UGANDA FEMINIST FORUM 2009

“Movement Building For Impact And Sustenance Of The Feminist Mission”

RANCH ON THE LAKE HOTEL, KAMPALA, 10TH – 14TH MARCH, 2009
The Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF) is an autonomous space that brings together Ugandan Feminists and activists to deliberate on issues of key concern to the movement. The Uganda Feminist Forum is the national process that is part of the African Feminist Forum Framework (AFF). UFF as an autonomous space for Ugandan feminists provides room to deliberate on these issues internally reflecting on the current architecture for the advancement of the rights of women, women’s organizations; developing strategies for feminist and operationalising the Charter of Principles for African Feminists at an operational level. It is also a space to revive the feminist fires as well as assessing and developing strategies to address the external challenges on the movement. Every year, UFF hosts annual staffing forums and in-between implements activities aimed at strengthening feminism; mobilizing and organizing; feminist leadership support; collective learning and sharpening of skills as well as individual support to feminist. The Uganda Feminist Forum is coordinated by a Working Group that has a 15-Member composition of individual feminist as follows: Hope Chigudu; Rita Aciro-Lakor; Dr. Sylvia Tamale; Christine Buteegwa; Patricia Munabi-Babiiha; Marren Akatsa Bukachi; Anne Nkutu; Stella Mukasa; Sarah Mukasa; Jessica Horn; Hadijah Mbabazi Kissembo; Dr. Maria Nassali; Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng; Jessica B. Nkuuhe and Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe.

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) is an International, Pan-African, non-governmental development organization for African women with its Head Office in Kampala, Uganda and a UK/Europe sub-regional office based in London, United Kingdom. AMwA was set up in 1985 by women from different parts of Africa, resident in the United Kingdom. AMwA was set up in 1985 by women from different parts of Africa, resident in the United Kingdom. AMwA aims to provide solidarity, support, awareness, and to build links with African women active in the areas of their own development. Since it has been in existence, AMwA has actively supported initiatives to strengthen links with the women’s movement in Africa. AMwA’s ethos is ‘Speaking for Ourselves’. The organization was founded and operates on the premise that African women have a key role to play in their own development and the shaping of their own destinies. Over the past 25 years since it has been in existence, AMwA has actively supported initiatives to strengthen links with the women’s movement in Africa. AMwA is an NGO in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. AMwA is the hosting Secretariat for Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF).

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About The Cover Design

“The Design of this Publication uses a theme of leaves, which signifies; life and growth of the Uganda Feminist Forum. From the Beads that signified planting a seed; the leaves open a new chapter in the Herstory of Feminist Movement Building in Uganda; Africa and Internationally.”
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The unveiling of the ‘drum’ was a both a moment of celebration and some embarrassment. Celebration on account of the memories that it evoked; and shame given the amount of dust the drum had gathered both physically and literally.

*The Drum of Commitments that were set in the first Uganda Feminist Forum 2008. The Drum was symbolic reminder that kicked off the discussions at UFF 2009*
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Foreword

Globally, there has been notable and visible change as an outcome of collectively organizing and rallying on common issues more away from organization and individuals to collective action and energies such as that comes with social movements. There is power in unity, the synergies, energies, sustenance and also collective learning!

Likewise, for Uganda, the women’s movement in Uganda has set out deliberate steps to organize women’s rights activists to build a collective voice as an avenue for strengthening feminism to dismantle institutionalized and oppressive patriarchal norms and tendencies in society birthing the Uganda Feminist Forum in 2008. The Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF) annually provides an open space and advocacy platform which taps into other regional movement building bodies to build synergies across the region and to strengthen the women’s movement in Uganda. In the 2nd year running, in 2009; the Uganda Feminist Forum deliberated at length under the theme: “Movement-Building for Impact and Sustenance of the Feminist Mission”. The report is a summary of the deliberations, collective energies; actions and commitments.

This report of the 2nd Uganda Feminist Forum 2009 provides a peek into the interesting journey of the status of the Feminist Movement in Uganda; the progress made so far and the challenges faced; to where it is and then goes fast forward to envision the future. It is illustrated therein that movement building however not an abstract but involves building individuals’ and organizations’ capacities grounded on feminist principles without compromising, competence and excellence. Another part of the report provides room to learn from the strategies and insight into the successes of other global social movements and campaigns particularly the recently concluded President Obama Campaign which defied all odds to succeed and make history. This culminates into how the women’s movement in Uganda can collectively organize to build a movement that is sustainable and has the ability to make significant and tangible impact on women’s rights. The Report also lays out the major strategies, and interventions that can be replicated by other progressive social movements and national processes under the framework of the African Feminist Forum.

Enjoy the report; process and methodologies employed and most importantly be part of our journey of building a robust Feminist Movement in Uganda. Be part of our journey in revising the feminist fires; going back to the basics of women’s rights work; decoding power and patriarchy; rewriting history; replenishing our ranks; and being angry enough to re-politicize our work so as to act. Lastly, be part of our journey as we take on the challenge of sustaining the feminist fires beyond the Annual Forums and assessing and developing strategies to address the internal and external challenges on the Feminist Movement in Uganda.

Join the Uganda Feminist Forum in Sustaining the Feminist Mission...

Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe
Executive Director, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA)
For and On Behalf of the Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF) Working Group

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Acknowledgements

The Uganda Feminist Forum Working Group wishes to acknowledge the support and generous contributions of a number of individuals and organizations who contributed to organizing and hosting the 2009 Uganda Feminist Forum:

First and foremost, we would like to recognize development partners: African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) and Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-A) for the financial support given to host this forum.

Special recognition goes to several ‘Sistas’ within the women’s movement for their time, creativity and ability to think out of the box to organize a forum that successfully provided significant recommendations towards movement building and sustaining feminist spaces. These include Ms. Stella Mukasa, Ms. Hope Chigudu, Ms. Sarah Mukasa, Dr. Sylvia Tamale, Ms. Anne Nkutu and Ms. Solome Nakweesi-Kimbugwe.

Final thanks go to the staff of Akina Mama wa Afrika for their tireless effort as Secretariat.
THE 2ND UGANDA FEMINIST FORUM 2009; "MOVEMENT BUILDING FOR IMPACT AND THE SUSTENANCE OF THE FEMINIST MISSION"
Executive Summary

Background

The feminist movement in Uganda conducted its second annual Forum (Feb 10 – 13) 2009 at the Ranch on the Lake Hotel in Lweza. Under the theme: “Movement Building for Impact and Sustenance of the Feminist Mission”, the Forum sought to: a) support a process of introspection on progress made since January 2008; and b) initiate a strategic thinking process aimed at strengthening the Feminist Movement in Uganda and increasing its visibility, influence and clout in relation to the struggle for women’s rights.

Such a process was considered necessary in view of a history where high sounding resolutions arrived at during women’s meetings have remained on paper, hindered by the lack of follow-up, poor task allocation and co-ordination. These factors have contributed to the much talked about ‘sense of inertia’ and the inability of the women’s movement to sustain the momentum and activism generated at these meetings. Related to the above are a number of movement building challenges that the Women’s Movement in Uganda continues to grapple with, including: a) the lack of clarity on issues of identity and mission; b) the lack of focus in terms of strategy and leadership; and c) the inability to mobilize and galvanize our own agency and the broader constituency of women.

The establishment of the Uganda Feminist Forum in 2008 heralded a major point of departure and sought to address some of the above problems. It was anticipated that the adoption and subsequent implementation of the Charter of African Feminist Principles for African Feminists would “release the feminist brakes” and accelerate efforts to promote the women’s agenda. However while a number of strategies were proposed and initiated, many of these are yet to be rooted in practice.

Deliberations

Discussions over the three day meeting largely revolved around the following sub-themes:

- Relevance of Feminism to the diverse women’s constituency
- Attributes of Feminist Organisations
- Activism and Movement building strategies
- Feminist Organizing

A core part of the three day meeting was dedicated to reflection on the progress so far achieved and the challenges encountered since the inauguration of the Uganda Feminist Forum in January 2008. Collective achievements thus far include the initiation of a Leaders’ Forum; Public Dialogue Forum and Feminist Learning Spaces. However, when compared against the written commitments; progress has generally been modest, slow and intermittent. It appears that the call for action has been heeded by only a few individuals and the question of sustaining activism and the pressure for change remains a critical concern. Proposals on ways and means of addressing these issues included:
a) better division of labour that is commensurate to expertise and resources; b) greater reliance on organisations as opposed to individuals; c) widening partnerships with women outside the NGO world; and d) establishment of accountability mechanisms within the Movement.

The issue of “inclusion” within the Feminist Movement and the level of its responsiveness therefore to ‘ordinary’ women, has come up several times. Reviews and discussions assessing the relevance of feminism highlighted the challenges surrounding the Feminist Movement in Uganda including: the lack of visibility; narrow (mis)perceptions of its role; resistance to feminist ideology; and gaps in its communication mechanisms. Preliminary responses to the issues raised included the need to: a) improve communication and mobilization strategies to bridge the gap between the ‘so-called elite’ and ‘ordinary’ Ugandan women; and b) increased engagement with broader policy/development issues that resonate with all women.

A key objective of the Forum was to assess current movement-building strategies and to consider practical ideas for strengthening current practice. A range of strategies were proposed with the need for a clear, consistent and shared vision, mission and objectives cited as paramount. The need to remain relevant by exercising flexibility and constantly revising strategies in relation to the operating context is equally as important. Other areas identified as critical for movement building were: a) dynamic leadership; b) team work; c) the application of diverse resource mobilization strategies; d) mobilisation at all levels; e) the strategic use of media; and f) incorporation of new information technologies to promote the work around women’s rights.

It was however acknowledged that efforts to strengthen the struggle for women’s rights must be preceded by efforts to “put our house in order”. Strengthening the Feminist movement requires the existence of feminist organisations that are ‘authentic’ i.e. where feminist principles are embedded in practice. There is to date, no ‘model’ feminist organization and a key step taken by the Forum included the identification of some key attributes that should serve as a yardstick for feminist organisations in terms of: systems, structures, governance, leadership and policies. Various presentations also emphasized the need for: transparency; accountability; integrity; efficiency; professionalism; capacity development; flexibility; empathy; solidarity; respect for diversity; fairness; teamwork; and sisterhood as some of the feminist principles that should guide conduct within each and every feminist organization.

The Way Forward

At the end of the three day event, the Forum resolved to pursue a range of strategies aimed at supporting the feminist movement building efforts in Uganda. These include:

- A campaign to promote a shared vision for the Women’s movement in Uganda.
- Documentation of the Movement’s achievements and its ‘sheroes’.
- Wider mobilization of women at the grassroots level and in the private sector.
- Stronger engagement with the media.
- Organization of dialogues around current issues e.g. violence against women.
- Development of varied resource mobilization strategies.
- Popularizing of the Feminist Charter.
- Translation of the Feminist Charter into a performance measurement tool.
The feminist movement in Uganda conducted its second annual Forum (Feb 10 – 13) 2009 at the Ranch on the Lake Hotel in Lweza. Unlike the inaugural meeting in January 2008, the second Uganda Feminist Forum was a much smaller event and largely limited to the leadership of the main Feminist and Women organisations in Uganda.

Under the theme: “Movement Building for Impact and Sustenance of the Feminist Mission”, the Forum sought to: a) support a process of introspection on the progress so far realised since the inaugural meeting in 2008; and b) initiate a strategic thinking process aimed at strengthening the feminist movement in Uganda and increasing its visibility, influence and clout in terms of its stated mission to fight gender based discrimination and promote women’s rights. Such a process was considered necessary in view of the previous history where high sounding resolutions arrived at during women’s meetings have remained on paper, hindered by the lack of follow-up, poor task allocation and poor co-ordination. Combined, these factors have contributed to the much talked about ‘sense of inertia’ and the inability of the women’s movement to sustain the momentum and activism generated at these meetings.

The women’s movement in Uganda has in the past identified ‘movement building’ challenges1 including issues related to: identity, vision and mission; strategies; leadership and inclusiveness. Many of these have not been dealt with conclusively and continue to affect progress. The Women’s movement in Uganda has been criticized for being largely issue-based, reactive as opposed to proactive and in the habit of employing short-term strategies to deal with long-term issues. Institutionally, a number of organizations that once played a significant role in the women’s movement have, or are undergoing painful transitions that have left them powerless and without influence.

The establishment of the Uganda Feminist Forum in 2008 heralded a major point of departure and sought to address some of these problems through the subsequent adoption of the Charter of African Feminist Principles for African Feminists; and the establishment of different feminist fora to facilitate learning, accountability and a more focused and informed approach in the struggle for women’s rights. Whereas the Forum sought to ‘release the feminist brakes’, many of its initiatives are yet to be rooted in practice and are not yet up to speed.

1 UFF 2009 Concept Paper
1.1 Objectives of the Forum

The Forum, guided by the lead forum facilitator - Ms. Hope Chigudu, therefore sought to address the following:

• Review the performance and strength and weaknesses of Uganda’s women’s movement.
• Take stock of the external climate affecting women’s activism in Uganda and possible scenarios for the future.
• Critically assess current movement-building strategies and consider practical ideas for strengthening current practice.
• Devise strategies for assessing impact of the performance of Uganda’s women’s movement
• Deliberate upon ‘how’ to move from feminist principles of organizing to practice.

1.2 Expected Outputs

• A collective reflection and analysis of the women’s movement including an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.
• Concrete strategies to tackle challenges for movement-building.
• Concrete strategies for impact assessment of the women’s movement
• Strategies to popularize feminism
• Pragmatic approaches for implementing the Charter.
2.0 Opening Plenary

The meeting opened with a brief review by Ms. Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe on progress registered since the inaugural Forum in January 2008. Significant milestones/achievements include: the creation of an autonomous space for Ugandan Feminists; and the adoption of the Charter for Feminist Principles for African Feminists. The 1st Forum Report entitled “Releasing the Feminist Brakes” published in 2008 led to renewed efforts to embrace and engage the diversity within the Women’s Movement. A number of initiatives have since emerged: i) ‘Adisi ku kyoto’ – a space for feminist conversations on various issues; ii) the Directors Forum – a peer review mechanism for feminist leaders; iii) the ‘Kimeeza’ – a monthly public dialogue forum; and iv) MEMPROW – an organization focusing on building young women’s leadership capacities. The Uganda Feminist Forum also successfully hosted the Second African Feminist Forum in September 2008 – which is testament to the progress made by Ugandan Feminists in terms of organizing.

There are however as many commitments that are yet to be realized, one year down the road. The reasons for this are varied and range from external factors to internal challenges within the Movement. As noted by Dr. Hilda Tadria, “insufficient commitment to the work of the movement on the part of its members is one of the key factors that have curtailed progress. You know what you value most by where you put your money, your energy and your time”. The current levels of commitment amongst the membership are wanting and not commensurate to the task at hand.

Regarding the external, Dr. Thelma Awori linked some of the challenges of the Women’s Movement in Uganda to the on-going struggles and appropriation of the gender debate at the global level i.e. gender mainstreaming and the subsequent confusion it has created for those pursuing women’s rights. “In order to avoid deviation, it is important that we as feminist activists are clear about the terminology and stick to ‘women’s rights’ and ‘gender equality’ which are simple, straightforward and what we are really working for.”
The unveiling of the ‘drum’ was a both a moment of celebration and some embarrassment. Celebration on account of the memories that it evoked; and shame given the amount of dust the drum had gathered both physically and literally.”
A core part of the three day meeting was dedicated to reflection on the progress so far realized and the challenges encountered since the inauguration of the Uganda Feminist Forum in January 2008.

### Guiding questions:

- What are the strengths of our efforts to create change (either in our own organizations or in the movement)?
- What are the weaknesses of our efforts to create change?
- What does our ideal movement for change look like?
- What kind of movement are we yearning to create?
- How do we sustain the activism around our commitments?
- How do we sustain the movement with a punch?

### 3.1 Call for Action 2008: Reflection on the Achievements and Sustaining Activism within the Uganda Feminist Forum

The process of reflection was set into motion by the unveiling of the Drum – a fixture of the first Uganda Feminist Forum due to its symbolic association with the ‘call for action’.

- Establishment of peer review mechanisms to promote integrity and accountability;
- Creation of feminist learning opportunities and spaces to ensure sufficient grounding in feminist theory and its linkage to practice;
- Exploring and expanding the Feminist Movement’s engagement with media to promote women’s agency;
- The development of internal resource mobilization strategies to build a strong resource base;
- Spearheading public dialogue on women’s issues to promote feminist analysis;
- Mobilization of women actors across the board and building alliances with other movements; and
- Institutionalization of the Feminist Charter.

The unveiling of the ‘drum’ was a both a moment of celebration and some embarrassment. Celebration on account of the memories that it evoked; and shame given the amount of dust the drum had gathered both physically and literally.

It was acknowledged that even where some progress had been recorded (see 2.0 above), it was of modest proportion when compared against the list of commitments. Seemingly, the call for action has been heeded by only a few individuals and the question of sustaining activism and the pressure for change remains a critical concern.

Several broad suggestions were tabled on some of the ways and means that could promote activism and improve the implementation of the Feminist Movement’s agenda.
Identity:
1. Define who we are and who can partner with us to move the agenda forward.
2. Practice feminism at the personal level and eliminate the gap between theory and practice – remembering that the personal is political.
3. Develop a shared vision and agenda that will facilitate a proactive approach in our work.

Human Resources:
4. Promote sisterhood and ownership by recognizing and employing the varied talents within the feminist movement to avoid burn-out and reliance on a few individuals.
5. Nurture the spirit of volunteerism and the need to make personal investments (time, resources, expertise) towards the work and goals of the movement.
6. Break down broad commitments into smaller/realistic tasks and assign specific roles to the different women organisations in accordance with their expertise and resources.

Partnerships and Alliances:
7. Make the Feminist movement more inclusive by mobilizing and partnering with women actors across sectors i.e. the private sector and at the grass roots.
8. Engage with policy issues on current development issues and start doing ‘under-the-rader’ mobilization by identifying issues that resonate with women from different walks of life e.g. HIV/AIDS, violence against women.
9. Tap into existing networks in order to build a critical mass of support and for solidarity.
10. Strengthen linkages with the media to demystify and popularize the feminist agenda.
11. Improve and adopt creative means of communication e.g. through documentation of herstories of feminist ‘sheroes’.

Organisational Development
12. Establish support mechanisms to sustain sisters during difficult times (both personal and professional).
13. Create spaces to mentor and develop the capacities of young women and new recruits to the movement.
14. Develop accountability mechanisms for members of the feminist movement.
15. Include the feminist agenda in our organisational planning.
16. Explore alternative resource mobilization strategies including looking at ourselves and our organisations as donors of our own movement.
17. Strengthen internal leadership capacities by undertaking leadership development programmes.

Skills Building Session: Personal Development
“The Art of Public Speaking “
Guest Speaker (Kim Chamberlain)

The session explored some of the factors that differentiate poor and great speakers and included several tips on public speaking and presentations. Issues discussed included the following:

- What do you need to do before you start a presentation –
- How you structure what you say
- How to look and remain confident
- How to choose what to say
- PowerPoint presentations
Tip 1:
There are several differences between poor and great speakers. Good speakers frequently exhibit powerful intonation, keep eye-contact and understand how to touch the audience’s buttons. They are engaging, passionate, clear, concise and focus on the audience; while the poor speakers are nervous and focus on self.

Tip 2:
Good presentations require adequate preparation which should include some prior homework on the: i) topic and duration of presentation; ii) characteristics of the audience; iii) the available facilities; and iv) the purpose of the presentation and expected outcomes.

Tip 3:
A good presenter should apportion at least 10% of their time to the opening; 80% to the main body and 10% to the end. The Body should have a maximum of 5 points of learning – however 3 points are the ideal for any audience.

Tip 4:
Confidence, competence, composure, character and sociability are important attributes for a good presentation and there are several ways that one can reduce nervousness. Remember KARM i.e. need for Knowledge, Action; Relaxation; and Mental Preparation.

Tip 5:
A good presentation should be preceded by a Mindmap – selecting what Must-Should-Could be said. Time is critical and it is important to identify the key learning points before digressing. If you have less time cut back on the ‘Could’ and ‘Should’ but always leave the ‘must’ or key messages and the opening and ending.

Tip 6:
Poor presentations contain only words. Good presentations contain visuals/photos, diagrams, animation, one point and a photo on each slide, have an end slide with your contact details. Move away from bullet point slides to pictures because the human brain thinks in pictures and colours.

Tip 7:
Dealing with antagonistic audiences

- Work out what the basic fear of the audience is and how do you deal with it (antagonism comes from fear
- Stand next to the person asking the question. Most tend to feel intimidated.
- Through the question open to the group so that you get group consensus on whether to answer the question within the group or handle it with the person on the side.
- Request the audience to write their questions and hand them to you after the session. You can then choose which questions you’re comfortable with answering and then tell the others that you will answer their questions on a one-to-one basis.
- Keep your answer on a general level not a personal/personalised level.
- Use testimonials of change - ‘feel’, ‘felt’, ‘found’.
- Practice your questions with people and ask them to role play being the worst audience you can get so that you can prepare your answers.
- Know the antagonistic people and get to them beforehand which removes their sting.
3.2 Documentary: ‘Views of “Other women” on the Women’s Movement in Uganda’

The documentary titled “Views of “Other Women” on the Women’s Movement in Uganda” set out to establish the relevance of feminism to the lives of ordinary Ugandan women and in so doing brought to the fore some challenges the Feminist movement should endeavor to address. The responses given by a sample of women (mainly engaged in small enterprises) exhibited high levels of ignorance and narrow (mis)perceptions of the role of the feminist/women’s organisations; the lack of knowledge of and visibility of the main women’s organisations; resistance to feminist ideology; and gaps in communication between the women’s organisations and the wider constituency of women.

The 4 Key Views and Perceptions of “Other Women” are:

- “The women’s movement has also on several occasions been pitted against the women it serves by its antagonists”
- “We are aware of the existence of a number of women’s organisations but we do not know exactly what they are doing”
- “Women’s organisations are only benefiting certain categories of women; the elite and middleclass; socially acceptable groups and those that are able to participate in their programmes that are often held at the capital or district headquarters...”
- “A few women’s organisations have supported us on micro finance and credit issues; land issues; speaking out for our rights; education of children etc and we wish the others could do the same”.

The Forum was in agreement that while the documentary raised a number of pertinent issues which must be addressed, its coverage was extremely limited and that was likely to limit its usefulness. The documentary was skewed towards women’s practical and welfare needs and masked the achievements of the women’s movement at the more strategic levels. It was thus agreed that a more comprehensive documentary targeting different categories of women should be filmed with the technical support of a team of feminists to ensure the inclusion of subjects and questions of particular interest and relevance to the Feminist Movement.
3.3 Great Debate:
“Feminism is not relevant to the lives of ordinary Ugandan Women”

Providing room and follow up to the Documentary, a Great Debate was used as methodology to critically analyze and engage with the feedback and reflections of the voices of the women’s constituency. The debate moderated by Ms. Sarah Mukasa sought to explore issues and some of the personal difficulties surrounding the concept of feminism. The debate also sought to illustrate the kinds of resistance that feminists face in the course of their work and the need therefore to identify counter-mechanisms.

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<th>Those in Favour of the motion led by Peace Kyamureku, Hope Turyasingura, Stella Mukasa held that:</th>
<th>The Opposers comprising Sylvia Tamala, Jessica Nkuuhe, Rita Aciro argued that:</th>
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<td><strong>Feminism:</strong> Is not relevant because it does not address the practical needs of ordinary women – incomes, school fees, livelihoods, water etc. Goes against biblical teachings and the world order as ordained by God. Is disruptive because it questions culture and accepted social norms and gender roles. Rather than assist women, it causes problems for many. Besides, feminists do not have the capacity to change nature. Does not respond to the aspirations of many women who have chosen to embrace their God given responsibilities. <em>What we do not know does not hurt.</em></td>
<td><strong>Feminism:</strong> Is for ordinary women (rural, elite) – we are just all women with needs. Our needs are similar in many ways and we need a forum that can push for women’s rights and gender equality. Is a value system responding to a <em>hegemonic</em> ideology of patriarchy? Feminism stands for dignity, equality, justice and respect which is what every ‘ordinary’ woman would wish for. Enables us to question and demand for women’s rights and equality and avoid being hoodwinked by patriarchy. Focuses on the structures and systems that have been put in place to subjugate women i.e. the oppressive laws and customary norms. Is a celebration of our personhood as women.</td>
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The discussion that followed the debate arrived at the following conclusions:

- Our strategies as feminists have focused on the oppressed and less on the oppressor. We are not likely to achieve much success without developing specific strategies on how to deal with the ‘oppressor’. We need to, for example, develop new strategies of engagement with those who promote information that places women in a subordinate role i.e. the preachers. We must also engage retrogressive organisations that have helped to perpetuate patriarchy including some women’s organisations.

- The issues that affect women transcend class, colour, creed etc and we need to develop mobilization strategies that enable us to speak with a common voice and bring us closer. We must improve our communication strategies – sharpen our messages and simplify concepts in a language that is easily understood. We should use our voices in ways that resonate with the oppressed and arouse a sense of injustice in our oppressors.

- We need to strengthen our knowledge base so that we can sharpen our analysis and coherence. The perceived differences i.e. ordinary vs. elite should not be used as tools to divide us and we should thus find mechanisms to bridge the gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’.
Practical Session: Self Care and Support Mechanisms
Jessica Nkuuhe; Hope Chigudu; Solome Nakweesi-Kimbugwe and Thelma Awori

Many women working in feminist organisations have from time to time experienced one crisis or another on account of work pressures; personal relationships; depression; and health issues. Balancing responsibilities and maintaining a healthy lifestyle i.e. that is physically and emotionally fulfilling is a challenge that many are grappling with.

The Forum included an evening session on self care that tackled many issues affecting women in their daily lives. The sharing between the participants touched on the following:

- The work-life balance;
- Nutrition;
- Sex and Pleasure
- Sexual and reproductive health issues;
- Exercise;
- Therapy and alternative treatments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Mechanisms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learn to say “No” to avoid additional burdens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take short breaks from work every now and again to live a little to renew oneself and reposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pay great attention to your body and life changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain regular health checks esp checks that are central to the reproductive make-up as women to check breast cancers; cervical cancers, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore and enjoy your sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adopt some time management techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn to identify and deal with stressors – phone/ email/ negative people/oppressive sisters and peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Learn to delegate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and walk away from toxic friendships; relationships; work and personal situations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create balance in your life – apportion time to your family, friends, self, leisure and work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sustaining Activists
Planning the session and programme on well being and sustaining activists surfaced out of deep respect for each one of the women who at the forum.

In planning for the well being session, we were just plain lucky to enjoy delicious, fun and spiritually uplifting conversations and email exchanges about the evening programme. We played with the idea until it had a sense of “rightness” about it, and had embodied the resilience and trustworthiness required to hold the gems that each of us would bring to the session. Therefore, the evening and what happened and how it happened was forged out of our deepest thinking, feeling and caring.

The session:
“It slowed us down, and caused us to lose track of time (it started at 8 pm and ended at midnight). It allowed us to witness our lived experience for the purpose of learning from our work and our lives (emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual).”

“It Reminded us that renewal isn’t just restoring something that has been lost or forgotten, but is rather a generative process that provides new insight, maturing perspective and avenues for growth as our needs change.”

“Required more “self” than we are used to giving in preparing for a forum, with a collective sharing of knowledge that we took away more than the usual fare.”

“We shared things we had thought about but never dared doing fully before”.

Issues emphasised
• WELL BEING is the right of everyone to the highest attainable degree of physical and mental health; it presumes the integration of body, mind and spirit.
• The well being of feminist activists is to a great extent negatively affected by the patriarchal and oppressive forces that are the causes of the injustice and human rights violations which she is working to dismantle.
• Personal well-being and the wellbeing of families & communities are connected; however, they are not dependent on or conditional to the well-being of each other.
• Power structures and relations which maintain systems of privileging affect the health and well-being of activists and their organisations.
• The well being of activists is essential to organisational well-being and the sustainability of the movement.
• The well being of activists must be supported by and integrated into organisational structures, processes & budgets.
• Wellbeing is not done in pieces; it incorporates the mind, body, soul, and spirit.
4.0 **Movement Building Strategies**

### 4.1 Imagining a Real Feminist Organisation

Feminist/women organisations are the backbone of the feminist movement and while a lot is known about their weaknesses, there are no examples of a “model” feminist organization against which to assess compliance with feminist principles. The Charter has provided some guidelines but these are yet to be operationalized.

As part of the process of institutionalizing the Charter and strengthening the Movement, Forum participants were tasked with conjuring an image of the ideal feminist organization that would serve as a yardstick for existing feminist organisations.

**Guiding Questions:**

“What would a real Feminist Organisation look like, smell like, taste and feel like...?”

Through presentations that varied in style and approach, the forum participants identified the key attributes of a real feminist organization in terms of systems, structures, governance, leadership and policies. The main themes that resonated through all the presentations were the need for transparency; accountability; integrity; efficiency; economy; professionalism; competence; transfer of skills; flexibility; empathy; solidarity; respect for diversity; fairness; teamwork; and sisterhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXISTING CHALLENGES</th>
<th>ATTRAIBUTES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leaders in feminist organisations should:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insecurities and feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>• Be feminists and/or activists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Issues of competence</td>
<td>• Base leadership practices on principles of equality and respect for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be supportive, empower and mentor subordinates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use power responsibly and delegate duties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Be friendly, approachable, and show empathy but should not tolerate incompetence and lack of professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be accountable and transparent in relation to the use of organisational resources and time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have a clear mandate and term limits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognise and reward achievement of subordinates.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote open communication and mutual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote participatory decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Structures in feminist organisations should:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>• Be flexible and not too bureaucratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less hierarchical and promote more linear/horizontal structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote transparency and delegation across the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote succession planning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Governance | • Mistrust between boards and management.  
• Disparities in terms of skills/ experience/ qualifications, ideology, vision, personal values viz organizational mission.  
• Recruitment processes  
• Lack of an incentive structure for board members. |
| --- | --- |
| Governing bodies in feminist organisations should: | • Be self identified feminists- must walk the talk  
• Be competent and knowledgeable of organizations’ mission and able to develop a clear road for organisation  
• Monitor adherence to the organization’s values & mission  
• Emphasize the recruitment of competent women who can own the organization’s vision  
• Add value to the organization  
• Promote good communication across the organization  
• Promote a team approach and working relationship between the board and management  
• Subscribe to collective ownership of successes and challenges. |
| Policies | • internal conflicts between staff; poor personal relationships |
| Policies in feminist organisations should: | • Be based on the feminist charter and gender sensitive  
• Respect diversity and promote mutual respect and dignity  
• Should promote women’s wellbeing and welfare  
• Be sensitive to the fact that women have personal challenges from time to time ( welfare funds, loans); but should not be afraid to draw the line when situation becomes unmanageable  
• Include conflict resolution mechanisms which should be used exhaustively however we should not be afraid to let go when these fail. |
| Systems | • “Baggage”  
• Absence of support mechanisms  
• Mistrust  
• Management of our multiple relationships  
• Inertia |
| Systems in feminist organisations should: | • Be flexible  
• Be responsive to women’s gender roles and needs ( e.g. Flexible working hours)  
• Promote transparency and accountability  
• Create a supportive working environment that affirms women’s rights and dignity; but should not compromise professionalism in the name of sisterhood.  
• Encourage peer appraisals and other feedback mechanisms  
• Include mechanisms of recognition and acknowledgment of positive contributions; we must affirm each other)  
• Promote regular spaces for open sharing on both personal and organisational issues  
• Promote staff development and personal growth  
• Enforce accountability ( itemized phone bills, central printing) |
| Resources | misappropriation of organisational financial resources limited funding dependency on donors |
| Feminist organisations should: | be well resourced  
put resources to good use  
ensure the existence of proper accountability systems that promote transparency ( income, expenditure)  
establish endowments to generate additional income  
have diverse resource mobilization strategies  
establish an open environment where staff can discuss their personal financial management. |
**Conclusions:**

Adherence to the feminist principles in the management of feminist organisations is critical to our sustainability and credibility. If we fail to do so, we lack the moral authority to hold anybody else accountable on issues of governance, accountability, etc. We should endeavor to build organisations with a “soul” and that requires that the feminist ideology is infused in all our systems and practices.

To ensure that the Forum aspirations are translated into practice, Dr. Tadria was assigned the task of compiling the defined attributes and using them to construct a template for an ideal feminist organization that would be distributed to all initially for use as a monitoring/ performance measurement tool. It was also agreed that a separate Code of Conduct derived from these principles would also be developed.

“We should endeavor to build organisations with a “soul” and that requires that the feminist ideology is infused in all our systems and practices.”
5.0 Lessons for Movement Building: The Obama Campaign

A key objective of the Forum was to assess current movement-building strategies and to consider practical ideas for strengthening current practice. A presentation by Ms. Jessica Nkuuhe on the Obama campaign that captivated the world for its ingenuity spurred an animated discussion on a range of possible strategies.

Below are some of the lessons obtained from the Obama campaign (some of which have been identified before) which could be adopted by the feminist movement in Uganda.

- The need for a clear and consistent vision and mission
- Clear objectives and timelines for the delivery of results
- Flexibility and continuous revision of strategies
- Team work and building effective teams of persons with a shared vision and sense of purpose
- Mobilisation of grass root communities
- Building alliances with people from different walks of life.
- Inclusion and involvement of young people willing to apply themselves
- Recognition of team efforts
- Utilisation of experts in various fields
- Wide and varied resource mobilization strategies
- Strategic use of media and incorporation of new information technologies and media channels
- Effective, energetic and charismatic leadership
- Ability to confront and address difficult and controversial issues
- Clear communication strategies
- Willingness to transcend comfort zones and conventional borders
- Delivery of a compelling message of hope and change
Feminism in Practice Session: Sisterhood

Stella Mukasa

Contributions from the participants identified the following as their perceptions of sisterhood*:

’Sisterhood’ is a key feminist principle. It is however not clearly defined. The Forum thus sought to explore this concept

• What is sisterhood, what does it mean?
• What does it mean to experience sisterhood?
• Someone being there for you in good and bad times/journeys;
• Someone will to share, support and defend your
• Someone who understands you as a person; with feelings, weaknesses, empathizes, console, commiserate, comes to your space no matter what,
• Someone who affirms and encourages you on life’s journey
• A confidant

*Sisterhood is an investment: sometimes you get out what you put in, but it also puts demands on sisters.
6.0 Discovering a Different Space of Resistance: Our Future Organizing

6.1 Movement Building: Personal Reflections on our Future Organizing

A summary presentation by Ms. Sarah Mukasa reiterated earlier discussions on the gender agenda which has shifted from its original objectives. Gender Mainstreaming which; is now being promoted is tantamount to no action at all given that the specifics of women’s oppression are not being addressed. It is crucial therefore that we embark on creating spaces where we as women can come together, define our agenda, support each other, and identify strategies to implement it. We need movements to do this.

The importance of supporting and nurturing women’s spaces has been recognized by funding bodies such as the UAF-A and AWDF which have committed to support these processes and to reach out to women from different walks of life. Successes todate include the AFF the first of its kind and others that have followed such as the UFF. These spaces are an integral part of our work, sustainability, renewal and sisterhood. Although we have experienced challenges in sustaining these spaces, let us not lose sight of the gains that we have made that have moved closer to movement building. Movement building is critical to our struggle towards gender equality.

Therefore, if we see this as integral to our survival, we should start thinking about how to start integrating these spaces into the work we do, for example in terms of investing time and resources towards nurturing these spaces. Movement building is critical to our struggle towards gender equality. There will be a lot of resistance because men fear these spaces – but we should recognise that as the power of our organizing. Our role is to protect these spaces and not to be apologetic about it. We need to sharpen and clearly define our values in order to protect women’s spaces.

If we are fighting against the status quo, there is no way that we should invite the gate keepers of the status quo into our spaces i.e. men in women’s organisations. We need to be alert to the conversation on “male streaming” – men for gender equality on the basis that women have failed to deliver gender equality.

Despite the new gender architecture, we need to remember that our foremothers who fought for the women’s decade are the ones who created UNIFEM i.e. our sisters’ place. The battles within the UN are currently a threat and the ideology for mainstreaming is threatening UNIFEM. We therefore need to conscientise our governments on the need to have a dedicated space for women in order to protect and safeguard spaces for women.
### 6.2 Building Collective Power: Planning for the future

#### 6.2.1 Task Allocation for Key UFF Strategies and Activities

As a way to ensure robust & effective follow up, key tasks were allocated to individual feminists & organisations as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsible Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Shared Visioning - A campaign to promote a shared vision for the Feminist and Women’s Movements in Uganda | Maria Nassali - FIDA - U  
Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbuge - AMwA  
Hope Chigudu. |
| 2. Documenting Sheroes and Role Models -                                 | Christine Butegwa - AMwA  
Marren Akatsa-Bukachi - EASSI |
| 3. Development of a Directory on Feminist and Women’s Organizations      | Spearheaded by Rita Achiro - UWONET  
and Dorothy Akello - WOUGNET  
and comprised of Ruth Achiero - Isis WICCE  
Theilma Awori - IST  
Peace Kyamureku - NAWOU |
| 4. Media Engagement - Stronger engagement with the media                 | Thelma Awori - IST  
Patricia Munabi - FOWODE  
Dorothy Akello - WOUGNET |
| 5. Annual Networking Week/ Festival - Establishment of an Annual Networking week preceding the annual women’s day to showcase women’s achievements and highlight women’s concerns | Rita Aciro  
Sheila Kawamara Mishambi - UWONET |
| 6. Grassroots Mobilization - Mobilization of grassroots women’s organisations | Led by Peace Kyamureku - NAWOU,  
Hadija Kisebezo - DWNRRO and comprised of:  
Trade Unions, DAWA, YWCA, Mother’s Love, Women’s Producer Association Busia, FOWODE; Institute for Social Transformation (IST) |
| 7. Outreach and Mobilization of women actors at different levels         | Led by Rita Aciro - UWONET  
Peace Kyamureku - NAWOU  
comprised of others: Hilda Tadria - MEMPROW Nabilah Sempala-Women Parliamentarians and  
Irene Kaboole - Women Trade Union Association |
| 8. Public Dialogues - Organization of dialogues around current issues affecting women like: VAW | Patricia Munabi - FOWODE  
Tina Musuya - CEDOVIP  
Evelyn Letiyo - Raising Voices |
Stella Mukasa  
Solome Nakaweesi  
Sarah Mukasa  
Hope Chigudu  
Jessica Nkuuhe |
Jessica Nkuuhe (UAF-A) Sarah Mukasa - AWDF and the UFF WG |
| 11. Popularizing the Charter of Feminist Principles                      | UFF WG, Members of AMwA and all Individuals and organizations |
| 12. Translation of the Charter into a performance measurement tool        | Sarah Mukasa - AWDF  
Hope Chigudu  
Solome Nakaweesi - AMwA |
6.2.2 Implementation Strategies for UFF for 2009 - 2010

At the end of the three day event, the Forum proposed and undertook to implement a range of strategies aimed at galvanizing movement building efforts in Uganda. Specific organisations were assigned specific tasks to improve co-ordination efforts and accountability. Spearheading the Key Strategies, women’s organisations were allocated responsibility as thus:

Some of proposed strategies for implementation by the UFF in 2009 – 2010 include:

1. A campaign spearheaded to promote a shared vision for the Women’s Movement in Uganda - (FIDA Uganda).
2. Popularizing the Feminist Charter – (Institute for Social Transformation (IST) and MEMPROW).
3. Documenting Sheroes and role models - (EASSI).
4. Development of a directory on Women’s organisations to support mobilization efforts - (UWONET; WOUGNET, Isis WICCE and NAWOU).
5. Establishment of an Annual networking week preceding the annual women’s day to showcase women’s achievements and highlight women’s concerns - (UWONET).
6. Mobilization of grassroot women’s organisations - (NAWOU, DWNRO, Trade Unions, DAWA, YWCA, Mother’s love, Women’s Producer Association Busia, FOWODE).
7. Engagement with the media (IST).
8. Outreach and mobilization of women actors at different levels - (MEMPROW and UWONET).
9. Organization of dialogues around current issues e.g. violence against women - (Raising Voices).
10. Development of resource mobilization strategies - (working group on resource mobilization).
11. Translation of the Feminist Charter into a performance measurement tool - (AWDF, MEMPROW).
# Programme for Uganda Feminist Forum 2009

**Theme:** “Movement-Building for Impact and Sustenance of the Feminist Mission”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Participants’ arrival and registration - 2:00 to 4:00pm</strong></th>
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</table>

## Day 1 Evening: Tuesday 10th February 2009

- Detailed self introductions
- Dinner
- Personal Development Session: “The Art of Public Speaking”

## Day Two: Wednesday 11th February 2009

**A Budding Consciousness: Discovering a Different Space of Resistance**

- Reflecting on the drum with all its cobwebs and dust: what did we achieve, what didn’t we do and why...? What are the strengths of our efforts to create change (either in our own organization or in the movement)? What are the weaknesses of our efforts to create change? What does our ideal movement for change look like? What kind of movement are we yearning to create?
- Views of poor women on the women’s movement in Uganda (Report back from the survey or lessons from the field)
- Organizing as a Building Block for Resistance: What can we learn from the Obama Movement Building (campaign)?
- Evening - Personal Development Session: “Coaching and What it Means”

## Day 3: Thursday 12th February 2009

**Discovering a Different Space of Resistance: Personal Reflections our Future Organizing**

- Scenario Building
- Building Collective Power: Planning for the future

## Day 4 Morning: Friday 13th February 2009

- Building Collective Power: Planning for the future (Continued)
# UGANDA FEMINIST FORUM 2009

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>EMAIL ADDRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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**Annex 2**
Concept Paper UFF 2009

Theme: Movement-Building for Impact and Sustenance of the Feminist Mission.

Concept Note
By Stella Mukasa

The dismantling of patriarchy and the pillars that sustain it lies at the core of our mission as the Feminist movement. The mission is pursued through specific and targeted programmes to fight gender based discrimination; gender based violence; and marginalization in education, health care, political participation, the economy, ownership of property, decision-making, and access to justice. Patriarchy and capitalism are a key factors in explaining the trend of casualties and consequences of conflict, poverty, and HIV/AIDS taking on a female face. The feminist mission further seeks to reverse and ultimately eliminate these trends. Strategies have involved mobilizing and organizing through organizations, coalitions, and advocacy campaigns, at international, regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national and community levels. Achievements from feminist organizing have been registered in terms of influencing global, regional and to some extent national policy agenda by drawing attention to women’s concerns and rights. According to Ahikire, the Women’s Movement in Uganda, spanning from the 1940s to the 1960s and the present day has registered victories, big and small.3

The idea of a Feminist forum emerged from growing levels of exasperation with the apparent inertia within the Women’s Movements in Africa; and its capacity to confront the institutions and challenge the systems that continue to deny African women the full enjoyment of their rights. The first ever Africa Feminist Forum (AFF) was held in Accra, Ghana in November 2006 and it greatly inspired national forums to be formed. Using feminist analysis to inform the strategies of the women’s movement is part of the effort to move the struggle for women’s rights in Uganda to a higher level.4

The 1st Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF) held in January 2008 commenced the process of re-defining the women’s movement in Uganda and the role it should play in bringing about transformational changes. The 1st UFF had three immediate outcomes; the creation of an autonomous space for Ugandan Feminists through a regular annual forum; adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists; and establishment of a Secretariat for UFF. A report on the status of the action points adopted at the end of the 1st UFF will be shared at the 2nd UFF.

The women’s movement in Uganda continues to grapple with various issues affecting its own sustenance as well as the effectiveness of its operations. An effective response to these issues and other emerging challenges calls for a strong women’s movement with the ability for sustained engagement while continuously replenishing its ranks. In line with the broad objectives of the UFF, and in a bid to secure the gains registered by the women’s movement while at the same time anticipating the future, the theme selected for the 2nd UFF is; ‘Movement-building for impact and sustenance of the Feminist mission’.

This concept note provides a background, rationale, objectives and expected outcomes for the 2nd UFF due in February 2009. The discussion briefly touches on the movement-building challenges which the UFF needs to give particular attention.

Rationale

The motivation to focus on movement-building essentially lies in the recognition of patriarchy as an entrenched social and political force, inter-related with and informed by relationships of class, race ethnic, religious and global imperialism. Dismantling patriarchy and the pillars on which it stands therefore constitutes a very long term mission of sustained engagement with cumulative gains. Such a mission can not be realized through isolated interventions but rather through concerted, collective and coordinated efforts. Hence the significance of movement-building.

Our own perceptions of the women’s movement in Uganda clearly point to the need for us to invest in movement-building. Below are some of the perceptions of key actors in the women’s movement as captured by Ahikire:

Strengthening of the women’s movement with feminist principles is among the key principles underpinning the UFF and its linkage to the African Feminist Forum. The forum presents us with an opportunity to ponder and to the extent possible respond to the movement-building challenges in Uganda and beyond.

“……the broad profile of the women’s movement is that it is strikingly episodic and adhoc with no ability, means or mechanisms to sustain the pressure.”

“It is big, visible but lacks power (a punch) as a collective.”

Movement-building challenges

The discussion of movement-building challenges dwells on challenges that we have acknowledged for a long time. Without being exhaustive, the discussion touches on key issues and attempts to indicate the linkages between them. Key issues discussed and to which the 2nd UFF needs to focus its attention on the following; identity, vision/mission, strategies, agency/constituency, organizational health, leadership and inclusiveness.

The feminist movement in Uganda has made some efforts to respond to the challenges. The women’s movement in Uganda has convened two internal meetings in 2005 and 2008 to consider progress, map out challenges and propose strategies. Since the last UFF, there have been attempts at: i) creating feminist learning spaces - ‘Adisi ku kyoto’; ii) peer review mechanisms – revival of the Directors Forum; iii) the Kimeeza; and iv) Young Women’s mentoring programme. At a personal level some women have gone ahead with entrepreneurship exploits - Kizuri Gardens. All these are attempts to address some of the challenges identified and it will be useful to discuss them at the Forum; particularly how to strengthen them.

From a broader perspective, individuals from the Uganda Women’s movement are members of the working group for the African Feminist Forum (AFF) which not only produced the Feminist Charter but also provides resources for national convenings such as the UFF. The AFF 2008 which was convened in Uganda provided important assessment for the feminist movement at regional level. The 2nd UFF presents an opportunity to make linkages between each of the processes and how each has built on the other as we forge ahead.

Identity

Some of the respondents engaged by Ahikire in the preparation of her paper raised questions on what the ideology of the women’s movement in Uganda is. At the 1st UFF it was agreed that in order to “release the feminist breaks,” we need to establish a clear identity on what we stand for and the principles and values that will direct our work, our struggle against all forms of patriarchy. The question of philosophy was addressed through adoption of the Charter of African Feminist Principles

5 Ibid, page 5.
for African Feminists (the Charter) during the 1st UFF. The Charter sets out the collective values that we hold as key to our work and our lives as African feminists, thus providing a good foundation for addressing the issue of conceptual clarity. Key questions relate to whether individual organizations have formally adopted the Charter, and if so, what measures they have taken to translate it into practice.

**Strategies**

- Popularize the Feminist Charter
- Share strategies and experiences for translating feminist principles into practice

**Vision and Mission**

Respondents consulted by Ahikire pointed to the lack of a clearly defined vision and described the movement as lost and confused with no sense of direction. The 1st UFF recognized **clarity of vision and mission** of what we are setting out to do and where we want to see the women of Uganda/ Africa as crucial for movement building. This concept note submits that it is not clear what our targets are for the short, medium and long term. Ahikire aptly notes that the women’s movement has largely been issue-based, and is reactive as opposed to being proactive. This has meant that the women’s movement responds to specific issues and works on an isolated strategy for each issue rather than taking a holistic approach to the whole question of women’s rights. We have sent out mixed signals when in some instances there has been a very loud silence from the women’s movement on issues that should have spurred us into action. Respondents met by Ahikire candidly pointed out that employing short-term strategies to deal with a long-term issue can not work. A focus on movement-building will inevitably require a shift from such ADHOCACY\(^6\) to strategic and sustained activism.

**Strategies**

- Devising clear analyses that seek change, i.e. to transform structures of power in Uganda.
- Linking actions to theory through internal education (expand political understanding, discuss past actions, debate strategies, plan future actions).
- Building alliances & creating connections with other key social movements.
- How do we engage the larger communities in our struggle? (Education, outreach, campaigns, action)

**Agency and Constituency**

The gains and achievements registered by the women’s movement have neither been owned nor used as a basis for political leverage. Instead the gains are credited to government, implying a failure to locate the agency of women in the changes that have taken place. Consequently the women’s movement is fast losing its constituency and continues on an unquestioning confidence in the state to address women’s rights.

The rise of religious fundamentalisms linked to the state poses an additional challenge, particularly given that religious groups (in particular charismatic evangelical churches) have a mass, largely female following.

**Strategies**

- Documenting contributions and achievements of feminist activism in Uganda in formats that are interesting and accessible to the media, academics and the general public
- Hosting more public dialogues (in the media, at universities) to profile the contribution of feminists to positive change in Uganda
- Investing in ways of popularizing feminist analysis and advocacy concerns including using popular culture and the arts
- Longer - term vision of developing feminist-owned or controlled communications including publishing and media

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\(^6\) This term was coined by one of the respondents quoted in Ahikire’s paper.
Strong Organizations

The women’s movement can only be as strong as the sum total of its constituents – the women’s organizations. A recent analysis of the operational context of the women’s movement in the East African Sub-region revealed that a number of organizations that once played a significant role in the women’s movement in various countries have, or are undergoing painful transitions that have left some powerless, without influence and institutionally weak. In the organizations given as examples, difficulties involved governance challenges particularly at board and management level which negatively affected recruitment of chief executive officers, fundraising, conflict management and overall growth of the organizations. Institutional issues affecting the women’s movement are therefore reflected in a crisis in funding, in leadership and in governance of organizations. Moreover, there is little understanding and respect for the concerns of various participants and the communities they represent.

Strategies

• Need to build strong, accountable and politicized women’s organizations.
• Mobilizing and engaging membership.
• Redefining the concept of membership for networks and membership based women’s organizations in terms of: composition, recruitment, board composition, roles and responsibilities among others.
• A community-based structure that connects these organizations (building solidarity from the bottom up).
• Common commitment based on a shared vision by all organizations.
• Development of a clear and well-focused political programme of action.
• Capacity to be responsive to women’s immediate needs.

The institutional challenges divert attention and stifle progress on the mission for individual organizations and ultimately for the feminist movement. Organizations as a result are too weak internally to fight a common enemy and jointly envision externally.

Leadership

Leadership is critical for the success of any social movement. During the 1st UFF, it was observed that the leadership qualities required for transformational change are in short supply within the Uganda women’s movement. Discussion noted the following leadership setbacks:

• Careerism – although many sisters in the leadership ranks share the motive of improving the rights situation for women, they are not willing to walk the talk. Many are in it for personal gain rather than out of passion and conviction. They are thus afraid of the backlash that comes with challenging the system, avoid areas of controversy and have inadvertently depoliticised the struggle;
• Commitment – many women leaders exhibit little commitment to the struggle in terms of the resources (time, energy, expertise, finances) they devote to the wider movement, and particularly when it comes to implementing resolutions agreed upon.
• Exercise of power which some sisters have used to undermine and oppress other women; have adopted autocratic methods, refused to relinquish their positions and pave way for younger women and have subsequently burnt out and weakened their organisations.
• The personal is political – many women leaders have been weighed down by personal crises as well as the challenges of balancing the personal and the professional and are as a result failing to sustain personal energies.

8 Committed, honest, courageous, intelligent, articulate, charismatic, inspiring
Many of the above problems were attributed to: poor grounding in women’s rights issues; the lack of a shared vision; limited opportunities for leadership training; lack of safe spaces; inadequate peer support; absence of peer review mechanisms; limited collaboration amongst feminist and women’s organisations; competition for resources; and the comparatively modest compensation packages which have forced many to look for greener pastures.

**Strategies**

- Invest in programmes for feminist leadership development including training, mentoring and coaching.
- Create safe spaces for discussing leadership challenges.
- Develop Peer Review mechanisms.
- Develop criteria to assess a feminist conviction during recruitment processes particularly for leaders of NGOs.

**Inclusiveness**

The 1st UFF acknowledged that the women’s movement is fragmented and has divisions and tensions based on: ideological/ political/ religious/ class differences that have limited its potential to bring about transformation. The limited focus on recruitment to continuously replenish the ranks is another challenge. The discussion pointed out that “inclusion” has been undermined by:

- The disconnect between the “elite” and “women at the grassroots” which has resulted into the lack of a shared agenda. This has affected the capacity of the women’s movement to mobilize and garner mass support for critical campaigns such as the domestic relations bill as well as to consolidate the gains so far registered.
- The unequal power sharing arrangements within the women’s movement; (in respect of generational and class differences, sexual orientation, ability or disability, those within NGOs and those located elsewhere).
- The absence of coalition building strategies which have led to the ngosisation of the movement i.e. Dominance and patronage of the NGOs;
- Limited communication and the absence of collaborative mechanisms with other groups of women e.g. Women politicians;
- Fragmentation of rights issues where women’s organisations only focus on only particular areas and marginalize/ ignore issues affecting some other groups (sexual minorities and women with disabilities etc)
- The absence of clearly defined strategies for feminist conscientizing, which have affected the re-generation of the women’s movement and will ultimately affect its continuity and sustainability;
- The language / terminologies/jargons used which have reinforced exclusivity of the movement.
- The gap between theory and practice
- The co-option of women leaders by state interests

**Strategies**

- Develop mechanisms to ensure representation and effective participation of the wide spectrum of women in the movement.
- Design mechanisms for collaboration among the various actors in the women’s movement.
- Develop strategies for translating feminist theory into practice.
- Develop mechanisms for enforcing accountability by feminist leaders.
Objectives of the 2nd UFF

The second Uganda Feminist Forum (UFF) presents an excellent opportunity to:

1. Assess performance, and recap on the strength and weaknesses of Uganda’s women’s movement.
2. Take stock of the external climate affecting women’s activism in Uganda and possible scenarios for the future.
3. Critically assess current movement-building strategies and consider practical ideas for strengthening current practice.
5. Deliberate upon ‘how’ to move from feminist principles of organizing to practice.

Methodology
To be defined by the Facilitator and organizers.

Expected outputs
1. A collective assessment of progress/impact of the women’s movement.
2. Concrete strategies to tackle challenges for movement-building.
3. Concrete strategies for impact assessment of the women’s movement.
4. Strategies to popularize feminism.
5. Pragmatic approaches for implementing the Charter.