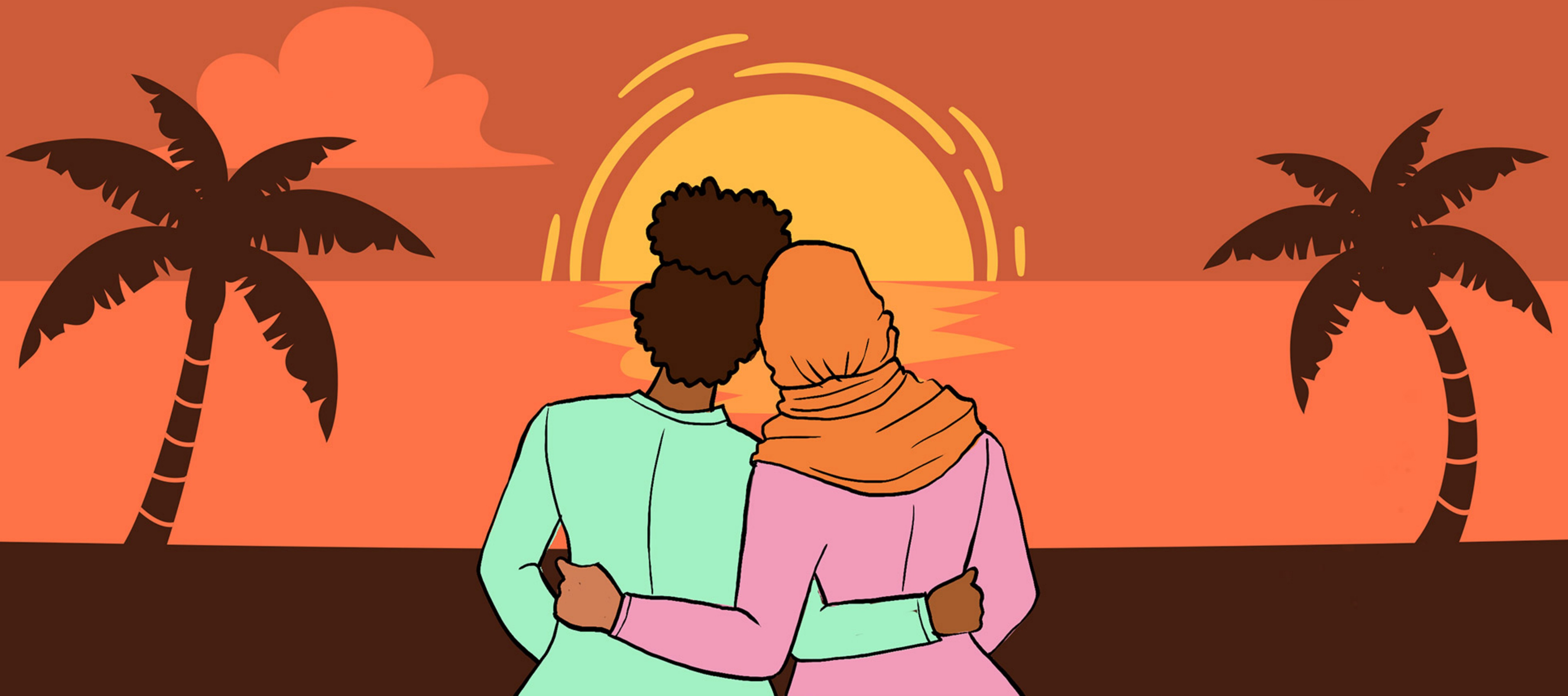


BIRTHING LEADERS

Stories of Change in African Women's Organisations



In a 2016 McKinsey's Women Matter report, only 5% of CEOs, 22% of cabinet members, and 24% of parliamentarians in Africa are women. These statistics sharply contrast the rich history of women's leadership on the continent.

From Vera Chirwa, a founding member of the Malawi Congress Party, who led the country to win independence, to Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, founder of the Abeokuta Women's Union in Nigeria who protested the lack of women's representation in decision-making corridors, Africa, thrives on the often undocumented stories of leadership by African women.

In 2015 the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) launched its Leadership and Governance programme to consciously nurture the hearts and souls of women leaders and organisations. And to honour the batons passed by our ancestors.

The programme uses one-on-one and collective coaching to mentor senior, mid-level leaders and governance boards of African women's organisations. To date, the programme has directly impacted more than 60 women and 30 organisations across the continent.



TRANSFORMING ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

[SISTER TO SISTER GROUP]

The Sister-to-Sister Group (SSG) is a women's organisation that nurtures the growth and confidence of young women to become leaders in South Africa.

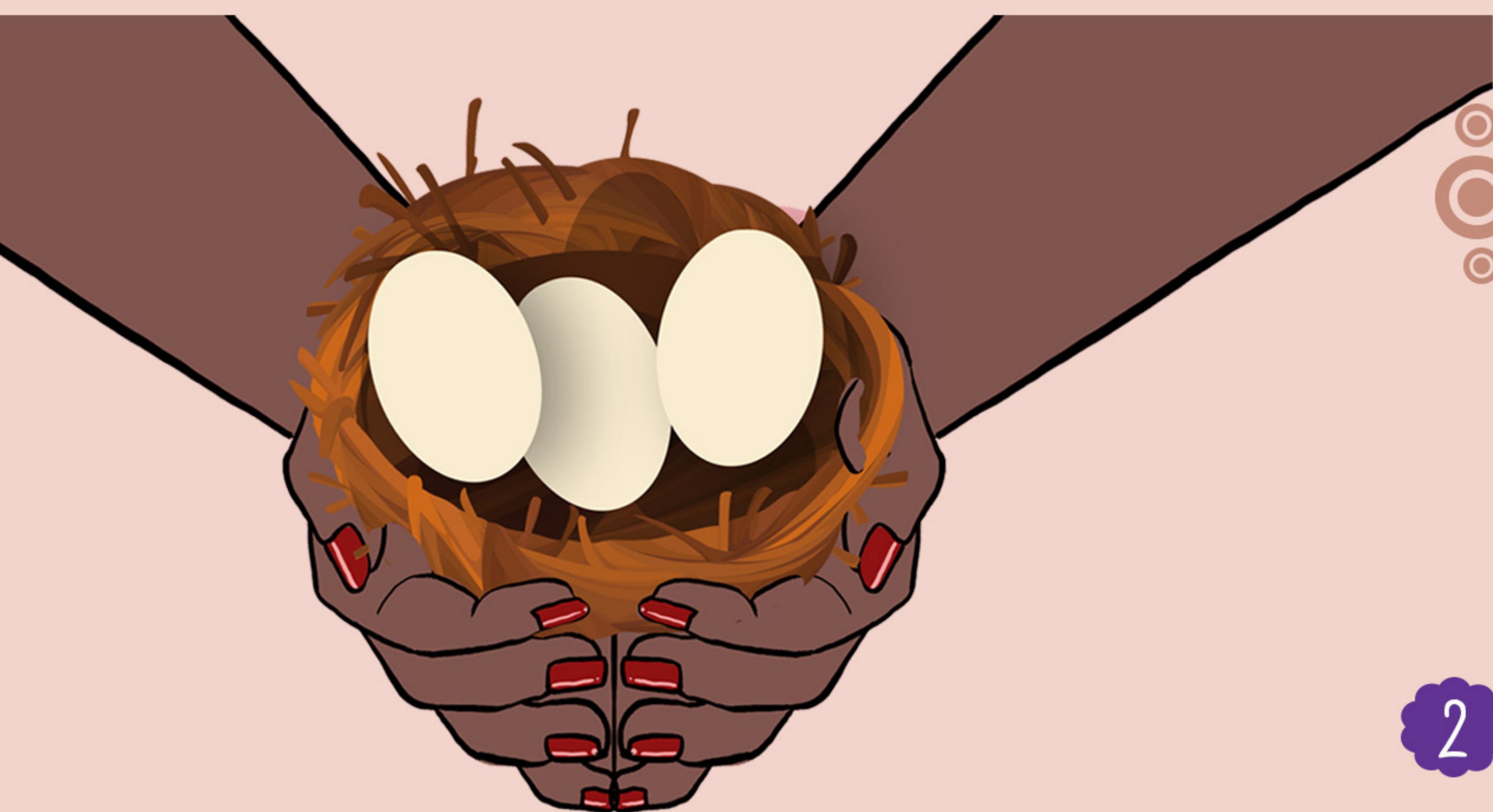
They joined the leadership and governance programme in 2017 amidst internal leadership transition. Supported by coaches, SSG staff and the board created a safe space to reflect on the organisation's history and vision. This clarified their mandate to deliver sexual and reproductive health rights as some members did not initially support components of this work. Sensitive issues like nepotism that reproduced a culture of complacency were also openly discussed.

With the support of coaches, the Board membership was reviewed leading to the stepping down of some old members and recruitment of new ones. Today SSG is one of the lead advocates for sexual and reproductive health rights on the continent and uses their story to inspire other organisations.

[THE SAFETY NEST]

The Safety Nest addresses poverty and mental health needs in Malawi. Since its establishment in 2002, they were headed by the founding Executive Director who also selected the Board of Trustees without elections since there was no General Assembly. Moreover, their management policies were outdated and made adherence to processes difficult. In 2017, the Safety Nest requested capacity support from AWDF through which they were assigned a coach and received their first board governance training the same year.

The training set the stage for change and allowed board members and staff to openly speak out on internal issues like the need to re-envision their mandate. They also voted to reconstitute their board with a majority of women in line with their mission to advance women's rights. This allowed for previously excluded women staff to get involved in decision making.



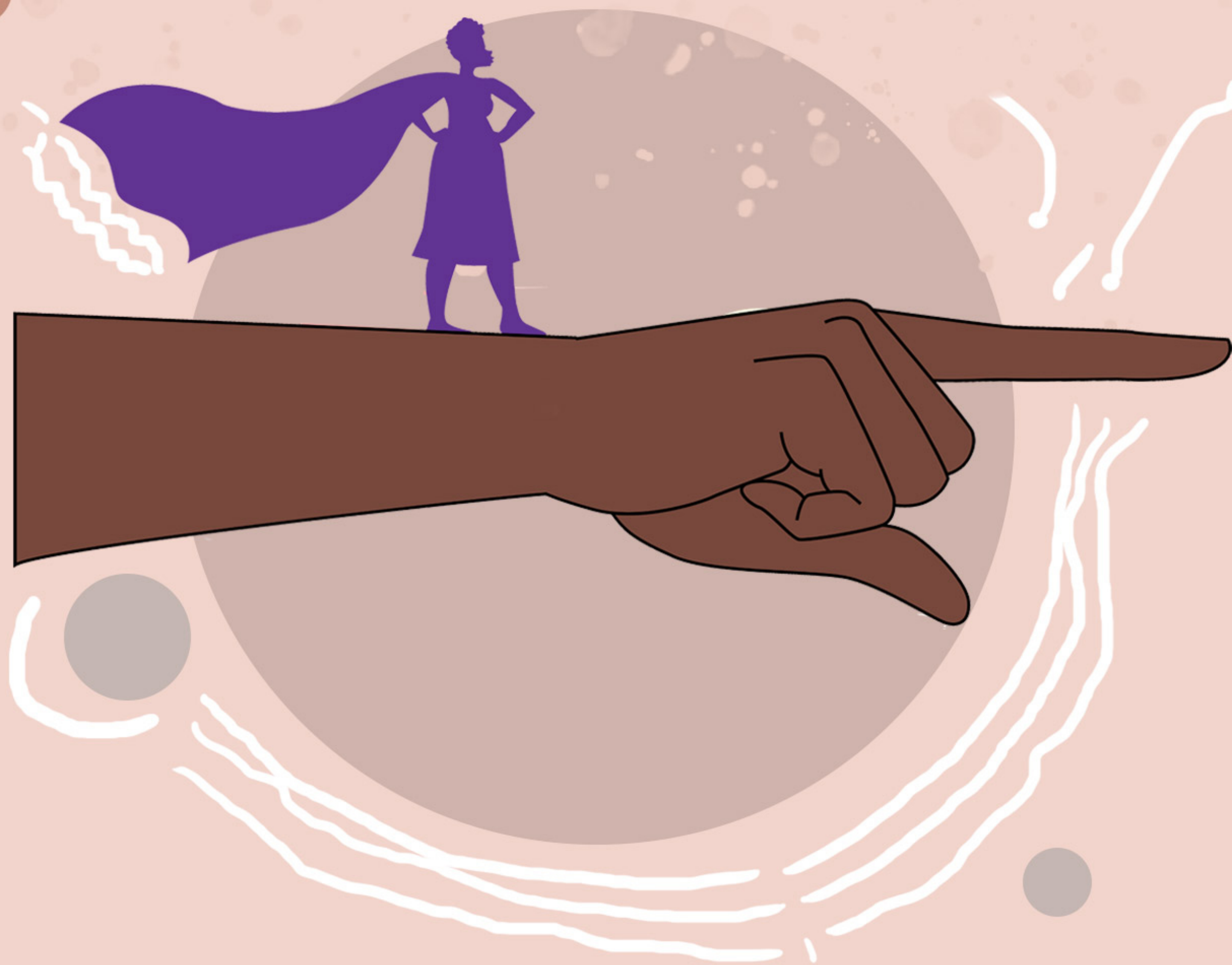
“A policy alone cannot change an institution. The change at Safety Nest started with internal recognition for the need to build structures and processes.”

[WONDER WOMEN FOR SOCIAL CHANGE]

Wonder Women for Social Change in Uganda promotes the rights of women entrepreneurs.

In 2014, they underwent a transition at the senior management level with the appointment of a new Executive Director from within the organisation. However, the new Executive Director was not equipped with the tools and skills to head the organisation. Owing to this difficult transition, they applied to participate in the Leadership and Governance programme in 2015.

Today Wonder Women for Social Change is proud of being able to review their organisational policies, collaboratively develop a board manual and a resource mobilisation strategy to support their strategic plan with the help of the coaches.



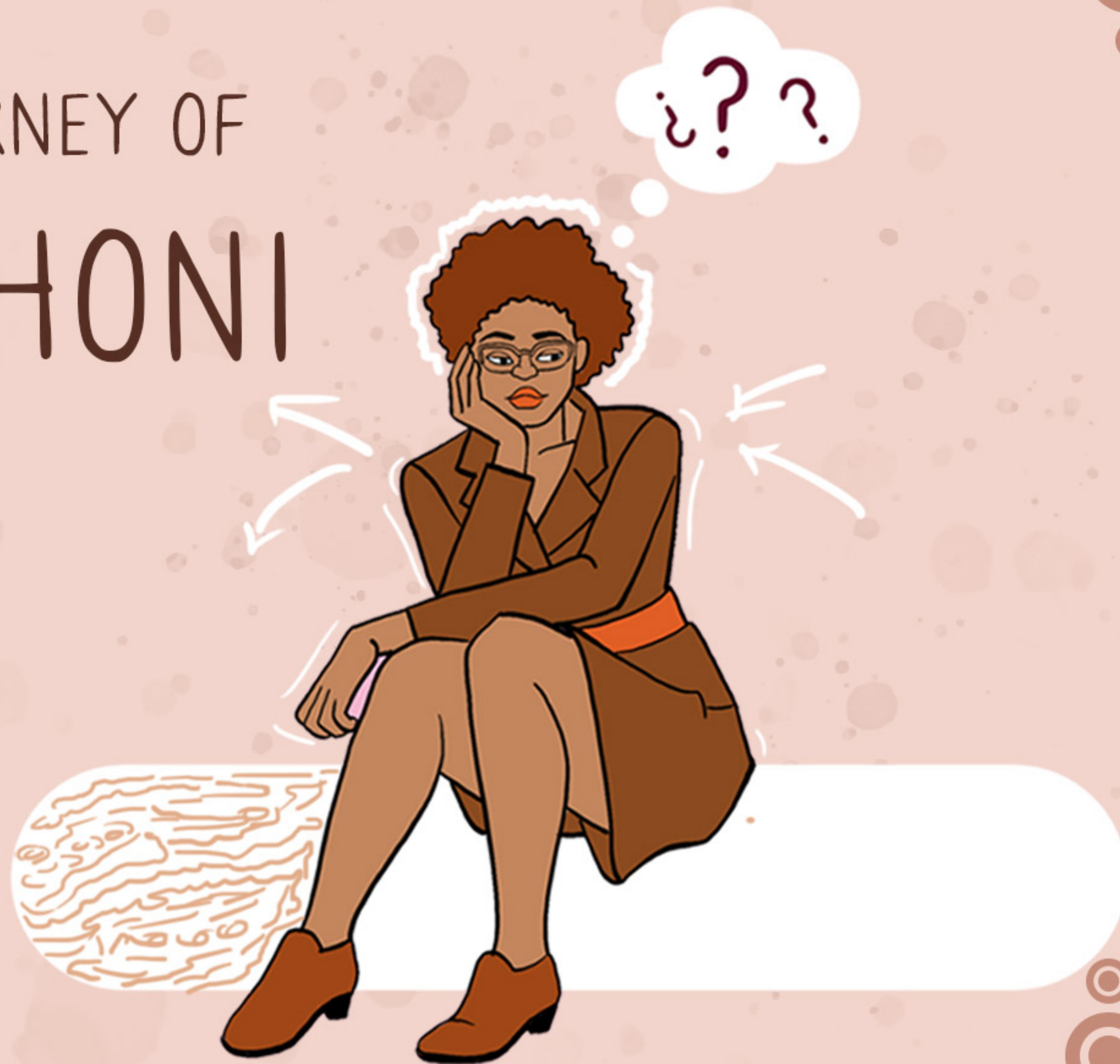
THE JOURNEY OF MENTORING AND COACHING INDIVIDUAL WOMEN LEADERS

To reach individual leaders, the programme hosts a CEO forum at each training cohort.

The coaches use strategies like group exercises and presentations to encourage leaders to speak up. In addition, mock filmed interview sessions are used to help them practice, identify their own points of improvement and provide peer support. One on one sessions are incorporated to allow the leaders to reflect on their personal strengths and improvement points, build self-worth and discover their power.

"I would tremble and lack words to express myself in large audiences. This lowered my self-esteem and made me fear interacting with people of high class".

THE JOURNEY OF MUTHONI



"My name is Muthoni. Despite my dedication to the organisation, I had low self-esteem. At the beginning of my coaching journey, I cried the first time I was asked to lead a staff meeting. I had a cold chill run down my spine to the bottom of my toes and could not utter a word out of fear. I could not actively participate in high level meetings as required, given my role in the organization. Because I believed I was not good enough due to my low level of formal education and my social class.

This changed after the coaching process. My coach challenged me to see the positive sides of myself and to gain strength from them. I was encouraged to write out who I was, my strengths and opportunities. While this took time, I began to recognise my value and my incredible achievements. This

THE JOURNEY OF KHANYISILE

I am Khanyisile. I live in an environment that judges in a very subtle manner, by the outer appearance of the skin. No, People in leadership did not look like me, they were mostly of a different gender and race. This made me shy and I kept my ideas and dreams to myself. The coaching brought out a new Khanyisile. Knowing I had a coach gave me a sense of sure support and guidance."

Khanyisile believes that the exposure through travel outside of her country, which was her first, to attend a CEO Forum made her appreciate the importance of representation in different spaces.

"It was amazing. I met with amazing women who had worked and achieved positions of influence. Women with a skin colour like mine; that I cannot get over. I believe in myself a whole lot more!"



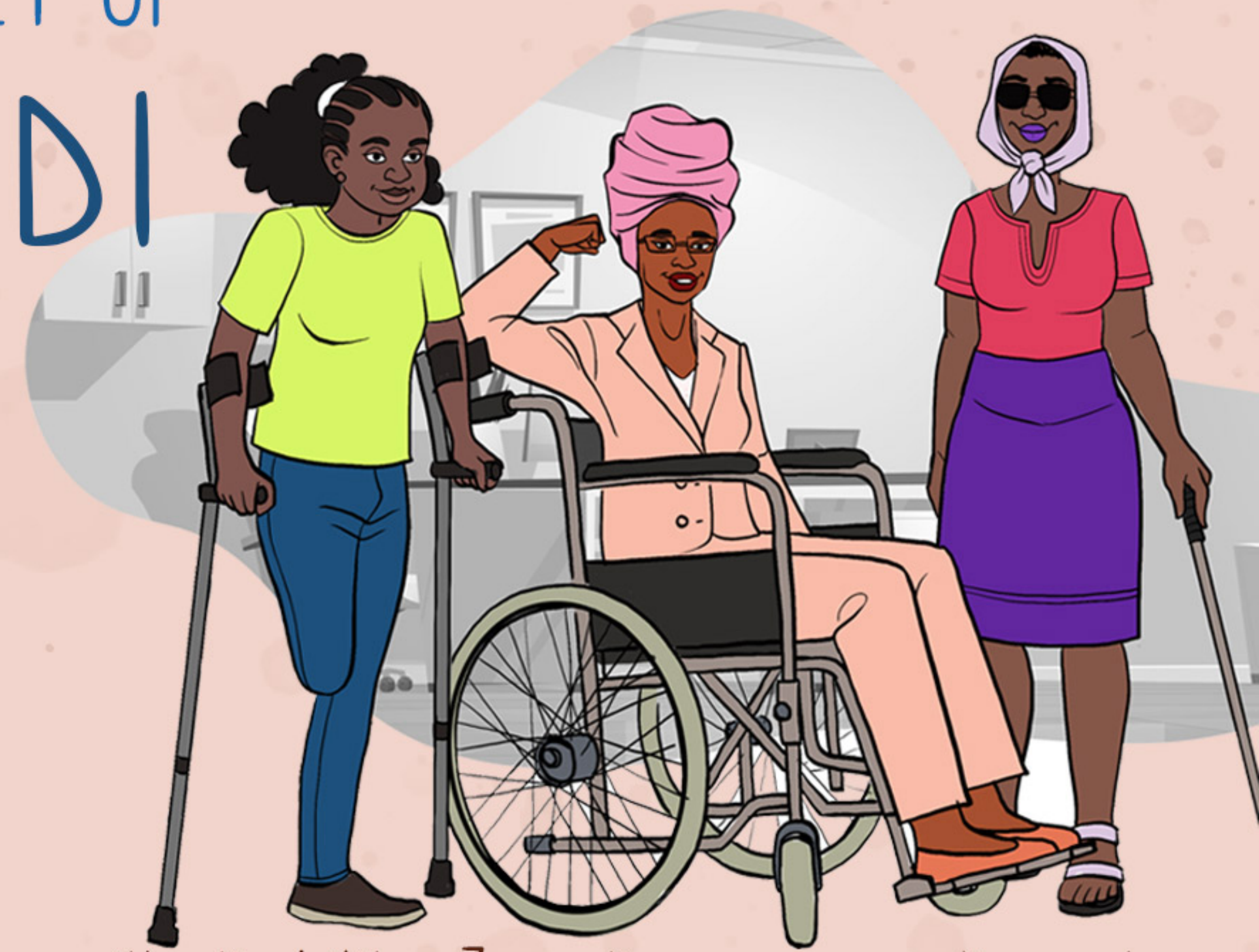
THE JOURNEY OF GASIRA

"My personal wellbeing is nothing I ever considered because I did not see the sense in taking care of myself while I needed to chase money. Through the coaching I learnt that leadership should be transformative and that effective leaders give birth to leaders"

Gasira feels that her most significant achievements throughout the coaching process were finding her self-confidence, as she now believes that one needs this to be able to truly grow. She is also proud that her sisters see the transformation in her and look up to her as their role model. Gasira believes that having a mentor is very helpful for personal growth, it makes things easier.



THE JOURNEY OF ZAWADI



As a woman living with disability, Zawadi overcame stigma to lead with strength. "The programme built my self-esteem and confidence to articulate sensitive issues in our work like the prevention of gender based violence. I discovered the power within me which I never knew I had and I have been able to transfer this power to the women and girls with disabilities that I work with at the grassroots. I also have a deeper sense of belonging with other staff members as a result of this project."

These stories are only a pinch of the enormous experiences of African women breaking the glass ceiling to transform their organisations and communities.

The AWFDF Leadership and Governance Programme continues to bring more women and organisations into this space with the goal of shifting beliefs to do what African women do best. LEAD!

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