

Transcript Episode 5

Feminist Development Policy: *Beyond Representation* (5/5)

[OVOC Jingle]

Samie: Our Voices, Our Choices, the feminist podcast from the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Jovan: And I think that for many leaders in different spaces, in order to change this structure, it requires to go into like alert zone of being uncomfortable. You know, like letting go of control of many things. Being ready to risk, being ready for things to happen that you are most fearful of, and then like trusting the collective that together, you can mitigate these risks.

Pema: That's what we are also advocating for. We are calling for organisations to change their policies and have that proportional representation in their policies. So at least they have people in the spaces.

Roula: Because fact of the matter is what brings women and feminised populations together with paid care workers, including domestic workers, is that the reason this domestic worker is underpaid is because feminised labour is invisibilised. So, contributing to that struggle also alleviates part of the sexism, misogyny that women at large are experiencing.

Samie: Welcome back to “Feminist Development Policy: A Pathway toward Feminist Global Collaboration.” I’m Samie Blasingame and this is the last edition of our five-episode series. So, if you are just now joining us, I hope you’ll also go back and check out some of the topics we’ve covered so far.

In this final episode of the series, we are critically exploring the topic of representation, both its benefits and shortcomings, and why we believe it is vital to the process of shaping Feminist Global Collaboration and the policies within it.

That’s because we live in a world that has been shaped by many generations of human thought and interaction. But many things which dictate how our world, quote, “works” – such as, for example, the existence of nation states and borders; the dominance of a binary between only two genders; or the concept of a 40-hour work week as a general standard – were decided by a small minority of people, often with little consideration for the needs, dreams and desires of society as a whole.

So, when it comes to creating policies which aim to usher in a new era of Feminist Global Collaboration, it is imperative that we take note of who has access to so-called “decision making tables,” as well as which ideas and understandings are being considered when such decisions are being made.

If the diverse perspectives and lived realities of working class, Indigenous, or differently abled peoples, and all the intersections that exist beyond the norm of the white, hetero, able bodied, academic, wealthy man, are not considered in the planning of budgets, prepping of emergency situations or in visions of the future, we fear that any attempt at Feminist Global Collaboration will ultimately be futile.

Samie: Our first guest is Pema Wangmo Lama, a Mugum Indigenous youth activist, feminist, and semi-reluctant climate activist from Kathmandu, Nepal, who has experienced both personally and professionally the lack of being represented in different spaces.

Pema: I grew up in a community that was not that much sensitive to Indigenous people and that was not that open to women's rights. So, for that, in all my younger years and my years currently, I was more of a feminist and Indigenous activist. But as I grew up and as I myself, had faced just so much changes in my own surrounding, in such a little span of time, like just in five, six years, I can feel that change.

I don't wanna be a climate activist actually, I don't want to go on talking about people, how we should stop using plastic, how we should not use fossil fuel, and how we have to make more plans and policies to include, to make sure that me and my future is secure. But it's like I don't have a choice. Actually, none of our youth in my age are younger than me, have any choice regarding not being a climate activist.

I think it transcends to not just climate activism, it transcends to all the other activism that I'm currently involved. I, as a person, I as a youth, me as an individual, I would not want to be involved in movement activities. I don't want to go on shouting to people that you need to consider rights of Indigenous people. You need to consider rights of rights of women. You need to consider our freedom. You need to consider what I as a human, have the rights to. I do. Nobody wants to do. But we have to do that because as you go on living and as you go on, understanding how the social structures have been made, how our policies have been made, how our government make the plans and policies, how our government describes the development and has been implementing those activities in our daily life. And we see those impacting our own lives, impacting our own freedom. Then you get to, it's not, it's like, like I've always said, we don't have a choice. I don't have a choice. Not being Indigenous activist, not being a feminist, not being a climate activist.

Samie: Which is why representation of diverse groups with diverse interests is so important...everyone seeks a good life, and everyone should be involved in shaping what that means. When we spoke, Pema had just gotten back from attending the annual Conference of Parties - COP27 in Egypt, where she was representing the National Indigenous Disabled Women's Association, for whom she works, so I was curious in which ways the topic of representation presented itself there...

Pema: There are a lot of improvements that can be done in organising COP. I think that starts from the planning phase, and that starts before the delegates reach the COP. It has to start from the visa processing. It has to start from the accreditation processing. It has to start from how the organisation can have access to the accreditation to represent themselves and their communities at the COP.

When we are talking about climate change, we need to make sure that a lot of communities, a lot of groups are there in the COP.

Samie: Exactly, any space in which policy is being discussed or where human rights are concerned require the representation of various, often competing needs and perspectives. But while the COP and other spaces like it are often promoted as spaces of inclusive negotiation and international exchange, rarely do they ever live up to it. Our guest, Aiysha Siddiq, shared this sentiment with us in episode two, noting that from the design of the space to the way people talk, hardly anything feels welcoming.

Pema and her colleagues experienced something similar – although some efforts were made, the COP was in many ways inaccessible, including for people with limited mobility. Pema told me they spent much of their time coordinating how to move around the venue with a wheelchair, often missing important meetings and opportunities for exchange and input.

Pema: I think we also, because it is our first time, we spent two, one to two days just navigating through how the system works now, where the negotiation spaces are, where do we have our voices, where do we put our voices? Me as an Indigenous youth, where, where should I go and where should I put the issues of my communities? Where should I get our voices into place? We had our call to action. We had demands, we had concrete demands, we

had concrete papers, we had concrete facts in our hands, but we are not sure where should we go and distribute that.

We have limited funds to go to attend COP and do our negotiation, but in also that, in also in that process, we need to stay there for like one week or two weeks and COP is very expensive. It's not accessible in terms of budgeting as well.

I also heard that this year there was, the number of youth representation was lowest this year, because of the country that was hosting COP. And there are a lot of security concerns as well. We have been constantly communicated that there will be a lot of security concerns. We won't be able to express ourself as freely as we used to in the other groups.

Samie: And those concerns were largely true – this year's COP did indeed see the lowest number of civil society attendees compared to previous years and protests were limited, largely due to where the COP was hosted, [given Egypt's human rights](#) record and the many political prisoners in jail for speaking out against the government.

But not only in the context of a repressive regime is representation an issue. [Dr Sherilyn MacGregor](#) of the University of Manchester argues that [the lack of diversity at UN climate summits is both a cause and effect of the fact that](#) climate change has been represented both as a scientific problem and as a threat to security – two disciplines which have been traditionally dominated by males, resulting in solutions to the climate crisis stemming largely from a very narrow and male-centric set of “knowers”. [A UN report from 2022](#) showed that at the COP in Glasgow in 2021, women, for example, made up only 37 % of national delegations, and accounted for between 23.7 and 29% of total speaking time in various spaces.

Which is why many activists, including some of our guests in this series, have come to find international negotiation spaces like the annual Conference of Parties a bit of a fig leaf for civil society– when what we need, is to be focusing our energies on the day to day organising of communities within movements for social change, as we discussed in episode 4.

Nevertheless, as the most prominent space for decision making concerning one of our most urgent social environmental challenges, it's extremely important that diverse representation at gatherings like the COP is ensured. Here's Pema again with some thoughts on that...

Pema: Representation can be ensured by two ways. Top down in which we have, strict policies. We have strict standards; we have proportional representation. We have laws that ensures proportional representation based on the composition of population of a certain society, of a certain nation. And that ensures that at least we have that participation of people at decision making spaces.

I'm also a student of sociology, so when I was studying, I studied about a conflict perspective, conflict approach to making changes So, when we are talking about shifting the power imbalance, I think it's important that it, first it has to come from the top because other than that, we don't have any other options.

But to ensure that it's true and it's meaningful and it's not tokenism. We have to aware our communities. We have to make sure that our communities know their rights. We have to make sure that our communities understand these kind of structural barriers.

Samie: “Tokenism” is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing. We see it most commonly when organisations or governmental structures with weak socio-cultural or racial diversity purposefully hire a new CEO or representative from an under-represented group [without committing to more meaningful shifts in power, policies, or communities served.](#)

In her work, Pema focuses on both sides of this representation equation: advocating on the one side for policy change and quotas, and on the other, working with her community to ensure they know their rights and the options they have to advocate for themselves.

Pema: By population we have 37% Indigenous people. So, what we are asking for is 37% representation in the Constitutional process, 37% representation in the governmental offices. We're not asking more than that. And to ensure that it's very important that we go from top down as well as bottom up.

And so, a lot of Indigenous people, they don't even know, like, we have these kind of opportunities in national level, people don't have that much of awareness. Even if they have, they don't have that much courage to go and do that and take that leadership position. And that comes with the historical discrimination that these communities have been facing and the kind of society that we ourselves have created that does not motivate these underrepresented communities to come at the leadership position, to come outside of the society and talk about their situation, to talk about the discrimination they face.

So, when we talk about representation at the spaces, we also need to look at how our society is right now. It's not just about getting people out of their homes and just telling them, you do that, you do this. It's not just about that. It's more about bringing a change. And that is a continuous process. And we have to keep on doing that from the ground level, from the community level. And we have to keep on aware people. We have to keep on making them realize that what you're facing should not be the normal.

Samie: This point about ensuring people have the resources and knowledge of opportunities to enhance the representation of a particular group in decision making processes is an important one— and something I touched on with our second guest this episode – Jovan Ulićević, founder of the feminist organisation Spektra.

Jovan: I'm Jovan Ulićević, but yeah, I think that everybody literally calls me Jolli. I'm based in Montenegro, from Montenegro that's in Western Balkans. I'm an activist, a trans activist. I'm very active in the queer movement in my country, in the region, also in Europe.

I'm leading the Association Spektra, that's a trans-led feminist organisation in Montenegro. I'm also one of the coordinators of a regional trans-led organisation called Trans Network Balkan. And also, I'm co-chairing the board of Transgender Europe, which is the umbrella trans-led organisation covering Europe and Central Asia.

Besides that, I see myself as a leftist antifascist and I think that in all of these organisations, my approach in a way, even though different, based on different roles, is always, it has some similar note, because my approach is that I would like to see active trans people fighting for social justice in general, because I believe that we are front liners all around the world in fighting for justice.

And I really, I'm really passionate about changing the narrative, you know, like trans people for trans human rights. I find it deeply wrong, same as I find deeply wrong women for women's rights and stuff like that. And I think this narrative is still dominant because I see trans people fighting against corruption, find fighting against many anti-democratic movements, when we fight for body autonomy, we fight for body autonomy of all people, not only for body autonomy of trans people, et cetera.

Samie: Which is why we were grateful that Jovan was willing to join us for *this* episode in particular. And in discussing this with Jovan, he got right to the point that we wanted to make sure got across: that representation is not optics, its much deeper than that. It is an opportunity to bring changes for the whole of society.

Jovan: I'm really cautious when speaking about representation because I think that speaking about representation for the sake of representation, that's missing the point. That's literally tokenisation. And if we speak about representation in a more meaningful way, not only like

who is included, like we have this and this and this and this, but also like what are these people bringing, what is their experience? How are they enriching some space with their presence? I think this is, this is the important part, not we need representation so that people would feel included. That is one part of that, but I also think that we need representation for the sake of every space, you know, because that kind of representation, it's not optics, but it's what they bring.

Like you can have like many, for example, POC people on board, but still have like dominant white capitalist norms and structures which are preventing these people in showing their full potential and actually contributing to the space, collective, organisation, whatever. And I think that's why I'm always thinking about representation that we need to go deeper, not to be so superficial and tokenise people.

Samie: Exactly. As Pema was saying – it's not always enough to make space for someone and call it representation. That space needs to come with a critical self-reflection of persistent power structures, as well as guidance and support to ensure that people are fully able to enrich the spaces, they are part of with their presence.

Here, Jovan shares some examples of the type of resources, beyond financial, people can be supported with when they enter a new space.

Jovan: So, when you hire someone, I think it's very wrong to expect for them to perform immediately to the max. Like you need to have a proper onboarding. You need to take into consideration how that person fits into the older, the established collective. You need to take into consideration a certain amount of destabilisation of collective, because of the new person and how everyone can contribute for that person to feel welcome and also to learn. And then after some time you can expect some performance. And also, you can always expect ups and downs because there are many things that we cannot control. I cannot control if someone is going to experience violence, if someone is going to experience health issues, mental health issues. If someone is going to experience, like, for example, sickness in their family and they need to do care work or stuff like that. Like these are all things that we need to take into consideration. And I think what is preventing us is this reality of scarcity of resources, but at the same time illusion of scarcity of resources. Because I think that sometimes we neglect how many resources we have, it's a matter of how we distribute them.

Samie: As someone who holds a leadership position in many spaces that he organises in, Jovan told me the many ways he has tried to shift the status quo of what leadership means and allow for representation that extends beyond optics and tokenisms.

Jovan: We need to believe that it is possible to change because for example, in my leadership role, I wanted to implement different things which were not, like, standard things in civil society sector. For example, shortening working hours, empowering collective decision making, having like strategic operational budget decisions, which are owned by the team, not being the only spokesperson, sharing opportunities - because the more out there you are, the more opportunities you have and I don't need to grab them all, you know, like it's fine to share them.

I also think that the concept of leadership, the dominant concept of leadership, is something which is very capitalistic and white. And I think that this is also for me, outdated version of leadership because I really believe in diverse leadership. Also *dispersed* leadership. And I think that this is also seen in practice, you know, like my colleagues would always say formally, we have a director, but in practice we – all of our decisions are jointly made, and I really like that. It's much slower, but I think it's also on a long run better because when people own the movement, I think that movement cannot fail.

Samie: Speaking of dispersed leadership... One of the questions we asked our guests this episode stemmed from the fact that currently, many decision-makers in NGOs and other development institutions are men, as the FAIR SHARE Monitor shows – so, what needs to

shift in order to create decision-making structures that are representative, anti-oppressive and participatory? Here's Jovan's response...

Jovan: Yeah, I would, I would shift a bit to the direction here. Yeah. Because of course it's problematic that majority of leadership positions are covered by men in CSO, in private sector in the State. But I also think that a crucial question is how can we make these structures not be patriarchal? Because there are also many women in these places who are perpetuating patriarchal behaviours and capitalistic behaviours, and they are not actually changing the spaces.

I know very prominent women who are doing a very important political work. And because they operate in masculine, patriarchal structures, they are adopting these practices, I believe to survive. But at the same time, they're perpetuating them towards other people.

Samie: Here's Pema again, with an example from Nepal...

Pema: We also see that in action in our countries. In most of the cases, like currently we have our president who is a woman, and that is the actual field of having that 50/50 percentage at the policies. And that insured a woman representation at the assemblies. And that ensures the woman representation at the governmental offices, but that's not enough.

If she's not able to put the, put actual voices and actual experiences of woman in the policy making spaces, if she's not able to make that changes, if she cannot put her own voices strongly. That does not make the representation effective. That does not make the participation meaningful.

Samie: Again – representation of individual people from marginalised groups in policy making spaces is not enough, it must lead to and allow for structural, systemic change... or else, what's the point?

This is something we also talked about with our third guest this episode – Roula Seghaier - Strategic Program Coordinator for IDWF – the International Domestic Workers Federation.

Roula: I am Roula Seghaier. Other than being here in my professional capacity as part of IDWF, I am a community organiser. So, I have organised with migrant workers for the past decade in a transnational manner. So specifically in context of migration, also in context of refugeeness.

Samie: In her role at IDWF, Roula is tasked with bringing demands together and implementing them within a strategic plan for the Federation as a whole... and with over 650,000 domestic workers represented, that is no small task. And so, I wondered how they go about achieving a level of accountability that is satisfactory to all.

Roula: I think one mistake that is often made in organisations and in general in the mainstream is that people mistake or perhaps purposefully and intentionally conflate inclusion with representation. So, it is not sufficient to check the checkbox in front of particular identities and make sure that they are included on a certain executive board or that they are included in the planning and the methodology of a certain project. One needs to make sure that that inclusion translates into representation and that the person who holds a certain position of power or authority, even like symbolic, let's say if we're talking about an executive board, was elected and safeguards the interests of the union that proposed them so that there is a certain level of accountability that is transferred into all of these bodies.

Samie: And on this note, Roula shares an example of how a collective movement of domestic workers has formed a new wave of representation within the labour movement, resulting in broadening the scope of issues relevant to the movement as a whole, including the needs of a specific group within the domestic workers movement as well.

Roula: Traditionally, the labour movement or the sector is historically, like every other space I would imagine in the world governed by men. And because of the state of patriarchy, women's issues have always been perceived as secondary. So domestic work in that sense, is a topic that we constantly struggle with in terms of recognition within the trade union sector in general.

So not only is that relegated to a secondary position as a learnings issue, but when there are subcategories of thematic areas that need to be worked on within something that is already minored, I'm not quite sure that this word is used in English, but still, there is a general lack of support I would feel like in the mainstream for forms of organising that try to grant space for such voices that do not rely on the proportionality of the issue to make it a big issue or the priority issue.

For example, the way that the union SitradoTrans, from Nicaragua, that has joined us in 2018 was formed is that transgender domestic workers who are women specifically, were part of a bigger union and still are, I mean, they hold offices in that bigger union. But then they have discussed the value of organising within their own group. And this was supported by the union and to which they belonged, which also is a positive example in regards to what a lot of times is experienced as an attempt like to divide.

Samie: So while numbers may be important, intersectional representation is even more so, or else people fall through the cracks... but as Roula said, this can often be seen as an attempt to divide an already marginalised movement.... In fact, Pema and I discussed something similar in relation to the disability rights movement as well:

Pema: When it comes to disability movement, I think, also from the perspective of humanity itself, people do give a lot of importance to disability movement itself. People do give a lot of importance to making sure that people with disability have rights. People with disability have their voices heard because it attacks a humanity when you don't do that. But when we go to intersection within the disability movement, people are, very reluctant to have, to have any other identities and any other, any other barriers to other identities come at the - to have that spotlight within disability movement.

People with disabilities of certain identities are facing more stigmatisation, are and facing more discrimination than people with other communities. But that is not acknowledged despite knowing that it is real. People are not acknowledging that because, because for them it's like breaking the movement. It's like, fragmentising the movement. So that's what they're talking about. They're more focused on like, if we keep on talking about caste and if we keep on talking about other identities, the own disability movement will not be strong enough.

Samie: But intersectional representation does not limit the movement, it broadens it by allowing people to be aware of a wider range of needs.

And *who* is defining those needs is important. One thing to be careful of is the pitfall of an outer gaze – as Roula explains:

Roula: When development agencies attempt to include, say, workers and the shaping of their agendas about care or like how the development sector attempts to include their subject within the design of the project. They either come to a context and go to the usual suspect, so go to somebody who already has comparatively more power, more visibility, more recognition, and have them monopolise the discourse. So, one thing that happens is that the inclusion is only formal and ceremonial and does not speak to the needs of another like larger or more precarious population that exists.

And a second thing that happens is like the other extreme where they go and look for the most vulnerabilised person who like experiences various disadvantages based on like compound

vulnerable identities. And like they try to find the very last person in the very last village, and then try and build off their projects on that.

So, it is not really up to a development agency to identify these people. They need to come to the movement, like they need to map out which movements exist in a particular context and have these movement propose their candidates, have these movements propose their agendas, have these movements elect their representatives.

Samie: As we discussed in episode 4, prioritising movements remains an important part of more Feminist Global Collaboration... And if – as we've discussed this episode – the aim of more meaningful representation is to lead to structural change rooted in shared values, what values should that include?

Well, as many of our guests this series have alluded to – it must include various forms of care. Here's Jovan again with some thoughts:

Jovan: I think my first thought on development is the critique of the concept of growth and this idea that you can grow indefinitely. Both in terms of like country perspective, organisational perspective, which means that you grow and grow and grow, let's say from the organisational perspective, collective perspective, like the growth is usually perceived as having more money, therefore more activities, therefore more political influence. And I'm very, um, interested in exploring more the concept of degrowth. I think it's a very interesting concept and I think that we need to think about development in that way. Like how can we approach our work by degrowing not with less money or less people, but doing more meaningful work and also including collective care work.

If you address different organisations, you will rarely find prioritising care work. And this is also a part of degrowth because it's not seen as a productive work. It's not an activity. It's not something that you have like, how do you say, concrete outputs or measurable outputs, but they are closely connected to sustainability. And I think you cannot see development - if you look at development only as growth, I think that kind of growth is set to failure and set to like snapping at some moment.

Samie: In episode 3 we discussed the concept of care work and the feminist demand that it be recognized, redistributed, reduced, and remunerated. In discussing this with Roula, she shared that there is also a fifth element to this framework: representation of care workers... which in our current, growth-oriented economy, is sorely lacking...

Roula: It's twofold, because first, they're not recognised in labour in general as a profession in a lot of context, but also in a lot of other contexts they're not recognized as care workers, even though they perform care, meaning they perform direct and indirect care. They do care for people who are older with care needs for people with disabilities, for children. They perform direct acts of care, but also indirect acts of care, such as the upkeep of a household, the cooking, the cleaning, everything that reproduces the conditions of life, nonetheless, we traditionally conceive of care workers as staff within the medical sector.

Capitalism relies on the invisibility of domestic work as work and keeps erasing it. So a lot of domestic workers have struggled for decades and centuries to make the point that this is work and it ought to have representation within the trade union sector.

Care provides anywhere from [20 to 60% in any country's GDP](#). So there are some recent studies that try to evaluate or assess the contribution of care with an economy and traditional economy, care is not calculated within country's GDP as a lot of other things -- like GDP as a notion is a very, like masculinized, like patriarchal, et cetera, et cetera, flawed notion, but like feminist economists have been trying to like, claim aspects of it to say like, okay, if this is your measuring unit, let us show you the reality of what it looks like if you count what should be counted - if you count who should be counted and if you care for those who care for you, which is also a slogan that is used by our affiliates when they campaign around care issues.

Samie: One final aspect of representation I want to make sure we consider this episode is that which makes up our collective understanding of “progress” and “development.” We’ve discussed quite a bit this series the colonial roots of the development sector and how that mentality is perpetuated in the way development is practiced today – so as we move toward more Feminist Global Collaboration, there must be room for a new era of “development” to be shaped by those it has historically deemed as beneficiaries. Here’s Jovan again with an example of inclusion in the EU.

Jovan: I come from the EU accessing country, and EU has been an amazing ally for, for many activists here, including me. At the same time, I think that this kind of EU will not remain EU, if it does not transform completely. And I think that many countries who don't have Western experience can contribute to that. So, for example, my country has this dominant view that we can only benefit from being in EU.

I strongly disagree. It is the same as I disagree that, for example, a PoC people can only benefit from being in white spaces, uh, or that trans people can only benefit from being in cis spaces. I think all of these dominant spaces can benefit from communities who are on the periphery. Like we bring unique experience and unique knowledge, and I don't need, for example, European values. My country has these values of solidarity, of care, of fighting for freedom, fighting against autocratic regimes. You know, like we don't need to be in the process of democratisation or civilisation to contribute.

I think that EU needs to drop this kind of patronising attitude towards different countries and communities. I find EU very important, as a structure. I would love to see my country in EU, but I would love to see transformed EU, not this kind of EU.

Samie: And as we come to the end of our last episode this series, there's a few things our guests still have to share with you. First, some practical tips from Jovan on what we as individuals, and as a collective, can start to do right now.

Jovan: We all have our limits. I think it's very important to recognise them individually and as a collective. And I think that the best way to go with it is like taking it slow, being uncomfortable one step at a time, but with a clear, visionary, strategic approach. We want to get there. We want to get to an open collective. We want to get to an intersectional collective. We want to achieve this. So, we need to imagine how it looks like at the end. And then we need to see like which practices we can implement today and tomorrow and the day after that while being enough uncomfortable not to like overwhelm ourselves, but not to stay like, completely comfortable.

And also, I think it's important for people, as I said, to own the collective, to feel that they are, that their needs are, that there is space for their needs, because I think that there is also a lot of patronising attitudes from leaders, like they are caring for everyone, you know, like that's also patronising and taking away your power. If you're a leader or leaders, you should empower systems who are empowering, collective and individual responsibility. Like if you want people to speak up or speak out, like you need to create that kind of system that allows that... if they give you feedback that you don't become defensive or that you don't become aggressive, in a passive or active way.

Samie: Creating empowering systems of change help people take responsibility even after the end of a project. Doing this will help us more strongly address the root causes of social injustices, as Roula argues here as well:

Roula: The first ask or the priority ask from developmental agencies would be to truly represent, the voices and interests of the people concerned and to make sure that the project does not become an end in itself. But it is a means to fulfil the demands of these people.

So, granted some developmental projects like work on creating a lucrative activity for the people from that area in order to like to mend the problem. Like the two birds with one stone. Like we will clean the street, like you will make some money out of it. But the structural reasons that create the problem remain plus the burden or the responsibility is alleviated from the government that is purposefully killing that population. So, while we're doing developmental projects, we also need to keep that in mind, and not transform it into an entrepreneurial endeavour that services like capitalism at the same time, like brushes off practices that are violent and uses a quasi-empowering discourse, a little bit like to gaslight people in the situation and tell them like, you have the power to change this. Like, pick up that broom. I mean, they probably already did. But also like maybe we should unite against the people in power who are creating the situation to begin with and focus on like the decent work component, the decent life component, the dignity element that is absent oftentimes in the domestic work sector and other similar contexts.

Samie: And one last word from Pema.

Pema: When the rights for people are being decided, policies and plans are being made - in those decision-making processes, meaningful representation of diverse community should be at the place. The people should be the one deciding what their definition of human rights is. What their definition of representation and inclusion means, and what development looks like for them. It also translates to everything - for certain development activities happening at certain locations, for certain policies being made, or even for services that are supposed to be for them. People, the diverse people of that community, and diverse people of that targeted action, have to be in these spaces with prior information. And mandatory has to be 'free, prior and informed consent' - they have to be informed about the consequences, about the profits and they have to be informed about the implications certain activities, certain actions, certain policies can make to their lives. And through that information they have to be the ones deciding for their rights, and deciding for their future. So yeah, I think that's what, for me, true representation would look like.

Samie: So, friends, we have reached the end of our fifth and final episode of this series. From reflecting on who and what we value when it comes to shaping and defining progress, to exploring the intersections of identities as well as topics, dissecting the flows of funds needed to fuel systemic change, and the concept of representation as another tool in our feminist toolboxes, we hope these five episodes provided a place of reflection, questioning and unlearning for people involved in the developmental sector and beyond.

We cannot reiterate enough that we are at a pivotal point in time – a moment that calls for putting in place alternative models of collaboration, leadership perspectives, understandings of success, and priorities. In a world filled with multiple crisis's and injustice we cannot continue with business as usual as is currently the status quo – especially when it comes to the way humans and states interact, trade with and influence one another.

From colonial continuities within knowledge hierarchies, to racism and tokenism within formal international spaces and the much-needed feminist transformation of funding and economic systems, we hope that we have been able to portray that feminism is not merely about integrating women and girls into specific systems, but that it is about questioning systems that create injustices which affect all people and which risk our home, Mother Earth, in the name of greed, profit and self-interest.

We would like to thank all of our incredible guests who have contributed their time and energies toward putting together this project with us. And as we have done for each episode, we would like to end with one final quote by an activist, scholar or practitioner. Today, that's with a quote from social impact strategist and non-profit founder, Arezoo Najibzadeh:

"We need to recognise that numerical representation isn't enough; we don't just need to elect more women to office or get more young women on the convention floor. We need bold voices that are actually empowered and supported in calling out intersecting systems of

oppression that otherwise tokenise women and dispose of them when they demand better from their colleagues and workplaces.”

This has been a podcast of „Our Voices, Our Choices“ in the series “Feminist Development Policy: A pathway towards Feminist Global Collaboration”. You can find this and other episodes on the podcast app of your choice, and if you could help us by spreading the word by rating us or recommending us to others, we would be very grateful. We’d also love to hear from you! You can also send us feedback and suggestions at podcast@boell.de

Audio for this podcast was produced by Gretsch and directed by me, your host, Samie Blasingame, in collaboration with the Audiokollektiv. Thanks so much for listening and hopefully see you back here sometime soon. Take Care.