



AFRICAN WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT FUND



The 5th CEO FORUM
On Leadership &
Communications for
Women's Rights
Leaders in Africa
CONVENING REPORT

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The Participants of AWDF's 5th CEO Forum, August 2015.

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**AWDF's
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AWDF's 5th CEO Forum on Leadership and Communications for Women Leaders of Women's Rights

Organisations in Africa took place in Nairobi, Kenya between 10 -12 August 2015. The three-day convening brought together 21 vibrant women executives from 8 organisations across Africa, including Botswana, Zambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana. The program featured two main facilitators, Hope Chigudu and Paula Fray, who will serve as coaches leading the participants through a 10-month coaching program following the forum.

Over the years, the focus of the CEO Forum has deepened and expanded. The forum and coaching program are also growing *just* as the participants are also developing their leadership and communications portfolio. With each forum, the experience shared by the organisers and participants pushes the Capacity Building Program to take risks and try new and different processes. So, the forum and coaching program are interactive and responsive, shifting and changing over time like the women leaders who take part.

Through this process, the Capacity Building Program is creating a unique framework that promotes African feminist leadership and coaching as a model for implementation for women's rights organisations throughout Africa and, potentially, around the world. The idea is to mobilise more resources to support African women and organisations to build a compelling leadership practice that infuses the whole organisation. This can provide routes for the democratisation of leadership among staff and board members, so that human resource talents and skills can be adequately tapped and utilised for greater viability of the organisation. This can provide much needed support to the CEO and senior management team. With feminist leadership, leaders are built to carry the vision of the organisation into the future.

We are grateful to our CEO, Theo Sowa, for making time to share with other women leaders. Thanks also to our coaches for this process, Hope Chigudu and Paula Fray, and the Capacity Building Assistant, Ayesha Abukari.

Special Thanks to the African Capacity Building Foundation for supporting the convening and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for supporting the coaching programme.

It gives us joy and energy to mobilise more resources for the work we are doing. We want to take part in growing new, young leaders and contributing to the shift on our continent. We want to make a political statement. We need to take care of ourselves as women. We need to appreciate the good things in life as women and we need to commit ourselves to enjoying them and using them for our full development. That is why we are here.

This particular forum is targeted at individuals and that is the Executive Director (ED), CEO, Program Manager, or top level management because we are focusing on individual leadership development and actually looking at issues of communication. We all know the ED gets to do all the strategic engagement, attend most of the important meetings where critical decisions are taken and so we want to ensure that the ED, the CEO, the Program Manager, or whoever is leading the organisation, has those skills, the exposure and experiences to fully engage in those spaces.

This program is very flexible. We try to improve on it as we move along, so the Forum transforms, it changes a bit each time. Make the best use of the facilities here so that when you go back, in your own little way, you can enjoy whatever is available to you. You will build a relationship with your coach, agree on the coaching objective and how it is going to be done. We expect you to be very committed to the process.

You have to find ways of supporting to make sure that it works for you. In your own time, you have to accept that you want change to happen. You have to give yourself the permission to go through the process, to accept the change that is going to happen to you, that you will transfer to your project. So it's not just about you, it's about your organisation and the people who come into contact with you.

NAFI CHINERY

Capacity Building Specialist

Welcome Message to Participants of the Forum

Amplifying Feminist Leadership and Coaching

This section serves as an introduction to the 5th CEO Forum. Central queries about the ethics and responsibilities of leadership were discussed among the participants.

**What does it mean to be a woman and a leader?
What strategies and solutions do leaders engage with to address organisational issues?
How do you practice “soulful” leadership?
Furthermore, what is the relationship between leadership and coaching?**

What follows is a detailed look into what makes African feminist leadership and coaching with responses given by **AWDF's CEO, Theo Sowa, and facilitator and coach, Hope Chigudu.**



SOULFUL LEADERSHIP

Too often, we end up working like crazy 24hrs a day, seven days a week. Our bodies are part of our leadership. If we don't nurture our souls, goals and vision, how can we mentor and bring on new leadership and affect social change? If we burn out, we don't do the work any good, we don't do our families any good, we don't do our communities any good. So the idea of the coaching was that when you go back home, there is someone who is investing in your individual professional development.

This is not about management because management is not leadership. You need to have vision, heart, and soul and you need to be integrated. More than anything, you need to walk the talk. What we need as a movement on our continent is a cadre of women who can talk to each other, who know each other, who understand the challenges that we are facing - someone who can celebrate you. We need to talk about our own styles of leadership because if we don't, other people will define leadership for us, which may not be the way that we see it. When we define our own leadership, we can celebrate that leadership but also we can build on it.

What do we understand to be good leadership?

When we talk about women's rights on our continent, how are we as individuals living those values?

Let's build together, knowing that we are not superwomen but celebrating what we do because as African women we believe in the future of the next generation.

ANCHORING THE VISION

We need our leaders to have hearts and souls. We're hoping that when you go back, you will be taking a lot of the lessons that you've learned. It is not all about being taught things but also about knowing and discovering and learning about yourselves.

You have to know what your purpose is. Those are the moments you have to remember why you are doing this and that goes beyond the pay cheque, beyond writing reports, beyond being in the office. It goes right back to your moral basis, for being in leadership, for wanting to see social change and social justice. Because you'll make friends here, you have colleagues - reach out to them. Not in the times of crisis but when you are ready and able to share. And again, work together, discover together because if you lead collectively, you will go so much further than if you tried to do it on your own.

Remember to celebrate the achievements of your organisations. When you are using your voices, you do so to change the narratives of African women. That means you are using your voices to talk about our challenges, but more importantly, to talk about our responses to those challenges. To talk about how we are bringing change. We stop people from thinking about us as victims, and direct people to look at us as leaders and change agents. That means this generation and the next generation and the future generations have something to be proud about.

I hope you will be writing. I hope you will be documenting your experiences. The more people see about what it means to be a good woman leader, the more women will be prepared to follow your footsteps. The more you use your voice, the more you write and speak about how you are bringing about change, about what the challenges are for women, for our communities and our nations. The more we speak about how we are developing the change, the more people will recognise the strength and importance of women's leadership.

If you do not use your voices to do that, if you do not write about it then you cannot open your mouth and complain when strangers come and document our stories for us. So let's not be in that position, let's make sure that all of our knowledge, all of the innovations are in place so our voices and our stories are heard. Let's make sure that our change is being written and recognised.

THEO SOWA

BY AND FOR WOMEN

The three Founders of AWDF worked in diverse areas of development and women's rights for many years. They heard the same narrative everywhere - how African women are the ones who will bring real change to the African continent, how without African women bringing potential to all sectors on our continent, we will never actually reach the aims, goals and heights that we want the continent to reach.

How African women are the engines of change but when we look at where the money goes, it does not go to African women organisations, it does not go into African women's rights. Instead of complaining about it, they decided to set up a fund ensuring that money goes to African women's organisations because if African women are the engines for change, then how do you provide the change if there is no fuel in the tank?

Amplifying Feminist Leadership and Coaching

CRAFTING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

No one should be an exact imitation of anyone else because if you are, that means it's not coming from your heart, and leadership has to come from our heart, our souls, our mind and our bodies.

Some of the words that I use when I am thinking of feminist leadership are responsibility, accountability, ethics and respect.

This is how we become the change that we want to see. How do we get our leadership style to mimic or be parallel to the change that we are hoping for? If we just promote having hundreds and thousands of women in positions of power and that power is abused and there is no progressive agenda that actually leads us towards the achievement of the rights that we want to see, then that's not the kind of leadership that I think any of us should be interested in. So that means we have a lot of work to do because the images of leadership on our continent in particular, are very hierarchical.

Somewhere along the way, hierarchy has become people's understanding of leadership. All leadership is actually very personal. Unless you have a solid understanding about why you are doing this, when a decision is really difficult, you will end up making the wrong decisions. Think about what forms the base, the heart of your leadership.

Our feminist leadership should be about dismantling patriarchal systems that encourage disrespect, discrimination and organised forms of inequality.

We've all grown up with these systems even when you know it is wrong. Because a part of it is in you, it stays with you, because you have been told to behave in a certain way, to dress in a certain way, you have to respond in a certain way. We are fighting against systems that influence so much of our lives.

I really hope that the next generation of women will have the kind of leadership that we can truly celebrate. We want to identify civil society leaders by the way they speak with staff, the way they interact with the media, the way they tell stories of women working for change - this shows true leadership. Let's go and walk the talk.

THEO SOWA

If you are not taking care of yourself, you are not feminist.

Yoga is an essential part of this forum, to be strong and healthy. It is part of recovery and leadership.

How do you deal with an organisation that is traumatised?
Organisations need to be supported, counseled, healed.

Are our workspaces happy?

**Is there a process for nurturing energy in the organisation?
Is it in the walls and computers and everything?**

**Why not have a happiness manager?
Do we feel fulfilled and love ourselves?**

We can't give love if we don't have it ourselves.

**Why do we have unhappy work spaces – piles of paper, brown walls,
working long hours without encouragement?
Why have we mirrored the corporate world?**

We can, however, learn from the corporate sector who are better at keeping up with change and how the world is moving.

**How can we develop more innovative practices in our work?
Why not be creative and try out different things in our office?**

We must create an environment that encourages learning and rituals of happiness where we can really support each other.
We can learn about the strengths of each person apart of the team and the fullness of all they have to offer.

Are we organisations of the future?

What does this look like?

Who are you learning from?

Are you seeing what others are doing and identifying innovative practices?

Be an organisation of the future. The world is changing – dance in the twist.

If you are not able to see, you will expire.

HOPE CHIGUDU

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Grantee Partners Share Their Leadership Journeys

Our next session focused on a lively studio talk show featuring two Kenya grantee partners, **Isabel Omondi Sadya (CEO, Africa Health and Community Program) and Wangechi Moegi (CEO, Centre for Rights Education and Awareness).**

Moderated by Paula Fray, the Q&A discussed the leadership journeys of the two women executives. Having completed all four rounds of AWDF's Capacity Building Program, the CEOs shared their experiences, lessons and strategies for success with participants at the forum.

PF: How did you come into civil society?

WM:

While in university, I began community work and was supporting an organisation called the National Council of NGOs in Kenya. Their work was capacity building for nongovernmental organisations in Kenya - financial management, how to manage governance and how to push policy at the national level.

But what really drove me is to see my mother, aunties, and the women around me back home. I grew up in a very huge tea growing area, where women toil the earth and take the tea to the centre of town to weigh. At the end of the month, the money goes into a man's bank account. So I asked myself, "What can I do for the women back home?" So that women are part of making decisions on how money will be divided and how it can change the life of a family.

In my job interview with the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness, I was asked this question: "Where do you want to see yourself in the next five years?" and here I was joining as a Program Officer. I wanted to be the CEO of the organisation. And six years later, I am.

IOS:

During school, I was attached to a hospital and I discovered that there were so many cases coming in of child abuse and abuse of women along South Lake Road. I couldn't sit comfortable and see kids be abused and do nothing. Eat my food and be in my comfort zone. So my inner convictions made me feel like I could come out of my cocoon and do something. I became a volunteer doing one-on-one counseling. I knew people in the community, the police, hospitals and the children's officer.

I found my work in the NGO world and I am made to do this, to make a difference in people's life because that makes me happy. You see the woman that was so crushed today like the tortoise, they came and were so confused and disoriented, not even sure about life. But then they blossom up and I feel very happy.



Grantee partners Cynthia Coredo (left, BoxGirls Kenya) and Isabel Omondi Sadya (right, Africa Health and Community Program) embrace coach and facilitator, Hope Chigudu (middle).

PF: How do you define leadership? What does leadership mean when you express it?

IOS:

Leadership is when you are confronted with an issue and you are not shy about finding solutions. You take initiative to do something, to make a change. You know your responsibility is to take action at that particular time.

WM:

Leaders are never defined by position because each one of us is a leader. You do not need to be in the highest office for you to be able to influence, for you to be able to inspire, for you to be able to encourage. We must have leaders who have no boundaries.

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Grantee Partners Share Their Leadership

PF: How have you grown as a leader through AWDF's Capacity Building Program?

WM:

We have been funded by different development partners but there is something unique about AWDF. They don't just give you money, you are assisted. I have been able to benefit enormously because this is the only platform that brings women CEOs together to talk about their organisational challenges. Women come from different parts of the Africa. AWDF brings together the women who have been fighting battles, the women who actually created the way for us. Younger women also are part so there is cross-generational learning. This platform hasn't been created by other development funds - they give you money, they want a report. But an interaction with other women CEOs has been a very key learning process for our organisation.

We must have a pipeline of leaders within our organisation, identify staff members who are willing and able to take up the work. If you don't have a resource mobilisation strategy, it means that your resources are probably coming from one development partner and maybe the day this partner decides to change their strategy, you are likely to shut down your organisation. How do you diversify your resources, how do you ensure that the people from your country can put resources into the work you do? You have the passion, you have the staff members but how do you ensure that the work you do is being supported in a way that you can deliver on your vision and your mission?

These are the questions the forum helps to answer - As women leaders, how do you balance life as a CEO? How do you motivate your staff members? How do you manage your board? How do we ensure that the people we bring to our board are not just our friends but people who are going to bring competence and drive the agenda of the organisation? How are you dealing with the challenges everyday when they come, how do you communicate to other team members? How do you identify talent and inspire your staff even in challenging times? Who will run the organisation after you - who will carry on?

After the training with AWDF, if there is any case of sexual violence in Kenya, they will look for me. If you are not telling the world what you do then how will the world know you exist? I am now able to talk about the work done by our organisation, what the government of Kenya is facing, what else can be done by families and society.



IOS:

It all began with somebody whispering to my husband, "We are giving you only one hour to come out of this. Don't say anything, don't take anything. Just move your wife and go." At that time, ASCP was growing and we were semi-sufficient because we had a women's empowerment program, children's program, and a youth program. But after the post-election clashes in 2008, we came to Nairobi and I had to find my space again.

AWDF has really groomed me. They are my mentor. I saw a need in the community and I decided to intervene. But I was so naïve, I didn't know about accounting, proposal writing, financial management. Proposal writing has really sharpened us because now we are able to write convincing proposals that can get funds. Not only from corporates but also from individuals. This is a skill I got from AWDF.

In 2014, we took part in the Resource Mobilisation Strategy Bootcamp and it has made me see life from a different perspective. I have discovered there is no road map without a strategy. So now we have a vision and a pathway with goals, timeframes and activities, and we are heading somewhere.

The training you get here, value it completely. It is a privilege to be trained, to be skilled, to be sounded and grounded in a leadership position because you are going to shine. In 2012 we were funded by the American Embassy, for our youth program in Kibera. When it came to the evaluation, they marveled, "We didn't expect this level of reporting on work in Kibera." So this year they told me I was selected as an exemplary leader and I would be going to the U.S. for six months for an NGO management program. I was the only person elected from Kenya.

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Grantee Partners Share Their Leadership

How do you work with your board?

WM:

We have been able to categorise the competencies of our board members with our programmatic work. We represent women in court, therefore, we need somebody who goes to court everyday so we always know what is happening in the judiciary and at the policy level. There's also someone whose background is Human Resources so if we have an issue of how to deal with a staff member, we can quickly bounce the issue and get feedback. There is another board member who is an auditor. He tells us how to go about the audit process. Each person gives professional advice. Also, whenever there is an activity, we invite the board members so that they can relate to our work and have a feel of the organisation.

IOS:

Your board has value and can offer something. Our board progressed by learning the constitution of the NGO. The board also needs to know the strategic plan of the organisation. I can't stop praising AWDF enough because in March we attended the CEO Forum with our board chair. Afterwards she said, "Now I understand you" because there are some board members who do not know what your work entails as much as you tell them. We have a meeting once a month with the board to strategise and involve them in fundraising for the NGO. If you do so much on your own then you feel burdened and like they don't understand you. When you involve them in the activities of the organisation then they can be teammates. This will help to make sure that you move together.



Isabel Omondi Sadya shares her story with forum participants.

PF: How do you deal with challenges as they come up in the office?

WM:

You must have a pipeline of leaders within the organisation so if you are not there others can face crises that arise. This means you have a well built leadership within your organisation. If you don't have this, you will be overwhelmed and unproductive. You'll check in with your body but your mind will be very far away so make sure there's balance.

There are days you have your high moments but there are also days where the challenges keep coming and this is when you are tested - how do you deal with these issues when they come? At my organisation, we took a journey for about a year to look at our culture. How do we identify our values and how do we define those values?

IOS:

You're not on this journey alone. Some of the things I deal with as a CEO or at home as a wife and mother are not necessarily unique challenges. These are challenges experienced by other women CEOs, many of whom I've met at AWDF forums.

When I get an opportunity, I really take advantage of it to learn as much as I can. Some solutions you find in yourself and others as a team. The more you share the more you can trust others also as leaders. I'm now able to identify that I can call A on this issue, B on this issue and C on that issue. I now have a database of contacts that can be called at a moment's notice.

How do you engage with the media?

WM:

From the training with Paula at last year's CEO Forum, I went back to my organisation and asked the staff, "Between us, who do we know at the radio stations?" To my surprise, people had cousins, friends, and mates from university at various radio stations. I asked them to talk with their people about the work we do. That's how we did it. Previously, we had to pay a lot of money for a show on TV. Today we are accessing media for free - we just have to show up.

It's important to have a good relationship with your staff because they are the ones who might create that link between you and the media.

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Grantee Partners Share Their Leadership

PF: What is the most important advice you can share with others?

IOS:

It is good to know your strategic plan, where you want to be, so that you have a road map for where you want to go. Networking is very important. AWDF has wide resources - it's good to tap into the resources and be groomed and sharpened as a leader. As far as the board goes, you must try to select people who can add value to your organisation. Have your organisation at heart, not just for money matters but also have a vision where you want to see the organisation growing.

WM:

Put in place a strategic plan. It doesn't need to be a 10-year strategic plan, you can even start with three years showing where you want the organisation to be. Until you write it down, it stays a conversation. Make your strategic plan as participatory as possible. Bring out people to critique your work. Put in writing of what you expect from board members, what you expect them to bring to your organisation so that it is very clear that they are coming in from the policy level to direct the organisation.

Identify the talent, be able to see who is good at what because we are all different. Encourage everyone to thrive. Interns are such a great resource. There are so many people graduating from universities and colleges every day, let them come on board. They have so much energy, they want to work, they want to learn. I would encourage you to dedicate 3-6 months for internships so they can grow with the organisation.

Seek partnerships with universities, ask if there's a Gender department or a Health department to tap students. Throw them into the deep end and let them grow within the organisation. I started as an intern and if I hadn't been given that opportunity, I don't know where I would have begun.



What has your experience been like grooming other leaders?

IOS:

I have groomed leaders in my organisation so I don't have to be there for AHCP to exist. When I was away in the states, I didn't have a doubt in my mind that AHCP wasn't moving on. We have continued to talk about our mission, values and strategic plan and where AHCP should be in four years time.

Sometimes I refer others to staff as the best persons to handle issues because they might know better than me in this area. When grooming leaders, you have to give them some authority and trust to make decisions. I delegate work and see how they take on challenges. I praise them for the work they have done well. When I see that my staff has not done something well, I try in a very wise way to correct them. Everyone in the office is a team player. There is no superiority complex so my team is very confident.

You also have to create time for yourself. Yes, there may be too much work. But I discovered in life that if you don't love yourself, you cannot love others. Love has to start from you. Need a strategic plan for myself - what do I want to achieve in the next two years? So

I tell myself, work is there but it will never finish because even when you exit, the work will continue.

You need to detox, you need to create space for yourself because if you break down, what will happen? Make a definite plan and time. That's one thing I want to always remember.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP WITH A SOUL
Participants Share Their Takeaways on How Soulful Leadership Works

Create more time for myself

Continuously, Consistently and consciously live my values

Upgrade my skills

Make concrete plans about the future

Mentor and groom other leaders

Focus on positive energy for my journey

80% of my work is attitude

Make a strategic plan for myself not just the organisation

Nurture the talents of staff members

Get proper rest, eat well and exercise regularly

Be fully present in the moment

Create the future right now. We make the path as we walk it.

Crafting Effective COMMUNICATION Strategies

Media Strategist Paula Fray led an intensive one-day session on *Developing Communications* for the participants of the forum. The session focused on understanding how communications works, harnessing relationships with media houses and journalists, honing organisational messages and key pitches, crafting writing through a sharp "column structure," and successfully completing interviews for radio, television and print media.

Participants went through rounds of mock media interviews followed by group feedback sessions on what went well and how to improve in the practice of interviews. The session also provided hands-on training for social media, particularly, how to maximise Facebook and Twitter to advocate and share the impact of the work women's organisations on the continent engage in every day.

What follows are some key lessons on how to engage effectively with media and journalists.



Facilitator
and
Coach,
Paula Fray

Key Interview Skills

- **76% of all communication is body language.** The way you speak is very important. Prepare and practice for interviews by thinking of possible questions that might be asked. You are the expert so be confident.
- **Always be well groomed.** You want people to focus on your message not your appearance. Be professional, informed, relaxed. When you are well groomed you have the confidence to speak. Make sure that your attire is not too busy – do not wear too many pieces of jewelry or patterns since TV is made up of pixels and that's too much detail for the camera. Your face should not be distracted by large earrings, a necklace, brooch or exaggerated cleavage. Also beware of too-tight clothing.
- **Stay Focused.** Don't get distracted. Stay tuned into your mission for doing the interview. If you don't know something, say it. If you make a mistake, immediately correct yourself or otherwise a mistake can become a story.
- **Speak with authority.** Women have been socialised to be nice. Very often when women say something harsh, we smile to soften it. Don't apologise for your message. You must be consistent and target your responses to reach specific goals.
- **An interview is not a Q&A, it's a conversation.** Watch the person interviewing you and their body language. Are they amused, bored, interested? Are they engaged? Be sure to make eye contact and move deliberately. The space around your head is a picture frame. Use your hands to emphasize meaning. Your hands are relevant to the story you are telling. Use your hands to send viewers back to your face and message.
- **Remain passionate and connected to your strategic vision.** Don't practice extensively for the interview. . If you rehearse answers, the audience can hear it. It sounds artificial and it lacks authenticity. Prepare for your interview but don't learn your answers by heart.
- **The journalist is not your friend.** The reporter has a job to do – to get a story. You have a job – to advocate for African women's rights and build greater awareness. So be a little suspicious. If you don't want to see it published, don't say it, not even "off the record". Also be wary of sharing gossip about the sector. It will come back and bite you.

What issues are happening around town and why are you being asked to do this interview? Are you the best person to speak or someone else from your organisation? With hard-nosed journalists, practice and prepare for curveball questions. If the interviewer disagrees with you, it's not a personal slight. Think about how you are going to get this person to listen to you. Keep driving home why your organisation matters and the cost of undermining women's rights in Africa.

Print influences the public more than any other media.

Why are newspapers important? Stories appear in the newspaper and radio and TV takes it up. They are permanent and have a shelf life.

Build relationships with journalists.

You can write a column of 600-800 words for newspapers, journals or magazines. Your argument can be explained in more detail here than radio and TV and print allows you to post contact information more easily.

Short Time, Big Impact.

Radio has the biggest reach and is the best place to build the most hype. A sound bite gives you 30 seconds to speak. You must have the ability to speak in short, catchy and meaningful phrases that people remember or you'll lose them. Package the information in a way that captivates the audience.

45 Words or Less.

Whether for radio, print or TV, journalists capture compelling stories. In a 30-minute TV news program, you may have 4-15 seconds to speak about your organisation.

Can you say what your organisation is about in 45 words or less?

Questions to help form your Key Messages:

What's my expertise?

Who is my audience?

For what purpose am I using my voice?

How and where can I use my voice?

What changes am I hoping to see by using my voice?

Know Your Audience.

Decide what your target audience needs and how best to deliver the information you have. Be concise and to the point. Your passion is just as important as how you speak. If you're not excited about what you're talking about, people will go elsewhere.

Am I speaking to policy makers, project participants, activists or donors? What platforms do they use?

Meet your audience where they are.

Social Media Completes the Communication Cycle.

- Social media, more than any other platform, allows information to be an interactive sharing experience. When you communicate with your audience, it's not simply a matter of giving them information. It's also about the political act of listening to what they might need. With social media, there is a direct feedback system that listens to the audience and responds to the audience's needs.

Are your stories of change in reports? Why not repurpose them for your website or on social media?

Use social media to supply the diverse needs of your audience in a form they can use it.

Keep it Short.

With practice, you'll build a skill to get to the point almost immediately and then expand. Consider the impact of your organisation, the lives changed, the way you live your vision, mission, and values. Make the link between your daily activities and the change in your communities. Cultivate an ability to speak in short and catchy phrases that people remember.

Whether you have 5 minutes or an hour, don't focus on giving loads of information. Reemphasize the information you've given in different ways.

Tell what you will say, say it then tell what you've said.

How do you stay focused on the key messages?

You move from a position of confidence through research and study of the issues, knowing your organization's vision, mission and values.

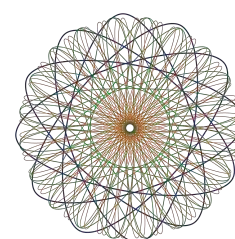
Here are 2 techniques to process your key messages.

BRIDGING.

Take the question you are asked and bridge it back to the answer you want to give. Take control of the interview and bridge to your organisational strategy. Whatever the question is, return to your central message. Use this technique when it seems the interviewer is going in a different direction.

FLAGGING.

Tell the listeners that what you are about to tell them is very important and they need to listen. This provides focused attention on your argument. **"The most important thing is..."** or **"I want to emphasize..."** This flags your audience that what's coming next is important.



1. What is your overarching message?

Engaging with the media is a strategically powerful tool. Think carefully about your organisation's vision, mission and values. Why does the journalist want this interview? Why do you want this interview? What do you want to achieve?



Mastering Your Pitch

Decide **the key three things** you want listeners to fully grasp. Keep repeating these messages again and again in different ways by providing statistics, anecdotes, case studies and research. This is the evidence to support your argument.



2. What are the defining characteristics of your organisation?

What makes you unique to other organisations? What is your selling point and how can you reach more people?
How are you giving life to your views?

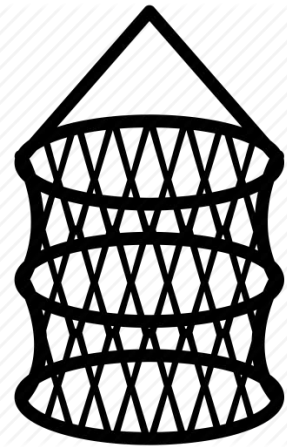
Why do we give interviews? It's not about raising your profile but promoting awareness of the issues and raising the profile of your organisation. This is an opportunity to explain why women's rights matters and how your organisation in particular is creating transformation for African women and communities.

3. What is the evidence of your impact?

Know the issues and be able to speak about them confidently. Share how your organisation is making the difference with credible statistics, research and stories of change. Be as transparent as possible. Frame your responses so you create awareness on how the public can make more informed decisions to support women and girls in their communities.

THE COLUMN STRUCTURE

Kick into high gear writing with these five steps



Step 1: START WITH A HOOK.

How do you hook the audience in the first paragraph? You need a captivating narrative strategy to keep the reader engaged. Target the audience by understanding who is reading you. The hook gets people to listen by capturing their attention.



Step 3: DOCUMENT WITH EVIDENCE.

Provide at least 3 pieces of evidence that speaks to the impact of your work. This solidifies your argument. Bring out case studies, anecdotes, research, media reports – documents created by other resource people and backs up your argument.



Step 5: CONCLUDE YOUR ARGUMENT.

Final Call for Action – let your reader know that if the points you have raised are not seriously considered, these are the consequences. Don't let the column fizzle out. Start strong, end strong.



Step 2: FOCUS YOUR ARGUMENT.

This step begins the conversation. Don't beat your drum without convincing the reader with evidence to back your claims. Provide statistics to support your advocacy.



Step 4: EMBRACE COUNTER ARGUMENTS.

Recognize that people have different perspectives and some may not agree with your position. Get readers to at least *consider an issue differently*. Don't ignore the naysayers. By acknowledging them, you dismiss their arguments.

The Importance of GOVERNANCE

This session on Governance was conducted by Theo Sowa. In a comfortable and open session with participants, Sowa shares her personal journey as a board member and how this has impacted her understanding of how boards work as CEO of AWDF. The discussion examined the role of board members, establishing healthy communication between staff, executive leaders and board members, the difference between private sector and civil society boards and treasuring the board's worth to your organisation's development.

Below are excerpts from Theo Sowa's discussion on Governance with participants.



AWDF's CEO Theo Sowa shares key lessons in governance.

Being a Board Member

The first board I was ever part of was in the UK at age 22. It was a public sector board, The National Youth Agency. And I was really young and had no idea about board membership. I worked with young people, I had done a lot of work and that's why they identified me but what it took me a while to recognise was that I was put there because I was young, a woman and Black. Nobody sat me down and explained to me what that responsibility meant, what my input would mean, how I should comport myself and how I could add value to that system. I had to find that out the hard way. I had to really work it out for myself.

It made my experience the next time I was invited to a board, still very young, a lot easier. It was easier because the organisation knew that I had some board experience previously and they were much more organised. They had an induction for the board members, a very clear framework about what you to do and how to interact with the executives, the team and other board members. It made life so much easier and I was far more effective because I knew what to do and how to do it.

Sitting on a board helps you relate to your Board of Directors and make it work better. You understand what needs to be done in order for the board to work well. Using your own experience of boards can be really productive.

The Purpose of the Board

Develop a relationship with the board. The board is the custodian of the vision and mission of your organisation. A board can help you with not just fundraising but the sustainability of your organisation. As leaders, we need a kind of interaction, a relationship where they can offer guidance and they can help keep us honest. They will challenge you to push further but will also take some of the load off. Their job is to keep us committed, on track, helping you to carve a path and stay on that path when it gets difficult.

AWDF's Board

We see ourselves as a women's fund and if women have the right financial resources and are given the space to make decisions then we are going to get that transformational change. So perhaps that means investing in women and not only giving money to women's organisations but also making sure that women have broader experiences and opportunities.

So, we deliberately have an all-women board. There's a reason for having a board – there are checks and balances. You can put in the ground rules about behavior of board members. You need to have a clear terms of reference. You must have clarity about your vision.

Private Boards vs. Civil Society Boards

The private sector boards pay their board members because board members are accountable to shareholders. They have different kinds of financial responsibility and they are very clear with the terms and conditions, i.e. this is how much you will be paid, this is what you are expected to do as a result. Sometimes in civil society and as we develop new relationships, we get caught in that trap because we get someone from the private sector. Before they start, there needs to be that understanding of a different way to be on a board.

The Importance of GOVERNANCE



Facilitator and Coach, Hope Chigudu

THE BOARD CHECKLIST

Do we understand why our boards are there?

Does the board understand that they are nominated and then elected to the board?

Does the board understand the criteria of the specific responsibilities she or he is to carry out?

How often do you do a skills audit when you are replacing a board because their term is over?

How do you make something work if you don't value it?

If you value it, put in the structures, the boundaries and the relationships to make it work. There needs to be clear guidelines as to what board members are supposed to do.



Valuing Your Boards

Boards are also different forms of leadership. We are talking about organisational leadership within different sectors and fields that we work. The board is part of a leadership structure - all of your board members are leaders in their own right.

Board membership is a lot of hard work and no one is even paying you for it. So you need to think about how you can make your board members feel appreciated. How are you encouraging leadership with your board?

We learn to be leaders and continue to learn, grow and make mistakes. We learn from the mistakes and we keep growing. What I love about board members is they are really experienced in one area but not experienced in some other area. So the same way you train your staff is the way you need to train your board members. Identify their weaknesses and build on those weaknesses. Identify the strengths and make use of them for your overall organisational goals. It's important to really value your board's experience and give them information. It's a mutual learning experience.



What Is the Purpose of Having a Board?

Participants exchange perspectives

Policy Making

Financial Oversight

Strategic Direction

Accountability

Credibility

Ensure Sustainability

Obtain Adequate
Resources for the
Organisation

Provide Holistic
Support

Share Expertise

What Value Does the Board Add to Your Organisation?

Responses from the Participants

Our Board Chair represents the CEO at meetings when she is unavailable

The Board meets regularly and provides feedback on program reports

A diverse team of Board members with different fields of expertise help to respond to needs within our organisation

Our Board offers technical support to staff when needed

Our Board is involved in local resource mobilisation efforts

Our Board has passion, enthusiasm and commitment for the work we do

The Board involves senior staff in the leadership process of the organisation

Clear communication from the very beginning with the Board eases issues of translation

THE COACHING PROGRAM: When Feminist Leadership Wins

The CEO Forum does not end with the convening. In fact, this is only the beginning. The real process begins with the coaching, a leadership journey held hand in hand with expert mentors over the next 10 months.

Committing time, effort, and energy to the coaching program is what leads to success. Here Nafi Chinery, AWDF's Capacity Building Specialist, facilitator Hope Chigudu, and grantee partners who have been coached through the Capacity Building program, walk the CEOs through what to expect from this process.

You are more likely to be called upon to come and speak on an issue, to make a contribution to an issue or to represent us in different spaces.

So we want to make sure that to the best of our ability we have leaders who are able and confident to do this. Leaders who can also inspire their team members to represent them when they are not there.

One of the ways AWDF does this is through the coaching program. We do more than training - we coach women over a period of time to make sure that their specific needs are met. I reassure you that this is a safe space, whatever you discuss with your coach is held in confidence.

Nafi Chinery

Listening is a political act.

Hope Chigudu

It's about availing yourself and deciding if this is something you need. Think about your workload. Sometimes we take it for granted that you can juggle 20 things at a time but really think carefully about what you're getting into because it will also become a hindrance. You really need to put your time, effort and everything into it for you to benefit immensely.

It's about opening up. Not hiding your weaknesses or flaws. Really stand in front of a mirror and say, I'm naked. The coach is not there to judge you but to refract things that you need. It makes you start to think that you really need to do something. Trust is very key. Trust yourself to be vulnerable. We want to hold onto this thing to be safe all the time and to be in a comfort zone. Let go and trust someone else to assist you to make the shift. Maybe the shift won't be now. Maybe it's coaching that will make you start to think about things you need to change.

Gertrude Pswarayi
Executive Director
Creative Centre for Communication and Development
Zimbabwe

We are women. We work with women's organisations, so we need that of point of consciousness. Issues of heart, mind and body are part of everything. Your body's vibrant. We have to support it.

We understand why we do the work that we do. When you have a vision you know where you are going. And then you show up - show up by being there, by being present. I think the issue of presence is very important because at times we are not present.

We are here on the Internet, the phone, we are everywhere, we are writing, we have proposals, we are responding to emails all at the same time. That's not showing up. In the process we don't do it well and I have seen people write and make so many mistakes because they are rushing. They are not present where they are. We can't respond to opportunities when we are not present.

Indeed, you are very busy. What we are talking about are institutional changes you'll have to make to achieve the desired results.

How will you give this process time?

What are you going to let go?

What are you going to retain?

What can you shed off to others?

Hope Chigudu

You can't put a price on it. Someone can see some things that you can't see. Learning is not easy. Sometimes you have to juggle the different things you have to do. The most important thing is to really commit yourself. A coach is a friend. There'll be some things she'll be seeing in you that you're not seeing. Some things are personal. Perhaps it is you affecting the change in the institution. If this person becomes your mirror, it's good for you to accept. As you slowly go with it, you learn that it's a very good thing that shapes you to be who you're really supposed to be and in line with your purpose. It's a very interesting process and experience. When you're being coached individually, bring the team along. Sometimes you don't have that time, so the people that you work with, they can help you to push through.

Cynthia Coredo
Program Manager
BoxGirls Kenya

REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE 5TH CEO FORUM



It's always exciting meeting other women – the perspectives they bring, the innovation around their programs. As I was talking to the other participants, we felt that the challenges we go through don't happen to only us. I learned about the importance of doing a donor scan so that we focus on funders who have changed their focus.

I've already spoken to my coach about some of the challenges we are experiencing and how to move forward. I can see that my CEO wants me to play a key role in the organisation but what kinds of support should be in place for this work to be done? How do I encourage my team members to be excited? What motivates them?

Ellen Dankwah Eyison Dzah
Program Manager
Abantu for Development
Ghana



Coming here was a really great experience for me because I got to meet so many women who have different experiences and drive for what they do. That was really inspiring to know that our organisation is not the only one that really cares about women. What I've learned in these three days is, no matter what challenge you are going through, someone else is also going through it. You only need someone who understands you to help you get out of it. There's also no way you can work for an organisation and not be connected to the staff.

The session that stood out to me most was Communications. Without this, nothing can happen – it won't work, you're crippled. Talking to people, connecting with them is really important. Know what the organisation does – communicate the impact you make to the community.

Most women are really talented in arts but they do nothing about it. Every woman is an artist. From the way we dress, how we decorate, to our hair, how we walk and talk. We were born like that. It's our talent – inside us. We just need to reach it – let it come out. When I perform, I have the confidence that I'm inspiring someone – at least one person. The significance of performing for me, particularly as a woman, is that I get to connect with so many people. We get to walk together from the beginning to the end.

Marion Maloba
Communications and Fundraising Manager
Busia Community Based Services (BUCOSS)
Kenya



For me, it's always been about work, work, work and no play. I loved yoga – painful as it was! It gave me time to laugh and stretch. I see now the importance of taking care of myself so that I can take care of others. I'm refreshed and inspired and I will give this new insight to my staff. There are a number of things that we need to put in place as an organisation. I'm talking of a strategic plan, my sister. I'm thinking in 20 years time – it should still run.

With leadership, be firm but always understand your ethics and never compromise. Communication is the only way people are going to know what I am doing and the women we work for. I have to put time aside for me so that I don't burn out or stress my staff at work. I opened Twitter for the first time and I've already made arrangements with some of the women here for further discussion. Those who are firmly placed will help me to develop my organisation.

Sharon Handongwe Mainza
CEO
Kuvuna Youth Foundation
Zambia

REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE 5TH CEO FORUM



My presence here has been really enriched because I was inspired by the different experiences the women who were previous mentees shared. This experience helped them to restructure and revision their organisations. I believe we will really benefit from it and be able to restructure into international organisations.

Leadership is a political issue that has to be dealt with in a team spirit. I believe my leadership style has been influenced in a positive way. When I go back to my organisation, I really will take this coaching and mentorship process seriously.

LundiAnne Omam Ngo Bibaa
Executive Director
Reach Out Cameroon



One of the biggest takeaways for me was when Wangechi Moegi said that "80% of our work is our attitude and 20% is our professional qualification." And when Isabel Omondi Sadya said we need to have a strategic plan for ourselves. Another participant mentioned that we should not just create "me time" for ourselves but also teach the women and the girls we work with to have "me time" for themselves.

I want to engage more with the media. I want to sharpen my interviewing skills and come ready. With the board, are we getting value? Our board says they are fundraising but so far, what have they brought on board? What is the next phase for the board?

Seeing how CEOs also have challenges and feel a lot of pressure, maybe that's what my director goes through but is not able to communicate. I'll let my director know that I am there and to let me know what I can take from her shoulders so that she can also get some "me time" and balance our working roles.

Ivy Nyawira
Programs and Administration Officer
Resource Center for Women and Girls
Kenya



This experience has been awesome - it's a very complete training package. When I was answering the assessment form, I couldn't find the right words to describe this training because it appears AWDF thought of every kind of situation a CEO might find herself. I used to be really skeptical of granting interviews because I thought I wouldn't do well but the practical session taught me I could do it. I am going to keep lighting the candle to ensure that the purpose of this training keeps getting replicated and the objectives are achieved.

Leadership is personal and leadership grows, so there is always room for improvement. With media interviews, I am going to be more open to such opportunities and seize them when they come.

I will get everybody in the organisation to work on preparing our message, in case, we have to deliver it at short notice. I am going to learn to improve my writing ability. I will learn about other resource mobilisation models. I have somebody who is supportive that I can talk to - a listening ear.

Joy Ijeoma Ngwakwe
Executive Director
The Center for Advancement of Development Rights
Nigeria

REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THE 5TH CEO FORUM



The best part was meeting women from different African countries. We discussed redefining leadership for Africa because a lot of times we hear negative stories about African leadership, so coming here and meeting these women, really energised me. Listening to the kind of work that other women are doing out there humbles me and motivates me. I am looking forward to the coaching, to see what it will do for me as a process of challenging me. What activities in the last three days are the key take away for you? I am familiar with the media but now I am learning new techniques.

We are leaders in our own way and this forum encourages and motivates us to cultivate and excel our leadership gifts. One thing I have to keep working on is the issue of self-care. Taking care of me because I am a mother, a CEO and a leader in my community. I would really like to take the issue of "me time" and make sure I deliberately create that time for me.

Lorato Moalusi-Sakufiwa
CEO
Kagisano Society – Women's Shelter Project
Botswana



I learned how to develop an impactful message for the media, write columns and conduct interviews on camera. I also learned that I need to develop a strong relationship with my board of directors for effective governance in the organisation. It was interesting to note that certain social media avenues are more inclined to women. For example, Instagram is more used by women than men and that will help me target my messages properly. If I intend to target women then I would know which social media channels to use.

This has been a great experience hearing these women's experiences as they share their challenges and successes. I have been an ED for only a year and it is easier to learn from other people who have been there before and walked the journey.

Susanne Muwazi
Executive Director
Action for Rural Women's Empowerment
Uganda



In the past three days, I have been thinking about my position and title. In the training, we discussed how we create structures that put us in a box. Hope spoke about being a Chief Steward but I think am a Vision Leader. This title gives me a lot of purpose, it keeps me focused, it makes me carry the vision of the organisation in a new way. Even if I leave the organization, anybody who is going to come and take my position is going to be a visionary leader and the vision for CCCD will not die.

The "Aha" moment for me was about changing the environment where we work so it doesn't suck our energy. I was thinking that to change our environment means paint and that's an extra dollar I can use to change the community. Not realising that for me to give back, I need to take care of myself, my surroundings, bring back that energy so that I can give more. It's something that I have taken for granted.

The other "Aha" moment was to fuse communications into the staff orientation program so that whoever joins, is fully trained in communications, the mission of the organisation and the vision in a profound way that changes the way we communicate messages to people.

It was empowering to meet other African leaders. Getting the extra support from the sisters who also are being supported by AWDF is great. Meeting them has been about sharing ideas and knowledge, reconnecting and the support is really energising.

Gertrude Pswarayi
Executive Director
Creative Centre for Communication and Development
Zimbabwe

KEY INTERVENTIONS: Lessons Learned from the First Four Forums

1st CEO Forum: Leadership and Management 2009

FOCUS:

Interrogate and analyse the internal organisational strengths and challenges facing women's organisations in Africa since 1985 and explore the best strategies to address and limit issues.

TAKEAWAYS:

- There is dire need for sustained dialogue to strengthen women leaders and organisations to better manage the effects of global and domestic policies and practices of governance, peace and security, climate change, as well as challenges like access to clean water, health services, land and food security, violence, exploitation, disease, exclusion, and discrimination, as frequent threats to the lives and work of women
- Address challenges affecting women's organisations within the framework of African feminism, particularly using *The Feminist Charter* as an organisational development tool

2nd CEO Forum: Leadership and Management 2011

FOCUS:

Develop strategies that address challenges obstructing the organisational development and sustainability for regional and sub-regional women's rights organisations in Africa.

TAKEAWAYS:

- Develop and review a sustainable finance strategy and capacity building plan for organisational sustainability
- Generate succession strategies for effective transition between leaderships
- Facilitate asset acquisitions and development, create institutional business plans
- Coordinate and organise national feminist forums and set up communities of practice

3rd CEO Forum: Leadership, Governance and Communication for CEOs of Women Organisations 2014

FOCUS:

Share skills and reflect on the diverse leadership capacities of African women. Engage in a 10-month coaching program to sharpen areas where additional support is needed for African women leaders.

TAKEAWAYS:

- Form a clear feminist ideology and develop key messages for the media about the work of women leaders and organisations
- Develop keen processes on grounding, self-care and well-being, leadership succession, integrity and accountability, courage and resolve, consistency, managing work relations, financial sustainability, and disconnects between rural and urban-based women

4th CEO Forum: Leadership and Governance March 2015

FOCUS:

Engage women leaders across the continent to discuss and strategise around new strategies of organisational transformation through participation of the CEO, Board Chair and Emerging Leaders. CEOs invest in a 18-month coaching program to hone in on personal and professional development.

TAKEAWAYS:

- Discuss strategic leadership issues within their organisations, receive hands-on coaching, network and share success strategies with other women leaders, and reflect on innovative solutions to implement in their work.
- Harness a culture of internal support, reflection, and critique with a goal towards nurturing innovative and unusual solutions to challenges facing our communication and development as an organisation with a soul.
- Transform communications between CEO, board members and emerging leaders within the organisation

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