

## Governance to Reinforce Our Community: Reflections of a Former President

---

**T**he major preoccupation of any Executive Committee (EC) is to foster research. We know that Africa lags far behind in this domain and so, for CODESRIA, the mobilization of the African scientific community should translate into greater intellectual output.

One of the major objectives of CODESRIA is to contribute to the development of social sciences in Africa. In this regard, for the EC, research and coordination of scientific work are the main activities that should guide the chief organs of the Council, particularly the EC. Research to CODESRIA means research–development. The idea here is to develop the kind of research that will produce useful results that can transform reality in accordance with the desired blueprint for society and the development strategy to be implemented. By developing the social sciences, CODESRIA helps us to understand society better; to understand human behaviour, in order to contribute in solving the problems of development. To this end, the EC, with effect from 1986 and particularly in the 1990s, laid emphasis on: expanding the scientific community, opening up to all the social sciences, upgrading scientific content and expanding the publications base. Independently of the responsibilities the EC assumes, it was necessary to develop research networks further as they stand to be the main actors to reinforce and widen the research community in Africa.

Expanding to all the domains of the social sciences steadily became a reality. Thus, the traditional economic topics expanded to include fields such as the environment, without leaving out geography. This direction must be followed for it is the best way to achieve the intergration of the African research community.

One of the major concerns of the EC was the need to have qualified researchers go through the texts. Similarly, in a bid to bolster up content, the ECs recommend that for MWGs and NWGs, seminars on methodology should be organized beforehand. This would strengthen the scientific basis of the

group and build cohesion and methodological understanding within the team. Again, to ensure good governance and transparency, it is important to lay down rules for choosing coordinators. In this regard, a distinction had to be made between those preparing “Green Books” and coordinators. The person who prepares the “Green Books” is not necessarily going to coordinate the study. It was agreed that best works be selected on a competitive basis by the EC and that Coordinators should in turn be chosen on the same basis.

The Executive Committee and the Executive Secretariat of the Council have always made efforts to come up with publications. But it was in 1989 that efforts at improving the technical and publishing capacities of the publications service started bearing fruit. The number and quality of publications back then was already eloquent testimony of the vigorous publications programme. In other respects, the policy of translating publications both into French and into English is taking root. With respect to publication activities, we have always believed that action needs to be taken in three areas: editing, distribution and staff training.

I believe that good governance ultimately requires that an EC should think of succession by renewing its bases.

In light of my short six-year experience in the EC, three of them as head of the institution, we can say that for an EC to govern well, it should be composed of experienced and, above all, honest men and women. The honesty of all EC members cements around the president the solidarity he or she needs to govern well. The personality of the president, his or her experience, conviction and altruism are crucial to the achievement of their mandate.

**Taladidia Thiombiano**  
**President**  
**Executive Committee, 1989–1991**

---

## Let Us Not Forget the Challenges that Lie Ahead

---

**I**f there is any resemblance between institutional and individual life in the African continent, and I suspect there is, then institutions which survive the first five years are likely to have a more than even chance of surviving into a ripe old age. This is why thirty is a relatively young age for CODESRIA. Having survived the temptations of youth, we should prepare for the challenges of maturity. And if the times are anything to go by, there will be plenty ahead. My guess is that the biggest challenge in the coming decade is likely to come from the World Bank. Remember that, not so long ago, the World Bank argued that university education is a luxury and that African governments would be better served by investing educational resources in primary rather than tertiary education. Since the Bank seems never to pay for its own mistakes, its history is full of sharp twists and turns. The World Bank now accepts that we live in a knowledge-driven economy

and that a relevant higher education is at the heart of successful economic development. Having failed in its attempt to close African universities by starving them of funds, the Bank is now getting ready to choke them with conditionalities that will go with the provision of much-needed funds. In the Bank’s vision, African universities should turn into vocational institutes, without an independent research mandate. As in the last round, this time too, CODESRIA will have to take the front seat in the defense of a research mission for the African university. The simple fact we must not forget is this: if the agenda for basic research on the African reality is formulated outside Africa, then the options from which Africa must choose will also be defined outside Africa.

**Mahmood Mamdani**  
**President**  
**Executive Committee, 1998–2002**