



DATAFEST
AFRICA 23
Kampala | Nairobi

Afro-Feminist Data Futures Manifesto



Pollicy is a collective of feminist technologists, data scientists and key partners from women's and Community Based Organizations who have made this document on the occasion of the 2023 edition of DataFest Africa under the theme "Turning the Data Tables: No Gender Equality in Tech AI without Data Equality."

Data and technologies have been curated to shape and normalise gender biases, violence and harassment especially for women, girls and gender-nonconforming people that are vocal about Gender Equality concerns. Cognisant of the fact that data and specifically gender data is useful in creating better and improved services online and offline, advocating for an inclusive internet offline and online is our collective responsibility.

On 12-13 July 2023 Pollicy convened the 'Afro-Feminist Data Futures Festival' which brought together 25 participants cutting across - feminist activists, legal scholars, academia and human rights defenders from different global contexts from across Africa to re-envision the future of data (including gender data, data governance, AI and other emerging technologies) on the African continent from an Afrofeminist perspective.

This Festival intended to create and shape narratives and conversations on Africa gender data and how they shape narratives for system and policy change now and for the future.

During the 3rd Edition of DataFest Africa in Nairobi, Kenya we declare that:

- a) **Inclusion is not just an add-on;** diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives are ineffective because they generalise too much and ignore intersectionality and issues. Data is and will continue to be the key to truly understanding the varying gender equality challenges diverse groups face. We commit to push back on data practices and policies that view gender equality as homogenous. Equal and Universal Access to Information is essential to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate discrimination and to build inclusive knowledge societies.
- b) **A Safe, non-conforming and positively involving internet is non negotiable;** Surveillance is the historical tool of patriarchy, used to control and restrict women's bodies, speech and activism. We want a space where we can confidently and without fear talk about lived experiences and issues while contributing to the discussions without fear that violence will move from online to offline. We support the right to privacy and to full control over personal data and information online at all levels. We reject practices by states, developers and private companies to use data for profit and to manipulate behavior online.
- c) **Data Sovereignty should be eliminated!** We recognize how historical and systematic patterns of data violence and exploitation have continued to produce differential vulnerabilities for communities yet they are the main source of data. We commit to feminist data ethics that explicitly seek equity and demand justice for all by shifting how power works and lobbying governments to invest in data infrastructures within the continent including but not limited to data centres.

- d) **Feminist focused data collection tools must be a priority!** We advocate that the feminist principles of research must be recognized not just in the subject matter, but how, where and who to engage in the research. We commit to make the process about co-creation of ideas and solutions, respect, inclusivity,, and partnerships, centering women's realities and voices in what they have experienced and in creating sustainable solutions.
- e) **We defend the right to Accessible, Available and Affordable Afro Feminist Data Future!** Women make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people. Of the estimated 2.9 billion unconnected, the majority are women and girls. We note that the underrepresentation of women and girls in the digital industry only reinforces and amplifies existing gender biases and stereotypes that continue to harm women, girls and non confirming people. We commit to embracing agency and working with intentionality to have more women in the decision making spaces.
- f) **Online abusers should face immediate punishment!** Creating the internet we want goes beyond simply calling out bullying or harassment. We reject the attacks, threats and intimidation and policing experienced by women, girls and non confirming people. We commit to call on all internet stakeholders, including internet users, policy makers and the private sector, to address the issue of online harassment and technology-related violence which ultimately finds its way offline to the streets and at home.
- g) **Centering joy is core!** We defend the right to foster a culture of care and healing across the movement. We commit to deeply explore joy and pleasure as forms of resistance, self care and power. In addition, to embrace individual and collective pleasure in all its diversity.
- h) **There is power in numbers and collective synergies!** We commit to challenging the patriarchal spaces and processes that control internet governance, as well as putting more women and other minorities in decision making tables. This includes connecting across territories, demanding accountability and transparency, and creating opportunities for sustained feminist movement building.
- i) **Donors and funding agencies should adopt funding modalities** that are abundant, flexible and sustainable. We reject the colonization system of funding and the inability to acknowledge feminist activism is real work. We commit to changing the narrative towards feminist funding and lobbying donors to adopt continuous resourcing of feminist work that recognize and value the transformative work done within the movement and the dedicated time to engage policy makers and change the narrative.
- i) **Our stories matter and should be preserved!** We reject the efforts to erase the memory, determination and experiences of black feminists. The digital space should be used as a tool to enhance our advocacy, preserve the tales of African women and exchange knowledge through oral storytelling, reading materials and curating a safe space for personal interaction. We commit to leaving an institutional legacy for younger feminists to lead with fresh ideas, approaches and wisdom they deem fit in their feminist journey.