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News release

Joseph Asunka tapped as Afrobarometer's next CEO

Afrobarometer is pleased to announce that Dr. Joseph Asunka, currently with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, will succeed Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi as Afrobarometer chief executive officer in early 2021.

Asunka will lead the pan-African survey research network into its third decade as the go-to data source on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Afrobarometer co-founder Gyimah-Boadi, who will continue as board chair after retiring as CEO, said Asunka's recruitment caps a two-year process of organizational strengthening to transition the network from a pioneering research project to a first-rate pan-African institution.

"I'm immensely encouraged that we are appointing such a talented young leader," he said. "Joseph has the academic pedigree, survey and data analysis expertise, personal integrity, and deep commitment to excellence to inspire our staff and partners and to amplify the respect that Afrobarometer has earned among stakeholders and data users throughout the world."

From his academic and field experience, Asunka brings extensive research insights on the interplay between government policy, politics, and civil society; a detailed understanding of the policy and funding ecosystem; and a strong commitment to Afrobarometer's mission of making African voices count in policy and development.

"When I was growing up in a remote corner of northern Ghana, government was very far removed from the daily lives of people in my community," Asunka said. "The only regular experience of government in many communities like mine was through loudspeakers mounted on vehicles of the Information Services Department.

"That Afrobarometer makes it possible for ordinary Africans, and not just economic and political elites, to influence decisions, actions, and processes at national, regional, and global levels is revolutionary, powerful, and reassuring. Deepening these core contributions and positioning Afrobarometer for greater impact in the next generation will be a major focus in my role as CEO."

Asunka began his research career with the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, an Afrobarometer core partner, in 2004-2008. In his current role with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which also provides financial support to Afrobarometer, Asunka manages a portfolio of grants supporting efforts to increase transparency and accountability in fiscal governance and foster citizen participation to improve public services in developing countries.

As a lecturer in political science at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), he taught courses on research methods and data analysis, political institutions and economic development, African politics, and political economy of Africa. He has also worked with World Vision International and Catholic Relief Services and has consulted for the Africa Region of the World Bank Institute.

He holds a Ph.D. in political science from UCLA as well as a master's in economics and a bachelor's degree in statistics and computer science, both from the University of Ghana, Legon.

Afrobarometer's vision: African societies thrive when African voices count in public policy and development

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