

Feminist Economy: an introductory overview

Introduction

The world relies on women's unpaid and undervalued care work. Growth has often equated to extractive and exploitative means of accumulating wealth for the elite. Whether natural, intellectual or human resources; individualism capered under meritocracy and free market participation has benefited in lieu of majority populations. Already benefiting from structural impediments heralded by colonialism, economic and development structures feed into systems that disenfranchise labour rights, care work and environmental beauty. Patriarchy, racism and other forms of supremacy embedded in legislative and fiscal instruments have had some amendments in social protections and mitigating poverty. However, inequality remains unabated whilst excessive wealth, illicit financial flows and climate injustice continue unabated.

Recognising and adopting women's economic empowerment merely integrates women deeper into a system that does not appropriately recognise their contributions. Possibly viewed as a temporary means of survival, there is a need to create alternatives that erode existing systems and structures (AWID, 2020). Safeguarding economic participation of all women in their diversity cannot be in isolation of autonomy and intersecting challenges to exercising it. Whether in affirmative healthcare, bodily integrity,

expression, and indigenous belonging among other intersections of being equally and equitably human. Strengthening Pan African ideals in indigenising economies can be an accelerator to collective belonging and prosperity.



Notable Instruments

Language is important, as it politicises consumption, production and interrelated variables of social order, government spending and determinants of variant forms of trade. Inclusive language that reflects of generous interpretation in international law would not only allow for increased accountability, but further holistic, cross-cutting and rights-based approaches to global challenges (Hedges-Chou, 2017). The recognition of informal, care-related and gendered roles should be accounted for. The prescribed parameters for evaluating production of any country should be inclusive if no one is to be left behind in achieving the sustainable development goals by 2030.

International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) can safeguard and strengthen economic policies and human rights simultaneously. Equality and non-discrimination as articulated in article 2.1 commits countries to use maximum possible resources towards progressive realisation of socioeconomic rights.

Including the rights to equality, work, education, standard of living, rest, leisure and protection from discrimination. This compels countries to respect and promote the rights of all. Applying this to the formal economy would mean including informal vendors, domestic workers, domestic care work, civil society, and sustenance farming. The principle of generous interpretation would further allow for addressing inequalities in underemployment, social protections in variations of available infrastructure and recognising sex work.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international bill of rights for women and commits States to adopt all measures to end gender based discrimination including violence against women and girls (Government of Botswana, 2009). This should apply to all women, including the unbanked and those without payslips. The neoliberal construct of financial inclusion prescribes mobile money transfers to bridging the gap between the banked and unbanked. Essentially absolving economic enablers from their discriminatory practices from excluding poor women in formal economic participation. No mortgage, payroll or foreign exchange can be secured via mobile money.



Intersecting identities

Recognition is just as important as language. Where criteria are often termed eligibility or listed as requirements that only elite or privileged demographics can access. These criteria are developed by the elite, further propelling inequality within confinements of regulations or the law. This explicit exclusion further accelerates those who are recognised as hard workers in spite of the little effort needed to benefit from the system. Barriers of entry, participation and growth continue without dignified means of correcting injustices of the past. Colonialist elite continue to benefit from the structures and systems they created, whilst having to share this space of profit with those previously disadvantaged. Thus, a hierarchy continues where aesthetic gendered progress is made in lieu of criminalised bodies and experiences.

Women's empowerment, as articulated in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states "equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace." (Womenkind, 2019). Although largely binary, in generous interpretation it recognises the importance of equality within the context of rights and development. This includes all with disabilities, living with HIV, living in poverty,

criminalised and young. It recognises injustice and circumstances that should not serve as a restriction to equality (Garland-Thomson, 1998). This should only be a start, recognising the importance of equity in mobilising resources, exercising autonomy and self-determining.

Environment and social barriers to equal and meaningful participation is essential to recognising and strengthening inclusion of women with disabilities in their diversity. Barriers for fundamental needs and rights are prevalent (World Health Organisation, 2017). Shortcomings in healthcare, public infrastructure and social protection negatively impact equal economic participation. People with disabilities are denied their gender roles (Price, 2011). This places disability before womanhood for many, affecting other aspects of identity. However, it does not mean that they are absolved from gendered injustices related to violence and sexuality (Morris, 1998). Storytelling has been identified as one way to strengthen visibility and voice (Women With Disabilities Australia, 2018).

Conclusion

Transformative equality should be expanded to safeguarding equity. Equity that has proved effective in safeguarding intergenerational wealth, philanthropy giving and remaining productive. Weather in the form of quality

education, institutional power inherent in asset ownership or simply means of participation. It is founded on recognition and palpability within social, legal and economic constructs historically developed by white men. Although evolving, there is a significant shortcoming in accountability and reparations. Hierarchies continue unabated with movement challenging these structures in the spirit of meaningful change. This brief overview is a start towards that change.

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Success Capital is a grassroots non-governmental organisation based in Gaborone, Botswana. Working on eliminating the barriers between grassroots experiences and regional to global policy making. This includes advocacy linking human rights and sustainable development in decolonising knowledge production and strengthening youth agency in HIV, GBV, SRHR, UHC, LGBTIQ+, Governance, Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures through up skilling and supporting variant forms of civic action and participation.

Development and civil society prescribe focus on the outcomes; we understand and live in the process. Recognising that in order to work ourselves out of relevance, need and interest of LGBTIQ+ youth, we must do the neglected and overseen work of transforming lives. The work that allows for our community to articulate what they believe in as success. It is in the detail, the experience and the process of activism, organizing and impact work.

Outcomes are a social construct of colonialist neoliberal saviours. Do not be mistaken, we can produce as many M&E logframes and theories of change as you want to advance our work; just know it is not that important in the face of systemic violence, discrimination, hate speech and harm. The law and public health have only gone so far to let us be; our work is centered on belonging and becoming in spite of the many influences and invisible nuances against us – even within safe spaces.

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