FEMINIST CONNECTIONS:
Reconnecting with ourselves and our Communities

OCTOBER 21 – 24, 2010
Le Meridien Hotel, Dakar, Senegal

Report written by: Anne Nkutu
Edited by: Shamillah Wilson
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The African Feminist Forum Working Group

ACRONYMS

AAWORD Association of African Women for Research and Development
AFF African Feminist Forum
AGI African Gender Institute
AGRA Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
AmwA Akina Mama wa Afrika
APC WNSP Association for Progressive Communications, Women’s Networking Support Programme
AU African Union
AWC African Women’s Caucus
AWDF African Women’s Development Fund
AWID Association for Women’s Rights in Development
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women
CSOs Civil Society Organisations
CSW Commission on the Status of Women
DAW Division on the Advancement of Women
DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo
EASSI Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women
ECOSOC Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States
FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists
FEMNET African Women’s Development and Communication Network
FGM Female genital mutilation
FDOWDE Forum for Women in Democracy
GMOS Genetically modified organisms
GREFELS Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Senegal
HIVOS Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation
IGITs Information and Communication Technologies
IMF International Monetary Fund
LGBTI Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MDG Millenium Development Goal
NGO Non-governmental organisation
OD Organisational development tool
OSI Open Society Institute
ROCAF Réseau d’Organisation Féminines d’Afrique Francophones
SADC Southern African Development Community
SAPs Structural Adjustment Policies
TGNP Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
UFF Uganda Feminist Forum
UN United Nations
UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women
VAW Violence against Women
WIDAF Women in Law and Development in Africa
WLSA Women and Law in Southern Africa
INTRODUCTION

The third African Feminist Forum (AFF) was held from October 21st-24th 2010 in Dakar, Senegal, co-hosted by the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) and the Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Sénégal (GREFELS). The forum brought together more than 150 women from all over Africa, representing diverse feminist identities. Compared to the two previous forums, there was a significant increase in the representation of women’s groups that have traditionally been at the periphery of the movement in Africa, for example women with disabilities and those from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. Young women and sisters from the Arabic and French-speaking countries of North and North West Africa were also present in greater number.

Since its inception, the biennial AFF has witnessed the emergence of a number of national level feminist forums, which have played a critical role in nurturing more robust feminist engagement with the state and other institutions on policies, laws and practices that undermine women’s rights.

During the opening ceremony of the forum, the chair of the AWDF, Dr. Hilda Tadria, noted that while there is a lot to celebrate, a lot of work remains to be done. This sentiment was echoed by other speakers throughout the forum. It refers to the reality that in spite of progressive policy change and the enactment of gender-sensitive legislation in various African states, African women continue to experience violence and discrimination in all spheres of life. Patriarchy remains alive and well, and is manifest in the growing magnitude of the issues being addressed, and the need for these groups to survive and sometimes even compete.

Whilst the terrain of feminist activism is constantly shifting and reconfiguring, the continued fragmentation of women’s movements in Africa seriously inhibits the forward progression of our agenda for the rights and dignity of African women. The theme feminist connections was therefore chosen for the third AFF with the belief that in order to achieve the unimaginable, African women need to struggle together, to move together, to think together and to celebrate together.

Participants were urged to bring their minds, bodies and soul to the AFF space in order to reflect critically on the status of women’s movements and feminist organizing on the continent.

In addition, there is a growing trend across Africa for feminist activists and human rights defenders to be directly targeted by those who promote these fundamentalisms. Unfortunately, the fractured solidarity of the women’s movement and other partners in the fight for social justice means that resistance to this latest onslaught has been slow, insufficient and often poorly coordinated. Ms. Codou Bop, coordinator of GREFELS, posed the apt question to the forum: “What is it that breaks our solidarity from within? And how can we as feminists move beyond analysing these fundamentalisms to claiming our freedom?” The 2010 AFF was deemed an opportune moment to reflect on such questions, to connect our visions and actions as African feminists, and to connect with each other. Hence its theme: feminist connections.

1. This was the first time that the AFF was held in a Francophone country, the previous two forums having been held in Accra, Ghana (2006) and Kampala, Uganda (2008).
2. The arrests of feminist activists, Isatou Touray and Amie Bojang-Sissoho, in The Gambia because of their public stand against harmful traditional practices, is but one example.
As has become custom, a variety of creative and participatory methodologies were employed at the AFF with the aim of stimulating thinking and re-energising participants. In addition to the plenaries, in which feminist leaders and intellectuals presented thought-provoking papers, the 2010 AFF included interactive sessions such as the great debate and great trial, which provided humorous but important opportunities to consider the overall status of women’s movements in Africa, and the key issues and discourses that shape this.

The programme also included multi-generational dialogues and a variety of skills-building workshops, from which participants could obtain new ideas and techniques for their personal effectiveness and feminist activism. A key highlight of the forum was the preview of the movie, The Witches of Gambaga, directed by two leading African feminists. This showcased the potential of new media and forms of creative expression as tools for feminist consciousness-raising and mobilising for social justice.

In keeping with the forum theme, participants at the AFF were given an opportunity to connect with each other through caucuses geared at promoting stronger collaborations amongst the sub-regional and diasporic feminists; a petition for the Gambian feminist activists currently on trial; a fundraising event in solidarity with Senegalese women; and fun activities including an open-mic session and gala evening. The two latter events stimulated dynamic and creative expression in the form of song, dance and poetry, bringing a certain soulfulness to the AFF space.

The speakers emphasised the need to integrate new and more effective forms of feminist engagements in Africa, highlighting the following as critical:

- Conceptual clarity to ensure that feminist practice and conduct are rooted and guided by theory.
- A deeper interrogation and analysis of culture and religion, to identify entry points for feminist engagement.
- Bottom-up organising through active collaboration with our constituents, in order to remain relevant and connected to the issues.
- Strategic alliances with other social movements in order to build collective power.
- A paradigm shift in our relationships with money and markets.
Connections with Self – “The Personal is Political:” Being a Feminist in Africa Today

Usu Malya, executive director of the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), addressed the disconnect between feminist theory and practice, as well as between feminist activism and individual activists. Her presentation emphasised the importance for African feminist analysis and activism to be guided by ideological clarity, that is an understanding of the whys and hows of women’s oppression in Africa, and an understanding of our socio-economic contexts.

Usu highlighted that African feminist theory has been influenced by ideas from the global feminist movement. In particular, the notion ‘that the personal is political’ has contributed to the understanding that women’s personal experiences have political causes and effects, namely a patriarchal social order which strives to maintain women’s subordination.

African feminist theory has also been influenced by the socio-economic realities of the African continent and its historical marginalisation and exclusion. This theory therefore recognises the influence of factors such as race, colonialism, imperialism, religion, ethnicity, culture, class and globalisation on African women’s experiences. It follows that it considers the multiple and intersecting layers of marginalisation that African women face.

Ensuring that activism is underpinned by theoretical and contextual analyses is therefore key to improving African feminisms’ engagement with, and responsiveness to, the lived realities of African women. In addition, Usu proposed that for African feminists to remain connected, feminist values and principles should not only guide our public engagement and organisations, but also our private lives. As she put it: “We must walk with the talk and brace ourselves for the continuous challenges, remembering that feminism and connecting with self is a life-long process that involves learning and unlearning.”

Connections with Community

The sheer magnitude of women’s rights issues in Africa requires immense resources and multiple approaches by feminists. Using examples from South Africa, Lesley Ann Foster of the Masimanyane Women’s Support Centre and Amanatere, highlighted community organising as one of the most viable approaches in the struggle for gender equality. She pointed out that community organising in this context refers to active collaboration with other movements and groups, including women, at the grassroots level, as a means of achieving social change through collective action. Community organising brings on board not only a large constituency, but also different synergies that can collectively contribute to the resolution of specific issues.

Lesley emphasised the importance of recognising that African women have for centuries resisted patriarchy, and are acutely aware of how male domination affects their lives. While they may lack visibility, women at the grassroots level have long been engaged in feminist struggles and devised their own practical responses to political, economic and cultural oppressions. As Lesley noted:

“It is long overdue for feminist activists to acknowledge and build on the activism taking place at the community level. We need to develop the leadership capacity at the community level because that is the only way feminists can combat the backlash and fundamentalisms that women face.”

She cited the experiences of civil society organisations (CSOs) during the post-apartheid transition in South Africa, which show how close collaboration with community activists can, for example, enhance policy advocacy efforts. In South Africa, an alliance with the trade union movement and community-level women facilitated a participatory approach in the identification of critical gender issues, and generated massive support and a vibrant campaign for the representation and active involvement of women in the constitution-making process. As a result, South Africa today has one of the most gender sensitive constitutions on the continent.

Similar success was registered by a coalition spearheaded by Amanatere in its campaign on violence against women, following the murder of a young female marine worker. The sustained pressure by the coalition comprising of the media, trade unions, women and religious groups, pushed the South African government into drafting new, progressive maritime laws with specific clauses protecting female employees. The utilisation of different media further ensured that the campaign attracted international attention, later resulting in the review of international maritime law.

While limited to South Africa, the examples Lesley cited ably demonstrate how broad alliances can bolster advocacy efforts. They present a strong argument for African feminists to consider community organising as a strategy for promoting and defending women’s rights at the local, national and global level.

Connections with the State

Malika Ben Radi, from Morocco, addressed the disconnect between feminists and the state, particularly the insufficient interrogation of the dual role the state plays in promoting gender equality while maintaining gender inequality. In doing so, she called into question the very capacity of the state to dismantle sexism.

Malika argued that the ‘modernisation’ of the African state has engendered the rationalisation of most dimensions of political and social life, with the exception of the principle that human rights are universal and indivisible, particularly as they apply to women. On the one hand, most states in Africa strive to be recognised as ‘progressive’ by promoting women’s rights in some arenas, for instance employment and political participation. Yet many are concurrently ‘putting the breaks’ on this progress by delaying or avoiding a deconstruction of cultural and religious norms concerning women’s entitlements and position in society. For example, it is evident that many African governments, despite their authority to do so, avoid dealing with issues related to women’s sexual and reproductive health rights such as female genital mutilation (FGM), fertility, birth control and abortion.

There is a clear contradiction if the state claims to be increasing space for women’s political participation and leadership, while at the same time preserving the power of culture and religion, to undermine women’s subversive capacity. Similarly, Malika discussed how most African states have adopted the principle of ‘gender mainstreaming’ with superficial, rather than structural or systemic, results.

Therefore, according to Malika: “The challenge for the feminist movement is how to deal with this dual role of the state – that is both positive and negative at the same time. It is apparent that feminists have not analysed their connections to the state sufficiently. The rights of women within the public and private domain in national constitutions is where this analysis should begin, with a view to aligning local legislation with more progressive regional and international human rights frameworks.” National constitutions must embody the principle of gender equality, and feminists must demand that the state revise laws and customs that are not consistent with this constitutional principle.

Connections with Money and Markets

Esther Passaris, a social entrepreneur, focused on feminist connections with money. She underscored the critical role of money in fulfilling personal needs and achieving the goals and objectives of the feminist agenda. Key points from her presentation included:

- the need for an attitudinal change among feminist regarding money, financial and economic literacy.
- the power of affirmation and the importance of language as a tool for attracting success: “If we perceive women’s liberation as a success rather than struggle, we will achieve success.”
- the need to become funders of our own movement by adopting new strategies of mobilising resources, for instance through supporting the development of local markets: “Our quest for social justice must begin with our own efforts to create jobs and income for women in Africa, by buying local.”
The National Feminist Forums: What We Have Achieved Thus Far

Moderator: Shamillah Wilson
Rapporteur: Patricia Munabi

“Do not agonise, organise” — Tajudeen Abdul Raheem

A key outcome from the first convening of the AFF in Accra in 2006 was the establishment of national feminist forums in different countries on the continent. This was motivated by the need to strengthen feminist organising to deal effectively with the various national issues that African feminists face. As indicated in the examples below, this objective is beginning to materialise, although many countries are yet to fully establish national forums. There are plans by the AFF Working Group to put in place a “guardian circle,” as a mechanism to support the launch of more national feminist forums.

Nigerian Feminist Forum
Achievements:
Key player in advocacy against the Public Nudity and Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) bills.
Coalition-building with other movements and women’s organisations.

Uganda Feminist Forum
Achievements:
Three forums in 2008, 2009 and 2010:
Releasing Feminist Brakes, Movement Building and UFF Vision 2025.
Key player in the Anti-homosexuality Bill Coalition and ratification of Maputo Protocol.
Advocacy for FGM and Domestic Violence Acts.
Handover of UFF secretariat from Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) to Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE).

African Feminist Forum Secretariat
Achievements:
Mobilisation of funds for feminist work on the continent.
Popularising the African feminist charter and organisational development (OD) tool.
Engagement with popular culture and establishment of biennial forum to mentor women in film industry.

Senegal Feminist Forum
Achievements:
First forum in 2010: Identifying Ourselves as Feminists.
Translation of the African feminist charter into Wolof.
Establishment of working groups on: economy, youth, environment, and politics.
Skills-building on communication and reproductive health issues.

"Do not agonise, organise" — Tajudeen Abdul Raheem

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Workshops: Managing Pressure Points in Our Different Generations

Moderator: Mary Wandia
Resource persons: Fatou Sow (Senegal), Hilda Tadria (Uganda), Diakhoumba Gassama (Senegal/Spain), Kaari Murungi (Kenya)

Burnout is a common affliction amongst African feminists, mainly resulting from our multiple roles and responsibilities. Managing the work-life balance – family, work and movement building responsibilities – is one of the common pressure points. This panel was arranged to facilitate the sharing of tools and information on this subject between different generations of feminists. The ultimate objective was to foreground the well-being of feminists as critical to the sustainability of the feminist movement.

A panel of both seasoned and younger feminists shared their experiences of navigating personal and professional relationships, managing resources such as time and money, health issues, as well as some of their personal coping-mechanisms for the competing demands in their lives. There was general consensus that stress is inevitable, such that it is important to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to manage it. Some of the tips that emerged from the discussion are:

- Identifying the underlying causes of stress and possible ways of resolving them.
- Taking charge of one’s life by making and sticking to choices that work for one’s personal circumstances.
- Being assertive and developing boundaries in both the personal and professional spheres of life. In other words being able to decide what one can take on and what is unacceptable.
- Learning to say ‘no.’
- Being clear about one’s personal values and engaging in only those activities that ring true to one’s spirit and soul. In other words, not conforming to the expectations of others.
- Seeking the support of other women and sisters, including mentors, in one’s personal and professional development.
- Adopting a healthy lifestyle and nurturing the self by engaging in regular exercise, sport, sleep, relaxation and fun.
- Maintaining open and regular communication with family members and significant others, to facilitate support and understanding for one’s work.
- Walking away from toxic environments and people.
- Surrounding oneself with positive people and taking responsibility for one’s individual happiness.
- Seeking spiritual guidance and nourishment.
Skills-Building Workshop: Writing, Writing, Writing

Moderator: Bibi Bakare Yusuf (Nigeria)
Resource persons: Demere Kitunga (Tanzania), Aissatou Cissé (Senegal)
Rapporteur: Mabel Takoma (Cameroon)

Although it is only one of many forms of creative expression, writing is an important form of engagement and a critical skill for feminist knowledge production. Writing is a powerful means for African women to give voice to their own issues. This includes accurately documenting and depicting the realities and experiences of African women, recording herstories, choosing what to share and amplify as part of feminist movement building and organising, both within and beyond the movement.

This skills-building workshop thus sought to introduce participants to the basic skills of writing, and encourage them to document their stories and experiences using different formats, including contemporary media such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

By the end of the workshop, the participants, who included both aspiring and accomplished writers, had generated an array of stories covering critical women’s rights issues, illustrating the ability of African feminists to write and reflect on experiences concerning their bodies and their rights. The fear of failing to meet publishing standards was noted as an inhibiting factor for African women’s writing. However, the workshop moderators and participants alike affirmed that this should not stop us from writing, as it will perpetuate a situation where African women’s narratives are told by others.

The following basic tips for feminist writers were shared:

- The secret of writing is to do just that, write. Write on topics/issues that one knows about.
- The first sentence is the most important, after which other ideas will often flow.
- To be a good writer, one has to be a good reader. It is a good idea to study different writers’ styles, for instance their use of language, expression, choice and arrangement of words, and the feelings that all these evoke.
- Incorporating the five senses (sight, smell, touch, feeling and sound) often inspires creativity in writers.
- Writing is about expressing one’s self and people express to be heard. However, it is important to balance the need to write for self-expression and for others.

Aspiring feminist writers were cautioned that:

- Writing is not an easy task as it sometimes brings to the surface the writer’s fears and insecurities.
- It is natural to worry that one’s writing may not be good enough to be published. However, one needs to make the choice to either give up or defeat the demons by writing even more.
- Writing is a moment of solidarity and connecting with ourselves, because it is often an individual activity. Feminist writers should therefore desist from judging and policing each other.
The Great Debate: “Women Are Their Own Worst Enemies”

Moderator: Bene Madunagu

For the Motion
Betty Luma (Cameroon)
Priscilla Usibaifo (Nigeria)
Djingarey Maiga (Mali)

Against the Motion
Bella Matambanadzo (Zimbabwe)
Koorto Williams (Liberia)
Massan d’Almedia (Togo)

The mock debate sought to interrogate the anti-feminist rhetoric that “women do not help themselves,” which has been long used to derail the feminist movement. In debating this notion, the objective was to thereby identify and develop strategies to combat it.

Those in agreement with the motion argued that women are their own worst enemies on account of:

- Women’s continued collaboration with patriarchal structures and systems. The gatekeepers of patriarchy include women who promote and participate in harmful cultural practices such as FGM, breast-ironing and widowhood rites.
- Women’s role in the socialization of boys and girls in conformity with hegemonic, socially defined roles, even when these serve to place girls and women in subservient positions.
- Women’s acceptance of systems of male privilege such as polygamy, which undermines women’s dignity and equal right to mutually respectful and fulfilling relationships.
- Women’s self-limiting behaviours and conformist attitudes with regard to gender stereotypes, particularly within the professional arena.
- The selfish tendencies of women who have climbed to the top of their careers and prefer to carry the ladder along with them, instead of leaving it for their sisters to climb, for instance through mentoring and supporting the professional development of other women.
- Women’s poor leadership and exercise of power when in positions of authority. Many women leaders have been accused of the ‘Mama Fowl syndrome:’ managing women subordinates in a matronising way and trapping them under their fold.
- The ‘pull her down’ (phd) syndrome and unhealthy competition amongst women.
- Women’s poor leadership and exercise of power when in positions of authority. Many women leaders have been accused of the ‘Mama Fowl syndrome:’ managing women subordinates in a matronising way and trapping them under their fold.
- Women’s submissiveness in personal relationships at the expense of their own dreams, fulfillment and happiness. Many wind up bitter and resentful of others who have refused to give up their dreams.
- Lack of solidarity in promoting women’s leadership and women’s issues. Although the majority of the population, women have consistently voted for men to take up leadership positions. This disregard for women’s own power facilitates the co-option of women leaders at the expense of the concerns of their primary constituency. Some of the most repressive bills have been sponsored by female legislators, for instance in Nigeria.

Those against the motion argued that:

- Those who say that women are their own worst enemies are tools of the patriarchal system. Women are products of patriarchy and its socialisation, and have learned to fit into this social order to survive. Even then, women are struggling to challenge the status quo in many ways, such as by personal and activist resistance to patriarchal authority and systems, and by showing solidarity with others who do the same, thereby building their collective strength.
- Underpinning all of women’s struggles is the need to support other women and protect their rights. The existence of various women organisations advocating for women’s rights at the community, national, regional and international levels is testimony to this fact. There are also many examples of women supporting each other informally, especially during times of hardship like bereavement, sickness, war and armed conflict.
- There are clear examples of women’s solidarity for women’s leadership, for example evidenced by the active role that women in Liberia played in electing Africa’s first woman president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.
- While various allegations are made about women’s self-limiting behaviour, failure to socialize children differently and so on, it is important to recognise that women do not control the mass media, the school system and their sexist ideas.
Conclusion and Way Forward

Whereas it is not true that women are their own worst enemies, those for the motion carried the day on account of their vivid examples. This illustrates certain weaknesses and gaps in African feminists’ ability to articulate and counter untruths about themselves and feminism. In particular:

- The language employed by feminists is frequently too intellectual, not easily understood and thus not very effective in countering anti-feminist rhetoric. The promoters of this rhetoric, on the contrary, are very persuasive in their arguments and have used it to effectively divide the women’s movement. It is important that the feminist movement revisits its language and emerges with clear and convincing articulations of its key issues and positions.

- Feminists need to understand the intent and workings of this anti-feminist discourse. The message is a tool. It blames the victim, which is an easy way to deflect responsibility and attention away from the perpetrators and beneficiaries of women’s oppression, and its systemic nature. Understanding this is critical for feminists to avoid being derailed by the rhetoric. In order to end patriarchy, women have to first make a break with patriarchal thinking, refusing and deconstructing patriarchal ideologies such as this.

- It is plausible that African feminists have not sufficiently documented their contributions to the struggle for women’s rights. There is therefore a need to write and make known our achievements in shifting patriarchal thinking, resisting patriarchy and showing solidarity with each other.

- Additional examples to dispel the notion that women do not help themselves:
  - Shifting patriarchal thinking: The very existence of feminist thinking, theory and writing is clear evidence that despite the heavy weight and institutionalisation of patriarchal ideology, many women have refused to collude with it. This refutes the argument that women are their own worst enemies.
  - The very fact that women’s rights now have to be acknowledged in political discourse throughout the world is testimony to this.
  - Resistances to patriarchy – individual and collective, past and present: There are many instances of African women resisting patriarchy in relation to their access to education, forced marriages, employment opportunities, control of their sexuality and so on. Women have resisted individually, collectively and on behalf of others – hence the multitude of women’s rights organisations in Africa.
  - Activism to end patriarchy: The AFF is constituted by feminist activists engaged in different aspects of the struggle for women’s rights. It is thanks to many African women’s struggle and activism that gains have been realised across the continent in relation to women’s property rights, political participation, increasing freedom from violence, access to education and so on. These gains were not given to women; rather they are the result of many lifetimes of commitment, labour, dedication and expertise by African women, for themselves and for each other. Far from being their own worst enemies, women are each other’s best friends.
Solidarity with women fighting patriarchy: Women have also shown great solidarity with each other in their local and national struggles to break patriarchy. They have shown solidarity with those who have faced culturally or religiously-specific struggles against issues like forced marriages and sharia law. In liberation and post-conflict contexts, women have worked in solidarity to support those who have suffered rape and sexually abuse, ensuring that rape is now recognised as a war crime. Far from being their own worst enemies, women’s lives, chances and opportunities have been enhanced and, indeed, sometimes saved by other women’s solidarity.

Plenary: Connecting and Challenging Power: Feminist Responses to Fundamentalisms

Moderator: Jessica Horn
Panel: Sylvia Tamale, Djingarey Maiga, and Iheoma Obibi
Rapporteur: Bunmi Dipo-Salami

This plenary analysed the growing influence of economic, religious and cultural fundamentalisms, their implications for women’s rights in Africa, and the need for a more strategic and effective feminist response to them. Using research findings and case studies from Uganda, Nigeria and Mali, the plenary speakers illustrated how these fundamentalisms are working and finding their way into law. They also presented examples of resistance that have proven fairly effective.

The resurgence of different kinds of fundamentalisms has fuelled a serious backlash against the advancement of women’s rights and autonomy in Africa. Religious fundamentalisms are patriarchal and ‘anti-women,’ and their ‘one way and one way only’ approach is used politically to maintain the status quo, perpetuate gender hierarchies and deny certain groups their full citizenship. Paradoxically, religious fundamentalisms, particularly the pentecostal and charismatic Christian movements, are growing in strength and influence in Africa on account of their mobilisation strategies: messages of hope and prosperity which appeal especially to the economically marginalised, the majority of whom are women.
By emphasising a return to ‘traditional values’ and ‘spiritual’ perspectives, fundamentalists have used religion to de-politicise the structural arrangements that give certain groups power and privilege over others. This undermines their followers’ capacity to critically think, question and challenge the conservative postulations of religious leaders, or the oppressive circumstances of their daily lives. This is where the danger of fundamentalism especially lies: in fostering an increasing inability and lack of desire among Africans to question religious doctrine and other oppressive ideologies. This has created obstacles in advancing women’s rights, particularly with regard to recognising new human rights frameworks. If left unchecked, religious fundamentalisms in Africa have the potential to roll back hard-won feminist gains. It is therefore imperative to urgently identify and explore new strategies to counter these fundamentalisms.

Using Religion to Justify Gender Oppression

According to Sylvia Tamale, religion has an important influence on people’s values and experiences, and provides them with the symbols and tools to manage different aspects of their lives, particularly during times of hardship. African feminists must not ignore or underestimate the power and hold of religion, given its implications for the strategies they employ to confront women’s oppression. Moreover, there has been a shocking resurgence of religious fundamentalism in Africa, linked to growing partnerships between American right-wing fundamentalists and local churches. Fundamentalists often justify gender and other oppression on the basis of religion. For instance, in Uganda religious fundamentalist repression has been primarily manifest as attacks on women’s bodily autonomy, integrity and dignity. It is therefore critical for African feminists to be strategic in addressing such fundamentalisms, which, indeed, pose the single most dangerous threat to our aims.

At the same time, despite dominant patriarchal interpretations, religion has also been an invaluable resource for Africans struggling for equality, freedom and liberty. The struggles against colonialism, slavery, apartheid and racial discrimination were often based on religious principles. Therefore, feminists can also tap into, and take advantage of, the potentially liberatory aspects of religion for women. Sylvia noted that: “African feminists should therefore focus on reconstructing religion in a manner that makes it more egalitarian and relevant to women. This would inevitably require leading a process of un-learning the dominant, hegemonic religious culture and re-learning a new, liberating one.”

The Case of the Public Nudity and Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Bills in Nigeria

Iheoma Obibi pointed out that: “one of the frightening things about the promoters of fundamentalisms is their capacity to infiltrate and use every available channel, including the state, to impose and influence public policy with their ideas on morality.” She cited the example of the Nigerian legislature, where fundamentalists from the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity) have sought to contain women’s freedoms and bodily integrity by sponsoring bills that contradict the human rights and democratic principles of equality, expression and association, guaranteed by the Nigerian constitution.

Among these bills are the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill, which sought to invade the privacy and dignity of citizens, and the Public Nudity Bill. The latter (ironically proposed by a female legislator and Chair of the Senate Committee on Women and Youth), sought to subject women to fundamentalist violence by granting both police officers and ordinary citizens the power to arrest and/or undertake vigilante action against women they perceived to be ‘indelicately dressed.’

While supported within some quarters, both bills were eventually squashed as a result of the vigilantism and concerted efforts of Nigerian feminists. By applying a multi-pronged approach that included preparation of a legal opinion; working with the Senate Committee on Human Rights; the organisation of public hearings on both bills; petitions to regional bodies; and utilisation of local media and social media to increase coverage and public debate, the feminist sisterhood was able to challenge the bills on the basis of their contraventions of international human rights instruments. This, they hoped, effectively put a stop to the dangerous trend.

Feminist Organising to Secure the Family Code in Mali

Djingarey Maiga highlighted that the experiences of women in Mali attempting to secure a ‘family code; (a law regulating domestic relations in the instances of marriage, inheritance and enhances girls’ rights in Mali) is further evidence of the power of feminist organising against religious fundamentalism. She noted that: “activists have not been deterred but rather further motivated by the backlash from Islamic fundamentalists, who have organised other women to demonstrate against the Code which, according to their understanding, does not tally with Islam.”

While those opposed to the code, led by the Islamic Council, attempted to use religion to suppress women, feminist activists applied a dual approach to challenge the old laws. This included evoking international human rights instruments, specifically Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which compels states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relations. This was complemented by an interrogation of religion and research on the Koran that enabled the activists to highlight progressive hadiths and verses that support women’s rights. The activists then invoked such hadiths as part of their arguments for a more progressive family code. This process entailed intense networking and information-sharing amongst women groups; awareness-raising and dialogue with various stakeholders on international treaties and the realities of Malian women; and active media engagement to dispel untrue stories and promote a shared understanding of the principles behind the code.

Challenging Fundamentalisms: Moving Forward

Following the presentations, participants discussed and identified that which they considered as some of the bigger challenges in combating religious fundamentalisms in Africa which, if addressed, could pave way for a more effective feminist response.

- Religion is at the core of people’s lives, communities and societies, and thus for many it is sacrosanct and difficult to criticise or interrogate.
- There are gaps in our analyses of African traditional religions and practices, and their points of convergence with organised religions from the global North and East. It is important to situate and interrogate the oppression of African women that derives from traditional religions, not only Christianity and Islam.
- As women are excluded from key decision-making positions within patriarchal religious institutions, there are limited entry points and capacity for feminist engagement to influence the thinking and interpretation of doctrine from within.
- Feminists are relatively preoccupied with securing gender-sensitive laws and policies that are, in some cases, only false comfort. While such laws may be enacted, they mean little if traditional practices and attitudes remain unchanged. Therefore, there is need for feminists to engage more with what goes on at the community level, including reviewing and re-defining ways of thinking and dealing with culture.
While recognising such challenges, the plenary agreed that it was no longer excusable to allow fundamentalisms in Africa to go unchallenged. The time has come to muster the necessary political will, resources and strategies to combat them. To this end, various participants proposed strategic alliances, mass mobilisation strategies and organising a specific conference on religion and cultural fundamentalisms. The plenary agreed to immediately embark on the following:

- Begin challenging fundamentalisms from both within and outside religious institutions.
- Build a knowledge base and understanding, through rigorous research and documentation, on religious and cultural fundamentalists. Feminist scholars and activists should collaborate to deconstruct religion and the interpretation of religious texts including the Bible, Koran and hadiths, to critique those that promote the oppression of women, as well as identify the more progressive verses that can serve to support feminist advocacy.
- Identify progressive allies within religious institutions to challenge conservative interpretations of religion.
- Demystify and expose fundamentalisms whose interest is in power rather than addressing social problems and injustices.
- Strongly advocate for a culture that is founded on basic human rights, and deconstruct essentialist ideas of ‘African culture’. Rights are now considered universal, while religion and culture change across time and place. Arguments that culture and religion in Africa are essential and static, and therefore unchallengeable, are false. African culture is constantly being re-shaped by different and intersecting phenomena.
- Identify avenues for constructive engagement with different religions and cultures. Feminists should desist from totally dismissing these social systems, but rather focus on identifying their positive aspects and seizing opportunities within them that can be used to women’s advantage.
- Document and share analyses and responses to fundamentalisms that have been effective in defending women’s rights in specific communities.
- Step up feminist organising against fundamentalisms by engaging with power and the state where these fundamentalisms contravene women’s human rights.

Workshops

Photovoice – Giving Voice through Photography
Moderator: Yaliwe Clark
Resource persons: Shamillah Wilson (South Africa) and Françoise Mukuku (DRC)
Rapporteur: Zeytuna Azasso

The objective of this skills-building workshop was to equip participants with skills on the use of Photovoice, an innovative method with the ability to enhance advocacy efforts for women’s rights. Photovoice blends photography and grassroots social action. By actively involving communities in its execution, Photovoice helps people to photograph and thereby record and reflect on particular issues within their communities, around which they can develop an action agenda. Photovoice in this sense ‘gives voice’ to marginalised communities, and is particularly oriented towards the empowerment of the oppressed.

A case study of a Photovoice project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was used to illustrate how to use Photovoice. In this case, Photovoice was used to explore and facilitate dialogue around various women’s rights themes, such as sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, early marriages and commercial sex work.
What makes Photovoice an effective advocacy tool for women’s rights?

- Photographs tell stories better than text and are hence a very effective communication tool.
- Photographs have the power to illustrate situations and are particularly helpful when people are not literate.
- Photography has the ability to bring nuances to situations that would otherwise be missed.
- Photographs can be used to give visual meaning to written text.
- Some audiences are more receptive to visual images.
- Photographs have the ability to capture special moments in time.
- Photographs can be used to present alternative, positive images of women to challenge problematic or stereotypical media portrayals, for instance of women as sex objects or in limited social roles.

Guiding Questions

- What I like
- What I do not like
- What I would like to change

Because it is not value-free, Photovoice has a set of ethics. These include:

- Seeking the consent of communities to take and use photographs prior to a project.
- Educating communities on the objectives of Photovoice projects.
- Involving communities in the shooting and selection of photographs.
- Protecting individuals and communities by shielding their identities where necessary.
- Promoting ownership by working with communities to develop narratives to explain photographs.
- Ensuring that the interpretation of photographs concurs with the community’s understanding of the represented situation, to promote the integrity of the project.
- Photovoice is a group process and should be part of an empowerment strategy aimed at strengthening a community’s collective reflection and self-advocacy efforts against negative policies, laws and cultural practices.
- It should enhance a community’s capacity to demand for accountability.

Stages of a Photovoice Project

- Conceptualising the problem
- Identifying the main themes
- Training on photography/camera techniques
- Taking pictures
- Selecting pictures for discussion
- Facilitating discussion and critical dialogue about selected pictures
- Developing a narrative around pictures
- Documenting stories
- Disseminating findings

Group Exercise

To practicalise the learning from the session, participants were asked to photograph key issues and objects that reflect the AFF theme of feminist connections. The outcomes would thereafter be utilised to develop key messages and stories that will form part of the AFF products.

Photographs depicting different sub-themes of the forum were presented, such as:

- Different hairstyles which could be perceived as a form of subversion.
- Patterns and colours of chair fabrics to represent the mosaic of the AFF, that is diverse feminist identities.
- Women coming together to promote women’s rights — a symbol of sisterhood.
- African attire — celebration of African roots and of our bodies and beauty.

Conclusion

There is more than one way to tell a story and there are even more ways through pictures. It was noted that while Photovoice may be a challenging tool, it offers an exciting exercise in terms of how differently people see the world. Photovoice illustrates a diversity of expression and perspectives, which can be enriching and deepen our understanding of community issues.

Tips on using Photovoice

Photovoice has three main goals:

1. To enable people to record and reflect on their community’s strengths and challenges.
2. To facilitate critical dialogue about community issues through group discussions.
3. To convey a message.
Women’s Acts of Subversion

Moderator: Yaliwe Clark
Rapporteur: Lesley Ann Foster
Resources persons: Amina Mama and Abena Busia

The workshop set out to explore and illustrate the meaning of subversion. Through practical exercises and the sharing of individual and collective accounts, participants were able to recognise the different forms of subversion in their everyday lives.

The group also analysed the politics and power dynamics hidden in the ‘everyday’ – in events, institutional structures, building architecture, the arrangement and utilisation of space – and how these are continuously used to maintain social hierarchies and prevent changes to the status quo.

What is Subversion?

The following contributions emerged from participants in the workshop:
- Defying authority
- Rioting
- Turning things upside down
- Strategic disobedience
- Challenging and going against what is put forward as ‘legitimate’
- Underground or hidden work
- Infiltrating and changing
- Consciously disrupting
- Blocking and preventing
- Sabotaging

Central to all acts of feminist subversion is challenging dominant patriarchal structures and authorities – whether at the level of state institutions, the community or even family. For feminists, subversion is a dance in opposition to authorities, and an experience that requires straddling the lines between the private and the public, the individual and the collective. Notwithstanding its liberating effects, engaging in acts of subversion can be overwhelming. This makes it vital for feminists to have a space to which they can retreat when faced with challenging situations.

The examples presented of feminist-led subversive acts clearly pointed to the need to:
- develop support systems at both the strategic and personal level.
- recognise that much of who feminists are and what they do is part of a collective.
- maintain the links between private and public life, so as to recognise individual acts of resistance as strategic and part of the broader feminist mission.
- understand that subverting patriarchal structures, norms and views can take many forms. Writing, poetry, and dance are creative forms of subversion. Even to laugh, be happy and feel joy is often subversive in the face of the oppression and multiple burdens that African women endure.
- recognise the contribution of resistance to women’s rights. Women’s acts of subversion have a long history and context in Africa. Indeed, African women across different eras have been subversive in order to survive. Hence a sense of history is important, moreover as no act is complete in itself. Each act of subversion can be taken further but can also be subverted.
Exploring the Connections between Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Violence against Women (VAW)

Resource Persons: Sally Jean Shackleton (South Africa) J Janine Moolman (South Africa)

The significance of new media and information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting women’s rights can not be over-stated, owing to the vast information and networking opportunities that these new technologies offer. However, African women’s ability to take advantage of these technologies has been hampered by issues of: accessibility (infrastructure, literacy); appropriateness (content); and appropriation, owing to women’s hitherto limited participation in the development and governance of these ICTs. This situation is beginning to change with increased feminist engagement with ICTs as a medium for giving voice to gender inequalities and challenging mainstream notions of what women are or should be.

Linkages between Gender Inequality and ICT

Gender inequality pervades all aspect of life. It intersects with issues such as economic and political power, ethnicity, disability and sexuality. With regards to ICTs, this impacts women’s control of communication channels and tools; knowledge creation and dissemination; records of our living history; and the paradigm of technology.

Strengthening Women’s Strategic Use of Information and Communications Technologies to Combat Violence against Women and Girls

Those with knowledge of, control and access to ICTs are able to determine their use, development and priorities. For instance, although the Internet is not necessarily creating new forms of crimes against women and children, it is creating new ways and means for these crimes to be perpetrated, such as through online pornography. ICTs also play an increasingly powerful role in disseminating stories about gender relations, sexuality, citizenship, identity, rights and concerns. They can therefore serve as a medium for reinforcing unequal power relations.

At the same time, as is clear, the internet is creating new ways and means for people to organise, network, campaign and bring about social actions. One such example is the Take Back the Tech, an initiative by the Association for Progressive Communications, Women’s Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) to promote an action-based campaign on Violence against Women (VAW & ICTs.)

The campaign is trying to:

- Addressing the intersection between communication rights and women’s human rights, especially concerning violence against women.
- Recognising women’s historical and critical participation and contribution to the development of ICTs.
- Creating digital spaces that protect everyone’s right to move freely, without harassment or threats to their safety (echoing Take Back The Night campaigns).
- Realising women’s rights to shape, define, participate, use and share knowledge, information and ICTs.

The campaign is about:

- Build knowledge on how VAW is connected with ICTs, based on diverse women’s experiences and realities.
- Support and promote local actions, priorities and advocacy issues on VAW and ICTs in different spaces and contexts.
- Collaboratively create strategies on using ICTs to counter VAW.
- Change the landscape, potential and paradigm of ICTs through women’s active participation.
- Facilitate movement building concerning the human rights of women in relation to the field of ICTs.

Take Back The Tech is a collaborative campaign to reclaim information and communications technologies (ICTs) to end VAW. It is a call to every user – especially girls and women – to take control of ICTs and use them strategically for activism against VAW.

Why Take Back The Tech?

Take Back The Tech is about:

- Building a culture of action, digital activism, and a new sense of empowerment for women.
- Supporting women’s human rights in the digital age.
- Building a digital movement that includes women’s voices.
- Creating digital spaces that protect everyone’s right to move freely, without harassment or threats to their safety.

Take Back The Night campaigns are an example of how digital activism can be used to promote women’s rights. The Take Back The Tech campaign is building on this tradition by expanding it to include all users of ICTs, especially girls and women.

APC WNSP is a network of over 150 women from more than 30 countries. It promotes gender equality in the design, development, implementation, access to and use of ICTs, and in the policy decisions and frameworks that regulate them.
Movement Building
Moderator: Patricia Babiha Munabi (Uganda)
Rapporteur: Shereen Essof(Zimbabwe)
Resource persons: Azola Gqwani (South Africa), Seynabou Male (Senegal)

The aim of the workshop was to facilitate a greater understanding of the concept of movement building and ways of strengthening the women’s movement in Africa. Two case studies from Malawi and South Senegal illustrated some of the key issues and common pitfalls associated with movement building, including potential power dynamics and tensions, inclusion and funding.

The discussion led to an identification of critical factors in movement building processes:

- Movements are about action and change. Sometimes movement building is a conscious effort, while other times the process is more organic and different forces bring together people around a shared cause.
- An issue or problem-centered movement has higher chances of survival than one that is open-ended.
- One should not presume to speak for those at the centre of the issue around which the movement is built. Rather, solidarity means those affected should inform the movement’s direction, strategy and voice.

Movements often bring together disparate groups of people, which can lead to internal fragmentation, for instance around age or ideology. Therefore, it is important to manage diversity and maintain focus on the broader cause.

The governance and leadership of a movement is important, yet a movement should transcend personalities. No one person can or should be allowed to ‘own’ a movement.

Conflict within movements should be dealt with openly and swiftly.

Fundraising efforts should cater for both specific campaigns, as well support in institutionalising the movement.

Questions for Further Interrogation by the African Feminist Movement

- How to successfully manage the diversity within the women’s movement and the different positions on certain issues, e.g. LGBTI rights? How can these factors be dealt with in ways that build a more inclusive struggle for African women’s freedom from oppression?
- How feasible or even desirable is it to bring diverse women’s rights groups into the feminist movement? How can the gap between non-governmental organisations (NGOs), urban feminist activists and women at the community level be bridged, so as to build a strong movement?
- Where does one draw the line between the movement organisations, that is NGOs, and the movement itself?
- What can be done to ensure the sustainability of feminist struggles, and what strategies can be borrowed from the successful national liberation movements that were largely self-financed?
Money, Literacy and Entrepreneurship

Moderator: Asmau Joda (Nigeria)
Resource Person: Esther Passaris (Kenya)
Rapporteur: Stella Mukasa (Uganda)

This was a practical skills and knowledge-sharing session. The conversation on money, literacy and entrepreneurship covered a number of topics, including: a) relationships that feminists have with money; b) what feminists should know about personal finances and planning; c) entrepreneurship as a means to generate finance for the individual and the movement. The session also included the sharing of experiences and insights by women in business and the private sector. Money literacy was defined as: “having knowledge to understand issues relating to money, that is being in a position to make informed decisions on money and manage money.”

Participants were advised to obtain as much knowledge as possible about money by reading about it and, where possible, attending short business courses. Emphasis was laid on the importance of pursuing ‘clean’ investments and avoiding unethical conduct at all costs. Examples of such investments are those that promote social entrepreneurship and create jobs for local communities. Franchises of Africa-based enterprises and network marketing were particularly recommended.

Tips on Money

1. Concerning the central role of money and the importance of money literacy, participants were advised to:

   ➤ Plan and manage money for a more secure future and make prudent decisions about it. Plan, make and manage investments and savings, and manage debt, credit and mortgages.

   ➤ Read and understand documentation about money, like financial statements, commercial contracts, insurance policies and audit reports.

   ➤ Take advantage of professional financial services whenever possible. Look out for special funds set aside by banks to promote different categories of the private sector, such as funds for women in business.

   ➤ Understand and negotiate for individual rights; understand the law governing access to money, for instance inheritance/succession laws and contract negotiation.

   ➤ Take advantage of government financial incentives that could save you money.

   ➤ Make smart money decisions – save and look for deals through social networks.

2. Key areas of focus in money management:

   ➤ Participants were advised to start with a dream. This includes making a plan and a budget, including the cost of one’s own labour and time. A key piece of advice was: “Always pay yourself first, others can wait.”

   ➤ Discipline in the use/expenditure of money was advised, as were the need to work with a budget and try to stick with it. Another key piece of advice was to live within one’s means and spend on essentials like shelter, food, utilities, child and health care. In other words, buy what is needed and avoid waste or junk. It was suggested that one should involve children and family in expenditure discussions and decisions.

   ➤ Invest in your health and that of your family by taking life and accident cover.

   ➤ SAVE. Join women’s savings groups and credit societies. Saving money together with other women has liberated many from poverty.

   ➤ Invest wisely, for instance in business, real estate and capital markets.

   ➤ Another key strategy is to build up reserves to be able to pay bills in the event of a ‘no sunshine day’ in business. Reserves should be at least one year’s worth of expenses.

   ➤ Finally, the belief and conviction in success are extremely crucial in managing money, business and investments. Therefore, participants were advised to unlearn the stereotypes about women and money.
Alternative Forms of Resource Mobilisation

Moderator: Muadi Mukenge (Democratic Republic of Congo)
Resource persons: Tina Thiart (South Africa)
Rapporteur: Unoma Madunagu (Nigeria)

Resource mobilisation remains a critical issue for women’s movements in Africa, particularly as funding from the traditional sources for women’s rights has been declining steadily. This skills-building workshop aimed to share fundraising tips and ideas about funding opportunities beyond the traditional donor community that most women’s groups approach. These included: foundations, multi-nationals/corporations, individuals and self-funding. The private sector and corporate bodies, in particular, were identified as one of the alternative avenues that women’s rights organisations should explore.

It was emphasised that regardless of the donor support women’s organisations may receive, they must begin to build their own asset base and contribute towards their own work. This is not only important for the autonomy and sustainability of organisations, but of the African women’s movement as a whole. Having access to self-generated resources will ensure that women’s groups are able to retain autonomy and pursue their agendas.

The following strategies were shared to leverage funds from corporate bodies:

- African women’s organisations need to take advantage of the fact that many corporate bodies hunger for publicity and association with ‘noble causes.’ As part of their corporate social responsibility programmes, many corporations are willing to support initiatives associated with education, health, income generation and small-medium enterprises (SMEs), environment and youth.
- Funding opportunities should only be sought from corporate bodies with integrity, who share similar objectives and goals on social justice issues.
- One way to approach the corporate sector is to identify allies on boards, preferably women, who are interested in women’s rights issues, to champion the cause and also advise on how best to approach the corporation.
- Requests for support should not be restricted to cash but include other forms of material and technical support, which are equally valuable.
- Organisations should be flexible and open to new ideas.
- Organisational credibility and accountability is critical for fundraising within the corporate sector, and for building and sustaining long-term relationships with funders.

In terms of building an asset base, the following was advised:

1. A clearly identifiable niche
2. Proper financial management systems
3. Strong and committed leadership
4. A credible governance structure
5. Internal technical expertise and knowledge
6. Monitoring and evaluation systems
7. A strategic plan

The workshop also identified different strategies for raising resources internally. Ideas included the establishment of business centres; membership contributions; rental income; selling products made by the organisations; and the establishment of endowment funds. Hiring personnel with the requisite skills for this function was identified as critical.
The Great Feminist Trial II: Review and Appeal

The State vs. African Feminists - Case No. 200 of 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judge: Prof. Amina Mama (Nigeria)</th>
<th>Prosecutor: Sylvia Tamale (Uganda)</th>
<th>Defence: Kaari Murungi (Kenya)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court Clerk: Jessica Nisuhe (Uganda)</td>
<td>Witnesses: Fatou Sow (Senegal)</td>
<td>Witnesses: Sarah Mukasa (Uganda), Fanta Cissé (Senegal)</td>
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The great feminist trial was first introduced at the AFF in 2008 as a method for introspection on the state of affairs of the feminist movement in Africa. The feminist movement was at the time considered wanting on six counts below, which essentially concerned the disconnections within the movement, and between the movement and its constituency. The 2008 trial acquitted the feminist movement of counts 3, 4 and 6, and passed sentence on counts 1, 2 and 5.

Count 1: Failing to put in place mechanisms to bring on board younger feminists, and to transfer skills and knowledge.

Count 2: Being unaccountable to the women they are set up to serve, and losing focus and direction.

Count 3: Being timid, indifferent, and inconsistent in demonstration of solidarity.

Count 4: Failing to put in place mechanisms to bring on board younger feminists, and to transfer skills and knowledge.

Count 5: Speaking only to themselves and neglecting the diverse groups they are supposed to represent.

Count 6: Lack of credible feminist institutions with vision and impact.

Lack of credible feminist institutions with vision and impact.

The 2010 feminist trial sought to review these charges and establish whether or not the African feminist movement had made the necessary reforms adequately and in a manner befitting the guiding principles elaborated in the feminist charter.

Progress Achieved

African feminists have individually and collectively devised strategies to strengthen feminist organising on the continent and promote greater coherence between their vision and actions. Progress made includes:

- Development of material such as the organisational development tool to enhance vertical and horizontal accountability within feminist organisations.
- Establishment of linkages with marginalised groups such as LGBTI groups and women with disabilities, and working to mainstream their concerns into women’s and wider human rights organising. Examples of this solidarity include the role played by the coalition of women’s organisations in Uganda in challenging the anti-homosexuality bill which was a clear infringement of the human rights, dignity and privacy of a section of society.
- Development of trans-regional networks around particular issues and themes. The Women’s Peace Coalition has facilitated a collective voice on the implementation of United Nations (UN) resolution 1325.
- Investment in research and knowledge-building. Feminist scholars from Africa have published a number of research studies, including on African women’s sexuality, patriarchy and militarism.
- Creation of spaces to promote multi-generational organising and the transfer of skills and knowledge.

Nevertheless, there are still a number of weaknesses and disconnections within the African feminist movement that continue to undermine its engagement on the continent. These include:

- Language differences between anglophone, francophone and Arabic-speaking countries, which exacerbate the challenges of collaborating.
- The disconnect between knowledge and praxis arising from the division between, and different approaches of, feminist activists and scholars.
- The failure to operationalise and put into practice existing feminist policies.
- The failure to look beyond fundraising for programmes to issues of organisational sustainability.

Observations

The trial highlighted many of the challenges and imperfections that the feminist movement continues to experience. It was acknowledged that achievements and challenges alike must be viewed within the operating context:

- African feminists are working in repressive settings, where laws abound that restrict freedom of association, expression and privacy. They also face structural and cultural violence.
- The feminist movement in Africa is facing a well-resourced fundamentalist movement that is evidently led by religious and political leaders within and beyond formal institutions.
- There have also been major reversals of women’s human rights gain and an increase in sexual violence against women in the recent past in many African contexts.
- The global economic and financial crisis has further limited funding to women’s organisations, and hence compromised their long-term sustainability.

The global economic and financial crisis has further limited funding to women’s organisations, and hence compromised their long-term sustainability.
Conclusion

Following representations during the trial for and against the African feminist movement, it was found that despite the myriad challenges, the movement is continuing to progress and strengthen its organising. It was felt that due recognition should be given to the movement’s increasingly pro-active approach and strategising around emerging issues such as militarism, fundamentalisms, globalisation, changing aid modalities, climate change and food security. The movement has succeeded in establishing spaces within which it is continuously interrogating these issues.

However, in order to increase the African feminist movement’s responsiveness to its constituency, the following is needed:

- strong accountable organisations that can withstand the dual forces of economic decline and religious fundamentalisms.
- to establish vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms including internal reviews, public debates and coalitions to negotiate with donors to improve financial accountability.

The Judgment:

Count 1: Not guilty
Count 2: Not guilty
Count 3: Acquittal upheld
Count 4: Acquittal upheld
Count 5: Dismissed
Count 6: Dismissed

Plenary: Power, the State and Accountability

Moderator: Jessica Nkuube (Uganda/Kenya)
Rapporteur: Emilia Eyo (Nigeria)
Resource Persons: H.E. Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (Nigeria) – First Lady Ekiti State/President, AWDF
Hon. Awa Fall Diop (Senegal) – Honorable Minister, Federal Government
Hon. Margaret Dongo (Zimbabwe) – Member of Parliament and former freedom-fighter

In addition to women’s entitlement to participate equally in formal decision-making processes and to speak for themselves, their presence in African governance institutions is widely perceived as an avenue for redressing gender inequalities and promoting social transformation. Feminist struggles in Africa and globally have paved the way for the increased numbers and representation of women in political decision-making structures. However, despite their increased presence, women’s political influence remains insignificant, and women’s needs and priorities remain at the margins of policy and budget processes. This disconnect between women’s engagement with power and its benefits is one that the feminist movement in Africa has been grappling with.
A number of high-level feminist politicians were invited to share their experiences within the corridors of power and to shed light on the persistent obstacles to gender equality within political processes. The discussion covered a range of issues, including factors affecting women’s access to decision making, and their effective participation and leadership within hostile patriarchal institutions. The plenary also identified strategies to deal with challenges and barriers facing women in politics, and to strengthen the qualitative and quantitative political participation of women at all levels.

While sharing their political experiences, the panelists reiterated that “although engagement with power was fraught with challenges and trials, it was imperative for feminists to get into positions of power in order to effectively challenge patriarchy” (Margaret Dongo). They noted that feminists have been working on the sidelines for far too long and with limited results. It is high time that feminists leverage the power and authority of the state and draw from these to create positive changes for women across the continent.

The three feminist politicians have each, during their term of office, championed efforts aimed at promoting women’s rights. Their achievements include the appointment of a woman deputy governor in Ekiti State in Nigeria; women’s right to endorse their children’s travel documents in Zimbabwe; strengthening the alliance between women politicians and other movements fighting for social and gender justice (Senegal); and mentoring of women for leadership positions and to better represent women’s issues.

Key Drivers for Feminist Engagement with Power and the State

In Africa, these key drivers include globalisation and its macroeconomic effects; growing militarisms and fundamentalisms; the numerically weak and insufficient representation of women in key decision-making positions and the co-option of those already there; the recognition of the limitations of working through civil society organisations. All these issues necessitate a more pro-active approach by feminists in the political realm.

Feminist leadership within institutions of governance at the local, national and regional levels is necessary to:

- ensure that gender equality and women’s rights issues are at the centre of national development policies.
- promote and protect women’s full citizenship.
- demonstrate alternative forms of leadership that are more accountable and responsive to the different needs of men and women.

Based on their experiences, the panelists identified the following barriers to women’s access to, and effective participation within, decision-making processes and structures in Africa:

- the commercialisation of politics and women’s low socio-economic resources relative to men.
- rampant corruption and manipulation of electoral processes.
- the patriarchal nature of, and deeply entrenched male prejudices within, modern democracies.
- fixed mindsets concerning a gendered public-private dichotomy, sexism and presumptions about men’s natural leadership roles.
- male domination of political parties and structures, a culture of machismo and unequal treatment of women within these structures.
- multiple layers of discrimination facing women, including ethnic, religious and political.
- women’s weak political capacities and unfamiliarity with the workings of political power.
- limited consciousness of women’s political rights, even among women, which weakens individual and collective agency.

The panelists noted that many of these obstacles apply to both men and women, leading Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi to stress that: “as ugly as they may appear, we can not be quitters and we should not expect to be treated differently.”

Strategies to Strengthen Feminist Engagement with Power

There was consensus on the need for a critical mass of feminist leaders in positions of power, to safeguard women’s rights and push for transformation. Hence there is a need to identify mechanisms that will promote women’s entry to, and effectiveness within, the political arena. Some of the strategies African feminists need to adopt are to:

- improve the responsibility of women’s movements to women in positions of power by clarifying our expectations of their representation and accountability on women’s issues; and consistently offering them support.
- build strong support networks and maintain close connections with family, friends and communities in the quest for political leadership.
- develop national and regional alliances for the purposes of sharing strategies and experiences across countries, to support women’s increased and more effective political participation.
Workshops
Alternative Economic Systems

Moderator: Shamim Meer (South Africa)
Resource persons: Marjorie Mbilinyi (Tanzania/USA) and Fatime Faye (Senegal)
Rapporteur: Unaiti Jaime (Mozambique)

The workshop discussed the role of the existing economic frameworks in exacerbating gender inequalities, and the need therefore for alternatives that will equally benefit both women and men.

The resource persons argued that existing economic frameworks are not working and African governments do not appear to be doing anything about this. In spite of their multiple roles, women’s contribution remains invisible in national economic figures and is not reflected in the allocation of resources towards their needs. Women lack access to productive resources, including land and substantial financing, which has hindered their capacity to move out of poverty. Hence there is an urgent need to advance economic justice, including by exploring alternative economic systems. In the words of Fatime Faye:

“If the system doesn’t work, one needs to move away from it and find alternatives with the view to create money.”

The resource persons also argued that feminism must challenge patriarchy in all its manifestations, including the global capitalist system. It is all the more imperative to explore alternatives as women’s economic and political autonomy are intertwined. According to Marjorie Mbilinyi:

“Patriarchy divides people exploited by globalisation and, for that reason, there is a need to look at alternatives that will address both evils.”

The following considerations and proposals emerged from the discussion:

- Macroeconomics is a feminist issue so feminists must build their knowledge of macroeconomic frameworks, including poverty reduction strategies, in order to advocate for alternative systems that are more supportive of women and sustainable. The search for alternatives begins with an in-depth understanding of the current policies and their implications for women’s rights and opportunities.

- Alternative economic systems should include a holistic approach to rural development, rather than looking at specific aspects of agriculture. Investments should strengthen women’s capacity to produce and hence should consider infrastructure, labor efficient technology, access to markets, trade policies and so on.

- Alternative economic systems should advocate for investments that are driven by the desire to fulfill rights and sustainable development, rather than immediate profits.

- Feminists’ advocacy for alternative economic systems should begin with their entry into policy formulation spaces and stronger engagement with policy-makers, as opposed to working from the outside.

- Promote the sharing of good practices and success stories that support women’s economic empowerment.

- A shift in financing strategies for women beyond micro-finance to the funding of larger-scale projects. Donors need to consider financing institutions that develop separate finance portfolios for women.
The Witches of Gambaga

Moderator: Amina Mama (Nigeria)
Resource persons: Yaba Badoe (Ghana)
Rapporteur: Simidele Dosekun (Nigeria)

This session consisted of a preview of the film, The Witches of Gambaga, a documentary produced by Yaba Badoe and Amina Mama. The film is part of a sexuality research project initiated by the African Gender Institute (AGI) in 2003, aimed at documenting the different forms of rights violation suffered by women in communities around Africa. The project initially faced financial setbacks but was completed with the support of the AWDF, and is to be officially launched in Ghana in November 2010. The AWDF is promoting the use of non-traditional advocacy methods, such as popular culture, as a mobilisation strategy aimed at reaching and engaging the grassroots communities most affected by the violations depicted in the film.

The Witches of Gambaga documents the experiences of women branded as ‘witches,’ ostracised and driven out of their communities, having been accused of being responsible for unexplained misfortunes and deaths there. The film interrogates the gender stereotypes and related forms of oppression experienced by the mostly elderly women, and shows how poverty increases women’s vulnerability and oppression by exploitative, patriarchal power relations.

Aside from the rights violations which the film documents, it raises the fundamental question of how women come to be conceptualized as ‘witches,’ and their resulting subjectivities and feelings of inferiority, given that some women in the film ‘confessed’ to being witches. The branding of women as ‘witches’ has a centuries-long history in Africa, and is today not limited to poor, rural communities. Indeed in popular discourse, ‘feminists are witches.’ At the same time, it was noted that historically, some African women have organised against patriarchy and deliberately separated and empowered themselves by claiming to be ‘witches.’

Issues Highlighted

While African feminists have registered significant progress in securing policy and legislative changes, the film shows how much remains to be done in order to bring about real change in women’s lives. The film illustrated the challenges that must be overcome if international rights instruments are to be of any benefit to the women they seek to protect. Likewise it highlighted the disconnect between pronouncements made at regional levels, and the action taken at national and local levels in Africa.

The experiences of the women in Gambaga highlight a number of issues pertinent to the women’s rights discourses and activism in Africa:

- the multiple layers of discrimination experienced by African women on the basis of their gender, age, socio-economic status and so on.
- the indifference of the state and its institutions to women’s rights violations, manifest in the lack of mechanisms to enforce international and regional human rights instruments. The African state itself is implicated in discourses of witchcraft and harmful cultural practices, given its ambivalence and silence on many of these issues.
- the contribution of dual legal systems in Africa (statutory and customary) to continued male impunity and women’s subordination and subjectation to arbitrary decisions.
- weakness of the rule of law in the protection of women’s rights, as evident in limited access to, or the absence of, mechanisms for legal recourse, particularly in rural Africa.

- patriarchy’s effective use of religious and cultural institutions, including the media, to depoliticise poverty, its structural causes and manifestations in many African communities. This leads to the kind of reasoning manifest in the film, that deaths must have supernatural, rather than socio-economic, causes. Paranns about witches typically occur in contexts of scarcity, ignorance and insecurity. Therefore, the branding of certain people, predominantly women, as ‘witches’ can be understood as a response to the failures of the state to provide health and welfare services to poor communities.

- the differential gendered patterns and value attached to activities such as traditional medicine and sorcery. Whereas men engaged in such practices may be regarded as healers, women are stigmatised and branded ‘evil.’

The Way Forward for Feminists

- Step up resource mobilisation efforts for advocacy initiatives, using popular culture to highlight and dispel gender stereotypes that propagate women’s victimisation.
- Use a multi-pronged approach to promote women’s rights, including giving more attention to economic empowerment as a strategy to increase women’s autonomy.
- Use the film to shame, draw the attention of, and demand for greater accountability from governments that are failing to fulfill their commitments to resolve the conflict between statutory and customary laws, particularly where the latter oppress, undermine, subordinate and discriminate against women.
- Be at the forefront of efforts to domesticate international and regional human rights instruments at both national and community levels.
- Devise strategies to address the specificity of women’s oppression and challenge discriminatory cultural practices.
Plenary: The Environment and Women’s Rights

Moderator: Ayesha Imam (Nigeria/Senegal)
Resource person: Vore Gana Seck (Senegal) and Christele Adedjoumon (Benin)
Rapporteur: Zeytuna Abdella Azasoo (Ethiopia/Ghana)

The plenary concerned a range of issues on environmental degradation and its connections with gender inequality and poverty. It was noted that climate change and the energy crisis are two of the main environmental threats faced by communities in Africa today. Both of these stem largely from current consumption and production patterns, as well as the unequal distribution of resources and uneven levels of development on the continent. Although the rural poor and women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, they are largely voiceless and absent at the spaces where the capitalist macroeconomic policies that have contributed to this situation are determined. There is urgent need, therefore, to bring women’s voices to the table and ensure their active participation in setting the agenda for sustainable development. In addition to discussing the pertinent reasons why women need to be involved in these decision-making processes, the plenary considered how feminists in Africa can support this development.

Why Women Must Be Involved

- Women have the right to a clean and healthy environment.
- Women play a primary role in ensuring household food security and in the management of local resources, and therefore have invaluable knowledge about the impact of environmental change.
- Given the adverse impact of environmental degradation on present and future generations, both men and women have the right and responsibility to participate in the definition of environmental priorities and development of environmentally-sustainable solutions.
- The participation of women would ensure a more inclusive and critical debate on environmental issues that takes gender concerns and perspectives into account.

How Women Can Be Involved

- By gaining entry into the spaces where policy decisions are made so as to advocate, influence and promote a more sustainable development agenda. Such an agenda would require re-examining the ways in which trade, industry, development and economic policies are presently being determined.
- By establishing a gender and environment working group to collate research on environmental concerns, and craft and present feminist, alternative policy positions.
- By urgently advocating for the increased allocation of resources towards renewable forms of energy, such as solar, as opposed to the environmentally destructive forms.
- Raising community awareness on environmentally-harmful practices and the related dangers and costs of using pesticides and genetically modified products, to protect women and communities from related hazards.
Workshops Current Debates on the Environment

Moderator: Pat Made (Zimbabwe)
Resource Persons: Vore Gana Seck (Senegal), Christele Adedjemoun (Benin)
Rapporteur: Muadi Mukenge (Democratic Republic of Congo)

The session discussed the impact of globalisation and macroeconomic policy on environmental degradation and gender. Prevailing global economic policies such as trade agreements on commodities and fishing rights have adversely affected African economies and the environmental rights of the local communities. For example, many of the countries that adopted the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) have experienced state disengagement in the provision of basic services, loss of agricultural land for biofuels, destruction of indigenous crops and adoption of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), food insecurity, unprofitability of the agricultural sector/destruction of livelihood systems and, ultimately, high poverty levels, particularly in rural areas. The social and environmental effects of these policies have widened gender disparities and increased women’s vulnerability to various factors.

There have been efforts to draw the attention of policy makers to the linkages between environmental degradation and gender inequalities. Feminists have been actively involved in this process through research and the development of analytical frameworks. However, the insufficient linkage between ecofeminism, environmental justice activism and the larger feminist movement has affected the coherence of their efforts. While each has a rich body of work, there is need to take advantage of their synergies in order to strengthen feminist engagement in the policy formulation processes. It is also important that feminists devise practical strategies to address basic rights at the community level. Such an approach would help to ensure the linkages between community efforts and national policy processes.

What Feminists Can Do

The discussion concluded that feminists in Africa should take action quickly, given the implications of the adverse global processes on women. Proposed actions include:

1. Being alert to the changing policies of the global community and ensuring a proactive response to these. National activists have to develop the language and capacity necessary to campaign against adverse bilateral policies.
2. Making use of international forums to keep abreast of changes in environmental protocols and contribute towards more critical debates on the environment.
3. Devising strategies to bolster national demands for accountability from governments on global economic agreements. African governments and regional bodies such as the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), must be urged to develop alternative approaches to externally-imposed economic development policies that respond to and serve the needs and interest of local communities.
4. Working at multiple levels of advocacy (local, national, sub-regional, regional and international) and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into policy frameworks.
5. Working with rural women to promote and protect indigenous species; likewise, to identify and promote cost-saving, labour-efficient and convenient forms of energy.
6. Diversifying awareness campaigns to include the use of popular media and theatre to reach a wide local audience and address environmental issues in very simple terms.
7. Mobilising and building the environmental advocacy skills of African youth generally and young feminist activists, in particular.
8. Interrogating and analysing the work of environmental organisations such as the Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and its implications for the rights of local communities and women.

Framework on the Gender Dynamics of Environmental Issues:

1. Women and poverty: Environmental issues are linked to communities and the prevalence of poverty.
2. Women and land rights: Land being appropriated from women.
3. Women and food security: GMOs.
4. Sexual and reproductive rights: Toxic environmental products may cause reproductive deformities and respiratory illnesses in women.
5. Health: rise in cancers, but also lack of health access in poorest areas.
6. Global capitalism/neo-liberalism: GMOS and technology are not advantageous to local communities.
7. Technological advancements and development: Do not address the needs of women.
8. Governance and accountability: Risks arising from government’s insufficient interrogation of partnership agreements and TNCs.
9. Conflict/displacement: As a result of scarce natural resources due to environmental degradation.
Plenary
Exploring Accountability as a Feminist Community: Launch of the Organisational Development (OD) Tool

Moderator: Sarah Mukasa (Uganda)

The plenary session included an overview of the organisational development (OD) tool which was developed because of the need to operationalise the Feminist Charter of Principles for African Feminists. The charter sets out the collective values that are key to the work and lives of African feminists, as well as their overall goals and mission. The charter also spells out the individual and collective responsibilities of African feminists to the movement and to each other. The OD tool, commissioned in May 2009, is thus essentially an accountability tool designed to support the learning and assessment of performance within feminist organisations and individual sites of activism.

Having developed the OD tool, it was considered necessary to collectively identify some of the ways and means through which it can be popularised and put to work in order to achieve its objective of strengthening feminist activism.

Key questions
1. What should be the priority issues for operationalising the tool?
2. How should the process be documented?
3. What commitments can we make for testing this tool over the next two years?
4. What connections can we make to share this tool with social movements?

Below are some of the proposed strategies:

- Development of a ‘training of trainers’ programme for selected persons within feminist organisations who will be the focal point in the institutionalisation of the OD tool within their respective organisational spaces, in accordance with the organisational mandates, policies and establishment. The institutionalisation of the OD tool can take many forms, including its incorporation within an organisation’s constitution, human resource and financial management policies, strategy documents and code of conduct.
- Establish a web platform to support the periodic monitoring and review of the application of the OD tool at the national and regional levels. The OD focal persons within feminist organisations could drive the sharing and dissemination of their institution’s experiences, good practices and lessons on this platform.
- Identify indicators/benchmarks corresponding to the principles outlined in the charter as a strategy for ensuring that these principles are infused within organisational systems, processes and practices, and serve as a standard for self-assessment.
- Translation of the OD tool into simple terms to avoid any ambiguities and misinterpretations.
Caucuses Preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women, 2011 Session

Brief Background to the 2011 CSW Session

The UN organises an annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which reviews progress made by member states and UN agencies towards global commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment, particularly in relation to the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. Civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations (with consultative status within the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)), are invited to participate in the open sessions of the commission.

To ensure the adequate representation of African women’s issues and concerns at such meetings, African women’s regional and sub-regional networks have perennially engaged in preparatory processes aimed at crafting a common position in relation to the themes at hand. It is for this reason that a CSW caucus session was included in the 2010 AFF programme. The purpose of the caucus was to concretise plans on how to prepare for African women’s participation in the 2011 CSW, which is taking place in February 2011.

Preparatory Process

Preparations for the 2011 CSW have obtained support from different organisations including AWDF, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Africa-Spanish Network for a Better World, Oxfam, Ford Foundation, Global Fund for Women, OSI. The process is expected to include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Critical dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Development of the African women’s statement for submission to the Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW)</td>
<td>By the 18th of November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registration of CSW representatives by NGOs in consultative status with the UN ECOSOC</td>
<td>Through December 2010 - January 2011 (dates are yet to be announced)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booking space for the African Women’s Caucus (AWC) meetings</td>
<td>December 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation and sharing of information on a monthly basis to all interested African women and women’s organisations (all regional and sub-regional networks should share information with their various constituencies to ensure a much wider coverage)</td>
<td>The circulation of information started on the FEMNET CSW list serve in August 2010. The latest update was sent out October 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking space for CSO side events</td>
<td>December 2010 - January 2011 (start dates are yet to be announced)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of a lobbying strategy for African women at the 2011 CSW</td>
<td>January - February 2011 to culminate in the preparatory meeting to be convened at the World Social Forum in Dakar in February 2011.</td>
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<td>Facilitate country level preparations – influence the government position on the theme – linking up with the national women’s machinery, and getting women’s organisations/representatives on the list of official delegations, especially for those African countries that are part of the CSW</td>
<td>November 2010 - February 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a programme/agenda for the AWC meetings to be organised in New York</td>
<td>The regional and sub-regional networks including the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Réseau d’Organisation Femminines d’Afrique Francophones (ROFAF) and any other sub-regional women’s networks in Central and North Africa.</td>
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The Draft Position Paper

The 2011 CSW session will focus on:

“Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.”

It was proposed that the African feminists’ statement should:

- acknowledge the progress realized in relation to girls’ and women’s access to education in Africa, remaining gaps and strategies to address these.
- focus on how education in Africa can be improved in terms of quality and relevance, in order to secure women’s right of access to the job market in the fields of their choice.
- highlight measures to be taken by different actors to support girls’ and women’s access to science-oriented professional courses and vocational training that will equip them with skills for innovation.
- urge African governments to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that foreign direct investments result in increased opportunities for women to join the formal wage market and contribute to improving standards for decent and healthy working conditions.

It was also agreed that:

- African feminists should contribute to identifying the main issue around which to organise, in relation to the theme of the CSW, to facilitate the process of movement building throughout 2011.
- additional comments and inputs should be submitted to FEMNET by 30th October 2010.
- input should be sought from FAWE, the regional body working on education of the girl child.

Division of Duties and Responsibilities

- FEMNET agreed to facilitate the process of drafting the position paper, which will then be sent to Dr. Asfor, who is coordinating the preparations of the Third Africa Congress for Women in Science, Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, to be held between 3rd – 4th November 2010 in Egypt. Additional input is expected from this congress, before submission of the final paper to the DAW.
- Work on the African women’s position paper will continue through email circulation and will be discussed at a special meeting to be convened in Dakar, Senegal, during the 2011 World Social Forum. The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) is responsible for organising the February 2011 meeting.
- All regional and sub-regional networks are required to share information on the process, as well as develop all related materials.
- Women’s NGOs with consultative status will facilitate the registration of the organisations that would like to participate in the 2011 CSW. However, all participants will be responsible for mobilising their own resources to support their participation.

FEMNET was requested to invite FAWE to be part of the core organising team for the African Women’s Caucus for the 2011 CSW.

FEMNET will share the outcomes of the caucus meeting with the other networks, while AWDF will be responsible for disseminating this information to AFF participants.
Statement from the 2010 Africa Feminist Forum on the UN Women

We, African women feminists, drawn from diverse women’s rights organisations and networks operating in different countries, sub-regions and across the continent, meeting at the third African Feminist Forum (AFF) held in Dakar, Senegal from the 21st – 24th of October 2010;

Considering and acknowledging the numerous achievements and progress made at different levels to strengthen the legal and policy frameworks and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the commitments made to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including, among many others, the strengthening of the gender equality architecture within the United Nations by the formation of UN Women;

Convinced that the establishment of UN Women is a positive indicator of the political commitment of UN member states to step up and accelerate efforts aiming to achieve the full realization of women’s rights and the pursuit of the goals of peace, equality and development for all;

Concerned that the current neo-liberal macroeconomic models and frameworks are not working for the majority of poor African women, and therefore the apparent need for UN Women to take leadership in developing alternatives based on priorities of people living and experiencing life in Africa;

Bearing in mind that we have a critical role to play in shaping the structure and influencing the way UN Women will continue to engage with different stakeholders, particularly women’s rights organisations and networks at the global, regional, national and local levels, and prioritizing issues that are of interest and concern to African women;

Call upon the UN Secretary-General and the leadership of the UN Women to:

- Ensure that the creation of UN Women quickly translates into the urgently required resources (both human and financial) to make it possible for the new entity to begin delivering on its mandate in the shortest time possible;
- Prioritise peace, security and disarmament programmes within the first three years of the UN Women Strategic Plan for sustaining gains made to promote women’s rights at different levels in African countries, and in particular support the systematic implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the UN General Assembly Resolutions 1888 and 1889;
- Ensure that the United Nations response to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence encompasses all forms of sexual violence that manifest in the everyday lives of African women;

Consider the priority actions highlighted in the NGO Forum 10-10-10 Communiqué and the Nairobi Declaration adopted at the continental launch of the Africa Women’s Decade in Nairobi, Kenya, on 10th - 15th of October 2010, for support by UN Women in the first three years of the decade;

Put in place international and regional level structures for UN Women that have a fair representation of African women and men in key positions, who have the essential competencies and experience to develop appropriate and relevant policies and programmes for Africa, which are in line with its peace, equality and development agenda;

Ensure that in all 53 African countries, UN Women has clearly established structures that will work closely with the national machineries and other key sectors to deliver on the focus areas identified for the African Women’s Decade;

Guarantee that at the international, regional and national levels, UN Women structures facilitate the formation of advisory committees which shall include representatives from civil society and women’s organisations and networks, in particular, which are providing leadership for the African women’s movement;

Remain committed to formalise the continued engagement with civil society, particularly women’s organisations and networks operating at different levels, in the formulation of policies, programmes and monitoring mechanisms for UN Women.

We further call upon African leaders to consciously choose the countries that are progressive in the promotion of women’s rights on the continent to be among the 10 representatives that will make up the executive board of UN Women.
Conference Highlights

Achievements of the AFF 2010
The conference trackers noted that the AFF had been conducted and concluded in an atmosphere of immense joy and a spirit of activism, in spite of some inevitable challenges. Below are some of the notable highlights of the conference:

Subversion and solidarity
The 2010 AFF yet again provided African feminists with a twin opportunity for subversion and solidarity, as manifested by the feminists’ experience at the Gambian embassy when they attempted to present a petition in support of two feminist sisters who were recently detained for challenging harmful traditional practices in The Gambia.

Movement building
The AFF has greatly contributed to movement building in Africa. It is evident that the establishment of such a space has led to the proliferation of platforms through which feminists can collectively strategise to challenge the continued subordination of women in Africa. The work happening at the existing national forums, and in between the biennial AFFs, is something to be proud of, as it presents the wider AFF with examples of good practices and effective strategies around some of the critical women’s rights issues, particularly within an increasingly repressive environment. The example set by the Uganda Feminist Forum in terms of a peaceful change of leadership is of strategic significance in most countries on this continent.

ICTs and women’s rights
The AFF showcased the versatility and potential of ICT and social media for advocating and publicising women’s rights issues. This year, the AFF proceedings were relayed on Twitter and Flickr, thereby increasing our reach and enabling the participation of sisters unable to attend. The skills-building workshops provided participants with the opportunity to learn about the use of creative mediums such as Photovoice and film in their advocacy efforts, and their potential for wider outreach. Some of the key messages that emerged were the need to use creative expression (music, theatre, art and drama) as a medium for knowledge production and challenging gender stereotypes. Both the filming of The Witches of Gambaga and AWDF’s ongoing efforts to engage with Nollywood were commended for trailblazing efforts and exhibiting how feminists can engage with technology to promote women’s rights.

Engagement with power
The increased number of feminist sisters in positions of power is of strategic significance for women’s empowerment. The AFF has cause to be proud of these feminists, and it is hoped that we will use their experiences to enhance our engagement with government bodies. Their participation and engagement with national governments presents African feminists as a collective with an opportunity to sharpen our interrogation of the state of governance in Africa. It was suggested that our interest in leadership processes should extend to the active participation of feminists in election-observation, to facilitate greater understandings of the workings of power.

Areas for improvement

Resource mobilisation
It was observed that the on-going debate on money and resource mobilisation did not cover certain critical areas, including the structural inequalities that have denied African women fiscal autonomy, the context of how we relate to money and its role in the work we do. Neither was any reference made to the continent’s vast resources, the primitive accumulation by our leaders, and how feminists should connect to ensure redistribution of these resources. The links between neoliberalism, patriarchy and the recent financial meltdown were also not exhaustively discussed. The AFF thus missed an opportunity to deeply interrogate and identify holistic strategies for feminist engagement with these issues.

Geo-politics and women’s rights
The current political dynamics on the continent that influence the work of feminists were not given sufficient attention. This was perceived as a significant gap in the forum discussions, given the implication of the geopolitical climate on women’s rights. While it was recognized that religious fundamentalisms are a serious threat to the advancement of women, it is critical to link these with poverty and the geopolitics of resource allocation.

Issues of diversity
While there was an attempt to discuss sex and sexuality, there was some concern that the debates had homophobic undertones. It was unfortunate to note that the repression experienced by the LGBTI community is also perceptible in the AFF space. It is thus clear that more needs to be done to acknowledge, respect and embrace our diversities as we strive to build a strong movement.

It was also suggested that more room should be created for the participation of grassroots/rural women within the AFF, since these are mostly the women on whose behalf we speak. There is need to empower these women to express and speak for themselves in spaces such as the AFF. The point was also made for the increased representation of sisters from North Africa.

Feminist organising
While the establishment of national feminist forums in some countries is laudable, it was felt that in addition to feedback on their progress, the discussion should have extended to consider why other countries are experiencing difficulties in organising national forums. There appear to be many issues in some countries, including the conflicting personalities involved. It might be useful therefore to explore how the feminist charter could be utilized in mediating such conflicts.

Environmental issues
It was noted that more work and interrogation needs to be done on issues related to the environment/energy/resources, including a clearer definition of feminist agency on these matters. The AFF has established a working group on environment that is to engage in policy analysis, but it is yet to fully define its position on these issues.

Forum programme
Many participants felt that the programme was rather crowded and did not give sufficient time for in-depth analysis of key issues. For example, while both the great trial and debate raised pertinent issues affecting the feminist movement, there was insufficient opportunity to discuss and interrogate them, to ensure clarity and a shared understanding. Future forums should limit the number of daily sessions.

Interpretation and representation:
While the quality of interpretation has improved significantly, some participants felt that some of the interpreters did not adequately cover/represent the issues being raised in the plenary debates. There were also some participants who felt marginalised, particularly those with small country delegations.
Closing Plenary
A Feminist Agenda for the African Women’s Decade 2010 - 2020

The 2010 AFF concluded with remarks and reflections from different feminist leaders on some of the possible ways to enhance the advancement of women’s rights in Africa over the next ten years. As noted at its launch in Nairobi in 2010, the African Women’s Decade presents a great opportunity for a REVOLUTION for the women of Africa, to fully realize their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. It is therefore the collective responsibility of governments and civil society actors to ensure that implementation of the commitments result in tangible, positive changes for women.

Prof. Fatou Sow (Senegal) expressed disappointment that while there have been some achievements, many of the aspirations and expectations of the feminist movement are yet to be met due to the huge gap between theory and practice. There were many activists who were not even clear about what feminism is. Prof. Sow emphasized: “Ideological clarity is critical for the attainment of our goals and we must begin with ourselves. We must ensure that we practice what we preach. Feminism must be lived and embedded in our organisational systems and practices so as to build enduring institutions that will contribute to the achievement of gender equality. Unless we do that, all the passion and energies that we are currently exhibiting will fade into nothing after several years.”

In addition, she noted the need to move beyond identifying the obstacles to the advancement of women’s rights to deepening our analysis of the enabling factors and the ways in which these can be mobilized for our purposes. For example, there is a need to examine issues surrounding religious fundamentalisms and interrogate why ‘modernisation’ cracks when it comes to women.

Doaw Abdallah (Egypt) recalled and reflected on a comment made by a university professor several years ago that Africa was a dying continent. While Africa is not yet dead, it is limping and heavily encumbered by many challenges, including endless wars, militarism, debt, poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and racial and ethnic divisions. However, despite these woes, she noted that: “We need to reflect and remain connected to the pan-African vision ‘from Cape to Cairo’ by promoting the values of good governance across the continent, unity among the various regions, and creating an Africa that we are proud of. We, as women, have an equal and important role to play in this process and the Feminist Forum should among its priorities consider the issue of women’s leadership. We need to increase the visibility of women in decision-making processes as well as groom women for leadership.” Her concluding statement to the AFF was to consider supporting leadership and mentoring programmes for young women so that women are not just integrated, but built up.

Prudence Mabele (South Africa) argued that: “We, as African feminists, must interrogate our collective failure in ensuring the implementation of the various protocols that have been hitherto put in place to promote women’s rights. We at the AFF therefore need to rethink our strategies and mechanisms for engagement and seek to operate at all levels – community, national and regional.” This means that feminist demands for accountability on the implementation of gender equality commitments should not be limited to national governments. Rather, the AFF should explore strategic alliances and partnerships with the regional bodies, specifically the African Union, in terms of ensuring that the commitments made at the launch of the women’s decade are met.
Closing Speech

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (President of AWDF and First Lady, Ekiti State, Nigeria)

I would like to thank all the participants for making a commitment to be at the 3rd AFF and for their hard work and contributions. I would also like to thank the Senegal Feminist Forum for hosting us and rising to the challenge of meeting the hosting criteria.

My thanks also go to the resource persons and facilitators for agreeing to participate in the forum and for their generosity in sharing their knowledge, expertise and time; AWDF staff who have worked very hard to bring this all together; the interpreters for their patience; and the photographer for the wonderful shots.

We at AWDF, the hosting secretariat of the AFF, would also like to extend our gratitude to all those who made financial contributions towards this event. We are indebted to the Global Fund, Mama Cash, UNIFEM, DUTCH MDG 3, HIVOS, UAF and AWDF.

As we prepare to leave, the challenge I put to each and everyone of us as individuals and as a collective is to remain connected. We need to remain connected so that we can draw courage and inspiration from each other. Let us stay connected to the herstories that we have written and will write — stories of hope, anger and triumph. Let us stay connected to each other from year to year, for unconditional love, support and encouragement.
## Conference Programme
### THIRD AFRICAN FEMINIST FORUM

### FEMINIST CONNECTIONS:
**RECONNECTING WITH OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES**

**OCTOBER 21st -24th 2010, DAKAR, SENEGAL**

### PROGRAMME

#### Wednesday October 20th October: General Arrival and Registration

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<tr>
<td>09.00 – 10.30</td>
<td>Meeting of AFF Working Group</td>
<td>B 02</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30 – 15.30</td>
<td>Meeting of NFF Working Group</td>
<td>B 02</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00 – 20.00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Secretariat of African Feminist Forum – B 03</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.00 – 17.00</td>
<td>Meeting of AFF Working Group</td>
<td>B 02</td>
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<td>18.00 – 19.00</td>
<td>Meeting with conference moderators, trackers and rapporteurs</td>
<td>B 02</td>
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<td>19.30 – 20.30</td>
<td>The Trial Rehearsal 1</td>
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### Day 1: Thursday October 21st

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Moderator/ Resource Persons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 09.30</td>
<td>OPENING PLENARY</td>
<td>Welcoming Speech: Hilda Tadria (Board Chair, African Women’s Development Fund)</td>
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<td>Rapporteur: Codou Bop (Senegalese Feminist Forum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.30 – 10.30</td>
<td>PLENARY: Setting the Context for Connections (Self, State, Community, Environment, Money and Markets)</td>
<td>Esther Passaris (Kenya) – Money and Markets</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Usu Mallya (Tanzania) – Self</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Malika Ben Raddi (Morocco) – State</td>
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<td>Lesley Ann Foster (South Africa) – Community</td>
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<td>11.00 – 11.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>Rapporteurs: Patrice Babiiha Munabi (Uganda)</td>
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<td>Fanta Cissé (Senegalese Feminist Forum)</td>
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<td>Ihsoma Obibi (Nigerian Feminist Forum)</td>
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<td>Solome Nakaweesi Kibugwe (Ugandan Feminist Forum)</td>
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<td>13.00 – 14.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>14.30 – 16.00</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Feminist Technology 1 (Introduction to Social Media)</td>
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<td>Venue: B 05</td>
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<td>Moderator: Mary Wandia (Kenya)</td>
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<td>Resource persons: Sally-Jean Shackleston (South Africa)</td>
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<td>Janine Moodman (South Africa)</td>
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<td>Managing Pressure Points in Our Different Generations</td>
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<td>Resource persons: Fatou Sow (Senegal)</td>
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<td>Hilda Tadria (Uganda)</td>
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<td>Diakhroumba Gassama (Senegal)</td>
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<td>Kaari Murungi (Kenya)</td>
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<td>16.00 – 16.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>16.30 – 18.00</td>
<td>The Great Debate</td>
<td>For The Motion</td>
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<td>Rapporteur: Funmi Balogun (Nigeria/Kenya)</td>
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<td>Against The Motion</td>
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<td>Rapporteur: Korto Williams (Liberia)</td>
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<td>Bella Matembanadzo (Zimbabwe)</td>
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### Day 2: Connecting. Friday October 22nd 2010

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<tr>
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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>09.00 – 09.30</td>
<td>Conference Check-In:</td>
<td>Shamillah Wilson (South Africa) and Coumba Toure (Senegal/Mali)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Moderator: Jessica Horn</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Bunmi Dipo-Salami (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>Venues: Hotel, Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>Hôtel, Dakar, Senegal (South Africa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.30 – 11.00</td>
<td>PLENARY: CONNECTING AND CHALLENGING POWER – FEMINIST RESPONSES TO FUNDAMENTALISMS</td>
<td>Djingarey Maiga (Mali)</td>
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<td>Iheoma Obibi (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>Sylvia Tamale (Uganda)</td>
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<td>11.00 – 11.30</td>
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<td>11.30 – 13.00</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
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<td>Photovoice</td>
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<td>Resource Persons:</td>
<td>Francoise Mukuku (DRC)</td>
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<td>Shamillah Wilson (South Africa)</td>
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<td>Moderator: Yalwe Clark</td>
<td>(Zambia/South Africa)</td>
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<td>(South Africa)</td>
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<td>Amin Mama (Nigeria/USA)</td>
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<td>Abena Busia (Ghana/USA)</td>
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<td>13.00 – 14.30</td>
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<td>14.30 – 16.00</td>
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<td>IT Clinic</td>
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<td>Movement Building</td>
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<td>Moderator: Patricia Munabi (Uganda)</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Shereen Essof (Zimbabwe)</td>
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<td>Azola Gqywana (S.Africa)</td>
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<td>Seynabou Male (Senegal)</td>
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<td>Money Literacy and Entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>Moderator: Mairo Bello (Nigeria)</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Stella Mukuasi (Uganda)</td>
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<td>Asmau Joda (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>Esther Passaris (Kenya)</td>
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<td>Alternative Forms of Resource Mobilisation</td>
<td>Venue: Salon Flamboyant</td>
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<td>Moderator/ Facilitator:</td>
<td>Tina Thiart (South Africa)</td>
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<td>Resource persons</td>
<td>Unoma Madunagu</td>
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### Day 3: Connecting with Communities. Saturday October 23, 2010

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00 – 09.30</td>
<td>Conference Check-In Day 3:</td>
<td>Shamillah Wilson and Coumba Toure</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Moderator: Jessica Nkueh (Uganda/Kenya)</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Emilia Eyo (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>09.30 – 11.00</td>
<td>PLENARY: POWER, THE STATE AND ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>Excellence Aminata Mbengue (Senegal)</td>
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<td>Hon. Margaret Dongo (Zimbabwe)</td>
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<td>Excellence Awa Fall Diop (Senegal)</td>
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<td>Excellence Bli Ackeye-Fayemi (Nigeria)</td>
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<td>11.00 – 11.30</td>
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<td>11.30 – 13.00</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
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<td>Photovoice 2</td>
<td>Venue: B 05</td>
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<td>Resource Persons:</td>
<td>Francoise Mukuku (DRC)</td>
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<td>Shamillah Wilson (South Africa)</td>
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<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Unali Jaime (Mozambique)</td>
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<td>Resource persons</td>
<td>Marjorie Mbilinyi (Tanzania/USA)</td>
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<td>Fatime Faye (Senegal)</td>
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<td>13.00 – 14.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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Day 4: Feminist Futures. Sunday October 24th  2010

09.00 – 10.30  Venue: Salon Flamboyant
Conference Check-In Day 4: Shamillah Wilson and Coumba Toure

09.30 – 11.00  Exploring Accountability as a Feminist Community
Moderator: Sarah Mukasa (Uganda/Ghana)

11.00 – 13.00  Feminist Agenda for the African Women’s Decade and AWDF Regional Advisor Meeting

11.00 – 11.30  Caucus 1
Venue: B 05
AFF @ AWID 2012

11.00 – 11.30  Caucus 2
Venue: C 05
AFF @ CSW 2011

11.00 – 11.30  Caucus 3
Venue: B 05
AFF and AU Women’s Decade

11.00 – 11.30  Caucus 4
Venue: B 01
Defending Africa’s Women’s Rights Defenders

13.00 – 14.30  Lunch

14.30 – 15.30  Closing Plenary
Venue: Salon Flamboyant

15.30 – 16.30  A Feminist Agenda and Connections for the Next Decade 2010 - 2020
Fatou Sow (Senegal)
Doaa Abdellah (Egypt)
Prudence Mabele (South Africa)

Poem: Abena Busia (Ghana/USA)

Close: Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (Nigeria/Ghana)

17.00 – 19.00  AFF WG B 02
Opening Ceremony

Welcome Address
Dr. Hilda Tadria (Board Chair, African Women’s Development Fund)

Last week, many of us were part of the launch of the African Women’s Decade in Nairobi, Kenya, an initiative of the African Union. At this launch, 50 year old women were dancing for the presidents and I said to myself that nothing had changed. In another country, in Uganda, a young girl who had participated in our young women’s mentoring and training forum came to my office for help. She had run away from her auntie’s house because she had been raped by her uncle. She had not gone to the doctor or the police because her uncle is a big man and it is his word against hers.

My reason for opening the African Feminist Forum (AFF) with such grim stories is to remind ourselves that the work is not yet done. I thank the Senegalese Feminist Forum for hosting the forum, and they have done a tremendous job. The challenge to the rest of us is why are there very few contenders of national feminist forums to host the AFF? The AFF can only be as strong as the national feminist forums. What are the challenges? Key among these challenges is separating our personal stories and challenges from the forums, and not letting them get in the way of having the forums top on our agendas.

We will also discuss what breaks our solidarity from within. I pay tribute to AWDF that has persistently supported the AFF. You are welcome to the 3rd AFF, and as you sing and dance, let us remember that the work is not yet done.

Ms. Codou Bop, on behalf of the Senegal Feminist Forum

We are glad that the AFF has gathered in Dakar in order to exchange and share our various experiences and challenges in Senegal and the rest of Africa. I’m delighted that there are many young women in this room as this shows that the next generation will carry on the work of the women’s movement. We also welcome the various identities of women here, including those with different sexual orientation, class and so on.

We are here because we share the same ambition and passion to see African populations rise from poverty. The AFF invites us to continue challenging the state and the global powers that impoverish our populations. We are confident that we will be able to discuss with women in political spaces and strategise together on women and democracy. We will also discuss what breaks our solidarity from within. What are the different forms of fundamentalisms that shape our laws, policies and societal models, including religious fundamentalisms that seek to control women’s bodies and sexuality? Beyond analysis of these fundamentalisms as feminists, how can we claim our freedom?

Ms. Sarah Mukasa, Programmes Director, African Women’s Development Fund

We have a lot to celebrate, including the victory that took place in Ekiti State, Nigeria, where one of Africa’s standing feminists is now First Lady. But even as we celebrate, let us take a moment to think about our sisters who could not be with us, like Dr. Isatou Touray and Ms. Amie Bjoyang-Sissoho, who were just recently released on bail from a prison in Gambia for fighting against harmful traditional practices. The AFF has prepared a petition that will be delivered to the Gambian embassy, as well as discussions on how we can strengthen our support to feminist human rights defenders.

Our theme for the 3rd AFF is feminist connections. One of the biggest challenges for advancing the feminist agenda currently is the disconnections that exist. That is, disconnections between the individual activist and the act of activism itself. The disconnect that exists between different groups that claim to be advancing the rights and issues of particular communities and the communities themselves. The disconnect that exists between the women’s movement. We also welcome the next generation will carry on the work of the women’s movement.

Our theme for the 3rd AFF is feminist connections. One of the biggest challenges for advancing the feminist agenda currently is the disconnections that exist. That is, disconnections between the individual activist and the act of activism itself. The disconnect that exists between different groups that claim to be advancing the rights and issues of particular communities and the communities themselves. The disconnect that exists between the women’s movement. We also welcome the next generation will carry on the work of the women’s movement.

Whilst the terrain of feminist activism is constantly shifting and reconfiguring, the fragmentation that exists in how we as women’s movements have continued to function is a serious inhibitor for propelling us forward. The theme feminist connections was therefore deliberately chosen because of the belief that in order to achieve the unimaginable, we need to struggle together, to move together, to think together and celebrate together. We are here to reflect and connect. Bring your mind, body and soul to this space.
The Great Feminist Trial II:
Review and Appeal

The State vs. African Feminists - Case No. 200 of 2008

The Judge: Prof. Amina Mama
Court Clerk: Ms. Jessica Nkuuhe
Prosecutors/respondents: Dr. Sylvia Tamale; Ms Charmaine Pereira
Defence/appellants: Ms. Betty Karić; Ms Simidele Dosekun

Witnesses:
Prosecution/respondents: Prof. Fatou Sow
Ms. Iheoma Obibi
Defence/appellants: Ms. Sarah Mukasa
Ms. Fanta Cisse

Judgment from Original Case

Count 1: Feminists accused of gross and woeful inadequacy, narrow visions and lack of clarity, and failure to make themselves relevant in light of severe poverty and intense violations faced by African women.
Verdict: Feminists found guilty in part and informed that there was room for improvement. Situation to be reviewed in 2010.

Count 2: Organisations established by African feminists are accused of being unaccountable to the women they set up to serve. They are accused of having lost focus and direction.
Verdict: Feminist organisations found guilty in part. Situation to be reviewed in 2010.

Count 3: Feminists accused of being timid, indifferent and inconsistent in demonstration of solidarity.
Verdict: Guilty as charged. Feminists ordered to rectify the situation and report in 2010.

Count 4: In spite of millions of dollars invested in Africa, there were no credible feminist institutions with vision and impact
Verdict: Feminist organisations acquitted and the charge dismissed with the contempt it deserved.

Count 5: Feminists accused of failing to put in place mechanisms to bring on board younger feminists, and to transfer skills and knowledge.
Verdict: Guilty as charged. Feminists ordered to rectify the situation and report in 2010.

Count 6: Women accused of speaking only to themselves and of criminal negligence of the diverse groups they are supposed to represent.
Verdict: Feminists acquitted. Ample evidence to the contrary.

Sentence: Two years’ community service, to be reviewed in two years’ time.

Present Case

The present appeal is brought by the defendants/appellants against the verdicts on counts 1, 2 and 5. The prosecution/respondents also sought a review of the decision on count 4, and for the court to uphold all the other guilty verdicts. They seek to prove that African feminists have not lived up to their expectations.

The court is to review the charges and consider whether the African feminist movement has indeed served its two year community service in a way that was adequate and befitting of the guiding principles elaborated in the feminist charter.

Record of the Proceedings

Opening statement by the defendants/appellants:
In the last two years, the African feminist movement took the opportunity to learn and unlearn its poor organisational practices, and feminists have individually and collectively devised strategies to strengthen their advocacy and organising on the continent.

Strategies were devised to address unhealthy organisational rivalries and enhance accountability in organisations. Connections have been made with other movements, including women’s organisations, the LGBTI community and women with disabilities. Feminists have also learnt to collaborate with each other and with donors. They now have effective feminist organisations and trans-regional networks, creating a multiplier effect. Feminists will show how they have clarified their knowledge and can now interconnect issues related to the economy, science and politics. Feminists have once again learnt how to politicize the movement.

Opening statement by the prosecution:
The prosecution seeks to prove that the defendants, who were given two years to address the issues in the main suit, have not done enough to fulfill the terms of their community service. The prosecution has three witnesses to prove this fact; that the dots have not been connected by African feminists.

The prosecution shall raise a point on count four on which the defendant was acquitted, and seek a verdict of guilty on the issue of a lack of self-generated resources to provide direction for women’s rights organising in Africa.
African sexuality reader to be tendered or struck off the record if it cannot be provided in court.

Note: The judge requested for a copy of the said African sexuality reader to be tendered.

There has also been a shift in strategy:

- On sexuality – There has been a lot of organizing around the continent to bring LGBTI and sex workers’ issue into ‘mainstream’ women’s rights and broader human rights discourse. For instance, a coalition of Ugandan women organisations worked together to fight the anti-homosexuality bill, which has now been retracted.

- On peace coalitions – The women’s movement has brought attention to the implementation of UN resolution 1325.

There has also been a shift in strategy:

- In Uganda, the women’s organisations that condemned the production of the Vagina Monologues a few years ago are now supporting the anti-homosexuality bill.

- Feminists have created spaces to come together, discuss and develop conceptual understanding of why these issues are central to women’s rights, which they are now using to resist oppressive laws.

- Research – The prosecutor is presently developing a reader on African women’s sexuality, the very first of its kind in Africa, which will be a collection of research on the theme.

- Linking theory to practice – African feminists have increasingly undertaken research and generated knowledge, for instance even the Honourable Judge has written on militarism and patriarchy.

Note: The judge requested for a copy of the said African sexuality reader to be tendered in evidence or struck off the record if it cannot be provided in court. A soft copy of the reader was to be tendered.

Prosecution witness 1:

Fatou Sow, professor of Sociology in Dakar and Paris and expert on women’s issues, teaches and researches on African women. For the last 15 years, she has worked with a number of women’s groups, including one that provides alternative development models for women, a network for Muslim women on the links between religion and culture. She as worked in West, Central and North Africa, and has links with colleagues in the Middle East and Asia.

The prosecution tendered in evidence a medical report to show the impact of the feminist movement on Prof. Sow’s personal health. She suffers from severe anxiety as a result of her work and the frustrations and anger of studying the status of women for so many years and seeing that nothing is changing. Her predicament also highlights the challenges of unifying African communities that are divided in their concepts and approaches to various issues, and that are multilingual. For instance, it is difficult to translate concepts like the vagina monologues into French. The witness alluded to the perception that women are their worst enemies, citing examples in which women violate other women’s rights and challenge their sexual expression, for instance in the Sudan, where women cannot wear trousers, and in Nigeria where a female senator tried to police other women’s dress.

Defense witness 2:

Miss Accountability, works with Mukati, based in Zimbabwe. Mukati is a women’s rights organisation that supports women at the grassroots by baking bread.

Two years ago, Mukati had no systems or accountability mechanisms. Miss Hope was the executive director, accountant, requisitioning officer and programme officer. After the sentence, Mukati received a grant which it used to overhaul its systems. It used the feminist charter to better understand the concept of accountability, and has now put in place systems and processes to enhance its accountability, particularly with regards to requisitioning and finance. For instance, processes and systems are now well-documented, a treasurer has been hired and accounts are audited annually. A succession plan has also been developed, and other key processes in Mukati’s institutionalization are increased representation on its boards, regular meetings in which activities, strengths and challenges are reported, and policy forums in which the organisation’s constituency discusses its needs. These forums include cross-generational groups of staff and young women, and are held on a quarterly basis.

Prosecution witness 2:

Miss Substantial, works with Mukati, which she terms “my madam’s organisation.”

The witness testified that she was denied maternity leave by the executive director of Mukati, despite the organisation’s written policies. She was eventually allowed 2 weeks unpaid leave. Thus while feminist policies exist in Mukati, they are on paper only.

Defense witness 3:

Miss Fantastic,Senegalese, 28 years old, working in a feminist organisation in Senegal

Miss Fantastic testified on her growth as a young feminist in the African feminist movement. She attended the Kampala Feminist Forum but did not speak much. She has since been in touch with other feminists, undertaken research, and is now an active member of the forum, including participating in the preparation for the Senegalese Feminist Forum.

Prosecution witness 3:

Miss Greatest, works as a Programme Officer in Nolly Molly Community, Association in Obalende, Lagos.

She testified on mentoring young women, as she is responsible for running a mentoring programme for women and girls who come to her office. However, most of the time, she is out of the office which renders the mentoring programme inoperable.

Prosecution witness 4:

Fatou Pol, an international consultant and expert with a doctorate in Sociology.

The witness testified that according to her research, African women’s organisations are not sustainable, especially financially, a fact which has been exacerbated by the global economic and financial crisis.

Closing Remarks by the Defense

The prosecutor and witnesses have not unclearly the evil lessons of patriarchy. Analysis from the prosecutor has been skewed and biased to traditional views of women’s ‘proper’ place and alleged incapacity to handle money and to organise. On resources for the feminist movement, the defence avers that the prosecution’s analysis is skewed. Taking donor money is simply taking back our money that was stolen in the first place.

The feminist movement in Africa is facing a well-resourced fundamentalist movement that is evidently led by religious and political leaders within and outside of formal institutions. Examples of its activities include homophobic legislation introduced in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, while structural and cultural violence continues...
to plague the continent. There have also been major reversals of women’s human rights and an increase in sexual violence against women in the recent past. Feminists have served their sentence in a repressive setting, where laws exist that restrict freedom of association and privacy, and impact upon the health of women on the continent. An understanding of globalised, militarized patriarchy has made it possible for African feminists to rethink the frameworks for organising with the knowledge that the military reinforces sexist, homophobic tendencies.

Despite all the challenges, feminist organisations in Africa have continued to grow. They have formed powerful networks including HIV-positive women and LGBTI groups.

Closing Remarks by the Prosecution

The prosecution has proved that while some work has been done by African feminists, there has not been much development. The work done is negligible – a drop in the calabash – in light of the challenges faced by women on the continent. The weaknesses that overwhelm African feminist organisations two years ago still prevail: hypocrisy, paper policies, double standards, abuse of power and nepotism.

Judge’s Remarks

The review has highlighted many of the challenges and imperfections that the African feminist movement continues to face, and should caution the prosecution to take note of the global economy and its impact on funding and resourcing for the feminist movement. Further advises that the financial accountability of the movement should not be to governments or donors whose understanding of our concerns as African feminists is limited, but to ourselves and the women we seek to serve.

The prosecution appears to have assumed (and hoped to benefit from) the patriarchal nature of the judiciary, and for all the lead prosecutor’s interesting work on matters of sexuality, she has failed to observe that feminism has made significant inroads into the judiciary. Some feminists sit on the bench.

It is observed that in order to address the issues facing African women, we need strong accountable organisations that can withstand the forces of economic downfall and religious fundamentalisms. The court is not the appropriate place to seek accountability from the feminist movement, so would recommend that in the future, feminists establish peer review mechanisms on which feminist judges can be called to serve. These can include internal review mechanisms, public debates open to all members of society, and coalitions to negotiate with donors to improve financial accountability.

The Judgment

Count 1: Not guilty
Count 2: Not guilty
Count 3: Acquittal upheld
Count 4: Upheld charge; prosecution’s counter-appeal dismissed
Count 5: Dismissed
Count 6: Dismissed