



## **GALVANISING WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISING IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA**

### **CONVENING REPORT**

**Dakar, Sénégal**

**May 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**



## Background

The Galvanising Women's Rights Organising in Francophone Africa convening was held from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015 at the King Fahd Palace Hotel in Dakar, Senegal. The three-day meeting, organized by Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-Africa), in partnership with Foundation for a Just Society (FJS), American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Global Fund for Women (GFW) African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), New Field Foundation and The Global Human Rights Fund (GHRF), was the first-ever regional convening aimed at strengthening women's rights organisations through capacity development on resource mobilisation, strategic communications, advocacy, movement building and cross-border collaborations that had been identified as priority areas for learning and engagement by the different women groups.

The convening brought together thirty three women's rights and feminist leaders from eleven French-speaking African countries to connect and support women's organisations from Francophone West and Central Africa. As countries in Francophone Africa emerge from conflicts, negotiate for peace and security, as well as transitioning to vibrant democracies, emerging women leaders must be an integral part of the establishment of the structures, systems, legislations and policies that will lead to open, tolerant and inclusive societies. However, in order to do this, women need enhanced understanding of the geo socio-political and economic terrain in which they deeply understand and seek to influence social change. There is no doubt that women also urgently need to arm themselves with sophisticated knowledge, intelligence, networks and tools of their activisms including opportunities to share experiences and strategies that have worked and not worked for women's rights advancement and protection in the mostly conflict affected nations where they live and work. The meeting was convened at the backdrop of an increasing volatile political environment that is strife with fundamentalist activity spreading from Nigeria, Libya, DRC, Mali, Central African Republic among many other hot spots of violence and socio-political upheavals. In the lead up to the convening, it had become glaringly evident to funders interested in supporting women's rights organizing in these two sub-regions that women desperately needed the knowledge and skills to be effective and meaningful actors in their countries' socio-political and economic leadership through strategic and timely grants that enable them to implement their visions of equality when threats erupt as well as when windows of opportunity open up to advance and secure women's rights.

The convening provided much needed opportunities for leaders, especially selected to participate based on their feminist activisms, leadership in their countries' women rights work, expert knowledge of the region including capacity to provide a critical analysis of women's rights status and trends in light of factors and drivers of growing poverty, public dissatisfaction with governments, heightened human and food insecurity as well as increased fundamentalist activities (both cultural and religious). Participants engaged in instructive discussions and debate on varied issues of concern and interest while exchanging strategies and identifying barriers and opportunities within this specific socio-political, economic, lingual, cultural and regional context. Participants were able to engage in forward looking agendas for strengthening the women's rights movement, networking and cross-country learning and resourcing, both within these two sub-regions and beyond. Participants also attended hands-on sessions that strengthened their individual

and collective capacities to lobby and advocate for identified issues at national, regional and international levels.

## **DAY ONE REPORT**

### **Opening Ceremony: Welcome remarks**

#### **UAF-Africa Board Chair: Coumba Touré**

In her opening remarks, Coumba welcomed participants both to the convening and to her home country, Senegal. She appreciated the agency of donor partners as well as UAF-Africa for organising the much needed meeting. Coumba lamented at the dearth of support for Francophone women's rights groups by funders and thanked the represented funders for their trust and confidence in the work of the women's movement in the two sub-regions. She encouraged the participating funders to educate other funders on the investment payoffs of supporting women's rights groups as well as challenging their negative perspectives of supporting Francophone countries and organisations working in conflict situations. She went on to share that UAF-Africa had to go the extra mile in interesting other funders to collaborate on the hosting of this rare meeting that would serve as a conduit in connecting women from the region while sparking new ideas, refueling institutional capacity and strengthening collective voices in advocating for more resources as well as enhanced peace and security within the region- with women playing meaningful decision-making in the peace negotiations and conflict resolution. Coumba highlighted that the meeting was to equip all participants with the requisite knowledge, political skills and tools to identify opportunities for active participation in gender sensitive peace processes, political transitions, and democratic governance initiatives that enhance the women's movement and lead to strong, vibrant and gender inclusive societies.

#### **Laying the Ground-UAF-Africa's work in West & Central Francophone Africa: Ndana Bofu-Tawamba, Executive Director**

*Our research intelligence, knowledge and grantmaking experience suggest that Francophone women's rights organisations in West & Central Africa need stronger networks and capacity development in the areas of resource mobilisation, strategic communications, lobbying and advocacy, movement building as well as knowledge generation of the specific issues women, girls and trans people face in these two sub-regions. Ndana Bofu-Tawamba*

Ndana welcomed the participants to the convening and highlighted how delighted UAF-Africa was to be in Senegal, once again. She acknowledged UAF-Africa's outgoing board chair Coumba Touré for her tireless advocacy, technical guidance and inspiration in stressing the need to continually elevate Francophone women's voices and visibility at the local, regional and international levels. Ndana recognised and thanked UAF-Africa's cooperating partners (Foundation for a Just Society, Global Fund for Women, African Women's Development Fund, The Fund for Global Human

Rights, American Jewish World Service and New Field Foundation) for making this meeting happen, in the special manner in which it did. She especially acknowledge the presence of Women's Funds (AWDF, GFW, FADHAF and Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises). She mentioned how the meeting resembled a kaleidoscope, with many different colours whose diversity represented strength, light and resilience. She stated that this gathering of African feminist and women's rights leaders was not by accident but was the fruit of collaboration and deep conversations among funders and interested stakeholders regards how best to engage, acknowledge the various pipelines of leadership in the Francophone women's movements while supporting and catalyzing new discussions and debates on the fundamental issues that the groups are working on.

While laying the ground of UAF-Africa's work in West & Central Francophone Africa, Ndana stated that for the last fourteen years the Fund has enhanced African women's leadership in bringing about social justice, equality, equity, and peace. Working across Africa, UAF-Africa builds broader alliances with partners at national, regional and international levels. She went on to elaborate that the meeting also represented the culmination of phenomenal work conducted on women's leadership in conflict transformation, a focus area for UAF-Africa, by the many groups attending the meeting. She highlighted that through the Advocacy and Alliance Building Programme, UAF-Africa supports women in Africa to lead transformation through collaboration, building alliances and advocacy for women's human rights in fluid operating environments. Ndana explained that through the Fund's strategic and emerging issues grants, UAF-Africa sparks new ideas while supporting spaces to enhance women's understanding of thematic issues, which scales up their ability to engage in influencing policy making, laws, decision making processes with a keen awareness of how the proposed decisions affect women and girls' lives, and with new and in-depth understanding of the technical issues they engage.

Ndana went on to elaborate the rationale behind the convening, indicating that it was a culmination of much study, reflection and collaborative discussion with the Fund's grantees and partners that pointed to a growing need for a strengthened and sustainable movement that would be able to respond to Francophone West & Central Africa's challenges and opportunities, which arose and declined quickly due to the fluid environment in which they operated. She noted that with regard to human development, seven of the ten worst ranked (out of 187) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are French-speaking African states (Burundi, DRC and Niger). There is also a growing current of dissent, militarism and fundamentalisms in these two sub-regions which is made more vulnerable by poor governance structures, inequitable resource distribution and high rates of unemployment amongst the youth. As a Fund, UAF-Africa had observed that Francophone countries particularly in Central Africa received significantly less funding than Anglophone Africa and while there was an obvious need for increased financial and technical support to women's rights organizations in Francophone West & Central Africa, there was a greater and more urgent need to bring these resources closer to the people by way of raising the capacity of organizations for resource mobilization, strategic communications, lobbying & advocacy and movement building. This convening was therefore a platform for strategic discussions on movement and organizational building but an informative encounter between funders, activists and organizations.



Ndana wished the meeting fruitful deliberations through having candid discussions and debate while sharing some of the most powerful strategies that have worked to advance and protect women's rights in their countries and regionally. She also emphasized the need to not only talk about what is working but also what is not working, both in the manner in which funders provide support as well as issues to do with institutional and movement capacities to advocate on specific issues. As the meeting was considered a melting pot of expert leaders with high level social justice skills and competencies, it was stressed that the end result should also be forward looking-what will the groups do together, both in-country as well as sub-regionally.

### **Introducing UAF-Africa's work: Edmond Mugisha- Grantmaker**

In his presentation, Edmond gave an overview of UAF-Africa's Rapid Response Grant making Programme. Through her Rapid Response Grant making model, UAF-Africa has supported women to seize windows of opportunity that promote women's agency in democratic governance, economic justice, natural resources governance, conflict transformation and justice processes while protecting their personhood, integrity and human rights. To date, UAF-Africa has been present through its rapid response programme, collaborations and convenings in 48 African countries addressing a wide range of current and emerging issues affecting African women in their respective contexts. The Fund has issued over 700 grants that have provided critical support for women's strategic initiatives across the continent.

Edmond concluded his presentation by introducing the Fund's new grant categories and elaborating on the criteria for the rapid response application process. [www.urgentactionfund-africa.or.ke](http://www.urgentactionfund-africa.or.ke)

### **Solidarity message: Muadi Mukenge-Program Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, Global Fund for Women**

In her opening remarks, Muadi emphasised the importance and timeliness of the convening. She noted that the gathering of women's rights organisations from Francophone Africa was apt and strategic because it recognizes the potential of women's rights groups and the confidence bestowed on them by the represented funders. She asserted that West & Central Africa were experiencing epic challenges socially, politically and economically that necessitated women's rights leaders and funders to urgently elevate the women's movement's agency, voice and visibility as they strive to actively participate in key socio-political and economic processes that determine their livelihoods.

In grounding her message, Muadi shared and highlighted the work of the GFW for Women, including their longstanding support and presence in Francophone Africa. She stated that GFW is working tirelessly to influence other funders to provide more resources, both financial and technical to Francophone African countries in general and towards women's rights organizing more specifically. She applauded the sisterhood, trust and spirit of collaboration that exists among women's funds such as UAF-Africa, AWDF, FFC and FADHAF among others in raising African women's voices and visibility in international strategic platforms as well as coming together to

organize such meaningful platforms for movement building as this gathering of committed feminist and women's rights leaders. Muadi further highlighted GFW's commitment to continue sourcing resources that ensure sustained institutionalisation of women's groups as a survival strategy as well as much need funding for their participation in key meetings, support of strategic initiatives that assist organisations to transform society's attitudes, norms and values towards women's leadership and agency. She encouraged participants to share freely their experiences as a way of educating the represented funders and participants on the unique work they are executing as well as challenges and opportunities they are encountering. [www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org)

### **Solidarity message: Rissi Assani Alabi-Programme Officer for Francophone Africa, African Women's Development Fund**

Rissi appreciated the coming together of funders to facilitate the capacity building of women's rights organizations in Francophone Africa-a rare opportunity, she stressed. She acknowledged the longstanding partnership of Women's Funds in supporting and advocating for meaningful resources for African women. Rissi shared the historical background and the thematic areas of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF). As the first pan-African women's rights philanthropic foundation, AWDF has worked on building relationships with, and mobilise resources for, close to 1,200 women's organisations in 42 African countries across the continent. Since its inception in 2001, the Fund has awarded more than 23 million USD in grants. However, only 2 million USD were granted to women's organisations in Francophone West Africa and 750,000 USD in Francophone Central Africa including Chad, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Her message allowed participants to recognize the initiative of this meeting as a healthy and autonomous space to reflect on women's challenges and opportunities in Francophone Africa. Rissi asserted that the issue of resource mobilization was a crucial aspect of institutional capacity across the regional which needed urgent attention. She reminded the meeting that despite progress made in women's agenda after Beijing 1995, there still were many countries in Africa where women are still considered second-class citizen because of the dominance of patriarchy. AWDF's position, like that of other organisations present, is that women's issues cannot be solved by women alone, women must consciously work with other stakeholders to uplift and transform their lives. Rissi concluded her solidarity message by calling for a robust women's presence in leadership positions across all sectors of the economy. [www.awdf.org](http://www.awdf.org)

### **Introductory exercise: Getting to know each other, Oury Traore**

For this exercise, Oury divided participants into small groups. In each group, participants got to know each other by asking questions about their work, activism and their experiences. The getting-to-know icebreaker was a powerful exercise because it allowed participants to understand what special qualities they brought to the meeting including revealing to participants the possibilities of working together if they shared the same interests. Knowing they have an ally amongst each other provided a sense of solidarity. It became quite a challenge to break the groups up as there obviously

was a lot the women could talk about. It must be noted here that there are few opportunities for the women to meet and network within these two sub-regions so there was an electric excitement about just being in the same space, as neighbours, leaders, activists and sisters, fighting for a common cause and speaking in French-what a breath of fresh air! After each participant shared their work in the small group, they presented one another from the group to the bigger audience by emphasizing on the “added value” the person brings to this meeting.



## **SESSION 1: Setting the scene: Insights from the ground –Context analysis, Oury Traore**

### **Presenting a contextual analysis of Francophone West & Central Africa**

Francophone West Africa & Central Africa’s history has been shrouded with political instability, poor infrastructure and weak regional and cross border integration and trade which has had a grave impact on the development of the countries and their stability. While their contexts are not homogenous, as a linguistic bloc, Francophone West & Central Africa have cumulatively had a poor socio-economic and political record. In 2012, Anglophone countries (except South Africa) accounted for 47 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa’s average GDP, compared to 19 per cent for Francophone countries. Francophone Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Sénégal and Togo have a combined population of approximately 102.5 million people – and some of the worst performing economies in the world, particularly given their abundant natural resources.

In 2012, Francophone countries also featured numerous conflicts. In April, 2012, Guinea Bissau experienced another coup d’état, its second in two years. This came as part of a wave of coups and unconstitutional changes of government that rocked West Africa: Mauritania in August 2008, Guinea in December 2008, Guinea-Bissau in March 2009, and Niger in March 2010. In the same 2012,

demonstrations for change took place in Chad as well as Madagascar and Togo. The coup in Mali in March 2012 took the international community by surprise because Mali has been a model of democracy in the region with a continuous democracy for two decades. Over the last decade, two of the principal countries, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Côte d'Ivoire, have undergone turmoil that have affected development in the whole (Francophone) zone. The resurgence in the very unwelcome phenomenon of coups d'état in Francophone West & Central Africa highlights the importance of reforms towards more synchronized security and democratic political systems.

Transitions from authoritarian rule to more transparent, participative governance frameworks are by no means uniform across the bloc. Each state's transition has and continues to take place within its own unique context and at its own pace, but with the commonality that women are systemically marginalised from these political processes. Nevertheless, these changes and waves are a symptom of deeply imbedded problems, such as lack of economic and social opportunities, youth unrest, organised crimes, piracy, endemic corruption that could paralyze state apparatuses, and more spending on military armaments than public spending for basic services. Whereas these symptoms are not unique to Francophone countries, the geo-politics of the region and in particular the influence of regional and international relations have had unique impacts on the nature of social movement building with specific focus on women's organising. There are differences in political structures both at national level and also at organizational level and at the heart of all distinctions in access to resources both financial and technical. Some distinctions have been progressive while others less progressive.

Some progressive ones for example, for the first time, a wave of Francophone West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Senegal and Togo have adopted some kind of electoral gender quota, or are considering doing so (Benin). In these countries too, mobilized national women's movements have called for the adoption of new constitutions or prompted the adoption of new electoral laws, often in close collaboration with regional, continental or international organizations like the African Union or UN Women. The stark differences in women's organising and movement building between Francophone and Anglophone countries signifies a need for differential approaches in engagement by stakeholders and funding partners.

Facilitated by Oury Traore, this session resorted to the use of visual aids for discussion and brainstorming, with an assumption that expertise should come from participants themselves. This exercise on visual illusions also allowed participants to integrate the need for them to work on the basis of their commonalities. It helped to bring out expectations of the participants.

The West & Central African women's rights context was explored as participants shared the following characteristics in a Strength, Challenges, Opportunities and Obstacles quadrant format.



<p><b>Achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing regional women's rights networks and national associations e.g. QAYN, FEMNET and WILDAF.</li> <li>• Exemplary and renowned peacebuilding initiatives. E.g. RECIFROAT-Burkina Faso during the Mali Conflict, WIPNET during Liberia peace talks.</li> <li>• Resilient, collective organizing at the grassroots around conflict transformation.</li> <li>• Economic empowerment of a critical mass of women cross border traders and merchants.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak women's rights organizations-systems, structures and capacities.</li> <li>• Weak succession plans by organizational founders/directors.</li> <li>• Low resource base.</li> <li>• Weak advocacy and communications capacities.</li> <li>• Weak of intergenerational movement building.</li> <li>• Weak visibility</li> <li>• Corruption, nepotism and tribalism.</li> <li>• Weak resource mobilization, reporting and MEL skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep- rooted &amp; retrogressive cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, norms</li> <li>• Insufficient resources for programming</li> <li>• Language barrier- Anglophone Vs Francophone divide</li> <li>• Corruption, Nepotism, Tribalism- Mismanagement of resources</li> <li>• Weak regional governance structures and systems</li> <li>• Politically polarized and uncoordinated regional and national civil society</li> <li>• Recurring socio-political and economic upheavals and conflicts</li> <li>• Growing religious and cultural fundamentalisms</li> <li>• Inequitable distribution of resources</li> <li>• Strong &amp; insidious post-colonial control of resources and means of production by former colonial masters across the Francophone countries.</li> <li>• Weak telecommunications and transport infrastructure.</li> <li>• High poverty and illiteracy levels.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The shift from military to democratic ruling in most countries</li> <li>• Existence of legal texts in favour of women in constitutions.</li> <li>• Strong movement of women and networks working on peacebuilding at national and regional level.</li> <li>• Women in the two sub-regions are showing increased interest in vying for socio-political and economic leadership positions.</li> <li>• They are also more aware and vigilant about claiming their rights.</li> <li>• Existence of political blocks such CEDEAO, (Economic community of west-African country) &amp; ECOWAS, present opportunities for women to network and learn from each other from the different countries that constitute that block.</li> <li>• Existence of two female Presidents and a growing cadre of female politicians, business women and the Chief Prosecutor at ICC (Fatou Bensouda) are role models for the younger generation.</li> </ul>



## DAY TWO REPORT

### **Session 2: Strategic Communications & Advocacy-Smart Messaging for social change, Naima Wane & Cissé Diatou Badiane of Nexus Communications Agency**

The consultants introduced themselves and welcomed the participants to the session. They immediately emphasised how strategic communications has become an important aspect in today's social justice work. It is a tool that helps organisations and activists influence and involve their stakeholders, the general public and ultimately policy and decision makers. Communications can take many creative forms and be molded to reach a variety of audiences and stakeholders. New media, social integration, changing demographics, shifting corporate cultures, global challenges and opportunities, the constant need to stay ahead and on top—all of these factors are driving a massive shift in how organizations communicate to each and every audience – from activists, employees, communities to the world at large. The consultants asserted that in Africa, with the aid of a growing media and communications infrastructure, communication is a strategic issue that many NGOs must take seriously and take up as a challenge.

Strategic communications is also one of the most important tools for advocacy efforts. The facilitators referred to advocacy as the aim to bring about fundamental and sustained changes in society by influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people's lives. Recognizing that advocacy cannot be effective without a solid communications strategy, and acknowledging the power of communications in showcasing and magnifying the effects of innovative work, this workshop trained participants to plan more strategic and intentional advocacy campaigns, and to harness the power of communications to raise awareness, lobby

stakeholders or push for the adoption of new laws that are progressive and align to their causes and agendas.

The session also provided participants with the tools and skills to help formulate smart messages, visual media and social networks for social change. The workshop strengthened each participant's personal readiness to increase assurance in media performance; develop enhanced writing skills to amplify the impact of participant's activism; and explore and strategize on ways in which the use of online tools can translate into offline actions for change. The workshop also taught participants how to develop effective communications strategies and how to become familiar with the complete range of current communications tools including how to use them in an integrated, tailor-made for their targeted audience and context as well as in a strategic way.

### **Media Outreach**

In dealing with the media, participants were encouraged to become a content expert and a resource for reporters and invest time in educating the media on issues that advance their agenda. Using practical and context specific examples, participants were reminded that it was not the journalists who had more knowledge on any particular issue but them-they held the key to in-depth knowledge and intelligence of the women's realities in their communities.

Although it has gotten much more difficult to establish long-term media relationships due to shifting political allegiances by media houses, participants were urged to be a student of media and do their homework on who to work with on what issues-not all media houses or journalists were the best or had interest in every thematic area the organization works on. Facilitators stressed the importance of investing in alternative media outlets, such as newscast, chronicles, opinion editorials for nuanced and increased coverage of their issues.

### **Media Tools**

The list of media tools available to NGOs on the continent is more extensive than many realize. These include media advisories or alerts (quick, short messages), press releases (more in-depth), printable calendar lists, print and broadcast editorials, radio and TV talk show and main news appearances, and public service announcements (PSAs). It is also important to monitor and follow up with the media on issues that might have shifted. It is the responsibility of activists and NGO leaders to constantly update journalists with news that advance women's rights including pushing back on inappropriate reporting by providing facts and figures that counter the previous story.

### **Social Networking**

Digital social networking including Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook have become most popular and widely utilized media tools in Africa, across economic and generational divides. Social networking provides the opportunity to share information on any topic to mass audiences-citizen journalism. It is rapidly becoming an important tool to build social movements. During the session about eighty percent of participants' organizations didn't have a social media account, a prominent resource in getting a message out to larger audiences. Blogging was also described as a potentially effective tool, a way to put ideas out to share with a wider community including, perhaps, mainstream media.

In addition to offering a place to post comments and videos to publicize their organization and its mandate, achievements and struggles, social networking is also an excellent way to gather data,

find useful videos, quotes and photos, and contact potential allies or partners (i.e. resource mobilisation). One important caveat about using the Internet was issued. Participants were advised that instead of rushing into these new media, it is critical that each organization revisit and update their website on a daily and/or weekly basis for more grounded content. The facilitators also discussed how strategic communications can change attitudes, norms and values if properly used, targeting the right constituencies with right messages. The consultants talked about the power of a unified message and how branding can generate broad changes, even a movement.

The session later led to a more excited and eager participation where the whole meeting had their hands up wanting to share their own experiences on using different communication tools. Some of the key findings from this highly participatory discussion were:

- Many didn't know or have good knowledge of communication tools and their uses;
- There is often lack of a dedicated communications person in organisations due to budgetary concerns yet everyone was clear that visibility amounted to resource mobilization successes;
- The communication function is often assumed by the leader of the organization, who is often overloaded with other functions;
- Low use of social networks and technological tools to communicate, also due to inaccessible internet connectivity-many worked in rural areas;
- Ambivalent relationships with journalists and traditional media-who often depicted women's rights organisations and activists as social deviants;
- Journalists demanded payments to feature their stories, which is unethical. Consultants advised getting in touch with editors who determined which story gets featured in newspapers and magazines;
- Organisations' need for capacity building in communications and advocacy;
- Need to adopt one's own production strategy for communication through certain mechanisms (i.e. drama, activism, paralegals etc.);
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation in the communications function as this was superseded by core programs.
- Most participants alluded to old and slow machines which prohibited them to be creative-opening one word document could take 5-10 minutes let alone downloading anything from the internet!
- Most funders were English speaking thus there is the need to constantly translate information and knowledge which is both a cost and an activity in and of itself!

The session concluded with a question and answer segment where participants discussed the importance of allocating a budget for their communications plan. Below are some recommendations generated from this sub-session.



## Key recommendations

- Use of available platforms – meetings whose invitees has diverse actors-people who do not always agree for deeper engagement, brochures, training, web communication- to increase visual impact and reduction of aids;
- Utilizing social networks and adopting a production strategy in order to be less dependent on traditional media;
- Need to urgently engage social media if organisation's work involved the youth as most of them were using these sites, e.g. work on sexual and reproductive health and rights and political civic education;
- Investing in alternative niches such as newscast, chronicles, editorials, magazines and fostering fruitful partnerships and rapports with artists and animators-visuals are powerful;
- Using presentation brochures and platelets;
- Building ongoing relationships with media partners, ability to work with editors;
- Updating regular mailing lists to include traditional and non-traditional stakeholders;
- Publishing e-newsletters over hard copy documents;
- Investing in communication training for staff members in order for them to effectively communicate with different stakeholders;
- Making regular appeal to communication consultants for short term pro bono or discounted assistance.
- Organisations were encouraged to have functional websites and official email addresses, not using gmail and yahoo accounts as they were viewed suspiciously by funders and government partners.
- Organisations were encouraged to practice effective advocacy by gathering powerful stories, facts and figures that would help influence key decision makers in pushing their agendas- infographics were cited as useful in conveying information creatively.
- Advocacy: the media strategy undertaken by NGOs should be determined by a thorough analysis of the organisation's environment, positioning and objectives. The importance of visual tools for a rapid identification of the structure and mission was recalled. Each organisation must be able to distinguish itself.
- Relations with the media: organisations should work on building a rapport with journalists in traditional media outlets.

## Session 3: Movement building-Effective mechanisms for strengthening women's collective organising, Hakima Abbas & Awa Fall Diop

The consultant introduced themselves and welcomes participants the session which began by discussing ways to catalyze on movement building in the region. Participants collectively defined a movement as *"an organized set of stakeholders with a common political agenda focused on change through collective action."* Participants discussed the strength and value of feminist movements, among which is the fact that movements enable women to leverage their collective power for change, speaking not as individuals or organizations, but with a powerful voice that cannot be easily isolated and suppressed.

An example of that is the work of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), established in 2011 by the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), a regional peace building association based in Ghana. WIPNET established the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace campaign to create a women-only movement for peace with three objectives: bringing the conflict to an immediate ceasefire, that peace talks take place between the government and rebel forces, and that international intervention forces be deployed to Liberia. The campaign was coordinated by social worker Leymah Gbowee, who was also the campaign's spokesperson. The campaign carried out various modes of resistance and action to bring the conflict to a halt. These included approaching bishops and clergy members who could exert pressure on Charles Taylor's government and enlisting imams who had influence over the warlords. To further illustrate their unity and commitment for peace, the women gathered in a fish market to sing and pray.

The campaign undertook various strategies to pressure President Taylor into granting them an audience (including occupying a soccer field on the route that Taylor frequented). The women were granted that chance in April 2003, and over 2,000 congregated outside the executive mansion to plead the case for peace, convincing Taylor to promise to attend peace talks in Ghana. The women also lined the streets around the rebels' hotels until the rebels also agreed to attend. The work of the campaign was also prominent on encouraging women's participation in elections that followed Taylor's exile to Nigeria, helping register voters, especially female voters who constituted half of the country's registered voters in the 2005 election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. This is a good example of the power of a movement and how if build on strong and collective values and goals, movements can shift what seemed insurmountable to some outcomes that bring about transformation to not only the members of the movement but many other communities.

The consultants also asserted the fact that there is strength in numbers and it is often the case that involvement in the large-scale struggles of movements helps protect women from the backlash that usually follows the demand for rights. It was also underlined that movements are also the most effective way for particularly stigmatized and marginalized women to have their voices heard, such as the disabled, indigenous, LBTQI, sex workers and minority laborers among many other groups.

Several challenges to feminist movement building were discussed during this session. Among these is the great breadth of issues that feminist groups have tackled over the decades, from labor rights, land rights, women's health, reproductive and sexual health rights, disability rights, the sex workers movement, the LBTQI movement, among many other issues. Each of these struggles introduced their own agendas and strategies that constitute a diversity that speaks both to the vibrancy of movements and also their fragmentation. This is as the array of feminist struggles has produced numerous specializations that make it challenging to come together over a shared political agenda to enable them to speak, on at least some issues, with a unified voice. Discussions ensued on this fragmentation and the absence of a mechanism for cohesion, which enables other forces to co-opt and side line feminist voices.

Looking at UAF-Africa's work, this need for common ground for collaboration has always featured prominently in our grant requests, which also reveal examples of innovative, much needed cross border collaborations and in a way movement building. During the crisis in Mali early on in 2012, for example, UAF- Africa supported an organization that sought to convene rural women from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and Chad to reflect and strategize on the developmental

role of Malian women in the deepening political situation and the significant increase of Islamic extremism in the country, which had negative effects on women. Grant requests also indicated that although LGBTQI groups are heavily oppressed, the movement is gaining some momentum, under organizing groups such as the Queer African Youth Network (QAYN).

The session also touched on the challenges facing feminist movement building. Externally, these include the decision by donors to move away from supporting movement building strategies, in favour of project-oriented work. Internally, within the women's movements and organizations, there is an increased focus on building up individual leaders and supporting implementation of short term projects, with little core support for growth of institutions, not on building movements and a base that demands rights. The backlash against feminist organizations and hard-won gains of the movement, coupled with the challenges facing organizations to be able to survive, have all resulted in fragmentation of groups. It was realized and discussed that given the global trend of widespread backlash against women's rights, organized resistance is the only solution to safeguard the wins that have accumulated over decades of activism.

Participants were then divided into groups where they brainstormed and mobilized powerful techniques to concretely illustrate the notion of movement as a collective process to effecting social change. These included the following:

- Militant Bob Marley song sung in unison (*Get Up Stand Up, Stand Up for your Rights, Get Up Stand Up, Don't give Up the Fight*);
- Dance in group with choreography;
- Clarification of the notion of movement with keywords-**power, action, resistance, force, diversity, culture, togetherness, community, group, resilience, cause, change, social, political, informal, oppression, inequality, justice**;
- Circulation of a candle which lights others and end up lighting a room plunged into darkness.



The consultants concluded the session by underlying how crucial it is to raise the visibility of the work that women are doing when it comes to movement building. The concept of movement perpetuates social change, which implies resistance, alliances, and powerful strategies. Participants were able to realize, first, that all change takes time, communication, and perseverance; secondly, that diversity is a strength insofar as it contributes to the group dynamics and thirdly, that movements thrive on charismatic leadership or leaderships of several leaders at different moments in the activism of the movement. The session also identified that all participants are part of a movement, beyond their organisation. The groups acknowledged the benefits, needs, and challenges of being part of a movement(s).

### **DAY THREE REPORT**

#### **Call for active participation at the May 2016 AWID Forum in Brazil: Hakima Abbas & Awa Fall Diop**

Hakima informed the meeting about the next Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) forum, which will be held in Salvador de Bahia, in Brazil, from May 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 2016, following preceding forums in Bangkok, Cape Town and the USA. Hakima stressed the importance of the global conference and encouraged active representation and participation by Francophone feminist and women's groups. She lamented the dismally low participation of Francophone women in the previous AWID fora as deplorable and not useful for advocacy on critical issues that the women struggled with. Hakima shared how during the AWID forum in Bangkok in 2005, out of more than 2,000 participants, only 20 were Francophone, and there were only 8 Francophone sessions out of 100 sessions. The forum had 8 plenary sessions, however, no French-speaking woman were part of the panelists. In 2008, there was a slight improvement at the Cape Town AWID Forum. Out of 2,000 participants, the forum had 130 Francophone participants. Hakima and Awa urged participants to generate session proposals for plenary and side sessions to the AWID Forum by June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Hakima reiterated the interest for a high participation of African women as a national march of black Brazilian women will be organized during the 2016 AWID Forum in Brazil. Participants were also informed of the possibility of applying for scholarships, which will cover the cost of their participation. A number of funders financially and technically support the participation of women and their organisations in such forums even though women are encouraged to take responsibility for part of their participation fees. It was deemed politically important that Francophone groups take the opportunity to showcase their achievements as well as find solidarity on challenging issues they are struggling with including severe fundamentalisms that have pushed back on the women's right agenda in significant ways. The forum was hailed as a great platform for networking, learning from one another and generally activists and women's movements from across the world connecting on many levels.



## **Session 4: Mobilising sustainable resources for women's human rights organisations and movements, Kofi Awity**

This session harmonized participants' knowledge regarding the mobilization of resources, sharing each other's failures and successes, and making an analysis of best practices to build on successes.

Mobilising resources is a constant activity for organisations. The various sources of funding for participating organisations were elucidated in a question-answer exercise. For these organisations, the segmentation by size of funding is as follows:

- From 5 to 25 million CFA per year: 8 organisations;
- Between 25 million and 50 million CFA: 4 organisations;
- Between 50 million and 100 million CFA: 2 organisations;
- Between 100 million and 200 million CFA: 6 organisations;
- More 200 million CFA: 3 organisations

### **Key findings**

- None of the organisations have resources that come from 3 or less funding sources. Great that organisations had a reasonably wide funding base.
- An individual exercise highlighting percentage by source of funding showed different funding structuring per organisation, from those that had over 50% of their funding coming from their own resources (income-generating activities, contributions, etc.) and those that had almost half of the funding coming from external donors.
- For organisations whose funding is mostly from their own resources, it is not always a deliberate option, but often as a result of the lack of external resources (donors).
- Given the diversity of the group, some of the members derived over 50% of the budgets through membership dues. This proved common for regional associations and networks whose membership had more organisational members than individuals.
- Less 10% of the organisations had single donor grants of more than 50 million CFA!

Kofi defined key points of resource mobilisation and discussed various fundraising opportunities. Organisations were encouraged to think differently and innovatively as the global philanthropic architecture is becoming more competitive-old strategies to new problems will not work. Kofi discussed the prerequisites for resource mobilisation, particularly regarding strengthening local skills and the importance of strategic planning. Some of the critical areas that needed to be improved within organisations for better resource mobilisation were explored including governance structures and systems. Kofi acknowledged that donors are reluctant to fund organisations that often have a centralised structure around one person, who is the founder, CEO, Board Chair and treasurer of the organisation, as was the case in a number of organisations, especially in Francophone Africa.

The session explored the need for embracing good governance and best practices, especially board composition, an area that many women's organisations pay insufficient attention to. In many organisations, the board of directors consists either of friends of the organisation's officers or local business or government luminaries for political reasons. The issue of board composition becomes an afterthought and the selection process random and haphazard. However, organisations' boards

are just as important as the multinational corporation's board to the organisation's success story. A strong, capable board can provide sound governance, programming and general institutional direction, strategic guidance and public credibility that an NGO needs to survive and thrive.

Kofi also stressed the importance of board structure and how it can help organisations increase their funding pool. He mentioned how as part of the board or even leadership selection criteria, the organisation looks at what skills are most needed to propel their mandate. It's pointless having two lawyers and accountants on a board or Executive Director when skills have nothing to do with the mandate of the entity.

In talking about resource mobilization, Kofi outlined that this requires mobilising a minimum budget, at least for the implementation of marketing tools that are now inevitable: social media platforms, engaging and interactive website, organisational e-mail address, etc. These tools also allow visibility on search engines and telephone directories, and are a guarantee of transparency that increases donor trust in these organisations. Participants noted that this is a huge challenge especially for organisations working in rural areas as internet connectivity was a challenge. Nonetheless, Kofi urged to do their best in this regard as visibility was a hallmark to successful fund raising.

The facilitator also discussed the external issues of resource mobilisation. He noted that it is important for organisations to keep in mind that donors' priorities often change. It is up to organisations to adapt or weigh options so that their cause is kept within donors' agenda.



## Mobilising resources from the corporate sector

In this session, participants discussed the motivations in which corporates provide funds to organisations including for economic interest, governance image and strategic positioning within communities. In addition, corporates need non-state actors to provide the social infrastructure they need to penetrate communities. However, they sometimes have trouble identifying NGOs and end up making themselves the fieldworkers without any guarantee of sustainable results. It was also highlighted that resources that are provided by corporates are diverse and vast. They are not just financial but can also include technical, human capacity, and in-kind donations (e.g. office equipment, materials etc.).

The issue of corporates whose businesses are sources of environmental pollution or causes of diseases was discussed, noting that sometimes civil society cannot by themselves prevent those economic entities to operate. The only alternative is to pressure corporates to spend a larger share of their income on promoting progressive social causes which can be done through taxation. This sparked a discussion on the ethical nature of taking or not taking money from any corporate source. Some participants believed that they could not accept monetary contribution from any type of business as this puts them in a conflict of interest relationship with the business, especially those that had malpractices or whose values were against social justice. After heated debate and discussions, the meeting reached a consensus that it is valid to seek financial and technical resources from the private sector if organisations were clear on the following:

- Understand the expectations of companies, especially in terms of communications, in a context where they put forward their social commitment for development at the expense of the organisations' politics and values;
- Be transparent on expectations especially in relation to beneficiary engagement, impact attributions, visibility and voice issues;
- Look for quality partnerships, including non- financial resources;
- Check that the values, constituencies and goals of organisations and those of companies are in alignment before requesting funds from them or them approaching organisations for partnerships as is the case in some contexts where corporate social investments are a mandatory activity.

Ndana and John of FGHR weighed in on this debate by encouraging participants to be open minded when dealing the corporate sector. They share a number of examples where corporates had successfully partnered with NGOs while recommending that organisations conduct two tests before accepting funds and relationships with the private sector. These included the following:

1. **A test of conflict of interest:** if you make an appeal against this particular company, will it prevent you from keeping your freedom of criticism? Really examining the politics, practices and values of the partner and sizing up on how this relationship adds value to the organisation.
2. **A test of image:** what will your beneficiaries think if your NGO establishes a partnership with such a company? Will that undermine your image or reputation?

## **Mobilising resources from individuals**

In light of responses from participants, very few organisations receive contributions from individuals, whether they are from Africa or from the West. Examples from participating countries were provided; individual donations range from 100 to 1,000 euros per year in Mali (for the preservation of Shea-trees) and in Burkina Faso (for enrollment of girls and improvement of a school canteen). An example of an organisation in Senegal whose members give 1,000 CFA per month was provided. However, it is noteworthy that elsewhere the largest share of finances mobilized for NGOs comes from individuals. It was observed that the culture of organised philanthropy is not deeply rooted in Africa, especially at institutional levels as it is common knowledge that philanthropy at family and community levels thrive. Moreover, mobilizing resources from individuals in Africa presents challenges such as:

- The need to define a strategy that targets individuals, to develop an application that is clear, precise and shows how donations are organised;
- Lack of proven individual giving models and functional infrastructure for donations to be made from;
- Understanding the reasons why individuals donate is what organisations need to do to satisfy these motivations and give individuals opportunities to donate for causes that are important to them;
- The establishment of appropriate mechanisms for individual donations in the African context (donation by bank transfer is not always well appreciated or understood);
- The need to establish an ongoing relationship with these donors and maintain an information relationship with a donor even though it was an occasional donor;
- Use support from public figures, however they need to be identified depending on specific contexts;
- Demonstrate due recognition to these partners to maintain their motivation.

## **Mobilising resources from governments**

The mobilisation of resources from governments presents challenges, as there is a risk of losing the freedom of criticism when an organisation accepts funds from governments. It is up to organisations to decide whether they seek and accept government resources and assess how by accepting them, they keep their freedom of criticism and independence. There are also obstacles in accessing funding from governments such as:

- Failure to communicate the existence of such funding;
- Competition from some ghost organisations set up by governments which monopolize such funding and insidiously monitor grantee movements and politics;
- Restrictive criteria that has political undertones of allegiance to political parties;
- Lack of a clear partnership policy with CSOs-a condescending relationship;
- Different working cultures-government very bureaucratic and slow while NGOs more flexible decision-making and agile.

Nevertheless, organisations must understand that they have rightful claims in being funded by governments, for several reasons:



- Under most bilateral cooperations, governments receive funds on behalf of CSOs;
- The international community requires the involvement of civil society organisations in government actions;
- CSOs work should be supported by their own governments.

Governments also have objective reasons to fund NGOs:

- Have access to the expertise and benefit from the energy and ideas of CSOs;
- Good publicity for the Government;
- More efficient service delivery mechanisms.

There is also a trend to be taken into account: in order to maximise the impact of their funding, donors now prefer to use bilateral or multilateral partnerships, putting their funds in “basket funds” managed by a government department, an organ of the United Nations or major INGOs such as Oxfam/USAID. However, these financing mechanisms decide priorities to fund on behalf of women's organisations which has been heavily criticised by the women’s movements.

This session was instrumental in sharing anecdotal resource mobilisation tips and examples of which strategy works in which context, websites to get funding information, who were the allies to get knowledge and information on funding opportunities including the need to form consortia of trusted partners to apply for bigger multi-year grants-leveraging each other’s track records, reputation, impact, competencies, social capital and skills and thematic expertise. It was appreciated by the meeting that by establishing fundraising alliances, organisations were in a way strengthening movements, conducting indirect strategic communications and advocacy, speaking with one voice on their need for more resources on specific issues while mobilising and rallying around specific priority issues for their communities, countries and region. Presentations including lists of funders and websites supporting women’s rights in Africa would be circulated on email, with all participants, thereby leveraging information for more engaged resource mobilisation.

### **Solidarity Message: Josephine Odera, Regional Director for West Africa-UN Women**

Josephine delivered a powerful message of encouragement to participants. She asserted the urgent need for a renewed vision for the African women's movement in the face of new and imminent struggles women across the continent were facing. Josephine was adamant that this was a time when women’s groups across the continent needed to join hands, name and shame their detractors while vigilantly confronting the current pushback on women’s rights head-on using equally sophisticated tools, strategies, arguments, facts and figures. She applauded UAF-Africa and her partners for organising such a much needed meeting that capacity develops women’s rights leaders and activists as that ensured groups are better able to analyse, articulate, break down challenges and reimagine practical solutions to their struggles. She emphasised the need for organising more of these spaces as they also assisted women to learn from each other, refuel, be inspired to do more with fresh ideas, knowledge and skills that are sure to achieve results. She implored women's organisations not to be content with their proven capabilities in communications, advocacy, movement building and mobilisation of resources but to also prioritise learning about hard issues and gain expertise in subjects like macro-economics, democratic governance, security,

environmental justice and climate change as areas that greatly impact women and therefore needed more analysis and supporting evidence for impactful advocacy. Josephine urged participants to continually document their experiences, processes and results as part of the sustainability mechanisms for organisations and the African women's movement. She concluded by challenging younger women to improve their leadership to be able to confidently take over the leadership of their organisations and the movements.

### **Integrating wellness into women's rights work**

*"We must start with the belief that the struggle to eliminate women's inequality in all its manifestations must first involve work on one's own self. To take care of ourselves, know how to defend ourselves, and ensure as far as possible that what we are fighting on behalf of others is also very much a part of our own lives. These are the key elements in strengthening our struggle and continuing our march forward." Marina Bernal*

As part of keeping alive her values of listening deeply to her constituencies, UAF-Africa is always attentive to the realities of the women's human rights leaders and activists. After discussing and debating grand topics, including funding joys and frustrations; the complexities of feminist movement building, and ways of strengthening women's collective organizing, among other topics, we always prioritise coming down to the basic fundamentals regards the well-being, self-care, self-renewal and re-energizing of women's rights warriors. This personalised and informal session of our convenings is an opportunity for the activists to undertake a journey of practical self-exploration in order to redefine, learn and build their own self-defense tactics as well as review how self care or lack thereof translates into self inflicted violence in their lives. An integral aspect of this session is also is to deepen activists self-knowledge to enable them understand their limitations and strengths, what makes them strong as well as what makes them vulnerable.

In this convening we had the honor of having sexologist and andrologist Dr. Jeanne Diaw join the meeting. She facilitated a short session in which she spoke about issues of sex and sexuality which brought about so much enlightenment to one's own physical and hygienic body needs. A renowned nutritionist, Salimata Wade, from "La Compagnie du Bien- Manger", facilitated a brilliant session on practical nutrition strategies including how to put together a healthy diet that participants can follow in their busy and stressful lives. Both these sessions were a practical application of the way that UAF-Africa understands issues of sex and sexuality as well as healthy living to be fundamental feminist issues that constitute a core aspect of the work that we and the activists do.

### **CLOSING CEREMONY**

#### **Closing remarks: Ndana Bofu-Tawamba: UAF-Africa**

Ndana expressed her gratitude for the vibrant participation, uninhibited sharing of information, intelligence, practical strategies and case studies, experiences and tangible recommendations-all done in the spirit of sisterhood, which is one of the key principles of African feminism! She acknowledged the healthy discussions, debates, disagreements and contestations as meaningful

aspects of democracy and the underpinnings of a lively and dynamic African women's movement. Ndana was delighted by the high levels of learning, networking, connections and both informal and formal engagements by women's organisations' leaders, activists, media personnel, funders and facilitators-what rich conversations the meeting generated! Ndana expressed the urgent need for women's groups to be adequately capacitated to meet the current challenges of this generation, *"It's often said that success happens when opportunity meets preparation. Well, we do hope that you all appreciate the level of commitment UAF-Africa and her partners have in ensuring that you all are well prepared for achieving the kind of social change you individually and collectively dream of- for African women, girls and trans people!"*

Ndana gave a succinct overview of what she believed were the highlights of the convening before personally extending gratitude to all the participants for honoring UAF-Africa and their funders' invitations to be part of this august gathering of daring leaders and activists. She thanked funders for their unwavering commitment to women's rights in Africa, the consultants/facilitators for their terrific presentations and dedication to advancing women's rights, media personnel present for continuing to be beacons of fresh and objective narratives of African women's grit and resilience, Coumba Touré- who completed her term as UAF-Africa Board chair in May UAF-Africa and was key to making the convening take place in Senegal, and staff of UAF-Africa who exuded unparalleled dedication to the meeting's organisation while demonstrating professional rigor in their shepherding of the convening's proceedings to a fruitful conclusion.

Ndana summed up her remarks by sharing opportunities that were within the range of women's organisations in Francophone Africa. She urged them to reorganize themselves not only as a structure but also as a regional movement for greater visibility. She particularly reminded them of the imminent launch of the *"Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women-2"* that provides financing up to 15 million Euros. The importance of this funding requires organisations to apply in consortia. She invited participating women's organisations to apply en mass and disseminate this information widely.

#### **Closing remarks: John Kabia- The Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR) & Rissi Assani-Alabi-African Women's Development Fund**

On behalf of partners, John Kabia from FGHR talked about the importance of meaningfully engaging new leaders within women's organisations in Francophone Africa in meetings such as this one. He mentioned that lessons and deep insights learnt from the convening were encouraging for his Fund, which plans to intervene in Francophone Africa. He encouraged women's rights leaders and activists to be more tolerant in accomodating other other views and opinions as that was part of the hallmarks of democracy. John was most reassured by the level of knowledge the participants had but quickly encouraged the participants to be sure to speak about all the rich anecdotal experiences they shared in the meeting in their reporting to funders as that adds value and enlightens funders on how far their funds are impacting communities. He acknowledged that what he heard during the meeting proceedings was uncensored information and intelligence that he would not have read or heard anywhere else this encouraged continuous establishment of more spaces like these where funders and grantees interact and share struggles, challenges, achievements

while learning together. John thanked the meeting organisers, participants and all stakeholders for the trust they had in him to sit in this safe space and participate.

Rissi Assani-Alabi, from the African Women's Development Fund, also thanked the meeting and announced the call for the AmplifyChange Programme proposals by AWDF. The AmplifyChange Programme is committing funds to break the silence on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The fund provides grants to civil society organisations across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to advocate for, and support policy on, marginalized sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. Rissi indicated that Francophone African countries including Senegal would be a high priority for this programme.

She also on behalf of all the participating funders thanked UAF-Africa for such a brilliant collaboration-which will grow from strength to strength with more strategic engagements. She was especially encouraged by the high levels of discussion, networking and connection of sisters from across the borders and looked forward to hearing about intra-movement collaborations especially on advocacy and resource mobilisation. She reassured participants of AWDF's unwavering commitment to supporting their work and encouraged more communications between the women's groups and funders on areas of capacity development and technical support.

## GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

- This conference was primarily intended to address practical concerns of the participants. The quality of knowledge and/or experience of the participants and their active participation allowed them to actively contribute to the production of knowledge and also to share among themselves many practical lessons and useful strategies.
- All sessions were characterized by a lively interaction not only between moderators and participants but also among participants. The constant interest and attention of participants, their questions but also their critical comments were a source of great satisfaction for participants, facilitators, funders and organizers of the convening. The quality of presentations, with clear examples and case studies was reinforced by essential contribution of the participants-who were quite knowledgeable.
- There were not as many young participants to foster meaningful intergenerational knowledge and skills sharing. More efforts need to be put into directly inviting young activists and practitioners to these meetings and to encourage their supervisors to provide them opportunities to participate in these critical spaces. Having a younger generation in such spaces is a conscious attempt at succession planning in organisations and within the movement.
- **Session 1 (Setting the scene: Insights from the ground-Context Analysis, Oury Traore)** was not only enlightening but it also proved to be essential for leaders of organisations to understand their socio-political and economic context of operations including the urgent need for improving their individual, structural and organisational capacities. The discussions that this session triggered were enlightening and fruitful- participants were very



active. Even though participants showed a clear understanding of the problems of their organisations, their analysis of the causes of these same problems was insufficient.

- **Session 2 (Strategic Communications & Advocacy: Smart Messaging for Social Change, Cisse Diatou Badiane and Naima Wane, Nexus Communications)** aroused a lot of interest. The session was highly anticipated and therefore met a communication need among organisations. It also showed the hunger among leaders for structured and organised communications that are aligned to better resource mobilisation. However, leaders of organisations tend to reduce strategic communications to relations with mainstream press. Some reluctance to change in the use of technology and social media platforms to build communication that is independent from traditional media was noted. It quickly became apparent that with most mature leaders, changing from one communication tool to the other at such fast pace as the tools are coming and going is a challenge to take up. Yes, there were challenges mentioned by organisations including poor internet connectivity on the continent especially in rural areas, illiteracy (including in technology) of beneficiaries or restrictions of supply in electrical energy as well as lack of communications budgets to facilitate hiring of communications personnel. The issue of the ethical nature of paying or not paying journalists who come to cover the activities of organisations in their respective countries, a practice that is apparently common and accepted by many other organisations, facilitators suggested that organisations work with editors in such cases although that was also cited as a process of undermining journalists who are the point of contact with the organisations. This was deemed a catch 22 situation that needs firm handling by the leaders of both women's groups as well as media houses.
- **Movement building-Effective mechanisms for strengthening women's collective organising, Hakima Abbas & Awa Fall Diop** was an energizing session which clearly brought about understanding of the need to continue working together including across silos for deeper impact. While there was agreement of the need to constantly bring the diverse movement within the women's movement there seemed to be tensions with some parts of the group who were not comfortable working with the LBTQI and sex workers movement. This matter was provided space for more discussion as it was believed this was an opportune moment to articulate a few basic fundamentals about the connection between women's rights, feminism and marginalization. The politics of fragmentation, impact of patriarchy and systemic oppression of women of all walks of life was revisited and put very squarely on the table. It became apparent that most analysis attached to LBTQI was archaic and biased in its formation and mostly emanated from people's religious inclinations. A number of participants were enlightened by this conversation and urged conveners to always have stand-alone sessions on these issues as a conscious way of sharing knowledge, arguments and rationale for the coming together of diverse movements.
- **Module 4 (Mobilising sustainable resources for women's human rights organisations & movements, Kofi Awity)** generated considerable interest, many questions, insights and discussions. It helped to highlight the tension that exists within organisations when it comes to seeking resources from the corporate sector and governments. The central question of the risk of losing autonomy while using these sources of funding resulted in many reactions.

Women's organisations certainly need to better understand the private sector, the kind of resources they can expect from them including non-financial and partnership opportunities with corporates either through partnerships between their organisations and companies, or through collaborations between companies and beneficiaries of the actions of these women's rights organisations (e.g. women entrepreneurs).

This session also led to a request for specific training in resource mobilization in order to learn or get better acquainted with technical instruments, especially on logframe, theory of change and indicators development, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning. This request raised the issue of knowledge sharing by leaders of organisations who benefited from training in resource mobilisation. Many of them do not share this knowledge with other organisations or their staff on the ground. FADHAF was willing to collaborate with UAF-Africa, GWF and AWDF to provide funds for such trainings. The session allowed participants to know that they could use some of the organisations present at the convening to strengthen their capacity in management systems or for specific issues such as M&E and other organisational development aspects, without always having to turn to donors.

#### Speaking From the Heart, Comments from the Participants

*"Je vous remercie d'avoir associé le REFAMP à la réunion de Dakar. La rencontre de Dakar a été non seulement un véritable rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir, mais l'occasion de connaître des personnes expérimentées et engagées pour la cause des femmes et leurs droits. Merci pour les différents thèmes qui ont été à la hauteur de nos attentes. Aussi, j'ai pu apprécier le professionnalisme de l'équipe de UAF-Africa et remercie tous pour leur disponibilité et leur courtoisie", Dr Makalé TRAORE, REFAMP/Guinea.*

*"Thank you the entire team at UAF-A for organizing such a fantastic event. The Dakar conference was very engaging and enlightening", John Kabia, The Fund for Global Human Rights, UK.*

*"Nous avons beaucoup et bien appris des présentations des personnes ressources et de l'expérience des différentes organisations. A cet effet, je voudrais au nom de l'APROFES remercier toute l'équipe de Urgent Action Fund – Africa et tout(e)s les participant(e)s à l'atelier de Dakar", Binta Sarr, Senegal.*

*"Merci infiniment pour cette opportunité que vous nous avez offerte. Nous avons vu nos forces et nos faiblesses. Nous attendons que vous preniez en compte nos recommandations qui vous permettront aussi d'avoir une place panafricaine", Mama Koité Doumbia, FEMNET Mali.*

*"Merci à vous pour cette expérience, que je souhaite voir être renouvelée", Nataka Gmakagni, Réseau des Jeunes LGBTQ d'Afrique de l'Ouest, Burkina Faso.*

*"I would like to register my gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with Urgent Action Fund. You truly have a great team - young, dynamic, competent and very friendly. It was such an amazing networking opportunity. I learned a lot from the participants. Immense gratitude", OURY TRAORE, International Senior Consultant, Senegal.*

APPENDIX 1: Convening agenda

APPENDIX 2: List of participants