



“What the Social Contract Means in the Age of Data - Feminist Visions and Perspectives”

Webinar by

IT for Change and
Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development

REGISTRATION LINK <https://tinyurl.com/ycualwj4>

Wednesday, 7 October, 2020

9am NY/2pm London/15hrs Rome/16hrs Nairobi/20hrs Bangkok

Panel:

Deborah James, *Director of International Programs, Center for Economic and Policy Research and Coordinator, Our World is Not for Sale (OWINFS) network*

Kate Lappin, *Asia Pacific Regional Secretary, Public Services International*

Anita Gurumurthy, *Executive Director, IT for Change*

Dr. Laura Mann, *Assistant Professor, Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science*

Moderator:

Mariama Williams, *Programme Coordinator, South Centre*

The Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FfD) is an alliance of women’s organizations and networks which advocates for the advancement of women’s human rights and gender equality in the Financing for Development related UN processes.

Co-Convenors:

Rosa Lizarde, Global Director, Feminist Task Force; rosa.lizarde@feministtaskforce.org

Emilia Reyes, Program Director, Policies & Budgets for Equality & Sustainable Development, Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work & Family; emilia@equidad.org.mx

Part of a series of action-oriented dialogues on the macro agendas and the current crises:
Macro Solutions for Women, the People and the Planet

- Macro Solutions for Women, the People and the Planet Closing Series Dialogue Wednesday, 21 October 9am EST

Concept Note

We live in the times of a fundamental shift in economic organisation, represented in the phenomenon of platformisation. In every sector of the economy, from agriculture to manufacturing and services, market power rests with platform companies who enjoy an 'intelligence advantage'; the competitive edge gained through relentless mining of data and enclosure of data-based insights. A unique characteristic of the digital economy is that a handful of transnational corporations have been able to usurp control over large swathes of economic activity through multi-sector vertical markets and data-based horizontal markets.¹ Think Amazon's forays into new sectors such as health and pharma and its significant presence in cloud and intelligence services through AWS.

The rise and rise of platform monopolies has not just led to a worrisome concentration of economic power, but also intensified labour precarity, reinforcing gender-based hierarchies in the international division of labour. The elite who corner the gains of this paradigm are overwhelmingly white and male. Emerging models of platform-based work are rooted in racialised and gendered inequality. Gig work platforms perpetuate gender-based labour market hierarchies in wages and opportunities through their algorithmic worker profiling practices. These trends are not only true for the organisation of digital work on a planetary scale, but extend also to traditional livelihoods. In many countries of the Global South, agriculture and micro-retail – sectors dominated by women – are under threat in the data-enabled restructuring of food retail chains by platform companies. Even women's bodies and life worlds are at the risk of data colonisation. An explosion of 'app-based' business models predicated on mining data about sexuality and reproductive health portends serious risks to women's bodily autonomy and integrity. Public private partnerships like the World Economic Forum's Earth Bank of Codes pave the way for marketisation of the world's bio-diversity commons through "open" digital and data frameworks that pose threats to local sustainability while promoting corporate capture. The COVID-19 crisis that has accelerated Big Tech-led digitalisation of the economy is only going to make matters worse.

Global governance deficits perpetuate structural injustice in the digital economy. The absence of a global consensus on digital taxation regimes leads to developing countries losing valuable fiscal revenues that could have been generated from the transnational digital corporations operating in their territory. Contrary to the mainstream narratives on ecommerce and women's empowerment, digital trade regimes have, in reality, been inimical to the interests of the most marginalised women in the Global South. They curtail the policy space of developing countries to restrict data extraction by transnational platform companies and to impose technology transfer obligations on them. As a result, developing countries are unable to evolve their own data, cloud and AI infrastructural public goods sans which no vision of alternative, home-grown platform economy models can be realised. Data as a building block of the economy, if governed appropriately, also holds promise for feminist social and solidarity enterprise models.

Against this backdrop, this webinar will address the following questions:

1. How has the platform-led restructuring of the economy increased gender-based inequality? What are the governance deficits that exacerbate this?
2. What needs to change about the global digital trade policy, digital taxation and data governance regime so that the feminist vision of a digital economy can be reclaimed?
3. Why are digital and data public goods important to furthering feminist visions of the digital economy?
4. How can we make the global digital economy work for women's rights and gender equality?

¹A **vertical market** refers to customers across different value segments of a sector/industry. A **horizontal market** is one in which customers use a product to do the same thing, regardless of what industry they are in.