

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark skin and hair, wearing a gold headband with geometric patterns. She is looking towards the right. The background is a warm orange gradient with a large, dark, wavy shape that frames the text.

Yaoundé Declaration: Africa Disrupt CSW68 (2024)



PREAMBLE

We, the **African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)**, in partnership with NGO-CSW Africa which comprises of Women for a Change Cameroon (WfaC) representing Central Africa, Women in Law and Development (WILDAF) representing West Africa, Akina Mama wa Africa (AMWA) representing East Africa, and Women in Law in Southern Africa (WiLSA) representing Southern Africa. Together we hosted the 3rd Africa Disrupt in **Yaoundé, Cameroon** from **20th – 22nd February 2024**, as part of greater efforts to support and prepare African girls and women to participate more effectively in CSW68 taking place in New York from the 10th – 22nd March 2024. Structured around the theme, **'Reclaiming the Dignity of African Women and Girls'**, the convening brought together **126 participants** from **over 27 African countries**, including African women and girls, development partners, the private sector, political leaders and FEMNET members.

As delegates shared their lived experiences in their pursuit of gender quality, they reiterated that urgent action and concerted effort are needed to address poverty, strengthen institutions and gender inclusive financing mechanisms. This is a crucial element in accelerating the attainment of SDG 5, Agenda 2030 and the of all women and girls.

DURING THE 3RD AFRICA DISRUPT CSW68 CONVENING, DELEGATES UNDERLINED THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS;



1. **Africa is at a critical juncture due to unprecedented global challenges, with poverty being a major hurdle to development**

83.7% of the world's extremely poor women and girls live in two regions: Sub-Saharan Africa (62.8%) and Central and Southern Asia (20.9%). Additionally, progress towards ending poverty needs to be 26 times faster to achieve the Sustainable



Development Goals by 2030. Beyond this, women are 7.7 times more likely to live in extreme poverty. Notably, global challenges (from the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crises and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict to the Humanitarian crisis in the Sahel Region, religious fundamentalism and the devastating DRC conflict) continue to exacerbate these inequalities.

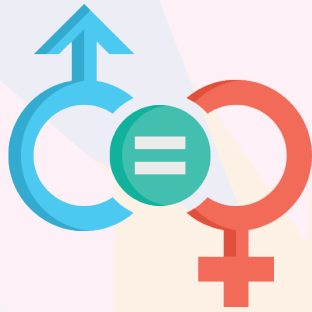
2. **The current global financial architecture hampers the advancement of financing for SDG 5 in developing countries**



The existing funding gap to achieve gender equality in key areas, including reaching the SDGs to end hunger and poverty, and supporting equal participation of women in societies by 2030, is about US \$360 billion annually in developing countries. However, this realization is hindered by the pursuit of austerity measures and orthodox macroeconomic models, which continue to exacerbate inequality within and between nations, particularly in low and middle-income countries. Escalating debt levels in many African countries are raising concerns that repayment may constrain economic performance and even limit financing for public services (such as education, healthcare, social protection, etc.) Moreover, the attainment of gender equality is rendered difficult by, global factors such as illicit financial flows (out of which Africa loses \$60 billion each year), trade liberalization, and economic growth patterns (such as regressive taxation mechanisms, unpredictable capital flows, and the feminization of poverty).



3. Institutions at various levels (local, regional, continental, etc.) play a significant role in shaping the landscape of gender equality.



Gender-based discrimination within the law in spheres such as inheritance, property rights, and employment can perpetuate inequality. Patriarchal social norms continue to reinforce traditional gender roles that limit women's opportunities and progression. For example, child marriage is both a driver and consequence of poverty, perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes and denying girls their education, health and autonomy. Under the current demographic trajectory, it is projected that Eastern, Western and Southern Africa's child marriage prevalence will grow to 41% by 2030, from 35% currently, highlighting the need to take urgent steps to address child marriage and the grave human rights violations with which it is associated. Moreover, legal systems that lack enforcement mechanisms for gender-based violence or fail to uphold women's rights create a climate of impunity. It is evident that institutions lacking adequate gendered participation in leadership roles may fail to address gender concerns effectively.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To foster meaningful and transformative change in the African continent, we call on African governments pursue the following crucial and actionable steps:

1. **African governments must prioritize gender equality by strengthening public finance and making gender-responsive budgeting mandatory across all sectors.**



Government budgets wield significant influence over gender equality initiatives and the empowerment of women and girls. Given this, there is a need for collaboration between ministries of gender, finance and economics to: Allocate resources specifically towards gender equality initiatives and publicly document spending; Establish clear performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of gender-transformative budgeting practices and ensure the meaningful participation of women and girls in shaping macroeconomic policies, budget design, and implementation. Additionally, **governments should employ gender budgeting tools to hold themselves accountable for spending on gender-transformative interventions, allocate budgets strategically to address gender inequalities and promote tax fairness, and integrate gender and human rights assessments into national budgets and economic policies to tackle poverty and inequality.**



2.

African governments must fundamentally reframe macroeconomic policies to address the needs and aspirations of women and girls, amid the cascading polycrises context.



Current macroeconomic policies (such as the privatization of rights-based public goods, services and infrastructure including health, education and social protection; increase of taxes such as value added tax (VAT) on consumer goods; as well as decreases in government revenues and budget cuts in social spending), have implications on financing for gender equality. As such, **we call on African governments to intentionally integrate and implement a feminist analysis in all macroeconomic policies, processes and decisions.**

3.

Addressing poverty, strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective means addressing the decades of debt burden and alleviating debt distress in Africa.



Decades of debt burden and escalating borrowing due to crises have crippled Africa's ability to invest in its people. Escalated borrowing in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and conflicts has further exacerbated debt burdens, diverting resources from crucial sectors such as education, social protection, poverty alleviation programs and healthcare – all services that African women and girls in all their diversities benefit the most. **We urge African governments to break free from this cycle by relentlessly advocating for debt cancellation in all global advocacy spaces.**



4.

To ensure just, inclusive and sustainable development, African governments and development partners should avail ear-marked dedicated, substantial, predictable and multi-year investments that directly reach frontline community activists, feminists and young women-led movements in Africa.



The political and economic context for funding interventions and innovations targeted towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment has decreased substantially in recent years, with several development partners withdrawing or minimizing funding and support to feminist movements and women's organizations operating at local, national and regional levels. Without the active and meaningful presence and participation of women's organizations and feminist groups, marginalized groups, advancements in gender equality and women's empowerment will not be achieved. This necessitates collaborative efforts between governments, development partners and women's rights organizations to enhance financing for gender equality interventions and programming at all levels – local, regional, and international.

Finally, **we urge UN member states to join our advocacy and calls for rotating the venue of CSW in order to ensure meaningful engagement of women, youth and girls from the Global South and reinforce their inclusion in processes, policy, frameworks and decisions that define their lived realities.** In 2023, during CSW67, over 500 feminists, activists, gender advocates, young people, civil society and movement leaders signed on a resolution to rotate the venue of CSW for meaningful inclusion of Girls and Young women from the global south in all their diversity. The resolution was submitted to the UN Secretary General, UN Women Executive Director, Chair of the CSW67 Bureau; the Special Representative of UN Women to the AU and UNECA; and the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We observe that despite the availability of the C-2 visa and UN Women's intentional efforts to direct potential participants toward its availability, numerous women and girls were unable to obtain visas to travel to New York and participate in CSW68.

We urge immediate action to implement these recommendations presented by African women and girls at the 3rd Africa Disrupt CSW68.



