

Buwa!

THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S WORK IN AFRICA



A JOURNAL ON AFRICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES
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ABOUT BUWA!

Guided by the feminist principle that 'the personal is political', BUWA! is a journal published by the OSISA Women's Rights Programme annually. BUWA! services as a tool and platform to explore a variety of themes and topics that are pertinent to African women today. The journal receives both commissioned and unsolicited articles primarily from women on the African continent. An editorial team decides on the themes and topics, and participates in the editorial process. The publication seeks to promote open society ideals through providing a platform for women's voices, amplifying these across the continent and beyond. BUWA! also explores African women's experiences through a policy lens, to shed light on international, regional, national, and local debates and policies that shape women's choices and lived experiences.

BUWA! ONLINE

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BUWA!

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ERRATUM

The Buwa editor would like to apologize for an error on page 132 of our Issue 8 *Youth In Africa: Dominant and Counter Narratives* (December 2017) where we credited the poem entitled 'Mhandara' to Nyaradzo Mashayamombe. This poem was in fact written and submitted by Tanatsei Gambura. I take full responsibility for this very unfortunate mistake and would like to sincerely apologize to Tanatsei for crediting her work to someone else.

Editorial

Alice D Kanengoni

This Issue of *BUWA!* offers feminist critiques of the current discourses framing the future of work in Africa. This is a very timely and critical theme given that there is a marked interest globally in better understanding and predicting the future of work. A number of research institutions, think tanks and others interested in labour and occupational issues have since invested in research and created platforms that have enabled debate on this issue. For instance, in 2013, the ILO initiated a global dialogue on the future of the work that we want. This led to the establishment of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work in 2017. The Open Society Foundation (OSF) also invested in an initiative exploring the issue which seeks to understand how technologies, for instance, will likely impact the vulnerable communities OSF cares about. The World Economic Forum (WEF) published a report in January 2016 focusing on *The Future of Jobs*.¹ In the report, the WEF estimates that 65 percent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new jobs – jobs that don't yet exist.

A few assumptions and theories underpin this global interest and current preoccupation with the future of work. One key theory is that the proliferation of technology will have very significant impacts on jobs and work as we currently know them, such that some jobs could be completely obliterated while new ones may be conceptualised. Another major assumption is that developments in the world of technology – dubbed the fourth industrial revolution – and related advancements in artificial intelligence and data-driven economies might render human capital irrelevant in the future. For instance, the 2016 WEF report predicts that 41 percent of all work activities in South Africa are susceptible to automation, as are 44 percent in Ethiopia, 46 percent in Nigeria, and 52 percent in Kenya. Automation means that a new set of job skills will be required.

However, much as the 'future of work' has found a firm space in the discourses shaping the global work agenda, there is limited debate and reflection in Africa – let alone among African feminist economists – on this subject. For a number of reasons feminists need to be shaping these narratives as well as the response

strategies ensuing from them. Firstly, because of the already existent gap in gendered perspectives in interpreting global and local processes that have unfolded in the past few years. The second reason is the reality that women on the African continent predominantly occupy precarious and vulnerable positions in job value chains while there is a dearth of analysis on what impacts the fourth industrial revolution and other factors might have in either increasing or mitigating these vulnerabilities. Third, existing gender gaps in technology adoption and use on the continent warrants a closer analysis of what the future holds for women in Africa against the backdrop of increasing inequalities among women due to differential geo-localities and related socioeconomic factors. For African feminists, the debates about the future of work are not just about the changing dynamics in the kind of activities and how these activities will be done. Rather, the debates ought also to be about the power dynamics and positioning of African women in the global economic and political schemes.

Additionally, there are legitimate concerns among feminists about the nature and levels of vulnerability and risks for communities of women whose livelihoods have been sustained by economic activities that have either been ignored or left out of the prescribed definitions of work. For instance, a significant contribution of women's work on the continent is 'informalised' and not remunerated or captured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).² Women in Africa already sit on the margins of economies with their economic lives mostly informalised. It is also a fact that women's work has globally sat on a dichotomy of limited and underpaid formal employment, on the one hand, and unremunerated, unrecognised, unappreciated 'informal' and often not very decent economic activity, on the other hand. It is notable that there has been an increased focus on women's economic advancement and women's economic justice in both government and civil society spaces respectively in the past few years. This is perhaps due to the seat that advancing women's economic rights has occupied in both continental and global policy spaces. However, the focus has largely been limited to the short-term

goals of increasing women's access to economic resources, carving spaces for women around policy-shaping tables, and women's financial inclusion, among others. The narrative of 'leaving no one behind' has anchored most of these initiatives. In practice, there has not been as much focus on *how* all the women we are 'carrying forward' will engage once we arrive at the future that we are all pulling towards.

Furthermore, it is important to note that, much as the fourth industrial revolution seems to have taken the pole position in anchoring debates on the future of work, there is a number of other factors that have significantly shaped such debates. Some, which are explored in this Issue, include trends in globalisation, widening inequality gaps, migration, demography and the existent gender gaps globally and continentally. The articles in this edition engage with each of these issues that tend to be providing lenses through which the future of work is being understood. For instance, there is a need for an exploration of global economic governance and especially the role of corporate power where global geopolitics, the global economy, and the resultant global economic labour chains and patterns in the movement of people/labour, goods and services are all perceived as strongly shaping the future of work. We offer a feminist analysis of all these dynamics and how they tend to promote labour informalisation, especially on the continent.

There are articles that map migration patterns in human capital and labour flows and seek to understand the increasing complexity of global migration patterns with a view to project where various kinds of jobs, skills and economic activities are likely to be concentrated on the global map. More important in these analyses is exploring where African women's labour is being projected to land in these matrices, and some articles in this Issue predict more women migrating up North to work in low-skilled and low-paying economic sectors, especially in providing care work. These are concerns explored in our 2016 Issue of *BUWA! (Moving Stories: Women and Migration in Africa)*.

One of the key gaps in discourses on the future of work generally is the lack of appreciation that these changes, which are envisaged and touted as inevitable opportunities, are being experienced against the backdrop of existent inequalities. There are global inequalities in the flow of information, financial capital, economic opportunities, technologies, and human capital, among others, which all are critical in shaping the form and nature of work that will be available and where it will be available, globally, in the future. These all have strong implications for already existing gendered inequalities for women who will be living and working on the African continent, and some articles in this Issue highlight these dynamics.

For instance, the impacts of already existing inequalities are glaringly stark in patterns in the care economies and care work. There is a global care crisis partly precipitated by increasing demand for decent work among caregivers, the majority of whom



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It is important to highlight that Africa's population is largely young, the majority being young women. It is critical to unpack from a feminist perspective how Africa's youth, given their realities in uptake and use of technologies, can realistically be bundled-up in this narrative on the future of work.

are women. Decent work speaks to promoting and sustaining 'inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment' (UN Sustainable Development Goal 8). A number of economic sectors, such as care work, where women have predominance have experienced major shifts driven by changes in the global political economies. There is an emerging drive to develop a new model of providing care. Debates about global migration patterns often underpin conversations on care work. Feminists are questioning the very framing of this kind of work as 'care' work – which tends to position it squarely as the soft, unpaid, uncaptured and un- or under-remunerated reproductive work generally provided by women. There is a need to invest more in exploring how globalised care work has increased challenges for achieving decent work for women on the African continent – a continent considered to be the primary source of global care work providers.

A key question that this Issue also grapples with is whether the continent has policy and legal frameworks that are responsive to the changing dynamics in the world of work. In most countries, labour and work-related policies and frameworks seem not to have shifted enough, given the histories of many sub-Saharan African countries and the various waves of change from pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial and current contexts. Some articles herein probe the policy and legal frameworks highlighting hits and misses in macroeconomic policies around trade, taxation, care work and related wage policies as well as policies pertaining

to some of the key economic assets such as land that need to be unlocked to meaningfully shift economic opportunities for women on the continent. A number of these articles offer policy recommendations to effectively respond to a changing world of work in Africa. Relatedly, there are articles that flag concerns on the limited extent to which the continent's education policies and practices are fit to prepare young women and men for a future of working differently.

The role of technology and innovation has been a key reference point for most debates on the future of work and there are various schools of thought and diverse theories anchoring these debates. In this Issue, there are articles that offer feminist analyses of the politics of innovation and the tech revolution which explore the extent to which such innovation is speaking to the needs of women in the economies where they are making a living. Our authors ask critical questions about who is innovating, for whom, and with what effect. There are concerns about the rate of African women's uptake of technologies that are often cited as potential innovative game changers for women's work on the continent. For instance, there are articles that examine the emergence of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technologies – innovations that are being promoted as having great potential to increase opportunities for safe trade and financial transactions. The articles herein explore what opportunities these might offer, especially for the largely unbanked rural-based population, the majority of whom are women. A number of such innovative initiatives covered in this Issue point to progressive and life-changing prospects for women informal traders and others whose economic activities are largely entrepreneurial.

There is a cluster of articles that offer feminist analyses of current and emerging economic models. The key arguments advanced in most articles in this cluster are that the narrative about the future of women's work should not be limited to what opportunities technology and other factors will influence the nature of the activities women will do. Rather, there is a need to go beyond this and question the positioning of African women in the broader global political and economic schemes. This approach pushes us to catechise drives towards entrepreneurship and enterprise economy models which are currently being advanced as panaceas for creating work for women. Feminists are considering how such models are in fact part of the neo-liberal project to mask a system that has dismally failed to provide employment and create decent jobs for global citizens. A number of articles highlight the resultant pressure placed on women to sustain themselves through income generation projects and small enterprises within the same neoliberal macroeconomic framework that positioned women on the margins to begin with. What is clear in most articles in this cluster is that the mainstream neoliberal economic model has systematically sought to keep the definition

of work within the narrow mainstream conceptualisation of it as production, to measure it in terms of profit and income, while still systematically ignoring women's unpaid reproductive work.

A number of articles explore the opportunities and threats that come with economic models that are emerging and demanding a heterodox approach to understanding economics, as well as work and labour issues. There are pieces that speak to solidarity economies, sharing economies, 'gig' and on-demand economies, creative economies, and how young and older generation women are carving space for themselves in these arenas, as well as pieces on queernomics, and reclaiming sex work as deserving a space in discourses on the future of work for Africans. For example, while the dominant narrative on the future of work presents 'gig' and on-demand economies as levelling the playing field for women by removing barriers that come with the demands of full-time jobs, feminists are cautioning on how this also potentially pushes certain women even further into precarity and insecurity in the world of work. Some have argued that gig economies free women's time from eight-to-five jobs and give them the flexibility to use their time for other roles they consider important. However, we contend that this model, in fact, increases women's vulnerabilities as the informal workspace often gets crowded as formal job spaces shrink. This disrupts labour chains and affects some jobs where women had actually found some level of security and regular income. Some pieces in this Issue offer feminist analyses of the patterns and dynamics in both the gig and on-demand economy on the continent, with a special focus on issues of social security, associated job perks and job insecurity, especially for women.

Trends highlighted in articles in this cluster also suggest that a significant number of women are innovating and creating alternatives, for instance, by making money out of digital media and other 'unconventional economic activities.' This often does not get recognised or acknowledged as work, and therefore is not counted in mainstream economic models. The articles herein shed light on the various creative economic activities that young women are engaging in and how they are creating these informal platforms against the backdrop of the fourth industrial revolution, and how governments and others can and should embrace these activities and count them as real work. It is important to highlight here that Africa's population is largely young, the majority being young women. It is therefore critical to unpack from a feminist perspective how Africa's young women (and young men), given their realities in uptake and use of technologies, can realistically be bundled-up in this narrative on the future of work (for an exploration of these issues see the 2017 *BUWA!* edition, *Youth in Africa: Dominant and Counter Narratives*).

There is also a discernible pattern of closing civic space and a clampdown on social justice movements including labour movements in the context of the rising far-right globally and on the continent. Business and, increasingly, repressive governments are clamping down on workers demanding their right to work,

decent jobs, fair wages, and the right to be remunerated for the largely unpaid care work of women. These developments result in shifts in labour relations, increasing unemployment, expansion of the informal economic sector, lowering of minimum wages, deunionisation, the growth and waste of the financial sector, deregulation, and changing regimes in taxation, among others. Some pieces in this Issue offer an exploration of the opportunities and threats of such developments, especially for social justice and labour movements and the relatively nascent organised domestic worker unions, women informal trader associations, sex worker movements, and tax justice movements among others that recognise the feminised nature of these struggles. There are more articles that highlight some of the strategies that women are using in organising and mobilising to resist and have a say in the future of their own work in Africa.

Articles in this edition of *BUWA!* provide teasers to the myriad of issues, considerations and reflections that we ought to be having as feminists on the continent. A lot more still needs to be investigated, researched and, more importantly, written about. Those of us who are working in the field notice a worrying trend in declining investment in knowledge generation by feminists in Africa. We need to be generating knowledge to shape the discourses as this will ultimately influence the praxis. For instance, feminists still need to critically interrogate narratives emerging around big data and prospects that such tech developments hold for better work for women on the continent. The aim is ultimately

to shape and influence policy-making in a manner that ensures gender-responsive policy alternatives and strategies that not only anticipate the changes but also guarantee equitable, inclusive and participative work that enables and guarantees women's economic autonomy.

Alice D Kanengoni is Senior Programme Manager: Women's Rights (OSISA) and Editor of *BUWA!* Write to her with your comments and ideas for future themes at alicek@osisa.org



NOTES

1. WEF (2016) *The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Global Challenge Insight Report. WEF: Geneva.
2. See, for instance, Kanengoni AD (2014) GDP is macho and keeps women poor. *BUWA: A Journal on Africa Women's Experiences*, 1(1).

The future of work for women in Africa: Crises and opportunities

Masego Madzwamuse and Koffi Kouakou

Introduction

The fourth industrial revolution is transforming the world of work at an unprecedented pace. It is fuelled by rapid advances in artificial intelligence which blurs the lines between the physical, digital and the biological spheres. Every industry and every aspect of life will be disrupted by artificial intelligence to the extent that by 2050 the world will be unrecognisable. There have been many industrial revolutions, and exponential changes have taken place in human history. The first industrial revolution used water and steam to mechanise mass production. The second industrial revolution used electric power to increase production while the third used information and communications technology to automate production. In the 20th century, the third revolution was characterised by much deeper systemic and seismic changes than any other in history as a result of technology advances.

Tracing developments through a different timeline points to the explosion of the Internet between 1995 and 2007 fuelled by the introduction of new disruptive products, from Microsoft, Google and Facebook, which changed the world in unimaginable ways (Urban, 2015). By 2000, the rate of progress was estimated as five times faster than the average rate of progress in the 20th century (ibid). According to Urban (2015), the period between 2000 to 2014 registered accelerated, disruptive and transformative changes. Urban (ibid) further notes that by 2030, changes are estimated to leap as high as 1 000 times observed in the 20th century. These changes are fuelled by advances in computing, digital and technological spaces the world over.

Africa, if it uses the opportunities well, is also positioned to benefit from the digital dividend of these changes via a new revolution known as the fourth industrial revolution. The potential benefits of this new revolution lie in the extent to which the continent could take advantage of its youth dividend as well as build on the uptake of technology advances in sectors where other parts of the world are seemingly lacking behind. Examples include the finance sector and mobile phone penetration as

demonstrated by mobile money, technology advances in the agriculture and health sectors. Notable developments include changes in farming technology wherein improvements in cloud computing, connectivity, open source software and other digital tools have made it possible to entrepreneurs to deliver technology to farmers at affordable prices (Abardazzou, 2017). Examples of these include aerial images that deliver information on crops that are in distress and agro-weather information delivered to farmers in a timely manner (ibid).

In Nigeria, tech entrepreneurs have developed technology that measures soil, temperature and, nutrients and vegetation health to help farmers determine the amount of fertiliser required (Ekekwe, 2017). ICTs are also used to deliver market information and data to farmers, which address information asymmetry between farmers and traders enabling farmers to negotiate better prices for their produce. In Rwanda, drones are used to deliver medical treatment, for example, blood transfusions to remote areas (Abardazzou, 2017).

With these developments and predictions, questions have been asked about the impact of the fourth industrial revolution on Africa. Will Africa seize the opportunities? What is the future of work and most importantly what is the future of women's work? What does it all mean for the rights of women in Africa and their own agency?

What have these developments meant for African women and the future of work?

While this coming new revolution claims a bundle of opportunities, it will also bring potential crises in the world of work for African women. Samans and Zahidi (2017) have pointed to concerns regarding the potential impacts of the fourth industrial revolution, particularly automation of jobs on the continent and their report estimates that, from a technological standpoint, 41 percent of all work activities in South Africa are susceptible to automation

with equally worrying trends of 44 percent in Ethiopia, 46 percent in Nigeria, 48 percent in Mauritius, 52 percent in Kenya, and 53 percent in Angola. Whether jobs will decline, remain stable or grow the reality is they are going to be major changes in skills requirements. In South Africa, 39 percent of core skills required across all occupations will be different by 2020 compared to the requirements for the same jobs in 2015 (Samans & Zahidi, 2017).

In these transformative times, there are concerns about the implications of the fourth industrial revolution for the future of women's work. Those concerns go beyond whether women will have jobs or be able to have a sustainable livelihood when advanced technologies replace most repetitive tasks in key economic sectors in Africa. It is about the extent to which women would have the right to participate in the economy, the right to work and to benefit from suitable social protection systems, the right to fully participate in society, the right to enjoy equitable benefits, and the right to the benefits of science, culture and arts. These rights, among others, must be at the forefront of considerations about the impacts of the fourth industrial revolution on the future of work for women in Africa.

Women remain over-represented among the poor, even though they account for more than 80 percent of food producers and 60 percent of labour force participation in Africa. It is estimated that women account for two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people currently living in extreme poverty. Across sub-Saharan Africa, women are more likely to be living in a poor household than men. Their poverty status makes them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity despite providing the bulk of the labour force in food production. There are great concerns about the extent to which the promising advances in the agricultural sector are accessible to and of benefit to women farming communities. The barriers women faced are poorly understood, in addition to the social, economic and political exclusion they already have to contend with. Are the crises and opportunities and the necessary safeguards properly accessed and advocated?

The concerns about the future of women's work in Africa are timely, given that the dominant analysis of the implications of the fourth industrial revolution has thus far been biased towards the formal sector. This completely ignores the realities of the structure of economies in Africa where most economic activity takes place in the informal sector. The bulk of the labour in the continent is located in the informal sector, and the formal sector has shown very little absorption capacity of this labour pool. The relatively small and but well-resourced formal sector operates in isolation from a large, growing, poverty-stricken informal economy. In sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) the informal economy contributes 20 to 50 percent of non-agriculture GDP (Cassim et al., 2016; Medina et al., 2017). In some contexts, such as in the case of Zambia and Zimbabwe, an estimated 80 percent of the workforce is engaged in the informal economy. Women are the most dominant actors in the informal economy, making up at

least 70 percent of the informal cross-border traders in southern Africa (Mayisela, 2015). Thus a narrow focus on the impact of the fourth industrial revolution on formal jobs can only result in policy and industry responses that will further entrench inequalities to be known as digital inequalities.

While the informal sector makes a significant contribution is often overlooked, there are many challenges that women face which are worth reflecting on, where the fourth industrial revolution has the potential to yield benefits. Some technology innovations have improved the business models of informal traders in Africa. In Mozambique, for instance, a women-led mobile phone platform MoWoza simplifies informal cross-border trade: 'Informal traders often have difficulties when carrying cash, and this platform helps to eliminate this risk by sourcing products through a network of suppliers accessible via a mobile phone' (Southern Africa Trust, 2014). MoWoza helps in managing the supply chain by means of text messages, allows users to negotiate bulk discounts, and has even created a trusted taxi distribution network to deliver goods (ibid). I had the opportunity to meet one of the innovators, Suzana Moreira, who won the Investing in the Future and Drivers of Change Business Award by the Southern Africa Trust in 2014. Talking about the impact of this app, Moreira said, 'It does not only save the women money and time involved in travelling between South Africa and Mozambique. This app also means women informal traders are able to spend more time with their families and take care of the children's education and health needs.' These are considerations worth noting as the future of work and what the concept of work entail towards the realities of women and work in Africa. Part of the hope and opportunities lie in the tech innovations that are led by women themselves.

One of the major problems informal cross-border traders face is harassment and extortions at border gates. Is it possible for the digitisation of border activities to eliminate the risks of sexual harassment and extortion which women cross-border traders face at the hands of border officials?

There are many lessons to draw from the third industrial revolution both in terms of the benefits and the barriers women face in Africa. The high penetration of cell-phones has been transformative in terms of improving communication and facilitating the rise of mobile money transfers which have created new and alternative microeconomic models. The limited access to finance and technology has often been cited as one of the major barriers to women's economic mobility. Africa women in the informal sector and rural areas together with other previously unbanked populations are now able to access national and international Diaspora remittances, loans and payments without the physical infrastructure barriers coming in the way.

Kenya and Zimbabwe are good examples of countries where mobile phones and mobile money have been most transformative. In Kenya, on any given day KSH7.7 billion (roughly \$730 000 000) is transferred on any day through MPESA (Church,



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The potential benefits of this new revolution lie in the extent to which the continent could take advantage of its youth dividend as well as build on the uptake of technology advances in sectors where other parts of the world are seemingly lagging behind.

2017). Econet in Zimbabwe, while it does not always make the headlines, has one of the most thriving mobile ecosystems in the world. Church (2017) attributes Econet's success to the provision of services that go beyond mobile money to include payments for pre-paid electricity, opening its own bank to claim a share in over-the-counter services, etc. Despite these developments in mobile money, there are a number of areas that require attention if these developments are to be fully beneficial to women. For instance, 70 percent of African women remain without access to finance (Daniels, 2014). Reduction in transaction costs and service charges coupled with an increase in the number and location of service points, and consumer education and financial literacy could make mobile money more accessible to women.

Increasingly the finance sector is relying on the use of big data and algorithms that are not transparent about how they operate (Knight, 2017). The increase in the use of algorithms and data in the finance sector threatens to erode the gains in reducing inequality. Algorithms are used to make vital decisions about who gets a job, who gets a loan, and other economic opportunities.

'Computers are inheriting gender bias implanted in language data sets' and, as such, algorithms have so far perpetuated inequalities and conceal biases, mainly against women (Knight, 2016). 'As these systems become more capable and widespread, their sexist biases could have negative consequences', for example, in job searches for women from poor backgrounds (ibid). Technology developers are more concerned with the bottom line and not making an effort to fix the problem (Knight, 2017). This ought to be an area of concern and advocacy for women's rights activist concerned about the future of women's work.

The risks for women's inclusion do not lie in the problem of design or algorithms alone. It also lies in the rate of digital adoption. According to Accenture (2016a: 2), considering the status quo in digital adoption, developed nations are unlikely to achieve gender equality in the labour market until 2065, and developing nations need over 80 years because gender equity is not predicted until 2100. However, if governments and business can double the pace at which women become frequent users of technology, we could reach gender equality by 2060 in developing nations (ibid).

The story of African women and the fourth industrial revolution is also one of hope and opportunity

The hope for changing the tide and improving the chances of the fourth industrial revolution benefitting women lies in the young women. According to Samans and Zahidi (2017: 7):

If current demographic and education trends continue, the continent's working-age population is set to increase by two-thirds by 2030, from 370 million adults in 2010 to over 600 million in 2030, while the share of this population with at least a secondary education is set to increase from 36% in 2010 to 52% in 2030.

Will Africa take advantage of the youth dividend in terms of opportunities presented by the fourth industrial revolution? More importantly, where will women be on this scale of things? Africa has one of the youngest populations in the world. Sixty percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 25, and by 2030 the continent will be home to more than one-quarter of the world's population under 25 (African Union, 2016). These youths are part of the continent's generation who are more educated with much higher productive employment potential than their predecessors. The combined effects of improved education and qualifications at secondary and tertiary levels and the sheer numbers of youths in sub-Saharan Africa will result in unique demographic-related advantages (Samans & Zahidi, 2017: 7). For African nations such as Nigeria, Benin and Uganda, among others, the contrast between the education level of the youth and of older generations is especially apparent (ibid).

The extent to which this hope can turn into reality depends on providing adequate investments in education to ensure that learning holds value for the future of our economies. Computing revolutions and digital technologies are now becoming pervasive and reshaping all parts of the global economy while generating an increase in computing jobs (Samans & Zahidi, 2017). Therefore, while the prominence of women is considered in this future, questions are asked about the role that young women are playing in the computer and digital technology industry as it unfolds.

In their report on the future of work in Africa, Samans and Zahidi (2017: iii) note a significant increase in ICT jobs: 'Average ICT intensity of jobs in South Africa increased by 26% over the last decade, while 6.7% of all formal sector employment in Ghana and 18.4% of all formal sector employment in Kenya occurs in occupations with high ICT intensity.' Based on these trends, they come to the conclusion that curriculum developers need to pay attention to the skills of the future and align education with the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution. Future jobs

would require sharper skills including digital design, creation and engineering, pointing to a greater emphasis on STEM (Samans & Zahidi, 2017: iii).

The progress in the education space, while setting up more people than ever before for building their future livelihoods, still leaves a significant portion of the population behind. 'Sub-Saharan Africa retains the largest gender gap in the education of girls and boys of any world region, limiting the breadth of Sub-Saharan Africa's available talent pool and furthering social and economic disparities between women and men later in life' (Samans & Zahidi, 2017: 7). The gap in education is further worsened by the disparities in the uptake of STEM between girls and boys in the education system. In Kenya, only 17 percent of female students are pursuing science and technology subjects (African Union, 2016; Samans & Zahidi, 2017: 11). More attention is needed to encourage female STEM talent to enable them to take advantage of emerging jobs across the world and in sub-Saharan Africa which are becoming more intensive in their use of digital technologies. The current gender gap in STEM thus has serious implications for the future of women's work.

To address this gap in the number of girls in computing, an analysis by Accenture (2016b: 7-8) suggests that implementing a strategy focused on three stages of education, that is, primary, secondary, and then eventually higher education, would help triple the number of women working in computing in the US. Accenture (2016b: 7) warns that a delay in helping girls and women in the IT field will lead to a widening gender gap in computing, negatively affecting the US economy and opportunities for women. The same can be said for African nations. The progress made in the structure and learning outcomes of the African education system will have profound implications for whether or not young women in Africa will be both agents and beneficiaries of the fourth industrial revolution. The current overall expansion in education masks disparities and uneven outcomes across various segments of the education system. 'There is currently a lack of upstream and downstream coordination between Africa's primary, secondary and tertiary education providers and the region's pre-primary, technical and vocational, adult training and non-formal education systems remain unevenly developed,' according to Samans and Zahidi (2017: 7).

Interventions must be created which promote youth participation in STEM and IT. Accenture (2016b: 8) thus recommends that interventions 'include elements to specifically appeal to girls. Without such efforts, there is a danger that such initiatives will amplify the current gender imbalances given the entrenched perceptions of computing as a male pursuit.' Susan Price (2016) draws on the work of Reshma Saujani who founded Girls Who Code six years ago to help close the tech gender gap in computing, drawing the conclusion that we need to find ways of sustaining girls' interest in computing. This can be achieved by showing girls that computing can be cool and fun and it is not just for boys. One

of the recommendations for stoking girls' interest in computing is to deepen their hands-on computing experience by encouraging them to play computer games which have been found to increase curiosity in coding. There is an important nuance on how to actually influence girls' perception and interests. The effort does not only stop at access to gaming, the type of games matters.

Stories about women who are mathematicians and computer programmers are likely to inspire young women to take up STEM. Stories told through films such as *Hidden Figures* are powerful as well as exposure to role models. In order for another generation of girls not be left behind, they need to see many more women in senior positions in the tech industry. Without female roles models in these positions, young girls have no one to look up to or encourage them to pursue careers in the field (Price, 2016). There is a need to attract more women teachers in the field by creating female mentorship programmes. Accenture (2016b: 13) further states: 'having inspiring teachers for computing/coding makes girls much more likely to go into computing – and the uplift is even greater if those inspiring teachers are female.' Therefore, the number of women teachers in schools who are positive role models for girls in terms of ITC should increase (ibid).

Citing Saujani, Price (2016) notes that once girls interest in coding has been secured, it should be sustained by encouraging them to study computer science at university; redesigning high school computing courses to appeal to girls while offering girls immersion programmes; and creating grassroots campaigns to motivate peer group action as well as exposure that dispels the myth about computing being only for 'geeky' boys.

Conclusion

The future is here to stay. It will come with promises and opportunities but also disruptive societal crises with profound impacts, especially on women, their work and their way of life. African women will face enormous challenges in the future of work. However, if the future of work and relevant policies are well thought out, there may be great benefits and dividends for African women. Continued efforts should be made towards greater inclusion on all levels of society, especially regarding African women and the world of work.

No woman should be left behind. For that to happen, governments, companies and society must come together to provide safeguards that will protect the rights of women. Women need to be involved in technology innovation to respond to gendered differences, and they ought to be at the forefront in the various processes that have been put in place to mobilise Africa's response to the fourth industrial revolution. The fourth industrial revolution and its corollary benefits, including much-touted artificial intelligence or AI, must be inclusive and transformative, and not take away women's economic autonomy.

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Globalisation and the future of women's work

Marina Durano

Globalisation is an institutional process

The starting premise of this essay is that globalisation is a process of transborder institutional change towards a contested trajectory. It is certainly a human-made process and, therefore, should not be seen or understood as a natural process. While nation-states and their multilateral institutions are key stakeholders in the shaping of the trajectory of change, the multinational actors engaged in this contestation are a diverse lot. There are multinational corporations that create and participate in international production networks that manufacture, assemble, and trade a wide range of commodities. Other multinationals have singular objectives around mining and raw material extraction. There are also international non-government organisations and global social movements that attempt to provide a counter-hegemonic set of proposals and actions against immiserisation and exploitation. Sometimes these are coordinated actions and, at other times, they are divergent. We cannot ignore the role of illicit actors and their collaborators as they attempt to side-step rules and regulations created to contain their actions. They have demonstrated a tremendous capacity to create and govern their own globalised economies. I refer, for example, to warlords and mercenaries, drug lords and their cartels, as well as traffickers and pirates. For women and feminists, this globalisation process includes the transnational work by fundamentalist groups that today are intent on attacking so-called 'gender ideology'.

To sustain this transborder process of change, the diverse actors and stakeholders mentioned above build organisations and networks that define the frameworks upon which their transnational interactions are governed. These organisations and networks are vehicles that carry the globalisation¹ agenda (Djelic & Quack, 2008). In other words, as Djelic and Quack (2003) claim, globalisation is 'institution building in the transnational arena'. The globalisation agenda is not limited to socio-political and economic activities. Djelic and Quack (2003) also argue that the ideational and the normative are embedded within these

institutional processes. Institutions after all are the rules of the game (North, 1990), and normative ideals are deeply embedded in any rule-setting behaviour. Therefore, to view globalisation from this institutionalist perspective is to necessarily study it as a matter of governance.

The advantage of the institutionalist framework is that it affords the space to create and recreate the structures of governance over the globalisation process. This means that everyone can call upon their agency – individually and collectively – to contest the trajectory of the globalisation process. Participation is possible. The difference will lie in the power and control over coercive mechanisms that are used to drive the globalisation process. Nation-states, by definition, have these coercive mechanisms, most famously taxation and the military. Corporations have financial capital that may be used to similar effect or to evade state machinery. Sometimes, coercion is simply persuasion, as can often be the case for transnational human rights actors and their institutions of soft law and peer reviews. For the multitudes, however, they are simply coerced into agreement due to deep and disheartening disempowerment.

Global governance of the world of work

What kind of impact has globalisation had on the world of work? This is a frequently asked question. Globalisation itself did not become a phrase for study among the social sciences until the mid-1990s (Guillen, 2001, cited by Drori, 2008). This should not be surprising since it was in 1995 that the World Trade Organisation entered into force after more than seven years of negotiations that took the now seemingly mundane General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs into arenas never before considered tradable, such as services or even investment. The modernist, perhaps even neoliberal agenda saw this establishment as a clear victory over the determination of the trajectory for the globalisation process with hyperbolic claims of prosperity and peace resulting from the event.



Women fishing in the shallow water in Nungwi, Zanzibar North, Tanzania.

The world of work was already different by this time. The manufacturing world, whose celebrated rise was the basis for economic power of many nation states after the Second World War, declined considerably so that developed countries began to see themselves as services-led rather than an industrial power. In 1995, the share of industry's value-added, including energy, to total GDP of the EU was less than 25 percent, while its services sector generated more than 65 percent of total value-added. It was also during this period that the first research on global value chains and global production networks were published (Neilson, Pritchard & Yeung, 2014). Not only have global value chains begun to define a new era for the organisation of the production of commodities, these chains were also found in the services sector through business process outsourcing.

The expansion of these networks in the production of electronics and other high technology commodities, as well as in the expansion of the number of services that can be outsourced, has not been a purely private sector-led initiative. Rather, national governments played an intermediation role in linking domestic firms with global markets, especially in the case of the relationship between East Asian conglomerates and their developmental states.

Workers in these value-chains are seen to represent the new hope of economic growth and deliverance from poverty. Many women workers found themselves in assembly lines on factory

floors and even more were in home-based work manufacturing goods on a piece-rate basis. Other women were quickly absorbed in call centres, working anonymously in help centres, in data encoding, and in the digitisation of business processes. In reality, the employment benefits have been limited. Where such benefits exist, these are concentrated among a small share of the skilled workforce. These networks have contributed to an increase in skills inequality among workers that eventually becomes expressed as wage and income inequality in the labour market.

The changes in the world of work are a reaction to the realities of technological production and advancement, articulated clearly in the work of Sanjaya Lall (2001, 2003). One, technological capabilities behind high-technology production are the result of learnings accumulated over time. In other words, there is first-mover advantage. Two, there are agglomeration economies in building technological capabilities. This means that firms located in a cluster in a geographical space are better able to take advantage of innovation generated by neighbouring firms. Three, thus, given the first two characteristics, technological production and research and development tend to be highly concentrated in certain regions or in small groups of firms. Four, intellectual property rights regimes that protect invention and innovation create monopolies that heighten this concentration. These intellectual property rights regimes can also appropriate



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Now, more than ever, cross-movement organising and cross-border alliances are necessary for the articulation of a counter-hegemonic future.

indigenous knowledge, if not appropriately regulated. This mode of production organisation implies profit-taking at the low-value end of the network through labour exploitation and at the high-value end of the network through monopoly profits derived from industrial concentration and intellectual property (Durano, 2015).

All of these elements create barriers to entry for those firms and nations that still need to develop their technological capabilities. Even if firms (or entire countries) are able to move up the value chain through technological upgrading, there is no guarantee that there will be a parallel social upgrading for the workers in the value chain (Durano, 2015). In a world facing the dangers of climate change and pushing global boundaries, the goal of technological production can add to the dangers because it is intensive in the use of minerals.

Governance over climate change has the potential to change the global labour market as well. The intensity of regulation to prevent the earth from going beyond the boundaries of its absorptive capacity to deal with further extraction without regeneration will define which industries can continue and which ones cannot. The starting point of many of these attempts is a green economy strategy based on renewable energy. Other discussions have focused on the oceans and the seas, and the possibility of defining a blue economy that goes beyond mere exploitation. The prospects of economic growth and the future of industrialisation

need to respond with a new way of organising production and consumption to ensure sustainability and reduce risks of climate change. These proposals have yet to lead to a transformation of labour markets since these are still early days. There is very little evidence that the current trajectory of globalisation takes societies around the world closer to a green economy or a blue economy.

Labour organising in the new world of work

Generally, increases in productivity do not automatically translate into wage and earnings increases, especially for women who are still over-represented in low-paying and precarious work. Organised workers are needed to demand for that to happen. However, the impact on labour organising by these changes in the world of work has been especially damaging. In the US, union membership went down from one in three in the private sector in 1956 to one in ten by 1998 (Farber & Western, 2001). There are three reasons offered for this decline. The first has to do with labour-management cooperation strategies that reduced antagonistic industrial relations (Burawoy, 2015; Armbruster, 1995). The second was the role of President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and his attack on labour, most prominently the dismissal of air traffic controllers (Burawoy, 2015), as well as that of Prime

Minister Margaret Thatcher's opposition to the coal miners' strike. The political attack on labour was a key weapon of the neoliberal rise. The third was the mobility of US capital and its transfer of operations to other parts of the world. This process began in the 1960s (Armbruster, 1995).

Elsewhere, especially in the developing world, countries faced an external debt crisis that weakened their state structures considerably. This paved the way for the transnationalisation of neoliberalism and the policies of the Washington Consensus, most prominently in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America as multilateral financial institutions used their position to restructure indebted economies towards privatisation, liberalisation, and deregulation. Labour union organising in the developing world had very little opportunity to strengthen its ranks as heavily indebted developing country governments provided multiple concessions to foreign investors to court their establishment, which often included the deregulation of labour markets and the criminalisation of union activity. Governments participated in a desperate race to the bottom.

Labour organising responded by taking on a globalised character as evidenced by the consolidation of global union federations. Through these global union federations, we can see how globalisation and the changing nature of work have influenced the strategies used in union organising. National level concerns could no longer be addressed adequately unless they also engaged in coordinated approaches towards building industrial relations with multinational corporations, thus, transforming themselves from international secretariats in the 20th century to global union federations by the turn to the 21st century (Ford & Gillan, 2015). They sought to create parallel organisational infrastructures that could negotiate with these multinational conglomerates, of which the global framework agreements were key instruments that governed labour-management relations in global supply chains and production networks (Hadwiger, 2015).

While global framework agreements are useful in this new setting of international production networks, these were inadequate for informal workers, who comprise an estimated half of the global workforce (ILO, 2016). A significant portion of informal workers are linked to supply chains through subcontracting arrangements, facing seasonal demand for their output, and unable to negotiate for higher wages or reimbursement of capital, or operational expenses as the low-end, small inventory retailers selling goods in street markets. Many others, however, are delinked from global economic phenomena, engaged in subsistence production in their backyard gardens, forest gathering, artisanal fishing, or livestock raising, making just enough to live another day. For most, survival is a combination of any and all of these activities.

Despite the growth trajectory that studies have demonstrated for countries that become part of these networks of production, the employment generated by these networks is not enough to

absorb the available labour supply. Labour organising must now take on forms of organising that can secure rights entitlements to these informal workers. There is a variety of organisational formats for informal workers in addition to union formations, such as local associations, self-help groups, cooperatives, and non-governmental organisations, that have covered a range of occupations, among which include agricultural workers, construction workers, domestic workers, home-based workers, sex workers, transport workers, waste-pickers, and vendors (Chen, Bonner & Carre, 2015). Some global federations are already deeply engaged in working with specific occupations of informal workers, such as the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) that helped found the International Domestic Workers' Federation. However, this is more of an exception than a rule.

It also around this period in the late 1980s to the 1990s that scholars began to recognise a new form of unionism, which they refer to as social movement unionism. Among those considered to practice this type of unionism are the Central Unica do Trabalhadores (CUT) in Brazil, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in South Africa, and the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) in South Korea. These unions are known to have used the strategy of alliance-building with social justice networks on a common political platform for democratic change. The term was coined by Peter Waterman in 1993 in an attempt to bring together a theory of trade unionism with that of social movement theory (Rahman & Langford, 2010; see also Waterman, 2004). This concept has now expanded to recognise the globalised nature of challenges to union organising and, more broadly, of social transformation that pushed theorists of social movement unionism to consider giving the concept a globalised character as well, such that Waterman (2008) proposed a new global labour solidarity as the basic premise of global social movement unionism (Rahman & Langford, 2010). Clearly, this approach expands the political horizons of global union federations discussed earlier.

The transnational nature of organising became prominent during the 'anti-globalisation' protests many of which focused on the World Trade Organization's ministerial meetings. Many will recall the huge mobilisation in Seattle in 1999 that the City Mayor greeted with force calling on the National Guard and authorised the use of teargas and rubber bullets to contain a mostly peaceful group of protesters. This 1999 protest became a model for similar protests held at the regular meetings of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Group of 8, which later became the Group of 20, in the following years. Labour unions were actively engaged in these actions, coordinating with civil society organisations that gained their experience of transnational activism through the spaces that opened up in the previous decade when a series of conferences hosted by the United Nations strengthened the normative standards around social issues and human rights.

In 2001, the World Social Forum was organised, and this became a space for reflection for local and global activism to define counter-hegemonic globalisation. It continues to this day but faces severe criticism due to the dominance of non-governmental organisations over popular and mass-based social movements. In these settings, labour unions have had to negotiate with multiple actors in the social justice movement.

Despite its promise, however, the power relationships between the formal and sometimes larger trade unions and the informal worker associations are not always equal or dynamic. Furthermore, the construction of a collective identity across such a broad platform often requires the identification of a select set of injustices that may then result in downplaying other forms that may be more important to some groups of workers compared to others (Lindell, 2011). The broad unity turns out to be fragile.

Women workers and the care economy

In recognising the increasingly globalised nature of the world of work and the union response to globalisation, the women's question needs to be asked. Recognising that the flexibilisation of labour markets has also been about its feminisation, we need to ask to what extent labour unions have been responsive to this trend. This is a difficult question since the trade unions bureaucracy and leadership has reflected male privilege and patriarchy (Lindell, 2011). Union organising in female-dominated industries or occupations not only must confront the wage demands of their workers but also needs to face the gender-related issues of representation, voice and agency within their ranks.

Burawoy (2015) noted the importance of feminist work on expanding the notion of work. This led to a recognition of care work, including its unpaid aspects. From a union-organising perspective, this meant paying strategic attention to domestic workers and a whole range of caregivers who are increasingly dominating services-led economies. With attention being given to domestic work, migrant worker organising also became prominent among women's rights and labour rights advocates. The demographic transition not only applies to developed countries but also to some middle-income countries that are beginning to see the decline of the youth dividend and an increasing burden of caring for an elderly population. The world of work is only beginning to recognise the implications of this trend on social security and public services. Where social security is poorly developed, and household savings rates are low, the strain will be especially difficult to bear.

When we spoke earlier of a transition by developed countries into a services-led economy, the new jobs generated were in occupations and industries enhanced by the use of information technology. In this instance of a services-led economy that confronts the dependency needs of an elderly population, the

role of technology is still being hypothesised with many raising concerns about robotics and artificial intelligence replacing human effort. Technological development, however, is a complex process dependent on expectations of how innovation can solve 'blockages, bottlenecks and breakdowns in the continuous flow of production and smooth operation of the components', as well as the limits imposed by business strategy (Lipartito, 1994: 1079). More importantly, technology can only replace humans in routinised tasks, and much service delivery involves complex decisions that artificial intelligence has yet to learn. Perhaps even more significant is that market systems have not had a full grasp of the functions of the care economy.

This means that technological innovations in the care sector remain limited. The cultural norms that dominate decisions over labour functions in caring continue to rely on stereotypical ascriptions of women's unlimited labour supply coupled with altruistic conceptions of her identity such that complete replacement by machines will not be seen in the near future. The use of machines themselves requires an infrastructure of reliable energy sources and transport for portability. Maintenance and operations involving new technology often imply a demand for new skills. Even with an emphasis on placing women in STEM education, catching up will take at least a generation, and there is no guarantee that these women will themselves own and control the technology that this educational opportunity affords them. Those poised to take advantage are those who are already at the frontiers of technology.

Meanwhile, sexual rights and reproductive health rights remain inadequately addressed even as labour unions have succeeded in securing issues of maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, and work-life balance as core labour demands. Sexual education, access to contraception, and access to abortion services are restricted in many countries, and women's control over the industries behind them are unknown. In some of the poorest countries, forced sterilisation of workers continues, particularly where union organising is also restricted. Bringing together sexual and reproductive health rights with economic and social rights is a necessary component of the decent work agenda. A recent example is Ireland's Coalition to Repeal the 8th that was joined by a Trade Union Coalition to Repeal the 8th intent on decriminalising abortion and providing access to abortion services. We note that women's rights organisations are not necessarily easy partners due to their own history of neglect for class and race issues, while trade unions are known for their patriarchal leadership. Indeed, any future for social movement unionism entails an interrogation of labour unions' relationship with women's movements to overcome the institutional underpinnings of this uneasy alliance.

The care economy itself is a relatively unknown and unspecified space. That unpaid caregiving undertaken by women should be recognised as work has universal appeal but its operational

aspects remain debated. In Venezuela and Bolivia, unpaid care work has social security entitlements according to their constitutions, but this has proven to be challenging to implement. A woman's income status can determine whether she performs these caring tasks alone or whether she can pay someone else to do them. In higher income countries, this demand for caregivers has opened up a flow of migrant women workers willing to take on these duties and responsibilities.

In urban centres, rural women confronting the uncertainties of seasonal agricultural production or the destruction of forests and rivers, or the dangers of armed conflicts have moved into the cities only to find themselves in similarly precarious settings of isolation and vulnerability. There is a crisis of care that is looming. Instead of facing this reality and seeking solutions, migrant workers fulfilling the demand for care not only lost their citizenship rights that often do not extend beyond national boundaries but they are labelled as dangerous and a threat to national security in the host countries. Care and migration are now very closely intertwined. The literature refers to global care chains where a certain class of women workers care for the classes that can afford them and there is a chain of substitution as women move from home town to a global city to fill gaps in care left behind by others (Hochschild, 2000; Parrenas, 2000). Global institutions and normative frameworks are not prepared for this eventuality.

The future of women's work, the future of women's organising

The future of women's work lies in the resolution of tensions generated by the crisis of care and climate change. The global organisation of production has proceeded nearly unfettered, without anyone taking the social organisation of care with sincerity, and with a very belated response to global boundaries. The denial of these crises means that women will continue to bear the double burden of market work and care work for all species.

Since globalisation is a process of institutional change, changing its trajectory entails a reordering of norms that first recognises a care crisis over a generation of children and a generation of the elderly as well as a care crisis that has long ignored global boundaries. Trade union organising needs to move away from an uneasy alliance with industrial capital towards a stronger relationship with mass organisations struggling for daily survival. Trade unions must also do more to recognise their patriarchal structures and appeal to the feminist networks that struggle to individually and collectively be their own voice and activate their own agency. Meanwhile, the women's movement needs to give class considerations much more serious attention since it divides their ranks placing limits on a multi-faceted strategy against patriarchy in all its expressions. In a global setting, North-South divides

and racial hierarchies permeate power struggles in multilateral and multinational decision-making over the future of humanity. In defining our common future, women's work need not be the sole bearer of responsibility and women's organising while crucial is not enough to overcome disempowerment. Now, more than ever, cross-movement organising and cross-border alliances are necessary for the articulation of a counter-hegemonic future.

NOTES

1. Djelic and Quack (2008) prefer the term transnationalisation to globalisation because they argue that it is more accurate and less confusing.

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Women's work in the context of closing civic space

Lyn Ossome

Introduction

The contemporary closing of civic space and the attendant impact on social justice movements is impacting the world of women's work in ways that ought to be understood against the backdrop of shifts in labour relations, increasing unemployment, expansion of the informal economic sector, low minimum wages, de-unionisation, the growth and waste of the financial sector, deregulation, and changing regimes in taxation, among other factors. This article highlights the nature of social organising among labouring women, drawing on historical contexts to highlight the complexities that emerge in the contemporary period, which are attached both to the nature of the neoliberal state and civil society. Focusing on the legislative and punitive state, the paper examines contradictions that confound the demand for rights where the state is both guarantor of rights and mediator of capital and draws some preliminary conclusions in this regard.

For many labouring women in Africa, the modes of struggle and social organising that have historically defined their world have characteristically emanated from below and in relation to their lived contexts and realities. Such struggles have articulated social and economic questions that also critically articulate political questions of autonomy, freedom and equality. In precolonial African kinship systems, the flexibility of gender in the political and cultural system favoured the presence of women in the highest elite core of society, whether in the status acquired through titles, or in the position of the kinship itself. Power and authority emerged out of the reproductive and productive roles that women played in society, and women's political power emerged out of those roles articulated to daily struggles for survival (Lebeuf, 1963; Amadiume, 1987; Santoru, 1996; Oyewumi, 1997; Ossome, 2018).

Although largely silenced in colonial historiography, African women's resistance to colonial domination constituted a feminist lexicon out of which a concept of the 'political' could be discerned. Female subjecthood under colonialism was a bridge between women's lived realities and the existentiality of their struggles

and highlighted the political economies of women's labour, kinship ties, ritual-making and social reproduction of their families, households and communities (Ossome, 2018). Furthermore, the control of women's sexuality was central to the ways in which male resistance to colonial and postcolonial authority was publicly articulated, and to the ways in which women have developed a sense of political agency. What we understand as the social and political subordination of labouring women today is thus rooted in a longer history of resistance to colonial domination, through which the gendered division of labour and control of women's labour, especially by colonial authorities, provoked women into social and political mobilisation. Anticolonial and nationalist movements gradually became masculinised and subordinated women's agency to patriarchal, individualised, elite and state power.

The neoliberal state has not only fundamentally altered the world of women's work but also shifted the very basis and modes of struggle that are accessible to labouring women in the formal and informal sectors. Economic and political liberalisation brought contradictory outcomes for women in the global south. Across Africa, where implementation of structural adjustment policies proceeded in earnest from the late 1980s, evidence emerged to show the particularly gendered character of neoliberal reforms. New economic policies afforded capital the benefit of mobility, informal and flexible labour markets and formal capital markets, and facilitated the massive entry of women into the labour market, albeit in adverse circumstances. Growing unrest among the poor, landless people, and agrarian and industrial workers suggest that gains from the economic growth paths are inequitably distributed.¹ Furthermore, on-going agrarian distress and dispossession in many African countries has placed significant strain on women's productive and reproductive labour, pushing millions of rural women out of common and communal lands and, in women's semi-proletarianised status, compelling them into tenuous, informal, low-status and low-paying wage, de-unionised work, without easing their historical burden of reproduction at the level of the family and household.



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This process of socially reproducing labour(ers) hinges on the articulation between the family/household, market and the state.² The state may intervene to manage the contradictions associated with a reproduction crisis in order to prevent or mitigate cost-shifting by capitalists through appropriate legislation. Alternatively, the state may seek to underwrite some or most reproductive costs.³ The actual articulation and effective implementation of these interventions, however, are historical and dependent on the social structure and the growth process (Naidu & Ossome, 2016: 58).

The family-household undertakes the conversion of wages (and social grants) into the necessities of life for individual consumption and engages in consumption of simple-use values. This process of conversion depends to a great extent (although not exclusively) on the free, unwaged, and self-exploitative labour of women. The squeeze on household incomes also increasingly means that access to common and communal lands is necessary to mitigate the consumption gap being produced under neoliberal

capitalist exploitation. And, while changing global conditions make it unlikely for land to lift the working classes out of poverty, land still affords the primary means of reproduction for most rural households, a function which is still largely dependent on women's unremunerated labour. Yet the complexities and contradictions staged by neoliberal reforms mean that neoliberal capitalist expansion ignores and undermines the reproductive aspects of land and women's labour, even as capitalist accumulation depends on them (Naidu & Ossome, 2016: 71).

It is against this broad background of the contemporary convergence of opportunities and distress in the world of working women that we ought to make sense of the concurrent closing of civic space as presently witnessed. The intensification of social unrest and protest signify communities in distress and express demands for greater attention to the conditions under which the working poor and marginalised satisfy minimum daily consumption and reproduce themselves. While intensifying and diversifying the nature of claims on the state, political liberalisation has also

shifted the basis of claims from those articulated to the political economy (primarily class-based claims), to those expressed in the liberal language of rights. While the decline of class analysis and the ascendancy of rights claims bereft of structural critique is producing particular kinds of subjectivity in relation to the neoliberalising state, social protest in the language of rights remains a powerful weapon for most of the world's poor.

For women, obscured in their cultural identity as women and their economic identity as labourers, these two sets of claims – those expressing a politics of redistribution and those fundamentally seeking recognition – cannot be considered as inimical. Straddling both locations is the notion of 'legality' as the primary means through which women appear before, or become legible to, the state. The obsession with criminality in public discourse is thus increasingly hostile to labouring women seeking to earn a living, for instance, through prostitution, hawking, brewing of 'illicit' alcohol, and so on. For women in these deliberately criminalised trades, and those confined to the so-called informal economy, legal formality is rarely an option, yet they still exist in intense confrontation with the law. The interface between working women and the state is therefore highly mediated by the legislative and policy context as the primary means through which women encounter and become legible to the state, and through which they present their claims. The civic space mediates this relationship between labouring women and the state and, as such, feminist concern with labour and social organising has to engage critically with the implications of a shrinking civic space as witnessed at present.

Civic spaces: Prospects and opportunities

The intensification of struggles for social justice is indicative of the distress facing working-class households as wages and incomes are no longer sufficient to support families and households. While the diversity of resistances to neoliberalism reflect the myriad ways in which the effects of neoliberal restructuring are being felt across different societies by various groups, the social and political conditions under which working women are struggling for equity and recognition are also fundamentally structured by/through state laws and policies. In a contradictory manner then, social protest and resistance critique and seek to exceed the neoliberal state that is producing injury while, at the same time, expressing demands on the state for recognition and redistribution through existing legal and policy regimes. For labouring women struggling on the margins, a fundamental question that needs to be posed in this regard is this: how are we to relate with the state in its contradictory role as mediator of capital and as guarantor of rights?

A survey of trends affecting civic space from 2015-16 (International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL), 2016) shows that many states have continued to use a variety of tools to

undermine the influence of civic actors by means ranging from the adoption and manipulation of laws that restrict the ability of civil society organisations to register, protest, and access resources and, in extreme cases, have compelled the closure, de-registration and expulsion of civil society organisations. Yet, even under the worst forms of state repression, experiences in some African countries highlight contradictory outcomes for women. Out of struggles to survive and exceed these overt forms of state repression, some unexpected opportunities for renewed social organising from below have emerged. The experience of women's organisations in Ethiopia following implementation of the Civil Society Law is a pertinent illustration of this shift and worth highlighting here.

The Proclamation to Provide for the Regulation and Registration of Charities and Societies (Civil Society Law) No. 621/2009, enacted by the Ethiopian government on 6 January 2009, carried provisions that severely weakened the work of independent civil society organisations, particularly human rights defenders, through provisions prohibiting foreign NGOs from engaging in activities pertaining to human rights, women's rights, children's rights, disability rights, citizenship rights, conflict resolution and democratic governance. It also considered local NGOs that receive more than ten percent of their funding from foreign sources as foreign for the purposes of the proclamation (SIHA, 2013). Politically, the Civil Society Law functions as a tool for co-opting and controlling women's organisations. It imposes strict and unregulated criminal and administrative penalties for violations and criminalises human rights activities undertaken by Ethiopian organisations. It also entrenches broad discretionary power over civil society organisations, enabling government surveillance and interference in their operation and management (ICNL, 2013).

The law's anti-imperialist thrust stands as a critique of the international donor funding regime and, even if only rhetorically and not its intended outcome, it compels civil society organisations towards modes of social justice organising that are grounded in the local context. One of the key responses by women to the repression of NGOs has been the splitting up and reconstitution of smaller organisations in order to circumvent funding restrictions. Some women's organisations have narrowed down their work to focus only on economic empowerment – deemed as less political – as a means of retaining the prerogative to raise 100 percent of their funding from both local and international sources. Other organisations retain a focus on human rights while accepting the funding restrictions.⁴ The prioritisation of women's economic empowerment is accompanied by its de-politicisation under the same platform. The implication is the delinking of human rights from poverty, and the disarticulation of the causes of inequality, hunger, ecological destruction, and resource depletion from their economic and social bases (Ossome, 2013).

Women's organisations in Ethiopia have nonetheless shown remarkable initiative in mobilising women around savings and

cooperative schemes to save and regenerate their own incomes. These saving schemes enjoy a broad reach and include women working as coffee sellers, weavers, street vendors, domestic workers, firewood carriers, garbage collectors, and even street beggars. There are a number of initiatives to empower women, especially those who have no education and income, through savings, loans and income-generating activities. Many are organised under self-help groups and cooperatives, which have economic objectives and also play an important social and cultural role in bringing together women who previously would not work together due to cultural discrimination and stigma around certain work, like garbage collection, which is identified with lower castes (Ossome, 2013).⁵

The Ethiopian case highlights some pertinent questions: firstly, whether the state has been successful in its unstated objective of divorcing women's rights activism from the structural bases of women's oppression; second, whether alternative paths for social organising are possible in contexts where state authoritarianism dominates civic space; and thirdly, whether the role of civil society organisations in mediating social change is, in fact, an exaggerated one. The survival and innovativeness in forms of social organising discernible among Ethiopian women post-2009 provide a direct challenge to state-imposed legal restrictions and place women in direct confrontation and conversation with the state, a space historically mediated by civil society organisations. The Ethiopian women's example is not an isolated one and should not be regarded as such. Though nuanced by the specificity of context, the struggles of labouring women across the continent in the face of shrinking civic spaces highlight the ambivalence of the law and the possibility of broadening the scope and nature of activism to organically include those women whose work has historically been regulated by the state, but who remain outside of the purview of the state in terms of seeking redress.

Conclusion

While feminist claims directed towards states in Africa gained particular salience within the political liberalisation that ushered in democratisation, this brief article has tried to show that the separation between what is considered 'political' and 'economic' under neoliberal orthodoxy constrains interpretations of women's structurally defined positions in the global political economy. In this regard, the attack on civic space mirrors the purported divergence between cultural oppressions, with their basis in gender, and oppressions emanating from the political economy, with their basis in class struggles. While the former is trivialised, the latter is regarded as the 'subject of politics proper'. The effect has been to render the embodied nature of the domination and exploitation of working women invisible to law, policy and public discourse. For women so affected, the challenge emerges as one that requires recognition of the multiple ways in which

women experience the world of work; the structures, conditions and institutions that structure their labour; and the tools at their disposal when legal formalism functions to willfully undermine civic spaces for struggle.

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NOTES

1. See Naidu and Ossome (2017) for a longer critique of the neoliberal growth path and the inequities it is producing for working women.
2. Social reproduction broadly includes biological reproduction, everyday survival, the accumulation of education and skills to participate in the capitalist economy (for workers' participation in the formal and informal labour market), acquisition of skills to ensure the survival of households (i.e., skills to engage in household production and care work), and inculcating the necessary value system to ensure the reproduction of the patriarchal and capitalist economy (see Dickinson & Russell, 1985; Naidu & Ossome, 2016).
3. Examples of such interventions include South Africa's social grants programme, and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and Public Distribution System (PDS) in India.
4. A good example of this kind of reorganisation occurred with the formation of the Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Associations (UEWCA), whose members previously were hosted by the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA). While the latter was constituted to bring together NGOs and CBOs, whose primary focus is women's economic empowerment and who enjoy a broader funding base from international donors, NEWA has retained a focus on human/women's rights issues, albeit with weakened capacity as it is now compelled to raise most of its funds locally.

5. This analysis is based on fieldwork I conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between April and May 2012 on behalf of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network).

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The gender and labour question in the future of work discourses in Southern Africa

Sandra Bhatasara and Tamuka Charles Chirimambowa

ICTs and reconfigured labour markets

Automation and artificial intelligence are impacting the workplace and resulting in new forms of labour and gender relations globally and locally. There has been a surge in online labour markets or mobile labour markets on the Internet of Things. This has led to debates about technology and the future of work, and how that is creating more non-standard work, precarious labour conditions and, at the same time, shaping gender relations.

However, at the moment, two contending schools have emerged: one that sees gloom because of the likely loss of work to machines and robots and the increasing use of artificial intelligence and automation in the workplace. More hopeful discussions base their argument on the potential of making labour markets more efficient and flexible and of increased earnings. However, this article is interested in mapping the contours and problematise the nexus of the future of work, the labour and gender question, and its overall import to the advancement of women in the workplace in Southern Africa.

Time to rethink the gender and labour question

Anecdotal evidence points to a growing labour force working online in areas such as online tutoring, translation and transcription, research, hot forex trading, and transport, among many other services offered on the 'gig economy'. While the future of work seems to be offering opportunities to women and expanding their capabilities, the discourse obfuscates the benign historical and cultural gendered inequalities embedded in the workplace.

In addition, the de-standardisation of work and the increasing attendant precarity mired in the future of work pose more questions on the welfare of employees versus faceless and virtual employers. Therefore, the challenges posed to labour relations

and the general welfare of women by the future of work calls for the rethinking of the gender question, trade unionism, and worker activism. There is a need to understand the nexus of the local and global and likewise devise strategies that seek to create local and global solidarity partnerships that challenge patriarchal and masculinised Capital's insatiable appetite for profits at the expense of women.

Africa in the fourth industrial revolution

In Africa, the fourth industrial revolution has potential debilitating social effects, including generating polarised and violent societies as well as amplified poverty and social inequalities. It has been noted that:

Unequal societies tend to be more violent, have higher incarceration rates, and have lower levels of life expectancy than their more equal counterparts. New technologies may further concentrate benefits and value in the hands of the already wealthy. Those who didn't benefit from earlier industrialisation risk being left even further behind (Harvey, 2017).

This poses challenges, especially for women as they are always the most affected by violence and conflict. The entrance of Uber and Taxify in the South African transport sector has been met with intense violence from metered taxi operators who claim that Uber and Taxify are 'coming to take away their livelihoods' (Khoza, 2018). In some cases, the violence has claimed lives or led to the loss of property (see Nqola, 2017; Huffington Post, 2017; Mogane, 2017) with seemingly 'no political will' (Mahlokwane, 2018) to solve the situation.

These cases of extreme violence make the work environment unsafe for women. This creates challenges when addressing the gender gap in African labour markets, given that women are already under-represented within the workforce and, where they are

represented, it is in lower level and precarious jobs. Copley (2018) observes that 'Most African economies are already marked by high unemployment, underemployment, vulnerable employment, and working poverty and characterised by large agricultural and informal sectors that generally have low wages and low productivity.'

The African labour-intensive economy potentially faces the disruptions of technology and, in most cases, it has led to the loss of jobs, especially for women. Writing for France24, McNicoll (2018) observes that, in the US, '164,000 women secretaries and administrative assistants are at risk in a rapidly evolving economy in comparison to 90,000 men in vulnerable assembly line jobs.' These statistics point to women being under more threat in relation to their male counterparts in addition to already existing gender inequalities in the workplace. Therefore, based on available data from the US, one may conclude that the future of work holds limited prospects for women in Africa as well.

Intersectionality vis-à-vis women and the future of work in Africa

In 1989, Crenshaw (1989: 139) developed intersectionality as a metaphor (demarginalising) as part of the antiracist feminist critiques of the claim that women's oppression could be captured through an analysis of gender alone. Critically, this was mostly about addressing legacies of exclusions. In essence, intersectionality means the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination. We refer to simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility, and inclusivity in terms of women's experiences in the world of work (see Carastathis, 2014). We are also capturing structural intersectionality, political intersectionality and representational intersectionality, particularly within the so-called fourth industrial revolution vis-à-vis women and the future of work in Africa.

Women's simultaneous adverse incorporation and marginality

It is, however, unquestionable that where there are revolutions, there are disruptions, bifurcations, winners and losers. And there is no doubt that the losses and impact of disruption vary depending on gender, race, ethnicity, age, nationality, and immigrant status (multiple identities). Stuart Lowman (in Fin24, 2016) categorically stated that a major expected loser is women, 'as demographic and socio-economic change is expected to have a disproportionately negative impact on women than men.' Certainly, women are on the frontline bearing the risks of the fourth industrial revolution.

Statistically, based on the absolute job gains and losses mentioned in various reports since 2016, job losses will affect women (48 percent) and men (52 percent) almost equally (Schwab, 2017). 'However,' Schwab (2017) further observes, 'given that men represent a larger share of the overall job market than women, this even spread translates into a widening of the employment gender gap, with women losing five jobs for every job gained compared with men losing three jobs for every job gained.'

Although the fourth industrial revolution will have a disproportionately negative impact on the economic prospects of women, 'sweeping changes caused by disruptions to the labour force will result in more women progressing into senior positions' (Georgescu, 2016). Data from the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2016: 24) *Global Gender Gap Report* indicates that it will take about 120 years on average globally for women to be earning the same as men for the same work, with sub-Saharan Africa due to meet this goal in just under 80 years. Based on information from the WEF *Industry Gender Gap Report*, Cann (2016) surmises:

[T]he fact that women make up a smaller share of the workforce means that today's economic gender gap may widen even further than the current 40 percent... The drivers of change propelling the Fourth Industrial Revolution will heavily disrupt some of the job families with the largest share of female employees, such as Office and Administrative roles, but also some of those with the largest female gender gap, such as Manufacturing and Production, Architecture and Engineering, and Computer and Mathematical roles.

The other dimension for gender equality concerns the ability to secure work over the period of and after pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing (Lucas, 2009; Teow & Ravidran, 2016). Howcroft and Rubery (2018) explain, 'There is the risk that if work becomes more fragmented with competition for each new task, much of the progress made by women in retaining access to employment through paid maternity leave may disappear.'

So what does this mean for African women's futures in the world of work, in their diversity of professions, age, race, nationality, etc.? The previous revolutions produced and reproduced sexist tropes of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. Women faced limited participation in the labour force and also occupational segregation, populated low paid/skilled jobs and the care economy, received low wages and faced the glass ceiling. Women were historically double-burdened, bearing responsibility for unpaid domestic labour in addition to their paid workload.

Is the fourth industrial revolution poised to reverse the entrenched gender stereotypes and discrimination? Are we really about to experience gender-neutral economies or a post-gender world of work? There are some mistaken assumptions that gender-based limitations of the old order will fast become obsolete as 'The most successful companies in the future may be those that



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Is the fourth industrial revolution poised to reverse the entrenched gender stereotypes and discrimination?

eliminate gender-stereotypes in favour of post-gender structures, allowing them to innovate and grow' (Funna, 2018). The fallacy further perpetuates through overoptimistic notions that 'new technologies could potentially make it easier for employers to accede to requests for flexible working, thereby perhaps reducing the proportion of women pushed into self-employment or the gig economy after childbirth' (Howcroft & Rubery, 2018).

A recent study by Stanford University researchers reveals that women's relatively high opportunity cost of unpaid working time and gender-based preference differences can perpetuate a gender earnings gap, even in the absence of discrimination (Cook et al., 2018). Therefore, the fourth industrial revolution is most likely to perpetuate the structural nature of inequality. While the number of women moving into senior positions and making good salaries is increasing, on a broader scale, the historical and cultural gendered inequalities are likely to persist.

The virtual economy: Can it be the silver bullet?

There is a significant growing group of workers who are also tapping into the virtual economy in an attempt to escape precarity. A proportion of these workers are working in areas such as online

tutoring, transcription, research, consultancy, hot forex trading, and many other online jobs.

Freeman (2008) and Friedman (2005) have argued that the labour market is increasingly becoming globalised due to outsourcing and off-shoring of work online, creating a 'flat world'. In this argument, there is an emphasis on the positives of technology and how it will create new opportunities, yet it obfuscates the significance of structural and institutional changes happening in labour markets. For example, emerging evidence from research in the developed world, where the phenomenon has become widespread, points to the de-standardisation of work and the emergence of non-standard work in the form of self-employed or own-account workers who do not hire other individuals, or in the form of temporary or fixed-term contracts, and part-time work (see Codagnone et al., 2016; de Stefano & Aloisi, 2018). Most importantly, from a labour perspective, in online/digital labour markets, work is performed under even less standard forms than 'traditional' non-standard work, thus raising questions of inequality, precarisation, and erosion of labour rights.

Even though people working in this virtual economy have been described by fancy names such as 'micro-entrepreneurs', 'gigs', 'contractors', and 'freelancers', the evidence points to a story of turmoil and super-exploitation of workers. Online labour markets operate in a regulatory vacuum. This has rendered national labour laws obsolete because the global nature of the

platform operates on the pure logic of market fundamentalism, and online markets are out of reach of national legislation. The ineffectiveness of national legislation to address the maladies of online labour markets becomes more glaring and ghastly, especially in the developing world where there are limited, if any, resources, institutions and laws to challenge virtual Capital domiciled in the Global North. It raises fundamental structural issues of global power dynamics and the welfare of virtual workers in the developing world. Secondly, and especially for women, the long working hours, generally between 12 and 15 hours a day, militates against the opportunity cost of women in the care economy (from an interview with a Zimbabwean woman, undocumented online transcriber, Weltevredren Park, Johannesburg, September 2016).

The digital markets have thus become the new and unregulated channel for exploitation by employers and labour costs saving. In fact, the celebrated 'gigs' traded on these markets are the atomised formerly full-time jobs, thrust onto the online platform as broken-down units and tendered on a piece-by-piece basis to increase outsourcing across the board and reduce labour costs. The net result is that online labour markets end up creating a precariat new class, with no other employment benefits and social protection, thus aiding the steady erosion of the 'labour contract' and increasing inequality and poverty. For instance, investigative reports in the US (Friedman, 2005; Freeman, 2008), are showing that the online labour markets are laden with harsh conditions such as low earnings, inflexibility, tight work schedules, impromptu cancellation of work contracts, and other labour malpractices by Capital; thus rendering workers vulnerable.

Furthermore, in the US, there are a number of lawsuits and class actions that have arisen (see Kendall, 2016) and these point to the challenges emerging from the virtual economy. These problems associated with the gig economy pose challenges, especially to African women who have historically faced many struggles in the labour market. For instance, the South African taxi industry has been largely dominated by men and, given the violence that has characterised the competition between Taxify and Uber versus the rest of the taxi industry, with law enforcement appearing hapless to solve the situation, this creates an unsafe working place for women. In the end, it means the patterns of inequality are more likely to continue than discontinue.

Where to for African women in the future world of work?

'A woman's position in the labour market is inextricably linked to experiences in the home, and the distribution of reproductive labour remains imbalanced' (Howcroft & Rubery, 2018). It is

against this background of the emerging discourses of future work that trade unions and academics need to consider these nuances and the nexus between the global and local in order to come up with meaningful policy interventions.

The labour question and labour markets are increasingly becoming complex and mired in a confluence of a multi-variate of factors that have local, regional and global dimensions in the 21st century. This calls for new thinking and approaches to the issues of labour and gender as technology takes hold and continues to reshape labour markets. The following points are worth considering as trade unions and worker activists. Firstly, we propose the need for research that seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the extent and nature of the phenomenon of the virtual economy in Southern Africa?
- What are the gender dynamics informing and shaping labour relations in the fourth industrial revolution?

Secondly, work by Codagnone et al. (2016) provides a more nuanced basis for further research aimed at understanding labour market platforms:

- What is the direct employment effect of labour market platforms, i.e., how many workers (men and women) are actually involved in the functioning of labour market platforms?
- Who are the service providers (i.e., the supply side)?
- What are their demographics, education, location and motivation, and how do they judge the experience?

This will help us answer questions about the substitution of regular labour contracts with labour supplied through platforms, from the perspective of those supplying the labour. It will also provide a better understanding of their opinions on the conditions of employment in the sharing economy (hours of work, wages, quality of work, etc.).

Thirdly, we should consider:

- From the user's perspective (i.e., the demand side), what kinds of tasks are outsourced?
- Are outsourced tasks mostly related to non-core activities and/or standardised activities (where the 'buy' option dominates over the 'make' one)?
- Are those tasks mostly cognitive, manual or interactive? Are they routine or non-routine tasks?
- What are the main drivers for firms to use labour market platforms? (Codagnone et al., 2016: 58).

There is a need for women unionists to explore the possibilities of unionising these people and creating international solidarity

and partnerships with women unionists in the Global North, and to engage in joint collaborations that will seek to advance the case of women workers through lawsuits or class actions in these citadels of Capital.

Women unionists, researchers and policymakers need to explore practical ways of rethinking incomes and experiment with ideas around a universal basic income and adapted social safety nets to deal with the causalities of automation and technology.

The question of safety needs to be rethought due to evolution in the workplace, particularly the higher rates of change between sectors, locations, activities, and skill requirements. There is a need to consider adopting and adapting various best practices approaches to safety nets as well as testing new approaches.

It is our contention that trade unionism needs to consider involving solidarity and internationalism with their sister trade unions in the Global North to address the emerging precarity and gender questions in the virtual economy. Yes, the virtual economy is expanding and presenting opportunities in Africa, yet there is limited understanding of its impact on the African labour and gender question, despite that evidence from elsewhere points to not so rosy a picture. There is a need to invest more in understanding how the future of work is shaping and informing the labour and gender question, as well as possible solutions to address the gendered inequalities.

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Women's informal employment in Africa: New terrain of worker struggles

Sally Roever and Caroline Skinner

Introduction

There has been renewed interest in the African economy, in part fuelled by global corporations' search for new markets, captured in the notion of 'Africa Rising'. As Mahajan (2011) states in his book on the topic, 'the 900 million consumers on the continent offer more than you think.' However, a growing body of evidence (e.g., Hickey & du Toit, 2007; Lindell & Meagher, 2013;¹ Meagher, Mann & Bolt, 2016, and others) shows that this is leading to new forms of informality and precarity. A common theme in the detailed empirical literature is that these new forms of precarity particularly affect women but also that, in many contexts, they simply remain marginalised.

Mainstream economic paradigms, however, frame changes in the world of work — particularly technological change and the declining role of unions — as apolitical and gender neutral, suggesting that human capital investments and small enterprise promotion will facilitate adaptation (World Bank, 2018). This pushed women workers further to the margins of debates, processes and policies shaping the future of work on the continent.

Against this backdrop, this article reflects on newly available data that maps the size and nature of the African informal economy and women's role within it. We look at the intersection between status in employment, gender, and poverty risk and use this to chart out possible new scenarios to address informality through targeted collective action. This is with a view to inform women informal workers' strategies to achieve greater economic justice.

The article draws on the work of the global research, action and policy network known as Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). WIEGO was founded to improve the situation of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy through stronger organisations and networks of informal workers, improved statistics and research, and more inclusive and equitable policies and practices. WIEGO's specific contribution has been to put statistics and research into the hands of informal workers and their

organisations to bridge ground realities and mainstream policy debates, and to bring the voices of workers and their organisations to policy processes.

The African informal economy: A statistical snapshot2

Over 100 countries — both developed and developing — now collect data on informal employment. This has allowed the generation of estimates based on a common set of standardised criteria to determine informal employment (employment insufficiently covered by formal arrangements, whether in formal enterprises, informal enterprises or households) and employment in the informal sector (i.e., in unincorporated enterprises) (ILO, 2018; WIEGO, 2018). The result is the first-ever global estimates of the size of informal employment. The data shows the majority of all workers in the world aged 15 and above — 61 percent — are informally employed: a total of two billion workers (WIEGO, 2018).

This data gives unique and new insights into the nature of work in Africa in a global comparative perspective. Informal employment as a share of total employment by region is reflected in Table 1 on the following page, showing the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly nine in every ten of those who work in the region work in the informal economy (WIEGO, 2018).

In Africa as a whole, informal employment accounts for 86 percent of all employment (ILO, 2018). If agriculture is excluded, the figure goes down to 72 percent. There is, however, differentiation between regions, as reflected in Table 2 on the following page, with informal employment being particularly dominant in East, West and Central Africa.

Not only are there significant variations between regions but also between countries. Informal employment reaches its highest rate in Burkina Faso and Benin at 95 percent of all employment and its lowest in South Africa at 34 percent (ILO, 2018: 30). The lower percentage for informal employment in South Africa distorts

the overall figures for the Southern African region. The comparatively small informal economy in South Africa, combined with very high unemployment rates, has been an ongoing source of curiosity in policy and research. Among the explanations are that South Africa's formal economy is comparatively large and highly concentrated (see Philips, 2018; Fourie, 2018).

The informal economy globally and on the African continent is highly gendered. While, worldwide, men have higher rates of informal employment than women, in Africa, informal employment is a source of employment for women more so than for men – 79 percent in comparison to 68 percent. There are regional variations with North Africa as an outlier with a higher share of men (69 percent) than women (62 percent) in informal employment (ILO, 2018: 30).³

Informal employment dominates the labour market in both urban and rural areas in Africa, at 76 percent and 88 percent respectively. Also, important to note is that young people (95 percent) and older persons (96 percent) have very high levels of informal employment. The share of informal employment is particularly high in agriculture (98 percent), followed by industry (77 percent) and services (70 percent) (ILO, 2018: 26).

Unlike in many other regions, informal employment in the formal sector (i.e., jobs in formal firms that are insufficiently covered by labour and social protections) constitutes a relatively small proportion of total employment – 5.5 percent. Examples of this kind of work are unprotected work in formal firms in retail, manufacturing, services and agriculture, with women predominating in certain segments as, for example, supermarket cashiers, clothing workers and hairdressers. The vast majority of employment (76 percent), however, is in the informal sector, i.e., in unincorporated enterprises. This suggests a distinct set of challenges for improving working conditions, particularly around collective representation, as will be discussed below.

Finally, the most recent statistics on informal employment in Africa show that policies focused on promoting growth-oriented enterprises, i.e. those with more than a single employee, are likely to miss most of Africa's informal workers. As Table 3 shows, only 2.7 percent of those employed informally are employers who hire others. A far higher share are own-account workers, meaning they operate single-person enterprises, or they are contributing family workers.

The data shows that 'informal' work is, in fact, the norm and suggests that for analytical and policy purposes it is important to disaggregate the nature of work (and thus its future) in multiple ways. As outlined below, status in employment is an important starting point. This should be combined with understanding the nature of decent work deficits in relation to where different types of workers fit into value chains and how their conditions of work are shaped by this but also by the policies, laws and practises of the state.

Table 1: Informal employment as a percentage of total employment by region

Region	Informal employment
Sub-Saharan Africa	89%
Southern Asia	88%
East and South-eastern Asia (excluding China)	77%
Middle East and North Africa	68%
Latin America and the Caribbean	54%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	37%

Source: WIEGO (2018)

Table 2: Informal employment in Africa as a percentage of total employment by region

Region	Including agriculture	Excluding agriculture
North Africa	67%	56%
Central Africa	91%	79%
East Africa	92%	77%
West Africa	92%	87%
Southern Africa	40%	36%
Africa total	86%	72%

Adapted from ILO (2018: 29)

Table 3: Status in employment as a percentage of total informal employment in Africa

Employment status	Percentage of total informal employment
Employers	2.7%
Employees	29.7%
Own-account workers	50.1%
Contributing family workers	17.5%

Source: ILO, 2018: 24



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Young people (95 percent) and older persons (96 percent) have very high levels of informal employment.

Segmentation of informal employment by status in employment, gender and poverty risk

What are the implications of large informal economies in Africa, where eight out of every ten jobs for women are found in unincorporated informal enterprises? To begin, it is crucial to consider the intersection of status in employment, gender, and poverty risk.

Consider a pyramid of informal employment with the 2.7 percent of African informal workers who employ other people at the top; the 29.7 percent who are employees in the middle; and the 67.6 percent who are either own-account workers or contributing family workers at the base (ILO, 2018: 24). Those at the top enjoy the highest earnings on average; in fact, they may earn enough to invest capital back into their enterprises to make them grow. But they are far more likely to be men than women: worldwide, men are three times as likely to be employers than women (WIEGO, 2018). The few women who employ others have relative autonomy in their working relationships, but also take on a high degree of risk as entrepreneurs by taking on loans to invest in machinery or a second location, for example. This means that reinvesting their earnings into enterprise growth may be a possibility only if enough supportive conditions are in place to help mitigate those risks.

Those in the middle, informal employees, have less autonomy in their working relationships than employers. They would not take on the type of financial risk that comes with trying to grow an

enterprise, but they still bear other types of risk: without written contracts, they cannot be certain of being paid; without paid sick leave, they lose income when ill or injured; without health insurance, their earnings and time are spent on doctors' visits. For women who work as informal employees, there are other risks as well. Gendered power relations between male employers and female employees can open the door to systematic intimidation and abuse, for example.

Similarly, informal own-account workers are likely to have a mix of autonomy and risk. Like employers, they are enterprise operators and therefore can make certain choices, like when to work or what to sell, for example; but unlike employers, they don't accumulate enough to hire others, so they only earn if they work. Both men and women who work as informal own-account workers face risks similar to informal employees, such as unstable earnings and lack of access to health insurance. But women own-account workers must also balance work with child and dependent care responsibilities, and like women informal employees, risk intimidation and abuse from powerful counterparts, particularly when they work in public space. And at the base of the pyramid, contributing family workers — more likely to be women than men — are without any earnings at all.

A key question for the future of women's work in Africa is what is needed to address the different circumstances that informal employers, employees, own-account workers and contributing family workers face, as workers and as women. Notably, new arrangements within the global organisation of production — including platform work, gig work, and increasingly complex outsourcing relationships — have led to new conditions of

dependency for many workers, with more forms of risk shifted away from firms and onto individuals. In Africa especially, these come on top of not-so-new arrangements developed by corporations looking for access to 'bottom of the pyramid' markets, for example, informal traders selling airtime for multinational telecom companies are treated as own-account workers rather than employees, so that formal companies can rely on them for market access, but download the risk (including low sales, accessing public space to sell, personal safety and occupational health) onto the individual worker. The increasing diversity of employment arrangements within global supply chains calls for new and innovative methods to support worker organising and collective representation.

Future scenarios and challenges ahead

Future work scenarios for African women rest partly on the possibilities for building power through organising and representation. Put differently, collective political struggle on the part of women informal workers will be needed to shift the balance toward greater economic justice, given that existing processes of informality have placed them on the margins of debates, processes and policies shaping the future of work on the continent. Within that struggle, achieving a place in the policy-making and rule-setting bodies that determine their working conditions will be a key factor in shaping future scenarios. Some possible scenarios that could contribute to transformative change are mapped below.

Informal own-account workers

Own-account workers in single-person enterprises are especially marginalised politically. One reason is that the mainstream future of work discourse assumes an economy consisting only of wage employees and employers. The result is that policies are targeted towards enterprise growth, and focus on boosting the (male) entrepreneur through business loans and skills training. These approaches ignore the gendered power imbalances and structural constraints within which women own-account workers operate on a day-to-day basis.

A different approach would address those structural constraints by creating enabling conditions for collective action among women own-account workers: a place and time to organise, for example, and support to strengthen structures of democratic representation. With support for collective action, women own-account workers would be in a better position to collectively identify policy priorities and take them into negotiations with relevant counterparts. To smooth income, for example, informal traders' organisations could negotiate with local governments for permits to work in public space and shelter to protect their

stock, and waste pickers' cooperatives could bargain for sorting sheds and health and safety upgrades. Negotiations with national governments could lead to better access to social protection, including maternal healthcare and childcare. This scenario is well suited to African women workers because of their unique power in numbers – via high labour force participation rates and high levels of self-employment.

Informal employees

Women who are employed by others informally have a particular challenge with physical isolation and vulnerability within the workplace. Domestic workers, for example, generally work in private homes without being seen by fellow workers or people other than their employer. Garment workers in informal workshops may be less isolated physically, but work under extraordinary pressure without any labour rights or protections. Again, gendered power relations play a key role in depriving women workers of decent working conditions. In these circumstances, collective power is needed to counterbalance employer autonomy.

An alternative future for informal employees relies on organising for change at local, national and global levels. Like own-account workers, informal employees need a place and time to organise and access to regular bargaining structures. Yet this is especially challenging with small-scale employers who themselves can be isolated. Thus, informal employees also need dialogue spaces with governments to identify mechanisms for the enforcement of basic protections. As investors increasingly target Africa as a place to develop their supply chain, such dialogue spaces become increasingly important.

Informal dependent contractors

Women who work in the ambiguous territory of subcontracting and industrial outwork face especially complicated circumstances for shaping the future of work towards greater economic justice. Longer and more complicated supply chains mean that lead firms and higher-level intermediaries are increasingly difficult for workers to identify. Taking advantage of this situation, contractors can shift more risk to those at the bottom of the supply chain through mechanisms such as delayed payments and debt bondage. Thus, women who get piece work from a contractor are responsible for providing their workplace, infrastructure (water and electricity, for example) and machinery; for delivering finished products on time; and for incurring lost wages if the production process is interrupted in any way, for example, if the order is placed late, or the raw materials provided by the contractor are damaged.

In this scenario, improving working conditions would require a combination of interventions to reduce risk and ultimately move workers into either autonomous self-employment or protected wage employment.

In summary, the dominance of mainstream economic paradigms, combined with increasingly concentrated corporate power, present a daunting challenge for women informal workers throughout the world, but particularly in Africa. Yet future scenarios need not be constrained to a world in which inequality only continues to increase. There is real and growing potential in the power of women to organise, as evident in the continent's growing networks of membership-based organisations of informal workers.

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NOTES

1. Introduction to *African Studies Review* special issue entitled 'African Informal Economies: Social Inclusion or Adverse Incorporation' that contains several detailed case studies relevant to this paper.
2. This section draws from WIEGO's Statistics Programme led by Joann Vanek.
3. For country comparable data on informal employment by gender see ILO (2018: 85-86).

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Women in the informal sector in Zambia: Resistance and mobilising tactics

Ruth Kanyanga Kamwi

Meet Matilda Kozo

It is 4:00 in the morning and 39-year-old Matilda Kozo is already on the road going to buy assorted vegetables for resale from Zambia's biggest agricultural trading spot, Lusaka's New Soweto Market. Matilda buys vegetables worth 1 000 Zambian kwacha (approximately US\$100) from farmers who supply the market every day. She has to start off early from her home in Kalingalinga Township, which is about eight kilometres from the market.

Matilda, a single mother of two (a boy aged 17, and a girl aged 10), has been a vegetable trader for close to 10 years now. She says:

I started my business after my husband died in 2008, leaving us with nothing. My youngest child then was only two years old, and I found myself and my kids almost homeless. My older brother kept us for some time, and later advised that I start a small business to sustain our daily needs. The only thing I could think of was selling vegetables since I did not go far in my education.

Matilda adds that her brother gave her a 100 kwacha, which she used as start-up capital. Matilda uses 80 kwacha from the money she was given to buy a box of tomatoes which she sold out in three days, making a profit of 120 kwacha.

'I reinvested the money by buying a box of tomatoes, and two types of leafy vegetables. I found myself making a profit of not less than 200 kwacha every week and, in no time, my children and I were renting a one room in Kalingalinga, which became our home.'

And that's how Matilda joined informal employment. With no obligations to anyone but her children, Matilda is able to earn a living working from 4:00 in the morning to about 20:00 in the evening. She works long hours every day of the month except for Sunday because she must go to church to worship. Matilda was

making at least 800 kwacha a month. This money she would use to meet her household needs, with no worries of paying any form of tax to the government, a characteristic of informal employment.

Even though this could present a challenge or disadvantage to governments in many Africa countries, women in the informal sector who do not pay taxes see it as another way of using their resources for personal growth.

Notwithstanding the benefits of formal employment, such as annual paid leave and maternity leave, among others, Matilda has had the opportunity to own a house because her landlord decided to sell her the plot where she rented a one-room apartment. She has since built a two-bedroom house and is taking her children to school using the money she makes from selling vegetables. Matilda explains:

It has not been easy, but here I am. I managed to buy a piece of land and build a two-bedroom house. I saved the money through a village bank concept that we created with my friends at the market. We would save 200 kwacha every two weeks and borrow to pay back with interest at 10 percent. I decided not to borrow anything for six months, and when my landlord told me about his decision to sell the plot, I gladly took the offer knowing that I could now borrow from the Tigwilizana savings group, a form of a village bank.

The village bank (savings groups) concept as a tactic for mobilisation

A village bank is one of the mobilisation strategies that Matilda and 19 other traders initiated, through the Tigwilizana savings group, to financially empower one another and alleviate household poverty. With guidance from the Financial Sector Deepening Zambia (FSDZ), a non-profit company providing information, innovation and impact to increase financial inclusion, the



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Working in the informal sector can mean that women are vulnerable to fraud and misinformation, and that they lack market intelligence and social security.

women come up with their own terms and conditions that spur the growth of their money.

Simply defined, a village bank is a group of low-income enterprises which come together to share and guarantee one another's loans, and thus they become engines of development (FINCA, 2018). Village community banks are informal, locally based savings and credit groups being promoted in various parts of Tanzania.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) also indicates that village banks have benefited the poor in developing countries, who were initially termed 'unbankables' by the formal micro-finance setting. Through village banks, poor rural women have been able to save or obtain loans for their businesses, invest in long-term needs, such as health and education, and better manage when emergencies arise (Deelen & Majurin, 2008: v).

In Tanzania, village banks in urban and rural areas allow those with scarce resources to borrow, invest and grow their business. Women who are routinely denied credit can thus still build enterprises (Mashigo & Kabir, 2016). Village banks are said to be providing soft loans to almost all its members. Though the banks operate on different terms and conditions, depending on

what the members agree upon, the most common practice when it comes to providing soft loans, as Bakari et al. (2014: 131) highlight, is that the first loan to members is provided three months after the member deposits savings. Loans must be repaid after three months for the first loan, and six months for the second loan.

The concept has become popular among women, not just in the informal sector, but among those in the formal sector as well. The women in the informal sector and other vulnerable groups, such as widowed and abused women, may stand to benefit more because they, in most cases, do not have access to formal financial services, hence they are financially excluded.

The Center for Alternatives for Victimized Women and Children (CAVWOC) in Malawi encourages women to form groups of between 15 and 25 individuals to contribute an agreed upon amount of money weekly to buy shares, with good results. Similar stories of women reducing poverty in their lives are reported in Dowa District, in the central region of Malawi, where women's lives have changed by subscribing to village banks (Masina, 2013; Mhango, 2016)

According to the FSDZ, village banks or savings groups have been able to meet the need to access formal financial services

among those who are ‘too poor’ for banks or who live in areas that are more remote. FSDZ (n.d.) explains, ‘They provide services on terms and in time frames more conducive to the needs of rural clients and with far fewer of the constraints and conditions that are such a barrier to accessing formal institutions.’

FSDZ believes that community-based financial services are crucial to expanding financial inclusion and that savings groups are an efficient way to meet this goal, even among women in the informal sector.

And, in the case of the Tigwilizana savings club, Matilda and the other 19 members have been able to lift themselves out of poverty. The village banks have given these women an opportunity to expand their business, take their children to school, and own property. It is, therefore, not surprising that, with her savings of about 2 400 kwacha from the village bank, Matilda was eligible to borrow twice that amount and she paid it back at 10 percent interest over a period of six months. Matilda was then able to pay for the plot which cost 5 000 kwacha.

Through the village banks, women in the informal sector in Africa are encouraged to be determined and work towards a better life. The informal banks are proving to be a source of funding for projects much larger than would otherwise be possible. The banks have helped in empowering women who are members and owners of the banks. The women have benefited from the different services provided, such as soft loans, savings, shares, training, and social or emergency loans (Bakari et al., 2014).

In the wake of how the village banks are evidently acting as an empowerment tool for women in the informal sector, future models for the banks should introduce new conditions, such as the presentation of business plans for new loans, and visits of the group to the member applying for a new loan to check the viability of the business. This is important as the groups are formed based on mutual trust, and that members of the banks recruited should be familiar with the risk involved in case another member defaults.

The World Bank (2014) indicates that women make up 40 percent of the world’s workforce. Industries that are critical for economic growth in some of the poorest countries rely heavily on women’s labour. Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) owned by women represent 30 to 37 percent of all such enterprises. This amounts to between eight and ten million women-owned firms in emerging markets. Lack of financing is their greatest barrier to growth and development (World Bank, 2014).

Access to credit opens economic opportunities for women. Having a bank account can be a ‘gateway to the use of additional financial services’ (World Bank, 2014). It is, however, no secret that women face challenges more than men in accessing financial services, as the Global Findex (in World Bank, 2014) database shows:

In developing economies women are 20 percent less likely than men to have an account at a formal financial institution

and 17 percent less likely to have borrowed formally in the past year. Even if they can gain access to a loan, women often lack access to other financial services, such as savings, digital payment methods, and insurance.

That is why, in the informal sector, village banks are very important in providing both savings and credit to poor households and, in most cases, it is women who are at the forefront.

Mobilisation through associations and networks

Pilipenko (2014) explains:

Empowering women, improving their representation and participation in all walks of life, but particularly in the male-dominated world of business, is critical to demonstrate that women have the power to choose and define themselves, not only when it comes to keeping a family together and organizing the household, but also in selecting their career path. When female leaders globally get engaged more jobs are created. When they get involved in literacy, poverty eradication, healthcare, childcare, welfare support, family crisis centers support, women’s refuges, reforms in the law, with any problem of the world, things get better.

There is a growing need for women to improve their lives, leading to the creation of movements and associations that champion the gender agenda. Women have realised the need for unity among themselves in all sectors of life and want to be counted. Associations are and have been formed at all levels of interaction, starting from the level of the community, and extending to the regional, national and continental levels. For instance, the African Centre for Gender and Development is a division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The Center deals with gender issues and the advancement of women in the UN system in Africa.

As far back as 1977, a group of African women researchers realised the low representation of women in research, and they came together to form the Association of African Women for Research and Development. They were convinced that research was key to development and they thus conducted ‘research, advocacy and training with a view to improving the status of women and transforming gender relations in African societies’ (MEWC, 2011). Establishing such associations is one of the tactics that women have used to advance specific areas of interest that deal with women’s empowerment and work. Perhaps the association for the support of women entrepreneurs known as ASAFE could be one of those in which those in the formal sector

come together to help those in the informal sector. ASAFE a social enterprise created in 1987 and it is a support and development structure in view of the promotion and emancipation of women entrepreneurs who do not have access to the services of existing institutions, such as state structures offering assistance.

The Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM), a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) Institution, established in 1993, aims 'to promote the activities of Women in business in Comesa and beyond. It plays a facilitative, co-coordinative, and catalytic role working with federations of women entrepreneurs' National FEMCOM Chapters in the Comesa Member States to create an enabling environment for women in business as well as acting as a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences' (FEMCOM, 2018).

FEMCOM has National Chapters in all 19 Comesa countries and is cognisant of the fact that small and micro entrepreneurs dominate in most of these African nations' economies. Informal cross-border traders are among SMEs and they 'face challenges in limited entrepreneurial skills/experiences, lack of access to appropriate technology, lack of access to finance and low level of value addition' (FEMCOM, 2018).

The Zambia Federation of Associations of Women in Business (ZFAWIB) is an affiliate of FEMCOM. According to ZFAWIB Executive Director Maureen Sumbawa, as of December 2017, the Federation had at least 5 000 members and, of these, less than 10 percent were cross-border traders. However, more than 50 percent of the members were cross-border traders five years ago. ZFAWIB has followed its mission of empowering women at all levels of business, and thus most of the cross-border traders have been guided to more productive businesses that include agriculture and value addition. To achieve this, Sumbawa said that several training programmes are conducted for ZFAWIB members who can upgrade from one level to another.

For instance, in 2016, 150 Zambian women were trained in cassava seed multiplication and value addition at the Mount Makula Research Center in Lusaka (Nakaweesi, 2015). This was to encourage women to contribute to the commercialisation of cassava as a cash crop. The training was possible through the cassava cluster programme implemented by Comesa in seven countries: Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Uganda and Zambia. And, through this programme, in Eastern Africa, the Kenya Women Economic Empowerment Fund pledged to finance small enterprises along the cassava value chain and to enhance coordination and the creation of networks.

When it comes to establishing networks, FEMCOM is encouraging its chapter members to go a step further and conduct trade among each other. Its CEO, Catherine Ichoya, said members from different countries will be able to take advantage of the demand for certain commodities in their country and contact countries that can supply. This will advance informal cross-border trade and is a move towards formalising their businesses. FEMCOM plans to

expose its members to intensive capacity-building programmes on how to conduct e-commerce using devices such as mobile phones.

The future of work in the informal sector

The informal sector may not be the safest space for women, but as it is often the only available space for them, policies must be put in place to make it safe for everyone including women and young people. As it is, working in the informal sector can mean that women are vulnerable to fraud and misinformation, and that they lack market intelligence and social security.

Women need access to decent incomes if their future is to be safe and different to the hardships they face growing up. The ILO (2018: 2) explains that, 'Macroeconomic policies can be important enablers of gender equality, as they shape the economic environment for women's empowerment.' Macroeconomic policies that are gender-aware support social infrastructure, and takes care of issues such as health, education and childcare. On the other hand, monetary policies can advance credit to women in smaller enterprises; provide access to social protection; and ensure women's organisations have a voice in macroeconomic decision-making (ILO, 2018). The ILO (2018: 3) further says that:

Other measures, such as a minimum wage, can have a particularly important impact on women in informal employment, as it raises the incomes of those engaged in low-paid activities. Employment programmes, which guarantee and provide a legal entitlement to a minimum wage (e.g. rural employment guarantee schemes), have helped to increase women workers' wages and narrow the wage gap. This effect can also spill over into other sectors, as workers collectively bargain for better wages. Domestic workers are amongst the lowest-paid informal wage employees, and a minimum wage can have a significant impact on these workers.

To this effect, the Government of Zambia has recently amended the Minimum Wages and Conditions of Employment Act (Chapter 276 of the Laws of Zambia, Statutory Instrument No. 71 of 2018). Domestic workers minimum wages will be increased from about 550 kwacha to almost 1 000 kwacha (US\$55 to US\$100).

Governments used to regard the informal economy as a problem, as a large group of workers and small enterprises which do not pay work-related tax but impose burdens on the state which are hard to manage. However, after the International Labor Conferences in 2014 and 2015, and the adoption of the ILO Recommendation 204 (ILO, 2015), attitudes have shifted.

Governments are now coming to realise the capacities of the informal economy as a major source of employment and contributor to the economy. They are also coming to realise that

they have a responsibility to ensure social protection is extended to informal workers. They have signed up to international agreements to ensure certain minimum standards of social protection to all. Policies to extend social security also cover women in the informal economy. The ILO indicates that extending social security coverage to informal workers, such as domestic workers, in-land and cross-border traders, among others, will help countries move towards formalising the informal sector, as outlined in ILO Recommendation 204 (ILO, 2015).

For instance, an organisation called Precious Smiles Centre for Parents and Children in Lusaka, Zambia is way ahead. The centre ensures that all maids and nannies trained at the centre are registered to a social security scheme before they are deployed to homes to take up employment. Domestic workers were recognised as workers by the ILO only as recently as 2011 (ILO, 2013).

But, again, not many of the women in the informal sector would want to subscribe to social security schemes because their businesses in most cases are hand-to-mouth, their capital is small, and they make little profit. They use what they make and would not want to put aside a portion knowing that they will only be able to access their benefits at retirement age, if what they are supposed to subscribe to is a pension fund. In some cases, women resist such policies because they may not have enough information about the policies and how to access the benefit, or they could be misinformed, and other unintended persons benefit from them.

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Organising domestic workers: The unfinished business of labour movements

Shawna Bader-Blau

The Solidarity Center, the organisation that I lead, is the largest US-based international workers' rights organisation assisting workers globally. We have teams working across the world. In partnership with the American labour movement, in more than 60 countries, the Solidarity Center works with unions and workers' organisations whose members face the same challenges everywhere: poverty, low wages, a lack of legal protection, discrimination, and informal and/or isolated employment. We support organising and help workers achieve collective bargaining. We stand with workers fighting to change the laws that do not protect them and the policies that exploit them. We connect workers to one another across borders to support the growth of a global labour movement. This includes affiliates of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) in 20 countries around the world. We seek global solidarity in a global economy.

From our vantage point, we see what you see – in more and more countries, wealth is being concentrated, and that leads to the consolidation of political power and decision-making in the hands of fewer and fewer people. That is as true in the US as it is in India or Brazil, Cambodia or Jamaica, Mexico or Morocco. And we need to say 'Enough!' We need to say it loud, proud and *together*. And that's why I'm so proud to have participated at the recently concluded Second Congress of the IDWF that convened from 16 to 19 November 2018.

Of course, in that space, we had a strategic sisterhood and brotherhood of working people coming together. The future of the growing global domestic workers' movement was right there in that space displaying possibility, optimism and power. I saw something else, too. In that space was the future of the labour movement globally. Speaking to those who gathered in that space as a very proud trade unionist, and daughter and granddaughter of working-class trade unionists, I knew and shared that there's still a lot of what we should be calling 'unfinished business' in the labour movement.

Who is included and whose voices count?

There are too many workers we have historically never reached out to or tried to organise in too many of our countries, workers who look like the membership of all the great unions represented at that Congress. Too many of these workers are working harder, for less pay, and in increasingly precarious circumstances. Maybe they are migrant domestic workers in Qatar trapped on guest worker visas that restrict their freedom of movement; Algerian restaurant workers living only on tips in Washington DC; rural workers on agricultural plantations in South Africa and other parts of Southern Africa; Afro-descendant, low-wage contract workers in Colombia; or maybe they are market workers in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the labour movements and unions in all of these countries don't organise these workers enough. But they are the majority. And this is where we find our power in the global labour movement: when we organise the majority. Organising domestic and other home-care workers alongside other disenfranchised workers is part of the global labour movement's unfinished business. It's also going to be how we grow into the future.

When domestic workers organise, they rejuvenate labour movements because it takes innovation and creativity to organise domestic workers, to build the kind of organisations delegates gathered in Cape Town for the Congress are all building. The workforce isn't located in one place or in their home countries. For example, they are Nicaraguan migrants cleaning homes in Costa Rica. The workforce often speaks many languages. Maybe they are Filipino and Sri Lankan nurses caring for patients in a hospital in London or Amman, Jordan. Sometimes they are the working people who their fellow citizens just do not see because of discrimination, say, in the case of transgender workers at a call centre in Mexico. Nevertheless, that kind of discrimination and disenfranchisement is not the future.



It is not the invisible hand or the natural course of history that causes all this inequality. It is power.

The future is a labour movement led by people committed to the idea that everyone has the right to organise, that no government and no company will ever define for us who is a member of the working class, or who has the right to form or join a union. *We* define that. *We* choose. A movement that women, migrants and informal workers are increasingly leading, a movement that stands for all workers – that is the unfinished business of our labour movement. This is exactly what we represented in Cape Town with the IDWF. However, to build that future, we need to start organising our vision together too.

Let me say it plainly from my perspective: no government ever woke up one morning and said, 'Let's create a more fair economy today,' or 'Let's expand human rights.' Markets and corporations do not magically conjure up shared prosperity. It is citizens coming together collectively in trade unions, domestic workers' associations, and other workers' collective organisations that push governments and corporations to make changes to the way our economies work and to make them more fair. When workers who have never before had the benefit of union membership do that, then we start really finishing up our unfinished business and making our labour movements more equal, more fair, more representative.

Closing political space for civic engagement

However, with the way politics is going around the world, it is getting really hard to work collectively in many places. First, there is the global crackdown on human rights. There is a growing anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment, xenophobia and racism, misogyny, anti-gay and anti-trans bias and violence. There is a patent reduction in real civil rights, especially the most basic labour rights to form or join organisations, and to protest. The stakes are high for workers.

Labour rights globally are among the most frequently violated category of human rights. The majority of the world's workers are actively disenfranchised from their rights as workers. For example, 65 percent of countries exclude some groups of workers from labour law, like domestic, agriculture and contract workers, 87 percent of countries have violated the right to strike, and 81 percent of countries deny some or all workers collective bargaining. The number of countries where workers were arrested and detained increased from 44 in 2017 to 59 in 2018, including four migrant domestic worker activists in

Lebanon alone. Last year, trade unionists were murdered in nine countries: Brazil, China, Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria and Tanzania. This year we can add Turkey, Honduras, and others to that list. And the extraordinary, criminal injustice: four million domestic workers around the world live in forced labour and slavery.

Second, this human rights crackdown is taking place in the context of rising inequality. Most people are living in increasingly unequal economies. Seven out of ten people live in a country that has seen a rise in inequality in the last 30 years. The truth is, on the whole, we are living within a global economic system perfectly designed to reflect the economic value of profit over people, and the political *choice* to create a hierarchy of rights – in this case, workers' rights – that serves that economic interest.

It is a system in which low-wage men's labour is expendable, and it deeply undervalues women's work. Globally, women earn 30 percent of what men make for equal work. If current trends hold, it will take 170 years for women to be paid the same as men. The pay gap is worse in situations without unions. Gender-based violence is one of the most tolerated, hidden and underreported violations of workers' human rights in the world. When it happens at work, it suppresses women's voices. That is what misogyny and hetero-patriarchy are for.

Third, the global migration management system, in particular, contributes to inequality. This matters a lot for the IDWF Congress because women who migrate for care work are the largest segment of women who migrate for employment. These domestic workers almost exclusively migrate into a situation of complete and total lack of rights.

The hard-working women migrant domestic workers, cleaning homes, cooking meals and raising other peoples' children, are often just trading one patriarchy for another. If they have travelled to work on temporary visa programmes to a place like Kuwait or Malaysia, they are almost never allowed to bring their own children. What is that about? Is there an assumption that she will be working too many hours for too little pay to be able to afford to have her children with her on *kefala* or guest worker programmes? Why does being 'low wage' and 'migrant' mean you are sentenced to a life being separated from your family? Why is that built into laws that govern migrant domestic workers' travel?

There isn't some sorcery creating the economies we live in. There is no 'invisible hand' of capitalism that is creating all this inequality, this crackdown on trade unions and on human rights. It is most certainly not automatically the natural course of history that Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, is worth \$1 trillion, while a domestic worker in Bangladesh makes \$90 per month. It is not the invisible hand or the natural course of history that causes all this inequality. It is power. These elites, these wannabe masters of the universe, they exercise power and shape our economies to work for them.

The unfinished business

Returning to the subject of the unfinished business of our global labour movement, we recognise that we have confronted these global disparities before. This is why the labour movement was born in the first place, and the situations we are faced with are extremely tough. But, sisters, we were born for this moment. This is why we exist. And we come out of a proud tradition.

Domestic workers' rights in South Africa, for instance, were an integral part of the liberation movement and its activists – including our sisters Myrtle Witbooi¹ and Hester Stephens² – who took risks for freedom that every South African, and every one of us who believes in freedom, are honoured by. Now, South African domestic workers are about to win equal standards for health and safety and wages. When we stand together, South African domestic workers will win.

In Brazil, the current Secretary General of the Brazilian National Domestic Worker Federation (FENATRAD) is also a leading activist of another important civil rights organisation in Brazil, which was the first group that connected the fight for civil rights with the fight for democracy under the previous dictatorship. Brazilian domestic workers lead a brave struggle for racial justice and equality in their country. Domestic worker union leaders are members and activists of the Brazilian Workers Party, and though they now face a fascist regime, if we stand with these powerful women, if we stand together, Brazilian domestic workers and all workers will restore democracy in Brazil, and we will win.

In my country, one of the founders of the American movement #BlackLivesMatter has been a leader in the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). The NDWA and United Domestic Workers (UDW) are two US affiliates of IDWF. My sisters and brothers at UDW and NDWA have been courageous champions for immigrant workers in the US at a time when rising xenophobia is punishing immigrants and refugees.

However, recently, we had elections in the US. NDWA and UDW were both organised months in advance. In California, UDW mobilised 150 volunteers from the union and community to support pro-worker and progressive candidates and educate people about what was at stake for workers in these elections. These activists made nearly 450 000 phone calls and more than 400 trips around the community (we call these 'get out the vote' shifts), knocking on doors and talking to voters about pro-worker candidates.

The result?

In one county in southern California, as a result of the education and mobilisation domestic workers did in partnership with other progressive groups that are part of our coalition, UDW helped

unseat every single anti-union politician in office. When domestic workers in the US stand up for black lives, fight for disenfranchised people, and lead and join progressive coalitions across the country to advance worker rights in our political process and hold politicians accountable to our vision of a more just society, we can win.

Today more than ever, for all of us, focusing on the restoration of democracy and the building of more just societies is becoming the unfinished business of all our labour movements. The people

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This paper is adapted from her presentation at the Second IDWF Congress held in Cape Town from 16 to 19 November 2018.



whose situations have been described here are the story now, but they won't always be the story – not if we organise, not if we dream bigger. I know this because we have done it before and we have the unstoppable drive of our collective vision, which, as represented by the resolutions at this congress and by our presence together, is so much more beautiful than the darkness being spread by the oligarchs and the autocrats. As Myrtle Witbooi said in a plenary session on the first day of the IDWF Congress, 'Sometimes you just need to walk through the rain.' And you know what happens when you come out on the other side? The sun comes out, the clouds lift, and we walk hand-in-hand in the sun.

NOTES

1. Myrtle Witbooi is IDWF's current president. She recently won the highly prestigious Ashoka Award for courageous women 'Challenging Norms, Powering Economies' in acknowledgement of her work in mobilising domestic workers in South Africa during and after the apartheid era.
2. Hester Stephens is the current president of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) who has played a critical role in mobilising domestic workers and unionising them in South Africa.



Muscle Mary

Mercy Wandera

Mercy Wandera: *'I am a young and upcoming budding writer. My biggest accomplishments in my less than a year worth of active writing have been being published in some of the biggest literary magazines like African Writer, Jalada Africa, Poetry Life & Times, and The Kalahari Review, where I have won the Igby Prize for Non-Fiction. I have also been highly favored to start my personal blog (mercyonmeweb.com), which is my canvas that is always being filled with juicy storytelling, poetry and reviews. Additionally, I am a lover of the arts, travel, pop culture and an unapologetic feminist.'*

Muscle Mary,

She sways around her svelte self, unenthusiastically searching
 As if looking for meaning. Lost in her senses walking down the winding road
 Even as passers fly by and condescend with their batting eyes
 The nutty men staring down at her trodden cracked feet
 And the catty women raising their noses at the shrieking malnourished flesh and bone in her bony arms
 Her reeking baby with eyeballs so large they threatened to gouge out their sockets
 But Mary doesn't quite mind the stares, she has grown accustomed
 She blatantly ignores them
 For she knows all about unrequited attention and care
 Married off at fourteen,
 Ten times out of ten she was scraping and clawing,
 Just as her betrothed had done her body
 turn right around and jeer 'Spread them!'
 and still never shed a tear even while discoloured from the molestation
 She remembers taking the beating without tiring, even while in her third trimester
 Her husband would joke aloud 'She takes it like a man'
 And labelled her Muscle Mary to his bosom buddies
 'Cause she takes all of me,' he leered and winked and hooted with laughter
 What was she to do? She liked to think she took it like her mom
 See, she had lived in that reality
 When her drunken father would rain blows on her tranquil mother
 For just breathing wrong and attracting long stares from his companions
 Shaming him, he would claim
 Now she was doing expired mummy dearest proud
 Up until under a tree dozing, lightning struck her beloved husband dead as a doornail
 And Muscle Mary transitioned into the village sorceress in mere minutes
 Rather than wait for her absolute burning at the stake
 She carried her baby away in the cover of darkness and escaped into the night
 Began her journey to places unknown
 What she did know was that she had had enough
 Enough of moral ambiguities and disquieting supremacists
 Nature versus nurture was no longer a conundrum for her
 She was sick and tired of being sick and tired
 At twenty she knew she would work whatever remained of her muscles
 And start over to redeem herself

The changing world of work: Policy considerations for a better future for women in Africa

Naome Chakanya

It is evident that the world of work is changing, largely driven by the technological revolution, also known as the fourth industrial revolution, demographic changes, the globalisation of production systems, the global mobility of workers, and increasing informality, all of which have a bearing on the future of work and, particularly, the future of women's work in Africa.

A number of global frameworks have been adopted to provide a basis for a better future of women's work, including the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 and 8. SDG 5, Target 5.4 emphasises the role that social protection policies play in recognising and valuing unpaid care and household work. SDG 8 calls for 'full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men' (see UN-DESA, 2017). The ILO's Women at Work Centenary Initiative 'aims to better understand, and to address, why progress on delivering on decent work for women has been so slow and what needs to be done towards securing a better future for women at work' (ILO, 2017a).

In order for these global frameworks to be effective, the 2017 ILO-Gallup report noted that governments, employers' and workers' organisations need to first have a deeper appreciation of how women and men feel and think about women and work (ILO, 2017b). This can then lead to improved formulation or revision of regulations and policies that, in turn, could contribute to charting a better future for women at work. The same report, based on a survey of 142 countries and territories, showed that 70 percent of women want to work in paid jobs, and 66 percent of the men agreed, but there remains a significant gap between women's aspirations and the labour market reality (ILO, 2017b: 7). Hence, it is important to interrogate whether the existing labour and work-related policies and frameworks in African countries are fit for purpose.

Before discussing the policy considerations, it should be noted that the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, held in 2013, redefined 'work' as extending beyond employment to include unpaid care and household work, which women mostly perform globally, hence the term 'feminisation of care work' (ILO, 2018a: 3).

In terms of women's participation in the labour market, the ILO revealed that in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), women have lower labour force participation rates than men: 65 percent for women and 76 percent for men. Women are also more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts: 8 percent for women versus 6 percent for men (ILO, 2017b: 11). Although female participation rates were lower than men in SSA, they increased by 3.2 percent over the last two decades, due to the 'absence of or insufficient alternative income from social protection and persistent poverty not allowing the option of dropping out of work' (ILO, 2016: 7). However, women are still disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of their share in employment, remuneration and working conditions. In fact, the majority of women find themselves in the informal economy or holding informal or insecure jobs in the formal economy, which are also largely excluded from national social protection schemes. For instance, informal employment, as a share of total non-agricultural employment, ranged from 33 percent in South Africa to 82 percent in Mali, not by choice, but impelled by the lack of opportunities in the formal economy and an absence of other means of livelihood (ILO, 2016: 11).

Still saddled with historical imbalances

In addition, the current state and future of women's work cannot be isolated from the historical imbalances inherited by most African governments at independence. At independence, most African economies were characterised by a dual and enclave economy, which was the foundation of the economic superstructure that continued to marginalise sectors and activities dominated by women and the youths (Kanyenze et al., 2011). The dual nature was reflected in a well-developed, modern and male-dominated formal sector that co-existed with the underdeveloped and backward informal and communal sectors where the majority of women were found. Enclavity was explained by the fact that the male-dominated formal economy



LINDSEY NELSON, SIM USA

Safe maternity and health are at the centre of decent work and productivity for women.

had a growth momentum of its own due to its linkage with the global economy, and it was isolated from the activities that took place in the non-formal sector where the majority of women dominated.

Sadly, in the post-colonial period, most, if not all, of the African governments did not address the dual and enclave nature of their economies, but rather continued to marginalise and neglect the informal economy, further entrenching poverty and the feminisation of the 'working poor'. Furthermore, the liberalisation of most African economies in the 1980s and 1990s, coupled with the pressures of global competition, resulted in the shrinking of most African formal sectors and, hence, premature de-industrialisation, the exponential growth of the informal economy, and feminisation of the informal economy.

Regarding the quality of work, the 2017 ILO-Gallup report also showed that more women than men were in 'vulnerable employment', made up of contributing family workers and own-account workers, clearly indicating acute decent work deficits for women, characterised by working poverty, low-quality jobs and low pay (ILO, 2017b: 12). Thus, unless there is structural transformation of the dual and enclave economy in the majority of African economies, the future of women's work in Africa remains daunting.

From informality to formality?

Going forward, to address the dual and enclave economies, growing informality and decent working conditions for women's work, African governments need to consider transitioning the informal economy to a formal economy, as stipulated in ILO Recommendation No. 204 (R204) of 2015 (ILO, 2015). R204 provides a holistic and integrated approach to transition the informal economy to the formal economy (mainstream economy). It calls for a comprehensive policy framework to be adopted, which should include 'the promotion of equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence, at the workplace' (ILO, 2015: 5). Transitioning also means member States taking immediate measures to address the unsafe and unhealthy working conditions in the informal economy by promoting, extending and strengthening occupational safety and health (OSH) and labour inspection in the informal economy; providing entrepreneurship and skills training, finance and access to markets; organising informal workers; and extending social protection coverage to the informal economy.

More importantly, social security schemes for the informal economy need to: (i) be gender sensitive with simple administrative processes, considering the heterogeneity in literacy levels among women; (ii) take into account the socially constructed position of women, including specific risks and contingencies associated with the roles and responsibilities ascribed to them by the society in which they live; and (iii) take into account women's contributory capacities. The schemes can be implemented on a gradual basis, such as starting from health insurance, including maternity protection initially, later broadening it to include income security and family support, such as a grant for expenses of school children. More importantly, for the transition to be effective, sustainable and women-friendly, African governments must involve key stakeholders (affected or beneficiaries) in all stages of the transition, and in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of relevant policies.

One of the drivers of the future of work is demographic change, owing to declining infant mortality and declining fertility rates (AWDF, 2017: 14). These demographic changes have implications for the future of women's work and women's time devoted to paid economic activity and unpaid care work in the family. Going forward, policy interventions should be directed towards increasing women's opportunities in more protected, productive and profitable economic activities (AWDF, 2017: 19).

With the technological revolution, coupled with declining fertility rates, opening up spaces for women in the labour market, the adoption and implementation of family-supportive, childcare facilities and gender-responsive policies in the labour market, as stipulated in ILO Convention No. 156 of 1981 on Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (ILO, 1981), is imperative. A considerable policy shift is required to reconcile work and family responsibilities to attain higher female labour force participation rates, as well as the elimination of gendered sectoral, occupational segregation, and wage and income disparities between women and men.

It is concerning that there are only two African countries (Ethiopia and Mauritius) out of the 44 countries that have ratified the 1981 ILO Convention, while other African countries partially domesticated provisions of the Convention. In order to effectively respond to the changing world of work for women, and making the future of women's work safe in the next half century, it is critical for governments to ratify and fully domesticate this Convention. In the absence of affordable, quality and child- and worker-responsive care services, some women are more likely to continue taking up informal work opportunities, especially self-employment or home-based work that affords them the flexibility to manage their care responsibilities while generating income.

Another area that requires attention is maternity protection in the world of work. Safe maternity and health are at the centre of decent work and productivity for women, and they enable women to successfully combine their reproductive and productive roles, prevent unequal treatment at work due to their reproductive

role, and promote the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment between women and men. A study by the ILO (Addati et al., 2016: 10) revealed that, among the 52 African countries analysed, almost half (48 percent) provided at least 14 weeks of leave, according to the ILO Convention No. 183 on Maternity Protection, while 35 percent provided 12 to 13 weeks, and 17 percent provided less than 12 weeks of leave. A total of seven African countries increased the duration of maternity leave between 1994 and 2013 including Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe (ibid: 11).

Notable achievements in labour legislation were also realised in nursing breaks between 1994 and 2013, with a shift away from unpaid breaks towards paid breaks. However, four out of the 34 countries that have ratified ILO Convention No. 183 are in Africa (Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco and Senegal) (ILO, 2000). While some African governments have partially domesticated some of the provisions of this Convention, it is imperative that they ratify, fully domesticate and expand the scope of maternity protection, as set out by Convention No. 183, to the different groups of women workers (self-employed, informal workers, domestic, agricultural, casual or temporary workers) so that they enjoy maternity protection in law and in practice. Collective bargaining agreements can also reinforce maternity legislation, as in the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe.

To complement maternity provisions, comprehensive social policies are a prerequisite to promote a transition to paid jobs for women. Going forward, prioritisation of socioeconomic rights in national budgetary allocations is critical. Provision of basic infrastructure and community services, such as roads, public transport, the supply of water and electricity, and access to low-cost, labour-saving technologies that reduce girls' and women's unpaid work in urban and rural areas are critical to allow more women to engage in economically productive activities.

Thinking local, acting global, and investing in technology

Additionally, the future of work is also being driven by the globalisation of production processes. Global value chains (GVCs) and global supply chains (GSCs) have transformed the world of work in the last three decades (UNCTAD, 2013: iii). Technological changes, including increased digitalisation and automation, pose important questions for the future of work for women in GVCs and GSCs, particularly for labour-intensive industries where women largely dominate. While globalising the production can also translate into more job creation in the future, particularly for women in sectors such as services, textiles and clothing, these jobs may not necessarily be safe and decent for women. Tragic events, such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh

in 2013, which housed five garment factories, killing at least 1 132 people and injuring more than 2 500 (see Safi & Rushe, 2018), highlight the risks faced by workers particularly women workers in the global production cycle. Thus, there is a critical need to strengthen or review national, sectoral and workplace occupational health and safety (OHS) policies, and to prioritise workplace labour inspections to create a better and safer world of work for women workers and workers in general.

Another driver for the future of work is the technological revolution which has resulted in a demand for new technical skills, and women cannot be left out. Transformative education and skills policies that embrace a gendered approach to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education are imperative for African economies. Substantive investment is required in technical and vocational education and training, especially destigmatising courses available to girls and boys by supporting girls and young women to undertake STEM subjects. By improving the technical skills of women workers, African economies open up opportunities and potential for a brighter future for women in the changing world of work in the context of automation. Additionally, increased investment to close the STEM education gender gap is pivotal to prevent future workforce gender gaps, since the gaps may have an even stronger impact on gender-income inequality in the future. Furthermore, facilitating school-to-work transition is a critical policy thrust that enhances equal treatment and employability of both women and men.

Migration is another key driver of the future of work, and it has implications for the future of women's work. For example, the increased feminisation of migration has made domestic work a globalised profession. Sadly, migrant women domestic workers face acute decent work deficits without recourse. Therefore, African governments need to establish gender-responsive labour migration policies, and enter into bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) for skills in demand in another country, particularly for female-dominated occupations, such as agricultural, domestic, teaching and nursing work, as instruments to safeguard and protect the rights and welfare of women migrant workers. Trade unions, on the other hand, can also establish bilateral trade union agreements so as to collaborate in protecting the rights and welfare of migrant workers across borders.

Violence and sexual harassment in the workplace are also a serious and challenging obstacle for women in the workplace. It can prevent women from reaching their full potential and, it is regarded as 'the antithesis of decent work', which 'demands serious and urgent attention' (CARE International, 2018: 1). The increase in internet usage, mobile technologies, and the concurrent use of social media has seen the rise of new forms of technology-related violence against women in the workplace, such as cyber-harassment and various forms of invasion of privacy and surveillance directly targeting women, using information and

communication technologies (ICTs) to enable gendered sexual exploitation (AWDF, 2017: 64). Thus, it is critical that African governments take serious action to ratify and fully domesticate the new ILO Convention on 'Ending violence and harassment in the world of work' (see ILO, 2018b). Trade unions, together with civil society organisations (CSOs), should actively engage governments for ratification and domestication, including monitoring implementation. Additionally, collective bargaining agreements should include clauses to prevent violence and sexual harassment at the workplace, as well as clauses mandating preventive measures to address a range of other forms of violence and harassment at the workplace.

In a nutshell, it is clear that the technological revolution and other global changes are changing the world of work, creating mixed implications for the future of women workers. Whether these changes will lead to safer and decent jobs for women in future or the inclusive structural transformation of African economies and narrowing of gender gaps in the labour market largely depends on national policy direction. Deliberate gender-sensitive policies are required that address the following: (i) structural transformation of the dual and enclave economy of the majority of African nations; (ii) transition the informal economy to a formal economy guided by ILO Recommendation No. 204 of 2015; (iii) increase women's opportunities in more protected, productive and profitable economic activities; (iv) the ratification and full domestication of ILO Conventions 156 and 183; (v) reviewing national, sectoral and workplace OHS policies and strengthening workplace labour inspections; (vi) transformative education and skills policies that embrace a gendered approach to STEM education; and (vii) strengthening social dialogue mechanisms at the workplace and gender-sensitive collective bargaining agreements.

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Trade liberalisation and women's employment in Africa: Towards a level playing field

Amal Nagah Elbeshbishi

"If the playing field is level and all the rules are clearly defined, we will all excel"

Rev. Jessie Jackson

Introduction

Although we know that women in Africa are the majority of the poor and low-skilled workers, there is very little known about the impact of trade liberalisation on them, partly because of the lack of gender-disaggregated data in trade statistics, and partly because of the lack of gender awareness in economic analysis. This article discusses the issue of trade liberalisation and women's employment since employment is very important for poverty reduction in African countries, and it presents policy recommendations to move towards a level playing field.

The unprecedented expansion of international trade has been one of the key transformational forces of our time, often associated with creating major opportunities for economic growth, while also sometimes associated with challenges to human development (Elbeshbishi & Al-A'ali, 2018). Proponents of trade liberalisation benefits point to its apparent positive relationship with economic growth (e.g., Frankel & Romer, 1999; Dollar & Kraay, 2002; Sachs et al., 1995), while others have pointed out the technical deficiencies of such studies (e.g., Rodriguez, 2007; Rodriguez & Rodrik, 2001), emphasising the conditionality of the association on a country's income level, and the lack of evidence that openness has an effect on growth in developing countries (DeJong & Ripoll, 2006).

Trade policies affect women's employment, access to markets, production and consumption patterns. Trade liberalisation can be both positive and negative for women. For example, women who previously had no paid employment may have greater opportunities for employment in new businesses such as information and communication technology (ICT) firms or small export enterprises (Elbeshbishi & Al-A'ali, 2018).

There is very little known about the impact of trade liberalisation on women, partly because of the lack of gender-disaggregated data in trade statistics, and partly because of the lack of gender awareness in economic analysis.

The rest of this article will discuss trade liberalisation and women's employment issues to evaluate the impact of trade liberalisation on women. It will then discuss the policy recommendations for moving towards a level playing field.

Trade liberalisation and women's employment issues

Since employment is a very important issue for poverty reduction, especially in African countries, this section discusses the impact of trade liberalisation on women's employment and the gender wage gap.

Women's employment

Trade liberalisation typically results in an increase in labour-intensive exports from developing nations. Production of many such exports requires manual dexterity and stamina, but not great physical strength. The growth in exports, including garments, shoes, jewellery and electronics, has almost always been accompanied by a significant increase in female employment in the formal sector. Women workers have improved self-esteem, and the expanded social opportunities and life choices that wage employment brings make meaningful and sorely needed changes in their life (Tran-Nguyen & Zampetti, 2004: 18). This also brings about a greater change in gender relations, by shifting parents' perceptions of girls as a liability towards viewing them as potential income earners and contributors to the household. Attitudes and incentives for educating girls are improved as a result (Kabeer, 1995).

Evidence suggests that trade liberalisation often improves women's formal employment opportunities due to the increase

in labour-intensive exports from developing countries. Several studies have found that trade liberalisation is associated with an increase in the number of jobs for females in export-oriented industries (Banerjee & Veeramani, 2017). Women employed in the export-oriented manufacturing sectors typically earn more than they would in traditional sectors, many of them having never earned cash income before. For example, 85 percent of the women who found new employment in the textiles and apparel sector in Madagascar had never previously directly earned monetary income (Nicita & Razzaz, 2003).

At the household level, new employment opportunities for women in export-oriented industries have been associated with increased women's self-esteem, status and bargaining power within the family. In the workplace, there is less evidence of increased women's power as a result of trade liberalisation, given that the jobs created for women continue to be dominated by low-skill, low-wage, temporary and subordinate positions. The opposition of numerous export industry managers to unionisation, as well as women's dominance in informal work, means that women are most often not reached by union membership and, therefore, lack the power of collective bargaining.

Gender discrimination remains one of the key features of labour markets, not only in developing countries but also in developed countries as well. In many societies, men tend to dominate most of the occupations associated with high responsibility, job security, rapid career advancement, dignity, social status and high earning, while women are relegated to the low-paid jobs. It has been argued that women's relegation to low-paid jobs in the formal economy is about more than educational qualifications. It is also about the way that power is acquired, maintained and used (Kottis, 1993).

Kottis (1993) explains further that career managers need to acquire 'informal power' in addition to their educational qualifications. The implication is that even women with high educational qualifications may be excluded from the informal social networks and events where such informal power is acquired. The result is their low representation in high positions and high-paid occupations in the formal economy.

Trade liberalisation may be accompanied by a rise in female unemployment rates. 'The percentage of (unskilled) females in the labour force might peak at a certain level and then fall again over time, as the export structure of the economy moves up to skilled products where (skilled) males outweigh females' (Busse & Spielmann, 2005: 3).

Reviewing evidence from a variety of sources, Joekes (1995: 3) concludes that 'in the contemporary era no strong export performance in manufactures by any developing country has ever been secured without reliance on female labour' including textiles, apparel, electronics, leather products and food processing. In the case of the manufacturing industry, women are crowded into a narrow range of sectors that produce standardised commodities that

compete on the basis of price alone. In fact, many countries have used low wages for women as a basis to build their export capacity and compete internationally. Randriamaro (2005: 16-17) explains:

The main argument of the proponents of free market policies... is that increased trade liberalisation can improve economic growth, which in turn can increase women's participation in the labour market. There have been increased employment opportunities in non-traditional agriculture such as cut flowers, and clothing and textiles, and also in the electronics-oriented Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and the services sector.

Randriamaro (2005) further notes that, in many African nations, trade liberalisation has had the opposite effect and led to more unemployment. Some sectors experience reduced trade. Some require different skills women do not yet have. This leads to a decrease in employment opportunities. Women in industries like clothing and shoe manufacture are more at the mercy of foreign competition and are most likely to suffer during recessions. 'Women are more affected by retrenchment than men, who are perceived as the breadwinners in society' (Musa, 2007: 8).

Al-A'ali et al. (2018: 162) explain that 'Paid employment can improve women's autonomy as well as their economic and social status. It can also shift power relations between men and women, including at the household level, and can improve women's well-being, negotiating power and overall status.' In fact, the opportunities that market participation provides to women depend on women's capabilities to convert the means available to them into the ends they want to achieve.

The gender wage gap

The inconclusive theoretical and empirical debates as to the effects of trade liberalisation on gender wage inequality suggest that the effects can be positive or negative, depending on the context. According to the neo-classical approach, based on Becker's (1959) theory of discrimination, increased competition from trade reduces the incentive for employers to discriminate against women as discrimination entails higher costs. Also, the Heckscher-Ohlin factor price equalisation effects of trade would result in increased demand for low-skilled (mostly female) labour in low-skilled labour abundant developing countries, raising their wages relative to higher-skilled labour (mostly men) (Ting, 2014).

On the other hand, proponents of New Economic Geography approaches argue that wage discrimination may increase with growing trade and competition in a context where employment segregation and greater capital mobility limit women's bargaining power (Williams & Kenison, 1996). They also highlight that trade liberalisation often results in technological upgrading and a premium on skills, therefore increasing the wage gap between skilled



NOMPENDULO NGUBANE, GROUNDUP

The opposition of numerous export industry managers to unionisation, as well as women's dominance in informal work, means that women are most often not reached by union membership and, therefore, lack the power of collective bargaining

workers (mostly men) and unskilled workers (mostly women). In terms of empirical evidence, some international studies have found evidence that competition from trade is associated with a narrowing of the gender wage gap (e.g., Oostendorp, 2004), while others have found the opposite: greater international competition in concentrated sectors is associated with larger gender wage gaps (e.g., Berik et al., 2002).

There is evidence of a two-way relationship between trade and gender wage inequality, where gender wage inequality has also been found to affect trade competitiveness and export levels. Cross-country studies (e.g., Seguino, 2000, for South Korea and Taiwan) and case study evidence (e.g., Rodrik, 2000, for Mauritius) have found that gender wage inequality may have contributed to the export success of several countries, particularly in labour-intensive goods. However, most studies have concentrated on export-oriented semi-industrialised countries, which is unlikely to be applicable to most African countries, where unprocessed agricultural and commodity exports dominate. As women dominate agricultural production in these countries, the inequalities they face in terms of access to productive resources inhibit their productivity and, in turn, aggregate levels of output and exports.

Much of women's trade-related gains in employment have taken place in EPZs. However, conditions in these EPZs are characterised by long working hours, job insecurity and unhealthy

workplace conditions, as well as low pay and, in many cases, women also experience sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based discrimination such as forced pregnancy tests. This is not surprising since many EPZs have been designed to exempt firms from local labour laws (Sen & Gown, 1987). While it has been argued that women's wages and working conditions in export-oriented production, particularly in the case of multinationals, are better than the alternatives, including unemployment, and thus preferred by women employed in such establishments (Kabeer, 2000), this merely indicates how harsh conditions are for women in general, rather than showing a reduction in gender inequalities in employment and earnings (Sen & Gown, 1987).

Anecdotal evidence of international connections between gender inequality and trade exists. Rodrik (2000) reported that Mauritius, for example, pursued a development strategy that depended on operating an EPZ. The segmentation of the labour force according to gender, with female workers predominantly employed in the EPZ, was crucial, as it ensured a large additional pool of low-wage workers. 'Male workers, in contrast, have been able to preserve their status in the remaining sectors of the economy,' according to Busse and Spielmann (2005: 3).

Even though more women may be earning a wage external to their household, the gap between their wages and those of men is far from being closed. Randriamaro (2005: 18) thus says:

[A]lthough this is largely dependent on the type of employment. Industries that began by employing lots of low-cost women workers may begin to embrace new technologies, at which point women are laid off, and more men are employed at higher wages due to the skills required. Women's wages will... remain lower than those of men while they lag in education and training opportunities... Even when the available data suggest a reduction in wage differences, this may be the result of a decline in men's wages rather than an increase in women's wages... The persistent gender wage gap undermines the long-term sustainability of women's livelihoods.

Policy recommendations

Recommendations to policymakers regarding win-win policies that could be pursued to enhance trade as well as empowering women are discussed below.

■ Women involved in trading activities must be able to participate in determining priorities for trade and employment policies. This requires capacity building, economic literacy training, and dissemination of valuable information. It makes good business sense to set up programmes that encourage women to build up their businesses by entering the global economy but, to do so successfully, women exporters must also become part of the mainstream economy and operate on a level playing field with men. 'To make their case, women exporters need to engage in networking with government officials, national and international technical experts and others connected with the global market' (World Trade Organization, 2004: 4). Policymakers need to be sensitised to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs (as well as women workers) both at the domestic level and when participating in the design of international trade rules. Technical assistance and capacity-building activities can play an important role in addressing these barriers.

■ Strategic alliances must be forced between gender equality advocates, trade justice activists and development actors working on policies and programmes. This will ensure that workers' rights initiatives, market access programmes, ethical trade schemes and human rights campaigns adequately address gender equality.

■ As Randriamaro (2005: 52) says, 'Gender-sensitive institutions, enabling legal systems and strong market-support systems are required to remove the structural barriers to improved women's participation in markets and to ensure their rights are upheld as workers, producers and consumers.' Through gender mainstreaming in organisations involved in trade-related issues, we can start to address gender-related disadvantages. In other words, trade union action and the involvement of other concerned stakeholders in labour rights must address gender roles and the problems of unequal power.

■ Trade ministries should support the creation of women's cooperatives and enterprises to facilitate access to ICT and trading networks and ensure the alignment of trade policy with gender equality and poverty-reduction goals. Central bureaus of statistics and ministries conducting planning should also enhance their collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data to facilitate more detailed research into the impact of trade liberalisation on women.

■ UN organisations should continue to provide state-of-the-art information, research and analysis on the issues of trade and gender, assist in the development of tools for the formulation and implementation of gender-aware trade policies, and provide support for the promotion of regional and sub-regional networks for women entrepreneurs and workers. Special attention to small- and medium-sized businesses and the informal sector must accompany this, as well as government and NGOs representative training to monitor the gender-differentiated impacts of trade policy in the context of development plans, and they should provide support in identifying markets and products of interest with economic feasibility for women traders, producers and entrepreneurs.

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Digging for gold in unknown lands: The implications of migration for African women's labour, their future, and empowerment

Busisekile Khumalo

**'Each of us are immigrants if we go back far
enough in history' Anthony T Hincks**

I find myself in the heart of Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city and capital of the Gauteng province which is a long way from my home, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city. Ironically named the city of gold, Jo'burg as it is fondly known, is the cradle of many dreams and everyone comes here to dig for that elusive gold. My story is no different from that of the growing trend among African women immigrants. I graduated from university and, after months of searching unsuccessfully for employment, I decided to come in search of greener pastures in the 'city of gold'. What I found instead was a struggle to make ends meet and a sea of women, some younger and some older than myself, all searching for the same gold. According to UN Women, women and girls comprise 48 percent of all international migrants, and there are some 118 million migrant women worldwide who contribute around \$2.3 trillion to global productivity (Mlambo-Ngcuka & Swing, 2016). I would like to think that the number of female migrants has actually escalated since that report was made due to increasing economic strife in countries such as Zimbabwe.

With the change of legal status, from a citizen of Zimbabwe to immigrant in South Africa, there also comes a shift in the rights afforded me and millions of other women which impact deeply on our social and economic lives as well as on our empowerment as African women. This paper focuses on migration policy, the poor treatment and lack of labour protection for immigrant women, and the stigma and prejudice attached to immigrant women in Johannesburg, which has become a hub for immigrants from all over Africa.

**'No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of
a shark' – Warshan Shire**

Plenty of case studies have been dedicated to studying underlying immigration trends in Africa. Earlier research often took for granted that migrants are 'men', despite an apparent feminisation of migration, and the growing number of female immigrants counted in surveys (Piper, 2008; Silvey, 2006; UNCTAD, 2018). The reasons given for migration in Africa are usually poor socioeconomic situations characterised by low incomes, high unemployment, rural and urban underdevelopment, poverty, and the lack of opportunities. This is not to mention political and social factors such as human rights violations, political instability, conflict and strife, as well as the real or perceived opportunity for a better life (AU, 2006).

What some studies fail to sufficiently put across is the extent of the desperation which drives people from their homes, the constant disappointments, the ongoing need to access the most fundamental human rights and needs including food and shelter, and the fragile hope that the situation will get better – except that prices continue to hike, the poor get poorer, and the rich get richer. The living in constant fear in one's own country, not being able to freely express one's political or, even at extremes, religious beliefs, so that life becomes truly unbearable.

Immigration is often not about wanting to explore the world, but a dire necessity whereby the conditions in one's own country are so untenable that the only other option is to become a second-class inhabitant in another country just to make a living. Yet, often times, the perceived better life is not as rosy due to the stigma and hate directed at immigrants by the host nationals. With the socioeconomic and political situations continuing to worsen in countries like Zimbabwe, Somalia, Nigeria and others,

I foresee an increase in the immigration of women in the future as they pursue economic as well as political freedom.

Getting that paper

I remember the first interview I landed in Johannesburg. It was all going very well, the lady was impressed with me, and even set up an impromptu writing challenge which I managed to tackle to her satisfaction. This was until she asked me which permit I was using. I had to explain that I didn't have a permit, but hopefully, if I got the job offer letter, this would help me process one. She frankly told me that, in our field, law, it was close to impossible to get a work permit and that they couldn't help me as an organisation. Should I manage to get a permit, however, I should not hesitate to come back to her for the job. That was in 2016, and suffice it to say I still haven't managed to get a work permit, but not from a lack of trying.

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) in South Africa this year announced that it is outsourcing the handling and processing of visa applications to Visa Facilitation Services (VFS), a private company. VFS charges an additional service fee of R1 350 per application on top of the standard DHA application fee. This announcement comes after further legislative amendments to immigration laws, which were deemed part of a risk-based approach to immigration management (Apleni, 2015). This national policy, while trying to curb the influx of immigration, goes against international standards of equal opportunities.

While the screening process and the changes in immigration laws are meant to prevent the abuse and exploitation of migrants, especially those with fraudulent or no documents at all, I fear that the stringent laws are having the opposite effect. For instance, ladies like my sister, who has worked much longer in South Africa than I, have resorted to using fake permits just to get work and open bank accounts. The DHA has unwittingly opened up space for hackers to operate as unsanctioned facilitators processing fake visa applications. In the future, I foresee more and more women ending up like my sister, setting themselves up for fraud charges, being blacklisted, and burying their careers with a criminal record because of sheer desperation.

As I mentioned above, desperation is what drives many women to leave their countries of origin, but where the immigration laws make it very difficult for them to gain proper access to their destination country, it leads them to take desperate measures to ensure they still get into that country, with or without proper documentation. In effect, women may now be abused trying to get proper documentation. The immigration laws, while encouraging the immigration of skilled women, especially in the STEM fields, may also result in a future influx of undocumented immigrant women open to abuse and exploitation. On the other hand, these stringent laws may encourage more women to focus

on jobs in the sciences to fit the required skills list and to get permits to work in South Africa. I foresee more and more girl children being encouraged not to study the arts or commercial subjects like law and marketing, and being pushed more to study engineering and medicine, leading to a future increase in women in these currently male-dominated fields.

Working on the other side

Without a valid permit, I soon found that the only jobs available were either domestic work or restaurant work. I managed to secure a job as a cashier at a South African fast-food franchise, and there I found that three-quarters of the workforce were immigrants and most of them women. Some had been working at the establishment for over 20 years when I started working there. According to South Africa's Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA, Act 75 of 1997), workers may agree, in writing, to work up to 12 hours a day without receiving overtime pay. However, they may not work more than 45 ordinary hours a week, ten hours overtime a week, or five days per week (Government of South Africa, 1997). On our duty roster, there was a seven-day cycle in which each worker would undergo seven days of double shifts without off days. Generally, there were no 'shifts' because each working day started at 9:00am and ended at 9:30pm – a 12-and-a-half hour working day – without any overtime pay. We were thus not relieved from duty on any day of the week, and worked an exhausting 87 and a half hours per week.

Furthermore, in direct contravention of section 17 of the BCEA, there was no transport provided for the workers, no travel allowance, or reduced hours, even though the majority of the staff actually worked up to 10:00pm, or even later on weekends. This meant I had to wake up around 5am to take two taxis and battle through the traffic in order to get to work by 9:00am. If you were late, wages were deducted. Then I would only manage to get home after 11:00pm, and some of my workmates even later after midnight because transport in the evening is difficult to find. While my body battled to keep up, those who had been with the same employers for close to 20 years were somehow coping. How they managed to pay their rent, raise their children or, in most instances, send money back home to their children and families while also affording transport costs is beyond me. The majority of the staff didn't have proper documentation, the owners or employers were never reported to the CCMA, staff put up with these conditions, and they continued to underpay staff at an hourly rate of R18.

There were in fact inspections from the franchise headquarters, but inspectors were more concerned about the state of the ice-cream machine, and whether the staff had capped safety shoes – which, incidentally, we had to buy from our own pockets – than real staff well-being or fair labour conditions. If

only franchises like the one I worked at would follow a stricter screening process, as Nandos is in the habit of doing. The workers just next door to us had better working conditions and constant meetings with representatives from their headquarters to enquire about the working conditions of the employees and their salaries. Instead of sending in inspectors in their crisp uniforms, they could send undercover workers, whom the staff would be more open to talking to.

I eventually quit work after just three months back in 2017, mostly because the salary I received only really covered my transport and rent costs, not to mention the untenable hours of work. I didn't strike any gold, only my body was overworked, I didn't have any savings to my name, and I was no closer to getting my work permit. Recently, when I passed by my previous place of employment, the same workers were still there, with a couple of new female faces. They are unlikely to leave as they have additional piece jobs that they carry out to survive. They are unlikely to let go of their positions because of how hard it is to get a job in the first place, and their bosses are always quick to remind them of this. It's sad that in the future even more qualified women like me will find themselves in the same predicament, exploited for cheap labour, as massive unemployment rates persist.

Labour laws are thus not fully implemented to protect immigrants at workplaces, especially female immigrants who tend to lose their visas when they fall pregnant and have to stop work. Some women who are pregnant are refused assistance by their employer to renew an asylum status visa, and they are thus forced to go back to Zimbabwe with a baby soon to care for and little prospect of making a living. Most, out of sheer desperation, are forced to work under such conditions for a long period of time. Two ladies I worked with shared with me that they worked 19 and 18 years respectively for the same employer – and in all this time nothing has improved for them. These women, even after so many years of labour, still haven't found any 'gold', but rather meagre wages and unfair labour practices. There are also reported and officially unreported incidents of women being sexually harassed by their employers, especially those in domestic work in South Africa and abroad (Dlamini, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2017; Ross, 2017). Without any protective and proactive measures in place, this pattern will not change in the coming years, and immigrant women will continue to be abused and exploited.

'The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty' Mother Teresa

When a man leaves his home to seek employment or wealth in another country, in our African context, he is often applauded, while a woman's mosque is her home, and it is mostly frowned upon when the woman is the one leaving home to look for work. Some claim that the migration of women disrupts traditional care

arrangements for children and the elderly and it is often stigmatised and even considered synonymous with trafficking and sex work (Gioli et al., 2017). When a woman is 'well-travelled', she is often viewed as 'loose', and such stigmas are still alive even up to this day. Unfortunately, the stigma is not only from the home country of the women, but also at their destination.

After working at the fast-food franchise, I wrote and self-published my debut fictional novel, *The Harvard Wife*, and that exposed me to the other side of women, the career-driven, literary elite. Most assume I'm of South African origin because, I've been told, 'You do not look Zimbabwean at all.' To them, Zimbabwean women are maids and waitresses, and I'm not sure what look I should have that will scream out 'I'm Zimbabwean', but this has apparently worked in my favour.

As I rub shoulders with the locals, xenophobic utterances about foreign women out to 'destroy' or 'snatch' men are common, and immigrant women are often viewed with disdain in general. I recall one shop owner in particular. I was dropping off books, and she said, 'These "kwerekweres" are hard workers, they do their work chop, chop and efficiently. It's a pity our men are not safe from them.'

The backgrounds and economic burdens placed on immigrant women to sustain themselves in their destination country, while also sending money back home, may mean that they are not as well dressed as their citizen counterparts. And I have often been privy to conversations of madams complaining that their maids smell or are generally 'unclean'. I was at a book review of *The Gold Diggers* by Sue Nyathi recently, and the conversations sparked there about immigrants are the kind of conversations needed in future to dispel misconceptions and curb the disdain with which immigrant women (and men) are viewed.

Most disturbing are the horror stories of immigrant women's experiences in healthcare facilities. There are some rumours of incidents in which medical personnel have – intentionally – left objects inside the wombs of immigrant women after a caesarean birth which leads to the death of the women. If this is true, it is tantamount to the murder of a woman with children who depend on her. The rough treatment given to immigrant women, especially in government hospitals and clinics, often leads to some immigrant women defaulting on their medication or not going for treatment, which they may have started in their countries of origin. Most of this remains undocumented, but there are documented incidents of xenophobic attacks and mistreatment in healthcare and other settings, mostly stemming from the stigma and prejudice attached to immigrant women (see, for example, Hiralal, 2017; Saburi, 2017).

However, the stigma and prejudice against them haven't deterred the continued flow of women migrating into South Africa as well as to other countries around Africa and abroad out of desperate need to find a safer home and sustainable livelihood. Most persevere in these foreign lands in spite of



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While migration could be a powerful tool in “empowering women in our continent, enabling them to gain financial and political freedom, it is also exposing women to exploitation and abuse.

being unwanted and uncared. Thus, employers and co-workers admit that immigrant women are hardworking and respectful, but sometimes grudgingly. Many migrant women would rather suffer the stigma as it still allows them to care for their loved ones with them or back home, at least in economic terms.

Conclusion

The number of women migrating around Africa is on the rise (UNCTAD, 2018). Migration laws, unfair labour practices, and the stigma and prejudice attached to immigrant women will not slow or stop this movement. While migration could be a powerful tool in empowering women in our continent, enabling them to gain financial and political freedom, it is also exposing our women to exploitation and abuse. It is not enough to merely put in place laws to mitigate against the abuse of immigrant women without any implementation force put behind such laws.

While trying to control the flow patterns of immigrant women, it is also vital to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all women, whether citizens or from another country, and more measures can certainly be put in place to protect immigrant women at places of work, nationally and internationally. For example, the treatment of immigrant women, especially in high-risk workplaces, must be closely monitored on a regular basis. International standards set out rights for equal treatment and non-discrimination.

However, national-level policies may unintentionally prevent them from being put into effect. It is time to be intentional about setting out national policies that specifically protect and safeguard the rights and needs of women migrants. With the trends of immigration as they stand and likely to increase in future, I foresee more women, including well-qualified women, entering the workforce in foreign lands and who will end up in menial jobs under conditions of abuse and exploitation. This will likely increase if measures continue to be drafted on paper only and not implemented on the ground.

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Gender-responsive tax rulemaking to shape the future of women's informal cross-border trade in Malawi

Bernadette Malunga

Introduction

Women cross-border traders are currently facing a number of challenges in Malawi. Most of the challenges relate to the nature and application of tax regulations. Tax rates are exorbitant and fail to take into account that many women are poor, illiterate and operate their business on a small scale (Mbo'o-Tchouawou et al., 2016; Caselli-Michael, 2012). As such, women shun border posts when importing and exporting goods, and are thus engaged in informal cross-border trade (ICBT) (Afrika & Ajumbo, 2012). The degree to which a woman's trade is regarded as informal relates to how often she is engaged in non-compliant trade. The majority of women traders avoid official border posts and those who use them resort to illegal practices including under-invoicing. The future of women's work through cross-border trade can be strengthened where the tax regulations are favourable and conducive to their businesses. The tax regulations can only be favourable if women are given a chance to influence the tax rulemaking process. However, women hardly participate in this process because it is not gender-responsive. As a result, the regulations arising from the tax rulemaking are non-responsive to women's trade-related gender needs (Ndiaye, 2010).

Advantages of gender-responsive tax rulemaking for women's cross-border trade

A gender-responsive tax regulation system can have positive effects by reducing discrimination against women and promoting gender equality in trade (Tran-Nguyen & Zampetti, 2004). Firstly, gender-responsive tax rulemaking allows for the participation of both women and men and gives particular attention to marginalised groups. Women's participation in tax rulemaking has a number of advantages. Chief among them is that it allows the incorporation of their trade-related gender needs.

Non-participation results in the adoption of regulations that are unfavourable to women's trade, such as high import and export duties.

The major consequence of the unfavourable tax regulations is the growth and participation of women in ICBT. ICBT activities among women take a number of forms, one of which is the use of uncharted routes. The use of these routes is nonetheless illegal. As a result, women traders face the risk of arrests and confiscation of goods. The use of uncharted routes is also risky for women traders because of robberies (Njiwa, 2012). In the process, they lose all their goods, resulting in the end of their cross-border trade. Furthermore, due to the unfavourable tax rules, women are forced to indulge in corrupt activities. Women bribe border officers so as not to pay taxes or to pay much-reduced taxes (Njiwa, 2012). Consequently, gender-responsive tax rulemaking can transform the conduct of women's trade by reducing, among others, the incidence of women's involvement in ICBT and by protecting their businesses from unnecessary risks, harassment and closure. It can also reduce the incidence of corruption among women traders.

Secondly, gender-responsive tax rulemaking that allows the participation of women has the capacity to represent and unearth women's lived realities and situated knowledge in cross-border trade. The fact that underlies the demand for increased women's participation is that government agencies rarely respond to interests that are not represented in their official proceedings (World Customs Organization, 2013). In Malawi, the literature shows that people's needs are prioritised when they participate more in developmental issues (Namondwe et al., 2014). Women traders can contribute 'situated knowledge'. This knowledge is based on their experiences on the ground when conducting cross-border trade. They can reliably inform on the problems, circumstances or solutions related to proposed tax regulations. Moreover, it is essential for women to be engaged in tax rulemaking because the taxation of small- and medium-sized enterprises may affect enterprise formation and growth, as well as investment (Kandiero, n.d.). Thirdly, the value of gender-responsive tax rulemaking is that it can foster democratic governance in trade. When government officials

are unwilling to thoughtfully examine the value of women's participation in tax rulemaking, participatory democratic government is threatened (Farina & Newhart, 2013: 12). Women are likely to accept trade rules when they have had full opportunity to represent their views during tax rulemaking proceedings. Furthermore, their confidence in the tax agency decision can improve (Hoexter, 2002). Women's participation is related to trust in the government. As Farina and Newhart (2013: 12) explain:

Political psychology research confirms that individuals who are able to provide meaningful input into government decisions that affect them are more likely to view the process as legitimate and to accept the outcome, even if it is not what they had hoped for... trust is a social good essential to a well-functioning democracy.

Fourthly, gender-responsive tax rulemaking is essential as it would act as a channel of communication to women traders about how the tax system works. Most women have no adequate information about how the tax system works as they have no access to tax information and officials (Njiwa, 2012). Due to the lack of knowledge, in their cross-border trade, they are exposed to abuse. Participation in rulemaking would empower women with tax information and enable them to conduct their trade with confidence and to carry out informed negotiations with tax officials.

Achieving gender-responsive tax rulemaking

The tax rulemaking process needs transformation to enable women's participation. Firstly, Malawi needs to establish a proper legal framework for agency rulemaking in general which will, in turn, inform the tax rulemaking process. Currently, there is no clear legal framework governing agency rulemaking in Malawi. There are for example no legally established procedures on the conduct of agency rulemaking. This is despite the fact that most statutes mandate administrative agencies to make regulations.

Consequently, tax rulemaking practices in Malawi are ambiguous, which further disadvantages marginalised groups in society who rarely participate in the processes. The need to draft a proper legal framework governing agency rulemaking resonates with Malawi's obligation under article 19(1) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC, 2008) Protocol on Gender and Development. The Protocol mandates state parties with adopting policies and enacting laws that will ensure equal access, benefits and opportunities for women and men in trade and entrepreneurship. However, this obligation is being neglected.

Secondly, gender-responsive tax rulemaking will only be achieved through the establishment of a legal framework that

specifies how disadvantaged groups, such as women, can be engaged in the rulemaking processes. Currently, it is considered the duty of every individual or organisation to take active measures to be involved in tax rulemaking.¹ Such an approach leaves out the majority of women traders who do not have resources and the capacity to organise themselves and participate in tax rulemaking. Gender-responsive tax rulemaking should make deliberate efforts to incorporate women.

The tax administrative agency in Malawi employs two methods of public engagement in tax rulemaking, namely, lobbying and public consultation meetings. In the lobbying process, interest groups engage government officials in charge of formulating the tax rules. In most cases, these interest groups are professional bodies, such as bankers' associations, auditing firms and large companies. The interest groups are well resourced and often make written submissions about their concerns and requirements as regards the tax rules. However, there are no interest groups lobbying the Ministry of Finance on behalf of women.² Therefore, women are losing out on influencing an important stage of tax rulemaking. Further to this, most women are illiterate and therefore incapable of making written presentations. Gender-responsive tax rulemaking would go beyond written submissions and incorporate face to face interactions with officials in the lobbying process to accommodate women traders. Additionally, a gender-responsive tax rulemaking system should adopt affirmative action measures, such as the appointment of a public participation ombudsperson to speak on behalf of underrepresented persons or groups.

The second method of public engagement in tax rulemaking is public consultations conducted by the Ministry of Finance. However, the manner of public consultation is problematic as it is not gender-responsive and women-friendly. Presently, public consultation meetings are conducted in one central district in each of the four regions of Malawi. The meetings take place at upscale hotels and usually last for half a day. The consultation meetings are open to everyone. However, the meetings are conducted in English, and most women traders are not competent in speaking and understanding the English language. Thus they cannot contribute meaningfully at the meetings. The public consultations are, therefore, labelled as 'pro-western' by traders.

The public, especially women, do not participate in these consultation meetings. This is due to a number of reasons including logistical and capacity challenges. Women lack resources to enable them to attend the meetings. The fact that the meetings happen only in one central district of a region means that funds are needed to cover transport, meals and accommodation. The majority of women in Malawi are poor with no adequate resources to enable them to engage in processes that affect their lives (Mussa & Masanjala, 2015). The lack of women's participation in tax rulemaking is likely to continue as long as the cost, time and effort required to make a contribution is high and the government



The future of women's work through cross-border trade can be strengthened where the tax regulations are favourable and conducive to their businesses.

does not reimburse the expenses (Coglianese et al., 2009). Gender-responsive tax rulemaking would allow the meetings to be conducted in localised areas. It would also allow the use of local languages in the deliberations.

Conclusion

The discussion above has shown that tax rules can have a significant impact in propelling the success of women's cross-border trade activities. However, the current tax rules are not favourable to women's trade. As a result, a number of women have gone into ICBT which is not conducive to the development of their trading activities. Favourable tax rules can allow women to conduct decent and legal cross-border trade in future. They can also reduce the incidents of women's involvement in corruption. Favourable tax rules can only be brought about by a gender-responsive tax rule-making system that allows the effective participation of women in the rulemaking process. Currently, women hardly participate in tax rulemaking, mainly because of the absence of a gendered tax rulemaking legal system that champions the participation of

women. The future of women's cross-border trade is dependent on a reformed and gendered tax rulemaking process.

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NOTES

1. From an interview with three policy planning officials from the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) conducted by the researcher in September 2014. The author conducted the interviews as part of her field research for her doctorate. Her thesis is titled 'Women participation in customs clearance rulemaking: A case of women informal cross border traders in Malawi'. She has since successfully defended the thesis and is awaiting graduation.
2. From an interview with an official from the Malawi Ministry of Finance conducted by the author in July 2016 for her doctoral research.

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South Africa's social care sector and the introduction of a minimum wage: No joy in sight for women non-profit workers

Lisa Vetten

In May 2018, the South African Parliament approved the National Minimum Wage Bill, a first for the country. At the time of writing, the Bill is yet to be implemented, however. The minimum wage will be pegged at R20 per hour, but with lower rates set for workers in the farming and forestry sectors, domestic workers and people in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). While not a living wage, the minimum wage has the potential to improve the future earnings of most of South Africa's worst-paid workers.

Nevertheless, one category of worker has been left behind in the highly feminised non-profit social welfare services sector. This is due to the failure – perhaps even reluctance – to take into account the way non-profit organisation (NPO) services are financed by the state. The sector offers services including post-rape care; assistance to the elderly, people with disabilities and abused women and children; and those struggling with substance abuse and other life challenges. These services are critical to the wellbeing of the South African population.

The article explains the issues involved by first describing the non-profit social welfare sector and the ways its services have been financed historically, and then providing some brief examples of how the introduction of the minimum wage may affect the sector. In light of their neglect in the legislation, the article concludes with a reflection on the future of services offered by the non-profit sector.

The non-profit sector and its provision of social care services

South Africa established its first Department of Welfare in 1937 and drew social welfare organisations into providing services on behalf of the Department almost immediately. This partnership was further institutionalised by the Welfare Organisations Act of 1947. Reflecting on this history 60 years later in 1997, the White Paper for Social Welfare concluded that it was one in which 'social welfare programmes were not considered to be critical social investment priorities and were under-resourced' (Department

of Welfare, 1997: 33). Consequently, in 1997, the White Paper stated that 'salaries are extremely low, and working conditions and service conditions are poor for all welfare personnel' (ibid).

One explanation for these unfavourable conditions is the type of work performed in this sector. As the Code of Good Practice on Equal Pay/Remuneration for Work of Equal Value, issued in terms of South Africa's Employment Equity Act of 1998, puts it, 'Jobs involving caring for others or cleaning may be undervalued because of the erroneous assumption that the skills involved in these jobs are intrinsic to the nature of women and not acquired through learning and experience' (Government of South Africa, 2015: 12).

As the Code also recognises, it is predominantly women who provide labour in the sector. While we do not have data for the social welfare services sector specifically, the NPO sector as a whole is highly feminised. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the third quarter of 2017 asked each person interviewed how the establishment, institution, business or organisation which employed them was classified. The survey produced a (weighted) estimate of 210 853 people working for an NPO, of whom 69 percent are female.¹ Data from the EPWP foregrounds women's presence within the non-profit sector even more clearly: between 2014/15 and the third quarter of 2017/18, approximately 75 percent of the sector comprised women workers (Department of Public Works (DPW), 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015).

Labour law and the NPO sector

Those working in the social welfare services sector have also enjoyed fewer rights than most other workers. Indeed, when the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) was introduced in 1983, it expressly excluded both domestic workers and this category of worker from the definition of an employee.² This was rectified by the BCEA of 1997. Inclusion within the law did not, however, address the underlying problem of inadequate financing. Many organisations thus found it difficult to comply with the limits placed by the 1997 BCEA on hours of work, leave and the like.



The Minister of Labour subsequently issued an interim ministerial determination in 1999 that exempted employers in the sector from paying overtime and requested both the Department of Labour (DoL) and the Employment Conditions Commission (ECC) to advise him on a possible ministerial determination amending the required conditions for the sector. In March 2001, the Minister of Labour issued a new ministerial determination addressing working conditions and overtime specifically (Government of South Africa, 2001).

In the early 2000s, unions also approached the ECC to request a sectoral determination for the welfare sector. After undertaking both research and public hearings, the ECC tabled its draft report in 2012. Given the extent to which the sector is funded by the government, the DoL had also approached the National Treasury about the possible fiscal impacts of a sectoral minimum wage. On the basis of Treasury's concerns about these, the DoL argued against a sectoral determination and recommended that the sector instead continue to be governed by the BCEA, with some sections of the sector being covered by the EPWP Ministerial Determination. This recommendation was not accepted by the ECC, which sought to continue discussions between Treasury, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the DoL – but without success. Attempts to investigate the situation of volunteers were equally unsuccessful. While the ECC insisted on an investigation, these efforts were stalled on the basis that discussions around a national minimum wage were now underway (DSD, 2016).

When the National Minimum Wage Panel issued its report in 2016, this too recognised that NPOs faced particular challenges in paying their staff. Indeed, the Panel classified staff in the welfare sector, along with farm and forestry employees and domestic workers, as particularly vulnerable workers. In relation to farm and forestry employees and domestic workers, the Panel recommended phasing-in payment of the minimum wage over time (a recommendation subsequently reflected in the National Minimum Wage Bill), but the Panel made a separate recommendation in relation to the welfare and care work sector:

A large number of workers, mainly female workers, are employed in welfare and care work, at low wage levels. At least some of this work is undertaken on behalf of Government, and the low wages are partly a result of low levels of Government subsidy. The Panel believes that an expert group should address the challenges in this sector (National Minimum Wage Panel, 2016: 109).

This statement was important as it recognised that low wages in the sector are intrinsically related to the low levels of subsidies paid by government. The article now turns to describing this model of financing.

Financing NPO social care services

NPO services are funded through a system of subsidisation. Because subsidies are, by definition, partial payments, organisations are expected to raise the balance of funds from donor organisations, trusts and foundations, corporate social responsibility programmes managed by the private business sector, and lotteries. Obtaining these additional funds is neither easy nor guaranteed, and many organisations' services are now entirely dependent upon DSD subsidies. As part-payments, these are insufficient, with their limited value having been eroded further by inflation. In the absence of policy to guide and standardise their calculation, subsidy amounts also bear little relation to the actual cost of services. Housemothers in domestic violence shelters, for example, are allocated subsidies of R2 500 per month (which is below the R20 per hour proposed by the National Minimum Wage Bill), while subsidies as low as R1 250 per month have been recorded for counsellors providing post-rape care (Shukumisa Coalition, 2017: 3). This amount is even less than the R11 per hour recommended by the Bill for workers in the EPWP (Vetten, 2018).

The subsidy paid also varies widely within and across provinces – even when the identical service is being offered by staff with the same qualifications. In the Eastern Cape, for example, social auxiliary workers receive a post subsidy of R2 981 per month. This amount has not been increased in over a decade and is now below the March 2018 minimum monthly wage for farm and forestry workers, which is R3 169.19. In Gauteng, however, the lowest subsidy in 2016/17 for an auxiliary social worker was R8 060 per month (Vetten, 2018).

In 2010, a group of organisations in the Free State launched a legal challenge to the Provincial DSD's funding policy and practices. In its response, the DSD did not dispute that while NPOs may once have been able to obtain additional funds from other sources, this supplementation has become increasingly difficult. This left organisations reliant on subsidies which the court described as 'substantially inadequate'. Officials were ordered to develop a reasonable funding policy,³ which they finally accomplished in 2014.⁴ Yet, four years later, in 2018, the policy has still not been implemented, and organisations largely remain in the same position they were in eight years ago.

The National Minimum Wage Bill thus had the potential to address the long-standing issues raised by the ECC, unions and DoL, as well as the courts. However, when the Bill was introduced in Parliament in early 2018, it was clear that no expert group had been convened to investigate the sector's particular challenges. As a consequence, the Bill does not acknowledge the NPO sector nor does it address its particular difficulties.

Two joint submissions to Parliament by some 1 500 organisations comprising the Shukumisa Coalition, working in collaboration with the Vhembe Civil Society Network, the National Shelter



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All indications point to the future of work in this sector as differing little from its poorly-paid past.

Movement, the National Coalition of Social Services, the KwaZulu-Natal Welfare, Social Services and Development Forum, and the South African Federation for Mental Health, sought to explain these complexities to Parliament (see Shukumisa Coalition, 2017). Both committees thanked the grouping for bringing the issues to Parliament's attention, confessing they had been unaware of the situation faced by NPOs. The Select Committee on Economic and Business Development in the National Council of Provinces also invited the grouping to provide an additional submission setting out possible wording for the Bill that would address their concerns.

The potential impact of the minimum wage

It is critical to analyse how the minimum wage affects NPOs and women on the ground who work in the sector. This section explores the situation of four organisations offering social welfare services and networks.

Organisation A has 1 135 employees who earn below the proposed national minimum wage. This amounts to 41 percent

of its workforce. To pay each employee the proposed minimum wage requires an additional R6 million annually. The organisation does not have access to this amount of money and will likely have to retrench between 25 and 30 percent of its lowest-level employees (some of the most vulnerable workers in the economy) and/or close its facilities for older persons, children, and people with disabilities (Shukumisa Coalition, 2017: 6).

Organisation B is part of an umbrella body, which has determined that all 32 of its affiliate organisations in one province alone will be affected. The number of workers being paid less than the minimum national wage is 330. If their salaries are increased in accordance with the Bill, the additional cost per month would be R420 000. This umbrella organisation has not been able to increase any staff salaries in the past two years (Shukumisa Coalition, 2017: 5).

Organisation C is based in the Eastern Cape and provides early childhood development (ECD) services. While all the staff at the centre work on a full-time basis, the DSD deems them to be volunteers and provides stipends of just R2 000 per month for each staff member – including the centre's director (Shukumisa

Coalition, 2017: 6). According to a promotion of access to information application to the Provincial DSD in early 2018,⁵ there are over 1 000 ECD centres funded by the Department – probably all of which, according to this organisation, receive the same stipends as their centre.

Organisation D attempts to run its domestic violence shelter with 'volunteers' receiving stipends of as little as R600 per month and is seriously considering closing the service (Vetten, 2018). As with the example of the ECD centre above, the hours and conditions under which such 'volunteers' are working clearly confirm them as employees in terms of labour legislation. Certainly, the DoL made it clear during parliamentary discussions around the new legislation that they would be treated as employees under the new National Minimum Wage Bill and required to earn R20 per hour.

The submissions to Parliament thus strongly recommended the establishment of the expert group as a matter of priority. The role of this group is to calculate the scope and extent of increases to subsidies, as well as how these could be phased in over a period that provides the National Treasury with sufficient time to secure the additional funds. However, when the National Minimum Wage Bill was approved by the National Council of Provinces on 21 August 2018, none of these recommendations had been adopted. Instead, in an effort to mitigate some of the impact upon social welfare services, the DoL took an internal policy decision to locate the sector within the EPWP.

The future of NPO care work

The National Minimum Wage Bill presented an opportunity to improve the circumstances of the worst-off workers in the NPO social welfare services sector. The moment was not seized, leaving services to continue functioning on the back of women's low-paid work. All indications point to the future of work in this sector as differing little from its poorly-paid past. Indeed, there is a risk that it may well be further degraded.

The DoL's decision to treat social welfare services as part the EPWP may be well-intended, but it also inadvertently confirms that care is work requiring little skill. An additional concern is that the DSD might use this classification to reduce subsidies further in future. Yet, to continue treating NPOs as a source of cheap labour is to ultimately put the future of these services at risk. The work of child protection, post-rape care, assistance to older persons and people with disabilities, as well as those struggling with substance abuse or other life difficulties is emotionally taxing. It is not performed effectively when people are overworked, have too few resources to support and enable their work, and are also paid in ways that place little value on their efforts. Labouring under these circumstances not only damages the worker, it also adversely affects the beneficiary of services operating under strain.

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NOTES

1. Calculation provided by Debbie Budlender for the submission by the Shukumisa Coalition to Parliament, June 2018.
2. Clause 2 of the BCEA (1983) excluded from the definition of employees, among others, 'any person employed by an institution as defined section 1 of the Children's Act, 1960', as well as 'any person employed by any organization registered or deemed to be registered as a welfare organization in terms of section 13 of the National Welfare Act, 1978 (Act No. 100 of 1978), which receives financial aid from the State, in respect of his employment as such.'
3. *National Association of Welfare Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations and Others v MEC of Social Development, Free State and Others* (1719/2010) [2010] ZAFSHC 73 (5 August 2010).
4. *National Association of Welfare Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations and Others v Member of the Executive Council for Social Development, Free State and Others* (1719/2010) [2014] ZAFSHC 127 (28 August 2014).
5. Submitted by Webber Wentzel and Bowen attorneys in preparation for legal action against the Provincial DSD.

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Towards decent work for women in Eastern Africa's horticulture sector

Eunice Musiime

Introduction

This article examines the reasons for the apparent incongruity in the floriculture sector in East Africa and it explores strategies that can positively alter the fortunes of women workers in the sector. It draws from a case study of the Women@Work initiative, a campaign implemented by Hivos East Africa in 2012. More recently, Women@Work has partnered with, among others, Akina Mama wa Afrika, FEMNET, Rwanda Women's Network, and the Uganda Workers' Education Association. The initiative seeks to promote decent work for women and men and ultimately to alter power relations in the global supply chain.

As part of efforts to diversify the agricultural sector, floriculture has emerged as one of the main sources of foreign exchange earnings for East African countries. The sector's growth is due to the high demand for fresh produce in Europe, America and Asia, where organic products have been popularised as a means to better health outcomes. The one exception among the exports is flowers, which are generally bought for aesthetic and pleasurable purposes. This point is well argued by Getu (2009: 240) who notes that 'Flowers are luxurious products with high social value and rarely used for food.' Given that the global demand for luxury goods has increased, especially in developed nations, floriculture is an economic solution for developing countries that have favourable geographic conditions for growing the produce (ibid).

Over the last decade, flower exports have grown exponentially as populations worldwide have benefitted from economic growth across the board. A number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have leveraged their geographic proximity to Europe and have consequently become its main source of flowers and other fresh produce. According to EUROSTAT data, Kenya was the leading African exporter of flowers to the EU in 2007, with an export share of 38 percent, followed by Zimbabwe (5 percent), Uganda (3 percent), South Africa (2 percent), Zambia (2 percent), Ethiopia (1 percent), and Tanzania (1 percent) (Mwase, 2015).

But, behind this phenomenal growth is a female-dominant labour force, most of whom are informally employed and poorly remunerated, despite their great importance to the supply chain (Mlynska et al., 2015). It is inarguable that the flower export market would not be what it is without the hard work of women, a fact that begs the question as to why they, nonetheless, benefit the least from it. Across the world, and in virtually all employment sectors, women's effective participation in the labour market poses a major challenge as they must contend with the effects of discriminatory laws, as well as institutions and attitudes that restrict their ability to participate in leadership roles which would improve their circumstances.

Gender analysis of the horticulture sector

Despite the fact that African women are the most active economic engine worldwide, they have perennially faced many obstacles to achieving their full potential. There are many reasons for this, including the difficulty of uprooting deeply entrenched patriarchal and cultural practices, but it is also due to the fact that there have been limited interventions to correct this imbalance. According to the UN Women (2015) Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 report, 89 percent of women's jobs in Africa are in the informal sector and are, consequently, not covered by labour relation laws. Most countries on the continent have not yet put in place provisions for a minimum or living wage. This situation is particularly unfavourable to unskilled women workers as they are not eligible for social protection or maternity and pension benefits. The net result is that women are the most overworked and underpaid workers as they are also the ones solely responsible for most, if not all, household chores (UN Women, 2015).

A baseline study conducted by Hivos' East Africa office revealed that while women contribute 60 to 75 percent of the labour force in the horticulture industry, the nature of their work is of the unskilled, low-paying calibre (Gawayya, 2016). Their male counterparts tended to be involved in more specialised work, such

as machine operation and truck driving and, therefore, received much better pay. According to interviews conducted during the study, women were assigned work that required soft skills, such as sorting and packaging fruits and vegetables (Gawayia, 2016).

A situational analysis conducted by the NGO Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA, 2017) further revealed that women remain under-represented in leadership due to social-cultural and economic issues across the three countries of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. These include low education levels and unskilled labour, which result in low-paying work. Additional hindrances to better incomes are cultural practices that create obstacles to women's advancement, such as unpaid domestic work and rights violations at the workplace, such as sexual harassment and a lack of respect for women's reproductive health rights.

During consultations to develop a women's leadership strategy for the horticulture sector in Eastern Africa, one senior manager noted that women lack the confidence to offer themselves for leadership: 'While many female employees are hardworking, they have to be encouraged to vie for positions of leadership' (AMWA, 2017). Another male supervisor at a farm noted with concern that women, due to self-limiting beliefs and the burden of domestic responsibilities, do not have time to improve on their skills and position themselves for advancement.

Another key concern about working conditions in the sector is the prevalence of sexual abuse despite different initiatives having been put in place to stem the vice. For example, in Ethiopia, a study by Women Working Worldwide (cited in Mlynska et al., 2015: 11) found that a quarter of female workers experienced sexual harassment. Similarly, a 2011 study by the same organisation and Uganda Workers' Education Association found that almost half of the respondents at several farms experienced sexual harassment (ibid).

It is against this background that, as part of their wider Women@Work Campaign, Hivos East Africa commissioned AMWA (2017), a feminist Pan-African leadership development organisation, to develop a women's leadership strategy for the horticulture sector in East Africa. The strategy sought to promote women's leadership in the horticulture sector and, in addition, contribute to the promotion of decent working conditions for women who earn their living in global production chains for products such as coffee, flowers and garments.

Towards a changing landscape

Increasing women's leadership through feminist and transformational leadership development training

In order to increase women's leadership in the sector, it is of vital importance that feminist and transformational leadership training is given to them. According to Sinclair (2014), feminism

brings with it an insistence on facing several realities squarely. First, it demands a critical review of the sustained, yet normalised, and systemic way in which women are demeaned, discriminated against, and subordinated because of their gender. Second, feminism helps us understand why a certain category of women remains marginalised and vulnerable to oppression. Third, feminism provides theories and ways of not only challenging but also finding solutions to the status quo.

The interventions resulting from women's leadership development training are intended to facilitate change in the following areas: knowledge acquisition, increased self-awareness, perspective change, and skills development. Gelaye Debebe (2009) argues that a key issue with any leadership training is whether the new knowledge or impact of the training will translate into the effective deployment of new behaviours upon returning to their work settings. Specifically, can a learner sustain and further develop her newly acquired perspectives on the issues they have previously endured? Can she approach them with a new self-awareness, and use it to do things differently? Can she sustain this once she has re-entered the workplace?

Emerging and anecdotal evidence reveals that some of the women in the horticulture sector who have benefited from the feminist and transformational leadership training have internalised the newly acquired knowledge, and are shifting ground in their spheres of influence (Pedo & Kitakaya, 2018). A number of those who have been trained have taken up positions of leadership, and they demonstrably show evidence of enhanced confidence in championing their rights. For example, Janepher Nassali, the female Executive Secretary of a sector-specific trade union in Uganda – Uganda Horticulture Industrial Service Providers and Allied Workers' Union (UHISPAWU) – gained the confidence to shift unequal power relations between the trade union and employers. She was able to negotiate for, among other changes, better pay for workers, and for improved working conditions in some of the flower farms. Nassali's courageous actions have consequently inspired a cadre of leaders championing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Redressing discriminatory laws and policies in the horticulture sector

During consultations to develop the women's leadership strategy, it was found that very few farms have put in place comprehensive gender equality policies or any mechanisms to address discrimination and injustices such as sexual harassment, sexism, and unequal pay, or to address discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, the sector lacks adequate laws and policies to address health and safety issues that would ensure workers are provided with safety gear, such as heavy-duty gloves, appropriate field boots, and face masks to protect against harmful chemicals.

While some studies have found that laws and policies alone are not enough to end discrimination against women and girls, they are still critical in advancing the status of women in society (Badaru & ObiniMokay, 2018). Institutionalised laws and policies, coupled with independent, competent human resources departments can potentially address gender inequality and promote women's advancement.

Strengthening workers' associations and trade unions

With a specific focus on Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda, an in-depth assessment was conducted to determine the status of workers' representation by trade unions in East Africa (Pedo & Kitakaya, 2018). The assessment revealed major capacity gaps in the flower sector of the five countries' trade unions. Overall, there were common capacity gaps and needs identified among them including the capacity for long-term planning and budgeting, for organising and recruitment, for strategies geared towards the education of workers, for industrial relations and dispute handling at the workplace, and for the negotiation of a Collective Bargaining Agreement (Pedo & Kitakaya, 2018).

On the other hand, trade unions have been instrumental in bringing much-needed change in worker circumstances. In Uganda, UHISPAWU was able to successfully negotiate a six percent salary increment, much to the delight of its members. Nonetheless, the relationship between most workers' unions and employers is characterised by tension. This presents key stakeholders with an opportunity to strengthen workers' associations and trade unions that could lead to improved relations because changing this dynamic to a win-win situation would benefit all parties.

Gendering fair trade certification

Based on international standards, fair-trade certification seeks to protect and benefit workers employed in global production chains such as flower farms. Further, it aims to ensure decent working conditions for employees, and that workers' rights are protected by holding both producers and managers accountable. According to Fairtrade Canada (n.d.), 'These rights encompass economic, environmental and social dimensions of working conditions but also aim to amplify and strengthen the voices and choices of workers' themselves.' Failure to adhere to these standards can result in the suspension or banning of non-compliant companies by their clients in Europe and other places. However, for these protections to be enforced, both legislation and worldwide publicity of such measures is required. It would also necessitate buyers and exporters signing contracts containing such conditions. The resultant leverage afforded by such measures could be used to the advantage of women workers whose leaders would ensure

that appropriate assessment tools are aligned with gender-responsive workplace conditions.

Greater application of multilateral initiatives such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights were unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011. The Guiding Principles offer an agenda for advancing human rights in the corporate world within the messaging framework of 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' (Wilshaw et al., 2013: 2). Soon after the adoption of the principles, a range of international frameworks were updated to bring them into alignment with the UNGPs, including the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, the Global Reporting Initiative framework, and ISO 26000. The UNGPs are based on the International Bill of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. They apply to all states and businesses regardless of size, sector, location, ownership or structure, and regardless of states' ability and/or willingness to fulfil their own human rights obligations (Wilshaw et al., 2013: 3).

Wilshaw et al. (2013: 5) further explain that 'Women and girls are especially vulnerable to human rights abuses linked to business practices.' In the horticulture sector, they are more likely to have unstable contracts, lower wages, and less skilled jobs. In addition to their day jobs, women typically bear the responsibility of domestic work and working long hours, which have the effect of further exacerbating unfavourable working conditions. Worse still, girls are more often than boys the ones who are likely to be taken out of school for early employment and marriage. Overall, more women than men work in temporary and informal positions which are not covered by law. The UNGPs, therefore, provide a basis for addressing any adverse impacts on women and girls.

Conclusion

The current state of women workers in East Africa is characterised by long working hours and lower wages than men. There is also limited implementation of laws and policies that would promote decent work conditions, such as working in an environment free from sexual and gender-based violence; the promotion of health and safety; the provision of maternity leave; and the creation of opportunities for growth in management and leadership. These gaps in policy and implementation call for accelerated action to address problems in both international and national frameworks.



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The current state of women workers in East Africa is characterised by long working hours and lower wages than men.

The integration of women in the world of work will only lead to sustainable transformation if states fulfil their duty to promote compliance, enforce national labour laws, and ratify and domesticate international instruments and multi-lateral initiatives. It will also be critically important for employer or industry associations to incorporate codes of conduct, auditing, and certification schemes to promote progressive practices. Civil society will be a critical player in advancing a rights-based approach to labour relations and for the trade unions to play an instrumental role in defending workers' rights.

History shows that change typically occurs after a protracted struggle, as eloquently articulated by the world-renowned civil rights leader Martin Luther King (quoted in AFSCM, n.d.) in a 1965 speech he gave to a major labour union in the US:

The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold

struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life. The captains of industry did not lead this transformation; they resisted it until they were overcome. When in the thirties the wave of union organization crested over the nation, it carried to secure shores not only itself but the whole society.

What was true then is true now. Though inequality and inequity in pay are yet to be banished in the US, the policy and legislative infrastructure required for redress does exist and has secured many victories for women. The challenge for women's leadership in East Africa is, therefore, to intensify efforts such as those undertaken by Hivos and its partners including AMwA so that the next generation of women and girls will not have to suffer the indignities of their forebears.

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New Liberia Land Rights Act: A bridge to women's economic security and employability

M Sahr Nouwah

Poor land and forest governance have resulted in reduced livelihood opportunities for forest peoples, a loss of government tax revenues, and a loss of biodiversity with a far-reaching negative impact on many economies in Africa including Liberia. This particularly hinders forest peoples' ability to develop sustainably and to move out of poverty. The majority of these people are women.

Whenever land is concessioned out, the citizens, mostly women, become slaves to the investors with little or no power at all and no means of redress. A large portion of land in Liberia was given to concessions or private investors without the consent of local communities. Furthermore, despite well-crafted forest laws and policies capable of making sustainable forest management a reality in some African countries, especially Liberia, participation in discussion and the implementation of these forest instruments by the forestry governing bodies remains a challenge. This is especially so for the women who are more than 50 percent of most African countries' population. Formal governance processes in Liberia, for instance, tend to be heavily centralised and exclude major sections of the population, especially rural forest fringe communities and particularly women and youth. In addition, corruption and non-compliance with forest laws in the natural resource sector are widespread. The lack of transparency in the forest sector further compounds the marginalisation of citizens in rural communities in natural resource management, fostering injustice and preventing adequate benefit redistribution. This hampers agriculture and land-related investment for smallholder farmers, who are mostly women.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women make up about 48.7 percent of agricultural labour, but only 15 percent of agricultural landholders, according to Land Links (2016), a USAID body. In most of these countries, including Liberia, women are active role-players in the production of food, both for the markets and for their own families.

Women's inheritance given away to foreign interests

While paying a visit to a town called Kinjor in July 2018, I was overwhelmed by a touching story of a female farmer whose years are too far spent for her to be carrying a cutlass. New Kinjor is a small town in Grand Cape Mount County, North-Western Liberia, approximately 100km from Monrovia. The population of Grand Cape Mount County is estimated to be 15 million (Accountability Lab Liberia, 2017).

From a distance, I could see two roads, one leading to the mines, and the other leading to the town. The roads are well gravelled, and a fence divides off the most important land, which is being used for mining, from the general town, where the people have been moved to and settled. There was no doubt in my mind that the fenced land is a gold mine. The road leading to the town also leads to poverty and neglect. The fenced land is not just concessioned; all unauthorised visitors are not allowed, and police and private security personnel are on guard to catch intruders. Even though this land is arable, its gold deposit prevents it from being used for farming. On the left lies a piece of land used both as a settlement and for farming, but only for very few individuals.

My visit was to gather information for a story about the general land rights of the people of Kinjor. I met with Ma Sando, who is a farmer and has lived here all her life. Ma Sando has a cassava farm, a small rice farm, and a charcoal-burning site which she uses as a source of income. She had no government support or scheme to help her advance or increase her production. In fact, she remains vulnerable to the mining company, and her generation might lose the land altogether if they decide to expand. She

is among a few others who have had limited user rights; the rest have had no land-use rights, but this is set to change.

Ma Sando is one among the 50.8 percent of the female population in Liberia (LISGIS, 2009) and these individuals mostly have had limited access to land and resources for development and the possibility of escaping poverty. Her condition has not improved despite the limited land access, however, and in her eyes, one can see increased frustration and hopelessness. Ma Sando's age is another challenge. She explained her story as 'living hand to mouth', which means that she can only harvest enough for consumption. Even this she has to complement with rice and other foodstuffs bought from importers.

New Land Act improving the agricultural and women's outlook

For many women without land, however, a recently passed law is an opportunity to own communal land and thus contribute to agriculture as well as getting a direct share for residential use. The Liberia Land Rights Act of 2018 now allows women like Ma Sando the option to own land in conjunction with the community, it provides women, minority and rural groups with better decision-making rights, and it protects ancestral land rights (Koinyeneh, 2018). Until recently, the land rights laws were inadequate and disrespected, but with more international and local attention being paid to the issues, land rights are improving. Communities, supported by CSOs and international land rights' defenders, have won back a major means to poverty alleviation and sustainability.

This is a critical situation in Africa, where about 70 percent of the population are engaged in farming, but they are constrained by limited land rights and very limited support schemes (AGRA, 2017). The majority of these women have had to endure untold poverty and suffering due to the poor attention paid by leadership to their needs including the need to advance agriculture, a field that employs more than half of the population, mostly women.

There is empirical evidence suggesting that better land rights for women will increase their employability, especially when accompanied by effective incentives and support schemes. According to Land Links (2016), 'When women have secure land rights, women's empowerment increases. Secure access to land acts as a source of empowerment by increasing women's economic security and increasing their control over household decisions.' Research gathered by Land Links (2016) shows that when women have secure land rights, they have higher economic gains, and there is evidence from around Africa and Asia for this. For example, in Tanzania, women with better land rights are three times as likely to rent out their farm and work elsewhere. Their income increases by almost fourfold, and they are more likely to have their own savings (Land Links, 2016).

The allocation of micro-gardens to women in India has improved their use of credit, and better land rights for Indian women has allowed more women to sell their crops produced on such land (Land Links, 2016). Meanwhile, in Rwanda, women having title deeds is correlated with a 12 percent increase in their taking out loans (ibid).

Two other examples are Nepal and Ethiopia. Almost 40 percent of women with their own land in Nepal have decision-making power in household matters, compared to 20 percent of women who do not have their own land (Land Links, 2016). A household land certification programme led to a 44 percent increase in the likelihood of a wife being able to decide what crops to grow on the land (ibid).

The above examples suggest that investing in women's land rights is smarter, economically viable, and wise in terms of marketability – and leaders must take note of this. It may in time lead to economies of scale. The benefits are so extensive that it is better to invest in women's land rights than to invest in oil, gas and mineral extraction.

In the next decade, especially for Africa, agriculture remains the green gold for sustainable development and the expansion of the African industrial revolution. Since the population of the continent is more than half women and girls, and most of them are involved in agriculture, the logical conclusion is that supporting smallholder farmers will increase job creation and employment for women.

The agriculture field has massive potential for women, and there is no doubt that women will become the continent's leading entrepreneurs in fisheries (offshore), and fruit, rice, maize, cassava and yam production, just to name a few – commodities which are locally consumable and can be exported for a good income which will uplift poor women.

In Liberia alone, it has been claimed that about \$480 million is spent on rice imports (Parker, 2017), despite the extensive arable land owned by the country, which also has very good rainfall and a climate that permits the production of a variety of agricultural products, including allowing for cattle and poultry rearing, fisheries, and many others. If half of this amount spent on rice imports is diverted to women agriculturists, it will supply about half of the women in Liberia with the incentives they need to produce locally rather than import food.

African governments should invest in agriculture if this continent is to become food sufficient and industrialised. The agriculture industry is viable and promising for many African countries. With substantial empirical evidence being generated by civil society organisations and independent researchers, the present debate on Africa is focusing on the potential role of agriculture and industry in nurturing African development. Agriculture is the pathway for food production as well as a potential export sector to generate pro-poor growth, something that automatically includes women since they are already in this group.



TIM MOSSHOLDER PEXELS

Secure access to land acts as a source of empowerment by increasing women's economic security and increasing their control over household decisions.

It is imperative to examine how accelerating growth in the sector, as emphasised by agriculture's proponents and optimists, can influence a country's ability to significantly reduce poverty, ignite growth and prosperity, and generate new jobs. While it is important to recognise the country context, especially because agriculture has different roles to play in different circumstances, the argument to improve agriculture is unchallenged. It now remains a question of time and focus. Agriculture is likely to play a bigger role in countries with good agro-ecological conditions such as Liberia. By instituting land rights reforms, offering the needed incentives to till the soil, and incubating the agriculture industry through schemes that are inclusive and favourable to women, there is no doubt that women will become a driver of African development.

The International Growth Centre (IGC, 2018) says that the Liberian government under President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf 'has granted somewhere between 21 percent and 38 percent of the country's land to investors in the hopes that they will stimulate economic activity in the agriculture and mining sectors, increase employment in rural areas, and build and maintain infrastructure.' Before and during the Liberian Civil Wars, this practice of granting

land to foreign investors also occurred. Liberia has experienced growth, but without real development and the revenue generated has impacted little on the lives of ordinary Liberians. If the land concessioned is instead dedicated to food production, it would be difficult to experience food scarcity in Liberia. If this production is led by women, more than half of the adult population could potentially be employed decently, and such growth will be transferred to their families.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment within the sphere of agriculture must be emphasised, and African governments must take on the full responsibility to improve the sector. Creating the balance of trade through exports and the production of food domestically for the people of Africa must be a right and an obligation from all sides. While it is important to note the complexity of the challenges posed by agricultural development, the benefits outweigh these. Development issues are inherently complex. The poverty gap in the world, hunger and manmade suffering through wars and

unplanned migration cannot be resolved by one actor, one organisation or one sector alone. These complex issues can be mitigated through the operation of functional market forces, i.e., a market system that is regulated and by a people willing to respect the regulations. This must be driven by positive political will.

If Africa is to achieve, for instance, zero hunger, there must be sustainability in production. This means that the outcomes of sustainable approaches or actions, such as support to women smallholder farmers, the impact of the work done through development cooperation, the private sector and government holistically, should be inclusive and socially integrative for all actors. The system, as an inclusively initiated process, must achieve outcomes that are owned by all. The outcomes must include ownership, participation and satisfaction holistically and inclusively.

By uniting or linking the political will and sound market forces, we are creating competition and, to manage this competitiveness, there must be laws, policies, guidelines and structured processes that favour women in agriculture in leading sustainability. This is a complex model to sustain, and civil society needs to be empowered and strengthened in order to bring the actors together and serve as a collaborative bridge for development in the agriculture sector. Putting women at the centre of this investment will be worthwhile and profitable.

Women are good custodians of nature, homes and resources, especially if they are empowered in these roles (UN Environment Programme, 2017). If Africa must sustainably develop and produce

enough to feed its growing population, women must lead. This leadership in agriculture must start in communities, schools and workplaces with the political will to support women's empowerment in agriculture, social schemes that promote food production, loans and special initiatives. Investment in women in agriculture is worthwhile and productive, and they are capable of increasing jobs in the market through production, manufacturing, trading and other support services. The agriculture field provides a great opportunity for women's job creation, and land rights are a key to these chances. Liberia is on the right track with the progressive Land Rights Act being passed to facilitate the process. The new Act has been hailed as a means to safeguard communities and vulnerable people. The rest of Africa must follow by making land rights a high priority.

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African Women Work Hard

Namatsi Lutomia

African women work hard
 and produce

calloused hands
 painful backs
 rough skins
 tired bones

African women work hard
 and earn titles like

workaholics
 bossy
 bitchy
 men

African women work hard
 and become

sick
 divorced
 sacked
 shamed

African women work hard
 and are

married
 single
 mentors
 wealthy

African women work hard
 and come to be

successful
 promoted
 honoured
 praised

African women work hard
 to be

stronger
 excellent
 seen
 heard

Is microfinance a 'magic bullet' for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa?

Marvis Bih

Introduction

The impact of microfinance on women's empowerment and the advancement of gender equality has been a subject of debate in recent years. Some may regard microfinance as a 'magic bullet' for women's empowerment, while others are dismissive of the idea, and only acknowledge it as making a small contribution to development (Kabeer, 2005a). This article argues that increasing African women's access to microfinance has the potential to enable them to contribute to their household, community and the economy positively. Influencing microfinance are the three contrasting paradigms: self-sustainability, poverty alleviation, and feminist empowerment paradigms. The feminist empowerment paradigm is preferred due to the fact that it is more Global South-oriented and focused on the needs of African women. Furthermore, this article argues that microfinance is not a 'quick fix' to the development challenges facing African women, but it can be used in such a way that advances African women's position in the future.

Microfinance discovered

The microfinance revolution which started in the 1970s showed that poor people are able to save, borrow and repay regularly at even higher rates than that of commercial banks (Duflo, 2012; Chen et al., 2005). Although it started in some developing countries as an alternative to the top-down development approach, in recent years, it has become a tool for development in developed and developing economies (Boros et al., 2002). In addition, writing in the African context, Aghion and Morduch (2005) opine that microfinance is banking designed to increase African women's bargaining power and overall resources. At the centre of the microfinance movement around the world are working poor women, comprising around 80 percent of all clients of micro-finance institutions (MFIs) (Sarumathi & Mohan, 2011; Aghion &

Morduch, 2005). Over the years, women have proven to be good savers, creditworthy, and even have higher loan repayment rates than men (Sarumathi & Mohan, 2011; Al-Mamun & Mazumder, 2015; Chen et al., 2005).

In recent times, with the coming of the fourth industrial revolution, microfinance has also evolved, and institutions are delivering services in more innovative ways. One example of such innovation is the use of mobile phones to repay debt. Examples include the introduction of M-Pesa (mobile-based payment and money transfer services) in Kenya in 2007, and mobile money services in some African countries such as Cameroon, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Pomeranz, 2014). Although this technology is used to transfer money to the customer, it has also made borrowing and repayment easier for African women.

The three contrasting paradigms

There are three contrasting paradigms to microfinance. However, it is important to note that microfinance programmes cannot be perfectly grouped under any one of the three paradigms as these programmes have different elements from each.

The first is financial self-sustainability, which is neo-liberal market growth-oriented and dominant within most donor agencies. Its aim is to set up financially self-sustainable microfinance programme services to the poor and disadvantaged, especially women. Interest rates are set to cover costs, and women are mostly targeted because they have high repayment rates and could also contribute to economic growth (Sarumathi & Mohan, 2011; Al-Mamun & Mazumder, 2015). Therefore, this paradigm holds that 'increasing women's access to micro-finance services will in itself lead to individual economic empowerment. This increased economic empowerment will lead to increased well-being of women and their families and also to social and political empowerment' (Mayoux, 2002a: 8), even 'without other complementary interventions or change in the macro-growth agenda' (ibid: 5).

The second is the poverty alleviation paradigm, which focuses on poverty reduction among the poor, improved wellbeing, and community development. It aims to provide small loans for production, consumption and group formation. This paradigm also advocates for some level of subsidy for programmes implemented in certain contexts and for particular clients. The main assumption here is that 'better access to microfinance for women will lead to better household incomes, which will then translate into improved wellbeing for women and enable women to bring about wider changes in gender inequality' (Mayoux, 2000: 5; Kabeer, 2005b).

The third paradigm, and perhaps the most relevant paradigm for this issue of *BUWA!*, is feminist empowerment. This paradigm is Global South-oriented as opposed to the other two, which are more of a Global North imposition. Here, the structuralist and socialist feminists critique capitalism. The main concerns are women's human rights and gender equality. Also, microfinance is used as an entry point, and as a wider strategy for women's economic and socio-political empowerment (Mayoux, 2000). It focuses on gender awareness and feminist organisation as well as gender advocacy. The main assumption here is that 'Women's empowerment requires fundamental change in the macro-level development agenda, as well as explicit support for women to challenge gender subordination at the micro-level' (Mayoux, 2000: 6).

Potential of microfinance in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality in Africa

Economic impact of microfinance

Increasing women's access to microfinance services leads to economic empowerment by assisting women to make decisions regarding credit and savings use (Pomeranz, 2014; Mayoux, 2006; Kabeer, 2005b). Furthermore, it enables women to invest in their own economic activities, which could increase productivity and income by increasing women's engagement in the market, as well as creating employment for women (Levine, 2005).

However, it has been argued that women's choices regarding the activities to invest and their ability to increase their earnings are greatly restricted by gender inequalities in acquiring resources for investment. Another restriction is a lack of time, as they have to engage in unpaid domestic work, and often take on responsibility for household subsistence expenditure (Mayoux, 2006). In addition, due to the predominance of the patriarchy, women experience cultural limitations and sexual violence, which limits their access to markets. Also, there are indications in some urban markets that the growth of microfinance programmes may be

adding to the problem of market saturation in 'female' activities, thereby decreasing profits (Mayoux, 2006). This situation affects poorer women who depend on these markets but do not have access to microfinance.

One of the vital contributions of microfinance to women's empowerment and gender equity is that it brings about 'income smoothing' and reduced vulnerability to crises (Sarumathi & Mohan, 2011; Al-Mamun & Mazumder, 2015; Mayoux, 2006). One should be careful not to overstate the role of microfinance in women's empowerment and poverty reduction. This is because careful studies on the saving attitudes of women show very complex patterns as women use different sources for savings, with microfinance being just one of them (World Bank Group, 2017; Pomeranz, 2014; Roodman & Morduch, 2014; Mayoux, 2006).

Social and political impact of microfinance

Studies have shown the social impact of microfinance, especially in areas of education, health and nutrition (Kabeer, 2005b; Mosley & Hulme, 1998; Mayoux, 2000; Cheston & Kuhu, 2002). In addition, loans to women had a significant effect on children's status and resulted in a decrease in malnutrition among children.

Furthermore, a study carried out by Kabeer (1999) discovered that children of female loan-holders were more likely to attend school than children of male loan-holders, and female loan-holders were more likely to send girl children to school than their male counterparts. Hence, this is a step in the right direction towards women's empowerment and gender equity.

Politically, women's economic empowerment at the individual level has the potential to greatly contribute to the macro-level, as women are increasingly seen as agents of economic growth and actors in decision making (Mayoux, 2006; Kabeer, 1999). This, together with women's ability to meet household needs, increases their effectiveness as agents of poverty reduction.

Moreover, these microfinance groups sometimes act as a base for collective action to address issues of gender inequalities, gender-based violence (GBV), access to resources, and local decision-making within their community (Mayoux, 2006; Cheston & Kuhu, 2002). These local-level changes could be further reinforced, thereby leading to a wider movement for socio-political change and the promotion of women's rights at the macro-level. In some instances, microfinance groups have been used by NGOs as a space for mobilising women's political participation.

However, there is no clear connection between a woman's individual economic empowerment, or taking part in microfinance group activity, and socio-political empowerment.

In addition, poorer women could be excluded or exploited as better-off women divert resources to benefit a few friends. Therefore, in the absence of organising to address gender inequality, bringing women together for credit or saving does not necessarily lead to solidarity among them (Mayoux, 2006).

Improved household wellbeing

Increasing women's access to microfinance can improve household wellbeing. Providing resources such as credit to women can assist them in playing a more active role in intra-household decision-making, addressing issues facing the family, as well as increasing investment in the family's welfare (Akudugu, 2011; Mayoux, 2006). This will not only benefit the children by increasing access to education, especially for the girl-child, it can also lead to improved wellbeing for the family; thus enabling women to bring about changes in gender inequalities, especially in the household (Addae, 2015; Mayoux, 2006). In addition, women's confidence, skills and status in the community could be enhanced as they engage with others through group activities, networks and at the market.

In contrast, women contributing to household needs do not necessarily lead to an increase in the total income accessible to all. Unfortunately, some men then withdraw their support towards household needs, and then instead spend their money on alcohol or marrying more wives. For example, a study in Zimbabwe found that some women hide their income from their husbands for fear that it could be used to pay the bride price for another woman or drink alcohol (Kabeer, 2005b).

In addition, a microfinance programme does not ensure women benefit from the income that they earn, and there is also no evidence showing how gender inequalities in the household are challenged (Mayoux, 2006). Sen (1990) also notes that women's perceptions of self-worth and value do not often lead to actual wellbeing, nor do they change gender relations in the home. Instead, studies have shown that women's outside work has a negative effect on the elderly and children, especially the girl child, as girls may be taken out of school to assist their mothers at home while they attend development programmes (USAID, 1999).

Furthermore, a woman's increased productive role often comes at a cost, such as a heavier workload, increased stress and health challenges (Mayoux, 2006). Worst of all, when women start earning an income, some men expect them to shoulder more household responsibilities and expenditure, while the men continue to give little or no support to the women when it comes to domestic work (ibid).

The future of microfinance for African women

Although microfinance has made strides in enabling African women to access finance for personal and family development, an estimated two billion people globally, of which the majority are women, are still not benefiting from the formal

financial system (World Bank Group, 2017). Scholars note that microfinance does not automatically empower women, just as with other development interventions (Tarozzi et al., 2015; Kabeer, 2005b). The enthusiasm for microfinance in alleviating poverty, achieving gender equality and increasing women's empowerment in Africa has started to die down in recent years, as microfinance has been accused of enslaving people in debt (Pomeranz, 2014; Banejee et al., 2010). This is due to the fact that increased access to credit has not resulted in a dramatic reduction of poverty for women, hence making little impact on gender equality and women's empowerment (Banejee et al., 2010). Therefore, for microfinance to better serve African women, and achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in the future, the factors described in the rest of this section should be taken into consideration.

There is a need for a more balanced and evidence-based approach, as well as research that will provide guidance and continuous learning, and promote innovation to the microfinance community in Africa (Tarozzi et al., 2015; Pomeranz, 2014). For example, in Kenya, a randomised experiment was conducted with 113 rotating savings and credit associations and it was found that women who were given access to a savings device, such as a metal safebox to which the woman held the key, saved more and experienced growth in investment the following year (Dupas & Robinson, 2013). In addition, the use of randomised evaluations provides a more rigorous way to assess the impacts made by MFIs and tailor them to meet the specific needs of African women in order to achieve gender equality and empowerment (Angelucci et al., 2015; Crepon et al., 2015; Pomeranz, 2014; Karlan & Zinman, 2011; Banejee et al., 2010).

There is a need for participatory and empowerment approaches, where extensive consultations are carried out with women to determine the best model of microfinance for women in different contexts, as well as to engage in negotiations with development agencies (Mayoux, 2002b). An effective empowerment approach would require a major shift in work, attitude and practices and the challenging of vested interest. For instance, in achieving sustainable empowerment, extensive research on women's needs and consultations with women has to be conducted. Furthermore, strategies and proper negotiation processes between women and development agencies have to be put in place. Therefore, women's participation at all levels is imperative, as opposed to applying a particular model based on donor preference (Arunachalam, 2007; Mayoux, 2002b).

Improved Internet and mobile coverage and training in most remote rural areas will aid in facilitating access to financial services for poor rural women. This could be done by addressing the digital divide that currently exists in most African countries and the divide between men and women. For example, Musoni, an MFI in Kenya, is bridging this technology gap by offering 100 percent mobile payment, which is completely cashless, as well as three-week



ASHRAF HENDRICKS, GROUNDUP

Increasing women's access to microfinance services leads to economic empowerment by assisting women to make decisions regarding credit and savings use.

training to its new clients in rural and urban areas on how to use the mobile money technology (World Bank Group, 2017).

There is a need for regulators in both the private and public sector to work together to learn more about and test new approaches and technologies, such as M-Pesa, which is used in various African nations and allows the user to lend money under controlled circumstances. This could improve access to finance for many women, even in rural areas (World Bank Group, 2017).

Technology is fast reshaping the microfinance industry, thereby creating a need for tailored services that meet the needs of different segments of women. For example, there is a one in 31 chance of a woman dying from pregnancy and childbirth complications in sub-Saharan Africa, as opposed to a one in 4 300 chance in developed countries (World Bank, 2011). Therefore, the availability of gender-sensitive micro-insurance tailored to address specific risks such as these for African women in an affordable manner presents a challenge for the industry in Africa (Pomeranz, 2014). For instance, some MFIs offer health micro-insurance programmes including full maternity coverage. MFIs in countries offering this product, such as Bolivia (Bancosol) and Kenya, have reported that this product has a higher demand among women compared to other financial products (Banthia et al., 2009). This is due to the fact that it has been designed to meet women's need for financial security for themselves and their children.

With the digitalisation of financial services, microfinance institutions, governments and stakeholders have to find creative ways of protecting women from fraud, while offering convenient and secure services. This could be achieved by designing and implementing legislation on effective customer-centred education, creating awareness and training women to protect themselves from digital risk and fraud (World Bank Group, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper has briefly discussed how microfinance could assist in achieving gender equality and empowerment for women in Africa. It has also acknowledged that microfinance is not a magic bullet that can be used to fix the problems of inequality, as is sometimes claimed, especially in the short term. Nonetheless, microfinance and other interventions, such as education, constitute different entry points into this larger project of women's empowerment, depending on context, political commitment and capacity. In addition, if the possible suggestions for the future outlined above are taken into consideration, microfinance could become a highly effective means to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa.

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Women's empowerment in Africa's enterprise economy model

Joyce Chimbi

The purpose of this paper is to examine current drivers towards entrepreneurship and enterprise economy models in Africa. Globally, individual countries have gravitated towards different development paths guided by their most pressing needs. In the last decade, the push towards promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment to empower women and to boost sustainable economic growth in Africa has been unrelenting. A significant majority of African countries, particularly in the sub-Saharan region, have a capitalist enterprise economy model. They are predominantly free enterprise economies driven by self-interest, and they are largely free from government control. Prices, products and services are determined by the market. The *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* (GEM) report for 2017-18 indicates that:

Africa has the most positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship; 76.2% of working age adults consider entrepreneurship a good career choice and 74.5% believe that entrepreneurs are admired in their societies (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association (GERA), 2018: 28).

Against this backdrop, this paper interrogates the enterprise economy model and seeks to locate the place, role and contributions of women entrepreneurs within the African context.

The female face of poverty

Having exhausted the timeframe for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2015, the world has since embarked on a new journey towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the absence of gender equality, this will be an exercise in futility. Addressing gender gaps in Africa's labour market will set the continent on more solid ground towards poverty alleviation, addressing the high unemployment levels, and boosting economic growth. Africa is somewhat unique in that economic growth has not occurred in tandem with poverty reduction, as the number of poor people

in Africa is on the rise (Chandy, 2015). Within this framework, women have been disproportionately affected.

Compared to men, women suffer from greater unemployment and lower earnings. An estimated 50 percent of the world's poor are women (Sanchez-Paramo et al., 2018). Even though this means that 70 percent of the world's poor are not women, as was previously claimed, it does not take away from the fact that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. The consequences of poverty are more severe on women (Nappi, 2017).

Within this context, and yet, sub-Saharan Africa has taken the lead as the only region where women form the majority of self-employed individuals. There are now more Africans joining self-employment than in any other region (GERA, 2017). On the surface, this seems to indicate that the enterprise economic model empowers women, but this is not necessarily the case. Ennis (2018) notes that entrepreneurship rhetoric is a perpetuation of neo-liberal economic models. Entrepreneurship integrates the very same doctrines of liberalisation, particularly free markets and private enterprise, with a sense of individualism (ibid: 4). Thus, 'Neoliberalism encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form' (Lemke, in Ennis, 2018: 4).

Women entrepreneurs in a free market economy

Neoliberalist ideologies and policy models emphasise the need to embrace free market economies as the primary driver of sustainable growth. Entrepreneurship is still largely gender blind and brings to the fore the fact that economic processes and outcomes are shaped by gender.

Across the continent, women entrepreneurs are not participating at equal or higher levels than men in the economy. There is a demonstrated intention by women to participate at an equal or higher footing with men. The 2016-17 GEM report indicates that sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have the two highest

average total early-stage female entrepreneurial activity rates (GERA, 2017: 17). These are individuals in the working-age population actively involved in nascent entrepreneurship (businesses recently formed and beginning to show potential) or in businesses that are within three and a half years of their formation (ibid: 16). In these two regions, there is higher gender parity at the level of starting new businesses. GERA (2017: 17) also notes that women are starting their own businesses 80 percent more often than men. Nonetheless, this trend varies among African countries, and there are disparities in the rate at which women are starting businesses. There are more women entrepreneurs in Botswana, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Cameroon than in any other countries in Africa.

Africa may have the highest number of women running start-ups or newly emerged business ventures – at 27 percent – but the number of women running established businesses is not as high (GERA, 2017). In the sub-Saharan Africa region alone, there are two women starting a new business venture for every one woman running an established business (ibid). The 2016-17 GEM report indicates that women are also more likely to exit entrepreneurship or discontinue running a business compared to male entrepreneurs.

The *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2015* report (ILO, 2015) points at significant benefits resulting from encouraging, supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs not only contribute to their countries' GDP, but also to the wellbeing of their families. A woman entrepreneur is more likely to invest in the education of her children, and the health and nutrition of her household compared to a male entrepreneur (GERA, 2017). This contribution is, however, greatly constrained by a plethora of challenges including, but not limited to, a lack of capital, social constraints, low entrepreneurship education levels, the regulatory environment within which they operate, and access to markets. Women are, therefore, limited in the extent to which they can set up a solid physical infrastructure to drive the growth and sustainability of their businesses. Research presents the aforementioned issues as challenges that all entrepreneurs face; women are nonetheless much more constrained. These constraints are also anchored in complex socio-cultural, political and, religious beliefs and practices.

Gender-blind economic liberalisation policies

Within the framework of the enterprise model, economic liberalisation policies are essentially not liberating for women. These policies are grossly gender blind and are inherently limited in the extent to which they can empower women.

While there are more women in start-ups, there seems to be a prevailing perception that their businesses contribute little to the economy beyond the survival of their households. This has served to suppress the growth potential of women entrepreneurs further and, therefore, their ability to contribute more substantially to the economy. Indeed, in exploring Africa's entrepreneurial profile and behaviour, women are more likely to engage in self-employment and not entrepreneurship. Even though a woman in self-employment is, in essence, an entrepreneur, the difference in mindset and outlook between the latter and the former makes a huge difference in the extent to which the business can survive and flourish. The two sets of individuals tend to have different missions and visions about their business ventures, particularly in how they project the growth of their businesses.

Women in self-employment tend to work for themselves and often have no intention of bringing other employees on board. In instances when employees are engaged, they are often few and work for the business owner, as opposed to working with the business owner to achieve clearly defined objectives that feed into the larger vision.

An entrepreneur is, on the other hand, characterised by a desire to work with as many people as possible. These individuals have a particular set of skills that makes them suitable for the job at hand. An entrepreneur does not have to be at the place of work at all times; the business can thrive and be sustainable even in their absence. In self-employment, the presence of the business owner must be felt at all times. If the owner is absent over a period of time, the business will fail. Therein lies an explanation as to why more women entrepreneurs exit the market or discontinue entrepreneurship compared to their male counterparts.

The GEM 2017-18 report shows that, in comparison with other regions across the world, Africa has the highest established business rate at 11.9 percent, followed by Asia and Oceania at 9.7 percent (GERA, 2018: 37). An established business is defined as one that has paid salaries, wages, or other payments to the owners for over three and a half years (ibid: 23). This is in tandem with favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurship in Africa.

Enterprise economy and the economic struggle of women

As an economic philosophy, entrepreneurship is blind to women economic struggle. Women still take on a significant share of unpaid care work. As a result of discriminatory social institutions and prevailing stereotypes about the 'place' of women, globally, women spend two to ten times more on unpaid work compared to men (Ferrant et al., 2014). A significant number of women are still to be found in informal trading as formal structures are extensively skewed in favour of male entrepreneurs.



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While there are more women in start-ups, there seems to be a prevailing perception that their businesses contribute little to the economy beyond the survival of their households.

From a regional perspective, that Africa has the highest established business rate is not necessarily reflective of the existence of favourable market conditions on the continent. As a matter of fact, there are less conducive and enabling conditions to support entrepreneurship on the continent. Consequently, entrepreneurship and self-employment in Africa, and particularly in countries such as Uganda where market constraints are much more pronounced, are significantly necessity driven.

Entrepreneurial behaviours are revealing that, in pursuit of various business ventures, women are less likely to be opportunity driven. This means that their businesses were often started as an alternative when more attractive income-generating opportunities are not forthcoming. According to GERA (2017), fewer than two percent of women will start businesses in the Informational and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. There are also fewer women in the industrial sector; women are more likely to be found in the agricultural or service industries.

While women are more likely than men to start a business, they are more necessity driven. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, an estimated 36 percent of women in entrepreneurship are needs driven (GERA, 2017). Women in self-employment and/or entrepreneurship tend to be driven by their most pressing needs. Consequently, women in businesses are largely perceived as contributing marginally to the economy.

Attitudes that tend to demonise or trivialise self-employment are counterproductive. A woman who is able to eke out a living

and support a household in partnership or singlehandedly is also supporting the economy. This is a woman with a source of income and is one less unemployed person in the working population. There is a need, therefore, for this category of entrepreneurs to enjoy favourable market conditions that will reduce their chances of being pushed out of business and out of employment.

Is the African woman entrepreneur a misnomer?

In Africa, some communities have been socialised to accept the profile of an entrepreneur as being male, and woman entrepreneurs are a misnomer. An article titled 'Social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs in Algeria' makes a strong case regarding the many socio-cultural challenges that women in Algeria, and many other developing countries in general, face in pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities (Ghiat, 2017). Within the African context, entrepreneurship is generally inherently reserved for men.

Some challenges facing women relate to the age at which women enter entrepreneurship or self-employment. Age patterns across Africa have implications for the participation of women in entrepreneurship. In countries where women start their business at age 18 to 34, the ranking is much higher in terms of the number



A woman who is able to eke out a living and support a household in partnership or singlehandedly is also supporting the economy.

of women entrepreneurs participating in the economy. This is true for countries such as Botswana, Senegal, Cameroon and Burkina Faso. In these countries, there are more women starting businesses in the early stages of their careers, particularly within the 25 to 34 age bracket. Interestingly, in these countries, women in higher age brackets are also thriving in various business ventures. According to the GEM 2016-17 report, 'In Senegal, female entrepreneurship rates climb even higher among those age 35 to 44 and 45 to 54' (GERA, 2017: 24).

South Africa's women entrepreneurial tide is moving against this trend. Women in this Southern African country tend to enter entrepreneurship much later in life, between 45 and 54 years of age (GERA, 2017: 24). Research seems to indicate that the lack of younger women in start-ups has earned South Africa a low women entrepreneurship rate in comparison to other sub-Saharan African countries (ibid). Notwithstanding, there are areas in which South Africa is ahead of the pack. Women in the majority of African countries struggle with access to financial services, products, tertiary education enrolment, a conducive environment to support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), as well as borrowing and saving for businesses. While the same is less true for South Africa, the rate of women in entrepreneurship is curiously lower in this Southern African country. This seems to be related to other variables including self-limiting attitudes, perceptions and even age, as aforementioned (GERA, 2017: 24).

Developments in financial inclusivity

Nonetheless, in many African countries, there has been notable progress towards financial inclusivity. According to the World Bank (2018), the number of individuals using the services of financial institutions has not changed significantly since the year 2014. However, there is a significant improvement towards financial inclusivity in terms of the share of individuals with a mobile money account, which has nearly doubled (ibid). This is particularly the case in East and West Africa where financial inclusivity has been driven by mobile phones and the Internet. A World Bank 2017 Global Findex report (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2017), among others, indicate that financial technologies are successfully addressing the financial exclusion of some women in Africa.

According to the GEM 2017-18 report, while there are increasingly more people in Africa who hold entrepreneurship in high esteem than in any other region, 'Africa is in 2017 ranked again the lowest; 37.2% of the adult-age population believes that there are good opportunities to start a business' (GERA, 2018: 28).

This paper finds that entrepreneurial systems within the African systems are inherently built for the male entrepreneur. They are more likely to identify opportunities, to mobilise resources around these opportunities, and to run and build enterprises as prevailing conditions within which they operate are much more favourable to them.

There is an urgent need to address the plight of the woman entrepreneur with strategies specially tailored for her empowerment. Overall, entrepreneurs face challenges that vary from country to country due to the different mitigating factors prevailing within country-specific contexts. Granted, barriers to business investment can be gender neutral, but even within this framework, women are disproportionately affected. According to Ghiat (2017), 'To be entrepreneurs, women will have to face negative reactions and pressures from society: the family, the neighbours, men, and even females. Several people, including females, do not accept to work under the supervision of women.'

Empowering the woman entrepreneur by engendering entrepreneurial systems is not a lost cause. Steered in the right direction, societies can gradually become more accepting and supportive of women entrepreneurs. In politics, for instance, which significantly influences market conditions, despite a turbulent and arduous journey, there are now more women in political leadership. This journey has been supported by many stakeholders, including massive civic education on the need for gender parity in political leadership. Rwanda has, for instance, maintained a world record in its parliamentary women representation. One of Rwanda's leading newspapers recently reported on a remarkable development: there will be 67.5 percent representation of women in Parliament over the next five years (Kwibuka, 2018). This is remarkable, even by world standards. Interventions designed to address the specific challenges that women in politics face are much needed in the economic sphere.

Conclusion

This paper recommends greater innovation in the establishment of gendered entrepreneurial systems. Modern economies are still centred on men and consequently, largely skewed in favour of male entrepreneurs. It is clear that entrepreneurship

is empowering to the male entrepreneur and the enterprise model has significantly perpetuated the ideology that the world is run by men. Sustainable economic growth will require a liberal economic ideology and policy that is gender aware. The ideal economic model will also need to address the cultural norms, practices, societal attitudes and perceptions that are crippling to women entrepreneurial efforts.

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The foundation that wants women to ditch handicrafts and get political

Jumana Farouky

'Economic power and political power go hand-in-hand,' says feminist activist Jessica Horn. 'If a development project wants to boost women's economic participation, it needs to help them raise their voices, too. An essential part of any development initiative is encouraging discussions on women's rights and political participation,' says Jessica Horn of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

Introduction

Don't talk to Jessica Horn about tie-dye. The director of programs for the African Women's Development Fund doesn't have time for women's advancement projects that lean on an age-old standby, artisanal crafts:

'One of the most common post-conflict reconstruction initiatives in economic empowerment is teaching women to make soda soap and to do tie-dye,' she says. 'Now you're flooding the market with sub-standard tie-dyed cloth. Who's going to buy it?'

To become real economic players, equal to men, Horn says, women need a say in the decisions that affect them. Which is why every project the African Women's Development Fund supports has to meet at least two goals: increased income generation and greater political participation.

At the Bond conference in London, News Deeply spoke to Horn about the relationship between economics and politics, and the trouble with 'women's work'.

Women's Advancement Deeply: You say income-generation isn't the be all and end all of development work. How does the African Women's Development Fund change the traditional development model to promote women's equality?

Jessica Horn: There's a liberation-era phrase that says, 'Our struggle is not for bread or freedom, it's for bread and freedom.' Across the African continent, there's always been an

understanding that economic transformation is a part of political and social transformation – they're interrelated.

To invest in transforming African women's realities is political activism. For us, the issue is just about how it's done. For example, a lot of economic empowerment aid interventions are really small-scale, they're engaging women in industries that are not particularly lucrative. They're not looking at things like access to markets, women being able to get skills that help them raise their game, doing nonconformist trades. They also don't take into account the aspirations of people who want something a little slicker.

It's a very old-fashioned way of thinking, that a little bit of 'women's work' is good enough for African women.

Women's Advancement Deeply: Do you have any examples of projects the AWDF has worked on that you consider particularly successful in bucking that trend?

Horn: We funded a community-based organization in Ghana which processes cassava flour, or gari. It began as a group of women in a semi-rural area processing gari, but then they got together and started making a bit more money, getting a bit more prominence. Now the leader of the organization is part of the local government. Which means that she can now have a voice in any issues that emerge around gari processing, issues that affect the women's ability to engage in this income generation, and other issues facing the women in the group.

Economic power is political power everywhere. In every country, in every context. And so the more you become active in the economy, the more you become a political player.

We've seen it in HIV initiatives as well. Many women are stigmatized and ostracized by their families for having HIV. But as soon as they start earning money, they become viable members of the family again, because they can now contribute to the household income. Which is kind of cynical, but it does show how economics is also power.

It's not that by being involved in income-generation you automatically become empowered. You also have to have an element of discussion and conversation. What does it mean to



NOKWANDA SHABANGU, THE WOT-IF? TRUST

If a development project wants to boost women's economic participation, it needs to help them raise their voices, too.

be a woman in this society? How are you feeling? Are you happy with your husband?

It's important to cover the whole spectrum, because otherwise we're just plugging holes. The immediate is important – the bread is important – but the freedom is also important. And we have to do both.

Women's Advancement Deeply: Is that something you ask for whenever you're looking at funding a project?

Horn: An intervention has to make good business sense. Even if it's small-scale business, it has to actually make money for the women. And these types of projects don't always do that.

But the intervention also has to have some level of rights impact. That could be that, as part of the initiative, the women are talking among themselves about whether they're happy, do they have reproductive health needs, what do they think about their role in politics? Some kind of conversation about raising women's consciousness and encouraging women to think about their role more politically.

Or it could be engaging in a series of initiatives that are about rights in the sector that the women work in or about increasing their political voices.

Women's Advancement Deeply: In 2016, the fund launched a future trends analysis project. What has it revealed so far about the future of women's work?

Horn: We began it by doing a trends analysis based on already existing global development data on Africa. One of the challenges is the conceptualization of what is important. Development data links almost all of trends to their impact on GDP and that was a little problematic for us.

African women are situated for the most part in the informal sector. What's bad about that is that it's not recognized in economic measures, for the most part. That's a whole lot of labor that's just not accounted for. So women are made invisible and therefore we're made to look like we're not important as economic actors.

Working with the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, we gathered research looking at market women's realities in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia. They face a lot of common problems in terms of harassment by authorities, lack of proper provisions in markets for child care, cleanliness.

But what the market women do with their money is tremendous. Some of the findings show that even if the market women themselves don't have an education, with the earnings from their market trade they educate an enormous number – at least two, sometimes six, seven, eight people, even up to tertiary level. So when we're looking at who's funding education, we don't think about a woman in a marketplace who is using the money she earns to push children in her family and her extended family all the way through to university degrees.

Women's Advancement Deeply: One of the biggest obstacles to women's economic advancement is ingrained patriarchal attitudes. Do you find that some women are averse to fighting for their rights because they're just not used to the idea?

Horn: Of course. That's with any work where people are not already politicized. There are many initiatives, particularly community-based initiatives, where the technical side of the work, the women hand over to men. Who does their bookkeeping or their accounting? It will be a man. Who writes things for them? It's a man.

We try to encourage women to build their capacities around issues like financial management. We fund women-led, women-run initiatives, and sometimes when we find men really involved then we ask serious questions about that, to start to change some of the assumptions that people are working with.

Changing consciousness is the beginning of any activism. We encourage people to have the conversations.

Nobody likes being oppressed, but sometimes resisting carries too much loss, stigma, so a lot of people fear that. But a lot of other people are really confident and pretty feisty – it's about being able to meet that attitude and encourage it.

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The solidarity economy and women's livelihoods: What are the prospects?

Bernadette M Wanjala

Introduction

Over time, there has been an increased call for a paradigm shift in development thinking and a renewed interest in alternative production and consumption patterns and ways of organising enterprise activities. This is due to the occurrence of multiple global crises and heightened concerns about the social and environmental consequences of economic growth and liberalisation (Utting et al., 2014).

This call has been necessitated by the recognition of the social, environmental and developmental failures of market-centred approaches that have promoted economic liberalisation, financialisation, privatisation, corporate control of global value chains, and business models that externalise environmental costs. Some of the development challenges that have resulted from the market-centred approach include:

- i. The inability of the conventional formal sector to generate more and better work, and to absorb 'surplus' labour associated with the growing informal economy;
- ii. Rising income and wealth inequalities which have constrained people's productive and adaptive capacities, local economic development, access to markets, and the realisation of social, political and civil rights;
- iii. Recurring and multiple crises linked to finance, food and fuel that have heightened levels of human insecurity; and
- iv. Environmental degradation and climate change that aggravate economic shocks and vulnerability.

Thus, the emergence of the social and solidarity economy has been seen as a distinctive approach to sustainable and rights-based development, which would address some of the shortcomings of the market-centred development approach. Social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a term increasingly used to refer to 'forms of production and exchange that aim to satisfy human needs, build resilience and expand human capabilities through

social relations based on cooperation, association and solidarity' (Nelson, 2013). SSE can be seen as economic activities that are carried out by non-state actors (including households and enterprises) who pursue social objectives based on principles such as cooperation, self-help and solidarity (Utting, 2018). Examples of SSE are cooperatives, mutual associations, community organisations providing local services, savings and loan groups, women's self-help groups, and social enterprises.

According to (Utting, 2016), SSE is aimed at:

- i. Broadening the focus of economic policymaking beyond the individual consumer, producer and enterprise, to groups and the key role that collective action can play in development and change;
- ii. Directing attention not only to issues of economic empowerment but also political empowerment of disadvantaged or subaltern groups; and
- iii. Focusing not only on social and environmental protection but also equality, emancipation and cultural change.

Globally, some of the key developments in SSE have included: the revival of multiple forms of worker, producer, service delivery and consumer cooperatives; the growth of mutual associations providing financial and insurance services; the rise of fair trade and alternative food networks that connect producers and consumers in fairer and greener trading relations; new forms of social enterprise, often providing 'proximity services'; the collective organisation of informal economy workers in associations; various forms of community-based schemes associated with solidarity finance, risk management, basic needs provisioning and the management of common pool resources; and the emergence of millions of self-help groups, often comprising primarily women.

In Africa, some of the common forms of SSE are cooperatives. Traditional systems of cooperation exist in all African societies especially in rural areas and in the urban informal economy (Schwettmann, 2014). Some of the well-known SSEs are the



Women have been key players in the construction of transformative, solidarity economy solutions to respond to market-based/capitalist crises.

rotating savings and credit associations or ROSCAs pervasive on the continent and involving large numbers of people. They often include an element of mutual social assistance in addition to the savings and credit function and also work-sharing schemes for labour-intensive ventures. Traditional forms of co-operation also provide social assistance to community members (such as 'Ubuntu' in Southern Africa, or 'Umoja' in East Africa) (Schwettmann, 2014: 2). In addition, they provide essential services such as 'market access, agricultural supply, marketing and exports, transport, storage, appropriate financial intermediation, joint production, mutual risk coverage, affordable housing,' among others (ibid: 13). Cooperatives also play a role in extending social protection, facilitating popular participation, supporting social cohesion and strengthening civil society. They also create opportunities, enhance protection and provide empowerment, which are the key elements of any poverty reduction strategy (ibid: 13-14).

Another form of SSE is self-help groups. It is estimated that close to 200 million people across the developing world were members of self-help groups by 2017, with the majority being women (Alemu et al., 2018). The Self Help Group model is believed to be particularly appropriate for working towards women empowerment based on the idea that collective action is most effective in fighting patriarchy.

Why SSE?

There is evidence in the literature that SSE significantly reduces the scope for negative social and environmental externalities associated with conventional for-profit enterprises; that it fosters equitable patterns of resource and surplus distribution; and it

promotes social, cultural and power relations that can be considered democratic, empowering and emancipatory (Utting et al., 2014). Social economy institutions and organisations, which are the foundations of SSE, play a critical role in promoting livelihoods and employment towards ending poverty. Social economy enterprises also offer an important source of employment in the face of global unemployment and underemployment problems.

There are various benefits of collective action. Collective action by workers, producers and consumers enables them to overcome market failures, enhance productivity, add value and build resilience by strengthening capacities and capabilities needed to mobilise resources, integrate markets on fairer terms and compete economically. There is a benefit of cost reduction associated with economies of scale, value-added associated with processing and enhanced capacity of small producers to bargain for higher prices and access market information, transportation, distribution networks, technology and training.

The social economy sector also provides basic services where the services cannot be provided by the traditional welfare system and the private sector (Steinman, 2017). SSE has been seen as a model of transformative change that is rooted in real-world practices and possibilities rather than utopian idealism or blueprints (Utting et al., 2014). The possibilities for transformative change lie with existing practices of workers, producers, consumers and communities.

SSE also has significant emancipatory potential, given its association with political empowerment and identity politics and active citizenship (Utting et al., 2014). The poor can be empowered through SSE by gaining greater access and control over resources. There are significant benefits that can be derived from cooperation or group behaviour in terms of addressing market failures (for

instance through collective purchasing of inputs or collective marketing of output) and advocating for change. Regarding women's empowerment, feminist literature has shown that SSE has opened up significant spaces for women's participation in economic and socio-political activities, with some scope for minimising tensions between women's roles in paid work and social reproduction and simultaneously addressing objectives associated with both social protection and emancipation.

Further, as the world transitions from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a realisation that there are several factors that are important in the design of development strategies. These include the realisation of rights, empowerment, equality, women's care burden, and transformations in production and consumption patterns. SSE is theoretically attractive because it addresses these multiple dimensions of development. Given this potential, the question is: what prospects does this economic model entail for women in Africa in the context of the fourth industrial revolution?

The benefits and prospects for women's livelihoods and empowerment

There are various benefits of SSE for women's empowerment. First, SDG5 calls for women's economic empowerment and equal rights to economic resources, ownership and control of land and other assets, financial services and natural resources; full and effective participation in decision-making processes; and recognition, facilitation and adequate recompense for unpaid care work (Utting, 2018). The SSE can play a crucial role in the achievement of these objectives. For instance, enhanced access to and control over economic and natural resources can be achieved through cooperatives and other SSE organisations. These SSE organisations can facilitate access to finance, markets, skills development, agricultural land and forests; enhance collective bargaining power to negotiate more favourable prices; and improve access to information and transport to reduce transaction costs.

Secondly, SSE is important for attaining objectives associated with care and valuing domestic work. Many SSE organisations provide opportunities for better balancing responsibilities for remunerated work and unpaid care. Furthermore, a vibrant area of SSE expansion relates to social enterprises that provide local care services. As earlier stated, SSE has opened up significant spaces for women's participation in economic and socio-political activities, which to some extent has minimised tensions between women's roles in paid work and social reproduction. Evidence from various time use surveys suggests that there are significant differences in how men and women allocate their time between market and non-market work (Blackden & Wodon, 2006).

Globally, women spend at least twice as much time in unpaid domestic work as men (USAID, 2015). Women are not only prominent in agriculture and the informal sectors, but they also bear the brunt of domestic tasks: processing food crops, providing water and firewood, and caring for the elderly and the sick, especially in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Blackden & Wodon, 2006). This disproportionate allocation of female labour time to the reproductive sphere is invisible in economic terms because it is not included in the Systems of National Accounts for most African countries. Being 'time poor' affects women's wellbeing and future opportunities by hampering their ability to devote time to expanding their capabilities, for example, through formal education, and it prevents them from engaging in income-generating activities, including wage employment and non-employment related activities (Lampietti & Stalker, 2000).

Third, women have been key players in the construction of transformative, solidarity economy solutions to respond to market-based/capitalist crises. This is mainly because women are severely disadvantaged with capitalist labour markets due to their lesser access to family income and education, because of their caring labour obligations, and because of the persistence of sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

Fourth, SSEs, especially self-help groups, have been shown to enhance women's empowerment. Husain et al. (2010: 1) explain that, 'The group-based approach enables poor women to accumulate capital by way of small savings and facilitates their access to formal credit facilities.' One of the major barriers to access to credit especially by women is the lack of collateral, which can be overcome through group lending which enables joint liability of the loan.

Conclusion

It is evident that SSE has gained prominence globally due to the weaknesses of the market economy. SSE presents several opportunities for women, especially through the contribution of SSE to their livelihoods. However, one of the main challenges of SSE is the difficulty in obtaining statistical data on the size and importance of the sector mainly due to its informal and heterogeneous nature. Furthermore, there are few studies that have been carried out on SSE in Africa, with the few existing studies focusing mainly on cooperative movements and collective action. However, these challenges could be addressed through availability and analysis of big data, which could provide insights into the size, patterns and importance of the SSE sector, especially for women's empowerment.

In addition, few countries have put in place comprehensive policy frameworks for supporting SSE, with most countries only having elaborate policy and legislative frameworks for cooperative

societies. Mali is an example of an African country that has formally recognised SSE and developed a National Policy for the Promotion of Social and Solidarity Economy with a five-year Action Plan (2014-2018). The policy aims to strengthen the institutional, legal and regulatory environment conducive to SSE; the capacities of SSE organisations and actors; information, training and research related to SSE; and administration, monitoring and evaluation of the National Policy.

In general, a variety of policies and legislative frameworks are needed to support SSE, especially policies on credit, trade promotion, facilitating statistical and market information, technical assistance, labour market policies associated with training, education and other social services, social assistance, and social security, among others.

Lastly, most work on SSE is gender-blind and does not consider the implications of the economy on women, who are largely disadvantaged in one or more ways. Given the existing gender inequalities across various dimensions (gaps in education, employment, access to assets, decision-making, political representation, etc.) and the importance of SSE in empowering women, there is a need to ensure gender-sensitive policies and frameworks across all the social, economic and political spheres. Having gender-responsive policies and frameworks, in addition to a gender-sensitive SSE, would serve to change the experiences of women in African societies by empowering them and giving them a voice socially, economically and politically.

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Women, precarity, and the political economy of the fourth industrial revolution

Tinashe L Chimedza

Rethinking the 'gig economy': Can women move up the value chain?

This article focuses on the need to rethink the 'fourth industrial revolution' (4IR) by placing the question of inequitable gender relations and women's subordinated experiences within that emerging political economy. Firstly, the article points to the inequities of the industrial political economy and how this configures the character of the participation and experience of women in the emerging fourth industrial economy. Secondly, giving a few examples, the article points to the variegated ways in which the 'on-demand economy' is dominated by false promises of flexibility, better income for women, and has, in fact, counteracted some 'won' rights, like maternity leave, pension schemes, leave days, sick days and various other labour rights. Thirdly, pointing to the peculiarities of Southern African political economies (especially of enclivity, a dominant agrarian economy, natural resources based economies, and the feminisation of poverty) the article outlines how women are exploited, subordinated and marginalised. Here, the article points particularly to how large companies in IT extract exponential profits from what is called the 'bottom pyramid', which is dominated by women.

In conclusion, the article points to some necessary rethinking of the 'gig economy' around three strategies. There is a practical need for the women's movement to gather its intellectual arsenal; to start paying attention to the way the gig economy is perpetuating the inequitable gender relations of the industrial economy; to conduct basic research, share ideas and feed activism in the women's movement; and thus to make necessary interventions.

Women's movements have progressively reshaped post-colonial state structures and political economies, especially by advocating for women's rights in important areas like land, property ownership, political rights and representation, and the fight against gender-based violence. Importantly, the rethinking of the gig economy must focus intensely on the development

and monitoring of public policies that support the access to and control of resources that develop women's skills in information technologies. These strategies will contribute to reconfiguring the workplace away from a regime of precarity and workplace insecurity, and towards equitable workplaces that protect social rights while, at the same time, facilitating innovation, technological advances and economic independence for women.

From artificial intelligence to quantum computing: Where are the African women?

The fourth industrial revolution is characterised by the 'transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance' and the basis of this change ranges from 'artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing' (Schwab, 2015). Effectively, this means that the traditional workplace will change as some routine jobs will disappear while new jobs appear. In some workplaces, such as in finance and banking, machine learning is taking over traditional banking enquiries, making human customer service redundant.

A report by the Oxford University Internet Institute listed 12 occupations with a 99 percent probability of disappearing, including bank tellers, financial advisors, and telemarketers (Scott, 2017). The study found many more occupation types with a high probability of redundancy, such as modelling (98 percent chance of redundancy), pesticide application (97 percent), and automotive repairs (91 percent) (ibid).

Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) related workers are in a better situation, such as for dieticians (0.4 percent chance of redundancy), counsellors and social workers (<0.9 percent), and veterinarians (3.8 percent), among others, whose work is much more secure (Scott, 2017). New job type opportunities and the demand for some existing types of workers



ASHRAF HENDRICKS, GROUNDUP

Women's movements have progressively reshaped postcolonial state structures and political economies.

will increase like in some forms of research including machine learning, computer and information science research, and in leading innovation as the ultimate frontier in the workplace.

To fully grasp how the fourth industrial revolution is impacting women, especially in the Global South, this article draws first from Tsikata's (2009: 15) argument that workplace gender inequalities must be analysed within a 'broader context of capitalist transformations and two decades of neo-liberal economic policies in developing countries.' Secondly, the article draws from McFadden's (2016: 3) argument that African women must distinguish 'between gender as a "tool" of neo-liberal status quo re-invention, and gender as a feminist thinking tool.' The gig economy, or what has been called the 'platform economy' (Schor, 2014), is actually based on and directly related to the 'old' or 'real' economy, and this has a direct impact on the levels of gender-based income distribution and skills levels.

Professor Juliet Schor (2014) explains that the platform economy falls into four broad categories: recirculation of goods, increased utilisation of durable assets, exchange of services, and sharing of productive assets. If the changes in the workplace

are driven by these four fundamentals, the question that arises is: How do these categories impact the current configuration of the workplace, especially in relation to gender? The platform economy is based on real assets that are owned, circulated and shared in the real economy, while the provision of services (often highly skilled) is based on the 'real' existing economy. We then need to ask, in the case of women, and especially younger women in Africa: What productive assets do they have (like houses, for example) that will allow them to participate in the increased utilisation of such assets (like short-term house renting)? Secondly, what goods can they recirculate in the platform economy to make an income? Thirdly, what skills do they have (like those related to programming, invention, patenting, etc.) that will allow them to take full advantage of the gig economy? Fourthly, what other durable assets (like cars) can they use in the gig economy?

Considering these questions, the reality of the inequities turn out to be disappointing for a young woman in Lupane (Zimbabwe), in an urban informal housing area in Kibera (Kenya), or in Soweto (South Africa). The current President of the World Bank, Jim Yong

Kim, made this reality clear in saying that ‘nearly 6 billion people do not have high-speed internet, making them unable to fully participate in the digital economy’ (World Bank, 2016: xiii).

Many jobs available on the platform economy require access to the Internet and digital literacy. Often, women are under-represented in the areas that drive the gig economy, especially in STEM. But there is also another social division of labour whereby women perform unpaid work in the affective and reproduction economy. The challenges are made more complex by socially conservative cultures. To what extent do women, especially in economically underdeveloped countries, have the self-autonomy to decide to drive an Uber car at night or when they chose to?

In South Africa, the entry of Uber sparked violent protests in a country which has very high levels of gender-based violence, and it becomes very complex for women to penetrate these male-dominated areas (Armytage & Bell, 2017). The prevalence of violence, more so gender-based violence, in public spaces where the platform economy (Uber, Taxify, Deliveroo, and so on) operates effectively precludes women from participating in that economy. The gender gap in the ownership of real assets is a barrier for women to participate in the gig economy effectively. A senior journalist at *Fast Company* went undercover to experience the gig economy, and part of her conclusion was as follows:

Even worse, the universe of gig economy startups is mostly relying on young people and others who are under-employed—exactly the people whom are least likely to be able to afford a car in a city. Or have an extra bedroom. Or a parking space. Or designer clothes. Or handyman skills (Kessler, 2014).

Historically, the workplace has been a highly contested space, and over the years workers have mobilised to get some rights, ranging from a reduced working day, healthcare benefits, and workers’ compensation to sick leave, holiday leave, maternal leave, fair working conditions, pensions and retrenchment benefits. The global reflection of this contest has been the International Labor Organization (ILO) campaign under the ‘decent work agenda’ which seeks to protect workers’ rights, enhance social stability, and has directly targeted the inclusion of women. In Africa, young women, some very educated, have been roped into the digital platforms as transcribers, conducting data entry and ‘byte’ contract work which offers no working rights or social benefits. In light of these issues, it becomes necessary for feminist movements to adequately mobilise for legal and policy regimes that promote, protect and enhance gender equity in the changing workplace and economy. These strategies might include globally organised unions in the digital workplace, campaigning for global corporates that ‘digitise’ work to adhere to minimum standards of decent work, and seriously considering a campaign for a universal basic income.

Considered from this perspective, much of the rights that have been won almost fall away under the platform economy (Mozorov, 2016). Gender pay gaps are a reality of the real economy and are still present at companies like Uber (Koressec, 2018). In a way, then, the reconfiguration of the workplace means that women will have less access to necessary social protections, and they may be pushed back into the margins of the real economy, where inequalities already exist, and into further marginalisation in the workplace of the fourth industrial economy. For example, how do women who want to have children balance the lack of maternity leave rights in the gig economy and the need for stable income, especially considering that women dominate the informal economy?

The flexibility of the gig economy raises questions about power asymmetries, especially when collective bargaining is gone and ‘giggers’ are non-unionised (Wade, 2018). Radloff (2005: 1) has observed that ‘women are in at the deepest end of this “digital divide”’ and that ‘The gender divide is one of the most significant inequalities to be amplified by the digital revolution.’ The need for social nets has spurred some, like Mark Zuckerberg (2017), to argue that we ‘should explore ideas like universal basic income to give everyone a cushion to try new things.’ A broad creative rethinking is needed at different levels to organise interventions that balance innovation and technology changes with the social and labour rights that were won by labour, political, social and especially feminist movements. Behemoth companies that are increasing market share and pulling in billions in profit are at the apex of the gig economy, and they are re-enforcing the ‘capitalism of inequality’, as well described by Thomas Piketty (2016).

The gig economy and the particularities of the Southern African political economy

The political economy changes triggered by the gig economy offer very complex challenges to the Pan-African feminist emancipatory movement (Mama & Abbas, 2015). In the aftermath of the independence movement, Africa’s feminist movement has grappled with and confronted two broad forces. Firstly, there is the global hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism which was entrenched in Africa via the structural adjustment programmes. Secondly, there is the continued entrenchment of a particular nationalism which is exclusionary towards women, even if both neo-liberalism and nationalism have appropriated the language of ‘gender mainstreaming’ (Macfadden, 2016).

There is a further element – Southern African patterns of capital accumulation have been based on what is called ‘enclave’ economies (Kanyenze et al., 2011), meaning that there is a very small urban enclave, and the political economy is largely agrarian and rural. Even in cases where women participate, for example, as domestic workers



JAMES OATWAY, 2011

The gig economy is embedded in the free market political economy, and that free market economy has very particular social relations that exploit women's labour.

and the entry of the 'Uberisation of domestic workers' (Machingura & Hunt, 2016: 8) offers some 'flexibility', research nevertheless shows that this often leads to 'low and insecure incomes, discrimination, further entrenchment of unequal power relations within the traditional domestic work sector, and the erosion of established labour and social protections as key challenges' (ibid: 6). The reality of the predominantly agrarian political economy spurred a special issue of *Feminist Africa* in 2009 because:

The importance of land and labour rights to women in sub-Saharan Africa is on account of the predominantly agrarian nature of livelihood activities, whose low technological base makes labour a critical factor. Beyond agriculture, land has a wide array of uses in the organisation of livelihoods and is also the basis of social and political power, and therefore at the heart of gender inequalities in the control of resources (Tsikata & Amanor-Wilks, 2009: 1).

Even in countries like Zimbabwe, where there has been extensive redistribution of land away from a white minority, the process has not equally benefited women, and those who have benefitted face hurdles to access finance (Mazingi & Kamidza, 2011; Mutopo, 2014). The gig economy is embedded in the free market political economy, and that free market economy has very particular social relations that exploit women's labour. The reality of the post-colonial political economies of the Global South and, in this case, Southern Africa is one of gender inequalities in the control over and access to the factors of production and reproduction, such as land, labour, capital and technology. This is also because the postcolonial liberation movements, although very anti-colonial, also had socially conservative values that left the patriarchy intact (Geisler, 2004; Essof, 2013). At a global level, the inequalities in the ownership of land, a critical productive resource, are staggering, with estimates that women only own between 10 and 20 percent of land globally, yet they are the majority (Villa, 2017).

Transforming the gender gaps: Placing women at the centre of STEM

Structural approaches will be needed to transform the inequitable gender relations characteristic of the historical and contemporary accumulation patterns of capital which are and will shape the future of work. The first challenge in this complex situation is to have a rigorous analytical model for women, meaning, as McFadden (2016: 3) argues, a return to understanding how African women must distinguish 'between gender as a "tool" of neo-liberal status quo re-invention, and gender as a feminist thinking tool.' This beginning point will mean women's movements will have to rely more on a feminism which:

[U]ses gender as part of a critical intellectual and activist wedge prying open the patriarchal language and taboos that still inhibit women from being the creative, dynamic, conscious beings who bring their agency to the contested sites of power, at the interfaces between themselves/their communities and the institutions of the state and its largely feudal infrastructures, policies and practices (McFadden, 2016: 3).

So, at the end of each day when the bottom lines from the gig economy are announced from MPESA in Kenya, ECOCASH in Zimbabwe and SAFARICOM in Tanzania, the question that faces us is: Where are the women when the dividend cheques

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are written? Africa's political economists have argued and provided evidence of the inequalities and the enclave nature of African economies (Campbell, 2003; Kanyenze et al., 2011). A further question is: Does the gig economy transform any of these historical structural restrictions? Schor (2014) has argued that 'technologies are only as good as the political and social context in which they are employed.' Juma (2017) has pointed out that we need 'inclusive social policies' which require 'a much deeper look at how social systems and technologies shape each other to create more just and resilient economies.'

Feminist movements in Africa must make the needed interventions that transform the contemporary political economy structures that shape the positionality of women in the fourth industrial revolution. Feminist responses will need to be multi-pronged and focus on building and mobilising a feminist movement with a progressive critique, building that critique into a powerful feminist movement, and securing policy regimes that transform the access and control of IT resources by women.

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Queernomics: A queer eye for the straight economy

Vuyokazi Futshane

Introduction

Just over a decade ago, Joyce Jacobsen and Adam Zeller published *Queer Economics: A Reader*, a book that consolidated various essays, readings and research papers written on the subject matter. Jacobsen and Zeller (2008: 2) explain:

We (hesitantly) define queer economics as the examination of and response to the effects of heteronormativity both on economic outcomes and on economics as a discipline. Queer economics can be thought of as having the same relationship to the economics of sexual orientation as, say, the related area of feminist economics has to the economics of gender.

I imagine that they hoped the book would serve as a springboard for the inclusion of queer economics in mainstream economic discourse or, at the very least, provide an entry point for further research and expansion. It is unfortunate that, ten years later, nothing has attempted to address the prevalence of heterosexism in economics as a discipline and the economy as a social structure in the comprehensive manner in which Jacobsen and Zeller put together *Queer Economics: A Reader*. Even more disheartening is the lack of 'Afrocentric' interest the issue has gotten. In an age where 'inclusive capitalism' (Gumede, 2018), 'dismantling the patriarchy', 'post-racial societies', the 'decolonisation project' (Oelofsen, 2015) of this or that have become everyday buzzwords in progressive development discourse, queer economics, on the other hand, remains a niche western research field in a 'would be nice to have' utopia.

Within the scant literature that is available on queer economics, a substantial amount of the analysis undertaken remains very Americentric and Eurocentric. What has been addressed in the body of knowledge currently available does not speak to experiences in the African context, where the societal attitudes towards queer bodies and non-conforming identities remain very hostile.

Pink money in Africa?

If you consider the political, cultural, and economic characteristics of the Global North in comparison to the Global South, it becomes particularly clear why Americentric and Eurocentric queer economic analysis is unable to encapsulate African queer experiences and interactions with the economy. To illustrate this, in North America and the UK, there is the existence of 'pink money', which essentially describes the purchasing power of the LGBTQI community which Bloomberg reported as having reached \$917 billion (Green, 2016). American media, in true capitalist form, has capitalised on LGBTQI cultures, with primetime shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Will and Grace*, Ru Paul's *Drag Race*, *Modern Family*, and *The L Word* all using diversity and inclusion to pull in audiences. While acknowledging how problematic some of the stereotypical queer tropes that these shows overemphasise, they have also contributed to injecting LGBTQI culture into the mainstream.

In Africa, however, unless you're an upper-class white gay man or womxn, tucked away in an ocean view apartment in Clifton, Cape Town, I highly doubt we have anything close to the kind of pink money Green (2016) refers to on this continent. Opposition in Africa towards LGBTQI bodies and non-binary individuals is visceral. It is ingrained in the language used, in the ways cis-het men have weaponised *stabane* (a Nguni derogatory word for gay) to attack one another's masculinity when engaged in conflict, in the ways a Duduzi Manana will physically assault a womxn in a nightclub for allegedly calling him gay. It is in the way Yoweri Museveni (quoted in Mugabi, 2004: 4), the man who led Uganda's liberation in the 1980s and promised his nation on 26 January 1986, that 'The people of Africa – the people of Uganda – are entitled to democratic government. It is not a favour from any government: it is the right of the people of Africa to have a democratic government.' What he forgot to mention was that people did not include 'un-African homosexuals' when he signed an Anti-Homosexuality Bill in 2014, that would have included the death penalty for so-called



The way men and womxn are still presented as default categories is disrespectful to those whose existence is routinely erased through this default categorisation.

'aggravated homosexuality'. Though the bill was later deemed unconstitutional, Museveni has played an active role in breeding a very strong culture of homophobia in Uganda.

Homophobia on the African continent is rife; homosexuality is punished with death in four states and criminalised in over 30 countries and, on the rest of the continent, where it isn't prohibited by law, it is (more than anything) tolerated by those outside of the LGBTQI community² (Essa, 2017; Amnesty International, n.d.; Formby, 2017). Queer bodies and non-binary identities are continuously subjected to stigma and exclusion, and yet the scrutiny of the impact of this widespread social stigmatisation has not been sufficiently explored in economics discourse.

In Africa, where impact assessments on homophobic stigma have been conducted, you are more likely to find them centred on social cohesion narratives, psychosocial effects of exclusion, and human rights paradigms (Engl & Potgieter, 2015; Human

Rights Watch, 2016; Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013). If you search hard enough, you might come across some publications on intersectional inclusion, diversified economies, and a few papers on sex, gender and development.

Written out of the data and demographics

I foolishly hoped that, as South Africa is home to one of the most progressive constitutions in the world (Meshoe, 2017), it would provide some partial gender and sexual orientation diversity considerations in the socioeconomic data publications available. In several of the official government statistical publications I reviewed, sadly, what I found was quite the contrary. Queer demography is of no concern to the state. Official government statistics, household surveys, and other readily

available demographic and economic data largely presuppose the composition of the heteronormative family unit.

It is shocking, while, at the same time, paradoxically, boring to read a report that omits to mention same-sex households in its analysis. How is it possible for a 64-page document on gender statistics in South Africa to only reflect information on ‘percentages of married people living as husband and wife’ (StatsSA, 2013), and nothing outside of the man-womxn/husband-wife arrangement, when same-sex marriage has been legal in South Africa since 30 November 2006?

More recently, The General Household Survey: 2017 was released by StatsSA. It makes use of the gender of the household head as an indicator in several categories. I find this particularly discomforting as a household head is defined in the report as ‘the main decision-maker, or the person who owns or rents the dwelling, or the person who is the main breadwinner’ (StatsSA, 2018: 75).

No mention is made of same-sex households or the existence of two household heads in one unit. It is either male or female, and what comes across is a heteronormative arrogance and a systematic erasure of a complete sector of society or gender identity. This continues to uphold narrow classifications of family and household units.

Then, there are further complexities that statistics cannot quantify. Based on a StatsSA labour force survey from 2015, and other more recent data, it has been determined that South African womxn earn about 23 to 27 percent less than men (Makou, 2017). While this gender pay gap has been a growing research interest for economists and social science researchers and has gained a fair amount of media and public debate, we hear nothing of how lesbian households carry double the burden of this gender pay gap. We know nothing of the racial, gender, class, and sexuality implications of being a poor black queer womxn living in a rural village in the Eastern Cape, for example.

This and many other untold experiences remain invisible, and the lack of queer economic contextualisation remains problematic.

The need for queer feminist economics

While the development of feminist economics has provided a more enriched approach to inclusiveness in economics, highlighting the androcentrism in orthodox economics and injected a much-needed focus on the interrelationship between gender and the economy. In addition, this approach has brought issues such as unpaid work into rethinking what is counted as productive labour and generally broadened the scope of what ought to shape transformative and progressive economic discourse.

Yet in all the commendable pursuits feminist economics has made to uncover gender biases in economics and economies, there has been an extensive focus on the male-female dichotomy.

Though it is necessary to highlight how predetermined ideas of ‘manliness’ and ‘womxnhood’ operate to uphold male supremacy, it is equally as important to realise how these feed into regressive gender binarism.

This is a criticism that should be considered both within feminist economics and other heterodox schools of economic thought. The way men and womxn are still presented as default categories is disrespectful to those whose existence is routinely erased through this default categorisation. Heteropatriarchy is inadvertently given a pass because of the lack of data available on the economics of sexual orientation because the area is under-researched, the ‘LGBTQIA community’ is a hidden population and many other so-called challenges ‘minority groups’³ present in the validity and generalisability of studies.

These are excuses, not reasons.

If ‘convenience sampling’⁴ is continually used as an excuse to exclude (from economic narratives), and diminish the socio-economic lived experiences of those who have been relegated to the invisible ‘other box’, then, as feminists, as feminist economists, as ‘some-of-my-best-friends-are-queer’ allies, as radicals, as left-wingers, or however else one may ideologically and politically differentiate themselves, we are all colluding in the mummification of an economy that only favourably relates to cis-gendered identities. In ‘Canaries in the coalmines – An analysis of spaces for LGBTI activism in Southern Africa’, Mark Gevisser (2016: 3) says:

How our societies treat lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people is symptomatic of the dangers facing all people who are excluded in some way or another in our societies, by those who have a grip on social, economic, and political power.

These words illustrate how those who dictate the terms and conditions of whose gender identity and sexual orientation is an anomaly, and those whose violence is hidden in social structures (aka the economy) so it doesn’t leave bruises, protect and preserve the many forms of inequalities that operate to serve the interests of the privileged.

In conclusion, I share a few recommendations that – if implemented with intention – would go a long way toward an inclusive, just economy:

■ Changing negative attitudes, norms and behaviours: In the ground-breaking study conducted by the HSRC and the Other Foundation (2016), ‘Progressive Prudes – A survey of attitudes toward homosexuality and gender non-conformity in South Africa’, a large majority (about seven out of ten South Africans) feel strongly that homosexual sex and breaking gender dressing norms is simply ‘wrong’ and ‘disgusting’. This reaffirms the need for scaled-up awareness raising and programmes on shifting negatives attitudes, norms and behaviours toward gender non-binary people. These need to be made mandatory, especially in

spaces of academia, research institutions, government and other institutions of socialisation that determine rights, equality and freedom of those most marginalised.

■ Constitutional protections: Gender non-binary people should have access to the same human rights as all citizens living in South Africa. However, these are not always a given. Every effort should be made to ensure the Constitution, laws and policies on economic inclusion and equality are reformed and enforced where needed.

■ Developing instruments for collecting inclusive gender-disaggregated economic data: Currently, South Africa does not invest in developing these instruments that would ensure the formulation of gender-responsive policies, budgets and assessing progress towards gender equality goals.

■ Open source literature on queer economics: In appreciating intellectual property and recognising that not much is researched or written on the subject in Africa, it becomes even more critical to ensure that the research and analysis that exists is made readily available. In researching for this paper, the gap was made even more stark as even the readings of Joyce Jacobsen and Adam Zeller referenced at the beginning of this paper are only accessible through academic journals, or if you were to purchase it. We were fortunate enough to have Professor Joyce Jacobson present a lecture at the recent inaugural Rethinking Economics for Africa Festival that created the space and opportunity for learning and deepening our understanding of the discourse. This, however, is rare.

And so, as we continue with our progressive agendas, anticipate the changing nature of work (and where we will all run when the robots take over), in reimagining alternative economies and economics, may we reimagine a future where queer and non-binary people do not have to shelf parts of their identities to negotiate a space other than the other box. Reimagine a queer economy where we all find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

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NOTES

1. The word 'womxn' is used as the alternate spelling of the word 'woman' or 'women', recognising the struggles, identities, bodily integrity, and intersectionality of feminist and womxn's rights organising and strives to be inclusive of all on the gender identity spectrum, not excluding bi-sexual and trans men and women.
2. As someone who, for all intents and purposes, is a cisgender womxn, I use the term 'LGBTQI community', with a great sense of sensitivity and understanding of how it may contribute to an 'othering' and a broad generalisation of shared queer and non-binary experiences. Queerness is not a homogenous identity that everyone experiences in the same way.
3. There needs to be caution in how LGBTQI individuals are othered by language that lends itself to discriminatory speech and practices.
4. Convenience sampling is a non-probability technique used in sample collection. Participants are selected due to convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher.

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Women's work begins in the mind: Releasing women's creative capacity to improve their entry into and experience of the workplace

Tsitsi Dangarembga

Introduction

Necessity is the mother of invention. There are deeper truths to this popular wisdom than might at first be apparent. A need leads to a desire. Desire leads to action. Action leads to the creation of an object or condition that fulfils desire. That action is work. Whatever work we do, the precondition is desire. For the most fortunate among us, this might be the desire to earn a decent living. For the less fortunate, it might be the desire to keep the lungs breathing, the heart beating. In the worst instances, work might be the result of a desire to avoid or put an end to negative consequences or punitive conditions.

This piece distinguishes between internal, incorporeal work and external physical work and traces the links between the two. It is argued that the latter depends on the former and that women will not succeed in claiming their place in external physical work markets unless they are empowered to carry out the internal, immaterial work that is a precursor to physical action. Stimulating and tapping into the imagination of women is thus critical for bringing women's contribution to society to fruition and for inspiring women to make their contributions to themselves and the planet. Key notions are the symbolic – the internalised set of rules and normative laws induced by the environment that regulate behaviour, the creative economy, imagination, representation and the imaginary.

In all cases, the capacity and motivation to work begin in the mind. The first step on the pathway to work is imagination, the deployment of internal processes that collapse the distance between the obtaining conditions and what is desired. The work of improving work conditions and work outcomes for women in the region can thus be seen as a creative, imaginative process that requires the participation of women themselves. It is no accident that women's participation in symbolic life areas that rely on the imaginary for their power, such as religion,

politics and the humanities, including, more latterly the creative economies, as well as women's access to public spaces where their imaginations might not be easily policed, has been vigorously controlled or prohibited in patriarchal societies (see, for some examples, Chisale, 2017; Onwutuebe, 2013; Venny et al., 2014). In such societies, women were not expected to work to fulfil their own desires. It was necessary to subvert the potential energy of women's desire and the work that this desire occasioned to the patriarchal project. In this context, it is an apt question to ask whether and how African women today are allowed to desire.

Two kinds of economies

Human systems of economy attach value to those things that are desired. Put briefly, an economy is a system in which value circulates through a series of transactions. In traditional economies, value is attached to material and nonmaterial items, such as land, raw materials and the capacity for labour. Land and raw materials were for a long time withheld from women, who were also said to be incapable of the labour to acquire them. Even today, the distribution of land and raw materials between men and women is highly inequitable (Villa, 2017). Acknowledgement of equal capacity for the labour of women and men, when all qualifications are equal, is still to be achieved.

In the creative economy, value is attached to the contents and effort of the mind and the non-physical being. The creative economy values the processes and products of our imagination. These are resources possessed by all human beings. The creative economy, like the traditional economy, places products in markets. Unlike the traditional economy, however, these products engage the individual, not at the material, but at the symbolic level of thought and ideology.

The creative economy disseminates ideas into groups. It is one of the most powerful ways in existence today of representing the world to populations. Efforts were and continue to be made to exclude women from the imaginary. Imagination derives from experience. Patriarchal society strove and continues to strive to ensure that women's experiences are limited and that what is represented to women is not themselves but that which is male (Ford & Anderson, 2015; World Bank, 2018).

When the term representation is mentioned on the African continent, most people think of political representation. There are discussions during elections about the number of female counsellors, mayors, parliamentarians, presidents and candidates that the continent boasts. Yet there is little concern for how many women are present in the creative economy and what their roles in this economy are. The preoccupation with politics at the expense of most else in the public domain allows other systems of representation that function at the symbolic level to exert their influences and achieve their agendas with a minimum of scrutiny. One such system is the system of film. Here I use 'film' to refer to all moving images and narrative involving moving images.

Women and the creative economy as typified by women and film

Film is an integral part of today's creative economies. It derives its power from the fact that, at the perceptual level, the brain perceives film images as reality. The ability to distinguish film images from reality is learnt. In this digital age, film products that pour into markets range from those designed for the big screen, through products for TV to those suitable for the smallest of screens that we hold in the palm of our hands. In this burgeoning industry, it is apposite to ask, 'What is the work of women?'

The work of women in the film industry has a history determined by the society in which film became popular. This was and continues to be a patriarchal society. The role of women in film was to satisfy the desire of men (Mulvey, in Erens, 1990). This was true in front of the camera and behind it. Behind the camera, women were assistants, relegated to the less financially rewarding roles. Hollywood will mention female women like Lois Weber and Dorothy Arzner who directed movies. These were the exceptions that proved the rule.

In the film narrative, women were to be looked at sexually and existed to satisfy male desire. The desire of women was framed as the desire to be desired by the male protagonist. Filmmaking has been called 'a world of male narcissism and power' (Menard, 2017). The contents of women's imagination were taboo to this world. Women were imagined by men and were seldom in a position to imagine themselves. Work is a product of imagination, actions taken to close the gap between what is and what is

desired. As such, women's work is discouraged by film narrative at a deep symbolic level. Encouraged by societal norms to think of themselves as incapable of producing any object that fulfils their desires, film works psychologically to discourage women from thinking of themselves as workers who produce in their own right. In this way, women's attitudes are tailored to prevent their engagement in the workforce on their own terms.

This trend continues on the African continent today. The patriarchal consensus seems to be that, if an African woman is seen and she is not submissive when sighted, she must be seen in a negative light. Most popular African film content, typified by Nollywood, depicts African women as weakly dependent on men or in negative stereotypical roles, such as the domineering mother, prostitute (as opposed to sex worker), slay queen, witch, and so forth.

Interestingly, this trend towards disempowering women in the imaginary of moving images is also seen in another area of representative work: politics. Dr Thokozani Khupe, a Zimbabwean presidential candidate who has appointed a number of women to key positions in her MDC-T party, has been publically called a 'whore' (Chigumadzi, 2018). On social media, she and other women in leadership positions in her party have been called 'fat prostitutes'. This is to be expected in a patriarchal society because to represent is to claim power with respect to that represented and with respect to those to whom the representation is made.

How African women's imagination is controlled

Such control of how women may be represented in moving images is of growing concern on a planet that is increasingly reliant on these images for communication. Without African women's imaginary working in moving images narrative to create a liberating space for women, African women remain trapped in an imaginary that negates them both as they are today and as they imagine they might be tomorrow. Controls on what an African woman may aspire to and how she may fulfil her desires are too often internalised by African women under the guise of 'entertainment'. These controls work to shape how and where an African woman conceives of herself entering the workplace, which workplaces she believes she may enter, and the nature of the space that she is entitled to.

As with women's work in the traditional economy, resourcing African women's participation in the creative industries, particularly in the extremely symbolically potent film industry, is critical to opening up the ways in which African women imagine themselves, the ways in which they imagine they might be, and the action they will take to close the distance between the two. This gap has been beneficially addressed by the African Women's



OSISA

The creative economy values the processes and products of our imagination.

Development Fund. This fund is the only body in the world that systematically funds African women's participation in the creative economy with a view to creating empowering narratives of women's growth and transformation for women on the continent.

Yet there is a paradox in donor organisations that function according to the development paradigm being the major promoter of African women's moving images and imaginaries on the continent. The development paradigm consistently casts the African as the problem-bearer. Development discourse is too often concerned with extreme lack, rather than deriving its transformative power from the affirmation of what is working and where that functionality might lead. The negative framing of African being that characterises development discourse is very similar to the characterisation of women in traditional Hollywood cinema. African women thus live under the psychological burden of a double negative framing of their identity.

To free African women from being positioned in particular ways by mainstream male narcissistic film culture, and thereby free the imagination of African women to envision themselves as

whole and capable, more resources need to be directed toward achieving these ends. The audiovisual and cinema industry generates US\$5 billion in GDP for Africa, and about five million people are employed in the industry (*The Herald*, 2016). The African Union has initiated the African Audio-Visual and Cinema Commission with a view to creating more employment opportunities in the creative sector for young people on the continent, as well as with the objective of promoting social cohesion. While this acknowledgement of the economic and social importance of the moving images industry by the African Union is laudable, the Commission's plan to invest US\$410 million to realise its objectives (*The Herald*, 2016) does not mainstream gender, suggesting that the fund the Commission is to operate will perpetuate the narratives that work to limit African women's meaningful representation in film narrative and thus perpetuate their continued subjugation to a patriarchal agenda across all of society's sectors.

Most SADC countries, with the exception of South Africa, have done little more than postulate concerning the importance

of the crucial creative economies. South Africa is the only SADC nation to have a robust development programme for women filmmakers, and a vibrant national women filmmakers' movement. In Zimbabwe, the resourcing of women's organisations is under threat. This is particularly so for women's creative sector organisations. The Media Culture and ICT cluster of the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, an umbrella body for women's NGOs in the country, has only four members, out of a total membership of 70 affiliate organisations. Two cluster members closed doors in the past two years, citing viability challenges. Among the remaining organisations, one has made 18 applications for funding in nine months. Thus women in the organisation were kept busy with work other than their core creative work. Out of this programme of resource mobilisation, one grant was successful, this funding being disbursed by the African Women's Development Fund. Yet another cluster organisation has recently given notice of closure. The following reasons for the closure were given confidentially by the organisation's founder.

The influence of donors and funders on organisational vision and identity

Donors were found to have great sway over the organisational vision and identity, requiring difficult decisions to be made concerning whether to accept money for projects that are not in line with the vision of the institution in order to grow or to remain compact and largely self-funded in order to ensure the vision remains intact.

Burnout and lack of self-care

Because small organisations are inherently understaffed, there tends to be a lot of overwork and/or work happening in multiple concurrent streams, which leads to high levels of stress, a lack of self-care, and eventually burnout.

Inability to manage accelerated growth

This results from the intense need among the population of young women for the services provided by the organisation. As a result, demands on the organisation multiply quickly, they cannot be met, and the organisation becomes unsustainable.

Shared politics and ideologies within a collective

The organisation highlighted that when women start organisations, they do not always think deeply about whether political perspectives and general perspectives are shared or not. While differences on these issues can be masked for some time, they become more visible when challenges faced become bigger and more complex. Organisations need to be empowered to engage candidly with these issues from the outset.

The above stressors that challenged this recently closed organisation have affected other women's organisations in the creative sector in Zimbabwe. At Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe, some donor pressures towards empowering youths at the expense of more mature, experienced women resulted in young women being pushed into positions they were not ready for. The performance standards required were beyond the young women's capacity, leading to stress, malfunction and attrition in ways that were detrimental to the organisation and which resulted in compromised organisational performance. Unlike some of the other organisations mentioned here, this organisation was able to recover when other relationships were formed with partners who valued the advantages of intergenerational alliances in the workplace.

The demand for youthful participation has turned out to be more detrimental to young women than to their male counterparts in all spheres of work. While they are pursuing careers alongside their male counterparts, young women are also pursuing relationships, marriage and childbearing. The social work of family creation and childrearing is skewed against young women. Thus many young women channel their energies into these activities, intending to re-engage with their careers once the family is established and the children are grown. With the emphasis on youth, many women are unable to return successfully to the workforce once their personal relationship and social goals have been met, or they face many inequities if they can return to work including reduced pay (Lucas, 2009; Teow & Ravidran, 2016). Young men face none of these issues.

Concluding remarks

The examples given above are specific to the NGO workplace. This reflects the reality that women's participation in the creative industries in the SADC is generally carried out non-commercially. Women's entry into the creative marketplace as those who represent rather than the represented is still largely blocked. It may also be argued that the effects discussed above are not specific to women's NGOs only, but occur in all such non-government workplaces. While this may be true, limiting pressures on women's performance and experience in the workplace in general, whether market-driven, public or NGO, have been a central concern for generations of feminists and the gender factors that militate against women's full participation in the workplace function in the spaces identified above.

It is worthy of note that South Africa, which has the most notable programmes to free the African woman's imaginary through affirmative action in its creative industries, is one SADC country that has a long history of black women engaging outside their own homes. The link between women being able to imagine themselves in particular places outside the home, and women physically taking action to occupy those spaces is exemplified. It

is not by accident that a film is defined as 'a story about a sympathetic protagonist who has a goal and takes action to achieve the goal but is prevented by obstacles from doing so.' Securing women's imaginary and giving women the tools to self-imagine as active individuals who work to produce that which satisfies their desires through supporting their participation and production in the creative economy is a crucial step in securing women's places in the work markets of the future.

Novelist, playwright, activist
and filmmaker **Tsitsi**

Dangarembga's first novel *NERVOUS CONDITIONS* was hailed by Doris Lessing as one of the most important novels of the twentieth century. She published her second novel *THE BOOK OF NOT* in 2006 and her third, *THIS MOURNABLE BODY* in 2018. She founded the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa (ICAPA). Publishing in 2014 with *A FAMILY PORTRAIT*, a collection of short stories, which includes her short story *THE BRICK*. She is currently writing *SAI-SAI, WATERMAKER*, a dystopic speculative young adult fiction. Critically acclaimed, her films and literature have received various international awards.



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Young women in the world of work: Cheques and balances in the creative economies

Ntombi Mkandhla

Escaping the dreaded unemployment scourge

On Instagram, Busi Mavunga has posted a screenshot of Peter Diamandis' understanding of the rapid demonetisation in our time. Most commonly, demonetisation is associated with the stripping away of a country's legal tender, as was the case for Zimbabwe, in favour of a new one to counter issues such as corruption or a cashless economy. Diamandis, on his tech blog, says there is a demonetised cost of living due to 'the ability of technology to take a product or service that was previously expensive and making it substantially cheaper, or potentially free' (Diamandis, 2018).

'My [Instagram] post on demonetization was on covering the pillar of digital inclusion,' Mavunga explained. It looked at how small business owners, such as herself, should prepare for and adapt to the changes of the fourth industrial revolution. The advancement of industrialisation blurs the physical, biological and digital lines to give rise to automation in industry, 'where 41 percent of all work activities in South Africa are susceptible to automation, as are 44 percent in Ethiopia, 46 percent in Nigeria, 48 percent in Mauritius, 52 percent in Kenya and 53 percent in Angola' (World Economic Forum, 2017: iii). Automation risks changing or even eradicating work for women on a continent reliant on their labour force participation. Sub-Saharan Africa, along with South East Asia, has the highest rate of women's labour force participation: an estimated 60 percent (Chen, 2008: 2).

However, Diamandis' insight on the demonetised cost of living, debited to technological advancements, actually provides a loophole for the young African woman to escape this dreaded unemployment. While the fourth industrial revolution is devaluing the necessity of African women's labour participation, it is also diminishing the reliance on technology it had made such as the video camera, video player and GPS, as the smartphone now has them all, and more. As the smartphone further shifts away from primarily being a recreational tool to that of business, so do the social media applications on it. This remonetised digital

communication tool is a potential driving force in ensuring African women are economically included tomorrow.

That is something Mavunga has realised, being a 30-year-old South African business owner of three. With Aweddingday, she hires out African themed wedding décor, in Love Teatime, Mavunga sells imported Kenyan tea, and her latest venture, Inclusiion, she pushes a thought leadership publication. As an iPhone owner, she has a camera which she uses to take good quality pictures of her stock. With direct access to the Internet, she promotes her brands on social media, and, if her online presence translates to a sale, her banking apps will notify her of any payment received.

'I am the accountant, tax consult, marketer, social media expert, communication director and photographer,' Mavunga joked, as she wears multiple hats to ensure she sells her businesses. The smartphone has also lessened dependency on personnel such as bankers and photographers. Social media is her advert board which has made it easier (and cheaper) for her to take full agency for her brands.

Each of her three businesses have their own Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts – save for Aweddingday and Love Teatime – who share the same Twitter account. Alternatively, they each have their own websites where customers can purchase products online. 'My businesses actually started on social media,' Mavunga said, highlighting that strategic social media engagement provides her with leads and marketing opportunities. According to the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa's (BRCSA) August 2018 statistics, *Our Perfect Wedding* had an average of 1.27 million viewers per Sunday broadcast (BRCSA, 2018). The magazine show's popularity is shown by its dominance of Twitter trends each Sunday night. 'I know that every Sunday night, people are watching *Our Perfect Wedding*,' Mavunga said, adding that she leverages advert breaks to promote her own wedding décor on Twitter to possibly grab the attention of couples watching the show for their own wedding inspiration. As Mavunga's sneaky marketing garners her business leads, it is evident that there is business to be tapped into online – an 18 million (wo)man strong one – if South African active social media user statistics (Kemp, 2018) are anything to go by.



RETLAW SNELLAC PHOTOGRAPHY, FLICKR

While they may not necessarily abandon their physical vending spaces, such as flea markets, in favour of digitalisation, women find duality in merging the two entrepreneurial worlds.

Online freedom and cross-border e-commerce: Benefits and risks

The Internet is not regionally bound, and e-commerce players can participate on a global field. Advert services such as Facebook Marketplace offer free classified advert spaces for vendors with personal or business Facebook profiles. The e-commerce sector, a platform which Okoli and Mbarika (2003) describe as 'self-propagating and self-sustaining' can grant young African women economic inclusion in the digital spaces where they can make their own rules. Globally, Facebook is the most used social media platform with over two billion users, with the majority of users falling between the ages of 18 and 34 (Kemp, 2018). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, attract young users with the offer of independence to control what they post about themselves in a free and fun environment, a beneficial context for young African women today. That online freedom allows young African women to provide whatever service to whomever and virtually anywhere they want.

However, perhaps the seemingly wide pool of potential customers can actually be a sinkhole. In order to push her brands online, Mavunga has paid for adverts on Facebook and Instagram. While those platforms allow those who would have paid to boost their posts to tailor their target audience, Mavunga still believes the

algorithms are 'skewed' as the web baits people who are not the typical consumers of her products. The danger is that, if the unsolicited audience pays attention to a brand and interacts with it, the brand risks drowning in that unwelcome noise, and going unnoticed by the intended audience. In that sense, Mavunga said e-commerce in Africa is lagging behind where, on the one hand, businesses receive a lot of online attention but, on the other hand, there exists a cashless gap. Having even mistakenly spent R3 000 on an advert, Mavunga said she is yet to see any returns on that payment, seeing it as 'R3 000 down the drain, with no impact'.

To Mavunga, the reluctance to buy online comes from the cost of last-mile delivery. As most courier services charge per kilogram, fees may start at R40 but can easily exceed the R200 mark per parcel. Often, the charge will be a considerable fraction of the product price and prove to be a turn-off to possible customers. Rightfully so, as it becomes cheaper just to buy that brand or its alternative in-store. Resultantly, the majority of the small fraction of e-commerce customers are middle- to upper-class people. In fact, the whole online business idea itself is elitist as the business vendor has to have a constant connection to the Internet which is often a luxury in Africa, particularly for its women who have a less than 20 percent Internet penetration (Statista, 2017).

To solve this gap, government needs to start at grassroots level in ensuring that young women are extensively introduced to the Internet and its uses. Not every woman will afford to shop for a bundle of Peruvian hair on an Instagram boutique, but, if enough

women know of how it can be sold on the platform, economic disparities may be lessened. This can possibly shift the informal cross-border landscape synonymous with Zimbabwean women who import goods from neighbouring countries and South East Asia for resale (Skinner, cited in Chen, 2008). While they may not necessarily abandon their physical vending spaces, such as flea markets, in favour of digitalisation, they find duality in merging the two entrepreneurial worlds. Mavunga believes the South African government helps, but adds, 'The problem is that with governmental assistance, we see the same faces being supported every day.' Mavunga stressed that the government needs to further cast out its net in order to catch today's entrepreneurs and the brands which they are trying to grow.

Versatility in talent, skills and competencies

Branding influences the perceptions which a target audience has over a brand, including 'the intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised' (Ogilvy & Mather, 2018). Branding is important in the advent of social media where people's personal profiles, the *branding*, is constantly reflective of themselves, the *brand*. While this idea of self-marketing is associated with narcissism, it is that individualism that can catalyse young African women to monetise themselves, the brand.

Lindie Botes' brand is her tongue which speaks fluent English, Afrikaans, Korean, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, French, Vietnamese, Hungarian and Indonesian. Her linguistic capabilities, the culmination of talent and deliberate revision, have earned her a large international online following, with her five-year-old YouTube channel having over 59 000 subscribers. A 2017 YouTube video of her waking up from anaesthesia and only being able to speak in Korean has since gone viral and earned her over 4.7 million views.

The YouTube Partnership Programme (YPP) enables content creators to earn money from advertisements posted on their videos and from YouTube Premium subscribers watching their content. In January 2018, as a means of 'protecting their content creator ecosystem' (Mohan & Kyncl, 2018), YouTube announced their new monetisation policy. Red tape now makes it difficult for content creators to make money off their videos as YPP has rigid criteria about who is eligible for monetisation, dependent on factors such as video content and keywords in the description. Furthermore, the programme can limit content creators to only swim in a certain advertorial pool. 'Luckily,' Botes said, 'Before... my video went viral... I had been accepted for monetisation and started earning a small side income each month.'

Initially, 24-year-old Botes started her YouTube channel solely to share her ability to speak in multiple languages. 'It was actually my younger brother Daniel who encouraged me to monetise my YouTube channel around the time I had 2 000 subscribers,'

Botes said, adding that she was not keen on monetising her account due to the complexities of administration on that social media platform. Apart from the YPP, YouTube influencers often create revenue streams for themselves through ventures such as endorsements and partnerships with other brands. 'I am aware that many YouTube personalities work with sponsors, create their own clothing brands, and sometimes ask viewers to donate to them,' Botes said. Nonetheless, she decided not to partner with a brand solely for monetary gain. 'I'm very selective about which brands I choose to engage with,' she stressed, adding that she has no qualms with endorsing small businesses, even for free, as long as they relate to something her audience could be interested in.

While Botes is a full-time designer at a Johannesburg based consulting firm, she has found ways for her love of language and design to feed off each other. This way, no job of hers drains the other, risking her having to choose one over the other. Sometimes, her full-time job requires her to translate things as well as to do research in other languages. Botes explained that she has undergone formal design and branding training, allowing her to be self-sufficient in her digital endeavours. 'This has helped me design my personal logos, set up my own website, and edit my own videos without having to outsource it,' she said. This way, she is able to save money from the multiple income streams created around her brand.

Botes' self-reliance has helped her stretch out entrepreneurially as she also designs her own branded apparel, largely influenced by Japanese design. She promotes her products on her Instagram account and sells them on her online store. In addition, as her followers largely come from South East Asia, she said her online business has received more traction since she started selling merchandise with Korean and Japanese words on it. Botes' breaking into a two billion strong Asian-Pacific market, where 74% of the South Korean population and 63% of the Japanese market use e-commerce (Kemp, 2018), is inspirational.

Botes increasing popularity as a polyglot has seen people approach her requesting language tutoring. Even though her time is stretched due to her multiple jobs, Botes said she prefers tutoring in person 'because it's easier to explain and show concepts,' she said. However, with potential student numbers rising behind her computer screen, Botes has had to re-evaluate her teaching preferences to stretch herself towards offering Skype lessons. 'I converted the rate I usually charge in ZAR to USD,' she said. 'In terms of clients for language tutoring, the majority of my online students are American, British or Australian. I have one student from Slovakia,' she added.

It is interesting to note that, while Botes' international following is willing to pour into her digital entrepreneurial efforts, she barely has support on home soil. Describing local backing as 'virtually non-existent', Botes noted the few South African friends and followers on different social media platforms. However, in terms of business exchanges, she is yet to make a sale. Botes grabs the attention of fascinated Western international language

learners who are mostly monolinguals and South East Asians who identify with her social media visual aesthetics as well as language videos. Perhaps pushing Asian culture and foreign languages in African spaces where inhabitants are already multilingual does not resonate with many locals.

That identity barrier stands between Botes and engagement with local social media users in her country to garner support. It is that fragmentation which Botes believes could hinder her from any sort of governmental support. 'I doubt the government would donate financially to people who aren't directly promoting South African art and culture,' she admitted. Nonetheless, she would like to see more facilitated and inclusive workshops for young bloggers, particularly centred around cost-effective methods to run their online businesses. 'Perhaps if my Afrikaans language-learning separate YouTube channel grows, it could be cool to see it being promoted as something to help people learn South African languages,' Botes suggests.

Mavunga and Botes' different entrepreneurial journeys highlight the shifting of work opportunities in Africa due to the fourth industrial revolution, which presents push and pull factors for digital entrepreneurship. Today and tomorrow's digital female entrepreneur needs to assert herself further in an e-commerce environment not always ready to receive her.

The churning out of new technologies, such as automation brought by the fourth industrial revolution, will inevitably threaten African women's work. However, Diamandis' alternative definition of demonetisation provides hope. It shows that the creation of technologies such as the Internet and the cellphone are not only helpful in everyday life but provide the opportunity for creative entrepreneurship. This could possibly subvert the consequence of the erasure of traditional work as more young women would be able to participate in creative economies governed by the fluidity of the Internet. However, the rigidity of the financial implications of such a creative economy impedes the growth of African women's participation in it.

Looking at Mavunga and Botes, the two women definitely demonstrate agency in digitally pushing their brands. However, it cannot be ignored that their privileged access to information, finances, and the Internet itself, has greatly determined their economic success.

Access to the Internet, as well as comprehensive knowledge of its uses, is not afforded to most young African women. While it can be argued that the output of new technologies creates cheaper smartphones and decreases the cost of existing ones, the cost of buying mobile data remains high. These factors unfairly determine the type of African woman who can participate in creative economies.

Therefore, African governments have a serious role to fulfil in shifting the perspective of work in Africa for young women. This is because the women most affected by the erasure of work due to technology are the least likely to engage in creative economies.

Policies aimed at increased Internet access for young women and education about the economic advantages of digitalisation can increase young African women's participation in creative economies. Existing digital players such as Mavunga and Botes can also gain through such policies. They will have access to digitalisation support systems, and a wider pool of potential customers because of the increased digital participation of African women. Ultimately, this increase in Internet users could positively influence how Mavunga and Botes monetise their own digital presence.

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The future of sex work on the African continent

Megan M Schmidt-Sane and Macklean Kyomya

Introduction

This critical analysis examines the intersections of sexuality, morality, and the law to underscore the marginalisation of sex work in discourses on the future of work on the African continent. We contend that the current discourse on decent work is out of touch with the realities of sex work, and that ‘othered’ women are being pushed further to the margins. Furthermore, we heed the call of Tamale (2009) to avoid using Western theoretical frames to describe African realities. We particularly focus on Uganda as a paradoxical example of the marginalisation of sex work in prevailing policy discourses on work alongside the reality of the existence of individuals employed in this sector. This article is primarily informed by our experiences in sex work organising in Uganda, and it relies on a critical and rights-based framework that is the undercurrent throughout this paper.

A brief history of the construction of sex work as a problem

Sex work as a ‘problem’ primarily emerged from two related sets of global discourse: (1) that on morality, and (2) that on HIV and health. A global ‘sex panic’ has re-emerged in recent decades from the unlikely alliance between abolitionist feminists and religious ideologues that conflate sex trafficking with sex work (Vance, 2012). The 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others equated trafficking with prostitution, and defined both as ‘incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person’ (UN General Assembly (UNGA), 1949).

In 1979, an anti-prostitution paradigm was still dominant during the drafting and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This supposedly progressive declaration for the rights of

women, in fact, stated that ‘State Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women’ (UNGA, 1979). This is often understood to be a position against prostitution.

In 2000, there was a simultaneous drafting of a new international trafficking law and a passage of federal trafficking law in the US with global implications. The US Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) criminalised forced or coerced movement of persons for the purposes of exploitation. The legislation was drafted ‘to combat trafficking in persons, a contemporary manifestation of slavery whose victims are predominantly women and children, to ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims’ (US Congress, 2000).

The TVPA includes what Peters (2013) calls a ‘symbolic distinction’ between trafficking into forced prostitution (TiFP) and other forms of trafficking, thereby marking TiFP as a distinctive category. The TVPA is used as a diplomatic tool to encourage foreign governments to adopt anti-trafficking legislation. Meanwhile, the UN Protocol on Trafficking (UNGA, 2000) expanded the definition of trafficking to include other forms of labour beyond prostitution, while the characterisation of prostitution as inherently exploitative is no longer included.

The current paradigm on sex work and conflation with trafficking

‘Despite the new international standard for trafficking, there is still an obfuscation of the distinction between trafficking and prostitution by abolitionist and religious members of the anti-trafficking movement’ (Schmidt-Sane, in Daly, 2014). This mirrors US policy, and it has global implications. A rhetoric that assumes all trafficked persons are trafficked for sex is incorrect as there are a wide range of reasons why people are trafficked, such as for forced labour (Kotiswaran, 2011). Globally, there is a disproportionate focus on TiFP, with many conflating sex work and trafficking to the point where it is believed that all sex workers have been trafficked (Ahmed & Seshu, 2012).



OSISA

Sex work is similar to any other form of work - it should just be made safer and healthier.

In the current anti-trafficking discourse, the image of a suffering, 'third-world' sex worker is often exaggerated. Vance (2011) characterises this narrative as a 'melodrama', one that produces reductive caricatures of injured and victimised women. These false representations are out of touch with reality and have led to harmful policies and practices. In South Africa (Palmary, 2016; Thusi, 2015) and Uganda (Mbonye et al., 2013; Tamale, 2009), categories of trafficking do not map the realities of sex work. The paradigm that conflates sex work and trafficking does not advance the ability of the state to tackle exploitation and abuse, as much of the abuse actually takes place at the hands of the state because of existing legal frameworks.

Similarly, the global HIV pandemic has presented both an opportunity and a challenge to the future of sex work in what has been called competing discourses (Seidel, 1993). With the progression of HIV/AIDS, advocates of sex work have had a unique opportunity to call for the advancement of sex workers' rights within the context of the epidemic. Resources made available from the immense growth in HIV/AIDS programmatic funding have

aided in the mobilisation of tens of thousands of sex workers in the global South (Kotiswaran, 2011). Sex work movements are using the HIV/AIDS discourse as a form of advocacy, and rightly so, as sex workers are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS (Ahmed, 2011). A number of sex worker groups have formed in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic to work against the high prevalence rates and to counter the additional discrimination and stigma that has ensued with sex workers being labelled 'vectors' of the disease (Gould, 2011). In addition, it has become more common for HIV/AIDS programmes focusing on sex workers to be designed and implemented with our approval and input (DMSC & NSWP, 2012).

Morality and the law

The conflation of sex work with trafficking and the blaming of sex workers as 'vectors' of disease point to the underlying debates on morality – in civil society space, in government, and in everyday



To speak about sex work and morality on the African continent is to explore the contours of state control.

life. To speak about sex work and morality on the African continent is to explore the contours of state control. Recent empirical work points to the control of bodies as a way to detract attention from burgeoning social change (Kotiswaran, 2011; Tamale, 2009; Vorhoeelter, 2017). Critical scholars of sexuality in Africa have pointed to the colonial roots of moral discourse on sexuality (Vorhoeelter, 2017). Vorhoeelter (2017) aptly characterises the contemporary political state of moral discourse on sexuality in Uganda, arguing that the current discourse is a strategic power play by the government to make sexuality an issue of social and political concern. In our experience, policy on sexuality and morality has become a red herring to detract from social, demographic, economic, and political instability in Uganda. Similarly, in South Africa, a period of socio-political transition is marked by debates on migration, control over bodies, and sex (Palmary, 2016; Thusi, 2015).

Activists and scholars have argued that the arbitrary distinctions placed on human sexuality ignore the reality that most human relationships involve some transactional behaviour (Marlise & Chesa, 2009). In Uganda, all aspects of sex work are criminalised under the Penal Code (1950). It is because of the

moral exceptionalisation of sex work that rampant harassment, stigma, discrimination, and violence, primarily by the state, continues with impunity. In Uganda, as in other countries where sex work is illegal, sex workers occupy a precarious space. The state has adopted the abolitionist position with continued enforcement of criminal law. In reality, at the local levels, enforcement is uneven and dependent on local policing practices.

Decent work, labour, and the reality of sex work

The normative status of sex work has been long debated in academic and policy spaces. The abolitionist viewpoint sees sex work as exploitative and embodying gender inequality. The rights-based view, adopted by this paper and other sex worker activists, seeks to deconstruct caricatures of sex work and de-exceptionalise sex work. Sex work is de-exceptionalised when compared with other forms of labour in different labour markets (Kotiswaran, 2011). In other words, sex work is similar to any

other form of work – it should just be made safer and healthier. Some sex work advocates believe that sex work is similar to other forms of emotional labour, such as airline service work or childcare (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998). Sex work advocates have responded to the reality of life in criminalised settings on the African continent, organising dialogues across civil society to champion the human rights of sex workers, and to normalise sex work. We argue that very few other professions are scrutinised to the extent that sex work has been, and rarely do we question a person's reasons for entering into other types of work.

While the experience of sex workers in most of Africa is very negative due to the criminalisation of sex work, Senegal represents the lone example of sex work legalisation. In Senegal, sex work is regulated – a legacy of the country's French colonial history (NSWP, 2018). However, globally, sex work groups have taken issue with legalisation and regulation. Too often, regulatory measures do not respect the rights of sex workers (Amnesty International, 2016). These measures are often created without the consultation of sex workers themselves, and they are thinly veiled attempts to control the spread of disease – once again linking back to the scapegoating of sex workers as 'vectors' of disease. However, in comparison to other nations on the African continent, Senegal's system has contributed to impressive disease control outcomes (NSWP, 2018).

The future of sex work on the continent

Sex work advocates have leveraged space opened up through HIV/AIDS control to argue for greater participation in society, reductions in stigma and discrimination, decriminalisation, and the normalisation of sex work as decent work. We have responded to the realities of sex work on the ground. The reality is that the legacies of neoliberal policies across sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in unequal capital accumulation, growing inequality, and socioeconomic scarcity. Within a constrained economic space, people must survive and provide for themselves and families.

Concomitant population growth – in places like Uganda – has ensured the steady growth of sex work as a viable economic opportunity. Furthermore, the erosion of national borders through globalisation and migration has created space for sex work along migratory and trucking routes. These realities are not going to go away any time soon. Social media and technology have provided temporary spaces where sex workers can access protections unavailable through street-based sex work, as the Internet is utilised to screen clients, share information, and build an online community.

Across the continent, sex workers are taking matters into their own hands and organising through local, national, and regional networks. We are working across civil society spaces to advance the normalisation of sex work as work. We are challenging the

prevailing paradigm in abolitionist feminism, forcing feminist groups to acknowledge our presence. Movement building has created an opportunity in the face of great obstacles. It has been the only way to push for the recognition of sex work as decent work, and the decriminalisation of sex work. As Shannon et al. (2015) correctly note, decriminalisation presents the single greatest structural barrier to the control of HIV/AIDS. We would add, it is the single greatest barrier to the recognition of sex workers as full citizens within African (and global) states.

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Before AWAC, Kyomya was a founding member of the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) and the Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA). She has also won awards in recognition of her remarkable contribution in the founding and grounding of the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum 2008-2018. Kyomya is a leader in pushing for the mainstreaming of sex work issues, with over 13 years of experience working on human rights with sex workers and other marginalised populations.



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How cryptocurrency can promote gender equality in Africa

Mako Muzenda

Cryptocurrency technology can bring financial autonomy to women in rural and urban spaces. This autonomy will go a long way in ensuring women's rights are upheld, including the right to financial freedom. It contributes to a future where gendered economic inequality is no longer a reality, and women from different social and economic conditions can enjoy economic freedom. Apart from adding cryptocurrencies as a form of payment, women can also be involved as investors and educators.

Cryptocurrency in Africa: A brief background

The cryptocurrency boom in Africa has been widely covered by established media houses, bloggers and academics. For example, Business Live, Citizen TV Kenya, CNBC Africa and *Forbes* have covered developments in cryptocurrency in African countries, with recent coverage focusing on the creation of new cryptocurrencies (Nyamasege, 2018), and a potential Bitcoin bubble (McKane, 2018). In countries such as Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the use of cryptocurrency has resulted from its potential to disrupt old banking systems and economic power – systems that encourage a culture of corruption and secrecy. The idea of cryptocurrency transforming money and decentralising the banking system is appealing for citizens who are wary of a monetary order that is often exclusionary and prone to manipulation and exploitation.

Cryptocurrency has developed at a steady pace in certain parts of Africa. It has particularly thrived in countries with a growing technology industry, or countries dealing with a deep lack of confidence in the banking system. What also makes cryptocurrency appealing in these cases is its convenience. Buying and mining cryptocurrency doesn't require people to physically go to banks, go through a long and often tedious administrative process, or to fill out forms. Instead, one can get involved in the world of crypto from the comfort of one's home, gaining a level of control that is not present in the traditional banking system.

The latter is especially true for countries whose banking systems are unstable. Take Zimbabwe, for example. The crypto boom in the country was sparked largely by a severe hard currency shortage and a general mistrust of banks following the 2008 economic crash, in which pensions and savings were wiped out overnight (Southall, 2017). Cryptocurrency (primarily Bitcoin and Ethereum) gave people a means to sidestep banks and hard currency completely. The opening of crypto ATMs in South Africa and Zimbabwe indicates that digital currency is moving away from niche circles and into more mainstream use. Businesses and start-ups specialising in cryptocurrency have sprouted up, with Golix, Zimbabwe's largest cryptocurrency exchange, now operating in seven countries (Cameroon, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Tanzania). Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, has opened a crypto-fiat exchange in Uganda. All in all, the trajectory for cryptocurrency's spread across different regions in Africa looks positive.

Judging from some of the headlines and analysis of cryptocurrency's growth in Africa, it would appear as if it's by and large a success story. 'Cryptocurrency is the great African opportunity,' according to Preiss (2017). However, positive aspects of this currency's growth aside, there have been downsides. The question of security looms large, and it hit crypto users in South Africa particularly hard in May 2018, when a company called BTC Global defrauded investors of over \$80 million (Toyana, 2018). Tax evasion has also been of concern. The South African Revenue Service (SARS) initially stated that cryptocurrency could not be treated as a currency for tax, as it is not official tender in the country, but has since changed its stance and it will levy income tax or capital gains tax on cryptocurrency (Liang, 2018). In Zimbabwe, the government has banned trading in cryptocurrency twice (in November 2017 and May 2018), and although both bans were reversed, it's evident that the relationship between cryptocurrency and the government is not very positive (Althausen, 2017; Karombo, 2018). However, trading in cryptocurrency remains largely unregulated, which has been a crucial factor in its spread and popularity. For African users, the rewards of cryptocurrency



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With cryptocurrency, women have the option of trading without having to go through a husband or father.

far outweigh the risks, as will be discussed here. A decentralised currency that anyone can use is an appealing alternative, especially for women in rural and urban spaces.

Cryptocurrency and gender inequality

Economic inequality in Africa is a particularly painful reality for women. Poverty and lack of access to resources affect women more than men. Gender inequality makes women a vulnerable economic group in Africa. Although it affects women directly, gendered economic inequality has been proven to affect the continent's economic growth as a whole (Schlein, 2016). Making up just over 50% of the population, the economic health and empowerment of women are crucial for development. Women's development has focused mainly on access to resources, micro-loans, education, supporting women-run enterprises, and advocating for laws that ensure equal representation, but cryptocurrency is increasingly being regarded as a platform for economic empowerment.

There are several African women involved in developing cryptocurrency in Africa. Elizabeth Rossiello created BitPesa in 2013, and it's helped facilitate faster and easier payments between

Africa and other parts of the world. Alakanani Itireleng started the Satoshi Centre in Botswana to help educate private individuals and companies about blockchain technology, cryptocurrency trading and value. Sonya Kuhnel started the Blockchain Academy in South Africa to educate people on how blockchain works and the potential uses for cryptocurrency. These women are thus involved in educating people on blockchain technology, as they believe in its benefits for societal development and transparency.

Despite this, however, data on Bitcoin community engagement attributes 91.22 percent of cryptocurrency engagement to men, and only 8.78 percent to women (Coin Dance, 2018). Kelsey Cole, co-founder of blockchain digital advertising platform Adbank, developed three steps for women to get involved in the cryptocurrency industry. The first step involves setting up a wallet and writing the private key down. The second step is to participate in the community because participation increases knowledge and reputation. The last step is conducting research as due diligence is essential to progression from both an investor and career perspective. The steps do not require one to deposit money or send money to anyone. The early days of any technology or investment are the most profitable and women should not be left behind. In 2017 alone, of the 30 largest initial coin offerings (ICOs), four had female co-founders, and two of these ICOs were

among the best performers in terms of returns. In addition to these women, there are others who have seen the financial benefits of cryptocurrency and have incorporated it into their businesses.

How African women are using cryptocurrency

Melissa Messe Mwale is one of these women. As founder and owner of the Hive Incorporated, Mwale made the decision this year to add cryptocurrency as a method of payment. It's a decision that comes from three years of experience in the world of cryptocurrency. 'I got involved when searching for an online job, then something popped up about earning in cryptocurrency,' Mwale explains. After that first encounter, she spent time learning about what cryptocurrency is, how it works, and how it can be used. For her – as with many others – she thought it was a get-rich-quick scheme. Cryptocurrency was a concept so far removed from the standard banking system, and its prominence in digital spaces is similar to Internet-based scams and pyramid schemes. However, as Mwale learnt more about cryptocurrency, she realised its potential to transform her business, access new markets, and develop the position of women economically. For Mwale, the latter is especially true for African women. 'Issues of money in Africa are gendered. In cryptocurrency, nobody has to know your gender.' With no need to physically go to banks, cryptocurrency affords its users a level of anonymity. For women, this could be an advantage.

Mwale points out its potential in rural areas in Zimbabwe, where men still have higher levels of access to banks and mobile money than women. With cryptocurrency, women have the option of trading without having to go through a husband or father. Cryptocurrency also allows for any individual to be judged based on their numbers or performance, and not gender. If the market goes down, one's gender can't be used to assess a trader's performance. This gender anonymity creates an equal space unlike in other investment assets where one could attribute performance to a person's gender.

Women in informal sectors can use cryptocurrency to remit money to their loved ones without having to leave their business and go to queue in a bank. Other advantages are the speed and affordability of cryptocurrency transfers which help ensure financial emergencies are dealt with the urgency they deserve. A facility that remits money using cryptocurrencies in South Africa called Study 263 has seen its customer base grow, with one-third of its new clients being women. The co-founder, Tinashe Jani, stated that between September 2017 and August 2018 the company has had 103 female clients out of 300 new clients in total. The growth in female clients from informal sectors has been attributed to the ease in which the workings of the cryptocurrency

industry can be explained and used. Increasing awareness on cryptocurrencies and the potential benefits can go a long way to ensure the industry continues to grow.

Much still has to be done for the world of cryptocurrency to be a gender-inclusive space. Women have become more involved in investing in cryptocurrency, and there's even been speculation that the mysterious Satoshi Nakamoto (2015), creator of Bitcoin and author of the Bitcoin white paper, is a woman. However, for more women (especially women in Africa) to get involved in cryptocurrency, more work needs to be done, specifically with education.

As Mwale points out, the inclusion of women in rural and urban areas requires breaking down assumptions around women's abilities in technology and science. 'It's not an issue of cryptocurrency alone,' she explains. 'Technology has been created as a man's world. Whenever I enter a group on cryptocurrency, the first reaction I get is, "You're a girl, are you serious?" There are automatic assumptions around gender in the cryptosphere.' Anonymity in the cryptosphere can help women avoid this problem. Although it does not solve the underlying problem of gender discrimination, cryptocurrency does offer women a space to perform and be judged solely on that and not their gender.

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We, the creators: The role of young women in Africa's creative economies

Grace Mashingaidze

For four years many people across the African continent have been left in stitches by the antics of a young woman from Uganda whose no-nonsense attitude expresses loudly, very loudly, some comical truths. The boldness of this young woman is captivating. To unapologetically hold down her space in an otherwise male-dominated profession is no small feat, but to do so using a relatively new platform, YouTube, demonstrates determination and innovation. By showcasing her brand of comedy on a digital platform, Anne Kansiime ultimately catapulted herself to stardom beyond the borders of her country and achieved mainstream success. Kansiime now performs across Africa. She is just one of the young African women in recent history who have taken to exhibiting their creativity on various digital platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and the blogosphere, and who are taking the continent by storm.

To create or to be created

Africa's creative economies are still in their developmental phase, yet to reach the heights of its Western counterparts, but the tide is slowly changing. Our ethnic and cultural diversity is finding representation in more and more books, movies, plays, music and others forms of creative expression. Much of this is locally produced content. Young Africans are seeking role models and stories that they can identify with. I recall as a child telling anyone who cared to listen of my dreams of making it in the film and music industries (yes, both of them). Needless to say, that dream was shot down by those who told me that going into such industries was just not a viable career option. It was inconceivable to my advisors, as it still is to many people, that anyone can make a decent living through entertainment. Such beliefs are, however, not completely unfounded. The African creative economies are indeed growing with film and music industries accounting for 1.42 percent of the GDP in Nigeria (Lopes, 2015) and two percent to four percent of the GDP in South Africa (Lopes, 2014), but the continent still needs to reap the full benefits of its creative

economies to give impetus to economic development and to close gender disparities in the working world.

The creative industries are major employers of young women who face a number of socio-cultural barriers when it comes entering and achieving recognition in a number of sectors of African economies. Young African women tend to dominate creative spaces, such as in the arts and crafts, fashion and film industries. Women, for instance, constitute about 48 percent of the Nigerian creative economy which partly comprises of Nollywood an entertainment powerhouse on the African continent (Dandaura, 2013: 16).

However, it is also necessary to take off the rose-coloured glasses of employment opportunities for young women and note that, even within the creative economy, as in many others, leadership positions are held by men. In South Africa, women film directors are under-represented. The publishing of African literature, which is still male-dominated terrain, largely due to the gap in education and literacy levels between men and women, simply does not have enough women publishers (Christensen et al., 1998). Another important trend is the tendency for young women to carve out places for themselves in the informal sectors of their economies. This is already evident in the creative economy which, in many African countries, is yet to be fully integrated in economic development.

Changing the game: Content is queen

When I was harbouring dreams of international stardom, the Internet and virtual networking platforms were somewhat of a novelty, but now Internet use is gathering steam in sub-Saharan. As a result of this, the African creative economy is extending its presence to digital platforms with the popularity of blogs, web series and other forms of content online. The bad news is that Internet use is gendered. More men than women are connected to the Internet in sub-Saharan (Silver & Johnson, 2018). The gap goes beyond access to include digital literacy. This has slowed down



THE LAZY ARTIST, PEXELS

In this era of connectivity, there are many young women across the continent who are making their online presence felt.

the impact on the growth and establishment of female owned and managed creative spaces online. These and other barriers need to be overcome if African women in the creative industries are to catch up with the fast-paced, world-wide digitalisation of the creative economy.

But, and this is a huge but, mobile use in Africa is becoming ubiquitous with women in African countries, such as in South Africa and Kenya, where women are using mobile internet more than men (Tech Financials, 2017). In addition to this, there are innovative young African women who are gloriously rising to the occasion, and are producing and showcasing their creativity online. Content creation is not just an in-thing. It is becoming an avenue of creative expression and a means of sustenance for young Africans. African Millennials and Gen Zers are undoubtedly more tech-savvy than their predecessors, and are increasingly becoming content creators rather than mere consumers.

In this era of connectivity, there are many young women across the continent who are making their online presence felt. Kansiime is one of them, achieving continent-wide success via YouTube. Tyra Chikocho, a young Zimbabwean comedian, has garnered a huge following on Facebook with her 'Madam Boss' skits, which hilariously examine issues across the socioeconomic divide by highlighting the often tumultuous relationship between a maid and her boss.

Uche Edo, a young Nigerian woman, founded *Bella Naija*, an online magazine which won the Nickelodeon Teen Choice Awards for the best African blog. Honey Ogundeyi founded *Fashpa*, a Nigerian online fashion retailer which designs, manages and distributes its own clothing. Digital artists, such as the Angolan Keyezua and the Kenyan Wangechi Mutu, address African culture, womanhood and sexuality online. And the list goes on...

What is clearly evident is that the online creative economy gives young African women control. There is no shattering of the proverbial glass ceiling, nor is there need to, because cyberspace, by nature, is open and unstructured. The structural barriers which hinder young women from becoming leaders in the creative industries are therefore transcended through the use of online technologies. As a result, there are many young African women who are creating informal platforms which they themselves assume leadership of by determining the issues they want to highlight through the content and also by giving an authentic representation of African womanhood in the twenty-first century. The returns of the creative economy online are similar to offline returns, however. It is not as profitable as it ought to be. In many cases, it is even less so. However, there are young women who have been able to achieve mainstream success with some even generating a decent enough income to make passions and hobbies such as blogging a full-time job.

Formalising the informal

As we find our footing in the digital world we live in, it is time for young women and African nations as a whole to realise dividends from the hard work and time invested in the establishment and running of digital platforms. Digital platforms currently often represent a stepping stone to mainstream success, but they are not the mainstream. In order to increase the number of young women employed and achieving success in the creative industries, this needs to change. Young women who are making their mark online need investment and the recognition that often comes along with it. It is from these platforms that women are finding their voice and expressing their diversity, and such efforts should not go unsupported. They should be used to create more opportunities for women to work in the creative economy.

Countries outside the African continent have begun to realise this. Advertisers in more developed nations have taken advantage of the current trend by working with social media influencers to promote their brands. Influencer marketing has gone beyond including celebrities in more mainstream spaces to include people who are making an impact online. The phrases 'influencer' and 'content creator' are becoming less bywords. They now come with actual job descriptions. In Africa, where more traditional jobs are still favoured, we lag behind, and yet we have creativity in abundance. Both the public and the private sector should extend financial and technical support to young women who work in the creative economy.

A multi-stakeholder approach should be taken for this to be a reality. Programmes and projects which seek to achieve digital literacy among young women should be initiated and receive adequate funding from government and private players. Policies should be formulated and put in place to protect women creators online. A wholly unregulated industry leaves people vulnerable to unscrupulous practices, thus depriving them of the benefits they ought to reap, but it is important that regulation does not infringe upon the creative freedom of women. Africa has a bad history in terms of censorship, which shouldn't be repeated online. Finally, the so-called informal platforms should be integrated into national economies across Africa to ensure the transformation of the continent by eradicating poverty and inequality and achieving sustainable development.

The ingenuity of a few creative women alone is simply not enough to ensure the employment of and secure returns for young women in the creative economy, nor is it enough to steer the African creative economy into the future. The commitment and effort of various stakeholders who appreciate the need to have young African women dominating and achieving in their

respective spaces are needed. I believe the future is bright for young African women in the creative economy. The resilience and brilliance of the women who are creating their platforms are so powerful that, sooner or later, people will not be able to help sitting up and taking notice.

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Shaping the future of women's work in Africa: A mental health perspective

Patience Zimunya

Introduction

A considerable number of people have experienced some form of circumstantial mental health disorder where, unfortunately, and so often, society or organisations have failed to recognise the symptoms. Researches who try to situate the status of women at workplaces have tended to focus more on economic and legal issues, like equal pay and equal opportunity, among other important issues. However, the psycho-mental wellbeing of the individual; themselves, as a part of the organisation, has tended to be ignored. The multiple roles that women play in society, in addition to their general location on the margins of development, mean that women are more exposed to higher levels of social pressure than their male counterparts. Therefore, any discussion of the future of women in the workplace has to consider and discuss mental health as a key area of inquiry and practice.

Growing up as a young woman in a society which did recognise the existence of mental health challenges, but failed to acknowledge it as a condition that can be managed; I have derived personal lessons from observation. Individuals with mental health challenges have been socially stigmatised and treated as outcasts. They became sad victims of discrimination from mainstream society. Out of ignorance, as school children, some would run away from mentally challenged individuals, because we firmly held to the unverified myths that the evil spirit would transfer from them to us.

Some believed that the illness was a result of curses and the sole treatment relied on ancestors working through traditional healers. Traditional healers are believed by some to be in constant communication with the ancestors and that they could save the possessed individuals.

I do not recall anyone who received medical care. They were victims of mockery, and most families would abandon and disassociate themselves from them, especially when they had exhausted all traditional remedies.

If one were to exhibit any suicidal tendencies or any form of social withdrawal, one would be labelled weak and/or possessed. There were no possible connections made to stress and its physiological burden. Thus, some chose to keep quiet and contend with the menacing effects alone for fear of being stigmatised.

Decades later, I realise self-stigma and public stigma about mental health challenges still exist, and they have changed somewhat, but only for a small fraction of people in the modern day world. Accepting mental conditions in African societies is still a hurdle that requires collective action to counter negative mindsets.

This article discusses the prevalence and risks of mental health challenges and its negative impact on women's career development in the Southern Africa region. The individual, families, mainstream society and the workplace have hardly acknowledged the existence of these psychological challenges which, in many cases, is life-threatening.

That general failure to recognise the importance of the self within a working space requires a departure from a 'herding' approach that assumes that, when the majority is happy, everyone must be happy. This is far from true as 'the number of persons with common mental disorders globally is going up, particularly in lower-income countries' (WHO, 2017: 5).

While many scholars focus on the usual legal- and/or education-related remedies to bring parity in socioeconomic relations between men and women, this article highlights a deeper and common but fairly unresearched problem: mental health challenges and women's career development.

Mental health is described as the state of wellbeing in which every individual can realise their potential and cope with the normal stresses of life (WHO, 2003: 6). The point to note here is that, while poor mental health threatens everyone, it disproportionately affects women, irrespective of class, status or education (WHO, 2018).

The socioeconomic exclusion and gender inequalities within sub-Saharan Africa continue to burden women, even in this post-colonial era where human capital development is a priority.



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The general failure to recognise the importance of the self within a working space requires a departure from a 'herding' approach that assumes that, when the majority is happy, everyone must be happy.

Most women are still on the margins of development, where patriarchal and religious beliefs, societal expectations and traditional norms dictate their livelihoods.

This ordinary woman in many circumstances is a victim of gender-based violence, which includes emotional abuse, financial deprivation and physical and sexual abuse. In Zimbabwe, according to a demographic and health survey, the overall prevalence rate of gender-based violence is 35 percent, with 14 percent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 reporting experiencing sexual abuse in their lifetime (ZIMSTAT & ICF International, 2016: 318-319).

The few who manage to escape the monotony of patriarchal dependence and domestic stressors of caring for the immediate and extended family may discover their niche in the formal or informal sectors of employment. However, sexism, gender stereotyping, discrimination, public stigma, prejudice and negatively defined gender roles intimidate the already vulnerable woman.

This results in negative reactions and attitudes and decreased motivation to provide notable input in their workplaces. The symptoms proliferate and breed stagnancy in terms of career goals and development. They silently grapple with cycles of depression, social or personal anxieties and psychological insecurities between the workplace and domestic settings. Because they have families to take care of and fear being labelled failures, and because they have a lack of insight into the cause of their distress or understanding of the of the physiological damage incurred, they suffer in silence.

Sue et al. (2012) mention depression as a condition characterised by sadness, despair, feelings of futility, worthlessness and social withdrawal. Major symptoms include self-denigration, feelings of incompetence, difficulties with memory, concentration and decision making.

In developing countries like Zimbabwe, Malawi and the DRC, where economies are struggling and characterised by inflation and high levels of unemployment, individuals can lose a job after disclosing a mental health challenge, which is thus a major risk. Organisations, companies and informal sectors have difficulties in acknowledging the impact and presence of mental health challenges in the workplace. They unnecessarily dismiss an employee in the event of a disclosure, believing they are choosing productivity over expensive employee assistance. Social withdrawal and reduced work productivity are common with unmanaged and neglected depression (Sue et al., 2012).

Women end up contending with mental health challenges resulting from occupational and/or societal stressors as they struggle to keep their jobs. Southern Africa, in general, is still experiencing massive trends of migration within the region. In sub-Saharan regions, where mental health problems are still stigmatised, underfunded, under-resourced, and largely embedded in traditions and cultures, and sometimes racial and tribal discrimination factors which shun and portray relative ignorance about mental health challenges, the psychological burden remains neglected and in continuous proliferation.

The workplace: Sexual abuse and its effects on mental health

The workplace is also a potential breeding ground for sexual harassment and the physical abuse of women. It has been shown that sexual abuse at work has a strong propensity to induce depression (Sue et al., 2012).

In this era of high formal unemployment, the competition for formal jobs has allowed for men and some women to use job offers as sex traps. The problems are not limited to job offers, but also include other job-related self-actualisation targets like promotions and salary increases.

According to the WHO (2018), more women are affected by depressive disorders than men. While men are also targeted in sex and other forms of inappropriate advances at the workplace, women still bear a far greater burden of anxiety disorders as a result.

One common societal expectation whose effects are under-discussed is reproduction. Clinical postpartum depression is common, especially in cases of negative outcomes like unwanted pregnancies, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and miscarriages. Globally, it is estimated that 10 percent of pregnant women and around 13 percent of women who have recently given birth experience mild to severe depression. It is reported to be higher in the global South, with figures as high as 15.6 percent during pregnancy and 19.85 percent after childbirth (WHO, n.d.). These are relatively high statistics for women who are supposed to fulfil reproductive roles and, at the same time, maximise their prime years and vibrant energy in working. Inaccurate understanding of this encourages negative sexist comments about women in the workplace.

The challenge, I argue, is not primarily the biological challenge associated with reproduction, but society's failure to adequately factor and acknowledge childbearing-related stressors and rehabilitation.

While countries in the SADC region do give varying lengths of time to women during reproductive cycles, the focus is on childbirth, ignoring the reality that the challenges start from pregnancy to at least one year post-delivery.

Across the SADC region, the length of maternity leave differs. In Zimbabwe, the maternity leave is three months (Zimbabwe Labour Amendment Act 2018, section 18), and it is four months in South Africa (Labour Relations Act, section 185-187). In Zimbabwe, where the rate of unemployment is very high, many women are in the informal sectors, which rely on productivity for sustainability. It is difficult to claim maternity leave, and sometimes chances of coming back to work are slim. They are thus caught between the challenges of their reproduction role and fending for their family.

Stigma in the workplace: A catalyst for mental health challenges

Stigma is a mark which is usually permanent and segregates a certain group of people from society. Stigma remains in the modern-day revolution of women working as more women are gaining momentum in previously male-dominated industries.

While many women are rising on the socioeconomic ladder due to increased education opportunities, social factors operate against their growth. Gender has remained one of the biggest tools to stigmatise women in the workplace.

The psychologically strained woman remains fixed in a position where she has to contend with self-stigma, gender stereotyping and discrimination. The positive drive to compete for higher ground is diminished, and she fails to thrive. The symptoms proliferate and breed stagnancy in terms of career goals and development. This draws an invariably large gender gap that is still difficult to close.

Recommendations

The section below proposes contemporary tools in mitigating mental health-related challenges in the African workplace. The emphasis here is that these remedies are not substitutive but complementary to the existing processes and policies to protect and promote women at work. Gender development indicators and research seem to reveal gaps both in policy and practice. These include:

- Embracing the fourth industrial revolution and redefining innovative and inclusive roles for women's career development and in the workplace generally. The timely emergence of progressive digital industries affects the autonomy of mentally strained women. Although Africa may still be stuck in the era of the third industrial revolution, it relies on globalisation for future adoption of digital trends to its advantage. Due to the upcoming advanced digital workforce, and intelligence information technologies, it means one would be able to work from home or an office of one's choice. This means less interaction with colleagues, but it means a vast space can be accessed to a working woman's advantage. This helps because they would be able to recover in self-motivated spaces, away from public stigma circles. It can provide a conducive atmosphere where a different kind of spatial inclusivity and a self-expressive environment prevails.
- Formalising mental health/psycho-social support systems at workplaces by adopting workforce team-building exercises to promote inclusivity and occupational autonomy.
- Further epidemiological research on the prevalence of mental health challenges and their association with other chronic illness, with more focus on impacts on career development and the future of women at work.

- Qualitative and quantitative research on mental health for policy development and implementation and gender inclusivity
- Awareness campaigns, about disclosure targeted at individuals, occupational workforce sensitisation on how to prevent, identify and handle mental health challenges as well as addressing stigma in the workplace.
- The relevant mental health boards and ministries to adopt a top-down approach in the formulation of policies and guidelines for awareness campaigns, prevention and the management of health challenges within societies. This approach is appropriate to demystifying the issues and false perceptions about mental health in society.
- Implementation of policy frameworks that encourage gender inclusivity.
- Relevant NGOs are key in awareness campaigns, funding opportunities, and advocacy of existing policies and further research.

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Unfit for purpose – African education systems are not suited to shaping gender-responsive futures for African women

Velaphi Mamba

Introduction

I start off this opinion piece with an unapologetic claim – that African education systems are inherently unfit for purpose, obsolete and lacking in many regards when it comes to addressing the plethora of present-day socioeconomic hardships and realities facing learners and youth in general. African education systems are giving students a raw deal – literally. And, at the receiving end, are invariably young women and girls. You might, as a result, say I am an Afro-pessimist, Afro-basher, or ungrateful and even privileged son of a gun. Perhaps. But, in this article, I intend to qualify my claim, buttressing it entirely on my experiences as an educator working on the continent and in Southern Africa in particular. I will also refer to concrete examples which lend credence to my assertions. Inherent in my arguments is a heavy and well-justified criticism of African public education systems specifically.

I begin by highlighting the prevailing contextual issues and challenges as they currently manifest themselves on the continent in so far as the right to quality public education is concerned – here education being that which is provided within the ambit of the formal education system. The parameters of my criticisms follow the contours of education provision in the context of an exceptionally fluid global order – a chaotic world characterised by much disruption, uncertainty and technological as well as digital advances. For the purposes of this article, I take a feminist-inspired position seeking to locate the discourse around how the current structure and calibration of African public education systems disaffect young women and girls. I end by offering some practical reflections and pointers on what urgently needs to be done to fundamentally change course towards robust and transformative education systems that are fit-for-purpose.

Context

Public education systems in Africa today are largely blighted by a multiplicity of challenges which directly and negatively impact on young women and girls, threatening their fundamental right to quality education. Major world indicators and reports paint a picture of a continent lagging behind the rest of the world in most, if not all, domains of educational achievement (see, for example, UNESCO, 2018; World Bank, 2018). Strikingly, and quite concerning, is the pervasive evidence that young women and girls suffer the effects of systematic exclusion from education on account of financial considerations, socio-cultural factors, various forms of abuse, spatial and geographical location (especially in rural precincts), ethnicity, disability, and physical barriers – all of which militate against access, retention and survival within the system (ONE, 2017). Add to this clear evidence emerging from research by the World Bank (2018) and others (Spaull, 2013; UNESCO, 2018) of a colossal learning crisis globally, but more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, then it all comes together – albeit with disastrous results. The learning crisis points us to the sobering reality that, while a significant proportion of learners have access to schooling, they are not attaining the level of educational outcomes expected.

Significantly, a much distressing challenge relates to the key question relating to the quality, substance and general relevance of educational content provided in public schools. In this regard, there exists a clear mismatch in what is provided through curriculum systems across thousands of classrooms (many of which may still be under a tree, in a shack, or very substandard and unsafe physical structures) and the rapidly changing environment outside the school. In this sense, African curricula are still trapped in colonial era-inspired philosophies that sought to make the African a 'white

collar' educated individual more than a comprehensively skilled and competent one – in essence, a job seeker, a consumer and not a job creator or wealth producer. Thus, for example, efforts at getting girls to participate and succeed in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), entrepreneurship, leadership, innovation, and other important areas are dismally failing, except on a relatively small scale. In large part, this failure is due to the convergent negative factors alluded to above and the entrenched systemic systems' failures as a result of severely poor public education financing, planning and management.

Indeed, most large-scale education sector plans, reforms and budgets are still funded through the benevolence of funding agencies and donor entities in many African states (UNESCO-UIS, 2011). An analysis of budget spending patterns exhibits heavily skewed financing at two critical levels – the first being that salaries and administration costs account for disproportionately high allocations of states' national budgets (going as high as 90% in some countries), and the second being that tertiary level education takes up significantly higher proportions of education finance to the detriment of the foundational years, especially Early Childhood Development (ECD) (Myers et al., 2016; Steer & Smith, 2015). The grave result of such a financing structure is that public sector financing has extremely minimal fiscal space to finance the other critical condiments and appurtenances of the education sector. In other words, national budgets remain unable to provide the funds required for continuous teacher training and development, school infrastructure, equipment and learning materials, especially investments in internet access and digital technology.

Equally, the absence of expanded, elastic and innovative curricula that provides the technical, pragmatic and soft skills as well as competencies required for the 21st century is of grave concern. Curriculum rigidity that is undergirded by the archaic factory-based model of teaching and learning (input-processing-output manufacturing model) means that public education systems fail to align themselves to the important task of nurturing the diverse capacities and innate intelligences of all learners. Assessment practices and models are structured to reward single competencies (in many cases the ability to recall and regurgitate information) rather than to enhance talent, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking.

Indeed, the lack of curriculum systems that ensure adaptation, survival, economic and financial literacy, gender responsive-pedagogy, ethics, technology and digital literacy, feminist culture and ethos, human rights, productive assets and abilities to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, as well as the glaring gender divide in education is disconcerting. In other words, African education systems are failing at a fundamentally important task – that of providing the framework and substance for positive and transformative learning outcomes that young women and girls need in a knowledge-based economy and an information age.

Is the continent's education fit for the future?

Critical evidence points to a substantially different future than ever before imagined by humankind. This reality is driven by innovation and disruption in the technological and digital spheres where the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution is rapidly transforming the general order of existence and ways of doing business on many fronts. Indeed, the emergence of artificial intelligence, massive automation, digital biology, robotics, and the digital revolution must necessarily cause for reflection on whether or not curriculum content and subject matter in Africa are sufficiently aligned to such realities.

I argue that they currently fail in this regard and that this is problematic for the way young women and girls on the continent are educated, trained and prepared for life and participation in a competitive global environment. Jobs in the future (one which has already begun unravelling) will increasingly either be aided by technology or completely swallowed up by more effective and swift digital industries, innovations and platforms. Just as technological advancement will make it possible to eat artificially created beef in the future, so will artificial intelligence and digital biology take over the conduct of medical science, engineering, commerce and other enterprises – as is already beginning to happen.

Indeed, the traditional mode of doing business is radically changing: we have seen how Uber has decimated the taxi industry; how Netflix and Kweese have undercut MultiChoice; how Airbnb is carving off profits from traditional hospitality service providers; how Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media applications have revolutionised the news and communications spheres (including the emergence of fake news and 'alternative' facts); how WikiLeaks has changed the whistleblowing game, thus altering the conduct of diplomacy and international relations in the process; and how cryptocurrencies are shaking the finance and banking sectors to the core.

These are but just minimal examples amongst a host of other innovative inventions that are leaving a permanent mark and changing the tapestry of modern society. Surely, such developments must mean that the nature, character and content of African education systems must stay abreast or at best be ahead of the curve rather than playing catch up with such radical changes. In fact, any education system worth its salt today must necessarily be futuristic in nature – preparing young women and girls for an exceptionally changed world than we see today. It is my conviction that this is the greatest challenge facing public education provision today. Key in considering this challenge is the question of how policy-makers and African leaders will begin to decisively act in determining whether learners on the continent

continue to only go through the education system to become consumers or to become active participants and architects of this new global reality.

Across the Southern African region and the African continent, I have seen communities stuck in the past, using obsolete interventions for early childhood development, outdated teaching and learning practices as well as irrelevant subject matter and curricula content. Many educators still make do with dusty and faded chalkboards in overwhelmingly overcrowded classrooms with little or no didactic materials. Equally, the shortage of qualified and well-remunerated teachers is a pervasive problem and many schools lack the protective safety nets for ensuring girls stay in school such as access to sanitary pads, sexual and reproductive health education, safe learning environments and skills to withstand the existent pressures of early sexual activity that pushes them into the trap of teenage pregnancies, school drop-out and the ruthless cycle of poverty. Worse still, education policy in practice tends to ostracise girls who fall pregnant by pushing them out of the system often without any pathway back in (see, for example, McVeigh, 2018, on the case of Tanzania).

In addition, I have witnessed with much consternation the existence of ridiculous colonial era language policies, such as the continued use of English as a passing subject for entry into tertiary institutions. The continent's indigenous languages are sadly and much against proven scholarly evidence (Benson, 2004) relegated to second-choice lingua franca or not used as the language of instruction in teaching and learning. The net effect of such policies is the continued ostracism of brilliant young women and girls, largely on the basis of what I perceive to be a rather absurd colonial policy standpoint. This robs the continent of its doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, artists, digital innovators, industrialists and so on. Meanwhile, many young women and girls in China, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Europe, the UK and US, to name a few examples, start off from a far better position. These countries have invested heavily in education infrastructure, teaching personnel, teaching and learning materials that are informed by technological and digital advancement, learner-centred pedagogies that promote critical thinking, innovation, and the exploration of new frontiers in education provision. Can African young women and girls compete? Of course not.

Some propositions to transform African education systems

I have highlighted in the foregoing discussion the challenges and existential threats of the future of education for young women and girls in Africa and Southern Africa in particular. I now turn my focus to the measures I believe urgently need to be taken in order to revamp and totally overhaul the structure of education

provision in Africa. I posit that nothing short of radical action will be sufficient, especially given the glaring reality that Africa is probably more than a century behind the most developed countries in so far as its public education systems are concerned. African education systems need to be decolonised, feminised, re-organised, and totally transformed to be fit-for-purpose in addressing the continent's challenges.

I offer below, in no order of priority, some key propositions and interventions that Africa must put in place to transform its education systems and pull itself and its peoples, especially young women and girls, out of the current quagmire it is in. I recognise that implementing these measures might be perceived as more easily said than done, but nothing less than bold action, a strong political will, and a futuristic vision for the continent is needed. I am also acutely aware that these proposals do not represent the total sum of everything that needs attention, and that they may have been stated before. However, it is my contention that they provide a basis for radical transformation for Africa's young women and girls, as well as education provision on the continent as a whole.

- African governments must industriously begin thinking about and implementing innovative and sustainable education financing strategies. It cannot be proper that a continent with vast mineral, human capital and resource wealth still heavily relies on external support to fund its public education systems.

- In innovatively financing education, African states must establish endogenous Education Investment Funds (EIFs) rooted, located, financed and totally owned by Africans. Such funds must be structured as wealth production entities that generate finances through equities, stocks, shares, real estate and other instruments. They must be set up in each country, sub-region and for the continent. They must not be a replacement of budget instruments, but rather a complement to them; Education must be made a shareholder.

- EIFs require strong political will, open and transparent governance as well as fiscal oversight and management to counter corruption or misuse of these instruments. This latter point is exceptionally important. There is clear evidence showing that, while financing is a critical component of education reform, it can never be the sole ingredient for transformative change (Steer & Smith, 2015).

- African governments must establish and implement large-scale expanded education infrastructure programmes that will build more schools, provide bandwidth, equipment and other important inputs aligned with the provision of fit-for-purpose education systems.

- Related to the above, African states need to harness the power of virtual reality where teaching and learning happen anywhere – beyond the confines of schools and classrooms.

- Education financing must have a sharp and deliberate focus on young women and girls through practical affirmative action



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African curricula are still trapped in colonial era-inspired philosophies that sought to make the African a 'white collar' educated individual more than a comprehensively skilled and competent one.

interventions aimed at addressing the gender divide on education and skills development across industries as early as ECD and throughout the education system. Larger investments in ECD must be made to address the skewed structure of education financing and provide quality ECD services for the girl child in particular.

- Making education free and compulsory from pre-primary, primary, secondary to tertiary and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) levels is a must. The long-term gains of free quality public education can only be attained if African states stop seeing education provision as a drain but rather as an investment. Relatedly, thinking through robust macroeconomic and economic development planning changes that ensure the provision of high-quality jobs and opportunities is important in making sure that learners see the value of working for and in the continent in order to avoid the so-called brain drain.

- Education planning must have the level of precision necessary to deal with population dynamics and fertility rates. Evidence points to the fact that fertility rates are extremely high in Africa and that rapid population growth threatens to exacerbate already existent socioeconomic challenges for states (*The Economist*, 2018). Therefore, comprehensive planning and engagement with the questions of population explosion are profoundly urgent.

- Governments must be futuristic in their philosophical outlook and ideology to education provision – designing education systems for a future that potentially looks far different from present realities in line with rapidly changing technological and digital developments;

- Curricula and subject content must be aligned to 21st century needs with emphasis on comprehensive life skills and

competencies including but not limited to economic and financial literacy, gender-responsive pedagogy, technological, computer, internet and digital literacy, feminist culture and ethos, human rights, critical thinking, leadership, governance, political participation and ethical conduct, as well as skills for productive assets and capabilities.

- In an age of fake news, alternative facts, cyberbullying and other similar issues, it is vitally important for education systems to promote discerning and critical minds, tolerance and values of integrity and sisterhood.

- Teaching and learning, as well as the structure and intent of assessment methods, must be radically recalibrated to take into account the diversity of learners, especially young women and girls.

- Investing in teacher training and continuous professional development should be encouraged at all levels of education systems. Despite the massive changes taking place, teachers remain key role players in education provision, and thus their welfare, training and general working conditions must be radically improved to promote life-long learning, motivation, professionalism and innovation in the teaching profession.

- Considerable attention should be paid to the extent to which education systems can result in the kind of young women and girls who can design, fix, maintain, use and service technological and digital assets.

- Education systems must address the needs of all young women and girls in inclusive and transformative settings that transcend disability, socioeconomic exclusion and other attendant barriers, as described in this article.

Conclusion

In concluding this opinion piece, I reiterate the importance of the need for urgency in addressing the issues and challenges encapsulated herein. To re-engineer the form, function and efficacy of African education systems, Africans need to take full leadership, ownership and control of the trajectory of the African education vision. This vision, I contend, must be aligned to the interests of not only the present generation but also those yet to come. In the end, the true measure of Africa's success shall depend upon its ability to shake off outdated education systems and establish new, vibrant and fit-for-purpose ones. This, I believe, can be done!

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Is this what it means to be a woman?

Yemurai Nhongo

***Yemurai Nhongo** is a wife and a stay-at-home mother to two beautiful girls. Born in Harare in 1985, she has loved reading since as far as she can remember. Yemurai is an entrepreneur and a writer, exploits that allow her to be hands on with her daughters. She has, every now and again, put pen to paper to put her spin on what she sees around her. She is yet to have any of her writings published. She is currently working on a book that gives young people the pearls of wisdom that she has learnt in life.*

Is this what it means to be a woman?

To rise before dawn, inhaling the dust that I sweep up in the yard
Stifling the coughs as I heat water for everyone to bath and eat
Cleaning the house fast so that it is one less thing to worry about
Only taking a seat when I arrive at work

Is this what it means to be a woman?

Buying the big boss' wife flowers, arranging for his children to go to their activities
With perpetually urgent reports blinking at me from the desk.
Tearing home to make sure everyone eats a good meal before bed
In spite of the live-out helper who I pay on the last day of each month
Since my husband says he can't stand her cooking, mine is best

Is this what it means to be a woman?

Husband sitting feet up, changing tv channels and calling for a beer
To yearn for the helper to stay as she picks up her bag to leave?
I put the child on my back to push a hot iron over crumpled trousers
She says, 'The toddler has had a good day, the fever's down.'

Evenings running out in a blur of activity, me waiting on everyone hand and foot
The night, once refuge for my tired body
A new vigil as once again, the toddler's fever climbs
Frantic, I administer medicine, breathe to soothe the toddler's cries
My husband's contribution? To close his bloodshot eyes.
Is this what it means?



OSISA

Open Society Initiative
for Southern Africa

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) is a growing African institution committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in the region. OSISA's vision is to promote and sustain the ideals, values, institutions and practices of open society, with the aim of establishing vibrant and tolerant southern African democracies in which people, free from material and other deprivation, understand their rights and responsibilities and participate actively in all spheres of life.

In pursuance of this vision, OSISA's mission is to initiate and support programmes working towards open society ideals, and to advocate for these ideals in southern Africa. This approach involves looking beyond immediate symptoms, in order to address the deeper problems - focusing on changing underlying policy, legislation and practice, rather than on short-term welfarist interventions. Given the enormity of the needs and challenges in the region it operates in - and acknowledging that it cannot possibly meet all of these needs - OSISA, where appropriate, supports advocacy work by its partners in the respective countries, or joins partners in advocacy on shared objectives and goals.

In other situations, OSISA directly initiates and leads in advocacy interventions, along the key thematic programmes that guide its work. OSISA also intervenes through the facilitation of new and innovative initiatives and partnerships, through capacity-building initiatives as well as through grant making.

Established in 1997, OSISA works in 11 southern Africa countries: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. OSISA works differently in each of these 10 countries, according to local conditions. OSISA is part of a network of autonomous Open Society Foundations, established by George Soros, located in Eastern and Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the US.



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