

POSITION PAPER:

The Current State and Future of Feminist Organising in Africa





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African feminist organising has been shaped by successive political ruptures. The enduring afterlives of colonialism, authoritarian rule, forced migration, revolution, war and mass displacement are not simply historical events; they are the conditions that have shaped African lives for generations and continue to do so. I often return to the 2018 Sudanese Revolution. As a young Sudanese feminist, I witnessed radical imaginaries materialize into everyday political practice as women and young people transformed streets into spaces of political possibility, unsettling entrenched systems of power and bringing the promise of democracy within reach. Today, that promise has been engulfed by war, characterized by violence designed to extinguish the very spirit of resistance. Although the revolution and its aspirations have been violently suppressed, the organising infrastructures forged during the revolution have persisted and evolved, carrying communities through one of the world's most devastating conflicts.

For this paper, Sudan acts as a window into a broader continental reality. From the Horn to North Africa, the Sahel, West Africa, Central Africa and Southern Africa, feminist movements are organising through converging crises shaped by militarisation, authoritarianism, extractive economies, climate injustice and widening inequality. While these crises unfold differently across contexts they are connected through the enduring logics of colonialism, racial capitalism and contemporary geopolitical shifts[1].

African feminist movements are simultaneously confronting a vicious tightening of patriarchy's grip through the coordinated forces of anti-gender and anti-rights movements. These actors are mobilising tirelessly to reverse decades of progress on gender justice, sexual and reproductive rights and bodily autonomy. This is accompanied by deliberate attacks on civic space, escalating violence against women activists and profound shifts in global funding.

In responding to overlapping crises, African feminists are drawing on older feminist traditions and building new political infrastructures emerging through mutual aid, digital mobilisation, creative knowledge production, diaspora organising and cross-border solidarity often grounded in decolonial feminist politics. Changing realities are also compelling feminist movements to rethink sustainability, moving beyond conventional funding models towards more autonomous approaches to resourcing. These practices center collective care and African ways of knowing as the foundations of political action.

While feminist movements are often celebrated for their resilience, these moments reveal something far more significant. Beyond outliving crises, African feminist movements are reinventing strategies and alternatives under conditions designed to make organising impossible. This paper traces how converging crises are reshaping the terrain of feminist politics while examining the new feminist strategies, solidarities and political imaginaries emerging across Africa.

1 Pereira, C. (2017). *Editorial: Feminists organising—Strategy, voice, power. Feminist Africa*, (22), 1–12.

ANTI-RIGHTS, ANTI-GENDER RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Among the most defining features of the current moment is the rapid rise of organised anti-gender and anti-rights movements across Africa. As the social and political landscape is becoming steeped in fascist and fundamentalist logics, the boundaries of democratic freedom are steadily being redrawn and withdrawn. Across the continent, anti-rights campaigns advancing the language of "African family values" are actively undoing feminist gains in sexual and reproductive rights, bodily autonomy and the rights of LGBTQIA+ communities, functioning through networks that explicitly oppose contraception, abortion, sex education and gender equality[2]. This backlash is not abstract. It is alive and embedded in state rhetoric, codified through law and enacted through violence against bodies that challenge hetero patriarchal norms[3].

The manipulation of language, culture and religion remains a powerful tool in service of hardening legislative restrictions and delegitimising feminist and queer organising. This is evinced in Senegal, where new legislation criminalising "acts against nature," effectively doubled the penalties for same-sex relations under provisions framed by the state as targeting the promotion and/or financing of homosexuality[4]. The law increases prison sentences from five to ten years, raises financial penalties and criminalises advocacy for or support of LGBTQI rights[5]. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric has intensified alongside the government's emphasis on "traditional values" and national sovereignty[6]. While the country's legal framework is less explicit than in neighboring Mali, its broad and ambiguous provisions have created widespread uncertainty. Activists observe that in fear of legal repercussions, healthcare providers have become reluctant to service LGBTQIA+ people, severely limiting their access to essential medical assistance[7]. As a result, legal ambiguity itself becomes a function of repression as it extends violence into everyday life.

African feminists are raising the alarm noting that this backlash is neither isolated nor homegrown and is operating at a deeply transnational level. Although anti-rights campaigns frequently denounce LGBTQI+ rights as "foreign imports", many of the organisations driving these campaigns receive substantial financial, political and ideological support from actors based in the Global North[8]. International conservative networks have invested heavily in building local infrastructures through churches, advocacy organisations, legal campaigns and media platforms[9]. This is seen in Uganda, where transnational evangelical organisations played an influential role in supporting the political environment that culminated in the enactment of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act[10].

In Ghana, the National Conference on the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values was convened with significant involvement from US based Christian conservative organisations, under the banner of defending "family values"[11]. The conference formed part of a broader, well-funded political project seeking to reverse hard-won gains across the continent[12]. These actors have gradually positioned themselves as defenders of historical African values while reshaping public understandings of family, citizenship and

2 Akena. A. (2024, March 13). *Ghana must recognise that true Pan-African justice rejects anti-gender fundamentalism. African Feminism.*

3 Kis, M. (2024, March 31). *Unmaking a revolution: Fascist logics and the new authoritarian order in Tunisia.* Noor.

4 Djedje, B. B.-S. (2026, March 2). *Anti-queer moral panic and violence veiled as being anti-West doesn't advance African sovereignty.* AfricanFeminism.

5 ibid

6 African Feminism. (2025). *Existing in a world trying to erase you: Struggles and strength of LGBTQIA+ communities in French-speaking Africa.*

7 FRANCE 24 English. (2024, July 16). *African LGBTs exploited for clout, activist says as Burkina Faso bans homosexuality* [Video]. YouTube

8 Okech, A., Zelzer, R., & Adegoke, D. (n.d.). *Mapping anti-gender movements and strategic resistance framework.*

9 ibid

10 Traore, C. E. (2026, April 9). *Beyond Senegal's anti-LGBTQI laws: Rethinking the future of queer movements in West Africa. Alliance Magazine.*

11 Akena. A. (2024, March 13). *Ghana must recognise that true Pan-African justice rejects anti-gender fundamentalism. African Feminism.*

12 Okech, A., Zelzer, R., & Adegoke, D. (n.d.). *Mapping anti-gender movements and strategic resistance framework.*

belonging. In doing so, they seek to redefine "Africanness" delineating legal protection and ultimately which bodies are targeted.

Research reveals a far more unsettling reality: development funding intended to advance feminist movements and gender equality has, in some cases, directly contributed to the strengthening of anti-rights actors[13]. In Uganda, funding flows connect taxpayers in Europe and North America to conservative religious organizations across Uganda that have long opposed LGBTQI rights and called for harsher legislations[14]. Some of these resources can even be traced to governments publicly committed to feminist foreign policies and gender equality. Exposing how inadequate safeguards and accountability mechanisms create room for development funding to reinforce the very networks seeking to dismantle feminist and queer rights[15]. These dynamics highlight the extent to which anti-gender mobilisation travels through transnational flows of capital and political influence.

Within this political climate, sexual and gender minorities are constructed as symbols of "moral decline" in order to mobilize public support and divert attention from pressing economic and political crises. These manufactured moral panics not only expose vulnerable communities to heightened violence and criminalisation but also provide governments with convenient scapegoats for consolidating authoritarian power and restricting civic freedoms. African feminist scholars note that the recent wave of repression across the region symbolizes a clear reassertion of patriarchy. As feminist movements challenge systems of power and expand the possibilities of liberation, patriarchal structures respond in a panic through renewed efforts to regulate and re-establish control.



13 Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. (2023). *Progressive cash for the anti-LGBTQI+ backlash: How development funding inadvertently supports anti-rights actors in Uganda and Ghana.*

14 ibid

15 ibid

Digital Fascism:

Violence hasextended to digital spaces, revealing another defining feature of contemporary anti-rights organizing as transnational. States are using internet shutdowns, website censorship and surveillance to suppress dissent and weaken collective organising. Across Algeria, Sudan and Mauritania, internet shutdowns have become routine tools for disrupting protest movements, isolating activists and restricting access to information[16]. These forms of repression are rarely presented as authoritarian. Instead, governments invoke ambiguous language around "national security" and the protection of "public morality" to legitimize the expansion of state control over digital spaces.



Under the guise of protecting citizens, cybercrime legislation has become an instrument of anti-rights, enabling governments to criminalise online expression and police the circulation of ideas. In Egypt authorities have developed one of the region's most sophisticated systems of digital repression[17]. Hundreds of websites including independent media platforms have been blocked, while journalists, human rights defenders and activists have faced arrest and prosecution for their online activities [18]. Beyond restricting access to information, these measures seek to discipline the digital space itself, transforming it from a site of mobilisation into an extension of state control. Technologies of surveillance are growing more sophisticated with a rise in systems being exported to African states under the language of "security", embedding spyware, facial recognition and digital policing into everyday life.

Alongside state repression, digital spaces have become fertile ground for anti-rights narratives through the rise of the manosphere, an interconnected online ecosystem of influencers, podcasts, Youtube Channels, forums and online communities that spread misogyny and position men as victims of feminism[19]. Far from being confined to the internet, the manosphere is sustained by a growing political economy that feeds the mainstreaming of violent rhetoric. These narratives have gained traction through influencers who package misogyny as self-improvement, masculinity or relationship advice while profiting from audiences through paid courses, merchandise, subscriptions and coaching programs[20].

African feminists are underlining the connections between these digital spaces and wider patterns of gender-based violence. In Kenya, where rates of femicide have sparked national outrage, researchers and activists have noted how perpetrators frequently invoke manosphere narratives to justify violence against women demonstrating the brutal consequences of this digital discourse offline [21]. Activists in Burkina Faso describe how platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp have become powerful tools for spreading hate, with influencers publicly identifying people suspected of being LGBTQIA+[22]. These campaigns are cradled by

16 Saleh, M. (2025, May 14). *Fascism in practice: Digital spheres as landscape*. Noor.

17 ibid

18 ibid

19 Johnson, S. (2026, April 7). *Sluts, simps and body shaming: The rise of Africa's manosphere. The Guardian.*

20 Santos, A. P. (2026, March 6). *From manosphere to femicide: Investigating misogyny and violence against women. Global Investigative Journalism Network.*

21 Johnson, S. (2026, April 7). *Sluts, simps and body shaming: The rise of Africa's manosphere*. The Guardian.

22 African Feminism. (2025). *Existing in a world trying to erase you: Struggles and strength of LGBTQIA+ communities in French-speaking Africa.*

political rhetoric and conservative media working in tandem to produce an environment in which discrimination becomes socially and politically acceptable.

These dynamics have also fuelled the rise of technology-facilitated gender-based violence as a central tactic for silencing women and queer people online. Coordinated harassment, doxxing, cyberstalking, hacking and gendered disinformation are routinely deployed against women journalists, feminist organisers, women human rights defenders and LGBTQIA+ activists. African feminist researchers argue that these attacks are not isolated incidents of online abuse but deliberate political strategies that reproduce existing inequalities while narrowing civic and democratic space. As artificial intelligence becomes more accessible, deepfakes, image-based sexual abuse and coordinated disinformation campaigns are further expanding the scale and speed of digital violence[23]. TFGBV operates alongside state surveillance and legal restrictions as part of a broader ecosystem of authoritarian control that seeks to control narratives and silence dissent.



MILITARIZATION, EXTRACTION, DISPLACEMENT

The conditions under which African feminist movements organise are characterized by the convergence of militarisation, extractive economies, climate breakdown, debt and authoritarian rule. Together, these forces sustain a global political economy that continues to position Africa as a site of geopolitical competition and expendable labour. Across the Sahel, Sudan, the DRC, Ethiopia and northern Mozambique, protracted conflict has displaced millions, devastated public institutions and intensified conflict-related sexual violence[24]. As governments prioritise military spending over public welfare, feminist organising becomes inseparable from survival; resisting militarised power while simultaneously filling the gaps left by failing states[25].

These conflicts are kept alive by regional and global systems that profit from instability. The core of this political economy is extractivism through the pursuit of critical minerals, agricultural land and strategic trade routes that fuel violence while enriching multinational corporations, foreign governments, arms industries and local political elites[26]. From cobalt mining in the DRC and oil extraction in the Niger Delta to the smuggling of gold from Sudan and large-scale land acquisitions across East and Southern Africa, extraction relies on militarized violence, dispossession and the displacement of communities.

Due to its vast reserves of cobalt, lithium and manganese, Africa sits at the center of the artificial intelligence supply chain, owning minerals and resources integral to the powering of smartphones, computers, data centres and cooling systems that AI relies on[27]. The cycle goes beyond extraction and consumption as discarded electronics and other technological waste are frequently exported to and processed in African countries severely harming communities and workers by exposing them to toxic chemicals and hazardous materials.

23 Amuge, P. O., & Miliza, J. (2026). *From context to collective action: Outcomes of Africa's first symposium on technology-facilitated gender-based violence.* Association for Progressive Communications.

24 Doria Feminist Fund. (2024, December). *Sudan needs assessment: A call for feminist action!*

25 ibid

26 Pereira, C., & Tsikata, D. (2021). Contextualising extractivism in Africa. *Feminist Africa, 2*(1), 14–47. Institute of African Studies.

27 Institute for Science and Ethics. (2024, May 24). *An African feminist decolonial perspective of AI ethics: Modestha Mensah* [Video]. YouTube.

These extractive systems directly fuel environmental degradation and climate vulnerability. Across Africa communities face severe climate shocks, from wildfires and heatwaves across North Africa, to rising waters in West Africa and power outages in South Africa and Zambia. Prolonged drought in Namibia has increased food insecurity, while across the Horn of Africa repeated famine has compounded existing conflicts and humanitarian crises. The costs of these climate shocks are deeply gendered and unevenly distributed as women and children form a large share of the precarious workforce in artisanal mining and e-waste processing sites, absorbing severe health risks, environmental toxicity and displacement from ancestral lands[28]. Women and girls travelling further to secure water are exposed to heightened risks of gender-based violence while shouldering growing care responsibilities as social protections disappear[29].

These material forms of extraction are extended into the digital economy through data colonialism, the process of collecting people's unconsented data as a resource for technological and economic value. African users generate copious amounts of data through digital platforms and African land, energy and labour are used to build the infrastructure that processes it. However, control, ownership and much of the value generated from this data remain concentrated in the hands of global technology companies in the Global North[30]. Positioning Africa as a source of raw materials, data and labour, retaining little to none of the accumulated wealth and power, while bearing the social and ecological costs.

African feminist analysis defines these processes as contemporary extensions of colonial extraction where land, bodies, privacy and data are being exploited. Globally, AI is expanding at an undeniable speed, remodeling economies, labour and everyday life in its path. As African states enter the scene aiming to position Africa within the global AI economy, African feminists are calling for a reframing of the conversation, demanding a careful interrogation of whose resources and labour make it possible and who truly benefits from its rapid expansion. Recognizing that the digital economy is not abstract, it is built from land, minerals, water, energy, labour and bodies and its costs are particularly destructive.

Displacement and migration continues to be a defining reality across Africa, with millions forced across violent borders. Displacement extends the violence of conflict, exposing women, children, LGBTQIA+ people and other marginalised groups to heightened risks of sexual violence, trafficking and social exclusion. For feminist and queer communities, displacement often severs access to solidarity networks that have long maintained their safety and survival, leaving many more vulnerable to isolation and harassment[31]. African feminist analysis draws attention to how race, gender and sexuality define these experiences emphasizing that displacement fragments communities that are life-lines and impacts feminist movement's ability to respond and maintain its political work across borders.

Migration has become a key site through which anti-Blackness and exclusionary politics are being reproduced on the continent. Across North Africa, Black African migrants and refugees are targets of detention, deportations and everyday abuse. In Tunisia and Libya, racism has been legitimised through political discourse and securitised migration policies, in Algeria, campaigns such as *#NoToAfricansInAlgeria* have repeatedly called for the expulsion of Black migrants, often overlooking the distinction between migrants and Black North African citizens[32]. South Sudanese and Sudanese refugees in Egypt routinely experience arbitrary arrests, mass deportation, racial abuse and insecurity. These realities reveal how colonial racial hierarchies remain embedded in contemporary ideas of belonging and citizenship and are perpetuated by Arabisation policies and histories of enslavement.

Similar dynamics are unfolding in South Africa, where Afrophobia has become a violent expression of exclusionary nationalism. While Xenophobic violence is often presented as an inevitable conflict between "locals" and "outsiders"; this narrative obscures how economic insecurity, deep inequality and state failures are channeled towards Black African migrants[33].

28 Institute for Science and Ethics. (2024, May 24). *An African feminist decolonial perspective of AI ethics: Modestha Mensah* [Video]. YouTube.

29 ibid

30 Ryakitimbo, R. (2025, October 6). *Needs and wants: A feminist approach to AI in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Stimson Center.

31 Fanucci, B. (2024, August 30). *Queer community in Sudan facing unique challenges amid war and displacement crisis. GCN*

32 Lmrabet, A. (2023, April 7). *Racism against African migrants in North Africa is no longer a taboo.* Politics Today.

33 Garba, F. (2026). *Understanding the rise of Afrophobia in South Africa and how we resist it.* Amandla!

Feminist analyses argue that these are not spontaneous outbursts of public frustration but politically cultivated campaigns that scapegoat migrants while leaving intact the systems of exploitation producing widespread precarity. Increasingly, this rhetoric mirrors far-right politics in Europe and the United States by mobilising the language of border security, sovereignty and national protection to legitimise violence against Black Africans[34].

The same racial order that excludes Black African migrants also shapes international responses to war, displacement and humanitarian catastrophe across the continent. Despite the devastating consequences of these conflicts, the wars in Sudan, the DRC and other humanitarian crises have too often been met with indifference rather than global outrage. This is clearly reflected in inadequate humanitarian responses but also in limited funding, media coverage, advocacy and international solidarity. The normalisation of violence in Africa reflects a racialised global order in which African death is treated as inevitable and Black suffering as ordinary. African feminists fundamentally reject this rationale insisting that there is nothing inevitable about war, displacement, sexual violence, or mass death. Demanding that the devastation unfolding across Africa be met with a collective outrage and persistent global solidarity that is committed to dismantling the systems that continue to view African lives expendable.

For African feminists these developments demand a more critical vision of Pan-African solidarity. By understanding that shared geography alone does not produce shared politics, solidarity necessitates confronting the racial hierarchies and ethno-nationalist projects that continue to divide African people. At a time when borders are hardening and anti-Blackness is widely normalised, defending the dignity, safety and freedom of movement of Black Africans is central to any feminist vision of African liberation. African feminists are drawing the links and reading migration, race and belonging through a transnational lens. Recognising that outbursts of Afrophobia in South Africa, anti-Black racism in North Africa and anti-immigrant politics in Europe and the United States are all manifestations of the same political order, one that demands feminist solidarities that equally transcend borders and with the same vitality.



34 ibid

ATTACKS ON CIVIC SPACE

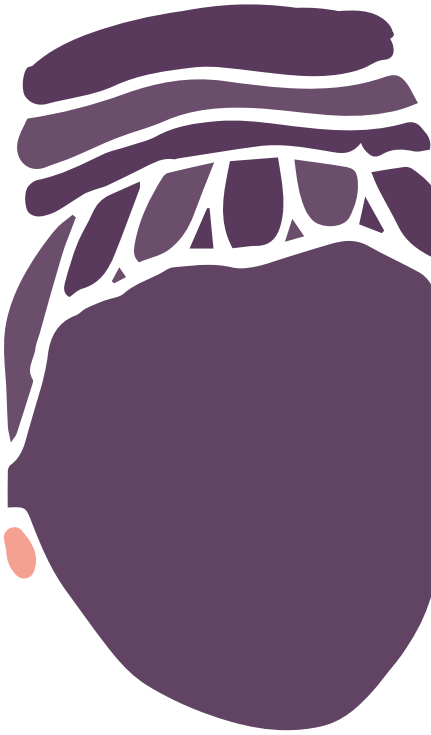
Attacks on civic space have continued to animate the current political landscape, serving as a mechanism through which states suppress dissent. Through deregistration, restrictive NGO laws, burdensome regulatory requirements, financial restrictions and surveillance governments are narrowing the conditions under which civil society can hold power to account[35]. Authoritarian governments rely on legal and bureaucratic mechanisms to institutionalise repression while maintaining the appearance of democratic governance[36].

Activists note that states also manufacture public consent for repression by framing feminist, queer and human rights agendas as threats to national security, public morality, religion or cultural values. This discursive strategy legitimises pervasive surveillance and public hostility towards activists, creating the illusion that repression is necessary rather than political. In Egypt and Tunisia, recurring allegations of foreign influence have been used across successive governments to freeze assets, restrict funding and shut down organisations. In Zimbabwe, expanded state powers to monitor and dissolve civil society organisations have created a climate of fear and self-censorship among human rights defenders. In Guinea, restrictive registration requirements have pushed many movements to operate without legal permits, rendering everyday organising more precarious.

Election-related repression has become a significant dimension of attacks on civic space across Africa, as governments use electoral periods to intensify restrictions on political participation. Beyond electoral malpractice on voting day, states ramp up restrictions on civil society and media censorship. In Uganda's 2026 elections authorities suspended civil-society organisations, halted opposition activity and imposed an internet and shutdown[37].

Women candidates and campaigners running in the elections experienced online violence in the form of AI-generated images and gendered disinformation aimed at destroying their political participation. For feminist movements, these attacks are particularly consequential as elections are important sites of organising and monitoring. Restricting these spaces while subjecting women to gendered violence weakens the avenues through which citizens participate in democratic life.

Across the region, these restrictions demonstrate that the objective is not only to silence individual activists but to systematically dismantle the very architecture of feminist organising. By erasing movements from public consciousness and the political landscape, they become harder to reach, harder to resource and harder for them to organise. This considerably impacts dynamics within feminist movements, namely by producing an air of mistrust, burnout and at times complete withdrawal from activism. This can be debilitating for the future of feminist and queer activism that relies on the dissemination of information, knowledge transfer and collective analysis as instrumental for feminist movement building[38].



35 Okech, A., Zelzer, R., & Adegoke, D. (n.d.). *Mapping anti-gender movements and strategic resistance framework.*

36 Nugdalla, S.O. (2020). The Revolution Continues: Sudanese Women's Activism. In: Okech, A. (eds) Gender, Protests and Political Change in Africa. Gender, Development and Social Change. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

37 Allen, K. (2026, January 26). *Did Uganda's internet shutdowns during elections backfire?* Institute for Security Studies.

38 Nugdalla, S.O. (2020). *The Revolution Continues: Sudanese Women's Activism.* In: Okech, A. (eds) Gender, Protests and Political Change in Africa. Gender, Development and Social Change. Palgrave Macmillan.

SHIFTS IN FUNDING

Theseissues are compounded by the alarming changes in the global funding architecture. Funding withdrawals, shifting donor priorities and restrictive grant conditions continue to be practices that constrain and discipline feminist organising. A rapid FEMNET survey found that 55% of African feminist organisations had no financial reserves, while only 16% had sufficient resources to finance their work for a year[39]. Most organisations reported that existing funds would last less than six months[40]. These inequalities are further complicated by structural barriers within philanthropy itself. Feminists from Rwanda and the DRC described how language exclusion routinely prevents francophone organisations from accessing funding opportunities because calls are neither translated nor widely circulated [41].

The current funding landscape raises deeper questions about autonomy and the future of feminist organising. Funding has become more entangled with shifting geopolitical priorities, where resources are redirected towards security, border control and other strategic interests and commitments to gender equality grow fragile. In Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso several international donors have reduced or withdrawn their support amid political realignments and declining relations with Western governments[42]. In contexts where feminist organisations already operated with limited resources these changes have further narrowed an already limited funding landscape as broader geopolitical dynamics redefine the availability of resources[43].

Additionally, donor models continue to privilege short-term projects, measurable outcomes, and institutionalised organisations, often overlooking the slower, less visible work of movement-building, political education and solidarity connections that nurture feminist struggles. As previously stated the intersection of extractivism, austerity and shrinking feminist funding across Africa is not incidental, it serves to systematically erode the conditions necessary for collective organising. As feminist movements are expected to respond to escalating crises from conflict and displacement to economic insecurity they are asked to do more with fewer resources. The cumulative effect is not simply shrinking funding and the closure of civic space, but the slow and deliberate erosion of the material, relational and political conditions that make feminist organising possible. The presented challenge is therefore reimagining how feminist movements can build independent political agendas within a dwindling and contested global funding architecture.



39 FEMNET. (2026, May). *Reimagining feminist funding in Africa: Beyond survival, towards sustainable movements.*

40 ibid

41 ibid

42 Alliance Magazine. (2026). *The state of feminist funding in Francophone West Africa.*

43 ibid

IMPACT ON AFRI-FEM MOVEMENTS

Movements have responded by studying the systems underpinning growing repression, producing counter-narratives and investing in regional solidarities, together exposing the transnational impact of anti-rights politics. However, as resources are diverted towards crisis response, emergency protection, legal defence and relocation, far fewer remain available to address the everyday realities affecting women, children and queer communities. Issues such as domestic and intimate partner violence, mental health, housing insecurity and economic precarity are often deprioritised as movements are forced into a constant cycle of crisis response. Rather than investing in strategy development, activists note that the current moment requires them to channel energies towards self-protection and survival[44]. The processes of collective reflection, knowledge-sharing and strategies that support movements and form the foundation for future organizing become sacrificed. This results in weakening the ability of movements to learn from their histories and ultimately undermining long term movement growth[45] .

The balance between visibility and security has become one of the important strategic questions facing feminist and queer movements across Africa. *How do movements navigate mobilizing while bypassing heightened surveillance, violence and criminalisation that visibility can invite?* This tension has required new approaches to organising, digital security and collective protection. It has also prompted critical reflection on the restrictions that often accompany international funding. External support frequently privileges visibility and measurable outputs as indicators of success. Yet, in contexts where feminist and queer organising is criminalised, visibility can itself become a source of danger[46]. As such, feminists are calling for forms of support that reflect their local realities by prioritizing their safety and autonomy. Recognizing that the movement has always been larger than the modest NGO structure, African feminists are pushing to decolonize strategies and focus on tactics that align with the needs and political visions of movements themselves.

African feminist movements continue to deepen long-standing conversations about inclusion, power and accountability within their own organising. Debates around race, disability, class, sexuality and generational power have gained renewed urgency as movements seek to ensure that feminist politics reflects the full diversity of lived experiences. Intergenerational organising has become a particularly important part of these conversations, with younger feminists questioning leadership structures and decision-making processes through a deliberate reluctance to partake in institutionalized activism. Instead many are choosing to organize through more collaborative models that challenge professionalisation and donor-driven agendas in favour of grassroots organizing.

Language frequently arises as a barrier limiting African feminist solidarity. The dominance of English in continental feminist spaces has systematically limited the visibility, participation and influence of feminists organising in Francophone, Lusophone, Arabaphone and indigenous African language contexts. Too often, key convenings, funding opportunities, knowledge exchanges and regional advocacy spaces are designed around English, excluding non English speakers from participation in collective agendas that define Afri-Fem movement priorities[47]. Building stronger African feminist movements therefore requires confronting linguistic justice as a political issue. Investing in interpretation, translation, multilingual publications and organising across African languages as a feminist commitment to epistemic justice and continental movement building.

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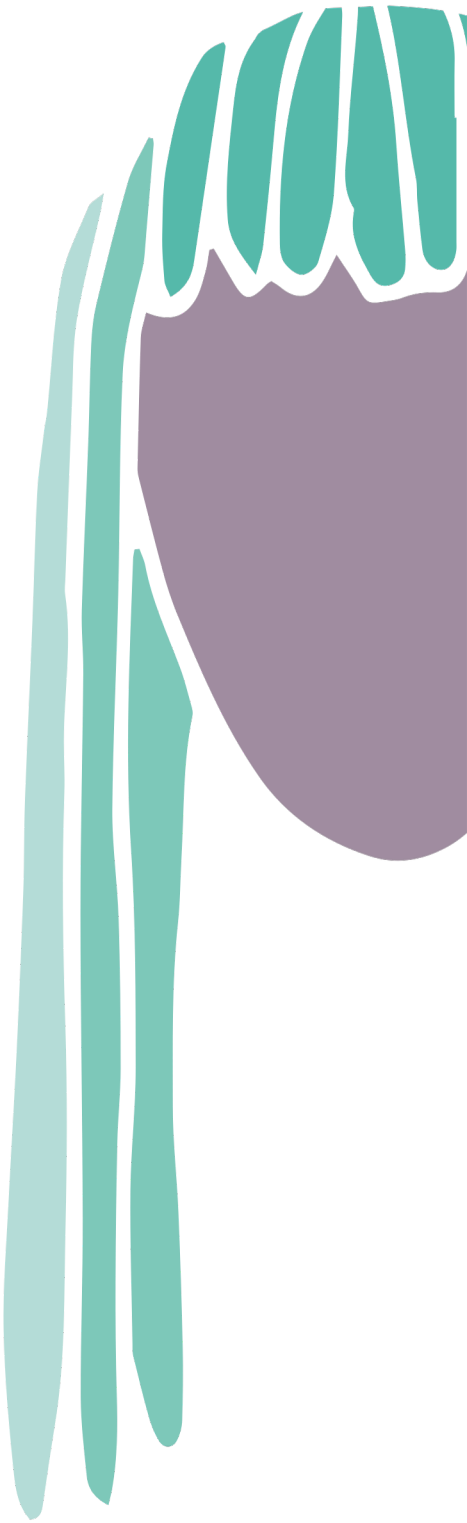
44 Okech, A., Zelzer, R., & Adegoke, D. (n.d.). *Mapping anti-gender movements and strategic resistance framework.*

45 Nugdalla, S.O. (2020). The Revolution Continues: Sudanese Women's Activism. In: Okech, A. (eds) Gender, Protests and Political Change in Africa. Gender, Development and Social Change. Palgrave Macmillan,

46 Johnson, U. (2025, June 23). *Queer Africans are reshaping the meaning of grassroots mobilization through their underground blueprint. The Africa Centre.*

47 Alliance Magazine. (2026). *The state of feminist funding in Francophone West Africa.*

African feminist movements also continue to grapple with difficult questions around LGBTQIA+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, abortion, sex workers' rights and other issues that expose differing political, cultural and religious perspectives within movements. While they risk fragmenting collective power particularly at a time where backlash is unrelenting, engaging these tensions reflects what it means to build genuinely intersectional politics across diverse contexts. Strengthening African feminist movements therefore requires persistent dialogue around these areas of division, as well as an increase in political education and cross-movement relationships connecting queer organisers, sex worker movements, disability activists and reproductive justice advocates. In the face of a growing hostile geopolitical landscape, African feminist organising must be grounded in shared political purpose and a willingness to engage difference constructively.





New Modes of Resistance

Mutual Aid, Collective Care Structures:

The tightening of civic spaceand the funding crisis have compelled feminists to rethink sustainability and move towards investing in community-rooted and autonomous methods of resourcing and organising. For many activists, this has meant exploring self-funded initiatives, forging alliances and strengthening mutual aid and collective care as pathways towards more self-sustaining futures[48]. These newer modes of resistance reflect a distancing from NGO based models for organizing, creating feminist leadership networks guided by trust and non-hierarchical practice. Additionally, these approaches strengthen movement autonomy while protecting activists from state discourses that dismiss feminist organising as foreign-funded efforts to destabilize regimes.

One of the most poignant examples is the Women's Emergency Response Rooms in Sudan, an extension of the Emergency Response Rooms that emerged from the grassroots organising networks of the 2018 Revolution and were reconfigured into life-saving structures during the current war. Rooted in *nafeer*, the longstanding Sudanese tradition of communal mobilisation in times of need, these horizontally organised, trust-based networks have transformed grassroots organising into systems of mutual aid and collective survival[49]. Each "room" operates autonomously, drawing on community knowledge and resources to respond to urgent needs, using encrypted communication platforms to enable coordination. The WRRs extend this work by creating safe spaces for women and girls, responding to and documenting sexual violence, supporting livelihoods and embedding feminist principles within humanitarian response[50]. This practice of collective survival goes beyond meeting immediate material needs through the act of preserving memory, by documenting atrocities and gathering community histories women are creating informal archives of oral histories and written accounts[51]. Representing a challenge to state propaganda that seeks to erase women's experiences from the immediate and historical narrative.

Other examples are documented in Ghana, where queer organising has deliberately been decentralised and shifted underground. Meetings are held in private homes or safe locations

48 AfricanFeminism. (2025, March 6). *Pan-African solidarity and community care anchoring Ghana's LGBTQ+ activism. African Feminism.*

49 Jafar, H. (2025, August 21). Madaniya (civic politics): Women's Emergency Response Rooms as flourishing sites of democracy in wartime Sudan. African Arguments.

50 ibid

51 Elhassan, T. (2025, September 24). *Between erasure and resistance: Women's bodies, memories, and narratives under Sudan's fascist Islamist regime.* Noor.

disclosed only at the last minute, while groups operate through encrypted communication, offline referral systems and trusted community networks[52]. Advocacy has also become transnational, with diaspora activists playing an important role in international advocacy, emergency fundraising, media engagement and sustaining pressure beyond the reach of Ghanaian state power. By organising in this way, activists have reduced their vulnerability to raids and surveillance. Rather than investing time in maintaining visibility, movements are creating systems of mutual support designed to carry communities long-term[53].

In Kenya, organisations are cultivating local donor communities through recurring giving initiatives rooted in community solidarity, completely divorced from traditional NGO models or foreign funding[54]. Among these initiatives is the Trans and Queer Fund Kenya, a decentralised queer mutual aid network established in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide monetary and non-monetary solidarity to trans and queer people[55]. Responding directly to the economic precarity facing queer Kenyans who experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment, workplace discrimination and rising living costs. Similarly the UmaUma collective is also a queer decentralized mutual aid network that grew from a "buy nothing" WhatsApp group. The collective operates through trust rather than financial exchange. Members share groceries, clothing, mental health support and safe spaces, while community food shelves across Nairobi provide anonymous access to essential goods. Demonstrating long-term systems of survival and reach that challenge the idea that visibility or formal recognition are necessary for impact.

These practices are rooted in a much longer history of African collective care that pre-existed institutionalized philanthropy, where communities supported one another through practices of redistribution and shared responsibility. Demonstrating adaptive governance at a time where survival depends on trusted networks capable of operating when formal institutions have failed. African feminist philanthropy and praxis builds on this legacy by understanding resources not only as financial assets but as relationships of care expressed through money, time, labour and knowledge. Philanthropy becomes more than a funding model; it is a political practice that reclaims resource mobilisation as part of feminist movement building.

Feminists across Francophone West and Central Africa are demonstrating the possibilities of transnational feminist solidarity. Regional coalitions such as PI7 and Fierté Afrique Francophone bring together LGBTQIA+ organisations from Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, DRC and Cameroon to confront threats that move across borders[56]. These networks facilitate strategic learning, share legal and security expertise, coordinate rapid responses and pool resources to support activists working in hostile environments. In doing so they are mobilizing a distinctly decolonial politics, rejecting narratives that frame queer rights as foreign imports and grounding their advocacy in local histories and languages.

While born of necessity, these initiatives reveal something fundamental about the future of feminist organising. Grounded in decentralised structures of care and mutual aid rather than formal institutions alone, they demonstrate that feminist resistance is not contingent on moments of political opening. Whether under authoritarian rule, revolution, or war, feminist movements continually reorganise themselves through enduring practices of care.

52 Johnson, U. (2025, June 23). *Queer Africans are reshaping the meaning of grassroots mobilization through their underground blueprint. The Africa Centre.*

53 ibid

54 Wepukhulu, S. K. (2025, March 20). *What the world can learn from radical queer aid collectives in East Africa. Resilience.*

55 Trans and Queer Fund Kenya. (n.d.). *Our history.*

56 African Feminism. (2025, January 29). *Existing in a world trying to erase you: Struggles and strength of LGBTQIA+ communities in French-speaking Africa.*

Digital Organizing:

Digital spacescontinueto be a vital site of African feminist organising. Across contexts restrictions on civic activity and surveillance have often been met with shifts to online mobilisation to coordinate action and maintain political momentum. Particular political moments have demonstrated the radical potential of these digital infrastructures. In Nigeria, the Feminist Coalition transformed digital organising during the #EndSARS movement using online platforms to organise legal aid, emergency medical care, mental health support and connect struggles across movements[57]. When state authorities froze the coalition's bank accounts, organisers rapidly pivoted to cryptocurrency and other digital fundraising mechanisms while maintaining collective action.

In Kenya, digital platforms have been crucial in mobilising against gender-based violence and femicide. Campaigns such as #JusticeForSharon, sparked by the tragic murder of a university student, mobilised tens of thousands of online petition signatures and helped coordinate safe-house networks for those at risk[58]. This was part of a larger response around rising femicide, that transformed public outrage into coordinated advocacy, survivor support, legal action and public accountability[59]. Digital organising has also strengthened Pan-African feminist solidarity. Across Southern Africa, movements have connected through campaigns such as #ShutItAllDown, which spread from Namibia to activists in South Africa, Botswana, and Lesotho, creating transregional feminist conversations around gender-based violence and state accountability [60].

Additionally, digital platforms such as *Feminist Africa*, *African Feminism*, podcasts, online magazines, panel discussions, social media and other creative forms such as memes have become central spaces for political education and feminist debate. However, although acknowledging that digital spaces have become indispensable sites of feminist resistance, African feminists continue to emphasise that online organising does not replace the trust, relationships and political community built through in-person gatherings. Noting that feminist spaces both online and offline remain essential for nurturing solidarity, learning and the difficult conversations that carry movements over time.



57 Faniyi, O. (2025). The networks of feminist and queer organizing in Nigeria's #EndSARS. Feminist Media Studies, 25(6), 1433–1453.

58 Okech A. Feminist Protest Action in Kenya: Lessons and Directions. Politics & Gender. 2024;20(2):485-489. doi:10.1017/S1743923X22000691

59 ibid

60 Ndakalako, M. (2024). Namibia's #ShutItAllDown and Contemporary Feminist Tactics: Social Media, Transgressive Practices, and Feminist Collaboration in the 2020 Protests. *Feminist Africa*, *5*(1), 152–175

Alternative Autonomous Spaces, Knowledge Production and Creative Resistance:

Ininternationalspaces, African feminists are creating autonomous platforms to build collective power and political alignment on their own terms. Initiatives such as Africa Disrupt emerged in response to the underrepresentation and externally driven agendas that have long shaped African participation in global forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women[61]. These spaces enable movements to strengthen solidarity, deepen political analysis and define priorities from African feminist perspectives.

At the center of this organising is a demand for epistemic justice, the insistence that feminist analysis be rooted in African histories, political economies and lived realities. This means challenging imposed narratives of feminism while affirming African experiences and modes of resistance as legitimate sites of knowledge production. Equally important is the work of memory. Through research, testimonies, oral histories, movement archives and community documentation, African feminists are preserving movement histories and safeguarding the political knowledge for future generations. This commitment also extends to reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems. African ecofeminists draw on philosophies such as Ubuntu to challenge both patriarchy and neocolonialism, demonstrating that African traditions of collective care, reciprocity, and ecological stewardship are important resources for advancing gender justice on the continent [62].

Creative knowledge production and dissemination has become a vital extension of this politics of memory. Poetry, film, theatre, storytelling and visual art have been utilized to document injustice, preserve collective memory and expand feminist political imagination. In Cameroon, the #JusticePourMirabelle movement mobilised artists, writers, and activists to transform collective grief into a transnational campaign against gender-based violence[63], while spoken-word artists have used poetry to bear witness to conflict and resist silence [64]. In Kenya, initiatives such as The Nest Collective use oral history and documentary storytelling to archive feminist, queer, and migrant experiences, ensuring movement histories are not erased[65]. Similarly, queer feminist platform HOLAAfrica uses storytelling, illustration, podcasts and lived experience to challenge dominant narratives around sexuality while creating affirming spaces for belonging[66]. These contemporary practices build on a long tradition of African feminist organising that has used songs, rituals, popular education and the creative use of public space to build resistance and imagine alternatives.



61 Ali, N. (2026, April 2). *Africa Disrupt: An alternative space for feminist organizing and mobilizing around CSW70. Women for Women International.*

62 Randriamaro, Z. (2024, July 15). *(Pan-)African eco-feminist movements. Global Dialogue.*

63 Ndengue R, Atsem A, Maveun M. #JusticePourMirabelle: The Resurgence of a Transnational Cameroonian Feminist Movement. *Politics & Gender*. 2024;20(2):501-505. doi:10.1017/S1743923X22000733

64 Akua, N. (2025, March 11). *War sparks new spoken-word poetry movement in Cameroon. OkayAfrica.*

65 The Nest. (n.d.). *The Nest.*

66 HOLAAfrica. (n.d.). *HOLAAfrica.*

Wellness, Joy, Hope, Radical Imagination:

Africanfeminists are firmly rejecting narratives that celebrate their ability to endure endless crises and hardship. Too often, these narratives applaud survival while obscuring the political and economic systems that make survival so difficult. They romanticise strength, reward sacrifice and normalize the expectation that feminist movements will continue to absorb violence. In resistance to this centering wellness and joy a core tenant of African feminist organising[67]. As movements navigate protracted crises and sustained repression there is growing recognition that justice cannot be pursued at the expense of those fighting for it. Instead positioning rest, healing and collective wellbeing as political practices that support long-term resistance and are imperative for movements to thrive[68].

The terrain of struggle has fundamentally changed and patriarchy has become progressively organised and transnational, traveling across institutions, political narratives and culture. ***The question is no longer whether feminist movements can endure, but how they continue to build power under these conditions.*** African feminists argue that the task ahead is not necessarily to broaden movements, but to deepen them and strengthen feminist political consciousness, relationships of trust and collective building so movements can withstand political shocks without losing sight of their radical transformative vision[69].

This requires carefully holding space for both urgency and possibility. It is important to acknowledge that it is an exhausting time to organize, to exist in physical and digital environments where each moment reveals another attack on rights, dignity and democracy[70]. Remaining alert is essential, but so too is resisting the temptation to allow it to define the limits of imagination. African feminist leadership continues to demonstrate an ability to adapt, shifting from protest to mutual aid, from public mobilization to underground organizing, while remaining rooted in collective care.

Ultimately, the future of African feminist organizing is not in resisting oppressive systems but in continuing to create new ones. Through scholarship, art, digital storytelling, community care and everyday organizing, African feminists are already working to build the worlds they seek to inhabit. At the heart of this lies radical imagination, the political practice of refusing to accept the present as inevitable. It insists that the futures we are capable of imagining are also futures we can build. More than hope, radical imagination is a strategy for transforming power, nurturing solidarity and creating conditions for collective liberation. It reminds us that feminism is a political project of building alternatives that is continually becoming.



67 FEMNET. (2026, May). *African feminist movements entering their accountability era.*

68 Horn, J. (2019, July 2). *On Africa's feminist frontlines, we need accessible care practices to sustain our movements. openDemocracy.*

69 Akina Mama wa Afrika. (2025). *Voices, visions and seeds for uprising: An anthology*. Akina Mama wa Afrika.

70 ibid

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