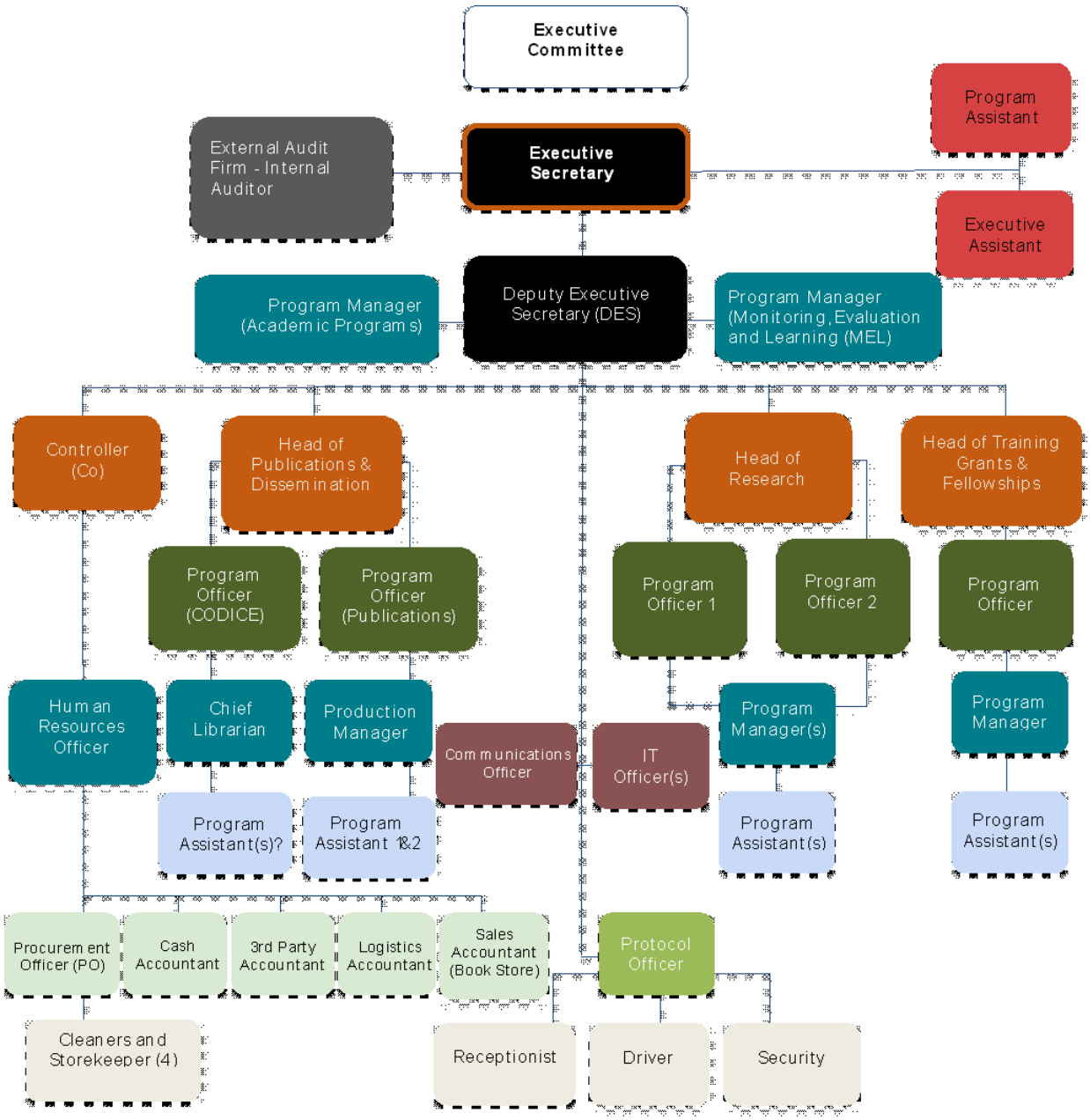
The Executive Committee (EC) is elected by the GA and oversees the CODESRIA Executive Secretariat. Led by a president, the EC is composed of ten members drawn from the five regions of Africa—North, West, Central, East and Southern Africa. While there is no emphasis in the electoral process on gender balance, the Council comprises as many female representatives as males elected, with the current EC being fully gender balanced. Also, the Council has had an almost equal number of male and female presidents since it was founded. The EC meets twice every year and reviews reports submitted by the Executive Secretariat including—most importantly—approving the annual workplan and budgets, and the annual audit report. Whenever necessary, it appoints all international staff of the Council, including the ES and Senior Programme staff.

The ES heads the Executive Secretariat and is responsibility for running the everyday management and scientific affairs of the Council. The ES implements the workplan and is supported in this work by the Senior Programme staff. In implementing the workplan, the ES and the EC benefit from the advisory role of the CODESRIA Scientific Committee (SC) whose role is to advise the Council on scientific matters. The SC is appointed by the EC and consists of twelve members, who represent the various diversities evident in the Council.

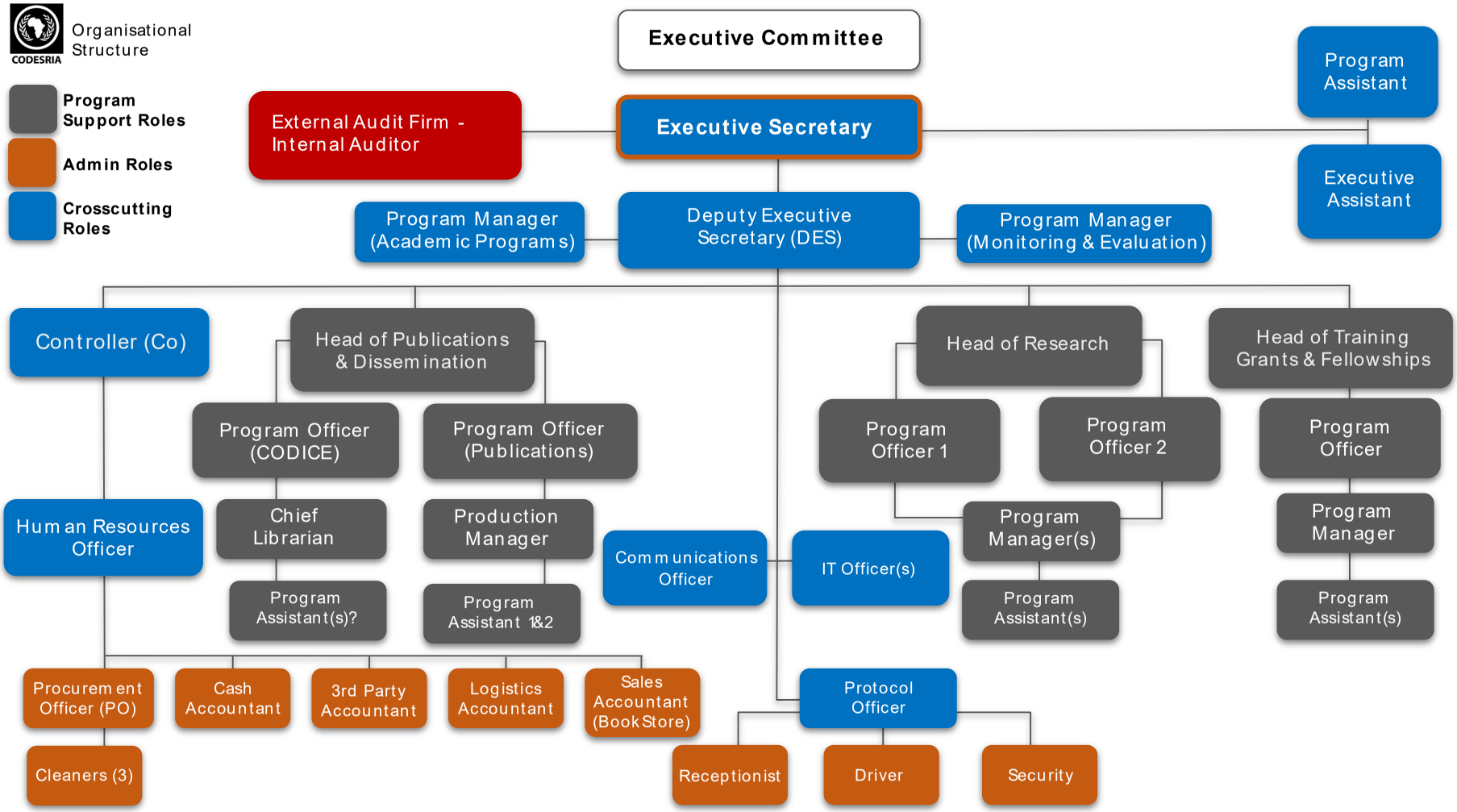
The CODESRIA Secretariat had roughly forty staff during the 2017–2021 planning cycle, comprising international and local staff. The international staff are recruited by the EC, whereas local staff are recruited by the ES. In part, the need to have a pan-African profile dictates this staffing profile. The Council advances a pan-African intellectual agenda, and this is reflected in the management of the Council. This profile also has implications for the resource and institutional capacity needs of the Council.

APPENDICES

Appendix Ia: CODESRIA Organogram



Appendix Ib: CODESRIA Organogram



Appendix II: CODESRIA Risk Assessment for the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

CODESRIA continues to experience three categories of risks. These most likely will be a source of concern in achieving the objectives set out for the 2023–2027 strategic plan. They are contextual, organisational and logistical. The contextual factors relate to threats that may emanate from the external environment and over which CODESRIA has little control. The organisational factors revolve around CODESRIA's governance structure and units that are critical to programme delivery. The logistical risks relate to the tools that the CODESRIA Secretariat has designed to implement its scientific programmes.

Contextual-risks

Three key contextual factors might trigger these risks. First is the change in the funding environment, which might threaten the very existence of the Council. Second are socio-political developments within the continent that will have implications on the relevance of the Council's work. And lastly are public health issues that affect programme delivery and completion.

Regarding the funding environment, the Council is exposed to risks in two ways. First, over the years since its establishment, the Council has relied on core funding from Sida with intermittent support from Norad and DANIDA. The continuance of this relationship has been critical for CODESRIA to attract other partners for project support. If Sida's core funding were to be withdrawn or substantially reduced, this would likely reflect badly on the Council and possibly trigger similar negative responses from other partners, thus affecting CODESRIA's intellectual programmes or leading to the eventual collapse of the institution.

Secondly, CODESRIA is located in Dakar, Senegal, courtesy of the home country head-quarter agreement which confers diplomatic status on the Council given by the Government of the Republic of Senegal. This status bestows on the Council indirect financial benefit, especially through tax exemption, which boosts the institution's financial health. Should the Government of the Republic of Senegal withdraw this status, it will change the circumstances of the Council, including its relationship with external partners, in ways that will threaten its continued survival. The threat from the withdrawal of funding is accentuated by the fact that, over the years and in spite of numerous attempts, the Council has not managed to establish an autonomous funding base nor attract any funding from African governments.

In terms of changes in the sociopolitical environment within Africa, there is unlikely to be any widespread civil strife that will drastically affect the Council's programmes. However, the last decade has seen African countries pile up external debt to unsustainable levels, which has pushed some countries into financial restructuring due to debt-servicing challenges.

This has affected the financial and intellectual health of some African universities. These being CODESRIA's core units for programme implementation, the challenge is greater given that these units have been seriously undermined.

In a sense, this might imply more pressure for CODESRIA to intervene in universities to support knowledge production in the SSH, as happened during the decade of structural adjustment. However, given the growth in universities and enrolment, the toll on CODESRIA's resources and its capacity to intervene might be too high as demands become almost impossible to manage. There is the danger of spreading programming so thin that the quality of CODESRIA's interventions will be compromised and this needs to be mitigated. Besides, the poor economic conditions on the continent continue to drive internal and external migration, and several potential partners are diverting resources to handle the resulting refugee problem that would otherwise have been used to support the work of the Council.

Lastly, are threats that arise from disease outbreaks. The Council experienced programme delays during the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014–2015. The same happened with the Covid-19 pandemic. Clearly, unpredictable outbreaks of epidemics and pandemics limit programme implementation. While some interventions would be implemented virtually, the poor state of ICT infrastructure on the continent means that this is not the most viable alternative for the Council. Implementing programmes where only those in well-resourced ICT institutions fully benefit will undermine a cardinal principle of the Council's charter, fighting fragmentation of the intellectual community and atomisation of knowledge on the continent.

Organisational Risks

CODESRIA's operations are secured by a governance structure that comprises the General Assembly, as the apex decision-making body; the Executive Committee, which oversees overall governance of the Council; the Scientific Committee, which advises the Executive Committee on the intellectual agenda; and the Secretariat, which is charged with programme implementation. The CODESRIA Charter assumes that all these organs will work in good faith always and with common purpose. Those who serve in these organs, especially the Executive Committee and Scientific Committee, are recruited largely from African universities. The quality of representation in these organs reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the source institutions. A dysfunctional environment in most African universities will most likely affect the capacity of some charter organs to function optimally.

At the level of the Secretariat, organisational issues likely to undermine the health of the Council include limited investment in institutional capacity needs and weak institutional development. These might result in a failure to review the organisational structure periodically for efficiency and alignment with identified strategic goals, low staff capacity to implement programmes, and high staff turnover due to the lack of competitive remuneration.

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

RISK	RISK AREA	RISK DESCRIPTION	PROBABILITY	IMPACT	MITIGATING ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY
Contextual	Funding	Loss of core funding	Medium	High	• Sustain internal reforms to win confidence of partners in the long-term. • Continue exploring possibility of autonomous funding. • Improve internal Revenue	EC/ Senior Management
	Sociopolitical Developments	Low quality HE institutions	Medium	High	• Strengthen partnerships. • Continue with institution-based interventions in select institutions	Secretariat
		Disease Outbreaks	Low	High	• Explore virtual alternatives without fragmenting the community	Secretariat
Organisational	Dysfunctional governance organs	Lack of commitment to charter values by any of the organs	Low	High	• Continue Charter reforms to ensure high compliance from governance organs	G/A, EC
	Low prioritisation of institutional development	Lack of capacity by the Secretariat to execute programmes in a timely manner and with quality outputs	Medium	High	• Explore alternative sources for institutional development within current strategy	EC/Secretariat

Logistical Risks

These relate to the soundness of the tools and vehicles that the CODESRIA Secretariat has designed for programme implementation. These tools are codified in the CODESRIA Internal Regulations, the Code of Conduct for Staff, the CODESRIA Gender Policy and the Manual of Procedures. Likely risks here will emerge from insufficient time accorded to prospective applicants to programmes, which may result in an unbalanced allocation of resources to the various regions; lack of fidelity to the processes and procedures; failure to follow the Manual of Procedures, which may result in poor quality service and, in some instances, the risk of fraud; failure by staff to declare a conflict of interest; and lack of adequate ICT infrastructure to promote the Council's work and secure its visibility.

The occurrence of any of the risks above undermines the integrity of CODESRIA and its programmes, undermines the quality of its outputs and potentially undermines the achievement of strategic objectives as set out in this Strategic Plan.

Appendix III: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

As an organisation built on a culture of self-reflection, the question 'How are we doing?' is key and continues to shape our work. However, the moment of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan is unique because, for the very first time in its history, the Council has put in place an MEL plan and established an MEL unit. CODESRIA's MEL policy aims to mainstream the imperatives of systematically tracking and critically assessing the work of the Council to improve performance, remain relevant, strengthen capacity, build relationships and pool experience as a way of advancing evidence to learn, innovate and scale our programmes. It also stresses continued reflection on how to improve the way we implement our programmes as well as their attendant outputs, outcomes and impact.

In line with best practice, CODESRIA adopts the results-based management (RBM) approach to MEL, which aims to improve management effectiveness and accountability. It proceeds by defining realistic expected results and targets, monitoring progress towards the achievement of goals outlined, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting on performance. This framework emphasises managing and implementing programmes and projects in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making. The aim is to make programme implementation more effective and results-oriented by allowing for a balance of emphasis between resources (inputs/activities) and results (outputs/outcomes/impact). In seeking to understand and document causal attribution, the framework adopts a contributorship approach to attribution. This method acknowledges that results are the joint product of inputs and activities (resources) and seeks to understand, where possible, how multiple interventions interact to produce outcomes.

Overall Objective

To ensure an increase in the contributions of Africans to the task of understanding, interpreting and addressing key challenges experienced on the African continent.

Specific Objectives

- *Specific objective 1*: Increase the production of quality and relevant social research addressing the priority research areas of the 2023–2027 programme cycle.
- *Specific objective 2*: Enhance engagement with social research produced by Africans.
- *Specific objective 3*: Enhance the capacity of African universities to train graduate students.
- *Specific objective 4*: Strengthen the capacity for institutional effectiveness and accountability.
- *Specific objective 5*: Increase the consideration of gender in the life and work of CODESRIA.

Theory of Change (ToC)

In operationalising the strategic objectives of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, this MEL plan is informed by an elaborate Theory of Change (ToC) and explains how the interventions of the Council can catalyse change in the higher education sector. Drawing from the objectives, the entry point of our ToC is defining the challenge that has become our mission, which states that *decades after formal independence, African voices still make little contribution to understanding and addressing important challenges facing the continent*.

In this regard, the ToC suggests that activities that support African researchers; facilitate knowledge production and its dissemination; strengthen higher education capacities; strengthen the institutional capacity of the Council and gender mainstreaming can '*increase the contributions of Africans to the task of understanding and addressing important challenges facing the African continent*'.

For this to happen, the ToC outlines key assumptions, which suggest that the change we seek is not necessarily a linear process. Therefore, for each of the domains, certain conditions need to exist for the anticipated change to occur. Although these assumptions indicate the aspects of the change process where there is limited opportunity for influence, they allow for reflection and learning in ways that gives room to innovate and think critically about risks and how to mitigate them.

In line with the objectives of the 2023–2027 strategic plan, the ToC is delineated into five domains of change.

Research Support to African Scholars

The strategic priority here is to contribute to the increase in the production of quality and relevant social research that addresses the priority research areas of the 2023–2027 programme cycle. Here, it is expected that activities under the Meaning-making Research Initiative (MRI), the Advanced Senior Research Fellowships, and scientific convenings such as the General Assembly and other scholarly writing workshops, will contribute to improving the capacity of researchers to conduct quality and relevant research and increase the contribution of scholars to CODESRIA activities and scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world. These outcomes will be dependent on the assumption that grantees receive a high level of graduate training and are well equipped to produce quality research. Furthermore, researchers' commitment to completing their work and submitting their manuscripts in good time will be critical for the anticipated outcomes in this domain.

Knowledge Production and Dissemination

Under this domain, CODESRIA seeks to enhance engagement with social research produced by African scholars, especially those supported by the Council. In this regard, activities around the publication of books and journals, policy convenings and outreach, and support to the com-

munity through library acquisitions, is expected to contribute towards increasing the citation of CODESRIA publications in academic and policy publications and heighten the consideration of CODESRIA publications in higher education institutions, civil society and policy circles. The underpinning assumption here is that policy actors evolve more favourable attitudes towards the usefulness of SSH research. Therefore, understanding the conditions that allow for improved attitudes towards social science research will form part of the learning agenda at the Council.

Strengthening Higher Education Capacities

The Thematic Institute(s), Summer Schools, Support to Doctoral Schools, Support to Academic Freedom Interventions and Collaborative Initiatives are integral to CODESRIA's activities. These initiatives are anticipated to improve the ability of scholars in need to conduct research while also increasing the participation and contribution of doctoral fellows to CODESRIA activities and policy work. In part, the realisation of these outcomes will rest on participating scholars finding the initiatives relevant and continuing to engage with and contribute to scholarship and policy work.

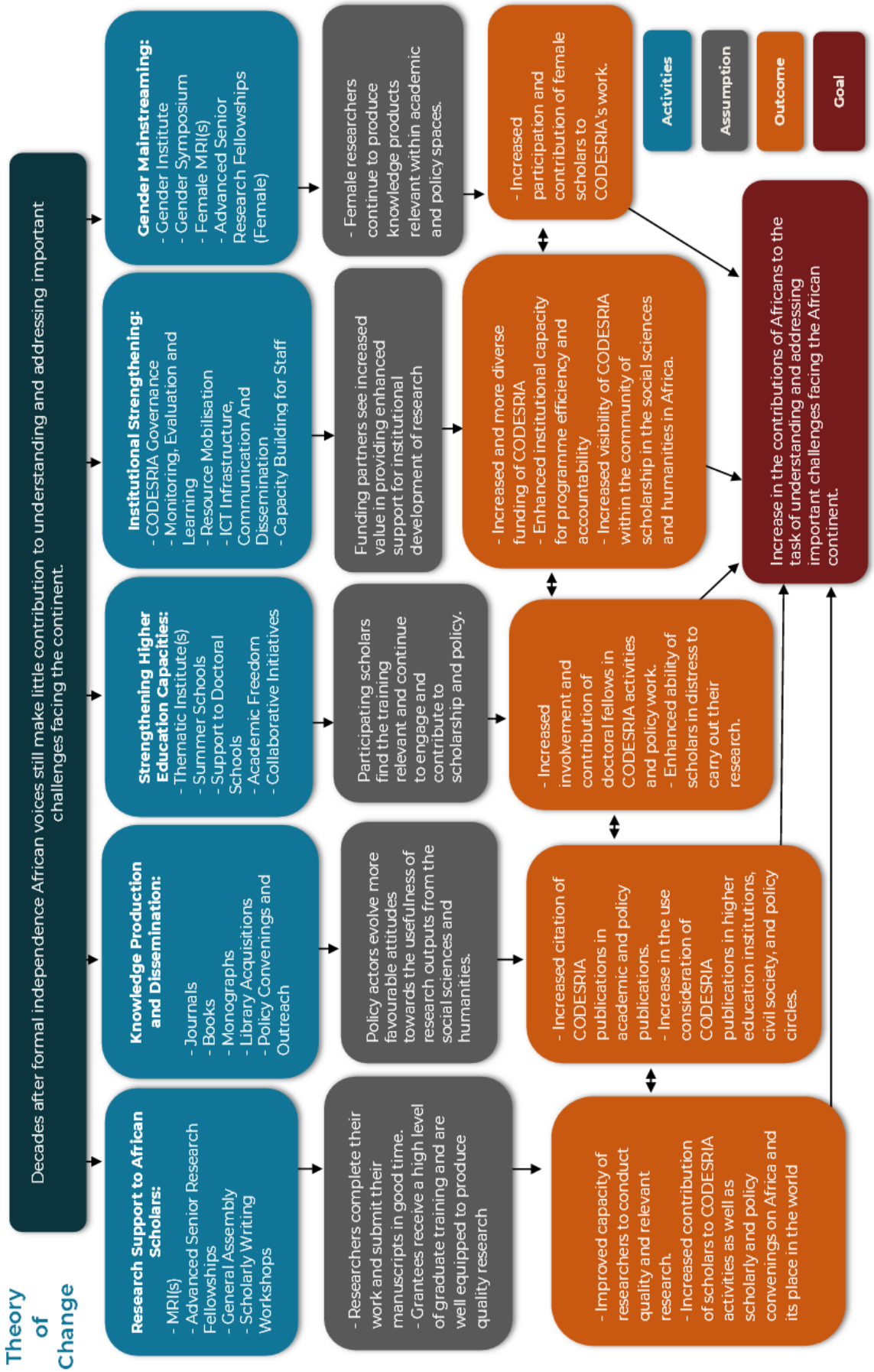
Institutional Strengthening

As an institution that aims to increase the contribution of African researchers to the task of understanding and addressing important challenges facing the continent, the Council is prioritising activities that support and strengthen its capacity internally, expand the funding pool and reach out effectively to constituents and partners. This will also include efforts to strengthen governance, monitoring, evaluation and learning, ICT infrastructure, communication and dissemination as well as capacity building for staff. The Council will continue to expand donor engagements but also keep learning about how their priorities are changing and how to remain relevant as an organisation.

Gender Mainstreaming

A key part of the Council work is to increase the consideration of gender in the life and work of CODESRIA. Over the years, the Council has developed specific interventions to realise this objective. They include the Gender Institute, Gender Symposium, Female focused MRI(s) and Advanced Senior Research Fellowships exclusive to female African scholars. While increasing the participation and contribution of female scholars to CODESRIA's work remains the goal, the Council will continue to innovate around options that that allow female researchers to produce knowledge products that are relevant for academic and policy.

The figure below illustrates the ToC, highlighting the activities within their respective domains and how they will translate into outcomes and goals. This includes the assumptions that must hold for change to occur.


Theory of Change
Decades after formal independence African voices still make little contribution to understanding and addressing important challenges facing the continent.
Research Support to African Scholars:
- MRI(s)
- Advanced Senior Research Fellowships
- General Assembly
- Scholarly Writing Workshops
Knowledge Production and Dissemination:
- Journals
- Books
- Monographs
- Library Acquisitions
- Policy Convenings and Outreach
Strengthening Higher Education Capacities:
- Thematic Institute(s)
- Summer Schools
- Support to Doctoral Schools
- Academic Freedom
- Collaborative Initiatives
Institutional Strengthening:
- CODESRIA Governance
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
- Resource Mobilisation
- ICT Infrastructure, Communication And Dissemination
- Capacity Building for Staff
Gender Mainstreaming:
- Gender Institute
- Gender Symposium
- Female MRI(s)
- Advanced Senior Research Fellowships (Female)
- Researchers complete their work and submit their manuscripts in good time.
- Grantees receive a high level of graduate training and are well equipped to produce quality research
Policy actors evolve more favourable attitudes towards the usefulness of research outputs from the social sciences and humanities.
Participating scholars find the training relevant and continue to engage and contribute to scholarship and policy.
Funding partners see increased value in providing enhanced support for institutional development of research
- Female researchers continue to produce knowledge products relevant within academic and policy spaces.
- Improved capacity of researchers to conduct quality and relevant research.
- Increased contribution of scholars to CODESRIA activities as well as scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world
- Increased citation of CODESRIA publications in academic and policy publications.
- Increase in the use consideration of CODESRIA publications in higher education institutions, civil society, and policy circles.
- Increased involvement and contribution of doctoral fellows in CODESRIA activities and policy work.
- Enhanced ability of scholars in distress to carry out their research.
- Increased and more diverse funding of CODESRIA
- Enhanced institutional capacity for programme efficiency and accountability
- Increased visibility of CODESRIA within the community of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities in Africa.
- Increased participation and contribution of female scholars to CODESRIA's work.
Increase in the contributions of Africans to the task of understanding and addressing important challenges facing the African continent.
Activities
Assumption
Outcome
Goal

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

This M&E framework is informed by the organisation's ToC and is operationalised using the results chain and log-frame. The results chain defines key terms and outlines the stepwise progression from activities to outputs, outcomes and impact. This is then adopted within a logical framework that links indicators and data sources across each step of the results chain and outlines a broad methodology for application and implementation.

Results Chain

The results chain introduces the results-based framework that unpacks the ToC. It is a tool that explains the links between what we intend to do and how it will translate into outputs, outcomes and the eventual goal. This is then operationalised into a log-frame which outlines the framework in more detail to include a description of the activities, outputs and outcomes, indicators, how data will be collected and disaggregated and the frequency, as well as how the data will be reported.

Problem: Decades after formal independence African voices still make little contribution to understanding and addressing important challenges facing the continent.

Activities (*so CODESRIA will*):

- Provide research support to African scholars to produce quality and relevant social research. (some of these will be academics; others will be involved in policy work and others yet still, will straddle)
- Produce and disseminate research and organise engagement on publications produced by CODESRIA and others.
- Train researchers and enhance the capacity of 'trainers of researchers' (individuals and institutions) and create safe spaces for scholars in distress to conduct research.
- Engage in activities that support the visibility, capacities, efficiency, and accountability of CODESRIA.
- Mainstream gender in the work and life of CODESRIA.

Outputs (*which will result in*):

- Increase in the number of scholars contributing to research on and about African on important development challenges facing the continent.
- Publication of Books, journals, policy briefs issued by CODESRIA and create multiple channels and platforms to promote and increase engagement with CODESRIA publications.
- Improved research capacity of African researchers and trainers of researchers and support more scholars in distress to carry out their research.

- Improved support from CODERIA's governance structure; more proposals submitted for funding; improved capacity strengthening for CODESRIA staff; and greater investments in ICT, MEL as well as communication and dissemination.
- More research projects carried by female researchers supported; gender equality at CODESRIA.

Outcomes (*that will contribute to*):

- Improved capacity of researchers to conduct quality and relevant research and increased contribution of scholars to CODESRIA activities as well as scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world.
- Increased citation of CODESRIA publications in academic and policy publications and increase in the use and consideration of CODESRIA publications in higher education institutions, civil society, and policy circles.
- Contribution of participants in CODESRIA activities to important scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world and greater involvement of participants in CODESRIA activities in decision-making on Africa.
- Increased and more diverse funding of CODESRIA; enhanced institutional capacity for programme efficiency and accountability; increased visibility of CODESRIA within the community of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities in Africa.
- Increased participation and contribution of female scholars to CODESRIA's work and greater representation of women in mid-level and senior level positions at CODESRIA.

Goal (*to ensure an*):

Increase in the contributions of Africans to the task of understanding and addressing important challenges facing the African continent.[1]

Results Chain

Problem	Activities	Output	Outcome	Goal
Decades after formal independence African voices still make little contribution to understanding and addressing important challenges facing the continent.	Research support to African Scholars to produce quality and relevant social research.	Increase in the number of scholars contributing to research on and about African on important development challenges facing the continent.	- Improved capacity of researchers to conduct quality and relevant research. - Increased contribution of scholars to CODESRIA activities as well as scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world	Increase in the contributions of Africans to the task of understanding and addressing important challenges facing the African continent.
	Produce and disseminate research and organise engagement on publications produced by CODESRIA and others.	- Publication of Books, journals, policy briefs issued by CODESRIA. - Multiple channels and platforms to promote and increase engagement with CODESRIA publications	- Increased citation of CODESRIA publications in academic and policy publications. - Increase in the use and consideration of CODESRIA publications in higher education institutions, civil society, and policy circles.	
	- Train researchers and enhance the capacity of 'trainers of researchers' (individuals and institutions) - Create safe spaces for scholars in distress to conduct research.	- Improved research capacity of African researchers and trainers of researchers. - More scholars in distress are facilitated to carry out their research	- Contribution of participants in CODESRIA activities to important scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world - Involvement of participants in CODESRIA activities in decision-making on Africa	
	Engage in activities that support the visibility, capacities, efficiency, and accountability of CODESRIA.	- Improved support from CODERIA governance structures - More proposals submitted for funding. - Capacity strengthening for CODESRIA staff. - Greater investments in ICT, MEL, as well as communication and dissemination.	- Increased and more diverse funding of CODESRIA - Enhanced institutional capacity for programme efficiency and accountability - Increased visibility of CODESRIA within the community of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities in Africa.	
	Mainstream gender in the work and life of CODESRIA.	- More research projects carried by female researchers supported. - Gender equality at CODESRIA	- Increased participation and contribution of female scholars to CODESRIA's work. - Greater representation of women in mid-level and senior level positions at CODESRIA.	

Specific Objective 1: *To increase the production of quality and relevant social research addressing the priority research areas of the 2023–2027 programme cycle*

Description	Type	Indicator Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Collection Method	Data Disaggregation	Frequency	Reporting Tool	Risk & Assumptions
Improved capacity of researchers to conduct quality and relevant research.	Outcome	- % of manuscripts accepted for publication by CODESRIA or other publishers. - No. of participants who indicate improvements in their research capacities.			Publication data Surveys	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (type of publication)	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Increased contribution of scholars to CODESRIA activities as well as scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world	Outcome	- % of participants that engage in policy work on Africa - Number of CODESRIA scholars that participate in policy work in areas for which they have conducted research with CODESRIA support.			Surveys and interviews	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (African scholars from the continent or diaspora)	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Increase in the number of scholars contributing to research on and about African on important development	Output	- Number of researchers supported - Percentage of research projects completed - Percentage of manuscripts that are published by CODESRIA and other publishers.			MRI data	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (African scholars from the continent or diaspora)	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	Researchers complete their work and submit their manuscripts in good time.
Research support to African Researchers to produce quality and relevant social research.	Activity	- Number of research grants awarded			Research contracts	Gender, Location/Region and Category (type of publication)	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	Grantees receive a high level of graduate training and are well equipped to produce quality research.

Specific Objective 2: *To enhance engagement with social research produced by Africans*

Description	Type	Indicator Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Collection	Data Disaggregation	Frequency	Reporting Tool	Risk & Assumption
Increased citation of CODESRIA publications in academic and policy publications.	Outcome	- Number of citations of CODESRIA publications - Number of publication downloads			Citation analysis (Google Scholar and other citation platforms) and CODESRIA Website (Bibliometrics)	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (type of publication)	Bi-annually	Bi-annual M&E Reports	
Increase in the use and consideration of CODESRIA publications in higher education institutions, civil society, and policy circles.	Outcome	- Number of times CODESRIA publications appear on course syllabi. - Number of policy actors and practitioners who indicate that CODESRIA publications influence their work. - Number of scholars indicating that they use CODESRIA publication for teaching			Syllabi analysis/ surveys and interviews, policy forum reports, communiques, and news clippings	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (typo of convening)	Bi-annually	Bi-annual M&E Reports	
Publication of Books, journals, policy briefs issued by CODESRIA.	Output	- Number of publications issued (Books, Journals, Policy Briefs, monographs, etc.) - Volume of publications sold.			Publication data and Sales records	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Monthly	Monthly records	
Multiple channels and platforms to promote engagement with CODESRIA publications.	Output	- Level of engagement (impressions, likes, media mentions, comments etc.) with CODESRIA publications on the Council's website and social media platforms. - Number of participants at CODESRIA events (book launches and policy convenings)			Social media, book launch and convenings reports	Gender, Location/Region, and Category (type of publication)	Monthly/Annually	Monthly records/ Annual reports	
Produce and disseminate research and organise engagement on publications produced by CODESRIA and others.	Activity	- Number of events organized (book launches and convenings). - Number of publication posts on the website and social media platforms - Number of books, journals, policy briefs, etc. that is published and printed.			Event reports, publication records and analysis from the Council's website and social media platforms.	Gender, Location/Region and Category	Monthly/Annually	Monthly/Annual M&E Reports	

Specific Objective 3: *To enhance the capacity of African universities to train graduate students*

Description	Type	Indicator Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Collection	Data Disaggregation	Frequency	Reporting Tool	Risk & Assumption
Contribution of participants in CODESRIA activities to important scholarly and policy convenings on Africa and its place in the world	Outcome	- Percentage of doctoral fellows who contribute to CODESRIA research and other scholarly activities. - Percentage of doctoral fellows who are involved in policy work.			CODESRIA activity reports, surveys, and interviews.	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Improved research capacity of African researchers and trainers of researchers	Output	- Number of fellows who successfully complete their doctoral studies. - Number of fellows with improved capacity to train graduate students and conduct research. - Number of participants who indicate improvements in their capacity to train graduate students.			Doctoral certificates, surveys, and interviews	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	Participating scholars find the training relevant and continue to engage and contribute to scholarship and policy.
More scholars in distress are facilitated to carry out their research.	Output	- Number of research outputs from scholars in distress.			Publications data	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual reports	
Train researchers and enhance the capacity of 'trainers of researchers.	Activity	- Number of trainings organized - Number of participants who attend trainings.			Training records, baseline, and end line assessments.	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Monthly/Annually	Monthly/Annual reports	Fellows have sufficient motivation to retain and apply knowledge received.
Create safe spaces for scholars in distress to conduct research.	Activity	Number of grants awarded to scholars in distress.			Grant records	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Monthly/Annually	Monthly/Annual reports	
Doctoral fellows are attached to mentors.	Activity	- Number of doctoral fellows that are attached to mentors.			Mentoring log	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Monthly/Annually	Monthly/Annual reports	Fellows make effective use of interaction with mentors.

Specific Objective 4: *To strengthen the capacity for institutional effectiveness and accountability*

Description	Type	Indicator Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Collection	Data Disaggregation	Frequency	Reporting Tool	Risk & Assumptions
Increased and more diverse funding of CODESRIA.	Outcome	- Percentage increase in the diversity of funding received. - Percentage increase in the volume of funding available. - Percentage increase in the volume of membership fees.			Financial records	Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Enhanced institutional capacity for programme efficiency and accountability.	Outcome	- Number of existing donors requesting renewal of funding -Increased satisfaction of donors on project delivery and reporting.			Donor ratings	Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Increased visibility of CODESRIA within the community of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities in Africa.	Outcome	- Increased number of partnership requests - Increased number of feedbacks in relation to the Council's work.			Partnership requests, feedback from emails, website, and social media platforms.	Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
Improved support from CODERIA governance structures	Output	- Improved oversight and engagement by EC and SC members - EC and Sc minutes			EC and SC attendance in CODESRIA activities/ EC and SC records	Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	EC & SC members deploy their experience to support CODESRIA.
More proposals submitted for funding.	Output	- Number of proposals that lead to funding - Number of funders reaching out for unsolicited proposal for funding.			Financial records, email requests	Category	Annually	Annual reports	Continued funding support for HE interventions.
Capacity strengthening for CODESRIA staff.	Output	- Percentage increase in staff performance indicators.			Activity/monitoring reports, Staff evaluation records.	Gender	Annually	Annual reports	Staff apply the knowledge they received.
Greater investments in ICT as well as communication and dissemination.	Output	- Percentage increase in CODESRIA membership. - Percentage increase in number of online followers on all social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)			Membership records, social media analytics	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Bi-annually	Bi-annual reports	Academic community continue engaging with CODESRIA.
Organise activities that support the visibility, capacities, efficiency, and accountability.	Activity	- Number of EC and SC meetings - Number of fundraising events organized - Number of proposals submitted for funding - Number of capacity development trainings organized for staff. - Level of investment committed to ICT, MEL, Communication and Dissemination.			EC and SC files, Proposal records, HR records, financial records	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual reports	Outreach strategies are attractive to donors & academic community.

Specific Objective 5: *To increase the consideration of gender in the life and work of CODESRIA*

Description	Type	Indicator Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Collection	Data Disaggregation	Frequency	Reporting Tool	Risk & Assumptions
Increased participation and contribution of female scholars to CODESRIA's work.	Outcome	- General perception that there is gender balance at the Council. - Greater representation of women in mid-level and senior level positions at CODESRIA			Gender audit	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	
More research projects carried by female researchers supported.	Output	- Percentage of research conducted by women. - Percentage increase in publications by women. - Number of special research projects conducted by female researchers			Contract records, publications record	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	Female researchers continue to produce knowledge products relevant within academic and policy spaces.
Gender equity at CODESRIA	Output	- Percentage of women in middle and senior levels at the secretariat - Representation of women at the EC.			Staff register.	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	Female applicants are willing to take up positions at CODESRIA.
Mainstream gender thinking in the work and life of CODESRIA.	Outcome	- Confirmation that calls for application emphasize the desirability of women. - Confirmation that vacancy announcements for middle and senior secretariat staff emphasize the desirability of female applicants.			Call for application, vacancy announcements.	Gender, Location/Region, and Category	Annually	Annual M&E Reports	PhD programs attract significant numbers of female candidates.

In terms of implementation, CODESRIA has recently instituted a dedicated unit to provide oversight of all its MEL functions. The MEL unit will function to independently evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and ensure the methodological integrity and quality of project evaluation and reporting. This relies essentially on tracking the indicators as outlined in the log-frame and with strict but flexible adherence to the frequency of data to be sourced as well as reporting.

Definitions

In operationalising the MEL Plan/Log-Frame:

Monitoring is defined as the routine process of collecting and recording information in order to track progress towards expected results. It is the continuous and systematic observation and recording of programme progress. This is measured by regularly examining targets based on indicators outlined in the log-frame and assessing programmes from the perspective of key stakeholders.

Evaluation is understood as the systematic assessment of the design, implementation and/or results of a programme, project, activity, policy, strategy or other undertaking. The intention of evaluation is to provide credible and useful information with a view to determine the worth or significance of the undertaking, incorporate lessons learned into decision-making and enhance the overall quality of the Council's programming and operations.

Principles Guiding M&E Implementation

Utility: MEL must serve the information needs of stakeholders and ensure that assessments are well informed, relevant, timely, clear and concise when reporting. Utility must therefore be seen in terms of CODESRIA's ability to advance evidence in line with the ToC, which should be made available in formats that are asy for uptake and decision-making.

Credibility: MEL should be based on reliable and verifiable data or observations. This implies that evaluation reports shall reflect consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgements and lessons learned, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret information. Evaluations at the project, programme and portfolio levels shall use, as much as possible, dynamic and pragmatic techniques and indicators to measure results and progress.

Transparency: Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of evaluation processes. This involves clear communication concerning decisions for the programme of work and areas for evaluation, the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of the findings. Documentation resulting from evaluations should be in an easily consultable and readable form to contribute to transparency and legitimacy. Evaluation reports shall provide transparent information on sources, methodologies and approach.

Ethics: Evaluations shall provide due regard for the welfare, beliefs and customs of beneficiaries as well as issues related to conflict of interest and safeguarding. Evaluators must respect the privacy, dignity and entitlements of all stakeholders as well as the right to provide information in confidence. Ethical evaluation requires that management and/or commissioners of evaluations remain open to the findings and do not allow vested interests to interfere with the evaluation.

Impartiality: The principle of absence of bias applies to self-evaluations, self-assessments, internal reviews, reports and monitoring actions. Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of programmes. The evaluation process should reflect impartiality at all stages and consider the views of all stakeholders.

Flexibility: It must be understood that the MEL framework is a living document and must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the changing realities within the higher education space as well as the economies where CODESRIA's work is implemented. Therefore, regular reviews should be considered important both within CODESRIA and with partners.

Competencies and Capacities: Depending on the subject, MEL requires a range of expertise that may be technical, environmental or outside the evaluation profession. The implementation of the MEL framework must therefore be realistic about possible limitations in relation to capacity and incentives.

Communication: The lessons from MEL processes shall be disseminated by establishing effective feedback to operational staff, beneficiaries, committees, funders and the research community. In the spirit of collaboration, CODESRIA shall share related monitoring reports and other internal periodic reviews of progress and implementation and make findings and lessons learned available to project management for improved effectiveness.

Best Practice: The MEL function shall be independent from the delivery and management of projects. Also, MEL should be considered a key element of a larger culture of performance management and learning within CODESRIA.

Note

1. CODESRIA understands its goal as one of deepening democracy at the global and local level by augmenting the extent to which African populations contribute to narratives about their continent and participate in decision-making and activism in their societies.