

URGENT ACTION FUND-AFRICA
WORKS TO SUPPORT AFRICAN WOMN
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE
FEMINIST AND WOMN'S RIGHTS
MOVEMENTS, WHICH ENABLE THEM TO
SUSTAIN THEMSELVES, EACH OTHER,
AND THEIR WORK BEFORE, DURING
AND AFTER URGENT SITUATIONS.

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UAF-Africa celebrates the multi-disciplinary and transformative work of her grantee partners who generously shared their experiences of courage and resistance in the face of the pandemic. Their passion, unshakable commitment, and clarity of political vision inspires us at the Fund to resource mobilize for big, strategic, flexible, long term and core support that ensure feminist activists, organizations, and movements feel supported.

The report contents' responsibility lies solely with UAF-Africa.

FOREWORD

"COVID-19 MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE NEED TO PULL BACK AND SAY, 'WAIT, WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT CARE, THE COLLECTIVE CARE THAT WE ARE PREACHING ABOUT. THIS IS THE TIME!" INTERVIEW WITH AN ACTIVIST FROM SOUTH AFRICA

The dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic did not only put a spotlight on the existing models of inequality across the world, but surfaced multiple pandemics faced by African womn, that have been systemically silenced or erased in mainstream spaces. On a daily basis, African womn are reeling from the negative consequences of the care crisis, systemic & interpersonal violence, poverty, hunger, and ill health (mental & physical). The COVID-19 pandemic deepened the fault lines on which these injustices thrive and provided an opportunity for us to reflect in the moment - what is normal? is a return to 'normal' just? what is the opportunity for movements we are part of to transform the unjust power relations that constitute 'normal'? what is our power to effect - reset, recovery, regeneration?

As a rapid response Fund whose mandate is feminist transformation, UAF-Africa, with her <u>new strategic compass</u> is poised to respond to the moment. We set out to be more intentional in our unique nature of funding, that is focused on rapidly responding to the urgent needs of African Womn Human Rights Defenders (AWHRDs) and their activism, while catalyzing long term change and dismantling systemic inequality.

This report, "Fire in the rain, UAF-Africa's feminist response to COVID-19", centers the organizing led by AWHRDs, African womn's rights organizations and feminist movements in the critical years of the first, second and third wave of COVID-19 across Africa. Despite the

multiple crises they have experienced, AWHRDs have the agency to transform their own lives and the environment in which they live and actively engage. In this report, we read about Defender's 'superpowers' - lighting fire in the rain and keeping it burning despite the context. We learn how defenders have mobilised their *power within* for basic survival, while harnessing *power with* and *power to* mobilise and connect in different ways amidst restricted movement while creating their own mitigation strategies to counter the impact of socio-political, economic, and health related inequalities.

In the report are highlights of UAF-Africa's internal reflections based on defenders' experiences on critical elements to sustaining African feminist movements - the *good life and power* fostering economic justice for womn; *relationships and power* influencing healing and regeneration in organizing; *resources and power* influencing better and more money for AWHRDs; *love and power* centering love and care as a political project crucial for fueling passion and all positive expressions of power. I am hopeful that this report, which is a culmination of collective feminist thinking, research and care work provides even more reflection and grounding to support feminist movements, resourcing their work, and a rejection of 'back to normal' recovery to a focus on reset and regeneration.

Jean Kemitare, Programmes Director, Urgent Action UAF- Africa



FIRE IN THE RAIN

COLLECTIVE POWER: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE AND REGENERATION

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INTRODUCTION

As we write, the people of the African continent are in the eye of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sixteen months ago, we entered the first wave, assuming that this new health crisis would soon pass. The lines of inequality that had already been drawn across the continent over centuries and particularly in the last few decades were, once again, drawn into sharp focus. People's struggles with accessing basic needs including that of housing, health, food security and water were pervasive.

Images of desperation, agency and power as people took to the streets to visibilise their realities in the face of authoritarian governance have stayed with us as we enter the second half of 2021. More recently, these inequalities have been further exacerbated as Europe and North America have accumulated and stored vaccines, whilst African and other Global South countries have been unable to access these early enough, and in sufficient quantities, to enable the protection from COVID-19.

Urgent Action Fund-Africa works to support African Womn¹ Human Rights Defenders in the feminist and womn's rights movements, which enable them to sustain themselves, each other, and their work before, during and after urgent situations. To do this, amongst other interventions, UAF- Africa mobilise financial resources from a broad base of international and increasingly local donors committed to advancing womn's rights and feminist agendas in Africa. Because we are focused on urgent and emergency situations, we have had a unique role in responding to

the COVID-19 pandemic, especially drawing from our significant experience alongside womn's movements during epidemics, such as Ebola and cholera.

This Report, Fire in the Rain, maps the organising efforts of African womn's and feminist movements supported by UAF-Africa in 2020 and 2021 as COVID-19 unfolded in the world, quickly becoming a pandemic, and subsequently impacting on the lives of Africans in three waves of rapidly escalating numbers of infections and related deaths. The report then articulates

¹ Our use of womn is an act of challenging and replacing traditional ideas of what and who a womn is and can be and the links of women to a system of patriarchy where womn are, in effect, subject to men or a sub-category of men. Womn' for us includes lesbian, bisexual womn and transwomn. Further, womn includes those who are gender non-conforming.

WOMN HAVE HAD TO NAVIGATE, RESIST AND TRANSFORM THE CONTEXT IN WHICH MANY OF US WERE BORN, LIVED AND DIED, A CONTEXT CHARACTERISED BY A PARTICULAR EXPRESSION OF VIOLENCE, VOLATILITY, UNPREDICTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY, CONFLICT AND HOSTILITY. THESE ARE SEEN IN THE MULTIPLE CRISES WHICH ENGULF THE ENTIRE WORLD IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

The work of Urgent Action Fund-Africa throughout the pandemic. Finally, the report considers the learnings and implications of the contexts and work of both the feminist and Womn's right movement and UAF-Africa in the last 15 month.

- What are the considerations as we move into a new era of our organising in ways that enable, variously, a reset, recovery, and regeneration within our movements?

The report is, first, a way to honour memory, acknowledge and affirm our efforts, and reflect and learn. Equally important, the report is for our partners and allies. Our report is both a celebration, memory, and learning, as well as a means of accountability.



BACKGROUND

COVID-19 and the Legacy of the Colonial Project



Centuries of colonial, imperial, capitalist oppression have extracted the wealth and resources of the continent as well as undermined the autonomy and agency of African people. Even liberation movements to remove colonial governments could not change the situation of African people in significant ways; the reality was that "liberation" was, without exception, the transfer of political and not economic power. Further, political elites entered a relationship of collusion with, and were co-opted and corrupted by, economic elites, both local and international. Some of the most significant impacts of these systems of economic and political oppression have been on access to basic needs [water, food, housing, energy] and services [health, education, and welfare in particular]. Responding to these contexts and driven by a commitment to a transformed world, progressive movements organised and built change on a range of issues: the right to food, water, shelter and housing; spiritual health and healing; saving our planet and transforming governance for accountability, transparency and meaningful participation; creating people-centred economies; winning the right to access and own land; and resisting extractivism, militarism and violence. We have opened space, expanded our base, generated hope, and inspiration, and co-created the world in which we want to live.

Womn have had to navigate, resist, and transform a context characterised by violence, conflict, and hostility. These are seen in the multiple crises which enaulf the entire world in different ways: the threats to democracy; the capitalist crises: militarism, conflict, and violence: heteronormativity, misogyny, and patriarchy; racial and ethnic oppression and the climate catastrophe. These, in turn, have impacted the lived realities of womn and other marginalised groups, unveiled in extreme poverty and economic inequality, social inequality, isolation and political exclusion. We have been variously impacted by these systems of oppression depending on, amongst other factors, body type, (dis)ability, class, age, geography, sexual orientation, and discrimination against those who choose sex work as a form of work.

In February/March 2020, just as the world was settling into a new year and decade, the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns descended on an already embattled continent. Given this context, it is no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic quickly took root and was sustained over the next year with death and infection rates soaring as new waves emerged. As we worked together to respond to the pandemic, we wondered the extent to which African people could realistically be expected to "social distance," to stay home, to afford to regularly sanitise their hands and to access clean running water.

Local economies, particularly those in which womn were engaged, required continued mobility and contact. Communications and media infrastructure and capabilities were inadequate to ensure IEC [information, education, and communication] could protect families and communities. Ordinary people's lack of trust in political elites meant that preventive measures were delayed and communities resisted governments' decisions and messaging, including lockdown measures to slow the spread of the virus.

As such, there was significant disbelief in the existence of and risks associated with COVID-19 infection. Further, the militaristic responses by governments where the army was mobilised or where police applied excessive force combined with an absence of people-centred services and social safety nets meant that the levels of violence against womn and gender non-conforming people and deprivation were extremely high. Direct action soon emerged in response to the pandemic's interference with access to basic rights around the continent, from South Africa where people faced severe food insecurity to Uganda, where pandemic responses interfered with a democratic voting process.

WE HAVE OPENED SPACE. EXPANDED OUR BASE, GENERATED HOPE, AND INSPIRATION. AND CO-CREATED THE WORLD IN WHICH WE WANT TO LIVE.

Enter the New Decade

In the wake of the first and second waves of COVID-19, after which effective and safe vaccines were produced, the question of access by African peoples further revealed entrenched historical global inequalities. Vaccine apartheid, where rich countries prioritised their own vaccine programmes at the expense of other countries' wellbeing, impacted the lives and livelihoods of the people of the continent, embedding a new cycle of hardship. In this context, there has been massive devastation from the COVID-19 pandemic itself and from the associated lockdowns which have deepened already existing economic, social, and political crises. The impacts for womn included a lack of access to livelihoods and incomes, mental health, sexual and reproductive health services and holistic prevention, mitigation, and response to violence against womn and gender-based

violence. Womn's burden of care greatly increased as they aimed to meet their families' basic needs, including childcare. A radical and lasting solution to the issues of poverty and inequality is now more urgent than ever.

Feminist activists entered 2020 having made major advances in confronting the hostile contexts by popularising feminist ideas and bringing them into social and political discourse. Feminists escalated their work to actively confront and address systems of oppression, expanding out of single-issue activism to inspire a collection vision of equity; the idea of intersectionality was increasingly applied to daily life to raise consciousness of multiple and intersecting oppressions. In the non-profit sector, many sought to move beyond mainstreaming gender by encouraging critical organizational

reflection on how to internalize and externalize feminist principles. Similarly, bilateral agencies, such as Mexico, Canada and Sweden, led the way in naming their foreign policies as feminist and carried this into their funding and programming globally. A second thread within the work by feminists was that of connecting arts, activism and healing to establish a more holistic practice of transformation and change. The massive backlash by state and non-state actors, including the strengthening of conservative religious, traditional, and economic agendas, meant that the work to transform society took a serious mental, physical and emotional toll on WHRDs and feminist activists. In response, the centrality of self and collective care, wellbeing, and healing justice became urgent in our work, as was increasing boldness to articulate love as integral to feminism(s).

FEMINIST ACTIVISTS ENTERED CONTING MADE MAJOR ADVANCES IN CONFRONTING THE HOSTILE CONTEXTS BY POPULARISING FEMINIST IDEAS AND BRINGING THEM INTO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE.



A FEMINIST FUND IN A PANDEMIC

2.1. UAF-Africa and the New Decade

In 2020, our experience in establishing and building Urgent Action Fund-Africa came into its own after two decades. We entered the year inspired and ready for greater flow in our work as we connected various aspects of programming, the governance, and external contexts. We had been building a steady evolution towards greater coherence and connection between art, healing, and activism. We had also strengthened the linkages between local, national, regional/continental, and global work. These culminated into one of the most powerful moments in our own story - the festival

which launched the Feminist Republik in December 2019 at Naivasha, Kenya. More than 300 feminists from 45 countries on the continent connected to acknowledge the shift to healing justice. This shift, together with the deepening commitment to working in intersectional ways, meant that we were entering 2020 with greater consciousness of the need for holistic coherence across movements, issues and themes and strategies as we build a feminist Africa together.

By January 2020, our work was recognised

as making a unique contribution to movement building with womn and feminists through a rapid response mechanism and strong advocacy initiatives supported by research and learning. Advocacy was work done alongside the movements on both longstanding and emerging feminist issues, as well as directly with actors in the philanthropic ecosystem to mobilise resources for AWHRDs navigating urgent situations. Our direct work with the womn's and feminist movements had become crystallised as a "support and solidarity" function and approach. This was in the form



of rapid response grants and strategic grants allocated to support shifts in the contexts in which AWHRDs did their work. The Support and Solidarity work entailed, as our new Strategic Framework was soon to reflect, three main elements: grant-making, accompaniment, connecting, and linking AWHRDs to one another. The Feminist Republik was a key resource to UAF-Africa as an organisation and to the broader feminist and womn's movements, including conversations and special events, spaces and moments which demonstrated the power of individual and collective care and healing justice for African womn human rights defenders.

Finding Flow as a Feminist Fund in the context of COVID-19

Soon after a successful consultation on feminist documentation of self and collective care in Nairobi, the first cases of the novel Corona virus in Africa were identified in February/March 2020. Many governments began to introduce lockdowns as the best approach to interrupt the spread. The state, civil society, and media were all immediately negatively impacted, thrown into shock by this unprecedented crisis. Our immediate response was to mobilise our internal machinery to mount a well-timed, targeted and grounded effort to demonstrate friendship, support and sisterhood - solidarity - to feminists, activists and WHRDs. Three features enabling the rapid response funding of UAF-Africa included readiness, relevance [and appropriateness], and connectedness of the Fund to the womn in the movements [our relational work].. We use these three factors as the basis to share the highlights of our response COVID-19 while contemplating how the Fund was able to reach over 100,000 womn and girls during the pandemic and its consequent implications.

2.2. Why was UAF-Africa uniquely placed to respond to the pandemic

#1 Our Power Within: Readiness

One of our core areas of expertise is that of urgent actions, including emergencies. We have significant experience (20 years) in responding to urgent situations, including health crises such as HIV and AIDS, the ebola and cholera epidemics. We galvanised internal human, financial and technical resources to offer timely support to AWHRDs and their groups and formations.



"UAF - Africa was the first funder to sav. 'what can we do?' We had no pre-existing relationship with them. They were able to establish trust and deal with the issues we were passionate about which other funders did not see the need to invest in at the time. However, after they provided us the USD20, 000 grant, [two organizations] reached out to support after that. These two funders had no idea of the wellbeing concept and what it means. See how a funder that does not fund what everyone funds started a movement. See how a seed grows, because of a responsive funder that is responsive like UAF - Africa. You can imagine what USD 20,000 can do. Donors need to see things in a different way and by so doing they will inspire other donors. For the 138 women who have gone through this house, UAF - Africa may never see them but these women are grateful for a warm bed and warm food. We cannot say they have all healed nor have we evaluated the long-term sustainability of what we are doing, but for now, it is putting people on a critical healing pathway."

[FROM VAF-AFRICA INTERVIEWS ON THE HEALING JUSTICE PROCESS]



As a Feminist Fund concerned with supporting womn's movements in urgent situations, readiness is central to mounting a well-designed emergency response. Within two weeks of the first reported COVID-19 infections, we were able to mount our own coordinated effort to stand in solidarity with the womn's right and feminist movements.

ACTIVATION: As coronavirus spread across the world, we activated internal processes to offer our support to the movements we serve through the following actions:

- · Placed the entire organisation on high alert for the impact of COVID-19 on ourselves and our partners and movements.
- Monitored reality and risk so the organization could strategically prepare a timely intervention, particularly among the Management Team.
- Established a collective communications for information sharing, briefings, and strategizing.
- Engaged robustly and actively in online learning and research about the novel coronavirus. informing ourselves and considering the implications for our own action internally and externally.
- Regularly communicated with funders to alert them on the evolving situation and the emerging funding-related needs.
- · Tracked the broader political, economic, and social contexts on the continent, within subregions and across countries.
- · Arranged organisation-wide meetings to discuss the realities, risks and threats and consolidated our actions for addressing what was soon to be declared a pandemic.
- Engaged in relational work including reaching out to our networks, exploring the views and ideas of grant partners and strategic partners across global movements and particularly on the African continent.

ORGANISING OURSELVES: To consolidate our readiness work and positioning, we mapped the context, conducting a risk and threat analysis, and using and applying lessons from our work in similar emergencies. We developed a care-driven, collective vision about our goals, roles and focus and the mechanisms and processes to enable an effective, robust, and relevant COVID-19 offering by UAF-Africa to our movements.

A concrete Emergency Action Plan with teams for both the internal and the external work came out of our timely activation of our internal emergency systems. This Plan was a set of agreements based on best practice - from our own learning and the work of others - and how this should be incorporated into the UAF-Africa response to COVID-19, given the current contexts. This Plan was to guide us and keep us grounded throughout the first year of the pandemic. Based on this Plan, we were now organised as follows:

INTERNAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: We consulted with staff, identifying and meeting their needs, including the necessary resources. Priorities which emerged related to technology and equipment for remote work; recruitment of a psycho therapist for collective debriefing, counselling and support as well as for individual services; attention to leave, flexible work arrangements, introducing shorter work weeks, and establishing UAF- Africa's COVID -19 Staff Well Fare Fund.



"The staff COVID -19 wellness provisions continue to be a lifeline for me as I deal with devastating effects the heath pandemic has had in my life and community. Losing so much and so suddenly was a wakeup call to prioritise safeguarding my sense of care and basic needs for health and wellness. I saw how little it took to tip the scales and be swept by burn out, grief and stress due to forces beyond our control that wreak havoc in my work and personal life. I took up many of the staff provisions but the short work week and the psychological support stand out. I took up one on one sessions after listening to staff group sessions with the pyschotherapist. It was incredibly helpful. Even beyond the staff facility I continue to get psychological support and is instrumental in helping me align my actions, thinking with all the internal work happening in healing myself from the inside out"

[STAFF MEMBER IN AN INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS]

GOVERNANCE STRATEGY which

addressed the active leadership and engagement of the UAF-Africa Board in decision making, sharing perspectives, and generating recommendations. The Board's leadership included, programmatic, risk mitigation and management, donor related budgetary and funding questions. The governance strategy also addressed guestions of coordination and coherence. aiming to link and learn with strategic partner organisations and sister-funds.

DONOR EDUCATION STRATEGY

which included briefing donors on the realities and experiences of grant partners and movements; offering guidance on their role and contribution; negotiating for amendments to allow for a more flexible framework based on the new realities.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

STRATEGY which included a literature review on the pandemic and related contextual realities, UAF Africa's politicized analysis of the gendered effects of COVID-19, and an article on addressing GBV during the pandemic. The strategy also ensured a thoughtfully documented response to COVID-19 [both internal and external] as a learning process and product and a position paper on how media and funders can work collaboratively with womn's rights organizations in the pandemic. This strategy was grounded in insights from grant partners and UAF-Africa Advisors on challenges, mitigation, and relevant responses to COVID-19, as well as changes to existing grants/partnerships.

GRANT MAKING STRATEGY which included analysis of grant partners' potential to deliver on agreed activities and outputs during the pandemic and lockdowns; summarizing the impact of COVID-19 and an evaluation of grants requests [including the number of requests received, the number of grants awarded, and the nature of activities proposed by partners]. Linked

with the documentation work, we also

prepared an article on the practical ways through which we supported grant partners. Here, we paid particular attention to some of their biggest concerns, including the need for flexible use of funds rather than relying on agreed work and outcomes planned before the pandemic.

ARTIVISMS AND CONNECTION

STRATEGY which included working with those creating inspirational artwork for AWHRDs and drawing them into the Feminist Republik [FR]. Informationsharing and connection through webinars on self and collective care and related themes emerging from the work of the FR.

By the end the first week of March 2020, Urgent Action Fund-Africa was well positioned to support AWHRDs and their formations.

By addressing partners' most pressing needs, our grant making met the criteria of relevance. Grant partners expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback, describing Urgent Action Fund - Africa as present, supportive, and open. Partner experience is a fundamental element of how we assess success.



"This funding has been integral to enabling women most impacted by the socio-economic effects of COVID-19, to receive support and information about GBV which would not have otherwise been available"

GRANT PARTNERS, ZIMBABWE.



"This funding is very important, especially in the context of COVID-19. For instance, in our planning for 2020, our organization was focusing on advocacy for a friendlier environment for Sex Work and LBTQ in Rwanda. When the pandemic arrived, we were not able to respond to the primary needs of our beneficiaries who were in need of food to survive during the lockdown period. This funding was paramount in the perspective of responding urgently to the unexpected situation by protecting the well-being of sex workers and LBQ in Rwanda"

[GRANT PARTNER, RWANDA]



"I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Urgent Action Fund- Africa through Disabled Women and Girls, for providing the funds during this COVID-19 outbreak which has greatly contributed to our wellbeing during this difficult period"

[DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVIST, DARU TOWN, SIERRA LEONE.]



"Since the lockdown, accessing the health facilities has been a problem, we have not been allowed to move and using family planning is not allowed in our culture. We suffer because we did not go to school and our husbands do not support family planning. Thanks to this funding, we have a better understanding of available family planning methods which will help us to prevent more pregnancies and keep peace in our homes"

[GRANT PARTNER, SOUTH SUDAN]

UAF- Africa measured the relevance of our contributions based on the psychosocial needs expressed by WHRDs. The Feminist Republik was key in evolving and unfolding various spaces to meet these needs through multimedia and diverse platforms.

The Feminist Republik organised well-attended community gatherings, Ubuntu gatherings, healing circles and seminars which received positive feedback. Activities included:

Happy hour Café and Yemoja dance.

Let's be merry, share, and dance together on Labour Day 2020 in celebration of collective contributions. Even in the face of a pandemic, we dare to be alive

· Ubuntu Gathering, We're not done yet!

Collective care and holistic wellness where we were guided through Kujijua Song Therapy and Holistic Body Scan.

· Ubuntu Gathering

Explored integrative journaling within collective care, gursha expressive writing

Ubuntu Healing circle: Sharing and Caring

A virtual space where we sit in an imaginary circle to share our truth

· Ubuntu Gathering

Gursha Expressive Writing and Glow Yoga

Ubuntu Gathering Finale

A celebration of Freedom and possibilities THROUGH Yemoja Dance

Pamoja Month: Pa-Muziki Healing Gathering

A celebratory Afrocentric-infused political journey through traditional song and music.

Virtual Healing Gathering: Care and Connection in Crisis and Beyond – The Lessons of this Moment

Explored the power of building institutions and infrastructure that serve a feminist agenda rooted in self and collective care.



#2 Our Power To: Relevance

For Urgent Action Fund-Africa, our support and solidarity role with movements is based on their expressed needs, ideas, and priorities, alongside our own work to track and analyse trends in the contexts and the movements. Our approach to ensuring relevance includes building relationships over time, with and alongside, feminist activists and WHRDs and with a diverse range of actors and institutions. This relational work is addressed in the next section where we offer highlights related to Relationship. Here, we focus on the relevance of what we support and how.



I. NEW GRANTS

As a feminist and womn's rights pan-African Fund, UAF-Africa was well-placed to support grant partners soon after the outset of the coronavirus lockdowns in Africa. By May 2020 already, we had a clear vision in how we would implement our grant making role. First, based on our listening and consultation with our networks and our own early research into the pandemic, we planned and communicated our intention to offer new grants to:

- i) Develop and widely disseminate gendered messages and information about the virus.
- Translate complex COVID-19 information shared by governments and public health experts into simple messaging and whenever possible, in local languages.
- iii) Conduct action research to document the effects of the pandemic on Womn and gender non-conforming groups.
- iv) Create awareness/education on COVID-19 at the grassroots level targeting informal sector rural/urban slums communities and other at-risk groups.

v) Support strategic, sustainable, bold, and unique initiatives proposed by our constituencies across Africa.

In all our analysis and planning, we were deeply conscious of our mandate on:

- 1. Thematic priorities: economic justice; bodily autonomy; sexual and reproductive health and rights; genderbased violence; economic justice.
- 2. Strategic interventions: solidarity and support; knowledge leadership; advocacy & agenda setting; fostering cultures of care; and partnerships and alliance building.
- 3. Womn on the margins: womn in rural and urban slums; womn refugees and prisoners; womn in the informal economy, including street vendors, care, and sex workers; womn with disabilities and those with HIV & AIDS, among other chronic illnesses; gender non-conforming people.

II. EXISTING GRANTS

We invited existing partners to reconfigure their existing grants and discuss potential changes to the implementation of contractual activities, such as:

- Shifting activities to align to the current environment and challenges.
- Postponing or cancelling activities. especially physical convenings and meetings.
- Delaying grant deliverables such as reports.
- · Addressing the reality that some planned activities may not be implemented.

III. CELEBRATION AND AFFIRMATION

As we reflect on our contribution, we celebrate and affirm our work on:

1. Reconfigured Grants

After providing significant support to grant partners on deciding whether to reconfigure. we were able to reconfigure several grants. Many partners were able to delay or make minimal changes without needing to alter contracts.

2. New Grants

Between May 2020 and August 2021, UAF-Africa provided 205 COVID-19 related grants across all themes in 32 countries in all subregions of the continent. The total amount of grants allocated was USD 1,063,766.

3. Strengthening Accessibility

We reassured existing and potential grant partners of our accessibility on various high - and low -tech platforms for 24 hours a day and seven days a week. We followed through with timely action to "walk and work" with grant partners.

4. Effective Donor Education and Advocacy

UAF-Africa influenced Funders to prioritize funding grassroots movements, provide flexible funding, and channel resources for COVID-19 response. The Fund was able to attract 11 new donors on board to support COVID-19 response work. By educating the funders on the extent of the impact of the pandemic, this resulted in funders having clarity with regards the magnitude of the need and enabling greater responsiveness.

S. ACTION RESEARCH

Two Needs Assessments conducted in May 2020 and February 2021 offered an opportunity for AWHRDs to reflect on priorities within their political, economic and social contexts. This informed our direct solidarity work and the broader advocacy and agenda setting in which we engaged.

STRENGTHENING RELEVANCE THROUGH RESEARCH

Conversations with our partners and other movement builders shaped our mapping of African womn human rights defenders. There was serious concern about their own health, the health of their families and constituencies, and following through on commitments to womn and gender non-conforming people. This, taken together with the ongoing work of UAF-Africa to conduct feminist-informed trends analysis, informed our navigation of the pandemic.

Between February and July 2020, Urgent Action Fund-Africa received the highest ever number of grant applications in such a period – 759. We awarded 134 (18%) grants from this pool. The majority of the applications were focused on:

- sensitization and awareness-raising about the pandemic (including simplifying and translating complex scientific information).
- · personal protective equipment supplies.
- establishment of hand washing facilities in the communities and enhancing access to water for womn.

- training womn on practical and strategic economic opportunities like making masks, sanitizers, liquid soap.
- sensitization on the rising numbers of sexual and gender-based violence and awareness rising on available services.
- advocacy initiatives to include womn especially structurally excluded womn on regional and national COVID-19 response mechanisms.
- guaranteeing support systems to AWHRDs and their constituencies.

Based on the unprecedented volume of applications and the real sense of desperation, we decided in April 2020 to conduct a Rapid Assessment to deepen our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on womn in general and womn human right defenders and their organizations. Whilst the main purpose of the assessment was to inform our own response in real time, we also viewed the assessment to inform future emergency responses and learning between AWHRDs.

We disseminated an online survey in English and French data collection in May 2020 to eighty-five grant partners. The survey revealed that majority (73%) of respondents reported that COVID-19 disrupted their organizing and their capacities. Only 26% reported that the impact of COVID-19 had a moderate or minor impact while 1% reported that COVID-19 had a low (little) disruption.

A second Assessment conducted in February 2021, with over 400 respondents spread across Africa, deepened our understanding of our grant making, capturing a moment in the movements to better plan for our contributions along side other feminist funders. The documentation contributed to the memory, affirmation, recognition, and celebration as well as mourning and healing. The outcomes of that Assessment can be found in Section 4 below. This analysis was further enhanced by the engagement of WHRDs in a consultation and feedback process conducted by the Feminist Republik as part of the Ubuntu Series.

#3 Our Power with: Relationships

We believe that the kind of change which feminists seek must address the root causes of the oppressions that we face as womn and gender non-conforming people - that is, the systemic factors. Nurturing friendship, sisterhood, and solidarity within and between movements and between various parts of the womn's and feminist movements is critical to achieve this transformational change. Our contribution to relationship-building included accompaniment, linking partners to each other and to relevant information and grant-making.





We aimed to demonstrate presence and availability, making ourselves visible as a movement resource to feminists and AWHRDs.

- I. NETWORKING: Aligning with our motto to have our finger on the pulse and our ear to the ground, staff from various programs and dispersed across 14 African countries and boasting 37 Africa linguistic capabilities reached out to individual and collective networks. These conversations covered a wide range of themes related to immediate concerns and longer-term strategic plans. We linked partners and actors in our networks to each other based on similar goals and themes. By linking 67 AWHRDs, we supported collective action and contributing to movement building within a broader transformation process.
- **2. COMMUNICATION:** We issued a <u>Solidarity Statement</u> to declare our commitment to understanding movements as they/we moved into the unchartered waters of a global pandemic. The Statement described available support both to existing and potential grant partners through 2020/21 and offered AWHRDs multiple ways to reach the Urgent Action Fund- Africa team, including specialized communication for segments of our grant partners such as womn with disabilities, amongst others.
- **3. INFORMATION:** Based on the concerns, confusion and questions of AWHRDs and feminist-activists, we updated the Frequently Asked Questions on our platforms. We also ensured that our teams moved collectively and cohesively under our COVID-19 Action Plan. Staff knew where to refer questions from various actors within the team. The same applied to the special events we hosted—we ensured that invitations were shared widely and followed up by team members with those in their specific networks. This enabled wide-scale participation in our processes at the international, regional, and national levels.

- Y. ACCOMPANIMENT: Our ongoing commitment to nurturing relationship with existing and potential grant partners is demonstrated through our work to offer support alongside the allocation of grants. This support varies, depending on grant partners' needs. Our accompaniment included webinars on specific themes: economic justice, movement building, gender-based violence, environmental and climate justice, and the politics of documentation. Further, we provided capacity building on developing UAF-Africa fundable grant requests and offering guidance to our partners about the available funding opportunities such as feminist response to COVID-19, one on one meetings, amongst others.
- S. TAILORED AND FORMAL CONSULTATION AND LISTENING: A key initiative of UAF-Africa in the 2020/2021 period conducting standard/general trends analysis with both external data and internal analysis, ultimately translated into two Needs Assessments with 485. grantee partners and advisers in all regions on the continent and a total of 29 countries. The Assessment process as well as the content produced offered opportunities for connecting, communication and relationship-building.

Throughout the COVID-19 Support and Solidarity work of UAF-Africa, actors and activists in the Womn's right and feminist movements were informed of our work, what we offered and how they could access such support. UAF-Africa remained open as we sought to deepen relationships as a central element in effective movement-building and feminist organising.

ALIGNING WITH OUR MOTTO TO HAVE OUR FINGER ON THE PULSE AND OUR EAR TO THE GROUND, STAFF FROM VARIOUS TEAMS AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS AND LINGUISTIC CONTEXTS REACHED OUT TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE NETWORKS. THESE CONVERSATIONS COVERED A WIDE RANGE OF THEMES RELATED TO IMMEDIATE CONCERNS AND LONGER-TERM STRATEGIC PLANS. WE LINKED PARTNERS AND ACTORS IN OUR NETWORKS TO EACH OTHER BASED ON SIMILAR GOALS AND THEMES.

SOME INSIGHTS INTO AWHRDS ORGANISING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Assessment 1: May 2020

3

Key insights that emerged from the analysis of the Needs Assessment of 2020 include:

- AWHRDs across the continent quickly responded to COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns by immediately organising within and across communities and organisations.
- 2. AWHRDs and their organisations, often without any dedicated resources, mobilised on a range of actions such as COVID-19 awareness-raising, provision of basic needs, provision of Personal Protective Equipment (masks, sanitizers), working with community health workers to provide mobile SRHR services (e.g. female sex workers accessing HIV treatment), sensitization on GBV and strengthening of GBV report mechanisms within communities, advocating for inclusive COVID-19 response initiatives including people with disabilities (e.g. production of accessible IEC materials, and inclusion on national and local response mechanisms).
- 3. Despite their readiness and commitment to address needs, AWHRDs faced many challenges. They faced decreased funding, a massive demand for their services and engagement and limited buffers in the form of savings to cater for the crises. Further, for many organisations, it was not possible to implement the previously made plans and donor agreements in view of the contexts of the COVID-19 pandemic itself and the associated lockdowns. AWHRD organisations faced a mismatch between their human, financial and capacity resources and the needs of communities.
- 4. Many AWHRDs and their organisations faced pressure to provide basic needs against the reality that their funding was allocated for capacity building and advocacy. Oftentimes, these organisations were unable to provide services from their current project funds nor

fundraise for them to meet basic needs.

- 5. For the most part, grant partners were actively engaged in responding to COVID-19 through awareness-raising on the pandemic and the provision of practical needs such as hygiene kits, masks and hand washing stations, sanitisers, food, medicine, supplements and even cash assistance. This amounted to the prompt and unavoidable adjusting of interventions serving womn and girls.
- 6. Womns' and feminist organisations prioritized service for those on the margins of society such as sex workers, LBTQI people, domestic workers, and persons with disabilities, amongst others.
- 7. High rates of gender-based violence were prioritized. African WHRDs showed interest in better tracking and measuring genderbased violence through the generation of new or strengthened indicators. Additionally, partners reflected upon the need for better support for more effective GBV responses.
- 8. Many womn's right and feminist organisations faced constraints related to virtual/remote work transitions, emphasizing an urgency for ICT equipment and training to maximize their organising and reach.

In February 2021, just under



CONFECTION DE SERVIETTES HYGIENIQUES AVEC LES FILLES LEADERS DU CLUB DES FEMMES DES SAVANES POUR LA PROMOTION DE LA CULTURE

L'implication des garcons dans la confection des serviettes hygienique est un apprentissage d'approche genre et une lutte contre les steréotypes liés au genre



SOME INSIGHTS INTO AWHRDS ORGANISING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Assessment 2: February 2021

one year after the first Assessment, UAF-Africa embarked on a follow up Assessment to identify the key issues womn were grappling with to better align our support and solidarity contributions. 400 AWHRDs from 29 countries responded to the survey, deepening our understanding of COVID-19's impact and the power and work of WHRDs and womn's rights organisations [WROs]. This insight offered clear direction on our efforts and resources going forward.

3.1. Impacts of COVID-19

IMPACT ON WOMN

In general, womn experienced discrimination and violation of their rights. Participants listed specific issues facing womn in the pandemic including:

- · high levels of sexual, physical, domestic violence
- · loss of income and livelihoods
- · high prices of essential items
- · limited access to health services
- · mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression
- · increased rates of teen pregnancies and deaths related to botched abortions and complicated teen age pregnancies
- · greater burden of unpaid domestic and care work
- · shrinking civic space
- sickness and death from COVID-19
- lack of information on and understanding of COVID-19 and related issues.

Gender-non-conforming people and womn with disabilities faced disruptions in the supply chain as small and micro scale vendors in the informal sector. An already high unemployment rate increased dramatically as companies closed and ended contracts while many workers became sick and unable to work. The financial consequences on womn and gender non-conforming people pushed them into poverty or deeper into poverty alongside high levels of homelessness.

Other impacts included restricted access to basic health services, limited access to SRHR services (especially for young women), limited access to PPE and inadequate information on the pandemic and related issues. Among escalating rates of GBV, marginalized womn and people who don't conform to normative sexuality, gender, and gender expression were particularly affected, such as womn with disabilities, sex workers and LBTIQA people.

IMPACTS ON THE WELLBEING OF FEMINIST-ACTIVISTS AND WOMN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

WRHDs and feminist-activists have had to navigate their daily realities and what the pandemic means for womn. These have included practical needs [such as food, medicines, sanitiser, and handwashing stations], addressing vulnerability to GBV and VAW, and protecting against COVID-19 infection, sickness and death.

"The lockdown has been so stressful for me as an activist but lately I feel more relaxed ever since we had the online yoga sessions, my mind is at ease, I love myself more and those around me...... I am just praying that Corona is going to end and they open the borders so I can go back to my country... yes now I am not stressed"

[ACTIVIST, UGANDA]

Our research showed that precarious work, livelihoods, and income severely impacted the mental and physical health of disabled womn, sex workers, LBTIQ people and womn in the informal economies. For example, their businesses and incomes were affected by the lockdown and the disruption in the supply chain. Womn with underlying conditions and certain kinds of disabilities were particularly constrained in terms of movement due to the heightened need to "shield" themselves from risk of infection. Similar challenges, as previously referenced, related to limited access to basic health services for example for pregnant and disabled womn, lack of access to PPE, and limited information on a range of health-related needs and services. Taken together, there was a huge burden of violence faced by womn in general and added risks of violence against WHRDs who are often more mobile.

In addition, feminists and womn's rights activists hold the responsibility of being present, responsive and creative in the organising contexts. The urgency of addressing pre-existing needs sat squarely on the backs of these activists and WHRDs who are among essential infrastructure for community change. Further, the anxiety about delays in implementation and delivery on constituencies, as well as the implications for donors, weighed heavily. Activists rearranged budgets, requested increased grant allocations and used reserve funds while they operated on reduced budgets and unable to actively fundraise for new funds.

Impact on Organisations

The overwhelming majority of organisations [73%] experienced significant disruption to their work, whilst 26% reported minor disruptions with moderate impact and 1% little to no disruptions with low impact. Where disruptions occurred, organisations are concerned about long-term repercussions. The disruptions included:

- cancellation of programs or events,
- · interrupted services to beneficiaries and communities,
- · increased and sustained staff/volunteer absences,
- · disruption of supply chain or sourcing materials,
- · increased demand for services/support from beneficiaries,
- · budgetary implications related to strains on the economy,
- · limited capacity to work remotely,
- · psychological/mental health impact on staff/volunteers,
- · and unsuccessful fundraising/funding withdrawal.

In many cases, activities were suspended temporarily or indefinitely, grant-related goals shifted, activity timelines were disrupted, budgets were insufficient and intended participants of projects and activities were unreachable.

Many organisations faced funding-related challenges. WHRDs made substantial changes to their expenditure. Expenses now included high costs related to virtual office setup and the provision of COVID-19 PPE and supplies to staff, volunteers and constituencies. When hosting inperson spaces, the cost of safety and security was high. Inflation pushed prices for basic and essential goods and services to unaffordable levels. Organisations began to dip into their reserve funds (for the few that had them). These new demands on expenditure happened alongside shifts in the donor priorities where funding was cut or donors ceased funding when existing contracts closed out. For some organisations, extensions for spending were negotiated and, even worse, some funds had to be returned to donors.

As a consequence, there continued to be significant unmet needs of womn and gender non-conforming people, WHRDs, and staff and volunteers working on womn's rights and feminist movement building. For UAF- Africa we shifted our focus to a hybrid funding model that supported COVID-19 related pressing activities while continuing to support strategic and longterm advocacy and agenda setting programming that dis-mantel structural oppression. In turn this enabled womn and gender non-conforming people to navigate their way in the pandemic.

MANY ORGANISATIONS FACED FUNDING-RELATED CHALLENGES. WHRDS MADE SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES TO THEIR EXPENDITURE. EXPENSES NOW INCLUDED HIGH COSTS RELATED TO VIRTUAL OFFICE SETUP AND THE PROVISION OF COVID-19 PPE AND SUPPLIES TO STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND CONSTITUENCIES.

COVID came abruptly and my biggest problem has been lack of food which made it difficult for me to take my ARV drugs. As you know us sex workers, we depend on daily income, so it has been challenging to use ARV drugs with no food, the side effects can be devastating, I thank you that you have brought food in the right time when I had considered withdrawing from my drugs, because they are very strong when taken with no food"

[SEX WORKER UGANDA]

"At first, I was sceptical. I wondered how anyone could just come to my rescue just like that during the pandemic. But to my surprise, they came and picked me up, and brought me here to the shelter home. They gave me a place to sleep, food and it all felt like a dream. I felt at peace and suddenly, my issue became minor"

[GBV SURVIVOR, KENYA]

"With this grant, we assisted 4 womn to get shelter; one of them was a seven months pregnant queer womxn who was thrown out of home by relatives amidst the lockdown"

[GRANT PARTNER SOUTH AFRICA]

3.2. The Power and Work of WHRDs and WROs

Despite the many challenges faced by WHRDs and feminist activists across the continent, they mobilized to shift, sustain and strengthen their efforts throughout the pandemic. As with most emergencies, they are first to respond and the last to leave. They are often at the frontlines, seldom acknowledged and engaged in unpaid, precarious and invisibilised reproductive labour.

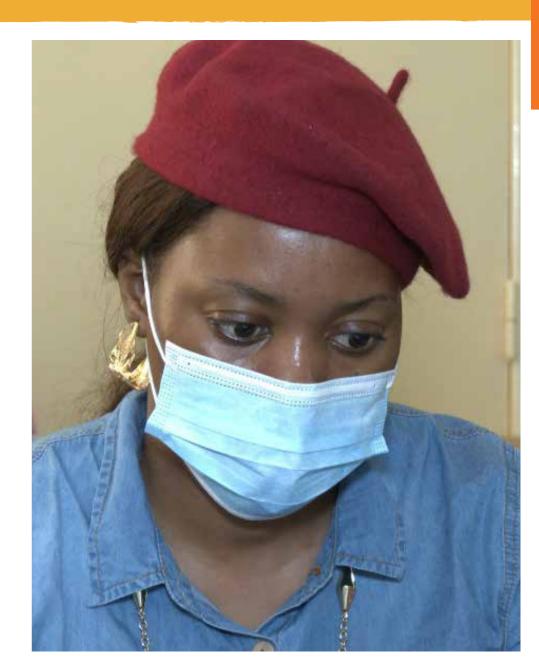
Womn carry an unequal burden of care, with this pandemic being no exception. They worked as small groups, collectives, and cooperatives both individually and in partnership with other organisations as well as across movements.

They used a wide range of existing and new strategies such as economic empowerment, digital activism, capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy, fundraising and psychosocial and legal support. The specific activities within these strategies included COVID-19-related awareness raising and capacity building, supporting small scale enterprises, providing practical needs, mental health services, wellness and healing work, action research/ documentation, Information, Education and Communication [IEC] production, and the provision of cash and livelihoods assistance. Much of the work addressed stigma related to COVID-19 and raising funds for community responses.

Many organisations and groups shifted to greater digital activism/ technology-intensive activism and the use of arts, culture, and creativity. This was expressed through poetry and spoken word, healing circles and the use of visual art in documents and presentations. There were also shifts for some organisations towards increased advocacy and towards services for those who previously focused more on advocacy. Some of the advocacy issues addressed included access to food, water, health [particularly PPE] as well as access to other social services, violence against womn and gender-based violence more broadly as well as on the militarized state responses.

"We have engaged Government officials and other NGOs to be disability inclusive regarding COVID-19 interventions. First was the State Government and APGA who gave us 100 bags of 10kg rice, 35 bags of 6kg rice, some bottles of hand sanitizers, and a hundred thousand naira respectively. Then followed by State Ministry of Children and Women Affairs in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and about 30 women with disabilities benefitted from the COVID-19 palliatives shared on 10th and 16th of August respectively. The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs have committed to setting up a committee which would involve WWDs to enable inclusion and proper planning for WWDs during and after COVID-19." [Ananymous, After An Urgent Action Fund-Africa Learning Process]

UAF-Africa will be sharing this publication that spotlights the power of AWHRD organising during the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 and 2021. This is part of our commitment to feminist documentation for the purpose of memory, healing, learning, sharing, expressing, and celebrating.



REFLECTIONS ON THIS NEW DECADE AND ERA OF FEMINIST ORGANISING

Movements carry a mix of pain, passion, joy and hope as well as steadfast commitment to creating a socially just world built on feminist principles. The many struggles we have endured during this time and the forced separation and disconnection alongside the feared and actual loss and illness has left many of us feeling battered, exhausted, and traumatised. At the same time, we have also grown and connected in new ways. The enduring and emerging feminist visions remain strong - both slowly and in spurts. Even as we see remnants of the old, we know that this is a new era.

Like feminists everywhere, Urgent Action Fund-Africa, guided by the impact of the Feminist Republik, has reimagined imperatives to align with this new era. Our conversations suggest that feminists need a "recovery", "reset" and "regeneration." We feel exhausted and burnt out, and at other times, resilient in our power and hopeful. We are in flux between survival mode and looking ahead to our dreams. We are part of a vibrant feminist movement, thinking on its feet, questioning, challenging and exploring, alongside an ever-growing recognition of the fundamental imperative to take care of ourselves and each other.

The lessons and reflections in this section are very personal for UAF-Africa and we hope are useful for our friends, sisters, and partners also. These insights outline a vision based on realities and needs of feminist-activists we have engaged in this period, whilst being mindful of the complexities within the movements and political, social and economic contexts. As they stand, these ideas for action are based on possibilities for our own direct implementation alone and alongside others through financial support and accompaniment.

1. The Good Life and Power

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. [VDHR ART 25(1)]

THE REALITIES OF WOMN AND WOMN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Many have said that COVID-19 exposed the worst and most oppressive aspects of the global economic system. The wealth and resources of our countries are unfairly distributed with a small minority of people owning the bulk of the resources and the vast majority sharing the little that remains. The wealthy elites are often men with links to political elites. Achieving the goal of a good life for all people is becoming a greater challenge due to governance crises in African countries where states have not prioritised the socio-economic rights of ordinary people. Womn and, in particular, womn on the margins, are at an even greater disadvantage of accessing an adequate, let alone thriving, standard of living.

Due to the pandemic, many of those who were already poor became even poorer and forced others into poverty. Many of the wealthy or well-resourced became richer during the pandemic as they maximised their class, race and gender. We carry painful images of African womn living on the streets and homeless, unable to access food, unemployed and unable to generate a livelihood, lacking access to water, energy, health services and personal protective care. The

worsening situation of violence against womn and gender-based violence carries few effective remedies and insufficient mental health support and sexual and reproductive health and rights and health services more broadly. The wellbeing of the majority of womn and certainly for many WHRDs and feminist-activists on the continent has been in sharp decline, even as they invest heavily in the wellbeing of others. Our right to a good life with our rights realised, including that of safety and joy, is non-negotiable.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

To support AWHRDs and their organisations, we aim to do the following:

- Popularise, grow, and ethically resource feminist movements as they work with others to demand and build a good life for all people, particularly for womn in all their diversity.
- 2. Integrate economic justice and anti-poverty and inequality advocacy from a gender and feminist perspective within their own work.
- 3. Link to activists who engage in such advocacy from a feminist perspective.
- 4. Equip WHRDs with resources to meet their practical needs when the usual means of such livelihoods are not viable and an option.
- 5. Enable easy access to equipment, products, and materials for work in emergency and urgent situations.
- 6. Engage in economic empowerment processes, projects, and programmes.
- 7. Provide a gender perspective and analysis to those engaged in economic empowerment work.

2. Relationships and Power

THE REALITIES OF FEMINIST-ACTIVISTS AND WOMN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Feminists have great power; it is how we relate, show, and build connection, solidarity, sisterhood, and friendship on its own, and as part of building and implementing a shared feminist agenda. Amidst this care and love are challenges such as contestation, contradiction, and competition. Conflict is sometimes ideological, strategic or based on approach or personality. Divergence can also be linked to privilege and power based on class, geography, age/generation, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, among other identities. We navigate these disagreements with or without outside help and, at times, the conflict remains unaddressed with lingering harm to our individual and collective energies.

The pandemic forced us into an extended phase of physical disconnection as we focussed on the survival of ourselves, our families, our communities, and our organising. This highly stressful period filled with loss, anxiety, and confusion, while also serving as a time of great empowerment as we strengthened our care-centred capabilities and networks. We believe in our individual and collective capability to shift our relationships, connections and friendships so that we can justly address conflict and build more enriching relationship.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

- 1. Affirm the power of relationships in feminist and womn's rights organising and movements.
- 2. Strengthen the capabilities of feminists and womn's rights activists to name and address conflict, contestation, competition, and contradictions as an integral part of navigating our humanity our organising.

- 3. Resource space for feminists and womn's rights activists to engage in relational work.
- 4. Strengthen connection across diversities of feminists and womn's rights activists, specifically elevating invisibilised groups of feminists and womn's rights activists.
- 5. Invest in skillful design of space rooted in the relational and social, weaving in celebration, affirmation, recognition and social interaction through conscious healing and artistic expression.

3. Resources and Power

THE REALITIES OF WOMN AND WOMN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Donor agendas and approaches to funding and resourcing womn's and feminist organising are high on the money-power agenda. Serious challenges for feminist and womn's rights activists in the culture and practice of donor institutions include:

- · Highly restricted funding,
- A focus on funding activities, projects, and programmes at the expense of strengthening organisations,
- Reluctance to fund practical needs of WHRDs and the needs of womn and LBTQI groups with which they work,
- Short-term funding that prohibits planning for deep, sustaining work overtime [the kind of work that leads to the strongest possibility of transformational change]
- Rigid and inflexible funding that fails to recognise life's constant flux and our evolving analysis and approach,

- · Protracted funding application processes,
- Application procedures linked to complex framing jargon and practices, such as theories of change and the setting of "indicators" written in highly scripted and prescribed ways that prevent the submission of requests or likelihood of approval, and
- Unrealistic and/or irrelevant measures of success from donors as it relates to the priorities of feminist and womn's rights organisations.

A linked issue related to money-power is how our movements can build our own resource base outside of traditional funding sources. This poses further questions as to who and how such money be raised, especially while feminist and womns rights activists are already overburdened with leading an unpopular agenda for societal change.

Finally, the realities of class privilege and the distribution of resources within our movements remains a central tension, as we have yet to see fundamental shifts in allocation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

- 1. Move the money-power discussion into real action that influences donor principles and practice.
- Identify aspects of inequity in money-power for feminist and womn's movements that are within our own control and commit to transforming power relations in this regard.
- Mobilise spaces and platforms to address these ongoing issues.

4. Love and Power

THE REALITIES OF WOMN AND WOMN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Feminists long articulated love as a political project. This often triggers discomfort with questions about what is meant by love and backlash to replace love with care and other alternatives. Love and care are nevertheless central for why we remain passionate and committed to organising in its very many forms. This includes building community and individual and collective power through various separate but connected means.

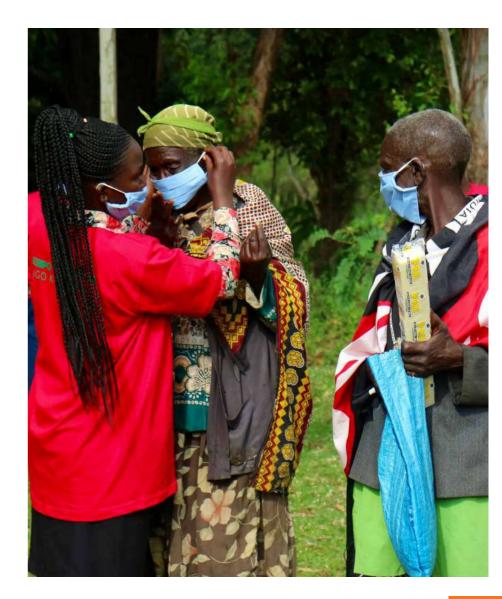
Feminists and womns rights activists have, during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns expressed many needs for building their knowledge and skill to better implement their work. These include digital activism alongside general ICT capability and confidence; ability to work remotely; effective awareness-raising and education. In this case awareness on COVID-19 and associated health issues as well as, a broader issue about IEC; organisational development; advocacy, coalition-building, alliance-building; and conducting action research.

WHRDs want to work better whilst also integrating and locating their work within specific themes such as womn's economic empowerment, climate change, responding to GBV, health services, and mental wellness services including for the "hard to reach." Linked with this is meeting practical needs and providing goods and services. This is particularly important during urgent and emergency situations and especially for marginalised womn and LBTQI people as well as WHRDs.

The above mapping of expressed goals and needs demonstrates the high bar we set for ourselves. This is the enormous vision that characterises feminist and womn's rights activism and the reality within which we work. At the same time, we also need to critically examine which are real, artificial or imposed needs.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION

- 1. Co-create, lead, and support feminist and womn's rights activists and actors to build, deepen and evolve their agendas and mandates individually and collectively.
- 2. Explore complementarity, reciprocity, and mutuality. Envision how to prioritise issues which the pandemic foregrounded such as feminist economic justice work, regardless of the themes and focus of any individual group and organization.
- 3. Foreground love and power as valid political projects and goals for ourselves, our movements and decision makers in various positions of power and authority.
- 4. Evolve the way work on care, wellbeing and wellness evolves is embedded within our organising cultures, rather than a series of events and activities.
- 5. Foreground equity within our movements and between funders, such as redressing bias based on language, geography and discourse and definitions of success.



CONCLUSION

5

In conclusion, we emphasise the following contributions by UAF-Africa to movement building with AWHRDs and feminist-activists on the continent:

1. There is much to affirm and celebrate on the part of WHRDs and their organisations

Although many womn's right and feminists movements were initially destabilised, they found ways of connecting and responding creatively to urgent issues. This was despite the reality that the devastation from sickness, death, economic hardship, and mental health impacts were a daily reality for these activists themselves. Womn and LBTQI people brought together healing work, the arts and activism in powerful ways to meet various needs.

2. URGENT ACTION FUND-AFRICA DEMONSTRATED FLOW AS A FEMINIST FUND

As the continent navigated three fierce and increasingly devastating waves of COVID-19, the work of UAF-Africa in

2020/2021 was a culmination of our strengths as a Feminist Fund with expertise in responding to urgent situations. We mounted our own response within days of the first COVID-19 cases, and in doing this, prioritised the most marginalised womn and gender non-conforming people. We organised ourselves in a way that each team member maximised their strengths. We focused on taking care of ourselves and holding space with others. We invested in grant making and accompaniment as well as paid attention to donor education, sensitisation and advocacy. We remained actively engaged in multiple coalitions and alliances to sustain the global womn's rights and feminist agendas. The politics of money must shift without delay – we have problematized this for decades and it is time to make the shift.

3. IT IS TIME FOR A RESET. RENEWAL. RECOVERY. REGENERATION.

We have been moving towards new ways of being and doing as feminist-activists and WHRDs for some time. The time for holistic organising that addresses a range of issues, themes, identities, and realities has arrived. To varying extents, we are all still deep inside the pandemic while repositioning for a post COVID-19 era. We need to dance and sing. We need to breathe and connect as we engage in this essential intellectual, service, influence, and relational work.

What will solidarity look like in this new world? How will we share it?

1. Solidarity Statement: Link

2. Call for Proposals: #1: Link

3. Call for Proposals: #2: Link

4. Call for Proposals: #3: Link

5. Video AWHRD Feminist Republik Ubuntu gatherings https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=90eNykG_Vek English https://t.co/ aMyQOMcl5Q?amp=1 French

INFLATION

FEMINIST RESPONSE

INNOVATIVE

CROSS BORDER TRADE

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

DEATH

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMN

SOLIDARITY

LOSS OF INCOME

SUPPORT

MENTAL HEALTH

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES

DIGITALIZATION

UNPAID CARE WORK

LOSS OF INCOME

CORRUPTION OF AIDS

ACCESS TO HEATH SERVICES

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



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