



Advancing progressive alternatives: IFAA 2018 in review

The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) is an independent policy research institute and think-tank committed to advancing progressive alternatives to our social and economic system based on the principles of equality, non-racialism, self-reliance and democracy. Based in South Africa, IFAA has a Pan-African and global perspective and consciousness.

As we close the year with this 71st edition of *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy*, we reflect on the range of topical and contentious issues we covered, such as land reform, decolonisation, inequality, state capture and development on the continent. *New Agenda* aims to bring solid, policy-relevant research to the public in an accessible and intelligible form while also advancing progressive economic and political alternatives.

We started the year with a report for the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) titled “Infrastructure, Industrialisation and Community Development in Africa” which was published by DBSA early in 2018. Our research department also completed a paper for the not-for-profit economic research Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS). This research was on the interface between infrastructure and minerals-based industrialisation initiatives in Africa’s resource rich economies.

Our research team is currently working on local procurement in the gold mining industries in Ghana and Tanzania. The report is due in 2019.

The research team also played

host to several seminars attended by policymakers, academics and members of civil society. Seminar topics included “Monopoly Capital in South Africa,” “Structural transformation and imperatives for productive investment,” and “Rethinking Economics Curricula in South Africa.”

We continue to highlight the growing inequality in South Africa and in the world at large. South Africa’s inequality statistics remain alarming, with a recent report indicating that 10% of the population owns at least 90-95% of the country’s wealth. In our work and public engagements we stress the dangers of continuing along this path. To stimulate discussion and motivate for urgent policy interventions, IFAA is engaged in publishing the proceedings of a 2017 conference titled “Confronting Inequality”. The book, titled “Confronting Inequality: The South African Crisis,” was published by Jacana Media and was due for release in December 2018. The book is situated within the global explosion of inequality studies since the publication of Thomas Piketty’s “Capital in the 21st Century” and aims to outline both a research and social agenda to bridge the vast chasms dividing our society.

The IFAA Student and Youth Department continues to grow and in 2018 hosted a number of forums and launched a blog, the ProgressiveCorner.com. The Department is currently working on a documentary exploring decolonisation and the student movement in South Africa, and was one of the players who launched

the Rethinking Economics for Africa (REFA) Movement in September at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The IFAA Student and Youth department aims to create, support and empower a network and community of progressive students, young academics and youth in civil society to participate in the search for alternatives routes to creating an equitable society.

All students, young academics and activists can join the department via our website and keep up to date with its events, publications and other activities.

Apart from our research, publishing and student forums for engagement, IFAA took part in several other public activities aimed at promoting our values and mission in society. IFAA’s Deputy Director and researchers have presented papers at a number of academic conferences, seminars and courses throughout the year.

One of the highlights of the year was a large ‘town-hall’ style public event that we hosted to involve civil society in renewing South Africa’s political landscape. The audience was addressed by some of our most prominent public figures: Pallo Jordan, Ben Turok, Kgalema Motlanthe and Thuli Madonsela.

We expect 2019 to be another busy year. To be kept informed of our activities simply add your name to our mailing list by emailing admin@ifaaza.com.

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