



The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network

Creating New Pathways to Reparative Justice: Pan African Feminist Perspectives on Justice Through Reparations



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FOREWORD



Recently, and more than ever, discussions and the demand for reparations have gained traction across the African continent. As we stand with the African Union to champion the demand for Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations, we offer, as our contribution to this advocacy, a background paper themed **“Creating New Pathways to Reparative Justice: Pan African Feminist Perspectives on Justice Through Reparations”**

This background paper is a timely and urgent feminist intervention in ongoing struggles for structural change, historical redress, and transformative justice.

Rooted in lived experiences and political analysis, it seeks to deepen understanding and provoke critical reflection on the intersecting oppressions of race, age, disability, sex, and class. We offer it as a tool to inspire radical imagination, collective resistance, and action toward reparative and feminist futures.

In this paper we challenge and move beyond narrow definitions of reparations as mere financial payments to embrace a vision of justice that restores land and culture, ensures access to health and psychosocial support, and upholds women’s leadership at every step. By weaving together historical analysis, feminist theory, and concrete examples of transformative advocacy, the paper lays a foundation for reparative frameworks that are inclusive and place the most marginalised at the centre.

As you read this background paper, we hope you will be inspired by the resilience and creativity of the many women and movements whose struggles and triumphs light the way forward in this critical discourse and practice towards reparative justice. May this paper not only serve as a call to action, but also as a contribution to shaping Pan African feminist narratives towards achieving justice through shared accountability, and the reclaiming of our histories and futures.

In feminist solidarity,

Memory Kachambwa
Executive Director
FEMNET



1. INTRODUCTION

Across Africa and the global African diaspora, the demand for reparations has become a defining call for justice in the twenty-first century. This demand is not new. It is rooted in centuries of resistance to slavery, colonization, apartheid, and the racial and gendered hierarchies that continue to shape global systems. The African Union's 2025 theme, "**Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations**", presents a timely opportunity to confront these legacies, and articulate a transformative vision of justice that places African women and girls at the centre (African Union, 2019).

This background paper, commissioned by FEMNET, responds to this moment by advancing a Pan-African feminist perspective on reparations. It foregrounds the lived realities, historical erasure, and ongoing resistance of African women and girls. It contributes to a growing body of work that challenges dominant narratives, exposes structural violence, and reclaims the right to memory, dignity, and redress.

In this context, reparations are understood as a form of justice that acknowledges, redresses, and seeks to heal the enduring harms caused by historical injustices. These include slavery, colonization, apartheid, and systemic racial and gender-based discrimination (Abuja Proclamation, 1993; United Nations, 2001). While the concept of reparations has gained traction globally, this paper centers its relevance to African and Afro-descendant communities. Reparations, it argues, are not limited to financial compensation. They encompass restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction, guarantees of non-repetition, and the transformation of the systems that continue to marginalize African peoples (African Union, 2019).

The paper draws on key milestones such as the Abuja Proclamation (1993), the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001), and the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (2019). It also builds on the momentum of the 2023 Accra Conference on Reparations, which brought together leaders, scholars, and activists to reaffirm the legitimacy of Africa's claims and to amplify the voices of those most affected (Accra Reparations Conference, 2023). The Accra Proclamation emphasized the need to center African women and girls, whose experiences of colonial violence have often been erased or ignored.



This paper challenges the tendency to conflate contemporary human rights violations with historical colonial crimes. Modern injustices such as reproductive coercion, economic exclusion, and climate vulnerability are deeply concerning. They must be understood as aftershocks of colonial systems that have never been dismantled. For instance, during British colonial rule in Kenya, women in detention camps were subjected to sexual violence and forced labor. Under French occupation in Algeria, women were used as instruments of psychological warfare. These are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of gendered colonial violence that remains largely unacknowledged in reparations discourse.

The paper also resonates with recommendations and outcomes from the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) held in 2025, with a focus on the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ([UN Women – CSW69 Official Documentation](#)), which highlighted the chronic underfunding of gender justice initiatives. This underfunding is both a symptom and a driver of structural inequality. Feminist movements across Africa are being systematically under-resourced, even as they confront compounded crises of debt, climate change, and economic injustice. This erosion of funding undermines not only feminist organizing, but also the capacity of states to fulfil their gender equality commitments (Accra Reparations Conference, 2023).

Importantly, the global demand for reparations by Africans and people of African descent is not a plea for charity. It is a principled and historically grounded call for justice. The Accra Reparations Conference marked a pivotal moment in this movement, drawing strength from decades of advocacy and resistance. As Ugandan scholar and decolonial feminist Sylvia Tamale (2020) argues in “Decolonization and Afro-Feminism”, reparations must be understood not only as restitution but as a radical reimagining of justice. This vision centers African agency, restores dignity, and dismantles the enduring legacies of colonial and patriarchal domination.

Africa’s demands are not utopian. They are grounded in precedent. Germany has paid reparations to the Jews who were victims of the holocaust. The United States has compensated Japanese Americans interned during World War II. These examples show that reparative justice is both possible and necessary. To deny Africa what others have received is to reinforce the very systems of injustice that reparations seek to dismantle.

This paper is not merely a policy contribution. It is a declaration of intent by women and girls in Africa, a feminist call to action, and a roadmap for justice.

1.1 Methodology

This background paper was developed through a collaborative and participatory decolonial evidence gathering process led by a team of three experts, each contributing to different thematic areas based on their expertise. The methodology combined qualitative approaches, including:

- **Document and Literature Review:** Analysis of key policy documents, declarations (e.g., Abuja Proclamation, Durban Declaration), AU frameworks, feminist writings, and international reparations literature.
- **Key Informant Interviews and Discussions:** Semi-structured interviews with African feminist scholars, activists, and representatives from Women’s Rights Organizations (WROs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across the continent and diaspora.
- **Consultative Engagements:** Insights from the 41st GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting held in February 2025 in Addis Ababa, as well as from the NGO CSW’s GIMAC parallel event at CSW69 titled “Centering Feminist Well-being Economies for Humans and the Planet: Catalyzing Transformative Change for Gender Equality Beyond Beijing+30.” These convenings brought together diverse stakeholders to engage in critical dialogue on justice, reparations, and gender equality within the framework of the African Union’s 2025 theme.



1.2 Limitations

While the methodology aimed to be inclusive and representative, several limitations must be acknowledged. Due to time and resource constraints, not all African regions or linguistic communities could be equally represented in the interviews and consultations, which may have limited the geographic and cultural diversity of perspectives. Additionally, access to historical and institutional data on reparations processes remains fragmented or inaccessible in many cases, which constrains the depth and comprehensiveness of the analysis. Furthermore, while the paper centers feminist and civil society voices, it does not claim to capture the full spectrum of views within broader African communities or among state actors. Despite these limitations, the paper offers robust, grounded, and visionary feminist perspectives that contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse and advocacy for reparative justice.



2. ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE AGAINST AFRICAN WOMEN

Tracing the historical trajectory of systemic harms that have shaped the African continent and its diasporas is crucial to comprehending the necessity of reparations. A Pan-African feminist analysis unpacks the particular ways African women and girls were targeted, violated, and dispossessed. It also highlights the resistance, resilience, and leadership of African women in the face of these intersecting oppressions. Additionally, it highlights African women's leadership, tenacity, and resistance to these interlocking forms of oppression.

2.1 Slavery, Colonialism and the Gendered Economy of Violence

The transatlantic slave trade remains one of the most enduring and traumatic legacies of racial capitalism. African women were captured not only as labour but as reproductive commodities. Their bodies were used to perpetuate enslavement through childbirth, while simultaneously being subjected to sexual violence, forced concubinage, and dehumanizing treatment.

As Angela Davis (1981) noted, enslaved African women experienced a dual burden: the back-breaking work in plantation fields and the unrelenting sexual exploitation within domestic and social spaces. Reproductive control, including forced breeding, rape, and denial of family formation, was central to slavery's political economy. These patterns of gendered and racialized violence were not confined to the era of plantation slavery alone; they continued into the colonial period in various insidious forms.

In countries such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, colonial authorities and administrators separated African mothers from their mixed-race children, who were often the product of coerced or exploitative relations between European men and African women, and sent these children to be raised in European institutions abroad. These separations were not unique to Belgium; other colonial powers, including France, implemented similar assimilationist policies grounded in puritanical racial ideologies that aimed to sever African lineage and deny mothers' rights (African Futures Lab, 2024). Many of these children, later referred to as *métis*, faced discrimination in the European countries they were taken to and suffered profound psychological trauma. The mothers themselves were plunged into deep sorrow and dispossession, stigmatized within their communities, and legally marginalized, with no avenues for redress under colonial law.

Although the Court of Appeal in Belgium recently found the Belgian state in violation of international law, ruling that it had committed crimes against humanity by kidnapping the mixed-race children (BBC 2019; Amnesty 2025), this litigation represents a missed opportunity as the court's findings centered mostly on the rights and suffering of the children, with scant attention to the immense, lifelong harm experienced by the mothers. Their right to family life, bodily autonomy, dignity, and reparative justice was largely overlooked, reinforcing the historical silencing of African women's experiences and perpetuating a gendered gap in accountability for colonial crimes.



2.2 Colonialism and the Construction of Gendered Subjugation

European colonialism imposed new legal, economic, and social hierarchies that destabilised indigenous African societies. These hierarchies were profoundly gendered. The introduction of European gender norms through Christianity, formal education, and colonial law reconfigured African women as legal minors, cultural subordinates, and economic dependents. As Oyēmi (1997) argues, colonialism institutionalised Western gender binaries in societies where gender roles had previously been fluid or complementary. Women were pushed out of political spaces, denied land rights, and subjected to new forms of gendered violence under colonial labour and taxation systems.

Colonial administrations targeted women's bodies and labour. In Southern Africa, women were banned from urban areas unless they had labour permits. In Kenya, the British criminalised indigenous midwifery and replaced it with missionary-led obstetrics that alienated women from their cultural reproductive practices (Thomas, 2003). These shifts amounted to cultural and bodily dispossession.

2.3 Neocolonialism and the Reproduction of Structural Violence

Post-independence African states inherited and, in many cases, deepened colonial structures of exclusion. Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), debt dependency, land grabs, and extractive development have continued to marginalise women economically, politically, and socially.

Women bear the brunt of neoliberal austerity: their unpaid care work subsidises public services, they face increased gender-based violence during economic shocks, and they are underrepresented in decision-making spaces that shape macroeconomic policy (Elson, 2002).

Climate change, driven largely by extractive industries and consumerism in the Global North, disproportionately affects African women; particularly rural and indigenous women who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. Reparations must thus include climate justice, debt cancellation, and socio-economic transformation that dismantles these ongoing harms.



2.4 The Continuum of Harm and Feminist Resistance

Across all these epochs: slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and neocolonialism, African women have not been passive victims. However, African women were denied recognition as resisters and revolutionaries. Historical erasures have silenced figures such as Nanny of the Maroons in Jamaica and Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba, who defied European encroachment with remarkable political and military acumen. Reparations must reclaim these histories, honouring both the suffering and the agency of African women. From the Aba Women's Riot of 1929 in Nigeria to modern-day land rights movements led by women across Africa, feminist resistance has been a constant.

Notable examples include:

- **Yaa Asantewaa of the Ashanti Empire**, who led an anti-British military resistance in Ghana in 1900.
- **Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti**, a suffragist and nationalist who led the Abeokuta Women's Union against colonial taxation in Nigeria during the 1940s.
- **Mekatilili wa Menza**, a Giriama resistance leader in Kenya who defied British colonial authority in the early 20th century.
- **Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**, and the women of the United Democratic Front who were central to anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa.
- **Leymah Gbowee and the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace**, whose peaceful protests ended Liberia's civil war in 2003.
- **Wangari Maathai**, whose Green Belt Movement in Kenya linked environmental justice to gender equality and democratic governance.
- **The Women's Advocacy Network (Uganda)**, which continues to mobilise war-affected women for psychosocial, economic, and legal redress.
- Regional feminist networks such as **FEMNET** and the **African Feminist Forum**, which have sustained intersectional advocacy across borders.

Pan-African feminism, as conceptualised by the African Feminist Forum and scholars such as Amina Mama and Sylvia Tamale, calls for the recognition of these struggles as sites of transformative politics. Reparations, in this framework, are not merely about correcting past wrongs; they are about reclaiming the future, realigning power, and restoring holistic well-being.

In conclusion, historical injustices against Africans and people of African descent are impossible to understand without acknowledging its gendered impacts. Through Pan-African feminist analysis, we understand that systems of violence have always intersected-racism with patriarchy, capitalism with imperialism-to design the very lives of African women. A reparatory justice mechanism would thus have to be intersectional and transformational in nature, and must recognise the entire scope of damage and place African women at the center of healing, justice, and restructuring processes.



3. THE LIMITS OF CURRENT REPARATIONS FRAMEWORKS IN ADDRESSING HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY RACIALIZED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Narrow, state-centric, and frequently gender-neutral interpretations continue to limit reparations as a principle of international law and a tool for justice. This section challenges the current reparations frameworks, and reinterprets them from a Pan-African feminist perspective, emphasising intersectionality, structural change, and the decolonisation of justice for African women and women of African descent by drawing on feminist legal theory, international law, and Pan-African intellectual traditions.

3.1 Legal Foundations: The Right to Remedy and Reparations

The right to a remedy for victims of gross human rights violations is well established under international law. The basis for this concept is that harms must be repaired. This right to remedy is codified in the following international human rights instruments such as:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, Article 8) affirms the right to an effective remedy for acts violating fundamental rights.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, Article 2) requires States to provide effective remedies when rights are violated.
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, Article 6) and Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT, Article 14) both codify States' duty to ensure redress.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, Article 39) mandates rehabilitation for child victims of armed conflict and other abuses.

In international humanitarian law, provisions encapsulating the right to remedy for wrongful acts can be found in:

- The Hague Convention IV (1907) and Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (1977) which establish reparative duties for violations of the laws of war.[6]
- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides for victim participation and reparations through the Court (Rome Statute, Article 68, Article 75).
- Regionally, this right is affirmed by:
 - African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR, Article 7). American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR, Article 25), and
 - European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, Article 13)

These provisions collectively affirm the principle that harms must be repaired under international law. The right to remedy is the normative anchor for human rights, humanitarian, and transitional justice frameworks. Yet, as explored below, the implementation of reparations often neglects gender justice and structural inequality.



3.2 Overview of Existing Legal Frameworks on Reparations

With reference to reparations specifically, the key instrument that unpacks this principle is the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparations (2005), which establishes five tenets of reparation:

1. **Restitution** - restoration of liberty, citizenship, employment, property, or return to one's place of residence.
2. **Compensation** - monetary payment for economically assessable damages, including physical or mental harm, lost opportunities, and material damages.
3. **Rehabilitation** - provision of medical and psychological care and legal and social services.
4. **Satisfaction** - measures such as truth-seeking, public apologies, memorials, and judicial sanctions.
5. **Guarantees of non-repetition** - institutional reform, human rights training, and legal reform to prevent recurrence

While the framework espoused by the UN Basic principles appears comprehensive in scope, it is limited in depth. It prioritises individual harm over collective or structural harm, and offers little guidance on historical injustices such as the trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans, colonialism, neo-colonialism. It remains silent on gender-specific reparations.

Other relevant frameworks include:

1. **The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001)**, which recognises the trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans as crimes against humanity, and calls for reparations.
2. **The African Union Transitional Justice Policy (2019)**, which acknowledges gendered harms and promotes victim-centred reparations, but it doesn't not extend to historical crimes of enslavement and colonialism.
3. **The Maputo Protocol (2003)**, which addresses gender-based violence and requires states to provide reparations for all human rights violations against women.

3.3 Unpacking the Pan-African Feminist Perspective

A Pan-African feminist framework draws from Black feminist thought, African indigenous knowledge, anti-imperialist critique, and intersectional analysis. It insists on reparations not as a transactional remedy but as a transformative political process that addresses epistemic, economic, environmental, and reproductive harms rooted in historical and ongoing systems of oppression. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Angela Davis (2016) argue, justice for African peoples must engage with the intersecting effects of capitalism, colonialism, racism, and patriarchy.

Similarly, Oyejemi (1997) critiques the colonial imposition of gender binaries in Africa, urging that reparations must also recover indigenous gender epistemologies. From this perspective, reparations are a site for reordering power and reclaiming sovereignty. Pan-African feminism also foregrounds collective healing, cultural reclamation, and economic justice. It insists that reparations address the unpaid labour of African women, including caregiving and subsistence work, the commodification of Black women's bodies during slavery, and the persistent extraction through neoliberal development regimes.



3.4 Critical Analysis of Existing Frameworks

- **Gender neutrality and its discontents**

Most international reparations instruments fail to account for how harms are experienced differently across gender, race, class, and sexuality. The UN Basic Principles do not disaggregate data or measures by gender, nor do they call for transformative justice that addresses the root causes of inequality. Moreover, in transitional justice contexts, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is often treated as a peripheral issue. Feminist scholars such as Banda (2005) have critiqued the underfunding of gender-sensitive tribunals and the exclusion of women's lived experiences from truth commissions.

- **State-centrism and the erasure of community agency**

Existing frameworks presume that reparations must be delivered by states to individual victims, ignoring collective claims and the political limitations of postcolonial states. Mamdani (1996) reminds us that African states are often colonial constructs with limited capacity or willingness to confront their own complicity in structural violence.

- **Economic conservatism and historical amnesia**

There is limited guidance on how reparations can address centuries of stolen wealth, ecological destruction, and systemic economic exploitation. The frameworks ignore the global economic order's complicity in sustaining racial capitalism, as theorised by Bhattacharya (2021) and Ross & Solinger (2017). This leaves the extraction of resources from Africa unchallenged and ongoing.

3.5 Towards a Transformative Feminist Reparations Framework

To address these gaps, a Pan-African feminist approach to reparations must:

1. **Recognise collective and intergenerational harm.** Reparations must be directed not only at individuals but at communities and generations affected by historical violence.
2. **Centre reproductive and bodily autonomy.** Recognise colonial and postcolonial control over Black women's bodies as a central harm, with reparative measures including free reproductive healthcare, legal reforms, and cultural recognition of indigenous birthing knowledge (Ross & Solinger, 2017).
3. **Advance land and economic justice.** Restore dispossessed land, cancel illegitimate debts, and reconfigure trade regimes to redistribute power, not just wealth (Collins, 2000).
4. **Support epistemic and cultural reparations.** Fund feminist historiography, revive indigenous languages, and support community knowledge systems disrupted by colonisation (Oyeṣemi, 1997).
5. **Institutionalise gender-transformative legal reform.** Amend constitutional and customary law to recognise care work, protect against gender-based violence, and guarantee feminist participation in policymaking (Banda, 2005).
6. **Redefine satisfaction and non-repetition.** Go beyond apologies to ensure systemic change; disarmament, education reform, gender-just climate policy, and the decolonisation of institutions.

In conclusion, reparations, if approached through a Pan-African feminist lens, hold revolutionary potential to dismantle entrenched structures of harm and affirm the dignity, sovereignty, and leadership of African women and their communities. This framework demands more than redress; it demands systemic transformation rooted in justice, memory, and liberation.



4. REPARATIONS THROUGH A FEMINIST LENS

Reparations, when framed through a feminist intersectional perspective, demand a radical interrogation of oppressive power structures, including colonialism as a system that actively shaped and stratified gendered harm. Intersectionality, as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, reveals how different systems of power and oppression interlock and overlap to shape unique experiences of oppression and privilege, producing compounded and differentiated harms across communities.

The colonial project was not a monolithic force; rather, its manifestations varied across African communities, entrenching oppression differently depending on pre-existing social, economic, and political conditions (Mamdani, 1996; Lugones, 2007; Bhattacharya, 2021). Some societies were subjected to direct territorial expropriation, others to exploitative labor structures, and yet others saw the violent restructuring of gender and social hierarchies to enforce imperial rule (Oyewùmí, 1997). Reparations, therefore, cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach; they must be contextualized, responding to how colonial power was specifically imposed and how it continues to reproduce inequities today. A gender just reparations agenda

needs to explicitly acknowledge and redress these varied oppressions, ensuring solutions align with the specific harms imposed upon different communities.

Angela Davis (2016) reminds us that “power concedes nothing without a demand,” yet demands that fail to interrogate the layered and intersectional impacts of colonial rule risk reinforcing structures of exclusion rather than dismantling them. Thus, reparations must not merely redistribute resources; they must actively challenge and reconstruct power, ensuring justice is restorative, transformative, and forward-looking (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2016). A truly feminist and intersectional vision of reparations demands action across multiple dimensions as analysed below:

Reproductive Autonomy & Bodily Sovereignty

Reproductive autonomy and bodily sovereignty have been systematically violated across Africa through colonial and neocolonial policies that sought to control African women’s bodies, disrupt indigenous birthing practices, and fracture family structures as a means of social domination. These violations, including forced sterilizations in Namibia and the suppression of traditional midwifery across various African regions, were not isolated acts but part of a broader strategy to suppress African agency and cultural continuity. A Pan-African feminist approach to reparations insists on the urgent need to acknowledge these harms, not only to prevent their recurrence but to affirm the dignity and rights of survivors who are still living and whose voices must shape reparative processes. Justice must include the restoration of traditional reproductive knowledge, the provision of culturally grounded and accessible healthcare, and the legal and economic protection of bodily sovereignty. Reproductive justice in Africa is inseparable from the broader struggle for liberation, self-determination, and the reclamation of African systems of care and knowledge (Ross & Solinger, 2017).



5. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING FEMINISTS REPARATIONS

5.1 Challenges of Implementing Feminist Reparations

Structural Patriarchy and Legal Constraints

The mechanisms that are required by legal systems to ensure the realization of gender-inclusive reparations are highly inadequate, limiting the ability of African states to implement feminist reparations in Africa. Inadequate, and in some cases, the complete lack of resources leads to the underfunding of courts which are also constrained by outdated laws that are not responsive to the gendered aspects of violence (Banda, 2005). In the aftermath of conflict and in transitional justice mechanisms, intentional mechanisms have not usually been put in place to ensure the experiences and specific needs of women, girls and LGBTQ+ individuals are included in truth-seeking and reparation processes. In postcolonial societies, the legal systems overlook the lived experiences and needs of marginalized groups, leading to the underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence and their exclusion from reparation initiatives due to the legal gaps that do not acknowledge suffered harms (Banda, 2005). Faced with social stigma and retaliation, women are discouraged from adding their voice to truth-seeking commissions and claiming compensation.

Political Resistance and National Interests

With a view that reparations can be sensitive in the political landscape and financially demanding, States often deprioritize feminist reparations programs. The notion that reparation threatens peace and cohesion, coupled with the fear that they seek to challenge power structures, affects States' will and commitment to ensure reparative justice is achieved (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015).

Patriarchal and Cultural Resistance

Deeply rooted patriarchal norms in African societies hinder the acknowledgement of gendered harms. The treatment of systemic injustices and rights violations, including sexual violence, forced marriage, and reproductive exploitation as personal and/or family matters fails to ensure public redress (Mama, 2001). These societal realities hinder the visibility of female survivors and restrict their access to reparative mechanisms.

Donor-Driven Agendas and Marginalization

The limited and in some cases, absolute lack of autonomy in the design of reparation initiatives to meet the specific needs of people and communities remains a fundamental challenge that hinders the sustainability of reparation programs. Reparation initiatives informed by donor agendas and priorities are shaped to deliver results for international donors that are not necessarily beneficial or aligned to the priorities of feminist movements and local communities. This limited autonomy and dependency on donors results in failure to take into account local realities and marginalizes grassroots movements (Mama, 2001). Additionally, global north donors, evidently benefiting from racialized systems that perpetuate gender injustice, fail to support the total involvement of global south feminist movements in the design of reparation programs that are reflective of the needs of people.



5.2 Opportunities for Advancing Feminist Reparations

Shifts in International Law

Increasingly, laws at a global level, particularly those on reparative justice, are recognizing the significance of gender-responsive and sensitive frameworks that seek to ensure redress, justice, reform, accountability and equality. The existence of instruments such as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Maputo Protocol mandates that States should address gender-specific harms using approaches that are participatory and holistic (Banda, 2005). While these frameworks provide feminist movements with the needed leverage to seek accountability and push for institutional reform, it is argued that reparation for colonial violence remains unrecognized and unaddressed by international frameworks.

Grassroots Feminist Movements

Grossroot feminist movements have continued to fundamentally contribute to the sustainable advocacy for reparations that are survivor-centered. Groups such as the African Feminist Forum and Women's Advocacy Network have coupled legal advocacy with psychosocial support, public awareness raising, and lobbying for political commitment (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015). The efforts of grassroot movements has led to significant achievements and gains, including legal recognition of SGBV survivors and symbolic reparations. Going beyond centering historical injustices in the quest to achieving reparations, grassroot feminist movements have strongly advocated for the recognition of slavery and colonial injustice as foundational oppressive systems that influence or structure contemporary inequalities.

Recognizing colonialism as a major contributing factor to current socioeconomic and political challenges hindering women's access to land ownership, economic opportunities and equal rights, Pan-African feminist groups are collectively applying advocacy approaches and championing reparations frameworks that seek redress for historical injustices and highlight how they continue to re-emerge in neocolonial systems, including foreign aid and unsustainable dependence on donors that systematically exploits people. In addressing the limited documentation, and in some cases, total erasure of enslaved and colonized women's experiences, feminist collectives from the grassroots and policy rooms have championed the re-telling of historical injustices through gender lenses that bring to light the lived stories of women imposed by slavery and colonial structures which violated their agency, perpetrated reproductive control and sexual violence, and forced patriarchal norms which erased pre-colonial African traditional and matriarchal political systems. Through collective and intentional advocacy, feminist collectives have championed reparations to include transformative justice geared towards disrupting patriarchy, capitalism, racism and imperialism; demanding for the return of stolen land; and reclaiming African spiritual beliefs and indigenous traditions.

Intersectional and Transformative Justice Frameworks

Approaches used by feminist movements to advance reparations put strong emphasis on intersectionality: addressing how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to affect people. These frameworks seek not only redress but also systemic transformation—through education, economic redistribution, and healing (Tronto, 1993). Approaches like this ensure increased inclusiveness and sustainability of reparative processes.



6. HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY ADVOCACY EFFORTS BY AFRICAN FEMINISTS

For decades feminist movements have championed the fight against injustice and led advocacy for reparative justice. African Feminist Movements have, over the years, applied tailored approaches, including grassroots engagement, policy advocacy, legal activism, intersectionality and advocacy for reparative justice to address colonial and racial injustice, slavery, patriarchy and post-conflict injustice. For decades, reparative justice has been advocated for and advanced by African feminist movements in recognition of the fact that it is fundamental to acknowledging past occurrences, healing historical wounds and ensuring transformed economic, social and political structures. While recognizing that monetary compensation is an essential part of reparations, African Feminist Movements have conceived reparations to include dismantling patriarchal power structures, ensuring and strengthening institutional and legal reforms, ensuring the redistribution of power and the rightful documentation of the injustices perpetrated on women by slavery, colonial rule, racism, patriarchy and socio-political injustice.

6.1 Historical Feminist Advocacy for Reparations

Historically, African feminist movements have been at the forefront of resisting systemic injustices in different forms. Through protests organized to raise voices to disrupt oppressive systems and strategic advocacy for legal, institutional, structural and policy reforms, African feminists championed the quest for reparative justice. In Nigeria, the Aba Women's War (1929) was a significant turning point that influenced the resistance of African women against the exploitation perpetrated by colonial rule. Mobilized in thousands, women raised their voices and resisted taxes and administrative injustices imposed and carried out by colonial authorities (Amadiume, 1997). Similarly, in South Africa, working through organizations that pushed for reforms, access to land, equality and restitution, women were actively involved in both mass protest which led to the 1965 women's march to the union buildings, and advocacy which focused on recognition and reforms, to resist apartheid (Walker, 1991). These efforts and collective feminist resistance built a strong foundation for reparative justice, and created avenues through which feminists have continued to demand for justice, accountability and reforms.

6.2 Contemporary African Feminist Advocacy for Reparations

Modern-day feminist advocacy for reparations in Africa has gradually become a strong intersectional movement deeply rooted in the fight against historical, colonial, and patriarchal injustices. In attempts to ensure women's voices are documented and reparative frameworks acknowledge the gendered violence and injustices women suffered across historical and modern-day events, African feminists, using tailored advocacy strategies, have continued to challenge the exclusion of women's experiences in continental and global discussions on justice and accountability (Mama, 2001). Through networks, movements, solidarity groups and platforms, including the African Feminist Forum, advocacy for reparations by feminists have gone beyond demanding monetary compensation to include documentation of women's experiences, commitment to reform, and healing (AFF, 2006). Contributing to transnational efforts to demand reparations for colonialism, slavery and racial injustice, African feminists have taken bold strides to challenge economic systems and impunity that reinforce gender inequalities.



6.2.1 Feminist Advocacy for Post-Conflict Reparation

Feminist movements, in the aftermath of conflict in African countries, have worked to ensure the stories, voices and experiences of women are included in truth-seeking commissions and processes. Following conflicts, including the genocide in Rwanda which was fuelled by colonially-promoted ethnic divisions between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes and the enforcement of western gender norms that disrupted women's authority; the Ugandan and Liberian civil wars influenced by prolonged colonial-imposed deprivation of economic rights and promotion of military governance both of which enabled the systemic violation of women's agency and laid the foundation for continued militarized violence; and the 22-year dictatorial rule in The Gambia built on legal and bureaucratic systems that were passed on from the colonial era such as the infamous Public Order Act which infringes on the constitutional rights of people to peaceful protest; feminist organizations mobilized resources and people, ensuring gender-responsive approaches were used by truth commissions to address the violence, political and socio-economic impacts of conflict on women.

The focus for reparations in these post-conflict nations have centered on prioritizing the needs of women who survived violence, structural injustice and social stigma. In Uganda, the Women's Advocacy Network (WAN) works to ensure psychosocial, economic and legal support is provided to survivors of war-related gender-based violence (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015). Through grassroot initiatives geared towards reconciliation in Rwanda, women have mobilized in groups to seek recognition and demand for redress. Reparations advocated by feminist groups in post-conflict also go further to dismantle neocolonial systems that continue to instigate conflict and reclaim the agency and autonomy of African women to have unhindered access to economic, social and political rights.

6.2.2 Continental Legal Frameworks

Providing the required legitimacy and enforceability to address rights violations to ensure accountability, legal frameworks are a central part in the advocacy for reparative justice. These frameworks strengthen legitimacy and enable governments to execute their mandates of prohibiting and addressing the abuse of women's rights; ensure the protection of the fundamental rights of women; establish mechanisms through which perpetrators can be held accountable; and set clear mandates for all institutions involved in achieving reparative justice. In recognition of the significance of including legal frameworks in the fight to ensure women have equal access to justice and legal protection, tailored advocacy by feminist movements have focused on seeking redress, reforms, equality and justice through legislation. The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) coalition has played a central part in the advocacy to adopt the Maputo Protocol, which addresses the failures of colonial and foreign instruments that seek to address the lived realities of African women, and mandates that redress should be provided for gender-based violence and discrimination by African states (Banda, 2005). Across the continent, through movements and solidarity groups, feminists continue to lobby for the effective implementation of the Maputo Protocol and other legal frameworks through which reparative justice can be institutionalized, legal sovereignty of African women can be reclaimed and their experiences can be centered within a continental framework that counters the racial marginalization of women by neocolonial systems.

6.2.3 Engagement with the Diaspora and at a Global Level

Through partnerships, transnational solidarity, and intersectional advocacy, African feminists have implemented strategies aimed at enhancing diaspora and global engagement. Feminist networks, including the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) have built alliances, prioritized transnational movement



building and included the voices African women in the diaspora in their work, ensuring they share experiences, collectively champion causes and initiate programs that solidify a global feminist agenda. Taking part in global movements formed to demand reparation and collectively advocating for justice, feminist movements continue to challenge injustices and women's experiences relating to slavery, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Partnering with African feminists and collectives to link grassroots women networks in Southern Africa and Central America, Just Associates supports cross-regional exchanges through which women share experiences, have in-depth analysis of how colonialism has informed modern injustices and explore strategies for global advocacy for transformative reparations. These movements such as the African Feminist Forum and Just Associates (JASS) lead advocacies that demand for reparations to be rooted in history and the lived experiences of women (Mama, 2001).

6.3. Advantages of Feminist Advocacy Strategies

Centering the lived experiences and voices of African women, particularly survivors and marginalized women, African feminist Feminist advocacy strategies offer advantages and strategic interventions in the fight for reparations. These strategies, with strong emphasis on justice, equality, community engagement, and intersectionality; create models of justice that are inclusive, accountable and just. With long-term vision grounded in the integration of legal, sociocultural, economic and psychosocial dimensions, the influence of these advocacies strengthens the impact across different levels of community and people (Tronto, 1993). African feminist advocacy strategies provide sustainable interventions that ensure:

- The use of victim-centered approaches that prioritize the voices of survivors to ensure reparations are responsive to their needs. In The Gambia, this approach, advocated for by organizations such as Women in Liberation and Leadership and the Female Lawyers Association of the Gambia, ensured that the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) provided a safe space that encouraged the inclusion of women's voices and testimonies based on their experiences of sexual violence, stripped autonomy and political persecution during Jammeh's 22-year dictatorship. The participation of women in the truth-seeking process ensured that the final report of the TRRC was written through gendered lenses and was inclusive of gender-specific recommendations which were accepted and included in the official government White Paper on the Implementation of the TRRC Recommendations;
- An in depth understanding of intersectionality and how structural violence affects different people, particularly marginalized women, girls and LGBTQ+ individuals. In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, intentional advocacy strategies were applied by women's networks to ensure reparations addressed the health conditions and economic situations of women who lost their husbands to the conflict, orphans and survivors who had HIV;
- The advocacy by African feminist movements reclaims and decolonizes history that reinforce eurocentric versions of slavery, colonialism and racism. Using instruments such as the Maputo Protocol to advance equality and justice through African feminist lenses, movements, including the Solidarity for African Women's Rights, continue to address the historical lack of acknowledgement of the ways in which colonial injustices such as stolen land and women's agency built the groundwork for current injustices African women continue to confront; and
- The engagement of local communities to take ownership collectively and tell their stories through truth-telling and traditional knowledge systems.



6.4 Limits of Feminist Advocacy Strategies

Notwithstanding the transformative vision and strategic interventions by Feminist movements, the existence of various limitations hinder the sustainable realization of reparative justice. These limitations include patriarchal structures that undermine and deprioritize feminist women's issues including feminist perspectives on reparations, institutional gaps and inadequate resources that form barriers to the effective enforcement of reparations, and the underrepresentation of African feminists in global reparation discussions which leads to the exclusion of African feminist perspectives in decision-making on reparations for historical and modern injustices. Additionally, donor priorities and the exclusion of African feminist voices in global discussions deprioritize local needs and autonomy (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015; Mama, 2001).



7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PAN-AFRICANIST FEMINIST REPARATIONS AGENDA

Evidently, the effects of slavery, colonialism, conflict and patriarchy have left lasting scars on Africans, including women and girls who continue to be faced with social, economic and political burdens. Recognizing the various ways in which the aforementioned historical and modern events were weaponized to target and harm women's rights and agency, immediate and long-term strategies are needed to address the harm women and girls were subjected to as a result of systemic oppression, slavery, colonialism and conflict. These immediate and long-term strategies encompass intentional and detailed measures that seek to ensure reparations recognizes and caters to the socioeconomic, political and cultural needs of women and girls.

In attempts to address historical injustices and an equitable way forward, reparations through the lens of Pan-African feminist recognizes the significance of actionable and achievable immediate and long-term reparative measures that ensure the injustices of the past are acknowledged and reparative justice is achieved.

Development of Reparative Frameworks that Recognize Historical Injustice

The inadequate acknowledgement of historical and current systemic oppression of African societies and people hinders the effective realization of reparative justice. There's an eminent need for AU member states and national governments to prioritize the development and/or effective enforcement of comprehensive and actionable reparations frameworks that recognize that reparations must transcend financial compensation to include programs that document the different forms of violence experienced by women through slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism, and educate people on historical injustices and the restoration of cultural artifacts that were unjustly taken away from African societies. This ensures historical oppression and its diverse impacts are acknowledged.

Strengthened Gender-Responsive Reparative Justice

Having encountered multifaceted injustice and violence, the lived experiences of women and girls should be addressed. Gender-responsive and sensitive approaches are necessary to apply in all measures for reparative justice. It is crucial that the stories of women and girls, and the harms inflicted on them, including economic, sexual and gender-based violence are addressed through legal redress, monetary compensation, access to healthcare and psychosocial support, and inclusion in leadership. The immediate strategy can be achieved through collective action, with feminist movements and organizations working closely with AU Member States and global rights organizations to leverage on the political will and commitment of governments to ensure reparative justice centers the needs of women and girls in equitable means.

Reparations Through Economic Empowerment

The passage and full implementation of policies that support economic empowerment, particularly for women is central to the realization of reparative justice. These policies should explicitly acknowledge historical exclusions by guaranteeing women's equal access to land, credit, and other resources, empowering them to participate fully in and benefit from economic systems.



Enhanced Institutional Reforms

Strong, accountable and inclusive institutions are crucial in the sustained attainment of reparations and as such, institutional reforms should be prioritized. Through collective action, the African Union Member States in close consultation with feminist movements and rights groups, need to ensure the formation of dedicated national and continental reparation commissions mandated to take bold strides aimed at achieving sustained and impactful reparative justice. Established with primary goals aimed at recognizing historical harms perpetuated on societies and people through slavery, systemic racism, genocide, and colonialism; ensuring the participatory design of holistic reparations frameworks tailored to meet the needs of victims and survivors of injustice; and creating an enabling environment that allows the participation of victims and survivors in reparations, reparation commissions are fundamental in the quest to achieve sustainable transformative reparation.

Reparations Through Education and Cultural Restoration

Education and Cultural institutions should integrate reparations in their curricula and public media. The integration of the lived experiences and histories in educational programs and narratives ensures their contributions are recognized and respected. This enables the authentic, accurate and unfiltered accounts of women's histories during colonial periods, slavery, conflict and systemic injustices are narrated. This goes further to ensure women's contributions are not erased and the roles they played as strong voices against oppression and fighters in the forefront for justice are acknowledged. Additionally, restoring cultural artifacts strengthens cultural heritage.

Enforced Policies and Legal Frameworks

The ratification and enforcement of tools, including the Maputo Protocol and the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVWAG) by AU Member States would solidify continental commitments to gender equality and protection. The enforcement of policies and legal frameworks would significantly contribute to the sustainable attainment of reparations based on economic empowerment, healing and redress for women and girls and built on a foundation of equality, accountability and reform.



8. CONCLUSION

This background paper has brought to the fore the gendered and racialized dimensions of the historical and contemporary harms experienced by African women and girls, which are deeply rooted in the trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans, colonisation, patriarchy, racial capitalism, and neglect for centuries. Reparations are situated not just as a legal and fiscal duty, but a moral, political and epistemic obligation. Seen through a Pan-African feminist framework, reparations become a radical act of truth-telling, structural change, and collective healing to confront the visible and not-so-visible architectures of harm.

As Africa marks the 2025 theme of the African Union on justice and reparations for Africans and people of African descent, it is crucial that reparatory justice processes do not elude gender justice as an add on or symbolic directive. Gender justice must form the basis of all reparatory processes and require centering the lives, labour, resistance, and knowledge of African women in the design, implementation, and evaluation of reparative actions; be they legal, economic, cultural or psychosocial.

The constraints of existing frameworks, as evidenced by their gender neutral design and state centric delivery, necessitate a comprehensive reimagining of reparations embedded in intersectionality, collective ownership, and history. A Pan African feminist reparations agenda requires the dismantling of extractive economies, reclamation of land and heritage, redistribution of power, and restoration of autonomy. It requires ongoing investments in feminist movements and community-led initiatives as sites of accountability and transformation.

Reparations must do more than patch up the broken pieces, but build what was taken: dignity, sovereignty, solidarity, and self-determined futures of African women and their communities. Not only is this possible, it is essential. Justice, if it is to be reparatory and impactful, has to be feminist, African, and transformative.



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