

AFRICAN PEACE ACADEMY

REPORT OF THE CONCEPTION WORKSHOP

Held in Gorée, from 23 to 25 January 2003

Reminder :

The conception workshop of the African Peace Academy (APA) was organised at the Gorée Institute from 23 to 25 January 2003, and was attended by 12 participants.

The purpose of the workshop was to invite resource persons (cf. list of participants) to undertake a collegial and in-depth reflection on the conception of an African Peace Academy, the « conceptual » document of which we had just completed.

Apart from reflecting on the proposed vision, the workshop was to collectively evaluate the relevance and feasibility of such a project.

For this reason, the examination of the various agenda items (cf. Agenda) enabled us, after three days of deliberations, to obtain the acceptance of the idea of the project, to have a delimitation of the content and types of activities to be envisaged, invent the most appropriate structuring and, finally, outline the immediate phases for the implementation of the project.

Minutes

Day 1 : (Thursday 23 January)

After the welcome address by the Executive Director of Gorée Institute and the individual presentation of the various participants and their organisations, a proposal was made to amend the agenda, and thus limit the discussions on two points : the in-depth discussion of the project document, and the exchange of experiences.

Going around the table enabled participants to express a few concerns about the ambition of the project but also to underscore the need to reflect on the name « African Peace Academy » and the diversity of roles which the various participants intend to give the project.

Thus, the methodological need to try an explicit formulation of what should be APA's mission quickly appeared. On the basis of a certain number of achievements (building blocks) including the physical and intellectual infrastructure of the Institute, its integration into several networks, its assets in terms of research and capacity building, participants put forward a certain number of proposals including the following two formulations :

- « APA's mission is to provide a platform and a forum to exchange ideas and viewpoints on peace, culture and development in Africa .»
- the second proposal, which is more detailed than the first, adds the function of « collecting, evaluating, processing and disseminating information on the issues of peace and security. »

During the afternoon session, a consensual formulation of the mission of the African Peace Academy was adopted. It reads as follows :

« Provide a platform to facilitate the exchange of views and experiences on the building of peace and security, as well as on their relations to culture and development in Africa »

The second item on the agenda (sharing real-life experiences) resulted in a certain number of recommendations the observance of which could contribute in the success of the project. These recommendations include :

- Ensuring the correct identification of strategic partners,
- Encourage neutrality and cross fertilisation,
- Provide a retreat space for dialogue and the exchange of experiences,
- Think up the information dissemination strategies,
- Think of a simple and manageable structure,
- Continue to facilitate relations between the various sectors ,
- Maintain a holistic approach integrating culture, development and peace,
- Turn APA into a place of reflection for the emergence of new paradigms,
- Envisage the use of different languages (French, English, Arabic)

Day 2 : (Friday 24 January)

The discussion of the project content was another item on the agenda.

After reading the summary of the preceding day's discussions, the Executive Director of Gorée Institute proposed the reading of a text in which he suggested a certain number of functions from which the content of the Academy could be derived. These essentially comprise :

- Identification (conflicts, partners, solutions, etc.)
- Understanding (question paradigms, search , etc.)
- Facilitating (presence in Gorée, exchanges, setting up a network, etc.)
- Training and launching appeals (information, the influence of leaders, etc.)

Following this proposal, it was considered necessary to slightly amend the agenda to enable participants to listen to three presentations on the ECA (Economic Commission for Africa) committee entitled «governance and HIV » (by Alex de Waal), the situation in DRC (by Félicien Malanda) and on the reconciliation process in Rwanda (by Alice Urusaro).

From each of these presentations, the participants were able to draw interesting indications for the contents and programmes of the Academy. It was thus suggested that :

- The Academy should be part of the Civil Society network of the ECA committee on Governance and HIV,
- The Academy should find ground to act in DRC,
- The Academy is opportunely interested in the experience of the « GACHACHA », traditional peoples' courts, currently operating in Rwanda, and which constitute a special conflict resolution method.

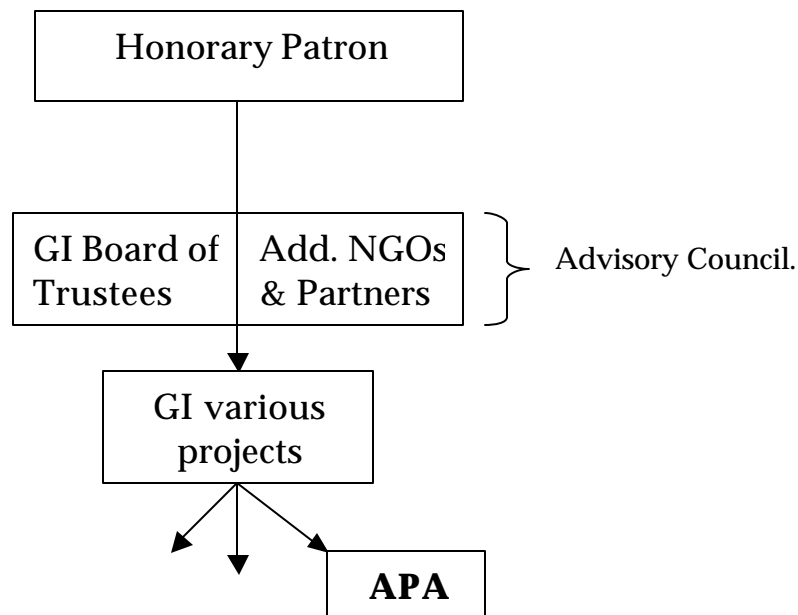
UNDP Representative, Mr. Razhaoui, was then given the opportunity to inform participants about the areas of interest and modalities of financing of this body.

In his presentation, participants were able to perceive UNDP's willingness to support the APA project, particularly in the area of "preventive development", by facilitating access to its data bases.

Friday afternoon was essentially devoted to discussions on the APA structures, and it was decided to proceed as follows :

- There is need to, first and foremost, think of APA as a Gorée Institute project among other projects;
- There is need to find simple and flexible structures for APA.

It was proposed that, in addition to the need to find a Patron, an Advisory Council should be set up comprising members of the Board of Trustees of the Gorée Institute who will be joined by a group of people from partner NGOs and financing bodies; find a Director for APA who will be supported by the Gorée Institute programmes co-ordinator and other staff members, according to the following model :



For reasons of geostrategic forecasting, participants also initiated important discussions on Africa's situation on an eventual war between the USA and Iraq. The discussions were introduced by Mr. Andrew Gilmour, special adviser to the Representative of the UN Secretary General to West Africa, who had just returned from a mission to the Middle East, and Mr. Alex de Waal, Director of Justice Africa. The discussions were of vital importance to participants who pursued their reflections on the project the day after .

Day 3 : (Friday 24 January)

Like all the others, the last day started with the presentation and appreciation of the summary of activities undertaken the day before.

It was proposed and accepted to consider all the participants to this conception workshop as members of an Advisory Committee for the project. The said committee will not be part of the structures proposed here above.

After this, the discussions on proposed programmes and activities as well as those relative to the subsequent phases of the project were extended .

The following proposals emerged from Friday's session :

- The conception and publication of an electronic review,
- The need for APA to have a prospective activity, that could result in a project for the realisation of a « scenario » on « Africa and HIV » spread over a 10 year period; or on "war against terror and its impact on Africa."
- The outline of themes on « the issue of power » ; « mass mobilisation motivation in conflict situations."

To conclude the day's session, it was decided to :

- produce and disseminate the final report of the workshop quickly and widely;
- convene (internally) a day's session for the planning of the project;
- organise a first workshop before June, within the framework of Ford Foundation funding ,
- study the possibilities of sending 2 members of the academy to participate in « Peace Week», organised by the Council of Development NGOs of Congo, in Bunia in February.

The workshop closed its deliberations on Saturday 25 January at 1 p.m.

Evaluation :

In view of the objectives assigned to this workshop, the intrinsic qualities of participants and of their contributions and the management of the allocated time, one can, without doubt, say that it was about 90% successful.