

Tale of Successes as IDS@50 Conference Ends

Date and time:

Wed, 2015-11-18 06:59

Location / Venue:

University of Nairobi, Main campus, VC Palour



From Right to Left: The IDS Director Prof Winnie Mitullah, UoN Deputy Vice Chancellor (AA), Prof Henry Mutoro and former IDS Directors Prof Dorothy McCormick and Prof Patrick Alila cut a cake to celebrate IDS's 50th Anniversary.

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, festivities to mark 50th Anniversary came to an end last week.

The highly successful celebrations ended on Friday 21st November 2015 after a series of activities that kicked off on 29th October 2015 with a well-attended United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) public lecture, "Optimizing Food Security for Jobs under Climate Change." The lecture was delivered by Dr Richard Munang, the UNEP Climate Change Coordinator for Africa.

The next major event was a pre-conference Public Forum, "Reflection on Law and Development," by Chief Justice Dr Willy Mutunga on 17th November 2015. The Chief Justice said IDS has the ideological and political role to play as the country fully implements the 2010 Constitution.

In his welcoming remarks, the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbithi said the link between law and development was part of the big debates on development in the 1970s and 1980s. "It is therefore significant that we revisit this debate with particular reference to how the law serves development."

Later in the day, there was a panel session titled: "Scholarship in Action: Deepening Linkage between the Civil Society, the Academy and the Private Sector." The panel session was jointly organized by IDS and SID-Kenya Dialogues Project.

The four-day conference began on 18th November 2015. The climax of the day was a keynote address by Prof Adebayo Olukoshi, Regional Director, International IDEA Africa Office. Prof Olukoshi reviewed the evolution of development studies and thinking. He observed that development studies in the west were studies about the author, but not issues affecting universality.

He said IDS has produced innovative thinking to establish priorities based on our realities. He observed that in order to rethink development studies, there are many theories to unpack and unlearn.

Earlier in the day, there was the IDS@50 Commemorative Panel, which featured IDS former directors Prof Patrick Alila and Prof Njuguna Ng'ethe and IDS Librarian Ms Jane Achieng. The panelists recalled the journey of IDS.

Day Two of the Conference, 19th November 2015, was a plenary session on Development and Devolution. The Panelists were Prof Peter Anyang Nyong'o: "Decentralisation and Governance Challenges in Kenya during the next decade: A Critical Evaluation"; Prof Winnie Mitullah: "Interrogating Deliberative Democracy in Devolved Government in Kenya"; and Elvis Ngome Nkome: "Devolved Governance and Development: The Cameroon Experience 50 Years after the independence and Pre-Unification: Challenges and Perspective." This was followed by a plenary session on Democracy and Development Dilemmas as well as two parallel sessions:

- The nature of Development Thinking, Past and Present
- The Prospect for a More Inclusive Development Practice

The conference participants then converged for a Plenary Session on Climate Change and Environment.

The day also marked the official launch of a book entitled: *Paratransit in African Cities: Operations, Regulation and Reform*. Edited by Roger Behrens, Dorothy McCormick and David Mfinanga, the book showcases the VREF-funded research on paratransit that ACET conducted in collaboration with practitioners in the field.

Day Three, on 21st November 2015, was dedicated to Contemporary Issues in Development. It began with a session on Peace building in Africa: Towards a New Architecture. This was followed by another session entitled: Africa's Changing Economies and Demographics as well as two parallel sessions:

- Gender and Development
- Peace Building in Africa Revisited

The conference concluded with a closing session, Prospects for Sustainable Development Goals, followed by farewell cocktail.