

Transforming economies for gender equality

Lessons from African advocates for women’s economic justice

CSW 68: An apt theme

The priority theme of the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing for gender equality. This theme comes at a time when many countries in the global South are still recovering from the uneven economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic shocks that followed, while increasingly being impacted by the climate crisis. In this context, African governments now need to [use](#) 54% of their revenues on average to pay off increasingly expensive debts, while the world’s poorest countries [lose](#) an additional \$47 billion annually to global tax abuse, equivalent to about half of their public health budgets. These systemic outflows mean that fiscal space is going to continue to be incredibly constrained in the global South, leaving little-to-no room to finance the realisation of gender equality and women’s rights. Meanwhile, in what leading feminist thinkers have [termed](#) “the betrayal of the global North”, Northern governments are [failing](#) time and time again to meet their aid and climate finance commitments, while continuing to use their illegitimately-gained power to [dominate](#) international institutions and actively block initiatives that address these systemic issues. **This outrageous state of affairs must focus our attentions on creating an enabling macro-economic environment for the realisation of gender equality and women’s rights and building the institutions that can deliver that environment.**

Lessons from the ground

Christian Aid aims to transform economies to serve and be shaped by marginalised communities. Since 2022, we have been working with our partners and communities in Africa to foster gender-just macroeconomic policymaking. This brief outlines our approach and some of the policy lessons learned so far.

Our approach

✓ Learning

Our approach starts with the belief that knowledge is power. We therefore centre co-created learning of our staff, our partners and communities in our work, aimed at understanding macroeconomic policymaking from intersectional feminist, pan-African and decolonial perspectives.



Snapshot of co-created learning tools.

✓ Convening

We understand that meaningful, sustainable policy change only happens when governments are held accountable to being responsive to the communities they serve. Yet still too often, civil society works in siloes, leading to feminist economic advocacy often falling between the cracks. We thus support convenings *across* justice movements to strengthen their ability to hold governments accountable and demand change.



Convening in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso of gender justice and economic justice advocates learning from one another to strengthen national gender responsive budgeting efforts.



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✓ Evidencing and Influencing

Finally, we work in partnership to influence policymakers and their constituencies to foster an enabling macroeconomic environment for gender equality and women's rights. This involves supporting the development of in-depth research to help ensure policymaking is evidence-based and rooted in the experiences of marginalised communities, working with allies in and out of government, and speaking truth to power.



Madame Congo, a prominent Burkinabe women's rights advocate speaking to national media to call for transformative gender budgeting that works for all Burkinabes.

Examples of our research work include:

- ✓ Working with communities in **Sierra Leone** to demonstrate the differential gendered impacts of recent and planned tax reforms to policymakers.
- ✓ Supporting women's groups in **Burkina Faso** to conduct research aimed strengthening the government's approach to gender-responsive budgeting.
- ✓ Measuring the degree to which the government of **Zimbabwe** has fulfilled its CEDAW commitments on macroeconomic policy and institutional reforms.
- ✓ Through coalitions and partnerships, investigating **national, regional and global economic decision-making** to better understand whether and how macroeconomic policymakers account for gender equality and the care economy.

Key message to policymakers

Our key message to policymakers everywhere is to live up to States' legally binding obligation to [mobilise](#) the maximum available resources for the fulfilment of gender equality and human rights.

This includes delivering on:

- **Debt Justice:** Implement the [Bogota Agenda](#) on debt justice and global financial architecture reform, including establishing legislation that would compel private creditors to participate in debt relief negotiations, and advancing towards a UN binding multilateral framework for debt crisis resolution.
- **Fiscal Justice:** [Assess](#) all fiscal policies from a gender perspective and do everything possible to [avoid](#) austerity measures that hollow out the state's capacity to deliver critical public services. This means [pursuing](#) progressive, feminist taxes and [supporting](#) the establishment of the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation to curb tax abuse.
- **Reparative Justice:** For the global North, this [means](#) making much more grant-based financing available as financial redress for historic and ongoing harm caused, without policy conditions.
- **Democratic and decolonised institutions:** Structural exclusion from decision-making lies at the very core of the power dynamics that shape so many injustices around us, from the household to the global level. Policymakers must ensure that international economic decision-making takes place in fora where all countries have an equal vote and where civil society has a voice, such as the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, where Christian Aid and our allies will be pushing for a more just global economic architecture.



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