



## **Board Resolution by Circulation 2011.2**

### **Location and organization of CPRsouth7 & 8 (and CPRafrica3 & 4) as joint conferences possibly leading to a new design for future conferences**

The proposal that was submitted to IDRC for the funding of CPRglobal (including CPRsouth and CPRafrica) in 2010 commits us to organize a multi-regional conference in 2012. The time to 2012 was supposed to be used to devise an effective design for the multi-regional event. CPRafrica has funds for a multi-regional conference in 2012, while LIRNEasia has to request money for an event in 2012.

Developments within IDRC, our principal funder, suggest that we must continue to place even greater emphasis on managing and reducing costs (we have made a good start on this with the Xi'an CPRsouth5 conference). This Board Paper describes a design that will both keep costs down and advance our mission. It is proposed that we trial the new design over two conferences in 2012-13, which may be adopted permanently by the Board and by RIA after assessment.

RIA intends to organize the 2012 joint conference in Mauritius (a natural meeting point between Asia and Africa), if the proposal is approved. LIRNEasia will organize the 2013 joint conference in an Asian location to be determined. This will cut costs for our common funder, IDRC, if we handle it right. It will also advance our cause as will be explained below.

#### **How would it work?**

The first and most important step is to synchronize the events. We have already decided to move to September from December, effective 2012. RIA has expressed its readiness to move from April to September, which is around the middle of April and December.

The paper selection process will work as follows:

1. The two organizations will send out the call for papers in around February 2012 (and February 2013), each to its own lists.
2. The total number of paper-giver slots will be 30 in 10 sessions, spread over 2.5 days (not the total of 42 over two days, if one takes the two conferences together).

- a. An alternative is to abandon our commitment to plenary sessions, and have some parallel, breakout sessions so that we can keep the overall length of the conference down to two days.
  - b. Cost savings will be achieved by reducing the number of paper-giver slots from the present total of 42 in the two separate conferences to 30 in the joint event. This will help us improve quality as long as we attract a large enough number of good abstracts and maintain the rigor of the selection process.
3. The abstracts will be shortlisted separately, with the judging done separately based on pre-agreed quotas (say, 60% of 55 short-list slots for the organizing entity; and 40% for the other entity). Currently we short-list around 40 abstracts to fill 21 slots on the basis of completion and quality of papers.
  - a. Assuming the short list is 55 and the ratio is 60:40 in favor of the host (Africa in 2012), Asia Pacific will get 23 of the slots in the short list. In 2013, Asia Pacific will get 33 slots. LIRNEasia and RIA are sister organizations and the relationship is not based on legalities. If, for example, one side has an excess or a dearth of submissions, the ratios can be adjusted.
4. Once the short-listing is done, the main organizer will take over and run the process, slotting abstracts into sessions, identifying the best papers based on “competition” among the papers shortlisted for each session, arranging the travel, etc.
  - a. Since the process is not region-specific after the short-listing stage, the 60:40 ratio may not hold at the end.
5. The CPRsouth Board plus other senior scholars from Africa and elsewhere (CPRafrica does not have its own Board separate from RIA) will serve as referees and chairs/discussants in the first and second stages of paper selection and mentoring.

Prior to the conference, there will be two days of tutorials, with 15 young scholars each from Asia-Pacific and Africa. This will be a reduction for CPRsouth. We accommodate 15 international young scholars and 15 young scholars from the host country. It will be pedagogically less effective to handle a group of 45 (our 30 plus the African 15) and in any case the concept of host country will not work when we're in one of the smaller African countries, Mauritius, in 2012. This can be reviewed in 2013.

### **Substantive (non-financial) rationale**

It was thought from the beginning that CPRsouth would encompass Africa. Given costs, especially high costs associated with English-French interpretation that seemed to be a requirement of working in Africa with IDRC funding, LIRNEasia was of the view that it would

be best to work in a decentralized way for the most part with periodic multiregional conferences and regional panels articulating the decentralized processes.

We have managed to gradually increase the quality of the papers and presentation at CPRsouth over five conferences, but we are not content. It was stated at the last Board Meeting that we needed to increase the number of submissions to around 200 (from the present number that has plateaued at around 80) and thereby to increase selectivity in order to improve quality further, for example, by requiring submission of full papers instead of abstracts as now. Based on non-systematic observation over two conferences, it appears that CPRafrica's papers are of two kinds: a subset that is equal to or superior to the papers at CPRsouth and a subset that is inferior.

We believe that reducing the number of slots from a total of 42 to 30 and increasing the pool by mobilizing the networks of both LIRNEasia and RIA will help improve the selectivity of the process and thereby improve quality. We also believe that cross-fertilization of ideas among African and Asia-Pacific scholars will be valuable, especially in the context of increasing economic and political exchanges between the two regions, exemplified by MTN's presence in Asia and Huawei's and Bharti Airtel's considerable activities in Africa.

There is the slight problem of the slight divergence of objectives between CPRsouth and CPRafrica, where emphasis in the former is the presentation of policy implications after a good paper has been done and the emphasis in the latter is the preparation of high-quality papers that could be submitted for publication. This can be balanced and managed.

CPRsouth has conducted best paper competitions since 2008 (Beijing). CPRafrica has not, choosing instead to select the best papers and submit them for publication. Can this tradition be continued? We hope so. We are confident a mutually satisfactory compromise can be achieved.

### **What about Latin America?**

The 2010 CPRglobal proposal submitted to IDRC included a component for DIRSI, the Latin American counterpart of LIRNEasia and RIA. It provided funding to conduct tutorials prior to the annual ACORN/REDECOM conference and a multi-regional component in the conference every three years. While the Asia-Pacific and African conferences shared a common format and a South-only structure, the Latin American component differed in significant ways. ACORN/REDECOM is a North-South conference lead by Raul Katz of Columbia University. DIRSI plays an important but not controlling role in the organization of the conference. Papers are not selected and mentored in the same way as in CPRafrica and CPRsouth; they are selected

in the same way as in conventional academic conferences, with papers that are completed on the basis of abstracts accepted. The common feature is the tutorial component.

Holding joint conferences of the form described above with DIRSI will pose significant challenges. Simultaneous interpretation will have to be provided and travel costs will be extremely high. Synchronizing the conferences will also be hard, given DIRSI does not control ACORN/REDECOM.

Therefore, we propose that the joint organization form be first tried out between Africa and the Asia Pacific for two years, with the present courtesies of invitations to participate in the conference and at the tutorials being extended to DIRSI. The question of better integrating DIRSI in to the joint conference format can be addressed in 2013 after the trial period.

Approval is sought for holding CPRsouth7 and 8 as joint conferences in collaboration with CPRafrica. As part of the decision, approval is sought to hold CPRsouth7 at a location to be decided by CPRafrica, most likely in the Mauritius. The Board will be asked decide on the location for CPRsouth8 when several options have been identified and the funding obtained.

**Decision: Location and organizing of CPRsouth7 & 8 (and CPRafrica3 & 4) as joint conferences**

Name of the Board Member	Approve / Disapprove