



CODESRIA Programme Announcement: 2009 Gender Symposium

Theme: Gender and Sports in Africa's Development

Date: November 23rd-25th, 2009

Venue: Cairo, Egypt.

In line with its mandate of developing, promoting, consolidating, and disseminating the highest quality of research on and about Africa, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) will hold a **Gender Symposium** from **November 23rd to 25th in Cairo, Egypt**. The Gender Symposium is an annual event that provides a platform for gender-focused debates. The theme for the 2009 symposium is **Gender and Sports in Africa's Development**.

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 and modes of intervention. 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; the conscious pursuit of gender equality and inter-generational dialogues; and the harnessing of 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, internally 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 to the production of a gendered critique of development that questions the very foundations on which socio-economic and political processes in Africa rest. Such a critique is a pre-requisite for the advancement of 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.

Different authors have identified different entry points for the developmental project they have in mind for Africa but these differences need not detain us here for now. What is really important to note is that it is inconceivable that the project of democratic development, however defined, can ever be successfully built without a full integration of gender into the equation. And it is precisely here that the deficits have been most in evidence in spite of all official declarations committing governments to the promotion of the rights of women and the equality of men and women. The dawn of the contemporary processes of globalisation initially fuelled widespread optimism that promised new opportunities for the expansion of

the frontiers of women's rights; several years after, this optimism has been tempered and mitigated as much by the disempowering elements thrown up by the global age as by the uneven distribution of the opportunities that have been associated with it. Particularly worthy of note in this regard are the severe limits imposed on the expansion of social citizenship by the neo-liberal ideological and policy moorings of contemporary globalisation. The sporting fraternity as global playing field, has not been spared this chequered character. While sport presents an opportunity for the participation of Africa's men and women in the development process, locally and with global implications, such participation is not without its own problems, however, that require us to apply the gender lens to the reading of the natural twin processes of play and development, and their applicability and place in the context of Africa.

Sports is an arena that is uniquely gendered, differentiating as it does between men and women, boys and girls, in ways that have largely come to be accepted by many societies. Not only are most sporting activities organised along dual terms, they also set the competitive standards differently according to biological sex, with the female standard usually lower than that of the male. Golf is a case in point; as are field sports such as high and long jump. Over time and with the commercialization of sports globally, this differentiation has translated into a hierarchy in the financial value ascribed to sports where female sports score lower on the financial scale. By the same token, remuneration in the sporting field tends to be lower for females while the males are paid more. Similarly, male sports arguably enjoy more attention and, therefore, reputation and national/continental value than do female sports. And yet for all these differences, the sporting arena retains its attraction for the gendered democratic developmental project. Most sporting activities offer opportunities for inclusive participation irrespective of gender, class, race, literacy, and other otherwise marginalising attributes. A lot of sporting activities have also contributed to the development of individuals, communities, countries, and the African continent in various ways, in recent times. At a political level, sport in Africa has made possible the renewal and expression of a continental African identity, especially with the upcoming Soccer World Cup in 2010, the first Soccer World Cup to be held in Africa. Packaged as a continental event, it has been described as 'an African journey of hope' towards freedom from war, tyranny, divisions, hunger, and the denial of human dignity. The 2010 event is important not only because soccer, in some places referred to as football, is a popular sport in Africa and has become an integral part of the African cultural landscape; but also because it arguably enjoys the largest following worldwide, and is immensely economically lucrative. To what extent then, does soccer, and all other sports present as real possibilities for an engendered African developmental project?

A lot of scholarship on sports has focused on its local/global business dimensions; its political importance; and as performance. Research into sports also offers interesting possibilities for exploring intricate gender dynamics in the evolution and development of societies. This is because sport is often played out beyond the confines of the playing fields. Sport, like most aspects of play, is an element of culture with a significant role in the gender socialisation process. As an institution, sport can be analysed and understood in terms of modern democratic societal participation and development, allowing us to reflect on crucial questions of governance, and pertaining to male/female participation and reward accrual that goes beyond materialism; as well as to gendered identity expression, be it masculine or feminine as performed by either or both sexes. Lending sports research a historical dimension holds out interesting possibilities with respect to the socio-cultural adaptation of sport to African societies' gender dynamics; the exploration of cultural patterns over time; and the possibility of insights into the relationship between children's play and adult sports and the ramifications, therein, for citizen participation in developmental processes.

Participants in the 2009 CODESRIA Gender symposium would be invited to consider the various dimensions to the landscape of gender and the multifaceted sports arena including athletics, cricket, children's games in Africa, and ball sports, with a view to reflecting on the possibilities and barriers that have emerged alongside the old obstacles that have persisted in the search for and process towards a gender-inclusive African development project. The symposium will, among other things, assess the:

- i) Theories of play and development as viewed from a gendered perspective, including children's versus adult forms of play;
- ii) Gender, Sports and theories of Space in Development terms
- iii) Traditional and Modern Sporting Practices – and the interfaces between them – as viewed from a gendered perspective;
- iv) Gender, Sports and questions of Audience and Participation
- iii) Modes and patterns of the refraction of gender differentiation into local/global sports governance and participation;
- iv) The impact of global processes on local struggles for engendering sports ;
- v) The Roles of local and/or global civil society in the mobilisation of gendered development through sports;
- vi) Sports, Gender and Work
- vii) Dialectics of multiple identities and citizenship in the practice of Sports in a global age;
- viii) Sports, Gender and Violence
- ix) The gendered aspects of Sports as Performance and Spectacle
- x) Sports and the Articulation of gendered Identities – including national, cultural, sub-cultural, and literary articulations;
- xi) New forms of international commodification of players and their gender Implications;
- xii) New forms of trans-national commerce in players and potential players and their Development implications through the gender lens;
- xiii) Sports as Global Business and Implications for the Developing world in Gender terms
- xiv) Sports, the Media and Gender in Africa's Development
- xv) Re-thinking Gender and Development in a global Sporting age: Alternatives open to women and men in the quest for gender equality.

Participation will be both by expression of interest by those interested in being considered for invitation and direct invitation to CODESRIA scholars working in the field. All those interested in proactively expressing their interest in the symposium are invited to send an abstract of the paper they intend to present not later than **31st August, 2009**; if accepted, the full papers developed out of the abstracts must be received by **30th September, 2009** for further review prior to final confirmation of selection from CODESRIA.

For more information on the 2009 CODESRIA Gender Symposium, and to apply, contact:

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