



A Pre event: Roundtable Dialogue on **Africa in Conversation!**

“Framing Africa’s Just Transition: From Extractive to Regenerative Economic and Climate Action Models.”



INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the outcomes of discussions that happened during a roundtable dialogue held from October 7th–8th, 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme “Framing Africa’s Just Transition: From Extractive to Regenerative Economic and Climate Action Models.” The roundtable dialogue was convened as a pre-event to a larger event that will be organized under the banner “Africa in Conversation: Reimagining to Reconstruct!”. The vision is to radicalize, reimagine, and repoliticize African feminist alternatives as the future.

This space brought together radical thinkers—individuals who seek to challenge the current boundaries of thought and action. These thinkers included civic actors, political leaders, government technocrats,



feminists, women's rights activists, economic justice advocates, climate justice leaders, and academics from diverse sectors and institutions.

As African people, we find ourselves in a tumultuous in which on the one hand, we seek to pursue socially just decolonial societies that are rooted in Afrocentric values of Ubuntu, egalitarianism, and ecological justice but are also confronted with the demands and influence of globalization and multilateralism that have fostered exploitative and extractive systems. This space was therefore inspired by the recognition that as Africa, we must deeply and critically reflect on how our societies can transition from exploitative, extractive systems to sustainable and regenerative models. It emphasized the importance of looking inward, reclaiming indigenous knowledge, and re-centering the lived experiences of those most marginalized in African societies—especially women, indigenous peoples, rural communities, and other socially excluded groups.

At the heart of this gathering therefore was a collective acknowledgement of the need for a new world order, one that deconstructs the unequal global systems upheld by colonial and imperialist institutions. Participants questioned the legitimacy of current systems and structures; they presented and debated various alternatives, strategies and actions; and began a process of charting a pathway for a radical reconstruction of the Africa we want, one that is steeped in feminism and decoloniality, rooted in local realities, drawing from Africa's rich history and herstories of resistance, and inspiring transformative practices. The space acknowledged that transformative practices do not always have to be new as the world has perceived it. These can be already existing indigenous/ locally led ways of being and doing that are supportive and protective of the ecosystem, people, and the planet.

The report was compiled by the EJCA team at AMwA. The visuals from this dialogue can be found [here](#), while the presentations delivered can be found [here](#).

OPENING REMARKS

The dialogue was opened with words of inspiration, caution, and reflection from Ms. Eunice Musiime, the Executive Director of Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Ms. Jackline Nekesa Makokha, the Director Gender at the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action in the Government of Kenya, and Dr. Prof. Sarah Ssali, the Dean, School of Gender at Makerere University who delivered the Keynote Address.

Remarks by Ms. Eunice Musiime, Executive Director, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA)

Eunice introduced Akina Mama wa Afrika and welcomed participants to the pre-event dialogue. She thanked everyone for taking the time to participate in this dialogue designed to be a pre-event to a Rethink! Space that AMwA will, in collaboration with other partners on the continent, convene at the start of 2025 prior to the annual African Union Summit held every year in February. This space is inspired by the pursuit for Pan African feminist and decolonial societies that are rooted in Ubuntu, Egalitarianism, and Ecological justice.



While reflecting on the cost of living crisis on the continent which has brewed into political unrests and protests by young people; the climate crisis which has led to floods and droughts that have led to food scarcity and increased energy poverty with power blackouts in countries like Zambia lasting for up-to 5 days; the growing anti rights and anti gender justice movement; and the old and enduring wars such as in the DRC, Sudan, Somalia, which no longer make it to the news cycle because they have been going on for decades, she re-echoed AMwA's radical hope for a new world order, away from the prevailing neoliberal, extractive, exploitative, unequal, and gender imperceptive system.

She thus invited the participants to a space of deep reflection and feminist consciousness noting that this is something that as feminists and gender justice activists, we have challenged ourselves to do i.e. to extend our analysis beyond the usual gender mainstreaming approach because realizing socially just development also requires the transformation of systems and structures that have upheld economic inequalities against Africa's most marginalized people. She further acknowledged that transforming systems and structures has always been a politically charged issue because they support, facilitate and foster an interconnected global economic architecture that supports a small proportion of the world's rich while exploiting and extracting from the majority, of whom are women in Africa and the Global South.

She therefore maintained that Africa must therefore redefine and reconstruct its development tapestry away from the neoliberal capitalist model, which is responsible for the majority of crises to date. For example, structural policy reforms away from the neoliberal capitalist model informing debt, fiscal policy, trade, capital flows and market driven responses to climate change and its impacts are urgently needed. Similarly, a systemic transformation through delinking which entails a reorientation of Africa's development strategies away from the imperatives of neoliberal globalization and growth to that of economic, social, and ecological priorities and interests of people is imperative. She therefore invited participants to use the two day dialogue as a space of collective reflection, rethinking, and reimagination by going back to the root causes of economic injustices against Africa, as well as bringing back to the fore Africa's lost/ buried development strategies.

Remarks by Ms. Jackline Nekesa Makokha

Ms. Jackline Nekesa welcomed participants to the Republic of Kenya, and emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change, recognizing its profound impact on all sectors of society. As the UNFCCC National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point for Kenya, she described the dialogue as timely and necessary, urging co-conspirators to share their lived experiences to enrich the conversation. The conversations, she said would go a long way in enriching the upcoming COP 29 climate change negotiations and outcomes thereof, that should ideally carry the voices of the most vulnerable in society. Jackline further emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships between state and non-state actors in developing effective solutions, and thus called for a critical examination of existing decision-making structures, noting that current policies often fail to prioritize gender issues.

Ms. Nekesa referenced the annual gender composition report by the UNFCCC, which indicates a disparity in women's participation in key climate negotiations and that existing climate governance does not adequately support inclusivity. According to the report, she said that while women are more involved in



preliminary meetings (such as the Bonn climate conference), their representation declines significantly at the main COP events. For example, at COP 28, there were only 34% of women represented in party delegations. Moreover, there has not been a woman leader/ head of delegation since 2008 to date, 2024. According to Jackline, this reflects ongoing challenges in mainstreaming gender considerations within government institutions and international policy spaces.

Ms. Nekesa concluded by encouraging participants to propose strategies that can alter the current gender gap in decision-making frameworks, making them more inclusive and responsive to gender issues. She stressed the need for a holistic approach that integrates diverse perspectives to develop effective, gender-responsive climate strategies and actions. She welcomed participants to Kenya once again and wished everyone fruitful deliberations.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By Dr. Sarah Ssali (PhD), Professor and Dean of the School of Gender at Makerere University

The keynote address set the tone of the event, calling for an urgent transformation of Africa's gendered, classed, and racialized neoliberal capitalist economic model. Prof. Ssali emphasized the need to transition from an extractive economy to one that is regenerative and reparative, advocating for a paradigm shift in the way the continent approaches development. To further unpack this, Prof. Ssali explored the interconnectedness of justice, feminism, and economics, urging a reimagination of Africa's development strategy that prioritizes sustainability and equity. The address was categorized into different subtopics:

☐ A Legacy of Extraction: The Plunder of Africa's Resources

Prof. Ssali began her address with a poignant video that depicted the effects of gold mining in Uganda. The video served as a stark reminder of the ongoing exploitation of Africa's resources, highlighting the devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences of extractive industries. She pointed out the alarming rise in school dropouts and the destruction of local communities due to unregulated mining, stressing how these impacts disproportionately affect African women. She questioned, "How do we create regenerative economies in a way that is just?" underscoring the need for a new economic model that addresses inequality, extractivism, and exploitation.

☐ Challenging Neoliberal Policies and the Broken Social Contract

A central theme in Prof. Ssali's speech further critiqued neoliberal economic policies, which, she argued, have weakened African states and eroded public services, particularly affecting women. She highlighted the privatization of essential public goods and services, and the growing burden of care work on women, noting that African governments have often become complicit in perpetuating inequalities by siding with global capital. Using Uganda's land grabbing and the country's dependency on foreign imports as an example, Prof. Ssali questioned, "In whose interest do our states exist?" This rhetorical challenge called for a deeper reflection on the true priorities of African governments.

☐ Revisiting the Past to Reimagine the Future



Prof. Ssali underscored the necessity of understanding Africa's historical context to reshape its future. She traced the roots of Africa's current economic challenges to the colonial era, when the continent was stripped of its resources. Despite the promises of independence, Prof. Ssali argued that Africa has yet to achieve the ideals of self-determination, justice, and social equity. She invoked Audre Lorde's famous quote, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," to argue that the structural changes Africa has undergone since independence have been those permitted by former colonial powers. This call for reinvention challenged the audience to rethink the lens through which Africa's problems and solutions are viewed.

☐ Feminist Perspectives on Self-Determination and Global Capital

Prof. Ssali further examined the exploitative nature of global capitalism and its impact on African women, who are often relegated to the lowest levels of the global economic hierarchy. She called for a radical shift in feminist thought, urging the repoliticizing of feminist alternatives and unapologetic advocacy for African women's rights. By critically examining how Africa's integration into the global economy has marginalized both African women and the continent, Prof. Ssali reaffirmed that the decolonial agenda must be central to any effort for true self-determination.

☐ Development as a Social Justice Agenda

In her address, Prof. Ssali framed development as a social justice issue, arguing that true development must prioritize the well-being of communities and the protection of natural resources over profits. She posed a provocative question: "Why should Africa remain underdeveloped so that the rest of the world can breathe fresh air?" This highlighted the unjust global dynamics that seek to force Africa to sacrifice its own development for the benefit of wealthier nations. Prof. Ssali advocated for collaboration between grassroots movements and elites, warning that true development must go beyond mere Africanization to address the systemic issues of global capitalism.

The Way Forward: Centering African Women and Herstories

Prof. Ssali concluded her address with a call to center African women and other structurally excluded groups of people in the development agenda. She emphasized the importance of acknowledging the collective herstories of African women, which should inform and guide the continent's future. She encouraged the audience to embrace radical feminist reimaginations of Africa's economic and social structures, grounded in self-determination and social justice.

In her final remarks, Prof. Ssali urged African feminists and activists to transcend the lens of oppression and fight for a development model rooted in equity, unity, and social justice. She called for an unapologetic, decolonial approach to solving Africa's crises, stressing that the path forward requires a fundamental rethinking of both the structures and ideologies that have shaped Africa's past and present.

Reflections and conversation Following the Keynote Address



The keynote address sparked a wide array of thought-provoking reflections, touching on various issues facing Africa today, particularly in relation to the economic and political challenges that hinder the continent's progress. Below are some of the key insights shared by participants in response to the keynote:

- Africa's governance system needs to reflect a return to the continent's traditional values, before colonial influences reshaped societal norms. There is a need for a re-examination of African identity and the inclusion of African values in national constitutions, particularly when considering the human rights frameworks that have been imposed by global institutions such as the United Nations. This idea connects directly to Prof. Ssali's call for a decolonial reimagining of Africa's development path, urging the continent to reconnect with its roots in order to rebuild a more just and equitable future.
- A participant further brought to the fore details about an off the record meeting that happens annually between Europe and North America, known as the Bilderberg Meeting. This meeting/ forum/ club was established in 1954, with the group's agenda, originally to prevent another world war. To date, the meeting convenes around topics such as bolstering a consensus around free market Western capitalism and its interests around the globe. This meeting brings together political leaders, experts, captains of industry, finance, academia from Europe and North America, only under Chatham House Rule.
- Several questions were raised in relation to why African leaders today are not advancing the agenda of reclaiming Africa's autonomy and power, despite the clear understanding of the negative impacts of neocolonialism and neoliberalism as expressed by previous generations. This observation raised the issue of political will and the lack of genuine commitment to a decolonial and transformative change. It calls for a reawakening of African leadership that is grounded in the principles of Pan Africanism, justice, equity, and a clear vision for the continent's future.
- Nancy Houston raised concerns about the role of the NGO industrial complex in African development, questioning how this system impacts the advancement of social justice. She asked how to reconcile the NGO complex with the pursuit of development as a social justice agenda. This reflection echoes Prof. Ssali's critique of external influences and the need for Africa to chart its own path toward equitable development.
- Participants also shared country experiences and lived realities. For example, a participant from Zambia highlighted the issue of Zambia's power cuts which she also framed as a clear example of how the climate crisis intersects with the continent's debt crisis. The rising costs of debt repayment and its impact on governments' fiscal capacity to invest in the provision of essential services such as energy and education cannot be ignored. She questioned why Africa, despite its rich resources, continues to face these challenges?
- Aidah questioned what "development as social justice" truly means for Africa? Aidah posed this question, urging the need for a clearer understanding of how development policies can prioritize the well-being of African communities, rather than reinforcing the structures that perpetuate inequality. This inquiry aligned with Prof. Ssali's call for a fundamental shift in how development is approached, advocating for a model that challenges the status quo and centers people and the planet.
- Elizabeth Lwanga voiced her concerns about the dependency syndrome that has been entrenched in African governance systems. Elizabeth argued that the current leadership often lacks the policy



space and vision to drive change. She further highlighted that this has stunted the growth of African economies into sustainable and self-reliant ones. This reflection stresses the need for leadership that is both visionary and accountable to the people.

- Eunice Musiime called for a reflection on how change happens, whether through incremental shifts or radical transformation. She noted that this was one of the ongoing debates within African activism and politics i.e. on which is the most effective path forward. While incremental changes may offer short-term improvements, the message highlighted by Prof. Ssali demands a more radical approach to dismantling the oppressive systems in place.
- Ruth Nyambura called for a deeper structural analysis of the issues facing Africa, suggesting that true liberation cannot be achieved without first understanding the underlying systems of oppression. She noted that Africa has for long clearly defined its development pathway but that these properly elaborated plans have been hijacked by certain power holders. She recalled for example, and quoted the “Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1980-2000)” which begins by acknowledging that “The effect of unfulfilled promises of global development strategies has been more sharply felt in Africa than in the other continents of the world. Indeed, rather than result in an improvement in the economic situation of the continent, successive strategies have made it stagnate and become more susceptible than other regions to the economic and social crises suffered by the industrialized countries. Thus, Africa is unable to point to any significant growth rate, or satisfactory index of general well-being, in the past 20 years. Faced with this situation, and determined to undertake measures for the basic restructuring of the economic base of our continent, we resolved to adopt a far-reaching regional approach based primarily on collective self-reliance.” This reflects Prof. Ssali’s assertion that any attempt to address Africa’s development must be rooted in a decolonial agenda, with an examination of the economic, political, and social structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation.

The reflections that followed Prof. Ssali's keynote highlighted the critical intersections of climate justice, gender, economic equity, and governance. These reflections reinforce the call for a transformative approach to development—one that does not shy away from uncomfortable truths, but instead reimagines Africa's future in a way that is both just and sustainable.



A LABOR OF LOVE: REFORMING THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC ARCHITECTURE - DAY 1

Moderated by Hon. Khanyisile-Litchfield Tshabalala

1. Ending Austerity – A Blueprint to Transforming a Tattered Africa

By Shereen Talat, MenaFem Movement

The session focused on the urgent need to address the deepening crises caused by austerity measures in Africa. Through an analysis of the historical and current impacts of austerity, Talat emphasized the critical need for radical change in both the economic and political systems that have perpetuated inequality, poverty, and environmental degradation on the continent. The session provided both a sobering critique of the existing systems and a call to action for transformative solutions. The session addressed::

☐ The Tale of 80 Years of Austerity

Talat framed Africa's current economic challenges within the context of over 80 years of austerity conditionalities propagated by the World Bank and IMF's influence over macroeconomic policy regimes at global and country levels. These conditionalities, she argued, have been imposed by these international financial institutions (IFIs) on governments in the global South particularly in Africa, leading to the dismantling of public services, including health care, education, and infrastructure, among others. Austerity has been instrumental in perpetuating the structural inequalities that define the African economic landscape today.

Throughout the 80 years of Bretton Woods Institutions' reign, there has been a deterioration of public services across the globe, consequently increasing the care work burden on women as women are automatically pushed to act as shock absorbers in situations of failed and or unfunded/ underfunded public services systems owing to the gendered nature of care work in Africa. She highlighted that this dire state of healthcare systems, education, access to water, among others exacerbates the already existing challenges of poverty, disease, and inadequate infrastructure. This collapse of public services, especially in health, education, sanitation..., is not just a technical or economic failure, it is a human rights violation affecting millions of people.

☐ A Normal Life and Well-being

Talat argued that Africans are not living "normal lives," with the understanding that a normal life should be one characterized by well-being and security. The pursuit of well-being, she suggested, should be the central goal of any society, but this has been undermined by the policies of austerity, which prioritize debt repayment and economic growth over human dignity and social equity. In her view, the failure to achieve a normal, thriving life is a direct result of systems that have intentionally marginalized and impoverished African nations.

☐ The Genocide of African Systems and African lives



Talat described the continued exploitation of African people and resources as a “genocide of the systems.” She framed austerity policies and the global economic order as a system that thrives on the “blood of Africans.” This metaphor emphasized the ongoing exploitation and the devastating human and environmental costs of policies that continue to prioritize external debt repayment over the needs of the people.

□ The Need for Radical Change

Talat strongly called for “radicality”, a complete break from the current systems that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and environmental destruction. She argued that incremental reforms would not suffice to address the scale of the crises facing Africa today. Instead, radical change in economic and political systems is necessary to dismantle the structures of power that have perpetuated Africa’s impoverishment. Talat emphasized that this radical approach should not merely focus on economic reform but also on transforming the political institutions and relationships that sustain inequality.

□ Neocolonialism and Neoliberalism

Drawing on the words of Kwame Nkrumah, Talat described how colonialism in Africa has been reshaped into a new form of economic dominance under neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies, she argued, continue to serve the interests of global powers and multinational corporations while disenfranchising African nations. These policies, which include austerity, privatization, and deregulation, have allowed former colonial powers and international financial institutions to maintain their control over African economies.

Conclusion

Shereen Talat’s presentation described how austerity measures and neoliberal economic policies have systematically undermined African development. The focus on the destruction of public services, the denial of well-being, and the perpetuation of neo-colonial economic structures provided a sobering critique of the current economic system. However, Talat also offered a vision for hope and transformation, calling for radical change and a rethinking of economic priorities to center human well-being, equity, and sustainability. The session was a powerful reminder that the future of Africa lies in its ability to break free from the economic and political systems that have trapped it in cycles of poverty and underdevelopment.

2. The Care Economy-Dressing Africa’s Economies in a New Colored Suit

By Felister Gitonga, Oxfam Africa

The session focused on unpacking concerns around the invisibilization of the care economy and its value in Africa’s economic frameworks and economy in general, and the need for a radical rethinking of the current economic system. Gitonga’s analysis proposed new approaches that move beyond traditional economic metrics like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and challenged prevailing gender norms and neoliberal policies. The session provided perspective on integrating care work into broader economic policies, advocating for policies that prioritize people’s well-being and environmental sustainability. The session focused on different issues including:



☐ Africa's Struggle with Austerity

While building onto the previous session, Gitonga began by highlighting the crippling impact of austerity on exacerbating the burden of care work, particularly unpaid care work on women. Conditions that have required African governments to deprioritize financing/ allocation of public resources to the provision of public services, including health, education, and care systems has meant that women take up this role. This was particularly evident during the COVID 19 pandemic, where it became a “survival for the richest”. Many households were pushed to rely on home based health care, consequently placing a disproportionate and double burden on women, both as care givers of the sick and domestic workers as this work has socially been perceived to be the work of women.

☐ Shift from Profit-Driven Models to Well-Being and environment sustainability

One of the central arguments in the presentation was the urgent need for African economies to shift away from profit-driven models that prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term losses, including impacts on climate and social well-being. Gitonga emphasized that this shift would require breaking free from the capitalist structures that have historically shaped African economies and instead adopting models that center human well-being, sustainability, and environmental protection.

☐ Beyond GDP: Challenging Economic Metrics

Gitonga called for moving beyond GDP as the primary measure of economic growth. She criticized the capitalist nature of GDP, stating that it is a flawed metric that does not account for the well-being of people or the planet. Furthermore, GDP fails to capture the value of care work, both paid and unpaid, which is predominantly carried out by women. The narrative surrounding poverty and development, Gitonga argued, has been shaped by the colonizer's view, rooted in GDP-based metrics that marginalize essential sectors such as caregiving.

☐ Care and Gender Constructs

The concept of care was examined from a gendered perspective. Gitonga pointed out that care work is often defined through a gender binary, where caregiving is traditionally seen as the responsibility of women. However, care should not just be understood in terms of gendered roles—it must be recognized as a human right, a social responsibility that extends beyond the individual to the collective. The economic valuation of care work should consider both the unpaid labor that women perform at home and the underpaid labor in sectors like healthcare and childcare.

☐ Challenges with Current Care Policies

Gitonga critiqued the current care policies, such as the World Bank's approach to childcare, which fails to consider gender indicators or the realities of unpaid care work. She argued that women cannot be reduced to mere economic markers, and the conversation about care should not be limited to its economic value. Care work, she insisted, should be recognized as fundamental to human well-being, requiring systemic changes to the way society organizes labor



☐ Alternatives and Proposals

Gitonga proposed several alternatives to the current economic framework:

- Move beyond gender binary concepts in the care conversation, recognizing care work as a shared responsibility.
- Focus on both paid and unpaid care, addressing issues like sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in cross-border care.
- Employers should finance care, ensuring that care work is properly supported in the workplace.
- Provision of social protection in workplaces, including paid family leave, childcare, and sick leave.
- Rethink the informal economy, where there are widespread violations of workers' rights and lack of protection.
- Financing for development that recognizes the value of care work and supports public services.
- Negotiate freedoms to ensure that the rights of caregivers are respected, and their labor properly valued.

Gitonga stressed the importance of looking at care work from an ecosystem perspective, understanding the time poverty that women face, and ensuring that women have the freedom to choose how they balance care with other responsibilities.

☐ The Role of Policy Makers

Gitonga noted that while policymakers are involved in the care debate, many resist systemic changes that would truly recognize and value care work. She argued that care should not just be viewed from a household level but from a macro perspective, where it can be integrated into national policies that support social protection and public services. The discussion must evolve from focusing solely on the household to considering the collective needs of communities and nations.

☐ Rethinking GDP and Economic Systems

Echoing Shereen Talat's earlier remarks, Gitonga highlighted the inadequacies of GDP as a measure of a nation's success. GDP, she argued, fails to differentiate between market activities that harm people and the planet, while ignoring the contributions of unpaid care work. As long as the current economic system continues to prioritize profit over human well-being, the integration of care work into economic models will remain a challenge.

Conclusion

This session presented a compelling critique of the current economic systems that ignore the value of care work and prioritize profits over people. She outlined a roadmap for shifting African economies toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and human-centered approach. The focus on care as a human right, the call for the integration of both paid and unpaid care into policy frameworks, and the challenge to neoliberal economic models were central themes of the session. Gitonga's message was clear: the future of Africa's



economies depends on dismantling the systems that marginalize care work and embracing alternative economic frameworks that prioritize well-being, equity, and sustainability.

Moderated by Angella Matsiko, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Government of Uganda

3. Reclaiming Debt Justice for Africa

By Tatenda Mzezewa, AFRODAD

The session provided a critical examination of the debt crisis facing African nations and its implications on development, social services, and gender equity. The discussion highlighted the urgent need for a reimagined approach to debt management that prioritizes the well-being of African citizens over the interests of creditors. The session also included a feminist response, emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive policies in addressing the debt crisis and achieving equitable economic growth.

☐ Current State of Debt in Africa

Mzezewa gave a sobering overview of Africa's current debt landscape, posing the question: Where are we now? The data presented showed that African countries are prioritizing debt servicing over critical investments in health, education, and the care economy. This situation is likened to a household scenario where debt repayment outweighs essential expenditures, a condition unsustainable at both the household and national levels.

Developing countries have experienced a sharp increase in net debt outflows since 2014, more than doubling in recent years. The disproportionate allocation of resources towards debt repayment has resulted in underfunding of crucial social services, leaving the burden of care work predominantly on women and caregivers.

☐ How Did We Get Here?

The session delved into the historical and structural factors that have led to Africa's mounting debt crisis. One of the primary reasons cited was the imbalance between government revenue and the substantial amounts directed towards debt servicing. Mzezewa emphasized the role of climate financing in exacerbating the debt burden, noting the intersection between climate change and economic vulnerability:

- Africa accounts for only 3% of global climate finance, despite being disproportionately affected by climate change.
- Nine out of the ten most climate-affected countries are in Africa, with projections showing the continent could lose up to 5% of its GDP by 2040 without adequate adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- The financing gap stands at a staggering \$2.5 trillion, leaving African nations with limited resources to implement national climate action plans.

☐ Feminist Response to the Debt Crisis



The feminist response provided a critical perspective on the gendered impacts of the debt crisis, calling for systemic reforms that address social and economic inequalities. Key recommendations included:

- **Increasing Women's Representation:** The session emphasized the need for greater involvement of women in political and economic decision-making processes, particularly in negotiations related to debt and development policies. This inclusion is vital for ensuring that policies are gender-sensitive and responsive to the needs of women, who are disproportionately affected by austerity measures and the underfunding of social services.
- **Reforming Tax and Fiscal Systems:** The current tax structures were identified as regressive, often exacerbating gender inequalities. The feminist response called for the reform of tax systems to create fairer, more equitable policies that promote social justice and reduce the burden on low-income households.
- **Advocating for Debt Cancellation and Restructuring:** The discussion highlighted the importance of advocating for debt relief measures that consider the social and gender impacts of debt repayment. By canceling or restructuring debt, African nations would have greater fiscal space to invest in essential services such as health, education, and social protection systems.
- **Strengthening Regional Institutions:** The feminist response called for the establishment of strong regional institutions capable of leading Africa's financial independence. Such institutions would play a crucial role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in economic policymaking.

□ Envisioning Debt Justice for Africa

The session concluded with a vision of what debt justice could look like for African nations. Tatenda and other speakers presented a roadmap for achieving fair and equitable debt management, rooted in principles of sovereignty, reparations, and international solidarity:

- **National Declaration:** A bold stance was proposed, asserting that no country should have to choose between climate action and development. Debt restructuring and relief should be guided by a new global finance charter that centers the needs of developing countries.
- **Accra Proclamation on Reparations:** The call for reparations was underscored as a necessary step in addressing the historical injustices of colonialism, which laid the foundations for the current debt crisis.
- **UN Tax Convention and Sovereign Debt Workout Mechanism:** The session advocated for the establishment of a UN-backed mechanism to address sovereign debt issues, ensuring equitable solutions that consider the quantity, quality, and accessibility of debt relief measures.
- **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs):** The use of SDRs was proposed as a tool for providing immediate financial relief to African nations, helping them navigate the current debt crisis while investing in social and climate resilience.

□ Debt as a Legacy of Colonialism

The discussion brought forth a powerful critique of the origins of Africa's debt, linking it to the legacy of colonial exploitation. A quote by Thom encapsulated this sentiment: "Debt origins come from



colonialism's origins. Those who lend us money are those who colonized us. They are the same ones who used to manage our states and economies. These are the colonizers who indebted Africa." This statement underscores the historical continuity of financial dependency, where former colonial powers and international financial institutions perpetuate cycles of debt and underdevelopment.

Conclusion

This session highlighted the pressing need for a paradigm shift in the way debt is managed on the continent. It looked at the importance of reimagining debt justice in a way that acknowledges historical injustices, centers social and environmental priorities, and empowers African nations to reclaim their economic sovereignty.

4. Dare to Dream – Alternatives to GDP, Delinking, and Degrowth

By Rumbidzayi Makoni, ActionAid International

The session explored the limitations of GDP as a measure of economic success and proposed bold alternatives that prioritize human well-being, social equity, and environmental sustainability. The presentation challenged conventional economic paradigms and called for a reimagined economic system that centers care, well-being, and a pan-African approach to development.

Key Discussions

☐ Why Alternatives, Delinking, and Degrowth?

Makoni began the session by questioning the pervasive reliance on GDP as a primary indicator of economic progress. GDP, she argued, is a flawed measure that focuses solely on economic output without considering the broader social, environmental, and human costs.

- **Neglect of Care Work:** GDP calculations fail to account for unpaid and underpaid care work, predominantly performed by women. This omission overlooks the fundamental role of care in sustaining economies and communities.
- **Consumerism and Mental Health:** GDP's emphasis on economic growth fuels consumerism, often at the expense of mental health and social well-being. The focus on material output neglects issues such as rising rates of depression and mental health crises, which are exacerbated by exploitative labor practices and environmental degradation.
- **Ignoring Human Development:** GDP disregards essential human development indicators such as literacy, education, and the happiness index. By measuring success only in terms of financial growth, GDP fails to reflect improvements in quality of life and overall societal well-being.

☐ Proposed Alternatives: Well-Being and Care Economies

Makoni presented a compelling case for moving beyond GDP to embrace alternative economic models that place people and the environment at the forefront.



- **People Over Profit:** The new economic paradigm prioritizes the well-being of individuals over profit-making. This shift would lead to the provision of essential public goods and services, including robust social protection systems that safeguard the most vulnerable members of society.
- **End to Labor Exploitation:** The alternatives proposed include an end to exploitative labor practices that undervalue or ignore the contributions of care work, particularly by women. Recognizing and compensating for care work would be central to building a more equitable economy.
- **Popular Education and Accountability:** The session emphasized the need for popular education on rights, as well as increased transparency and accountability from governments. By educating communities on their rights and holding governments to account, citizens can actively participate in shaping economic policies that reflect their needs and values.

□ Case Study: Care and Well-Being Economies in Malawi

The presentation highlighted Malawi as an example of the urgent need for care and well-being economies, given the country's experiences with gendered austerity, debt distress, and the climate crisis.

- **Gendered Austerity:** Economic austerity measures in Malawi have disproportionately affected women, who bear the brunt of cuts to social services and increased care responsibilities.
- **Debt Distress:** Covid and spiralling inflation pushed Malawi into debt distress, further constraining its ability to finance desperately needed public services, which are so crucial for women's rights and the ability to respond to the climate crisis
- **Climate Crisis and food insecurity:** Malawi's debt burden has left little room for investments in climate resilience and social protection. The intersection of debt and climate vulnerability has created a precarious situation, highlighting the need for a different approach to economic development.

□ Setting the Pan-African Agenda: Delinking from Neoliberal Economics

Makoni called for a radical rethinking of Africa's economic strategies, advocating for delinking from the exploitative and colonial economic models that continue to dominate the continent's policy landscape.

- **Cutting Unhealthy Ties:** The session highlighted the importance of severing exploitative economic relationships with former colonial powers. An example given was the recent migration of African care workers to the UK, illustrating ongoing economic dependency and exploitation.
- **Building a Pan-African Vision:** Makoni emphasized the need for Africa to create a new, truly pan-African economic model that rejects neoliberal measures and embraces local



values. This vision includes a focus on care economies and prioritizing unpaid and underpaid care work as essential components of economic policy.

- **Localizing Economies and Redefining Value:** A key part of delinking involves redefining what value means for African communities. Instead of adhering to foreign economic measures, Africa should develop localized indicators that reflect the well-being and aspirations of its people.

□ Rejecting the Neoliberal Matrix

The presentation concluded with a call to reject the neoliberal framework that perpetuates inequality and undermines human development.

- **Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** The neoliberal economic model often fails to address or exacerbates issues like gender-based violence. A human development index that includes gender parity indicators (such as the Gender Parity Index) was proposed as a more inclusive measure of progress.
- **A New Human Development Approach:** Makoni suggested adopting a holistic human development approach that centers care, equity, and environmental sustainability, rather than traditional growth metrics like GDP.

□ Key Takeaway: Radical Change for a New Economic System

The session underscored the need for a complete overhaul of the current economic system, echoing Audre Lorde's famous words: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." This quote served as a rallying cry for participants, emphasizing that real change cannot be achieved within the confines of the existing neoliberal framework. Instead, a new economic system must be built—one that is rooted in social justice, ecological sustainability, and the values of care and well-being.

Conclusion

The presentation challenged participants to rethink Africa's economic future by daring to dream of alternatives that prioritize people, the environment, and social equity over profit and consumerism. The discussion called for a break from the colonial and neoliberal economic models that have historically shaped Africa's development, advocating instead for a pan-African agenda rooted in local values and collective well-being.



THE POLITICS OF THE JUST TRANSITION: FORGING A NEW NARRATIVE FOR AFRICA'S JUST TRANSITION - DAY 2

Moderated by Anne Tek, FEMNET

1. Building one symphony: The right to water, food, land and seed

Led by Ruth Nyambura, African Ecofeminist Collective

Overview

The session focused on exploring the interconnected rights to water, food, land, and seeds. Ruth opened by expressing her reservations about the term "just transition," questioning its effectiveness in addressing the root causes of the current climate, environmental, and biodiversity crises. The session revolved around three critical questions that shaped the discussion:

Key discussions

☐ Who Defines the Crises?

Ruth challenged the audience to reflect on who holds the power to define the climate, environmental, food, land, and seed crises. She highlighted the hegemonic narratives that often shape our understanding of these crises, particularly through mainstream and Western lenses. This power to define the problem also translates into the power to shape policy solutions. For example, discussions around food security cannot happen without addressing seed sovereignty, and neither can be fully understood without considering the politics of land.

☐ Historical Context and the Land Question

The discussion emphasized the importance of understanding the historical context of land inequality, a legacy of colonialism that persists today. Ruth pointed out that in many African countries, land ownership remains deeply unequal. She cited examples from Kenya and South Africa, where the colonial legacy of land distribution has led to ongoing land injustices. The significance of land goes beyond its economic value; it holds cultural, spiritual, and ancestral meaning, making land struggles a deeply emotional and symbolic issue.

Ruth explained the concept of the "commons," a term that refers to shared resources like land and seeds, traditionally managed by communities through systems of stewardship and kinship. However, colonialism and capitalism disrupted these communal practices, leading to a market-driven approach that often disregards power imbalances. The current "willing buyer, willing seller" model of land transactions fails to account for the historical injustices and deep inequalities that persist, raising questions about genuine consent and fairness.

☐ The Impact of Neoliberalism and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)



Ruth identified a resurgence of neoliberal policies, which she termed "neoliberalism 2.0," that echo the era of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s. These policies, imposed by international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, dismantled state support systems in sectors like health, education, and agriculture. SAPs undermined land redistribution efforts, disrupted traditional agricultural practices, and introduced seed and trade laws that criminalize the use of indigenous seeds.

This neoliberal governance approach tends to frame the climate crisis as a technical problem, ignoring its political and economic dimensions. By depoliticizing the crisis, the responsibility for adaptation and mitigation is shifted away from its structural causes, reinforcing a cycle of exploitation and inequality.

☐ Revisiting the Politics of Seed Sovereignty

Ruth raised concerns about the increasing push for the privatization and patenting of seeds. The imposition of genetically modified (GM) and hybrid seeds, often promoted as solutions to the climate crisis, ignores the traditional knowledge and practices of small-scale farmers, particularly women. For generations, women have been the custodians of seed knowledge, adapting their farming practices to suit different climatic conditions. However, current seed laws restrict their rights to save, share, and cultivate indigenous seeds, threatening food sovereignty and deepening dependency on multinational corporations.

☐ The Role of Social Movements and Resistance

The session highlighted the importance of African social movements, especially women's movements, in reimagining environmental justice and challenging the neoliberal narrative. Ruth emphasized that resistance to these policies is not new; it has deep historical roots dating back to colonial times. Today, movements across the continent continue to fight for land, seed, and food sovereignty, rooted in a vision of true liberation and freedom, rather than mere superficial empowerment.

☐ The Call for a Feminist, Decolonial Approach

Ruth argued for a feminist, decolonial approach to addressing the climate crisis and agricultural systems. Such an approach would prioritize the voices of small-scale farmers, particularly women, who possess invaluable knowledge of sustainable farming practices. It calls for a radical restructuring of power and access, challenging the systems that have caused the current crises. By centering the needs of communities and reclaiming traditional knowledge, this approach aims to dismantle the colonial and capitalist structures that continue to dominate agricultural policies.

Conclusion

Ruth concluded the session by underscoring the need to address the structural root causes of the crises; colonial legacies, capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, and class inequalities. Without addressing these systemic issues, proposed solutions will likely perpetuate existing injustices. She urged the audience to critically engage with the power dynamics at play, resist neoliberal narratives, and envision alternative, community-rooted approaches.



In her final remarks, Ruth emphasized the importance of framing the struggle for land, seed, and food sovereignty as a fight for justice and true liberation, rather than settling for token rights or appeasement. She challenged participants to remember that African resistance is about demanding recognition of our humanity and the right to self-determination, not merely surviving but thriving with dignity and sovereignty.

Reflections, Reactions, Questions, and Conversations

The session sparked a dynamic discussion among participants, with key reactions and reflections from various contributors, who brought their own insights and experiences to the conversation.

- **Tshabalala:** Reflections on Communal Land Ownership Tshabalala highlighted the importance of traditional communal land ownership practices, which view land as a shared resource rather than a commodity to be bought and sold. In many African communities, individuals seeking to use land must gain the consent of the entire community rather than making a private purchase. This system of stewardship stands in stark contrast to the market-driven model favored by multinational corporations, which often seek privatized land ownership to bypass negotiations with local communities. Tshabalala warned that the increasing push towards privatization threatens these communal practices, undermining local decision-making and control over land resources.
- **Ikal:** The Need to Expand on Agrarian Movements Ikal emphasized the significance of agrarian movements, particularly those led by indigenous women, as a vital force of resistance against neoliberal agricultural policies. These movements are not limited to Africa but are part of a global struggle, with strong resistance seen in Latin America and parts of Asia. Ikal called for a deeper recognition of the interconnected nature of these struggles across continents, as they challenge the international economic order that prioritizes corporate interests over the needs and rights of small-scale farmers. Expanding the scope of agrarian movements can help build a more unified front against exploitative global practices.
- **Prof. Ssali:** Engaging with International Economic Policies Prof. Ssali provided a critical analysis of international economic policies, underscoring how institutions like the IMF and World Bank have systematically undermined local economies. She referenced the 1990 World Bank Report, which explicitly outlined strategies to weaken African self-reliance, particularly by encouraging investment in health services while neglecting agricultural production. This approach was designed to increase dependency on foreign imports rather than support local food sovereignty. Prof. Ssali argued that to effectively challenge these policies, activists must critique the underlying assumptions of these economic models, which were never intended to benefit African communities. The goal should be to expose and dismantle the ideological foundations of these institutions.
- **Sheeren:** Critique of International Financial Institutions Sheeren echoed the critique of international financial institutions (IFIs), pointing out how the policies enforced by the IMF and World Bank have systematically prioritized export-oriented agriculture at the expense of local food production. She provided the example of Egypt, where the cultivation of traditional long-staple Egyptian cotton has been restricted due to patenting and external control by multinational corporations. This reflects a broader trend of undermining indigenous knowledge and local crop varieties, pushing for hybrid and genetically modified seeds instead. Sheeren emphasized that challenging these policies does not



require expert knowledge; the complexity of the economic system is intentional, designed to dissuade public engagement. She called for collective learning and mobilization to break down these barriers and advocate for economic sovereignty.

Ruth's Closing Remarks

Ruth concluded with a strong call to action, centering the need to dismantle the power of international financial institutions, which continue to dictate exploitative economic policies that prioritize foreign markets over local needs. Ruth Nyambura reiterated that activism and resistance must focus on achieving sovereignty, justice, and true liberation. It is not enough to seek empowerment within the current exploitative framework; instead, we must strive for a radical restructuring of power dynamics, reclaiming control over our land, seeds, and food systems.

In her final reflection, Ruth emphasized the importance of centering the voices of African women and small-scale farmers, who possess the traditional knowledge and practices necessary for sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. The fight is not merely for survival but for a transformative vision of justice rooted in the historical, cultural, and ecological realities of African communities.

2. The truth about Carbon markets in Africa: Unmasking the conspiracy

Led by Collins Otieno, Hivos East Africa

Overview

The session was an eye-opening analysis of carbon markets, particularly their impact on African communities. The discussion aimed to deconstruct the dominant narratives surrounding carbon markets, exposing the hidden agendas and the exploitative nature of these mechanisms. It provided a comprehensive historical overview of carbon markets, critiqued the financial logic underpinning them, and highlighted the human rights violations linked to their implementation. The session challenged the idea that carbon markets offer a viable or equitable solution for climate mitigation, positioning them instead as a new form of neo-colonial exploitation.

Key Discussions

☐ Unveiling the Narrative of Carbon Markets

The session began by questioning the mainstream narrative around carbon markets, stressing the need to unpack these stories to understand the realities they conceal. The facilitator highlighted how these narratives have been shaped predominantly by Northern countries, often masking the underlying power dynamics and capitalist interests driving the agenda.

☐ The Origins and Evolution of Carbon Markets

The concept of carbon markets took shape in the 1990s, gaining momentum under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol through mechanisms like Joint Implementation (JI) and Clean Development Mechanisms



(CDMs). These initiatives were primarily driven by the Global North, reflecting their economic interests. Despite initial resistance from major emitters like the USA, China, and India, the adoption of the Paris Agreement marked a shift towards widespread acceptance of market-based approaches. However, this evolution has been deeply influenced by capitalist frameworks that prioritize profit over genuine climate solutions.

□ The Myth of a Financial Gap and the Role of the Private Sector

A key argument for carbon markets is the purported "financial gap" — the idea that there is insufficient funding for climate action, particularly in the Global South. Otieno challenged this narrative, arguing that the issue lies not in a lack of money but in the unwillingness of governments and international institutions to prioritize equitable climate finance. The push for private sector solutions, often championed by entities like the World Bank and IMF, diverts attention away from public financing and entrenches profit-driven approaches.

□ Economic and Environmental Realities of Carbon Markets

Proponents claim that carbon markets deliver economic and environmental benefits for the Global South. However, Otieno debunked this narrative, presenting evidence that these mechanisms often reinforce existing inequalities:

- **Economic Reality:** Carbon markets tend to divert resources away from direct public climate finance, creating a dependency on credit-based mechanisms that favor wealthy investors and corporations.
- **Environmental Reality:** Studies from the Kyoto Protocol era indicate that market-based approaches like carbon offsetting create perverse incentives, sometimes leading to increased waste generation solely to earn carbon credits. This contradicts the principles of climate justice as outlined in the Paris Agreement, which advocates for equitable and direct climate finance.

□ Debunking the "High-Integrity" African Carbon Markets Narrative

There is a growing narrative around "high-integrity" or "Africa-centric" carbon markets, which are supposedly designed to benefit African communities. Otieno argued that this framing is misleading, as these projects are often driven by buyers from the Global North, maintaining the same exploitative dynamics seen in earlier initiatives. These projects frequently result in land dispossession and disempowerment of local communities, who are not adequately consulted or compensated.

□ The Exploitative Nature of Carbon Markets

Otieno highlighted how carbon markets are rooted in an exploitative framework that mirrors colonial extraction. By shifting the burden of emissions reduction onto the Global South, these markets perpetuate a capitalist logic that prioritizes profit over equitable solutions. The reliance on offsetting mechanisms allows wealthy countries and corporations to avoid making substantial changes to their emissions, placing the responsibility instead on the private sector in the Global South.



☐ The Illogical Competition for Carbon Credits

Otieno argued that it is illogical for African countries, already facing severe climate impacts, to compete for carbon credits within a market-driven framework that favors established capitalist structures. Mechanisms like REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) often tap into public climate finance, diverting funds meant for direct adaptation and mitigation efforts. This emphasis on private investments undermines the need for public financing, which is critical for long-term, sustainable climate action.

☐ Carbon Markets as a Form of Neo-Colonialism

The session concluded with a powerful critique of carbon markets as a neo-colonial tool that perpetuates exploitation under the guise of climate action. Otieno highlighted how these market mechanisms are in direct conflict with the principles of climate justice, as outlined in key articles of the Paris Agreement (e.g., Articles 2, 7, 9, and 10), which emphasize the importance of equitable and direct climate finance.

Otieno urged the room to critically examine the role of carbon markets within the broader context of climate justice. He called for a shift away from market-based solutions towards direct, equitable financing mechanisms that center the needs and voices of affected communities, particularly in the Global South. The reliance on carbon markets, as currently structured, represents a failure to address the root causes of the climate crisis and serves to perpetuate inequities and exploitation.

He called on everyone to challenge prevailing narratives around carbon markets and advocate for alternatives rooted in justice, equity, and the lived realities of communities most impacted by climate change. This includes supporting movements that demand reparative public finance and resist the neoliberal, extractive models driving the current climate agenda.

Reflections, reactions, questions and conversations.

- ☐ Anne Tek raised concerns about the relevance of carbon markets to grassroots women in rural villages, especially in cases where investors present these markets as economic solutions. She questioned if women should accept or reject such proposals, given that people in Africa have already faced livelihood disruptions. She pointed out that some may see carbon markets as a form of ecological benefit, but there's confusion around how to balance the interests of science, economics, and identifying "false solutions."
- ☐ Raghda Shaloudy shared experiences from a background in international development, emphasizing the perspective that African nations are being taught governance practices by external powers that are also benefiting from Africa's resources. They questioned how Africa could ensure that external actors are held accountable and don't exploit African resources under the guise of aid, advocating for policies that clearly state Africa's ownership over its resources.
- ☐ Beatrice likened carbon markets to "washing debt" using African resources. Rather than benefiting Africa, carbon credits may encourage continued pollution by wealthier countries, who then offload the responsibility of environmental cleanup onto African nations. They argued that this approach isn't truly supportive of Africa's long-term sustainability.



- Ikal highlighted the need to unpack the complex history and ideology surrounding carbon markets, noting the evolution of this issue from REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) to carbon trading. She pointed out that private sector interests started profiting from carbon markets in Africa long before they were institutionalized. The market disparity was emphasized: carbon trades cheaply in Africa (\$7-10) compared to much higher prices in Europe (\$96-120), illustrating economic inequity. Ikal argued that while these markets might bring money to local groups, they limit Africa's productive capabilities, making communities dependent on foreign systems that don't serve African interests effectively.
- Miriam Talwisa voiced frustration over how market mechanisms such as carbon credits don't align with the realities faced by local women, who end up buying expensive "energy-saving" stoves with royalties benefiting the innovators rather than the users. She criticized these "false solutions" as disconnected from the needs of African women. Talwisa also argued that by signing onto the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, Africa lost some of its rights by agreeing to national contributions (NDCs) toward emissions reductions, despite Africa's minimal role in causing climate change.
- Elizabeth Lwanga noted the need for Transparency in Financial Flows. Elizabeth expressed the need for clarity on the volume of money being generated by carbon markets, who receives these funds, and how they are utilized. Without transparency, it's difficult to understand the true impact of carbon markets on environmental conservation and climate change. She emphasized that information must be accessible for ordinary people to comprehend the real consequences of carbon markets, beyond just the technical and financial aspects. She further raised concerns about the broader implications of carbon markets on Africa's industrialization and development. She highlighted how current regulations and rules might hinder Africa's progress, tying the continent's hands and preventing local industrial growth, while larger global actors continue to extract resources without addressing the underlying issues.
- Evelyn raised concerns about Tax Evasion and Abuse. She further highlighted the issue of carbon markets potentially facilitating tax evasion. She noted Kenya's establishment of an International Financial Centre, which resembles a tax haven, as a red flag. The center's role seems geared towards financial activities linked to carbon trading, raising concerns about greenwashing and tax abuses by entities operating within this space. She further pointed out the difficulty in taxing the actual beneficiaries of carbon credits, who are often based outside the country and therefore not taxable within Africa. This complicates efforts to ensure local benefits from carbon trading projects. She mentioned confusion among local revenue authorities about how to effectively tax these transactions, suggesting a lack of regulatory clarity. Evelyn expressed that carbon markets cannot be addressed in Africa without tackling the issue of environmental conservationism, which often has roots in colonial approaches. She argued that these frameworks perpetuate control over African resources, benefiting external interests more than local communities.
- Maria Matui also shared insights from Tanzania, where there is increasing political interest in carbon trading, often coupled with misinformation spread by traders. Politicians seem to protect the interests of traders rather than prioritize community welfare. She emphasized the need for greater understanding and involvement from civil society in carbon trading discussions, noting that many organizations may not fully grasp the complexities of carbon markets. There seems to



be a disconnect between civil society's role and the information being shared by carbon trading proponents. Maria recounted an incident where wealthy representatives from the UAE presented an adaptation program targeting local Tanzanian communities. However, they lacked clarity on partnerships and the role of the local community in these projects. The lack of proper Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was evident, with communities being portrayed as mere beneficiaries without active participation in decision-making.

She shared an example of a Carbon Trading Company in Tanzania that has gained popularity in the country largely due to government support and protection. This company seemed indifferent to local concerns, focusing instead on selling carbon credits and presenting a façade of environmental responsibility. She noted that she previously questioned the involvement of local women and girls in the process, but representatives of the company were dismissive, suggesting that the communities did not know how to use the funds allocated to them and implying that the company was handling their needs, such as taking children to school. She expressed concern that the lack of policy inclusion coupled with bureaucratic processes carbon trading in Tanzania appear to be influenced by a small group of rich individuals who are benefiting from this process consequently excluding local communities, particularly women from consultations. Bureaucratic hurdles make it difficult for civil society to engage effectively, with little progress on inclusivity despite multiple requests for participation.

- Joan Chingamba said that as young women in her community, carbon markets are a relatively new concept to them. Recently, a Kenyan organization presented a session on carbon markets, which initially seemed promising. However, after listening to Collins' presentation, she now feels confused and disillusioned. The optimism she once had about carbon markets as an opportunity has turned to concern, prompting her to ask how the research and information on carbon markets are being disseminated, particularly to communities that are directly impacted. Joan emphasized the need for broader communication and education on carbon markets, especially considering the involvement of both government and civil society structures.
- Virginia expressed concerns about the divergence in narratives around climate justice noting a lack of consensus in the climate justice space about carbon markets. While some activists advocate against them, others are actively mobilizing communities to participate, often presenting carbon credits as beneficial. She thus stressed the importance of critically examining the exploitation inherent in carbon markets, particularly the exploitation of rural women who may be pressured to give up land without understanding the full implications or benefits. The issue of benefit-sharing was highlighted, with Virginia questioning how much communities actually gain from these transactions, as the promises made to them are often not fulfilled.
- Tricia argued against the current trend of Trading Away Sovereignty and Livelihoods. Tricia provided a critical perspective on what is actually being traded in carbon markets, asserting that it goes beyond carbon; it includes the lives, food sovereignty, and autonomy of African people. She explained that the types of trees planted for carbon sequestration are often not aligned with Africa's food systems, leading to issues like water drainage and a loss of biodiversity, which further undermines food security and sovereignty. She further highlighted how land is essentially being sold cheaply under the guise of carbon markets, transforming it into public or conservation land without any real intention of returning it to the community once the markets expire. Tricia argued that carbon markets perpetuate existing economic structures, where Africa continues to be



seen as a provider of resources and "care" for the global community, burdening African women in particular. The narrative implies that Africa must now provide "clean air" for the world, echoing historical patterns of exploitation. She critiqued the false narrative presented to local communities, blaming them for environmental degradation due to activities like charcoal cooking or subsistence farming. This distracts from the real, large-scale polluters who drive the climate crisis. Tricia pointed out that promises of financial benefits from carbon markets, such as a supposed payout of ten million, are misleading. The actual amount received by the community is minimal after various intermediaries take their cuts. She concluded by challenging the idea of carbon markets being a "win-win" solution. In reality, she argued, the local communities are often left with little to show for their participation, raising doubts about who truly benefits from these transactions.

- Patricia referenced a 2023 report by Power Shift Africa (The Africa Carbon Markets Initiative: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing) that fundamentally changed her perspective on carbon markets. The report highlighted how carbon markets are part of the financialization of the climate crisis, turning it into a transaction involving an "imaginary commodity" (i.e., reduced or avoided carbon emissions) rather than tangible goods. She emphasized that this abstraction makes it easy for those in power to exaggerate the benefits of carbon markets, while local communities do not see any real gains. Patricia highlighted the problem of land being commodified for carbon offset projects. This often involves taking land from poor communities under the guise of "voluntary" agreements, even though genuine consent is rarely obtained. She urged participants to scrutinize what is being labeled as "voluntary" in these transactions, as the dynamics of power and coercion make true consent nearly impossible. She concluded by referencing earlier discussions on the concept of the "willing buyer, willing seller," urging participants to interrogate the power imbalances at play. Patricia called for a deeper examination of the so-called voluntary nature of these carbon market initiatives, emphasizing that they often exploit vulnerable communities.
- Ruth responded by addressing the question of power, emphasizing that policies and proposals, including seed laws and carbon markets, are shaped externally, often by powerful global actors (e.g., consultancy firms like McKinsey, philanthropic organizations, and diplomats from the Global North). Ruth pointed out the lack of African agency in critical decisions, even at high-profile events like the African Climate Summit. Despite being held on African soil, the summit was influenced heavily by non-African actors, highlighting a deep disconnect between the decision-makers and the African communities impacted by these policies. Ruth critiqued the notion of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), arguing that discussions around consent are flawed if they are premised on fundamentally oppressive intentions (e.g., projects that inherently exploit communities). She used a metaphor of domestic violence to illustrate how power imbalances invalidate consent.

She further shared an experience working with communities impacted by carbon market projects, particularly referencing the REDD+ readiness project funded by the World Bank and UN, which led to the displacement of local people, including the Ogiek community in Kenya. Ruth connected these issues to gender and care work, highlighting how carbon market projects often target women, who are then exploited under the guise of empowerment. She cited a project in Western Kenya by the Vi Agroforestry organization as an example where women farmers were forced into contracts that dictated the use of hybrid seeds and specific fertilizers, benefitting



agribusiness corporations rather than the local community. She highlighted the feminization of African agriculture, where women are mobilized to participate in projects that exploit their labor while portraying them as beneficiaries. She concluded by discussing the importance of political and ideological literacy, noting that African governments and negotiators often lack a deep understanding of the broader political implications of these projects, leading to decisions that open up African resources to exploitative global markets.

- Faith raised a question about whether carbon markets should indeed be considered a source of climate finance or rather a trade in environmental services that therefore earns the continent revenue that it can use to finance its other development priorities? She pointed out that Africa has for centuries provided unpaid environment services in terms of carbon sinks to the global North. With their carbon budgets depleted and at the verge of business closure, the neoliberal capitalist, majority of whom are in the Global North have now decided to dangle money at Africa to persuade the continent to preserve its carbon sinks, so that the Global North states can continue to emit green house gasses unabated. Faith thus argued that perhaps, this is the time for Africa to leverage its regionalization, and pursue a unified continental approach to carbon trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and negotiate for fair terms for their carbon sinks, especially as many carbon sinks span different African country borders, and thus, no single African country could potentially claim ownership over certain extensive carbon sinks. For example, the Congo basin spans 6 African countries.
- Prof. Ssali emphasized the depletion of natural forests due to carbon market projects. He noted that the focus on planting new forests often leads to a reduction in natural forest cover, undermining biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. She also highlighted the role of local elites and power brokers in land grabbing, noting that these actors often participate in meetings and negotiations, then return to their communities and exploit local land for personal gain. She urged participants to recognize the internal power dynamics and complicity among local leaders. Prof. Ssali shared a historical perspective on the role of academics, noting that many scholars in African universities who criticized neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s faced backlash and were sidelined by their governments. She highlighted how the academic landscape shifted towards less critical disciplines like public administration, resulting in a loss of critical political analysis in academia.

Collins Response

Understanding Carbon Markets for Local Women: Collins started by addressing the question about what carbon markets mean for a grassroots woman. He explained that carbon markets are linked to conditional Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) targets, which include sectors like agriculture, energy, water, and forestry. Essentially, any sector where emissions are reduced can generate carbon credits. The issue, however, is that many local women have little to no understanding of carbon market agreements, and yet indirectly commit themselves to taking up certain responsibilities and or obligations. They are often given products like solar lanterns without informed consent, while developers profit by claiming carbon credits from these projects.



Lack of Transparency in Carbon Market Projects: Collins highlighted the absence of transparency in carbon market transactions. He noted that communities rarely see detailed project agreements, and how credits are registered and sold because there is often no local communities' input. He noted that the process begins with identifying community issues, yet communities themselves are not consulted. The decision-making is driven by external actors who shape policies to attract private sector investments, often sidelining local needs.

Impact on Local Livelihoods: Collins pointed out that carbon market initiatives can disrupt traditional livelihoods, particularly in pastoralist communities. He gave an example of land that has been used communally for generations suddenly being restricted for carbon market projects. This limits local women's access to resources like firewood, making it difficult for them to continue their traditional practices. The land-use changes and restrictions are presented as necessary for carbon credits, but in reality, they often disempower local communities.

External Influence and Ownership of NDCs: Collins criticized the involvement of external organizations, like GIZ, in developing African countries' NDCs. He questioned why foreign agencies are driving these processes and what they stand to gain. He argued that this undermines local ownership and perpetuates the narrative that African countries lack the capacity to manage their own climate goals.

Greenwashing and Evolving Markets: Collins acknowledged the issue of greenwashing through carbon markets, where the projects are presented as eco-friendly but primarily serve corporate interests. He noted that markets are constantly evolving, introducing new mechanisms like biodiversity credits, which further complicate the landscape and may not prioritize genuine climate action.

Transparency and Accountability Challenges: He emphasized the lack of transparency and accountability in the carbon market space. Credits are often sold at low prices (e.g., \$5-\$75) in Africa, but when traded internationally, they can fetch up to \$150. This disparity raises questions about who truly benefits from these transactions, hinting at a capitalist agenda behind the climate interventions.

Institutional Framework and Double Counting: Collins explained the institutional framework governing carbon markets, including the role of the Designated National Authority (DNA). The DNA is responsible for validating and registering credits to prevent double counting—where a credit is counted both by the country of origin and by the buyer. He underscored the importance of this process to maintain integrity in carbon trading.

Adaptation Finance and Justice Issues: Collins addressed the link between adaptation finance and carbon markets, noting that a portion of the revenue from carbon credits (e.g., a 2% levy under the Clean Development Mechanism) is meant to fund adaptation projects. However, he highlighted the justice issue, questioning why communities must essentially fund their own adaptation needs through a system that profits off their resources. He suggested that this points to a deeper systemic problem, emphasizing the need for more equitable sources of finance for adaptation.

Collins' response addresses key concerns and ongoing developments in carbon market engagement, particularly from an African perspective. The primary focus is on the evolving narratives around carbon



markets, the integrity of market mechanisms, and the implications of engaging with international carbon market initiatives. His insights highlight the tension between leveraging these markets for climate finance and the risk of reinforcing existing power imbalances.

A central theme in Collins' remarks is the challenge of creating carbon markets that genuinely reflect the needs and interests of African stakeholders. There is a growing recognition of the importance of high-integrity markets, but concerns persist about the risks of blindly adopting external models without sufficient scrutiny. The process of establishing these markets must involve a critical assessment to avoid the pitfalls of previous mechanisms, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which often fell short of delivering promised benefits to local communities.

Collins stressed concerns around the significant level of skepticism among communities regarding carbon markets. There is a growing perception that these markets often fail to deliver meaningful environmental or economic benefits at the grassroots level. Instead, they are seen as opening the door to neocolonial practices, where foreign companies dominate the market, leaving limited opportunities for local actors. This skepticism is compounded by concerns about the narrative of carbon markets as a tool for sustainable development, which many feel has not been backed by substantial evidence of positive outcomes.

Taxation and Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms: A critical issue raised in the response relates to the taxation of foreign companies operating in African carbon markets and the transparency of their economic contributions. There are concerns about whether these entities pay taxes locally and whether benefit-sharing mechanisms are effectively implemented. Collins highlighted Ghana's model of benefit-sharing as an example, noting that while some frameworks exist, their real-world impact on local communities remains questionable. The lack of clarity and enforcement in benefit-sharing raises broader questions about the fairness and equity of carbon market engagements.

The Trade Perspective and Regional Negotiations: Collins' analysis delves into the complexities of negotiating carbon markets as a trade service under the World Trade Organization (WTO). He suggests that engaging as a regional bloc could provide African countries with greater bargaining power. However, the fragmented nature of African political alliances and the intricate regulatory landscape of the WTO make this a challenging strategy to pursue. Additionally, considering carbon credits as an export commodity for developed countries introduces further complications, particularly in aligning regional priorities and interests.

Strategic Risks and Opportunities: The response underscores the strategic risks associated with carbon markets, especially if they are viewed merely as a mechanism for financial gain without addressing underlying issues of climate justice. The example of Kenya's recent \$12 billion deal with an international firm, linked to clean cooking initiatives, illustrates the urgency of establishing a coherent, unified approach. Collins cautioned against relying on these deals as they may represent "false solutions" that fail to tackle the root causes of climate inequity.

In conclusion, Collins recommended the need for a measured and strategic approach to carbon market engagement, including increased scrutiny of carbon market mechanisms to ensure they align with the



interests of African communities and do not perpetuate neocolonial practices; enhanced benefit-sharing frameworks that genuinely deliver economic returns to local stakeholders; stronger regional coordination in negotiations to increase bargaining power and ensure that African interests are adequately represented; and a careful evaluation of carbon markets as a potential export commodity, recognizing the risk of prioritizing short-term financial gain over long-term sustainability and equity.

3. Climate finance: Who must pay and what?

Led by Faith Lumonya, Akina Mama wa Afrika

Overview

This session explored the critical topic of climate finance; examining who bears the responsibility for paying and what should be financed. The discussion shed light on the complexities of climate finance, the historical responsibilities of major emitters, and the challenges faced by African nations in securing adequate funding for adaptation and mitigation efforts. The conversation also highlighted the importance of distinguishing between different types of financial flows and emphasized the need for a justice-driven approach to climate finance. Specifically, the session discussed:

➤ The Global Context of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Faith noted that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have increased significantly since the early 2000s, largely driven by fossil fuels, industry, industrial agriculture, deforestation, and land degradation, and waste. A rarely discussed but significant contributor to emissions is the military sector. In fact, the military has been described as the blind spot in global efforts to reduce GHG emission. Faith highlighted the vast carbon footprint of the US military, which is larger than any other institution globally. Despite its significant environmental impact, military emissions have been historically exempt from disclosure requirements, including during the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, due to lobbying by the US government. Although this exemption was removed during the 2015 Paris talks, reporting of military emissions remains optional.

➤ Africa's Commitment and the Financial Challenge

In this regard, Faith argued that Africa, despite being the least industrialized region with only a 1.9% share in global manufacturing and contributing less than 4% of total global GHG emissions, has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to climate action, including reducing emissions. Currently, all but two African countries have ratified the Paris Agreement, with ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Africa is disproportionately vulnerable to climate change yet countries on the continent have been pushed to having to divert up to 9% of their budgets to respond to climate extremes. She argued that existing data shows that the continent consequently has regressed on 11 SDG targets, including gender, poverty, hunger, among others.

Africa requires an estimated \$3 trillion USD (USD 1.3 trillion annually) for NDC implementation, on top of USD 100 billion per annum for infrastructure financing and USD 50 billion annually for climate



adaptation. This financial need is underscored by the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Capabilities (CBDR-RC), as emphasized in the Paris Agreement and other climate accords, recognizing that developed countries must mobilize and provide climate finance to developing countries.

➤ **Complexity in Defining Climate Finance Needs**

There is no universally accepted definition of "climate finance needs." The absence of this definition has had far reaching implications on the process of mobilizing and providing climate finance, with some developed countries pushing to expand the scope of responsibility. While some countries refer to it as the cost of adaptation and mitigation activities, as well as losses and damages others have argued that climate finance needs entail the amount of climate finance that cannot be covered by national governments. However, this goes against Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement which states that developed countries shall mobilize and provide financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation. Article 9.3 further mandates developed countries to take the lead in mobilizing climate finance from a wide variety of sources, instruments, and channels, recognizing the significant role that public funds will play in achieving these objectives.

This complexity must be further interrogated in the context of gender justice as developing countries already have multiple financial needs including provision of public goods and services on which the majority of their vulnerable populations, particularly women rely. Coupled with a narrow fiscal space, it is essential that climate finance therefore is provided as new and additional, public, grant based, long term and flexible financing as the climate crisis is a societal problem, whose financing should not seek to maximize profits or a monetary return on investment.

Reflections and Reactions

- Mariam highlighted the increasing burden of care resulting from the climate crisis and the difficulty in quantifying this in terms of climate financing needs. She further noted that the discussion highlighted the importance of integrating gendered perspectives in climate finance debates, given the disproportionate impact on women and marginalized communities.
- Ruth dubbed this as the Politics of Development. She noted that while countries like China and India are often scapegoated for emissions due to their manufacturing sectors, deep inequalities persist within these nations. Africa's lack of industrialization can be traced back to the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and the current global financial architecture, which dismantled local industries. The conversation raised the need to address the politics of development and recognize how it has been built on the exploitation of African people and people of the global South.
- Judith noted that regarding the New Collective Quantified Goal, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Regional Office for Africa was developing a report that would cover the qualitative and quantitative elements of the New Collective Quantified Goal. She noted that the report specifically sought to address questions around how much climate finance is needed to support developing countries' needs to achieve their climate plans; and how the new goal can be designed to overcome flaws in the current climate finance regime.



- Wanjoki highlighted the importance of clarity when advocating for climate finance. There is a need to distinguish between Official Development Assistance (ODA), climate finance, and reparations to avoid conflating these categories and allowing the Global North to evade their financial responsibilities. In this regard, this is why we must demand for new and additional finance for climate action. She further invited the room to also reflect deeply on how Africa's existing financial resources for climate action are being utilized and whether these funds are being effectively channeled to meet the continent's needs, particularly communities' needs.
- Jennifer highlighted the link between Climate Justice and Tax Justice noting a critical point about the intersection of the climate justice and tax justice movements and the potential for a united front. However, clarity is needed regarding the differentiation between ODA, climate finance, domestic resource mobilization, and reparations, especially when discussing measures like curbing illicit financial flows (IFFs) as a potential source of revenue for addressing the climate crisis.

Faith's Response

Curbing Emissions as the Core Solution: Lumonya emphasized that while securing climate finance is important, it is not a substitute for the need to curb emissions. It is imperative that we seek to address the root causes of the climate crisis. We must be aware of the proliferating number of false solutions, of which, climate finance is one. There is a general assumption that once climate finance is provided, that the climate crisis will completely be resolved. However, this is not the case, as those responsible for climate change, must also take additional actions to reduce their emission. This is also why some scholars and thinkers have suggested degrowth theory for developed countries.

In addition, other thinkers have also proposed “delinking” from Northern Economies, a process that would involve undoing the colonial export oriented system/ extractive relationship. The theory of "delinking" as proposed by Samir Amin argues for "breaking away" from the world capitalist system. i.e. the refusal to submit national development strategy to the imperatives of globalization. This approach would allow African countries to build self-reliant and sustainable systems of adaptation and mitigation.

Regarding the debate around public vs. private financing, Faith warned against relying on private sector financing for climate action, noting that the private sector inherently prioritizes profit accumulation over social and ecological welfare. Climate finance must be public finance to ensure that it serves the needs of communities over corporate interests. She acknowledged that indeed, work must be done to ensure that more climate finance reaches communities because current evidence shows that for every \$10 advanced for climate finance, only \$1 actually reaches the communities in Africa.

The session concluded with a clear message that the responsibility for paying climate finance lies primarily with the Global North, whose historical emissions have disproportionately contributed to the current crisis. The focus should be on securing public, grant-based climate finance. This financing must be rooted in principles of justice, equity, and human rights, addressing both adaptation and mitigation needs in a way that empowers communities rather than perpetuating existing power imbalances.



4. Pan African feminist alternatives to a just transition

Led by Dr. Sarah Ssali, Makerere University and Ikal, Friends of Lake Turkana

This session focused on exploring Pan African feminist perspectives to a just transition, emphasizing the need for economic, social, and environmental justice. The discussion highlighted the interconnected nature of patriarchy, capitalism, and neo-imperialism in the exploitation of African resources and people, and called for a feminist framework that centers liberation, accountability, and sustainable economic recovery. It called for reflection on the importance of solidarity, intersectional organizing, and challenging entrenched power structures.

Dr. Prof. Sarah Ssali.

➤ The Intersection of Oppressions: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Imperialism

Africa is the most resource-rich landmass globally, yet its wealth continues to be extracted under a system of capitalism-imperialism. This exploitation forms the foundation of the global economic system, resulting in the oppression of African people both on the continent and in the diaspora. Prof. Ssali emphasized that the struggle for African liberation is inseparable from the fight for the liberation of African women. Feminism, while a later label in this context, should not become a source of division but a framework for collective liberation from all forms of oppression. The discussion further highlighted the intersection of capitalist and patriarchal exploitation, making the case for a Pan African feminist framework as a crucial lens for analyzing and challenging these systemic issues.

➤ Pan African Feminist Framework for Economic Recovery

Central to the Pan African feminist approach is the goal of achieving a just and sustainable economic recovery. This involves shifting away from extractive, profit-driven economic models to systems that prioritize the well-being of African communities and ecosystems. She also stressed the need for increased local production, particularly in agriculture, as a pathway to self-reliance and economic resilience. The conversation further explored how economic policies shape societal norms, and how political shifts can influence economic structures, underscoring the need for a holistic and integrated approach.

➤ Leveraging Regional Integration: The AfCFTA

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was highlighted as a strategic opportunity for advancing a Pan African agenda. With 55 member countries and 8 regional trading blocs, the AfCFTA provides a platform for promoting intra-African trade and economic cooperation. However, Prof. Ssali noted that critical allyship and a shared agenda are essential to fully leverage such frameworks. This will require a paradigm shift from the current siloed approach imposed by Western economic structures.

Ikal Ang'elei

➤ Agro-Ecology and Energy Justice



Ikaal emphasized that agro-ecology is not a new concept for African women; it is an approach that is rooted in traditional practices that have sustained communities for generations. However, these practices are often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream climate and development conversations.

In addition, the concept of energy justice must be discussed in a way that also confronts the realities of energy generation projects that displace communities, as seen in regions like the DRC. Energy democracy — the right of communities to decide how energy is generated and distributed — must be at the center of discussions on just transitions.

➤ Fragmentation in Pan African Feminist Work

Ikal pointed out the fragmentation within Pan African feminist organizing, noting that important issues like taxation are often addressed reactively rather than proactively. There is a need to understand the broader supply chains and economic systems that lead to issues like tax injustice. She called for organizing women differently to address economic justice in a way that reflects the diverse realities of different constituencies of African women, urging for a focus on intersectional organizing.

Reflections and Key Questions Raised:

- Mariam questioned whether current African agendas are truly reflective of African interests or if they have been shaped by external influences. This sparked a discussion on the need to develop and advocate for authentic, home-grown solutions that align with the lived experiences of African people.
- Taxation and Structural Transformation: There was a debate on whether taxation, particularly of multinational corporations, constitutes structural transformation if those companies remain controlled by elite interests. The reaction underscored the importance of addressing the underlying power dynamics and ownership structures that perpetuate inequality.
- Substantive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Spaces; The reflection emphasized the importance of substantive rather than merely quantitative representation of women in decision-making spaces. It is not enough to increase the number of women in leadership roles; the focus must be on ensuring that these women represent the interests and issues of African women, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- Participants called for a more intentional approach to "calling in" African women who have access to power, to ensure they advocate for collective interests rather than individual or elite concerns.
- Challenging and Disrupting Power; A key reflection from the session was the need to enter political spaces with the intent to challenge and disrupt existing power structures. The goal is to create transformative change rather than seek inclusion within an unjust system.

Conclusion

The session concluded with a powerful call to action: African feminists must unite across borders and constituencies to build a shared vision for a just transition that is rooted in liberation, equity, and sustainability. This vision requires:



- ❑ A Paradigm Shift in Organizing: Moving away from fragmented, siloed approaches imposed by Western economic models towards integrated, intersectional feminist organizing.
- ❑ Local Production and Self-Reliance: Prioritizing increased agricultural production and economic self-reliance to reduce dependency on exploitative global systems.
- ❑ Energy Democracy and Justice: Advocating for energy policies that center community control and resist displacement caused by profit-driven projects.
- ❑ Authentic Representation and Leadership: Ensuring that African women in decision-making spaces are advocating for the interests of African communities, with a focus on substantive representation.
- ❑ Holistic, Intersectional Analysis: Understanding and addressing the interconnected nature of economic, social, and environmental injustices through a Pan African feminist lens.

A. Closing: Towards a Radical Reconstruction Agenda

By Sarah Nannyondo Okello and Jennifer Lipenga, Akina Mama wa Afrika

This session focused on planning the upcoming **Rethink Space 2025**, a strategic gathering aimed at co-creating a collective vision for feminist and social justice movements. Sarah invited participants to reflect on the following proposed objectives of the Rethink space within groups; as well as a series of questions that were shared:

Objectives of the Rethink space:

- To create a platform for dialogue, reflection, and strategic planning for a **radical reconstruction agenda**.
- To foster **co-creation** of a collective vision and strategies for feminist organizing in 2025 and beyond.
- To break silos within the feminist movement and encourage **cross-sector collaboration**.

Key Discussion Questions:

1. Who should be engaged, and who should be in the room?
2. What topics should be prioritized for discussion?
3. How should the space be organized for maximum impact?
4. How can creativity be infused into the event?
5. How do we sustain momentum and engagement beyond the Rethink Space?

Group Feedback and Recommendations:

Topics, actors that should be added	Key issues discussed
Focus on Militarization and Impacted Communities	Engagement: Emphasize the inclusion of voices directly impacted by foreign militarization, particularly communities from conflict zones and frontline defenders.



	<p>Prioritized Topic: The role of foreign militarization in perpetuating systemic inequalities and undermining African sovereignty.</p> <p>Recommendation: Ensure that discussions around militarization are centered on lived experiences and grassroots perspectives.</p>
Inclusion of Decision Makers and Multilingual Access	<p>Engagement: Invite decision makers, policymakers, and key stakeholders who can influence systemic change, alongside grassroots activists.</p> <p>Organization: Provide translation services to accommodate non-English speakers, ensuring language inclusivity.</p> <p>Follow-up: Share a brief report or summary of discussions and outcomes to keep participants informed and engaged post-event.</p>
Grassroots, Creative Voices, and Strategic Policy Mapping	<p>Engagement: Prioritize participation from grassroots organizations, creatives (artists, musicians, poets), and local community leaders.</p> <p>Prioritized Topics: Climate finance, debt justice, and the intersection of economic and climate policy.</p> <p>Strategic Focus: Develop a map of critical policy spaces for the year, identifying key forums, decision-making bodies, and opportunities for feminist advocacy.</p>
Progressive Leadership and Silo-Breaking	<p>Engagement: Engage progressive women leaders, particularly those active within the African Union (AU), trade forums, and entrepreneurial networks.</p> <p>Prioritized Topics: Food sovereignty, corporate power in agriculture, and investment in learning opportunities such as virtual deep dives (e.g., on the African Continental Free Trade Area - AfCFTA).</p> <p>Organizational Strategy: Facilitate cross-sector dialogues to break silos between different feminist spaces (e.g., tax and trade, climate justice), and integrate organizing efforts even without in-person meetings.</p> <p>Creative Approach: Incorporate more creativity in the event, utilizing interactive formats and artistic contributions.</p>
Youth, Media, and Feminist Theory in Practice	<p>Engagement: Ensure the inclusion of Gen Z participants, media representatives, and private sector stakeholders to bring diverse perspectives into the conversation.</p> <p>Reflection: Plan a dedicated session to reflect on strategies for sustaining the conversation, with or without external funding.</p> <p>Creative Integration: Involve creatives such as artists and poets to infuse the space with cultural expression, making the event more dynamic and engaging.</p>



	Thematic Focus: Explore the relationship between feminism as theory and practice , emphasizing how feminist principles can be operationalized in various contexts.
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Key Recommendations for Organizing the Rethink Space 2025

☐ **Inclusive Participation:**

- o Prioritize inviting a diverse group of participants, including grassroots leaders, policy makers, creatives, Gen Z activists, and representatives from different sectors (e.g., trade, climate justice, private sector).
- o Provide translation services and ensure accessibility for non-English speaking participants to foster a truly inclusive environment.

☐ **Strategic Topics for Discussion:**

- o Focus on key issues like **foreign militarization, climate finance, debt justice, and food sovereignty**.
- o Integrate discussions on **economic justice** and explore how the AfCFTA and other regional agreements can be leveraged for feminist advocacy.

☐ **Innovative Space Design:**

- o Organize the space to encourage **interactive and participatory dialogue**, moving away from traditional conference formats.
- o Use creative methods such as **visual storytelling**, artistic performances, and interactive panels to enrich the discussions.

☐ **Pre-Event Learning Opportunities:**

- o Invest in **pre-event virtual sessions** (deep dives) to provide participants with a solid grounding in key topics (e.g., AfCFTA, climate finance mechanisms).
- o Share educational resources and facilitate preparatory discussions to ensure a well-informed participant base.

☐ **Breaking Silos and Cross-Sector Collaboration:**

- o Design sessions that bring together diverse constituencies and encourage dialogue across different feminist spaces (e.g., climate justice, trade, and economic policy).
- o Use Rethink Space as a platform to **build connections** and create a unified agenda that can be carried forward collectively.



□ **Sustaining Momentum Post-Event:**

- Develop a clear **follow-up plan**, including sharing a comprehensive report of the discussions, establishing a feedback loop, and identifying key actions to implement.
- Explore innovative ways to **continue the conversation** beyond the event, such as establishing working groups, virtual discussion spaces, or collaborative projects.

Conclusion

The session concluded with a collective commitment to co-organizing the Rethink Space 2025 as a catalyst for transformative change. Participants agreed on the need to:

- Foster **solidarity and shared purpose** across feminist movements and social justice allies.
- Embrace **creative and inclusive approaches** to organizing, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and valued.
- Build a **radical reconstruction agenda** that centers the needs and aspirations of African women and communities, challenging oppressive systems and advancing a just and equitable future.