



AFRICAN FEMINIST MACROECONOMIC ACADEMY
The Audacity to Disrupt

2020

FEMNET AFMA 2020 REPORT





**The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network**



AFRICAN FEMINIST MACROECONOMIC ACADEMY
The Audacity to Disrupt

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AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND



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And in the year 2020, the FEMNET African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA) went online... With a new online portal and content created by Masego Madwamuse and Fatimah Kelleher, participants took part in a two-week workshop from 9 November – 23 November 2020. AFMA 2020 included 133 registered participants from 28 countries throughout the continent. 63 completed the course.

The content included three modules: 1) **An Introduction to Macroeconomics**, created and facilitated by **Masego Madwamuse**, 2) **An Introduction to Trade Using a Feminist Lens** and 3) **The African Continental Free Trade Area**, both created and facilitated by **Fatimah Kelleher**. The participants had 3-4 days to complete each module and each module was followed by a live session where the facilitators took the participants through the content and facilitated discussions and participant questions.

The modules included video and audio lectures, slides, illustrations, images, quotes, assignments, supplementary outside content and video music breaks! The online portal had a chat room where participants could engage with each other at anytime during the two-week course. This report is a peek into the two weeks of learning and discussions that took place during AFMA 2020.

MODULE 1:

An Introduction to Macroeconomics



“Macroeconomic policy is not purely technical and economics is not rational,” a quote that framed Masego’s module one. She added, **“it is not a technical process, it’s a political process. And politics is about power and those with power don’t want to give it up...”** Along these lines, she took participants through an introduction to economics, economic problems, systems and the politics of macroeconomic policy. She used supplemental materials that question the push for economic growth, fossil fuel companies’ contribution to climate change, and neoliberal models of development; and she provided alternatives including the wellbeing economy and feminist economics.

Chat room and live sessions discussions:

“It’s introduced [as a technical field] to keep us out, to privatize a field that ought to be democratized. You can’t critique that which you do not know and that which you are intimidated by.”

Masego Madwamuse

“So true about what Masego said about the use of language that is used to keep us out. At school and at University, I stayed away from the subject for that reason, despite me wanting to learn.”

Rosie Motene

Nov 10, 2020 10:18 AM

“Hello Masego, am listening and reading to Part 2: Unpacking the Politics of Macroeconomic Policy. Honestly in Kenya we are far off from legitimacy. Its quite unfortunate how people monetise on another person’s lack.”

Sellah Awino Ogola Babu

Nov 11, 2020 9:17 AM

“Its amazing how we have been imprisoned/ enslaved by theories that were formulated within a context and from a perspective that was not African. And we continue to carry their burden and pass it on to our children and their children and on and on... We must break the cycle and teach our children to theorize in their lived realities and experiences!”

Maureen Olyaro

Nov 11, 2020 5:41 PM

“The economy is not about out here or right here it is about us in the space as a collective. Ms Pheko... Very powerful.”

Esther Wambui Kimani

Nov 11, 2020 5:25 PM

“My background is not economics. I belonged to that group that hates numbers, it’s too hard. Of course pathetic excuses. I have learnt that these are fundamental issues that must be understood deeply for us to tackle injustices against women and minorities for decades. Oppression hidden in technicalities. Thank you for opening my eyes. I actually now understand even much better the global strategic direction of the organisation that I work for... Fighting against corporations and capitalism is not a meek task and requires deep knowledge.”

Christine Aboke

Nov 11, 2020 8:13 PM

“There is a lot of work on rights based approaches to budgets. Every year there is a protest of GBD, but we don’t know how to read our budgets...”

Thandiwe Matthews

“It’s now time to make it work, to make inclusive policies, skewed towards wellbeing, solidarity and feminist economics!!!”

Josephine Namatovu

Nov 11, 2020 8:25 PM

"Some of the key points made by Lebohang in her talk: Feminist economics is everything. There is nothing like formal and informal work done by women. Both paid and unpaid workers resides in the same space. Everything is important. There's a need for new ideas and new models. Ethics of love and relationships is important. Care work is hard work and must be seen as such. Feminist economics suggests there are many ways to live i.e. we have choices to make. The GDP does not adequately explain our living life on this planet; it does not say anything about the quality of our lives. Feminist economics describes things, not defines them. Poverty is not only lack of money buy could be loneliness, anger, rejection, not having choices, hopelessness etc. Wealth does not only mean material things, but includes the ability to have choices, food, being with love ones, leisure, dance, laugh etc. We need to pass this on to the younger generations."

Kate Duru

Nov 11, 2020 11:54 PM

"There is fear and violence attached with even trying to get to alternatives, to try to disrupt the system that is strong and maintains its space through violence."

Nomathemba Tegobo Masemula

"The African heads of states that were killed are those who were trying to push for alternatives to development and economic policies."

Masego Madwamuse

"As you talk about the SAPs I kept thinking of the takeover of big foreign companies in Africa and the noose of debt we have around our necks. With Covid 19, states are borrowing even more. The pressure to ensure "ease of doing business" often means big capital is not regulated and gets big tax breaks. They are making a killing while local production and markets die. We are seeing all the characteristics of the SAPs still, high taxes, recession, floating exchange rates, focus on open markets, budget cuts, the works."

Tinotenda Salome Hondo

Nov 12, 2020 7:40 AM

"What are we observing under the COVID 19 era? An increase in national borrowing as African countries received more supplementary funds from the World Bank to finance the budgets for prevention, response and management of Covid-19. And yet the priorities of where the funds were spent did not reduce the care burden on women. We have seen countries develop and implement home based care isolation and treatment protocols and Covid patients opting to self isolate from home rather than in hospitals. As heath facilities become overwhelmed with Covid-19 cases, more people avoided visiting health facilities for routine medical checkups and treatment, especially those with chronic ailments, leading to increased self medication and dependence on women's care labour rather than on health workers. The closure of schools and all education institutions, shifting to online learning, shifted responsibility of monitoring and supporting children's learning to women within the households. The management of physically, socially, emotionally and psychologically confined children has been a double burden for women..."

Hellen Apilla

Nov 12, 2020 8:27 PM


"Those who shape the political discourse at any period of time are those with power."

Masego Madwamuse



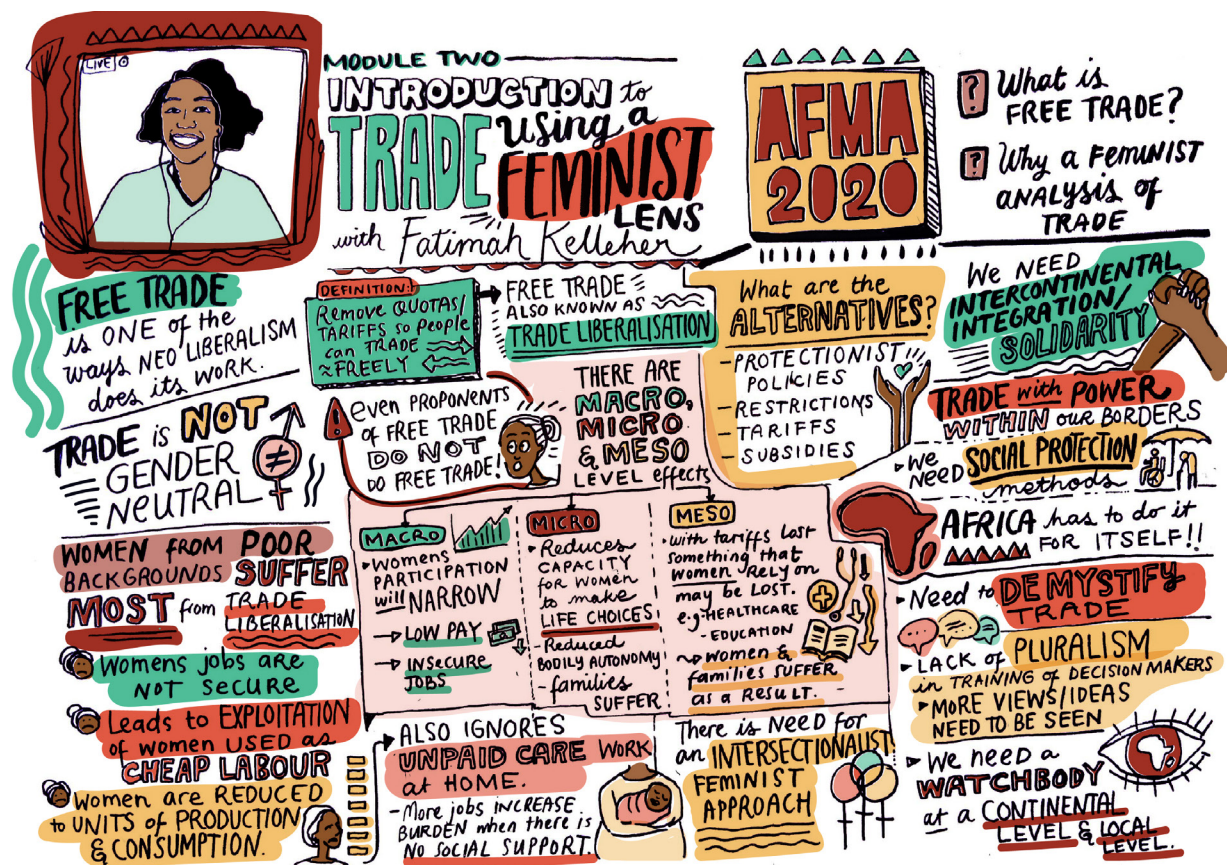
Masego closed the session with a poem by Lylee Rauch-Kacenski:

*We both work nine to five
long hours, day after day
though it's equal work
Is it equal pay?
Whose to judge the sweat, the depth
of contributions to the system.
When did we decide that doctors
work harder than school teachers
the barista smiling through condescending interactions
with hedge fund owners*



MODULE 2:

An Introduction to Trade using a Feminist Lens



Under the general understanding that “trade is not gender neutral,” Fatimah presented content for module 2 that gives an introduction to free trade and trade liberalization, the relationship between gender and trade, the multilateral trading system, and trade agreements. Like Masego, she included supplementary information from other sources and case studies of the affects of free trade. She presented the information through a feminist analysis of trade and she presented alternative ways of thinking as referenced in a quote by Mariama Williams included in the content, *“It is not sufficient to mainstream gender analysis within the current multilateral trading system, a gender perspective calls into question the whole basis on which the system is constructed.”*

Chat room and live sessions discussions:

“Good morning everyone. I just watched the video Going Local: The Solution-Multiplier and I am conflicted. Isn't the idea of going local against the African Continental Free Trade Area?”

Bwile Musonda

Nov 13, 2020 9:11 AM

“It's shocking to learn that trade deals are not about trade itself!!! It's all about the global sense of efficiency!”

Josephine Wangari

Nov 13, 2020 3:19 PM

"The poultry case study is very similar to what is happening in The Gambia. Many young women involved in the poultry industry find it very hard to sell their products because of imported chicken or its parts. Production of poultry is very expensive in the Gambia as all of the breeder and feeds are imported from Senegal. This make the price of the locally produced chicken two times the price of the imported chicken putting women out of business. Only the rich can afford to maintain their poultry business as most are involved in bulk production."

Matida Kebbeh

Nov 13, 2020 6:42 PM

"Trade liberalization... kills small local/ indigenous business. It encourages dumping. Citizens always prefer imported or western goods and services. In Nigeria, we see imported goods and services as 'original products.' Another disadvantage is the loss of culture. Here in Nigeria, oyibo food, clothes, dance and even ways of life is mostly preferred."

Kate Duru

Nov 14, 2020 12:01 PM

"Reflections on the trade liberalization video: Clear articulation of trade liberation, benefits and disadvantages. What does it mean when trade tariffs are reduced? This has a direct impact on how governments can raise money to cover social services such as health care, education etc., which has a significant effect on women. Cannot wait to get into the gender and trade aspects of this model."

Connie Nawaigo

Nov 14, 2020 7:29 PM

"If free trade's opposite is protectionism, but protectionism has been harmful to [us] in my experience working with Tanzanian women farmers... [then what are we asking for]."

Mwanahamisi Singano

"I thought that World Bank and IMF was helping developing country to come out of poverty. I didn't realize their double-faced help is pushing us more into poverty making us work against ourselves through our leaders. Very unfortunate."

Kate Duru

Nov 17, 2020 8:25 AM

"Even though economic globalization and foreign trade are major topics in the political discourse of most societies and negative attitudes toward international trade are prevalent, there is a lack of research investigating the ideological roots of protectionist preferences from a psychological perspective."

Liberty Kituu

Nov 16, 2020 10:14 PM

"

All of these trade agreements don't work for the global south. Why do we get into them? How do we get young people, women, etc in these decision making spaces?"

Tinotenda Salome Hondo

"Being an African woman is an extreme sport!!"

Joyce Mbuthia

MODULE 3:

The African Continental Free Trade Area

MODULE THREE
THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA: A PAN-AFRICAN FEMINIST LENS
with Fatimah Kelleher

AFMA 2020

What are the effects of the AfCFTA on African women?

WHAT is the AfCFTA?
AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA
- A free trade area amongst all African countries.
- LARGEST free trade area in the world.
- TARIFFS LIFTED from 90% of GOODS

The agreement has a VERY, VERY TOP LINE view of women.
- Small mention of GENDER EQUALITY in the Preamble.

women's roles have been **INSTRUMENTALISED**
- this takes away from women's RIGHTS. Shaping of women's roles becomes NARROW.
- women seen as a UNIT of PRODUCTION. There is a FALSE sense of TRICKLE down benefits.

Key AFRICAN FEMINIST Questions for the AfCFTA:

- What provisions are in place to make sure work created is **DECENT & DIGNIFIED**.
- Who will fund essential services that women need? Will they be **PRIVATISED & COMMODIFIED**? This would **HARMFULLY IMPACT** women further.
- How will this affect **LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS**? How will it DIFFER from other free trade initiatives that **FAVOUR MALE** dominated agriculture?
- In countries without social safety, how will they make sure women are not further **IMPOVERISHED** during re-adjustments of **LIBERALISATION**?

PAN-AFRICANISM
- **WIDER SOLIDARITY** is NEEDED
COVID-19 HAS EXPOSED vertical vulnerability
An African with **INTERNAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY** is WELCOME.

TRADE LIBERALISATION can create a lot of JOBS.
HOWEVER
- livelihoods are **DESTABILISED**
- **INEQUALITY** still exists
- it does **NOT** lead to greater access to services for women
- can lead to **BUDGET CUTS** on social services

► **FORMALIZE WORK FOR WOMEN**
► **FOCUS** on women **ENTREPRENEURS**
- leverage existing structures

CAPITAL rich countries will do well and **BE READY**.
Resource heavy countries will suffer with little time to re-adjust.

A.U. can SET UP a **FUND** that smaller countries can **DRAW** from.
★ **HOWEVER** this potentially creates **HIERARCHY**.

- As the AfCFTA is being **IMPLEMENTED TOO FAST**, effects on African women will be felt **DISPROPORTIONATELY** as AfCFTA has **NO gender lens** by there are **NO resources, no capacity**.

Countries **NEED TO COMMIT** TIME, RESEARCH, RESOURCES to **uplift women** and then **PUT POLICIES** in place.

- We must **learn & understand** the AfCFTA then **come together** in **SOLIDARITY**.

In module three, the focus was on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) or as Fatimah called it, “arguably the thing that could most impact our countries in the coming years, the repercussions of which will be felt for decades.” The content included an introduction to AfCFTA, why it matters to Africa’s women, what kind of pan African vision it offers, and its impact on agriculture, women traders, and the provision of universal public services. In line with the rest of the course, it included feminist critiques and recommendations for feminist engagement.

Chat room and live sessions discussions:

“Just watched the AfCFTA video and curious to know why the 3 member states have reservations signing into the agreement.”

Josephine Wangari
Nov 19, 2020 2:25 PM

“Just saw an update on the state of the AfCFTA - only Eritrea hasn’t signed now.”

Tinotenda Salome Hondo
Nov 20, 2020 11:11 AM

"It seems a given that Export Processing Zones operate outside of legally acceptable employment regulations. Why is this? There are many practices associated with FTAs, which border on being illegal or unethical. These need to be challenged if FTAs are to work for Africa and for its women. Corporates influence legislation a lot and legitimise things that are just wrong.

We need to start questioning and challenging them."

Tinotenda Salome Hondo

Nov 20, 2020 12:26 PM

"Good morning guys, this girl Nneka got moves. Damn!"

Sellah Awino Ogola Babu

Nov 24, 2020 6:44 AM

"Why is the EU pushing for the AfCFTA? We have to ask that question."

Fatimah Kelleher

"Economics can never be a stand-alone because it has a firm place in politics, in the environment and social justice dimensions."

Josephine Namatovu

Nov 24, 2020 8:49 AM

"Labour unions have an important role in promoting and safeguarding women's rights in the world of work. However most of the trade unions leave women out when discussing economic issues. I feel trade unions need to create alliances with feminist movements

if they are to adequately maintain gender through the collective bargaining process."

Naomi Lunat

"... It comes down to the strength of trade unions, how organized they are and how rigorous they are. You mentioned that it's hard to get women's issues on the radar with trade unions and it's a missed opportunity for them. It's about convincing the comrades around these issues. Trade union movements need to be able to learn how to weaponize the evidence and research around women's issues..."

Fatimah Kelleher

"What is decent work from a feminist perspective? It is one of AfCFTA's promises. How can we ensure that women benefit from it and actually get decent work with a decent wage?"

Reagan Mwanza

"I doubt the AfCFTA will change anything because of the already existing injustice happening here. The moment money is involved without first healing what is broken, the injustice will just advance further."

Seise Bagbo

"Curious about conversations around the notion that AfCFTA expects women to entrepreneur themselves out of poverty..."

Josephine Wangari

Nov 19, 2020 4:20 PM

"Cooperation is not enough, you can leave with cooperation... Solidarity is more long term. This is the language that we need to use more if we're going to be serious about the continent integrating and being a united force."

Fatimah Kelleher

CLOSING CEREMONY

Praying the Devil Back to Hell



On November 27, 2020, FEMNET closed AFMA with a two-hour ceremony featuring presentations from Memory Kachambwa and Nicole Maloba of FEMNET; Seise Bagbo, content and concept creator; Crystal Simeoni of the NAWI Afrifrem Macroeconomics Collective; Michelle Maziwisa, an AFMA alum; Yassine Fall, Chief Economist with the United Nations; and AFMA 2020 participants. Memory and Nicole spoke of the history of and power in AFMA; Crystal spoke of the work of the collective and the need to be “revolutionaires, resolutionaries and reformists;” Michelle Maziwisa spoke of her journey in “becoming a feminist;” the AFMA 2020 participants spoke of the two weeks of learning that took place and what to do with the knowledge that they gained; Yassine Fall presented the speech that she gave at the Beijing Conference in 1995 – a speech addressed to the president of the World Bank – historicizing the fight for feminist economic justice; and Seise Bagbo performed a poem entitled, *The Poet Bursts into Flames*.

In one way or another, as Seise spoke in her poem and as Crystal reiterated in her presentation, the closing remarks floated around the idea of “*Praying the Devil Back to Hell*.”

The Poet Bursts Into Flames

Dunia inapita

These are the last words of a dying poet, phrases struck in their throats, metaphors painted in blood, syllables bathed in their stomach, born of the knowledge that this moment here is all there is.

These are the very words of a womxn darkened into queer contortions, spitting out rainbows, space shifting changing themselves with every scar and wound.

Words as stubborn as the backs backs of the womxn who have walked before me.

They don't break, they are everything and more,

They are here and now.

These are the tongues of all freedom fighters and revolutionaries.

These words are the fists in the air in the rebellions.

The chants that have marked our being,

This is us, we don't die.

For birds...

These are the songs of the Queen mothers of rebirths. The very words as we pray the devil back to hell.

Now we're stamping our feet against the very ground that buried us, this is a war-cry screaming – Here we are.

With our complicated rootings, our hairs held in kinky knots, our footprints a sign that we are here. Fists in the air, these chains can't hold us now. Our dreams untamed flying past glass ceilings into the sky, these obstacles can't stop us now.

Chanting and chanting and chanting.

Freedom Freedom.

If this is the last time I stand,

Let it be known that I lived in an age where we fought back.

Let them know that I fought back,

Let them know that I saw women without chains

That I stood in a room full of women without chains

Tell them that I saw a day like this, when alliances were made and we pushed back with our hands held together.

Tell them that I stood here as a witness, chanting back the spirit of Madikizela.

Speaking in the tongues, birthed from the accents of the rain

Accents as stubborn as my ancestors.

Blessing us from the south to the North, the west to the East. These are the roaring words of the Nile.

The grains of sand in the Sahara and Kalahari

Words as complicated as the Congo forest and defying as the pyramids.

Coming through with the whispers of the winds and roaring of the mighty waves of the ocean that hold us

... and right in this moment, I am free.

I am all of us,

I am everything,

I am all that is here

I am this silence.

I am here and free

... and no amount of chains can rein that in.

For these are the words of a dying poet, the dirge of a lost musician, the embodiment of a sculptor.

The testimony of a people united,

That on this day you witnessed the poet burst into flames.



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