



AFRICAN FEMINIST  
COLLECTIVE ON  
FEMINIST INFORMED  
POLICIES

## TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

A Position Paper on a Pan-African  
Feminist Approach to Reparations





## **Towards Transformative Justice**

A Position Paper on a Pan-African Feminist Approach to Reparations

©2025, AFRICAN FEMINIST COLLECTIVE ON FEMINIST INFORMED POLICIES

# Introduction

The African Union (AU) declared 2025 the Year of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations, a moment that demands a reimagining of reparative justice grounded in the lived realities of African women and communities. Historically, reparations have largely been framed as financial restitution for colonialism, slavery, and systemic racism including Apartheid. Yet, reparations can be understood in a broader sense as not merely compensatory but fundamentally aiming to restore the relationships and balance that were disrupted by past and present harms through structural transformation, redress and the dismantling of interconnected systems of oppression – patriarchy, capitalism, neocolonial extraction, racism and imperialism (see Chigumadzi, 2023)

Drawing on African feminist epistemologies, reparations foreground relational accountability, collective wellbeing, and intersectionality. This approach to reparations insists that interventions must address gendered harms that disproportionately affect women and marginalized communities. Many existing frameworks of redress, however, often fail to consider and therefore address the intersecting oppressions that disproportionately impact women, including patriarchal violence, economic disenfranchisement, cultural and land dispossession and ecological degradation. At its heart then, reparations must encompass social, economic, cultural, epistemic and ecological justice.

We, the African Feminist Collective on Feminist Informed Policies (AfIP Collective, 2022), outline here a comprehensive feminist approach to reparations that addresses historical injustices while centring contemporary concerns. We offer actionable recommendations for the AU, its member states and beyond to ensure reparations are truly transformative, inclusive, and aligned with the vision of a decolonial, feminist future.

# Dimensions of Historic Oppression in Contemporary Context

*The legacy of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and imperial exploitation is deeply gendered and racialised. As Tamale (2020) argues, colonialism did not merely impose foreign rule, it systematically reinvented African social structures, identities and gender relations.*

Bolstered by religion, law, education and reconstructed cultural norms, colonial regimes imposed rigid, hierarchical definitions of 'women' and 'men', fundamentally altering how African societies understood gender, power and community. Under this colonial logic, African women were diminished, erased, or violently excluded from critical areas of social, political, economic, and spiritual life. This restructuring facilitated compounded forms of violence against African women, including sexual exploitation, reproductive coercion, forced labour, cultural erasure, and the dispossession of land, knowledge, and resources. Post-colonial states, often complicit in patriarchal and neoliberal structures, have largely failed to redress these harms, perpetuating cycles of systemic inequality, although the demand for reparations has been established by UN Resolution 60/147 adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 2005<sup>1</sup>.



**The 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action<sup>2</sup> and 2023 Accra Proclamation on Reparations** emphasise the moral and legal imperatives of reparations for African people and their descendants because of these injustices. The Declaration highlights past manifestations as well as contemporary forms of racial discrimination and provides a road-map illustrating how the international community would follow up on these commitments, indicating the steps to be taken to put an end to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to prevent their future occurrence. Importantly, the Proclamation highlighted the continued implications of these systems of oppression as evidenced in ongoing systemic inequalities manifested in a range of global hierarchies like racism and economic exploitation.

While what the **Proclamation** articulates is not new, bringing this concern for justice within the aegis of the AU, and as a concern of global governance is important because of the implications it continues to have for contemporary contexts. In contemporary contexts, the impact of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, the impact of the extractive industries, and neoliberal globalisation

have exacerbated gendered colonial legacies and inequalities. Furthermore, the legacies of the past have the most direct impacts on the contemporary state of environmental destruction, anti-queer legislation and militarised governance. And as contemporary scholars of reparations have noted, all mass violations are inherently gendered (Jones, 2020). As such, the implications of ongoing challenges like conflict, displacement and economic precarity must consider the implications for gender minorities, especially women if reparations are a serious consideration. Many of these challenges are layered with the historical interacting with the contemporary within a global political system that remains hierarchical.

It is our view that the case for reparations is not only about addressing historical harm, but about confronting the ongoing legacies of colonialism and the neoliberal dispossession of African women that persist in the present. The past is not behind us; it lives on in the structural inequalities, gendered violences, and economic exclusions that continue to shape African realities today. Any future, including the one imagined in Agenda 2063, remains impossible without centring feminist analyses and demands for transformative justice, which we set out below.

---

<sup>1</sup>Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law

<sup>2</sup>Adopted at the 2001 Third World Conference Against Racism in South Africa

# What feminists want: A Framework for Reparative Justice



We believe that reparations to Africans and all people of African descent must be understood as a multidimensional process of justice that seeks not only to redress historical and ongoing harms but also to envision a future anchored in liberation, repair, and collective power. As Sylvia Tamale (2020) reminds us, it is ultimately about restoring the dignity of African people through reconstructing relationships with coloniality, reclaiming bodily and territorial integrity, and celebrating our Africanness, womanness, and subversive agency.

The foundation of this framework must be **intersectional**, emphasising the impact of interlocking systems of oppression based on race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and other factors impact Africans. This means that reparations for Africans must acknowledge the disproportionate harm of colonialism and enduring coloniality on women, rural communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities, necessitating an inclusive, decolonial and transformative approach to reparations.

A feminist reparations framework demands more than financial compensation and rather seeks justice, equality, and community building, breaking the cycles of exploitation and violence. As such, feminists want transformative justice which is a process of rebuilding, not merely repaying – a means of nurturing and sustaining communities’ capacities to heal and thrive.

Reparations frameworks have historically been top-down, designed and implemented without the meaningful input of those most affected. A feminist approach recognises the expertise and agency of African women, grassroots communities, and marginalised groups, placing them at the centre of reparative justice initiatives. **Participatory and community-led processes** ensure that reparations are tailored to the needs, aspirations, and lived realities of those who have suffered the most from historical and ongoing injustices, including ecological ones.

Eco-feminists have highlighted the importance of the **ecological dimension** of reparations in Africa where neocolonial extractive practices have devastated natural environments (Lewton, 2019). These practices disproportionately impact women, who are often primary caretakers of natural resources. Environmental degradation and climate change exacerbate gender inequalities and further marginalise

vulnerable communities. A feminist framework for reparations must thus include ecological justice, prioritising the restoration of ecosystems, equitable access to resources, and community-driven solutions to environmental challenges.

The **redistribution of power and resources** is central to a feminist reparations’ framework. Addressing historical and systemic imbalances requires prioritising the liberation of women and marginalised groups. This includes dismantling patriarchal norms that exclude women from decision-making and resource control, ensuring that resources flow equitably to communities that have historically been dispossessed.

For reparations to be effective, processes must be transparent, accountable, and ethically governed. In alignment with feminist approaches to politics, we emphasise the importance of accountability not only to state institutions but also to communities. Reparations mechanisms must foster trust and ensure that resources and efforts reach those most affected. Ethical governance includes mechanisms for community oversight, inclusive decision-making, and the prevention of corruption or mismanagement.

Considering this feminist vision, we highlight focal points for action:

## 1. Economic Justice and Redistribution

African women have historically been central to the survival, development, and resilience of communities and economies—yet their contributions have been systematically undervalued, unrecognised, and uncompensated. Any serious reparations agenda must acknowledge and redress the centuries-long extraction of African women’s labour, time, and care work, which has been foundational to colonial, post-colonial, and neoliberal economic systems. This policy demand outlines key feminist perspectives and concrete recommendations for addressing these injustices as part of a broader reparative justice framework.

Across Africa, economic insecurity continues to define the lived experience of millions, particularly for women, youth, and communities

historically excluded from economic and political power. While the continent is rich in resources, the structures of global capitalism – shaped by colonial legacies, racialised extraction, and ongoing trade inequalities—have systematically undermined its development potential. Land dispossession, wage exploitation, gendered labour hierarchies, and restricted access to markets and finance remain persistent barriers. Women, especially in rural and informal economies, face compounded inequalities: denied land rights, excluded from decision-making over economic policies, and disproportionately represented in low-wage, precarious work and unpaid care roles.

This condition of ‘underdevelopment,’ as powerfully analysed by Walter Rodney (1972), is not accidental. It reflects the deliberate ordering of global political and economic systems through the intersecting forces of patriarchy, racism, and capitalism. These systemic constraints continue to marginalise African economies and inhibit



sovereign development. Reparative justice, then, must be about more than addressing past wrongs - it must transform the present and future by reconfiguring who owns, controls, and benefits from economic resources.

Moreover, contemporary economic structures continue to exploit African women: unpaid care work is disproportionately carried by women across Africa. On average, women spend three to six hours per day on domestic and care responsibilities, compared to less than two hours for men (UN Women, 2022). Informal labour constitutes the majority of women's economic activity. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 89% of employed women are in the informal sector, with limited to no access to protections such as maternity leave, health insurance, or pensions (ILO, 2022). Women contribute 60–80% of agricultural production across the continent but own less than 15% of the land and access less than 10% of credit or agricultural extension services (FAO, 2019). This reflects a systemic undervaluation of women's contributions to economic life and a deep structural injustice that must be addressed through targeted reparative measures.

African frameworks such as **Agenda 2063**, the **African Union's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWE)**, and the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** provide important – if still aspirational – policy tools. Agenda 2063 envisions “inclusive growth and sustainable development,” while GEWE foregrounds the need for gender-responsive macroeconomic policies. Yet these frameworks must be more deliberately mobilised to deliver reparative redistribution. The AfCFTA, for instance, must not replicate extractive models but serve as a platform for articulating the agency of women traders, harmonising fair labour standards, and promoting intra-African economic solidarity.

A feminist reparations agenda calls for a transformation of value systems that have historically prioritised profit over people. As

articulated by our colleagues at Pan-Africanist feminist collective NAWI such an agenda demands investment in the care economy, redistribution, debt justice and feminist epistemic transformation. Reparative redistribution is not simply about allocating resources—it is about challenging structures of accumulation, creating economic systems rooted in fairness, and ensuring that African women and marginalised communities are not only included but are architects of the continent's economic future.

Therefore, we call for a reparative framework that quantifies and compensates unpaid labour by institutionalising time-use surveys to capture the scope and economic value of unpaid care work by gender and socio-economic status, integrating this valuation into national accounts and gender-responsive budgeting, and establishing reparation funds to compensate women for historic and ongoing care work, especially in contexts of displacement, conflict, and post-colonial reconstruction. Simultaneously, states must invest in public and communal care infrastructure, including state-funded and community-based childcare, eldercare, and health services, while recognising and resourcing women-led care cooperatives and mutual aid networks as integral to national social protection systems. Legal and economic protections should be extended to informal sector workers, particularly domestic workers, market vendors, and agricultural labourers, through minimum wage guarantees, social insurance, occupational health standards, and enhanced land, credit, and business support for women in rural and informal economies. Additionally, we call for the restoration of women's time sovereignty by recognising time poverty as a structural inequality and developing national strategies for equitable time allocation, rest, leisure, and creative and spiritual life, including cultural and educational initiatives that affirm women's right to self-determination beyond economic productivity.

## 2. Addressing Gendered and Sexuality Specific-Harms

Sexual and gender-based violence is both a legacy of colonial violence and a pervasive contemporary issue in Africa. Beyond physical violence, the colonial legacy of reproductive control imposed legal, social and cultural systems that continue to regulate, police, and control African women's bodies, sexualities and identities. This legacy persists not only through inadequate healthcare systems and restricted access to reproductive rights and bodily autonomy but also through gendered legal norms that criminalise and marginalise women and gender minorities. As a result, women in almost every context remain unsafe from patriarchal violence.

Laws targeting sexual and gender minorities including anti-homosexuality legislation, public morality laws and restrictive family

and inheritance codes, are direct inheritances of colonial legal systems, repurposed with postcolonial and neoliberal governance frameworks. These laws and policies sustain systems of exclusion, dispossession, and violence.

Reparations for Africans cannot be complete without attention to gender and sexuality specific harms, which tend to be ignored in mainstream discourses (Nagy, 2010; see also Alvarez et al. 2024). and this has been identified already within transformative justice frameworks. Any meaningful reparative framework must include the dismantling of patriarchal legal architectures, the recognition of harms targeting sexual and gender minorities, and the structural transformation of laws, norms, and institutions. It will thus be essential that a comprehensive understanding of gendered and sexuality-based harms is integrated into the reparative justice framework put forth by the AU that includes **acknowledgment, accountability, repeal of harmful laws and systemic prevention.**



### 3. Education and Knowledge Systems

Colonialism disrupted African education systems and imposed Eurocentric curricula that persist today. Education as a means of reparations offers a transformative path to addressing historical injustices, especially for women and marginalised communities. Central to this vision is ensuring universal access to quality education, with a particular focus on girls and those who have been historically excluded. This includes not only building equitable systems but also revitalizing indigenous knowledge by integrating it into educational curricula and supporting women-led cultural initiatives that honour and sustain traditional practices.

From traditional medicine, cultural rituals and oral ‘herstories’ to spiritual practices and society’s ways of knowing and belonging,

African women have long served as knowledge shapers and custodians of resistance. Yet, colonial regimes targeted these roles through laws such as anti-witchcraft legislations and prohibitions on indigenous spiritual practices. A reparative approach also calls for targeted opportunities, specifically designed for African women. Investing in programmes that reclaim and preserve indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices, and African languages is another critical pillar of this effort. Women’s leadership in these initiatives ensures that cultural preservation aligns with feminist and decolonial perspectives, creating spaces for agency, resistance and repair. Furthermore, resources must be allocated to youth-centred cultural education programmes that foster critical thinking and celebrate diverse heritages through a decolonial lens. By prioritising these actions, education becomes a cornerstone of justice for communities that have borne the brunt of systemic oppression.



## 4. Ecological Reparations

The legacy of colonial extraction and contemporary neoliberal exploitation has left deep ecological wounds across the African continent. From polluted water systems and deforested lands to soil degradation and the collapse of local ecosystems, the devastation wrought by extractive industries is not only environmental—it is social, economic, and gendered. Women, as primary food producers, water carriers, and custodians of local knowledge, bear the brunt of environmental destruction. Their livelihoods are disproportionately affected, and their unpaid labour often expands to compensate for the collapse of ecosystems they once relied on. A feminist framing of reparations rooted in African eco-epistemologies thus demands a recognition of environmental degradation as a form of structural violence that must be redressed.

Ecological reparations must move beyond the language of “sustainability” to embrace a radical agenda of ecological justice. This entails not only

the restoration of degraded environments—through reforestation, soil rehabilitation, and the safeguarding of water sources—but also the redistribution of wealth generated by extractive industries. Reparative justice requires the **redirection of profits from multinational corporations** to fund ecological restoration and climate resilience programmes led by affected communities. Moreover, policy frameworks must shift the burden of accountability to corporations and states that have historically externalised ecological harm while profiting from African resources.

Crucially, ecological reparations must centre women’s leadership, recognising their varied expertise. Gender-responsive approaches to environmental policy are not optional; they are fundamental to ensuring that reparative efforts do not replicate the exclusions of the past. Integrating women’s voices into the governance of land, water, and climate interventions ensures that ecological restoration is not only technically sound but socially just – anchored in the knowledge, agency, and priorities of those most affected.



## 5. Public Representation and Leadership



Despite progressive commitments enshrined in African frameworks such as the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063 and the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP), African women remain significantly underrepresented in political, economic and cultural decision-making spaces. This exclusion diminishes the legitimacy and scope of reparations processes, which too often mirror the hierarchies and silences they are meant to redress. A Pan-African feminist lens reveals that reparations must not only address historical and material harms but also reconfigure who gets to define justice in the first place. The Maputo Protocol affirms women's right to political participation, while the AUTJP explicitly calls for gender-sensitive and inclusive transitional justice mechanisms. Yet in practice, these frameworks have yet to translate into sustained political access or influence for the majority of African women.

Embedding women's leadership at every level is vital to realising the transformative vision these continental instruments promise. Without the knowledge and perspectives of women who have long borne the costs of violence, dispossession, and displacement, reparations risk becoming elite-led exercises rather than vehicles for structural change. Ensuring meaningful representation of women in shaping reparations is thus not merely a normative aspiration, but a necessary condition for building just and enduring futures on the continent.

Beyond specific actions taken at the AU level, international accountability is essential. The AU is well placed to demand reparations from former colonial powers and big businesses including multinational corporations that have and continue to profit from causing harm (see Federman, 2022). In establishing an African Reparations Fund managed by the AU, feminists and feminist intentions should underpin its governance with transparent mechanisms for allocation and accountability. It would be important to build alliances with diaspora communities to strengthen reparative claims and amplify African feminist perspectives globally.

# Implementation Strategies

1. **Policy Integration:** The African Union should incorporate a feminist reparations framework into its Agenda 2063 goals, ensuring alignment with existing commitments to gender equality and sustainable development.
2. **Data Collection and Research:** Robust data on the gendered impacts of historical and contemporary injustices is essential for designing effective reparations programs. Member states should invest in feminist research and data collection initiatives that decolonise knowledge production and prioritise indigenous methodologies.
3. **Monitoring and Accountability:** Establish an independent reparation monitoring body, including representatives from feminist organizations, grassroots movements, and academia, to ensure transparency and accountability.
4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch continent-wide campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of reparations that incorporates a feminist approach using media, arts, and storytelling to foster solidarity and action.

## Reimagining Justice: A Collective Vision

African struggles for justice are deeply interconnected with global movements against racism, patriarchy, and imperialism. Reparations must be framed as part of a broader solidarity-based project, uniting movements across borders to challenge global systems of oppression. Our feminist approach emphasises the importance of building alliances and amplifying voices for justice worldwide.

Reparations offer an opportunity to address historical injustices while envisioning a just and equitable future for Africa. A feminist approach ensures that reparations is not only about financial compensation but rather an imperative remaking the world. . In the African context, centring the voices of women and communities can help the AU lead the way in crafting a reparations agenda that embodies justice, dignity, and solidarity.

A feminist reparations framework challenges us to reimagine justice as a collective endeavour. It moves beyond punitive measures to focus on restoration, community building, and the co-creation of a just future. Justice is envisioned not as a finite goal but as an ongoing process of fostering equity, healing, and liberation for all. This framework is not just about addressing the past; it is about building a future that centres care and liberatory futures. Reparations to Africa, informed by feminist principles, offer an opportunity to create a transformative model of justice that restores dignity, rights, and hope to those most affected by historical and ongoing injustices.

As pan-Africanist feminists, we call on the African Union and its member states, its partners and allies to adopt these recommendations and commit to a reparations process that advances not only gender equality but also the broader liberation of the continent. This is not merely a debt owed; it is a moral imperative and a path toward liberatory justice.

# Bibliography

African Union (2023) <https://au.int/en/decisions/accra-proclamation-reparations>

Haastrup, Toni; Kagumire, Rosebell; and Kezie-Nwoha, Helen (2022) Statement of Intent on Feminist-Informed Policies Abroad and at Home. <https://africanarguments.org/2023/07/statement-of-intent-on-feminist-informed-policies-abroad-and-at-home/>

Alvarez, GR, Ndlovu, N and Wamai, N. (2024) *Reparations: Resisting Historical and Contemporary Injustices through Decolonial*. London: Feminism Feminist Centre for Racial Justice <https://thefeministcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Reparations-FINAL.pdf>

Chigumadzi, P. (2023) With What are you apologizing <https://africasacountry.com/2023/10/with-what-are-you-apologizing>

Federman, S. (2022). How Companies Can Address Their Historical Transgressions <https://hbr.org/2022/01/how-companies-can-address-their-historical-transgressions>

GADN. 2023. 'Reparations as a Pathway to Decolonisation'. Gender and Development Network. May 2023. <https://gadnetwork.org/gadnresources/reparations-as-a-pathway-to-decolonisation>.

Jones, E. (2020). "Gender and Reparations: Seeking Transformative Justice." In *Reparations for Victims of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Nijhoff. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004377196\\_005](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004377196_005)

Lewton, T. (2019). "Uganda's eco-feminists are taking on mining and plantation industries". Mongabay. October Retrieved from <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/10/ugandas-eco-feminists-are-taking-on-mining-and-plantation-industries/> (accessed 2 January 2025)

Lykes, M. B., and Mersky, M (2006) "Reparations and Mental Health: Psychosocial Interventions Towards Healing, Human Agency, and Rethreading Social Realities", In Pablo de Greiff (ed.), *The Handbook of Reparations* (online edn, Oxford Academic),

Nagy, R. 2010. "What Happened to the Women? Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violations: Book Reviews". *Peace & Change* 35 (4): 660–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0130.2010.00660.x>.

Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Táíwò, Olúfẹ́mi O. (2022). *Reconsidering Reparations*. Oxford University Press

Tamale, Sylvia (2020) *Decolonisation and AfroFeminism*. Daraja Press



AFRICAN FEMINIST  
COLLECTIVE ON  
FEMINIST INFORMED  
POLICIES