

IIAS Conference Program

2024 Conference of the International Institute for African Scholars



Presenting African Scholars and Professionals
to the Global Community

Conference Theme: Unlocking Africa's Potential Challenges:
Democracy, Food Security, Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change, and
Development.

Virtual Conference

Saturday – November 2, 2024, 8:30 am – 5 pm Eastern Time

Conference Program

Theme: Unlocking Africa’s Potential Challenges: Democracy, Food Security, Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change, and Development.

Objective: The 2024 International Institute Conference for African Scholars will engage with pressing issues like Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, Climate Change, Food Security, and Development. By confronting these vital challenges on the African continent, IIAS is committed to crafting innovative solutions and shaping policies that will drive sustainable development forward.

Conference Opening Remarks: Dr. Folly Somado-Hemazro, IIAS President.

Introduction of Keynote Speaker by the Conference Chair – Associate Professor Veronica Nmoma Robinson (IIAS Fellow).

Keynote Speaker: Emmanuel Oritsejfor, Professor of Political Science, North Carolina Central University.

Panels:

Saturday Morning Session – November 2, 2024, 8:30 am – 12:30

Panel 1: Democracy and The Arts.

1. Dr. Veronica Nmoma Robinson, “Dependency, Underdevelopment, the Democratic Challenge and Resistance: The Niger Case.”
2. Drs. Edward Agbai and Shina Joshua Adesanya, “Leadership in Contemporary Democracies in Africa: Current Configurations and Mutations.”
3. Dr. Ifeoma Ana, “Africa: The Quest for Development Under Multifaceted Governance Systems and Porous Democracy.”

4. Drs. Monica White Ndounou and Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo, “Exploring Interdisciplinary Collaborations with the International Institute for African Scholars.”
5. Dr. Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo, “Theatre in Africa and the Diaspora.”

Lunch Break: 12:30 – 1:00 pm

Saturday Afternoon Session – November 2, 2024, 1:00 pm – 5

Panel 2: Health Care & Sustainable Development.

1. Dr. Anastasia Ashi, “Improving the Quality of Care in Health Care Organizations: A Strategy to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Sub-Saharan Africa.”
2. Dr. Christian Ehiobuche, “Healthcare Pan-Africanism and Medical Tourism: Strategies for Strengthening Health Systems Across Africa.”
3. Dr. Ngozi Okechukwu, “The Nexus Between Human Capital Development and Food Security: Bridging the Skills Gap in Nigeria’s Agro-Food Industry.”
4. Drs. Kingson Njoku, “Unpacking the Challenges to Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Closer Look at the Underlying Risk Factors.”
5. Dr. Okey O. Udo, “The Impacts of Renewable Energy Integration by Small and Medium Enterprises on Poverty Alleviation Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa.”
6. Dr. Agnes E. A, Offiong, “Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.”

Abstracts

Keynote Speaker

Indigenous Knowledge: An Alternative for Food Security in Africa.

Prof. Emmanuel Oritsejafor

ABSTRACT:

In *Indigenous Knowledge: An Alternative for Food Security and Wellness in Africa*, Emmanuel O. Oritsejafor argues that indigenous knowledge (IK) needs to play a central role in addressing food insecurity because IK methods result in sustainable agricultural practices that improve wellness. Applying IK in global communities demonstrates why it is an invaluable development alternative. For instance, Native Indians in the Americas have survived over several generations using IK for agriculture and wellness purposes. Oritsejafor establishes the severity and breadth of food insecurity on the continent of Africa and critiques the Western-led development model, which has proven to be inadequate in solving Africa's food security needs. In this regard, Oritsejafor suggests that Indigenous knowledge (IK) should serve as one of the central models for addressing food security.

BIO:

Professor Emmanuel O. Oritsejafor earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Clark-Atlanta University and currently serves as the Chair of the Political Science Department at North Carolina Central University, Durham. He has held various academic and administrative roles at universities across the U.S. and has published extensively in journals like the *Third World Studies Journal* and the *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. His work focuses on the Political Economy of Africa, notably with his book on the African Growth and Opportunity Act and co-authoring "Wealth Accumulation in Africa." His recent publication is "Indigenous Knowledge: An Alternative for Food Security in Africa" (2022). Oritsejafor is also involved in development projects in countries like Liberia and Rwanda and collaborates with several non-profits to uplift Indigenous communities.

Dependency, Underdevelopment, the Democratic Challenge and Resistance: The Niger Case.

Dr. Veronica Nmoma Robinson

ABSTRACT:

This paper argues that democracy in Niger, much like in other Sahelian African nations, faces an urgent and severe threat. In this former Francophone country, citizens perceive democracy as serving the interests of a corrupt political elite rather than addressing their fundamental needs or fostering sustainable development. The ongoing coups in the Sahel region challenge the viability of democracy and raise critical questions about its future in African institutions. The failure of democratic governance and the persistence of militant Islamist revolutionary movements exacerbating insecurity create fertile ground for military takeovers and deeper political and economic alliances with China and Russia. This trajectory unfolds in escalating geopolitical competition aimed at diminishing Western democratic influence. The United States must reevaluate its African policy to safeguard the future of democracy.

BIO:

Veronica Nmoma Robinson is an Associate Professor of Africana Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she has been a faculty member since 1991. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and Economics from Howard University and an MSc in Information systems and International Relations from American University, Washington, D.C. My “Power and Force: Libya’s Relations with the United States” article won the 2009 Lawrence Dunbar Memorial Scholarship Award for the best article published in the Journal of Third World Studies. Her article “A Look Back – Learning from Africa: Covid19 – Politicization, Polarization, and Resistance, The U.S. and Africa was selected as the 2023 Best article by IPRPD.

Leadership in Contemporary Democracies in Africa: Current Configurations and Mutations.

Dr Edward Agbai and Shina Joshua Adesanya

ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the evolving nature of leadership in contemporary democracies across Africa, examining how current configurations and mutations influence governance and political participation. In the context of a rapidly changing socio-political landscape, African democracies are facing unique challenges that require innovative leadership approaches. The study analyzes the impact of globalization, digital technology, and grassroots movements on traditional political structures, highlighting the emergence of new leadership styles that reflect the diverse aspirations of African citizens. By employing a comparative analysis of various African nations, this research identifies key trends in leadership practices, including the rise of populism, the significance of youth involvement, and the role of civil society in shaping democracy. The

findings underscore the need for adaptive leadership models prioritizing inclusivity, accountability, and responsiveness to citizen demands. Ultimately, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership configurations are transforming within the dynamic context of African democracies, offering insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in fostering sustainable democratic practices in the region.

BIOS:

Shina Joshua Adesanya is an accomplished professional with extensive experience in research administration, technology, academic research, business management, and project management. With a passion for driving results and helping organizations achieve their goals. Shina has established himself as a trusted leader and strategist. Shina holds a BSc. (Ed). and an MSc. In Economics from Benson Idahosa University, Nigeria. His research areas are Sustainability, Economic Development, Economic Growth, Micro and Macro Economics, Gender Equality, GBV, Governance, and Leadership. To his credit, he has authored and co-authored over a dozen publications, both National and International.

Dr Edward Agbai is an author and management professional with backgrounds in oil and gas, leadership, and contemporary issues, with over 20 years of combined experiences in the public and private sectors. He is an Associate Professor of Leadership and Organizational Change with Emmanuel University, Raleigh, NC, USA. He has authored, co-authored, and contributed to 11 books and 50 peer reviewed articles, including:

1. The 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: Actors, Intrigues and Winner.
2. Travails: Memoir of an Oil and Gas Field Worker.
3. Adaptation: Pandemic Learning Journey of an Immigrant Family.
4. Workplace Experience Across International Borders, among others.

One recent reference article is “Quality Performance Leadership for Political Leadership at the Local Government Level in Nigeria: A Case Study of AMAC Abuja FCT’ More Details on his Orchid Account. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9281-2054>

Africa: The Quest for Development Under Multifaceted Governance Systems and Porous Democracy.

Dr. Ifeoma Ana

ABSTRACT:

The African Union (AU) is comprised of 55 nations that operate under multiple forms of governance ranging from constitutional and absolute monarchies to declared democracies and federalism. Like any other continent in the World, the nations in the AU also pursue developmental objectives to improve their continental and global positions and enhance the socio-economic well-being of their citizens. Discussing the developmental implications of the various government structures within the AU in any one paper would be futile. This presentation, therefore, considers three basic types of governance, namely Monarchy, Parliament, and democratic governance within the AU. It deliberates on the historical influence of these

management systems on the developmental trajectories of the involved countries and how these systems of governance help unlock or undermine the potential for more significant developments in the nations and Africa as a whole. This paper discusses critical issues, including the effects divergent systems of political governance have on the real and sustainable development of individual African Nations and the impact these have on the African continent's advancement. The paper overviews the effect of the governance archetype on the economic and political progression in select African nations. It considers how these governance systems have kept Africa at the bottom of the ladder of ontogenesis, according to the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals Agenda reports. Finally, the paper considers the governance of advanced economies and how these mollify or further fuel the AU's gloomy socio-economic environment.

BIO:

Ifeoma Ana holds a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration and is a Chartered Accountant of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN). She has an MBA and MSc in accounting and is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (FCIB) and the International Institute of African Scholars (IIAS). Dr. Ana has a background in banking and financial services and is a faculty member of Emmanuel University and lectures business courses in a New Jersey high school. currently teaches business courses at a high school in New Jersey. She is passionate about immigrant welfare, which led her to establish AmeRItegrate Non-Profit. Additionally, she is the author of two books: "Bittersweet: Integration Struggles of Nigerian Immigrants in the United States" (2022) and "Beyond the Banking Hall: Banking Simplified for Customers and Students" (2005).

Exploring Interdisciplinary Collaborations with the International Institute for African Scholars

Dr. Monica White Ndounou and Dr. Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo.

ABSTRACT:

The International Black Theatre Summit (IBTS) embraces the expertise of members of the International Institute for African Scholars (IIAS) for this interactive session designed to actively strategize the future of Black storytelling at the intersection of various fields throughout the ecosystems in which we all work and live. How can scholars and practitioners in theatre, film, television, and related media strategize with IIAS colleagues in Education, Government, Agriculture, Technology, Economics, Human Rights, Health, and Healthcare on how to use the power of storytelling in Africa and the diaspora for development? In this session, IBTS seeks to further explore interdisciplinary collaborations with IIAS members by building on existing work to engage in explorations that expand development at the IBTS convening in Ghana from April 27 to May 2, 2025. The collective goal of session participants will be to utilize the organic, interdisciplinary intersections between these fields and Theatre, Arts, and Culture to develop and support a sustainable infrastructure for cross-cultural collaboration between continental and diasporic Africans. This session may be one of several quarterly virtual engagements between participants collectively strategizing the tangible action steps and infrastructures necessary for

true cross-cultural collaboration. Join us as we work together to strengthen our collective empowerment as people of African descent work in theatre and performance and the interdisciplinary fields we engage in for this exciting interactive session.

BIOS:

Dr. Monica White Ndounou, Associate Professor of Theater at Dartmouth College and founding Executive Director of The CRAFT Institute, is past President of the Black Theatre Association (BTA) (2016-2018), Vice President of Advocacy for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) (2019-2021), and serves on the board of The August Wilson Society. She is a founding member of the National Advisory Committee of The Black Seed, a national strategic plan for Black theater. Dr. Ndounou's book, *Shaping the Future of African American Film: Color-coded Economics and the Story Behind the Numbers* (Rutgers University Studies, Inc.

Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo is originally from St. Louis. Her primary interest is how the performing arts benefit older adults and how the performing arts are used in development in Africa—recent publications: *Workplace Experiences Across International Borders* (2023) by Bassoppo-Moyo, Agbai, and Nwosu. A memoir entitled *Ten Years in Zimbabwe*, Penultimate Press in 2024, and *Black Mask Magazine* (Summer 2024) will be released. She graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy, holds an Ed.D. in Higher and Adult Education from The University of Memphis, an MSc in Sociology from North Carolina Central University, and a BA in English Literature from Barnard College in New York.

Theatre in Africa and the Diaspora.

Dr. Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo

ABSTRACT:

This presentation will address the dearth of research on African theatre and performance across the African continent and its diasporas. It will review a collection of case studies and interviews that provide insight into contemporary African theatre practices and the interactions between African and African diaspora performances. It will focus on the performing arts from Africa's colonial past to the present day and provide insight into African theatre histories, spanning a spectrum of playwrights, movements, and contexts. This presentation explores how the collection acknowledges the various theatrical forms of contemporary Africa by integrating research on post-pandemic performance and digital technologies that engage with the question of what African theatre and performance are currently and in the future.

BIO:

Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo is originally from St. Louis. Her primary interest is how the performing arts benefit older adults and how the performing arts are used in development in Africa—recent publications: *Workplace Experiences Across International Borders* (2023) by Bassoppo-Moyo, Agbai, and Nwosu. A memoir entitled *Ten Years in Zimbabwe*, Penultimate Press in 2024, and *Black Mask Magazine* (Summer 2024) will be released. She graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy, holds an Ed.D. in Higher and Adult Education from The University of

Memphis, an MSc in Sociology from North Carolina Central University, and a BA in English Literature from Barnard College in New York.

Improving the Quality of Care in Health Care Organizations: A strategy to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Sub Saharan Africa.

Dr. Anastasia Ashi (FIIAS).

ABSTRACT:

Improving the quality of healthcare in health organizations is a prerequisite to ensuring healthy lives and promoting the wellbeing of all citizens at all ages. Poor quality healthcare or the total lack of healthcare plunges a nation or the entire community into underdevelopment, poverty lack education, degenerative lifestyle, poor health outcomes, low productivity, short life expectancy, and total lack of well-being. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to access the quality of healthcare in health organizations in Nigeria and the Sub-Saharan Africa. The social ecological model provided the conceptual framework for this study. Ten patients ages 21-60 years who had been hospitalized in selected health care organizations across the country were recruited through purposive sampling, and interviewed using in-depth key informant interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Interviews were transcribed, entered, and coded using NVivo 12 software. Collaizzi's seven steps of data analysis were employed to extract meanings from nine themes. Results show that quality healthcare in Nigeria is improved to a greater extent. However, it is not easily accessible and affordable to all. There are contextual issues such as poverty, cultural beliefs and illiteracy. **Findings:** Poor patients lack access to quality and affordable healthcare, resulting in many health challenges including birth complications, poor maternal health outcomes, and even death. Implications for positive social change may include advocacy for a universal all-inclusive coverage that provides a dependable level of quality care for the people, and engaging in periodic regulation of care providers in health facilities.

BIO

Anastasia Ashi is an accomplished educationist, Community Health facilitator and Public Health Coordinator in Nigeria. She holds a Ph.D. in Public Health from the prestigious Walden University, Baltimore, USA. Dr. Ashi is in the forefront of the fight against Child Marriage and gender issues. Her Ambition is to be a leading Public Health professional, and to promote peace and sustainable development in rural communities and globally. She intends to utilize her affiliation with the culturally manifold NYSC and her skills in community advocacy to help achieve the mission and vision of the global peace mission organization through an exploration of a new approach of community outreach, to ensure partnerships that cut across diverse communities in Nigeria and worldwide.

Healthcare Pan-Africanism and Medical Tourism: Strategies for Strengthening Health Systems Across Africa

Dr. Christian Ehiobuche

ABSTRACT:

Healthcare Pan-Africanism envisions a cohesive framework to enhance health outcomes across the African continent by transcending geographical, political, and socio-economic barriers (Azevedo, 2017). This paper investigates the intersection of Healthcare Pan-Africanism and medical tourism, focusing on the potential of medical tourism—including the integration of traditional medicine—as a strategic tool for strengthening healthcare systems and promoting health equity. Through a qualitative approach, this study explores the role of Healthcare Pan-Africanism in addressing shared health challenges and advancing socio-economic development. It assesses the potential of medical tourism to catalyze cross-border collaboration and enhance Africa's position in the global health arena. The research identifies key areas for policy advocacy, international partnerships, and scholarly contributions, aiming to develop actionable strategies that support a unified healthcare agenda across Africa. By examining these dynamics, the study contributes to understanding the complexities of healthcare integration and provides a roadmap for advancing sustainable health policies on the continent.

Bio:

Dr. Christian Ehiobuche is an influential author, professor, and healthcare executive with over 20 years of experience. As Chair of the MBA in Healthcare Administration and Leadership at Stockton University, he's known for his innovative, student-focused teaching and leadership. A prolific writer, Dr. Ehiobuche has published seven books and over 50 peer-reviewed papers, with his research spanning business, healthcare, and leadership. Beyond academia, he's a seasoned consultant, driving transformation and sustainability in businesses worldwide, especially within healthcare. His work inspires new ways of thinking, making him a leading voice in his field.

The Impacts of Renewable Energy Integration by Small and Medium Enterprises on Poverty Alleviation Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa

Dr. Okey Okoro Udo

ABSTRACT:

Renewable energy adoption by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Sub-Saharan Africa has emerged as a crucial strategy for poverty alleviation. This study explores the impacts of renewable energy integration on economic development and poverty reduction in the region, where SMEs face significant challenges due to unreliable and expensive energy sources. By adopting renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, and biomass, SMEs have enhanced their productivity, reduced operational costs, and improved business sustainability. A mixed-methods research approach was employed, combining quantitative data from national energy

access surveys and SME performance indicators with qualitative insights from case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions across multiple Sub-Saharan countries. The research examines regions with different levels of renewable energy penetration to analyze the correlation between energy access and poverty indicators, including income levels, employment rates, and business expansion. The findings demonstrate that SMEs leveraging renewable energy achieve greater economic efficiency and contribute to broader social benefits, such as job creation and environmental sustainability. The decentralized nature of renewable energy facilitates access in remote and underserved areas, promoting the growth of new enterprises and boosting local economies. However, the study emphasizes that the full potential of renewable energy in poverty alleviation can only be realized with supportive policies, access to financing, and targeted capacity-building initiatives. This research underscores the significant role of renewable energy in driving sustainable development and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa.

BIO:

Dr. Okey Okoro Udo is an adjunct faculty of the Emmanuel University, USA, and a dedicated Financial cum Management Professional with background in Economics, Finance, SMEs, Tax, Accounting, Forensic Audit and Investigation, Research, Leadership, and Sustainability with over 25 years of combined experiences in leading and managing operations and change management projects in the public and private sectors across various industries. He serves as the CEO of VOG Global Group, saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that organizations in corporate Nigeria and the world perform optimally as they blaze new trails and find new paths consistently.

Effect of Human Capital Development on Food Security: Bridging the Skills Gap in Nigeria's Agro-industry.

Dr. Ngozi Okechukwu

ABSTRACT:

Nigeria's agro-industry faces significant challenges in achieving food security due to a critical skills gap. This study investigates the effect of human capital development (HCD) on food security, focusing on bridging the skills gap in Nigeria's agro-industry. A multistage approach was employed to select 150 agro-farmers. The data was analyzed using means, standard deviations, and multiple regression analyses. The results show a high mean rating on the effect of human capital development on optimal food production. Similarly, a positive relationship exists between HCD and food security, with skills development in areas like agricultural technology, management, research and development, environmental awareness, and extension services contributing significantly to improved food production and availability. However, the study also reveals a substantial skills gap, particularly among smallholder farmers in the area under study. The study recommends targeted HCD interventions, including training programs, capacity building, and collaboration between industry stakeholders, educational institutions, and government agencies to address this. By bridging the skills gap, Nigeria's agro-industry can enhance its productivity, competitiveness, and contribution to food security. This research

contributes to understanding HCD's role in achieving food security and informs policy and practice aimed at developing a skilled and productive agro-industry workforce in Nigeria.

BIO:

Dr. Ngozi Okechukwu is a holder of a Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership from the University of Phoenix (2020), a Masters of Humanities in Public Administration (2000) from ABSU, and a Bachelor of Arts in English (1986) from the University of Calabar. With over 30 years of experience, she served as the Abia-State Director in the National Orientation Agency, excelling in grassroots mobilization, communication, public sensitization, and advocacy. Currently, Dr. Ngozi Okechukwu is a lecturer at the Institute of Industrial Relations and Personnel Management (IRPM) at Michael Okpara College of Agriculture, Umudike. She imparts knowledge in various courses related to human resource development and management. Furthermore, Dr. Ngozi Okechukwu is a published researcher and holds the position of Coordinator of the Academic Core Values Orientation Initiative (ACVOI) and the President of the Initiative for Rural Development and Enlightenment (IRRE), where she positively impacts children and vulnerable individuals.

Unpacking the Challenges to Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Closer Look at the Underlying Risk Factors.

Dr. Kingson Njoku

Abstract

Sustainable development in Nigeria is significantly hindered by a range of complex underlying risk factors.

This article investigates the critical challenges posed by insecurity, disasters—both natural and human-made—and financial instability, which collectively undermine the nation's infrastructure and disrupt the achievement of sustainable development goals. Insecurity in Nigeria is manifested through various forms, such as terrorism, banditry, cyber-attacks, and communal conflicts, all of which have been exacerbated by economic, social, and political dynamics. The repercussions of these security challenges are severe, leading to diminished foreign investment, increased population displacement, and environmental degradation. Additionally, Nigeria is increasingly susceptible to both natural and human-induced disasters, including floods and droughts, which are intensified by climate change, high unemployment rates, and insufficient infrastructure. These factors contribute to significant economic losses and social unrest.

Financial instability further complicates the situation, characterized by income volatility and restricted access to credit. This instability is largely driven by economic mismanagement and a reliance on fluctuating oil revenues, which stifles business growth and perpetuates poverty, threatening the prospects of future generations. The interconnectedness of these challenges creates a synergistic effect, where insecurity amplifies vulnerability to disasters, and financial instability worsens both insecurity and disaster impacts. The relationship between critical infrastructure, economic development, and growth is deeply intertwined. Case studies highlight regions grappling with these compounded challenges, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions. This paper advocates for strategies aimed at improving

governance, enhancing disaster preparedness, and fostering financial inclusion. A holistic approach is crucial for Nigeria to effectively address these multifaceted issues and achieve sustainable development, requiring collaborative efforts from policymakers, civil society, and international partners.

Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

Dr. AGNES E. A. OFFIONG

ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the intricate relationship between climate change and the Paris Agreement. It begins by examining the causes of climate change, highlighting human activities as the primary driver. The paper then delves into the concept of climate change, its effects on biodiversity, oceans, humans, weather patterns, and sea levels, and the role of ecosystems in mitigation and adaptation. The Paris Agreement, a landmark international treaty, is discussed in detail. Its objectives, key provisions, and progress made towards achieving its goals are analyzed. The paper also highlights the importance of ecosystems in mitigating and adapting to climate change, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices and ecosystem conservation. In conclusion, the paper underscores the urgency of addressing climate change and the critical role of the Paris Agreement in guiding global efforts towards a sustainable future. It emphasizes the need for concerted action, international cooperation, and innovative solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure a resilient planet for future generations.

Remarks by Prof. Frederick Nwosu

Closing Remarks by the Conference Chairman