



Reimagining Our Influencing Power: Feminist Approach to Influencing

Introduction

This session delves into the concept of feminist influencing, highlighting its role in driving systemic change to combat systemic injustice. It explores how feminist perspectives can challenge and transform power dynamics, policies, practices, and social norms to promote justice and equality. Key insights from influencing specialists like Isabel Crabtree-Condor and Nkateko Chauke, as well as activists like Twongirwe Ireen, illustrate practical applications and successes in feminist influencing. The article also introduces Oxfam's "Feminist Influencing Basket of Resources," a resource designed to empower marginalized communities and enhance influencing strategies. Through discussions and real-world examples, the piece underscores the significance of feminist approaches in addressing intersectional issues related to gender, climate, and economic justice.

Breaking Down Influencing

Isabel Crabtree-Condor, an influencing specialist in the African Activists for Climate Justice (AACJ) project, explained that influencing empowers marginalized individuals and groups to voice their concerns in decision-making processes. It also includes enhancing institutional capacity for inclusive participation in formal processes like budgets and climate planning.

Influencing raises neglected issues onto policy and public agendas, aiming to shift policies and practices in favor of marginalized groups. Efforts focus on changing public and official attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate poverty and climate injustice, aligning with AACJ pathways.



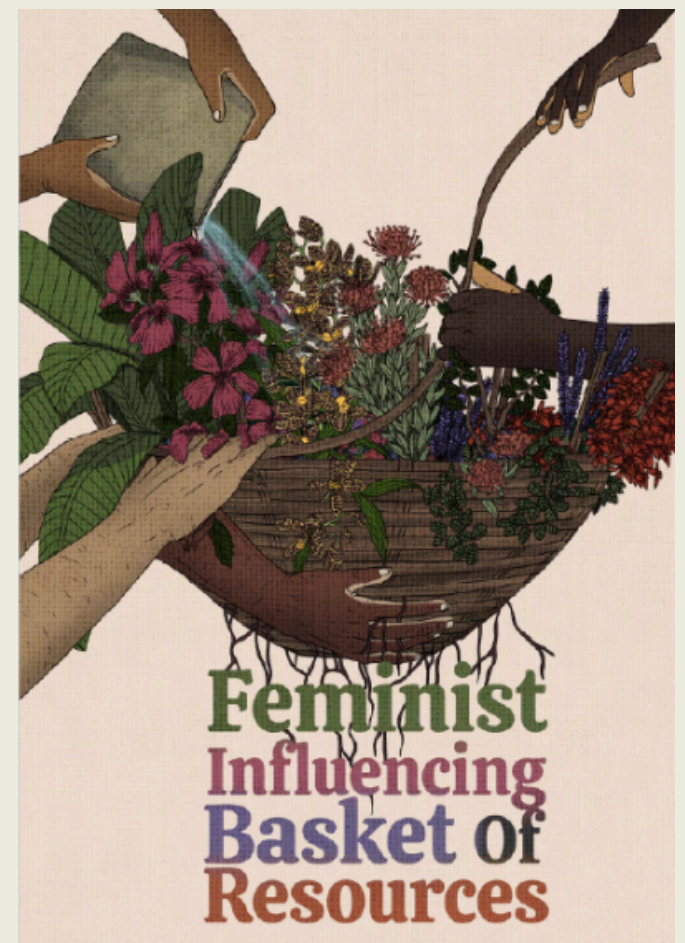
Feminist Influencing

Feminist influencing examines power dynamics from a feminist perspective, challenging visible, hidden, and invisible power structures that limit solutions. This approach seeks to transform power both systemically and interpersonally, emphasizing how agendas are advanced. It addresses intersectional injustice by recognizing intersecting inequalities and connecting across movements and issues. It centers women, youth, and marginalized people as agents with solutions, highlighting lived experiences and reflecting on power and position.

Feminist Influencing Basket of Resources

Participants explored the meaning of feminism and how to implement its principles in their work. Group exercises and discussions encouraged shared experiences and collaborative learning. For instance, Josephine shared insights on addressing online gender inequality and ensuring data privacy from a feminist perspective. Another participant, Ireen, highlighted the importance of inclusivity and justice for marginalized groups, emphasizing feminism as a tool to address power imbalances.

Isabel introduced the Feminist Influencing Basket of Resources ("feminist basket"), a comprehensive document with exercises designed to interrupt power dynamics and offer alternatives. This resource includes visuals and exercises on feminist facilitation, understanding power, intersectionality, and narrative strategies. It aids organizers, influencers, and collectives in designing and monitoring influencing strategies from a feminist perspective.



[Click here to access the basket](#)





Conversation with Nkateko

Program Director, Oxfam South Africa

Feminism, for Nkateko, goes beyond a simple definition—it is about taking ownership of decision-making spaces and claiming agency. In the African context, this idea is beautifully illustrated through community imbizos. These are meetings led by chiefs, predominantly men, who discuss community issues and make decisions after consulting with community members. Historically, the chief would say, "Let's sleep on this issue and decide tomorrow," but this decision often involves private consultation with his wife. This highlights the crucial yet unrecognized role of women in decision-making.

Oxfam in South Africa emphasizes linear relationships and partnerships, rejecting the "bottom-up" model that implies a false hierarchy. They prioritize creating spaces for women to enhance their leadership and participation in democratic processes and community decision-making. An example of this is our partnership with Old Mutual from 2020 to 2023. This project empowered women-led organizations through capacity development and mentorship, transforming them from community-based groups into recognized advocates for gender justice and women's rights.

"In today's world, being a feminist means stepping into these spaces of power rather than waiting for permission. Feminism takes many forms, such as economic and Pan-African feminism."

Intersectionality and Climate Justice

Nkateko further emphasized the importance of intersectionality, particularly in the context of climate change. She explained that building community resilience and understanding sustainable livelihoods are central to their feminist climate justice strategy. Indigenous communities, especially women, hold valuable knowledge for building resilience to climate change.





Conversation with Ireen

Executive Director of Women for Green Economy Movement (WOGEM) Uganda

Ireen shared her experiences regarding the collaboration around the feminist basket. The collaboration focused on decolonizing climate finance and sharing African feminist stories. Ireen emphasized that there is no climate justice without gender justice, as marginalized women are disproportionately affected by climate change. The feminist influencing basket emerged as a tool to empower marginalized communities with the skills needed to promote climate and gender justice. The basket's approach fosters sisterhood and radical healing from injustices. It creates an open space for everyone to share, which was particularly empowering for grassroots women.

"Reading through the basket document drafted by Isabel and her team, it created more meaning, especially in sharing African stories. We found that storytelling is a powerful tool for raising our voices and documenting injustices faced while fighting for climate justice or working on climate adaptation."

Ireen highlighted how this tool helped build trust and confidence within her community, allowing women to share their stories and work together on sustainable projects. One successful initiative inspired by the basket is an eco-friendly bag project, reducing plastic pollution and providing a platform for women to share their stories and support each other. Ireen also emphasized the need to transition from fossil fuels to a just, greener, equitable, and affordable energy system that supports the sustainability of marginalized communities. Fossil fuels are the primary drivers of the climate crisis and disproportionately benefit those in power while harming vulnerable communities. Prioritizing a greener economy over a capitalist one is thus essential for our future.



Discussions

Participants shared reflections on the critical intersection of climate change with issues of injustice and insecurity. Moumouni emphasized the need for research on displaced women and the impact of climate crises on gender dynamics within families and communities. Annida asked about the challenge of escaping hierarchical notions and becoming more aware of oppressive systems. Isabel answered that learning to be more aware is a progress and she emphasized the importance of adopting new frameworks that challenge old paradigms. Nkateko added that narrative framing is crucial, advocating for a shift from deficit narratives to more empowering perspectives.

Lessons Learned

Transformative Power of Feminist Influencing

Feminist influencing can shift power dynamics, enabling marginalized groups to assert control over their narratives and, consequently, over the solutions to their problems. This approach not only empowers individuals and communities but also challenges and transforms the broader systemic power structures that perpetuate inequality.

Intersectionality for Systemic Change

The conversation emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, particularly in how feminist influencing can address multiple layers of inequality simultaneously. This approach acknowledges that individuals experience overlapping forms of discrimination and privilege, which means solutions must consider these intersecting identities.

Collaboration and Community-Led Solutions

By working in partnership with grassroots and women-led organizations, and ensuring they have the necessary tools and resources, these groups can transition from being merely participants to becoming leaders and decision-makers in advocacy and policy-making processes. The Feminist Basket provides resources to start the conversation.

