Sustainable Futures in Africa

Report: Lagos Symposium
Protea Hotels Select, Lagos, Nigeria

Strengthening Connections: SFA Partners, Lagos Symposium 02/18
Key Index for Acronyms

**SFA**: Sustainable Futures in Africa

**WEP**: Women’s Environmental Programme

**AOU**: Obafemi Awolowo University

**AWOC**: Apala Widows and Orphanage Centre

**UofG**: University of Glasgow

**ESRC**: Economic Social Research Council

**EPSRC**: Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

**SFC**: Scottish Funding Council

**AHRC**: Arts and Humanities Research Council

**RCUK**: Research Council United Kingdom
OPENING REMARKS:

Hello everyone, and thank you each and every one of you for the time, energy, sacrifices, arrangements and all of the other things that you have done to allow you to be here this week. We have a big week ahead of us – a lot of work to do!!

Thank you to Molly, Grace, Anthony, and Goitse who have worked so hard to help the orchestration and administration of this event to allow it run smoothly, to allow us to focus on the content, purpose, and practices that mandate us to come together.

Thank you to those new colleagues in our network. Thank you for your investment and presence (we are all a little bit in unchartered territory, but for those new to the network, this is even more of a leap of faith than for us who have been building this community for a little longer). And thank you to those who have welcomed new members without hesitation – who remain open and eager to see what we can do with open hearts and minds.

In Lagos we meet again to ‘strengthen connections’ which is our theme for this symposium to take stock of how far we have come, to extend our experimental methods into data analysis and research representation; to make decisions and plans for the next chapter of our work together.

Dr. Mia Perry
Coordinator and Principal Investigator
Sustainable Futures in Africa Network
Opening Remarks:

The Vice-Chancellor, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife:

I am delighted to hear that your network’s international symposium is starting today in the City of Lagos – the most populous metropolitan city and centre of commercial activities in Nigeria. Although, I would have preferred that you benefit from the serene environment of the beautiful campus of the Obafemi Awolowo University, one of the foremost first generation universities in Nigeria situated in the ancient city of Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba people, but as I have been informed, your choice of Lagos as venue is understandable.

I am aware that your Network aims to build understanding, research and practice in socio-ecological sustainability in Africa, which is very pertinent and strategic to the attainment of the global Sustainable Development Goals. I am confident that partnership between the United Kingdom and sub-Saharan African academic and non-academic institutions from Uganda, Nigeria and Botswana is very historic and it will go a long way in understanding the critical issues revolving around a sustainable future in the Continent.

I was informed that your Network *modus operandi* defies the known tradition and also attempts to innovate with trials in mitigating the implementation gap in environmental initiatives through community engagement and public pedagogies. This, I think, is commendable and very imperative if the entire world must witness a new order in research and practice.

In this regard, I want to specially acknowledge the grant support of the United Kingdom’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), to the Team Nigeria, in exploring this mission. I also want to inform your Network that the University of Glasgow, UK and the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria have established a strong long standing and cherished relationship of which the on-going collaboration is expected to strengthen.

Finally, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and University management, it is my greatest pleasure to declare this Symposium open; and also to implore you all that as you judiciously invest a few days ahead in *strengthening your connections*, you should also endeavour to visit many important places in Lagos.

I wish you all a fruitful deliberation!

Thank you.
Progress Report on Trial Projects
Botswana, Nigeria and Uganda

Introduction:

Following the planning which was done during the Botswana symposium in March 2017, the different regional network members went ahead and implemented the ideas that they developed during that symposium. During the Lagos symposium, they reported on the progress so far made about those research topics. These countries are Botswana, Nigeria and Uganda.

Botswana Report:

The Botswana trial study focused on Unearthing the Dynamics of Human and Wildlife Interactions: The Case of Mmadinare Community in the Central Region of Botswana. In doing this study, the team was motivated to fulfill the following objectives: - Engage with communities on the dynamics of human and wildlife interaction and how they impact their lives, Explore the impact of HWI on livelihoods as well as generate appropriate community-based strategies for dealing with human and wildlife interaction.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the team employed an array of methods including holding community forums, storytelling as well as site visits. With these methods, the team generated various forms of data including texts, pictures, audio visual, documentary as well as the rich experience of the members who participated in the study.
With regard to progress so far made, the group analyzed the data and processed it to produce a report which has been shared with the community through the paramount chief, a conference was conducted and one article has been written and submitted for publication in an academic journal.

**Reflections:**

The team has been able to establish the practical problems that Mmadinare community face as a result of their interaction with wildlife. Doing this requires an engagement of community members to learn about the conflicts that humans have with the wild animals. Feedback has already been given to the community through its leaders such as the chiefs.

**Next steps:**

The team is to come up with a proposal to support follow-up activities and help the community members to actualize their dreams, identify precise hotspot areas, continue researching on community-wildlife interactions dynamics and power relations within the community, plan to conduct a community empowerment training for Board of trustees, village leaders and relevant village level structures to equip them with knowledge and relevance of the relationship between humans and wild life interaction, engage experts in the area of study (Tourism) so that many key stakeholders are involved in the same. It is hoped that this will not only increase voice but will also greatly help with policy formulation and advocacy at community and national level and finally plan to engage a doctoral or graduate student from the community that will assist with the project implantation and planning.
The Nigerian trial study focused on Prioritizing Challenges to the Development of Mining Communities in Nigeria: The Case of Itagunmodi (Osun State) and Komu-IgbojayeBabaode (Oyo State). In Nigeria there are several minerals and the mining sector contributes a big percentage towards the development of the country. Interestingly, the mining practices are not standardized and this has contributed to low productivity, hazardous working conditions, land degradation, pollution as well as neglect of the mining communities. Thus this trial study was about investigating the socio-economic situation of the mining communities with a few of prioritizing the challenges to the development of those affected communities.

Progress Made:

By the time of the Lagos symposium, several steps were undertaken on this trial study. For instance the team had built capacity for research assistants, community entry activities, conducted interviews, held focus group discussions as well as video capturing. After the data was collected, it is now being organized and analysis will start soon.

Reflections:

The team has been able to manage the interdisciplinary nature, establish relationships, time scheduling as well as challenges to information management. There were also issues for community expectations versus the mandate of the project.
Next steps:

The first one is to organize the collected data, start writing to share stories with the community members which can be done through coming up with community briefs so as to get the community feedback. Pass the feedback from the community to the local authorities to identify their capacity to meet the identified needs, come up with a policy brief, harmonize the study reports so as to come up with a scientific publication and engage the expertise and professionalism in the areas of community mythology, geology, power structure negotiator and resources for doctoral fellowships.
Team Uganda went out to two communities to study about the socio-ecological sustainability – from the community perspectives. Specifically, the team went out to reach the local community to hear from them about their world in relation to the environment, water, crop farming among others. These communities were selected from two regions that is western in Hoima district Kibanjwa community and northern in Alebtong district. The chart below summarizes the key aspects which were observed and discussed during the trial projects which used a “no method” methodology which literally means going to the field without a pre-determined method of data collection.

While doing this study, the group was guided by the desire to empower the local people to talk about their world as they perceive it from various angles. It is what seemed to be of interest to them that the researcher followed up to its logical conclusion and through this approach, the community members were found to be knowledgeable about their environment. The findings show that people did not only know their challenges but also suggested some of the possible solutions to those very challenges. The key concern was why are they not taking a step to respond to those challenges?
Progress Made:

Trial studies have been done in the two study sites. Data has been transcribed and it’s being analyzed by team members. Some of the members are working on drafts of papers and articles to be published or shared with the community members.

Reflections from team Uganda:

Members of the network are interdisciplinary in nature which brings different perspectives and interpretation of the data collected.

The trial study followed not the traditional methods and for this case creativity and innovation was emphasized. Even when the used methods had relationships with the traditional methods, efforts were made to do things differently for instance going to the field with no pre-determined method of data collection or aware of what data is to be collected but leaving that to what emerges was exciting.

The process therefore involved compromises, surprises, breaking new ground, and contestations between and among the group members because of their multi-disciplinarity.

Members reflected on what SFA is. Is it an organization, theory or about the people? If it is about the people, then it is network members need to have more time with the people in the community and learn lessons on sustainability that can be shared with the rest of Africa.

Also emphasized was the idea of community co-authoring with the network members. This is so because it is an active participant in these studies. Publishing with the community gives it voice and empowers them as well as enhancing ownership of the studies and its recommendations.

Next steps:

Several next steps were agreed upon including coming up with a report for the community, local and central government, write a Newspaper articles for a wide readership, one policy brief, find out more practitioners in the community who are doing the same work for synergies, work with the community to prioritize their needs and possible solutions, identify, train and work with community contact persons to monitor sustainability of projects as well as engaging more in a literature review on the use of “No method” approach of data collection.
Arts and Culture
Pilot Projects Review

Uganda

The team used art performance to disseminate information on waste management systems. This was done through visiting one of the city suburbs (Banda) where ECOaction an organization partnering with SFA operates from.

Nigeria

The team evaluated the connection between the Yoruba mythology which believes that dead dogs can be used to control cocoa pesticide diseases. This presentation raised a lot of concern from delegates, as it was difficult to understand the scientific link between the burying of a dead dog in a cocoa farm infested by diseases and the resultant effect of the disappearance of the pests. However, Dr. Abodun who presented the report of the team intimated the delegates that in Yoruba mythology and indigenous knowledge systems, the eco system is one whole, without a distinction between living and non-living things. Drawing from one of the verses of the Ifa knowledge representation system, he cited that “no termite who partakes in the eating of a dead dog can live to see the next day”. He however acknowledge that this may not be in tandem with the scientific body of knowledge, yet it works and as such it is a science of its own – if science is what works and can be replicated.
After the group discussions, the following decisions were agreed upon by the delegates. The structure of the network was jointly agreed to be a decentralized one. The position of the overall network coordinator will be by election among members of participating countries. The tenure of office the Overall network coordinator will be for two years. The activities of this office will be coordinated with the support of an appointed Administrative assistant. Country coordinators will also be elected and supported by Administrative assistants that have been appointed. All the Coordinators will form the steering committee for the Network.

Proposed SFA Governance Structure

Three levels of structure were proposed and agreed upon. The first one is the overall network coordinator followed by the country coordinators. These two positions were to be electable after every two years. The third level is that of the administrative assistants for each country network and these are to be appointed.

Participants debated on the criteria for admitting new members to the network. It was reported that more individuals and organizations want to join the network. The question was how should they be admitted as network members, friends of the network or as partners? In the end it was agreed that they be referred to as friends of the network as when called partners it implies they are in some way making a contribution to the network especially in terms of finances. A clarification was made that being a country coordinator does not necessarily mean one will always be the Principle Investigator (PI) if there are research studies to be done in that country. The role of the coordinator is more of mobilizing the members to ensure that the work of the network is implemented as agreed. In doing this, the country coordinators were to work hand in hand or in close cooperation with the recruited administrators assistants.

Conclusions:

- The Lagos SFA symposium was a success as the participants deliberated on the different ways on how to move the network forward.
- New leadership of the Network came into effect where the overall coordinator as well as country coordinators were elected during the symposium.
- It was agreed that the country coordinators as well as the Research assistants will have another meeting in Uganda in the following month of March.