Africa Notes is published four times a year by the Institute for African Development, Cornell University.

Contributions in the form of articles, news items and comments are welcome from scholars, professors, Africanists and organizations. The Institute reserves the right to select or reject submissions or edit for available space. Contributions may be sent via e-mail to CIAD@cornell.edu or by mail to:

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Cover image of Dakar train station courtesy of Alexis Boyce
Employment Relations and Socio-economic Development in Africa

Tayo Fashoyin

The labor market actors in Africa continue to play a critical role in improving the socioeconomic status of workers, and their role in the development process. However, with growing declines in modern sector employment and union membership, neocorporatist employment relations are needed for sustainability.

It is commonly acknowledged that the modern sector of the economy plays a leading role in a country’s industrialization and economic development. As African economies make the transition from primarily agriculture to a modern sector industrial base, industrialization plays a critical role in national socioeconomic development. Although there have been differences in African countries’ development trajectories, the common pattern or trend has been a transition from post-colonial economy to the modern industrial sector.

Industrialization and growth in wage employment are normally accompanied by the organization of workers into unions (as well as the organization of employers) as the two sides of industry seek to advance their broader economic and labor market interests. These developments are enhanced or spurred by favorable development in public policy, which acknowledges the role of labor market institutions in development. The labor laws that accompanied modern sector development contributed in no small way to defining the nature of the employment relationship and conferment of organizational rights at work. Naturally, these developments affect the state and the trade unions.

I argue here that industrialization is accompanied by continuing change in the role, influence, and outcomes of employment relations. Trade union membership has been contracting for the past decade or more, reducing union influence and appeal in the promotion of employment rights for workers generally, and of their members in particular. Given this reality, sustaining these rights would seem to rest on the use of the neocorporatist framework through which peak organizations of workers, employers, and the public authority cooperate to institute minimum terms and conditions of employment for workers.

Economies: Growth, Employment and Labor Market Governance

Post-independence policies favored giving social institutions the capacity to nurture the evolving democracy. Through this workers improve their wages and contribute to national socioeconomic development. This conceptualization is a logical extension of the strategic role of workers and their organizations as among the most outspoken groups in the campaign for political independence and industrialization. It is fair to say that many African countries genuinely adopted favorable policies for market institutions, particularly policies that support relations between workers’ unions and employer, insofar as this relates to the determination of the terms and conditions of employment.

However, looking at the more recent economic data, this appears to be changing. As the table below shows, Africa, indeed the world, has yet to fully recover from the global economic and financial crisis that surfaced in 2008. Many countries, particularly in Africa, continue to face high unemployment. According to the ILO, about 27 million new job seekers joined the global unemployment category, raising the pool of the unemployed from 171 million before the crisis, to more than 200 million in 2012.¹

| Comparative Economic and Labor Market Trends 2006–2012 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2012 |
| **GDP Growth** |
| World | 5.3 | 5.4 | 2.8 | -0.7 | 5.1 | 4.0 |
| N. Africa | 5.9 | 5.8 | 5.0 | 3.5 | 4.4 | 1.9 |
| SS Africa | 6.4 | 7.1 | 5.6 | 2.8 | 5.3 | 5.2 |
| **Employment Growth** |
| World | 1.8 | 1.7 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| N. Africa | 3.2 | 3.7 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 0.8 |
| SS Africa | 3.0 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.9 |
| **Labour Force Participation** |
| World | 65.0 | 64.8 | 64.6 | 64.3 | 64.1 | 64.1 |
| N. Africa | 48.3 | 48.7 | 48.8 | 48.8 | 48.8 | 49.0 |
| SS Africa | 70 | 70.1 | 70.2 | 70.2 | 70.2 | 70.3 |
| **Unemployment** |
| World | 7.3 | 7.4 | 5.69 | 6.2 | 5.9 | 5.8 |
| N. Africa | 10.0 | 9.6 | 9.1 | 8.9 | 10.0 | 10.5 |
| SS Africa | 7.5 | 7.4 | 7.5 | 7.6 | 7.6 | 7.4 |

¹ Africa Forum
Looking at the table, it is observable that generally, in Africa post-crisis economic growth has not been accompanied by commensurate employment, and it appears to be the case that, insofar as the effect of the crisis on the labor market is concerned, the economic crisis still lingers on. However, available evidence appears to suggest that the forces of liberalization and globalization have induced several countries that thought about or developed favorable labor market policies to significantly relax or water them down and, in some cases, reverse them.

The poor growth of African economies and the accompanying unemployment is attributable generally to the lack of structural transformation, which results from the concentration of growth on the extractive industries and construction, but with a weak manufacturing base. Generally in sub-Saharan Africa, industry accounts for no more than about 8.5 per cent of employment. While it is true that agricultural employment has decreased in the continent, much of the observed employment growth has been in the service sector, accounting for 30 percent of total employment in 2010. Thus, while labour force participation has generally been sustained, the wage earning population, particularly in the modern sector, remains comparatively insignificant, while unemployment constitutes the most unsettling labor market issue. This is particularly a concern as pertains to youth, because they are three times as likely to be unemployed as adults. Generally, those who succeed in finding employment are in part-time or temporary work; the conditions are of poor quality; and the prospect for continuity or long-term employment is uncertain. In these types of jobs, workers have little motivation to join the union, but their work provides little motivation to stay on.

In other words, the structure of employment shows the insignificance of formal sector employment and, by implication, this affects the context and significance of employment relations in present-day Africa. This is revealed by relatively recent evidence. According to the ILO, in 2008 the wage and salary share of employment in Africa was 28.4 per cent, of which the modern sector accounted for a mere 2.8 per cent. On the other hand, own-account or self-employed workers, or the mostly small micro-enterprises in informal activities, accounted for 40.2 percent, while contributing family workers (irregularly paid or unpaid), accounted for 28.6 percent. The general explanation for this evidence is the effect of neoliberal economic policies that are implemented across countries in Africa. In the private sector, employers naturally—perhaps justifiably—adjust their manpower needs to the dictates and consequences of neoliberal policies. By contrast, in the public sector employment has grown, ostensibly because in several cases the public employer is, in many countries, the main source of modern sector employment. Furthermore, workers generally enjoy relatively better and generous conditions of employment. However, in this sector, the employment relations institutions and processes are the weakest and, as a result, the terms and conditions of employment are most often fixed by institutionalized civil service rules, thus providing limited or nonexistent possibility for union and management a role in the determination of the terms and conditions of employment.

At independence African countries embarked on industrial ventures, in areas such as textiles, automobile spare parts and food processing. The extractive sector has been a boost to several of the economies. However, the introduction of neoliberal economic policies beginning in the 1980s has progressively devastated much of the emerging industries, undermining industrial workforce and resulting in large-scale under-employment in small operations. These operations though are in the formal economy, they generally operate as though they were informal formations. Consequently, the terms and conditions of employment are limited to wages, and possibly a few others, notably limited health and safety benefits.

The impact of neoliberal policies has thus been devastating to institutions of employment relations. Since private sector employers naturally rationalize their manpower needs to the dictates of market forces, there has been a general contraction of employment in the private sector. In turn this has had adverse effect on the fortunes of trade unions and their capacity to continue to forcefully provide a voice for workers. In cases such as these, unions across Africa contracted and lost membership, and unable to engage a determined employer who might be opposed to unionization or embrace joint determination of the terms and conditions of employment.

Across Africa the informal economy is a significant source of wage employment, and its role has acquired greater significance as a result of neoliberal economic policies. It is therefore a welcome development that the organization of workers in this sector can potentially assure a measure of industrial democracy particularly with respect to the determination of wages and other conditions of employment.

Consider, for example, the experience of Nigeria’s National Union of Petroleum, Energy and Natural Gas (NUPENG), a union of over 150,000 members in the 1991. This union led the historic pro-democracy campaign which forced the military junta to yield power to civilian authority in 1993. However, following the adoption of neoliberal economic policies, particularly in the specific case of the oil and gas sector, employment contracted significantly and led to the
reduction of the union’s membership to about 20,000 in 2012. What is particularly instructive is that most of NUPENG’s members today are in various forms of nonstandard employment relations in which the NUPENG has been active.\(^6\)

Across Africa, several unions have similarly contracted, obviously as a result of declining economic conditions most often induced by neoliberal economic policies. In the same context, employers’ organizations on labor market issues, which blossomed in the late 1970s have, as a result of the effects of these policies, either redefined the nature and context of their role in employment relations, or tacitly refuse to recognize trade unions of their role in employment relations, or as a result of the effects of these policies, which blossomed in the late 1970s have, as a result of the effects of these policies, either redefined the nature and context of their role in employment relations, or tacitly refuse to recognize trade unions or negotiate with them on terms and conditions of employment. These developments have uniquely contributed to the spread of nonstandard employment relations, with inferior terms and conditions of employment across most African countries.

The foregoing presents one fundamental policy challenge for African states and policy makers. Today, while countries of Asia and Latin America generally embrace neoliberal policies, and are making the free market to work for their citizens and economies, this is hardly the case in Africa. On the contrary, the fact is that neoliberalism is perceived as undesirable, one which has led to contraction in formal sector employment and joblessness, and the bourgeoning of jobs of poor quality; indeed, dead-end jobs. It has also been accompanied by relative ineffectiveness of labor market institutions.

Redefining Employment Relations for Socioeconomic Development

During the last two decades, the main challenge that has faced employment relations across Africa has come from several fronts; from reluctant political leadership to generally acknowledge the imperative of globalization and the pressure to liberalize the economies so as to accommodate or adjust to global imperatives. Indeed, the reforms that were necessitated by changing economic realities have exposed the structural weaknesses that define African economies, and of their inability to provide basic services to the population.\(^5\)

It is thus an irony that post-independence policies across Africa favored social institutions such as trade unions with the capacity to nurture the evolving democracy and by which they contribute to national socioeconomic development. This perspective is an acknowledgment of the strategic role of workers and their organizations as among the most outspoken groups in the clamor for political independence. However, it is debatable whether the emerging political leadership, which saw the unions and their leaders as opposition groups, was at ease with this idea, or was genuinely persuaded of the contribution of workers’ organizations to the evolving democracy.

Indeed, the response of several governments to the objective and role of trade unions create development dilemmas. More often than not, government authorities in most African countries tend to portray organized workers as constituting a privileged class. One might consider, for example, the case of Malawi, where the dictator Kamuzu Banda ignored the contribution of workers to the pro-independence campaign. Instead, Banda opted to silence the workers and their unions, which had embarked on strikes in defense of the deteriorating economic conditions of the population. By the beginning of the 1990s, only 5 of the 19 trade unions in that country remained in existence, as a result of the repressive policy of the regime.\(^8\)

Notwithstanding the wide differences in the economic and industrial landscape across Africa, and in turn the state of employment relations, internal and external forces are contributing to redefining labor and management relations within the neoliberal economic realities. The outcome is the emerging change in roles and institutions of employment relations. The observable changes would put to test whether the subsisting employment relations practice is in tandem with what is observable in elsewhere.

It appears, for example, that other regions, notably Asia, have welcomed or are adjusting to the economic realities, particularly as concerns what it portends for employment relations in that region. This development have been examined by Kuruvilla and Erickson, who explored the transformation thesis to determine the extent to which the employment relations systems in the region have changed or been transformed. While acknowledging considerable changes across the continent, the authors emphasize the need for consensus on what constitute a transformation.\(^9\)

In so far as Africa is concerned, while it can hardly be denied that changes have taken place in employment relations across the region, it is a matter for debate as to what extent this amounts to transformation. What is certain is that neoliberal policies are generally perceived to have led to the deterioration of the economies, in the process creating dead-end jobs. This means that the debate or discussion in a large number of countries is the critical need for mechanisms through which the parties in the labor market could promote their mutual interest in employment relations so as to enhance their respective contribution to national socioeconomic development.

A Neocorporatist Framework for Organizing Employment Relations

The foregoing observation leads to several conclusions, including the evidence that industrialization has yet to take off in several African countries, while the institutions of employment relations, such as trade unions of workers and employers and collective bargaining, have fallen victims of neoliberal policies. For example, the machinery of collective bargaining, which is undoubtedly the most important institution through which workers and employers jointly determine applicable wages and other terms of employment, has been rendered relatively ineffective in a growing number of countries and workplaces.

This has come as a result of several forces, including unfavorable public policy, shrinking formal sector employment,
decline in job quality and corresponding decline in union membership.

Given therefore the limited possibility for union-employer role in the determination of the terms and conditions of employment, what emerge across sectors are jobs that are comparatively of inferior quality, with the wage and terms of employment often exclusively determined by the employer. It is no surprise that workers who find themselves in circumstances such as this have little interest in joining the union.

Given this emerging reality, a realistic approach to the determination of wages and other terms of employment is the neocorporatist arrangement, through which the key actors in the labor market, namely the peak organizations of workers and employers, as well as the institution representing the public authority would engage in periodic tripartite deliberation on issues that concern the operation of the labour market. Specifically, the neocorporatist mechanism would undertake periodic discussion and determination of the minimum acceptable terms and conditions of employment, generally for workers who have no functioning representation or viable mechanism for periodic review of their terms and conditions of employment.

The merit of the neocorporatism is not simply in its enthronement of shared view on acceptable minimum standards in employment relations, but also in paying attention to related broader issues, namely workers’ benefits, corporate productivity and profitability and, broadly, national socioeconomic development. Arrangements such as this presents no particular threat or risk to the parties, because decisions are consensual and based on the need to empower workers and employers, and their contribution to broader national socioeconomic development.

Notes
2. Ibid.

Tayo Fashoyin is a Visiting Professor in Industrial and Labour Relations at Cornell University, where he has been teaching a course in Comparative Employment Relations in Africa. He is also Professor of Labour and Employment Relations at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, where he has served on the business administration faculty for over two decades. He was Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania in 1988–89. He spent sixteen years at the International Labour Organization in Geneva, where he served as the Director of Industrial and Employment Relations. In addition, he is former Secretary-General of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association and Founding Secretary of the Nigerian Industrial Relations Association. He also serves as scientific director of the editorial team for the journal International & Comparative Labour Studies. His publications include a co-edited volume (with Martina Ori and Malcom Sargeant), Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Working (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). He has also published widely in peer-reviewed journals including the Nigerian Journal of Labour Law and Industrial Relations, International Labour Review, Journal of Industrial Relations, International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations, and the Journal of Modern African Studies.
The IAD Guest Lecture was established to bring prominent scholars to Cornell to speak on topical issues affecting Africa. The central purpose of the lecture is to advance the education of students, faculty, and the Cornell community with respect to the most significant global issues of our times as they affect Africa.

The Spring 2014 Guest Lecturer was Li Xiaoyun, Dean of the College of Humanities and Development Studies and the School of Public and Policy Studies at China Agriculture University in Beijing. Dr. Li spoke on China’s growing role in Africa and Africa’s potential for growth. He cautioned that unless there are institutional changes and structural transformation, the economic gains made by many African countries will not be sustainable.

In addition to his role as Dean of two colleges at China Agriculture University, Dr. Li is also Director of that university’s Research Center for International Development. In addition, he is a Senior Advisor to the International Poverty Reduction Center in China and Director of OECD/China-DAC Study Group. He has worked as a policy analyst in the Central Party Committee’s Research Department for Rural Development, and in recent years he has been involved in evaluating Chinese economic and technical assistance to African countries for promoting their development. Prof. Li Xiaoyun has been a consultant for the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UN, and other bilateral agencies and international NGOs working in China, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

**Upcoming Conferences**

**26th International Council for Open and Distance Education**

October 14–16, 2015, South Africa

The University of South Africa will host the 26th International Council for Open and Distance Education World Conference in South Africa, with the theme “Growing capacities for sustainable & distance e-learning provision.” The conference will be hosted at one of South Africa’s most acclaimed tourist destinations, the world renowned Sun City, situated in the heartland of the African bushveld.

**African Studies Association 58th Annual Meeting**

November 19–22, 2015

Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina

San Diego, CA

http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=15367
Last fall, I took “Customary Law and Social Change in Africa” with Professors Muna Ndulo and Cynthia Bowman (Law School). The class explored the origins and administration of customary law, along with customary law’s many conflicts with European-imported systems of common and civil law within various legally pluralist African nations. At the conclusion of the fall semester, we travelled to Johannesburg, South Africa over winter break. The University of Johannesburg hosted us at the Kingsway Campus in Auckland Park. The study abroad experience was a combination of cultural excursions, museum tours, lectures, and community engagement.

My experience in South Africa has changed my life. The history was fascinating, infuriating, and encouraging all at the same time. It was incredibly eye-opening to learn so much about South Africa’s history and legal system while visiting and touring the very places where its history unfolded.

During our first week in South Africa, we visited and toured the Constitutional Court, Nelson Mandela’s home, the Voortrekker Museum, Freedom Park, Liliesleaf Farm, the Apartheid Museum, and the Hector Pieterson Museum, to name a few. These cultural centers told an in-depth narrative about South Africa, its history, and its current environment. This exposure provided a nice background and context as we transitioned into our “Indigenous Law” class during the second week.

The class touched on South African law, its Dutch and English influences, and the modern constitution’s formal recognition of African customary law as a source of law. We discussed the current tension caused by cultural and legal pluralism, along with constitutional court decisions that helped resolve these tensions. We also learned about South Africa’s labor and employment laws, and discrimination and equity laws. It was interesting to compare and contrast these various laws with the goals and administration of their American equivalents.

During this lecture week, we also visited Southern Africa Litigation Centre (an organization that uses litigation strategies to advance human rights throughout southern African countries) and Gender Links (an NGO that promotes gender equality throughout the southern African countries). These organizations raised our awareness of ongoing issues, not only in South Africa, but also in the southern African region, including the countries of Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

During our third week, we left the city of Johannesburg for a visit to one of the most rural provinces in South Africa, called Limpopo Province. We stayed at Mogalakwena River Lodge (about twelve miles from the Botswana border) and learned about the Mogalakwena Reserve’s current ecological research and entrepreneurial projects. We learned about the Reserve’s conservation efforts with giraffes and other animals. We went on nature walks, where we spotted crocodiles, large catfish, turtles, lizards, a bush baby, warthogs, ostriches, and impalas, while also learning about various forms of plant-life. We also visited a nearby village’s craft center and viewed several of the artists’ pieces.

My study abroad experience in South Africa was remarkable. It was my first visit to the African continent and I could not have asked for a better, more balanced educational and cultural experience. Every day was exciting. For instance, during our first night, we met the mayor of Johannesburg at the city’s New Year’s fireworks celebration.
I now see the world as a global citizen, not just as an American. I now have a better understanding of the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world and am interested in working to meet these challenges. In fact, when selecting a practice group for my law firm summer program, I chose Project Development & Finance, which advises on infrastructure projects all over the world. I am particularly interested in the ways lawyers manage political and financial risks while balancing client needs with sustainability and the long-term goals of developing nations. This newfound interest is a direct result of South African travel experience.

I would highly recommend this trip to others considering enrolling in the course. This unique and challenging study abroad will provoke new and interesting thoughts and enhance a student’s overall educational experience.

Ebony Ray '10 is a student at Cornell Law School and a Cornell Tradition Senior Recognition Award winner
Travel Grant Recipients

Tongai Makoni (MPA Candidate), Zimbabwe

Conference: 16th Annual Africa Business
Venue: Harvard Business School
Dates: February 28–March 2, 2014

The 16th Annual Africa Business Conference at the Harvard Business School, Africa Accelerates: Equipping a Vibrant African Economy, was a phenomenal event and an adumbration of what development on the African continent will look like in the years ahead. Tongai foresees a prosperous continent because of the young generation that is being educated across the globe.

The conference keynote speakers provided some inspirational words; of special interest was Dr. Okechukwu Enelamah, who posited that “it takes only one committed generation to rebuild a nation/continent.” His words were full of conviction and allowed participants to reflect on the opportunities that young Africans can channel back to the continent. In his closing remarks, Dr. Enelamah challenged his audience to have a “constancy of purpose and consistency in action.”

During the panel sessions, Tongai attended a panel on Transportation Investments: Connecting Markets and People. The panel discussed challenges facing Africa in terms of infrastructure, particularly the extremely high transport costs for people doing business. Another interesting challenge is the barriers to investment among Africans themselves; infrastructure and access to markets through trade for social economic growth pose yet more challenges. Africa faces non-tariff barriers that need to be dealt with; for instance time spent on the border equals 60 percent, while fixed costs and corruption/brides cost 35 and 5 percent, respectively.

The last and best panel Tongai attended was on Empowering Women in Leadership in Africa. The panel was comprised of dynamic women who explained what the role of women has been on the continent. Women in Africa have always been leaders—juggling a lot of issues—and from them we learn philanthropy, business, and service. They advised the audience to work on building relationships, especially when going back home. One of the things they reiterated was that as young people who have the opportunity to learn at prestigious universities, when we go back to Africa we should seek not leadership but seek to serve.

Cynthia Matare (PhD Candidate, Nutrition), Zimbabwe

Conference: Experimental Biology
Venue: San Diego, CA
Dates: April 26–April 30, 2014

Cynthia Matare attended the 2014 Experimental Biology Meeting in San Diego April 26–30, where she gave a poster presentation April 29 on interventions to promote breastfeeding in rural Zimbabwe. There were about six participating societies at the meeting, but her interest was mainly in events planned by the American Society for Nutrition.

Cynthia attended sessions on Global Nutrition: Infant and Young Child Feeding; and Lactation: Determinants of Lactogenesis, Lactation Duration and Other Indicators of Lactation Success. She also attended the E.V. McCollum Lecture, given this year by Kathryn Dewey of UC Davis—a truly enlightening experience from one of the major voices in maternal and child nutrition globally. A session on “Global Nutrition: Prenatal Micronutrient Interventions” provided insights in an area currently gaining traction in Cynthia’s field, showing where research, programs, and policy are headed.

Cynthia’s presentation was on a village health worker-led intervention to promote and support exclusive breastfeeding in rural Zimbabwe, showing that this is a feasible, acceptable, and effective strategy. She spent a fruitful time entertaining questions from many who showed genuine interest in her work. Cynthia is grateful to the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and the Institute for African Development for enabling her to participate in this very rich experience and opportunity to grow as a scientist and researcher.

Michael Latham Travel Grant Recipient

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Michael C. Latham, M.D., served as Professor Emeritus and Graduate School Professor of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University and was Director of Cornell’s Program in International Nutrition for twenty-five years. Professor Latham was born in Tanzania and studied medicine at Trinity College in Dublin. In recognition of his outstanding and invaluable service, in 1965 Professor Latham was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for his work on nutrition. Professor Latham joined the Cornell faculty in 1968 after four years at Harvard and later served as director of Cornell’s Program in International Nutrition for 25 years. He was “internationally recognized for his expertise in the major nutritional problems of developing countries. In research, teaching and public service he has been particularly involved with breastfeeding, infant and child health; parasitic infections and their relationship to health; micronutrient deficiencies, especially iron deficiency anemia and vitamin A deficiency; and nutrition and human rights” (Cornell Chronicle, 2008).

The Award: The Institute for African Development/Michael C. Latham Travel Award provides Cornell graduate students enrolled in a development-related field with travel support for conferences within the continental United States. Masters’ and Ph.D. students enrolled at Cornell who have been invited to present papers at professional conferences may apply for grants to help cover expenses related to conference participation (travel, lodging, conference fees, etc.). Topics should be relevant to African development. One award (maximum award $500) per semester will be given.

Application should include: the IAD Michael Latham Travel Award application form (obtained from the IAD office, 190b Uris Hall, or downloaded from http://iad.einaudi.cornell.edu/funding_field_research); a detailed itinerary of the conference and the proposed activity; budget, and a letter of recommendation from the student’s academic advisor.
The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which sprawls over 905,000 square miles, is the second largest country in Africa. Fifty-four years after independence, the DRC has few roads connecting one end of the country to the other. In fact, the only way to travel between two distant points is by air or by canoe. Many Congolese cannot afford air travel, and most feel as if their country is made up of different countries.

But imagine multi-lane tarred roads linking Kinshasa in western DRC to Goma in the east, or roads and railway lines from Cape Town in South Africa to Cairo in Egypt, and from Dakar, Senegal to Nairobi, Kenya. Just imagine the endless possibilities that such infrastructure would bring.

Improving road and rail systems in Africa will boost the transportation of goods and raw materials and facilitate transactions and negotiations, especially when face-to-face meetings are required; it will also boost tourism and positively impact ordinary lives in diverse ways, such as ensuring that people get to the hospital quickly during emergencies. Countless other activities depend on reliable roads and rails.

Most of Africa’s railway lines and roads are in bad condition and need huge investments, according to the African Development Bank (AfDB). The proportion of paved roads on the continent today is five times less than those in developed countries, notes the Bank. As a result, transport costs alone are 63 percent higher in Africa than in developed countries, hampering its competitiveness in the international and local markets.

The AfDB further points out that transport costs represent between 30 and 50 percent of total export value in Africa. These costs are even higher in the sixteen landlocked countries, including Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Mali, and Niger, and constitute up to three-quarters of their total export value.

Poor roads and railways also have a negative impact on intra-African trade, which is currently just 11 percent of total trade. Development experts believe this figure might have been higher with better roads and railway lines. Trade among Southeast Asia’s ten countries, at 37 percent of total trade, is much higher than in Africa, for example.

Railway lines in most African countries were built during colonial times to connect mines and other natural resources to ports. In fact, most of the lines were constructed by mining companies. Even now, passenger services account for no more than 20 percent of rail traffic, says the AfDB. Over the years, passenger business has been shrinking steadily, viable only when road networks are inadequate or nonexistent, it says. According to the bank, the costs of maintaining rail tracks and signaling systems, and the level of spending needed to reach passenger speeds, run into billions of dollars. If these costs are not subsidized, passenger fares alone could not cover the expenses.

Program for infrastructure development

With Africa’s economy growing at 5 percent per year on average, African leaders worry that without a good road and rail network, such impressive economic growth may not translate into real socioeconomic development for Africans. In order to turn the situation around, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) was established in July 2010. An initiative of the AfDB, New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and the African Union, PIDA is an ambitious effort to boost African infrastructure, including rails and roads.

Ibrahim Mayaki, the chief executive officer of NEPAD, says PIDA was designed to transform Africa and bridge its massive infrastructure gap. “At the moment,” he noted, “Africa is the least integrated continent in the world, with low levels of intra-regional economic exchange and the smallest share of global trade.”

One of PIDA’s remarkable projects is the construction of the 4,500 km Algiers-Lagos highway. Also known as the Trans-Sahara highway, the project is already 85 percent finished and the remainder is expected to be completed this year, according to PIDA. Upon completion, the highway will create a corridor through the desert that will facilitate trade between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. This means countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, and Niger will be able to easily conduct trade by road transport. Historically, the Sahara Desert has hindered trade between the two sub-regions.

Many other rail and road construction projects are underway across Africa. In Kenya, a $25 billion infrastructure development plan, including a road construction that links Kenya to South Sudan and Ethiopia, was re-
cently launched by the governments of the three countries. In addition, the AfDB is financing several roads projects in Central Africa.

State of rail transport in Africa

Today, only South Africa has a fairly good railway system, according to the World Bank. Before the FIFA World Cup in 2010, South Africa revamped its railway system, including the new underground commuter train between Pretoria and Johannesburg. Some mining companies in Africa also have dedicated railway lines for transporting their goods. For example, African Minerals, a company mining iron ore in Tonkolili Province in northern Sierra Leone, has invested up to $2 billion in mining and rail infrastructure, according to Africa Review, a Kenyan publication.

Most rail networks in Africa are as old as one hundred years and, due to lack of funds, have not been upgraded since they were first constructed in colonial days. These networks cannot meet the demands of modern times, says the AfDB. “Most lines are low-speed, small-scale, undercapitalized networks carrying low axle loads.”

Big projects and China

China is throwing a lifeline to Africa’s railway infrastructure. Some two thousand Chinese companies are in Africa, and many of them are heavily involved in roads and rail construction, reports Der Spiegel, a German newspaper. A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a global finance company, says that China’s goal is to take advantage of the increasing growth of African markets. In the DRC, two Chinese construction companies and a copper company, all state-owned, have signed a $9 billion contract for the construction of a rail and road network, which is more than the DRC’s entire national budget.

Rail infrastructure in Angola, one of China’s top oil suppliers, is rapidly expanding as part of an ‘infrastructure-for-oil’ trade agreement between the two countries. Kenya recently signed a $5 billion deal with China to construct a 952-km rail link from the city port of Mombasa to Malaba, a town near its border with Uganda. This is expected to be extended to Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania by 2018. And that is not all. In September 2012, the China Railway Construction Corporation (CRC) signed a $1.5 billion contract to rehabilitate a railway system in Nigeria. The CRC has ongoing projects in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Nigeria worth about $1.5 billion in total.

China South Locomotive and Rolling Stock Corporation, a major train manufacturer in China, is bringing $400 million worth of locomotives to South Africa. And China’s Export-Import Bank is financing the Mombasa-Nairobi railroad line with $4 billion, while the Addis Ababa-Djibouti line is being rehabilitated at a cost of $3 billion.

Investing in infrastructure

Raising enough finance for infrastructure development is one of the key challenges facing Africa’s expanding economies. Although most state-owned railroads have been privatized in recent times, and many conceded to programmes funded by international financial institutions, leading to increased traffic volumes, only a few railway systems are able to generate sufficient revenues to fund significant track maintenance. The AfDB recently announced plans to launch a pan-African infrastructure bond totalling about $22 billion. Part of this money will be ploughed into rail and roads projects, most of them in East and Central Africa.

There have been suggestions that governments and the private sector could develop infrastructure in partnership. Examples of successful public-private partnerships are the Citadel Capital of Egypt—the largest investment company in Africa, and the Trans-century of Kenya, a company that is involved in infrastructure projects. These efforts are supported by African banks, which are coming up with innovative products, such as syndicated loans, that provide the necessary financial support. The banks are also bringing on board development finance institutions such as the German Investment Corporation, Netherland Development Finance Company, and the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa, as well as transnational finance institutions such as the European Investment Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the AfDB.

Ongoing rail and road projects will help accelerate Africa’s industrialization efforts, says Dr. Mayaki. Experts add that there has to be a transfer of knowledge to local managers, local experts, and local workers. This means that when the expatriates leave, locals can continue to maintain the infrastructure. The urgent task now is to commit more resources to improving Africa’s rail and roads networks. Without good roads and railways, industrialization is impossible.

—from Africa Renewal, April 2014
JS: What experiences did you have growing up or in undergraduate school that led you to decide on your future goals?
EAB: My initial introduction to the Urban Planning field was as an undergraduate at the University of Ghana. The Regional Development class I took in my senior year sought to emphasize the importance of planning in shaping not only the physical and social aspects of urban centers all over the world but also its effectiveness in addressing developmental problems within urban communities. It has been a great desire of mine to impact public life and foster sustainable as well as equitable development within urban communities in my country.

JS: What led you to your current focus of study?
EAB: My interest in urban planning as a professional career stems from the realization that effective planning is one of the essential mediums for confronting the challenges of rapid urbanization within developing countries. Planning as a discipline is relevant in tackling issues and finding pragmatic solutions to developmental problems in Africa and the world at large. It not only addresses socioeconomic and developmental problems associated with urbanization but also seeks to provide practical solutions to these problems.

JS: Why Cornell?
EAB: In my pursuit of a graduate program, my particular interest in CRP at Cornell stems from the fact that the individualized program offers students the unique opportunity not only to draw on the curricular and extracurricular offerings of the other departments within the School of Architecture, Art and Planning but also to cross-register for courses offered by other faculties. Also the International Planning concentration offered by the program is best suited for addressing Planning issues within developing countries.

JS: What do you find particularly appealing at Cornell?
EAB: The multi-cultural experience as well as the academic experience based on the foundation of a partnership and shared commitment between students and faculty.

JS: What do you intend to do after graduation?
EAB: Since my interest is in International planning with a more narrowed focus in Regional Economic Planning and Development, I would like to work in the field of International Development/International Planning.

JS: How will your degree help you achieve your goals?
EAB: The Master in City and Regional Planning program’s emphasis on planning to develop, preserve, and enhance the built environment is uniquely equipped to guide me toward these objectives of becoming a professional urban planning professional.

Africa Notes invites submission of original articles and/or research reports. Submissions are chosen on the basis of scholarship, thoroughness of analysis, and relevance of scholarship to issues affecting Africa. Africa Notes publishes short articles in all areas related to African development and has a subscription of over four hundred, made up mostly of academic institutions, international organizations, NGOs, and development practitioners. Past issues of Africa Notes can be viewed at http://iad.einaudi.cornell.edu/publications_africa_notes

Submissions should be at least seven pages double-spaced. Please include a brief bio and send your submission as a Word document to Jackie Sayegh, Editor, jsb25@cornell.edu. If you wish, you may also send a paper copy to: Editor, Africa Notes, Institute for African Development, 190b Uris Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
Roland Krieger
IAD Fellow 2013-2014
Masters in Engineering, Ghana

Ms. Jackie Sayegh, Editor of Africa Notes, spoke with Roland Krieger at the IAD offices.

JS: What experiences did you have growing up or in undergraduate school that led you to decide on your future goals?
RK: In high school, I discovered I had a keen interest in Physics and Math, so I thought pursuing a degree in engineering would be the most logical thing to do with these interests.

JS: What led you to your current focus of study?
RK: I wasn't completely sure what branch of engineering I wanted to pursue, so I chose Electrical and Computer Engineering as my undergraduate concentration because of its flexibility in terms of branching into specialties ranging from signal processing to device physics, etc.

JS: Why Cornell?
RK: Cornell ranks really high in Engineering, and there were a number of classes I realized I wanted to take during my undergraduate years but didn’t have enough time to include. I decided to stay for a Master’s degree so I could take these classes. I also wanted to do a good Masters project that would prepare me well for working in industry.

JS: What do you find particularly appealing at Cornell?
RK: A lot of classes in my major involve doing labs and projects that teach students much more than lectures alone could. I also like that there is a large international student body that makes me feel quite at home. Finally, Cornell has a very beautiful campus.

JS: What do you intend to do after graduation?
RK: I intend to find a good job in software engineering. My current interests are in microcontrollers and medical devices.

JS: How will your degree help you achieve your goals?
RK: A Masters in Engineering degree gives me both theoretical and practical knowledge that make me appealing to employers, especially those who tend to sponsor international students.

Job Opportunity

Lecturer — Somali

The Department of African & African-American Studies (AAAS) at the University of Kansas seeks a lecturer for Somali language courses for Summer 2014 and Academic year 2014–15.

The Department also has additional positions available for part-time or full-time language courses (Amharic, Arabic, Haitian, Hausa, KiSwahili, and Wolof) and non-language courses (African History, Black Popular Music, Legal Issues and the African-American). The lecturer pool is renewed every two years. The Department accepts applications at any time, but normally makes appointments for the fall semester in May and June, and for the spring semester in November and December. Increases in enrollment, resignations, and emergencies may create openings that are filled just before classes begin (August and January). All appointments are contingent upon staffing needs. The successful applicant must have appropriate authorization to work in the U.S. before employment begins.

https://www.h-net.org/jobs/job_display.php?id=48756
A

dama Dieng, the UN secretary-general’s special adviser for the prevention of genocide, spoke on the Cornell campus April 18, on the 20th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide. As world leaders gathered in Kigali to commemorate the anniversary, Mr. Dieng and a pane of experts reflected on the tragedy lessons learned in a roundtable discussion.

The Rwanda genocide in early April 1994 was the result of tensions between two native ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Many Hutu blamed the Tutsi for Rwanda’s economic struggles, and when the Hutu president was assassinated, the Hutu implemented a mass killing that left 800 thousand people—mostly Tutsi—dead.

Dieng addressed the UN’s failure to prevent or stop the genocide, citing a “well-recognized fact in international relations that no state can interfere with another state without permission.” However, the sanctity of the state, created to promote peaceful coexistence between nations, does not grant states permission to violate their citizens’ human rights.

Since the abysmal international response to the bloodshed in Rwanda, Dieng said, much has changed. At the 2005 World Summit, the UN adopted the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ principle, which asserts that states have a ‘duty to prevent’ crimes like genocide. Should the state fail in this duty, the international community may step in to prevent these kinds of atrocities. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, set up in November 1994, led to the formation of the International Criminal Court.

At the Cornell event, genocide survivor Consolee Nishimwe gave her account of the terror and uncertainty her family faced as they were forced to flee their home and go into hiding. “I remember [the Hutu] singing, ‘Kill all of the cockroaches,’” she recalled. Dieng commented that one group’s feeling of superiority over another is often “the fuel for genocide.”

Professor of Government Nicolas van de Walle warned that despite new measures like the Atrocity Prevention Board established in 2011, the United States hasn’t learned much from Rwanda. This is evident in the debate over Syria, he said, where “realpolitik has pushed humanitarian concerns aside.”

The repercussions of the genocide appear to have resonated more strongly nearer Rwanda. The African Union has recommitted to preventing atrocity crimes, and its peacekeeping efforts have been much more successful than those of its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity. While the panelists agreed that these are positive steps, they are not enough, as measures enacted since Rwanda have failed to prevent other genocides.

The most important measure for state and nonstate organizations to employ will be early warning, Dieng said. It is crucial that the UN and other organizations in potentially violent states share early indications of potential atrocities, especially in areas of Africa where poor economic conditions could trigger another genocide.

The Rwanda genocide will “always be a scar on the human conscience,” Dieng said, and if there is one thing that the world should learn as it moves forward from this tragedy, it’s that “genocide does not have to occur for us to find new ways to prevent genocide.”

The event was organized and sponsored by the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and the Institute for African Development. Kifle Gebremedhin, Professor of Biological and Environmental Engineering, moderated the discussion; while Muna Ndulo, Professor of Law and Director of IAD; Nicolas van de Walle, Professor of Government; and Consolee Nishimwe, genocide survivor, served as panelists.

Kara Beckman ’17 is a writer intern for the Cornell Chronicle.
The Cornell Institute for African Development (IAD), in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), and with co-sponsorship from the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and the Einaudi Center for International Studies, held its annual spring symposium April 25–26, 2014 on the Cornell campus. The theme, Financing Innovation and Sustainable Development in Africa, explored the complex world of development financing on the continent.

The African Development Bank’s recent Study of Financial Inclusion and African Economic Outlook Report have argued that enabling the poor to benefit from the high rates of economic growth noted in many African countries is the most effective way to fight poverty and raise the standards of living on the continent. Realizing that the discourse on financing Africa’s development must shift from focus on the aid syndrome to the role of capital markets and domestic resource mobilization, the symposium was organized to address many of these issues.

The keynote address, delivered by Erik Thorbecke (H. E. Babcock Professor of Economics, Emeritus and co-creator of the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke poverty measure) and titled Financing Development in Sub-Saharan Africa through Structural Transformation focused on the importance of inter-sectoral resource flows. Li Xiaoyun, Professor and Dean of the College of Humanities and Development at China Agriculture University, gave a luncheon address.

Experts from the United Kingdom, Germany, Ghana, South Africa, Zambia, Tunisia, and the U.S. presented on various topics related to financing. Topics included “Interbank Markets in Emerging Economies: a Study of Liquidity and Volatility in Kenya,” by Christopher Green, Professor, Loughborough University, United Kingdom; “External Aid as a Financing Mechanism for Reforms in African Development: the case for economic freedom,” by Augustin Fosu, Professor, University of Ghana at Legon; and “What’s Driving Chinese Development Assistance to Africa?” analyzed by Rajlakshmi De of Stanford Law School.

Students from Wells and Houghton Colleges, along with Cornell and Ithaca community members, were in attendance for the event.

Dr. Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa (center) of the African Development Bank with Cornell students Mihret Tamrat and Tongai Makoni at the IAD Symposium

Professors Li Xiaoyun and Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa

Landry Signé, Anthony Simpasa, Phil Frost, and symposium participant
Although the quality and style of speaking varied greatly, I thought the overall quality of each presentation was great! The variety of topics, engaging discussions, and highly skilled presenters kept the class—which is longer than most I take—interesting and compelling. [The readings provided] made the material more applicable and easy to understand. The readings also provided good insight to the professional work of many speakers. —Mary Hannon

The semester-long course [gave] students an opportunity to become aware of [development needs in Africa]; many distinguished speakers from all over the country [provided] this opportunity. To those who did not have any background on any issues in Africa, these lectures were not difficult to follow. On the contrary, they were very stimulating and intriguing, only to trigger a deeper desire to study the topics. All students were given ample opportunities to join in discussion and ask questions. Not only were the speakers a great source of knowledge, but the students were also a great source to learn from. Because this seminar was open to the public, many people of all ages, races, and backgrounds came together to provide their insights, as students, to whichever topic was discussed in the particular lecture. These lecture topics ranged from issues in the financial development of the countries, such as the need for infrastructure, mining, and international financing to social movements and education. —Ja Young Kim

This seminar series was extremely informative and an amazing learning experience for me. It allowed me to gain a new perspective on various issues in African development, as well as furthered my knowledge on issues that I [knew little about]. I especially enjoyed having a new speaker each week who was well informed on their particular topic of discussion. It allowed the class an opportunity to learn about certain African development issues in an extremely detailed manner. —Maya Golan
Congratulations to the IAD Graduate Fellows of 2013–2014

Elizabeth Agyeman-Budu (MRP, City and Regional Planning) Ghana
Doreen Aryeh (MPA, Public Affairs) Ghana
Nelson Ayamdo (LLM, Law) Ghana
Philiph Frost (MS, Crop and Soil Sciences) Zimbabwe
Roland Krieger (MEng, Electrical and Computer Engineering) Ghana
Tongai Makoni (MPA, Public Affairs) Zimbabwe
Kaumbi Ndulo (LLM, Law) Zambia
Ariana Omar (LLM, Law) South Africa