



PROGRAMME ANNOUNCEMENT

2006 Gender Symposium

Theme: *Gender in the Construction of the Democratic Developmental State*

Date: 12 – 14 November, 2006 - Venue: Cairo, Egypt.

In the period since the beginning of the 1990s, CODESRIA has been at the forefront of the quest to harness the efforts of African scholars in both extending the frontiers of knowledge production around issues of gender, and doing so in a manner that ensures that for as many scholars as are active in its networks and at other African sites of scholarly work, gender is integrated into their frames of analyses. This has been done in line with the Council's institutional commitment, integral to its Charter mandate, to produce knowledge that is not only anchored in the realities of the African continent but which also contributes to the progressive transformation of livelihoods and is premised on contributions drawn from multidisciplinary perspectives. The results which have been accumulated from the experience of the Council and other like-minded institutions have, at one level, culminated in an efflorescence of studies on various aspects of the gender dynamics of development, an expansion in the community of African scholars with an active interest in gender research, the networking of that community on a sub-regional and pan-African scale, and the projection of the voices of its members on a global scale.

At another level, however, few will doubt that for all the progress which has been made in promoting the idea of the centrality of gender to the robustness of any social research and the completeness of any project of social transformation, a considerable amount of work still remains to be done. The challenges that are posed are many but in summary could be said to centre around the need to consolidate the many critiques of development that have been made from various gender – and feminist perspectives into a comprehensive, inter-

nally coherent and consistent set of alternatives on the basis of which further advances in theory, method and praxis could be achieved. Engendering African development requires close attention not only to the analytical tools of the researcher but also a gendered critique of development that questions the very foundations on which the African developmental process rests and the terms on which it has proceeded as a pre-requisite for new theoretical approaches and policy instruments. In sum, what is called for today is a complete paradigm shift for which new scholarship will be necessary.

To be sure, the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD)/Gender and Development (GAD) strategies that shaped policy interventions and informed scholarly reflections in the 1960s and 1970s went some way in addressing some of the gender-based silences and contradictions in the development process. However, they were limited by the fact that they mostly remained within the established parameters of the conventional theories of development and the discourses of the exponents of the mainstream approaches. Also, they tended to limit the terrain of analysis to either narrowly economic considerations or perspectives that were beholden to a notion of development as economic growth. Furthermore, women continued to be treated more as objects of history rather than makers of history in their own right; they "received" development but were not the makers of development. Gallant efforts that were made to draw attention to trends in the informal economy, the cultural and artistic expressions of women's developmental work, the status of the domestic economy of care, the transformation of gender identities in the produc-

tion and commercial processes, and innovations in science and technology did not succeed in altering the terms of the debate and generating a fully liberating alternative discourse in part because of the increased donorisation of gender as a tool of policy.

The decline of the state-interventionist strategy of development that occurred in the wake of the neo-liberal revolution of the 1980s represented a setback for the WID – WAD/GAD approaches precisely because their intellectual roots were undermined by the radical shift in direction that occurred as the ideology of the market and IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes gained ground. Subsequent efforts made to transcend the WID-WAD/GAD framework initially centred on strategies for expanding access to micro-credit and safety net schemes in order to mitigate the costs of neo-liberal economic adjustment and enhance women's participation in market processes. Later on, investments were made in exercises designed to modify dominant macro-economic models and policies in order to better accommodate gender concerns. In this connection, gender-budgeting enjoyed perhaps the highest profile. The political corollary of this was the rise of state feminism symbolised by the office of first ladies and the campaign for greater gender balance in the institutions of state power. But these approaches too, for all their success in keeping the Gender Question on the radar, did not, in most cases, transcend the parameters set by the new discourses of the market and the political economy of neo-liberalism; their political flipside may have served to reinforce existing structures of unaccountable power.

Looking at the Africa of the 1980s and 1990s, there is a lot to be regretted by the failure of dominant discussions on development to tackle the roots of the inability of scholars and practitioners to break out of the (self-imposed) prison represented by the theoretical and institutional boxes from which they work. For, as the state went into decline, market failures proliferated, violent conflicts burst out or acquired a new lease of life, new local and international diasporas were born, the boundaries of the informal economy expanded, the HIV/AIDS pandemic took its toll, and the economy of care grew further in significance, the role of women in the well-being of the household and society became ever more significant. Without doubt, the continued reproduction of economy and society in Africa depended on the tenacity and ingenuity of women. In this changed context, the nature of the gender relationship became ever more central to the prospects for development whether viewed from the vantage point

of the production process (including labour markets), the state-citizen relationship, the negotiation of the market and market relations, efforts at reinventing the state, and innovations in the arts, culture and technology. These developments added up to create a radically different context for gender relations that must, of necessity, be taken into account in a holistic re-thinking of development in Africa.

The agenda of social transformation in the development process has remained a live one which is in need of being creatively re-visited at a time when questions are cumulating on the limits of the market and the costs of the maladjustment of African economies and societies. The questions which are being raised have been accompanied by a revival of academic and policy interest in development and the role which the state could play in it. In this connection, the notion of the developmental state has been revived and is rapidly regaining currency. Among the most enlightened exponents of the renewed developmental state thesis as a path for Africa both to overcome its prolonged socio-economic crises and transcend the maladjustments brought about by the IMF/World Bank market fundamentalism of the 1980s and 1990s, a fundamentalism that may be less confident than before but which has not yet been decisively defeated, their primary concern has been to avoid the errors that hobbled the efforts that were made in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s to foster development and promote a developmental state project. These errors are primarily seen as being located in the arena of politics as captured by the deficit of democracy. It is on account of these deficits that the renewed discussion on the importance of the revival of a developmental state project has placed an accent on the need to ensure that this time, Africa strives to build democratic developmental states. Different authors have identified different entry points for the democratic import of the developmental state project they have in mind but these differences need not detain us for now. What is really important is that it is inconceivable that the democratic developmental state, however defined, can be built without a clear integration of gender in the equation. And it is precisely here that the silences have been loudest and, where gendered voices have been noted, it has been more for their feebleness than for their bold staking of a claim. The need to correct this early enough is clear: It will ensure that the struggle to more effectively engender development in Africa will avoid the historical errors of the past, namely, seeking merely to add gender garnishing to a meal that has already been cooked ready to serve. It is this challenge that constitutes the core objective of the 2006 CODESRIA Gender Symposium which, like the 2005 edi-

tion carries forward the broad theme of development alternatives that also constituted the primary focus of the 11th General Assembly of the Council held in Maputo, Mozambique, in December 2005.

Participants in the CODESRIA 2006 Gender symposium will be invited to engage the renewed debate on the developmental state in Africa whether built on its democratic underpinnings or its social/institutional embedness with a view to squarely engendering its theoretical underpinnings and weaving gender concerns into the fabric of its proposed operational policies. This will require a critical, gendered reading of the emerging body of new developmental state literature in all of its variants; it will also involve an engagement with the epistemological foundations of the theory and practice of development, the theory of the state, the theory of democracy, and the question of public institutions. To this end, CODESRIA is commissioning think pieces that will speak to all aspects of the developmental state debate in order to permit the participants in the symposium to consider and, to the extent possible, jointly develop new conceptual perspectives and theoretical possibilities on the basis of a re-reading of history, a re-thinking of inherited knowledge and the generation of fresh evidence. Such a bold re-reading is necessary because of the changes that have occurred in African economies and societies in the period since the initial efforts after independence to foster developmentalism. Whether it be at the level of the household or in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, women have gained an increasing role – perhaps even share – of the economy on a scale that is much higher today than at independence even though this is not reflected in the computation of the national wealth or in the distribution of power. It is incumbent on the scholarly community to correct this anomaly and, in so doing, ensure that the gender factor is placed at the centre of the quest for new developmental democracies in Africa. Among the sub-themes around which reflections will be organised are:

- i. Coming to Grips with Gender in Africa's Experiences of Development:
 - a. The Theoretical and Conceptual Challenges;
 - b. The Methodological Challenges.
- ii. Engendering the Theories of Democratic Developmental States:
 - a. Gender Silences in the Theory and Practice of Development;
 - b. Gender Silences in the Theory and Praxis of the State;
 - c. Gender Silences in the Theory and Practice of Democracy.
- iii. Gender in the Macro-Economic Foundations of the Democratic Developmental

State

- iv. Gender in the Macro-Social Foundations of the Democratic Developmental State
- v. Gender in the Political Institutional Fabric of the Democratic Developmental State
- vi. Gender in the Construction of the Political Institutions of the Democratic Developmental State
- vii. Gender in the Labour Regimes of the Developmental State Project
- viii. Gender in the Financing of a Developmental Democracy
- ix. Towards New Forms of Women's Participation in the Democratic Developmental Project.

The Symposium will be held in Cairo, Egypt, from **12–14 November, 2006**. More information can be obtained from:

The 2006 CODESRIA Gender Symposium,
CODESRIA,
BP 3304, CP 18524
Dakar, Senegal.
Tel: +221 8259822/23
Fax: +221 824 12 89
E-mail: Gender.Symposium@codesria.sn
Website: www.codesria.org