Finance Gender Equality and Women’s Rights – Close the Gap

KULU-Women and Development and The Equality Trust in cooperation with Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA) focused on Financing gender inequality and the impacts of privatisation in a public debate and a capacity building workshop on gender equality perspectives of the Financing for Development process. The events took place back-to-back to the FIA’s European regional gathering: Building European action on inequality and the climate crisis, which was coordinated together with Oxfam IBIS and MS-ActionAid-Denmark.

The events were organized by KULU-Women and Development and The Equality Trust as part of the Citizens for Financial Justice project. Financing stemmed from EU and Hermod Lannungs funds, together with support from the Fight Inequality Alliance, MS/AA-DK and Oxfam IBIS.

Financing gender inequality: Why privatisation leaves women worse off

Public debate, Monday, October 7, 2019

Approximately 30 individuals attended the public debate on the evening of October 7th to listen to a panel of international experts discuss what is driving the push towards privatization in development finance, the impacts of private financing on gender equality and women’s rights, and to explore what the alternatives might be.

The expert panel included Mama Koité Doumbia (MUSONET, Mali), Kira Boe (Oxfam IBIS, Denmark), Rosa Lizarde (Feminist Task-Force, USA), and Dr. Wanda Wyporska (The Equality Trust, UK).

Janice G. Førde, KULU, opened the debate by giving the backdrop of how Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have been used by developed countries in the North to privatize public services (healthcare, transport, education) and in development finance in developing countries in the Global South. The supposed benefits of privatisation are being increasingly called into question as the implications for equality, access and affordability continue to be questioned and debated on the world stage.

Mama Koité Doumbia explained that inclusive development is expensive, and project planning and funding often overlook the strategic and practical needs of women and girls. The focus on private-public-partnerships (PPPs) and the privatization of public services that provide basic services (water, sanitation, telecommunications, electricity, education, healthcare) has the following consequences: lack of services, increase in prices, and a sharp decrease in their accessibility for the poor and rural people who are predominantly women. To compensate for the public distribution of basic services, many women and girls are forced to increase their invisible and unpaid work. Ms. Doumbia noted that governments must demonstrate greater commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by implementing pragmatic and sustainable systems to address gender inequalities, gender and social injustice, and to promote the rights of women and girls.

Kira Boe spoke about how some governments are contemplating privatizing education under a PPP model. These private school end up taxing parents with high rates for private schooling, while the education these children receive is subpar. Not a lot of good has come from these private schools, which have been linked to cases of abuse.
Rosa Lizarde gave a “UN-weak of Action Review”. Ms. Lizarde informed about the events that took place in New York City the week of the September 20, where the Climate Action Strike took place before the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit. Ms. Lizarde told about the impression the youth, led by Greta Thunberg, made. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, held a CEO Alliance red carpet event for private financiers to encourage them to commit finances to climate change, which will probably fuel greater backing for PPPs. There is a $2.5 trillion/year gap in financing the implementation of the SDGs. At the September UN SDG Summit, it was noted that disinvesting in coal is a priority and that gender equality and women’s empowerment are critical for achieving the SDGs.

Dr. Wanda Wyporska chaired the debate and offered insightful questions and comments to the panel.

This event was organized by KULU-Women and Development and The Equality Trust as part of the Citizens for Financial Justice network (funded by the EU) together with the Fight Inequality Alliance, MS/AA and Oxfam/Ibis.

**Capacity-building Workshop on Financing for Development and Gender Equality**

*Tuesday, October 8, 2019, 9:30-13:00*

Janice G. Førde, KULU chairperson/CFJ project coordinator, facilitated a capacity-building workshop on gender perspectives of the Financing for Development (FFD) process and development finance issues with the assistance of Rosa Lizarde, Global Director of the Feminist Task-Force.

Ms. Førde introduced the workshop as part of KULU’s and Feminist Task Force’s *Finance Gender Equality and Women’s Rights - Close the Gap* project which is part of the Citizens for Financial Justice project. How a sustainable, gender-just development is financed is critical to realizing the Beijing Platform for Action and the 17 SDGs. The FFDs Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), adopted in 2015, is the means of implementation of the 2030-sustainable development agenda and the 17 SDGs. As such, it was the last element to fall in place before the 2030-agenda could be adopted. Therefore, the project’s aim is to remind and educate European civil society about the importance of the FFD process and that gender equality and women’s rights are critical to development finance, to attaining the SDGs, and to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. The project also aims to unveil and monitor the gaps and short-comings of the present development finance system.

Ms. Lizarde, Feminist Task Force (FTF), gave a presentation on the political background of FFDs, starting when the UN was formed in 1945 and up to the 3rd International Conference for Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in 2015. The FFD process became a political process to serve the needs of developing countries.

FFD was a historic attempt by the UN to recover a voice in international economic policy and decision-making in the 1990s. In order to succeed, it was deemed crucial that the FFD process go beyond a UN approach and focus on the economic policies and financing development and include the Bretton Woods Institutions - whose purpose is to promote international economic cooperation - and other multilateral agencies in the process: The World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The FFD process looks at the global institutional architecture: politics, economy and participation. FFD created a platform to bring together all the development stakeholders, institutional and non-institutional, as well as non-governmental organizations under the aegis of the UN. The FFD’s AAAA supports, complements and helps contextualize the 2030 Agenda’s means of implementing its targets. The SDG process expires in 2030, while the FFD process continues.
Mama Koité Doumbia, MUSONET-Mali, spoke about the implementation of gender equality and FfD in Mali. Gender equality is difficult to implement in Mali and incorporating gender equality into national policies and budgets is complicated. Gender equality issues are discussed on the macro level; but in order to change women’s and girls’ situation, change must also take place in the different social and economic sectors of society. A main issue for the FfD process in Mali is for local governments to use their local resources instead of relying on foreign aid. The difficulty here is that international companies come and export Malian resources, taking the profits back to their home countries. Mali gets 20% of what was produced, hence there is a lot of financial loss. Regarding the privatization of services, hospitals are being privatized while women continue to give birth on the bare ground in rural areas. Schools are being privatized, and you can find classrooms with 100 students. Girls go to primary school but disappear before finishing the primary level because their parents do not have the financial means to support their schooling.

Dr. Wanda Wyporska, The Equality Trust (TET), gave a great explanation of some of the issues linking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FfD: “One of the problems with the SDGs is that we come back to gender is placed in one silo, inequality in another, decent jobs in another, industry and production in still another, and poverty in its own silo. We are not necessarily looking at what the overlaps and the intersections are, and we need to start looking at these issues holistically. The UK does give 0.7% in development assistance; but not as cash aid or cash grants, but in the form of loans and guarantees to big companies that will go in and build infrastructure in other countries, whether it is needed or not. Companies cannot find profit in Northern Europe as easily now, so they are going to the South and building infrastructure and taking the aid money that is financed by our taxes. These companies build the hospitals; and when the money runs out, they charge women to access the hospital. If a woman doesn’t want to birth her baby on the ground, she goes to the hospital, which she has to pay for - even when by law giving birth should be free – and the money goes towards the company’s profits, which are extracted from the country and go back to the North.”

Rianna Garguilo, TET, facilitated “Points of Entry & Actions Points” following the panel presentations. She introduced the three working groups to a three-step planning method – Dreamers -> Realists -> Critics – to formulate realistic action points based on visions and practicalities.

Action point suggestions:

- Actions during the FIAs week of action in January 2020
- Events at the Beijing+25 conference in Paris, July 2020 in order to push for more rights, more funds for women’s/girls’ rights and gender equality advocacy CSOs
- FfD and gender equality consultation with OECD-DAC in Paris
- Women’s tribunals - telling holistic stories about economic inequality
- Provide evidence: Shadow reports on financing gender equality and women’s rights
- Advocacy campaign to increase quantity and quality for ODA (Official development Assistance)
- Advocacy to increase ODA to women’s and feminist CSOs and networks
- Connect the local with the global: Local partnerships for tangible change in local areas to shift attitudes and win hearts and minds

There was little time for summarizing the workshop. Participants were encouraged to join a Core Group to give guidance and input to the project.
FIA European Gathering: Building European Action on Inequality and the Climate Crisis
Monday, October 7, 2019 - full-day workshop

32 individuals from 15 organizations gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark on October 7 to discuss European action on the climate emergency and inequality crisis. The discussion focused on two points: the overconsumption of wealthy people and wealthy countries and how these wealthier nations have a debt to developing countries, and how climate change affects all other development agendas. The discussions revolved around what can be done to create the systematic change necessary for real change.

Presentations were given by the Fight Inequality Alliance, Rethinking Economics DK, Den Grønne Studenter Bevægelse (Green Student Movement), and the Laboratory of Aesthetics and Ecology. These presentations offered an insight of what different groups are trying to achieve to tackle the climate emergency and economic inequality.

The FIA informed about the annual Global Week of Action in January, when civil society will in 2020 take action to highlight the global crisis and call for an end to the “age of greed”. The Global Week of Action from January 18 to 25 coincides with the World Economic Forum in Davos which takes place from the 21st to 24th in 2020. The ambition for 2020 is to capture media headlines and social media attention through creative stunts and actions, influence large scale mobilizations, produce a counter-narrative, spread the voices and stories of those on the frontlines and have grassroots movements take priority.

This led to Week of Action creative breakouts, where participants in working groups came up with ideas to use during the Global Week of Action. The 4 main ideas were:

- “Usawa Dinner”: which captures the idea of what inequality feels like in real life - everyone pays for the same but gets different meals by chance.
- Using satire/humour: for example, a satirical campaign titled “Donate to Davos” that asks people to call for more benefits for the rich.
- Inequality strikes/protests: an idea was to mobilise national groups (e.g. trade unions, student movements, CSOs) to protest inequality, with the message that we are struggling while they are at Davos
- “Shame the Rich”: Name and shame the companies and individuals with the biggest carbon footprint - using Dario Kenner’s “Polluter Elite” database - to get media attention

In the plenary after the workshop, the following action points were discussed:
1. Keep in touch with FIA Europe and other allied organisations involved in the workshop
2. Attendees - connect with national FIA convenors and other allied movements/groups
3. Create key messaging for the European alliance
4. Continue working to keep the issue relevant within our own organisations
5. Build a 2020 calendar for key moments across Europe
6. Danish allies - arrange meeting for national week of action planning
7. Netherlands - use the week of action as a hook to start building their national alliance
8. Regular calls/communication between European FIA partners using Google groups
9. Actively integrate environmental and climate issues into women’s and girls’ rights issues
Fight Inequality Alliance Europe – Next steps  
Tuesday afternoon, October 8, 2019

The afternoon session focused on identifying practical steps needed to move forward with the discussions from Monday’s workshop, October 7.

Things to consider whilst going forward are to keep the follow-up momentum going and to develop the discussion on the regional focus. A clear and simple narrative needs to be developed; a movement needs to be mobilized in order to create a “journey to the future” plan; and the reality of lack of resources and commitment needs to be tackled.

Here are a few key dates the group proposed to mobilise around for 2020:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>18th-25th January 2020</td>
<td>Global week of action</td>
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<td>8th March 2020 &amp;</td>
<td>International Women’s Day and CSW64</td>
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<td>CSW64 9-20 March</td>
<td>• Plan something simple considering short turnaround between week of action and</td>
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<td>• Reach out to women’s CSOs who are already planning to ask</td>
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<td>what our national alliances can do to support/help</td>
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<td>• Commission on the Status of Women’s 64th session focusing</td>
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<td>on Beijing+25 takes place the following two weeks</td>
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<td>November 2020</td>
<td>COP26 - UN Climate Change Summit takes place in Glasgow, Scotland</td>
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<td>• Can link to Black Friday if overlap</td>
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