

# Co-Creating Feminist Narratives beyond Shrinking Spaces in 2017



*Happy Holidays from FEMNET!*

As we bid 2017, and look forward to ushering in 2018, we share with you briefly our **collective impact** throughout the year that moved us closer to realizing our vision of *an African society where gender equality is achieved and women and girls enjoy all their rights and live in dignity*.

We thank you for journeying with us and invite you to march on with us in 2018 for women's and girls' rights!



In 2017, just like in the last 29 years of existence, **FEMNET continued to distinguish herself as a visible and credible pan-African women's rights organization**, collectively working with her **over 600 members, spread out in 46 countries** across the African continent and in the diaspora, to assert influence at strategic national, regional and global spaces.





## Women's Leadership in Setting & Monitoring Regional & Global Agendas



FEMNET hosted (as far as we are aware) the **first and largest pan-African women's rights Convening on the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in Nairobi from 3- 4 May 2017. Over 190 women's rights organizations, activists, FEMNET members and partners drawn from the 5 African regions and beyond converged to attend the conference dubbed *[Safeguarding Our Gains: African Women's Collective Action on Defining the Pathway to Achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa Agenda 2063](#)*. The outcome of this convening was a clearly laid out **strategy roadmap** outlining implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and other women's rights frameworks and a [communiqué with six succinct priorities](#). The convening was a time for strengthening movement building across Africa and a space for women to re-think and refine strategies on advocating for implementation of existing commitments on women's rights and develop a roadmap on how African women can be at the center of achieving the SDGs. [Click and listen to this video Message from Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General during FEMNET's Pan-African Conference](#). Read also the various media coverage of the SDGs Pan-African Convening:

- [150 rights groups converge on Nairobi for gender forum \(2nd May 2017\)- Daily Nation](#)
- [Support women aspirants, urges CS Sicily Kariuki \(4th May 2017\) - Daily Nation](#)
- [Women's rights bodies must fight to overhaul gender bias \(3rd May 2017\) – Daily Nation](#)
- [Gender-based violence still high, hurts efforts to empower women \(4th May 2017\) - The Star Newspaper](#)

### Main Points on African Womens Footprints within the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and African Agenda

1. Women and their organizations must work in an innovative, collaborative, and united way and leverage on each other's expertise to represent gender issues in the spaces they are in, and to better inform and negotiate on their position regarding GEWE in the region.
2. Women and their organizations must create synergies between all frameworks to push the implementation of SDG 5 at national level by governments so that all agendas in all sectors and levels mainstream gender issues.
3. Women must document their achievements and footprints in GEWE advocacy for posterity
4. Women must domesticate their countries' development agenda and hold African governments accountable on their responsibilities to safeguard and build on their gender gains.



Elected FEMNET Board Members. From left, Dinah Musindarwezo, Executive Director and ex-Officio Board member; Dr. Amany Asfour (Egypt); Mrs. Bibyshe Takubusonga Mundjo (DRC); Mrs. Rafa Valente Machava (Mozambique); Mrs. Emma Kaliya (Malawi); Mrs. Charity Binka (Ghana); Mrs. Nancy Gitonga (Kenya) and Ms. Patricia Munabi Babiiha (Uganda)

FEMNET's **7th General Assembly** was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2017, a [new Board of Directors](#) was elected to steer FEMNET to greater heights in the next three years, and the Constitution was reviewed and adopted by members and a new membership fee was adopted. We are super excited that the new constitution now has a provision for the representation of a young woman and the diaspora at the board level.

In addition, FEMNET continues to make **deliberate efforts to bridge the intergenerational gap and be inclusive of the diversities represented by African women across the continent.** Involving young women remains key to all its interventions. FEMNET expanded her advocacy engagements by supporting **11 young women from more than 10 countries** to influence the demographic dividend discourse at the African Union whose theme was '*Harnessing Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth*'. FEMNET in partnership with the young women published the [Young Women and the Demographic Dividend: Advocacy Brief](#) that provided a gendered analysis and human rights framing of the demographic dividend discourse.

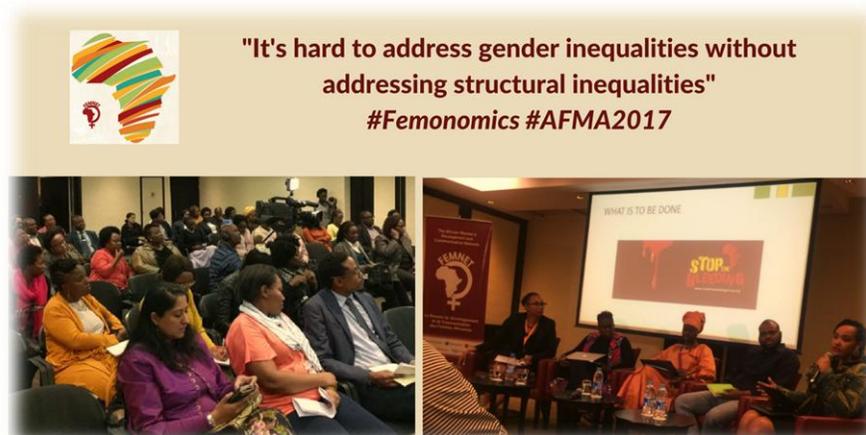


Throughout the year, we continued to make deliberate efforts toward **expanding our advocacy engagements and create pathways towards enabling, facilitating and amplifying African women and girls voices** at national, regional and global decision making platforms. One significant achievement was mobilizing African women to provide input into the AU Gender Strategy (2018-2023) spearheaded by the AUC Women, Gender and Development Division. FEMNET coordinated young women's participation in this process, which resulted in young women strongly calling for serious consideration of all young women's rights as priorities in the AU Gender strategy. The Director for Women, Gender and Development at the AU Commission Mrs Mahawa Kaba Wheeler shared her sentiments *"I am delighted that you had such a wonderful workshop and thank you [FEMNET] for the strong mobilization and support towards that process - young women are our future, let harness their potential effectively"*.

The [African women's priorities in SDGs advocacy asks](#) developed during the Pan-African women's convening, was **strategically and deliberately used to influence the outcomes** of the Kenya's Voluntary National Reporting on the Sustainable Development through the SDG Kenya Forum, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (AFRSD) in May 2017 and subsequent the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2017.

## **Feminists Dismantling Mainstream Macroeconomics**

FEMNET was one of the few voices **pushing for gendered language on illicit financial flows (IFFs)** at the sixty-first session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) that culminated in a side event in the margins of CSW61 that brought together 39 participants who delved into the discussions around IFFs and their gendered impact and implications on women and girls in Africa. [CSOs Recommendations to the Africa Group for CSW61 Agreed Conclusions](#)

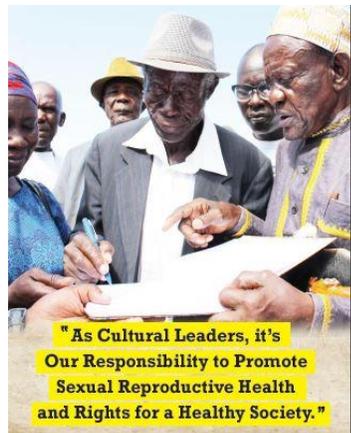


Another first in 2017 was the convening of the first ever **African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA)**, in October 2017, bringing together 25 feminist scholars, women's rights activists and journalists from 11 Eastern and Southern African countries who were trained on understanding and recognizing how current neoliberal economic models perpetuate gender inequalities in Africa and why it is critical to use a feminist analysis ([#Femonomics](#)) to challenge these models and propose alternatives . An open letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development – Mr. Saad Alfarargi – urging him to *[Infuse a specific focus on the gendered dynamics of Micro and Macroeconomic Policies for Africa](#)*. A *[public lecture on “The Gendered Dimensions of Illicit Financial Flows”](#)* held in conjunction with UN Women brought together over 60 people. Read the [Factsheet: What are the Gender Dimensions of IFFs?](#) and publication on [What are the Gender Dimensions of IFFs?](#)

“Spaces such as AFMA are precious in that they advance knowledge and information sharing and solidarity building among feminists in the continent. Personally, I found it inspiring to be in a room full of feminist activists and academia who are changing the face of macroeconomics which is often 'too white, too old, too male'”

- Felogene Anumo, [AWID](#)

Based on the key lessons drawn from the Men to Men interventions, FEMNET continued to **open new frontiers in engaging men by working with cultural and religious leaders**. As a result, over 55 cultural leaders are leading their communities against harmful cultural practices such as FGM, child marriage among others while over 23 religious leaders are revising doctrines that discriminate against women and girls in their places of worship.



## African Women's Bold Voices

FEMNET's **communication and rapid response mechanism** was excellently exemplified in major interventions that provided an opportunity for the articulation of the core issues within our core mandate of advancing women's rights and gender equality. In rapid response to the inauguration of America's misogynistic president Trump, FEMNET produced a compelling piece titled *[“Do not violate women!” African women warn Donald Trump](#)* and *[We are watching you!](#)* urging him to uphold and respect the rights for women & girls in America & globally. Other press statements in 2017 include:- *[“Retract your Statement & Resign!” – Women's organizations tell Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Chairperson; Halt threats & intimidation to the Kenyan Civil Society](#)* and *[FEMNET joins over 100 Organizations Calling for Meaningful Solutions on Inequality](#)*.

FEMNET and her members released several analytical and critical articles/ opinion pieces which were shared widely on mainstream and digital media regionally and globally and ultimately

**increased agenda setting and reporting of gender equality and women's empowerment in the media.** One of these was the counter response to teenage pregnancy remarks by President Magufuli of Tanzania ["Allow teen mothers to resume school or we will blacklist you!" African women threaten Magufuli](#). This Press Release was widely referenced and quoted e.g. in the Ugandan [Daily Monitor](#); [Kenya's Standard Media](#); the [African Independent](#); the [All Africa](#); [Pambazuka News](#); [Humanosphere](#). FEMNET managed a number of diverse media interviews both local and international. FEMNET also wrote an Opinion Piece on [Banning pregnant girls from school is against the laws of Tanzania](#) that was featured in The East Africa newspaper on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017.



## Thought Leadership

FEMNET Publications, Blogs, articles to read and share with others:-

- [Gender and Extractivism](#)
- [Women4Women: Collectively Advancing the Rights, Agency and Choices for Women in Kenya](#)
- [Still rising: women's movements in a changing world](#)
- [Abortion is a human right not a crime!](#)
- [Africa's Young women claim their rightful place at the AU Summit](#)
- [Women's Economic Empowerment Misunderstood](#)
- [Africa must close the macroeconomics gender gap to achieve sustainable development](#)
- [Feeling the Temperatures on Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights](#)
- [Reflecting on SRHR Conversations and Contentions at the 2017 ARFSD](#)
- [#SRHRDialogues Blog series – 2017 Day of the African Child Feature](#)
- [Women and Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Revolutionizing the Gender Divide in Technical Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\)](#)
- [Illicit financial flows and promoting gender equality through tax systems](#)



## #Trending in Digital Space

FEMNET continued to **increase and nurture a vibrant online presence by mobilizing and facilitating the exchange of information on women's rights** through the [website](#), user-dedicated listserve and social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)). FEMNET initiated, joined and contributed to online discussions using the hashtags [#YoungWomenSay](#),

[#FollowTheProtocol](#), [#FightInequality](#), [#SRHRDialogues](#), [#16DaysofActivism2017](#), [#EndGBV](#), [#AUEUSummit](#), [#All4Gender](#), [#Femonomics](#)

<i>Online Platform/ Year</i>	<i>Dec-2016</i>	<i>19<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017</i>
 <b>Twitter</b>	15,700	22,418
 <b>Facebook</b>	13,454	14,556
 <b>Website</b>	9,010	11,598 <sup>*</sup>
 <b>Instagram</b>	90	621

\* Newly revamped website uploaded in August 2017

## **Women @ Work and Leadership in Horticulture Sector**

In the last quarter of 2017, and as part of our goal of *“Promoting Gender Equality and Decent Work in the Horticulture Sector in Eastern Africa”*, FEMNET in close partnership with Hivos and Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), **strengthened and inspired leadership capacities** for 32 women and 15 men workers leading in various committees and unions, in 10 different **flower and vegetable farms** in Uganda & Kenya. An additional 26 partner representatives from women’s rights organizations and labour movement under the Hivos Women@Work campaign were also trained during the training of trainers.

## **Strengthening Strategic Partnerships**

2017 also saw FEMNET as a co-founding member of [Equal Measures 2030](#) collaborate to launch a [policymakers survey](#) which showed that most policymakers have limited knowledge on **gender data**. *“If some areas of policymaking – especially those, like public finance, which will determine whether there are resources available to tackle any gender equality challenges – are far more gender blind than others, will the necessary investments be made to meet gender equality goals?”*

FEMNET as a member of the [Fight Inequality Alliance](#) continued to join advocacy actions to challenge the concentration of power in the hands of an elite few, and to **demand a better, more just and equal future.**

We do acknowledge with much appreciation all the support we have received from you all without which we wouldn't be here; our members, our partners, our colleagues and our friends – united in the struggle for gender equality and the realization of women's rights from the household, community, national, regional to the highest global spaces.

As the new year fast approaches, we look with much expectation and optimism for another productive and year to continue to amplify the voices of African women and girls, ultimately contribute to a more equal Africa.

**In solidarity,**

**FEMNET Secretariat**



Mr Secretary General.... Africa loses a conservative figure of 50 billion USD per year through Illicit Financial Flows, 65 percent of which is through commercial activities. This takes away resources that are desperately needed to invest in essential services critical to women and girls including Health, Education, water, social protection etc . G77 and CSOs believe that this issue can only be addressed by establishment of a UN Tax Body that give all UNMember States equal decision making power on tax and finance polices. What will you do to get UN member states to agree on this and if not a tax body how else will UN address structural inequalities that continue to be a major obstacle to realising women's human rights and gender equality ?

**DINAH MUSINDARWEZO**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FEMNET