



## Inaugural Conference of Alumni

# Theme: *Re-thinking State and Democracy in Africa*

**Dates: 19 – 21 September, 2007 - Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## PROGRAMME FOR ALUMNI OF CODESRIA INSTITUTES

The Council for the Development of Social Science Since 1992, CODESRIA has organised annual thematic institutes targeted at younger researchers and mid-career scholars mainly located in universities and research centres in Africa. Over the period since then, the number of thematic institutes organised by the Council has grown, as has the number of scholars invited on an open competitive basis to participate in them. Beginning with the Governance Institute, the institutes hosted by the Council have grown over the years to include the Gender Institute, the Humanities Institute Programme, the Child and Youth Studies Institute, and the Institute on Health, Politics and Society. Plans are afoot, within the framework of the CODESRIA Strategic Plan for the period 2007 to 2011, to introduce two addition institutes, one on Development Economics and the other on The Social Sciences and ICTs.

With an average of 15 laureates participating every year in each of the existing institutes hosted by the Council, the programme has produced hundreds of alumni from the different sessions held. A majority of the alumni have remained within the African higher education system where many have also grown in seniority and matured in their scholarship. The Programme for the Alumni of CODESRIA Institutes is designed primarily to serve as a forum for continued interaction among all those who have participated in any of the institutes hosted by the Council. In so doing, it will enable the laureates to re-visit some of the old intellectual concerns that attracted them in the first place to the Institute in which they participated, pose new questions that arise as a result of the passage of time and the generation of new insights, and develop a new, collective intellectual agenda that might be pursued further through other CODESRIA research vehicles. In order to realise the objectives of the programme, CODESRIA will offer a page on its website for interaction among the former laureates; the page will also carry news about laureates and post publications which they may want to share with one another. Furthermore, the Council will convene an annual conference of the alumni of CODESRIA Institutes around a defined theme to which former laureates will be invited to respond through abstracts and papers. The revised versions of the papers presented at the conference will be published by the Council in its Book Series.

During 2007, CODESRIA will be conducting a tracer study on the laureates of its institutes with a view to building a database on their intellectual trajectory over the period since their participation in the session for which they attended. Effective from 2007 too, the Council will be hosting an annual conference for the alumni of its institutes. For the purpose of the tracer study, a short questionnaire is being circulated (by e-mail and on the CODESRIA website) which all alumni are invited to complete. With regard to the conference, it will be held from 19 to 21 September, 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the umbrella theme of : **Re-thinking the State and Democracy in Africa**. The conference languages will be English, French and Portuguese.

The theme of state and democracy is one which has preoc-

cupied the African social research community for a long time even if different generations of scholars have grappled with different dimensions of the question as they sought to relate with the contemporary socio-economic, political and cultural challenges to which they were called to respond. Not surprisingly, it is a theme which has also recurred directly or indirectly in all of the sessions of the different institutes which the Council hosted during the 1990s into the new millennium, that period when renewed struggles for the soul of the state and its institutions unfolded and ushered in a new phase of institutional and procedural reforms. Within the ambit of the specific themes of the institutes in which they participated, many laureates produced essays during the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium summarising their thoughts on the problems and prospects of democratic development in Africa and the role of the state in the project. They did so by examining the question through class, gender and generational lenses with a view to formulating interpretative perspectives on what the state and the democratic project mean to the working poor, women, and young people. They critiqued the old and emerging institutional foundations of governance and development in Africa and invested themselves in the difference between form and content in the African democratic and state-building project. They spoke to questions of access to participate in the policy processes of the state and equitable representation in the democratic processes. They also examined the feasibility of an Africa that is anchored on a democratic developmental state foundation. Many years after their initial contributions to the debates that raged in the 1990s on the state and democracy, and with the benefit of the experience accumulated in different countries since then, former laureates are invited to revisit the question taking advantage of the new contexts and knowledges that have developed. Contributions could come in the form of a theorisation of the state and democracy in ways which offer new insights or an analytic review of experience with an accent on trends that are discernable.

Former laureates wishing to participate in the conference are invited to send in paper abstracts anchored on a re-thinking of the state and democracy in Africa, doing so from the multiple perspectives arising from the diversity of institutes hosted by the Council, and the diverse perspectives that underpinned them. Abstracts should be concise with a clear problematic linked to the conference theme. They should be sent to CODESRIA no later than **15 June, 2007**. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified by **06 July, 2007** and will be expected to send in their full papers by **15 August, 2007**. All abstracts and papers should be addressed to:

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