Sub-Saharan Africa and the *Paradox* of POLITICAL Development

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Resetting Democracy:
The South Side of Global Deliberation.

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_Introduction

As a student at the School of Politics and Governance (SPPG), I was first introduced to the concept of deliberative democracy in a conversation about Nigeria's political landscape. My study focuses on the state of politics and the factors that hinder the active participation of citizens in the governance of Africa's most densely populated nation. In sub-Saharan Africa, deliberative democracy initiatives take the form of human rights advocacy, whether for personal or political reasons.

Deliberative democracy revolves around deliberation.[1] In a healthy democracy, the open exchange of opinions underscores the power of the people, and decisions made through deliberation are weighed in terms of pros and cons before being carried out. Inevitably, democracy must be understood as something that goes beyond the rituals of elections and party politics to include participation, inclusiveness, and responsiveness to citizens' needs, among others.[2] For many African leaders seeking political relevance in the region, democracy is undermined by its violent and confrontational approach when it comes to ascending to political and public office. From rigged elections to authoritarian

1. Extituto Política Abierta. (August 1, 2022). Demo.Reset: Introducción a la democracia deliberativa por André-Noel Roth | #DemoTALKS [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kxz9we_9cc4. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

2. Bertelsmann Stiftung. (n.d.). Workshop Theme: Rising above Crisis: Deliberative Democracy and Consolidation of Democracy in Central Africa. www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Demokratie_und_Partizipation_in_Europa_/Test-Democracy-R_D-Network-Annual-Meeting/WS_16.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

approaches to governance, the corrupt practice of clinging to political power and disregarding people's will prevails. These are the most common aspects of democracy as practiced in the region.

In this chapter, I combine my experience as a journalist and communication researcher to reflect on the efforts of individuals and organizations helping to restore democracies through deliberation in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, this chapter presents the state of democracy in the region and discusses the challenges faced by individuals and organizations whose efforts to sustain democracy are evident in their leadership of deliberative democracy initiatives. To provide context, I interviewed two leaders about their motivations for restoring democracy and how their initiatives have been sustained over time. This paper draws out the shared experiences, obstacles, and specific community experiences gathered in quotes from key people behind ActHub Nigeria and Africa's Voices Kenya.

The conversations reveal that the framework for deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa is transforming as a response to the failure of democratic regimes, political structures, and civil societies in the region. However, there are opportunities to spread good development practices that help strengthen deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.

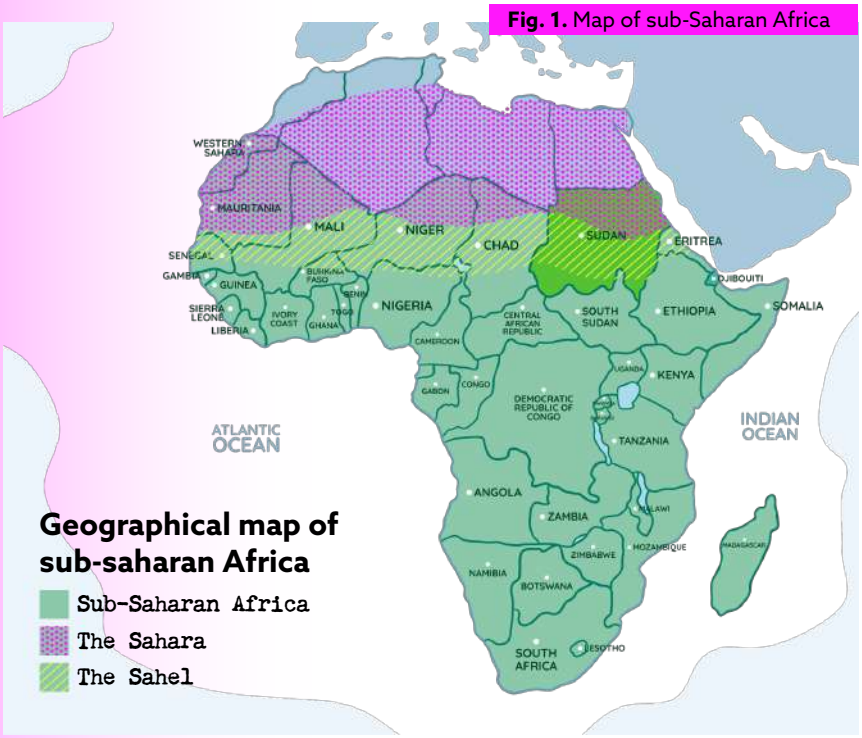
_Deliberative Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Deliberative democracy is based on the idea that legitimate decisions are reached through inclusive and reasoned public deliberation. Deliberation entails a public consultation of

citizens in which various perspectives are presented, and decisions are then made based on the strength of the arguments.[3]

Deliberative democracy emphasizes the importance of deliberation as a process and the results it produces through consensual decision-making and majority rule rather than coercion or mere preference aggregation.[4]

Fig. 1. Map of sub-Saharan Africa



3. Cooke, Maeve. (2000). Five Arguments for Deliberative Democracy. Political Studies, 48(5), 947–969. http://www.policy.hu/karimli/FiveArgumentsForDeliberativeDemocracy.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023)

4. Gutmann, Amy & Thompson, Dennis. (2004). What Deliberative Democracy Means. In: A. Gutmann & D. Thompson. Why Deliberative Democracy?. Princeton University Press. http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s7869.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Geographically, sub-Saharan Africa is the area and regions of the African continent located south of the Sahara, including Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, several key conceptual frameworks shape the understanding of deliberative democracy. The first is the African philosophy of ubuntu, which stresses human existence's interconnectedness and communal nature. Ubuntu translates as "humanity toward others" and highlights deliberative democracy by adhering to the principle of collective deliberation, consensus building, and mutual respect.

The second is that grassroots participatory and consensual decision-making processes often characterize the legacy of traditional governance systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Many African societies have a history of participatory decision-making through processes such as village assemblies, elders' councils, and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms. This provides a basis for deliberative democracy practices in the governance of contemporary African society. Applications of deliberative democracy in sub-Saharan Africa range from local community initiatives to national processes such as participatory budgets, constitutional reforms, and citizens' assemblies.

According to Demo.Reset's findings, very few initiatives are related to active citizen participation in governance in sub-Saharan Africa. The projects mapped 18 initiatives that promote the quality and inclusion of youth and women in political processes. Some of the initiatives within the sample gather resources to defend human, digital, and civic rights by

designing and supporting the implementation of participatory budgets; others focus on conflict stabilization, peacebuilding, and protecting the rights of rural populations. The methods and tools used by these organizations to implement their initiatives are community-centered and collaborative. They all rely on community development, organization, and mobilization to drive, implement, and effect change. Some use collaborative design solutions (i.e., two or more stakeholders working together) to address a common problem. A recurring theme across sub-Saharan Africa is that the organizations and the people behind them bear the burden of self-governance and self-sufficiency.

More troubling is the revelation that while a few select individuals work to increase participation in governance, most public servants oppose this framework. In Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African nations, voting and political discussions about elections are the most common manifestations of deliberative democracy. The modern marketplace for political argumentation is social media, and citizens openly confront public servants on platforms like Twitter. In countries like Nigeria and Malawi, citizen assemblies involving randomly selected citizens deliberating on political issues through traditional and digital media platforms have been tested. These assemblies bring together diverse groups of citizens to deliberate knowledgeably on specific policy challenges and make recommendations to policymakers.

Nigeria may be a good case study on the paradox of deliberative democracy practice in the region because of its status as Africa's most populated nation. In February 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported a historically low voter turnout for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Based on media trends and the number of registered voters, citizen turnout for the 2023 general election was the highest in history. However, the turnout dropped to an all-time low regarding valid votes on election day. Of 93.47 million registered voters, only 24.9 million voted in Nigeria's February 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections. This represents a low voter turnout of 26.72%, the lowest since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999.[5] The way Nigeria addresses this paradox will depend largely on the more than 200 million Nigerian citizens at home and abroad, who must demand accountability by strengthening deliberative democracy practices and active citizen participation in governance.

Other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, have implemented participatory budget processes in which citizens are involved in the decision-making process on allocating public resources. Deliberative approaches have also been used in constitutional reform processes in countries such as Uganda and Zimbabwe. Citizens participate in public deliberations on government structure, human rights, and electoral systems. These processes are established to ensure that the constitution reflects the aspirations and needs of citizens and promotes inclusiveness and accountability.

5. Yusuf, Kabir. (March 5, 2023). "ANALYSIS: Trend of Low Voter Turnout Continues in Nigerian Elections." Premium Times. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/586193-analysis-trend-of-low-voter-turnout-continues-in-nigerian-elections.html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, where democracy has been marred by a complex history of colonialism, post-colonial struggles, and socio-economic challenges, the shift to deliberative democratic practices presents both challenges and opportunities. From the lack of design in deliberative democracy processes to limited systems thinking in deploying African policy frameworks, transforming the landscape of democracy in the region will require a close relationship and constant dialogue between citizens and representatives of the institutions created to make society work for them.

_ActHub and Accountability for Good Governance in Nigeria

Based in Ibadan, Oyo State, in the southwestern region of Nigeria, ActHub is a non-governmental organization pioneering active public participation initiatives in governance.[6] ActHub uses various methodologies, such as citizen budgeting, fiscal data, and people-led advocacy, to hold the government accountable in environmental, governance, spending, and selections. Through its flagship #LGAccountified project, ActHub focuses on demanding accountability at the local government level through active citizen training that uses available fiscal data to engage elected officials from the local government level up to the federal government.

#LGAccountified is ActHub's flagship citizen-led " advocacy for accountability" initiative at the local government level.

6. For more information on ActHub Africa, please visit: https://acthubafrica.org/

The initiative is a "blue ocean" idea that addresses a core area historically neglected by other civil organizations in Nigeria, i.e., local government accountability for improved infrastructure governance. Although limited by funding, the initiative has advanced its work in the area of (i) local/federal government accountability, (ii) citizen-led fight against corruption (iii) citizen participation and focus groups. In a conversation with the founder of ActHub, John Oluwafemi, to discuss Acthub's work in promoting accountability and governance in Nigeria, it was established that ActHub works around two aspects of accountability: social accountability (i.e., budget credibility, participatory governance, and other governance and democracy initiatives) and environmental accountability.

ActHub aspires to promote deliberative democracy, participatory budgeting, accountability, and budget credibility in Nigeria and Africa.

_Founding ActHub

John Oluwafemi is from Moniya and grew up in the semi-urban area in Akinyele LGA of Oyo State. He speaks fluent Yoruba, English, and some Hausa, Egun, and Ikale. His journey to become a change agent did not start with advocacy for democracy and good governance but as a promoter of quality education in response to an issue common in his hometown: the lack of schools.

> "Growing up there was only one school in the area. It takes 50 minutes to one hour to get to school by walking, a distance that will cost around 200 naira by public transportation in Nigeria today."

John remembers that his secondary school was underdeveloped. To keep hope alive, John recalls walking from Moniya in Akinyele LGA to Ibadan North in Oyo, where the University of Ibadan (UI) is located. There he got a taste of university life and decided to pursue his studies regardless of the cost. After enduring the constraints of learning under impoverished conditions, John started applying for admission to obtain a degree at UI while fending for himself.

A major breakthrough for John was when he completed his SSCE and graduated with a degree in Education from the University of Ibadan, majoring in Economics and Political Science. The University of Ibadan,[7] located in the ancient city of Ibadan in Oyo State, is undoubtedly one of Nigeria and Africa's best higher education institutions.

John was part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) group for his Community Development Service (CDS) during his one-year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) assignment. He was the President of the group, a role that allowed him to gain experience in the development field as he traveled, taught children and volunteered in Gwadangaji,

7. For more information on the University of Ibadan, please visit: www.ui.edu.ng/uihistory

Jega, Bumza, Ayu, and other locations in Kebbi State. John decided to actively work for society to ensure that people didn't have to suffer as much as he did to get an education. After a successful year in NYSC, he moved to Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and pursued other passions. He received training as an IT specialist and consultant before returning to his hometown in Oyo State.

Returning to Oyo after learning about life in other parts of the country only to realize that nothing had changed since he left home marked the beginning of John's journey in search of ways to help his community.

Fig. 3 - John Oluwafemi's Tech Tutors deliver ICT knowledge to children in rural communities in Kebbi State, Nigeria. Autor: Unknown.

John started an initiative called Tech Tutors in Oyo State. Under this initiative, children in rural areas learned basic computer skills from one village to another. He later applied and was admitted to the regional Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) conference, where he formalized his knowledge of NGOs and social enterprises. By the end of the YALI conference, John was working with an organization called Endunamoo Transformation Global Initiative (ETGI). This opportunity helped him learn that sitting in the development bureaucracy is not ideal. He applied for and was admitted to another fellowship called Accountapreneur from Accountability Lab, where he found his core mission and passion in demanding accountability. John launched what is now widely known as ActHub Africa at the end of this fellowship.

_People and Networks for Deliberative Democracy in Nigeria

When we think about how any social enterprise is born, there is always something or someone that inspires it all. Organizations and initiatives like BudgIT and TrackaNg inspired John to create ActHub. Founded by Olusegun Onigbinde and Joseph Agunbiade in 2011, BudgIT is a Nigerian civic organization that applies technology to citizen engagement and institutional improvement to facilitate social change.[8]

8. Kazeem, Yomi. (February 3, 2017). Data Transparency Is Being Used to Tackle Nigeria's Corruption Problem One Report at a Time. Quartz. qz.com/africa/899190/budgit-has-raised-3-million-in-funding-from-omid-yar-network-and-bill-and-melinda-gates-foundation. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

"Organizations like BudgIT have given us grants. #LGAccountified was funded by BudgIT at some point and Citizens' Commons has also funded us."

Fig. 4 - ActHub Founder, John Oluwafemi engaging a local government community Autor: Unknown.

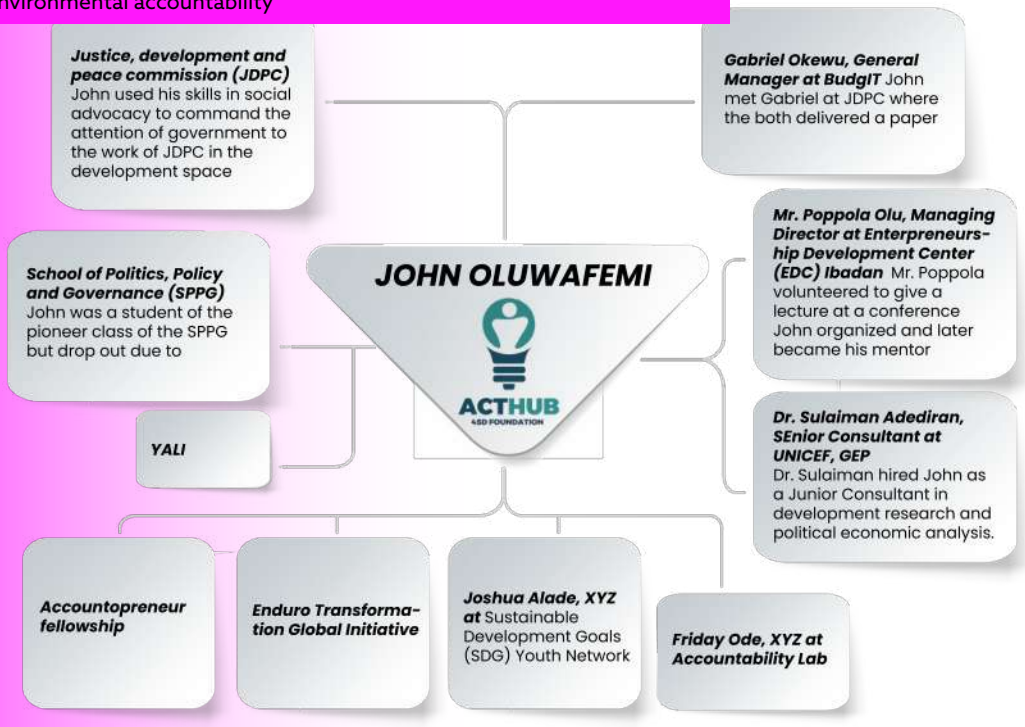
While ActHub Africa's main focus is working on governance, democracy, research, and the environment, ActHub's flagship initiative, #LGAccountified, is inspired by BudgIT and what BudgIT is doing with TrackaNg. #LGAccountified simplifies local government budget documents for greater civic engagement using infographics, data mining, and visualizations. BudgIT makes budgets look less complex by stripping them down into something worth engaging with.

Local NGOs, such as the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), and international organizations, such as UNICEF, have funded ActHub and have provided mentoring and one-on-one opportunities to ActHub leaders since its founding. ActHub management also provides paid consulting services to

groups such as *Brace up the Youth*, an initiative led by Obasanjo Fajemirokun in Ogun State. ActHub has also collaborated with JDPC in Nnewi, Anambra State, and the Civil Social Action Coalition on Education For All (CSACEFA) to monitor Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) projects in any state. Joining and collaborating with global and regional development networks has helped ActHub access resources to implement original ideas on a large scale.

John's personal and professional networks comprise individuals and organizations generally considered advocates and mentors in the development field. John's journey demonstrates that he has always wanted to step outside the norm and become an accountability activist.

Fig. 4 - John Olwafemi's, ActHub Founder, work towards social and environmental accountability



While discussing some of the people and connections that were instrumental in the founding of ActHub, I discovered we shared a bond. John was an alumnus of the School of Politics, Policy, and Governance (SPPG), where I am currently enrolled. Although John did not complete the SPPG program, he was part of the pioneering class and said he learned everything he needed to know in the process. The School of Policy and Governance (SPPG) exposes young Nigerians and Africans to issues affecting Nigeria's policy formulation and political framework. Then it inspires them to act accordingly to create solutions to the identified problems plaguing the system.[9]

It is possible to conclude that a growing network of people and organizations is intentional about development in Nigeria. The Deliberative Democracy political ideology may not be mainstream, but it exists and thrives in Nigeria.

_Leading Deliberative Democracy Initiatives in Nigeria

ActHub concluded that initiatives like TrackaNG in organizations like BudgIT mainly focus on holding the Federal Government of Nigeria accountable. Therefore, it created #LGAccountified as an initiative that ensures openness and transparency at the local government level. John insists that governance has

9. Nnah, Mary. (November, 2022). SPPG to Solve Africa's Leadership Deficit. This Day LIVE. www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/18/sppg-to-solve-africas-leadership-deficit/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

a local nature. By facilitating and simplifying access to fiscal data, people can use it and knowingly participate in decision-making at a local level.

When Governor Seyi Makinde assumed leadership of Oyo State in 2019, John says he went into the state's Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and told them they needed to do participatory and citizen budgeting in Oyo State. From 2019 to date, ActHub has produced Citizens' Budgets for the Oyo State government and continues to be part of the successful formulation and implementation of fiscal policies in the state. This movement emphasizes the importance of government officials extending an invitation or accepting those extended to them by ordinary citizens to participate in the governance process.

"I don't know the confidence that actually came to me but I went there and started listing so many things that we needed to do and luckily for me, they invited me over for a kind of discussion."

John notes that Nigeria does not actively practice deliberative democracy due to a lack of political education and enlightenment, an absence of transparency on government activities, and funding problems faced by civil society organizations. There is a dire need to improve the standard of living, educational infrastructure, and political leadership to have the opportunity to increase political awareness in Nigeria. The firm entrenchment of ethnicity and religion profoundly divides the country, and addressing

this situation will require arduous efforts that must begin at the grassroots. Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 500 or more languages spoken. Language can become a barrier to doing development work in the region. ActHub mitigates this challenge by using local languages to create awareness-raising materials.

> "Once we publish simplified fiscal data, we interpret it in the Yoruba language so that the people of Oyo State can access it. I think it is time state governments engage people in the language that they understand."

Some states in Nigeria (Oyo, Akwa Ibom, etc.) practice some aspects of deliberative democracy. Still, the general approach is that policymakers and legislators gather and think for the people, then push their personal or political ideals as democratic. Political education is absent, and many Nigerians do not understand the do's and don'ts of government, policymaking, and how politics affects their lives as citizens. The current state of politics is that there is one side where the government is, and then the citizens are on another. Based on the #LGAccountified project, ActHub has prototyped a software called dev.info (i.e., development information) to help citizens group their needs based on the LGA they come from. The system can perform an auto-prioritization of needs, and government officials can see and work to meet needs based on what is most important to citizens.

> As a result, government officials are currently engaging citizens and hearing directly from them. ActHub does not lead the conversations but prompts citizens by giving them what they need to lead their own advocacy. #LGAccountified does not stop at the local government level because

ActHub has also made an impact at the state level. The Oyo State government is currently signed to its Open Government Partnership (OGP), an aspect of deliberative democracy that will introduce participatory monitoring and budgeting in the state.

Funding is a severe issue, and Acthub still works pro bono to gain credibility and access. ActHub views its pro bono service as a win because positive feedback on the project is publicly available for anyone who wants to replicate the same approaches. Exposure to international organizations such as UNICEF through the Oyo State government was based on the sacrifices ActHub made for the state regarding its pro bono work. Another technical challenge faced by ActHub is data collection for research. Nigerian agencies that are spared with the job of educating the masses are inefficient, and some data requests take up to four or more months from submission to access.

> "The National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Oyo State is as good as non-existent, yet they are in every local government in the state and have a secretariat."

In his travels throughout Nigeria, John has developed an emotional intelligence about the cultural sensitivity and nuances of navigating Nigerian diversity. With thirty-six distinct states spread across six geopolitical zones, the problem of acceptance is also common. More prominent NGOs tend to resist adopting new initiatives based on establishing a monopoly on success in the development field. John was quick to stress the importance

of support from government organizations and NGOs that provide funding and mentoring and from individual citizens who volunteer to launch impact initiatives.

_Africa's Voices Innovates for Deliberative Democracy in Kenya Using Radio

In another interview with Samuel Kimeru, Executive Director of Africa's Voices, I saw how an innovative initiative relies on accessible technologies such as radio to build bridges between the government and active citizens in Kenya's political economy. Samuel, a lawyer by training, joined Africa's Voices 4 years after its founding due to a convergence of personal and political ideologies.

> "Kenya was coming out of many years of dictatorship and economic mismanagement and Kenyans had the opportunity to self-reflect and begin a transvaluation of how they wanted to move forward based on what they had."

In 2010, the Kenyan Constitution reflected a more structured society that emphasized the centrality of Kenyan citizens in governance and decision-making. Samuel worked in civil society groups that addressed the broader problems of poor governance at the time. He had the opportunity to contribute to the laws of Kenya, especially on the devolution of powers as one of the revolutionary provisions of the constitution.

The Kenyan constitution states that citizens should be at the center of decision-making.[10] Still, on-ground experience in Kenya shows few politicians are interested in making this happen. Even though Samuel was part of the deliberation that led to the development of the national guidelines on public participation, he believes that Kenya is far from actively practicing deliberative democracy.

> By mobilizing digital media spaces for pluralistic, rich, and inclusive debates, Africa's Voices is working to revolutionize the use of radio as a platform where citizens can exchange informed opinions on priority concerns. In turn, decision-makers in government listen to these opinions and act on them.

_Radio as a Tool for Social Change

Africa's Voices originated from research conducted at Cambridge University –with on-site research in Kenya, Zambia, and Malawi– that focused on exploring how radio can be deployed as a socio-technical system for governance. The study successfully created a prototype that effectively extends communication to engage citizens and ensure their ideas are heard and considered in the governance process. Some of the early motivations that brought the founders together to launch the organization were interdisciplinary thinking, in which schools from Cambridge University converged. Dr. Sharath Srinivasan, co-founder and first

10. Parliament of Kenya, The National Assembly. (2022). Public Participation in the Legislative Process. Factsheet No.14, Aug. 2022. www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2022-08/FS14%20Public%20Participation%20in%20The%20Legislative%20Process.pdf. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

Executive Director of Africa's Voices, conceived a study on how to use radio for governance purposes on the African continent.

Fundraising for this research attracted Africa's Voices Founding Board Chairman, Simon Cairns, also known as *Lord Cairns*. Trusting that the concept could make a difference for decision-makers making an effort to engage with beneficiaries of their leadership in Africa, Lord Cairns funded the research to be carried out by Dr. Claudia Abreu Lopes at the Centre of Governance and Human Rights (CGHR) in Cambridge University. The outcome of that research was put into action as an organization. So far, Africa's Voices has done a lot of work in Somalia and is now building a public presence in Kenya for more people to appreciate the transformative power of radio. The mission of Africa's Voices is guided by the idea that citizen voices must be at the center of their decision-making and the continent's development.

Radio is the primary mode of mass communication on the African continent.[11] Although a growing demographic does not listen to the radio in the traditional sense, as they prefer to go online for services like news, that population is still quite the minority compared to those who still use the radio in Africa. The use of radio for deliberation can tend towards three broad outcomes: (i) citizen engagement in political

11. LifelineEnergy. (n.d.) 9 Big Reasons Why Radio Is Important to Africa. www.lifelineenergy.org/9-reasons-why-radio-is-important-to-africa/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

conversations, (ii) success in evidence-driven insights based on data analysis of citizens' ideas, and (iii) informed action and measurable social change in society.

> Africa's Voices brings a radio guest into the studio to discuss a topic for about an hour. A facilitator will take the time to explain and train guests on the objectives of the program based on the traditional function and ethical practice of radio broadcasting.
>
> Radio presenters also work to help Africa's Voices achieve its goal by preparing to interact and offer helpful critiques intelligently. Since interaction with the public is limited regarding how many phone calls can be made during a 1-hour radio program, Africa's Voices uses text messaging to collect feedback on live radio programs. An SMS shortcode that is free to use is opened up to as many people listening to the live radio program for their voices to be heard. People's opinions are collected via SMS into Africa's Voices data pipeline. The data is analyzed using traditional social science analysis methods to produce qualitative and quantitative insights into respondents' thoughts regarding a particular issue.

Other instant messaging platforms, like Facebook, Telegram, and, more recently, WhatsApp, are also being tested for use at Africa's Voices. Radio stands out as an innovative means for introducing deliberative democracy in the region because people do not need to move from where they are to express themselves or for their voices to be heard. Furthermore, social behavioral change through mass media like radio can create an impact on a wider scale, amplify positive norms, and contest negative ones. This can, in turn, move society from one level of development to another.

_Samuel's Journey to Africa's Voices

Samuel was born about 70 kilometers southeast of Nairobi, in Machakos County –formerly Machakos district–. This is a semi-arid part of Kenya with little rain, and the Machakos people have a history of mixed farming, basically keeping cattle and farming crops for subsistence. In the pre-colonial period, the Machakos people had a reputation for walking 400 or more kilometers to Mombasa to sell ivory and other goods to the Arabs and Indians. In my conversation with Samuel, I learned about his upbringing in Kenya under previous governments.

Samuel's father was a public servant working for the Government of Kenya, and his mother was a housewife that raised her children in the village. Samuel's mother was not so concerned about the traditional gender roles, and she taught him how to cook. By the time he was about ten years old, he could cook many meals for the family. Governance structures and political leadership in Kenya in the late 70s and early 80s were formative when Samuel first came into political consciousness.

"Occasionally during the holidays, we'll come to meet my dad in Mombasa and then go back to the village where we will go farming and also go to school at the same time. My responsibility in the family was to look after the goods."

Samuel grew up when Kenya had its second president. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi (1978 to 2002) was President of Kenya for 24 years. In this single-party era, the government was called baba and mama, i.e., father and mother. As the leader of the ruling party, the President was very pervasive. The philosophy about politics around that time was that the ruling party was the government, and the government was the ruling party, so this instilled fear in many people. There was controversy over how long the President could legitimately stay in office and whether or not he repeatedly won elections with the huge percentages recorded in the one-party era.[12]

"I still remember the Chief coming with some youths and carting away with my mom's chicken to contribute towards some national fundraising initiative."

Back then, it was mandatory to attend the Chief's meetings in which the citizens were informed about government policy. Of course, this would hardly be called deliberation, as it was a monologue directed to the citizens in which they were told about what the government wanted and how quickly it wanted it. Something that greatly influenced Samuel's interest in law school was a land dispute between his father and one of the members of a school board who was a relatively powerful political player at the time. During this period, Kenya had the

12. McFadden, Robert. (February 3, 2020 Daniel Arap Moi, Autocratic and Durable Kenyan Leader, Dies at 95. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/03/obituaries/daniel-arap-moi-dead.html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

largest corruption scandal in Africa, the *Goldenberg* scandal.[13] This was a political scandal in which the Kenyan government was found to have subsidized exports of gold far beyond standard arrangements, leading to approximately 46% inflation.

> "I participated in a good number of demonstrations which I can't do now. At my age and with my weight, I can no longer fly over fences like I used to."

After leaving college, Samuel interned at the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). He was deployed to do human rights education nationwide for about five years before being recalled into administrative and managerial work for ICJ. He moved from civic education and mobilizing for the constitutional review process to the arena of decision-making. He worked with decision and policymakers and used his legal knowledge to offer legal aid in public interest litigation cases that did not favor the communities. His choice to contribute and give himself almost as a sacrifice for the liberation of others is seemingly in response to the injustices he faced in his childhood.

Samuel studied laws locally at the University of Nairobi and also obtained a Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (US) in 2007. Upon his return to Kenya, Samuel worked for three years in a diplomatic

13. Grynberg, Roman & Singogo, Fwasa. (2021). An Anatomy of Grand Fraud: The Goldenberg Scandal and the IMF/World Bank. In: R. Grunberg & F. Singogo. African Gold: Production, Trade and Economic Development. Palgrave Macmillan. https://ideas.repec.org/h/spr/sprchp/978-3-030-65995-0_9.html. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

organization involved in development. There he oversaw a project related to democratic institutions and security sector reforms. He became more inclined to the field of governance and worked on the frontline in the fight against corruption for almost a decade. As the director of Transparency International, Kenya chapter, Samuel was involved in many debates on the role of citizens and the kind of state citizens wanted in 2011 when Kenya was drafting a new constitution.

He crossed paths with Africa's Voices in his search for ways to widen channels for citizen participation.

_Foreign Influences & Kenyan Politics

A look inside the history of the Kenyan people can be instructive and informative to reflect on the practice of deliberative democracy in Kenya. During the pre-colonial period, Kenya had about three main linguistic groups: (i) the Bantus *(Nigerkordofan family)*, (ii) the Nilotic *(Nilo-Saharan)*, and (iii) the Cushitic *(Afro-Asiatic)* people. These three categories of people had very different ways in which they governed themselves.[14] Some had Kings and an elders council that helped make decisions, and some were pretty advanced in their leadership structure, and their Chiefs were elected or chosen through a peer review

14. National Museums of Kenya. The Language of Kenya: The Nilotic, Bantu and Cushitic Language Groups. Google Arts & Culture. https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-language-of-kenya-the-nilotic-bantu-and-cushitic-language-groups/2AJCwOhG6x7aIQ. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

process. When colonialists disrupted Kenya's governance system, Christianity became the agent of change and transformed how Kenyans organized themselves. A situation that also eroded individuality in contemporary Kenyan society.

As a young Nigerian, I've been privileged to experience life in developing African countries and overseas in developed nations like France, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. From January 2019 to December 2020, I studied for a master's in Communication, Culture, and Technology (CCT) at Georgetown University, leading me to live in Washington, DC. At that time, the US was in a transitory period with an election that ushered in President Biden after a tumultuous run with the Trump administration.[15] During this period, the US built resilience and supported underdeveloped countries to rebound from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. These realities catalyzed geopolitical shifts worldwide, from the rise of China in the global order to the war in Ukraine. I witnessed firsthand as the US made tough decisions to secure social justice and sustain democracy to work in favor of the people.

This atmosphere taught me about diplomacy, international affairs, and how strong foreign policies can shape the future of developing nations. US diplomacy helps foster and protect democratic values abroad, creating a more secure, stable, and prosperous world where democracy is viewed beyond the political system. Samuel's

15. Dan Epelle, Evelyn. (November 9, 2020). BIDEN-HARRIS: The Tumultuous Journey To The White House. KAFTAN Post. https://kaftanpost.com/ biden-harris-the-tumultuous-journey-to-the-white-house/. (Accessed May 13, 2023).

personal experiences abroad also depict how foreign education and international influences can shape an African's fundamental understanding of democracy; as a set of fundamental principles, including liberty, free speech, equality, human rights, and justice.

"There were some firebrand religious leaders who spoke truth to power and challenged the single-party era at a time when, you know, the politicians had a very difficult time and people were being silenced and killed."

Education made all the difference for Samuel. He did very well in his exams to be admitted into a national school established about a hundred years ago by an alliance of churches to train African leaders. There, Samuel was exposed to the works of Martin Luther King at a time when few schools in Kenya had access to a library.

At 29, Samuel was chosen by the Council of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) to be in charge of the organization in an acting capacity. Moving from intern to Executive Director of the ICJ required him to return to study for a master's degree. Although his dream school was the University of Pretoria in South Africa, Samuel was admitted to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana (US). He resigned from his position as Executive Director of the ICJ to study abroad. Once there, Samuel immersed himself in the teachings of Martin Luther King. He accompanied one of his graduate school professors to an Inter-American Commission on Human and Peoples'

Rights session in New York and had one of the most profound insights into his career and path.

> "The black people I saw in that commission had come with complaints. They spoke a language I couldn't understand, although I could see that they looked like me. I was informed that the largest population of African or Afro-descendants in America are Latin Americans."

Many people are moved to think that the Caribbeans hold the largest number of people of African origin outside Africa, but it's actually Latin America. Samuel shared an apartment with an Ecuadorian who elaborated that: "huge populations of Afro-descendants in the US are only visible in Sports. You will see Africans on US national teams, but in politics and social life, you don't see them, and it is because they are marginalized". Samuel takes every opportunity to let people know that linkages between Latin America and Africa are very weak, but fluency and buoyancy in language and income will make a difference. He also discovered that there were no direct flights from Africa to Latin America and pointed out that it was inexcusable for Africans to make multiple connections before arriving there.

Samuel attended a predominantly white institution that had existed before the town around it was developed. The institution controlled the water supply system, transportation, and to a large extent, the information flows in the area. Newsletters issued at the university would report few security incidents in the neighborhood, and the

narrative of the reports created fear about black people in the region. Samuel says that insecurity data analyzed for the region showed that few black people resided in the area and that the crimes being reported were, in fact, committed by white folks. Historically, black people in the US are viewed with suspicion and stereotyped for crimes like assault or rape when merely walking along the streets.

Black people are also tokenized in many US institutions. When a report in one department at Samuel's institution said, *"the number of black students had grown by almost a hundred percent,"* he discovered that the department had merely increased to seven black people from the previous four.

Another good experience he had overseas was when Obama campaigned to be President. Samuel had first-hand experience of how campaigns are run in the US. He spent three months in Washington, DC, doing an internship on global rights after completing his program in Indiana. The Obama campaign had people knocking on doors to tell DC residents why they should vote for Obama, as did the other candidates.

> **"By interacting with the university and people from different countries, I got to learn a lot that I would never have learned if I remained and schooled entirely in Kenya."**

Foreign exposure is good for young Africans. It provides experiential learning about what works in developed economies and the factors that directly limit underdeveloped economies from shared prosperity and the development path.

In comparing the local to the global, young Africans in the diaspora also learn about organizing for democracy. The shared experience of the Africans in the diaspora is valuable and provides a background for how Africa can reshape its thinking around diversity and divisive stereotypes. Most independent African countries like Kenya and Nigeria had endured in the past the African imperialist company administering a protectorate on behalf of the British empire in their territories. Governance proceeded this way until countries gained independence and had their first elections. Africa is still clearly recovering from the trauma. Between 1963 and 1966, many changes were made to create what was known in Kenya as the imperial presidency. The President was like a replacement for the Queen or the King and was not accountable for anything. As a matter of fact, Kenya's first President never lost an election and was elected in every other election until he died in 1978.

> "Anyone else who came up as an alternative voice was vanquished politically, or even physically. When the first President passed in 1978, many said the second President was fairly progressive until 1982 when there was an attempted coup to overthrow his government. His reaction was draconian and he entrenched himself as an imperial president."

What is common is the semblance of democracy through elections organized to give an enforced government some measure of legitimacy, with the burden of social order falling on the legislature to effect manageable constitutional changes. Many activists in

Sub-Saharan Africa have decried the conduct of elections and the need for accountability and transparency in the electoral process. Samuel surrounds himself with people known for expanding citizen participation paths. Today Kenya remains a fairly open society, and the efforts of organizations like Africa's Voices and people like Samuel makes the Kenyan civic space vibrant and poised for development.

_A Positive Outlook for Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

In learning about the work and mission of Demo.Reset to strengthen democracies in the global south, I deduce that Sub-Saharan African countries have very similar experiences in terms of the context of issues discussed in this chapter. In the last five years, I have worked as a journalist with a local TV station based in Abuja, Nigeria, and as a Communications Consultant for the Africa-focused social impact firm Baobab Consulting, headquartered in New York City, US. I have covered diaspora stories for KAFTAN TV in the African diaspora, and I believe in the possibility that Africans can rethink and redefine democracy based on positive developments being reported in the region.

While deliberative democracy holds promise for promoting inclusive and accountable decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa, emerging trends and challenges also need to be considered. Issues such as weak institutions, corruption, and political polarization can challenge the practice of deliberative democracy. In some cases, political elites may manipulate or ignore the outcomes

> of deliberative processes, limiting their impact on policy decisions. To solve this problem of not being deliberative in our style of democracy, countries in the region must recognize that there is no government without the people.

It is family members, relatives, and acquaintances that are in the government. Acknowledging this will help Africans build stronger political institutions where only the best people are brought forward to represent the masses in public offices. The experiences shared in this chapter can shape our collective thinking as Africans by informing us that a working society largely depends on our unification. The inaction we see in the region today is because many Africans can't properly articulate that things aren't working. The leadership of development initiatives by Africans like Samuel and John, exposed to working economies, is invaluable because the awareness of what works is inherent in Africa's future governance approaches. Reading and writing should be prioritized for young African children under this climate, as this will impact how their minds work as adults.

> A society where ignorance and disorder are the status quo will adapt to change only when more people are exposed to superior understanding and enlightenment.

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