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Toward a Vision of Sexual and Economic Justice
Thought Paper

Sexual and Economic Justice Preparatory Questions

1. From your activist and/or academic position, what are the most pressing concerns surrounding the intersection of economic and sexual justice? With respect to which concrete issues does that intersection appear most relevant?

More and more economic policies that impact negatively on the right and ability for women to self determine and actualise are being elaborated. Most of these present the super power, USA as the ideal model of economy and good governance. We have seen this glaringly in the past eight years where the economic super power suddenly cuts down funding for population and development agencies as a result of the re-activation of the gag rule causing these agencies to cut down on the support they gave developing countries to carry out intervention programmes addressing sexual and reproductive rights needs. This stance influenced the pattern of negotiations and the weak outcome documents that were obtained from the review processes marking 5 and 10 years of the implementation of the IPD POA, FWCW PFA blackmailing feminist and women's human rights activists not to negotiate strong language on sexual and reproductive rights for the fear of re-opening the consensus documents. The same stunt was played by the economic model during the review of the MDGs (the World Summit) where a lot of background work had gone into enriching the MDGs with a section on sexual rights.

Similarly, was the PEPFAR policy that stipulated conditions for funding for HIV/AIDS programming that are discriminatory to certain groups of people, especially those whose sexualities do not conform to the heteronormative models. This policy also shifted attention away from primary prevention that had developed from ABC methods of prevention to a more holistic behavioural change communication to abstinence only messages and management interventions which address only a selected population in a selected phase of their lives - women who attend antenatal clinic. In Nigeria, this is less than 50% of pregnant women.

The same economic models suggested poverty eradication without taking into account the diversity in the different nation states to which they sold the model. These have not yielded positive results apart from strengthening the socio-economic apparatus that has further impoverished women and perpetuated their low status. In my context this plays out in many ways including the inability of women to seek healthcare services without the permission of their husbands, women lacking a say on the sexual behaviour of their male partners even where

this puts them at risk of contracting the HIV, lack of power to decide for themselves when and who to marry, seeking help to end domestic violence, etc.

In response to the economic model has been a wave of fundamentalisms which repress women's sexual rights especially as an element of holiness and effectiveness. In Nigeria for instance, we woke up into the new millennium, 2000, with 12 out of 26 states in northern Nigeria declaring a much broader shari'a law than there was in the penal code. This led to the sentencing of women to death by stoning or flogging (100 lashes of the cane in a public place) for alleged adultery while the male partner was not found guilty.

These have further pushed women behind in participation in development efforts further subjugating them to the patriarchal system.

The intersections lie in the self determination of women, the right to personal integrity and bodily integrity.

2. What are the possibilities for collaboration between and among social movements with respect to global economic and sexual justice?

Recently, the need to build bridges across movements has been articulated in the erotic justice discourse. This is because rights are inalienable. Social movements can therefore collaborate to conduct advocacy, shape policies and set pace in designing intervention projects that address and or respond to real needs bordering on erotic justice. Those who specialize in trade can articulate sexual rights needs and link them to the economic issues being discussed, making policy makers aware of the intersections, the adverse impact of globalization as it is today, the benefits of making erotic justice a key determinant of policy intervention projects. For instance, sexual rights activists and those interested in economics can participate in HIV dialogues, and the latter can be part of World Trade dialogues, etc.

3. How do we think through sexual justice in intersectional form – attentive to structurally produced differences of gender, race, class, and able to produce the political responses these differences require?

We can think through this by ensuring that every discourse is participatory bringing into the process allies we ordinarily would have left out and ensuring that marginalized voices and invisible are brought on board and that their participation is fully recognized. We need to open up more to one another and listen to one another and identify areas of collaboration in those spaces.

4. What are the obstacles, both in political activism and conceptual representations, to responding effectively to sexual and economic injustice? What keeps activists and scholars from approaching sexual and economic justice as co-constitutive?

Most of us are products of socialisation that has segmented us and boxed up the parts that make us separately. This mode of socialization has defined and given meaning to each segment that makes the individual, determining what value each part of us has as individuals and as groups. The institutions that socialize us have determined what about us should be celebrated, what parts should be criminalized, what part of us should be trivialised. The erotic part of us has been denied as taboo, shame, insignificant, and this has played a role in how we approach sexual and economic justice as co-constitutive. Economy has been seen as “dough”, key to survival, while “orgasms” are luxury, entertainment, and in some groups, criminal. That is the politics of power/desire and pleasure.

5. What initiatives can we invoke that consider sex work from the interlinked perspectives of sexual and economic justice, and how can these help us re-think the broader debate between global markets and intimacies, love and sex?

We can hold inter-sectional dialogues. These fora will provide the space for activist, and other stakeholders from all the sectors, including manufacturers of sex toys and aids, the pornographic industry, sex workers, economists, etc, to dialogue from the various perspectives and also make linkages and tease out intersections between global economy and erotic justice.

6. How is the intersection between sexual and economic injustice shaped by war and militarization?
 - a) A lot of resources are diverted for armaments that could have been used to secure the sexual rights and health of a people
 - b) There is a lot of sexual violence during conflicts and is in most instances an additional weapon of war

These further impoverish the people and create more avenue for sexual rights violations, and it is a vicious cycle.

7. HIV/AIDS scholarship and activism is another privileged site within which to interrogate the connections between sexual and economic justice, structural inequality and intimate desire. What are the possibilities in *this* arena for forging a model of global justice in its full, sexual and economic, complexity? What are the limitations?

There is a lot of funding for HIV/AIDS programming and bi-annual international conferences on AIDS. This is an opportunity to bring activists from diverse sectors to discuss this. The HIV/AIDS situation itself provides an opportunity to study these intersections because the commonest mode of transmission is through sexual activity. Now, the mode of prevention and management have great economic implications as seen in the production and marketing of condoms, micro-biocides, ant-retroviral drugs, the rights implication in sexual

behaviour and choices, including cosmetics, and services such as surgeries (trans-sexuals).

8. What scale is helpful to you as you approach these questions? The national? The global? The regional? The local? The South-South? Something else? To whom do you look for responses that will secure sexual and economic justice? The state? Transnational social movements? Bretton Woods institutions? Civil society organizations?

All levels are helpful in approaching the question. Since we are regarding an issue that requires a multi-sectoral approach, so do I view the intervention. The colloquium is therefore a commendable start, the global level, then we can expand by taking the discourse or follow up strategisation to other levels, just the way the horrid global policies come from the global level and filter down to the local with their ugly impact on the population at the local level. We can structure the response that same way.

Responses can be found from all the options listed above, as each responds as is within their power. It is the synergy from the responses that will yield a positive impact in the changes we seek to secure erotic and economic justice.

9. Finally, how do we develop effective rhetorics and practices of resistance in the present context, and how do we reimagine global justice as involving both sexual and economic components?

We need to reconfigure sexual rights as all encompassing and as inalienable with other human rights. We need to dialogue and commit to principles of equality, integrity, diversity, autonomy and choice. We need to re-position ourselves as activists in this context and project the voices of all affected without marginalization of the needs of sexual minorities, victims of sexual abuse, people living with HIV/AIDS and persons with disabilities. We need to identify those spaces we wish to carry out our interventions and have a systematic strategy of intervention for action.