



HARNESSING OUR POWER WITH SOUL

BESPOKE CURRICULUM FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL
LEADERSHIP AND WELLNESS

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BESPOKE CURRICULUM FOR
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND WELLNESS



**Women's
International
Peace Centre**

Amplifying Women's Voice and Power

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Acknowledgement

Women's International Peace Centre is grateful to project partners' of the "Women's Advocacy for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE) through inclusive platforms in Uganda" project- Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Mentoring and Empowerment for Young Women (MEMPROW), National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU) and National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) who reviewed and gave their feedback to strengthen this training manual.

To Womankind, thank you for being an empowering development partner and for the financial investment that enabled us to develop a two-in-one curriculum that offers guidance for facilitating feminist transformational leadership and pays particular attention to individual and collective internal and contextual rhythms that impact the lives and work of activists and women human rights defenders as they take on work in complicated and volatile contexts.

The shoulders on which we stand

This guide is a compilation that is inspired by and consists of curated content from a diverse range of existing leadership curricula. It seeks to provide context as well as offers guidance for facilitating feminist transformational leadership. In this guide, we pause for reflection on the many generous offerings in the field of transformational leadership and wellness from different sectors. Drawing from their richness, this guide makes an additional offering that is nuanced by the theorising and experiences of African feminists. The content of this curriculum is not designed to be prescriptive neither is it a comprehensive summary of all existing knowledges on transformational leadership and wellness approaches. It is merely an offering of what may be imagined at the convergence of what already exists with what the complexities of feminist organising is continuing to reveal. It is an attempt at lighting fire beneath the brewing pots for the transformative work that supports feminist organising across the continent by injecting care and creativity into the invaluable work of activists striving for healthier more just societies.

The curriculum builds on extensive work from different sources including the work of the Urgent Action Funds on care and protection and sustaining women human rights defenders, the power analysis from the JASS framework, African Institute of Integrated Responses to VAWG & HIV/AIDS (AIR) in advancing a feminist framework for emotional well-being and mental health and the work of Hope Chigudu and Rudo Chigudu on strategies for building organisations with a soul, the imaginative work of co-creating feminist realities by AWID, Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements by CREA.

How to use this guide

This curriculum is designed with two sections. The first is the transformational leadership curriculum which takes us through understanding feminist leadership and ways of supporting and strengthening organising in communities. The second section takes us through an operationalisation of feminist leadership through an integrated approach to wellness. This second section pays particular attention to individual and collective internal and contextual rhythms that impact the lives and work of activists and women human rights defenders as they take on work in complicated and volatile contexts.



Introduction

The 'Harnessing our Power with Soul' consortium consisting of Isis- WICCE, FOWODE, FARUG, NAWOU, MEMPROW and NUWODU (National Union of Women with Disabilities), is a collective of women's rights organizations that is committed to the intentional integration of wellness into the ways and practices of organizing for transformational leadership.

The language of 'sustaining organizations' can be detrimental to the well-being of individuals within those organizations. When the focus turns uncritically to the survival of an institution it can lose sight of the purpose of the existence of the organization in the first place and individuals within the organization just become cogs that keep the machinery turning. In this guide we focus on people and their relationships as key elements in bringing organisations to life and in implementing their work and visions. We also recognise that the wellbeing of members of an organisation or movement is not just essential for facilitating the work but is in itself the work. The mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of activists is in itself the actualisation of feminist goals for women to self-actualise and live healthy fulfilling lives.

Well-being matters. It has been demonstrated that without it, individuals as well as organisations involved in work that is difficult, traumatic, demanding and challenging will eventually collapse and fragment or they will produce results without a soul.¹ This guide seeks to find creative ways of altering this reality or at least prompting the kind of conversations necessary for creating change.

The guide contains some practical activities in an attempt to meet the needs of diverse groups at different stages of organisational growth and their varied approaches to learning and ways of sharing knowledge. This allows activists to visualise the experiences of others doing similar work to their own and to see themselves in these experiences. Additionally, it is not always easy for some people to operationalise change while working from the abstract. The guide therefore offers some exercises, to act merely as sign posts to guide each trainer and training on its own path and through its unique process.

Why an integrated approach?

There is no questioning that the lives of women human rights defenders are under threat and that this is not a new phenomenon.² What however can be noted is that the nature and frequency of attacks seems to have increased or at the least become more visible. The threats from the state have intensified through increased criminalisation of dissent. Fundamental civic freedoms are being restricted and despite whatever country or context one is from the environment for WHRDs and gender non-conforming collectives to organize and practice their activism continues to be hostile.³

We come to activism and the defense of human rights in various ways, playing different roles in the struggle. For some, the work is sustained and continuous while others come in and out of it. Some individuals confront violence and the survivors of that violence daily, while others research and theorize about it or document it. Some work to challenge the legal and policy frameworks that enable such violence to thrive and others do the administrative work that facilitates this work of resistance to continue. Whatever the role one plays in activism and protection of the rights of women and gender non-conforming persons, this work is deeply personal. Whether we meet the work as survivors of violence or as witnesses to it, our experiences of injustice, hatred, repression, oppression, sexism, homophobia, violence and discrimination personalize this work. These experiences force us to turn

1 H. Chigudu & R. Chigudu 'Strategies for building an organization with a soul' AIR (2015).

2 Women human rights defenders face worsening violence, warns UN human rights expert, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24232&LangID=E>

3 <https://www.awid.org/special-focus-sections/women-human-rights-defenders>

to deeply personal sources of support such as family and community and often engage the core of who we are as people, challenging our senses of self, attacking our physical bodies, demanding our time, energy and our minds.

Those that challenge our activism are fully aware of the deeply personal nature of the work and thus attack where it hurts most, in very personal ways. They threaten our bodies, lives and those of the people we love and care about. They attack our dignity and integrity, seeking to alienate us from family and community, seeking to fragment our senses of self and brutally separate us from our very souls. Once we are torn, angry, frustrated and broken we begin to self-destruct and tear into those around us. We too become a threat to ourselves and to those around us.

What then does safety, wellness and protection mean or look like when the threats are so personal and seemingly private? What place does my sadness, tiredness, fear, worry, anxiety about making ends meet have in conversations about activism? A common activist cry is that, 'We are living in violent times – the world is on fire with unending nightmares. Violence against women is on the increase, we need to communicate, organise, and mobilise. We need activist energy, passion and fire now. The present moment is the only moment we have. Self-care is not a priority for us, it is only [a luxury] for the rich.'

Co-creating brave, inclusive and transformative space

Ways of trying to collectively create brave, inclusive space that enables transformation are presented in detail in the operationalizing feminist leadership section (Annex 1).

A range of tools and techniques can be used to assist a facilitator and participants to collectively create space that feels respectful, inclusive and authentic. A space that encourages everyone to show up as they are, that honors the kind of bravery it takes to engage honestly and authentically with a group and in which everyone is valued and respected. Some examples include, 'Designing and Facilitating Creative Learning Activities' – A companion booklet to 'The Barefoot Guide 2: Learning Practices in Organisations and Social Change'. Another resource that is useful in facilitating more democratic spaces is the book 'Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings that Matter'. The facilitators manual by CREA on Effective Teaching Methods from the 'It's all one Curriculum' provides some excellent exercises.



Facilitator Note

In preparation for the training it is necessary to meaningfully ground yourself for the facilitation process. Here are a few ideas that you might want to reflect on.

- ✦ *Familiarize yourself with the concepts of feminist leadership and wellbeing by reading through this guide and other relevant material.*
- ✦ *Reflect on your own biases and ideas about issues that the participants work on or that may arise during your sessions. For instance, what has framed your own opinions about leadership, wellbeing, religion, human rights, sex work, LGBTQ, abortions, power, security, safety, protection etc. (It may be useful to then also do this exercise with the entire group where each participant is given a chance to reflect on their ideas and biases individually without having to share this with others).*
- ✦ *Be prepared to have honest conversations about the ways in which social institutions, religious organizations, and other groups may undermine people's rights or allow discrimination. Especially because some people in the meeting or workshop belong to these institutions.*
- ✦ *Find out as much as you can about the participants and the nature of their work. Familiarize yourself with the issues they work on and draw on these for examples when explaining or describing ideas.*
- ✦ *Pay close attention to the mood in the room and have breaks and adequate movement. While an agenda provides direction, it is pointless if it does not also allow for the gentle holding of participants. Be prepared to be flexible in the pursuit of the meeting goals.*

Objectives

- ✦ *Co-develop an understanding of feminist leadership that is rooted in collective wellbeing.*
- ✦ *Build or strengthen relationships with those with whom you are building and creating.*
- ✦ *Engage from an honest and experiential place and not from an idealistic one that is tinted with unacknowledged bias and prejudice.*
- ✦ *Explore obstacles to and opportunities for creating healthy and transformative feminist leadership.*

PART 1

Transformational Leadership

We begin by engaging the central themes of this guide, transformational leadership, feminist leadership and wellbeing.



Feminist transformative leadership

*'Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others – especially other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all.'*⁴



How is feminist leadership different from other kinds of leadership?

*"Leadership from a feminist standpoint is informed by the power of the feminist lens, which enables the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppressions and inspires her to facilitate the development of more inclusive, holistic ... communities. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice and equity and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and ability at the forefront.... The elements particular to ... feminist leadership ... include a focus on both individual or micro-level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalised voices to the centre of the conversation and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda."*⁵



Where does wellbeing fit in all of this?

Our work can sometimes seem to be at odds with our bodies, but should it? The work of activism is heavy, on a daily basis we are immersed in a horrifying picture of humanity at the edge of an abyss as you have said. So we absorb all the negative energy that comes from such work. And then you know what? Eventually this work that we love leaves its mark on us. We find our spirits and organisations woven into negative things. Souls of our organisations start shrinking because they are not being fed with nourishing food. Our inner power begins to shrivel and with it our collective power. We stop seeing all we are capable of because we have loved the self out of us leaving us with little if anything at all to give. Well-being matters. It has been demonstrated that without it, individuals as well as organisations involved in work that is difficult, traumatic, demanding and challenging will eventually collapse and fragment or they will produce results without a soul. This guide seeks to find creative ways of altering this reality or at least prompting the kind of conversations and experiments with practice towards that change.

⁴ S. Batliwala 'Feminist leadership concept paper'

⁵ Tracy Barton, "Feminist Leadership: Building Nurturing Academic Communities", in *Advancing Women's Leadership Online Journal*, Vol.21, Fall 2006.

So transformative leadership that is feminist is not only about what you do with or for others but equally what you change within yourself in order to mirror and model the change that you seek in the world outside.⁶ Additionally leadership is not about the role of the individual that holds the title of leader. Leadership can be practiced by every individual in a team that is taking responsibility for that larger change and contributing to it, each in our own way, irrespective of our role, position, power or status in the organisation.

Proposed training outline

Exercise	Methodology	Materials	Time Allocation
Introductions and welcome	<i>In plenary welcome the group, participants introduce themselves and facilitator provides agenda overview.</i>		
Grounding and presence in the room	<i>Allow time for individuals to land in the room through a guided collective exercise to relax the mind and awaken the body.</i>	White board or flipchart and markers	
Meeting objectives, expectations and co-creating the space	<i>Share the meeting objectives, collate participant objectives and allow participants to decide on the values they want to guide the training space.</i>	Tape or blu-tac Coloured paper, post-it notes, crayons Printed copies of Annex 1	Depending on whether these are long or short trainings allocate time accordingly
Prevailing realities and understandings of leadership	<i>In small groups allow participants time to share about the leadership practices they observe and they themselves engage in whether positive or negative. Share stories.</i>		

⁶ S. Batliwala & M. Friedman 'Feminist leadership manual' 2013

Exercise	Methodology	Materials	Time Allocation
<i>Imagining and co-creating models of feminist leaderships</i>	<p>Allow time for individual reflection and then group discussion on what practices of leadership participants would like to see in their organisations/collectives.</p> <p>Groups feedback in plenary. Compare and combine with leadership values of the charter (see Annex 1) in order to develop your co-owned leadership tool.</p>	<p>White board or flipchart and markers</p> <p>Tape or blu-tac</p> <p>Coloured paper, post-it notes, crayons</p> <p>Printed copies of Annex 1</p>	Depending on whether these are long or short trainings allocate time accordingly
<i>Challenges and opportunities of transformative feminist leadership</i>	In plenary, discuss what challenges may arise in trying to practice the imagined transformative leadership as well as the opportunities it creates		
<i>Conclusion</i>	Synthesize the information gathered and commit to intentional and thoughtful leadership.		

1

Introductions and welcome

In plenary welcome the group

Facilitator/facilitation team introduces themselves to participants. Allow time for each participant to introduce themselves, for example they could say their preferred name and gender pronoun, the rights protection work they do and share about a moment of courage or bravery.

Provide agenda overview

Facilitator shares the agenda with participants and agreement can be made on changes where necessary.

2

Grounding and presence in the room

Presence

Allow time for individuals to land in the room through a guided collective exercise to relax the mind and awaken the body. This could be guided breathing and gentle stretches or whatever feels appropriate in the context.

Grounding

Give each participant a piece of paper on which to write what leadership means to them. Place them in the middle of the room and have participants pick pieces of paper at random and read them out. Stick these pieces up on a wall in a visible space in the room.

3

Meeting objectives, expectations and co-creating the space

Objectives

Share the meeting objectives, collate participant expectations and allow participants to ask questions to clarify the objectives.

Values of the meeting space

Guide participants in naming the values they want to govern the workshop space. Write these values on a sheet of flipchart and stick it up on a wall as a reminder of the ways the group has collectively chosen to protect the space and guide the process.

4

Prevailing realities and understandings of leadership

Acknowledging prevailing realities

In small groups allow participants time to talk about the leadership practices they observe and they themselves engage in whether positive or negative. This process is integral to understanding transformative leadership by allowing the recognition of two things, firstly that we are immersed in the systems we wish to change and secondly that there are ways we already know of practicing transformative leadership.

Storytelling

Share stories of leadership and identify patterns or commonalities in them.

5

Imagining and co-creating models of feminist leadership

Imagining

Allow time for individual reflection and then group discussion on what practices of leadership participants would like to see in their organisations/collectives

Co-creating

Share the imagined realities in plenary and combine them with leadership values of the charter (see Annex 1) which have resonance, in order to develop your co-owned leadership tool.

6

Challenges and opportunities of transformative feminist leadership

Challenges and opportunities

In plenary, discuss what challenges may arise in trying to practice the imagined transformative leadership as well as the opportunities it creates

7

Conclusion

Synthesise

Combining the stories, imagined forms of leadership and what was gathered from other sources consolidate a co-created imagination of feminist transformative leadership that emerged from the training. A key part of this process is the modelling of transformative leadership by the facilitators throughout the process along with the tensions and challenges that leadership unavoidably surfaces.

PART 2

Wellness Approach to Leadership

Thinking about wellness

The idea of wellness is far from new. The work of many different organisations have articulated concepts similar to or the same as that of wellness for decades now. The work on integrated security by the Urgent Action Fund global, that of UAF-Africa on wellness and sustaining activists, the seminal work of the African Institute for Integrated Responses to violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life.⁸ In thinking through wellness we are compelled to think about power and the ways in which power is wielded in different ways that can be affirming and empowering or oppressive and limiting. We need to continue learning to reclaim our power to love ourselves, to fight for our wellness and our right to happiness, to live and work in environments that are nurturing and supportive for ourselves and the communities we exist in.

It is easy to obsess over notions of leadership. There has been a growing focus on women's leadership, however this leadership is conceived in a social and political vacuum and does not allow women leaders to thrive or promote transformation. It is no surprise that the limited number of women that enter into positions of leadership or influence often do not succeed in generating the changes the women supporting them want to see. With leadership systems greater progress and achievement is possible if we support training and activities that help women and organisations strongly resonate with their core purpose, and identify how to weave those social justice and social change values and principles into their everyday activities.⁹

Part 1 of this guide is devoid of meaning without the intentional efforts towards wellbeing. Unlike the commercialised discourse around wellbeing, in this guide we explore wellness as the ultimate goal of women's rights or feminist activism.

Different forms of power come together to anchor our movements. A healthy leadership carries this awareness and recognises that when human bodies fragment, these forms of power, particularly power within, power to and power with fragment as well. A fragmented leadership leads to a fragmented movement/organisation and this produces excessive, toxic, oppressive and coercive power over. When a leader is consumed with glory and praise they can lose sight of the greater good. Equally when they are consumed with sacrifice at the expense of their wellbeing that can be equally disastrous. This leader may become torn and fragmented which can lead to bitterness and hostility or devastating self-neglect and burn out.

⁸ <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/wellness/what-is-wellness>

⁹ H. Chigudu & R. Chigudu 'Strategies for building an organization with a soul' AIR (2015).

Self-care, Love and Power

Self-love is where self-care starts. Complementing seeing and presence in engaging other people, is the capacity for self-care – of seeing and being present for yourself. Yet many of us have been brought up to love others but not ourselves. Loving the self has nothing to do with being selfish, self-centred or self-engrossed. It means that you accept yourself for who you are and that you accept responsibility for your own development, growth and happiness. It means that because you have enough for yourself, you also have something to give others. You can't give what you don't have. Self-love flows inwards to the deepest parts of the self and it ignites and radiates. It increases happiness. Self-love means having the power to defy, to challenge and to choose. It is about having inner power that enables us to discard things that do not work for us.



How do I negotiate my way across life with a system that I find so violent yet it seems so normal to many others?”

Malebo Sephodi

Self-love invokes the power of presence or self-awareness. It supports the soul song to be captivating and the soul to flourish and to unfold in a wonderful and refreshing way. It's up to each individual to ask themselves what makes them happy and fulfilled, and to invest in it.

Self-care is a political activist strategy. It is important to note that self-care is not a separate methodology but a political activist strategy underpinned by the understanding that well-being is the ultimate goal of the work that many of us do. Self-neglect depoliticises activist work. Given the negativity that surrounds activists, in a world full of pain, poverty, trauma, disease, war, violence and suffering be it at the hands of the extended family, the media, the socio-economic climate or political experiences, it becomes more than a political act to reclaim our power and use it for well-being. Then self-care turns into an act of revolutionary warfare as Audre Lorde¹¹ called it or revolutionary love as Jessica Horn¹² calls it.

Love: We should not fear using this important word in our organisations. As many people have argued, love is the ultimate motivation of a great transformative and radical leader. In an organisation, a leader should consciously and intentionally cultivate love in order to generate boundless energy and inspire courageous activism. And she must provide proof that it is all worthwhile, proof through the experience of phenomenal success as well as glorious failure.

Self-care, self-love and presence are central to building and manifesting power within. As we begin to get more in touch with ourselves and appreciate the beauty of well-being, we begin to feel our power and know it's not power over others but a personal power glowing inside. This kind of power extends to our organisations and movements so that together we are stronger and able to resist. Indeed our movements are born out of resistance to the forces and forms of power that dominate, subordinate and oppress and it is this kind of power we equip ourselves to challenge and transform, when we nurture and nourish our organisations and movements through self-care and well-being.

¹⁰ This whole section is extracted from, 'Strategies for building organizations with a soul.'

¹¹ Audre Lorde was a Caribbean-American writer, radical feminist and outspoken lesbian activist who famously wrote "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." (in Lorde, Audre. 1988. *A Burst of Light: Essays*. New York: Firebrand Books

¹² Horn, Jessica. 2013. Speech given at Ted X Euston Salon, London, 3 April

Proposed training outline

Exercise	Methodology	Materials	Time Allocation
Introductions and welcome	<i>In plenary welcome the group, participants introduce themselves and facilitator provides agenda overview</i>		<i>Depending on whether these are long or short trainings allocate time accordingly</i>
Grounding and presence in the room	<i>Allow time for individuals to land in the room through a guided collective exercise to relax the mind and awaken the body.</i>	<i>White board or flipchart and markers</i>	
Meeting objectives, expectations and co-creating the space	<i>Share the meeting objectives, collate participant objectives and allow participants to decide on the values they want to guide the workshop space.</i>	<i>Tape or blu-tac Coloured paper, post-it notes, crayons Fresh plants, fruit, cushions and water</i>	
Unpacking wellness and dominant ideas of wellness	<i>In small groups allow participants time to discuss wellness and habits or contextual causes of being unwell. Also discuss existing ways in which wellness is practiced, or promoted.</i>	<i>Box of tissues The room must have adequate natural light and air circulation Printout of Annex 2</i>	
Cultural and contextual models wellness	<i>In small groups brainstorm on what wellness practices you know that African women or other global South women use/have used in different contexts.</i>		

Exercise	Methodology	Materials	Time Allocation
Imagining and co-creating models of wellness	<i>Take time to imagine wellness practices you use or think would be nourishing. Reflect on some of the emerging practices and combine these with the suggestions made below to co-create your own wellness tool.</i>	<p>White board or flipchart and markers</p> <p>Tape or blu-tac</p> <p>Coloured paper, post-it notes, crayons</p>	<i>Depending on whether these are long or short trainings allocate time accordingly</i>
Troubleshooting potential challenges to the practice of wellness	<i>In plenary, discuss what challenges may arise in trying to practice wellness and identify ways in which this can be overcome</i>	<p>Fresh plants, fruit, cushions and water</p> <p>Box of tissues</p> <p>The room must have adequate natural light and air circulation</p>	
Conclusion	<i>Synthesize the information gathered</i>	Printout of Annex 2	

Introductions and welcome

1

In plenary welcome the group

Facilitator/facilitation team introduces themselves to participants. Allow time for each participant to introduce themselves, for example they could say their name and share about an activity that brings them joy and fulfilment. Encourage participants to identify examples outside of their work.

Provide agenda overview

Facilitator shares the agenda with participants and agreement can be made on changes where necessary. The agenda should be flexible, accommodating breaks and the room should be set up to facilitate comfort for participants. Have plants, fruit, water and cushions in the room. Explain to participants that they are free to stand, sit, lay down as they need and see fit during the process.

Grounding and presence in the room

2

Presence

Allow time for individuals to land in the room through a guided collective exercise to relax the mind and awaken the body. This could be guided breathing and gentle stretches or whatever feels appropriate in the context.

Grounding

Give each participant a piece of paper on which to write how they would spend their days if they and everyone else did not have to work for a living/survival. (Flag that there is no such thing as selfishness in the context of this question). Allow participants to read this out before sticking these pieces up on a wall in a visible space in the room. These ideas are instrumental in the imagination of wellness and healthy lives.

Meeting objectives, expectations and co-creating the space

3

Objectives

Share the meeting objectives, collate participant expectations and allow participants to ask questions to clarify the objectives.

Values of the meeting space

Collectively generate a set of values to guide the workshop space. Write these values on a sheet of flipchart and stick it up on a wall as a reminder of the ways the group has collectively chosen to protect the space and guide the process.

Unpacking wellness and dominant ideas of wellness

4

What causes us to be unwell and what are the dominant ideas of restoring wellness?

In small groups allow participants time to discuss wellness and habits or contextual causes of being unwell. Also discuss existing ways in which wellness is practiced, or promoted. Also discuss the commercialised (focus on manicures and massages) and medicalised approaches (medication, counselling, psychology) to wellness.

Storytelling

Share stories of being unwell (physically, mentally, emotionally and/or spiritually) and the ways of coping that were employed.

As an individual exercise participants can reflect on the following

- ✦ Why am I doing this work?
- ✦ What about this work is nourishing and fulfilling?
- ✦ What takes my energy or drains me?
- ✦ What are the things in my life that bring me joy and how often do I do them?
- ✦ What are some of the unhealthy habits and practices that I have grown accustomed to?
- ✦ If I was no longer here to lead, how long would it be before someone else is hired to replace me?



**Cultural and contextual models
wellness**

5

Reflecting

In small groups brainstorm on what wellness practices you know that African women or other global South women use/have used in different contexts. Think about the herbs, foods, rituals, cultural practices during or after childbirth that have supported women. Make a list of these.

Imagining and co-creating models of wellness

6

Imagining

Take time to imagine wellness practices you use or think would be nourishing. Reflect on some of these practices and combine them with the suggestions made in Annex 2 to co-create your own wellness tool.

Troubleshooting potential challenges to the practice of wellness

7

Challenges and opportunities

In plenary, discuss what challenges that may arise in trying to practice wellness and identify ways in which this can be overcome. Facilitator can also make additional suggestions based on their additional readings.

Conclusion

Synthesize

Combining the practices that participants in the room use, imagined practices as well as the shared knowledges of various culturally specific wellness practices discussed, synthesize these into a wellness practice resource that can be shared and returned to by participants at different moments beyond the training. This wellness training must model the kind of care and wellness practice it is encouraging.

Overall Conclusion

Transformative feminist leadership models the kind of leadership we wish to see in the world. This kind of leadership is not achievable in the absence of balance and wellness. This guide combines these entangled issues not just to demonstrate this link but to encourage it and ways of operationalising it. In the process of operationalising self-care for transformative leadership it is inevitable that there will be challenges. Some of these include difficulty in changing established ways of being, overworking, challenges managing power dynamics, mistrust amongst colleagues or the absence of an ideological foundation. Tackling these challenges to build vibrant and soulful organisations/movements requires patience, humility, courage and creativity.

This guide is merely an offering, that should be contextually adapted and enhanced. We hope that the guide inspires you to continue to challenge yourself and to take the risks that are necessary to build transformative leadership that leaves the leader alive and well when their work is done.

Wellness at individual or organisational levels does not mean there will be no chaos around us. It serves to hold us when chaos erupts. Remember;



**A bird sitting on a tree
is never afraid of the
branch breaking,
because its trust is
not on the branch but
on its own wings.”**

Charlie Wardle



Annex 1

Operationalising feminist leadership based on Charter of feminist principles for African feminists

This section uses the ethics and guidelines of the Charter of feminist principles for African feminists to engage practical ways of operationalising feminist transformative leadership

Openness, transparency, equality and accountability in feminist-led institutions and organisations.

Nugget

The practices of openness, transparency, equality and accountability require intentionality and constant reflection. Engage in an exercise with the group in which each individual thinks of a person close to them such as a child, partner, friend. Using this person describe how one would feel, what thoughts and feelings would arise if you were to receive big news relating to this person from another source. Feminist-led institutions are communities of trust where information within the organisation should be shared openly and transparently.

Being professional, efficient, disciplined and accountable.

Nugget

Collectively discuss what your ideas of professionalism, efficiency, discipline and accountability are. Having done this outline for yourselves some of the ways in which these values could be put into practice. Get two volunteers for an on the spot role play, the only instruction is for them to role play a scene in which a projects officer whose child has been ill has just gotten back to the office and is being asked by the director for a report that was due during the time the child was ill. Give the role players free reign on how they want the situation to play out for a minute or two. After this allow the rest of the group to share their thoughts and feelings about the role play in relation to the values of professionalism, discipline, efficiency and accountability. The idea here is to surface the tensions that arise in real life situations and to give participants an opportunity to co-create what they imagine as ways of holding these values along with holding our humanity and wellbeing.

Expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders across the continent. Nurturing, mentoring and providing opportunities for young feminists in a non-matronising manner.

Nugget

Feminism as daily practice involves modelling values and this includes recognition of multi-generational needs and dynamics. Mutual respect, recognition of holding of different generations of feminists. A great deal of focus on young feminists has enabled more dialogue about generational needs and forms of expression however much older feminists are ignored and often forgotten as they get older. There is need for care and solidarity across generations and this must be intentionally considered in the planning and implementation of activities, organising or meetings/workshops.

Exercising responsible leadership and management whether in a paid or unpaid capacity and striving to uphold critical feminist values and principles at all times.

Nugget

In a consortium or collective not everyone is paid directly or otherwise. The work that is being done needs to be held with integrity whatever the case. Part of upholding feminist values and principles whilst working is creating a shared sense of responsibility as well as investment in the goal of the work. If one does not feel invested in the work they are unlikely to give it their all. If there is a need for different roles in carrying out work, try and ensure that individuals take on the roles they are interested and most excited about, to the extent possible of course. Do not impose duties on each other.

Using power and authority responsibly, and managing institutional hierarchies with respect for all concerned. We believe that feminist spaces are created to empower and uplift women. At no time should we allow our institutional spaces to degenerate into sites of oppression and undermining of other women.

Nugget

Building shared and collective power does not always mean the absence of a hierarchy. The greatest challenge with a hierarchy is when it allowed to become an instrument to silence, oppress and dismiss others. When seen and practiced as a functional instrument and not a value system it can be highly productive. Allow time for participants to share ways in which they feel existing hierarchies could be managed with respect for all as well as what it takes from all concerned not just the said leaders to maintain healthy, respectful and collectively owned ways of working.

Building and expanding our knowledge and information base on an ongoing basis, as the foundation for shaping our analysis and strategies and for championing a culture of learning beginning with ourselves within the feminist movement.

Nugget

In order to grow together and cohere it is helpful for any collective to engage in individual as well as collective learning. A reading club or circle followed by discussion is helpful for getting to know and understand each other beyond rolling out activities together. Take time and invest in reading circles or other collective processes with those you will be working with outside of the direct implementation of a project.

Being open to critically assessing our impact as feminist organizations, and being honest and proactive with regards to our role in the movement.

Nugget

The purpose of coming together is the intended or imagined impact of the organising efforts. It is essential to be honest about whether the work being done is a true reflection of the purpose and not just a box to be ticked. Take the necessary time to envision together understanding that each individual or organisation in a collective is coming from a different place and perhaps with different priorities. It is important to acknowledge the power we hold and therefore the responsibilities one has based on that power. As facilitator, trainer etc there is power you hold in a space and that must be owned and acknowledged as ignoring it creates a greater power gradient.

Creating time to respond in a competent, credible and reliable manner to other feminists in need of solidarity and support whether political, practical or emotional.

Nugget

This speaks to a variety of issues but just to highlight a few. Women are such a diverse category with varied needs and ways of being. Solidarity with each other requires a recognition of this. Age, class, geographical location, sexual orientation are just a few examples of some of these differences that require intentional consideration.

Being open to giving and receiving peer reviews and constructive feedback from other feminists

Nugget

A feminist identity does not mean infallibility. Part of being able to live our feminist values is being held accountable by others. We are immersed in the institutions we are struggling to resist and therefore cannot always see the path clearly. Being open to being constructively told where we might be going wrong is allowing others to hold up a mirror for us to see ourselves and adjust accordingly.

Annex 2

Wellbeing strategies from 'Strategies for building organisations with a soul'.

Individual practice

Regular exercise and healthy eating

At an individual level, taking care of our bodies is important in finding balance and averting or dealing with work-related health and well-being issues. Although diet and exercise may not always cure the full effects of stress, they certainly help to alleviate and build more resilient bodies. It is helpful if exercise is built into the culture of an organisation as this opens time for it and allows for mutual accountability.

Freeing selves from overworking

Organisations can plan to structure their time so that people are able to take their leave days and enjoy weekends and also have time during work hours to reflect and develop personally.

Truth telling

Are you a 'truth teller', a person who stands up in a meeting and says, 'this is not affirming vocabulary, let us use positive, energising and soulful words?' If this is not you, are there individuals like this in your organisation/movement, if so how do you hold space for them to bring their honesty?



Leader driven collective practice

Focus: To explore how an organisation can support a healthier balance between work and personal life

Process: This is a group discussion and should help in laying the foundation necessary to ensure life work balance by working fewer hours. It should be made clear that one does not have to sacrifice family to be an activist and in fact if you are doing that, the organisation is not getting the best out of you. Some of the issues pertaining to work/life balance might be personal but must be discussed collectively. This requires superior dialogue and communication skills.

During the discussion/dialogue, a facilitator must continually bring forward people who have not spoken and prompt them to add their views and whatever is behind their thinking.

Introduce the subject of life/work balance and have a discussion within the team about what you really want both in terms of organisational results and in creating a culture that honours life/work balance.

As a collective, look in the organisational mirror and talk about the number of hours spent working compared to the number of hours spent doing other things. Engage in an honest discussion, which can consider the following:

- ✦ Is there a way of reducing some of the time wasters in the organisation? Is there a way of eliminating non-productive activities and to reduce the time spent in meetings, on emails, and social media?
- ✦ Given that we want a work/life balance, what areas should we focus on more toward what we want? What are some activities that can be reduced?
- ✦ What are ways of doing things and ensuring that there is life/work balance?





A stylized illustration of a woman's profile in shades of orange and red, facing right. Her hair is dark and voluminous, filled with various colorful flowers including yellow daisies, pink roses, and small blue berries. She is wearing a large yellow hoop earring and a patterned orange top. The background is a solid orange color.

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