



Gender Equitable and Transformative Social Policy for Post-COVID-19 Africa (GETSPA)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR ISSUES PAPERS

The **Institute of African Studies (IAS)** at the **University of Ghana**, with funding support from the **Open Society Foundation**, is calling for proposals for issues papers that investigate the potential for and challenges of transformative social policy in Africa.

Background

At present, the quest for transformative social policy approaches is hampered by the neoliberal foundations of traditional approaches and the patriarchal cultures of policymaking institutions, two problems that result in the lack of policy attention to inequalities related to gender, generation, location and dis/ability, among others. Social policies are invariably reduced to social protection and are rolled out through targeted rather than universal measures. Additionally, there is poor recognition of the interplay between social and economic policies, with economic policymaking given prominence and social policy seen as a way to mop-up those left behind in the quest for economic growth. Finally, there is a dearth of social policy academics in Africa, leading to the privileging of Western-based knowledge as the basis for social policy praxis. African scholars also lack opportunities and resources to undertake research into social policy in other global South contexts and are therefore unable to learn lessons that would enrich social policy in Africa. The GETSPA project is committed to contributing to addressing these obstacles to transformative social policy in Africa.

As an initial step in this transformative social policy agenda, the GETSPA project has undertaken research since November 2020 in thirty-one countries in Africa, to map the landscape and evolution of social policy approaches since the colonial period. These country studies have found that the importance placed on social policies in addressing the developmental needs of Africa has varied over the years. In the colonial period, social policy was pursued with a resource appropriation agenda which resulted in the creation and/or exacerbation of inequalities and structural dualities. The early independence period appears to have been the period of the greatest attention to social policy, when developmental states rolled out broad-based policies to simultaneously address the challenges of nation-building, social and economic citizenship, and economic growth. The devaluation of social policymaking began with the period of economic reforms prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s when public provisioning by the state was rolled back and the market logic was given prominence. While social policy has made something of a comeback in global discourses, it has been reduced to a question of social protection which narrowly focuses on remedial interventions for the “vulnerable”. These are not adequate to address important questions about rising inequalities including gender inequality (related to the gender segmentation of work, the gender pay gap, and the gender asset gap). The period of the

pandemic highlighted the limits of the reductive version of social policy to address the crises of poverty, vulnerabilities and inequalities that were deepened during the pandemic, much less the goal of human well-being in its most positive and expansive sense. This realisation offers an opportunity to rethink social policymaking, signalling an entry point for the transformative social policy agenda of GETSPA.

It is against this background that this call is being put out for issue papers that focus on promising initiatives that can lead to the realization of an agenda for transformative and gender equitable social policy for Africa's development.

Approach

The project takes as its starting point Mkandawire's expansive definition of social policy as the

“collective interventions to directly affect social welfare, social institutions and social relations.... concerned with the redistributive effects of economic policy, the protection of people from the vagaries of the market and the changing circumstances of age, the enhancement of the productive potential of members of society, and the reconciliation of the burden of reproduction with that of other social tasks. Successful societies have given social policies all these tasks, although the weighting of tasks has varied among countries and within each country, from period to period”.¹

Social policy is thus concerned with social welfare, social institutions, and social relations, and has both instrumental and intrinsic or normative value. This approach to social policy provides a framing for assessing social policy in Africa.

Furthermore, the project takes up gender equity and the transformation of gender hierarchies as an overarching concern. This is to address the lack of interest in the gendered nature of social policy regimes and the gender inequalities in social development across the spectrum of social policy regimes. Although there are increasingly social policy instruments that target women and from which they derive welfare benefits, these do not necessarily challenge gender hierarchies, and may actively reinforce them. The neglect of gender issues in social policy is manifested by unexamined assumptions about the family and household; and the lack of attention to the gender segmentation of employment and the problematic gender norms that underpin paid and unpaid care work and social reproduction. Addressing these gaps in policy making and the policy literature brings issues which are crucial to economic and social development into the conversation on social policy.

The overarching goal of this project is the transformation of the discourses, approaches to and cultures of social policy making and implementation to establish Gender Equitable and Transformative Social Policy approaches in Africa.

¹Mkandawire, T. (2011). Welfare regimes and economic development: Bridging the conceptual gap. In V. Fitzgerald, J. Heyer, and R. Thorp (Eds.), *Overcoming the Persistence of Poverty and Inequality*, Palgrave, pp. 149-171; See also Adesina, Jimi O. (2011), Beyond the social protection paradigm: social policy in Africa's development. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 32(4), 454-470

THE ISSUES PAPERS

The issues papers are to complement or build on country and regional studies already carried out to provide pathways to transformative social policies by analyzing promising interventions or solutions for transformative social policy in Africa.

The project has provision for 9 issues. Below is a **non-exhaustive** list of possible issues for study:

- A. Interfaces and synergies of social and economic policy**
- B. Gender equitable social policy**
- C. Political and democratic underpinnings of social policy and citizenship**
- D. Informal social policy systems and practices**
- E. The debt crisis, austerity and implications for social policy**
- F. The influence of the SDGs on social policy in Africa**
- G. Social policies and the AfCFTA**
- H. Financing social policy in Africa**
- I. Neglected areas of social policy**

As the themes for the issue papers are not exhaustive, responses to the call have the flexibility to propose important issues not reflected in the list of themes if they deem these to be critical for rethinking social policy. You are also encouraged to highlight relevant but muted aspect of a transformative social policy for consideration.

The following are brief discussions of possible directions for papers under the proposed themes.

A. The interfaces and synergies of social and economic policy

In its foundational stages, the concept of the economy was understood as “political economy” - the site for social struggles for distributive fairness in the benefits of the collectively-created value. In effect, the economic and the social were two sides of the same coin. By contrast, the economics discipline since the late 18th century has been dominated by the normative premise that actions directed purely by self-interest and mediated by the “invisible hand” of the market ultimately produce common welfare in the most efficient manner. In the conception, social welfare is a by-product of efficient markets rather than the normative basis of the economy. It is claimed that unlimited markets, free trade, limited government involvement in the supply and regulation of goods and services will ultimately lead to an increase in wealth and welfare. Among others, this liberal orthodoxy does not take account the economic value created in the care of the household and the community, which is carried out predominantly by women. This exclusion not only negates the claims of efficiency of the market as an allocative instrument but, moreover, makes the welfare consequences inherently gender inequitable. Furthermore, the unseen-hand conception contradicts heterodox approaches that see markets as political and social institutions with highly unequalising tendencies that require attention by policy makers. It also makes it difficult to fully account for the role and the limitations of different institutional arrangements (involving states, markets, and “communities”) for the management of economic and social issues.

The issues paper will examine how the evolution of economic thought and practices have affected social policies, paying greater attention to how current economic orthodoxy undermines gender equitable transformative social policies. The paper will explore alternative economic paradigms and policies that are consistent with values of equity and social justice and will also discuss how progressive economic policies in turn produce transformative social outcomes.

The issues paper could address the following themes:

- The evolution of economic thought and the implications for gender equitable transformative social policy.
- How the main pillars of current economic orthodoxy have impacted social policies and how alternative economic policies could shape social policies in equitable directions.
- The implications of alternative conceptions of the markets, and their implications for the roles of economic and social policy.
- In view of the current economic difficulties and consequent restructuring across the continent, how transformative social policies could provide a solution for sustainable economic development.

B. Gender equitable social policy

Social policy regimes in Africa, irrespective of their orientation, have not prioritised questions of gender inequality and social reproduction. Since the 1970s, generations of Women in Development (WID)/Gender and Development (GAD) and gender mainstreaming policies designed to support women's productive activities, reduce women's poverty, and promote their empowerment have been implemented alongside mainstream economic and social policies that have been either gender blind or gender discriminatory in outcome. The productivist logic of WID/GAD and gender mainstreaming programmes have required beneficiaries to accept extra work, group work and intrusive institutional policing. The general assumption of such programming is that gender equity would be the inevitable outcome of these interventions. The reticence about directly addressing certain gender inequalities was defended in terms of questionable claims of non-interference in African cultural practices.

In the current context of neo-liberal social policy, the commonly used social protection instruments such as cash transfers, fee exemptions for pregnant women and credit programmes are no different in this regard. While these instruments have supported women's welfare and have acceptance among women facing existential challenges, they are being rolled out by institutions that subscribe to eurocentric and patriarchal male-breadwinner and female housewife models of family. This together with the increasing reliance on market mechanisms to address social issues that used to be the purview of the state, have compromised the potential for gender equality outcomes of social policy.

In general, social policies have not addressed the persistent gender imbalances in the responsibility for care and domestic work, low investments in improvement in services, infrastructures and technologies for care and domestic work; and the lack of efforts to promote a more equitable gender division of care and domestic work and to socialize care. Furthermore, social protection programmes require women to compromise gender equality and equity

principles and assume the normative expectations of filial, maternal, and marital piety and hard work to qualify for support.

In spite of the relatively high female labour force participation rates in many several African countries, the majority of working women are not employed in the formal sector. As social insurance programmes tend to be hinged on participation in the formal labour market, the majority of working men and women cannot access the social welfare provisions. Women are also adversely affected by the gender segmentation of work, the gender pay gap and the gender assets gap, which are all legitimate areas of concern for social policy, as is the issue of gender based physical and psychological violence.

Key social policy institutions within the state either take a paternalistic welfare approach to gender inequalities or are an integral part of the problem. Rules governing marriage, land tenure, inheritance, and labour relations are some of the ways in which gender inequalities are transmitted. Beyond the state, informal welfare mechanisms and actors--the family and community, in particular--play critical roles in social policy in Africa. The family is an important provider of care (childcare, elder care and health care) and supports the unemployed. Family farms and firms provide the financial resources for the provision of informal social welfare, and when households have to adjust to negative shocks, women's housework is usually the shock absorber that minimizes the impacts on the household by making up for reductions in the consumption of paid services by increased production within the household.²

This general picture notwithstanding, there have been social policy interventions that have directly or indirectly promoted the transformation of gender relations in various countries, sectors and in relation to particular groups of women. A critical appraisal of these interventions and their outcomes would be invaluable in identifying what works and what does not work in achieving transformative and gender equitable social policy.

This call is for an issues paper on gender equitable social policy which can address the following areas:

- What is the state of social policy from a gender equality perspective, and what are the most critical areas of concern?
- How can social policy regimes be characterised in terms of their approaches to gender inequalities and women's rights?
- Which key institutional sites need attention in the reform of social policy institutions to make them more receptive to and capable of promoting gender equality and equity?
- How can formal social policy and informal social welfare in Africa be complementary and synergistic, whilst reducing the burden of the provision of social welfare on the family, in particular women?
- To what extent can the debate on decommodification and defamilialisation inform the design of social policy in Africa and what are the implications for women?

² Hassim, S. and Razavi, S. (2006). *Gender and social policy in a global context: Uncovering the gendered structure of 'the social'*. S. Razavi and S. Hassim, (Eds.) *Gender and social policy in a global context: Uncovering the gendered structure of 'the social'*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-39.

- As governments navigate fiscal consolidation in the context of the continuing debt crisis, what are the implications for gendered social policy?
- What would be the parameters of a social policy framework for Africa that explicitly takes gender implications into account, particularly the gender dimensions of unpaid care work?

C. The politics and democratic underpinnings of social policy

In the 1980s, countries in the region were compelled to implement neoliberalism economic policies that neglected social policies. Consequently, social policies introduced in the early postcolonial era, primarily to promote inclusion and to enhance the productive capabilities of the citizenry, were dismantled through privatisation and other mechanisms designed to roll back the state and individualise social and economic risks. The 1990s witnessed the transition from military and other authoritarian political regimes in Africa to democracies based on competitive partisan elections. Since the return of democracy, social policies have become major issues in political campaigns and debates, especially in the areas of healthcare, education, child support, old age income support, labour market conditions, housing, access to portable water, gender equality, social protection. This is not surprising given the fundamental role of social policy in promoting human wellbeing through redistribution, production, reproduction, protection, and social cohesion. These roles of social policy reinforce the argument that the dichotomy between social and economic policies is artificial, and that the social and the economic are symbiotic and inseparable.

Within the context of Africa's democracies, social policy discourses are taking place at a political interface occupied by both domestic and transnational actors. This raises questions about actor constellations and interests, the mediating role of institutions, power and positionings, policy design and delivery, as well as resource capabilities. This paper is expected to provide a conceptual and theoretical analysis of social policy in Africa's contemporary democratic politics. It will draw on examples and illustration from countries in the region to suggest a transformative agenda for social policy within democratic contexts. The issues paper could address the following themes:

- Social policy and democratic politics in Africa
- The politics of social policy (interests, agenda setting, positioning; debates)
- Normative and human rights perspectives for transformative social policy
- Global governance institutions and social policy

D. Informal social policy systems and practices in Africa

The study of social policy has been dominated by the analysis of formal institutional arrangements. Yet, in Africa, informal institutions loom large, complementing and competing with formal institutions. Informal policy systems and practices manifest in individual or collective actions that display the relevance and resilience of time-tested norms premised on mutuality, shared expectations, repeated practices, and reciprocity. The co-existence of both formal and informal systems and practices is not surprising due to the colonial origins of the

modern African state, which is bifurcated in terms of the rules that define appropriate behaviours. Consequently, the state in Africa is neither the typical modern state as seen in Europe and other parts of the world nor is it truly indigenous as it was before colonial rule.

Initial attempts by early postcolonial nationalists to formalise the informal spaces through the creation of publicly funded social services were curtailed in a manner that reversed early efforts at nation-building, and this has resulted in the continued reliance on informal institutions. Specifically, because formal social policy programs are limited in scope in Africa, a significant portion of the population is compelled to resort to informal mechanisms for survival and support. Despite their prominence, systematic analyses of the forms, structure, principles, design, and operational dynamics, of Africa's informal social policy systems and practices have been lacking.

Knowledge of the informal social policy arrangements upon which people rely for protection, production, reproduction, care, redistribution, and community solidarity has the potential to provide creative and innovative ideas about how to engineer transformative social policies in the post-Covid 19 era for Africa. GETSPA seeks to understand the mechanisms that African peoples have devised to promote human well-being and to protect themselves in the face of state neglect and the constraints of limited formal social policy arrangements.

GETSPA welcomes proposals for a solid research paper that takes the following into account, among others:

- an analysis of the specific forms of informal institutions that shape social provisioning in African countries;
- an analytical discussion of the inventory of the typical social risks that informal social policies are deployed to mitigate;
- a critical assessment of the nature, design and scope of informal social policy arrangements in Africa;
- lessons to be drawn from informal social policy for designing transformative social policies in Africa.

E. The global debt crisis, austerity and the implications for social policy

Three decades after a debt crisis and a global campaign to forgive the debts of highly indebted poor countries, there is a global debt crisis and, once again, Africa's debts are threatening the continent's development gains over the last thirty years. In 2020, average debt-to-GDP ratio in Africa was estimated at 71.4 percent. Several debt distressed countries have defaulted on debt repayments or are on brink of default.³ A combination of factors have come together to create a perfect storm, including Africa's export commodity dependence with its cyclical crises of corruption collapsing prices, the COVID-19 pandemic's deleterious effects on economies, and high levels of government borrowing to finance the covid-19 response, the effects of the war in Ukraine, and capital flight in response to rising interest rates in the Global North. A

³ African Development Bank (2021). *African Economic Outlook 2021*. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2021>

contributory factor in this mix is corruption and the lack of accountability in the use of borrowed money.⁴

Accompanying the debt crisis has been the savage devaluation of currencies in many African countries such as South Africa and Ghana, rising interest rates, high rates of inflation (particularly in food prices, which carries the risks of inter-generational damage), and the rapidly rising costs of other essential goods and services such as energy, education, health, and transportation.

What is different about the debt crisis this time is that the increase in public debt has been accompanied by a rise in its costs, partly because of the higher proportion of private lenders involved.⁵ Also key in this regard, domestic debt default has become a matter of concern because of its implications for the entire economy, and for exposed entities such as pension funds and individual bondholders, many of whom are retirees. Some of the affected institutions and individuals are key non-state actors in social provisioning and social protection, and this has ramifications for the social conditions of numerous citizens who depend on them, at a time when austerity policies mean a reduction in state expenditure on social sectors. This situation constitutes a social policy crisis which has implications for social cohesion.

Governments across Africa are engaged in short-term responses such as debt restructuring, regressive and excessive taxation, reduced interest rates on government bonds and the resort to IMF bailouts and austerity measures. This has implications for the welfare of large segments of Africa's working people and is likely to reverse social development gains.

An emerging issue since the 2008 Global financial crisis is the question of household and individual debt, its drivers, and its relationship with the crisis in public debt. The relationship between public debt, on the one hand, and household and individual debt, on the other, has several ramifications for social welfare. With the return to austerity measures to support debt repayments, households and individuals must pay for critical services which should have been publicly available. This increases the indebtedness of poor households that must turn to borrowing to pay for these services.⁶ A report by the Human Rights Council's independent expert on foreign debt has drawn attention to the negative human rights implications of micro-credit, health, education and housing related debts, sharp debt collection practices such as the criminalisation of debtors, consumers and migration related debts and debt bondage.⁷

⁴ Bradlow, D. and Masamba, M. (2022). Debt distress in Africa: biggest problems, and ways forward. *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/debt-distress-in-africa-biggest-problems-and-ways-forward-182716>

Harcourt S. and Robertson, F. (2024). *African Debt*, ONE <https://data.one.org/topics/african-debt/#:~:text=Africa%E2%80%99s%20debt%20is%20at%20its%20highest%20level%20in,bankrupt%20or%20at%20high%20risk%20of%20debt%20distress>.

⁵ Adesina, A. (2023). Evolution of the debt landscape over the past 10 years in Africa. *Keynote Speech Delivered at the Paris Club on June 20, 2023*. <https://www.africa.com/evolution-of-debt-landscape-over-the-past-10-years-in-africa/#:~:text=The%20total%20external%20debt%20of%20Africa%20was%20estimated,expected%20to%20rise%20to%20%241.13%20trillion%20by%202023>.

⁶ Balasubramanian, P. (2021) Debt in everyday life: A critique on the increasing role of finance in social policy. *The Current Column*, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

⁷ UN General Assembly (2020). *Private Debt and Human Rights*. Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights. A/HRC/43/45.

A second ramification of the public private debt nexus is through the deepening financialisation⁸ of social policy, which can be seen in the expansion of programmes to deepen financial inclusion and the emphasis on instruments such as micro-finance and income transfers. These instruments, while directed at poverty reduction, also boost consumption, bank two billion adults without bank accounts across the globe, and integrate the poor into markets. This is a further retreat from universalism and de-commodification, as individuals are now required to purchase public goods. Related to this is the introduction of various forms of payment and financial technologies which have extended cosigned credit where income becomes collateral from formal salaried civil servants to the recipients of social cash transfers, with repayment instalments deducted automatically from their transfers. There are fears that the financialisation of social policy is creating a debt-poverty nexus for individuals and households.⁹

It is therefore important to ensure that these issues of public and private debt and their inter-connections become part of the policy debates on the debt crisis and the way forward. In short, how do we get these issues of priority (such as the protection of social spending and investments in long term structural transformation) into how debt sustainability is defined and understood?

Some of the themes to be covered in the paper include:

- Implications of debt crisis on economic and social sectors, population/social segments, and institutions.
- Emerging approaches to the debt crises and their implications for social policy
- Country agreements with the IMF and the nature of provisions for social policy
- Private debt and debt in everyday life- manifestations, effects, and implications; transformative solutions
- Towards approaches to debt that support transformative and gender equitable social policy.

F. The influence of the SDGs on social policy in Africa

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) with support from other multilateral institutions. The SDGs were designed to address challenges associated with three areas of growth: economic growth, social inclusiveness, and protection of the environment. The SDGs aim to eliminate or reduce poverty within the human family, end hunger through safeguarding food security, improve the quality of human life and livelihoods through better prioritization of healthcare investments, ensure empowerment of women and promote equality, improve on the supply of potable water and sanitation, focus on providing enabling environment for decent work and employment opportunities and aggressively address the underlining causes of climate change among others. The SDGs have become the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring progress in countries, especially in Africa and the developing world. In Africa, one

⁸ Financialisation has been defined as the increasing role of financial markets, actors and institutions, and the fact that profits are increasingly made through financial channels (See Balasubranian, 2021 for a brief and useful discussion of financialisation of social policy).

⁹ Balasubranian, 2021, op. cit.

report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the SDGs noted that progress has been slow. For instance, although there has been some progress on school enrollment, the report noted that about 288 million school-age children are not in school, and this is most prevalent in conflict-ridden countries on the continent. The report further cautions that approximately 350 million Africans will be affected by abject poverty by 2050 unless more significant progress is made on the SDGs. Although the goals remain a useful blueprint for guiding policymakers about their policy priorities, there are worries that most countries on the continent suffer developmental issues—including unemployment, insecurity, insurgencies, political upheavals, ballooning debts, mismanagement of funds—that were not specifically analyzed and factored into the overall framework of the SDGs. Thus, although in their broad framing, the SDGs directly fall within concerns of social policy, the history of interventionist policy approaches in Africa teaches us that when context is not properly accounted for in problem definition and the design of solutions, the chances of success are minimal. In addition, the challenges to human well-being in most African countries demand multiple innovations, smart policy thinking, and creative designs at the conceptual, institutional, social, and technological levels.

The issue paper can consider these and other questions:

- To what extent has there been a fit between the SDGs and local realities in African countries as far as social policy is concerned, and what has been the influence of the SDGs on social policy politics in the region?
- In what ways can the SDGs support or serve as inspirations for promoting and designing creative social policies with multifaceted problem-solving capabilities, without compromising the promises of economic growth in Africa?
- How and to what extent are the SDGs tackling—or capable of tackling—issues of gender inequality in a manner that dislodges deeply embedded norms and taken-for-granted practices that inhibit efforts to promote gender equity?

G. Social policy and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement AfCFTA

Within the framework of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, countries on the continent are expected to deliver an “inclusive and sustainable development” as “a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance”.¹⁰ This ambition has given rise to the formation of the largest regional trading bloc in human history, named the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Coming into force on May 30, 2019, with official commencement on January 1, 2021, (AfCFTA) is designed to eliminate barriers and promote intra-African trade with a special focus on initiatives to add value and enhance trading activities across various sectors. Overall, it is anticipated that AfCFTA will take advantage of Africa’s over 1.3 billion population and an estimated combined GDP of US\$ 3.4 trillion to create a continent-wide single market as a major step towards the emergence of the “Africa We Want”.

Although AfCFTA is a commendable initiative, questions remain about the extent to which it prioritizes the individual and collective well-being of Africans within its framework. After all, it is human beings who spin the axis of trade to promote job creation through economic growth.

¹⁰ African Union (n.d.) *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want*. Available at <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

Thus, it stands to reason that the better the quality and capabilities of Africans as citizens, clients, customers, entrepreneurs, employers, employees, traders, and social workers, among others, the higher the chances of achieving the noble objectives of both the Agenda 2063 and AfCFTA. A major requirement in the pursuit of AfCFTA would be a well-crafted social infrastructure with integrationist designs to serve both economic and social ends.

As the experiences of developed economies have shown, the function of creating human beings with the requisite capabilities and capacities to serve as promoters of trade lies within the remit of social policy. Generally, social policy promotes human well-being as an end itself but also as a means of ensuring society has the best human resources with the creative capabilities, innovative tendencies, and transformative ideas to attain individual and collective well-being. In addition, when designed thoughtfully and implemented dutifully, social policy has the potential to correct lingering historical legacies of gender inequality and inequity in countries across Africa. Sadly, however, in the prevailing neo-liberal era, social policy is often treated as an afterthought to economic policy, and the marginalization of social policy in the structural adjustment years in Africa is a sad testimony of this situation. Undoubtedly, getting the sequencing of social and economic policies right, with an understanding of their mutually reinforcing synergy holds the key to transformative social change. Since the early 2000s, there has been an increased recognition of social policy as expressed in various sectors as drivers of economic growth, and this provides a window of opportunity to access the AfCFTA with social policy.

In this call, GETSPA is interested in an analysis

- of the extent to which AfCFTA can address the challenges of poverty, ignorance, diseases, illiteracy, and unemployment posed to human well-being in Africa while exploring its industrialisation potential for countries in the regions. This should be within the broader context of the social dislocations often associated with industrial change as well as the transformative role that social policies can play in ensuring appropriate adaptations and adjustments.
- that focuses on strategies and mechanisms through which AfCFTA can foster and promote equitable growth for African countries as well as among and within different segments of the population in Africa, against the background of studies that suggest that although economic integrations have positive linkages to growth, they can also fuel inequalities.
- that specifies and discusses the potential welfare gains associated with AfCFTA, especially for the socially and economically marginalised in Africa, as well as ways in which social policies can be leveraged within the broader framework on the continental free trade agreement.

H. Financing social policy

Financing social policy has long been a vexed question. While there is increasing recognition of the value of social policy as an investment in socio-economic development, the question of the affordability of social policy remains a critical issue in policy and scholarly debates; building social policy programmes on financial arrangements that are sustainable, equitable and conducive to economic development remains a central concern. Often the focus on the cost of social policy has been used as justification for targeted and market based social policy instruments.

The focus on the financial dimension of social policy is deemed necessary for the avoidance of policy extremes of either austerity or expansionary social policies that are unsustainable.¹¹ A set of studies of the sustainable financing of social policy from a broad developmental perspective have identified different sources of revenue for social policy such as taxation, insurance contributions, pension funds, rents from natural resources, development aid as well as remittance. Different countries use different combinations of these instruments based on their resource endowments and economic policy trajectories.¹²

Researching the economic, social, and political implications of each revenue source enables an appreciation of the importance of balancing the economic, social, and political goals associated with each revenue arrangement. Secondly, a critical interrogation of combinations of these instruments points to their varying effects on macro-economic stability, citizens' ability to demand accountability, and the functions of social policy and state society relations (production, reproduction, protection, redistribution, and social cohesion).

Financing social policy involves questions of resource mobilisation and allocation, as well the actors and institutions involved in these processes. In looking at these issues, there is the need to move beyond a micro-perspective on how best to allocate a given number of resources to examining the impact of welfare arrangements on economic development and vice versa. A related question is how social policy can support an accumulation process that generates income that can be used by different social policy instruments.¹³

The focus on sources of revenue for social policy enables researchers to focus on both the constraints as well as opportunities for developing countries to put together effective strategies for financing social policies that advance the development agenda.

The paper will examine issues such as:

- The evolution of social policy financing
- Changing notions of the costs and benefits of social policy and their implications for effective social policy.
- Private investments in and provisioning of social policy.
- Comparative analysis of current dominant approaches to financing social policy and financing arrangements and their implications for gender equitable and transformative social policy.
- Promising approaches to social policy financing that promote transformative and gender equitable social policy.

I. Neglected dimensions of social policy

Influential academics on social policy in Africa have conceived of social policy as encompassing production, protection, redistribution, reproduction, and social cohesion, and

¹¹ Mkandawire, T. (2009). Preface. In K. Hujo, and S. McClanahan (Eds.), *Financing social policy mobilizing resources for social development*, UNRISD and Palgrave Macmillan.

¹² Hujo, K. and McClanahan, S. (2009) "Introduction and Overview. In K. Hujo and S. McClanahan (Eds.), *Financing social policy, mobilizing resources for social development*, UNRISD and Palgrave Macmillan.

¹³ Abdikani, H.I. (2021) *Social policy as a tool for reducing poverty in Africa: Exploring ways and mechanisms*, ILA.

having the capacity to generate multi-dimensional and multi-faceted transformation. This expansive definition of social policy suggests important dimensions of social policy that have not received sufficient research attention, whether these are sectors, actors, processes or phenomena.

We welcome, for instance, proposals for issue papers that

- take up a social policy perspective on public goods and services that support human flourishing such as housing, public transportation, clean air, urban planning, recreational facilities, public broadcasting, consumer protection, law enforcement and postal service;
- discuss the social policy implications of areas of leisure, creative expression, philanthropy and volunteerism, and un/paid carework;
- examine the nature, operations and influence of less-visible or less-researched social policy actors such as the military or regional bodies such as ECOWAS.

FORMAT OF APPLICATIONS

Content of application

Applicants must submit the following documentations:

1. a CV
2. A concept note of not more than 2,500 words (excluding references and footnotes), with the following sections:
 - Background
 - Nature of the issue and importance of the topic for social policy
 - Current academic and policy debates on topic in Africa
 - Theoretical or conceptual approach to the paper
 - Scope of the paper
 - Research questions/objectives
 - Data sources and analysis
 - Outline of paper
 - A professional profile section with
 - a brief description of the experience/background of the researcher(s) that illustrates relevant qualification and skills,
 - examples of similar reports/papers, with a few links to published work.

****We accept proposals in English, French and Portuguese.****

Timelines and fees

Deadline for applications: **10 April 2024**

Notification to successful applicants: **30 April 2024**

Duration on contract: **6 months** from date of signed contract

Fees: **\$6,000** per paper

Submission and enquiries

Email applications and/or enquiries to: ro.getspa.ias@ug.edu.gh

