

## **Mama Jua Kali: Female Resistance and Resilience to the Coloniality of Modernism and Neoliberalism in Nairobi, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

*The coloniality of modernism and neoliberalism peripheralises the informal sector. Individuals in the informal economy (also known as 'Jua Kali' or literally 'hot sun,' a term that is used to describe businesses in the informal economy that operate in open spaces subjecting its operators to hardship and harsh weather elements) are not only treated as nonhuman and primitive, but they are also disregarded in matters of economic development. Mama Jua Kali (literally 'Mother Jua Kali,' a term given to this woman and other women - for demonstrating prowess in the informal sector business and identifying with it) and fellow workers in the informal economy negotiate their everyday life in the context of neglect, stifling and attack from modernity and neoliberalism. This paper adopts a case study methodology to describe how Mama Jua Kali of Kamukunji Jua Kali cluster has been navigating her everyday livelihood through resistance and resilience over the last 40 years. She navigates her livelihood using the feminine utu (humaneness) and genius of caring, compassion and nurturing to build alliances with men and women in the informal economy cluster in order to survive the effects of modernity and neoliberalism. By adapting her experience to modernism and neoliberalism, the informal economy lives on to the next generation in a quiet revolution.*

**Key words:** Mama, feminism, informal economy, Nairobi, resilience, resistance

### **Introduction**

The term 'mama' (or mother) is used in African etiquette to address a senior woman by age. Calling an older person by name is considered disrespectful. 'Mama' thus denotes respect and acknowledges the woman's status in the family or community. A woman with a daughter called Njeri can be called 'Mama Njeri' (meaning Mother of Njeri). Mama Jua Kali in this write-up refers to the woman's role, status and activity. Mama Jua Kali has distinguished herself in the Jua Kali informal artisan activity to earn the name. The term goes against existing narratives in literature that characterise women in the informal economy as helpless, marginalised, voiceless,

vulnerable, invisible, survivalist and poor (Sassen et al; 2018; Stevano, 2018; Dasgupta and Lyod-Jones, 2018). The term also confers agency, authority and command to the bearer.

Most women in Nairobi carry out various economic activities. Some launder clothes and are referred to as *Mama fua*. Those who engage in fish (*samaki*) trade are called *Mama samaki*. Vegetable (*mboga*) vendors are called *Mama mboga*. They can be easily picked out from a crowd by their simple dresses and how they carry their goods in heavy baskets and sacks on their back. They are resilient, self-reliant, self-determined, practical, and courageous, and determined to pursue their dreams. By doing this, they claim their position in the city in the context of coloniality of modernism, neoliberalism and patriarchal dominance. Coloniality of modernism is a term used by Quijano, Anibal<sup>1</sup> to describe the social reality of colonialism which colonised people and their way of life as non-human. Neoliberalism is a model of economy where markets regulate all transactions.

In this paper, Mama Jua Kali of Kamukunji Jua Kali cluster in Nairobi is a protagonist who has made considerable effort to lay claim to the city through resilience and resistance in the sprawling informal sector. She has navigated the conflicts and contestations of urban life by confronting modernist planning paradigms, relics of neoliberalism and patriarchal dominance in development matters using different strategies, one of them being the feminine genius of self-reliance, self-determination, persistence, resilience, agency and collective action. Her feminist life has quietly confronted major forces that stifle individual initiatives and breed hopelessness in many cities.

Constrained by lack of funding for my research on the informal economy and the need to come up with a decolonial methodology, I developed my own ethnographic data gathering methodology called *ndereti*. *Ndereti* in Gikuyu refers to a conversation process that involves two people learning about each other's well-being and experience and reaching a mutual understanding. It is useful in gathering information on the logic, norms, values and people participation in the informal economy. The *ndereti* data gathering strategy adopts the structure of everyday ordinary conversation. It reduces the distance between the researcher and the respondent and creates a partnership between two equals. It is different from interview methods that involve researchers seeking answers to confirm their research agenda. *Ndereti* assumes that respondents are storehouses of knowledge. In *ndereti*, the respondent directs the conversation and builds the storey. The researcher interjects with questions for clarification and also shares personal experiences to push the conversation forward. It begins with general information about the health and wellbeing of the person, then moves to issues related to the business, significant others and the environment.

<sup>1</sup> Quijano, Anibal (2000). 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America' (PDF). *Nepantla: Views from the South*. 1 (3): 533–580.

The data about Mama Jua Kali of Kamukunji was gathered through a *ndereti* conversation held with a research assistant in October 2016. The conversation was held over two days in the afternoon when she was not very busy with customers and supervision of her workers.

### **Urban Informality and Gender**

This paper draws from several strands of literature that include the living feminist lives literature, informal economy and neoliberalism literature. Living a feminist life in Africa in general and in the Jua Kali cluster is unthinkable. Gweldoy (1997) and Tripp (2017) observe that African women are at the bottom rungs of the global feminist ladder. In the global feminist ladder, African women are presented as in need of rescue or saving by other feminists (Kinyanjui, 2019). Most Western feminist writings present African women as docile and devoid of agency to fight sexism and patriarchy due to patriarchal, retrogressive cultural practices, lack of gender rules and regulations, weak policing and poor enforcement of gender rules. According to Gweldoy (1997), African women are concerned about bread and butter and overwhelmed by culture, poverty, ignorance and disease, they have no space and time to live feminist lives. Tripp (2017) depicts African women as passive recipients of externally generated and imposed feminist tenets. Roberston (1997) in her studies of women in the informal economy demonstrates how women are overwhelmed and forced into precarious production and exchange economies. They are forced into trade activities by problems such as domestic violence and neglect. White (1990) says that women are compelled into prostitution in their homesteads so that they can join the new monetary economy. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine women living feminist lives in Africa. The situation is even harder for women working in the Jua Kali sector.

Developmental feminism presents the African woman as marginal, beast of burden, victim, passive, and without space and opportunity (Kinyanjui, 1999). She is driven by needs which are practical and strategic rather than philosophical and ideological (Moser, 1993). Concluding that she has limited choice in her actions in everyday livelihood negotiation, gender development planners have proposed that the African woman be sensitised about their rights to take on new identities.

This paper uses a feminist decolonial perspective to illustrate how Mama Jua Kali has lived a decolonial feminist life that has involved proactivity, advancing an ideology, creating space and opportunity and using collective action. Post-colonial feminists such as Maria Lugones (2010) and Sarah Ahmed (2017) attempt to show how women can live feminist lives in their everyday livelihood negotiation. According to Ahmed, women who have stood up, spoken back and risked lives, homes and relationships in the struggle for a bearable world are feminists. Hooks (2000) observes that living feminist lives is about overcoming sexism, sexual exploitation and sexual oppression.

The participation of women in the informal economy is viewed as a weakness and the reason why they are not part of the patriarchal global capitalist development. Chant and Pedwell (2008) commenting on women in the informal economy document the limitations and problems of women in the informal economy. They attribute the participation of women in the informal economy to patriarchal dominance and the failure of governments to create conditions for employment generation in the modern sector. Further, they observe that the feminisation of informal labour has served to exacerbate gendered, sexualised, and classed inequalities. According to them, there is need for policies to initiate growth that creates decent jobs.

Martha Chen in her scholarly and activist engagement on the informal economy in developing countries has documented the marginalised and peripheral position of the informal economy in national economies. Through her Women in the Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) organisation, she has tried to form informal economy networks and associations to address the problems affecting the informal economy. In her 2016 study, Chen et al (2016) bemoans the lack of national and local government policy for informal enterprises. Mitullah (2003) demonstrates the constraints that street vendors in African countries face while carrying out their business. She observes that street traders operate in unregulated and unprotected environments that are not conducive to business development.

Had these cited works examined the informal economy in the eyes of women, they would have appreciated that the informal economy concept alluded to above was a masculine creation by Keith Hart, who viewed non-western traders and craftspeople as informal. They would have appreciated that African women in particular have been traders and artisans for a long time. The survival of their mode of production and exchange into the 21st century is a form of resistance to incorporation and conscription into global capitalist production chains in the context of the coloniality of modernism, neoliberalism and patriarchal dominance.

The interaction between coloniality, neoliberalism and patriarchal dominance positions most Kenyan women in the margins of urbanism. In Kenya, only 880, 000 women are in formal employment. The rest work as peasants, traders and artisans (KNBS, 2018). The spread of modernism in African communities, for example, was selective. Individuals who went to mission schools during the colonial period and those who could pay for education in the postcolonial state were acculturated into modernity (Kinyanjui, 2012). These individuals were able to access jobs in government and corporations and secure spaces in fairly posh areas. Those without western education and right social networks were relegated to work in the sprawling informal economy as traders and artisans and in rural areas, subsist in peasant agriculture. The divide between the modern and non-modern was accentuated by neoliberalism in the late 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberalism's market fundamentalism allowed only the most entrepreneurial, with right education and political connections to gain from the liberalising markets. Neoliberalism espoused a structural adjustment package that advocated for opening up of markets, introduction

of cost sharing in social services, privatisation of government owned enterprises, floating of exchange rates and retrenchment of workers. The structural adjustment took away social safety nets, leaving individuals to fend for themselves. With limited options, women in cities who were already operating in the margins, had inadequate space to trade, and were excluded from major planning initiatives dominated by patriarchy (Kinyanjui, 2014). They consequently entrenched themselves further in the sprawling informal economy as traders (Kinyanjui, 2014) and largely used their own agency, self-determination and solidarity to lay claim in the city.

### **The Informal Economy and the Kamukunji Jua Kali Cluster in Nairobi**

Jua Kali enclaves offer very few social amenities like toilets, water points or work spaces. Spaces in this sector have no security of tenure. The Jua Kali mode of production is often seen as a disruption of the orderliness of the city. It is unfathomable to imagine that individuals like Mama Jua Kali peg their lives on such a fluid enclave.

There is significant innovation in the Jua Kali sector. Products such as wheelbarrows, popcorn machines, chicken feeding troughs, water gutters, cooking stoves, deep fryers and traditional cooking pots are made. Most of their products are sold to traders who in turn sell them to rural communities and people living in slums and informal neighbourhoods. The Kamukunji cluster has a strong apprenticeship programme where youths are taught production skills.

Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans is a metal product processing hub for the production of household and agricultural goods. Situated along Jogoo Road near the main Country Bus Station, it is one of the most studied Jua Kali clusters in Nairobi. It is estimated that 5,000 artisans operate in the cluster. It has surprised many due to its tenacious existence at the heart of the city. Its evolution in the city may have been from blacksmith activities recognised in the 1928 Hawkers Bylaw. The artisans have been joined by others who lost jobs in the metal sector after the collapse of the import substitution industries as well as recent migrants brought in by relatives and friends. All undergo a thorough socialisation process that makes them part of the cluster.

Anecdotal information has it that one time in 1985 when President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya had gone to watch a football match at City Stadium that neighbours the Jua Kali enclave, his attention was captured by heavy noise from the pounding of hammers that was coming from Kamukunji. Stopping to see what was happening in the area, he found many people, young and old engrossed in manufacturing household and agricultural implements such as cooking stoves, pots, pans, wheelbarrows, metal boxes, potato chips cutters, hoes, *pangas*, popcorn machines, gutters, cooking pots, and stoves. He sympathised with the poor conditions under which they were working and asked them to form an association that he could work with. He later formed the Ministry of Applied Technology and Training to handle their affairs. He also asked the City and Urban councils to provide land to Jua Kali artisans. The Kenya Federation of Jua Kali Artisans was also formed to be an umbrella organisation for all Jua Kali associations in the

country. The federation was also extended to include other East African countries. It participates in the annual East African Community (EAC) Jua Kali/Nguvu Kazi Exhibition which held in EAC partner states done in rotation. The Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans enclave continues to intrigue. Where do the artisans derive their innovation prowess? How do they endure many economic, social and policy shocks? How do they balance ethnic, gender, age and political interests? How do they minimise conflicts? How do they adjust to innovations and competition from other sectors? Although the cluster is mainly dominated by men of all ages, women are making inroads into the cluster as owners of business, employees in polishing and painting as well as sales persons. Some are also learning craft work.

The ability of the cluster to survive lies in its complex internal organisation, rural-urban linkage, and the subaltern African consciousness that not only hardens but also inspires individuals into resilience. Some have been hardened by the trauma of modernisation, neglect and neoliberal policies. They take their hardening positively and engage in gainful action. Secrecy and the attitude of always dancing to new tunes but preserving their dancing steps is observed. Change is discussed and negotiated in chats or formal meetings. This way, they are able to survive and change at their own terms in the city. Besides, the informal economy in 2018 created 80% of the jobs (Kenya, 2018)

### **The Case Study: Mama Jua Kali's Feminist life**

Living a feminist life is not just about overcoming sexism, exploitation and oppression. It is also about advancing the feminine *utu* (humanness) ideology. The feminine *utu* is a state of being human. It is not a status like being feminist or womanist. It is a way of life based on a humanist philosophy and ideology. The feminine *utu* connects to other humans. It involves using the feminine logic, norms and values. It is expressed in caring for offspring, connecting humanity, fulfilling self-determination, self-actualisation, and resilience. Kinyanjui (2018) observes that the feminine *utu* upholds: continuity of life; peace and harmony; pain management and control; food self-sufficiency; tolerable work and life; socialisation and education for the next generation; connecting human beings; as well as thriving and flourishing communities. Mama Jua Kali juggles with sexism, sexual exploitation and oppression as she goes about her livelihood negotiation in the Jua Kali sector. She builds alliances and solidarities to enable her provide for her offspring, flourish and connect communities.

### **Mama Jua Kali's Story**

*‘I started this business in 1978. Initially, Kamukunji was not as congested as it is today. The area was covered by tall grass. Before my current job, I was a tailor at Uhuru market. I would make clothes and distribute them to Kisumu and other towns.*

*I tried my hand in selling empty tin drums. I would buy a drum at 15 shillings and sell it at 20 shillings. I borrowed some money from a friend to boost my business and increased my stock of*

*drums from 1 to 5 drums. Later I connected with Kenya Weigh company that would buy my drums at 60 shillings. The high demand for metal drums in the region saw me supply drums beyond the borders to markets in Uganda.*

*When I heard that the government was out to build stalls and give them to trained artisans, I enrolled in an artisan class and started making jikos (cooking stoves) and sanduku (metal boxes for household use). That is how I secured Stall No. 19 from where I manufactured cooking stoves, pots, wheelbarrows and metal boxes.*

*Due to my advanced age, I have handed over the business to my children and resorted to selling mabati (metal sheets) and other metallic items," she observes.*

Mama Jua Kali has been in Kamukunji for 40 years. She is married and has children. Her husband is a retired Prison warden and is presently working with her in Kamukunji. Everybody knows her as Mama Kamukunji Jua Kali because she has transacted business in Kamukunji for a long time.

She started her business in Kamukunji in 1978. She was one of the founders of the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans cluster. She traded in drums that would be used as raw materials by other artisans. She started small and gradually increased her stock and also became a supplier to a large company. She underwent training to become a skilled artisan that would make cooking stoves and boxes. She later diversified her artisan work to include wheelbarrows and pots.

Mama Jua Kali was not marooned and condemned to the informal economy. She made a choice from being a dressmaker in Uhuru market to become a drum trader in Kamukunji. She also acquired artisanry skills and manufactured a range of products. She moved from a gender specific activity to a male trade. She made a decision to start up her business and then used collective action to build capital by borrowing from her friend.

In a male dominated space, Mama Jua Kali has created her own space of production and exchange in the city. She has also created a job for herself and lived a working life for 40 years. She has stood against obstacles that characterise Jua Kali, resisted displacement and risen above the precarious working conditions. Some of the obstacles she has overcome are lack of security of tenure and harassment from city authorities and police. She has moved beyond being a passive victim of urbanisation and neglect by government policy to become an actor and a performer. Mama Jua Kali's lived feminist life exhibits courage and self-determination. She is independent and content with her work in the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans cluster and has the freedom to pursue her own desires of motherhood and negotiating a livelihood. She has constructed her own success story in Kamukunji and mentors other women.

### **Mama Jua Kali, Sex and Sexuality**

The issues of sex and sexuality in the informal economy need research. Undoubtedly, Mama Jua Kali is heterosexual and in a marital union. She has had to contend with her sex and sexuality in a cluster dominated by men. As a matter of custom, being a married woman means upholding and controlling one's sexuality to avoid attracting other men. Some degree of decorum is expected from men towards married women. Mama Jua Kali has resisted sexual advances and lewd jokes. Her simple manner of dressing confirms that she is neither seeking approval nor desiring to be an object of romantic admiration. She is riveted on her artisanry mission. She is not in the cluster to seek sex and companionship but to negotiate a livelihood just like the men. She enters into strategic alliances with the men in the cluster to advance her interests. This saw her voted in as the head of the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans association. Mama Jua is acknowledged by both men and women. She has worked with men to advance the interest of the cluster and advocates for both men and women in the city and national government. She wields a lot of power, is respected in the community and is also consulted on many trade and administrative issues in the cluster. She is different from the otherwise helpless women presented in the informal sector literature.

### **Nurturing, Connecting Family across Generations**

Mama Jua Kali makes attempts to maintain her gender difference in her everyday livelihood negotiation in Kamukunji. Her feminine *utu* goal of nurturing and having peace and harmony in the family prompted her to go into business. She did not venture into business to fetch money for its own sake, but rather to supplement her husband's income so that together, they can meet household needs and reduce family quarrels over money.

*'My husband, a Prison warden, used to meet most of the family expenses. He would provide clothes, shelter, foodstuff and school fees for our children, among other responsibilities. His salary could not satiate all our household needs. There are times we would sleep on an empty stomach. In fact, at some point, we would quarrel and fight over finances and unmet needs. This perhaps explained his indulgence in heavy drinking, further exacerbating our conflicts. This is why I decided to set up a business. I used to ask myself, why should I sleep without food yet I have two hands and legs? I solicited the help of my uncle who bought for me the first drum that opened my world of business. From that drum, my business started growing. I would sell drums and plough back the money into the business,'* she narrates.

Mama Jua Kali's earnings from the business are used to meet family needs. The business is therefore closely connected to her family and community. The proceeds from the business are used to pay school fees, buy clothes, secure food and build the family wealth portfolio in the urban and rural area. The family portfolio includes parcels of land and residential quarters.

Mama Jua Kali is also an active member of her church and meets her church tithing obligations. She also pays school fees for her brother's children.

Proceeds from the business have enabled me to take my children to school, purchase parcels of land and build two houses - one in Kahawa West and another one in my rural home. I meet basic family needs now that my husband has retired. I am working with him. I have a car that I use to reach my customers, supply them with goods or sometimes hire it out for extra cash. I dutifully give tithe and offerings in church and assist in paying school fees for my brother's children. My brother who passed on a long time ago, she says.

Mama Jua Kali has also catered for intergenerational transfer in her family. She has introduced her children to Jua Kali business to ensure the continuity of her family line in business. This also ensures continuity of the artisanal mode of production in the city. The determinants of her business success are continuity through family, durability of metal and plenty of customers. As she puts, her children have taken up the business but within Kamukunji.

Mama Jua Kali has liberated herself from poverty by becoming financially independent. Her financial independence has created peace in the family. She is able to meet family needs and negotiate with her husband. *'With my own money, I have some sort of independence and no longer quarrel with my husband. We are now living happily and contented with the little we have, 'she says.*

### **Creating a Flourishing Community**

Mama Jua Kali has been able to perform her feminine utu objective of creating a flourishing community. She performs this through collective action and sisterhood in Kamukunji. She has organised a women movement in Kamukunji. She provides mentorship services, generously shares her experience with other women in Kamukunji, and mobilises women to form groups where they pool savings and offer credit. Through this collective action, women have a social safety net.

*'Women pay attention to me. They are very supportive whenever I rally them for a course. Through collective action, we have borrowed money from formal financial institutions. I am always ready to offer counsel, ' she confidently brags.*

Mama Jua Kali performs the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and business skills among younger women. She nurtures the women just like she nurtures her own children. She has nurtured and mentored many women who wanted to venture into business and they have succeeded. She has sustained her solidarity with women. She has encouraged women to form social welfare groups which cater for household needs and social insurance during illness and death. The groups are also conduits of knowledge and ideas between women in Kamukunji. She has tried to build what Federerici (2012) calls commons that are used to assemble resources

among women. She connects and builds community through welfare groups that assist in establishing themselves and their businesses. In the welfare groups, they also share ideas, transfer knowledge and skills.

### **Female Resistance and Resilience**

Mama Jua Kali has resisted economic paradigms that punish the informal sector workers, define the informal sector's manner of operation in terms of the nature of business, space of operation, health, safety and environmental concerns without consulting the cluster. Most of these paradigms are informed by coloniality of modernism, neoliberalism and patriarchy and often serve the interest of formal businesses. Informal workers are excessively policed to comply. Mama Jua Kali, like other workers in the informal economy, has to deal with these competing interests. She has persevered and survived harassment from government officials who consider informal businesses as illegal and non-modern.

*“The city council officials used to licence informal businesses selectively and had inspectors who would go round asking for licences. Those who did not have licences would be arrested and taken to court. Sometimes traders and artisans would indiscriminately be arrested and their goods confiscated. Even traders and artisans with licences would be arrested. Those who didn't have licences would hide in drums and resurface after the city authorities had gone,”* she recalls.

Mama Jua Kali is also key in the social movement to protect the Jua Kali from the city modernist endeavour. She fights for the right of fellow artisans in Kamukunji. In 2013, she was elected Chair of the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans. She negotiates with the city policing authorities in favour of the traders and artisans and advises colleagues who are arrested. She has carved herself a niche as a leader, king maker and reference point for individuals who are disenfranchised by the city authorities. It is for this reason that she is accorded the title Mama Kamukunji Jua Kali.

*“Due to my active role of championing for the rights of my fellow colleagues at my work place, I was once elected at the Chair of Kamukunji Jua Kali Association in 2013. Any time my fellow traders are caught by the city authorities, they usually rush to me to seek my advice and assistance. They trust my judgement. They also allow me to decide who to be elected or not in the Jua Kali cluster,”* she narrates.

Mama Jua Kali works in opposition to modernity and neoliberalism without losing her self-determination and collective action. She works in solidarity with others to advance her interest. Her business is closely related to her personal, family, community needs. She frugally builds her business by trading in small quantities and accumulating gradually. She acts as the link and mediator between the artisans and the city government that treats artisans with disdain. The artisans are always at loggerheads with the city and national government because, as Mama Jua

Kali observes, ‘*They (city and national government) consider us to be illiterate, a nuisance and criminals.*’

The city and national government overlook the, autonomy, self-determination and resilience of the artisans. They do not recognise the entrepreneurial acumen of the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans cluster and the revenue it generates. The city authorities would rather open their gates to foreign investors at the expense of people like Mama Jua Kali who have spent a lifetime in the metal production.

She observes: ‘*We are generating revenue to the government but can’t see what the government is doing for the Jua Kali sector. The Chinese and Indians have been allowed to crowd us out. They are now producing the same items we manufacture but this time with plastics and not metals. We can’t sell metals while people are going for cheap plastic items. The country’s Ministry of Industrialisation should come to our rescue.*’

### **Like Men in the Cluster**

Mama Jua Kali has also tried to perform like some men in the cluster who provide for their families and accumulate. She has confronted Patriarchal dominance in the Kamukunji Jua Kali Artisans cluster. Her gender has not stopped her from building a business empire that matches the ones of men. She started small, with one drum, but diversified to include transportation. Her business is worth thousands of shillings. She has employed workers in her enterprise. Just the way men bring their wives on board to join them in business, she has brought her husband on board. She has also diversified the family portfolio by reinvesting her surplus just like the men, by constructing rental housing.

Mama Jua Kali has gone beyond feminine trades such as garment making and sale of foodstuffs. She has entered into metal work which is a male domain. She understands the intricacies and benefits involved in metal work. She says that metal products are not perishable and the longer metals stay, the more expensive they become. Not covered by the gloom and despair associated with African women, she exudes confidence in her work, builds relationships and supports other workers in the cluster.

Mama Jua Kali manages an integrated business system. She is the link between different communities of entrepreneurs in the city. She caters for everyone by supplying a range of goods including pots, wheelbarrows and boxes. She obtains her raw materials from Asian wholesalers. She is linked to fabricators who make goods on commission. She also has a close relationship with traders who play the important role of distributing goods to customers. The Asians supply artisans with raw materials. Fabricators fashion them to desired commodities. Traders and marketers come in to supply the goods.

The Kamukunji integrated system is managed and governed by a system of rules and regulations that determine relationships and minimise conflicts in the cluster. Drunkenness is prohibited at work. Fighting, theft, fraud and interfering with customers are not condoned.

### **Conclusion**

The Jua Kali sector partially entrenched itself in response to economic stagnation arising from the Structural Adjustment programme (SAP) imposed on sub-Saharan African governments by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. It originally attracted negative publicity as a habitat for failures, rejects and uneducated. Such connotations were highlighted by government authorities who neglected and suffocated the sector.

The success of players like Mama Jua Kali, who have been fearless, valiant, proud, and skilful, has given the sector a positive image. They have made the Jua Kali sector to be a badge of honour. Mama Jua Kali is proud of her accomplishments in the money economy. She can service her household needs, support relatives and social groupings and bargain with formal lending institutions and government authorities from a position of strength. Through the success of people like Mama Jua Kali, the government has started extolling the advantages of the Jua Kali sector to the masses and encouraging young school leavers to join the Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TIVET) that enable their graduates to be self-employed like Mama Jua kali.

Women peasants, artisans and traders encapsulated in Mama Jua Kali live feminist lives and are key players in the evolution of economic informality in Nairobi as a strategy for laying claim to the city. They do their business in open urban spaces, streets or in designated market places under a mostly unfavourable regulatory environment. Through the feminine *utu*, Mama Jua Kali has defied all odds to rise and navigate everyday sexual exploitation and adapt her artisan indigeneity to neoliberalism by creating commons and using family and kinship in production and exchange. This quiet feminist revolution characterised by perseverance, courage, self-reliance, self-determination, persistence, nurturing and connecting communities has enabled her to lay a claim to the city, maintain her gender difference and liaise with men in the cluster to address cultural contestations and confront conflicts imposed by modernism, neoliberalism and patriarchal dominance.

From the resilience of people like Mama Jua Kali, the Jua Kali industry has become an integral part of the Nairobi economy, attracting every segment of society the young and the old as well as the educated men and women and the uneducated. Women are not passive. Given the right environment, they have big stakes in the socio-economic and political development of the country.

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