

IDS receives a grant of US \$ 350,000

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The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, has received a grant of US \$ 350,000 from the Ford Foundation Office for East Africa to conduct a study on "Rethinking Social Movements in East Africa: The Rise and Expiry of (un)Civil Societies and Their Transformative Lessons to Current Civil Society". The study, whose work began in January this year, is expected to take two years - up to December 2012. The study, coordinated by Professors Njuguna Ng'ethe, and Karuti Kanyinga, is premised on the observation that the quality of civil society seems to be shrinking when the quantity is expanding.

The questions that the study will seek to answer include: Has the current civil society neglected important allies such as academics and the general intelligentsia? Is the civil society ahistorical in its thinking and, therefore, has neglected the lessons of the past social movements? Have the lessons been collated for learning purposes? Could it be that the current civil society is too preoccupied with the logic of the log frame at the expense of transformative social action? Could it be that the logic of developmentalism, that is now common in most civil societies,

has worked against transformative thinking and action?

The above questions invite a series of other questions which will also be explained in the attempt to diagnose what ails the current civil society in Kenya. Such questions as: Why do some members of society choose the exit option as opposed to the loyalty option; and, what retards or facilitates their growth; will be addressed. The promulgation of the new Constitution in Kenya is a good example of one result of a social movement at its best in the region, but it is not clear under what circumstances social movements form, nor is it clear under what circumstances civil societies can be transformed or transform themselves into social movements.

There has been the suggestion that civil societies need to engage in deliberate decay of their sometimes inhibiting structures before they can successfully transform themselves into social movements. Again, how social movements interrelate with each other forming alliances and who is in control of these alliances is a critical question. One would want to understand why social movements do not transform into political parties or organizations for

mobilization of politics and what happens to the lives of those that transform into political organizations. In other words, the study will look into the "black box" of how movements happen, how they expire and generally how they exit the space of engagement.

The study will publicize its findings in the form of both academic and advocacy materials. The purpose of these publications will be two fold: to add to the knowledge on social movements and to produce ideas on how to sustain social movements.

For the last six years, IDS has offered research degrees at both Masters and PhD in development studies, targeting scholars and practitioners in development. In line with this, the study will seek to mentor young and upcoming scholars in the field of development studies, through including young scholars, especially new PhDs, with a view to mentoring them on research. Therefore, one of the expected outputs of the study is a publication from each member of the research team which includes Dr. Musambayi Katumanga, Dr. Joshua Kivuva, Dr. George Michuki, and Mr. Geoffrey Njeru.