

COVID-19 Recovery and Beyond: An African Feminist Vision for Macroeconomic System Change

Wangari Kinoti and Fatimah Kelleher

Abstract

This article provides an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of women in Africa and the extent to which government policies designed to respond to the social and economic shocks caused by the pandemic have addressed wider, persistent gender inequalities. We argue that while there have been some laudable policy efforts across the continent, they have not only been largely gender-blind, but have also potentially deepened gender inequalities. We find that although some measures like cash transfers, various forms of tax cuts and public employment schemes may have benefited women, they did not take into account the more systemic and gendered exclusionary factors, such as the ability to access payment infrastructure and digital financial services, household care burdens and division of labour, access to decent paid work and the dynamics of formal versus informal work. Containment measures were implemented without much evidence for mitigation planning around increased unpaid care and domestic workloads or escalations in gender-based violence. We make the case for a rethink of the predominant economic models that have kept Africa in a financial chokehold, severely limiting the ability of governments to deliver on the social and economic rights of their people. Ultimately, we draw on African feminist positions to recommend a set of policy directions that could form the backbone for fundamental system change, which, as this pandemic has shown us, is crucial for the economic health of the continent and the wellbeing of the African people.

Introduction

By the end of 2021, over 5.6 million people had died from COVID-19 globally (ECDC, 2021). While reported death rates in Africa remain among the lowest from a global continental perspective, the start of 2021 saw a spike in cases and mortality that led to a “second wave” of the pandemic over that year, resulting in a rapid quadrupling of numbers of both the infected and those who succumbed to the virus. As a result, the economic devastation – already disproportionately felt by the African continent – deepened intensely over that year. But even as the real impacts of COVID-19 are expected to be felt most keenly in the years ahead, voices across the continent hold hope that in this devastation lies an opportunity for systemic change. Globally, the pandemic has exposed the inherent inequalities and injustices of the dominant global economic order. Vertical dependencies on global supply chains and inadequate fiscal space to deliver social protection have left citizens facing food deprivation and severe economic precarity as both incomes and savings vanish. And while early calls for a “return to normal” have since been followed with the mantra of “building back better”, these platitudes fail to capture the more deeply rooted systemic change needed for a more economically just future.

In this paper, we begin by looking at some of the major impacts of COVID-19 so far, particularly as they are experienced by women on the continent. We then present an analysis of a sample of the policy measures taken by governments – targeted at individuals, households or workers, employers and businesses – in order to illustrate the extent to which they have largely continued to miss the mark when it comes to addressing the gender inequalities that have persisted and, in many cases, been worsened by the pandemic. We also present a brief analysis of the financial realities that African countries are in against the backdrop of a historically deeply problematic global financial architecture that keeps Africa in a debt, austerity and privatisation chokehold and how this continues to influence policy decisions in the COVID-19 era. Finally, after a more in-depth look at the economic realities of women on the continent, we offer a range of alternative policy directions, informed by (Pan) African feminist positions for system change that go beyond the current crisis and encompass a viable rethink of the dominant economic paradigms that were already failing many African citizens even before the coming of COVID-19.

COVID-19 in Africa: The Impacts so Far

After the start of the pandemic and over the course of 2020, COVID-19 took the lives of 65,000 Africans and infected 2.7 million (ACSS, 2020). At the beginning of 2022, COVID cases on the continent were at over ten million and reported deaths at over 236,000 (ECDC, 2021). Even accounting for significant underreporting across the continent, these figures have placed Africa at far lower morbidity and mortality rates than other parts of the world. While the reasons for this continue to be debated (a younger and more dispersed population being the dominant theory), the continent's position in a globalised world has meant that the social and economic impacts are far more visible and have also arguably been felt disproportionately. The vertical vulnerabilities of Africa's export-oriented economies within the global economy have left the continent facing its first recession in 25 years (World Bank, 2020a). Countries with the greatest dependency on primary resources, in particular, experienced the worst downturns as commodity markets suffered from the multiple lockdown impacts of the decreased movement of goods, depressed demands for manufactured products dependent on those commodities, and a general halt to global production within supply chains (Tröster, 2020). Outflows of capital from emerging markets towards "safe havens" have also followed (Tröster, 2020).

At a human level, these economic impacts are being felt in various ways. The predominance of the informal sector across the continent has led to increased economic precarity as markets have closed in response to the pandemic. Women dominate the informal sector on the continent and there is evidence that globalisation has increased their employment informality rather than decreased it, resulting in increased gendered income disparity (Chimhangwa, 2020). COVID-19 has intensified gendered economic inequalities significantly; in South Africa, for example, rural women who are subsistence farmers and informal traders have experienced severe loss of income and have found themselves relying on loan sharks to sustain their production and households (Parry, 2020). In Kenya and Ghana, a study of young women in urban areas, who are mostly workers in the informal sector, showed significant decreases in income and/or loss of jobs since the onset of the pandemic (Chakma, 2020).

But even women in formal, paid employment have been disproportionately hit, with industries that employ more women being most impacted by the global fallout of 2020 (UN Women, 2020). The gendered segregation of work that exists across many industries, coupled with unfair working contracts, pay and conditions,

leave women doubly vulnerable in any economic crisis, and COVID-19 has been no different.

While terms like “slow down” and “shut down” have been used to describe the economic realities brought on by the pandemic, the opposite has been true for the care economy and particularly for unpaid care and domestic work, which, in fact, went into overdrive. Although there were major variations in the stringency and length of lockdowns across the continent, even the mildest lockdown measures caused notable disruptions at the household level when it came to care work. This has disproportionately affected women and girls in households. Although it varied from country to country, it is estimated that, before the pandemic, African women were already doing 3.4 times more unpaid care work than men (ILO, 2018). People’s confinement at home, school and daycare facility closures, the growing vulnerability and restricted travel of older members of households, increased domestic workloads. Healthcare burdens on households also increased both due to care required for COVID-19 patients and, particularly at the onset of the pandemic, the impact of scaling back on non-COVID-19 related medical and health services. In an August 2020 survey covering young women in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa, over 70% reported an increase in their household work during the lockdown period, with 46% spending an extra two to four hours and 31% spending more than four extra hours doing housework every day (ActionAid, 2020). This included cooking (as more family members were home during the lockdown), childcare and home-schooling of children. Physical cut-off from institutional and familial support that followed lockdown restrictions compounded the situation, with services and networks that women in particular are more in need of, such as healthcare, childcare provision and local transportation, being even less accessible than before.

As we moved deeper into 2021, the pandemic’s second wave across the continent delivered greater tragedy in terms of mortality and morbidity, compounding the wider impacts. Throughout the year, the toll continued to rise, driven heavily by reporting from the southern region and, in particular, South Africa –both a more susceptible economic hub and also a country with one of the stronger reporting mechanisms on the continent (Al-Jazeera, 2021a). The continent’s already fragile health systems were being overwhelmed and, quite simply, could not cope. Although there has been some vaccine uptake across the continent, this remains lacking with many African countries continuing to struggle to source not only the vaccine for all their citizens, but also the medical equipment needed to manage cases and lower

morbidity. As at the end of December 2021, all but one of Africa's 54 nations were rolling out COVID-19 vaccines. Of the almost eight billion doses given globally, only three per cent had been administered in Africa, and only around eight per cent of Africans had been fully vaccinated, compared with more than 60% in many high-income countries (Africa CDC, 2021). Meanwhile, the emergence and continued movement of new variants means that subsequent waves of COVID-19 continue to threaten (Al-Jazeera, 2021b). Any reinstatement of lockdowns and other restrictions across countries - while harder to uphold as stringently as in the first wave - will continue to devastate an already economically precarious informal sector that most Africans, particularly women, are dependent on. Countries have already been pushed into recession in the wake of the pandemic. Rwanda went into its first economic recession (World Bank, 2020b), attributed in part to its tourism and hospitality industry being hit hard and potentially compromising the great progress made in poverty reduction over the years. Kenya also faced its first recession in 18 years with the hospitality and education sectors being the most affected (Muriruri, 2021). World Bank projections heralded Africa's first recession in 25 years (IMF, 2020a).

Government Policy Responses: Missing the Mark on Gender

Government responses to the social and economic crises flowing from the pandemic have varied across the continent. Policy decisions of this nature continue to take place against the backdrop of a continent already facing multiple crises, with some specific and disproportionate impacts on women as discussed in the next two sections.

As was the case globally, the initial policy measures put in place by governments across the continent were related to containment. Notably, African countries took **containment measures** comparatively early, and in most cases, even before the first index case was recorded (World Health Organisation, 2021). These measures included geographical containment, periods of home confinement, suspension of social, educational and economic activities, and prohibition of mass gatherings. A World Health Organisation (WHO) study of containment strategies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal illustrates that there were impressive levels of adherence to the measures, while recognising the reality of adherence fatigue creeping in over time (WHO, 2021a). It also makes some reference to the impact of the containment measures on "vulnerable groups" and the mental health toll on the population. However, there is no attention paid to the issues of increased household labour and gender-based violence (GBV) as a result of some of the containment

measures. GBV was a global pandemic long before the onset of COVID-19 and it has been documented that it is even more prevalent during any type of emergency. Before the pandemic, governments were already failing to provide essential services to address GBV and, as described later in this section, they found themselves in a largely ineffective scramble to prevent and respond to rising violence levels when COVID-19 hit. In Kenya, for example, rape and other forms of sexual violence cases increased exponentially in the first two weeks of the current nationwide curfew, constituting 35,38% of all reported crimes (Daily Nation Newspaper, 2020). “Stay-at-home” directives largely do not account for the fact that there are many women, girls and LGBTQI+ people for whom home is not a safe place; with increased confinement and isolation at home comes increased risk of GBV, compounded by the lack of options to leave under a lockdown.

Cash transfers in one form or another was probably the most common policy measure taken as soon as the pandemic hit the continent. Malawi announced a six-month Emergency Cash Transfer Programme (giving US\$47 per month to each beneficiary) for 172, 000 households in urban and peri-urban areas and estimated to reach 35% of urban households (ILO, 2021). The government simultaneously announced a “top up” to its existing unconditional Social Cash Transfer Programme. South Africa expanded its social grants programme through an extensive special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress scheme that included an increased child support grant (South African Government, 2022). Kenya introduced an additional KES Ten billion (US\$100 million) in cash transfers to the elderly, orphans and “other vulnerable members of the society” over and above the existing US\$19 a month scheme (ILO, 2021). Many cash transfer programmes are based on digital transfers made via mobile phones. Depending on context, women can face significant challenges accessing digitised government-to-person (G2P) payments. One is their ability to access payment infrastructure and digital financial services; many women face barriers such as discriminatory requirements for and/or lack of documentation to open required accounts. Additionally, many women will have restricted mobility due to domestic care responsibilities or other cultural structures that limit their access to mobile money agents, particularly in underserved rural communities. There are also gender gaps in mobile phone ownership (13% in Africa south of the Sahara) linked to identification document requirements and affordability (Zimmerman and May, 2021). On top of their disproportionate care and domestic work burden, women are less likely to be in paid work, earn less than men when they are, and are

concentrated in the informal economy, making them most vulnerable to economic exclusion. Social protection programmes that do not take this into account end up widening gender inequalities.

Governments also took various forms of taxation measures targeting individuals, employers and businesses. These measures were widely intended to mitigate income losses for individuals, employers and businesses (primarily by introducing new tax relief parameters and lowering income tax rates) and improve access to basic necessities for households (mostly by reducing consumption taxes). Kenya introduced a 100% tax relief on monthly incomes of US\$240 or less. The top income tax rate was also reduced from 30% to 25% and value added tax (VAT) shrunk from 16% to 14%. Corporation tax reduced by five per cent (ILO, 2021). However, these measures were short-lived with Kenya's parliament reversing all but one of them in December 2020, eight months after they were introduced (Obulutsa, 2020). South Africa introduced a tax subsidy to employers of up to ZAR500 per month for private sector employees earning below ZAR6,500 under the Employment Tax Incentive. It also fast-tracked VAT refunds and provided a three-month delay for filing and first payment of carbon tax (IMF, 2021a). Guinea reduced taxes on health and life insurance contracts (IMF, 2021a). Of course, some measures such as decreasing consumption taxes, may result in short term benefits for women, even though they are not deliberately designed to do so. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, introduced a three-month suspension of the collection of VAT on the import and sale of necessities or mass consumption products for a period of three months. This was likely to benefit low-income women who are generally responsible for meeting basic household needs. A similar measure was taken on agricultural products, which would probably benefit 72% of women who work in agriculture (UNDP and UN Women, 2020). On the other hand, gender gaps in employment mean that payroll tax relief will neither apply to nor benefit the majority of women as they are concentrated in the informal sector. The same can be said of tax cuts to insurance policies when most insurance policies are taken out as part of formal employment contracts.

Targeted public employment programmes also featured in the stimulus packages of several countries. Nigeria's Special Public Works in the Rural Areas programme was set up to provide jobs for 774,000 young people through three-month placements paying US\$51 a month (Government of Nigeria, 2021). These youth employment schemes have been criticised as not accounting for the high

rates of underemployment, where millions of educated and skilled young people are still without work or under-utilising their skills. These schemes primarily target young people from the lowest economic bracket and with little education. *Kazi Mtaani* is the Kenyan equivalent, this time targeting young people living in informal settlements in an “extended public works project” aimed at utilising labour intensive approaches to create sustainable public goods in the urban development sector (Republic of Kenya, 2017). The jobs target an initial 226,000 young people in and around informal settlements with the aim of improving the environment and service delivery infrastructure, as well as providing income generation opportunities. Although gender-specific information on these two schemes is not publicly available, public employment schemes of this temporary nature have been found to include little effort to take into account women’s participation. In many cases, households will select a male family member to participate and women tend to opt not to do so. Other issues include unfriendly work environments and male work norms leading to gender biases in selection. Crucially, many of these schemes do not consider the gender-based division of labour in households and the constraints on women’s time and availability in that regard.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is difficult to find COVID-19 data that is disaggregated by sex or gender, including on policy responses across the continent. However, it can be deduced from the limited information available that while there have been some laudable policy efforts across the continent, they have largely been gender-blind. This is not unique to Africa; UNDP and UN Women estimate that only 18% of the global social protection and job response has been “gender sensitive”.¹ In fact, 16 countries were reported as not having registered any gender-sensitive measures at all (Mlambo-Ngchuka, 2020). The UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker defines “gender sensitive” measures as those that seek to address gendered links and challenges, including violence against women and girls, women’s economic security and unpaid care work. These would include social protection measures that target women or prioritise them as the main recipients of benefits, labour market measures aimed at improving women’s access to paid work, and fiscal and economic measures that channel support to sectors of the economy where women are overrepresented. In addressing unpaid care work, we would see social protection measures that support women and men with care responsibilities or improved services for populations with care needs and labour market measures

¹ The authors prefer the term “gender-responsive”.

that help workers with care responsibilities to cope with the rising demand for unpaid care (UNDP, 2021).

At 57%, those measures focused on preventing and responding to violence formed the majority of “gender-sensitive” measures taken on the continent. These ranged from setting up or boosting hotlines, shelters and other GBV services (Mozambique, Angola, South Sudan and others), to fast tracking cases in court (South Africa, Zimbabwe) and measures to improve data collection (Cameroon). Despite WHO advice for governments to declare GBV services essential and an integral part of national and local COVID-19 response plans, by September 2020, only seven countries in the region (Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe) had taken this step (UNDP and UN Women, 2020).

As of the end of September 2020, a total of 45 countries and territories in Africa south of the Sahara had adopted 189 social protection and labour market measures in response to COVID-19, but only 16% of these measures were considered “gender sensitive”. Similarly, of the 98 fiscal and economic measures that 31 countries and territories adopted, only 19% were aimed at strengthening women’s economic security. Measures to address unpaid care and domestic work featured the least, at only two per cent on the UNDP-UN Women Tracker. These kinds of measures also performed poorly globally at eight per cent, showing that the unpaid labour done at domestic and community level primarily by women, despite coming into unprecedented focus during the pandemic, remained largely absent from policy discussions and decisions in most of the world. Overall, we continue to see a poor effort to design policies that aim to reduce gender inequalities at a time when, more than ever, they are in plain sight.

Africa in a Global Finance Chokehold: Debt, Austerity and Privatisation

African governments have taken a raft of public policy measures against the backdrop of what was already a dire economic situation for the continent. It is important to note this in charting the path ahead, not only for continental recovery from the impact of the pandemic, but also for a fundamental system change towards building just economies.

In its April 2021 Regional Economic Outlook report for Africa, the IMF classifies 17 countries as either in debt distress or at high risk of distress (IMF, 2021b). Over the period between 2010 and 2018, the average public debt increased from

40% to 59% of GDP, making this region the fastest growing in debt accumulation, far beyond other developing regions. In the same period, public debt as a percentage of GDP had at least doubled in more than a quarter of the countries in the region, among which are Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria (Carneiro and Kouame, 2021). The IMF projected that public debt would increase to 65% of GDP by the end of 2020, with the largest increases being in oil-exporting countries (IMF, 2020b).

When it comes to COVID-19 specific response measures, analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (Raga and Housseini, 2020), shows that as of mid-August 2020, economic stimuli (both fiscal and monetary policy) across 23 countries south of the Sahara amounted to only three per cent of GDP. South Africa's package was highest at ten per cent of GDP (Smith, 2020). In comparison, the amount across the G20 countries was 27percent. This is equivalent to about US\$3,900 worth of fiscal and liquidity support for each person in G20 countries, compared with US\$52 per person in African countries (UNDP and UN Women, 2020).

Towards the end of January 2021, the IMF cautioned South Africa against its large fiscal deficit and massive debt burden (Zwane, 2021). Its advice on improving the situation was what we had come to expect long before the onset of the pandemic: wage bill containment, avoiding "ill-targeted" subsidies and transfers to state-owned enterprises, creating conditions to increase private investment, redefining the role of the public sector and increasing labour market flexibility (Zwane, 2021). Yet it is widely documented that this advice is what continues to result in the poor delivery of social protection, privatised and commodified public goods and services, and precarious labour conditions described in other sections of this paper that are the major cause of enduring gender inequalities. In Kenya, citizens recently put up a vigorous online protest under the hashtag "#stoploaningKenya", opposing a new US\$2,34 billion IMF loan described as support for pandemic response and economic reform (Mwaura, 2021). A petition signed by more than 235,000 people protested this newest loan on the basis that "previous loans to the Kenya government have not been prudently utilised and have often ended up in mega corruption scandals" (Change.org, 2022). Although corruption and misuse of public funds featured most prominently in the campaign, the petition also decried heavy taxation and the high price of basic commodities. In its latest Country Report for Kenya, the IMF continues to advise the broadening of tax nets and the reduction of tax exemptions—including VAT - and restraint in recurrent expenditure, "particularly through a gradual reduction in the wage bill and transfers to public sector entities" (IMF, 2021c).

Many of the COVID response and recovery related actions taken by the international finance and development community fall short of addressing gender inequalities. For example, just eight out of 71 World Bank health emergency response projects approved between April and the end of June 2020 were aiming to eliminate healthcare fees, which are prohibitive in at least 56 of those countries. Out-of-pocket healthcare expenses hit the poor and women the hardest and, prior to the pandemic, pushed 100 million people into poverty every year (ReliefWeb, 2020).

Additionally, we continue to see COVID-19 financial support for countries being mostly in the form of new loans, despite the already vastly unsustainable debt levels on the continent. In April 2020, the G20 announced a plan suspending principal and interest payments on debts for the world's poorest countries due to bilateral government lenders between May and December of that year (University of Toronto, 2020). This Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) would potentially cover 77 countries which would have to make a formal request and make a set of commitments and disclosures on spending, public sector financing and borrowing. However, analysis by groups such as the European Network on Debt and Development shows that the G20 DSSI does not meet the scale of the debt problem in the Global South and calls for a much more ambitious approach, ranging from scaling up the DSSI to substantial debt relief, restructuring and cancellation (Iolanda, 2020).

There is also a possibility that the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) system could be directed towards funding a Liquidity and Sustainability Facility (LSF). SDRs are a unit added to the reserves of IMF member countries to increase their liquidity; they were last created following the 2009 financial crisis and are about to be created again in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the UK set to receive approximately US\$27 billion. However, while increasing the vulnerability of African countries to foreign currency debt, concerns regarding the characteristics of the LSF undermining fiscal space and monetary policy autonomy cannot be ignored by governments, despite the COVID-19 recovery pressures they now face (Gabor and Simeoni, 2021). Ultimately, the longer-term consequences of these risks could constrain the development needs of national economies in the long run.

For Africa, this reality of widening inequality while in the pursuit of economic growth is rooted in the IMF and World Bank-imposed structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s, where public sector cut-backs, deregulation, and privatisation crippled the strong state-building necessary to manage and implement progressive macroeconomic policy. For women, the SAPs

had impacts across the continent, with agricultural commercialisation pushing them further down the rural hierarchy, welfare provisioning being slashed or terminated, and cuts to state-provided health and education not only compounding patriarchal norms that deny women access to those services, but also leading to a huge reduction in women's formal avenues for secure wage earning in those same sectors (Abiru, 2018). Under the framework of the Washington Consensus, these policies have continued into the 21st century through de-industrialisation, a focus on export rather than domestic markets, import dependency and a suppression of the role of the state while promoting market-driven growth.

The latest and most blatant illustration of the life-threatening injustices that result from a neocolonial and neoliberal global governance and economic model is the gross inequity in access to COVID-19 vaccines between rich and poor countries. As the vaccine was being finalised for roll-out in November 2020, just over half (51%) of all available doses had been reserved through premarket purchase commitments for high income countries. These countries represent only 14% of the world's population (So, 2020). They include the United States, which reserved 800 million doses; Australia and Canada that collectively reserved one billion doses despite accounting for under one per cent of the global COVID-19 cases (So, 2020); and Japan. In what has been described as a "catastrophic moral failure" whose price will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's poorest countries, (WHO, 2021b), some countries and companies continue to bypass multilateral initiatives such as COVID-19 Global Vaccine Access to cut bilateral deals. In the meantime, a waiver on certain aspects of the trade regime for intellectual property rights (TRIPS) agreement that would allow up-scaled and more localised production of the vaccine remains contested at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), following a rejection of the proposal in March 2021 by predominantly global northern countries whose access to the vaccine has already been secured.

The trade-related inequality at the heart of this vaccine apartheid throws further light on the issue of trade more broadly within the continent, both in terms of trading relationships between African countries and the rest of the world, and more imminently in relation to intra-continental trade. Currently the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) has become the biggest economic project on the continent, promising economic development. It is also being touted as a key towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are serious concerns about the neoliberal model that the AfCFTA is based on, which need to

be interrogated. African feminist analysis of the AfCFTA has already assessed the problematic nature of the current model, which not only threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities between African nations as it creates winners and losers, but could also potentially be of greater benefit to extra-continental actors in the longer term (Kelleher, 2021). For women, the impacts of trade liberalisation – even as a continental initiative – could also be catastrophic, from the further dislodging of women’s rural sovereignty under an accelerated AfCFTA-supported agro-industrial paradigm, to the proliferation of jobs that exploit women’s low-waged labour in pursuit of comparative advantage (Kelleher, 2021). With privatisation of services also an implicit aspect of liberalisation, the AfCFTA’s rapid tariff liberalisation schedule will potentially further undermine the fiscal policy space of African governments to deliver on equitable universal public services in the longer term.

Existing Economic Realities and the Impacts on Women

In the area of unpaid care, the care economy and social reproduction, African women provide care to households and the economy predominantly through invisibilised, unpaid care and domestic labour, as well as migrant and public sector jobs that are precarious, badly paid and without labour protections. As a result, women carry a disproportionate amount of the physical, emotional, sexual and intellectual labour needed in homes, communities, markets and the global economy. Within many African contexts, the unpaid family labour both urban and rural women put into production is the foundation of their nations’ overall economic reproduction. In a rapidly urbanising continent, the agricultural and subsistence production that characterises the continent is just one aspect of an increasingly diversifying landscape of women’s labour.

Where universal access to public services and social infrastructure is concerned, the hollowing out of the role of the state following the introduction of the SAPs has led to a gradual commodification of rights via privatisation, increasingly in the form of public private partnerships. This has created a hierarchy of access. However, privatisation of subsidised and free public goods and services has not reduced government deficits any more than it has “crowded in” private investment for services which by their nature cannot and should not generate profit. Often more dependent on public services and infrastructure due to gendered roles in society, African women have carried the brunt of a lack of provision and growing inequities in access as these services have become increasingly commodified and

at the mercy of market vagaries. Beyond the right to education and health, critical public services such as water, electricity, transportation, public childcare and elder care services are all essential to reducing women's unpaid care responsibilities in their homes and communities.

As the pandemic continues to move across the world, the issue of vaccine equity has highlighted once again the importance not only of ensuring access to the COVID-19 vaccines, but of combating patent protections and intellectual property injustices more broadly. Halting the devastation of the disease itself remains the first imperative for African governments. Without a successful vaccination programme conducted in parallel with the rest of the world, the Africa Centre for Disease Control warns that COVID-19 could become an endemic disease in Africa, creating opportunities for the virus to mutate further. However, even as this paper is being written, the EU and other wealthier countries continue to hold back support from the TRIPS waiver so desperately needed at the WTO to ensure Africans can access the vaccine. This dependency has stemmed from the stark reality that all African countries are net importers of medical and pharmaceutical products, importing almost 100% of their pharmaceuticals. This reality exists alongside an increasingly accepted commodified approach to healthcare in Africa that has been compounded by the culling of state healthcare provision during the SAPs. Along with the incursion of private finance and a growing culture of health insurance penetration through increased financialisation, the continent also has the legacy of fighting for access to lifesaving medicines on the global stage in the face of inhumane intellectual property protections for multinational corporations within WTO trade agreements; the case of antiretroviral drugs in the earlier part of the 21st century remains an ever-present shadow of Africa's immense vulnerability within the economic order.

For the large numbers of women working in the informal economy, although the central role of informal economies is widely acknowledged, it continues to be treated as "adjacent" - a policy approach prejudiced by the fact that it is largely driven by women's labour. However, African economies are largely predicated on this invisibilised work, a reality that disrupts the fallacy that the informal economy is marginal while it is how many households earn their livelihoods. Policy interventions concerning them tend to focus on regulatory measures such as licensing and taxation. Little attention is paid to the rights of workers in the informal economy and African feminists have argued that this is largely driven by both the invisibilisation and undervaluing of women's labour.

The growth of the gig economy is also an area that policy makers will increasingly need to legislate for in the coming years. While, on the one hand, there is the potential for new opportunities for women's work, the gig economy itself could also lead to a "formalisation of informality" if the right protections are not put into place to protect workers – including women – with decent work standards in terms of contracts and remuneration (Kelleher, 2020). As with every other form of work, this will ultimately come down to who owns the means of production as the digital economy mushrooms, a reality currently riven with a gendered digital divide and other intersectional inequalities.

Austerity, debt and tax deficits have been at the heart of Africa's developmental barriers for decades and, even as the COVID-19 pandemic started to impact the continent in 2020, the continent was still dealing with the fallout of the financial crisis from a decade ago which led to austerity measures prescribed by the global financial architecture and international finance institutions that run it. Debt burdens were already high and have now reached critical levels. Meanwhile, acknowledged tax deficits on the continent remain unaddressed and indeed continue to be exacerbated within economic systems now heavily reliant on the solicitation of Foreign Direct Investment, often with promises of tax breaks alongside minimal private sector regulation. While debt in and of itself is not necessarily the problem, the conditionalities that come with it and decrease fiscal policy space and challenge monetary autonomy (and the ability to make sovereign decisions on needed public investments) are.

Agriculture, livelihoods, food and ecosystems remain major factors within Africa's economic policy trajectory. However, the colonial legacy of resource extraction continues to dominate the continent's agrarian model, impacting food systems, livelihoods and ecosystems. An export-oriented trade policy, continued dominance of primary commodities and the importation of finished products have kept the continent in a neocolonial vertical dependency on the Global North. Newer actors like China have simply benefited from this already unjust structure. Meanwhile, Africa's agricultural development paradigm remains dominated by agro-commercial interests that are continuing to proliferate cash and monocropping across the continent, displacement from land by multinational corporations, decreases in crop biodiversity and a dependence on commodified inputs and food price fluctuations caused by market vagaries.

In the area of trade justice, wholesale trade liberalisation and export-oriented models have not facilitated economic diversification and industrialisation or brought in long term sustainable foreign direct investments. Although liberalisation has in some contexts led to an increase in employment opportunities for women – particularly in export-oriented sectors such as textiles and horticulture – the unemployment that often results from the restructuring of labour markets disproportionately impacts women more than men and continuously remains unaddressed, plunging women into economic hardship. Liberalisation of imports also has gendered consequences, with the influx of goods and services (including legalised dumping) often leaving women traders unable to compete. Competition has also led to low wage jobs, poor working conditions and, in some cases, greater informality as market fluctuations require even greater labour flexibility, with women constituting a significant percentage of such workers.

Finally, although the commitment to human rights as a cross-cutting imperative remains an unrealised goal across the continent, it is needed to underpin and uphold any successes in each of the economic areas already discussed. Human rights and their fundamental principles, including those of universality, inalienability, interdependence, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, non-derogation and accountability, must guide all actions taken in response to COVID-19. Recognising multiple and intersecting discriminations (such as those based on sex, age, race, ethnicity, economic status, geographic status, religion, migration status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics and others), is a prerequisite for the kind of just societies that a post-COVID-19 future should seek in order to “build back better”.

COVID-19 as Catalyst for Economic System Change? An African Feminist Vision

Theo Sowa, a women’s rights and social justice activist who until recently was the Chief Executive Officer of the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) captures the African feminist vision succinctly in her words: *‘When people say ‘build back better’ I hope we are going to say ‘build better’, because the ‘back’ wasn’t good for most of us.’* (as cited in Van der Gaag, 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a much-needed global critical focus on orthodox economic models; but even prior to it, the flaws of GDP growth-focused development were visible in the face of deepening structural inequality. In 2015,

global income inequality had been at its highest level for the past half century (OECD, 2015), while in Africa the richest 0,0001% owned 40% of the continent's wealth (Seery *et al.*, 2019). Assumptions around trickled-down growth, automatic gains through market liberalisation, the “efficiency” of privatisation and the “benefits” of minimal state intervention and deregulation were already proving baseless.

African feminist economic propositions see the COVID-19 pandemic's global impact as an opportunity for African countries to “rethink” these dominant models. The harm already done to the resilience of African economies through the acceptance of conditionalities that enforced austerity policies need to be acknowledged, and alternatives that ensure that those same harmful conditionalities are not accepted once again, even while pursuing COVID-19 recovery, need to be developed (Pheko, 2020). By placing and defending the need for gender justice at the heart of our economies, African feminists argue that governments would be in a significantly better position to reject the current injustices of neoliberal capitalism (Kinoti, 2019).

Feminist policy analysis highlights the inherent inequities embedded in this neoliberal paradigm, with a focus on how gendered and other economic inequalities deepen on the back of these models globally: from the disproportionate impact of water privatisation on the poorest women (Fall, 2011) to their exploitation as low wage labourers and the undermining of labour standards in global value chains (Beneria, 2011). Such critical analysis ultimately challenges the GDP-growth driven trajectory of the last 20 years as this has been accompanied by pervasive unemployment and reduced public spending that has left millions without basic services such as healthcare. Increased privatisation has compromised equitable access to public goods and services such as water and electricity by commodifying them (African Feminism, 2020). Feminists also challenge the extractive and neo-colonial nature of neoliberal capitalism by global northern corporations and their host governments and expose the harm this has wrought on African lives and the continent's economic and ecological sovereignty (Mapondera *et al.*, 2020). Feminist analysis has also consistently centred the unrecognised role of women's informal labour and unpaid care and domestic work – core gendered labour that the extractive capitalist system relies upon to reproduce itself.

As the impacts of COVID-19 continue to unfold, these critiques are accompanied by the proposition of viable alternatives that comprise an African feminist vision to the dominant neoliberal model. Feminist propositions offer more economically just alternatives that are “not just for Africa's women, but indeed for

all those who are not part of the global capitalist elite” (Mama and Abbas, 2015). At their core, these propositions include placing the lives and wellbeing of Africans at the centre of the economy and the economy in the service of those lives, as opposed to African lives simply in the service of the economy. Going beyond the narrow measures of GDP growth, African macroeconomic policymaking needs a post-growth vision that - even while acknowledging the need for increased production within our economies - ensures that human wellbeing and respect for our ecological endowments and planetary boundaries always come first.

Conclusions and New Policy Directions: An Alternative Roadmap for Macroeconomic Decision-Making

African feminist propositions understand that most countries remain wedded to the now orthodox economic trajectory of market-driven growth as a result of the globalised economic influences wielded by powerful international institutions and bilateral aid relationships with wealthier nations. The challenges of attempting alternative macroeconomic strategies in the era of rapidly moving capital flows and the pressure this puts on policy-making cannot be dismissed (Ghosh, 2010). But despite a hegemonic framing of neoliberal policies as the apolitical and “common sense” option for developing countries to follow, African policy makers must remember that macroeconomic policies are never politically neutral nor irreversible, and are therefore always open to reform, especially when they are clearly failing (Kelleher, 2020).

Indeed, neoliberal capitalism in itself has been a major shift away from the early post-independence gains by African leaders who sought to remove the extractive political and economic relationships that had defined the continent’s colonial history. Firstly, it was understood that only genuine economic independence could bring about sustainable and social development on the continent, as clearly argued by Kwame Nkrumah (Nkrumah, 1963). Before his assassination, Amílcar Cabral had successfully begun to create an economy based on state-owned enterprises and cooperatives (Jacobin, 2019). A refusal to imitate foreign models of capitalist development or to submit to foreign dictates also underpinned the thinking of Thomas Sankara, who saw use of the State as an instrument for economic and social transformation, and rejected the neo-coloniality of foreign debt (Dembele, 2013; Jaganarth, 2015). These principles, along with many others from the decolonisation era, are inherently aligned with the anti-imperialist positioning that underpin African

feminism (Organisation of African Unity, no date). These can be seen in examples such as the Association of African Women for Research and Development, established in 1977, placing a focus on gender equity alongside a critique of Western-driven development discourses that could undermine the policy sovereignty of African states (Tsikata, 2012). These and more offer lessons for a return to the solidarity politics of Pan-Africanism needed to reimagine our societies for a post-COVID-19 future (Regions Refocus, 2020).

Shocks resulting in economic crisis can act as catalytic moments for reimagining societies, even as they bring about seismic change. Whether the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic shock it has wrought in Africa offers an opportunity for change will be based partly on the strength of societal push towards systemic changes at national and continental levels. Evidence shows that social movements and collective power have been at the heart of some of the most meaningful shifts in human rights over the years (Horn, 2013) and, in this vein, African feminist thought challenging the extractive nature of neoliberal economics and its impacts on the continent is also an opportunity to harness that power. Women's movements and civil society more broadly need to shift their focus of activism to the wider economic systems sphere, to be familiar and cognisant with the core macroeconomic areas in need of action, and to form coalitions within countries and across the continent on the issues. Much of this work has already started, with several feminist and pan-African organisations and think tanks already active in these areas. At the country level, coalitions such as the Malawi Feminist Macroeconomics Alliance offer a model for national organising that others can look towards.

An alternative roadmap for macroeconomic decision-making in Africa has been needed for decades. Such a roadmap has the following primary objective: to deliver economically just African societies that dislodge structural inequalities and bring about economic system change that places the wellbeing of the African people and environment above the needs of capital accumulation. This will not only require a reframing of our economic policies, but also a reconceptualisation of our current values for what constitutes economic development. Growth alone is not only insufficient but, in the longer term, also destructive to people and the planet.

The following recommended policy directions draw on and further develop from a collation of existing policy recommendations developed by African and other feminist collectives or/and coalitions that have emerged in response to the COVID-19 global crisis. These propositions are offered as a roadmap at the continental level

and acknowledge the very diverse conditions that our countries are operating within - from collapsed states and war zones to stable and well-established economies. Nonetheless, they are offered as the visionary propositions needed for the continent and as part of a call to political and economic solidarity within and between nations on these issues.

Recommendations

Unpaid Labour, the Care Economy and Social Reproduction

Countries need to develop a system-wide approach to the care economy by investing in care infrastructure, such as access to water and electricity, along with care facilities and institutions - including for the young and elderly - and ensuring decent work conditions for all workers across the care sectors - education, health, child and elderly care, wider social and community services, domestic work, public transport, housing, water and sanitation. To liberate women from inequitable and unsustainable unpaid care work burdens, governments must ensure quality, accessible and universal public services and universal social protection.

Universal Access to Public Services and Social Infrastructure

Governments must ensure basic universal access to land, water, food, healthcare (including sexual and reproductive health), transport, education, housing, electricity and information technologies. Crucially, these must include essential services to prevent and respond to GBV. This will require reclaiming and protecting the fiscal space needed for budgetary investments in social protections, including quality and accessible services for all populations. The increasing move towards public private partnerships for delivery of essential services such as water, healthcare and education must be reversed; efficiency gains in this approach remain unproven and, in many cases, questionable, while the presence of private sector compromises access to these services in the pursuit of shareholder bottom lines.

Vaccine Equity: Ensuring Access to the Covid-19 Vaccine and Combating Patent Protections and Intellectual Property Injustices for the Future

Underpinning vaccine equity is the importance of ensuring that all citizens have access regardless of gender and/or other marginalising factors; and this is a

commitment that needs to be made at national, regional and global levels. As the battle for access to COVID-19 vaccines continues to rage with African lives precariously at the precipice, the time for African governments to find a clear and unequivocal space of solidarity around universal access to vaccines, medicines and related knowledge is undoubtedly now. The recent appointment of an African woman as the Director General of the WTO, along with increasing calls for an overall reform of the WTO, present an opportunity to challenge the TRIPS hegemony, more specifically within this COVID-19 context, but also more broadly where access to medicines is concerned, so that African lives can no longer be held to ransom by powerful pharmaceutical corporations, as they were previously in the case of access to antiretroviral drugs during the AIDS pandemic. To this end, African governments also need to commit to increased budget lines within pharmaceutical research and development domestically so they can shift from being net importers of medicines and vaccines.

Workers in the Informal Economy

To begin with, countries need to make a clear commitment towards ending the marginalisation and, in some cases, criminalisation of informal workers, and instead acknowledge, promote and value their critical roles in the economy. More specifically, there needs to be a focus on policy prescriptions that work towards ensuring a dignified wage across the economy, along with safety protections within working spaces, including the market spaces where many women engage both directly and indirectly with the economy. The process of introducing formal social protection policies for women informal workers – including income support, statutory leave payments, and tax incentives – particularly for women own-account workers who maintain the continent's value chains and market spaces, is long overdue. As governments seek to expand domestic and regional value chains through enhanced intra-continental trade, any attempts to include women in these must go beyond the rhetoric of market access opportunities and seek to mitigate the realities of increased exploitation, gendered segregation of labour, and economic vulnerability to unrestricted market forces. Social protection systems need to be expanded to include the informal sector such as micro entrepreneurs and self-employed people, especially the most precarious in domestic, care and services work (such as sex workers), in order to ensure that all people have access to a universal basic income, paid leave, food and caregiving services.

Austerity, Debt and Tax Deficits

The COVID-19 crisis has made the call for debt cancellation even greater, and this is a position that African governments should organise around from a clear position of unity and solidarity. Debt cancellation is a minimal condition for rebalancing the imperialist system of wealth accumulation. In the same vein as Pan-African solidarity, the opportunity to collectively push for a rejection of the conditionalities surrounding financial assistance that impact on the ability of the states to deploy socially responsive policy and/or refuse increased privatisation of key services is now here. If countries like Bolivia and Costa Rica can do so as individual nations, African nations as a genuinely unified body must also find the courage to do so. Progressive tax policies that target multinational corporations in particular must now also be prioritised for economic recovery through revenue raising, decreasing external debt reliance, and post-COVID-19 fiscal planning.

Agriculture, Livelihoods, Food and Ecosystems

In the first instance, African countries need to critically review the current commitment to Green Revolution theology as a basis for agricultural policy; globally it has not solved hunger by providing sustainable food security. It has been proven to also exacerbate smallholder farmer marginalisation and impoverishment. Instead, governments should start the process of divesting from industrialised and commercialised agriculture and invest in agroecology along the lines recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Apart from investing in agroecological research and development and other alternative systems, this will involve bolstering local food supply chains by direct support to smallholder farmers and community-driven market paradigms that are more likely to respect the sustainable use of agricultural diversity to benefit those who are both the custodians of and dependants on natural resources for their livelihoods.

Trade Justice

African policy makers must rethink the current models of rapid and expansive trade liberalisation, not only in terms of external regional and bilateral agreements with non-African nations, but also in terms of internal regional integration projects such as the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). In relation to non-continental agreements, the detrimental impacts of open borders on African economies through a continued extractive relationship is clear; from a concretisation

of national dependencies on primary commodities for export to the continued reliance on costly imports. Internally, the AfCFTA needs far greater review, understanding and constructive critique than has so far been exhibited by policy makers and other stakeholders; the rapidity of its liberalisation timeframe has dangerous implications for the kinds of adjustment costs that will be needed if African lives are not to be destabilised, particularly following diminished national capacity in the wake of COVID-19. While African feminist positions call for a complete rethink of the AfCFTA, as a bare minimum, African policy makers must insist that rigorous social and human rights impact assessments be conducted to inform effective policies that may actually mitigate some of the economic disruptions that many Africans will face if the agreement is implemented within the planned time frame.

Commitment to Human Rights as a Cross-Cutting Imperative

Policy and budgetary interventions to address the rights of those marginalised by the current economic system (including by those policies that uphold the status quo) must be prioritised. Information and prior consent for large scale policy processes, including negotiations on the world stage and therefore outside of national parameters, must be central to this.

References

- Abiru, Fadekemi. 2018. "Africa's Lost Decade: Women and the Structural Adjustment Programme." *The Republic*, 25 September. Available at <https://www.republic.com.ng/augustseptember-2018/africas-lost-decade/>.
- Action Aid. 2020. "Impact of Covid 19 on Young Women: A Rapid Assessment of 14 Urban Areas in India, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa." Available at <https://actionaid.org/publications/2020/impact-covid-19-young-women#downloads>.
- Africa Centre for Strategic Studies. 2020. "Analysing Africa's Second Wave." Relief Web. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/africacenter.org-Analyzing%20Africas%20Second%20Wave%20of%20COVID-19.pdf>.
- Africa Centres for Disease Control. 2021. "Key Lessons from Africa's COVID-19 Vaccine Roll Out." Available at <https://www.afro.who.int/news/>

- key-lessons-africas-covid-19-vaccine-rollout.
- African Feminism. 2020. "African Feminist Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Statement." Available at <https://africanfeminism.com/african-feminist-post-covid-19-economic-recovery-statement/>
- Al Jazeera. 2021a. "Africa COVID deaths pass 100,000 amid second wave." Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/19/africa-covid-deaths-surpass-100000-amid-second-wave>.
- Al Jazeera. 2021b. "South Africa faces third Covid wave, returns to stricter lockdown" 30 May. Article available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/30/south-africa-faces-third-covid-wave-returns-to-stricter-lockdown>.
- Beneria, Lourdes. 2011. "Globalisation, Labor, and Women's Work: Critical Challenges for a Post Neoliberal World" in Elson, D and Jain, D, eds *Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy: Rebuilding Progress*. International Development Research Centre, Sage Publications.
- Carneiro, Francisco and Kouame, Wilfried. 2021. *How much should Sub-Saharan countries adjust in order to curb the increase in public debt? World Bank*. Available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/how-much-should-sub-saharan-african-countries-adjust-curb-increase-public-debt>.
- Chakma, Trimita. 2020. *Impact of COVID-19 on young women: a rapid assessment of 14 urban areas in India, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa*. ActionAid. Available at <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/YUW%20final%20report.pdf>.
- Change.org. 2022. <https://www.change.org/p/imf-executive-board-petition-to-the-imf-to-cancel-the-ksh255-billion-loan-to-kenya>.
- Chimhangwa, Kudzai. 2020. *How globalisation has impacted African womens' lives*, Opendemocracy. Available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/how-globalisation-has-informalized-african-womens-lives/>.
- Daily Nation. 2020. "Women Urge State to Prioritise GBV in Covid-19 Response." DN, 9 December. Available at: <https://nation.africa/kenya/gender/5362750-5536046-view-asAMP-jex9r2/index.html>
- Dembele, Demba M. 2013. *Thomas Sankara: an endogenous approach to development*. Pambazuka News. 23 October. Available at <https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/thomas-sankara-endogenous-approach-development>.
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). 2021. "COVID-19

- situation update, as of week 20. Updated 27 May.* Available at <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>
- Fall, Yassine. 2011. "The Cost of Commoditisation of Food and Water for Women", in Elson, D. and Jain, D., eds. *Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy: Rebuilding Progress*, International Development Research Centre, Sage Publications.
- FEMNET, 2022. *African Feminist Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery Statement*. Available at <https://africanfeminism.com/african-feminist-post-covid-19-economic-recovery-statement/>
- Fresnillo, Iolanda. 2020. "Shadow report on the limitations of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative: Draining out the Titanic with a bucket?" EURODAD, Belgium. Available at https://www.eurodad.org/g20_dssi_shadow_report
- Gabor, Daniela and Simeoni, Crystal. 2021. "Time to tap SDRs to boost African bond liquidity?" *Financial Times*, 12 March. Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/d1751724-e66b-4b00-96f1-6b13e7257e78>.
- Ghosh, Jayati. 2010. "Gender-sensitive Macroeconomics and Reshaping Economic Development in the Context of the Crisis." in Wichterich, Christa (Ed.). *In Search of Economic Alternatives for Gender and Social Justice: Voices from India*. WIDE.
- Government of Nigeria. 2021. *Nigeria Special Works Programme*. Available at <https://specialpublicworks.gov.ng/site/>.
- Horn, Jessica. 2013. *Gender and Social Movements, Overview Report*. BRIDGE, Institute of Development studies. Brighton. UK. Available at <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/10898/Gender%20and%20social%20movements%20overview%20report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). 2018. "ILO calls for urgent action to prevent looming global care crisis." Press Release 28 June. Available at https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_633460/lang--en/index.htm
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). 2021. *COVID-19 and the World of Work: Country Policy Responses*, ILO, Available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/regional-country/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm#MW>
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2020b. "Regional Outlook

- Sub-Saharan Africa, A difficult road ahead.” October 2020, Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/10/22/regional-economic-outlook-sub-saharan-africa>.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2020a. *Transcript of October 2020 World Economic Outlook Press Briefing*. Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/10/13/tr101320-transcript-of-october-2020-world-economic-outlook-press-briefing>.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2021c. IMF Country Report No 21/72, Kenya. April 2021
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2021a. *Policy Responses to COVID-19: Policy Tracker*. Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#G>
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2021b. *Regional economic outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa*. April. Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2021/04/15/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2021>.
- JACOBIN. 2019. *The Socialist Agronomist Who Helped End Portuguese Colonialism: An Interview with Peter Karibe Mendy*, JACOBIN, 17 October. Available at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/10/amilcar-cabral-portuguese-colonialism-biography>.
- Jaganarth, Vashna. 2015. *Why what Sankara had to say about sovereignty still resonates*, *The Conversation*, 22 July. Available at <https://theconversation.com/why-what-sankara-had-to-say-about-sovereignty-still-resonates-44864>.
- Kelleher, Fatimah. 2020. “African feminist futures: macroeconomic pathways.” *Bread and Butter Series No. 4, African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF)*. Available at https://awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/African-Feminist-Futures_Macroeconomic-Pathways.pdf.
- Kelleher, Fatimah. 2021. “The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Women: a Pan African Feminist Analysis.” FEMNET. Available at <https://femnet.org/2021/04/the-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta-and-women-a-pan-african-feminist-analysis/>.
- Kinoti, Wangara. 2019. *It’s time to put gender justice at the heart of our economies*. Open Democracy, 26 September. Available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/its-time-put-gender-justice-heart-our-economies/>

- Mama, Amina and Abbas, Hakima. 2015. "Editorial, Feminism and pan-Africanism." *Feminist Africa* 20. Available at http://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/429/feminist_africa_journals/archive/20/fa20_web-_entire_journal.pdf.
- Mapondera, Margaret et al. 2020. "If Another World is Possible, Who is doing the Imagining? Building an Ecofeminist Development Alternative in a Time of Deep Systemic Crisis", *Bread and Butter Series No. 6*. African Women's Development Fund. Available at <https://awdf.africclub.net/wp-content/uploads/If-another-world-is-possible.pdf>.
- Mlambo-Ngcuka, Phumzile. 2020. *Addressing the economic fallout of COVID-19: pathways and policy options for a gender responsive recovery* UNWomen, 23 November. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/11/op-ed-ed-phumzile-addressing-the-economic-fallout-of-covid-19>.
- Muriruri, Kepha. 2021. *Kenya's economy slumped into recession after 18 years in December*. Citizen Digital, 28 January. Available at <https://citizen.digital/business/kenyas-economy-slumped-into-recession-after-18-years-in-september-5068864/>.
- Mwaura, Waihiga. 2021. Letter from Kenya: Kenyans protest over growing debt. *BBC*, 8 April. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56651735>.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. 1963. *Nkrumah, Kwame 1963 Africa must unite*, London, Panaf Books.
- Obulutsa, George. 2020. *Kenyan parliament halts COVID-19 related tax relief*. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-kenya-economy-idUSL8N2J12LX>
- OECD. 2015. *In it Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*. OECD Publishing, Paris Available at https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/in-it-together-why-less-inequality-benefits-all_9789264235120-en#page1.
- Organisation of African Unity. No date. "Lagos plan of action for the economic development of Africa 1980-2000." Ethiopia. Available at <https://www.merit.unu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Lagos-Plan-of-Action.pdf>.
- Parry, Bianca R. and Gordon, Errolyn. 2020. "The shadow pandemic: inequitable social impacts of COVID-19 in South Africa." *Gender, Work and Organisation*. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.12565>.

- Pheko, Lebohlang L. 2020. *The Real Pandemic*. Africa is a Country. 6 May. Available at: <https://africasacountry.com/2020/05/the-real-pandemic>
- Raga, Sherillyn and Housseini, Bouba. 2020. *The evolving fiscal and liquidity stimulus packages in response to COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Brief, SET ODI. Available at <https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-evolving-fiscal-and-liquidity-stimulus-packages-in-response-to-COVID-19-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>.
- Regions Refocus. 2020. *Lessons from the Decolonisation Era in Confronting the COVID-19 Crisis*. Webinar by members on Post-Colonialisms Today, discussing the impacts of COVID-19. 29 July. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbbuwVUHgBo>
- ReliefWeb. 2020. "Over 80 percent of IMF COVID loans will push austerity on poor countries." 12 October. Available at [Over 80 per cent of IMF Covid-19 loans will push austerity on poor countries - World | ReliefWeb](https://www.reliefweb.int/news/2020/10/over-80-per-cent-of-imf-covid-19-loans-will-push-austerity-on-poor-countries-world).
- Republic of Kenya. 2017. *Kazi Mtaan.*, Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development. Available at <https://housingandurban.go.ke/national-hygiene-programme-kazi-mtaani/>.
- Seery, Emma et al. 2019. *A tale of two continents: fighting inequality in Africa*. Oxfam International. Available at https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-tale-of-two-continents-fighting-inequality-africa-030919-en.pdf.
- Smith, Elliot. 2020. *South Africa unleashes largest ever spending plan, but adds to debt worries*. CNBC, 23 April. Available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/23/south-africa-unleashes-largest-ever-spending-plan-to-tackle-coronavirus.html>.
- So, Anthony. 2020. "Reserving coronavirus disease 2019 vaccines for global access: cross sectional analysis." *BMJ*: 371. Available at <https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m4750>.
- South African Government. 2022. *Social Grants – Coronavirus COVID-19*. Available at <https://www.gov.za/covid-19/individuals-and-households/social-grants-coronavirus-covid-19#>.
- Tröster, Bernhard and Küblböck, Karin. 2020. "Unprecedented but not Unpredictable: Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on commodity dependent countries." *Eur J Dev Res* 32: 1430–1449. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00313-9>.

- Tsikata, Dzodzi. 2012. "Development Alternatives for a Post-Crisis World: An African perspective." *Development* 55: 497–502. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2012.68>
- UNDP. 2021. *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker*. Available at <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>.
- UNDP and UN Women. 2020. *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. Regional Fact Sheet: Sub Saharan Africa*. September. Available at <https://www.undp.org/publications/covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker-fact-sheets>.
- University of Toronto. 2020. G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting. *Communique*, 15 April. Available at <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2020/2020-g20-finance-0415.html>.
- UN Women. 2020. *COVID-19 and its economic toll on women: the story behind the numbers*. 16 September. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>.
- Van der Gaag, Nikki. 2021. Imagining the world anew: gender equality and women's rights -Part 2, FP2P. Available at <https://oxfamapps.org/fp2p/imagining-the-world-anew-gender-equality-and-womens-rights-part-2/>.
- World Bank. 2020a. "World Bank confirms economic downturn in sub-Saharan Africa." Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/08/world-bank-confirms-economic-downturn-in-sub-saharan-africa-outlines-key-policies-needed-for-recovery>.
- World Bank. 2020b. "COVID-19 Pushes Rwanda into Recession: Severely Impacts Human Capital." 18 February. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/08/covid-19-pandemic-pushes-rwanda-into-recession-severely-impacts-human-capital>.
- World Health Organisation (WHO). 2021a. "Containment Strategies: Lessons from Early COVID-19 Responses in Five African Countries. Available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/350527/9789290234593-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.
- World Health Organisation (WHO). 2021b. "WHO Director General's Opening Remarks at 148th Session of the Executive Board." 18 January. Available at <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-148th-session-of-the-executive-board>.
- Zimmerman, Jamie and May, Maria. 2021. *Digital Cash Transfers in the time of COVID-19: Opportunities and Considerations for Women's Inclusion*

and Empowerment. Available at <https://www.ictworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Digital-Cash-Transfers-COVID-19-Womens-Inclusion.pdf>.

Zwane, Thulethu. 2021. *The IMF warns SA against its massive debt and large fiscal deficit*. *News 24*, 28 January. Available at <https://www.news24.com/citypress/business/the-imf-warns-sa-against-its-massive-debt-and-large-fiscal-deficit-20210128>.