



IMAGININGS OF A FEMINIST ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

Thematic Focus: Trade Justice

VISIONING JOURNEY MANIFESTO

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Art by Favianna Rodriguez



“The decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is: for it is where all forms of decolonization are born. Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless.”

Octavia Butler in “Octavia’s Brood” – spoken by the character
Walidah Imarisha

This report was compiled by Rehana Tejpar (Bloom Consulting), Amar Nijhawan (Oxfam Canada), and Dakota Porter (Oxfam International) and directed by and co-created with members of the global Advisory Group for the Feminist Economic Transformation Project, which is convened by Oxfam Canada.



Background: A Visit to the Future

On June 1st, 2021, the Feminist Economic Transformation Project hosted activists and feminists from around the world for a visioning journey to re-imagine our world and collectively identify and uplift economic alternatives that can be transformed into policy changes, while fostering connections and inspiring movement actors in their change work. The focus of this visioning journey was trade justice. It was an intimate global gathering of feminist activists, economists, development and policy practitioners who convened to creatively re-imagine new economic systems that centers the planet and people over profit. The session prompted thinking through large systemic issues while grounded in the regional realities of our participants from Asia, Africa, MENA, and North America. It also involved a collective art making session where folks were encouraged to share their ideas through drawings, poetry, and song.

During our journey, we entered a time capsule and travelled through the imagination to the year 2041. The world we emerged into had undergone a feminist economic transformation, embodying our hopes and dreams for a world we want our children to grow up in. In the future we saw tremendous changes had taken place, and the seeds we collectively helped to plant years ago had now become a reality. Ideas and recommendations that were shared ranged from the care economy and collective approaches to care, to Dalit rights and economic justice, to corporate accountability and moving away from extractive forms of resource governance. This report and manifesto is the harvest of our visions from the future with the aim to support advocates, decision- and policy-makers to work towards a world that serves all.

About the Feminist Economic Transformation (FET) Project

COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the extreme inequalities in our societies. Globally, the pandemic has had disproportionate economic, health, and social impacts on women particularly those who belong to Black, Indigenous or racialized communities, (im)migrants and refugees, women living with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ communities. Experts are already calling the economic downturn a “she-cession,” as women workers are bearing the brunt of job losses and increased care responsibilities.

Building a better future” cannot simply be an exercise of rebuilding what was already there. Rather, now is the time to envision a transformative and new economic model that centers the health and wellbeing of our societies, economies and our planet.

The world needs a feminist economic transformation that places gender, economic and climate justice and feminist leadership at the heart and transforms our economic model to one that is equal, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The purpose of the FET project is to re-imagine our world through feminist economic transformations, fostering connections, inspiring movement actors in their change work, and to support collective visioning and uplifting of economic alternatives that can be transformed into policy changes.

The FET Advisory Group, composed of feminist thought leaders and advocates from across the globe, is facilitating an inclusive and participatory visioning journey, bringing together feminist and equality-seeking leaders in a series of global conversations to develop key elements of a feminist economic transformation that lays the ground for a more equal, inclusive and sustainable economic model. The series of conversations will focus on macro and micro economic realities and hone in on specific policies that would be required for a feminist economic transformation.

Why Trade Justice?

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition from governments across the world that trade and investment rules have gendered consequences. However, with few exceptions, gender-responsive policies have yet to be mainstreamed throughout trade rules and policies, including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). The international community has welcomed efforts that recognize the significant role that women play as producers, entrepreneurs, consumers, traders, workers, and key providers of unpaid care that enables the global economy to function, as well as the unique constraints facing women in realizing benefits from trade. Too often in these approaches, women, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2 and youth are only positioned as instruments and beneficiaries of trade growth, with subsequent policy responses focused on increasing the numbers and roles of women involved in the flow of capital, resources, and labour.

Trade can be a tool for poverty reduction and economic development, but rather than break down structural inequalities, the liberalization of trade in recent decades has largely reinforced (and in some cases expanded) inequalities by disproportionately benefiting large multinational corporations, largely run by men. Part of the problem is that trade policies and agreements are often formulated without the input and active participation of women's rights, labor and other representative organizations of those most potentially impacted – such as women farmers, racialized workers, and Indigenous women. Trade policy, from the national to the multilateral level, has not gone far enough to meaningfully address the inequalities that can result from trade, especially gender inequality. Few FTAs contain language regarding women's rights- and/or gender-focused chapters, and many of the proposed activities and policies included remain voluntary and non-binding. In these FTAs, it remains unclear what success would look like or how it would be measured.

Economic justice needs to be at the center of trade and international labour policies. This includes understanding barriers to equality and impacts of trade through an intersectional lens by considering class, race, caste, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, migrant status, and physical ability, and the connections between these.

To remove the barriers to fair and decent working conditions for all, it is important that mechanisms like social protections are embedded in FTA's and that international instruments like the ILO's labour standards are enforceable. Poor working conditions for domestic workers, unpaid care workers and those working in export industries are examples of inequality rooted in labour standards, cultural norms and economic policies.

Patriarchal structures have positioned women, particularly women from vulnerable social groups, as an easier source of exploitable, low-cost labour. To maximize the gains for women, trade rules, agreements and support programs must all address the specific issues that women workers, entrepreneurs and consumers face. This includes advocating against the privatization of public services often enabled by trade agreements. A broader and more robust collection of gender disaggregated data, including data on unpaid care work, needs to be taken into account in trade impact assessments to understand the impacts of trade on inequality, particularly for the most vulnerable women.

Key Findings From Visioning Exercise: A Manifesto for our Feminist, Transformed World

Through our conversation a diverse set of ideas and ideals came together to create this manifesto. It reflects the common values and intention of a multiplicity of feminist voices' vision of the future. The mind map on the following page shows how this constellation of ideas connected together to create this shared vision.

- 1. Economic Equality:** Women own 50% of the world's wealth, and everyone has enough of what they need. Work is decent and dignified in that it is paid, shared equally among all people, and a high standard of human development is central to work life. Classism does not exist, and resources are allocated equitably and peacefully.
- 2. Collaboration + Common Good as the Basis for Governance and Institutions:** There is no competition, and government and institutional policies center community care and mutual aid.
- 3. Meaningful Participation:** There is respect for all people, and women from marginalized communities hold positions of power in economic processes where everyone is engaged. In regards to trade, there are diverse ways of engaging in trade policies and agreements beyond money.
- 4. Care Economy:** Our feminist society is one where all people are cared for: healthcare is accessible and available, health and wellness is prioritized over policing, education is a priority for all people, and gender-responsive public services are available and accessible to all. Care work is captured in GDP, and government and institutional policies center care for the community.
- 5. Safety for all:** Our communities are clean and peaceful. Community accountability occurs through restorative justice frameworks, and police funds are redirected to the community. BIPOC community members feel safe and respected.

6. **Play:** Everyone has decent work and a sustainable livelihood that allows them the freedom to enjoy life through play. Play is valued in our communities.

7. **Trade policies and regulations are fair and intentional:** Within trade policies and regulations, there are fair assessments of economies that go beyond growth. Civic space is protected for feminist advocacy around specific trade issues which targets governments and institutions. All debt is cancelled.

8. **Health of the Planet is Prioritized Over Profit:** In our feminist, transformed society, interdependency (among people, the planet and all other sentient beings) is valued. Our communities and oceans are clean due to nature preservation and minimization of pollution. Natural resources are used to advance human development, not profit.

9. **Food Security and Justice:** We live in a society where agroecology is central to our economy. Small farmers are supported by governments and are able to trade locally. All people have access to healthy, locally-produced food.

10. **Smaller, sustainable communities:** The world's population grows at a sustainable rate which allows trade to be further localized. Innovative technology and health services are accessible to more people.



Manifesto for Our Feminist, Transformed World

An innovative, arts-based approach was used to capture the essence of our collective visions during the session.



Image by Eddy Fidele

*This is a time where we see small holder farmers flourishing,
trading locally,
Channeling divine energies into seeds and the earth
That sustain and nourish the blood.
The knowledge of the ages, once again in their hands.
These lands are filled with love,
And markets where 'cut throat' is word told in the history
books,
From a time when
competition was a God,
And today the children
call us pirates.*

By Fatimah

Manifesto for Our Feminist Transformed World

The future is here yo

No more devotion to multinationals and their f*ing economy

Children have schools and technology.

Paid caregiving is central, no longer a notion but a reality.

Small and women led businesses and farmers thrive with support that lasts,

Because competition with large commercial companies is a thing of the past.

People not profits.

A human development index driven by true human development.

Based on art and thought not profit.

The children tell tales of rapacious 20th century pirates

When we go to the future what do we see?

Peace, hope and harmony

By Gita, Jeannette and Fatimah



Image by Nandhu Kumar