



# HUMAN, SOCIAL & ECONOMIC CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

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# INTRODUCTION

- The role of women in African economies have long been a concern for social workers.
- Women across Global South countries are unable to secure employment in the formal work sector and end up working in the informal economy out of necessity rather than choice (Chant and Pedwell, 2008; Frye, 2013; Raniga, 2021).

# GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ECONOMY

- South Africa's economic growth has disguised the deepening gender inequality and structural problems which has perpetuated the feminization of poverty.
- It is no surprise that the relationship between the formal and informal economy has become prominent in policy discourses in respect of its role and contribution to create jobs and mitigate persistent poverty and unemployment.
- One of the key ways of making the economy work is simply to discourage the pathological discourse that poor women remain poor because they are trapped in the 'informal economy' and that they need to be protected and recued.

# POLICIES AND LEGISLATION IN SA

- The White Paper on Social Welfare (1997); the White Paper on Local Government (1998), the Cooperatives Development Policy (2005) and the National Development Plan Vision 2030 (2015) support pro-poor and pro-economic growth objectives, thus simultaneously integrating psychosocial support and economic imperatives for women who work in the informal economy.
- While the rollout of these policies are commendable; the gaps remain with translating these policy directives into meaningful action such as access to microcredit, collective organisation and business training for women (Patel 2015, Raniga 2016).

# GENDER RELATIONS, FINANCIAL CAPITAL AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

- Women are disadvantaged in the work place in terms of access to productive employment opportunities.
- While women's participation in the first economy has increased over the past two decades, the income paid to women continues to be lower than those of men (Statistics South Africa, 2020).
- The ILO Report (2017) reveals that a significant proportion of the female global workforce secure income through work in the informal economy.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the livelihood practices through which African women survive in the informal economy?
- How have their experiences challenged their own gender identity?
- What were African women's suggestions for economic transformation?

# CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

- Makhushane in rural Limpopo and Ivory Park in Gauteng are two sites of impoverishment and economic marginalisation in South Africa.
- Both these areas are characterised by chronic poverty and dire levels of unemployment which requires a careful analysis of structural poverty and the ways in which livelihoods are shaped and mediated by women in the broader political and social contexts.

## RECRUITING THE WOMEN

- Using snowball sampling I purposively selected women who worked in the informal economy either in private households and or informal businesses.
- All the women were non-tax paying members and did not receive basic benefits such as pension or medical aid contributions from their employer (Statistics South Africa, 2020).
- Eight women were selected from Makushane and eight women from Ivory Park
- . Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the 16



# HUMAN CAPITAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Developmental and transformative interventions have unleashed the creative human capital and entrepreneurial skills of unemployed women who reside in low income communities (Raniga, 2016, Raniga 2021).
- Women acknowledged that human capabilities and skills can be enhanced by working together and pooling strengths and resources during an economic crisis (Osiobe 2019) .
- Many of the women who worked as street vendors said that they gained a lot of new and innovative skills in marketing their products using digital technology and social media. The use of Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube also enhanced their human capabilities and social business relations with customers

# FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

- In African societies, women who are entrepreneurs remain economically, spatially and racially marginalised from the mainstream first economy (Nishimwe-Niyimbanira, 2013).
- *P3: Sometimes you are not paid in time, and my child is using transport to go to the Crèche, and to pay the Crèche. It becomes a challenge because you must explain to those people your challenges, some they understand and some they don't.*
- *P 14: The salary that I get from my work is not enough; hence I said my son is the one assisting. Sometimes you can spend a month or two without receiving any pay. We are paid in a quarterly basis; it's not guaranteed that every month you will get paid.*

# SOCIAL CAPITAL CHALLENGES

- Mobilising women entrepreneurs, creating solidarity via online spaces for engagement of women who worked as traders and claiming positions in business forums that existed in their respective Municipality areas.
- They talked about their visions for claiming and sharing their physical resources, organising collective action for changes to informal trading regulations and sustaining their livelihood activities.
- The findings corroborate Patel's (2015) suggestion that successful realisation of economic goals requires access to microcredit and promoting microenterprise as part of a holistic social development agenda to address the feminisation of poverty.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- women's contribution to the informal economy is an important source of income is a survivalist economic activity which is dependent on the resources and social capital connections upon which they can draw in society.
- Policy makers should put in place systems that can ameliorate existing power imbalances and reduce gender inequality.
- There is an urgent need for national and provincial policies to include the concerns of women who are self-employed entrepreneurs to ensure that they have access to trading permits and microcredit to sustain their livelihood activities.