



**WEST AFRICAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**  
**14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE**  
**Banjul Gambia**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

**COMMUNIQUE**

**INTRODUCTION**

The 14<sup>th</sup> WARIMA Annual Workshop and Conference took place on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January to 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 in Banjul, the Republic of Gambia at the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre, respectively. The theme of the conference was *Research Management in the Era of Equitable Partnerships and Open Science*.

Participants at the conference numbering 175 came from 10 West African countries. These include Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Cameroun. Other participants came from Mozambique, South Africa, Kenya, the United Kingdom, Germany and France.

The conference was formally opened by the Minister of Higher Education, Research Science and Technology of the Government of the Republic of The Gambia. The opening ceremony was also attended by the Director of the Medical Research Council (MRC-LSHTM) Prof Umberto D'Alessandro and the Vice Chancellor of the University of The Gambia. It was also attended by Representatives of some Foreign Missions in The Gambia. Others include Vice Chancellors of some Universities in West African countries, the Incoming president of the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) and the Executive Secretary of the UK Collaborative for Development research UKCDR and members of WARIMA ably led by the President, Mr. Dembo Kanthe.

The resource persons were drawn from the University of Cambridge UK, World Health Organisation (WHO), Inqaba Biotech, UK Collaborative on Development Research, Science for Africa Foundation and Queen Mary University UK amongst others.

The preconference workshops trained members of WARIMA on two central themes in research management viz *Funding, reporting and project management* as well as the *Fundamentals of effective knowledge exchange: intellectual property, policy and exploitation*.

The Key Note Address titled *Plan for tomorrow, today – Building the next generation of African Researchers* was delivered by Professor (Sir) Tumani Corrah. The conference had six plenary and ten concurrent sessions with 31 papers presented by members of the Association.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

The conference made the following observations:

1. Africa's contribution to the global research landscape is still weak. This is a wakeup call for governments, universities, research institutions and the private sector to reinvigorate life in the research community.
2. The research landscape in Africa is becoming competitive and complex. Contracts, regulations, and compliance levels are demanding. This should therefore compel researchers and managers of research in Africa to improve their understanding of the emerging trends and complexities in research management.
2. Universities and think tanks in West Africa are at different levels of research and innovation management. This indeed provides an opportunity for experience sharing and collaboration amongst these institutions.
3. There is high level of inequality in the research partnership, eco-system with obvious implication for national research priorities determination. This therefore provides an opportunity for national governments, universities, the private sector and other development partners to imbibe the principle of equity in their research partnerships.
4. The knowledge of "Open Science" practice is developing within the science and research community in the region. An opportunity therefore exists for members to key into the discussion and leverage on the potentials it offers for the development and democratization of knowledge production and use.
5. While big data production and use is a major issue for discussion in the research community in Africa, research institutions must continue to pay attention to big data governance in order to ensure knowledge production and sharing for development.
6. Despite the huge gaps in resourcing the University system, these institutions have continued to survive in difficult political and financial environments. The resilience of the Universities in the region is an opportunity for governments to make them engines of development in the nations.

7. There is still a high level of knowledge production in many tertiary institutions, research institutes and think tanks in the region but there are huge gaps in knowledge exchange in the direction of commercialization and community development.

8. Funding research in the region is still a preoccupation of external funders. Many governments and the private sector are conscious of the need to fund research and innovation for development but there are resource gaps to undertake this endeavor.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

The meeting therefore resolves to call on the governments, universities, research institutes, think-tanks and the private sector in West Africa to invest more funds to facilitate research and the professionalization of research management through recruitment of professional staff, investment in capacity building and having a condition of service for this category of staff. This will improve the administration of grants, stabilization of research offices and support to the research environment.

WARIMA mandated its members to work with their University Governing Councils and management as well as heads of research institutions to:

- Set up and or strength Intellectual Property Units to support the commercialization of research output.
- Adopt “Open Science” practice in a manner that will enhance their research integrity and research outputs and outcomes.

### **WARIMA also recommends that:**

Governments, Universities, think tanks and the private sector in West Africa should strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks to promote research integrity.

Governments, Universities, research Institutes and the private sector in West Africa are urged to sustain good levels of funding of research work and consciously increase their national budgets in countries where the levels of funding are still low.

Universities, research institutions and the private sector in the West Africa region should invest in gender research and innovation in order to provide evidence for public policy. This will also facilitate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals that support inclusivity in development.

### **WARIMA is committed to:**

- Empowering its member institutions to build collaborations and partnerships that are equitable, beneficial and sustainable.
- Building the association by expanding its membership to Francophone countries
- Working with ECOWAS Secretariat particularly its Scientific and Research Department to ensure that member states create the enabling environment for responsible research as well as ensure that research contributes to national development.

WARIMA will set up a machinery in motion to seek an observer status in the ECOWAS Parliament. This will go a long way to build synergy which is key in promoting research governance in the region.

### **Closing**

The leadership and members of WARIMA want to sincerely thank the government and people of Gambia for giving it the opportunity to hold the conference in the The Gambia. The peaceful atmosphere in the country and the supportive state presence was lovely and made the country conducive for the meeting. We equally thank the Medical Research Council Unit The Gambia at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the University of the Gambia and all funders for supporting the organization of the meeting. We equally appreciate all resource persons and members for insightful contributions. The Local Organizing Committee is appreciated for the energy and resources invested in the successful hosting of the conference.

Finally, we want to commiserate with the government and people of the Republic of Gambia for the passing on of the Vice President of The Gambia, His Excellency Dr. Badara Alieu Joof. May the creator accept his soul and comfort his family.



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Mr Dembo Kanteh  
President WARIMA