



# AFRICAN WOMEN: ECONOMIC FUTURES

## CONVENING REPORT

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## PREFACE

The African Women's Development Fund is a regional grant making foundation that supports local, national and regional women's organizations working towards the empowerment of African women and the promotion and realization of their rights. Our fourth strategic plan (2017-2021) prioritises the future of African women and their movements, including three major themes: Body and Health Rights, Women's Economic Security and Justice, and Leadership, Participation and Peace. This plan was developed through insights from our future-focused [trends analysis entitled \*Futures Africa: Trends for Women by 2030\*](#) and its accompanying animated [scenario](#) stories, which flagged major questions around equity in Africa's future economies, and the need for targeted and creative thought and action to ensure just and secure economic futures for African women.

Following this strategy, AWDF convened the *African Women: Economic Futures* (AWEF) at the Best Western Hotel in Accra, Ghana from September 13 to 15, 2018 as part of a movement building effort for conversation and activism on African women's economic transformation. Spearheaded by the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), the interdisciplinary event explored future trends, challenges and opportunities for women in African economies. The Convening also invited a rethink of economics, policymaking and geopolitical dynamics in Africa by exploring three key themes in relation to African women's economic futures: mapping the trends, praxis makes perfect, and the story of labour. We employed a future-focused approach based on AWDF's fourth strategic plan [Shaping the Future](#) to consider how African women are actualizing their own economic futures. As an outcome of the event, a manifesto was developed by participants, stating their commitment to improving African women's economic futures and providing recommendations on a sustainable way forward.

The following document discusses the key themes, concepts and interventions presented during the convening. We hope that key stakeholders will engage with this report as a resource to understanding African women's economic priorities and strategies for the future.

***Onward and upward with our feminist futures!***

# DAY 1

## WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS



AWDF's Chief Executive Officer Theo Sowa welcomed the 28 participants and representatives of 20 organisations, launching the AWEF Convening with a passionate call for African feminists to be active participants in global discussions on Africa's economic futures. She also challenged participants to support existing feminist efforts for economic justice; to think outside the box; and to take the lead in transforming the systems which curtail the overall socio-economic and political development of African women.

*"In our discussions I'm really hoping that we're going to mix traditional knowledge and pathways, with global ideas, with feminist transformative vision of economics. So, we can actually manage to move beyond the discussion of African women and microfinance loans which we all know has not worked in recent times." –Theo Sowa*

Following her welcome, Sowa introduced Nancy Kachingwe as the Convening's facilitator. A Harare-based independent policy and advocacy strategy advisor, Kachingwe has widespread experience in social and economic policy and is a strong African feminist. Taking over, Kachingwe emphasized the role of the AWEF Convening as a step towards a more vocal, visible and active response from African feminists on the continent's economic futures, its impact on African women, and vice-versa.

Thereafter, AWDF Knowledge Management Specialist Rita Nketiah encouraged participants to share their insights with a larger audience through social media. The Twitter hashtags [#AWDFutures](#), [#EconFutures](#), [#Afrifem](#) and [#Femonomics](#) were provided to facilitate collation of such insights. The introductory segment of the morning session concluded with a program review and an invitation for participants to present case studies and contribute to a reading list.

## FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL, REGIONAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL TRENDS

To set the stage for discussions on the first day, the facilitator brought participants up to speed on the current global economic, political and geopolitical landscape with a presentation analysing external trends from a Global South feminist perspective. She noted that race and class have largely been excluded from feminist work in development although both have served as catalysts for feminist movements against slavery, colonialism, apartheid and other injustices.



*“Even as we’re doing the macroeconomic work - which may seem neutral - behind that are hidden systems of oppression that define outcomes of what these macroeconomic policies would be.” -Nancy Kachingwe*

The facilitator presented five key trends from the 2008 economic and financial crash which could potentially impact the global economy in the present and future, notably:



1. **The ongoing and multiple crises under heterosexual, patriarchal neoliberalism:** Economic crisis is endemic to the neo-liberal system. The financialisation of the world has led to the narrative and belief that the only value is the value of the stock market, thereby doing away with wealth in real and physical terms. This creates social exclusion and insecurity, which in turn fuels migration and displacement of impoverished and vulnerable populations. Ultimately, the system ensures the entrenched double danger of crises and reduced resilience.
2. **Dominance of “false free market solutions” to keep neoliberalism on track:** In the absence of an alternative to the neo-liberal model, the dominance of “free market solutions” entrenches the neo-liberal model as the only model with a focus on “getting the market right”. The facilitator cautioned against the determination of the global elite in keeping the status quo, drawing attention to the fundamentalist tenor of some global powers and the hijacking of development issues by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Kachingwe summed up the impact as follows:

*“We have democracy, but it’s “choiceless democracy”. Yes, you can vote, but how much can you say about the policies your government puts out? It’s more or less one size fits all, cut and paste.” -Nancy Kachingwe*

3. **Hijacking of women’s rights for neoliberalism:** Reminding participants of how vocal feminists were about structural adjustment at the Beijing Conference, the facilitator warned about the danger of women’s rights and feminism being used by persons and institutions with mal-intent. This, she explained, could put in jeopardy strides made by the feminist movement thus far. She also spotlighted the trend of women dropping out of the labour market as they climb up the professional ladder. Addressing gender power relations in women’s empowerment efforts and remaining vocal about economic policies as feminists could help prevent a total hijacking of feminist interests and women’s rights.
4. **The state of States and the paralysis of multilateralism:** As captured in DAWN’s [Remaking Social Contracts](#) book, the policy space and state policymaking are shrinking due to multilateralism and institutions like the G20 which lack inclusiveness yet prescribe policy interventions for regions like Africa. Despite the patriarchal nature of states and the shift away from evidence-based policymaking, there is still opportunity to reclaim and change the state, while ensuring the institutional manifestation of the collective will and purpose of the people. In this regard, further examination of the impact of state decisions on women during crises like Ebola and the Grenfell Tower fire is imperative.

- 5. The people versus capitalism:** Despite the various crises under the neoliberal system, citizens have remained outspoken and active with new social movements, language and politics coming to bear. Traditional civil society organisations (CSOs) are being displaced in a landscape with stark ideological demarcations and the neo-liberal model being presented as the centre. The “re-politicisation” of issues using new and old resistance vocabulary as well as the rise of fundamentalist religious ideologies have increasing relevance and impact.

Based on the trends, the facilitator outlined key issues for analysis during the Convening: women’s rights; labour; displacement and dispossession; technology; ideologies; climate change; agrarian crisis and reform; global economy and trade; the commons (public and social goods); and South-South cooperation in a multipolar world.

She also proposed pathways to addressing those issues, notably examining the changing development sector and challenges for new actors; donor roles; social media for movement building and engagement; as well as the relevance and vulnerabilities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as establishments or activists. The facilitator also stressed the need to develop resistance and change strategies; build a new advocacy knowledge base; and confront hegemonies driven by patriarchy, capitalism and racism. Finally, an entire re-imagining of development would be necessary to reintroduce the right to self-determination by individual member states.



## Reflections on Trends

Following the facilitator’s presentation, participants offered their reflections on the trends, issues and recommendations touched upon, as well as additional questions for consideration during the Convening. There was consensus that the neoliberal model deliberately erodes agency, autonomy and alternative thinking by African feminists and agreement on the need for progressive and feminist policy spaces. Captured below is a snapshot of the contributions:

- *How do we boldly begin to redefine what women’s economic empowerment is? How do we push for more African philanthropies? A lot of funding is not really ours and you can see it’s not ours, but we have to go with it in order to survive.*
- *How do we move women from the microlevel to the macrolevel?*
- *How do we help our constituencies with social and environmental justice? How do we begin to use our spaces to build the capacity of our own constituents who are classified as rural farmers, subsistence farmers and unpaid care work? How do we work to help capture the value of their work in our budgets?*

- *We must be the people to define policy and say what economic policy is - as opposed to being told by someone in Chicago that it is stock markets. Because we are all economic actors, all of us.*
- *How do we empower most women to understand some of the technicalities regarding economic development? How do we deepen understanding of Africa's economies and the extraction model they are built upon? How do we transition from this dependency and its social, political, economic impacts? How do we reformulate power and gender relations in this economic system?*
- *People use Gender Ministry to say it's not only women and to erode gains in women's empowerment. We should not stop interrogating the processes.*
- *We need to discuss efforts to reshape Africa without adequately engaging women. The Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), mining and regional policies – those policy discussions and instruments are still very heavily male-dominated. How do we shake their foundations?*
- *Women are key agents of change. How do we involve them, especially those in informal sector who may not be organised and who policymakers do not reach unless it is voting time? How do we formalize them? If we succeed in this area we can talk about women's rights and justice.*

*The impending ecological crisis needs to be thoroughly examined, especially the extractivist model. Massive biodiversity is being lost on a scale never seen before. There is also rising violence and repression of people defending their resources, as well as the impact of militarisation on women's bodies through gang rape and so on.*

## MAPPING OF ORGANISATIONAL AND SECTORAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE WORK

After a tea break, participants broke up into four groups to discuss updates, learnings and trends at the organisational, global and regional levels. Thereafter, they presented their group insights in plenary, highlighting interesting developments like Uganda's transition from output-based budgeting to program-based budgeting; South Africa's preferential procurement program; Nigeria's work in developing police trainings and partnerships on sex worker livelihoods; and Tanzania's success with increasing the minimum wage for domestic workers.

### Organisational Updates

#### Group 1

The **Global Fund for Women (GFW)** takes a rights-based holistic approach to its grant-making and offers non-project-based grants to enable grantees decide on how to effectively use funds. GFW is also currently exploring the possibility of multi-year grants for women and Trans\* people. As an access to justice organisation, The **Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA Kenya)** is working to expand their legal support and engagement beyond individuals to the macro and government levels. A recent project on government





accountability in Kenya's engagement with China is ensuring that displaced women still have land access for economic empowerment, particularly since many men are using their wives' or mothers' names to benefit from a women's economic fund. The [Urgent Action Fund-Africa \(UAF-Africa\)](#) focuses on rapid response grant making and is working on land accessibility in the economic justice arena. Additionally, UAF-Africa is investigating how to influence mining and extractives policies, while establishing women's policymaking networks. Similarly, [Third World Network-Africa \(TWN-Africa\)](#) is focused on small scale salt and gold mining alongside their work on trade and economic policy which spotlights the multiple taxation of women working at borders and moving across nations. TWN-Africa's representative expressed caution about the recent China-Africa engagement and loans, noting that there was no grassroots consultation and little information on who the "stakeholders" are.



## Group 2

Focused on women's socio-economic strengthening, [ARUWE](#) advocates for Uganda's young women, women of reproductive age, and grandmothers. They address key issues like financial access, land rights and usage; and the promotion of women's education through lifelong learning and vocational skills. Regarding sustainable health, ARUWE provide community services in water, sanitation and hygiene; sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); and maternal and child health. Climate change resilience through energy conservation and alternative energy is another focus. Uganda-based [Forum for Women in Democracy \(FOWODE\)](#) works in districts and nationally through their leadership, capacity building and women's mentorship program. FOWODE has made strides in gender and equity budgeting and social accountability under their gender and economic policy program. Through partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and the Equal Opportunities Commission, they have helped establish a gender and equity certificate for gender inclusive budgets; gender budget audits and policies. FOWODE also plans to tackle extractives, oil and gas, trade and taxation and movement building. With a presence in 20 African countries, the [Graca Machel Trust](#) addresses women's rights, leadership and governance. On women's rights, they seek to strengthen women's agribusiness and media networks and build leadership and advocacy capacity on land rights, trade, financial inclusion and gender parity. Continuing their advocacy for preferential procurement for companies with over 20% of female ownership, the Graca Machel Trust hopes to make headway on trade and technology, energy and extractives and infrastructure issues in their partner countries.

The [International Domestic Workers Federation Africa \(IDWF\)](#) has footprints in 22 African countries through its local association and trade union partners. It is currently rolling out its five-year strategy for organisational and capacity building; addressing migrant domestic worker issues like the rescue of workers from Gulf nations; research and advocacy for labour law reform; minimum wage and child domestic worker protection; as well as gaining representation in key decision-making platforms. The IDWF has achieved some successes in recent times with minimum wage increases for domestic workers in Tanzania and creating space for domestic workers to share their stories with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The [Nigerian Sex Workers Association \(NSWA\)](#) is working



on similar issues: amplifying sex worker voices; building leadership capacity; HIV awareness and services; skill development for alternative business opportunities; and organisational strengthening and formalisation. A standout organisational achievement is being selected to supply handcrafted goods by its members to the US Embassy in Nigeria. NSWA hopes to establish strategic linkages to feminist structures like GFW.

### Group 3

**WoMIN** is a South Africa based gender and extractives alliance working on economic and social justice in 12 countries. They believe rural inhabitants have a right to determine their economic realities and see neoliberalism as violent and detrimental to rural African women. The **African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)** addresses economic justice by building macroeconomic knowledge and capacity; policy knowledge and data on extractives and the future of work; and applying



a feminist lens to mainstream economics. FEMNET's work on SRHR, gender-based violence (GBV) and economic justice also enables them to build a cross-sectional movement. **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)** is contributing to feminist capacity building in the global South through research analysis, advocacy and training on the political economy of globalisation, ecology and sustainable social transformation. DAWN's knowledge base and network is also a valuable resource for activists and feminists working at the grassroots in countries like Ethiopia.

### Group 4

The **Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)** examines the gendered impact of microeconomic policy on women particularly in natural resource governance pertaining to land, oil and gas, and mining. NETRIGHT advocates for women in rural agriculture and is currently working with a parliamentary committee to highlight their issues and needs. **Kenya Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA)** tackles violence against sex workers, the majority of whom are women. Aside narrative building, mobilising and training on rights, KESWA is building a paralegal team to ensure social and economic justice and also envisions a demand-driven bank for sex workers to access loans. The bank to be managed by the Red Umbrella Circle will enable sex workers to save 20 cents daily. **Regions Refocus** is very involved in the CFTA trade negotiations and is challenging issues around post-colonial economic arrangements. Noting the danger of levelling the playing field through liberalised trade tariffs, Regions Refocus is researching the role of women in developmental ideologies of prominent African leaders Kwame Nkrumah, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Julius Nyerere. The Senegal based **Open Society Foundation (OSF)** is championing parity laws to enable women participate in governance and decision-making, while promoting economic justice for poor women. OSF also

supports advocacy for inclusion, participation and voice across Africa and seeks a redefined economy which recognises vibrant women informal workers as the backbone of African economies.

## Reflections on Regional & Global Dynamics

On global scale, the groups highlighted the importance of working towards the eradication of GBV; advocating for social protection; ensuring equal opportunity; and contributing to shaping the [Global Compact on Migration](#). Regionally, the effect of Trumpism on African economies; contradictory narrative of “Africa rising”; growing inequalities; sale of natural resources to the global north; and the continued scramble for Africa with new players like China were flagged as issues of concern. The absence of women in key policy and decision-making discussions like the CFTA and China-Africa agreement was also brought up numerous times.

- Overall, the groups agreed that building capacity for feminist economics and assisting women economists gain a better understanding of feminism would go a long way to guaranteeing economic futures of African women. As a step in this direction, the facilitator challenged Convening participants to examine and think through factors influencing the economic hierarchy in Africa; the accumulation and redistribution of resources and wealth; why women-led activities are generally not regarded as “work”; and the interplay between hetero-patriarchy, globalisation, imperialism and capitalism. Below are some participant reflections: *How do we interpret this world of economics? How do we redesign this conversation about the economic and social? Is it just economic or is it social and economic? Who’s under the table?*
- *Some of these issues are complicated and male dominated - so how can we build movements and strengthen around these issues?*
- *We should involve all stages of women in our struggle – for instance, sex workers - because we’re all women.*
- *As we explore economic futures we should also pay close attention to the digital and creative economies, and future of work.*
- *We need a disruption of what we really mean by economic, to go beyond our ideas of “work”. The most interesting thing I’ve heard*





*about is the sex workers economy which is fuelled by demand. How are we using our feminist knowledge to recreate and produce models of social and economic solutions that we want to see? At Urgent Action Fund we're beginning to ask - what is a feminist economy? Does it mean having our own banks?*

- *I agree on the need to involve all women. We have a difficulty engaging on the sex worker issue, not just with other feminists, but also in general. We need to explore need to explore how to diversify funding to include grantees focused on sex workers.*

- *So much time spent defending what is needed for financing women's work. There are issues with tracking informal and other work. We need to look at creating alternatives. The ultimate goal is ensuring economic models are fair and just.*

- *As small organisations can we actually build movements? Should we rather facilitate movements? We also need to work on migration issues and refugees - how do we empower women refugees who do not have access to land? How do we dissolve tensions between refugee and local communities?*
- *We have common issues, so as African feminists we need to work on those. We talk about solidarity, but when it comes to getting the money, we struggle - and we become divided. We need to come together as African feminists.*

*As we explore economic futures in Africa we should also pay close attention to the digital and creative economies, and the future of work.*

## SCENARIO BUILDING: AFRICAN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC FUTURES

Building upon the morning's work, the groups undertook a future prospecting exercise to imagine, develop and present their African women's economic future scenarios for the next decade depicting stagnation, catastrophe, success, and the wildcard (unexpected). The purpose of this exercise is to assess the possible economic future outcomes of African women based on several approaches, actions and inactions by state actors. How might specific policy directions negatively or positively impact African women in the future? What happens when we invest in women? What happens when we choose not to? These scenarios offered very different conclusions that are important to consider in building collective feminist futures.

### Stagnation Scenario: "The Wilting Rose"

Rose is a 25-year-old African woman. The year is 2018 and she is married with three children; two girls and a boy. As a seamstress, she makes about \$200 a month and lives with her family in a rented chamber and hall in Accra. She is the main income earner of the family since her husband cannot find decent work. Fast forward to the year 2030 and Rose still lives in the same chamber and hall, now with an additional child. Her husband who is now disabled and has medical needs and costs is unable to work so the responsibility for feeding and taking care of the family falls entirely on Rose's shoulders. While her income is still the same, her costs are still going up. Consequently, she is perpetually in debt with no recourse for self-improvement or a more lucrative job. Rose's economic future remains at a standstill; she is not the poorest of the poor, but perhaps worse: she is one of the invisible.

### Success Scenario – “Women Arise”

Agriculture is the medium of economic change for the African woman. The year is 2030 and the entire agricultural value chain on the continent has been developed with booming women-led agribusinesses and agro processing that is nutrition rich and food secure industry. During the preproduction phase, smallholder farmers are engaged and provided with adequate land due to the effective enforcement of land



tenure policies. Local seed and crop production have also been improved and there is increased funding for research and technology adoption particularly around issues like climate change and resilience. The production phase is built not just on manufacturing, but also on entrepreneurship, storage, investment and capacity development. By the post-production stage there is a market, finance and inclusive policies which help ensure that farmers get good pricing for their products. The continent's comparative advantages have been leveraged to promote intra-Africa trade with the requisite trade infrastructure so Africans trade primarily with each other. All these advancements would not have been possible without the strong advocacy from African women and feminists to push for inclusive policies and implementation; monitor gender and equity budgeting and ensure transparency; and to develop public infrastructure. African women are empowered leaders due to capacity development efforts which helped them understand their role and responsibility to take the lead in transforming the world; they operate in both the private, domestic home space and public space. Women have united around economic, social, political and environmental issues and have a positive outlook on their capabilities, lives and communities. Finally, there is strong support for strengthening women's advancement institutions.

### Catastrophe Scenario – “Mawa”

Mawa is a 43-year-old slum city dweller. Climate change is at its height and African women are resorting to trading sex for water due to its drastic effects. Mawa goes to church to find solace away



from her problems. Unfortunately, the financialisation of religion is so entrenched that she needs to pay for every religious service or assistance she receives. The bulk of her income goes towards this, and on some occasions, she gives away her last money and goes to bed hungry, hoping that God will finally heed her prayers. Because of the poor environment and food, Mawa develops cancer but health care is very expensive and so she cannot get the necessary care. What is however not expensive is mobile phones; phone companies are even giving away smartphones for free. These phones become an avenue for collecting and using her data without her permission; but Mawa is ignorant of this. She ends up dying in her 40s; the life expectancy is that low.

## **The Wildcard & Unexpected Scenario – “The Red Umbrella”**

Expanding on KESWA’s Red Umbrella Bank idea, the Wildcard group discussed the inclusion of sex workers in formalised systems; a topic many may regard as taboo. Knowing that sex workers do not have documentary evidence and receipts for their work or pay, Red Umbrella brings together 300,000 Kenyan sex workers into a savings group. They contribute a few shillings daily and reinvest as the funds grow. As a first step to stepping up a bank, Red Umbrella is registered as a cooperative. Eventually, the bank is duly registered and offering Kenyan sex workers key banking



services. As a next step, Red Umbrella investigates how to reach other non-sex worker, non-banked populations that are vulnerable and left behind. As a demand-driven bank that is owned by the people, it is agreed that a Red Umbrella Foundation should be established to support members of the newly created Red Umbrella Party to run for political office. The party succeeds in not only getting a seat at the table, but also in decriminalising sex work in Kenya. Thereafter, the Red Umbrella has its sights set on the presidency, and is yet again successful. A Red Umbrella member becomes president and establishes a national development bank to ensure that foreign investors reinvest their profits in the country, in renewable energies and in strengthened democratic processes. The Red Umbrella story is one of marked success, creating opportunities and taking risks outside of the status quo.

## **DAY 2**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: KEY ISSUES, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

With a solid grounding in the theoretical and prospective economic futures of African women, participants were ready to examine the real issues affecting economic development in Africa.



Through a series of case studies, they examined challenges in areas like the extractives sector and their impact on African women, and learned from success stories in various African countries.

## Sectoral Panel & Case Studies

The first panel explored issues, gaps and opportunities related to African women's economic futures in extractives; economic justice; globalisation and regionalisation;

smallholder women farmers and agriculture; and building economic skills and literacy.

Panellists: Samantha Hargreaves (WoMIN); Crystal Simeoni (FEMNET); Pauline Vande-Pullen (TWN-Africa); Sylvia Nalubega (ARUWE Uganda); and Bilene Seyoum (DAWN).

### Extractives

WoMIN's Samantha Hargreaves gave a comprehensive overview on Africa's extractive industries and landscape which includes mining, fisheries, the knowledge economy, and forestry. She explained that the existing extractivist and capitalist economy emerged during the colonial period and is present throughout Africa and the global South:

*"It is a neo-colonial model which dominates in our region and is seen as a driver of growth. The whole discourse of "Africa Rising" centres around the extractivist economy – the question is whether it is good for women and how do they integrate? ...We need to have a really critical conversation about what that pie is – is it just? Why would we want to insert women into an economy that steals, that destroys?"*

Hargreaves drew parallels between extractives, social injustice, and climate change which she described as "the biggest threat facing humanity today". All three involve resource extraction and export across distances and serve a hyper consumption model with little regard for the environment. The extractivist model thrives on both production and consumption. For instance, infrastructure development is to facilitate the movement of goods produced and not necessarily people, thereby driving consumption. Consequently, any real change to the model would need to address elements.

African women at the grassroots have always been vocal about their desire for involvement and for the protection of natural resources. WoMIN offers support by highlighting the impact of extractives on African women and their communities, specifically, the double cost of externalities of extractives they bear through unpaid labour and the need to respect their right to say no to extractivist activities. To minimize the double burden of extractive activity on African women, companies must pay for their short and long-term costs; alternatives must be explored and African nations must be aware of what they sign up for.

*"We cannot be naïve that [extractive activity] will stop, but we need to think about how it will happen and to whose agenda. If it benefits elites and corporates, it is not to the benefit of women and communities... What are the energy alternatives that suit the needs of women?" –Samantha Hargreaves*

## Economic Justice

Crystal Simeoni of FEMNET highlighted the lack of women in policy and decision-making as a contributor to the exclusion of informal work and the care economy from macro-level interventions and policy. Africa has been at the forefront of combatting illicit financial flows of about \$100 billion annually; of this amount, about 35% is due to commercial activity. The lack of input from African women and CSOs on the issue means exclusion of their narratives on the real impact of those losses.



***"If you're not at the table, you're on the menu and we're trying not to be on the menu...It is actually the banks and transnational corporations and so on that are sucking the continent dry. It is important to highlight these things in global settings. It was apparently too "complex" to be discussed at the CSW, so we as pan African feminist economists need to discuss and make our voices heard." –Crystal Simeoni***

Simeoni also gave the example of how taxes can burden women entrepreneurs and small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs) as they bear a larger proportion of the cost relative to larger companies. By being taxed heavily, business women are unable to take proper care of their families. On the other side, women whose work is unpaid or undocumented remain invisible and closed off to resources like financing. And yet, there is an ongoing "instrumentalisation of women" in furtherance of economic growth with no private sector accountability on human rights. The [UN's Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights](#) seeks to address some of these issues.

## Globalisation & Regionalisation

TWN-Africa's Pauline Vande-Pullen addressed Africa's economic development through the lens of globalisation and regionalisation. Despite being the second largest region in the world, Africa's intraregional is the lowest globally. The fast pace of negotiations on agreements like the CFTA without input from African women and smallholder farmers and the exclusion of the largely female informal trade sector from the African Union's indices on regional trade are both concerning.

***"By opening our borders in a way that we are now – importing the bulk of what we eat, wear, watch, and generally struggling with production, road networks, flights, and so on - while producing less, we are setting ourselves up for great challenges". –Pauline Vande-Pullen***

Delving into China's new agreement with African nations, Vande-Pullen questioned the real gains of some trade and economic agreements for African nations. Not only do many agreements erase the complexity of specific country contexts in Africa, the technical language used often makes it difficult for CSOs to discuss or use them to hold their governments accountable. To benefit from such agreements, African economies need to look more to production than assembly of goods.

## Women Smallholder Farmers & Agriculture

Sylvia Nalubega shared insights from ARUWE's work with Ugandan women farmers on land access, policymaking and agricultural insurance. The majority of women farmers do not own their land or lease land although their husbands may be land owners. By training men on gender issues and encouraging them to support their women with land access, rural Ugandan women can nurture productive families and communities. Efforts are underway to promote land co-ownership and encourage men to include their wives in their wills, thereby protecting women who may not have marriage certificates in the event of their spouse's demise.

***"What do women say the economic future for women is? The number one thing that ranks is owning land for production, shelter, stability. They say I want to own land in my own name so I can make decisions on how I use it." –Sylvia Nalubega***



A viable economic future for many Ugandan women entails owning land; diverse income sources and economic security for the household; coping with climate change; gaining education and skills; access to banking services; benefiting from a functional land governance system; regulated seed supply; support from male counterparts, and self-empowerment.

***"It may seem like a simple thing when you can read and write but when you are a woman and you're doing agriculture, you buy seeds and fertiliser and cannot read the expiry date and it does not work well you lose money, time. It also affects marketing, because they cannot calculate prices to know how much they need to sell. Having numeracy and literacy skills will really pave way for women's economic futures."***

## Building Economic Literacy & Skills

DAWN Alumni Bilene Seyoum highlighted the need to simplify economic language to the benefit of African women at all levels. DAWN offers feminist analysis, research, and trainings to enable women gain economic literacy. In Ethiopia for instance, the rights of women working in industrial parks are largely neglected by corporations. Women suffer from human rights abuses and are paid low wages for arduous work and conditions. Knowledge and technology transfer are side lined in the interest of meeting production targets, leaving workers with no professional development or advancement opportunities. Furthermore, rural women workers have no support in procuring housing or other urban services. Through DAWN's feminist analysis and research, these issues were captured and presented along with recommendations to the national planning committee. The lack of feminist economists in the country has serious ramifications for Ethiopia's industrial growth.

***"When we bring up the question of finding female economists, and when there's a willingness to create space for them, there's a dearth of professionals available." –Bilene Seyoum***



## Reflections on Sectoral Panel & Case Studies

The financialisation of development; emergence of repurchase (repo) markets; need to draw on lessons from feminist economic models around the world; and the urgency of building counter-power and movements resonated throughout the panel discussion. While brainstorming the way forward, participants put forth these questions:



1. What is the feminist engagement with AU Agenda 2063? How do we connect the local and regional?
2. How can CSOs be more engaged in policymaking?
3. How do we participate in extractives now that the train has already left? How do we participate meaningfully while safeguarding the environment?
4. How many of African women have the insight, skills and knowledge on the economics front and how do we build upon and expand that capacity?
5. What links exist between women's rights organisations vis-à-vis their work in human rights, macroeconomics and how Africa fits into the global infrastructure?

## Back to the Future Panel: Revisiting Success

The second panel focused on successes and lessons learned through national projects in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda, and regional efforts at movement building. Case studies were presented by Amaka Enemo (NSWA); Vicky Kanyoka (IDWF); Emmanuel Kashaija (FOWODE); Liepollo Lebohang (Trade Collective); and Anita Nayar (Regions Refocus).

### Addressing the Plight of Sex Workers in Nigeria

NSWA's Amaka Enemo described efforts by her organisation to raise awareness about sex worker rights in Nigeria. While sex work itself is not criminalised, living off the earnings from sex work is. Many detained or arrested sex workers face violence from police and are often denied their human rights. NSWA has liaised with the Police Action Committee on AIDS to train police on sex worker human and economic rights. The training covers how the appropriate treatment of detained sex workers; how to respect their privacy and handle of their information; and how police attitudes can impact progress on reducing HIV. Despite these efforts, there is still a long way to go as Nigeria's sex workers are still ostracised by law enforcement officers and citizens alike. NSWA plans to advocate for the economic valuation of sex work and revisions to legislation which may be used to criminalise sex work in Nigeria, while providing health care and social services to sex workers in detention or incarcerated.

## Minimum Wage Gains for Tanzania's Domestic Workers



IDWF-Africa works with over 40 affiliates (trade unions and associations) across Africa to improve domestic worker conditions. The Tanzania arm has been liaising with the domestic workers' trade union under the Prime Minister's office; the Labour and Education Ministries; social protection and welfare institutes, and employers' associations to establish a minimum wage for domestic workers. IDWF-Africa Coordinator Vicky Kanyoka pointed to public awareness campaigns, partnerships and technical capacity as key in unionising domestic 9,000 workers as well as ensuring domestic workers are

paid for their work in cash and not just in-kind. A minimum wage board comprised of the Labour Department, Domestic Workers Trade Union, the Employers Association and an NGO or CSO observer has also been set up. To address the inadequate data on domestic workers and help spur labour reforms, IDWF is lobbying the ILO to conduct an analysis of labour law and generate union case studies. Looking ahead, IDWF will be embarking on domestic worker trainings on issues like salary negotiation as well as engaging its members to create petitions and advocate for policy reform.

## Mainstreaming Gender Responsive Budgeting in Uganda

FOWODE has made considerable strides in helping mainstream gender and gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in Uganda where female members of parliament (MPs) account for 36% of the assembly. The multi stakeholder GRB process involved capacity building; research, gender audits, public expenditure tracking surveys and analysis; advocacy and lobbying on the importance of gender aware budgets; and trainings at local and national levels. Village budget clubs were set up to ensure social accountability while some MPs were identified as GRB champions to help further law-making and reform. Consequently, Uganda's GRB process which started in 1997 led to the first published budget analysis in 2000; a Ministry of Finance (MOFPED) approved list of GRB requirements in 2004; the adoption of gender and equity guidelines by MOFPED in 2005 and the enactment of a public financial management act in 2015 with a gender certificate requirement for approving budgets.

Partnerships have been vital to the project's success. Through the Equal Opportunities Commission for instance, a Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) certification with a 50% pass mark became a requirement for passing a budget as gender compliant. Links to researchers and academia at institutions like the Makerere University's School of Gender and Women's Studies have helped provide evidence on gender issues, while collaborations with editors and media houses have been instrumental in public education. FOWODE is looking forward to embarking on similar work in areas like taxation and trade, extractives and oil and gas.

### Social Ecology and the Power in Building Counter Movements

Liepollo Lebohang Pheko of the Trade Collective offered insights into using movement building as an instrument for improving African women's economic futures. In an ever-changing feminist and development landscape, social ecology or the consistency in ideological and political agendas, is essential to nurturing networks and counter movements. Gatherings like the [Rethinking Economics for Africa Festival](#) are important for formalising and consolidating feminist economics and building global alliances. They also offer alternative thinking to macroeconomic models which privilege trade liberalisation, and allow for examination of scenarios like the mechanisation, recolonisation of work and the displacement of women in areas like agriculture with the emergence of robots. Heterodox constructions of globalisation and what the economy should look like are being influenced by a student-led ecology and activism in countries like South Africa. As a result, feminist economics is being decolonised and redefined as well.

*"The fact that many of us know each other, and have known each other for a really long time is an indication that there is power in counter movements, that there is continuity, that there is consistency. Even if we even change the form and the places where we do what we do, even if our organisations and our affiliations will shift, our basic ideological and political agenda remains consistent." -Liepollo Lebohang Pheko*



There is also value in learning from previous counter-movements like the International Gender and Trade Network which was created in 1999 to connect feminist gender specialists, lawyers, and activists around movement building. As a virtual feminist think tank based in the Global South the network helped build alternatives for a feminist dimension on trade, while applying an inside-outside "talking the talk while tire burning" approach to activism. Recreating such a network and building curricula around it would help address challenges like regulatory and cultural biases; procedural obstacles; and the backlash against feminist economists attempting to provide radical input on trade and macroeconomic issues. Finally, the co-optation of potentially empowering language like 'gender', 'entrepreneurship', 'gendered development' and 'women in the workplace' by neoliberal spaces like the World Economic Forum needs to be stemmed as they eliminate class-power analysis.

### Africa in a Macroeconomic Development Context



Anita Nayar of Regions Refocus wrapped up the panel discussion by examining Africa's current macroeconomic development context. The disunity between progressives and feminists; dwindling strength of the Beijing Consensus as an advocacy and accountability instrument; and shifting funding priorities are key challenges which need to be addressed. With development economics hardly visible or taught in Africa's academia, the onslaught against progressive thinking perpetuates neo-liberal thinking and models.

*“We need to locate our feminist struggles inside the broader structure of multilateral organising. We need to work with other allies outside of traditional women identified groups. This is a moment to come together to really confront the EU cross-regionally and in the post-Cotonou era.” –Anita Nayar*

While new global efforts seek to incorporate gender into neo-liberal schemes of trade like bilateral agreements, the co-optation of feminist language and mutation of the content of those agreements to encompass everything in life calls for concern. The long-standing Cotonou Agreement which defines trade and economic ties between Europe and Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific States is due for expiration in 2020. Without a clear African position and cross regional alliances, the EU’s push for separate regional compacts built upon a foundational agreement could be to Africa’s detriment. Overall, African economies need to develop technical capacity for global negotiations and prioritise multilateral organising through avenues like the recently created gender and trade coalition.

## GROUP WORK: THEMATIC AREAS FOR A COLLECTIVE STATEMENT

After two days of fruitful discussion and learnings, the Convening participants set out to craft a collective statement on their commitment to improving African women’s economic futures and providing recommendations on a sustainable way forward. Led by the facilitator, they dissected four key themes and two crosscutting issues and presented their main observations, concerns, demands and recommendations for ensuring African women’s economic futures. The outcome of those discussions is summarised as follows:

- 1. The geopolitical context of African development, gender and race inequalities in regional and global economic governance:** The multiple memberships of some countries in trade blocs propagates a lack of harmonised standards on traded goods and creates loopholes in regulatory frameworks on the origin and exemption of goods. While ambitious, frameworks like the AU’s Agenda 2063 lack practicality and relevance to Africa’s realities in some cases.



There is also a conflict of interest as instruments like Agenda 2063 are largely funded by the West. This promulgates the handing down of policies and costly funding mechanisms by the IMF and World Bank, thereby entrenching African nations in neoliberal systems. To unravel this situation African governments should prioritize paying fees for regional structures and embark on a decolonisation of everything from the internet to infrastructure. With local resources, the AU will have more autonomy and can strengthen regional blocs and mechanisms to unlink Africa from non-beneficial global trade structures.

- 2. Extraction, destruction and crises reproduction; shifting economic paradigms in the face of climate catastrophe:** Western science has created a separation between humanity and nature, fuelling the notion by some humans that they are “mini-gods” of those resources.



This greatly devalued efforts at safeguarding nature and has contributed to limited narratives about wealth, the rich and the poor. Economics needs to be reframed to capture women's role in areas like social and biological reproduction, environmental protection, and food security, as well as reclaim indigenous traditions, values and customs for holistic living.

3. **Equity, access, control, and ownership of productive resources in African economies and markets:** The limited access to land; violence against sex workers; gender pay gap and prioritisation of corporate interests over local are all instances of economic injustice against African women. By exploring flexible and demand-driven multiyear funding for women's groups; creating gender sensitive policies; building South-South women's economic justice movements and operating from a common agenda on movement-building headway can be made in reclaiming productive resources for African women and economies.
4. **Women's rights and dignity: material well-being, economic security, social protection and labour justice:** The dignity and rights of African women are inalienable and extend beyond sexuality. Unequal pay and unpaid work are thus abusing those rights and dignity and need to be addressed in the context of social protection in both legal and non-legal frameworks. For instance, gender-responsive services like a child care centre or maternity leave for informal sector workers could be of value. While African feminists work on behalf of all African women, not all those women identify with feminism and this limits the reach of feminist narratives even in spaces where women may be present. As a result, it is essential that Africa's feminists be well-skilled, resourced and knowledgeable in order to navigate the landscape and grow in agency.

## DAY 3

### AWEF Key Takeaways & Next Steps

The inaugural AWEF Convening was fruitful and resulted in key takeaways about the current and future landscape of opportunities and challenges for improving Africa's development as well as **a collective statement published on AWEF's website** and highlighting participants' observations, concerns, and recommendations for viable African women's economic futures. There was consensus on the pitfalls of the neoliberal system and its impact on African women, particularly in actively undermining women's autonomy and deliberately discriminating against women who play an equal if not more important role in economic progress. While not fully resolved, there was recognition of the need to investigate which economic values and thinking drive African economies, and what principles African women and feminist economists would rather promote.



Participants committed themselves to challenging and expanding ideas about wealth is with the aim of being more inclusive and documenting the value that women offer as unpaid workers, informal sector actors, caregivers, and change makers. Linked to this, participants reiterated the need to explore alternative financing to enable them continue feminist work and build knowledge

and capacity around feminist economics in Africa. In this stead a number of participants volunteered as contributors to AWDF's 'Bread and Butter' knowledge series. An outline of practical next steps was also developed to keep the momentum going and is captured as follows:

1. Develop a campaign on decolonising education to respond to and reframe global realities.

Specifically:

- Pan African Campaign on rights to education (PACER)
- Feminist analysis of budgets and funding flow at the regional, national and continental levels
- Feminist organising on macro-economic policy that is broad-based, multi sectoral and multidisciplinary
- AWDF-led re-convening of AWEF as a network to take up the issues
- Organisations to decide on what they can include in their programming work
- Approaching development partners to fund the campaign
- Creation of an AWEF group platform

2. Identify and map organisations working on the theme of redesigning African economies and including strong social elements.

Specifically:

- Identify movements for regional and global advocacy
- Identify progressive allies working on the same issues and/or with expertise
- Liaising with the ILO to end gender-based violence, participating and lobbying around the upcoming ILO 2019 report
- Reframe economics and social reproduction to include informal sector and care economy
- Recognising and crafting alternatives, outlining women's role in food security
- Using the proposed education campaign to transform indigenous knowledge
- Focus on, value and create knowledge and evidence on the care economy

3. South-South cooperation and anti-austerity movement building.

Specifically:

- Examine economic governance
- Create a resource list of feminist economists and convergence points
- Establish an African macroeconomic academy to research things like the debt crisis
- Pan African feminist conference
- Organise periodic conferences and academic for a
- Map what is happening and opportunities for collaboration e.g. Women Advancing Africa and the TGNP festival
- Gender macro-economy training, planning and budgeting
- Narrow down what advocacy should be in terms of and where to get funding
- Commission a series of think pieces on funding women's work

The Convening concluded with remarks and thanks from Theo Sowa and the AWDF organising team.



AFRICAN  
WOMEN'S  
DEVELOPMENT  
FUND



*AWDF thanks all our participants for their contributions and insights. We hope to continue this journey with you. Onward and upwards with our feminist futures!*

## ANNEX 1: ORGANISATIONS & PARTICIPANTS

ORGANISATIONS	PARTICIPANTS
<a href="#">Graca Machel Trust</a>	Korkor Cudjoe Rachel Toku-Appiah
<a href="#">Forum for Women in Democracy</a>	Emmanuel Kashaija
<a href="#">African Women's Development Communication Network</a>	Crystal Simeoni
<a href="#">Tanzania Gender Networking Programme</a>	Lilian Liundi
<a href="#">Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya</a>	Teresa Omondi
<a href="#">WoMIN</a>	Samantha Hargreaves
<a href="#">International Domestic Workers Federation</a>	Vicky Kanyoka
<a href="#">Kenya Sex Workers Alliance</a>	Philester Abdalla
<a href="#">Urgent Action Fund-Africa</a>	Onyinyechi Okechukwu
<a href="#">Regions Refocus</a>	Anita Nayar
<a href="#">Global Fund for Women</a>	Britt Jenkins
<a href="#">ARUWE Uganda</a>	Sylvia Nalubega
<a href="#">Nigerian Sex Workers Association</a>	Amaka Enemo
<a href="#">Third World Network-Africa</a>	Pauline Vande-Pullen
<a href="#">Open Society Initiative for West Africa</a>	Afia Asantewaa Asare-Kyei
<a href="#">Network for Women Rights in Ghana</a>	Patricia Blankson Akakpo
<a href="#">Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</a>	Billene Seyoum
Trade Collective	Liepollo Lebohang Pheko
Independent	Sybille Nyeck Nancy Kachingwe (Facilitator) Jemila Abdulai (Rapporteur)
<a href="#">African Women's Development Fund</a>	Theo Sowa Madonna Kendona Rose Buabeng Rita Nketiah