

fire in the belly

**URGENT
ACTION
FUND +
AFRICA**

FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Strategic Plan 2011-2015

Our Roadmap to Social Change

Though captured on paper, this plan is living and vibrant, fuelled by the passion, commitment and belief in women's power for change. As we launch into the next five years, working alongside the women of Africa, we step out eagerly and with fire in our belly!

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Acknowledgments

The development and writing of this Strategic Plan was a collaborative effort that would not have been successful without the committed involvement of several co-creators. Special thanks to the board and staff of Urgent Action Fund – Africa (UAF-Africa) whose dedication to the process and well thought-out inputs have gone a long way in coming up with this document.

We also wish to recognize our grantee partners, donors, human rights partners, advisors and other collaborators who contributed directly or indirectly towards the development of this plan. Many thanks to eloise burke, our fired up facilitator for the inaugural strategic planning meeting. We applaud Tom Olila of Strategic Connections, whose expertise and sharp execution guided us through this process. For this, we are grateful.

Please accept our invitation to join hands with us along this new journey.

What we mean by...

Fire in the Belly... our commitment to 'fight' with energy, determination and passion. A pledge to support women's rights activism, defend human rights and justice.

Feminist change... our belief in transformation of self, power relations, and societal structures and practices to enable all women in Africa to fully access rights and opportunities.

Resources... funding, knowledge support, skills, solidarity, linkages and energies as necessities for African women's active participation in bringing about and sustaining positive change.

Women's human rights defenders... activists who work to promote and protect women's human rights. Due to their activism, they face unique situations and require specific mechanisms for their safety.

Rapid response grants making... a tool that allows urgent and timely financial support to women's rights organizations for strategic and time urgent interventions. UAF-Africa responds to grant requests within 72 hours of receipt and completes processing the grant in a period of 7-15 days.

Unlocking women's potential...



Executive Summary

Women and girls are Africa's untapped potential. The issues, factors and actors that inhibit their freedom to thrive are numerous, complex and constantly evolving. Yet, women are not passive; they have resisted oppression, spoken out for the silenced, marched for change and advocated liberty, justice, dignity and rights against forces that are resistant to a shift in the present inequitable power structures; a shift in the status quo.

UAF–Africa ardently believes in the power of women to activate change, and has been a partner of women's human rights actors on the continent who passionately work for a better, equal world for women and girls. We position ourselves strategically to bolster women's efforts, support them as agents of change and work with them to ensure deep and lasting transformation to an equal world for all women and girls, men and boys.

This Strategic Plan (Fire in the Belly...) summarizes the critical reflections of the context in which we work; the evolving social, political, economic, cultural, legal and technological landscapes; the lessons we have learned on our journey, and our desire to add value to the efforts of women to bring about change. It presents a five-year road map which, beyond the written document, captures the passion with which we approach the task of women's leadership, empowerment and engagement for change.

The plan outlines our mission to catalyze action, collaborate with partners, and support the protection of women's human rights defenders at risk. It highlights the objectives, strategies and tools we will use in working towards a continent where women and girls thrive. In particular, we have prioritized four strategic areas as critical to the transformation we hope to see:

1. Funding catalytic women's rights activism
2. Support towards sustained women's human rights defenders' work
3. Investing in knowledge generation and dissemination for social change
4. Strengthening internal organizational development and efficiency.

We recognize ourselves as one among a community of diverse actors working for women's human rights, their access to opportunities and their positioning to lead change. As a Fund, we bring financial and technical resources to the table and seek to catalyse action, supporting those well placed to embark on strategic, well thought out, daring, different and bold initiatives. We prioritize our responsiveness to emerging global issues as they affect women and girls in Africa. We will invest in the growth of a critical mass of women who believe in and take action to achieve change for African women.

We are consciously and systematically positioning ourselves as a leading organization on issues of feminist activism, analysis and women's human rights. We will revitalize our efforts towards resource mobilisation, networking and collaborating with funders, and consciously advocating the reinvigoration of feminist activism on the continent.

In the first part, the Plan lays out our identity, vision, mission and values. The second part summarizes an outcomes analysis of our external and internal contexts. The third part speaks to our theory of action and our working assumptions. The fourth and last part contains our strategic focus areas for the five-year strategic planning period (2011-2015).

Women are not passive; they have resisted oppression, spoken out for the silenced, marched for change and advocated for liberty, justice, dignity and rights.

Who we are...

Urgent Action Fund-Africa, a consciously feminist and women's human rights Pan-African Fund, established in 2001 in Nairobi, Kenya. As the first rapid response fund on the continent, UAF-Africa adds value to the work of activists and civil society organisations focusing on women's active socio-political participation and visibility by leveraging resources and opportunities for critical engagements that advance women's rights.

Committed to working across Africa, UAF-Africa builds broader alliances with partners at national, regional and international levels. To date, we have provided critical support for women's strategic initiatives in 45 countries across Africa.

We envision...

A world where African women are leading change agents at all levels of society with full access to opportunities, justice and resources – a world in which women and girls thrive.

Working towards social change...

We support catalytic interventions through rapid response grant giving, deliberate collaborations on topical and emerging issues and protection of resilient women's human rights defenders at risk.

Our Core Values

We embrace...

accountability: We walk the talk, deliver on our commitments and partner with those who share our values. We are accountable to each other and to our external partners.

diversity: We respect and celebrate diversity in people's identities and abilities in line with our ethics.

professional rigor: We strive for excellence and integrity in all we do.

working with a Soul: We are an organisation that tends and nurtures the flame in ourselves and in others. We listen to silenced voices and are committed to working as a collective, with respect and empathy.

teamwork: We work in the spirit of sisterhood for the good of our organisation, partners and those with whom they work.

dynamism: We have our ear to the ground. We listen deeply to the voices of women, to people, patterns and power dynamics.

introspection: Critical self-reflection is core to our quality of practice and our organisational life.

The Operational Context

Africa's political, social, economic and technological landscapes are diverse and continuously affect how her citizens enjoy their rights. With growing alarm, we are witnessing a hardening of social-cultural and religious intolerance, in particular around respect for diversity, and the political manipulation of religion and culture to entrench patriarchal gender norms.

Under the cloak of culture and religion, new efforts are under way to roll back hard-won gains for women's equality and autonomy. For example, legislating morality, which includes prohibiting abortion, women's dressing, imposing ethics, and controlling sexuality -- all these are in fact restrictive, oppressive, and narrow interpretations by certain social or religious groups to enforce their values on the rest of the population. So-called traditionalist

movements such as the *Mungiki* in Kenya have evolved into militia gangs that impose these norms through the use of fear and violence. The trend to employ both traditionalist and religious discourse is common in hate speech and violence used to justify homophobia, dehumanize and criminalize lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons (LGBTIQ). Women's reproductive health and rights to control their own sexuality are still contentious and face increased control in light of active advocacy by religious groups against policy and law on safe abortion, access to condoms and sex workers' rights.

UAF-Africa recognizes the importance of arming women with facts and figures to enable them challenge issues from an informed perspective.

Although multi-party political systems are now the norm in Africa, elections have become fertile grounds for discrimination, hate speech, violence, corruption and impunity. Africa is becoming the next arena for the global war on terror. Counter-terrorism efforts in Africa reflect the bad practices initiated by the US government. New counter-terrorism laws, police forces and operations have become a conduit for obtaining military funding and assistance as well as a means to silence and victimize members of unpopular ethnic, religious, political or racial groups. Encouraged by external forces, many African governments are responsible for illegal renditions, arbitrary detentions, mistreatment and torture, as well as harassment of human rights advocates, which further erode the rule of law and due process on the continent.

Economically, Africa is showing growing economies and higher gross domestic product values which are expected to translate into better livelihoods for the citizens. However, in real terms, poverty has increased, particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis, food crisis, skyrocketing fuel prices and other economic

shifts that affect the net incomes and buying power of many households. But focusing on the financial situation of individual households does not tell the whole story. Economic policies and operational frameworks are still highly biased against women. These issues are interconnected – the insecurity and rising crime rates, government gender insensitive planning and budgeting which does not take into account the gendered patterns of work, and the social stereotypes that exclude women from certain income activities. Women are invariably subjected to violence, abuse, marginalization and continued insecurity. All these violations diminish women's ability to run income generating ventures. Similarly, providing micro-credit loans while erecting barriers to women's access to large loans from financial institutions creates an economic glass ceiling that inhibits their potential in actively contributing to a male-dominated macroeconomic arena.

Africa is experiencing rapid technological growth linked to economic development and increasingly to politics and governance. The spread of mobile phone technologies as

a primary means of communication, as well as Internet use to obtain and share information and knowledge, have also affected the way women and men experience human rights. Mobile phone technologies have been used to report crime and human rights violations, connecting people in remote regions who do not have access to government services to institutions that can give support in curbing or addressing rights violations. In addition, Internet real-time reporting has been used to scale up monitoring of tense situations, to pass on information rapidly and create opportunities for self empowerment. However, technology is still not as widespread across Africa and indeed the vertical growth and advancement of its quality has not matched the horizontal reach and accessibility to communities across Africa. Many women still rely on radio, television, newsprint and physical communication materials to access information.

UAF-Africa's flexibility and ability to move funds quickly is our strategic niche and of a particular advantage. This uniqueness highlights the importance of having a multi-media communication strategy to ensure efficient multiple

-channels flow of information between us and our grantees and partners across Africa, with due consideration for the varied communication capabilities across the continent. Through various media, it is important to keep in the public limelight women's rights issues so that they are debated and, therefore, given attention. This way, we promote awareness on the importance of communities to safeguard the rights of women and girls and enhance their protection. We believe that, when the rights of one woman are violated, the rights of all women are not safe. By highlighting the critical work that our grantees across Africa are doing, we will seek to create a critical mass of women and support a strong African women's movement.

Information, it is often stated, is power. As such, UAF-Africa recognizes the importance of arming women with facts and figures to enable them challenge issues from an informed perspective. In the coming years, UAF-Africa will be a hub of new information and knowledge that critically analyses the situations of women on the ground. This information will be distributed with the sole aim of transforming and challenging the ordering of the African society.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities And Challenges

Strengths: UAF-Africa has successfully positioned herself as a leading women's human rights Fund; currently funding initiatives in 45 countries, and giving grants in the 5 AU official languages (English, French, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Arabic). We have developed and positioned our rapid response grant making model as a unique funding tool. UAF-Africa continuously reviews context dynamics, embraces change and produces cutting-edge knowledge products addressing women's human rights issues. The organisation has an activist Board of Directors and a team of dedicated and experienced staff. The Fund has built a strong network of African women's rights activists who act as advisors and key resource persons. We boast of a sound financial management system that enables efficiency, transparency and accountability for resources. The Fund's convening capacity to catalyze debates on topical and emerging issues plays a critical role in bringing women at the margins to the centre of debates.

Weaknesses: Weak structures for periodic review of policies and procedures. Resource mobilization strategy has been inadequate in exploring higher levels of new funding. Monitoring and evaluation remains a challenge given the catalytic (rapid) nature of the grants we make. Research and learning mechanisms and practices are not yet fully systemized. There is inadequate investment in ICT infrastructure that would support the use of diverse technologies.

Opportunities: The revolutions that occurred in North Africa in 2010-2011 provide a platform for UAF-Africa to engage with women's movements for democracy and equality in that region. Further, there is a possibility for UAF-Africa to tap into the emerging African philanthropy, use advances in media and ICT as well as growing organizational contacts as a basis for resource mobilization, including revitalizing the African women's movement.

The creation of UN Women and a new state, South Sudan, presents an opportunity for UAF-Africa to influence policies and capacitate women at higher levels.

Challenges: The global financial crisis and the non-existence of gender responsive budgets in Africa and the dwindling funding for women's rights work against a backdrop of increasing women's needs, as well as rising economic disparities, create a risk for the further marginalization of women. Elections in Africa have now become the new sites of violence, rising cultural and religious intolerance and homophobia are growing phenomena across Africa. Corruption, piracy, militia, mercenaries and rising insecurity have presented new challenges in women's rights activism. Climate change,

food insecurity and drought are on the rise in Africa and disproportionately affect women. Equally challenging has been the relaxation of immigration regulations that leave room for heightened trafficking of women and girls. Poor technological infrastructure in Africa presents difficulties in the way UAF-Africa moves money to her grantees.

We boast of a sound financial management system that enables efficiency, transparency and accountability for resources.

Organisational Reflections

Money remains a critical tool in protecting and advancing women's rights and enabling their active participation in crucial economic, social, political and technological processes that contribute to the shifting of power relations. UAF-Africa operates in the context of unstable political regimes, conflict and post-conflict transitioning societies. Within this context, the realisation of women's rights is difficult and interventions for change are highly time-sensitive.

Emerging issues such as climate change continue to affect the rainfall patterns in different countries on the continent, and has resulted in the current food crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Most countries on the continent have poor road, water, electricity, health and communications infrastructure, which makes issues of equal access and opportunities for women and men harder. There is need for UAF-Africa to consider other ways of sending funds, e.g., Western Union, or via larger international organizations as fiscal sponsor.

Creating linkages between women's human rights defenders in Africa with relevant stakeholders, resources and opportunities at national, regional and international levels provides opportunities to influence policies, practices and decisions relevant to women's human rights. UAF-Africa recognizes that women are excluded from key decision-making platforms and are, therefore, hindered from advancing their rights in those spaces.

Human rights activism is neither neutral nor static, and thus requires ongoing reflections, repositioning and re-strategizing. This necessitates in-depth research and analysis to provide deep reflections from different angles.

The realisation of women's rights is difficult and interventions for change are highly time-sensitive.

Knowledge products need to interrogate the nuanced and rich discussion points brought to the fund's attention.

The existence of such knowledge, information and skills that is premised on practice and the lived experience of women in Africa is currently limited and requires strategic investment. Strategic dissemination of findings to the external world is key to building and sustaining UAF-Africa's profile as an organization with specific knowledge on the dynamics of the African context.

UAF-Africa has experienced exponential growth. In order to effectively realize our purpose and remain relevant in facilitating sustainable social justice and change, we recognize the need to adapt and self renew, achieve coherence and deliver on development goals, to become a vibrant and dynamic organization with a soul. There is need for the expansion of our advisory base across Africa.

Strategic dissemination of findings to the external world is key to building and sustaining UAF-Africa's profile as an organization with specific knowledge on the dynamics of the African context.

Priorities And Key Strategies

Our analysis of the African context highlights a number of challenges that contribute to gender inequality. These have had immense effects in the form of sexual violence, exclusion of women from realising their full economic, social and political potential. This multiplicity, variety and diversity create the need for multi-pronged strategies by a diverse group of actors. Based on our strategic analysis and appreciation of the need for thematic focus, we have adopted a socio-economic and political approach to women's human rights.

Going by our theory of action, we will focus on four major strategic areas:

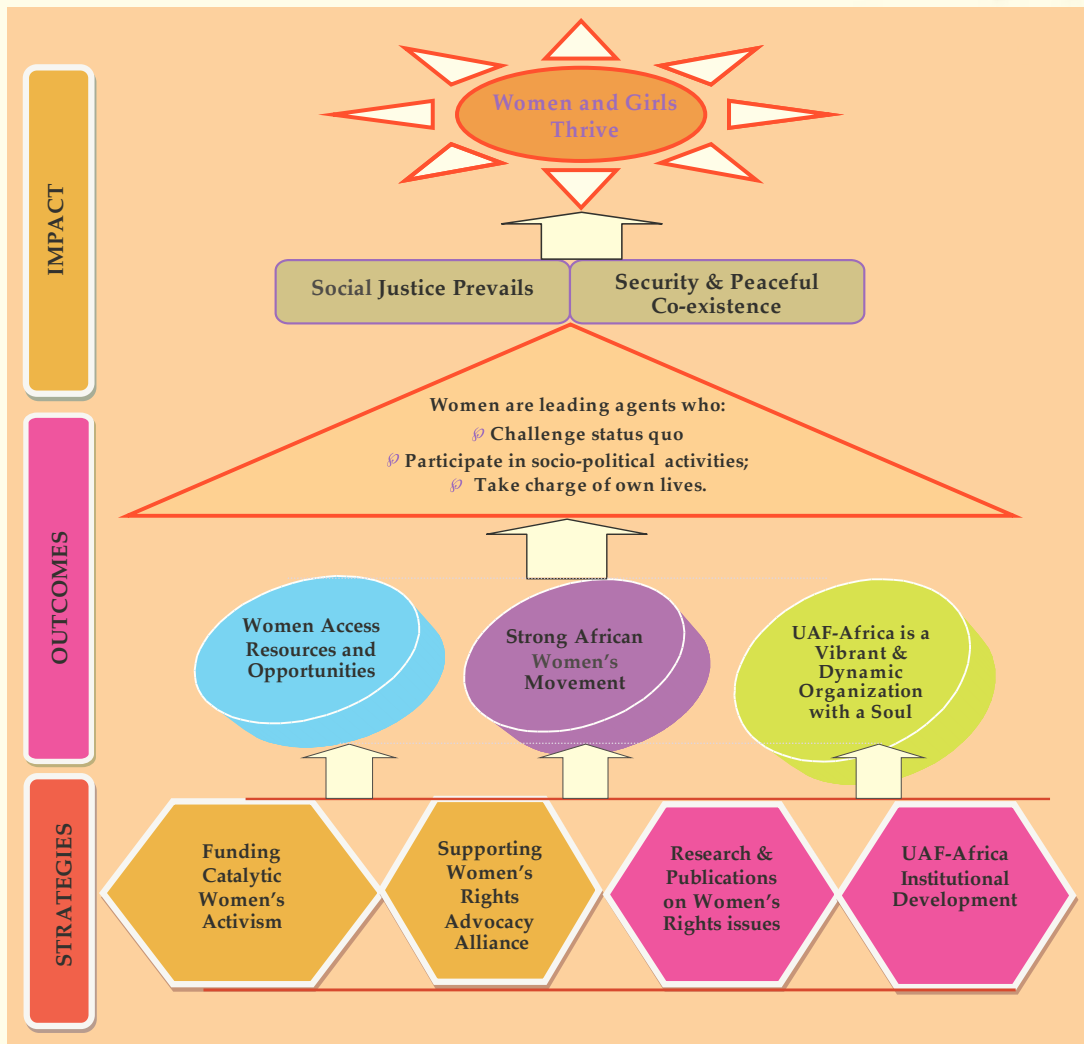
1. Funding catalytic women's rights activism;
2. Support to sustain women's human rights defenders' work;
3. Knowledge generation and dissemination; and
4. Internal organizational development.

We will in regard to these focus areas seek to strategically support vibrant, conscious and committed women's human rights activism as a critical pillar of transformation, using money as a tool to facilitate action and empower women actors. We will collaborate with like-minded partners in spearheading catalytic interventions that advance, promote and protect the rights of women in Africa.

In an effort to enhance the security of women's human rights defenders who face risks and persecution as a result of their activism, UAF-Africa will provide timely and strategic support to enable them sustain their activism.

UAF-Africa will generate and disseminate analytical and new knowledge products on topical, emerging, sensitive and neglected issues affecting women. These products will be informed by the lived experiences of women on the continent to promote conscious debate. We will also strengthen our organizational efficiency and effectiveness as we operationalise our strategic objectives.

Our Theory of Action



By leveraging financial and technical resources, generating relevant knowledge and supporting the African women's movement; we support the courageous activism required for the realization of women's rights. In so doing, women become leading change agents who challenge the status quo, take charge of their lives and equally participate in all aspects of society thereby establishing a just, secure and peaceful world where women and girls thrive.

Strategic Areas of Focus

STRATEGIC AREA 1

Fund catalytic women's rights activism that questions and challenges the socio-political ordering within African contexts

Strategies

- Support women's rights priorities with rapid response grants.
- Make available resources that support discourse, visibility and act on emerging women's rights issues.
- Leverage additional resources for critical linkages with partners.

STRATEGIC AREA 2

Contribute to sustained activism of women's human rights defenders working in Africa

Strategies

- Support the enhancement of security and sustained activism of WHRDs facing oppression, intimidation and other threats due to their work.
- Engage with relevant stakeholders to influence policy and encourage accountable governance.
- Build alliances towards a strong African women's movement.

STRATEGIC AREA 3

Be a hub of knowledge that influences discourses on topical, emerging, sensitive and neglected issues, grounded in the lived experiences of the women we work with

Strategies

- Enrich UAF-Africa's research capacity through feminist methodologies and analysis.
- Creatively package knowledge and use of multi-media for vibrant activism.
- Apply research information to enhance programming.
- Develop an information management system.
- Contribute to establishing a critical mass of information and knowledge for evidence based advocacy.

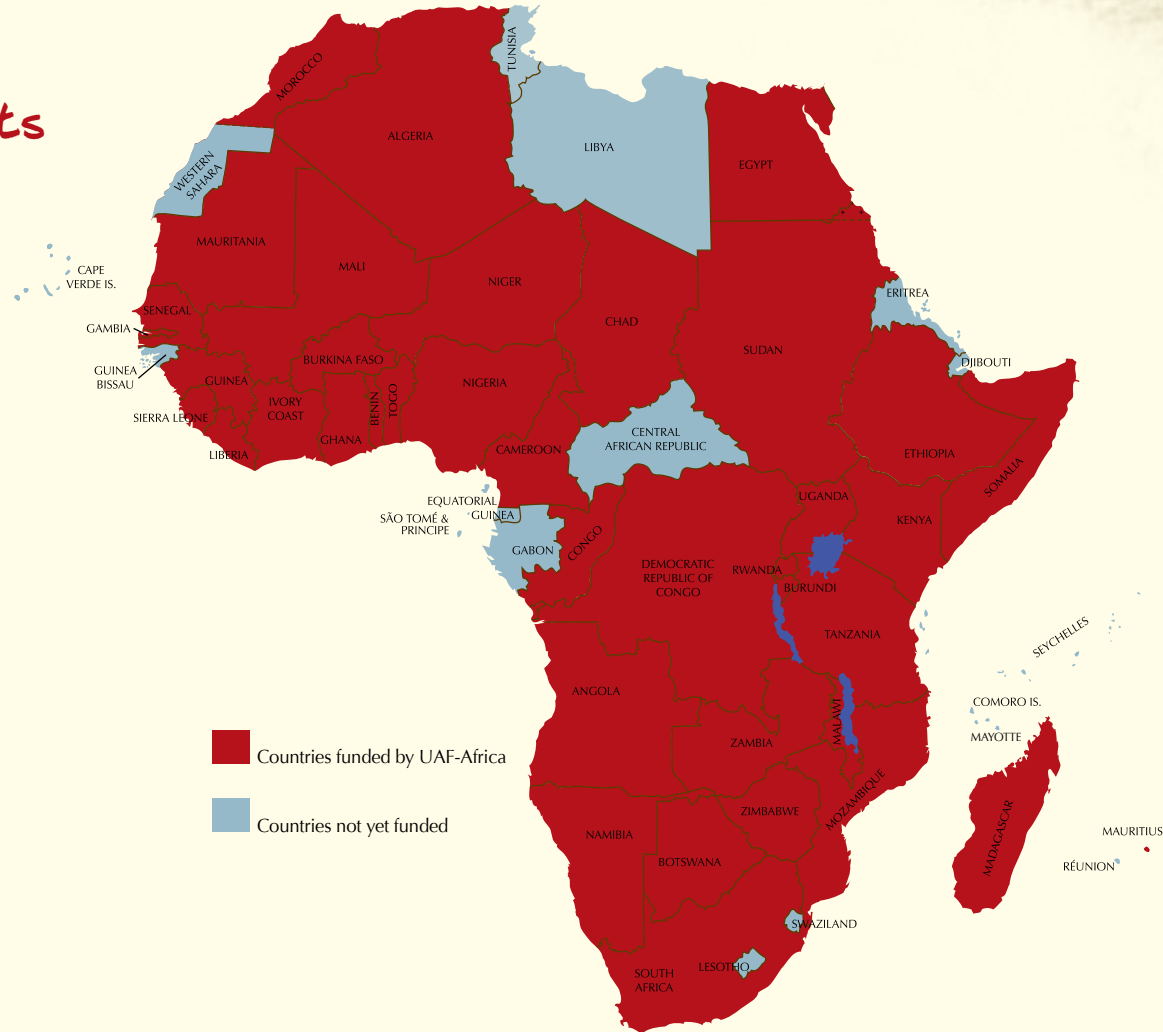
STRATEGIC AREA 4

Sustain an organization with a soul that creates an enabling environment for UAF-Africa to actualize her goals

Strategies

- Review and keep alive policies, procedures and systems.
- Develop and operationalise a Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation system that adapts to the uniqueness of our work.
- Develop a knowledge and learning management system.
- Develop and operationalise a robust resource mobilization strategy
- Review the communications and public relations strategy in line with the changing environment.
- Enhance human resource management that cultivates and nurtures the growth of the organization and her staff.
- Align the organisational structure with the plan.

Our Footprints



Our Form



Keeping the fire burning

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Design and print production by Jacaranda Designs Ltd.

PO Box 1202, Nairobi 00606, Kenya

Graphic Design & Layout Grace King'ori

Illustrations Bella Kilonzo (JDL) & Edmond Mugisha (UAF-Africa)

Creative Direction: Sheila Mulli & Alice K. Mutuma

Printed in Nairobi, Kenya.

ISBN 978-9966-017-08-6

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