

A photograph of four women sitting around a table in a meeting. The woman on the left wears a grey hijab with blue and green floral patterns and a black and white polka-dot top. The woman next to her wears glasses and a black and white polka-dot top. The woman in the center wears a dark sleeveless top and has her hand near her face. The woman on the right wears a bright pink top and a yellow headscarf with orange and black patterns. There are water bottles on the table. The background is a plain wall.

AWDF Grand Finale CEO Forum Report

BRINGING HOME THE SHEAVES

October 4-6, 2018

Accra, Ghana

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Feminist organisations have been at the forefront of women's and girl's rights advocacy and action across Africa and the Middle East. Often working in challenging socio-economic and political contexts with limited organisational capacity and ever-increasing demands, women's organisations help bridge the public service delivery gap, while redefining conventional ideas and practices on the rights and roles of women in society, the economy, and policymaking. How do these women's organisations continue to push the envelope on impact while embarking on feminist movement building? How do they remain innovative and relevant in ever-changing women's rights, development and professional landscapes? How do they stay accountable as they tackle Africa's challenging socio-economic and political issues?

To address the capacity building needs of African women's organisations, the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) spearheaded the creation of the CEO Forum. Designed by African feminists, the CEO Forum seeks to build individual and collective leadership and skills of senior, mid-level and emerging women leaders and executives. Participants benefit from networking, technical skills acquisition and professional capacity building, alongside in-person and virtual coaching over a specified timeframe. The coaching process involves practical exercises and feedback for the continuous evolution and growth of African feminist leaders. To date, 60 feminist leaders and activists have been coached.

From 4th to 6th October, 2018, 30 representatives of grantee women's organisations joined coaches Hope Chigudu, Paula Fray, and Yene Assegid and the AWDF team at Accra's Best Western Hotel for a period of sharing, reflection, learning and evaluation on the CEO Forum's successes, shortfalls and impact. The gathering marked the eighth edition and grand finale of the CEO Forum and featured past and prospective coachees working in 14 African and Middle Eastern countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



"Our coaching programme has always reflected this belief in the tenacity and ingenuity of African women and our grantees to take tiny seeds and grow them into mighty trees."

AWDF



WELCOME

The paths walked by African women leaders and feminists can be as lonely as they are exciting; more often than not, it takes another African woman leader or feminist to understand what the journey entails. Perhaps this is why the 30 grantees wasted no time in connecting with, getting to know and catching up with one another. A warm welcome from AWDF CEO Theo Sowa set the ball rolling on what would turn out to be an inspiring three days laden with memories, colourful stories of transformation, candid assessments and the undeniable mood of hope and expectation. Sowa introduced AWDF's grants, leadership and governance programme teams, thereafter handing over to the capable hands of Hope Chigudu; coach, co-founder of the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, and main facilitator of the Grand Finale CEO Forum.

"Coaching does not mean you do not have capacity. Everyone needs a coach. We are coached, sometimes formally, sometimes informally. Coaching is about having a mirror, someone who walks beside you saying, 'maybe you should go straight, maybe you should go this side'. What is your current being and where do you want to be after coaching? We do not come with a prescribed way of being."

- Hope Chigudu, Coach



Hope Chigudu, Facilitator

Noting the importance of coaching for professional and personal development, Chigudu encouraged participants to speak candidly about their coaching experiences, expectations and questions. She also outlined the key objectives and activities over the next three days.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- ◇ Reflect on coaching experiences and how coaching can help shape African women's leadership from a feminist perspective.
- ◇ Share best practices and explore scaled solutions.
- ◇ Develop a community of practice around transformative feminist coaching approaches in the African region.
- ◇ Brainstorm the establishment of a coaching leadership platform for African women.



Theo Sowa, AWDF CEO

PASSPORT SHARING

As with any journey, coaching is as much about the process of being and becoming as it is about arriving at one's destination. It is a nuanced personal yet collective experience for both coach and coachee based largely on trust, honesty, and a sense of safety. To highlight the transformative nature of coaching, the facilitator asked participants to share two passports or profiles as coachees and prospective coachees. The first passport captured who the coachees were before they embarked on coaching, while the second showcased their transformations and changes made in their lives and organisations. Prospective coachees were not left out of the exercise; they also shared their objectives and expectations of the coaching programme.

There were common threads between the stories shared. The need to overcome societal expectations and cultural biases; gain self-awareness and confidence; take responsibility for one's self and manage one's time and relationships; and to prioritise self-care and wellbeing were emphasised by all participants. Communication; work-life balance; financial independence; risk taking, problem-solving; and owning narratives were also highlighted on both the personal and organisational development fronts. Below is a snapshot of some of the powerful, inspiring, and thought-provoking stories and experiences shared.

PROSPECTIVE COACHEE EXPECTATIONS

"I am working very hard, but my children's grades are dropping and my husband is blaming me because it seems like all I am doing is work – I am trying to be a better parent."

"I was more of a feeler than a thinker, and now I am becoming stronger in thinking. My feelings are still important and I would like help with that - to divorce my personal life from my work."

"I have yet to learn to say no to collaboration opportunities...Through coaching I would like to know when to stop and reflect, how to balance care for my organisation and care for myself. How to respect the idea that the body, heart and mind have limits, and learning how to choose my enemies and enemies of the organisation strategically."

"I have been really burnt out. There is a lot of work and I rarely have time for family or myself... I would like to see myself as a better mentor."

"I would really like to learn how to balance life - family and personal - and to come up with my own business and be financially independent."

COACHEE REFLECTIONS

Pre-Coaching Stories	Post-Coaching Stories
"I used to feel like I did not have control of anything happening to me, and I used to cry a lot. I was financially dependent on my spouse and did not realise that was a way for him to exercise control over me and a catalyst for emotional violence...I always sought approval from another person, I could not believe in myself."	"During our coaching programme our coach encouraged us to build our careers - I was able to enrol in a psychology course and should be finishing the first part soon on counselling people with posttraumatic stress disorder. I am also on the path for financial independence."
"I had no idea what I would be doing with the board as an Executive Director (ED). I was the only one worrying about salary payments, tax agency... it felt like I was the only one who would wonder whether we would open the next day."	"Now, the board is taking responsibility. We are working to refocus our strategy plan to get money. I started a business that is helping me to earn and not just deplete our resources."
"I was working hard, staying in late, I did not have time for myself or my family. Although I was achieving a lot, I was really tired and slowly losing focus."	"When I started coaching, I was really huge, but I found my time and paid attention to myself. Our organisation is doing well and I am also doing well."
"I had not been to college and I was struggling with my confidence...I was afraid of what life has to offer."	"I realised my power - that I have a voice and I can use it to address whatever I want to do and push for whatever I want to push for."
"I was working as a communication expert and yet I did not express myself. A communicator who does not communicate is not a communicator."	"The person I always looked up to, to speak, was my husband, but now I can express myself on my own without his approval. The coaching has allowed me to be free of fear and social judgment and perceptions. I have become a better person."
"I spent a lot of my time crying. I did not have income."	"Coming from a background where communication was a great challenge for me, I am now a different person. I have learned communication is important for resource mobilisation."

<p>"I had bad time management. I was afraid of making decisions in all parts of my life...I had poor reading habits."</p>	<p>"Through reading and experience sharing I have overcome my fear. Now I plan to read at least one hour a day and can share my experiences from my reading."</p>
<p>"I am the coordinator of a resource project and we see the problems every day. I would like to do something but I cannot because I am afraid. I do not know how to proceed, and so I stay where I am."</p>	<p>"My knowledge and skills have been enhanced in managing my family back home and relating with my board. I had an uncompleted project and I was encouraged to save a little. Now I am proud to say I am living in my own house."</p>
<p>"Despite the fact that I was an ED, so many things were happening <i>to</i> me and my true self was hidden within me."</p>	<p>"I discovered I too had my own needs, goals, desires. I had lagged behind on my masters but I finished it...I have started appreciating myself more and I am more confident. So many things are now happening in a positive way."</p>
<p>"Last year I was feeling tired, frustrated and saturated, not because of the work I do, but because I thought I had reached that position where I was in a box and I was closed. Even the space I had did not offer opportunity to bring out those ideas. I was on the verge of resigning."</p>	<p>"It has been a very inspiring journey. I feel more energised, focused and assertive...As a result of coaching the frustration left. It was [a] tiring and challenging [process], but I was happy and feeling resolved."</p>
<p>"I am comfortable in authority and it is that feeling that has become my greatest weakness. The organisation became inward looking and complacent."</p>	<p>"Hope showed me that [complacency] can be very dangerous. Having a trusted leader can make members passive, lull, and fear change... it is amazing how external opportunities have come. Now we have a lot of invitations from organisations and even a university to come and train them."</p>
<p>"Before coaching it was like I was swimming against the tide - it was energy draining and I was trying to stay afloat. I was super comfortable with my comfort zone and I did not like change."</p>	<p>"I feel empowered. I have my Master's degree and so many online certificates. I enjoy the wonder of discovering new things and as an organisation we have fulfilled many goals."</p>
<p>"I had lost direction; my self-esteem was very down and I lost confidence. I thought to be an effective leader you had to be liked."</p>	<p>"All my members did the coaching and it allowed us to correct a lot of things; we can give guidance and be honest with each other using the exercises that the consultants taught us."</p>
<p>"I understood and knew the theory and concept of documenting and telling women's stories. But it remained a theory to me."</p>	<p>"I got to tell my own story...It is my story and I learned to stop comparing it with other people's stories and to understand the uniqueness of it all."</p>

THE CEO FORUM: COACHING FOR TRANSFORMATION

The passport sharing exercise had an almost therapeutic effect. Despite emotions running high, all participants were able to define and present their passports with the support of the facilitator. They affirmed and confirmed each other's stories and experiences, and celebrated the transformative promise of coaching. AWDF's Capacity Building Specialist Nancy Akanbombire and Capacity Building Assistant Ayesha Abukari described the participants' stories as evidence of the significance of coaching in building up African women leaders. They encouraged the coachees to continuously work on their personal, professional and organisational development.



AWDF's coaching programme was specifically designed to spearhead transformative feminist leadership coaching that integrates emotional wellbeing, mental health and healing as part of the programme. In addition to offering a coaching experience finetuned to the African context and realities of women leaders working with community based and national organisations, the programme is predicated on a learning and sharing model with participants as well as between coaches and coachees. So far, 60 grantees have benefited from AWDF's coaching programme in 16 African countries, notably Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. There was a general consensus on the need to scale up the programme and make it available to women's organisations and African women leaders across the continent.



(L-R) Ayesha Abukari and Nancy Akanbombire
AWDF Capacity Building Team

"Some of us were sitting on our potential, we have it, but we are held back by certain structures. Through the coaching programme you have discovered that potential, that ability and we think that with your stories we have seen it."

- Nancy Akanbombire
AWDF Capacity Building Specialist

SISTERHOOD CIRCLES: COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS ON COACHING

While the individual is important, nurturing the collective is the goal of feminism. Sisterhood and safe spaces play a crucial role in offering support to African women leaders who usually find themselves in caregiving roles and are rarely care recipients themselves. Coached participants shared their coaching experiences with their respective sisterhood circles and the larger audience. They explored what worked, what did not work, what could have been better and key lessons and reflections on how to better support African feminists physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

HIGHLIGHTS

Increased organisational visibility
Enhanced communications and branding, development of organisational tools and documents
Improved organisational governance, strategies and tools
Improved leadership, board membership and competence
Better resource management, new funding and donors
Improved organisational prioritisation, delegation, decision-making and results
Transparency and accountability
New skills, knowledge and technology
Empowering coachee stories and evidence of impact
Focus on self-responsibility
Benefits of self-care physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually
Better equipped to deal with life's issues
Economic and financial independence
Better confidence and sense of self
Career advancement and skills development

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engagement opportunities with role models
Peer-mentoring sessions e.g. monthly directors' sessions
Explore cost-sharing strategy to extend coaching beyond board and directors
Higher selectivity to prevent high staff turnover
Review timeframe
Provide clear blueprint on board role and terms
Further prioritise wellbeing throughout programme
Expand training and coaching to involve other organisations
Create a post-training networking and learning platform for coachees, perhaps on WhatsApp

SISTERHOOD CIRCLES: LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH COACHING

ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Important to develop a personal strategic plan alongside organisation's strategic plan.

Personal development is a lifelong journey and there is no need to fear failure.

Documentation and reading expand knowledge. Use diaries to manage time and track progress.

Know your self worth - you have the power to change things.

It is not possible to empower others before you are empowered. You can only give what you yourself have.

Set goals and create milestones to measure progress.

Aim to be economically independent, diversify income sources, and save to plan for the future.

Prioritising is essential, especially with limited resources.

Organisational programming should extend beyond fundraising.

There is need for mainstream training and coaching throughout organisations.

Develop key organisational documents including a strategic plan, communication strategy, code of ethics.

ON ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Processes should be streamlined with clear task delegation, outcomes and followup.

It is necessary to support both organisational and professional development of teams and staff members.

Clear terms of reference and strategic recruitment can help make a board more effective.

On Time Management:

"A day is 24 hours only and nothing will change this. Regardless of how much we want to extend time, a minute will remain 60 seconds."

If people are committed, change can happen in nine months."
- Hope Chigudu

On Storytelling:

"You cannot tell women and girls' stories without documenting your own."

ON FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

Leaders with a healthy wellbeing make healthy decisions for the organisation.

Leadership at director level is about commitment, strategy and thinking.

Feminist leadership teaches one to appreciate what many ignore.

As feminist leaders, we cannot deliver if we are not taking good care of ourselves.

Leverage family and other support networks. You do not have to leave alone.

Coaching is a collective process; hold someone's hand during their process to pull them along.

A good coach is not only an influence, but a conduit for knowledge transfer.

Going through the coaching process helps build patience and resilience.

ON COACHING

Learning is a lifelong journey and one has to be conscientious about it.

Tough sisterly love helps push us towards the growth we all want to see.

With the CEO Forum's funding cycle nearing its end, AWDF solicited ideas on improving, scaling up, and/or transforming the programme. Key propositions put forth by the groups included addressing the risk of organisational staff turnover post-coaching; managing board expectations post-training; clearly defining what feminist leadership is; guidance on succession planning; exploring avenues for ensuring the scale up and sustainability of the programme's impact; and introducing other avenues for knowledge and best practice sharing on African feminist leadership. The groups also highlighted challenges and issues for consideration by AWDF, notably:



High Staff Turnover Post-Coaching: Aside creating personal time and space for upskilling, the various groups pinpointed high staff turnover as a capacity building concern. A number of participants shared examples of team members leaving their organisations after investments in training had been made, thereby leading to staff shortages and overwhelm. Sowa acknowledged the challenge and assured participants that AWDF would closely examine the situation to determine how best to select coachees and trainees without jeopardising organisational structure.

Sustainability & Scale-Up:

To scale up and ensure sustainability and impact of AWDF's coaching programme, participants suggested pairing coached organisations with those that are yet to be coached for mentorship, learning and resource sharing.

The ideal length of the coaching programme was debated at length taking into consideration coachee experiences under the 9- and 18-month programmes. Noting the limited number of coaches, there was a strong call for "Training the Coach" and "Internal Coaching and Peer Mentoring" modules to support the scale up of AWDF's coaching programme across Africa.

"When you are doing organisational and personal development, sometimes someone will do the training and afterwards they will feel like they should move on. It is an issue for us because the point of this programme was to strengthen the organisation – that is why we went from one organisation to more than one representative per organisation." – Theo Sowa

Documenting & Enhancing Feminist Leadership: By highlighting the stories of African feminist leaders and leadership in a consistent manner, and providing skills training and mentorship, emerging feminists will have a blueprint to draw on when charting their own course in the heavily patriarchal landscape in most African countries.

"Feminist leadership is completely different from regular leadership...The patriarchy is here, resistant and persistent and we are going to deal with it on a daily basis. Understanding how to live through it and confront it is also important."

"Say you are a feminist. If others do not agree it is okay. When people reinforce patriarchy do they apologise? Be a feminist - no ifs, no buts, no maybes."

"As feminists, I believe the personal is really important and the personal is also political. We work best when we work together and this is what we need to know in order to work better together."



The process of change can be a difficult and long one. In the spirit of learning from and inspiring one another, coachees were paired with prospective coachees to share their organisations' experiences. Led by Communications Specialist and Coach Fray, the participants reflected and shared stories on how their organisations were able to overcome key challenges through coaching. Key successes pinpointed included: outlining clear governance and management structures, reigniting board member involvement, streamlining communication, strengthening organisational identity, boosting team member morale, securing funding and taking difficult decisions for organisational sustainability.



"The board realised that their role was a lot more than just oversight...They were successful in getting UNDEF funding which they had been applying for over 10 years."



"Being able to modify the organisation's strategy and bring people on the board to work toward that strategy was significant. The board of directors has been better defined with roles as well as contracts and commitment."



"Long-time board members who did not have passion or interest realised they were in wrong place so they resigned. The new board members are more proactive, professional and passionate about the organisation's work."



"As a collective of NGOs, they learned about feminism and feminist leadership, governance and financing. They assessed areas for improvement, undertook trainings, and created a better annual work plan."

They were able to develop governance manual, secure resources and go through organisational development process which came out of board training."

"They rebranded the organisation and developed a communications strategy, four-year strategic plan and new media relationships."



Paula Fray
Coach

Feminists and women's rights organisations work in challenging environments across Africa. Understanding an organisation's environmental landscape can help ensure effectiveness in addressing its unique needs during coaching. The facilitator invited participants to provide updates on their country contexts to inform AWDF grant making. She noted that progress in one country can influence progress in others. Best practice and lesson sharing from country and regional perspectives can be powerful.

"It is one thing to work hard. It is another thing to be empowered. But if you are working in a disempowering context it is something entirely different to know."

SADC

English, French and Portuguese are spoken in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which is comprised of 16 nations. The region's diversity makes it promising yet challenging for civil society organisations (CSOs) working regionally. Gender laws are in place; however, a significant gap remains between rhetoric and practice; women are becoming vocal about this. Abortion is legal only in South Africa and Mozambique, although countries like Namibia have progressive laws. The political landscape is also a mixed bag with democracies like Zimbabwe still finding their footing while monarchies like Lesotho and Swaziland also exist.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has progressive gender provisions in its constitution, but gender-based violence (GBV) is a daily occurrence. Feminists and women's rights organisations are overwhelmed with the lack of public trust in the justice system and courts and the lack of inclusion within civil society. Competition for limited funding and lack of collaboration are key concerns as more GBV organisations spring up.

ZAMBIA

Zambia's economy has grown in recent years, but poverty, inequality and corruption are high. Women are often framed as accomplices and used as scapegoats when corruption is uncovered. The recent dismissal of the female Minister of the Social Cash Transfer programme without evidence of her involvement in corruption highlights a trend of further reducing women's 20% political participation. Government has made headway in granting women equal land access and ownership, but women's lack of economic resources and high taxes make land procurement costly and thus inaccessible. Zambian women and girls also encounter GBV; at a university riot, police teargassed female dorms and caused a student's death. Freedom of speech is under threat as CSOs are persecuted for voicing their concerns. Kenyan academic Patrice Lumumba was recently deported for questioning the growing numbers of Chinese in subsistence jobs like rearing chickens – jobs that used to be handled by Zambia's women.

"We do not mind the Chinese coming in and doing what Zambians cannot do, but we do not want them to do what the rural Zambians can do."

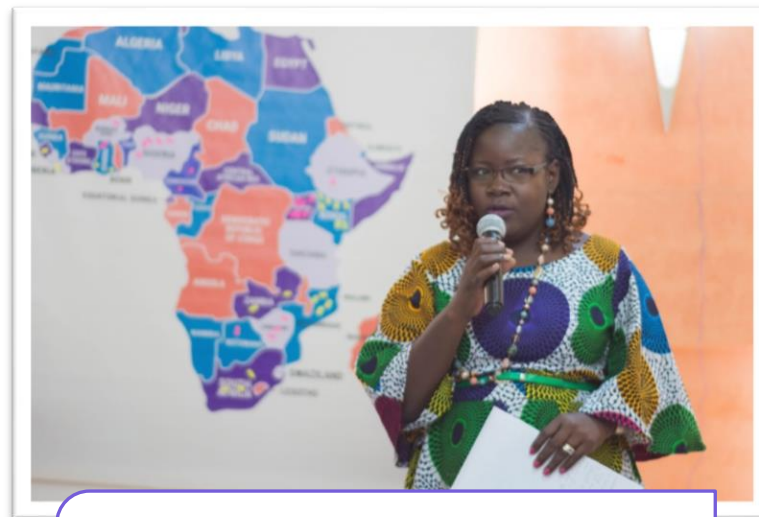
ZIMBABWE

President Mugabe's departure has left a bittersweet taste in Zimbabwe. There is a sense of relief and freedom, but there is also insecurity. The deepening economic and debt crisis; a multi-currency and cashless system with a parallel market for gold further heightens the uncertainty. Feminist and women's rights organisations working with rural women are struggling as funds deposited in bank accounts are reduced by transaction and transport fees. With new rules, international transactions are also cumbersome. Despite an established gender quota, women find it difficult to engage politically. Some women leaders have been replaced, side-lined or

forced to resign because of limited resources, political will and support. A recent cholera outbreak worsened already serious social issues. The media is however doing a good job of covering gender issues and creating space for candid conversations on the way forward. There is hope for a revitalised grassroots movement.

MALAWI

Malawi has some of the most progressive women's land right laws in Africa. However, challenges remain in protecting the rights of women and vulnerable groups like disabled persons and albinos. Women's rights advocates are using the pre-election period for public sensitisation on issues like women's political participation, information access, economic empowerment and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In partnership with UN-Women, CSOs are also signing agreements with political leaders as a tool for demanding accountability on women's rights from leaders like President Mutharika, who is a UN 'He for She' campaign champion.



"We push women into politics, we write reports about the work we have done, but when these women are beaten and violated, when things are tough, they are on their own...who supports their wellbeing and self-care?"



EAC

The socio-economic and political landscape within the East African Community (EAC) - and by extension East Africa - has seen a rise of political movements rooted in people power as a result of the alarming levels of human rights abuses, particularly where women's rights and GBV are concerned. In Tanzania, President Magufuli is slowly undoing decades of work with the introduction of policies against abortion; the education of pregnant teenagers and young mothers; and family planning. The 'Me Too' movement has found its way into the region as reports of sexual misconduct and abuse plague the growing numbers of international NGOs and CSOs on the continent. Also worrying is the targeting of CSOs by governments and the lack of safeguards within civil society against injustices.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia's new and first female President Zewde Sahle-Work is a breath of fresh air in a country dominated by men in the social, economic and political spheres. There is hope that political repression will cease and that more women will have access to political and economic opportunities. Rural women in particular face with GBV and suffer from a widening gender pay gap. Many Ethiopians are looking forward to the day when women's issues are mainstreamed and put front and centre, while media control, persecution and internet closures become a thing of the past.

KENYA

Politics and ethnicity have defined employment, politics and Kenyan society since the country's 2017 presidential election. A deal between the ruling party and opposition is weakening checks and balances and engendering corruption. There is growing trepidation over government monitoring of CSOs through the NGO coordinating board and closures of NGO offices. This makes CSOs reluctant to question or report on corruption. While the Kenyan economy has experienced some growth, poverty remains high as do fuel and commodity prices; and organisations find it hard to pay high taxes. Women and youth who are economically disempowered have resorted to somewhat life-threatening "sponsor" relationships with rich and older men. The Kenyan media recently reported on the deaths of two Kenyan girls apparently killed by a politician and foreigner - each girl had received a significant amount of money in her bank account. Economic hardship is also pushing women and youth in the slums towards crime; many carry arms, hide criminals, con or distract unsuspecting victims, or engage in mobile money fraud. Women and girls remain at risk of GBV with little recourse as Kenya's once vibrant and vocal women's movement has been snuffed into silence. Microcredit schemes are providing a channel for economic and social independence for women and girls, and more women are getting involved in local politics and community building thanks to government devolution measures.

UGANDA

Uganda is nearing what could be a watershed moment after over 30 years of autocratic leadership under President Museveni. The arrest and maltreatment of pop star turned politician Bobi Wine has put a face to the growing people power movement of activists and citizens alike. Political repression in the East African nation is strong; civil society is under increasing scrutiny with some offices vandalised. Citizens have not been spared either as women have been beaten for simply voicing their support of the president's opponents or protesting harsh living conditions. The introduction of a social media tax has put a muzzle on journalists and bloggers using the digital sphere to raise awareness on human rights abuses, while the mobile money tax is making business unsustainable for small and medium business owners, the majority of whom are women. With the

stagnated flow of relevant information, the work of feminists and women's rights organisations is further impeded. On the economic front, land grabs by government officials is negatively affecting the livelihoods of rural Ugandans who depend on agriculture. Many parents are resorting to home-schooling their children, especially girls are threatened with GBV. The increasing disconnect between female political leaders and women and youth constituencies further aggravates Uganda's already troubled women's rights landscape.

ECOWAS

As with most of Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has had its fair share of challenges in recent years. Discrimination against women and girls is pervasive as patriarchal structures, local traditions, culture and religion reinforce notions of women being second class citizens. Women's contributions to the economy are largely informal and unaccounted for, leading to low wages, skills training opportunities and hindering their progression in decision-making and leadership roles. The threat of terrorism has also made life in many West African nations insecure, with women and girls being the most vulnerable.

BENIN

Benin has women's political participation encapsulated in its legal framework, however the socio-cultural context makes it difficult for women to participate politically. The lack of awareness on women's rights, even by elected officials, led to the rejection of progressive laws by parliament, hindering work of women's rights organisations. Like many of its African counterparts, Benin has high poverty and inequality levels.

BURKINA FASO

The rise of terrorism and religious extremism in the West African sub-region has Burkina Faso on high alert for security threats. This has disrupted everyday life and business in the land-locked country where security intelligence is inadequate. The youth have been quite affected by the security situation as many of them are behind in school. Burkinabe women are vulnerable to outdated patriarchal traditions like early marriage and widowhood rites which also impede on their rights.

CAMEROON

Cameroon is undergoing a tumultuous time and security crisis following demands from its Anglophone minority for a more equal footing with the Francophone majority in accessing public services, economic opportunities and human rights. The current struggle goes back to the post-World War I era when Cameroon became a bilingual state; English-speaking Cameroonians have been largely marginalised and side-lined when it comes to key leadership and economic activities, resulting in a call for an independent state. The government's response to protests was to block internet access resulting in violence, sexual and human rights abuses particularly against women and girls. The situation has made working in the country very difficult, as major communication lines are regulated and a curfew is in place. There are daily reports of murder, rape, leaving citizens in angst. Agricultural activity has also been stalled leading to food shortages. As an ongoing situation, it has been difficult for many feminist and women's rights organisations to work, much more focus on building networks and capacity.

GHANA

Often touted as peaceful, democratic and economically progressive, Ghana is grappling with growing inequality which perpetuates rural-urban migration of young women and girls. The girls, some as young as eight years, search for informal jobs as head porters in cities. They receive low wages, and even when they survive GBV, they remain largely illiterate and stifled by way of economic opportunity. The collapse of financial institutions has also impacted women informal workers who rely on small loans and savings with microcredit institutions. Ghana's affirmative action law drafted in 1998 is yet to be passed, although President Akufo-Addo is the AU's Gender Champion. There have been some high-level female appointments to the judiciary and parliament, but women's political participation remains low at 10.9% nationally and 3% for local government. That said, CSOs succeeded in establishing a domestic violence and women's manifesto coalitions which are helping spearhead women's rights and counter GBV.

NIGERIA

Plagued with cultural and institutional barriers around gender and women's roles, women's

political participation in Nigeria is in decline. Women's inheritance, the gender pay gap and other key issues remain unaddressed and a gender bill put before a largely male parliament was rejected as not being "religious" or "African" enough. Women are seen as second-class citizens under religious and customary laws, and fall victim to religious extremists and groups like Boko Haram. Corruption and bribery are ripe in Nigeria, making the dollarised economy hard and the fuelling black markets. Farmers and herders receive low prices for their produce, alongside climate change effects. Nigeria has been exemplary in Maputo protocol reporting on SRHR, but high levels of female genital mutilation and maternal health fees remain a concern.

“No matter how bad things are going, we as activists still need to mention our achievements. Because if we do not do it, nobody will do it. We should celebrate our achievements even as we push for more.”
– Theo Sowa

SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone's 2018 general elections was a let-down for women's political participation as fewer women participated in the election due to inadequate support and preparation. Women who held political office were also side-lined in favour of their male counterparts. Consequently, Sierra Leone is a long way off from reaching the 10% of female leader appointments promised in political party manifestos. This is derailing affirmative action efforts and undoing the achievements of the women's rights agenda. CSOs have their work cut out for them as the government embarks on a witch hunt and ignores the constitution. The criminalisation of CSOs and use of divisive tactics by the government makes it hard for civil society to collaborate. On the economic front, high inflation and poverty levels stall efforts at entrepreneurship by Sierra Leoneans.



TOGO

Togo is preparing for its general elections amidst continued protests against President Faure Gnassingbe's government. For CSOs, a key priority for the upcoming elections is to ensure balance between appointed and elected government positions. They are also advocating for more women to be politically involved. The placement of female candidate names at the bottom of ballot papers reduces women's chances at winning local elections. As such, women's organisations are focused on eliminating such barriers. Although gender equality is recognised by Togo, little value is actually placed on women girls. Girls are often seen as an economic burden or opportunity and are taken out of school by parents to get married or sent to neighbouring countries like Ghana to work as house helps or become concubines. Despite the fact that the government does not officially recognise femicide, it is widely practiced along with widowhood rites

LEBANON

Classified by the World Bank as a higher middle-income nation, Lebanon has a poor track record on women's rights especially with regards to Syrian and Palestinian refugees. The personal status law established by religious groups prioritises religious law over civil laws on family-related issues like marriage, thereby fuelling socio-economic discrimination. While there is gender parity in education, many women are low-skilled, and receive substantially lower salaries than their male counterparts. Furthermore, most jobs do not offer training, career progression or child care for women. As a result, many women do not consider formal employment to be attractive or viable.

REFLECTIONS ON CREATING CHANGE

- ◇ There is power in coalitions, even in the midst of fragmentation – how can we leverage it? Can FEMNET lead the charge?
- ◇ Sexual misconduct is happening in our CSO spaces, at workshops and so on. What does safeguarding from sexual misconduct mean from a feminist perspective?
- ◇ How can reporting on the Maputo protocol be improved?
- ◇ Who supports women when the going gets tough, especially those in political leadership?
 - A group of women in Sierra Leone have come together for periodic breakfast meetings as a support and brainstorming mechanism. Can we replicate this in other countries?
- ◇ Can we crowdsource funding to support African women in politics? How do we raise funds beyond donors when everyone is dealing with economic hardships? How do we keep them accountable?
 - Working in solidarity, women in Burkina Faso have secured UN-Women funding to sponsor the political involvement of five women leaders, thereby putting women's issues forth.
- ◇ It is very hard to fight individually. How do we mobilise ourselves into a regional group where we meet to strategise as women directors and leaders?
- ◇ The African woman's voice is missing in economic fora. How do we get involved, for instance on the UNECA committee on illicit financial flows?

WHAT GIVES US HOPE

"Despite all the struggles and challenges women face, women still have hope, do not give up, are fighters and there for each other."

– Ayesha Abukari

"Seeing change. The choices our mothers and grandmothers had are not what we have. We are not stagnating, we are moving towards something. We may not be there yet but the revolution is coming."

"We grant our girls opportunities to speak and this gives me hope because I can see the future in these girls."

"We are moving somewhere and changing women's mindsets that they can make a difference regardless of what people say."

"Seeing small girls put on gloves and walk into the ring and box like nobody can do anything to them. It makes me believe we can do anything."

"The fact that women can be mobilised and that we have been able to mobilise ourselves and have the passage of landmark gender legislation."

"Women speaking out against sexual violence on university campuses and getting campuses to review their policies on sexual misconduct."

"My government is beginning to realise women and girls in institutions of higher learning are a critical mass and can help change their communities and countries."

"Women speaking out against sexual violence on university campuses and getting campuses to review their policies on sexual misconduct."

"We have built a cadre of young feminists who will continue pushing our agenda."

"CSOs at the grassroots level who are helping women speak out and reclaim their lives."



"We secured a grant from the US Embassy in Cameroon to ensure women's rights."

"The impact that we are making at the local level gives me hope - people with so little do so much."

"Seeing women do their best to pay back their loans so their sisters can access those same loans."

"Seeing women agricultural workers change and better their economic status. Documenting their success."

"My organisation is working on my country's universal health insurance program. About 50% of health costs will be covered to make women more economically and socially empowered."

"I am proud of our work in economically empowering women at the grassroots. It gives me hope that tomorrow's story will be a better story."

"Helping increase representation of women on boards in Nigeria's banking sector to at least 30%."

"Being able to create a critical mass of women and girls with disabilities who are advocates, leaders, and economically productive gives me hope."

"As women leaders, we bring so much to the table. Resources, ideas, vision, energy - even if we do not always have the funding."

"Seeing women in Sierra Leone progressively find their voice and approach issues not from a position of victimhood but from a position of information and strength."

"Every single woman I work with has a savings account and most of them are completing their degrees. The impact we have on one another and the sisterly nudges we give one another."

"The power of social media and that women can work together. Also, being able to change and make the CSW political; a space where African women are organised to speak."

FEMINIST LEADERSHIP: UNLOCKING THE 90%



What makes a great leader? Ask a room of people and they will likely mention intelligence, prior experience, competency and skills. Elements which can be demonstrated or are easily evident. But is that really all it takes for someone to be an exceptional leader? What about those elements which nobody can really see: persistence, overcoming disappointment, dedication, sacrifice, learning to fail gracefully? As is captured by the iceberg illusion, competency behaviours are necessary for top performance, but not sufficient. It takes more than what can be seen or demonstrated to make a great leader. While Intellectual Intelligence (IQ) is often touted as being the more

preferable, and “male-like”, quality in leaders, in actuality it only constitutes 10% of successful leadership. The remaining 90% comes from the more “feminine” Emotional Intelligence (EQ) gained through the arduous yet fulfilling lifelong journey of personal development and self-awareness. Research from the past three decades indicate that world renowned leaders like Nelson Mandela were emotionally connected to themselves and to others. They were dedicated to getting to know themselves as individuals and dynamic beings, and then leveraged their learnings to be more effective leaders. With a high EQ one is not only able to use knowledge and skills to deliver results, but also to self-regulate, stay motivated, empathise, and develop the social skills needed to build and maintain meaningful relationships as well as lead effectively. For female leaders, it is important to question what social filters are being used to assess one’s leadership capacity. Words used to describe male and female leaders can be very different, and more often than not, women themselves use disempowering words to describe their capabilities.

“In order to empower ourselves, we must be clear about how we feel and be clear about why. It is important to own our emotions otherwise it will hijack us.”

Yene Assegid

“Whether you are a child or a grandmother it is never too late to build on that emotional intelligence. EQ means understanding yourself so you can do better and be better in relation to yourself and to others. When your brain (the 10%) works with your heart (90%) you get 100% performance.”

Coach Yene Assegid led participants through an insightful, interactive and inspiring workshop on how to build and tap into EQ for exceptional feminist leadership. She noted that unlike IQ which does not change over time, EQ can be built upon gradually. Once a potential leader understands who they are, they can then take responsibility for themselves and motivate themselves, their team, stakeholders, and so on. One’s EQ level also determines one’s leadership style or how one leads. High EQ or ‘above the line’ leaders tend to be more conscious in their leadership; they are open playful, curious; listening; and committed to learning. On the other hand, leaders with a low self-awareness and EQ lead from ‘below the line’ by being more closed off and defensive, very serious with a strong commitment to being right, and exercise control in carrying what they consider to be a burden. Most leaders oscillate above and below the line, but effective leaders are conscious enough to realise when a change is necessary.

COMMUNICATIONS

"Know who you want to speak to, where they get their information from, how they use platforms and how they want to get their information. It is not enough to speak to people; you need to speak to them where they are, in the language they understand and know how they want that information." – Paula Fray



GOVERNANCE

"If everybody is clear on the roles of the board and the executive and when those roles need to change, that is a starting point for negotiation. If you have good communication and planning with your board then it means you can stop issues before they become issues." – Theo Sowa



News consumption patterns have changed, are changing, and will continue to change. Mobile and video are the fastest growing mediums.	Governance is core to our work, but one of the areas we put in the least investment.
Radio still has biggest reach. Television is preferred for visual impact. Print is still an influencer. But online is the best for growing relationships.	Have a clear definition and understanding of governance – legal compliance and accountability, efficient use of resources, board, functions, and so on.
Newsrooms are increasingly outsourced and audiences expect to be engaged in content rich, immersive experiences from sources they trust.	Clarity, communication, and documentation are at the very base of good governance and addressing governance nightmares.
Two-way journalism is now a reality, making it harder to fix stories. Information is generated from multiple sources.	An organisation's governance framework or constitution should clearly outline functions, but be flexible enough to accommodate change and growth.
Make sure you own your website, that it is properly populated, and that you use data to inform your content and digital engagement.	The board is at the heart of accountability and governance. When there is no clarity around the board's role, contention in relation to governance starts.
Lean-in communication on phones and tablets should be short, to the point. Lean-back communication through TV, newspapers should have more context.	At the start of the organisation's life you need the board to be more engaged. Eventually, the board needs to trust the executive. It is a growth process.
Social media is crucial to telling stories. It is good for engaging, disseminating information and gathering intelligence. Your social media platform cannot be neutral; it should have personality.	Clarity comes with terms of reference and clear guidelines. Ensure clarity with consistent and thorough documentation. Documents are important for crises.
Video is driving news globally. Use the "live streaming" and "stories" video features on social media to connect with your audience(s).	The board is the ultimate accountability arm of the organisation. Learn to know the difference between when a board is overstepping or when a board is really doing its job.
Create a community of interest, think about who is in the community, and give them content and stories that reflect their interests as well as your organisation's vision, mission and values.	Executive leadership is different from board leadership. Join a board to understand how boards work.

It is essential that feminist leaders are adaptable and conscious of the patriarchal power structures and systems that might hinder progress. It is equally important that feminist leaders infuse accountability, monitoring and evaluation into their organisations to measure impact and make evidence-based decisions. By creating feedback loops and leveraging sisterhood communities, feminist leaders can better identify, address and use resistance as a stepping stone for collective progress.

BEING A FEMINIST LEADER

Be smart and strategic. Plan, strategise and establish mutually beneficial partnerships. There are no accidental wins.

Feminist leaders may disagree with each other, but it is important not to imitate patriarchal leadership in feminist spaces.

Anger is what drives us to advocacy, but do not just be angry, get smart. Channel your anger to make impact and create value.

Fear can be paralysing, but only if you let it. You can accept the fear, and then do the thing you are afraid of anyway. Fear is to be managed.

Validate yourself. When you allow someone else to validate you, they will make your rain or shine. Take compliments and criticism with a grain of salt. It is just an opinion.

Crossing the line for yourself or for others, is a step that brings about transformation. Pay attention to the energy.

Leading *above* the line: ownership, accountability, responsibility. Leading *below* the line: blame, excuses, denial.

Identify the boundary of your learning zone. Figure out how pressure works for you. Co-creating improves you. Have the courage to stay open.

Listen to feedback from other feminists. Find a balance between self-affirmation and being held accountable.

Be clear about why you are giving feedback. What is motivating you? To prove you know better? Or to serve?

You cannot learn where you are comfortable. Progress goes hand in hand with discomfort, conflict and resistance. Recognise and practice conflict management to handle it better.

Negative energy will drain you. Step away. You can choose to leave. Protect your energy.

MEASURING IMPACT

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential element of an organisation and helps ensure efficiency and growth.

To truly understand impact, you need stories. Look out for stories of change, then develop an action plan to document and disseminate those stories.

Constantly tracking stories of change and highlighting impact is how you create evidence.

There is a difference between outcome (women were coached) and impact (what happened as a result of women being coached).

Identify the change expected to occur. Be as specific as possible.

Track and capture the change with a mix of tools. Debrief meetings and testimonies, progress reports, social media, personal progress tracker, journaling, online survey, expense tracking, Google analytics for website, annual meetings, and so on.

Communicate the change. Share through a variety of communication mechanisms including learning sessions, newsletter, videos, social media, field visits, annual reports.

Share impact stories online, tagging @AWDF01 on Twitter and using the hashtag #FuturesAfrica.

SELF-AFFIRMATIONS: "I LOVE MYSELF BECAUSE..."

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"I lead with the power within and that I can connect people and connect things together."

"I am resilient and I thrive."

"I smile and laugh a lot. I listen and consider anything anyone says verbally and non-verbally."

"I am confident, I love my voice and I am undefeated by pain."

"I liberate young women from patriarchal mindsets and stereotypes."

"In this very serious work that can be depressing I will find the humour."

"I have a learning spirit - I learn in all sorts of ways and I share what I learn."

"I am positive and I love to invest in women and rejoice in the successes of other people."

"I always like to learn and listen to myself and know when I have to change."

"I like to persevere no matter how hard the task is and I encourage people around me."

"I never walk alone to success, I take other people with me."

"I have been able to improve my confidence and someone can walk up to me and tell me her issues and we laugh and cry together."

"In the midst of everything, I still find the strength to smile."

"I have passion working with the most vulnerable women to change and transform their lives to a better one."

"I know I am making a change."

"I always challenge myself, I get out of the comfort zone and reach out to the challenges. I encourage women with disabilities to challenge the status quo and not settle for less."

"Change starts with me and I am being a role model to women with disabilities in my country."

"I walk the talk because I believe Africans can integrate and I carry myself as a symbol of integration. I was born somewhere and I have integrated elsewhere."



AWDF
ABANTU for Development
Africa Health and Community Program
African Women's Development and Communication Network
Anti-Racism Movement
Association Catholique Pour le Developpement Socio-Economique
Association Songui Manegre / Aide au Developpement Endogene
Box Girls Kenya
Campaign for Good Governance
Circumspecte
Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action
Community Agriculture and Environmental Protection Association
Cameroon
FrayIntermedia
Gender Links
Girls Power Initiative
Groupe d'Appui aux Initiatives Féminine pour un Développement
Intégré et Durable
Hadis Foundation
HOPEAfrica
Human Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities in Malawi
Institute for Social Transformation
Integrated Disabled Women Activities

Kiambu People Living with HIV/AIDS
Lupane Women's Development Trust
Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women
Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust
Resource Centre for Women and Girls
Students and Youth Working on Reproductive Health Action Team
The Sola Company
Womankind Kenya
Women in Management Business and Public Service
Young Women Campaign Against AIDS
Zambia Alliance of Women
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association



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*“I just want to remind you that you have
already been fearless in ways that many
people are unable to be...The other things are
things that will come with practice.”*

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Theo Sowa, AWDF CEO