



AFRICAN FORUM AND NETWORK
ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT



AFRICAN FEMINIST RESISTANCE AND SOVEREIGN DEBT JUSTICE:

TRANSNATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR
ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION



LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAWORD	Association of African Women for Research and Development
AFMA	African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy
AFRODAD	African Forum and Network on Debt and Development
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
GATJ	Global Alliance for Tax Justice
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NAWI	NAWI Afrifem Macroeconomics Collective
PSI	Public Services International
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TJNA	Tax Justice Network Africa
UN	United Nations

Africa's sovereign debt crisis is not simply an economic problem—it is deeply political and rooted in colonial legacies, neoliberal globalization, and entrenched inequalities. This article examines how African feminists have engaged with debt justice struggles, linking debt to intersecting systems of oppression including patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and imperialism. It highlights feminist leadership, organizing, and scholarship that reframes debt as a feminist issue, sharing overview of its gendered impacts and advancing alternative frameworks centered on care, justice, and solidarity. Drawing on African and Black feminist scholars, activists and organizations, it argues that debt justice cannot be achieved without feminist leadership that centers transformation, decolonization, and collective wellbeing.

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1.0

HISTORICAL FEMINIST ENGAGEMENT WITH DEBT JUSTICE

African Feminists engagement with debt and macroeconomic policy has deep roots in their historical resistance to colonialism and all its violence and exploitation which has extended into the current imperial and neoliberal economic domination. African feminist resistance to colonialism was fundamentally a political-economic struggle against extractive systems that dispossessed communities, reorganised labour, and institutionalised gendered inequality through taxation, land alienation, and the colonial restructuring of governance and “customary law.” From a feminist political economy perspective, colonial rule not only exploited African territories as sites of resource extraction, but also devalued women’s productive and reproductive labour while entrenching patriarchal authority as part of colonial administration (Amadiume, 1987; Mama, 1996; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Women’s uprisings and organizing—such as the Aba Women’s War (1929) in Nigeria against colonial taxation and political exclusion provides an example of resistance to an early architecture of externally imposed fiscal control, where colonial budgets were financed through regressive extraction from African households and women’s livelihoods (Amadiume, 1987; Van Allen, 1972).

This historical terrain echoes the contemporary political economy of sovereign debt and austerity, in which fiscal policy is again shaped through external conditionalities and macroeconomic orthodoxies that prioritize debt repayment over social investment. Feminist scholars and movements argue that austerity reproduces colonial logics by shifting crisis costs onto women through cuts to health, education, care services and social protection—intensifying unpaid care burdens and deepening gendered poverty (Elson, 1998; Rai, Hoskyns & Thomas, 2014; Mama, 1996). Thus, African feminist struggles against debt and austerity today can be understood as a continuation of anti-colonial resistance: a fight to reclaim economic sovereignty, revalue care and social reproduction, and transform global economic governance that sustains unequal extraction in new forms often by institutions set up by super power governments in the global North to continue to serve their interests.



As a good example, during the 1980s and 1990s, structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank forced African states to adopt austerity measures of liberalization, and privatization. These policies devastated social sectors—reducing education and healthcare budgets and eroding public employment. Dzodzi Tsikata (2009) and Amina Mama (2020) have shown how SAPs disproportionately affected women by limiting their access to essential services as health services and increasing unpaid care responsibilities and pushing them into precarious, informal labor. Increased unpaid care and domestic work for women and girls compromise their time for paid employment, education opportunities, leisure and wellness activities thereby affecting their wellbeing, financial independence and limits their opportunities to build networks and relationships. In **Kenya**, structural adjustment-era reforms introduced **cost-sharing/user fees** in public health services, which deterred women from seeking antenatal and pre-natal care and contributed to reduced access to maternal health services, particularly for low-income women (Kamara, 1997). In **Zambia, user fees were introduced in public health facilities in 1993** in the context of macroeconomic reforms associated with structural adjustment and fiscal consolidation, creating major financial barriers to primary healthcare and maternity services; evidence shows that even where exemptions for pregnant women were expected, they were not consistently applied, thereby undermining access to maternal health services and increasing burdens on women (Chitah and Jonsson, 2008; Sochas, Channon and Nam, 2017). When the States stopped providing these services, women had to step in to provide care for the sick from home thereby increasing the care burden on women who are expected to be the caregivers due to patriarchal societal prescribed gender roles.

African feminist political economy frames **care work** as part of social reproduction: the often invisible labour that sustains life, households, communities and economies. This includes both **paid and unpaid work** such as childcare, eldercare, cooking, cleaning, emotional labour, and community support, as well as time-intensive labour shaped by underinvestment in public services—such as fetching water, fuel, and accessing healthcare. African feminist scholars highlight that care work is not simply “private” household activity, but a deeply political and gendered form of labour that sustains economies while remaining systematically undervalued and largely excluded from macroeconomic policy priorities (Mama, 2001; Tsikata, 2009).

For this paper, the **care economy** refers to the broader system through which care is organised, distributed, and resourced—across unpaid household labour, informal/community care networks, and the public services that enable care, including health, education, childcare, water and sanitation, and social protection. African feminist analysis argues that austerity-driven reforms which are often linked to sovereign debt crises and creditor conditionalities thereby shrinking public services and shift the burden of survival back onto households, where women and girls disproportionately absorb the costs through intensified unpaid labour and time poverty. This reproduces inequality and constitutes a form of structural violence, while simultaneously subsidising the wider economy by relying on women’s uncompensated labour to absorb social and economic shocks (Mama, 2001; Tsikata, 2009; African Feminist Forum, 2006).

Therefore, due to the gendered impact of SAPs on women, girls and gender diverse people, African feminists were active in mobilizing against SAPs, framing them as instruments of neocolonial control that deepened gender inequality. Women’s organizations collaborated with social movements and trade unions to demand debt cancellation and economic sovereignty. For example, (Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) was among the leading continental feminist organisations that produced evidence and feminist critique of SAPs and helped define SAPs as a



gendered economic project, showing how austerity, privatisation, and the rollback of social services intensified women's unpaid labour and poverty. While transnational feminist networks such as DAWN advanced alternative development frameworks that explicitly identified "structural adjustment" as a gendered economic crisis.

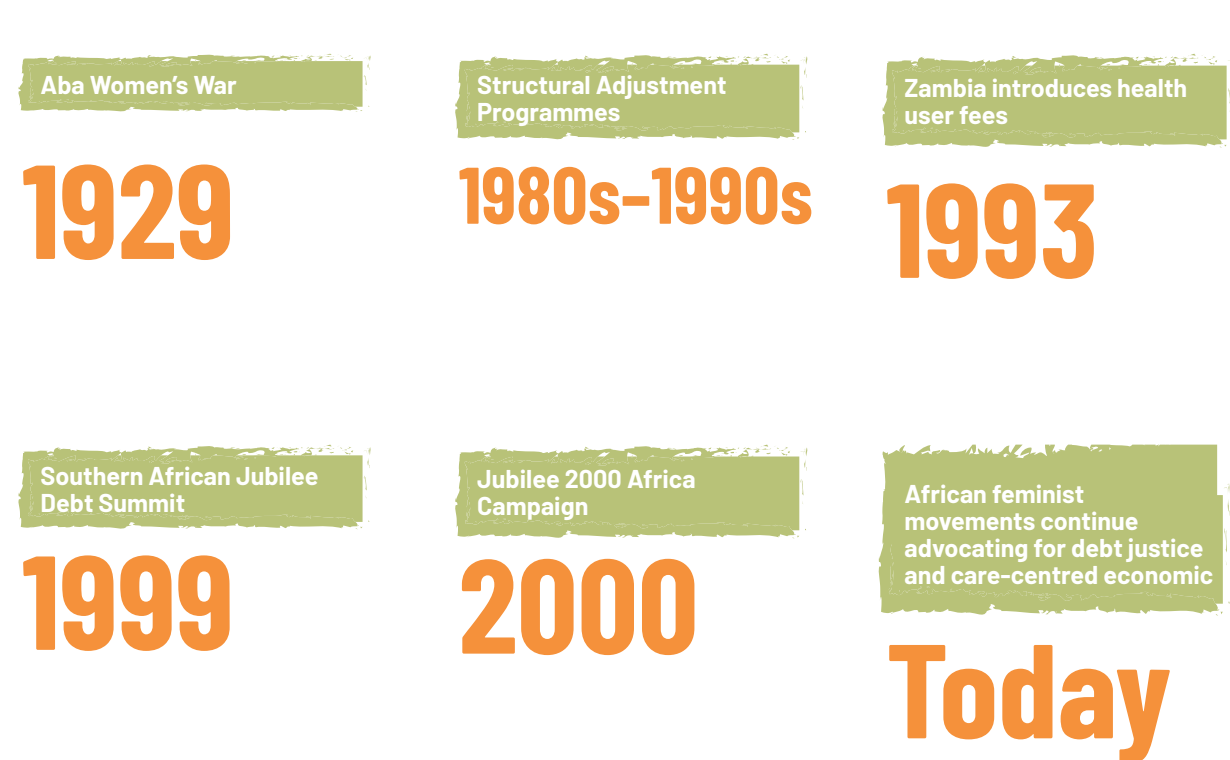
African feminist networks and movements have continued to position SAPs as a historical foundation for contemporary austerity regimes and debt distress. For instance, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) explicitly links the structural adjustment era to the dismantling of public sector development and state-building through cutbacks and privatisation, noting that these policies undermined the social systems needed for gender equality and wellbeing (African Women's Development Fund, 2020). Similarly, **FEMNET** highlights that SAP "prescriptions" contributed to the erosion of public services and entrenched inequality, and frames feminist macroeconomic advocacy as a continuation of resistance to these neoliberal governance models (FEMNET, 2020; FEMNET, 2021).

African feminist scholarship further argues that SAPs contributed to gendered structural violence by reorganising the political economy of care. When states withdraw from public provisioning through austerity and fiscal consolidation, women's unpaid labour becomes the "shock absorber" of economic restructuring—sustaining households amid service cuts while concealing the true social cost of adjustment. This feminist critique has been carried into the current movements work on debt justice and alternatives to austerity through African feminist organising and coalitions seeking economic transformation that centres care, wellbeing and redistribution (Public Services International, 2021; Sibeko, 2023; Simeoni, 2022). African feminist resistance to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) era emerged through both movement building and organizing; and feminist knowledge production that challenged the macroeconomic logic of austerity, privatisation and public-sector rollback and contributed analysis, policy influencing and advocacy, majority of which is still relevant to today's advocacy and influencing work. African feminist involvement in debt justice mobilisation can further be traced through their leadership and coalition-building roles in major global campaigns such as the **Jubilee campaign 2000**. Most notably, Kenyan ecofeminist leader Peace Prize winner **Wangari Maathai** played "a leading global role" as **co-chair of the Jubilee 2000 Africa Campaign**, advocating for the cancellation of unpayable African debts and strengthening the African moral and political case for cancellation (Nobel Prize, 2004). Beyond individual leadership, Jubilee 2000 was strengthened through regional coalition organising such as the **Southern African Jubilee Debt Summit (Johannesburg, 1999)** and its **Gauteng Declaration**, affirmed by Jubilee coalitions from Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and others, reflecting a coordinated regional organising infrastructure that helped expand and legitimise Jubilee's demands (World Council of Churches, 1999).

African feminist critiques of sovereign debt are not limited to its economic impact but frame debt as a political struggle over sovereignty, self-determination and democratic accountability. By centring feminist perspectives, African scholars and activists have exposed how international debt regimes reinforce patriarchal structures, undermine women's human rights, and reproduce inequalities both within countries and between the Global North and Global South. In this analysis, debt operates as a mechanism through which African states' policy space is constrained, and national priorities are informed by creditor interests, often through austerity conditionalities, fiscal consolidation, privatisation and the restructuring of public services. As AFRODAD argues, existing global debt governance reflects power



asymmetries in which creditors and international financial institutions shape domestic policy and weaken state accountability to citizens, thereby undermining democratic control over development choices (AFRODAD, 2021). African feminist political economy further emphasises that debt-driven adjustment externalises crisis onto households and communities, intensifying unpaid care burdens and deepening gendered inequalities—linking sovereign debt directly to structural violence and the erosion of women’s social and economic rights (African Women’s Development Fund, 2020; FEMNET, 2021). This historical engagement has set the stage for feminist critiques that locate sovereign debt within broader struggles against colonisation and imperialism, capitalism and neoliberalism, and patriarchy, showing how these interlocking systems sustain Global South vulnerability and dependency while women, girls and gender diverse people bear the brunt of their impacts (African Feminist Forum, 2006; Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2020).



2.0

GENDERED IMPACTS OF DEBT AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

While much attention has been paid to unpaid domestic care burdens, the gendered impacts of debt extend far beyond the household. Deregulation and austerity policies have led to the degradation of public-sector employment, disproportionately affecting women who make up the majority of teachers, nurses, and community health workers. For example, under Ghana's 2015 IMF programme, wage bill restraint contributed to hiring freezes that left trained nurses and midwives unemployed despite health system needs (Education International, 2021; Peoples Dispatch, 2022)

In the absence of public services, privatization and commercialisation of public services have become the norm thereby commodifying basic needs and essential services, forcing women to fill gaps through unpaid labor and low-paid informal work (Kachingwe, 2019).

Defunding of public services constitutes a form of structural violence—an institutionalised harm that limits access to healthcare, education, social protection and safety. Feminist policy analysis has demonstrated how high debt servicing burdens divert resources away from essential public services, undermining states' ability to mobilise maximum available resources for gender equality and women's rights (Musindarwezo, 2018). This erosion of public systems directly undermines women's, girls' and gender diverse people's human rights and dignity. African feminists such as Sylvia Tamale (2020) and Patricia McFadden (2019) describe this as the feminisation of survival where women are compelled to sustain families and communities in economies that devalue their lives, bodies and labour and deny them decision-making power.

Debt regimes also reinforce patriarchal state structures. Fiscal consolidation measures prioritize financial markets over social reproduction, institutionalizing the idea that care is a private rather than public responsibility. The stripping of public jobs, coupled with precarious labor conditions, has deepened gendered inequalities



across Africa, creating new layers of vulnerability for women, girls, and gender-diverse people. These dynamics are most visible in the reorganisation of care and social reproduction. African feminist political economy frames today's "unpaid care drain" as a **"debt of care"**: the cumulative, unrecognised liabilities transferred onto women's bodies and time when states and markets retreat from social provisioning. Time-use and household survey evidence across African countries consistently shows that women spend substantially more time than men on unpaid care and domestic work, reflecting how fiscal consolidation and service cutbacks are absorbed through households rather than addressed through public investment (World Bank, 2024; UN Women, 2024). In this framing, debt-driven austerity does not eliminate costs; it reassigns them—from public budgets to unpaid labour primarily done by women and girls, thereby deepening gendered time poverty and limiting women's economic autonomy and political participation (UN Women, 2024; World Bank, 2024) as well as time for leisure and focus on their wellbeing. Recent valuation studies further demonstrate that this unpaid labour constitutes a major "hidden economy": in Kenya, unpaid domestic and care work was estimated at **KSh 2,544.6 billion** (23.1% of GDP) (KNBS, 2025), while South African estimates value unpaid care work at approximately **25–37% of GDP**, depending on method (Valodia, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2003).

It is clear that there is need to rebuild economies that center lives, justice, care and wellbeing. Feminists have long argued that macroeconomics and debt management are not gender neutral or technical domains but deeply political with real gendered impact. The term care economy has often been critiqued for its market framing. Although the concept of a "care ecoprofitability, politically useful in making visible the economic value of care work, feminist scholars critique the term for its market framing, as it risks reducing care to a productive sector or investment opportunity defined through GDP logics, efficiency and profitability thereby obscuring care as a political and ethical relation rooted in social reproduction, redistribution and justice.

South Africa

Unpaid care work is estimated to contribute

25%–37%
GDP

Kenya

Unpaid domestic and care work is valued at

KSh 2,544.6
billion

equivalent to 23.1% of GDP.



That is why African and Global South feminists call for rebuilding the social organisation of care which means seeing care as both an activity and an ethic (PSI, 2021). This framing emphasizes collective wellbeing and recognizes care as the foundation of economic and social life.

By advocating for the re-socialization of care, African feminists reject the commodification of caregiving and argue for state responsibility in delivering public care systems. Centering care means restructuring economies to prioritize health, education, childcare, and social protection—restoring care as a public good rather than a private burden to be left to households and taken care by women and girls.

In addition, linking feminist debt critique to the social organisation of care shows that debt regimes extract value not only through repayment, but also by shifting the costs of crisis onto households through unpaid labour. When austerity and privatisation reduce public provisioning, women, girls and gender diverse people disproportionately absorb the impact through intensified unpaid care work. This reveals a reversed debt relation: **Global North creditors, alongside domestic elites, owe a cumulative “care debt”** to African women and gender diverse people whose unpaid and underpaid labour has historically subsidised colonial extraction and contemporary neoliberal economic restructuring (African Women’s Development Fund, 2020; AFRODAD, 2021). This care debt can be addressed immediately through **debt cancellation and transparent debt audits**, alongside sustained public investment in care systems including water, health, education, childcare and social protection. These should be financed through progressive taxation and measures to curb illicit financial flows (AFRODAD, 2021). In the long term, there is need for total overhaul of the current global governance and economic model to build a new model that centers care, wellbeing and justice at all levels.

Taken together, these dynamics demonstrate that sovereign debt is not merely a macroeconomic concern but a restructuring of social reproduction itself thereby making feminist intervention and leadership indispensable to debt governance and justice.



When public services are cut, the debt is paid at home—through unpaid care work. It is time to recognise and repay Africa’s ‘care debt.’



3.0

AFRICAN FEMINIST LEADERSHIP, KNOWLEDGE, AND STRATEGIES FOR RESISTANCE

African feminists are advancing transformative frameworks for debt justice that integrate macroeconomic analysis with intersectional activism. Their leadership spans scholarship, advocacy, and organizing. This section will elaborate on this by giving a few examples.

African feminists have reframed sovereign debt as a feminist issue. They have documented how debt repayment and austerity policies undermine public services and expand women's domestic and unpaid care burden (Musindarwezo, 2018; Kachingwe, 2019).

In addition, a rich body of African feminist scholarship has emerged linking debt to questions of justice, sovereignty, and care. Tamale (2020) situates debt within global systems of exploitation and calls for radical alternatives to neoliberalism by rejecting neoliberal values of competition and accumulation. Amina Mama (2020) connects feminist activism on debt to broader histories of anti-colonial resistance, showing how African women's struggles have long contested transnational forms of domination. Crystal Simeoni (2022) has emphasized that debt crises cannot be solved through orthodox prescriptions of austerity and fiscal consolidation. Instead, she argues that feminist alternatives must center wellbeing, social reproduction, and public investment rather than austerity and privatization.

Pan-African feminist organisations and movements have built vibrant spaces for collective analysis and action. Initiatives such as the African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA) by FEMNET creates space for learning, movement building and collective resistance bringing together African Feminist activists to challenge technocratic orthodoxies. African Networks and Organisations like FEMNET, AWDF, Akina Mama W'Africa, and NAWI Collective collaborate with broader Civil Society Organisations such as African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA), Global Alliance for Tax Justice (GATJ) and trade unions such as Public Services International (PSI) to push for feminist perspective towards



debt justice. Sibeko (2023), writing for NAWI and AFRODAD, emphasizes that Africa's debt crisis is inherently gendered and cannot be resolved without feminist frameworks that demand systemic transformation to the global financial architecture. These movements connect the gendered impacts of debt to the urgent need for transforming global economic and financial governance architecture.

Southern feminists' coalitions and movements including Delinking Initiative and South Feminist Solidarity are calling for an overhaul of the entire current exploitative and violent global economic system and calling for a new transformative system that centers human life, collective care, justice, human rights and the planet, and liberates all people especially people of the global south.

African and southern feminists are increasingly present in global and regional forums such as the African Union, UN Financing for Development processes, and IMF dialogues. They advocate gender-responsive debt analyses and accountability mechanisms that evaluate social impacts. As FEMNET (2021) notes, feminist engagement aims to "disrupt and reconstruct" economic orthodoxy by demanding structural transformation grounded in justice and human rights.

African feminists have also entered policy spaces traditionally dominated by male technocrats and global institutions. FEMNET and allied organizations have engaged with the African Union, UN Agencies, and international financial institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to advocate for gender-responsive macroeconomic policies. They have argued that debt sustainability analyses must incorporate gendered social impacts, not just fiscal ratios (FEMNET, 2021).

This policy engagement reflects a broader strategy of "disrupting" macroeconomic orthodoxy. As FEMNET's (2020) *The Audacity to Disrupt* report argues, feminists must not only critique but also transform economic thinking, ensuring that issues such as unpaid care work, social reproduction, and women's labor rights are central to shaping economic policy and decision-making.



4.0

TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES IN FEMINIST DEBT JUSTICE

Despite these advances, African feminists face significant challenges in transnational mobilizing and resistance around unsustainable or illegitimate sovereign debt.

First, there is the structural power imbalance between African states and international financial institutions. The IMF and World Bank with Global Northern governments that founded them retain disproportionate influence over debt governance, often sidelining southern governments and southern feminist voices. Even when civil society organizations participate, their contributions are frequently marginalized in technocratic processes at the expense of transformative political feminist agenda. Feminists warn that this dilutes radical demands into tokenistic measures, such as increasing women's representation on boards without challenging structural oppression (NAWI, 2022).

Second, within African states themselves, feminist advocates struggle with patriarchal structures that limit women's participation in economic policymaking. As Waris (2019) notes, fiscal policy is often treated as a technical domain, closed off to feminist intervention. Memory Kachambwa, Executive Director of FEMNET in an interview confirmed this where she shared that FEMNET has often been not invited to key spaces at the African Union such as in the process of consultations for the formation of Africa's credit rating agency which is still in its formation (personal interview with Memory Kachambwa, Executive Director of FEMNET, 2025). If a well-established pan-African Feminist network such as FEMNET is being excluded in such spaces it reveals the extent to which majority of feminists organizations are excluded especially those working at several intersections of marginalizations such as young feminists, women with disabilities, LGBTQI organizations, community-based organisations among others. Third, feminist movements themselves continue to grapple with resource constraints, fragmentation and structural underfunding. While networks such as NAWI and FEMNET have made important strides, sustaining transnational mobilizing and solidarity across Africa and globally, quality funding especially for movement building



and strengthening remains difficult to secure in the face of drastic international aid cuts, donor-driven agendas, closing civic space, political backlash and the co-optation of feminist agendas by neoliberal institutions. African feminist organisations remain severely underfunded in a context of weakening and inconsistent global commitments to gender equality and women's rights. AWID's research consistently shows that less than 1% of gender-focused aid directly reaches women's rights and feminist organisations, and that over 99% of official development assistance and foundation grants bypass these movements altogether (AWID, 2020; AWID, 2023). Evidence from the Black Feminist Fund further underscores that Black feminist movements, particularly in Africa and across the Global South remain chronically under-resourced despite their central role in advancing gender justice (Black Feminist Fund, 2023). Similarly, the African Women's Development Fund highlights that African feminist organisations continue to face systemic funding gaps, with many operating on small, unstable and restricted budgets that constrain long-term organising, transnational alliance and movement building and sustained advocacy (African Women's Development Fund, 2021; African Women's Development Fund, 2023). These patterns reflect a broader political economy of funding that privileges short-term, project-based results over long-term transformative change, reinforcing precarity within feminist movements and limiting the infrastructure needed to sustain collective resistance.

Additionally, work on structural issues such as debt attracts even fewer donors, given its challenge to imperial and neoliberal systems (Simeoni, 2020). Feminists work on structural and systematic issues such as debt that question imperialism, neoliberalism and power imbalances between the global north and south attracts few donors because majority of donors are part of the imperial project structured to sustain the status quo. "In addition to chronic underfunding of feminist organizations compounded by recent and ongoing international aid and funding cuts, the Economy issues seem less urgent to many donors than everyday challenges (personal Interview with Crystal Simeoni Director of NAWI- Collective 2025)

Fourth, there are divergent views among global feminists' movement on what to prioritize especially in global advocacy spaces where collective advocacy must be carried out. Southern feminists in general and African Feminists in particular prioritize structural reforms such as debt cancellation and systemic change, while Northern feminists often emphasize narrower social agendas. These tensions weaken global feminist advocacy, as seen during the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) negotiations (Okech & Musindarwezo, 2018).

Finally, the global political economy is shifting in ways that complicate feminist resistance. The rise of private creditors, such as bondholders and commercial banks, has made debt negotiations more complex and less transparent. African feminists must therefore navigate not only state-centered institutions but also diffuse global capital markets (Bohoslavsky & Rulli, 2024).

In the current political environment that has heightened the backlash against feminist collective resistance and expanded the challenges faced by African Feminist movements, it is crucial to strengthen African Feminist transnational organizing, resistance and solidarity, not only on the African continent but across the southern feminist organizing

5.0

STRENGTHENING AFRICAN FEMINIST TRANSNATIONAL RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for strengthening African feminist transnational resistance and solidarity toward sovereign debt justice. This section offers a comprehensive set of recommendations, rooted in the work of African feminist scholars, activists and organizations, that could reshape how debt is understood and contested.

6.1 Building Knowledge and Evidence

African feminists must continue to expand feminist research and knowledge production on sovereign debt. Initiatives such as FEMNET's mapping of feminist macroeconomic engagement (2021) provide essential data on who is working in this space and what strategies they are using. Strengthening collaborations between academic institutions, think tanks, and feminist organizations can help generate rigorous evidence that challenges dominant narratives of debt sustainability.

Building on these efforts, African feminists should consolidate and advance the collective political commitments articulated in the **Maputo Manifesto (2024)**—adopted at the Pan-African Feminist Conference on Debt and Economic Justice. The Manifesto calls for cancellation of illegitimate debt, establishment of a fair and multilateral sovereign debt workout mechanism under United Nations auspices, and protection and expansion of public services and care systems (AFRODAD, 2024). It situates sovereign debt within colonial, patriarchal and neoliberal systems of extraction, offering a clear continental feminist framework for advocacy. African feminists should use the Maputo Manifesto as a strategic advocacy tool in national, regional and global policy spaces, while also developing alternative debt sustainability frameworks that center care, social reproduction, human rights and economic sovereignty (Simeoni, 2022; Sibeko, 2023).



6.2 Expanding Transnational Solidarity

African feminist movements must deepen their transnational solidarities, linking struggles across borders and aligning with global South feminist movements. Networks such as FEMNET, Akina Mama W’Africa, NAWI- Collective have already created platforms for cross-country and cross-continental collaboration. Expanding these networks to include more grassroots women’s organizations, young feminists and trade unions movements would broaden the base of resistance and ensure that feminist debt advocacy reflects diverse voices.

Equally important is for African feminists’ movements to build stronger alliances and solidarity with other feminists’ movements in the Global South. Due to their shared history of colonialism and dominance of the North, their shared analysis and strong collaboration would go a long way in strengthening southern feminists’ movements against all systems of oppression. New platforms and networks such as South Feminist Futures, through their monthly Feminist Political Economy teach-ins led by Global South feminists, are contributing to political education and collective mobilisation across the global south by amplifying Southern feminist voices and analyses on shared concerns, including debt, economic governance and reparations (South Feminist Futures, 2024; South Feminist Futures, 2025).

It is important to note that transnational solidarity also requires building alliances with movements in the global North. Feminist activists in Europe and North America can play a critical role in pressuring their governments and creditors to support Feminist demands towards a transformative global economy and to act on immediate demands such as debt cancellation, ending illicit financial flows, investment in public and social services and infrastructure. By framing debt justice as a feminist and human rights issue, African feminists can connect with broader struggles against austerity, neoliberalism, and climate injustice (Tamale, 2020).

6.3 Engaging with Policy and Governance Structures

While challenging patriarchal and technocratic governance, African feminists must continue to strategically engage with policy spaces at national, regional, and global levels. This means pushing for gender-responsive debt management strategies within African finance ministries, advocating for feminist representation in African Union debt policy forums, and influencing UN processes on financing for development.

At the global level, African feminists should join calls for the establishment of a multilateral debt workout mechanism under UN auspices—A UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt; one that prioritizes human rights and social justice over creditor interests (AFRODAD, 2021). AFRODAD in close collaboration with Pan-African feminist Organisations such as FEMNET and NAWI -Afrifem Collective have consistently advocated for a fair, transparent and rules-based international debt resolution framework that addresses power imbalances in global debt governance and protects social spending. Such a mechanism could incorporate feminist criteria, ensuring that debt restructuring agreements do not undermine women’s rights or social protection systems.

6.4 Reclaiming Political Economy as a Feminist Space

A central task is to challenge the notion that macroeconomics and debt are technical domains beyond feminist concern. As FEMNET (2020) argues, feminists must reclaim political economy as a space of contestation, where decisions about debt, budgets, and taxation are recognized as deeply political. This requires developing feminist curricula, training programs, and public education campaigns that demystify economic concepts and empower women to participate in economic policymaking.

6.5 Centering Care and Social Reproduction

Finally, African feminist debt advocacy must continue to center care and social reproduction as the foundations of economic life. Sovereign debt policies that undermine public services and social protection erode the very basis of human survival and flourishing. By prioritizing investments in healthcare, education, childcare, and environmental sustainability, feminist alternatives to debt orthodoxy can reorient African economies toward justice and well-being (AWDF, 2020; Simeoni, 2022).

6.6 Feminist Reparations, Climate Debt, and Transnational Solidarity

Strengthening African feminist transnational resistance requires advancing **reparatory frameworks** that confront the historical and ongoing injustices embedded in global economic governance. African feminists emphasise that colonialism, slavery and apartheid were not only systems of economic exploitation but deeply gendered regimes in which women's labour was systematically devalued, extracted and subjected to racialised and sexual violence. The legacies of these systems persist in contemporary forms of indebtedness, financialisation and austerity, making debt justice inseparable from broader struggles for reparations. Feminist organisations such as FEMNET and the African Women's Development Fund have increasingly articulated the need to situate debt cancellation and economic reform within a reparatory justice framework that acknowledges historical harm and demands redistribution (AWDF, 2021).

Within this reparatory agenda, African feminists also foreground **climate debt** as a central axis of transnational resistance. They argue that while African countries are aggressively disciplined for financial debt, wealthy countries of the Global North continue to evade accountability for their disproportionate historical responsibility for climate change and environmental destruction. This asymmetry exposes a fundamental hypocrisy in global economic governance, where the costs of ecological crisis are externalised onto African communities—particularly women, girls and gender diverse people—while climate liabilities remain unpaid. Addressing climate debt is therefore a feminist demand that links environmental justice, economic sovereignty and care for life-sustaining systems.

Advancing feminist reparations and climate debt claims requires **cross-movement and cross-border solidarity** that connects African feminist movements with environmental justice, labour, debt justice and broader social movements globally. Strengthening transnational alliances enables collective pressure on states, multilateral institutions and private actors to pursue debt cancellation, climate finance rooted in justice rather than charity and sustained public investment in care and social reproduction. In this way, African feminist transnational resistance moves beyond critique to build shared strategies for reparative transformation, challenging the structures that sustain inequality while advancing alternative futures grounded in care, redistribution and collective wellbeing.



CONCLUSION

Sovereign debt is not a neutral financial instrument but a deeply political mechanism that shapes whose lives are valued and whose are ignored. African feminists have long recognized this reality, from their historical resistance towards colonialism to structural adjustment programs to their current mobilizations against the current debt crises. By exposing the gendered impacts of debt and offering transformative alternatives, African feminists have redefined debt justice as central to the struggle for gender justice, human rights, freedom and decolonization.

The path forward requires strengthening African feminist transnational solidarity, building robust knowledge bases, and engaging strategically with global financial governance. It also requires reimagining economies in ways that center care, social reproduction, and ecological sustainability. In doing so, African feminists not only resist the injustices of debt but also chart pathways toward liberation and freedom for all.

As Sylvia Tamale (2020) reminds us, decolonization and feminism must go hand in hand, challenging both imperial and patriarchal structures. Sovereign debt justice is therefore not merely about financial reform; it is about creating new worlds where African women's voices, labor, and visions are at the center of political and economic life.



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