

Obituary for Professor Omar Egesah

It is with deep shock that the BIGSAS team received the sad news about the demise of our dear colleague and friend, Professor Omar Egesah, based at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, on 18 March 2021. The sudden death of Professor Egesah, a great personality, a mindful colleague and a close friend, is a tremendous loss. In the first instance, his unexpected passing is hard to bear for the members of his family, to whom we express our heartfelt condolences and sympathy.

Omar Egesah was Professor of Anthropology at Moi University, Kenya, with a focus on Medical Anthropology. His areas of interest included field work oriented research on reproductive health and its dimensions for (African) societies. Due to his experience, he was a respected international evaluator for programmes on maternal and child health in Kenya, Zambia, Cambodia and Nicaragua.



Professor Omar Egesah in May 2018;
Photo: BIGSAS

Professor Egesah also was a crucial partner to BIGSAS. When the idea of responding to the European Union Commission's Call for Proposals in the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme gained momentum in 2016 in BIGSAS, he visited the graduate school for the first time. He entered the consortium's preparatory meetings with extraordinary dedication. His collegial style, personal commitment and insightful comments were crucial for the success of our joint application. After the approval of the EU-funded project Academic Mobility for African Sustainable Development (AMAS) in 2016, he led the project in the capacity of administrative coordinator.

In May 2018 Professor Egesah spent three months as a visiting professor at BIGSAS, where the Management Board and the Academic Committee benefitted from his vast expertise and his valuable contributions to the institutional enhancement of BIGSAS. During his time as a visiting professor he also visibly enjoyed the vibrant activities of the BIGSAS Junior Fellows, such as the MAU Conference (Model African Union Bayreuth) and the stimulating Swahili Colloquium. In the Anthropology Colloquium Professor Egesah gave a paper on the topic he was passionate about: "Contributions Made by Medical Anthropology Research to Reproductive Health in the Kenyan Context, Annotated Ethnographic Experiences".

Another passion of Professor Omar Egesah pertained to the developments in Higher Education in general and Africa in particular. As contributor and participant of the seminar 'Higher Education in Africa', he added essentially to the interdisciplinary research and creative intellectual exchange on higher education in Africa. In an interview he described his approach as follows: "This seminar is challenging our mindsets on methodology of teaching. You sit together, discuss and share experiences. It is a give and take: giving your experience and receiving experiences from other people, to learn from others."

Omar Egesah's passing will leave a glaring gap and deep marks in BIGSAS, as well as in the entire field of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth. Those of us who had the honour and pleasure of interacting and collaborating with Professor Omar Egesah will always remember his intellectual rigour, his generosity and kindness, his clarity and utmost dedication to his various projects, not to forget his fine humour that helped him to 'survive and enjoy' academia.