



Tweet-a-thon Report



Background

On Wednesday 8th February, 2017 UAF-Africa hosted a robust and landmark women's rights oriented tweet-a-thon with the hashtag **#UrgentAction4Women**. The tweet-a-thon's main objectives were:

- To establish from the Fund's social media constituency and beyond, the urgent issues impacting women in Africa that require immediate attention, action and response.
- To contribute to the process of shining the light on a platform where African women from across a broad spectrum collectively wove their dreams, frustrations, hopes, fears, dilemmas, challenged each other, interrogated patriarchal structures and systems while celebrating

achievements the movement has recorded and consciously determined the next steps.

Introduction

The platform provided an opportunity to bring together African women from across different social movements to share with UAF-Africa and other interested parties what immediate human rights issues women are excited about as well as grappling with. The tweet-a-thon provided a space to invigorate discussions that are happening at global, national and local levels, exploring issues and experiences affecting African women across various contexts. The discussions explored events and phenomena that are shaping discourse; the way we think, the way we act and the way we perceive the future with regards women's human rights.

Successfully, the tweet-a-thon brought together women's rights activists; feminists engaged with gender, socio-political, economic and environmental justice from across Africa to interrogate the human rights issues African women are grappling with and further explore ways to pivot our support (as a Fund) to women's specific struggles.

Priority issues raised

The following, in no ranking order, were the top five (5) priority issues that were raised as challenges that women in Africa are grappling with:

VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN(VAW)

SEXUAL &
REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH
RIGHTS(SRHR)

ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER
&SANITATION

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LAND OWNERSHIP

DIGITAL SECURITY & SAFETY
FOR WOMEN

The analytics

The hashtag **#urgentaction4women** was used over 120,000 times during the entire period of the three (3) hours with over 110 000 of these instances happening between 2:30 and 4:20pm (EAT).



The tweet-a-thon discussions broke the interwebs as the **#urgentaction4women** conversation became number 1 trending on twitter in Kenya as evidenced by the tweet from one of the followers. There was full engagement from across the continent as the tweet-a-thon was language inclusive with Arabic, English, Swahili, French and Portuguese being used throughout the conversation.

The participants

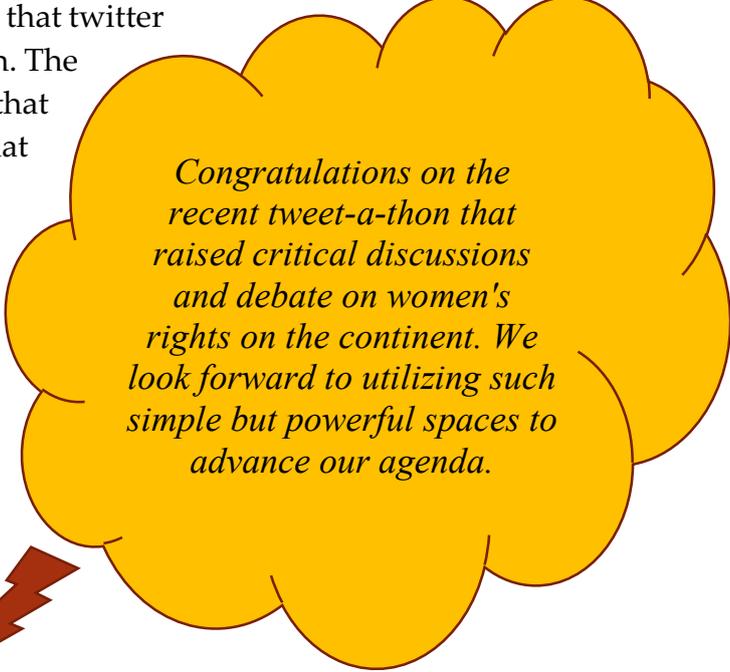
The forum brought on board local, national, regional and international feminist and gender justice activists and organisations through the active participation of multi-generational women and a few men. Participants hailed from diverse sectors, including national and regional media, international development, human rights and social justice realms, the arts, entrepreneurs, faith based realm, political actors and academics.

The tweet-a-thon raised critical agendas that disproportionately impact African women in unprecedented ways. The conversations elicited passionate responses and energised many at both personal and organisational levels. The candid intergenerational perspectives and reflections on feminist activism and transformative leadership that ensued during the tweet-a-thon pointed to the growing need for more similar platforms of social engagement.

Twitter as a movement building platform

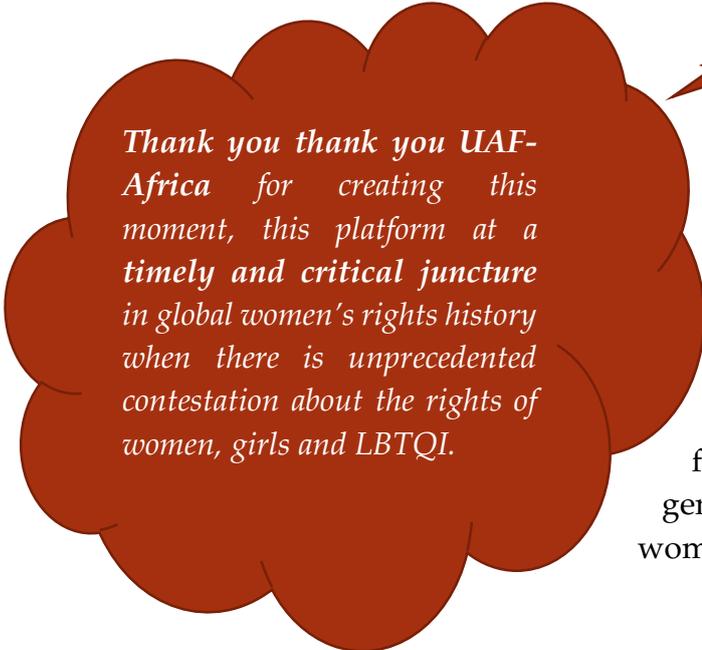
The deliberately participatory, more liberal design of the platform was geared towards harvesting the rich experiences, ideas, knowledge and energies presented by the participants. The twitter platform ensured room for a public space to air and challenge divergent viewpoints, learn, test and sharpen advocacy skills while providing room for deepened connections, individual and group introspection. From the deep conversations that became the hallmark of the tweet-a-thon, it was evident how twitter has become a transnational movement building tool and platform. Many activists and

organisations separately and privately commended UAF-Africa for driving this activist agenda at a time with civic space is closing and in some instances already closed. UAF-Africa was highly commended and encouraged to continue creating well structured platforms. At a political level, the tweetathon debunked the publicly held notion that twitter is mostly used by professional men. The tweetathon demonstrated that women too have valid opinions that they are not afraid to air publicly.



Congratulations on the recent tweet-a-thon that raised critical discussions and debate on women's rights on the continent. We look forward to utilizing such simple but powerful spaces to advance our agenda.

Akina Mama WaAfrika-Uganda



Thank you thank you UAF-Africa for creating this moment, this platform at a timely and critical juncture in global women's rights history when there is unprecedented contestation about the rights of women, girls and LBTQI.

Lagos, Nigeria-based activist

Participants further noted with concern the barriers and challenges that continue to affect women's leadership and decision making and their ability to influence the African development agenda. These include lack of enabling policy and legislative frameworks, financial resources and general lack of political will to implement women's rights instruments.

Furthermore, the participants recognized and affirmed the value that women's intergenerational connections bring towards strengthening of the African women's rights movement and in particular their roles as mentors and coaches of young women aspiring to leadership.

Outcomes and recommendations collectively agreed will add impetus to the urgently needed agency in raising our collective voices and making visible the giant transformative leadership strides that women have made on the continent.

Snippets of the tweets

The image shows a vertical scroll of five tweets from the #UrgentAction4Women campaign, dated February 8th. Each tweet includes a profile picture, the user's name and handle, the text of the tweet, and engagement icons for replies, retweets, and likes.

- Tweet 1:** Retweeted by You. User: Nyaradzo Mutohori (@nmutohori). Text: "#UrgentAction4Women let us address militarization & state or business driven VAW wc always disenfranchises women @NdanaTawamba @herzimbabwe". 5 retweets, 5 likes.
- Tweet 2:** User: Em. (@MzTau). Text: "Sexual and reproductive health services should be access to all women irrespective of their circumstances #UrgentAction4Women". 1 like.
- Tweet 3:** User: Love Matters Africa (@lovemafrika). Text: "Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and #rights ensures women lead healthier lives. @UAFAfrica @NdanaTawamba #UrgentAction4Women".
- Tweet 4:** User: S.K.I.R.T.S (@skirtsfd). Text: "3. Women need to be free and safe on the online space without any fear of any type of harassment whatsoever #UrgentAction4Women @EvarMburu". Includes a screenshot of an Instagram post from @ZawadiNyongob with the text: "IG: @ZawadiNyongob What are your top 3 urgent women's rights issues in Africa? Pls share via #UrgentAction4Women & let's make a loud statement today." 2 retweets, 2 likes.
- Tweet 5:** User: CREA (@ThinkCREA). Text: "@UAFAfrica #UrgentAction4Women Separating SRHR & women's health frm religion is important in getting access 2 safe & legal abortion services". 1 retweet, 2 likes.



Conclusion

Social media is a strategic tool of engaging with diverse populations and unlikely activists and champions of women's human rights. More and more people are engaging twitter to articulate their political position and opinions on key issues as well as to connect with like-minded people while defending their positions and ideals on critical matters affecting their lives. Our tweet-a-thon revealed that critical intelligence lies not only in board rooms and conferences but in the women and girls who engage and deal with issues, experiences, challenges and opportunities that are gendered in their day to day lives. We seized the opportunity to create this platform in a world where narratives are shaped by interests, power and currency. We observe with huge alarm as more spaces for knowledge sharing and expression of thought are shrinking and critical and dissenting voices reigned in. UAF-Africa will continue to facilitate these conversations while supporting more spaces that demonstrate values of open societies and discourse.