

HOLDING HANDS

The 2022 AWDF Annual Report



AFRICAN WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT FUND

AT A GLANCE

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Ayana gazes at her chapped hands, toughened by years of tilling the arid earth of her homeland to sustain her community despite natural adversities. She extends her hand to Kampire, whose soft but adept hands craft position papers addressing climate injustice impacting women. Together, they connect with Mazvita, who uses dance and song in healing circles to empower women, feeling the life force in their united hands.

Mazvita passes the connection to Ferkete, an aged educator whose life involves teaching young minds about feminism and gender studies. Ferkete, in turn, links hands with Djeneba, a village activist fighting against female genital mutilation. Djeneba, tired yet unyielding, acknowledges the importance of her fight, inspired by those like Ferkete.

Djeneba connects with Aissatou, who, despite losing her fingers in an acid attack by a former partner, remains dedicated to combating intimate partner violence through advocacy at local and international levels. Her resolve is clear: such atrocities must never recur.

DBupe, next in the circle, uses sign language to convey a poem about the activism of deaf women, expressing the collective aspirations and challenges through her art.

The baton of hope and resilience is finally passed to Lesedi, who documents the harrowing yet vital stories of violence against LGBTQ women in her region. Wangechi captures these narratives of pain and perseverance in a podcast, playing a snippet for the circle, symbolising their shared commitment to amplifying unheard voices.

Through each handoff, the story underscores a powerful journey of solidarity, resilience, and the transfer of knowledge and inspiration among women activists from diverse backgrounds and struggles. Together, we extend an invitation to hold hands and weave your story into the fabric of the AWDF journey through 2022, a journey of profound solidarity.



Over the COVID years, our hands had begun to represent something unclean, a source of potential disease and even death. We followed strict guidelines to sanitise them thoroughly and not touch the people we held dear to avoid harming them. So, in 2022, we needed to use our hands again. We needed to hold them out to connect and reconnect with our partners and movement, to amplify and celebrate voices, and to provide support and solidarity.

This story is about how we bridged the distance across many different transitions and divides, holding hands with many to catalyse change and envision new worlds.

HOLDING HANDS: A WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

The year 2022 had many in-betweens for women's rights and feminist activists. Collectively, we experienced a sense of relief that the COVID-19 pandemic was coming to an end. At the same time, we braced ourselves to face an economic crisis. We celebrated the reopening of borders. At the same time, we lamented the closing of civic space.

The duality of joy and uncertainty was ever palpable. And this has, unfortunately, always been the nature of the world.

We embraced the opportunities and challenges of working as a hybrid team, developing strategies to hold hands across our multiple geographical and digital divides. We held hands with our funded partners, facilitating opportunities for their physical presence in regional and global advocacy and activism spaces. We invested much time and effort into reflecting on our just-ended strategic plan as we developed our new framework for the next decade. This was a time of intense consultations with our partners in African feminist movements and the global philanthropic community. We extended our hands in gratitude, reflection and solidarity.

Just as diviners hold our hands to read our palms and lifelines, offering insights into our past, present, and future, we joined hands with our partners. Together, we looked back to draw from past wisdom, observed our present circumstances to understand our current state, and looked forward to envisioning new possibilities for our future together.



During this time, listening to and uplifting voices was essential for us. We focused on harmonising our efforts with the broader movement and opened spaces where voices could resonate and be amplified from local to global stages.

During the pandemic, we became aware that while we were holding space for one another by nurturing our activism and solidarity via digital and social media, the divide between those with and without digital privileges impacted all of us.

African women are perpetually one of the demographics most impacted by the digital divide, and the pandemic served to remind us of this. So, one of our main priorities in 2022 was to support movement members and leaders in carrying their voices in national, regional and global spaces. In doing so, we sought to undo – as much as possible – the erasure of the preceding years.



Holding hands has always been a political act. But even more so now as we continue to envision new worlds and challenge the dualities of the old.

In 2022, the AWDF office reopened for in-person work. While remote work allowed us to rethink the nature of our workdays—a particularly important reflection for us as women, whose work often extends beyond office hours and is never done—we returned with joy. We were eager to share handshakes, hugs, and laughter again and collaborate closely.



I'm one of those who prefer to work from home. However, seeing my colleagues after not having seen them for such a long time was something I really looked forward to. It was good to be in the same space after that long. And the chit-chats were quite endearing; just popping into people's offices and chit-chatting was great. So for me, the feeling of coming back was a feeling of things becoming normal again.



Beatrice Boakye-Yiadom, Programme Manager- Resourcing Movements

During the pandemic, we developed mechanisms to hold hands virtually through online events like weekly check-ins to discuss our mental health, share tips and encourage each other for collective well-being. We also can't forget the fun and energy of our Friday Zoom dance-offs, during which we took time to be in our bodies. But even with all these activities, we know that nothing replaces the element of human contact and of being able to convene, share, and hold space together.



We've updated our in-person work policy: now, staff based in Accra can work remotely three days a week. This change reflects the flexibility we embraced during the unprecedented lockdowns and continues our exploration of what 'normal' means in our workdays, programs, and resources. With this shift, we're focusing on doing less to achieve more and recognising rest as a vital political act.



Following the reopening of our offices, we also reopened the Sauti Centre, our resource hub, allowing feminist collectives to, once more, have important space to bring their hands and voices together to organise and strategise. The centre hosted numerous events, offering young feminists a place to reunite, delve into, and strengthen their politics. We know that online spaces are only sometimes as safe as they purport to be, especially in climates where there are deliberate clampdowns on rights and liberties. Therefore, offering a physical space for these discussions and meetings was a crucial way to support each other and hold hands.



In 2022, we also recommenced in-person grantee monitoring and learning visits. Historically, our focus on site visits has been on due diligence around finance and monitoring rather than listening and learning. But in 2022, we rethought this approach to make these visits more expansive and reciprocal, especially for funded partners working outside the scope of the dominant African colonial languages of English and French.

Often existing on the periphery of mainstream organising, these voices – as with those lost through the pandemic digital divide – were especially important for us to listen to and learn from. And so, for the first time, we undertook learning visits in Arabic (as we expanded our grantmaking reach to include organisations registered in the Middle East) and Portuguese, in addition to the usual English and French languages that we do. This represented an important threshold for us in our work as it broadened the scope of our listening and learning to incorporate movements and regions of the continent often erased within a continental imaginary dominated by Anglophone and Francophone colonial legacies.

In totality, our different interventions were about broadening the scope of our listening and learning. This helped us to reflect on how to hold hands more widely to amplify more voices in future.

**HANDS CREATE MOVEMENT.
THEY ALSO CREATE
MOVEMENTS.**



A CHANCE TO EMBRACE ONE ANOTHER: WORDS FROM OUR CEO

To me, connection is the essence of leadership, so the COVID-induced isolation of my first year at the African Women's Development Fund had been a challenge. In 2022, as it felt a little safer to step out of our homes and into the world, many were quick to declare a return to normalcy. I welcomed the opportunity to connect and hold hands with my colleagues, our movement and funding partners, and the broader community of AWDF supporters in Africa and beyond. At AWDF, we took a deliberate step back to question the very notion of 'normal.'

Was what we used to know pre-COVID what we actually wanted and needed going forward? Or, had those unprecedented times gifted us an opportunity to learn from everything we'd experienced and create something different?



Challenging existing norms is a daunting task, yet it became imperative for us to apply the lessons learned from the pandemic. This reflection was crucial as we concluded our former strategic plan and looked ahead to crafting a new vision for the coming decade. Our focus on connection extended beyond individual interactions; we aimed to create spaces for collective voice and action, especially as the world reeled from the isolation and digital divide enforced by lockdowns.

Reflecting on this period, I am particularly moved by how we supported our movement's members to engage in significant events like the African Conference on Sexual Health Rights (ACSHR) in Sierra Leone and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum in Mexico. Our role was to ensure that activists could access these platforms, share their stories, and be heard without the barriers of internet connectivity issues.

Crafting *Lemlem*, our new strategic framework, was a complex task that demanded patience and thoughtful consideration. We chose to give ourselves the time to listen, learn, and understand without the distractions of daily disruptions. This approach proved to be one of our most insightful decisions, allowing us to create a strategy that is truly our own and can be implemented collectively, hand in hand.

A landmark achievement in 2022 was reaching our 50th grant cycle - a testament to the dedication and hard work of those who have supported AWDF's mission over the years. In celebration and in response to the cost-of-living crisis, we piloted a series of small, flexible grants to all our partners.

AWDF's 50th grantmaking cycle was such a humbling milestone to me; a reminder, at a time when we were developing our new strategic direction, that we were building on a robust legacy. It was an opportunity to celebrate the African feminist giants who dared to dream of such a bold vision and brought it to life: our founders, Joanna Foster, Dr Hilda Tadria, and Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi; current and former Board members; my predecessor, Theo Sowa, and previous team leaders like Sarah Mukasa and Jessica Horn. And, of course, every single team member who has made this work possible over the past two decades.



This annual report is more than a recount of reconnection; it's a celebration of the moments and milestones that have intertwined our efforts, voices, and spirits on this meaningful journey.

I hope these words convey the depth of our collective celebration and the impact of our work together.

With deep gratitude,

Françoise Moudouthe



***I called it Sista hood
When you took my hand
And did not let go;
When the rough winds blew
cold and uncaring
and you held on, ready
to take on all of winter's wildness
with me.***

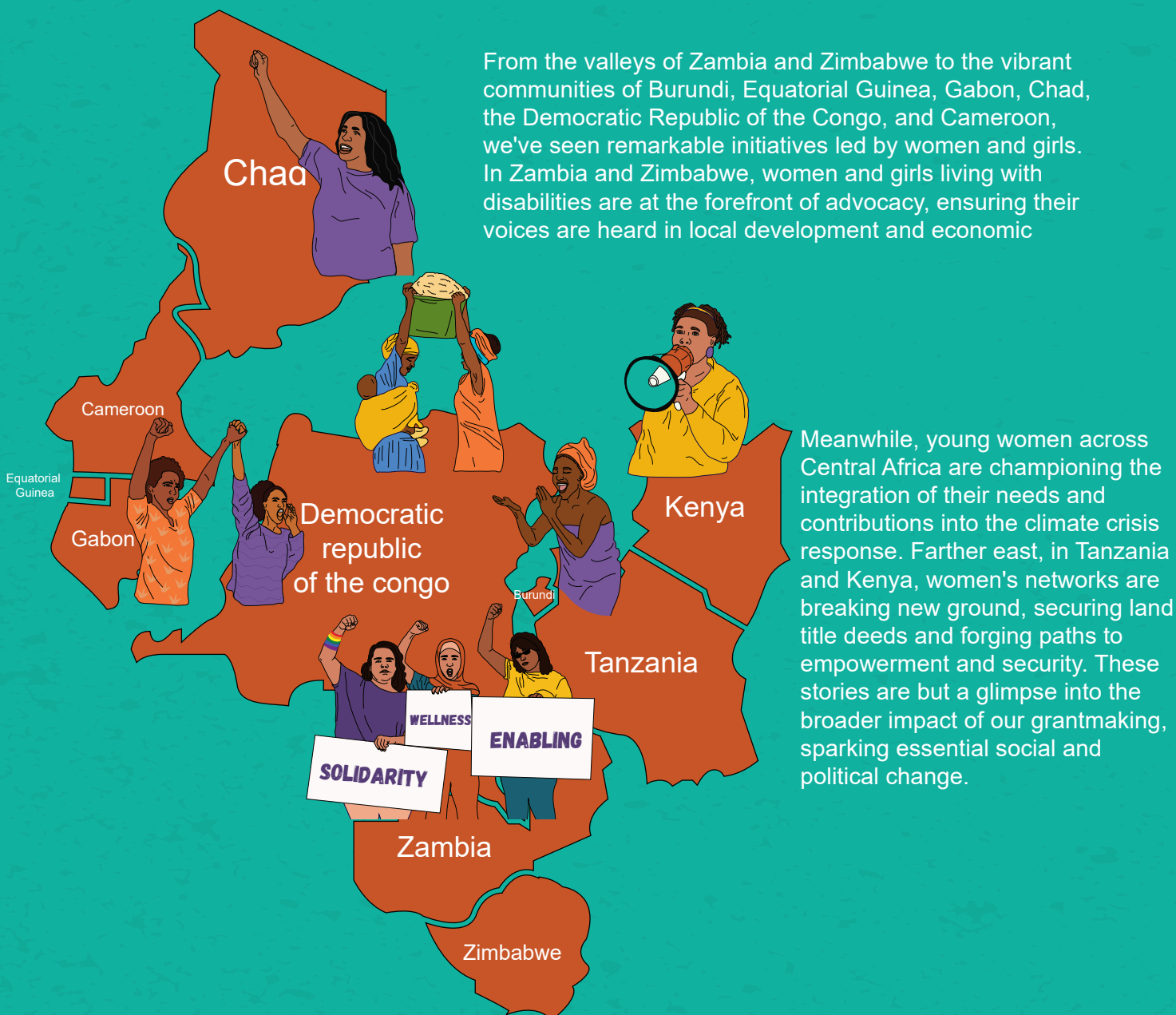
***I called it Sista hood
When I could no longer tell
Where your hand ended, and mine began
When my fear,
my joy,
my movement
Became your fear
your joy;
Our movement.***



HANDS MAKING A DIFFERENCE: OUR GRANTMAKING

Bigger picture of grantmaking in 2022. What kind of grants were given? How many grants and where did they go. Proportion of budget that goes to movements, non-grantmaking. Not keeping the money for operations costs but distributing it to movements.

In the heart of our narrative, the theme of "Hands Making a Difference" weaves a story of unity, resilience, and the transformative power of collective action. Our journey through 2022 has been one of profound partnership and innovation in grantmaking, embodying the essence of our report, "Holding Hands."



From the valleys of Zambia and Zimbabwe to the vibrant communities of Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon, we've seen remarkable initiatives led by women and girls. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, women and girls living with disabilities are at the forefront of advocacy, ensuring their voices are heard in local development and economic

Meanwhile, young women across Central Africa are championing the integration of their needs and contributions into the climate crisis response. Farther east, in Tanzania and Kenya, women's networks are breaking new ground, securing land title deeds and forging paths to empowerment and security. These stories are but a glimpse into the broader impact of our grantmaking, sparking essential social and political change.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



2022 Total Inflows: **USD 15,305,059**

2022 Total Expenditure: **USD 15,289,055**

Total grants awarded in 2022: **USD 11,289,634**

Total finances-fundraising and communication: **USD 698,328**

Total finances-capacity building activities: **USD 152,976**

Total finances-management and institutional development: **USD 671,469**

Total finances-programmes management: **USD 1,552,699**

Total finances-other programmes: **USD 923,949**



Our hands are deeply connected to our voices. When we cup them together around our mouths, we make our voices even louder. When we tap them over our lips, we change the timbre of our voices to the sound of ululation. When we hold hands in protest and solidarity, our chanting voices make our demands even louder and clearer. Working in unity with our voices, our hands create new sounds and visions. It is the presence of these many voices and many hands that makes our movement rich.



The year also brought introspection on our approach to philanthropy, especially African movement-centred philanthropy. It was a year to pause and reflect on the ways our efforts foster connections and bolster movement building from an African perspective. We confronted the reality that traditional grantmaking often remains rigid and hierarchical, challenging for activists and organisations navigating the unpredictable landscapes of social and political change in Africa. As the world began to emerge from isolation, the lingering effects of funding cuts, inflation, and diminished programming threatened the vital work of feminist movements. In response, we reimagined resourcing models to strengthen and amplify these critical voices and spaces.

Crisis is, unfortunately, always one of the greatest teachers. And one of the biggest lessons we learnt over the COVID pandemic years was that our movements were poorly equipped to face sudden and drastic change. Because of the rigidity of funding models and their project-based focus, we were alive to the struggles of many organisations and collectives to shift focus and resource allocations at that time. We are conscious that some of these organisations did not survive.



A pivotal moment came with the approval of our 50th round of grants since AWDF's inception—a testament to our commitment through times of uncertainty. Embracing this milestone, we introduced the *Zinariya* grants, a testament to our adaptability and innovation in grantmaking. These unrestricted grants of USD 5,000 each were awarded to 155 partners, celebrating our collective resilience and acknowledging the diverse impacts of the economic and political climate on our partners.

The overwhelming response to the *Zinariya* grants underscored the importance of trust, connection, and solidarity. It highlighted how, even in crisis, our experiences and support mechanisms vary, much like the unique ways we hold hands through challenges.

In the Hausa language, *Zinariya* means golden, which is the traditional celebratory gift for a jubilee anniversary. The *Zinariya* grants were, therefore, a way of celebrating two things: the movement's work and the milestone of our 50th main grant cycle.



As we stepped into a new strategic phase, our focus sharpened on responsiveness and deeper connections with our grantees. The *Zinariya* grants were a step towards this goal, aiming to reshape conversations around funding and amplify the influence of women and sister funds in these discussions.



“The *Zinariya* grant was a very unexpected but beautiful gesture from AWDF because, when you write proposals as an organisation, sometimes that administration to programme activity ratios, unfortunately, don't allow you to cover a lot of things, which then makes it difficult sometimes to implement projects. For us, the *Zinariya* grant came at a time when administrative issues had delayed the disbursement of other grants, and staff were still supposed to be coming to work. It's difficult to keep people in the office when they are demotivated and not being paid. At the same time, we were having challenges with office security and facing the very frustrating effects of ongoing power cuts. So this grant really came in handy for us because we were able to pay staff, and get our own solar system and office security in place at a time of great need.”

Talent Maposa, Founding Director, ICODZIM

Our partnership with the Leading From the South (LFS) consortium, alongside Women's Funds Asia, Fondo Mujeres del Sur, and Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indigenas, continued to be a cornerstone of our strategy. Through this collaboration, we sustained our core mission of resourcing feminist movements, providing critical support to those at the forefront of gender justice. In addition, our consortium offered timely assistance to mitigate the impacts of flooding in southern Africa and extended emergency support to Ugandan organisations amidst challenging times.

Meeting in person with our Leading From the South (LFS) consortium partners in 2022 allowed us to realign our visions and voices, transitioning LFS's identity towards a Global South feminist partnership. This reconnection spurred reflections on our role within the Global South and the promotion of collaborative feminist funding models.

Our journey through 2022 confirmed the power of collective action and solidarity. As we navigated the challenges and celebrated the milestones, we remained united, hand in hand, with our partners and allies, reaffirming our commitment to gender justice and the transformative potential of feminist movements across Africa.



**WE ARE NOT HERE FOR HANDOUTS
BUT TO HAND OUR VOICES AND
VISIONS, OUR STORIES AND SCARS,
TO BIRTHING A NEW WORLD; WE ARE
HERE TO HOLD HANDS WITH HOPE.**



HANDS-ON INVOLVEMENT: SUPPORTING MOVEMENT BUILDING

The essence of collaboration and mutual support defined our approach to movement building in 2022. Recognising the challenges faced by activists and organisations working in isolation, we leaned into the power of unity. By providing funding and creating shared spaces, we connected vital voices, amplifying the impact of our collective endeavours. This unity was instrumental in the growth of our movements and in strengthening our actions, especially amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19, budget cuts, and the looming threat of organisational shutdowns that marked much of the year.

During the pandemic, movements like #ENDSARS in Nigeria, #EndAnglophoneCrisis in Cameroon, and #ZimbabweanLivesMatter demonstrated the potential for significant online impact despite restrictions on physical gatherings. In South Africa, a spike in femicide rates during the pandemic prompted activists to question their safety, encapsulated in the haunting query, "Am I Next?" Moreover, 2022 witnessed an escalation in restrictions on LGBTQI+ organisations and individuals, particularly in East Africa, with countries like Uganda and Kenya debating anti-homosexuality legislation, signalling a broader crackdown on freedoms.

Against this backdrop of assaults on narratives and knowledge, our work focused on amplifying voices and movements at risk of being silenced, understanding this as crucial to maintaining ground in our struggles. A key part of our support strategy involved leveraging pandemic lessons to foster global movement connections and ensure people could engage in crucial spaces, counteracting the fragmentation experienced during COVID.

Any clampdown is also a clampdown on narratives and also on feminist knowledge; on how we know, why we know and what we listen to.

**Dinnah Nabwire, Programme Manager,
Nurturing Movements, AWDF**



Our knowledge unit evolved, incorporating "voice" into its identity to reflect the diversity of community responses. This shift underscored our dedication to elevating diverse voices in crucial spaces, embodying the spirit of solidarity that holds our movements together.



Our hands tell a symbolic story about ourselves and our unbroken connection to each other and everything in the universe. What better reminds us of this Ubuntu truth than the feminist movement building and organising in Africa during the pandemic when we held hands virtually across so many physical divides? We have what it takes to heal each other and the planet. We just need to bring ourselves back into this awareness and set free the oppression of each other.

Dr Toyin Ajao (Moon Goddess of iAfrika)

Introducing the African Women's Knowledge Circles marked a significant innovation. Created in partnership with funded and non-funded partners, these circles were born out of the necessity to adapt feminist organising to evolving contexts. Starting as small virtual gatherings, they expanded to include physical meetings at international conferences, fostering experiential learning and deepening feminist knowledge among AWDF grantee partners. This initiative showcased the myriad ways African feminists engage with and disseminate knowledge, from storytelling to multimedia, emphasising the importance of cross-learning and dialogue on advocacy and self-care.

How the circles are structured is movement-led, with partners thinking about topics and areas of importance. Within the knowledge circles held thus far, grantees have led conversations on approaches to advocacy and self-care, sharing their experiences and calling for better resourcing for frontline women's rights defenders and activists, among other themes. We have conducted multiple circles targeting multiple groups and see them not as an event but rather as an evolving approach to creating models that better amplify African feminists' ways of coming to knowledge.



Our commitment to interactive partner-led knowledge sharing highlighted the need to support long-term, innovative processes that encourage learning and adaptation. It also reminded us of the diverse and complex nature of creative knowledge.

Our solidarity with partners extended to supporting feminist forums in East and West Africa, facilitating discussions on navigating challenging environments. Notably, the Ugandan Feminist Forum (UFF) broadened its inclusivity, fostering a significant shift towards unity within the movement.

Where AWDF has supported the feminist forums, we're starting to see them be not only just about dialogue but also collective action. The support has been very important, for example, in consolidating responses to the anti-LGBTQ law in Uganda because there has been so much time spent building the Uganda Feminist Forum, where a lot of the issues around LGBTQ rights have been discussed and clarified. So that dialogue has been important in building a constituency that is very clear and understanding around questions of queer self-determination, anti-discrimination and so forth. And there have also been conversations around other fundamentalisms, such as religious fundamentalism, which we're seeing quite a lot of growth of on the continent. The forums have been spaces where people have come together and been able to point at and understand what's going on, have an understanding of the world and particular issues, and analyse them to respond.



Nancy Kachingwe, African Feminist Forum

The days of discussion culminated in the cocreation of a new vision for the UFF, with a visioning group constituted to lead the development of a strategy to complement the vision. AWDF supported the African Feminist Forum working groups in organising meetings in East Africa (Uganda) and West Africa (Nigeria).

“After days spent in collective reflection on the work to be done towards combating fundamentalism, the convening came to a close. At this point, the four days had cultivated an understanding that within and amongst us was sufficient courage, resilient bonds, and wisdom to put up a resistance against the forces threatening our liberty. We felt that no matter how hard the fundamentalist gales blew, we would remain unbowed. In the joyous moments of exchanging words of hope and embracing each other goodbye, the words of Nigerian poet Ijeoma Umebinyuo came to life: “You call me sister not because you are my blood but because you understand the kind of tragedies we both have endured to come back into loving ourselves again and again.”

An excerpt from a [blog post](#) by Mubeezi Tenda reflecting on the Uganda Feminist Forum convening



In the tapestry of our 2022 story, threads of empowerment, solidarity, and global connection stand out, painting a vivid picture of our journey through the year. This period was marked by the deliberate fostering of diverse voices and the deepening of knowledge across continents.

We resourced 15 activists to participate in the African Conference on Sexual Health Rights (ACSHR) in Sierra Leone. These activists, representing a spectrum of movements from sex workers to abortion rights networks and gender-diverse communities, took centre stage as speakers, moderators, and co-hosts, enriching the conference with their invaluable perspectives. Similarly, at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum in Mexico, we extended our support to 25 partners from 15 African and 10 Middle Eastern countries. This diverse group, including younger feminists, LGBTQ+ activists, and French-speaking partners, brought a rich tapestry of experiences and knowledge to the forum, ensuring that the dialogue was as inclusive as it was insightful.

Our commitment to amplifying voices went beyond simply providing financial support to attend these events. By leveraging AWDF's extensive network, we secured speaking and moderating opportunities for our partners, ensuring that a wealth of expertise and real-world experiences informed the discussions. This strategy allowed us to transform participation from mere attendance to an active exchange of ideas and strategies, fostering learning and collaboration among activists and movements.

In celebrating International Women's Day and Women's History Month, we hosted a virtual roundtable that served as a bridge across generations of African feminists. Guided by the documentary 'When Women Speak,' which chronicles the Ghanaian women's movement from the 1960s to the 2000s, the discussion featured luminaries like Aseye Tamakloe, Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Dr. Kate Skinner, and Professor Pumla Gqola. This gathering was not just a reflection on the strides made but also a forward-looking dialogue on preserving our history and ensuring the continuity of our movements.



In the spirit of nurturing the next generation of changemakers, we supported two young African laureates at the Young Activists Summit, underlining our belief in the power of youth to drive global change. With the reopening of the Sauti Centre, we provided a haven for young feminists to gather, share, and grow. Amidst a backdrop of increasing homophobia in Ghana, the screening of a Nigerian lesbian love story at the centre was a defiant act of solidarity and a reaffirmation of our commitment to championing feminist values in the face of adversity.

Through these actions, 2022 was a year where AWDF supported the fight for rights and representation and celebrated the diversity, resilience, and unity of the movements we stand with. It was a testament to our belief in the power of holding hands across different contexts and generations to nurture and grow our collective strength and vision.



"IZANDLA ZIYAGEZANA" IS A PROVERB DERIVED FROM THE ISIZULU LANGUAGE. TAKEN LITERALLY, IT TRANSLATES TO SAY THAT ONE HAND WASHES ANOTHER. ITS DEEPER MEANING IS THAT WE CANNOT SUCCEED WITHOUT HELPING ONE ANOTHER. MANY HANDS WORKING TOGETHER BRING ABOUT DEEPEDED SUCCESS.



MOULDING REALITIES: A BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH PREPARING FOR OUR NEW STRATEGIC PERIOD

As the calendar turned from the final pages of *Shaping Futures*, our guiding light since 2017, we found ourselves at the close of 2021, poised on the brink of a new chapter. The end of one strategic period always heralds the dawn of another. So 2022 unfurled as a year brimming with action and reflection, a delicate dance of doing while planning, a time when we cast glances backwards to chart a course forward.

Our forthcoming strategic framework, *Lemlem* is envisioned to span a decade from 2023 to 2033 and promises a roadmap for a future where our efforts would be even more intertwined with the movements we support, where feminist funding in Africa would become more inclusive and movement-centred, where our hands would be firmly held with our partners, amplifying their voices and their impactful work.

From Ethiopia's Amharic language, *Lemlem* translates to means 'lush', 'verdant' and 'fertile'. This embodies AWDF's desire to nurture the aspirations of women's rights and feminist movements across Africa so that they reach their fullest fertility and richness and hold hands to cultivate new worlds and realities.



The journey toward *Lemlem* was one marked by deep introspection and careful listening. Recognising the profound importance of understanding the needs and aspirations of our partners, we embarked on a period of listening. Yet, we first turned inward before we could lend our ears to the world. Our team engaged in reflective exercises to identify our connections within the movements we supported to grasp the context and nature of these relationships truly. This was more than a preparatory step; it was foundational, ensuring our new strategy would be crafted from a place of deep understanding and alignment with our partners' realities.

Following this internal reflection, we widened our circle, initiating a broad, consultative process with past, present, and potential partners. Over a year, we reached out to more than 600 movement partners, listening to their experiences with AWDF, perceptions of our funding, and visions for the future. We also engaged with over 70 African women's rights organisations, feminist groups, and leaders from other women's and feminist funds in the Global South. Our conversations extended even to those organisations that had sought our support but did not receive funding, seeking to understand their views on our role and operations. Further, we consulted with donors and strategic partners across the regional and global philanthropic landscape, ensuring that diverse perspectives informed our path forward.

There was a sense, I would say, of the end of various eras. We were not only seeing the light at the end of the tunnel around the global pandemic, but we were coming to the end of Shaping Africa's Futures, our previous strategic plan. And so we needed to not only acknowledge that but also allow our partners to just take a moment to reflect on what the upending of things as a result of COVID had meant for them as organisations, individuals, feminists and activists. And so I think the main way we were in partnership was that we were very much in listening mode.



Pontso Mafethe, AWDF, Director of Programmes

This listening process, longer than initially anticipated, was crucial. With the shadow of COVID-19 still cast over us, we found ourselves navigating the dual challenges of responding to an ongoing pandemic and envisioning a future for women's work within this new, uncertain context.

The voices we heard spoke of the need for more accessible, flexible funding to support transformative work. They called for funding practices rooted in reciprocal trust, for a support system that transcends mere financial assistance. They shared their desire for shared decision-making, radical inclusion, and accountability to be at the heart of our grantmaking principles moving forward.

As we synthesised these voices, a sense of anticipation filled the air. Our movement partners were not just asking us to step up but inviting us to step out, to venture beyond our familiar territories boldly. They reminded us that our role was not to dictate the path but to listen, understand, and act in concert with their articulated needs and dreams.

This was a moment of significant change, a time when our team's excitement and aspirations melded with the insights and expectations of our movements. Together, we stood at the threshold of *Lemlem*, ready to embark on a journey that would redefine our collective future, holding hands tighter than ever as we stepped into the light of a new day.

**DID YOUR HAND FEEL NURTURED AS WE
TOLD THE STORY OF OUR YEAR? WE HOPE
SO. THANK YOU FOR HOLDING HANDS WITH
US, FOR BRINGING YOUR VOICE TO OUR
STORY, AND FOR ENVISIONING NEW
WORLDS TOGETHER.**

**DON'T LET GO.
WE ARE ONLY JUST AT THE BEGINNING OF
OUR NEW JOURNEY TOGETHER.**



MANY HANDS MAKE THE WORK LIGHT

The contents of it would, however, have not been possible without the work and support of many people:



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- Association Djazairouna des familles victimes du terrorisme islamiste-Algeria

ANGOLA

- Arquivo de Identidade Angolano
- Associação Mwana Pwo

BENIN

- Fondation des Jeunes Amazones pour le Développement
- Groupe d'Appui aux Initiatives Féminines pour un Développement Intégré et

BURKINA FASO

- Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme- CBDF
- Groupement Féminin Pag-La-Naam
- Initiative Pananetugri pour le Bien-être de la Femme (IPBF)

BURUNDI

- Femmes Unies pour la Paix dans la Région des Grands Lacs-FUPGL
- Planète de Femmes du Burundi
- Young Women's Knowledge and Leadership Institute
- Burundi-YOWLI

CAMEROON

- Association pour la Santé et la Prospérité (ASSAPRO)
- Common Action for Gender Development (COMAGEND)
- Women Agri Investment Hub (WAIH)
- Women for a Change
- WRIGTS SOCIETY- Cameroon (Women's Rights Integration In Governance)

CAPE VERDE

- Cape Verdean Association to Fight Gender-Based Violence

COTE D'IVOIRE

- Stop au Chat Noir

DJIBOUTI

- Djibouti women's rights initiative

DRC

- Action de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Femme et l'Enfant en sigle (ASOFFE)
- Action pour la Promotion des femmes (APfemme)
- Association des Jeunes filles et Femmes Autochtones Engagées dans la Protection de l'Environnement et la Lutte Contre la Pauvreté Féminine « AFPE »
- Focus Droits et Accès
- Forum des Femmes pour la Gouvernance des ressources naturelles
- Women In Action for Human Dignity, WAHDI asbl- DRC

EGYPT

- The Alliance for Arab Women

GHANA

- ABANTU for Development
- Purim African Youth in Development Platform
- Iseguri Initiative
- Savannah Women Integrated Development Agency, Ghana
- Women in Law and Development in Africa(WILDAF) Ghana
- Women's Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE)
- Women Support and Activists Group (WOSAG)

GUINEA CONAKRY

- Association Guineenne des Femmes pour la Democratie et le Développement (A.G.F.D.D.)
- Today's Women International Network ou Réseau

IRAQ

- Baghdad Women Association

KENYA

- African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
- AkiraChix
- Boxgirls Kenya
- Flone Initiative
- Hope Foundation for African Women (HFAW)
- Hope to the Vulnerable Communities (HOVUC)
- International Community of Women Living with HIV -Kenya Chapter (ICWK) International
- Community of Women Living with HIV-Eastern Africa (ICWEA)
- Kombato Christian Hope for HIV/AIDS Orphans and Widows Program
- Most at Risk Young Mothers and Teenage Girls living with HIV Initiative (MOYOTE)
- Rising Women Organization

- Solidarity With Women And Girls in Distress (SWAGID)
- The Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust -CRAWN Trust
- Ufanisi Women Group (UWG)
- Women Beyond Barriers (WBB)
- Women Empowerment Group
- Women for Cancer Early Detection and Treatment
- Women Spaces Africa
- Youth Changers Kenya (YCK)

LEBANON

- Anti-Racism Movement
- KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation

MALAWI

- Human Rights Of Women And Girls With Disabilities In Malawi (WAG DisabilityRights)
- Coalition of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (COWLHA)

MALI

- Association De défense Des Droits Des Aide-ménagères et Domestiques - ADDAD

MAURITANIA

- Ass Aux Femmes

NAMIBIA

- ATHENA
- AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA)

NIGER

- Association Nigérienne pour le Progrès et la Défense des Droits de la Femme (ANPDDF)
- Cellule Nigérienne des Jeunes Filles Leaders

NIGERIA

- Concerned Women International Development Initiative
- African Girls Empowerment Network
- Alliances for Africa (AfA)
- BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights (BAOBAB)
- Centre for 21st Century Issues(C21st)
- Circuit Pointe
- Girl Child Art Foundation
- Girls Inspired Development Network (GIDN)
- Hands Off Initiative
- Leadership Initiative for Youth Empowerment
- OhLeSe
- Partnership for Justice
- Project Alert on Violence Against Women
- She Writes Woman Mental Health Initiative
- Women Against Violence and Expediency Handling Initiative
- Women and Community Livelihood Foundation
- Women in Management, Business and Public Service -WIMBIZ
- Women Information Network (WINET)
- Women's Initiative for Self-Actualization (WISA)
- Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP)
- Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

PALESTINE

- Mothers School Society
- Psycho Social Counseling Centre for Women
- Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disabilities
- The Society of Women Graduates in Gaza Strip
- YWCA of Palestine

RWANDA

- Afro Ark
- ChooseYourself
- Join Our Hands Initiative
- Rwasa United Youth Association
- SPECTRA: Young Feminists Activism
- Women Empowerment Program (WEP)
- Women Rise For Change

SENEGAL

- And Soppeku
- Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS)
- JGEN Women Global Entrepreneurship
- Réseau Ouest Africain des Jeunes Femmes
- Sourire de Femme
- Women in Mining

SIERRA LEONE

- Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Organization (WHRRO)

SOUTH AFRICA

- Ikhwezi Women's Support Center
- Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA)
- One in Nine Campaign
- Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Task Force (SWEAT)
- Soul City Institute for Social Justice
- The Women's Legal Center (WLC)

SOUTH SUDAN

- Global Empowerment for Poverty Alleviation - GEPA
- Women for Change

TANZANIA

- Readership for Learning and Development (SOMA)
- Tanzania Trans Initiative

TOGO

- Réseau des Femmes et Développement de la région des Savanes (REFED/S)

UGANDA

- Artivism, and Forever Media
- Emanzi Community
- Empowerment Foundation Uganda
- FitcliqueAfrica/Fitclique256(U)
- Health And Rights Initiative Lira
- Imarisha Dada Uganda
- International Women's' Coffee Alliance (IWCA) Uganda chapter
- Irise Institute East Africa (IIEA)
- Kabarole Women Health Support Initiative
- Kasese Women's Health Support Initiative (KWHSI)
- Kitabu Integrated Development Association
- Paradigm for Social Justice and Development
- Resilient Women's Organization
- Shared Action Africa
- Simma Africa Creative Arts Foundation
- The Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW)
- Trans Youth Initiative –Uganda Trans Youth
- Initiative-Uganda(TYI-Uganda) Women Human Rights
- Defenders Network Uganda
- Women Leadership Development - WLEDE

YEMEN

- Basement Cultural Foundation

ZAMBIA

- Young Women in Action (YWA)

ZIMBABWE

- Chengeto Zimbabwe Trust
- Citizen in Action Southern Africa
- Female Student Network Trust
- Institute for Community Development in Zimbabwe (ICODZIM)
- Katswe Sistahood
- Pan African Positive Women's Coalition-Zimbabwe (PAPWCZ)
- Tag a Life International (TaLI)
- Women and Law in Southern Africa-Zimbabwe
- Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ)
- Katswe Sistahood Youth for Innovation Trust
- Youth-led Innovative Engagement with Leadership and Development (YIELD) Trust



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