

African Women's Recommendations on Financing for Development (FFD) Conference, Addis Ababa, 13-16 July 2015

The representatives of African women's rights organizations, feminists, young women, trade unions, civil society organizations including peace-building, indigenous, faith-based and community based organizations, media and academia from across 17 countries working in the spheres of environment, agriculture, finance, health, leadership, governance, law and trade met in Nairobi from 6 – 8 May 2015 to reflect on the current debates and negotiations taking place in the Financing for Development (FfD) and the Post 2015 Agenda processes. That meeting was convened by African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) in collaboration with the Post 2015 Women's Coalition and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF). Young African feminists under the banner of Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 30-31 May 2015 to further hone their skills and identify critical systemic issues that need to be addressed under the FFD process.

On 10 July African women and feminists meeting ahead of the 3rd International Review Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) in Addis Ababa and as part of the global Women's Forum organized by the Women's Working Group (WWG) on FFD; further deliberated and strengthened the outcomes of the two meetings above. As African women we recognize the significance of the FFD Conference happening on African soil. It is therefore imperative to shine a spotlight on specific concerns affecting African women and girls. African women are the backbone of economic development in the region. However, majority of them are predominantly employed in the informal sector, are in precarious employment, in low-skilled jobs and are often marginalized in decision making particularly in the collection, control and redistribution of resources for sustainable development.

There is need to transform the current economic models to be guided by principles of gender equality, human rights, social, economic and ecological justice. In addition, African women must be meaningfully included in regional and global policy discussions; in the articulation, development, implementation, and the follow-up and review of these processes.

We also reflect on the need to ensure adequate financial allocation for the implementation of the SDGs to further the realization of gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls. These require not only fiscal resources but political will and a shift in

norms and values that ensure the systemic conditions that keep women and girls subjugated.

We also recognize the linkage between women's ability to participate in the labor market and their control over their sexual and reproductive rights. In this regard, structural reforms are needed to address unequal access to economic opportunities for African women. Care work specifically directly impacts on development and equality. Without the everyday care work that African women engage in, the realization of full development in the continent would not be possible. There is need to recognize the economic value of unpaid care work that relies heavily on women, and the need for its redistribution.

We are particularly concerned on the continued and pervasive forms of violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence, that are an obstacle to African women's contribution and participation in development processes.

Furthermore, we are astounded by the findings of the Report of the [High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows](#) which estimates illicit flows from Africa to be US \$50 billion per annum. Enactment of freedom of information laws where they do not exist, and an enhancement where they do exist, ensuring citizens are able to access information as a way to enhance transparency and accountability are very crucial. The importance of transformative leadership in decision-making cannot be underscored in order to ensure progressive fiscal policies that will curb illicit financial flows and end corruption at local and global levels.

We note that the Monterrey Declaration, called upon developed states to commit to 0.7% of GNI as ODA. We call for ODA and development cooperation that contributed to the respect, protection and fulfilment of gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. This would continue to play a key role in responding to the specific needs of women and adolescent girls especially access to public services such as sexual and reproductive health services.

The empowerment of women and girls is being limited by not only the rules of international trade and finance such as access to markets, credit and finance, agricultural subsidies but also corruption through the mismanagement of taxpayer's resources. The grand narrative of "Africa Rising" is also challenged by increasing illegal immigration, conflict escalation, inequalities and poverty levels, de-industrialization, lack of economic diversifica-

tion, consumption patterns that do not promote local entrepreneurship, growing unemployment especially among women and the youth who are the target of current “demographic dividend” initiatives, unmet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and inability to mobilize sustainable funding.

We wish to add our voices to the FFD deliberations to ensure that gender equality, empowerment and human rights of women and girls are paid attention to as a crosscutting issue while at the same time highlighting key systemic issues affecting women and girls.

We therefore call for the following:

- a. In **global partnership**, a transformative shift in the relationship between African countries and the international community that; is rooted in the principles of equality, mutual respect for the ability of Africans to undertake development within the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.
 - It should ensure respect for national policy space and the right of States to implement regulations that protect public interest including women’s human rights. African countries are involved in multiple trade negotiations and have launched the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) to build a regional market. However, women’s cross-border trade has always existed and while the extension of markets is welcome, there is a need to question for whom the market is being extended. A regional market should not be built in order to strengthen transnational companies and promote trade liberalization which would destroy all the efforts that have been made so far to build an African industry by Africans. In this context, measures to protect women’s businesses and share of markets, as well as protection of infant-industries, female-job intensive sectors and small women’s producers and women’s traditional knowledge are crucial. There is also a need to agree on public disclosure as well as ex ante and periodic human rights impact assessments of trade and investment policies.

- b. In **international finance**, there must be an end to illicit financial flows. More specifically:
 - Return of Africa’s lost resources and curbing of future leakages by changing the international rules of taxation to ensure that all states share tax revenue fairly.

- Ensure that FfD 3 addresses structural obstacles to the realization of the right to development in the continent. The global financial architecture has increased global volatility, financialisation and systemic risks, and has facilitated the draining of resources from Africa at the expense of wages and investments promoting social and economic rights. Additionally, trade and investment agreements enable companies to protect and repatriate their profits, further limiting attempts to regulate capital flight.
- Assessment of foreign direct investments (FDI) and their impact on climate change with particular attention to policies that often result in large scale forced eviction, land grabbing, loss of livelihoods and violence against women.
- Clearly state that FDI should complement and be aligned with sustainable and equitable development strategies and identified governments priority areas rather than high profit projects. Export-oriented 'extractivism,' in particular mining, has led to increased conflict and continued to devastate the environment and livelihoods by displacing small holder producers, including women farmers and small scale miners who are in the most affected. FDI should support the creation of decent work by eliminating the gender pay gap, providing technology transfer, promoting links with small and medium enterprises and fostering territorial decentralization and productive diversification in order to be accounted as a financing for development flow.
- Banning of unfair trade regulations that facilitate the dumping of cheap products including food making it difficult for developing countries to; foster south to south cooperation and develop local industries and smallholder farming systems.
- Insist on additionally and predictability of Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows. Policy conditionalities and changes in ODA definitions that privilege the rechanneling of the funds to developed countries business interests and donor countries' private sector should be removed. In addition, the ODA priorities and the priority areas should speak to the multiple and intersecting operations faced by African countries and specifically women. Finally, South-South cooperation cannot replace ODA commitments by developed countries. South-South cooperation should be based on the principle of solidarity and should not replicate unequal power relations and traditional rules of subjugation that Africa has suffered from in the last century.
- Debt relief to ensure that loan repayments and the burden on debts on Africa do not redirect finances that would otherwise cater for essential public services includ-

ing health including sexual and reproductive services, education, and water and sanitation.

c. In domestic finance, the institutionalization of progressive taxation systems and domestic resource mobilization

- Domestic finance need to promote and use more comprehensive definition of domestic resource mobilization that encompasses not only taxation but also remittances and natural resources.
- In addition, we call for gender-sensitive tax reforms geared towards removal of value added tax (VAT) on essential commodities such as food products to ensure tax regimes do not place an undue burden on all women, girls and vulnerable groups.
- We call for increased efficacy of tax collection by increasing the capacity of government administrations to collect revenue and increasing the tax literacy of domestic populations.
- Establish binding norms to safeguard human rights, labor, environmental standards and natural resources including ex ante and periodic assessments, and clear mechanisms and platforms to enforce these regulations. African states have made progress in formulating continental policies to promote investor accountability on issues such as land acquisition; however we note that they are voluntary guidelines. Additional measures such as better, transparent and accountable contract negotiation, the elimination of the secrecy of beneficial ownership and public registration should be agreed.

d. Gender responsive financial facilities to enable access of interest-free credit facilities that will encourage upward mobility of women in the formal and informal sector. Overcome the current narrow focus of women's financial inclusion by supporting women's grassroots financing mechanisms and fulfilling women's economic rights. Micro-credit programs for women can lead to excessive indebtedness and worsening of poverty conditions, especially if they are not accompanied by financial education and access to other productive resources that would promote women's autonomy.

e. Sustainable funding for development initiatives driven by a feminist, gender-responsive agenda, and gender budgeting including civil society organizations es-

pecially women rights and feminist organizations, national gender mechanisms and arms of the UN and AU that focus on gender and development to ensure stability in funding sources.

- f. A **gender audit of all international, regional, state and devolved national government budgets** to ensure gender participation in decision making, allocation, evaluation and monitoring of financing processes. Gender desegregated data should be emphasized and institutionalize in all national, regional and global policy and decision making bodies.
- g. **Industrialization should be engendered** — and promoting decent work, fair pay, living wages, better working conditions for women and a conducive environment for women to become leaders in this sector.
- h. **Informal industries** where products can be sold on the local and international market **should be encouraged and protected**.
- i. **Intellectual property rights** should not prevent access to medicine as well as technology, critical to the survival of women and girls in the process of poverty alleviation.
- j. **Sexual and reproductive health services** for women (including but not exclusive to cervical/breast cancer screening and comprehensive abortion care services) should be included in national health insurance cover.
- k. **Eradication of all taxes on essential reproductive health commodities and services** (including but not exclusive to sanitary towels, family planning services, and safe abortion services).
- l. Public financing for the establishment and running of **shelters for women survivors of violence**. Funding should be available for strengthening health systems to address and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls; including strengthening the capacity of health services and health care providers to respond to violence; strengthen the role and capacity of the health sector in programming to prevent VAWG; and ensure funding to improve research and evidence on VAWG.
- m. A specific percentage of tax revenues should be allocated to improving the existing **health infrastructure** including comprehensive and quality social protection health systems.
- n. Extractive industries: FDI extractive activities especially mining should be directed to addressing to structural issues including; funding small scale miners to have them engage the effectively in policy agreements, formulation, apply technology, address environmental issues, prompting backward and forward linkages; not leaving pow-

ers to funders/large and small miners to decide on ways to allocate cooperate social responsibility; give voice to space to communities issue of compensation to be decided by women and men at community and national level.

- o. Energy, Water and sanitation: Water is life, sanitation is dignity, water and sanitation has been a huge challenge for the African women and the continent in general which further impoverished them in terms of health, economic status, livelihood and wellbeing. We advocate for a rights based approach that does not leave this responsibility to the private sector, the state is the main right bearer and need to provide social infrastructure through the promotion of public-public partnership. Funding must prioritize local, decentralized and clean (geothermal, solar and wind) energy, which Africa has huge resources to tap into. We need an immediate paradigm shift from current energy systems that relies heavily in fossil fuels like coal and oil, which disproportionately impacts communities particularly women and children. We need to move from large centralized energy systems as a matter of both ecological and gender justice.