

[00:00:19.760] - Alys Mumford

Hello and welcome to The Briefing, bringing you fortnightly news of women's equality and Covid-19. I'm Alys Mumford,

[00:00:25.820] - Amanda Stanley

And I'm Amanda Stanley. Today, we're going to be talking about why we need a post-Covid economic recovery, which works for women. But first off, Alys, what's been your positive bit of news for this week?

[00:00:37.990] - Alys Mumford

Ooooft

[00:00:38.240] - Alys Mumford

Well, it has been a tough couple of weeks for everyone, I'm sure. It's been a pretty full on and varied week. We've seen lockdown easing in Scotland, which has meant I've been able to swim in the sea, which has been amazing. We've just this week heard that folks that shielding are being told that they should be shielding until the end of July. Which obviously is really tough for a lot of folks. And of course, we've had the global events of the Black Lives Matter protests.

[00:01:05.090] - Alys Mumford

And I think that that's really been my positive from the last couple of weeks. In that I've seen so many people that I would not expect, that I have never discussed anti-racism work or politics with, sharing posts, articles, really insightful things in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. So I think that's my positive, sort of ally-ship where you maybe didn't know it was going to be. How about you, Amanda?

[00:01:28.430] - Amanda Stanley

Yeah, I totally agree with you. I mean, even just across the weekend looking and like travelling around the neighbourhood on my bike, I saw so many signs in solidarity. And it was something really nice to see, and a lot of them are still up.

[00:01:40.730] - Amanda Stanley

And yeah, it's just been really, really nice across the past week to see that support grow, both online and offline.

[00:01:47.590] - Alys Mumford

For sure.

[00:01:48.650] - Amanda Stanley

But yeah, for me, I was having a bit of like a down week last week. And then it came to the end of the week into the weekend, and I got a surprise delivery at the weekend from my local cheese shop and Brenna, wonderful Brenna Jessie from Rape Crisis, had sent me a surprise box of cheese!

[00:02:06.020] - Alys Mumford

Oh my God. Incredible.

[00:02:07.520] - Amanda Stanley

It was. I've just been eating cheese for all the meals.

[00:02:10.320] - Amanda Stanley

And it was a hearty amount.

[00:02:12.380] - Alys Mumford

[Laughs] What's the top cheese in the box? If you had to choose.

[00:02:17.780] - Amanda Stanley

If I had to choose, there's one called Auld Reekie actually. That's kind of smoked hard cheese that's

really good.

[00:02:24.380] - Amanda Stanley

And then there's also [laughs] is a cheese from Dornoch, and it's from a small farm and it's called Minger.

[00:02:30.200] - Alys Mumford

Nice.

[00:02:30.800] - Emma Ritch

Oh, that is delicious. Sorry, you haven't even introduced me properly.

[00:02:35.260] - All speakers

[Multiple Laughs]

[00:02:36.950] - Amanda Stanley

It is so delicious.

[00:02:38.210] - Amanda Stanley

And it actually won best cheese two years ago at my annual cheese night. Which people who follow me on Twitter will know, that it is a big deal.

[00:02:45.440] - Alys Mumford

Amazing.

[00:02:46.090] - Amanda Stanley

Cheese, man. I mean, it just made it all better.

[00:02:49.100] - Emma Ritch

Surprise cheese.

[00:02:50.360] - Amanda Stanley

Surprise cheese, yeah.

[00:02:51.090] - Alys Mumford

The dream.

[00:02:53.030] - Amanda Stanley

But yeah, so on this week you already just heard her. We are joined again by Engender's Emma Ritch. Emma, have you got anything positive that you would like to share?

[00:03:04.250] - Emma Ritch

Hi Amanda.

[00:03:05.420] - Emma Ritch

Yeah, I'm just back from a week's holiday which I enjoyed in my flat obviously as we're still in lockdown. And I guess I've been thinking about some of the global solidarity stuff that you and Alys mentioned. I saw a friend when I was off who is involved in a massive project to sequence the Coronavirus genome, which is very cool. And he was talking about how there's just been this massive coming together of scientists from all around the world on this shared endeavour.

[00:03:35.780] - Emma Ritch

And I guess some of the same thoughts that you've been having about the Black Lives Matter movement and how heartening, even in the middle of racist violence and tragedy, the outpouring of commitment to live a better way and create a better world is across all of our nations. So that, I guess, is a good thing.

[00:03:57.440] - Amanda Stanley
Definitely.

[00:03:58.550] - Alys Mumford
Amidst all of the things we've just discussed, another thing that happened last week is that Engender, along with our sister organisation, Close the Gap, launched our nine principles for an economic recovery which works for women. While of course, we're still in the midst of this Covid-19 pandemic, and it seems difficult to focus on anything outside of that. Work is already beginning on what needs to be done to prevent an economic downturn as a result of it. And we're working to make sure women's equality is at the heart of that.

[00:04:25.880] - Amanda Stanley
Of course, women's equality in the economy is something that feminists have been banging on about for a long time. Why is now such an important time Emma to be talking about it?

[00:04:35.740] - Emma Ritch
I guess there's a kind of saying around the economy, which is never waste a crisis. And I think we saw Naomi Klein really articulate that in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, that often we see very anti-progressive things happen at moments of great crisis and Coronavirus / Covid is one of those crisis moments.

[00:04:56.780] - Emma Ritch
But for feminist organisations like Engender and Close the Gap, we see it as a moment to do the economy differently. And so we put together these nine calls that really set out, we hope, a better way. The pandemic has highlighted so many things that don't work in our society and I think has very much highlighted the fact that the economy doesn't work for women. The last episode, listeners will remember, was on unpaid care, and the way that that work just isn't counted isn't taken into consideration when policy gets made.

[00:05:29.750] - Emma Ritch
And so it's really vital that we start reshaping some of those structures and assumptions that underpin our economy and how it works. The other reason why this moment is particularly important is that this economic downturn is very different from recessions we've seen previously, and the reason for that is because of the cause. So the recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis, mainly firstly impacted on jobs that were done by men. And then the policy response to that austerity created huge problems for women and ultimately the Social Security cuts and other cuts, massively, disproportionately affected women.

[00:06:11.420] - Emma Ritch
This recession has started in economic sectors that are female dominated and also dominated by Black and Minority Ethnic workers. So hospitality, retail and care sectors. And that means that you can't do what you would normally try and do to stimulate the economy after a recession, which is spend on massive infrastructure projects that essentially amounted to building roads and building massive other projects like bridges. You have to do something different. And so we've created a list of what we think should be done instead.

[00:06:44.270] - Alys Mumford
Amazing. Thank you. So as you say, we've got nine principles. The point of these Briefing podcasts is to be, well, brief. So we're going to challenge you Emma to a quick fire round of going through these principles. We're going to take it in turn to read them out, and we want you to just expand on them a little bit, in a minute, or less. Does that sound doable, sound good?

[00:07:07.140] - Emma Ritch
I'll do my best.

[00:07:10.360] - Alys Mumford
Principle one, equality is good for growth. The converse isn't necessarily true as women and men

have different levels of economic well-being before Covid-19, that have been deepened by the crisis, the principle of equality and non-discrimination must be core to the economic recovery. Inclusive growth means including all women in the process of growth and ensuring that the outcomes of growth are used to meet the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic, Disabled, LGBT, and older and younger, women. Inclusive growth, what's that? Go!

[00:07:40.070] - Emma Ritch

So, inclusive growth is the idea that there should be social benefits from economic growth as well as economic benefits. But it is a concept that does lack a bit of definition. And Emily Thomson and other feminist economists like Diane Elson and Marzia Fontana have done some really great work on describing what feminist inclusive growth should look like. But the key idea is that the way that some supposedly progressive economic thinkers imagine economic growth is we just make the economy bigger through any means at all, and then we share out the proceeds of that growth that come from tax. And so that means it's as good as good to expand investment banking as it is to expand social enterprises.

[00:08:23.190] - Emma Ritch

It's about GDP going up and then sharing out the tax take. We are arguing for something else. We're saying that how you create growth is also important. Which bits of the economy grow and which bits shrink, who does the jobs and the quality of that work. So the process of growth matters as much as the outcomes.

[00:08:43.080] - Amanda Stanley

Principal two. Gender sensitive, inclusive growth is about the pattern of growth and not its rate. Repatterning growth means seeing the poorest women's income rise, both along with the poorest men's and also relative to men's as a group.

[00:08:57.450] - Amanda Stanley

OK, so I get the second part. But what does repatterning growth look like and how do we do it?

[00:09:02.340] - Emma Ritch

At the moment, the Scottish labour market is characterised by something we call occupational segregation. And what that means is that women, and particularly Black and Minority Ethnic women, are clustered into the most low paying, and increasingly the most precarious jobs. And that is a pattern across the economy. So when we repattern growth, we want to change the focus on which parts of the economy we're thinking about. And we also want to make it a policy ambition that that poverty wage and poor quality work is not the preserve of women.

[00:09:40.830] - Emma Ritch

It's not the preserve of anybody.

[00:09:43.020] - Alys Mumford

Principle three. Creating aggregate demand should mean cash transfers to women and their dependent children so that women have money in their pockets to spend on goods and services in their local economies. Aggregate demand - go!

[00:09:56.610] - Emma Ritch

So aggregate demand is kind of the opposite of trickle down economics. So we're saying put the money into the pockets of the poorest women. And one of the ways of doing that is by investing in public services like health and social care. And doing that creates so much more jobs and so much more benefit for local economies. We're also saying, think about the money that you provide to your citizens in the form of the Social Security net, and think about the Social Security system and potentially even consider quite radical proposals like Universal Basic Income.

[00:10:31.710] - Emma Ritch

As long as you do that in a feminist way, and think about women's needs and the needs of women's dependent children.

[00:10:38.330] - Amanda Stanley

Inclusive growth means investing in a care economy. Care is as essential to our economy as brick, steel and fibre optic cable. Investment in child care and care for disabled people and older people should be considered as necessary infrastructure for sustainable well-being, economy and a good society. I mean, this seems totally obvious to probably most people listening to this podcast and especially to those who listened last time. But, why isn't this already the case?

[00:11:03.000] - Emma Ritch

So there's two reasons. The first is the nemesis that people often don't realise they have, which is the UN system of national accounting. And what that does is create a boundary around the household, in terms of the things that are counted by economists. And it says everything that happens outside the household, by and large, is important, is part of the economy. And everything that happens inside it is unimportant and is not part of the economy. And so a lot of the unpaid care work that women do, which amounts to about 10 billion pounds in Scotland a year, is simply not counted and so can't form part of the economic thinking.

[00:11:42.360] - Emma Ritch

The other reason is because there is a little bit of ignorance about just how beneficial to economic growth investing in care is, and that something called a multiplier effect means how every pound you spend, benefits those in the economy. And actually investing in care has been demonstrated time and time again to have huge benefits to local economies in terms of growth as well as in social value.

[00:12:10.790] - Alys Mumford

I'm in awe. You've not got over a minute yet in any of your answers. It's very impressive. Because I am timing.

[00:12:17.920] - Alys Mumford

Unpaid domestic and care work needs to be recognised, produced and redistributed from the household to the state by an increase of accessible, good quality childcare and social care. Within households, men and women should be enabled to do a 50/50 share of paid work and unpaid work. Again, sounds great, but how do we bring about what would be a massive shift in how we understand society?

[00:12:40.890] - Emma Ritch

It is a massive shift and at the moment we're seeing glacial pace of change on this. So every year men do one more minute a day of domestic and reproductive work, which is work in the household, work on childcare. So we need to count the work that is done. We need to make that visible. And one of the ways that we want to see that happen is through the collection and publication of time use data, which does happen in Scotland.

[00:13:08.640] - Emma Ritch

But we don't think to a sufficient scale, and we don't think that's used by policymakers sufficiently either. The other thing we need to do is massively shift the delivery of public services from households to services. And so that would see an expansion in social care and health and childcare.

[00:13:31.390] - Amanda Stanley

Women's work in care, cleaning, catering, retail and clerical roles has for too long been undervalued, underpaid and under protected. State and public body wage setting powers should be used to increase pay in these sectors and improve their conditions of work. This is such a vital point Emma, is it just a case of increasing minimum wage or is there more to it than that?

[00:13:52.420] - Emma Ritch

Definitely more to it than that. So these roles are undervalued because they are done by women. And what we see around the world is that if you see an increase of women going into a particular occupational sector, then the pay rates for that job come down. So we do need to have a kind of reconciliation of the value of work that's done by women and it's wage rates. You can't just do that

through the living wage. What the living wage does is it raises the wage floor.

[00:14:23.620] - Emma Ritch

But if all of the work that women do, is kind of bumping against that floor, then you don't really increase the relativities between the pay of work done by women and the pay of work done by men. And if the living wage goes down, then you've plunged women back into that economic precarity again. So we need to see this question of value and be the central question in this discussion.

[00:14:49.030] - Alys Mumford

Economic success shouldn't only be measured by GVA or GDP, but by an increase in well-being of the people in Scotland. Gendered well-being indicators should take a human rights approach and measure the extent to which all groups of women, and men, have an adequate standard of living, including access to housing, social protections and health. And so we've seen well-being indicators be talked about quite a lot in various contexts recently, and it seems like it's an idea that's gaining more and more traction. Emma, do you think that's something we could actually see in Scotland over the next few years?

[00:15:18.630] - Emma Ritch

Yeah, absolutely. And I think there is some commitment in Scotland already to alternate indicators of, I guess, well-being or happiness or progress. And one of those is the Gender Index that Engender has been contributing to, and that should be ready to be published in the foreseeable future.

[00:15:38.530] - Emma Ritch

I think everyone is aware of the limitations of GDP. I guess there is a lot of work still to do to develop what exactly these well-being indices might look like, how to bring in all of the human rights dimensions we would want to see, in terms of the adequate standard of living, housing, Social Security and other social protections, questions around climate justice, for example, how should environmental indicators be integrated into all of that.

[00:16:07.450] - Emma Ritch

I guess the question then after that is what do we use that for? Because at the moment, GDP is the key driver of a lot of economic decision making. So do we have these indices that sit on shelves, or are they actually part of economic policy making processes?

[00:16:25.250] - Amanda Stanley

And public spending and revenue raising decisions shaping Scotland's economic recovery, and the reset of Scotland's economy, must integrate gender analysis across budgetary processes. This includes allocation of resources, scrutiny of spending and outcomes from public finance decisions.

[00:16:41.700] - Amanda Stanley

Sounds like gender budgeting to me. Could you expand on this Emma?

[00:16:45.570] - Emma Ritch

Yes. I mean, it is gender budget analysis and that's something which organisations like the Scottish Women's Budget Group have been calling for, for some decades now and have seen some progress in response to those calls. So we do have something called the Equality and Fairer Scotland Statement that gets published alongside the budget. I think the question still for feminists is, to what extent is that influencing spending and revenue raising decisions or just acting as a kind of post hoc rationalisation for those?

[00:17:16.680] - Emma Ritch

And we've really seen what the possibilities could be if you integrated gender into decision making throughout the period of Covid. So, for example, as we've discussed on previous podcasts, the decision about the fine detail of furlough missing out women providing childcare really shows that if you don't think about gender, you make very bad decisions that don't meet women's needs.

[00:17:40.740] - Alys Mumford

And our last but definitely not least, principle. Scotland's economy should be governed by gender balanced, gender competent leaders making decisions based on intersectional, gender sensitive, sex-disaggregated data. A healthy economy is one that provides equality for all, including between all groups of women and men. Black and Minority Ethnic, Disabled, LGBT, and older and younger, women must have power to participate in decision making about their economy. Yes, democracy and data. I love it.

[00:18:08.850] - Alys Mumford

I think the economic crisis is probably completely opaque to a lot of folk listening, especially with some of the really rapid decisions that have had to be taken at times of crisis. Emma, have you got anything else on this principle to say?

[00:18:22.710] - Emma Ritch

Sure, I mean, there are so few women involved in economic decision making globally. There are only currently 18 female finance ministers within the government of sovereign states. Only one woman has ever won the Nobel Memorial Prize in economics. And we just don't see women around the economic and finance decision-making tables. But more importantly than women, I think we need people who have gender competence, which means that they understand the different ways that women's and men's lives are inflected by gender and the hierarchies and the absence of power and safety and economic security that gender causes.

[00:19:02.850] - Emma Ritch

So we need the economy to work for all women. We know that Covid has had a disproportionate impact on Black and Minority Ethnic communities and women particularly. We need for our economic decision making to take account of all of that and of course, to heavily use gender sensitive, sex-disaggregated data.

[00:19:25.040] - Alys Mumford

Data klaxon!

[00:19:28.140] - Alys Mumford

[Claps] Very well done Emma. Thank you. Listeners, if you were also timing those, because, you know, why wouldn't you have been? Emma's a pro at that. And of course, if you want even more detail than a minute worth of Emma, we will link to all of the documents in the show notes. So that's the principles themselves, some background information and that paper about inclusive growth that Emma mentioned. I mean, I think with these principles, it feels weird, as I said at the start, to sort of be thinking about post-Covid.

[00:20:02.190] - Alys Mumford

It feels like we're not there yet. And it particularly feels weird to think about positives coming out of this. But I think the point you made about opportunism in these crises and we know that people that don't have equality as their primary interest will absolutely be looking for ways to use Covid, to their advantage. And I think it's really exciting, actually, to think that we could we could take this crisis point to make Scotland better for women and particularly when you're talking about linking in with work around climate justice, work around fair wages, the whole Build Back Better movement, and looking at how all these things can, could work together to actually make an economy that works.

[00:20:41.350] - Alys Mumford

Amanda, I don't know if you had any reflections from hearing those principles and chatting them through?

[00:20:47.740] - Amanda Stanley

No, just in complete agreement with you, Alys. And the thing that maybe for me stood out a lot, was around child care and care in general, but also women working in precarious jobs or in low paid jobs and how we can make their lives better, because as somebody who for a long time worked in hospitality, that's always something that was on my mind, so.

[00:21:08.990] - Alys Mumford
For sure.

[00:21:11.220] - Alys Mumford
Emma, is there any sort of final thoughts on the economic recovery you want to share?

[00:21:15.180] - Emma Ritch
I think just that this is a real moment of opportunity. Today, Engender has been asked to join an advisory group on social recovery that Scottish government is convening. And it seems that there are more and more vibrant conversations happening about social justice and the economy in which feminists and Engender are playing a part. And that has to be exciting to get our ideas into some of the mainstream thinking. I think the area of the economy is somewhere from which feminist thinkers are often excluded.

[00:21:46.590] - Emma Ritch
And it's nice to be round some of those discussion tables at this time. And I think we need to maximise the impact we have while we're there. And I think the principles will be helpful to us in doing that.

[00:21:58.410] - Alys Mumford
So Engender and Close the Gap will be hosting a webinar on these principles. So chance to ask your questions and explore them a little bit more on the 18th of June. So you can sign up to that on Engender's website, engender.scot . We're going to close off here, so it's time for those recommendations. Amanda, what joys can you bring us over the next couple of weeks?

[00:22:21.240] - Amanda Stanley
Well, if you are able to, you should definitely order surprise baskets of cheese to your friends' houses. Strong recommendation. No, something that I had written down that I wanted to say was I have been going back and reading a lot of Sara Ahmed's blog, feministkilljoys.com. She is an incredible writer, if you don't know about her, she's a feminist academic and writer, and her work is kind of mainly around, I guess it centres mainly around feminist, queer and race studies. And about how bodies and environments are kind of shaped in both the everyday, but also very much so in institutional settings, too.

[00:23:01.810] - Amanda Stanley
And I find her writing so inspiring and, you know, for me and my masters it was very important, a lot of her work. And I really drew a lot of inspiration from her thoughts in her books, but her blog as well. Yeah, so it's on feministkilljoys.com

[00:23:16.620] - Alys Mumford
Amazing, we will make sure we link to that in the show notes as well. Emma, have you got any recommendations for us.

[00:23:22.350] - Emma Ritch
Yeah, on the theme of the economy, I would absolutely recommend the work of Marilyn Waring, who's written a brilliant book called If Women Counted, which is all about why the UN system of national accounting should be your nemesis, but is incredibly engaging and entertaining. And there's also a film you can watch for free online, which is called, Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics. It will change your mind, I'm sure.

[00:23:48.390] - Alys Mumford
Amazing. You've both recommended things to read, I'm going to recommend some things to listen to. The Kanneh-Mason family have been doing live broadcasts every Friday at five thirty on Facebook and on YouTube, and they are wonderful musical renditions. So I'd really recommend them. They did a Black Lives Matter performance in tribute to George Floyd and it was super beautiful. But all of their stuff is amazing. So check them out. Again, the link will be in the show notes.

[00:24:17.850] - Alys Mumford

And also just a bonus, minor one. Before we came on to do this recording, I was having my lunch break with some soup and toast, and I watched just the start of the reunited apart episode with the cast of Lord of the Rings. And I only got ten minutes in and my cheeks were quite sore from smiling. So if you were a fan of Lord of the Rings, or still are a fan of Lord of the Rings, do check that out as well. It doesn't all have to be about feminist economics after all.

[00:24:44.040] - Emma Ritch

Oh Alys, of course, it does.

[00:24:47.070] - Alys Mumford

[Laughs] I'm so sorry.

[00:24:49.170] - Alys Mumford

Amazing. Thank you very much. We hope you enjoyed listening. You can leave us reviews, which helps sort of bump us up in the listings and helps other people see them. So please do that if you've found the podcast useful, or interesting, in any way.

[00:25:02.370] - Alys Mumford

Thanks, Emma. Thanks, Amanda.

[00:25:03.870] - Amanda Stanley

Thank you.

[00:25:04.180] - Emma Ritch

Thanks, Alys.

[00:25:05.100] - Alys Mumford

We'll be back in two weeks time and until then, stay safe.