

Vibrant Canvas

African Women's Development Fund
Annual Report 2019

**This is a summary of our 2019
annual report.**

Yet this report is written in 2020 at a time when the world is responding to the impact of the Covid-19 virus pandemic and global protests around injustice, inequality and anti-blackness. Although that is a story to be painted at another time, present day realities have made clear the importance of the intersectional feminist struggle in Africa and around the world. Our work as African feminists is central to the vibrant canvas that will move us beyond fear, beyond hate and into that just dreamscape that we are building. What follows is a summary of our report, you can find the full version [here](#)



AFRICAN
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND

Introduction to the theme

Vibrant Canvas is the world told by African women, created and founded in their experiences. It is an imagining of how African feminists continue to create their world; splashing colours on a canvas and mixing what they have to create new shades and patterns. In 2019 our artists -AWDF grantees, donors, staff and the Board -stretched boundaries to create new futures for African women and in the Middle East. This theme presents a collective painting of the works of our artists designed in all colours of the world, in familiar and unfamiliar images, painted from memory, sometimes not their own, sometimes deep into the past, and far into the future...

Message from the CEO

Welcome to AWDF's painting of the work we did in 2019 to support African women activists as they painted the larger canvas – imagining and pushing to build and make real the just, the loving and the better world that we want to live in. We disbursed the largest grantmaking budget in our herstory and partnered with other organisations for additional funds not through AWDF but where we were part of charting the path, raising the money, administering the funds and monitoring progress.

Sometimes in 2019, our momentum and growth felt like we were careening down a complex and often hazardous mountain roads, our heads moving faster than our bodies could. We saw too many of our sisters, mothers, and activist colleagues succumb, in different ways, to the unrelenting stress of trying to make change in a world where the powerful find new and more nuanced ways of resisting. While we mourn their grief, their ill health, and in some cases, their deaths, we celebrate their solidarity, commitment and contribution to our feminist dreamscapes.

As you read this report, I hope that you will think about how you are contributing to the vibrant canvas of women's activism and that you will take joy in joining with AWDF on a journey as we support that activism.

The Canvas

The canvas is women's rights organisations and movements in Africa, the Middle East and across the globe. The canvas is our homes, our communities, our daily lives, our past, present and future. The canvas is our world. And, for the purposes of this report, the canvas is AWDF.

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) was created in 2000 by three African women, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Hilda Tadria and the late Joana Foster, who saw the need to redefine philanthropy by aligning it to the needs of African women's organisations. Nineteen years later, it has become a leader in organising and delivering equitable feminist resourcing and a prominent advocate for women's funds. Nineteen years later and this is just the beginning. AWDF continues to resource and anchor women's rights organisations and movements and transform development spaces by shifting power to the centre of the work. We subscribe to the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists. Find out more about our Mission, Vision and core values in the report.



2651 GRANTS

1442 ORGANISATIONS

\$55,295,515.00 AWARDED

44 COUNTRIES IN AFRICA AND 3 COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

These figures are a trail of AWDF's statistical achievements since 2001

The Colours

The year in numbers

For the canvas to be truly vibrant, truly liberated, it should include space for a full reflection of womanhood and the issues facing women. AWDF funded initiatives across African women's diversities of age, geography, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability, HIV status, and economic status with a focus on the most marginalised. Our work included support for the fight for rights around women's health, economic agency, leadership and full participation.

91
GRANTS

USD
\$8,168,804
awarded

23
COUNTRIES
including
transnational &
regional grants

19%
INCREASE
in total grantmaking
from 2018

In 2019, AWDF grantee partners, through the diversity of their work and processes, created changes in public discourse and visibility; they built skills and analysis, raised awareness and changed consciousness in their communities about the rights of women and the support and services available to them; they built and strengthened movements and consolidated alliances; created knowledge products; and they pushed for and achieved changes in laws, policies and regulations that advance women's rights and gender equality. They, in short, moved us forward in our push for a new world.



Body and Health Rights

53 grants
\$4,399,512



Economic Security and Justice

24 grants
\$2,620,980



Leadership, Participation and Peace

14 grants
\$1,148,312

Other Highlights!



Creating the Data, Building the Tools

In 2019, African feminists led efforts to eliminate VAW fuelled by gender inequality and patriarchal power, and the field of evidence-based prevention continued to grow with promising methodologies for tackling the root causes of violence and transforming norms and behaviours. Through this work, we know that prevention is possible by using key principles of VAW prevention, securing sufficient financial and human resources, and, ensuring feminist- driven leadership.

Bread and Butter

The Bread and Butter Series was launched as a knowledge production project led by AWDF to deepen analysis around African feminist economic futures. The series is a part of a larger movement building process and an ongoing contribution to an ever-growing collection of knowledge products, data and documentation pushing for economic justice through African feminist economic alternatives. Through this programme, we saw African feminist writers proactively seek the opportunity to contribute research on macro and micro economic issues affecting them and women and girls across the continent.

... And Roses Too

That now famous slogan, “We Want Bread, and Roses Too,” is as important today as it was over a hundred years ago when it was first recorded in the streets. AWDF’s labour rights work centres the belief that the right to work must mean the right to dignified, safe, and equitable work. In November 2019, AWDF held a labour rights convening with six of our grantee organisations to discuss their work and share experiences around advocacy for women’s labour rights. The convening resulted in new alliances and networks for a global labour rights movement and worked as a space for learning and exchange for the partners.

The Future of Women's Health

AWDF commissioned an in depth study to address gaps in research and assess how to best support women's organisations working on the prevention and response of NCDs.

The research covered all 54 countries in Africa and focused on cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental health conditions. It was determined that while the scale of impact of NCDs on African women's health remains largely underreported and under researched, women-led organisations are a strategic frontline of prevention and response. Building on these insights, AWDF is developing a stream of grantmaking and knowledge sharing around building African feminist leadership for NCD prevention and response.

NCDs and Women in Africa: The Numbers

- 1 An estimated 22+ million women are living with cardiovascular diseases
- 2 Women make up more than half of the 70 million chronic respiratory diseases cases
- 3 Women represent 65% of all cancer cases
- 4 9.6 million healthy-life years of women in Africa are lost to mental health conditions
- 5 Women's nutrition intake is at significantly low levels - in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Tanzania, less than 3% of women eat the recommended five portions of fruits and vegetables daily

* Figures from 2017

The Foundation

The canvas is only as good as its foundation. If it is weak, the image blurs and the colours disappear. In order to strengthen the canvas and ensure that the work is sustainable, AWDF continued to invest in strengthening institutional capacity through our Capacity Building Unit.

Transforming Institutional Capacity

In 2019, the capacity building team made changes to our training approach to make our spaces even more user-friendly and in line with our values. They introduced standard sessions on feminism and AWDF values, and better meeting of language needs including Arabic and sign. Organisations we reached with our capacity building support reported that they had rethought internal structures; created and updated board governance, human resource and financial manuals; created resource mobilisation strategies (in many cases for the first time); and revised strategic plans to better echo their institutional ethics and best practices in the sector.

Nurturing African Feminist Leadership

In 2019, we concluded our five-year pilot Feminist Leadership and Governance initiative. Launched in 2014, this initiative guided 30 grantee organisations and 60 individual staff through a process of deep organisational reflection and transformation. Each organisation also received a grant to implement change strategies.

The leadership coaching centred self-care upholding that transforming individual power meant a change of collective strength. Participants expanded their understanding of feminist leadership, they learned how to challenge hierarchies in their organizations, and they transformed in personal growth, in consciousness, confidence, self-esteem and in finding and learning how to project their voices.

Splashes of Light



Light is sometimes used on canvases to bring attention to important aspects of a painting. Light creates spotlights, and, adds dimension. New and continuing funding in 2019 allowed AWDF to expand and deepen our work and reaffirmed our principle belief that global south women's funds work and that feminist principles and feminist resourcing of women's rights organisations and movements can change the world.

Shift the Power in Funding

In 2019, AWDF built on previous years of resourcing advocacy for women's rights to join and help shape The Equality Fund initiative. The Equality Fund, formally launched in June 2019, is both an independent organisation and a Canadian led partnership, with AWDF as one of its 10 partners. Read more in the report to see what lies ahead as we seek to increase scope and scale and shift the power in development and human rights financing for sustainable, feminist-led initiatives.

Collaborations in Global South Women's Funds


When we say that we built on our previous experiences to join The Equality Fund, we are speaking, in part, about the **Leading from the South** initiative (LFS) – a groundbreaking partnership built on a foundational belief in the power and capacity of Global South women's funds and of women's rights activism in the global south. Through the fund, between 2017-2019, AWDF awarded grants to 76 organisations working around our three core themes. Read the report for more statistical and qualitative impact from selected LFS grantees.

Women's Voice and Leadership

WVL is one of the bold, initial steps in actioning Canada's feminist international assistance policy. In the initial stages of this collaboration, AWDF worked on learning exchanges and strategy linkages with women's rights organisations in Africa and with women's funds in other parts of the world that were a part of the Global Affairs Canada's **Women's Voice and Leadership Initiative**. AWDF also has an African regional role.

Amplify Change Collaborative

Amplify Change is a collaborative funding initiative on sexual and reproductive health rights. It is co-managed by AWDF, Global Fund for Women and Mannion Daniels. Over the years, this has meant joint visioning and implementation of more relevant, more imaginative and greater amounts of resource for sexual and reproductive health and rights organisations and activism, as well as collaboration in raising those resources, linking to that activism and promoting the work of grantee partners.



Radiant Designs

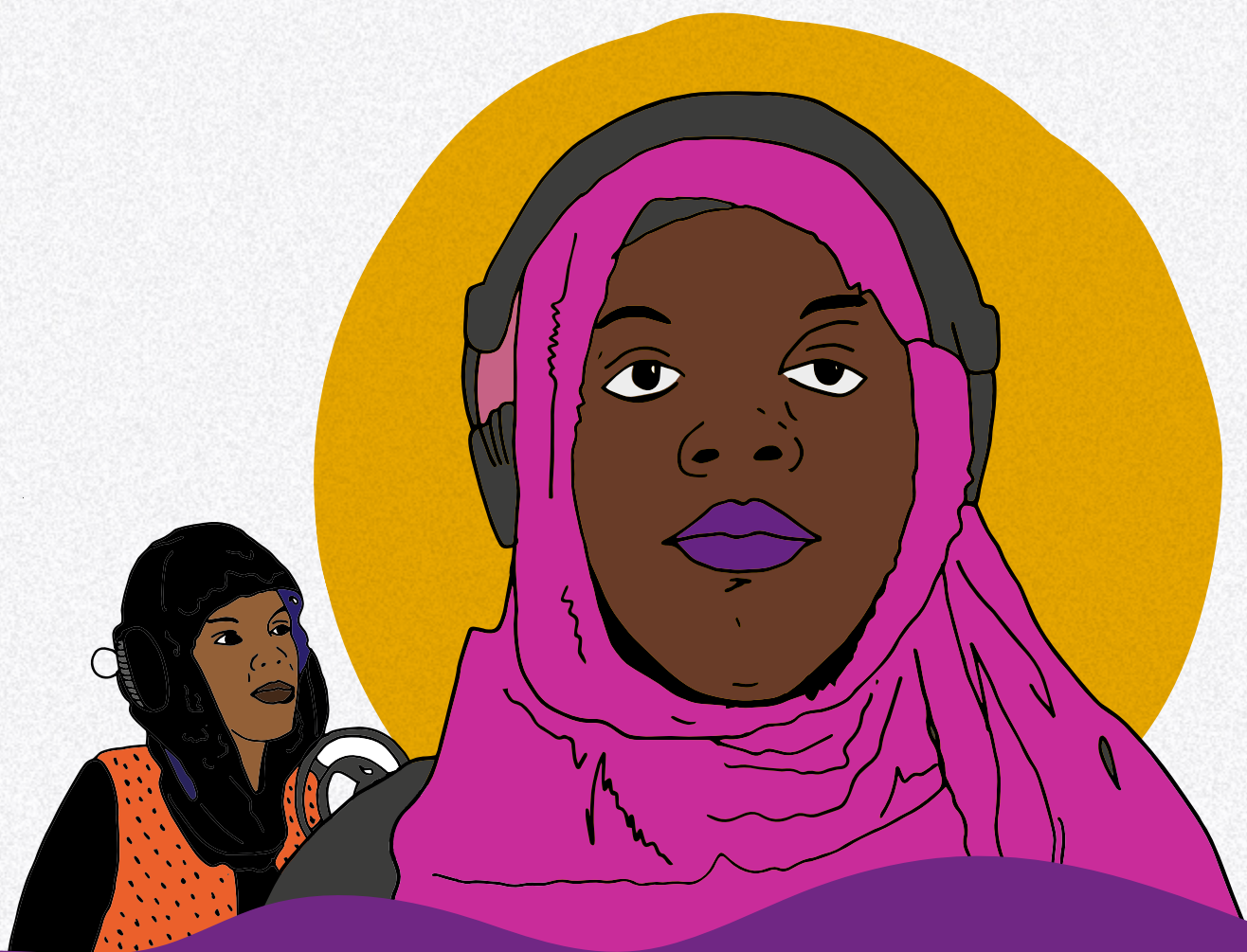
And on the canvas was more art.

Performance Art to Combat Violence Against Women (VAW)

Because art and activism have always gone hand in hand, AWDF engaged communities around campaigns to combat VAW through art during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and International Women's Day commemorations. For 16 days of Activism, AWDF awarded small grants to 20 organisations in 10 countries (Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) for events taking place between 25 November – 10 December 2019. AWDF also collaborated with the Global Arts and Development Centre in Accra, Ghana to fund an event showcasing a series of monologues about violence against women. The first event in the series was held at the University of Ghana and was attended by 120 people who engaged in active discussions around VAW - realities and prevention.

Writing from the Centre

The African Women's Writers Workshop (AWWW) was created with the aim of building a network of African women writers and voices of authority in public spaces able to provide feminist narratives of womanhood and of women's rights movements. In October 2019, we hosted the third AWWW in Ghana. The workshop included 20 writers from 15 African countries. As a result of the AWWW, participants have gone on to secure publishing deals, written social change and/or feminist articles published in international media, and have spoken on global platforms such as TED Global.



Because It's Bigger than Hip Hop

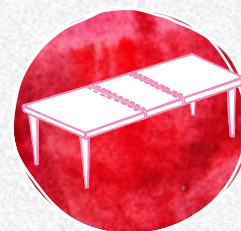
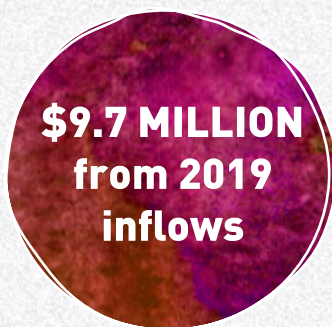
In 2019, AWDF supported the Genji Hip Hop Collective, a powerful group of 84 women Senegalese rappers, singers, DJs and graffiti artists who perform and create art around women's rights. The funding contributed to a 72-hour festival called Waxal Sunu Bopp, which gathered artists, journalists, cultural programmers and activists around panel discussions; held workshops on photography, dance, digital communication, writing, and djing; and showcased music performances - all organised by and for the benefit of women, all focused on women's rights issues. It was a powerful and beautiful event, which the Genji Hip Hop Collective plans to replicate in the coming years.



The Artists

The artists, the ones who do the work and create the future, are spread throughout the African continent and in the Middle East. They are grantee organisations spread across 44 countries in Africa and 3 countries in the Middle East. The artists are also AWDF staff and the Board of Directors – and so in 2019 we also centred our growth initiatives on the soul of AWDF through check-ins and assessments to ensure that our systems and our work environment promoted self and collective care, were grounded in our guiding principles and worked in ways that are safe, enriching, and inspiring.

Finances



Capacity Building
Activities:
\$203,198



Grants Awarded:
\$8,168,804



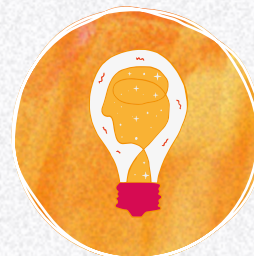
Other Programmes
\$350,104



Programme Management
\$1,056,415



Fundraising and
Communication:
\$414,846



Management and
Institutional Development:
\$409,518

Thank You

The paint on this canvas, AWDF's work, is the result of collective action and collaboration with a range of partners and friends. Thank you to our community of women rights activists, advocates and supporters. Thank you to our past and present grantee partners and to the donors who help us do this work.

Our donors in 2019

Anonymous Donor A ● Anonymous Donor B ● Comic Relief ● Ford Foundation ● Foundation for a Just Society ● Global Affairs Canada ● Global Fund For Women ● Individual Donors ● Libra Foundation ● Mama Cash ● Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands) ● Novo Foundation Fund of the Tides Foundation ● Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA) ● Stephen Lewis Foundation ● The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation ● Women's Foundation of Minnesota

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