

Regenerating in the Storm

Grounding Healing Justice in Conflict Settings



**URGENT
ACTION
FUND +
AFRICA**

FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

**THE 2025
ANNUAL ACTION REPORT**

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**“Healing and rest
are not a luxury or a
reward. They are a
right of life.”**

Who We Are



We are **bold, responsive, passionate, and rooted in solidarity** with African women leaders and organisations that promote and advance women's and girls' holistic transformation for an equitable and just future.

In **2025** we received **5,029** grant applications; a total of **409** grants were distributed to **42** countries amidst severe funding cuts and increasing socio-political crises.

Our board and staff members are physically present in **12** African countries; collectively, we speak more than **46** African languages.

**Bold, responsive,
passionate, and rooted
in solidarity**



Our Vision

We envisage an Africa where transformative justice is a shared goal, ensuring that all marginalised women and girls are recognised for their full worth and value, live to their fullest potential and can actively participate in decision-making processes that shape their lives, families, and communities.

We believe that investing in local and regional initiatives can foster sustainable development and create lasting impact.

Our Values



RESPECT



INTEGRITY



ORGANISING
WITH A SOUL

Anchored in four core and interconnected strategies

**Sustaining
Defenders**

**Feminist
Knowledge
Leadership**



**Fostering
Cultures
of Care**

**Transformative
Partnerships &
Philanthropy**

After the Rupture: Building Feminist Futures in a Fractured World

The global order African feminists are expected to engage with has proven inadequate. Analysts refer to a 'post-hegemonic era,' where institutions from 1945 are collapsing under demands they can't meet, dominated by transactional power. In Africa, this isn't just metaphorical. The architecture of the global aid system is shifting, and civic space infrastructure is contested. The 52% rise in grant applications UAF-Africa received in 2025 (5,029) reflects movements turning to the surviving institutional architecture amid mutation.

What the fracture revealed was not a new fragility. It revealed how long feminist movements on this continent have been building without the scaffolding we had assumed was a constant. When the scaffolding fell, the roots held.

"We are not just in Mombasa, Kenya. We are at the
3rd Feminist Republik Festival. We are home!"

— **Coumba Touré during the Opening
Ceremony**

The terrain where African Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), work has become increasingly hostile and more sophisticated in its hostility. The Feminist Republik Registry recorded a 50% increase in attacks against WHRDs in 2025, reflecting deliberate repression rather than isolated violence. Verbal intimidation silences, surveillance tracks movement, legal actions drain resources without conviction, and physical or sexual violence enforces compliance. Only 16% of violations are formally reported, not because of a lack of harm, but because reporting often increases risk; visibility without power leads to exposure (Sammuel Chu). African feminist movements understand this well. Our Registry is part of a counterstrategy: documentation not for reporting to authorities but as feminist evidence for movements.

The funding crisis worsened the political situation. Women's rights groups got only 0.34% of global aid in 2022. The median annual budget of a feminist movement was \$22,000 in 2024. In 2025, UAF-Africa made 409 grants in 42 countries, 41% to conflict-affected areas. These interventions created durable capacity, coalitions, and accountability. Rapid-response feminist grant-making is powerful because of its issue-agnostic, movement-led architecture, which reaches (among others) unregistered groups and activists on the run.

The Gungano, UAF-Africa's donor convening embedded within the Feminist Republik Festival, was a deliberate disruption of the philanthropy-as-transaction model. More than 100 funders and activists sat with the question: how do we continue to resource

movements when the systems meant to support them are no longer holding? The conversations did not produce a roadmap. They produced a compass, a shared orientation toward trust-based, context-driven philanthropy that resources land, care systems, safety, leadership, and the conditions that enable movements to sustain themselves over time.

The 3rd Feminist Republik Festival's theme Regenerating in the Storm: Grounding Healing & Collective Care in Conflict Settings was grounded in the analysis UAF-Africa has generated since 2017. At a moment when the world speaks constantly of resilience, movements have inspired us to move beyond it. Not resilience, but regeneration. Resilience asks how we survive. Regeneration asks what we are building in the ruins and for whom. At the heart of this argument is the healing justice framework, a political epistemology that recognizes how historical and transgenerational trauma, rooted in structural violence and oppressive systems, manifests collectively in activists' bodies, movements, and organizing cultures.

From the 2016 grant trends analysis identifying burnout as a structural threat to feminist movements to the 2022 Healing Justice Framework and 2025 Registry data showing that fear, exhaustion, and anxiety dominate WHRDs in conflict zones, the conclusion remains: activists are not fragile but are forced to revisit the same harmful contexts, often without support that addresses root causes. Psychological harm isn't a side effect of repression but a tool of repression. Addressing it isn't peripheral but central to movement strategy. Activists across Africa have shown that peace isn't the goal; justice and liberation are. Any care framework that doesn't support justice isn't enough. This was the spirit of the Festival.

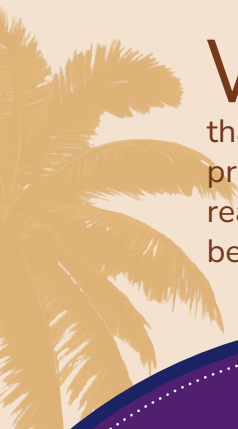
The Festival wove 18 healing modalities, ancestral, somatic, clinical, and spiritual, not as amenities but as a political acts of reclamation. The systematic erasure of traditional healing practices under colonialism, the severing of body from spirit, the pathologizing of indigenous knowledge, and the imposition of a medical model that treated political distress as individual pathology were themselves forms of structural violence. Rebuilding those practices in feminist space is decolonial work. The Feminist Republik Healing Farm in Kitui, Kenya, a healing and convening space launching in January 2027, is the physical articulation of this proposition. It says, in land and in stone: movement infrastructure is not a line item. It is the work.

This report is an account of 1000 defenders, healers, and allies who gathered on the shores of Mombasa's Indian Ocean in November 2025 and did not wait for the world to become safer before they built. Through analysis, through grief, through joy, through matrices co-generated by activists, in the Solidarity Spaces, and most proximate to armed conflict, is a compass for feminist crisis response rooted in healing justice. The report names what has always been true. Root systems hold. Rhizomes regenerate. And the thousands of African women human rights defenders whose work animates every page of this report have, through the most difficult of seasons, proven that what we are building outlasts the storms that seek to stop us.

We do not ask for patience. We ask for partnership — courageous, trust-based, and urgent.



A Celebration of Collective Rising



We celebrated the power of coming together as a deliberate refusal to fragment. In a time shaped by rupture, we chose convergence. In a moment that demanded retreat, we gathered. 2025 did not arrive quietly. It came with pressure. With conflict that stretched across borders and into bodies. With climate realities no longer abstract, but immediate. With a funding landscape that shifted beneath our feet. And still, we came together.

The Power of Convening

We celebrate the power of convening as resistance. We gathered 1000 defenders, donors and philanthropic allies, healing practitioners and coaches at the 3rd Feminist Republik Festival. To anchor. To hold ground. To create a shared centre in a world pulling us apart. We celebrate spaces where voices coexisted.

Where the room itself became infrastructure. We celebrate moments where joy was a tool. Where laughter and grief sat side by side without contradiction. Where connection became a form of protection.

The Power of Healing

We celebrate the power of healing as infrastructure. As a condition for continuity. We witnessed healing justice being practised. Through rest. Through care. Through intentional pause. Healing became a strategy for staying.

The Power of Collaboration

We celebrate the power of collaboration across roles, across geographies, across generations.

We saw funders listening differently. Activists speaking with renewed clarity. Consultants unlearning extractive models. Healers guiding processes that words alone could not hold. "This is what it looks like when funding meets humanity,"





The Power of Knowledge

We celebrate the power of knowledge that travels. Across borders. Across generations. Across disciplines. We witnessed indigenous knowledge systems standing alongside digital safety frameworks. Climate justice intersecting with economic justice. Stories becoming data. Data becoming action. We celebrate the emergence of new language. New ways to name what we are building. Knowledge did not sit still. It moved. It connected. It expanded what felt possible.



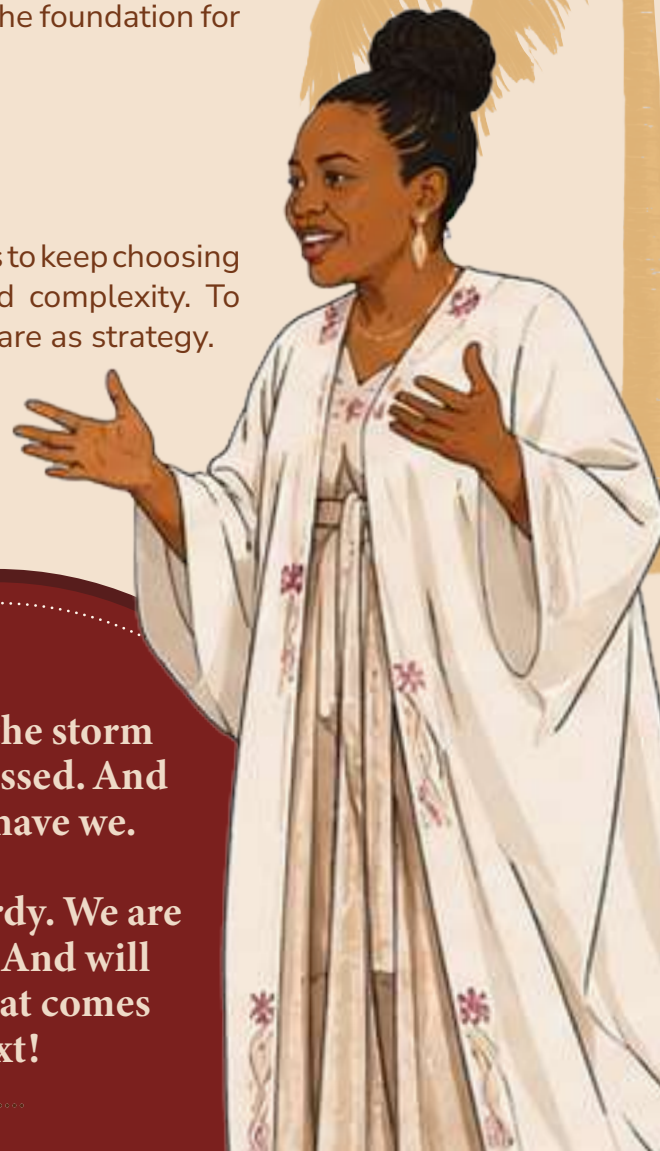
The Power of Regeneration

We celebrate the power of re-making. 2025 asked for more than resilience. It demanded regeneration. We celebrate the shift from returning to what was, toward creating what should be. Rest. Care. Restoration. Regeneration became the foundation for what comes next.



A Collective Call

We celebrate. And we continue.
We call on defenders, funders, healers, and allies to keep choosing collectivity. To keep building spaces that hold complexity. To keep resourcing with trust. To keep centering care as strategy.



Because the storm
has not passed. And
neither have we.

We are sturdy. We are
together. And will
shape what comes
next!

An Invitation to Remember and Reflect on the 3rd Feminist Republik Festival



Healing as an Infrastructure for Movement Building



The theme of “Regenerating in the Storm: Grounding Healing and Collective Care in Conflict Settings” was deliberately framed. Across the continent we see and live in storms of crisis coverage, armed conflict, climate emergencies, political instability, economic collapse, and deepening inequalities. We know that these are deeply gendered. They shape bodies, choices, safety, and survival.



And yet, alongside these storms, there lies wisdom, resistance, and healing. Feminists continue to lead, rebuilding relationships, holding communities together, and practicing forms of care and resistance that the world rarely sees.



This Festival was curated because we understand that wisdom, community practices, and healing matter. Together we asked, thought and reflected on what it truly means to weave healing into our understanding of crisis, of care, and of collective survival.



Our short time together holds a powerful memory of the songs, the chants, and the feelings that were navigated along the shores of the cool and calm ocean.



Voices of the Land: Narratives from Coastal Women's Movements

UAF-Africa invited Mama Shamsa, a proud resident of Mombasa who shared a powerful story that reflects the life of WHRDs - birthed from trial, refined through resilience.

She shared of her upbringing as the first female in her polygamous family and the barriers that she faced on the journey to attaining basic education. From being promised to an arranged marriage, to threats of removal from school when menstrual cycles began, it was through the

efforts of elders who believed in progressive narratives and educations that she was able to complete her education until high school level. Mama Shamsa's work leans on the many lessons she gained in her work as a mediator for interreligious and community mobiliser, and has allowed her to help over twenty thousand young girls complete school.

How telling is it that her story reflected the stories that of many of us hold? Our collective journeys contain shared golden threads that are revealed through conversations such as this. Here are four of the themes and narratives resonated with us during the conversation with Mama Shamsa.



3 These are Three Questions which were Asked



How to address the harms of female genital mutilation that is rooted in religious frameworks?



Should the question of the absent of men and fathers be considered in the assessment of the rise in gang culture?



What is the state of leadership for the women of Mombasa and how should women of all regions be supported in order to take up leadership roles in their communities?



Welcome Dinner: A Feast of Reunion and Resistance

Oh! Sisters were reunited! The welcoming dinner of the 3rd Feminist Republik Festival was an energising sea of embraces that were as warm as the Mombasa weather. The return to each other since the previous festival can be likened to a rekindled spark which warmed each of our hearts under the cool skies.



Gogosimo's energetic musical sounds preceeded the warm welcome from a vibrant Janet Mbugua who reminded participants that "you belonged here". From thirty countries across all parts of the African continent and not limited by language, sisters were reunited.

With resounding ululations meeting the acknowledgment of each country represented, Naomi Lanoi Leleto welcomed all to the festival on behalf of Urgent Action Fund-Africa, and gently invited everyone to reconnect with joy and healing during this sacred period.

Reverend Dorcas Chebet Juma anchored everyone in the message of care, healing and restoration; calling on everyone to make full use of the space to prioritise personal well-being, spiritual and physical nourishment and joy that arises through dance.

Quotes to Reflect On

"I am here. You are here. We are here."

Janet Mbugua

Naomi Lanoi Leleto

Quotes to Reflect On

"Healing cannot happen if you do not approach your life with self-care"

Day Moja

Roots: Unpacking Healing in Conflict Settings

The invocation we heard....

Ancestor of fire, guide our tongues. Let
us speak healing not as hush, but as
drumbeat.

Let the circle hold all of us grief, rage,
tenderness.

We do not whisper healing, we
declare it.

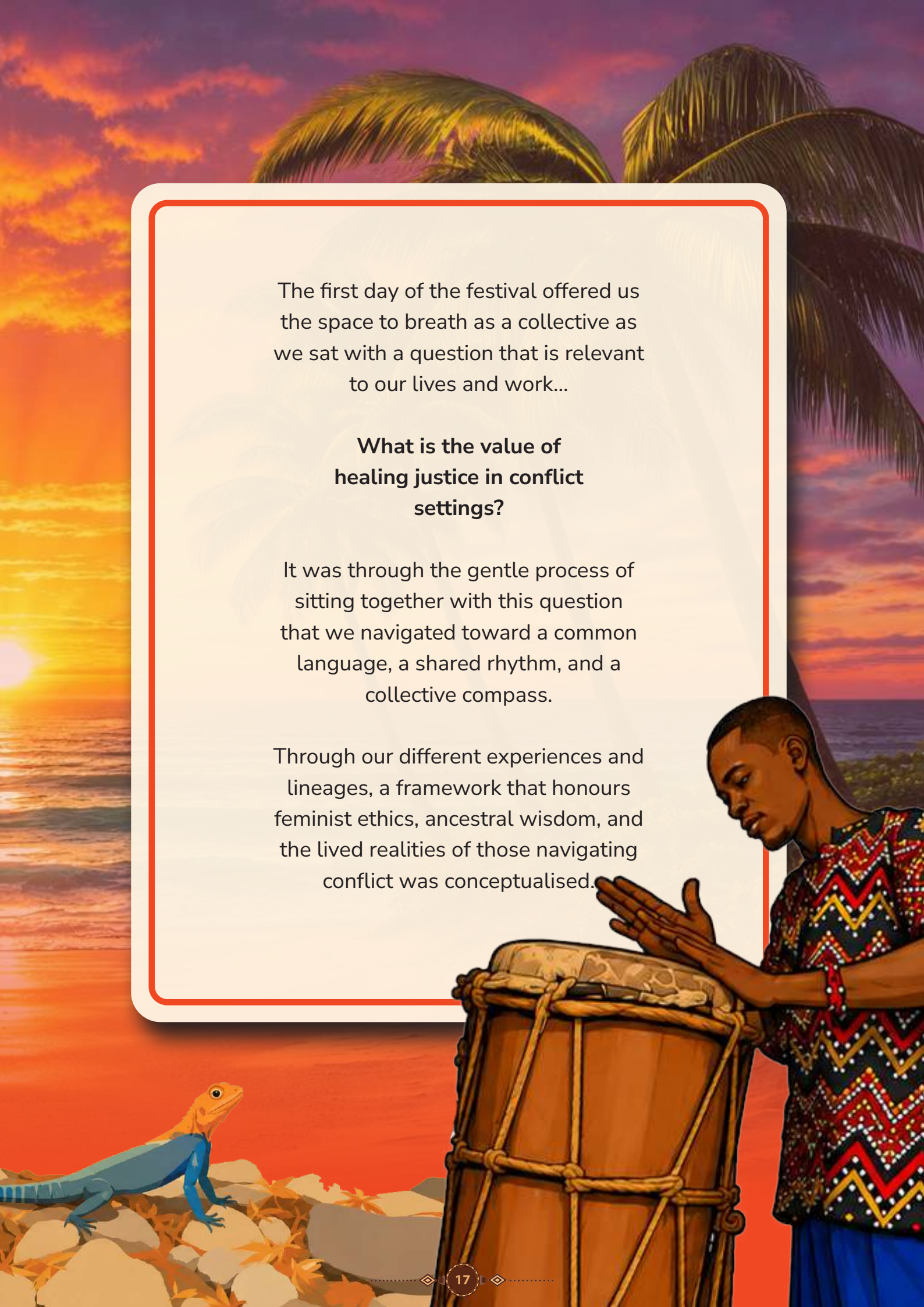
We name harm, we name hope.

We hold power gently, like a
calabash filled with water.

Today, we begin again.

Not perfect. But present.





The first day of the festival offered us the space to breathe as a collective as we sat with a question that is relevant to our lives and work...

What is the value of healing justice in conflict settings?

It was through the gentle process of sitting together with this question that we navigated toward a common language, a shared rhythm, and a collective compass.

Through our different experiences and lineages, a framework that honours feminist ethics, ancestral wisdom, and the lived realities of those navigating conflict was conceptualised.

Opening Poem from Coumba Touré

I welcome you daughters of light. I welcome the spirits of your mothers. The spirits of your grandmothers. The spirits of your great-great-great grandmothers; until the first grandmother that ever existed that we all share. We go back all the way to the first grandmother that we all share. We bring those spirits in here right now with us. I welcome you from the Sènègal River, that is where I'm from. I welcome you from the Niger River, that's also where I'm from. I welcome you from the Sahara Desert where I'm from. I welcome you from this continent that I am from.

Welcome. Amba ambisu.

I welcome you from all the institutions that I'm carrying with me here. And I welcome every institution that you represent here. All the organisations that you've been part of, that you are supporting, that you are connected to are welcome.

I welcome you to this dream space we are building together. You are welcome more than I can ever say in any of the languages that I speak. You are welcome more than you will ever know, more than you can imagine.

Welcome. Amba ambisu.

In the name of every staff member of UAF-Africa; welcome. Welcome in the name of every staff member that have ever worked at UAF-Africa. Welcome from all the board members of Urgent Action Fund for Women Africa.

Welcome from every board member that have ever sat on the board. Welcome from the founders of this institution; from the people who had the dream from the beginning that brought us here. In the name of all the partners, all the supporters, all the friends, all the service providers, all the healers, all the people translating, building this space, creating all of this to I welcome you. You are welcome especially in the name of the healers who are here. You are welcome.

We are here. We are home.

Listen, we are not just at Sarova Hotel, not just in Mombasa. We are not just in Kenya. We are not just in Africa. We are at the Feminist Republik Festival. We are home. You are welcome.

Welcome to this dream space born from the insufficiencies of our realities, born from our consciousness about the possibilities of healing.
Welcome to the beautiful intention of solidarity.
Welcome to the lucid dream to give us a taste of what will be.
Welcome to the challenge of burning down and burying our pains.
Welcome to the shedding of our old skins and to the burial of ashes.
Welcome to planting of to the planting of the seeds of justice.
Welcome to the weathering of joy in fertile soil.

Welcome. Amba ambisu.

Welcome to the blooming that will feed from the dying cell of our society's sickness. Patriarchy. Capitalism. Colonialism. Slavery. Exploitation. Fascism. Militarism. Sexism. Inequalities. Name it, you did not cause it!

Welcome to the erasure of violent madness. Welcome to envisioning a place and time of healing for all women, for all African, for all people. Welcome to the creation of new legend. Welcome to the beautiful stories that we will be telling again and again. Welcome to the response to the cold, to survive, to thrive, to exhale in orgasms.



Welcome. Amba ambisu.

Welcome to the revelation of the myth of women gathering to recreate life from broken bones. Welcome to sewing back torn flesh and mending broken heart.

Welcome. Amba ambisu.

Thank you for bringing your most profound face, your magic fingers.
Thank you for carrying us through your real mind, your caring words, and your sharp thought.

Thank you for bringing your most beautiful voice and your most sexy clothes.
Thank you for believing that no one group of people is better than another at birth.

You are welcome because you know a life is a life, is a life, is a life, is a life, is a life, is a life.

You are welcome. We are here. We are home.

Welcome to putting down every language that makes us feel less than someone else. Welcome to challenging old and false narrative, disguising themselves as truth. As we know together that Africans are no slaves. Women deserve joy. Welcome as we bring together the stories of the beautiful ones, the powerful one, the kinds one African women.

Welcome.

We are a thousand women so that we can create a thousand years of peace, thousands of years of joy, thousands of years of abundance in thousands of lands.

Welcome.

We are here to inspire thousands of years of love. Be welcome. Please welcome each other back to the next thousand years of humanity.

Welcome.

Because if you are here, someone here needs you. Share with them how you heal yourself daily. How you heal women around you. Come and share how you make it one day after the other. One step in front of the other. You are among the wonders of this world. Come with your songs. Come with your grandmother's lullaby.

Come with your healing plants, healing stone, healing waters, your tears, your laughter are welcome, your joy, your angers are welcome, your sadness is welcome, your depression is welcome, your confusion is welcome. Bring it out. Put it here in the corner. Write it down so we can burn it. Worship in this ocean. Scream it. Scream it at the top of your lungs. You are welcome here.

You are welcome here. You are loved here. You are loved here.

Your hope is welcome. Your optimism is welcome.

We are here. We are home.

We are here. We are home.

We are here. We are home.



Welcome Remarks from the Board Chair of Urgent Action Fund Africa

It gives us great joy to welcome you to the beautiful coastal shores of Mombasa. This is our space and it is more than a convening. It's a homecoming, a moment to breathe, to reflect, remember, and reconnect with the heartbeat of feminist movements.

So why are we here? We gather at a time when crisis, wars, authoritarianism, ecological disasters, and shrinking civic space, to name just a few, are reshaping the world we live in. Yet even in the storm, African women human rights defenders continue to rise. We organise, we care for one another, we resist, and we imagine a new. We are here because healing, our collective healing is political.

We'll say that again. Healing is political. It is how we resist despair. It is how we sustain activism and nurture hope. We are all too familiar with the unravelling crisis in our various contexts on the continent. Crisis is not just an event. It's a rapture in unjust systems that have long inflicted harm. By naming crisis, we confront it not with fear but with clarity and solidarity across Sudan, Niger, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, Kenya and beyond. Women human rights defenders continue to hold the line, proving that peace without justice is not peace and survival without well-being is not freedom.

As we gather here, we carry very different weights. Some of us have travelled from places where the sounds of celebration might echo too closely to the sounds of loss, where music and laughter feel impossible when they remain impossible for those we have left behind. Others among us have

journeyed from these same places carrying a desperate hunger for joy. For a moment to remember what it feels like to breathe without fear, to move our bodies in ways that are not about survival, but about being alive. Both of these truths are sacred. Both of these needs are legitimate. And between the tension of them is not a problem to be solved. It is the very terrain of healing in conflict. The sadness and the joy is the very terrain of healing in conflict.

Our theme for this festival which we have been calling the third most epic actually we say the third epic-est Feminist Republik Festival. Our theme, which is "Grounding Healing and Collective Care in Conflict Settings", asks us to do something that is profoundly difficult. To hold space for healing that looks nothing like our own. To recognise that for some healing sounds like silence, like the absence of noise that has become unbearable. For others, healing sounds like drums, like the voices raised in song, like the defiant refusal to let violence take our capacity for celebration. Some of us heal our pain by naming it out loud again and again and again until it becomes bearable. Others heal by setting it down for an evening. By dancing it into a different shape. By laughing so hard we can remember we are more than what has been done to us. This is not contradiction. This is the complexity of collective trauma. This is what it means to be human in the midst of catastrophe.

Revolutionary care as something different of each of us. It asks us to trust that the person sitting next to us who may be celebrating while we need silence or sitting in silence while we need to move is doing exactly what they need to do to survive. It asks us



to believe that there is enough room in this space, in this moment, in this movement for all of it. No two situations in your countries are the same. Each has its own particular cruelty and its own devastating history. Each one is shaped by specific geographies of power, specific legacies of colonialism and extraction. Specific patterns of violence that cannot be collapsed into a single narrative. And yet, and yet there are threads, they are links that only you can see because you have lived them. You will recognise in each other the exhaustion that has gone bone deep, the kind that sleep cannot cure. We will recognise the guilt of being here when others are there. The impossible mathematics of who gets to rest and who must keep fighting. These threads of recognition are what make solidarity possible. Not sameness, not resonance, not identical experience, but the deep knowing that comes from having walked through fire, even if the fires burned differently.

This space, this Feminist Republik Festival has been intentionally designed to hold multiple truths at once to offer places of silence and stillness for those who need them and places of music and movement for those who need them. To provide access to healers who work with talk, with touch, with ritual, and with rest. to create pockets of time where you can be alone with your thoughts and pockets of time when you can be held by community. What we are asking is what collective care in conflict settings demands. It is that we practice both boundaries and compassion. That we communicate what we need and we trust others to communicate what they need. That we make space for celebration without demanding that everybody celebrate. That we honour grief without requiring that

everyone grief in the same way at the same time.

As we move through this Festival, we invite you into this practice when you encounter someone whose healing looks different from yours. When the music is too loud or the silence too heavy, when someone is laughing and you cannot fathom laughter, or when someone is weeping and you need to hold yourself together, pause, take a breath, witness it, allow it to exist alongside your own truth. This is the practice of solidarity in conflict. Not agreement, but coexistence. Not sameness, but room enough for difference. not the erasure of tension but the slow hard work of remaining in community anyway.

This Festival invites us to reimagine what a feminist response to crisis looks like with healing justice as our compass. It reminds us that caring for ourselves and each other is not indulgent. It's revolutionary. From the very beginning, the Feminist Republik has stood for this. that healing and care are not side notes to activism but its foundation. From Naivasha in 2019 and 2022 to Mombasa in 2025, this journey has been one of courage, connection and imagination. Each Festival builds on the last, carrying forward our lessons, reflections and our songs. This year we don't seek a fixed road map. We seek a feminist compass to guide us through the uncertainty of wisdom, love, and collective power.

Welcome Assembly - Voices in the Circle

Speakers



Atieno Odhiambo



Jean Kemitare



H.E. Caitríona Ingoldsby



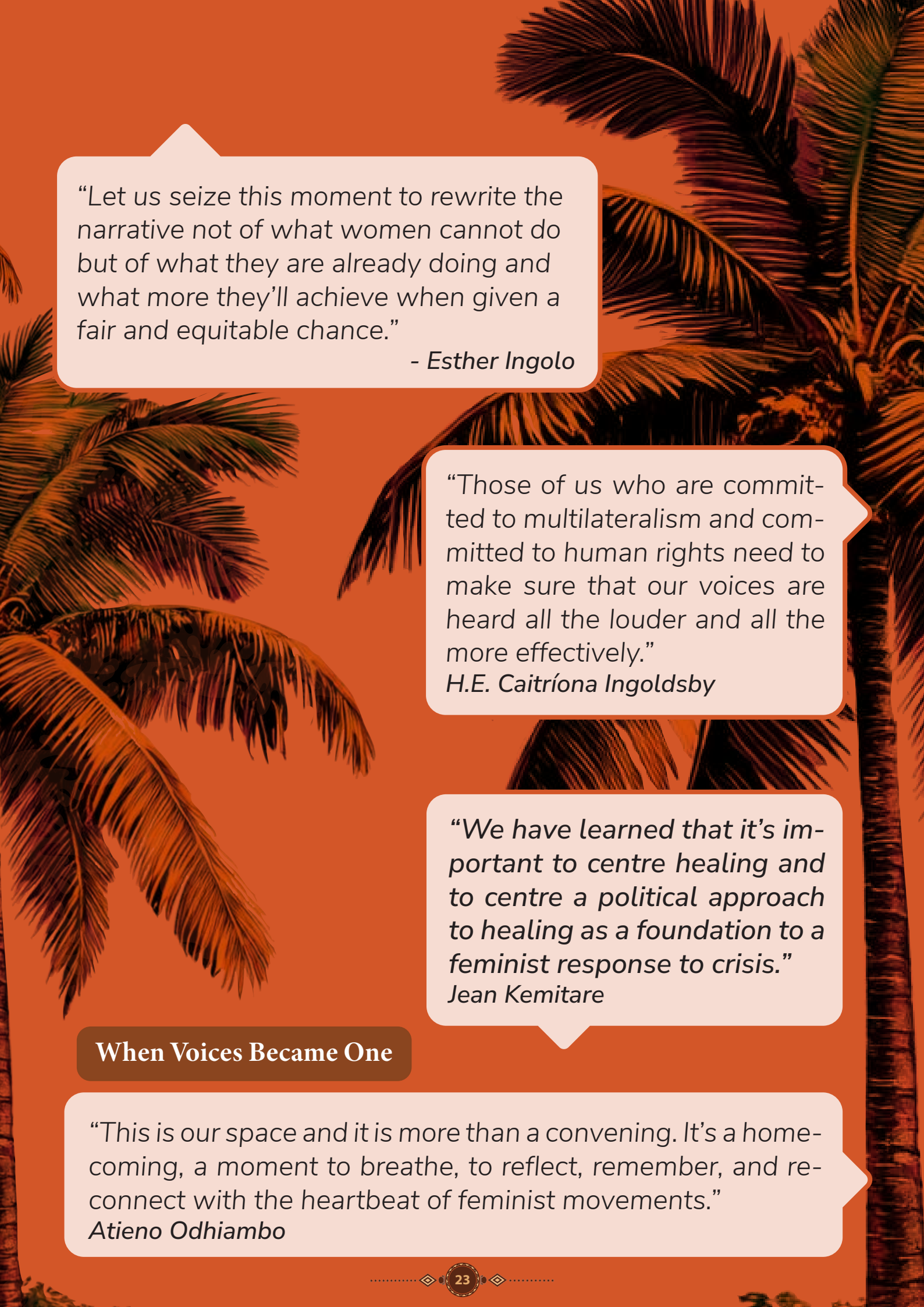
Esther Ingolo

Arriving Together: A Shared Beginning

In a room thoughtfully designed for comfort and connection, the Welcome Assembly was a joyous convening of hearts and souls which grounded us together in the purpose of the Festival.

As the words “I am here. You are

here. We are here!” rang across the room, participants heard words of assurance that they were indeed at the right place, at the right time.



"Let us seize this moment to rewrite the narrative not of what women cannot do but of what they are already doing and what more they'll achieve when given a fair and equitable chance."

- *Esther Ingolo*

"Those of us who are committed to multilateralism and committed to human rights need to make sure that our voices are heard all the louder and all the more effectively."

H.E. Caitríona Ingoldsby

"We have learned that it's important to centre healing and to centre a political approach to healing as a foundation to a feminist response to crisis."

Jean Kemitare

When Voices Became One

"This is our space and it is more than a convening. It's a homecoming, a moment to breathe, to reflect, remember, and reconnect with the heartbeat of feminist movements."

Atieno Odhiambo

Why Healing Justice in the Context of Crises

Speakers

🌴 Leila Hessin 🌴 Sahra Ahmed Koshini

🌴 Iya Afo 🌴 Mmatshilo Motsei

This conversation explored the gendered violence embedded in crises and the feminist responses that seek to resist, heal, and regenerate. Together crisis is defined through the nervous system's response to trauma, the womb is often used as a weapon of war and perpetuating the transmission of intergenerational trauma.



The Voices That Stayed with Us

It's one thing to have data and it's quite another to have voice"

- Sahra Ahmed Koshini

"The humanitarian aid infrastructure is very devoid of compassion of humanity. And this is the argument we're trying to make is that we need a different kind of approach."

- Sahra Ahmed Koshini

"Song, singing, whether it's in community or by ourselves, that's one of the most powerful things we can do for the nervous system"

- Iya Afo

We cannot use the wounded womb as a foundation for peace in Africa"

- Mmatshilo Motsei

Healing is a lifetime process. What changes is your relationship to your wound? The memory of the wound does not disappear"

- Mmatshilo Motsei

We have to create a lifestyle that supports our nervous system so that we can brace ourselves for what we know is our reality"

- Iya Afo

Key Concepts That Grounded the Conversation

Healing

A lifelong, individual, and collective process involving the spirit and body, focused on fixing systemic imbalances rather than just symptoms.

Crisis

Reinterpreted beyond just war to include the over-medicalization of birth, climate change, and the systemic violence of state and extractive policies.

Documentation

The act of preserving indigenous knowledge and women's narratives to provide evidence for policy-making and historical accuracy.

Womb

A battlefield of political and physical conflict and a powerful portal for ancestral healing. It is a central site for disrupting the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Nervous System

The primary driver of how we think, feel, and relate. Managing crisis requires a balanced lifestyle and specific frameworks to regulate our nervous system's response to trauma.

Questions That Were Asked

How long does the healing process take when using traditional versus modern routes, and are there specific situations where one method is better suited than the other?

How can we seize the womb and reclaim control of our bodies and communities?

For those of us who have found psychological freedom at this gathering, how can we maintain this healing when returning to an active conflict zone?

What specific procedures or support systems can be used to help women who have experienced rape break their silence, especially when they fear social rejection?

Key Takeaways

Responses to crisis must be understood within specific local contexts, requiring customised approaches that honour indigenous ways of knowing and ancestral practices over Western medicinal models.

While crisis is a recognised part of our reality on the African continent, it is not the only thing that defines us. Healing justice is a critical modality for moving through and beyond any crisis.

Activists are encouraged to utilise specific practical tools, such as the Circles of Wellness and the Feminist Ethics of Care, to manage our nervous systems.

Day Mbili

Flame: Exploring Regeneration through the Storm

The Invocation we Heard...

Storm, we do not fear you.
We have danced in your eye, built altars from your debris.
We are not the storm's victims; we are its midwives.
We birth care in chaos. We plant seeds in cracked ground.
We organize not despite the storm, but through it.
Let today be a sanctuary.
Let our resistance be soft, strategic, and sacred.

For the second day, we shifted our focus from theoretical understanding to practical application. The theme helps us to find pathways to renewal and growth amidst the turbulence and destruction of conflict.



“How Does Regeneration Occur in Conflict Settings?”

As we navigated terrains and implication of practicality, we heard the many harrowing experiences of women’s human rights defenders and activists. And as each of us bravely and authentically shared, the same was returned in compassion, spiritual covering and acts of solidarity.



Finding Healing Amidst Conflict

Who we Heard From

- Mmatshilo Motsei • Neema Rukunghu • Jude Clark
- Mamello Phomane • Billy Hani • Mawada Adam

Stories That Stitch Us Back Together

The speakers shared a narrative of remembering traditional customs or beliefs as pathways towards healing. Mawada shared the history of Sudanese warrior queens to remind the audience of their matriarchal roots. Jude described trauma as something that fragments and disempowers, suggesting nature and storytelling as the glue for reconnection. Neema spoke on the alchemy of turning sexual violence trauma into strength through peer support. Mamello discussed the body as a “remembrance of ritual”, while Billy reflected on how joy and grief can co-exist as two sides of one coin.

Questions from the Wounds & the Witnesses

Participants shared their own stories of war and displacement, asking if it was “right” to run away to cinema or music to cope. Others called on the speakers to expand on how they balance their professional medical roles with personal religious or tribal beliefs.

Questions focused on validating healing practices and understanding what healing means in this regard. In response, speakers emphasised the neuroscience of trauma recovery (safety › connection › analytical capacity) and our body’s inherent knowledge of what it needs.

Why This Conversation Matters Now

This panel addressed gaps in healing approaches for conflict-affected communities:

- ✿ Western medical models often fail Black, African, and indigenous peoples by excluding spiritual and ancestral dimensions. The panel legitimized suppressed knowledge systems and exposed how colonialism criminalized indigenous healing practices.
- ✿ By explaining traditional practices through neuroscience, the panel validated indigenous methods within scientific frameworks while maintaining their spiritual essence.
- ✿ Moving beyond individualised self-care, the discussion positioned healing as requiring structural change within movements and institutions that currently perpetuate harm through cultures of overwork.

A Living Dialogue: Shared Space, Shared Truths

As we experienced throughout the Festival, the interaction was non-hierarchical and allowed for knowledge sharing and collective wisdom:

- ✿ Personal narratives built upon each other, creating a tapestry of insights rather than isolated presentations.
- ✿ Vulnerability was seen through sharing failures and doubts.
- ✿ Panelists made themselves available for individual conversations after the session, extending the panel into ongoing relational practice beyond the session.

Pathways Forward

The panel identified several pathways forward; these include:

- ✿ Developing organisational policies and movement-wide norms that legitimise rest, analyse power dynamics, and stop valorising overwork.
- ✿ Supporting practitioners in honouring multiple knowledge systems through training programmes, institutional validation, and peer communities.
- ✿ Educating younger generations, challenging stigmatising laws and policies, and publicly reclaiming healing traditions through documentation and practice.
- ✿ Translating insights into multiple languages, create digital resources, train facilitators regionally, and ensure knowledge reaches beyond elite or English-speaking spaces.

Day Tatu

Bloom: Resourcing Movements through Crisis

The invocation we Heard....

Oh earth, bearer of truth, teach us to resource
like ancestors with love, with legitimacy, with
long memory.

We turn broken ground into gardens.
We fund not just programmes, but prophecy.
We honour defenders not just as survivors,
but as strategists of fierce tenderness.

Let today be a covenant.
Let our offerings be enough, and then some.



With the theoretic and practical aspects now established, day three allows us to explore the question of funding, resourcing and continued care.

How we can sustainably and transformatively resource feminist movements and activists in contexts of armed conflict and systemic crisis, while centring healing justice and collective care?

The day's theme affirmed the political necessity of resourcing as a feminist act of solidarity, justice, and resistance. It centres the voices of women, gender-diverse people, and grassroots movements who remain at the forefront of care, healing, and resistance in conflict and crisis settings.



Seeding the Future: Resourcing Healing Justice in Conflict Settings

Speakers



Lerato Mashianoke



Lame Olebile



Françoise Moudouthe



Alice Banze



Dinah Musindarwezo



Mariam Hussein

5

Insights from the Frontlines



Mariam: In Somalia, survival is political; resourcing must move beyond “safety and survival” to provide actual “rest and justice”.



Dina: Despite being the frontlines when states fail, feminist organisations have faced a resource crisis for over a decade, receiving minimal support.



Françoise: We must invest time and resources into the fabric of our movements to ensure we stay together by choice and design, not just because we happen to be on the same path.



Lame: We must ask what ethic guides our movements so that we do not become the death doulas of one broken system only to birth another one just like it.



Alice: The goal is a future where “I am because my sister is,” prioritising the most vulnerable, including those living with disabilities.

5

Voices from the Collective



If African conflict zones don't make guns, we must look to where they come from to find the solution.



There is a need for a roving protest movement where women from across Africa travel to support sisters in conflict-heavy nations.



Concerns were raised about privacy in hotels and digital spaces, where activists are vulnerable to surveillance and cybercrime.



The movement must address why police stations and hospitals remain inaccessible to women with disabilities during times of crisis.



The Feminist Republik Festival continues to serve as a rare, essential space for activists to receive the healing they cannot find in their home environments.

5

What Emerged: Lessons, Tensions, and Possibilities



We must recognise "African ways of giving," which include intelligence, influence, and time.



When one part of the movement is in crisis, it is a "governance, climate, and foreign policy issue" for all of us.



To reach liberation, every member of the movement must have access to healing; it is the only way to avoid reproducing injustice.



Activists should leave the space "walking like a threat to injustice," backed by the strength of their ancestors and the collective movement.



We need more "healing farms" across the continent to sustain the movement's long-term health.

International Women Human Rights Defenders' Day

Speakers

- 🌴 Ekaete Umoh
- 🌴 Hon. Zamzam Chimba Mohammed
- 🌴 H.E. Håkan Åkesson
- 🌴 Betty Sharon
- 🌴 Natalie Caruso and Equality Fund representatives

The festival ended on a high note to honour the power of agency that everyone fully partook in.

With this also being International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, what better way to celebrate each participant than through a festive merger of colours, sounds and soul!

Nuggets of Wisdom

 Ekaete Umoh: Reminded us that the festival was a celebration of survival, connection, and feminist brilliance, and emphasised that indeed joy is a political act that sustains resistance.

 Natalia Caruso: Shared a message of cross-border solidarity that both commemorated International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders and celebrated the outcomes of the festival.

 Betty Sharon: Shared a charged yet sobering look at the challenges facing African women while celebrating their achievements. While the rise of technological-facilitated gender-based violence continue to violate women, it is through our continued activism that such patriarchal power will be dismantled.

 Hon. Zamzam Chimba Mohammed and H.E. Håkan Åkesson: Shared words of solidarity with all the participants.

Rhythm, Release, and Renewal



What is a festival or a revolution without dance? And indeed everyone danced with a renewed hope and in the company of sisters who share a vision for an Africa that is free from conflict.

What is the Point of a Festival if we Can't Dance?

Baaba Maal

Adorned in a majestic bright green mbubb, and accompanied by his full band, the voice and songs of Baaba Maal reverberated through the isles carrying stories of love for all humanity.



Aita Senghor

An emerging voice in west African music, Aita Senghor brought her guitar along to Mombasa's shores and strung her way into our hearts with her melodies.

Hope Masike

Hope Masike's unique blend of heart along with her affirming voice and mbira sounds ushered emotions of healing, visions of restoration and a message of hope.



Gogosimo Band

One of Kenya's most popular musical bands, with whom a song is incomplete without dance! The Gogosimo Band treated us to memorable songs from across Africa, with feminist sisters dancing away.



Bilenge Musica Du Congo

The musical beats that kept all of everyone on their feet! Bilenge Musica Du Congo's rhythms were a vibrant addition to our festival's memory.



Healing Practitioners and Coaches at the Festival

Healing in action was made possible through a thoughtfully invited practitioners who represented several specialisations of healing.

From group session to one-on-one consultations, sisters were provided with physical space, emotional covering and support to fully partake in the healing offerings, with full agency of where they wish to go and who they wish to consult with.





Ancestral love and restoration
with Rose Myrtha

Coaching sessions with Hope
Chigudu

Collective healing circle with
Sarah Nalule Lwanga and Lydia
Oyiemba Were

Divination consultations with
Lame Olebile

Emotional Freedom Technique
Tapping with Lamia

Feminist healing circle with
Aminata Mbengue

Medical consultations with Drs
Einas Adil Mohamed, Ndeye
Babou and Oumu Fadly Toure

Psychology counselling with
Jamilla Wahome, Aya Miyale and
Stellah Qelani Alice Kandemiri

Psychology consultations with
Stellah Qelani Alice Kandemiri

Psycho-social first aid with Maab
Salah Labib

Ritual rebirths Fatou Drame

Sexologist consultations with
Jeanne Diaw

Somatic Circle with Mawada Adam,
Suzan Shedid Elsayed, Rana Bilal
and Lella Misikir

Tantra dance and meditation with
Nathalie Fanja

Trauma healing with Mamello
Phomane, Iya Affo and Kim
Gariel-Dixon

Trauma-sensitive yoga with Nicole
Ditsie

Vocal chanting with Siphumeze
Khundayi

Womb Healing workshops with
Mmatshilo Motsei

Writing workshops with Doriane
Sognonvi and Billy Hani

The Healing Justice Framework

The concept of Healing Justice was introduced as a vital aspect of addressing the trauma caused by conflicts and systemic oppression. Throughout the Festival proceedings, we were encouraged to discuss how healing can be integrated into activism - a pertinent question as we face several conflicts.

The Healing Justice Framework is a political infrastructure project that anchors the work of fostering cultures of collective care and healing. It posits that healing is a critical activist strategy rather than a “luxurious add-on,” serving as the foundation for a feminist response to crisis.

The development of this framework was informed by years of engagement with feminists and trends analysis regarding the well-being of activists:

- Trends analysis in 2016: An analysis of grants revealed that burnout and exhaustion were significantly impacting activism and movements.
- Consultation between 2017 and 2019: Through convenings, defenders expressed a need for a specific platform to support African women human rights defenders facing challenges and attacks.
- Research and co-creation in 2022: The fund conducted “groundbreaking research on healing justice” which was co-implemented with defenders across the continent. The resulting framework was co-created to reflect the specific experiences and definitions of African women.

The framework is built upon several core understandings and shifts in approach:

- It recognises that systemic oppression and structural violence shape the world, the generations before us, and the current experiences of defenders.
- It involves a “roots-based analysis” that looks at the deep causes of conflict, such as legacies of colonialism, militarism, extractive capitalism, and patriarchy.
- It acknowledges the “current, collective, and intergenerational” trauma that activists bring into their work and spaces. This includes exploring how trauma influences the ways activists demand justice.
- A major pillar is the shift from a focus on “self-care” to a “collective lens”. This is based on the belief that individuals cannot be well in isolation and that the collective spirit inspiring activism must also apply to support systems.
- It asserts that collective care and working with healers are critical strategies that should be planned and budgeted for in the same way as advocacy, communication, or strategic litigation.



You can access and read the full framework by scanning the QR code.

The Feminist Republik Healing Farm

Rooted in indigenous and African feminist traditions, Feminist Republik Healing Farm is secured, serene and designed to support your wellness when you need to recharge and reconnect with nature. The support of various healing practitioners and resources will be accessible to make a visit to the Healing Farm a meaningful one.

Currently under construction at a secured location, we look forward to launching the Healing Farm.



The Context - Shifting Philanthropy

Across the globe, democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space continue to reshape the terrain for feminist organising. In many contexts, governments are tightening restrictions, dissent is increasingly criminalised, and the cost of organising continues to rise. At the same time, the philanthropic landscape is contracting. Aid flows are declining, risk tolerance is narrowing, and funding is becoming more compliance-driven at a moment when flexibility and trust are most needed.

In 2025, UAF-Africa deepened its strategic engagement within this reality. We are seeing a clear shift where women's rights and feminist movements are being disproportionately affected by funding cuts, even as the demand for support continues to grow. This moment required us to move differently. It required us to prioritise partnerships that are agile, relational, and grounded in trust, while creating spaces for honest conversations about risk, funding shifts, and collective response.

The 3rd Feminist Republik Festival, and in particular the Feminist Republik Healing Farm and Gungano, were not simply convenings. They were deliberate political interventions into how we gather, relate, and resource movements in a time of crisis.

The Healing Farm: A Living Model of Care and Sustainability

The Feminist Republik Healing Farm is not only a space. It is a physical manifestation of collective care, wellbeing, and sustainability. It embodies a different approach to resourcing movements, one that is grounded in land, community, and regenerative practice. In a context where funding is often short-term and output-driven, the Farm offers a tangible alternative. It shows what it means to invest in the conditions that sustain movements over time.

The visit to the Healing Farm was an intentional starting point. It created a pause in a moment defined by urgency. A space to arrive, to breathe, and to reconnect before entering into deeper conversations about strategy and resourcing.

This was not incidental. It was necessary. The conditions we are working within are intense. Activists and funders alike are navigating uncertainty, pressure, and complexity. The Healing Farm offered something different. It grounded participants in presence, in community, and in care. It shifted the pace from reaction to reflection, creating the conditions for more honest, open, and relational engagement.

At the same time, the Farm demonstrates how care can be structured and resourced. It integrates well-being, ecological consciousness, and movement support into a holistic model that moves beyond project-based funding. It is a reminder that sustainability is not only about financial resources, but about how we nurture people, spaces, and ecosystems that hold the work.

By centring care and collective presence from the outset, the Healing Farm shaped everything that followed. It allowed participants to engage not only intellectually but also relationally and intentionally, by affirming that regeneration is not something we arrive at after the work; but where the work begins.



The Gungano: Where Regeneration Becomes Practice

The Gungano did not begin as a convening. It began as a response to a question we are all sitting with: how do we continue to resource movements in a moment where the systems meant to support them are no longer holding? In a context defined by shrinking civic space, rising risk, and declining funding, it is clear that incremental shifts are no longer enough. What is required is something deeper. A rethinking of how philanthropy shows up, how it relates to movements, and how it understands its role in moments of crisis and transition.

The Gungano created a space to sit with this question together, bringing together over 100 funders, activists, and partners; it disrupted the usual distance between those who resource and those who organise. It created proximity. Not only physical, but relational and political. The Gungano allowed for a different kind of conversation to emerge, one grounded not in reporting or performance, but in honesty, tension, and possibility. What unfolded was not a set of recommendations, but a process of collective sense-making.

Across the conversations, a clear thread emerged. The systems we have relied on are no longer sufficient to the realities we face. Funding models built on predictability, short-term outputs, and risk aversion are struggling to respond to contexts that are fluid, complex, and often unpredictable. Movements are adapting. They are regenerating in real time, but the systems around them are slower to shift. The Gungano became a space to name this openly, and in naming it, to begin reimagining what comes next.

Therefore, what began to take shape was not simply a critique of existing models, but the contours of something new. A context-driven philanthropic model grounded in trust and relationship, where funding is not transactional but understood as infrastructure, investing in land, care systems, safety, leadership, and the conditions that enable movements to sustain themselves over time. Each conversation pointed to regeneration. Not as a concept, but as practice. Regeneration of systems, where funding moves with flexibility and responsiveness rather than rigidity. Regeneration of infrastructure, where spaces like the Healing Farm are recognised as essential, not auxiliary.

Regeneration of ideas, where knowledge is co-created and grounded in lived experience rather than imposed frameworks.

At its core, the Gungano affirmed that movements are already doing this work. They are adapting, holding, and rebuilding in the midst of crisis. The role of philanthropy, then, is not to lead this process, but to align with it; listen more deeply, move more intentionally, and resource in ways that reflect this reality.

This is why the Gungano matters

It created the conditions to shift from conversation to commitment, and to move beyond recognising the limitations of current models toward actively building alternatives. The space reminded us that trust is not an abstract principle, but the foundation upon which any meaningful partnership is built and that without it, even the most well-resourced interventions will fall short.

The Gungano was never intended to be a standalone moment, but a point of convergence. A place where ideas, relationships, and commitments began to take shape.

The Gungano reminded us of continuity; to carry forward what was surfaced, translate reflection into practice and move from alignment into action.; meaning continuing to build a philanthropic ecosystem that is grounded in trust, shaped by movement realities, and responsive to context. The Gungano called for investing in the systems and infrastructures that sustain movements, even when they do not align neatly with traditional funding models, and for holding firm to a relational way of working that resists a return to transactional approaches meaning recognising that this is ongoing.

Regeneration is not a one-time shift but a continuous process of listening, adapting, and responding. The Gungano showed what was possible when we create the space to do this work together. The task now is to continue building, deliberately, collectively and in ways that are grounded in the realities we are all navigating because this moment is asking for more than adjustment; it is asking for transformation.

Resourcing Feminist Movements Amidst Polycrises

Sustaining Movements Goes Beyond Grants

Rapid response grantmaking and fostering cultures of collective care remain at the core of our mandate because they respond directly to the political, social, and material realities under which advocates and movements continue to organise, resist, and survive.

✿ **In 2025** we received 5,029

grant applications; a total of 409 grants were distributed to 42 countries amidst severe funding cuts and increasing socio-political crises. The impact of reduced resources and amplified demand was reflected in a 52% increase in the number of applications received, from 3307 in 2024 to 5029 in 2025.

✿ **Faced with the mammoth task** of addressing the growing socio-political, environmental, and economic crises, women-led groups continued to seek financial support to fill the gaps left by the abrupt closure of funding streams for women's rights work on the continent. As an intermediary funder, we intervened with Trust-Based Philanthropy approaches that reached even the most remote movements. The 409 grants awarded were not only financial interventions but also critical acts of solidarity supporting immediate safety, sustaining resistance, and fostering cultures of care that enable defenders and movements to survive, heal, and continue their work in increasingly hostile environments.

✿ **Remaining agile** we supported movements in 42 countries to catalyse strategic interventions that shift structural oppression. Due to tighter constraints on civic space and intensified attacks on women human rights advocates, an 18% increase in holistic security grants was recorded in 2025. Arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and violence against women and activists are some of the ways in which women experienced systematic assault. Despite these harsh realities of Poly-crises, advocates from the 13 countries most affected by conflict were relentless and continued organising movements to push back against repressive leadership. A total of 167 grants, representing 41% of our overall grants, were awarded to groups in these countries, a testament to the Fund's commitment to resourcing women in the greatest need. The DRC received the highest number of grants at 50, followed by Nigeria at 22 and Sudan at 16, respectively. In 2025, we observed an increase in the demand for humanitarian support, particularly for Sudan and the DRC, accompanied by calls for a response to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

We continued to strengthen our support to the 48 CSOs supported under the IGNITE project (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DRC, Ethiopia and Nigeria) by prioritising institutional capacity strengthening as a core element of our accompaniment.

Looking forward, we intend to expand this institutional accompaniment model in additional countries, with a particular focus on francophone and losophone contexts. This expansion is especially critical as feminist and women-led organisations in these regions navigate increasingly restricted funding environments, heightened surveillance, and growing risks of suspension or closure linked to the application of counter-terrorism legislation and terrorism-related databases that disproportionately target feminist organisations in the Sahel region.

2025 Grantmaking in Numbers

01		Sustaining African Women Human Rights Defenders	42.5%
02		Environmental & Climate Justice	12.7%
03		Civic Engagement	8.3%
04		Economic Justice	7.3%
05		Gender Based Violence	21.0%
06		Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, & Justice	6.8%
07		Disability Justice	1.4%

Acknowledgements

This report is a reflection of collective courage, care, and commitment across a vast and interconnected feminist ecosystem.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the African Women Human Rights Defenders, movements, and organisations who continue to organise, resist, and reimagine futures under increasingly complex and constrained conditions. Your trust allows us to accompany you not only in moments of urgency, but also in processes of healing, regeneration, and long-term movement building.

We are profoundly grateful to the incredible community of funding partners sustaining this work.

To our Board, we thank you for your strategic guidance, stewardship, and dedication to safeguarding the vision and impact of UAF-Africa.

To our dedicated staff, your passion and unwavering efforts ensure that feminist and women's rights movements receive the critical support they need, while holding space for care, dignity, and transformation.

We also honour the communities, friends, and partners that continue to guide and ground this work. We recognise that none of this is possible in isolation. Together, we remain committed to building feminist futures rooted in justice, care, and collective liberation.



Our 2025 Publications

- [Revolutions That Breathe](#)
- [3rd Feminists Republik Festival – Weathering the storm: Seeding the future](#)
- [Wellbeing philanthropy as a resourcing and political strategy in conflict and crisis](#)
- [Regenerating in the storm: Grounding healing justice in conflict settings](#)
- [A Luta Continua: Ubuntu in the face of extractivism](#)
- [Reclaiming ritual, community, and imagination in times of crisis](#)
- [Healing Justice for African human rights defenders](#)
- [Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict: How structural inequalities fuel impunity](#)

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