

## Call for Contribution: Volume 33, Issue 3

### Beijing +30

#### About the journal

Gender & Development (G&D) is a unique journal that offers a forum to share experiences and analyses between feminist activists, scholars, and women leaders across the globe working in research, policy, and practice. The November 2025 Issue of G&D will focus on “Beijing +30”.

#### The context

In the year 2020, the world was set to celebrate the historic 25th anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, one of the most powerful articulations of women’s rights. In July 2020, *Gender & Development* Journal published a special issue to mark this occasion and offer a critical appraisal of the work done to achieve the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and take stock of how much more needs to be done to realise a feminist future. The time of the issue’s publication coincided with the global pandemic, and the editors and authors of the Beijing +25 attempted to make sense of how this health crisis might shape the gains made in realising gender justice, while amplifying the challenges that lay ahead.

The +25 special issue addressed several critical themes, ranging from tackling religious conservatism and questioning the effectiveness of multilateralism, to engaging with young feminist activisms and transnational feminisms. It also highlighted some pertinent questions: How are we dealing with the emerging questions of the identities of gender and sexual minorities in the context of rising religious and political conservatism? How far have we come in realising a feminist economic future? How (and why) has gender and development been reduced to a mere sector after the Beijing conference instead of the alternative frames envisioned so as to achieve transformative change? Five years on, the Beijing +30 special issue will reflect on these questions and the new opportunities and challenges these present, in a radically new context.

The current political climate characterised by wars, forced displacement, occupation, worsening impacts of climate crises and environmental degradation, rising conservatism, and a backlash against hard-earned women’s rights has made it harder to reach the goals set by BPfA. The Global Gender Gap report (2024) estimates that it will take another 134 years to achieve gender parity across the globe (WEF 2024); an additional 51 years compared to what was predicted in 2016 (WEF 2016). A UN DESA report on progress in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals estimates that it will take 286 years to eliminate gender discrimination in legal frameworks around the world (UNDESA 2022). Given this, it is still important and urgent to keep working at multilateral, national, and local levels towards gender equitable goals, and the Beijing +30 review provides a litmus test to know where we stand and what is required in moving forward.

## **Rising political extremism, religious extremism, and the alt right**

The rise of the ‘Global Right’ (see Walters and Graff, 2019) and its negative implications on the rights of women and other marginalised groups (such as gender-diverse groups, LGBTQI groups, refugees, persons with disability, and migrant groups) have become more evident worldwide and are visible across geographical, economic, cultural, and historical contexts. There are repeated attempts in South Korea to abolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (Hyo-jin 2024), something that effectively happened in Argentina (D’Alessandro 2024). In Poland, the ‘Stop Abortion’ Bill seeks to deny legal access to abortions (while currently stalled, it may be tabled again in the future) (Human Rights Watch 2020). The intersection of anti-feminist and anti-immigration agendas in the populist far right is exemplified in the case of Spain and the US. In Spain, a far-right political party put up a poster that depicted feminist and LGBTQ+ flags as trash in June 2023 (which was later taken down after complaints) (Euronews 2023a). The same party proposed the suspension of processes that grant Spanish citizenship and residence permits to immigrants from Islamic countries (Euronews 2023b). In the US, halting migration processes, promising ‘mass deportations’, and expanding the powers of enforcement agencies that deal with immigration form the cornerstone of the new government’s immigration policy (Yousif 2025). The same government is attacking the sexual and reproductive rights of women, and a recent executive order de-recognises more than two genders and un-winds federal support for LGBTQ+ policies (Wendling and Epstein 2025); these attempts are likely to have deep repercussions on the trans- and non-binary community and movements.

Several scholars have regarded the Beijing Conference as being a decisive moment in the consolidation of alliances amongst different religious groups (Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and Muslims) to resist the use of the term ‘gender’ as a category (Baden and Goetz 1997; Walters and Graff 2019; Cupać and Ebetürk 2020). The anti-gender movements have only been growing stronger – with professionalised anti-gender advocacy (McEwen and Narayanaswamy 2023); efforts to reframe debates and dilute commitments and policy frameworks (Zarembeg, Tabush, and Friedman 2021); systematic funding (Khan, Tant and Harper 2023; Datta 2021); and increasing political legitimacy (Khan 2023). In December 2023, the Russian Supreme Court banned the LGBT movement because of its “extremist” nature (Choi et al 2024). These orders illustrate “the entwined nature of anti-genderism, queerphobias, xenophobias, authoritarianism, and militarism” (Choi et al 2024, 1). These are the latest political actions taken by many governments to maintain the traditional institutions of marriage, family, and reproduction that are vital to the functioning of the state and the neoliberal economy. These actions are also embedded in ‘anti-gender’ movements that have been operating in LAC and Europe, Turkiye, US (albeit in different ways) and work to derail progressive laws and maintain the status quo (ibid).

The rise of political conservatism, misogyny, and religious intolerance have also made rapid inroads into digital spaces, revealing the role of digital technologies in pushing this extreme brand of politics. The political radicalisation of young men through social media platforms, image and video sharing platforms, and micro blogging platforms is on the rise bellowing white nationalism and xenophobic content. Millions of alienated men are getting drawn into the alt right pipeline and this is a significant threat to gender equitable goals and feminist action (Kor-Sins 2023; Guzman 2024).

At the same time, there is a strong collective feminist challenge to these forces through rights based movements and coalitions that are actively adopting and developing innovative strategies and advocacy mechanisms, although they have to navigate the difficult political terrain characterised by the nexus of anti-genderism and state policies (Korolczuk 2020; Zarembeg et al 2021; Unal 2024). Against this background, the goals of the BPfA need to be expanded/reinterpreted/revisited as well as

afforded financial and political support to account for emerging contexts and their implications for the rights of women and marginalised communities. This special issue aims to reflect on this.

## **Building feminist economic futures and feminist funds**

### *Implementing feminist economic policies*

The pandemic and associated lockdowns caused wide scale economic devastation with severe gendered implications for women, especially those from socio-economically marginalised groups working in the informal economy (ILO 2021). Research and empirical data revealed the drastic effects of neoliberalism, the declining role of the state, and cuts in public expenditure on health and education, with women and marginalised groups suffering the most (Elson and Seth 2019; Ghosh 2021; Esquivel 2021; Esquivel et al 2022; Muchhala and Guillem 2022). The invaluable role of care, both paid and unpaid, re-emerged in the midst of the pandemic, yet has found little support or recognition by governments. The inadequacy, incapacity, and unwillingness of governments to invest in care infrastructure has been at its starkest.

The main economic problems identified by BPfA was the lack of people-oriented and sustainable economic growth, as well as lack of sufficient social security measures. Overall, discussions at the conference pushed towards macro-economic policies with meaningful involvement by women (Esquivel and Enríquez 2020). There is a need to centre women and other marginalised groups in economic policies, focus on women's entrepreneurship, and challenge neoliberal and exclusionary economic policies guided by neoclassical economic and growth logics.

### *Resourcing feminist movements*

One of the important contributions of the Beijing conference is the recognition of the collective action of women and the funds that sustain it (Moosa and Kinyili 2015). While a few feminist funds such as Mama Cash (in the US) and Semillas (in Mexico) existed even before the Conference, the women's fund model grew significantly after it; autonomous women's funds at the national and regional levels were being set up across Africa, Asia, and Latin America by the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s (ibid). However, others report that the resources available to feminist movements began to shrink towards the early 2000s since many donors were under the impression that gender justice had been achieved and was no longer a priority (Durán 2015). In the US, various groups and organisations faced a funding crunch leading to the closing of programmes and a reduction in the scope of their work (ibid). While the Beijing Conference was a momentous event, financial commitments were not as strongly negotiated and secured which had subsequent implications for women's rights organisations and towards achieving the goals of the conference (ibid). In recent years, women's rights organisations and movements have continued to be underfunded (Dolker 2021). Further, the recent suspension of funding by USAID, the world's largest international aid agency, will directly affect sexual and reproductive rights of women, gender programmes around the world (Celis 2025).

Today, to address the gaps in more mainstream funding channels, there is an emergent and growing landscape of feminist funds. Organisations such as the FRIDA, Urgent Action Fund, Doria Feminist Fund, Prospera, and others use diverse issue-based, geography based, population-based funding mechanisms and provide funds for emergencies/ rapid responses. Beyond what is funded, how funding is structured is as important. Several of these feminist funds have participatory grant-making models. Hessini (2020) points out, "The very structure of women's funds support organisations, activists and movements in ways that are grounded in their own needs and priorities, by being flexible and interconnected. Many women's funds seek to disrupt the unequal power dynamics between donors and grantees by providing multi-year, core, and sustainable funding." Despite

innovations and efforts, these funds might still not be enough to counter traditional donors. This special issue hopes to explore the gaps as well as opportunities in the existing forms and structures of funding and invites deliberations on new ways and structures of financing towards advancing the goals of the BPfA.

### **Re envisioning international development and socio-economic transformation**

Feminist decolonial analyses have unpacked and critiqued colonial and neoliberal framings of international development that render it projectised and goal oriented while offering alternative frames that promote feminist, decolonial, and community centred approaches that challenge extractive and exploitative practices (Clements and Sweetman 2020; Narayanaswamy et al 2023; Newman et al 2023). Activists in Beijing called out the inequitable and north centric impositions of international development that had reduced it to a sector or project characterised by quantifiable goals and metrics, and reiterated the need for a slow, ground up and community led approach which could potentially transform inequitable norms and policies. The need to collectively design inclusive development programmes as well as research methodologies that push for gender transformative change is important, and the special issue will reflect on this.

### **Key themes and objectives of the issue**

This special issue aims to explore some of opportunities to push back against shrinking political rights and spaces and draw from the collective intentions of the BPfA. It asks: to what extent is the BPfA being creatively reinterpreted and politically mobilised by women and other marginalised groups to meet the emerging challenges of rising conservatism, climate crises, wars and increasing social and economic marginalisation in the last five years; and work towards more feminist, equitable futures? This special issue will build on the gaps, opportunities, and learnings of the Beijing +25 issue. It will focus on the following questions:

1. What are the ways in which women, gender-diverse groups, LGBTQI groups, refugees, disability, and migrant rights groups and movements are leveraging and/or (re)interpreting the BPfA in practice to challenge power structures and achieve a gender just and equitable world?
2. What are the ways in which the BPfA can be deployed to theorise, understand and examine existing socio-economic disparities?
3. What are the economic models and financing routes that could advance the goals of the BPfA?
  - a. What is the role of feminist funds and feminist economic policies in working towards a people-centered and gender equitable model of development that could result in gender transformative change?

### **Our Guest Editors**

This special issue will be guest edited by a group of reputed gender experts, including Lina Abou-Habib, Hashem Hashem, Deniz Alca, and others, who have been involved in decades of feminist activism and knowledge generation.

## Submissions

This theme is relevant across the sectors of academia, policy, and feminist movements and organisations. We invite contributions from community and grassroots leaders, civil society organisations and networks, as well as political and legal representatives, researchers, academics, policymakers, and practitioners.

Please send your abstract of no more than 250 words with details about your research and preliminary findings or a small multi-modal proposal (a two-minute video clip abstract or 250 word abstract with images) using the submission link below.

### Please submit your abstract or proposal here:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc7JsNKLC4TMVHtXmPvE9ftUr-rGGrLVHRuAwvqmqIPN\\_KK8Q/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc7JsNKLC4TMVHtXmPvE9ftUr-rGGrLVHRuAwvqmqIPN_KK8Q/viewform?usp=sharing)

**Deadline:** 24 March 2025, 11:59pm UTC.

Please read the Guidelines for contributors carefully before abstract/proposal submission. Please send any queries to [genderanddevelopment.south@gmail.com](mailto:genderanddevelopment.south@gmail.com).

## Guidelines for content

- Full research article should be no more than 7,000 words excluding the references, abstract, and annexures. The annexures can include photographs, maps, images, graphs, etc. Multimedia content can be embedded within the article and should be kept below 500MB file size. Guidelines for contributors can be found here.
- Shorter essays should be 4000 words, and these can include photographs, maps, images, graphs. Multi-media content should be kept below 500MB file size.
- Photo essay and illustrations can be uploaded on Flickr or any other image sharing platforms and then shared with the editorial team.
- All content must be original and must not have been previously published. Authors are responsible for obtaining necessary consent and permission for the use of any third-party material.

For more information on the journal, visit: [www.genderanddevelopment.org](http://www.genderanddevelopment.org)

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