



## January 2021 in review

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## Program Director's Corner

On behalf of the secretariat and board of AROCSA, I would like to begin by wishing all our readers a Happy 2021!

No doubt, many were happy to see the back of 2020 and are holding out hope and optimism for 2021. At AROCSA, we are very optimistic about the promise that 2021 holds. For one, despite the worst assault on US democracy since the British burned down Washington in 1814, President Elect Joe Biden was sworn in on January 20th as the 46th President of the US.

For the discerning, the symbolic importance of the (relatively) peaceful transfer of power to President Biden isn't lost as it sent a clear message to all that at the core of every lasting democracy, is strong institutions. Suffice it to say that AROCSA is committed to supporting civil society movements across Africa in strengthening institutions on the continent by

Another cause for optimism around the world is the nature of some of President Biden's raft of executive orders including reversing Trump era anti-immigration policy, re-joining the Paris Climate Accord, and reinstating funding to the UNFPA; a move that will have significant impact on the lives of women and girls across the world, funding lifesaving maternal health care, family planning services, and programmes ending violence against women and girls.

The availability and roll out of several COVID vaccines also signals hope of a return to some degree of pre-pandemic normalcy before the end of the year, at least for most of the world. Although it isn't quite clear when these vaccines will become readily available to the masses in Africa.

Internally at AROCSA, we began implementing a key strategic pillar to expand our program and funding partnerships in Q4 last year in order to create more value for our beneficiaries and members alike. This work is bearing fruit and we expect that we shall be announcing some new partnerships over the coming months. We shall also be unveiling our new membership structure and plans shortly, so please keep your eyes on our website.

We thank you for your continued support and wish you a very productive 2021.

In solidarity,



*Shaninomi Eribo*  
*Programs Director*

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## AROCSA News

A very happy new year to you from the Association for Research on Civil Society in Africa. The new year has come with new inspirations and challenges and we look forward to sharing them all with you as we journey together.

very best of a community of civil society researchers and practitioners that assists you in maximizing your career potentials in a cost-effective and practical way. To this end, we are currently integrating an exclusive membership portal into the existing AROCSA website where this community can thrive in the exchange of ideas and access to valuable resources.

Last year, we launched the AROCSA PhD Fellowship Program to provide research grants to PhD scholars who have successfully defended their research proposals. Successful applicants to the Fellowship will be notified in February and will subsequently provided with funding to complete their research. Upon completion of their research, AROCSA PhD Fellows will have their papers hosted on the AROCSA website as an open source document to benefit other researchers and the general public.

The NGO Leadership Transition Fellowship Program will most likely be hosted in Africa this year for the first time since its inception. The program - which is usually hosted by the Lily Family School of Philanthropy (LFSOP) of Indiana University, Indianapolis - was previously postponed in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying restrictions. Plans are underway to have the program hosted in Accra in conjunction with the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS).

Also coming up this quarter, our 2020 African Civil Society Practitioner Skills Gap Survey report will be published. The primary aim of conducting the Survey was to identify the functional skills gaps within CSO's and NGO's operating across Africa, so that the results of the survey could then inform the development of an appropriate program to help address the gaps identified. This is in keeping with AROCSA's mission to build a community of excellence in civil society 'research' and 'practice' on the continent, with the survey focusing on delivering on the 'practice' side of our mission. This skills gap survey appeared to take on even more importance as the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying restrictions brought the operations of a lot of civil society organizations to a halt last year.

Thank you for your commitment to AROCSA. Welcome to 2021!

Sincerely,

The AROCSA Team

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## [A New Hope: In Anticipation of Joe Biden's](#)



Photo by Chip Somodevilla on AFP/Getty Images

Saying that the presidential elections of the United States of America have a tendency to hold most of the world in its hypnotic grip is no exaggeration. President Joe Biden's win on November 3rd, 2020 was no exception to this tradition. After much anticipation and despite the initial reluctance from former President Donald Trump, [President Biden was declared the winner and President Elect](#); the New Year would see a new president in the White House.

However, the celebrations of the winning party, anticipation of the inauguration, and the general governance of the country were however impeded by [the storming of Capitol Hill on January 6th, 2021](#). The events of that day left a blemish on what had already begun to feel like the turning of a new page.

Even before [President Biden's inauguration on January 20th, 2021](#), he already committed himself to the task at hand by engaging a 12-member advisory board that makes up his [coronavirus task force](#). The pandemic, now an ever-pressing point of concern for Americans and the rest of the world, remained at the forefront of proceedings as he and Vice President Kamala Harris [paid tribute to 400,000 people](#) who have lost their lives to COVID-19 in the United States thus far, on the eve of inauguration day. Since he was officially sworn in on January 20th, he has signed [42 executive actions](#) covering the pandemic, equity, the environment, and immigration amongst others.

The early signs fill many with optimism. The 46th president of the United States has assumed office at a difficult time but appears prepared to navigate it. His clear and decisive approaches to key issues show a preparedness and conscience that many might argue has been missing in American politics over the last 4 years, glimpses of an America that many are in a hurry to return to.

Other Headlines

[Cardinal Pell case: Australian news outlets admit breaching legal ban](#)

[13th National Party Congress makes headlines around Asia](#)

[Asia Today: China reports 380 cases south of Beijing](#)

[Shukatsu sexism: The Japanese jobseekers fighting discrimination](#)

[Israeli prosecutors spell out allegations against Netanyahu](#)

[Opinion: Iranians move into front line of the Middle East's quest for religious change](#)

[Democracy on the brink? US has familiar echo for Latin Americans.](#)

[Hyatt to offer free coronavirus testing at all Latin America resorts](#)

[Brazil's COVID-19 catastrophe: nothing less than criminal](#)

[COVAX to send AstraZeneca shot to Latin America, some states to get Pfizer too](#)

## [AfCFTA: a new dawn for prosperity in Africa?](#)

On January 1st, under the continental free trade agreement, African countries opened their markets to duty-free trading of goods and services across borders. The formal start of trading was given the official go-ahead at an extraordinary meeting in December 2020 where AU member states called on “women, youth, businesses, trade unions, civil society, cross border traders, the academia, the African Diaspora and other stakeholders to join them as governments in this historic endeavour of creating the “Africa We Want” in line with the Agenda 2063.



Image credits: *pixababy*

According to the World Bank, the new market created under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement is estimated to be as large as 1.3 billion people across

However, ahead of full implementation of the agreement lie a number of significant challenges. As Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the AfCTA told the Financial Times before the launch;

*“If you don’t have the roads, if you don’t have the right equipment for customs authorities at the border to facilitate the fast and efficient transit of goods... if you don’t have the infrastructure, both hard and soft, it reduces the meaningfulness of this agreement”.*

African civil society has a key role to play in transforming the potential of the agreement into reality. By continuing to advocate for the provision of the required infrastructure investments in national budgets and holding governments to account in budget implementation, civil society can help unlock the full potential of the agreement for millions across Africa. This has to be a priority as it is a win-win; investing in infrastructure development creates jobs, and the delivered infrastructure facilitates borderless trade with the end result that prosperity is created for millions of Africans across the continent.

### In other news

[UNFPA welcomes Biden’s intention to reinstate funding](#)

[Africa: Development Prospects in Africa Undermined By a Severe Economic Downturn](#)

[Africa: Musu Bakoto Sawo Emerges 2020 Daily Trust African of the Year](#)

[North Africa: Ten Years After the Arab Spring, the Region's Media Faces Grave Threats.](#)

[Here Are the Top Press Freedom Trends](#)

[Mozambique: British Aid for Victims of Cyclone Eloise](#)

[Congo-Kinshasa: South Kivu - an Endless Flight](#)

[COVID 19: TrustAfrica and V6 CO Online Medical Supplies Provide Support for Healthcare Workers in Senegal](#)

[Nigeria: IMF Revises Nigeria's 2021 GDP Forecasts to 1.5%](#)

[South Africa: New Vaccine Trial Shows promise Against ‘Severe’ COVID symptoms](#)

[Nigeria: Covid-19 - Death Cases Rise By 34% in Two Months](#)

## In Civil Society Research

CIVICUS has been publishing its annual State of Civil Society Report since 2012. The report focuses on civil society action and trends impacting civil society. The 2020 edition is now available on their [website](#).

The interactive report is broken down into 5 parts:

1. [Civil society action on climate crisis](#)
2. [Collective action triggered by economic injustice](#)

## 5. [Civil society at the international level](#)

The 2020 report outlines the significant effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on civil society as it has "exacerbated, accelerated and further exposed crucial global challenges that came to the fore in 2019". It also makes a case for the inclusion of civil society as "partners in the struggle to build a better post-pandemic world".

## Opportunities

A list of curated opportunities from around the world for civil society scholars and practitioners in Africa

- [Common Fund for Commodities Open Call for Proposals](#)
- [U.S. Mission to Nigeria: Ambassador's Special Self Help \(ASSH\) Small Grants Program](#)
- [U.S. Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire: Special Self-Help Fund](#)
- [Félix Houphouët-Boigny-UNESCO Prize for Peace Research](#)
- [UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award 2021 nominations](#)
- [Al Alfi Foundation Sustainable Development Fellowship](#)
- [Barer Institute Fellowship](#)
- [World Habitat Awards](#)
- [Russell E. Train Fellowships](#)
- [The Spencer Foundation Small Research Grants Program](#)
- [Wildlife Acoustics Grant Program](#)

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## Meet...Mrs. Muday Mitiku

Muday Mitiku is Founder and Executive Director of Ethiopia based The Muday Association, Fresh and Green Academy, and the Mother's Cooperative a trio of interconnected organisations concerned with the well being of vulnerable communities, specifically women and children. She has been at the helm of these organisations, working with local communities of women and children, for the better part of the last 2 decades.

Mrs Mitiku began in education at 19 years of age, founding a for profit preschool across the street from Kotebe Teacher's College where she received her degree in Education. She would later pursue a Business Management Degree at City College, Ethiopia. Fresh and Green Academy initially began as a for profit institution with help from a business partner in 2000. However, Mrs Mitiku expressed frustration and sadness at seeing impoverished children begging for food outside Fresh and Green Academy, while the school catered to children whose parents could afford the fees. This led to her bringing in children off the street to feed and educate them.

Unfortunately, the parents of the paying students did not want their children associating with the impoverished students that Muday was bringing in off the street. So they withdrew their children, and their money by extension. In 2012, the Muday Association - a partnership of non governmental organisations banding together to feed and educate students via Fresh and Green Academy - was registered in Ethiopia. The Association is currently able to feed and educate over 400 students between 3-14 years of age.

Consequently, the Mother's Cooperation was created to help the parents of many of the vulnerable children that Muday assists via the Muday Association and Fresh and Green Academy. The Cooperation teaches mothers to make items indigenous to Ethiopian culture such as shoes, jewellery, and items of clothing for sale. This has provided an alternative stable income for some of the women who previously supported their families through begging and sex work. They are looking to expand the project which impacts almost 500 women already.



through these three organisations brings her in contact with children who are disabled or affected by HIV-AIDS and other ailments. She remains unflinching in her commitment to her community and continues to educate her students on ethics, respect, and unity

## Contributors

We are always looking for new and exciting content about civil society in Africa. If you would like to contribute to *Solidarité*, please read our [guidelines](#).

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## About the Newsletter

*Solidarité* is AROCSA's regular newsletter designed to keep readers up to date with AROCSA's programs, and events, as well as developments and opportunities mainly from within, but also from outside Africa's civil society spaces.

Appreciating the recognition at the onset of the founding of AROCSA that there have been and continue to be multiple, stand-alone efforts to encourage research and knowledge-sharing on the 'third sector' in Africa, *Solidarité* seeks to be a resource for pooling together information in order to provide a more holistic view of the sector, as well as insight into what different civil society actors across practice and academia are doing to improve the quality of life across the continent.

So on the occasion of our inaugural issue, we thank you for reading and as always, we appreciate your support.



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## About AROCSA

The Association for Research on Civil Society in Africa is a platform set up to promote and advance a community of excellence in research and practice on civil society in the service of African development.

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