



Dreams of Transformation: Healing Justice as Feminist Practice



**URGENT
ACTION
FUND +
AFRICA**

FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

2022 Special Edition
Action Report



Who We Are



We are a Feminist pan-African Rapid Response Fund committed to transforming power relations through resourcing African feminists and womn's human rights defenders and their formations, as an act of solidarity. Bold, responsive, creative, and consistent, UAF-Africa advocates for funding partners to understand, commit to, and actively invest in pan-African feminist and womn's rights organising and urgent situations requiring rapid response. With deep and expanding knowledge, experience, and skills in the contexts in which womn's human rights defenders live, organise and work, the Fund is alert and agile in responding to the priorities and urgent needs of African womn's rights activists and movements, thus ensuring holistic security, safety and well-being, movement building and strengthening using feminist philanthropic principles and values.





Vision

We envisage an Africa and world where transformative justice is a shared goal so that all African womn; in all kinds of bodies, realities, and identities are recognised for their full worth and value, live to their fullest potential, are healthy and live in harmony with the earth and with fellow human beings.

Values

Respect
Integrity
Organising with soul

Our Ways of Working

Collective and shared leadership
Cross-movement and intersectionality
Openness, knowledge and learning

Mission

We work to support African womn's human rights defenders, particularly in the feminist and womn's rights movements, in their actions, which enable them to support and sustain themselves, each other and their work before, during and after urgent situations.



Powering Urgent Actions

UAF-Africa works through...



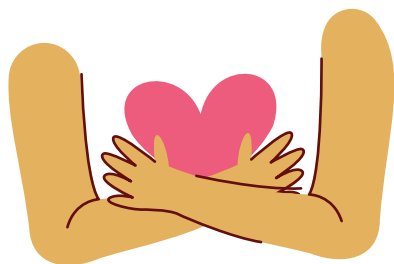
Solidarity and Support:

Working alongside feminist and womn's rights movements and making Urgent Action and Influence grants.



Agenda Setting and Advocacy:

To transform the conditions in which feminist and womn's rights movements do their work.



Fostering cultures of care:

To enhance learning and practice among feminist and womn's rights as well as inspire collective care and healing justice movement culture.



Knowledge Leadership:

To inform the urgent actions and broader work of feminist and womn's rights movements to bring change.





The 2nd Feminist Republik Festival

28-30 November, 2022

Naivasha, Kenya



Experiences at the 2nd Feminist Republik Festival

More than **600** feminist and women's rights activists from Africa and the diaspora

60% of **600** participants from francophone Africa

33 international Development funders'

23 Women and Feminist Funds

Over **100** resource people: cultural producers, psychosocial specialists, feminist healers and artists

5 African Union languages: Swahili, Arabic, French, English and Portuguese, **Plus Wolof**

5 People's Assemblies

22 People's Concurrent Sessions

20 Cultural, Social and Sporting Events

39 African Healing Practices

17 Artistic Expressions: Different kinds of music, spoken word, poetry, journaling, body movements, dances, drumming types, and painting, among many other expressions

6 Fireside Chats

Day Zero Welcome Dinner and Dancing the Revolution Away

International Women's Human Rights Day
Sound of Music Gala Dinner: 29 November





Activists and defenders responded to unparalleled care needs, from caring for family members afflicted with COVID-19 while transforming into teachers as children shifted to online schooling, all while trying to function with minimal childcare support.

Meeting at an unprecedented moment

The 2nd Feminist Republik Festival presented a special moment in our lives. It had been almost three years since we were able to gather face-to-face due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It had undoubtedly been a challenging, strange and reflective time for us all. At the Fund, the pandemic placed an added urgency on issues we had always grappled with, namely the multiple roots of distress, fatigue and burnout that womn's¹ human rights defenders (WHRDs) experience. COVID-19 presented a 'golden opportunity' for states to criminalise the activism of WHRDs and clamp down on civic spaces. Womn's rights organisations grappled with rapid decisions to shift organisational budgets, respond to new community needs, and quickly make organisational shifts to virtual work arrangements (shifts that typically take organisations years to get accustomed to). Activists and defenders responded to unparalleled care needs, from caring for family members afflicted with COVID-19 while transforming into teachers as children shifted to online schooling, all while trying to function with minimal childcare support.

It was dizzying. It was near impossible, and yet WHRDs did it!

They managed to organise and provide much-needed support to communities, ranging from responding to practical needs for masks and cleaning supplies to responding to unique security threats that faced WHRDs during the pandemic to carrying out educational campaigns to inform communities about COVID-19 and methods of protection, advocacy for vaccine justice, establishing shelters for womn facing violence while implementing regulations to avert COVID-19 infections, among many other feminist responses.

UAF-Africa believed that the pandemic and the patterns it revealed and unleashed are a critical aspect of our contexts that highlighted the need to centre collective feminist healing and dreams for transformation more than ever. UAF-Africa knew that the areas of work of the Feminist Republik were always relevant. Still, the pandemic clearly illustrated that we

¹ At the Fund, the use of womn is a simple 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. Additionally, womn' for us also includes lesbian, bisexual womn and transwomn.



needed new ways of interpreting our contexts and engaging with them.² The time was now for healing justice and its dual focus on interrogating the structural violence that is at the root and perpetuates our oppressions and collective feminist healing. The COVID-19 context made the need to interrogate the systems and structures that made our experience with the pandemic almost impossible to survive very clear: the swift crumbling of health services in many countries

(including the quick decisions made to cut down on sexual and reproductive health services and to scale down on response services available to women facing gender-based violence), the role and impact of the privatisation of medicine and corporate takeover of public hospitals made it very clear that we need to collectively develop feminist dreams of transformation of health systems that do not respond to our conditions, but perpetuate trauma and violence.

² The Feminist Republik's areas of work include, holistic security, safety, wellbeing and collective care, healing justice, feminist documentation and knowledge generation and a healing farm for the rejuvenation of AWHRDs

Holistic security, safety, well-being and collective care, and specifically the focus on collective care

as an area of work of the Feminist Republik, became critical to interrogate. The unprecedented burdens carried by WHRDs during the pandemic took a significant toll on their bodies, spirits and minds. More than ever, activists reported burnout of the entirety of their group members, skyrocketing rates of illness (especially difficult for WHRDs with chronic illnesses whose experiences with and healing from COVID-19 were difficult), reports of intense feelings of isolation, depression and hopelessness, and a conviction that there was no end in sight for a pandemic that surprised us at every turn with a new, more vicious variant.

Living through these unprecedented times underscored the need for **feminist documentation and knowledge production** as critical responses to the silencing of womns' narratives, especially during crises. It would be easy to dismiss the role of WHRDs in countering the spread of the pandemic if their efforts were not documented. The Feminist Republik Registry of violations, threats and risks facing African WHRDs started its work at the height of the pandemic and continues to capture interesting trends relating to the strategising, creative organising and feminist wins during the pandemic that is crucial to document if we are to write our narrative of how we survived these difficult times. Given our experiences with the pandemic and how our post-pandemic world will present different realities to our lives and activism, what do we envision a **Healing Farm** can offer to WHRDs? Should it look, feel and present anything different than what we envisioned back in 2019?

We were thrilled to host the 2nd Feminist Republik Festival, not just because we had so much to share on the work and our reflections on it, but simply because we were able to meet again; be in the same physical space; feel each other's energies, fears, anxiety, hope; hear laughter and speak to each other without

mediation of screens and internet malfunctions. Never before have we understood the necessity for physical human company as we did in these times.

Excited does not begin to describe how we felt and still feel. It was an absolute pleasure dancing, singing, laughing, hugging and crying with all that joined us in Naivasha, Kenya!



Aim and Process of the Festival

The beauty and power of feminist ideas invite, inspire, provoke, fuel, nurture and give us hope and strength to make sense of the ever-deepening chaos, crises, hostility, violence, unpredictability and instability of the world.

The Festival is UAF-Africa's unique offering to AWHRDs on the continent and the diaspora. It seeks to curate spaces for connection, reflection, collective care and healing, and celebration in a context that centres on the wisdom and experiences of AWHRDs and their formations in fostering cultures of care. Every iteration of the Festival seeks to incrementally build on the Feminist Republik platform together, creating spaces guided by visionary practice and overreactive responses. There were over 100 resource people, cultural producers and psychosocial specialists – including feminist healers and artists. These all brought gifts of ideas and frameworks, and traditions, and all were able to demonstrate or at least explain the practice linked with these ideas.

The 2nd Feminist Republik Festival was framed as a space for AWHRDs to co-create approaches towards collective healing together, themed around healing justice as a radical approach to feminist organising. The programme and

atmosphere of the Festival echoed Coumba Toure's provocation that **"The Feminist Republik Festival is not a meeting platform to do work, but a space for feminist joy, care and freedom"**. This manifested in the manner in which the Festival created an environment that centred on healing, profound expressions of art, entertainment, networking, robust discourse, and different movement practices.

The Festival was a canvas set in nature – green everywhere, a nearby forest and beautifully created gardens, a stunning lake and the massive dome of blue sky that is the Great Rift Valley. The space was open to receive and hold people – African feminist activists and women human rights defenders from all over the continent and in the diaspora as well as the allies and friends of the Urgent Action Fund-Africa. There were valuable things such as art supplies and tools, healing tents and healing supplies and tools, and this same space was heavy and rich with delicious food and music and a market where women sold, sampled and bought crafts/art. There were showers and baths; there were rooms and comfortable beds. There were bars and coffee shops and clubs/discos and more. There were also offices and spaces for the UAF-Africa team to operate from and hand out daily allowances and reimburse



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those who have spent their cash on various aspects of travel to the space. In the domes and baby tents where breakout sessions were hosted, there were benches, cushions, and chairs, and there was music. There were amazing people, saying and sharing remarkable things and pearls of wisdom that emerge from deep knowing the inside of their/our own lives – who better? This was the canvas of space, the sacred and the powerful.

Knowing that activists were keen to learn from each other and collectively strategise, the Festival was a co-created space where activists shared experiential learning on diverse healing practices, collective care practices and

documentation efforts that took place during the high days of the pandemic.

The Festival proceeded over three days, with **Day 1** focusing on an exploration of the root causes of the violence, trauma, and harm that AWHRDs experience and the intersecting systems of oppression that support the perpetuation of historical and intergenerational trauma and violence. **Day 2** explored the manifestations of structural violence and illuminated existing feminist practices that work to transform harm. **Day 3** shed light on the commitments and shifts required to centre healing justice as a feminist organising framework.




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Celebrating International Womn Human Rights Defenders Day





The Feminist Republik Festival, in essence, is aligned with International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, which falls on 29th November each year. Therefore, Days 2 and 3 were dedicated to affirming and celebrating the love, bravery, courage and power of Women Human Rights Defenders and feminist activists across the world and on the African continent in particular.


During the gala dinner celebrating International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, some of our funders offered messages of solidarity.

Althea Anderson – Hewlett Foundation

Rosalie Nezien – Foundation for a Just Society

Jessica Horn – Ford Foundation





The Festival was designed with moments to grieve and celebrate. The healing justice research findings surfaced in traditional healing practices that have been applied in feminist settings. These practices surfaced and were collectively practised during the Festival. The Festival centred on collective pandemic learnings – how did we care for each other in these times? How did communities come together to survive these times? How did feminists creatively organise at a time of

abrupt closures of civic space? And importantly, what are our needs and plans for this liminal and confusing time when it feels like we have reached certain milestones (in specific contexts relating to vaccinations and the seeming return to normalcy) only to discover that life still feels very strange and unusual?

During our time together, we asked each other: *How are we doing? How are we still surviving? How has this journey altered us?*

The Root Causes of Trauma & Violence

As feminists, we live the ideas that we have and continue to generate as movements over time. These ideas often enable us to take steps to propel the change we want to see in the world, and sometimes they enable us just about to put one foot in front of the other. They are life-giving and generative.

Grounding the Festival as a collective healing space, a poem recited by **Mmatshilo Motsei** on **Day 1** highlighted the intergenerational histories of violence carried by African women. It referenced the manner in which the dispossession of land intersects with the erasure of African forms of knowing, including wisdom on health, education, and personhood. The rendition further called for “the healing of the wound, cleansing the spears of the sword and fighting for

indigenous sovereignty”. The poem gave context to the significance of applying a political lens to collective care and healing, including an analysis of the structural conditions that perpetuate transgenerational trauma, harm and oppression. Modern-day systems, such as economic, healthcare, education, and criminal justice systems, are all shaped by ideas institutionalised through colonisation, heteronormativity, ableism and capitalism, among other structures of oppression. Despite the attainment of formal independence, most African countries retained the colonial apparatus of statecraft and subsequently did little to transform the extractive nature of these systems. Consequently, our experiences of these systems are shaped by a legacy instituted through violence and continue to embed a violent inheritance through existing practices.



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Manifestations of Structural Violence


Acknowledging that structural violence manifests through a set of institutional, systemic, interpersonal, and ideological arrangements that shape the organisation of society, exploring the manifestations of structural violence becomes critical to a feminist analysis of harm and pathways to healing. Concurrent sessions on Day 1 critically explored the role that different systems play in perpetuating violence against AWHRDs. Different sessions discussed various manifestations of structural violence that surfaced from the Festival, including, but not limited to, the criminal justice system, global health systems, land and environmental justice and the erasure of indigenous forms of knowledge.

Framing the criminal justice system as a violent institution is based on the knowledge that judicial systems, including the law and policing functions, were developed from a corrective justice framework³ that seeks to restore law and order through the enforcement of violent systems of control and punitive measures (such as the death penalty and imprisonment). The centrality of violence in this framework has been a cause of trauma and injustice for generations and continues to affect popular imaginations on justice and accountability. In a session entitled **“Structural Violence and How it Manifests in AWHRDs’ Lives: Violence and Trauma of the Criminal Justice System”**, facilitated by **Happy Mwende Kinyili**, discussions illuminated the manner in which the criminal justice system has shaped black people’s relationship with violence, using case studies from Apartheid South Africa and the Civil Rights

Movement in the United States. The discussion highlighted that the violent nature of this system had been consciously designed to cause destruction and wound African family structures and ways of being. **Mya Hunter** demonstrated that the most evident manifestation of this wounding is reflected in the prevalence of gangsterism, predominantly in black communities, practised mainly by young black men in both contexts. Other examples were shared of the forms of torture inflicted on black people, including the institutionalisation of corporal punishment in schools, which continues to shape and influence how black people interact with offence and conflict. This combination of institutional and intergenerational traumas and legacies and the normalisation of ‘punitive correction’ contribute, in part, to violence at the interpersonal level. This is demonstrated by the ever-rising scourge of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), cancel culture, and Gender Based Violence (GBV).

The critique of the healthcare system as a manifestation of structural violence is premised on the fact that **the current global healthcare system only holds space for Eurocentric and individualistic approaches to healthcare that focus on diagnosis and pathologisation as frameworks for healing**. This is evident in the emphasis placed on developing language to name, categorise, and treat illnesses, excluding other forms of indigenous and African ways of healing that centre expansive models of healing that transcends treating physical symptoms. In a session that **explored the root causes of ableism, Lame Olebile**

3 Corrective justice is the idea that liability rectifies the injustice inflicted by way of one individual on another. Common responses include making a person who has wronged or injured another suffer some form of punishment, give back something that was stolen, or pay for damages.



shed light on how ableism is rooted in an inordinate focus on a biomedical lens to explain human experiences with un-wellness, which paved the way for an oppressive lens of what constitutes 'healthy bodies'. When combined with the hegemony of patriarchy, capitalism, ableism and white supremacy, the framing of a 'healthy body' is largely male, able-bodied and heterosexual.

Complementing the analysis above, a session moderated by **Mmatshilo Motsei** on land ownership and environmental justice discourse interrogated the linkages between systems of oppression, including patriarchy, capitalism and neoliberalism, and how they have, and continue to set, precedence for **the gross inequity of land ownership and distribution that continues to disconnect and deny womn access to land, while contributing to environmental degradation**. The conversation surfaced that collectively, African people's relationship and connection to the land are shaped by colonial and neo-colonial manifestations of capitalistic and patriarchal systems that are profit-driven and give rise to extractivism, increased commodification and appropriation of land and natural resources. This exacerbates historical experiences of land dispossession, especially for African womn and gender non-conforming groups.

Defenders shared their personal stories reflecting some of the ways in which patriarchy continues to be a systemic barrier that enacts violence when AWHRDs attempt to access land. One defender from Kisumu, Kenya, expressed:



When I went to a governmental office, I was shocked at being told to go away if I didn't have a husband or get my brother to have their name on their title deed. Of course, I didn't go ahead with that.

The struggles of WHRDs in communities affected by extractivism and deep patriarchal practices should be

recognised as deep and systemic, not the actions of individual "greedy" corporations protected by uniquely corrupt governments. Restoring our connection to land entails land stewardship practices that will enable AWHRDs to return and care for the land, leveraging the interconnectedness of human and ecological systems to disrupt the widespread trauma of land dispossession, privatisation and commodification.

The erasure of African indigenous cultures and knowledge systems was also highlighted as one of the ways in which **structural violence prevails and continues to disconnect Africans from their rich ways of knowing and ancestral wisdom**. The colonial legacy of using language to dominate African communities culturally continues to influence how Africans make sense of the world. This is evident in the prevailing forms of disconnection from our histories, healing practices and food systems. In a session entitled **"Erasure of Indigenous Culture, Knowledge and Food Systems"**, facilitated by **Françoise Moudouthe**, Francophone activists reflected on the forms of cultural distancing enacted by their naming and linguistic practices, so much so that they relate to the French traditions and ways of living more than their own. This realisation provoked activists to imagine decolonial ways of being and community-building that cultivate memory practices rooted in their African experiences. During the session, healing modalities were used to connect to indigenous cultures and knowledge systems, including playing ancestral

music, displaying herbs, and tasting indigenous foods as offerings designed to ignite practices of remembrance.

Impact of Structural Violence on AWHRDs' Organising

The work of AWHRDs is at the coalface of challenging and responding to the manifestations of structural violence. A resonant theme from the first day of the Festival illuminates that AWHRDs, in their diversity, are living under **unrelenting threats and violence that continue to inflict trauma and pain and negatively impact how they organise**. Defenders highlighted the use of repressive tactics like imprisonment, silencing, surveillance, restrictive laws, and ostracisation as forms of the backlash they encounter linked to state violence and shrinking civic space.

Defenders also shared how exposure to continuous stressors at the political, legislative, organisational and interpersonal levels **has given rise to depression, vicarious trauma, and chronic fatigue**. AWHRDs from Western Sahara painted a clear picture of these stressors and

their impact when sharing an emotional account of their lived experiences under occupation, which is heightened by constant exposure to repression and violence from state agencies because of the nature of their activism. They shared that they face imprisonment frequently and live with the threat of violence, targeting themselves, as AWHRDs, and their families.

Cumulatively, these manifestations of structural violence, alongside organisational challenges and limited resource flows, perpetuate constant whirlwinds of unwellness for defenders. Upon openly reflecting on these layered challenges, AWHRDs agreed that the nature and intensity of feminist and social justice organising limits their ability to pause and reflect on their wellness. As a result, they find themselves constantly overworking, experiencing burnout and adopting harmful coping mechanisms which have a direct bearing on the collapse of relationships and feminist movements.



Unwell people cannot coexist without bleeding on each other. Who protects the feminist against herself? - WHRD from Kenya.

Defenders also noted how the **violence of the criminal justice system manifests itself in "callout" culture**. Callout culture is not rooted in the politics of correcting each other in love and reconciliation. Instead, it is aimed at isolating, othering, shaming and punishing feminists who are regarded to be in the wrong. Throughout

the Festival, feminists heavily critiqued this trend, maintaining that it does not align with the feminist ethos of care and cultures of healing. Instead, callout culture reflected the forms of violence that exist in social justice spaces and heightened the importance of structural analyses of existing trends in organising spaces.



Pathways to Collective Healing

As illuminated by **Jude Clarke** during the plenary session on Day 2, trauma is complex in that individual and collective experiences are intertwined, rooted in systemic and historical violence that spans generations. Healing necessarily requires a political orientation that acknowledges the roots of systemic trauma and harm that shape how we experience the world and how we may carry or experience trauma in organising spaces. Feminist practices of healing acknowledge that it is multi-dimensional and, therefore, seek to transcend bio-medical approaches to cultivate holistic practices that are attentive to emotional, spiritual, legal, energetic, social, economic, political and ecological dimensions of ourselves.

Discussions during the Festival affirmed that AWHRDs and their movements had been exposed to trauma, violence, and wounding across generations. Feminist pathways to healing justice, therefore, frame **healing as an everyday practice** rooted in an analysis of systems of power at the heart of our traumas and mediate power relations across different contexts by cultivating wholeness within individuals, collectives, as well as social and ecological systems.

Disrupting urgency addiction in our movements by **slowing down**, pausing, and reflecting was seen as a critical pathway to healing. Pausing not only enables AWHRDs to take stock but also cultivates a quality of awareness that enables the shifting of harmful and discriminatory practices and supports transitions out of survival mode. Collective practices like examining the rhythms of our activism, institutionalising collective care practices and scheduling moments of rest disrupt **“the lack of wellbeing in feminist activism”**, as illuminated by **Laity Fary Ndiaye** during the Activists in the Spotlight Action Assembly on Day 3. Additionally, when practices like breath work, meditation, grounding and journaling are coupled with individual and collective efforts to transform injustice, these modalities can become pathways to healing. This approach is reminiscent of **Bayo Akomolafe’s** oft-quoted lecture: “The times are urgent; let us slow down”.⁴



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⁴ Bayo Akomolafe (2019) The Times are Urgent, Let us Slow Down. The Base Healing Community. YouTube, 02 September 2019. Accessed here.



In addition to a feminist analysis of the roots of our trauma and creating feminist alternatives to systems of harm, healing indeed entails the intentional creation and curation of **feminist spaces for connection**. These spaces enable AWHRDs to centre care and wellbeing in their social justice organising. This understanding was embodied during the Feminist Republik Festival through offerings such as lively dinners, fireside chats, early morning rituals, opportunities to dance and mingle at the disco, and to deepen connection through the Feminist Republik Café. Creating spaces for joy amidst ongoing repression, surveillance, and danger, is a radical act of resistance. Connected to efforts of resisting structures of violence, healing practices, in this context, entail the revival of traditional healing and care practices that have been systematically erased by decades of colonisation, medicalisation, ableism and patriarchy. Reviving these practices does not mean

romanticising them, as many are rooted in patriarchal and heteronormative understandings of the world, but rather attempting to view them from the lens of adapting them to feminist spaces and practices. This was the spirit that informed this iteration of the Festival, which centred healing practices from across the continent as a part of the festival offering.

Returning to the body is a feminist pathway of healing that enables the practice of embodied social justice⁵. The Festival was a space to practise returning to the body through various healing offerings, including bodywork, energy healing, transforming our relationships with our bodies, cultivating pleasure, and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), all of which address different forms of numbness that may have been cultivated as coping mechanisms. However, it should be noted that practices of embodiment are not without

5 Embodied social justice refers to the “embodied experiences of individuals who have faced various forms of oppression, and connects those experiences to implications for social justice in an increasingly complex and challenging world”. Rae Johnson (2017) Embodied Social Justice. Routledge: London and New York.



Collectively, the feminist analyses and practices covered on Day 2 remind us that healing justice is a framework that leverages feminist imaginations to build new worlds rooted in radically just alternatives.

contestation. Returning to the body for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) may be triggering and re-traumatising. Trauma-informed body-based practices, one of the offerings at the Festival, are thus critical to expanding experiences of the body, holding both the realities of the body as sites of trauma and violence and the possibility of the body as sites of liberation, power, consciousness, joy, and pleasure.

Connected to efforts of elevating collective ancestral healing modalities are feminist practices of archiving and memory work that

document, celebrate, honour, and visibilise the lives and activism of AWHRDs. These forms of recognition disrupt the erasure of women and gender-diverse people from historical narratives, centre different forms of knowledge, and co-create decolonial archives that live in individuals, movements, and different communities. Power relations also inscribe memory work and require activists to be attentive to which histories are being erased, silenced, buried or dismissed.

Feminist pathways of healing acknowledge the importance of **daily practices of self and collective care**. Adopting traditional healing practices, creating spaces for celebration and recognition of the work of other activists, and creating communal responses to depression and burnout were cited as examples of practices that cascade into, and shape, the prospects of collective healing.

Honouring the limits and boundaries of our bodies is a healing

practice informed by disability justice praxis that questions able-ist notions of productivity and overworking. **Danai Mupotsa**, in her contributions to the healing justice research concurrent session, reminded us that failing to address the traumas we carry as individuals and collectives results in the reproduction of trauma in organising practices. Additionally, fostering the politics of repair through conflict management strategies is a vital healing pathway that increases the possibilities of harm reduction, reconciliation, and transformation.

Institutionalising practices of care, healing, and solidarity in

feminist and social justice spaces through addressing power dynamics, creating administrative and operational processes that embody justice, equity, and collective care, and investing in the thriving and regeneration of social movements were seen as critical healing justice practices. These organising practices elucidate the conviction that healing pathways “...reset organisational templates and usher a new reality”⁶.

Collectively, the feminist analyses and practices covered on Day 2 remind us that healing justice is a framework that leverages feminist imaginations to build new worlds rooted in radically just alternatives.

6 Urgent Action Fund-Africa (2023) “We carry Generational Demands for Healing that will not Rest”: An African Feminist Exploration of Healing Justice as an Analytical Lens and a Practice. Accessed here.





African Feminist Imaginations of Healing Justice

African feminist imaginations of healing justice acknowledge that healing justice practices have historical and contemporary roots in the continent and often use different naming conventions. Justice is framed as an intersectional collective endeavour that cannot be siloed and is deeply connected to the multiplicities of social justice struggles across the continent. **The Healing Journey Talk Show**, hosted by Melissa Wainana, revealed

that African feminist imaginations of healing justice seek to nurture cosmologies of mutuality within and between activists, their movements, and allies. They also support practices that cultivate balance as well as equilibrium as a healing pathway, as described by Iya Affo during her contributions. This section weaves contributions from the three days to describe the feminist imaginations of healing justice shared during the Festival.

Transformations towards Healing Justice

Shifting activist cultures is a critical transformation required to cultivate healing justice. One transformation requires moving from the corporatisation of social justice organising to valuing the humanity, politics, and ways of being of AWHRDs. African feminist imaginations of healing justice, in this regard, would cultivate practices that honour boundaries in organising, experiment with different approaches to resource movements holistically, and invest in the humanity of activists by supporting measures that would enable them to be safe in all their identities.

Transforming woundology⁷ and trauma organising⁸ by centring African feminist principles of self and collective care was another proposed shift. This includes shifting narratives of self-sacrifice and self-neglect in the name of liberation, centring feminist joy and inclusivity in movements, prioritising consent in movement processes, fostering just organisational processes, exploring pleasure and sensuality in organising, and reinventing ways of living and being in community with others. Brenda Kugonza, during the Activists in the Spotlight Action Assembly, roused the Festival with the following provocations:

7 “Woundology refers to the condition of constantly pitying oneself and playing the victim. This happens at individual and collective levels with the collective version of this leading to an unhealthy atmosphere or constant complaining”. Hope and Rudo Chigudu (2015) Strategies for Building an Organisation with a Soul. African Institute for Integrated Responses to VAWG & HIV/AIDS. Accessed here.

8 Trauma organising is when individuals, movements, organisations, cultures, or systems “becomes fundamentally and unconsciously organised around the impact of chronic and toxic stress, even when this undermines its adaptive capacity”. Karen Treisman (2020) A Spotlight on Organisational Trauma: The System as the “Client”. Accessed here.



**Defending human rights is not a sacrifice.
Self-care is not a privilege - it is a right!
Neither money nor time can limit us to
have self-care.**

Shifting colonial and neo-colonial institutions, practices, belief systems, and legacies are critical to realising healing justice for AWHRDs. This includes standing in solidarity with AWHRDs organising for the end of the occupation of Western Sahara, transforming discriminatory legal and organisational frameworks, harmful cultural and social practices, systems of coercion, violence, and power-over, valuing colonial ways of knowing and being, discrediting African spiritual practices, and violent practices of accountability and justice.

The Womn's and Feminist Funds Action Assembly, moderated by Jackie Asiimwe, referenced the importance of **shifting the unpaid, under-resourced and under-valued work of activists** by resourcing movements abundantly and investing in their holistic resilience. Lame

Olebile encouraged resource partners to "[interrogate] the contribution of philanthropy to burnout, exhaustion and struggles facing activists to feel well [...]" and capitalist modes of organising" for social justice. Practices that would support shifts in this area include framing collective care beyond psychosocial support to include meaningful salaries, healthcare support, shelter, general operating support, and flexible and multi-year funding. Additionally, practices like going beyond the parameters of funding criteria and mandates to centre movement-led agendas, as illuminated by Jebli Shrestha, were critical to centring the care and resilience of feminist movements, as "survival is the risk itself". Adopting participatory approaches to philanthropy, as illuminated by Ange Belyse Irankuda, was seen to deepen the prospects of healing justice in the social change ecosystem.



Commitments to Resourcing Healing Justice

The Festival hosted an Action Assembly, entitled Donors in the Spotlight, where resource partners shared a range of commitments to deepen their support of AWHRDs and efforts to centre collective care and healing justice in movements. Moderated by **Cynthia Eyakuze**, the session revealed that resourcing healing justice requires systemic shifts in how feminist organising is supported. Many of these shifts are inspired by feminist funding practices and include commitments to **resourcing movements holistically** as a strategic pathway to resourcing healing justice. In practice, this would be expressed through sharing a range of movement-strengthening resources, including financial, technical, human, social capital and networking resources, as outlined by **Fadzai Muparutsa** during the penultimate Action Assembly. Additionally, **Sarah Iqbal** committed to resisting siloing and the distribution of resources based on thematic areas through her work with the Hewlett Foundation. Sharing resources that enable movements to sustain themselves through flexible, long-term, and core funding was expressed as another commitment by **Daniela Pedraza Moreno and Rosalie Nezien**.

Commitments to deepen **personal and institutional reflexivity** to realise justice in funding processes were also shared during the Festival. **Rosalie Nezien** further committed to listening deeply to movements, shifting the policies and practices that perpetuate trauma, harm, and the under-resourcing of movements. **Sarah Mukasa** committed to developing an African strategy that does not balkanise the continent, that seeks to pool resources across common challenges in different regions anchored in the principles of feminist intersectional analysis, decolonised approach to philanthropy, and supporting AWHRDs to push back against authoritarianism.

“If feminists in philanthropy are described as conduits, how can we be better conduits?”

During this Action Assembly, a question was posed: Responses recommended funders to be in community with movements and deepen the accountability of resource partners to movements and the constituencies they serve. Moreover, **Happy Mwende Kinyili** committed to furthering Mama Cash’s practices of implementing trust-based approaches to philanthropy, reimagining application and reporting processes, and leveraging philanthropic advocacy to influence sectoral practice and transform philanthropic architecture.



It was noted that philanthropy is a means to an end and not the end goal of feminist organising in philanthropy. Therefore, cultivating worldbuilding practices that increase the possibilities of a world without philanthropy is a healing justice pathway that was also explored.



Resources available to AWHRDs remain meagre. **Hakima Abbas** shared findings from the Black Feminist Fund's research, entitled *Where is The Money for Black Feminist Movements?*⁹. The research found that 0.1%-0.35% of global foundation giving went to Black women, girls, and trans people. Furthermore, of the percentage of human rights funding allocated to Black communities globally, only 0.24% was directed to Black Human Rights Defenders. Resourcing commitments from the Black Feminist Fund, therefore, sought to **increase the quality and quantity of resources to movements**, sharing resources that encourage different forms of organising to resist the NGO-isation of social justice, disrupt scarcity in movements by facilitating abundance through resource flows and privileging the knowledge, strategies, and priorities of those most marginalised to inform philanthropic practice.

Hakima further proclaimed that (institutional) "philanthropy is violence" because it is based on giving practices that do not interrogate the

structural conditions that enable the mass concentration of wealth. **Feminist political analyses and strategies are critical to interrogate and transforming the structural conditions** that perpetuate the status quo of philanthropy. The infiltration tactics of feminists in philanthropy enable the shifting of resource flows to movements and model solidarity-based approaches to philanthropy. These approaches include centring the agency of movements and communities, as illustrated by **UHAI-EASHRI**, commitments to shift power to movements and absolve forms of risk so that movements can operate with freedom and spaciousness, as demonstrated by **Michelle Truong**, and practices of being responsive, first response funder to movements, as implemented by **Women's Fund Tanzania**. It was noted that philanthropy is a means to an end and not the end goal of feminist organising in philanthropy. Therefore, cultivating worldbuilding practices that increase the possibilities of **a world without philanthropy** is a healing justice pathway that was also explored.




9 Hakima Abbas, Awa Fall Diop, Cynthia Eyakuze, Maie Panaga Babker, Yannia Sofia Garzón Velencia and Timiebi Souza-Okpofabri (2023) *Where is the Money for Black Feminist Movements?*. Accessed here.

Making Sense of the Festival...

Highlights, Hindsights and Insights





We entered the Festival space with anticipation and a sense of possibility. We were fierce, gentle, bold, brave, vulnerable and fragile. We were healers, and we were artists, we were speakers, we were staff and volunteers, and we were consultants. We were here/there.

We were here/there because we had fought for the space, the time, and the right to be present at the table. We eventually took others along with us, or rather, they eventually chose to come with us and to bring us into their spaces because we gently nudged and cajoled or forcefully pushed and even made them. And here we are/were—a celebration of our being. We were almost lulled into just being and not needing to defend and explain why we were there. We were almost lulled into a space of thinking that we didn't even have to foreground

Throughout the Festival, AWHRDs and allies deliberated what the embodiment and practice of healing justice might look like individually and collectively. The Festival proceedings illuminated that AWHRDs and their movements have rich healing traditions that enabled them to navigate the continuum of structural violence in their various contexts for decades. This abundance of knowledge and practices, however, is not equivalent to the forms of support and resourcing that AWHRDs receive to

advance the work of liberation. The discursive spaces on shifts and commitments enabled AWHRDs and allies to identify the pain points of existing practices and leverage feminist imaginations to build more just organising frameworks and platforms for solidarity. The Feminist Republik Festival expanded the frontiers of the healing justice discourse by illuminating its multi-dimensionality, presenting healing justice as an organising framework and practice and as a way of being. If each generation has its mission to fulfil, then perhaps, as the proceedings of the Festival reveal, the mission of this generation of AWHRDs and allies is to embed healing justice as an integral feminist analytical and organising practice.

There was a feeling of “we”, of belonging. We were/are part of movements of feminists who refuse to succumb to the violence imposed on the world by the greedy and callous. And somehow, there was enough to hold us in the space as a community or maybe communities. It was being a part of something bigger than ourselves whilst also affirming the power of ourselves as individuals. This was certainly a high, a highlight of the space and time we spent together—the simplicity and satisfaction of being a part of and of the collective power of community.



“Yet...I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bemoaning these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. The fact is, we were made for these times.

Yes. For years, we have been learning, practising, been in training for, and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement. I cannot tell you often enough that we are definitely the leaders we have been waiting for and that we have been raised, since childhood, for this time precisely....”

Dr. Clarissa Estes Pinkola

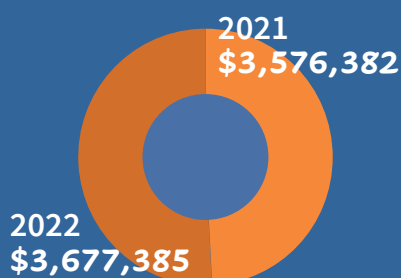


Our grant-making in 2022

In 2022, we received and reviewed 4,300 grant requests compared to 3,200 grant requests in 2021. From the grant requests received, we provided 492 grants compared to 465 grants during the same period in 2021, translating to a 6.4% increase in response to the unfolding context, which was marked by converging crises of democratic collapse, rising authoritarianism, heightened religious and cultural fundamentalisms, closure of civic space, increasing natural disasters necessitating unprecedented humanitarian emergencies.

The figures provided above indicate that there was a 25.5% decline in grant requests in 2021 which was attributed to factors based on our grants analysis and intelligence, some of which relate to the closure of some women's rights organisations/feminist's groups due to shrinking financial resources for feminist organising, especially experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Total Grants Awarded (in USD)

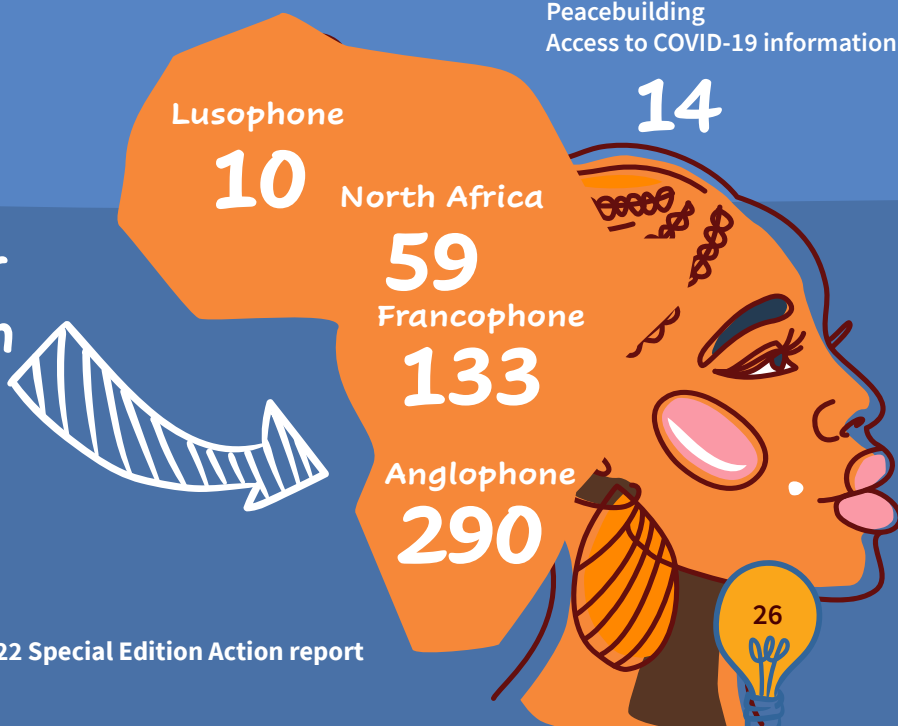


The increase from 2021 to 2022: **2.8%**

Grants per issue in 2022

VAW/GBV	Disability Justice	Environmental and Climate Justice	SRHR	Economic Justice
164	15	46	88	70
Other Peacebuilding Access to COVID-19 information				
14				

Grants per sub-region in 2022



Bolstering Feminist Thought Leadership at an Inflection Point

At UAF-Africa, we are continuously learning, documenting and sharing what we are observing, what we hear from our constituents, what we are experiencing in our grant-making and alliance-building work, and what we are making sense of in a world that is constantly in flux. Through our Knowledge Leadership portfolio, the Fund works with others to build a culture of learning and knowledge production within and external to UAF-Africa for deeper consciousness, consistently theorising and articulating a feminist, pan-African perspective and translating this into solidarity and action. This work includes Documentation, Information Management, Research and Publications, Learning and Historical Political Initiatives, and Special Projects.

Our Knowledge Leadership work focuses on the African continent at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels. In 2022, UAF-Africa produced a plethora of multifaceted publications that are reflective of the political and socio-economic moment the Fund and her constituencies found themselves. We hope you enjoy our collection of strategic resources from the Fund.



- We Carry Generational Demands for Healing that will not Rest: An African Feminist Exploration of Healing Justice as an Analytical Lens and a Practice.
- Contextualising Healing Justice as a Feminist Organising Framework in Africa
- Activism as a Spiritual Practice
- Healing in Solidarity
- Compendium of abuse of WHRDs in Africa
- Beyond Survival, beyond resistance Part I
- Beyond Survival, beyond resistance Part II
- A love letter to WHRDs by Hope Chigudu
- The 2nd Edition of Dzuwa
- Pamoja Month
- Fire in the Rain: UAF-Africa's Feminist Response to COVID-19
- Steadfast, Ready and Rising
- La-femme-africaine-et-leau-la-lutte-continue
- Reimagining pan-African and Feminist Philanthropies.
- UAF-Africa's 2021 to 2030 strategic compass.
- La Justice Réparatrice comme Esprit d'Analyse et comme Pratique
- Positionner La Justice Économique Dans Le Contexte Du Féminisme et De L'agentivité Financière Pour La Femme Africaine
- UN FEU SOUS LA PLUIE _Réponse Féministe de UAF-Africa à la covid-19
- LES FEMMES ET L'EAU EN AFRIQUE: Un Aperçu des luttes pour la justice de l'eau
- Boussole Stratégique 2021-2030





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