

From Theory to Action

Deliberately Entrenching Gender Equality &
Women's Human Rights in Development Agendas & Frameworks



**The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network**

2014 Annual Report

Inform. Mobilize. Influence.

[@femnetprog](#)
www.femnet.co
admin@femnet.or.ke
+254725766932

FEMNET (The African Women’s Development and Communication Network) is a feminist, pan-African organization with over five hundred individual and institutional members in 43 countries in Africa and in the Diaspora working to amplify African women’s voices and advance women’s rights. FEMNET was established in 1988 with its secretariat based in Nairobi, Kenya, with the aim of strengthening the role and contribution of African CSOs focusing on women’s rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Network was set up to share information, experiences, ideas and strategies among African women’s CSOs and individual activists as a strategy for strengthening women’s capacity to participate effectively in development processes at different levels.

CONTENTS

Our Vision	4
Our Theory of How Change Happens	5
Sustaining the Movement	6
<i>Word from the ED</i>	
2014 Snapshot	9
<i>Engagements, Moments & Contributions</i>	
Our Strategic Priorities & Key Result Areas	12
ADVOCACY	12
The Nerve Center	
<i>Beijing+20</i>	
<i>Advocating at National Level</i>	
<i>Religious and Cultural Leaders Speaking up against Harmful Practices</i>	
<i>Malawi Learning Mission</i>	
<i>Regional Engagements</i>	
COMMUNICATIONS	17
The Heartbeat	
<i>Knowledge Products</i>	
<i>Engaging our Online Community</i>	
<i>Documenting Stories</i>	
<i>Media Engagement</i>	
<i>Campaigning – Bring Back Our Girls</i>	
CAPACITY BUILDING	21
The Brain	
<i>Entrepreneurial Mentorship</i>	
<i>Nurturing Young Leadership</i>	
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT & COORDINATION	23
The Backbone	
<i>Strength of our Network – our Membership</i>	
<i>Building Partnerships & Alliances</i>	
Reflecting & Moving Forward	25
<i>Challenges/Lessons Learnt</i>	
Financial Overview	26



Our Vision:

An African society where gender equality is achieved and women and girls enjoy all their rights and live in dignity.

Our Mission:

To mobilize African women for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' rights at all levels.

Our Core Values:

- Gender equality & commitment to the rights of women and girls
- Respect for diversity
- Professionalism
- Solidarity
- Integrity

OUR THEORY OF HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

Problem

In order to reverse the existing gender inequalities and social injustices against women and girls in Africa, patriarchy must be dismantled so that women enjoy their rights fully, lead dignified lives and realize their full potential.

Our Strategies

FEMNET's theory of change is premised on the feminist framework that recognizes women's rights as human rights; the imperative of gender equality and justice in development; women's empowerment in all spheres; recognition of unique African problems and African solutions around women's rights; and solidarity through pan-Africanism. Since its formation in 1988, FEMNET has sought to realize African women's collective leadership for gender equality, peace and sustainable development.

In the current Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018, FEMNET:-

- Advocates for African **women's rights to be recognized** in key policy and development frameworks.
- Facilitates her member organizations to have **improved capacities** on organizational development, economic empowerment, policy advocacy and political participation.
- Facilitates women in Africa to be **better informed** and be able to **meaningfully engage** in and **influence processes** at all levels and **contribute to the body of knowledge** on women's rights issues using cutting edge communication tools.
- **Strengthens governance and management** for organizational effectiveness.

Results

The envisaged change occurs when women as primary rights holders and relevant duty bearers are empowered and accept women's rights as a norm. This requires **solidarity, resilience, transformation** of oppressive norms, change in policies and laws and revamped individual mindsets and communal belief systems.

Impact

FEMNET's role in creating this change is **catalytic** through sustained action to simultaneously address practical gender needs and strategic gender interests in Africa using the women's movement and partnership with men as the primary anchors.

FEMNET mobilizes and coordinates African women and girls to participate and influence development by **remaining connected** and **informed** so as to undertake **collective actions** and advocacy on matters of common interest.

Sustaining the Movement

Word from the Executive Director



In 2014, we continued to do what we have done for the past 26 years – **inform, mobilize** our members and partners so as to ensure **meaningful engagement and influence** of policies, practices and processes that affect the lives of African women and girls.

2014 was significant for us at FEMNET in many ways. It marked the start of our [5-year Strategic Plan \(2014-2018\)](#). It has been a **marathon, impactful & full of rich learnings**.

Marathon in the sense that the year kicked off with exciting and new partnerships such as the rigorous engagement in the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals that resulted in lobbying and advocacy of leaders as well as drafting of

position papers and statements around the Post-2015 development agenda. FEMNET has been at the forefront of mobilizing African women to actively engage and influence the process of the Post-2015 development agenda from the time the consultations started in early 2012. As a member of the Women’s Major Group and Post 2015 Women’s coalition, FEMNET continued to work with the Women’s movement globally and on the African Continent to follow closely this process that promises to ‘*leave no one behind, to improve the lives of people and the planet*’.

FEMNET mobilized and partnered with other women’s right organizations to reflect and review the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) commitments in view of the 20 years commemoration in 2015. Commonly described as the most progressive blueprint for advancing women’s rights, the BDPfA attests to a world that is possible where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work. In November 2014, ahead of the 9th African Regional Inter-governmental Conference held in Addis Ababa, FEMNET coordinated the CSO Taskforce¹ to organize a CSOs Regional Consultation meeting on Beijing+20 bringing together close to 200 participants. This resulted in the [CSOs position paper](#) that articulated key concerns and recommendations that were used for lobbying during the intergovernmental meeting and some recommendations were actually included in [Government’s Regional Review Declaration on Beijing +20](#) such as those around unpaid care work, access to safe abortion and comprehensive sexuality education for youth.

During the Malawi tripartite elections in May 2014, FEMNET coordinated a learning mission that had members from Egypt, Liberia, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Mali to observe an unprecedented election and monitor experiences of women candidates, to learn from the process

¹ The CSO Taskforce included organizations such as AAWORD/AFARD, ACORD, AMwA, AWDF, EASSI, Equality Now, FAS, Ipas Africa Alliance, IWHC, Servitas Cameroon, WiLDAF West Africa and YWLI

and the campaigns that were taking place to support female candidates in the political arena. Clearly, the road to achieving 50/50 female heads of states in this continent needs urgent concerted efforts by all.

Throughout the year, FEMNET ensured women and girls in Africa are **better informed** and are able to **meaningfully engage** in and **influence** processes at all levels. We produced and disseminated our flagship publication; the bi-annual [African Women's Journal](#), the [monthly E-Bulletins](#), updated the bilingual [website](#) and kept vibrant conversations via social media networks, engaged with the media and availed publications and other information resources via the Gender & Development Resource Centre.

The year was also *Impactful* in that even with time, financial and human resource challenges, we were able to realize key milestones such as **mobilizing** our members and partners across the continent and across the world to [take action in solidarity](#) with the Chibok girls who were abducted in Nigeria. With [calls, cries, prayers and demands](#) for #BringBackOurGirls, FEMNET called on our members to organize solidarity marches, protests, sit-ins, rallies, vigils on 14th May 2014.

Our members also stood in solidarity with the women of South Sudan in their calls for peace and a more robust inclusion of women in the peace process.

In Tanzania, FEMNET members have been following closely the drafting of the proposed new Constitution, with an aim at ensuring it is gender sensitive. Some of the proposed changes include:- a requirement that there is a 50/50 representation of men and women in the National Assembly and ensuring equal land ownership rights for women and sexual and Reproductive health and rights especially access to safe abortion.

In the second quarter of 2014, we began a new partnership with the Pan African Parliament (PAP) which sought to build the capacity of members of PAP to effectively champion the gender equality agenda in their parliaments and constituencies. This resulted in FEMNET conducting a gender mainstreaming workshop for the PAP Committee on Gender in July 2014. We will endeavor to partner and work closely with PAP, especially following the adoption of the [Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union Relating to the Pan-African Parliament](#) which means PAP will now exercise legislative powers as a regional parliament and propose model laws for approval by the Assembly.

Hope lingers! The African Union declared the year 2015 as the “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. We will be watching closely how our governments will be moving from the rhetoric to real action.

We also describe the year as having been *full of rich learnings* in the sense that the team grew both professionally and personally through the various engagements and these learnings continue to be ploughed back to our daily work. One key learning that stayed with us was the importance of partnership, mentorship and sustainability.

"gender equality is a positive and forward-looking vision of Africa's development. As we search for resources that will help us build on our successes and set us on the path to long-term prosperity, let us begin from the tremendous potential of the women in our midst".

Geraldine J. Fraser-Moleketi,
Special Envoy on Gender,
African Development Bank

On behalf of FEMNET Board, staff and entire FEMNET Network I want to acknowledge with heartfelt appreciation the continued support of our partners in 2014 who include:- Oxfam Novib, Urgent Action Fund-Africa, International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), Ipas Africa Alliance, Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU), Anonymous, Equality Now, Fredskorpset (FK), Hivos, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Family Care International (FCI), the Embassy of Sweden (formerly Sida), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), ACORD, Ford Foundation, African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and Global Fund for Women.

In 2015, we will continue to build on the strength of our members, partners, friends and colleagues in our mission of *mobilizing African women for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' rights at all levels.*

We invite you to join us, because alone we go fast, but together we can go far.

In Sisterhood and Solidarity,



Dinah Musindarwezo
Executive Director

2014 Snapshot

Our Engagements, Moments & Contributions



FEMNET hosted a side event in the margins of the 22nd African Union Summit to highlight [African Women's priorities](#) derived from several consultations with women's rights organizations from across Africa. This was timely as the Heads of States agenda included adoption of the Common African Position on Post 2015.

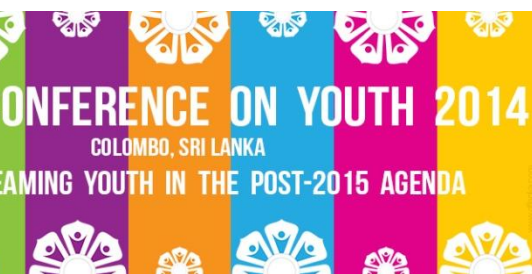
FEMNET participated in various sessions of the [Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals](#) in New York -- engaged and presented the [Africa We Want Position Paper](#), highlighting key recommendations from African women and girls to the co-chairs and Member States.



Over 500 diverse African women's rights organizations, coalitions and networks who have been working to ensure that African women's needs, interest and realities are captured in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, wrote a letter to the Heads of State of the High Level Committee on Common

Africa Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda calling for strengthening of the document in as far as gender equality and women's empowerment is concerned.

Through four sessions of the African Women's Caucus and three side events facilitated by FEMNET and her members, African women at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) dialogued on advocacy strategies to lobby member states to adopt women's priorities within the Agreed Conclusions document.



Strengthening advocacy and positioning SRHR in the Post-2015 Agenda has been core to our advocacy work at FEMNET. During the World Conference on Youth that took place in Sri-Lanka in **May** 2014, together with our partners Organisation of African Youth (OAYouth) and Ipas Africa Alliance, we facilitated over 100 youth

participants present to be more aware of the SRHR agenda, resulting in personal commitments to advocate for the inclusion of SRHR recommendations in the Colombo Declaration and move this forward upon return to their respective countries.

On **May 15**, FEMNET members from across Africa as well as partners across the world took up FEMNET's call for a [Solidarity Day of Action](#) that marked one month since hundreds of girls were abducted in Chibok, Nigeria. At least 20 countries across Africa took action, convening marches, vigils, fasts, prayers, protests, media briefings and more.



FEMNET began engaging the Pan African Parliament especially the Committee on Gender, Youth and People with Disabilities and the Women's Caucus on gender mainstreaming and women in political participation respectively.

FEMNET joined the Africa Youth Task Force of twelve respected, experienced and dynamic young African leaders passionate about advancing SRHR to learn from Permanent Representatives based in New York, to share their own experiences and to open a space for greater African inclusion in global processes



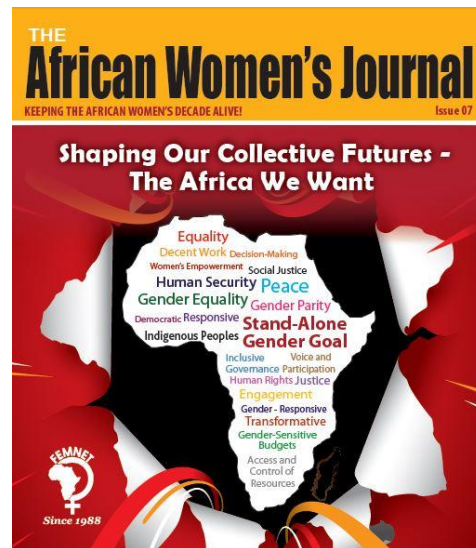
FEMNET mobilized over 150 African women and girls from 34 countries across the continent in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for a CSO regional review ahead of the Intergovernmental Meeting. The outcome was a [powerful statement from African CSOs](#) that was drafted and disseminated at the Addis meeting. The Intergovernmental document lifted a lot of the language from the CSO position paper including references to the Maputo Protocol on reproductive health and unpaid care work. FEMNET in conjunction with the Beijing+20 CSO taskforce commissioned a [Regional Shadow Report](#).





FEMNET partnered with HBS to organize the monthly Gender Forum, under the theme “SGBV in Kenya – Are we Losing or Gaining Ground?” which highlighted the Justice for Liz case which had received a lot of global and local attention.

Through our flagship publication, the [African Women’s Journal](#), we continue to commemorate the African Women’s Decade and bring to our readers insights on specific topics of interest and relevance from a broad range of perspectives. This issue, [Shaping our Collective Futures – The Africa We Want](#) has recorded close to 8000 downloads!



Throughout the year, FEMNET continued to engage with its online community through her various online platforms. By December 2014, [the website](#) had received over 10,000 views per month, [Facebook](#) had 6,522 likes, [Twitter](#) had 6,024 followers and over 20,000 tweets, the [blog](#) had 36,778 views and [Youtube](#) had 14,084 views – over 6,000 of those in 2014 alone.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & KEY RESULTS

ADVOCACY : The Nerve Center

At FEMNET we have been advocating for African women's rights to be recognized in key policy and development frameworks through influencing decision making at national, regional and global levels.

Beijing+20

FEMNET in partnership with the CSOs Taskforce composed of Women's Rights Organisations mobilized close to 200 African women and girls from 34 countries across the continent from 14-16 November in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for a Regional Strategy

Meeting ahead of the Intergovernmental Meeting on Review of Beijing+20 from 17-19 November 2014. The outcome was a [powerful statement from African CSOs](#) that was drafted and disseminated at the Ministerial Addis Ababa regional meeting. The Intergovernmental document lifted a lot of the language from the CSO position paper including references to the Maputo Protocol on reproductive health and unpaid care work.



The Beijing
Platform for Action
Turns 20

CSOs called on African governments to re-dedicate themselves to upholding national, regional and international laws and policies that advance women and girl's rights and gender equality on universal human rights standards already agreed upon and protect them from social, moral and cultural arguments and positions. This position was presented at the Intergovernmental Meeting and the same will further be highlighted at the upcoming 59th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

FEMNET commissioned a [Regional Shadow Report](#) prior to the Regional Strategy meeting. The findings from the Regional Shadow report formed the basis of the position statement. The Regional Shadow Report and position statement will both be utilized for further advocacy at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women.

**Stop fighting
wars over our
bodies. Our
bodies are not
your battlefields.**

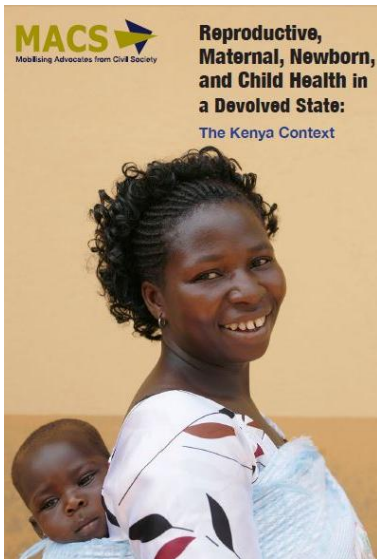
Bridget Osakwe
WANEP, Ghana

#Beijing20

#TheAfricaWeWant



Advocating at the National Level



FEMNET and FCI-Kenya conducted a situation analysis of the new devolved government structures in Kenya so as to identify key avenues and opportunities for civil society on RMNCH. These findings were presented in the form of a Policy Brief: [RMNCH in a Devolved State: the Kenya Context](#) which was disseminated to stakeholders working on RMNCH in Kenya at a launch in **March** 2014. In addition, a training for members in the Mobilising Advocates for Civil Society (MACS) coalition on Country level Budget advocacy on RMNCH was conducted with an aim to build capacity of CSOs on budget processes and how to interpret, engage and influence resource allocation for RMNCH.

FEMNET has also been part of the team that developed the national GBV policy which was launched by the President of the Republic of Kenya during the 16 days of activism in 2014. The policy is a national government tool that will be used and adopted by the 47 county governments in Kenya. FEMNET has been engaged in the process since 2013. FEMNET was appointed a member of the national steering committee for the zero tolerance to FGM campaign in Kenya by the Ministry of

Devolution and Planning and the Gender Directorate.

In line with SOAWR's strategy to shift focus from ratification to implementation of the AU Women's Rights Protocol, a Multi-Sectoral Approach Training was hosted by UN Women and SOAWR for Kenyan government officials. This comprised officials from the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, National Gender and Equality Commission and gender focal points in the line Ministries who were taken through the provisions contained in the Maputo Protocol and provided with guidelines for reporting to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

As part of the Kenya CSO Post 2015 Reference group, FEMNET developed a Kenya CSO Position for the various delegations taking part in the UN General Assembly. Subsequently, the CSO Reference Group organized and convened a breakfast meeting for civil society, parliamentarians and government officials from the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, the government unit responsible for coordination of matters of the MDGs and Post-2015. This served as a platform for enhanced interaction between various actors, update on progress and set the groundwork for implementation. It also provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to organize themselves and engage with the process more actively.

The **Justice For Liz campaign** which had received both local and global attention continued in 2014. The case was taken up by the Chief Justice and investigations were reopened. The case made it to court with one suspect being apprehended. Liz underwent surgeries to correct the fistula and the slipped disk in her back. She's currently under witness protection as she and her family have received threats. The struggle to get justice for her and countless others like her continues.



Religious and Cultural Leaders Speaking up against Harmful Practices



In many African communities, cultural leaders are increasingly under pressure to remain relevant in light of increasing awareness and advancements on human rights for women and men. There are many cultural practices that are in direct conflict with national and regional laws, especially those which focus on the rights of women and girls. Most cultural institutions are male dominated and promote patriarchal tendencies that have remained a major hindrance to social justice and adherence to women's and girls' rights. The greatest challenge remains transforming the attitudes of cultural leaders and in turn the cultural practices and norms to promote the rights of women and girls.

Since 2013, FEMNET has sought to tap into the social status and influence religious and cultural leaders have to promote rather than hinder sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women and girls in Meru, Tharaka Nithi and Homabay counties in Kenya.

The project engages cultural and religious leaders in mobilizing and leading their communities towards ending socio-cultural practices deeply-rooted in their communities such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child, early and forced marriage and wife inheritance and cleansing that threaten the bodily integrity and dignity of women and girls.

Using FEMNET's Men to Men Strategy, the leaders have successfully cultivated an environment for religious and cultural leaders to work together to address these harmful practices. In Meru and Tharaka Nithi, the highly esteemed cultural leaders known as Njuri Ncheke have been openly speaking out against harmful practices and supporting alternative rites of passage, taking concrete steps to transform norms and cultivate positive cultures.

Malawi Learning Mission

A number of African women from across the continent were supported to undertake a non-partisan, fact-finding and learning mission to Malawi prior to the unprecedented tripartite elections that took place on May 20th, 2014. The mission met with female aspirants and political candidates, women's rights activists and practitioners, voters as well as relevant entities who have been engaging in the electoral process and organizing to support female candidates irrespective of their party affiliations.



A media briefing was also held as a way to engage media personnel and gauge public opinion. The mission sought to understand the prevailing environment and discourse in which female candidates operate as they enter and contend for elections. The mission also served as a demonstration of pan-African solidarity for and support to female candidates and women's rights campaigners.

Unfortunately the results of the election did not yield positive results for women's political participation – with the incumbent female president, Joyce Banda losing her position, and significant declines in numbers of women in parliament and local posts.

Lessons learnt from the Mission include:

1. Necessity of sustained and consistent support prior, during and after women's term in politics
2. Understanding of different forms of power – including power within, power with and power to
3. Ensure right strategies, support systems and tools are in place – and adapt as necessary
4. Carry out periodic reviews for feedback and accountability



Regional Engagements



FEMNET in conjunction with other women's rights organizations felt it timely to engage with the incoming President of the General Assembly (PGA) Hon. Sam Kutesa, prior to September 2014 when he was expected to begin his tenure. This resulted in a High Level Meeting that took place from July 23 – 25 2014 in Kampala, Uganda. The meeting was attended by representatives of women's rights, faith and community-based civil society organizations, media, UN Agencies and government from over 14 countries across the continent. The output of the meeting was a [position statement](#) which was shared with Hon. Kutesa and Amb. Etuket who was his designate as well as other members of government, civil society and media. Other articles from that meeting are available [here](#).

AGA - the African Governance Architecture within the AU Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has been convening the High Level Dialogue Trends on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights for the past three years on various themes. For the first time last year, a Gender Pre-Forum was held in Kigali, Rwanda prior to the High Level Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. FEMNET supported AGA to organize for the forum, providing inputs, recommending participants and panelists for the meeting. Furthermore, FEMNET used its networks and platforms to ensure that the recommendations from the High Level Forum were widely disseminated and utilized. The theme of the DG Trends in 2015 will be dedicated to Gender Equality.



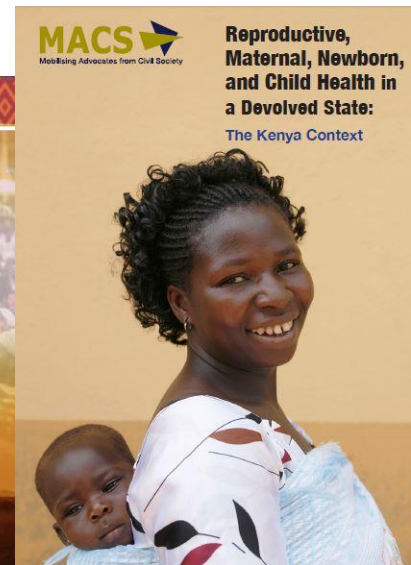
COMMUNICATION : The Heartbeat of FEMNET

At FEMNET we facilitate women in Africa to be better informed and be able to meaningfully engage in and influence processes at all levels and contribute to the body of knowledge on women's rights issues using cutting edge communication tools.

We produce information resources that inform, educate, generate debate and contribute to the body of knowledge on women's rights and gender equality.

FEMNET publishes and widely shares information resources that speak to the empowerment, development and growth of African women and girls – as well as provide feminist analysis to ongoing processes and policies. Our [monthly bilingual e-bulletins](#) continue to provide current news and trends, resources, opportunities, viewpoints and a platform to showcase our members and their work. Through our flagship publication, the [African Women's Journal](#), we continue to commemorate the African Women's Decade and bring to our readers insights on specific topics of interest and relevance from a broad range of perspectives.

25 YEARS STRONG: COLLECTIVELY SHAPING THE AFRICA WE WANT



A Handbook for Religious and Cultural Leaders Engaging Communities to End Female Genital Mutilation

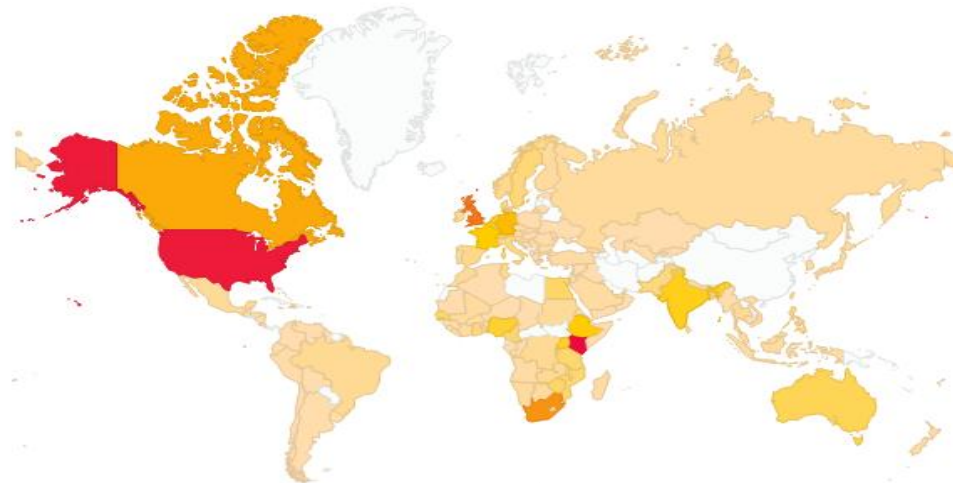


Find a [complete list of our resources](http://www.femnet.co/index.php/en/resources) here: <http://www.femnet.co/index.php/en/resources>

Through the **Gender & Development Resource Centre**, FEMNET continuous to offer information and reference services on diverse gender and women's rights issues.

Engaging our Online Community

Throughout the year, our various online platforms, from our website to our social media sites and listservs, were used to facilitate the exchange of Information, ideas, experiences and strategies as well as to engage and lobby decision-makers on key policy issues.



The global footprint of our blog in 2014 (<http://femnet.wordpress.com>)

1 2,521

The [bilingual website](#) has received approximately over 10,000 views per month in 2014. By mid December 2014, [Facebook](#) had 6,522 likes, [Twitter](#) had 6,021 followers and over 20,000 tweets, the [blog](#) had 36,778 views and [Youtube](#) had 14,084 views.

In [May](#), [FEMNET](#) joined [Girls Not Brides](#), [SOAWR](#), [Equality Now](#) in supporting the [#EndChildMarriageNow](#) tweetathon in line with the [AU Campaign Launch to end Child Marriage](#), which culminated in an [Al Jazeera Interview](#).



During Africa Day, commemorated annually on 25th May, [FEMNET](#) together with [Make Every Woman Count](#) hosted a tweetathon giving a platform for women and girls to define [#TheAfricaWeWant](#) in poetry, songs, articles, pictures and blog posts. The tweetathon was featured on [Al Jazeera's the Stream](#). Find a [compilation of visions here](#).

[FEMNET](#) also joined the [LEPA Initiative](#) and Red Elephant Foundation in commemorating the very first Menstrual Hygiene day in the [#MenstruationMatters](#) and urging others to [#BreakTheSilence](#).

Other tweetathons we joined/facilitated include: #Beijing20, #MydressMychoice, #BringBackOurGirls, #JusticeForLiz and the 16 Days of Activism (Travelling Caravan).

In August, during the famed [US/Africa Summit](#), FEMNET joined Oxfam in their online campaign – including a letter to President Obama as well as a joint social media strategy defining #TheAfricaWeWant. Our Member from Seychelles, Homa Mungapen represented us at the Summit and shares her reflections, thoughts and recommendations for next steps following the Summit in this [report](#).

Documented Stories and Experiences Using ICTs

FEMNET embarked on producing a [biographical documentary on FEMNET](#) in partnership with Newmark Group Limited. The clip captures voices from our members and key moments of FEMNET in the last 26 years and briefly outlines our milestones and dreams for the coming years.

FEMNET has also partnered with the International Museum of Women, now under the Global Fund for Women on a very exciting [IGNITE exhibit](#) that aspires to showcase women and girls and ICTs and engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Media Engagement

Liaising and deepening engagement with the media, both local and regional, has been critical to FEMNET’s work of promoting women and girl’s rights and the gender equality agenda. In 2014, media personnel were incorporated as participants in several convenings to deepen their knowledge and understanding of women’s rights issues as well as the nuances therein. Media personnel were also actively engaged in planning and executing campaigns such as the *Bring Back Our Girls* and *Justice for Liz*.

Engagement with the media was also enhanced during this period by facilitating media training sessions on pertinent topics such as SRHR which allowed media personnel to interact with experts and civil society actors in a relaxed atmosphere and build relations.



Campaigning – Bring Back Our Girls



Hundred of girls were abducted on April 15th, 2014 from their school in Chibok, Nigeria. A local campaign, Bring Back Our Girls, was launched that captured the imagination of both a regional and global audience. FEMNET joined the campaign – mobilizing its members and partners to take action. One month on, FEMNET called for a [Solidarity Day of Action](#) that resulted in at least 20 countries across Africa and globally taking action, convening marches, vigils, fasts, prayers, protests, media briefings and more.

Together with SOAWR, FEMNET renewed the [Bring Back Our Girls](#) campaign and sustained calls for the return of the girls throughout the year through a user-generated site to populate key messages and consolidate updates, holding anniversary vigils and consistently calling on authorities to act. The girls are not yet returned but we will not stop advocacy until we see their return and reintegration in their communities. FEMNET was keen to sustain pressure on policy-makers and ensure the world did not forget the girls.



CAPACITY BUILDING : The Brains

At FEMNET we work closely with our member organizations to improve the capacities of women and girls in organizational development, economic empowerment, policy advocacy and political participation.



Entrepreneurial Mentorship



FEMNET has been a partnering with the [Cherie Blair Foundation](#) since 2013 to ensure that its members benefit from the Foundation's [Mentoring Women in Business Program](#). The program combines mentoring with technology, pioneering a new way of supporting women entrepreneurs. Mentees spend 12 months working one-on-one with mentors to achieve key business goals. Participants build their business skills and digital literacy through trainings, and join a global community of committed, ambitious entrepreneurs. The 2014 intake included 17 FEMNET members from across the continent.

Nurturing Young Leadership

FEMNET continues its strategy of engaging young people as a way of nurturing and building their leadership – understanding the critical importance of inter-generational dialogue, learning and exchange as well as the right of young people to determine their own destinies and partake in decision-making.

Since 2010, FEMNET has been part of the [Fredkorpset](#) (FK) South to South exchange of young professionals that takes place over a year. FEMNET selects fellows from its diverse membership. The FK fellows of 2014 speak of their own experiences:



My FK experience was enjoyable. This program gave me an opportunity not only to overcome my weaknesses but also to learn more and discover my abilities. It gave me a platform to better understand and tackle gender issues and courage to face all challenges that came my way. This fellowship was a big part of my personal and professional development. I salute the organizers and encourage all (present and future) fellows to engage, learn, listen and participate in every opportunity.
– **Julian Nakyazze, Uganda**

My gratitude goes to FEMNET for what they are doing to empower young women like me through the FK Exchange program. This opportunity equipped with skills and as well as financial resources that I would not have acquired sitting at home. Reflecting on the FEMNET-FK journey, many young women from Zimbabwe and other countries have benefited from the FEMNET - FK partnership. This has positively impacted on the lives of many young women as well as their families.

– **Martha Mlambo, Zimbabwe**



Building partnerships and alliances



At FEMNET we believe that it is impossible to realize our mission if we work in silos. Throughout the year we have sought and built critical partnerships with like minded institutions, organizations, individuals and unlikely allies across different sectors and different levels. We continue to invest resources and time in movement building and working in coalitions and alliances at national,

regional and global level. FEMNET co-chairs NGOCSW Africa; is a steering Committee member of SOAWR, the Post 2015 Women’s Coalition, Reproductive Health Advocacy Network (RHANA); and a member of the Women’s Major Group, Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), Africa Working Group on Post 2015 Development Agenda, AWID, among others.



REFLECTING & MOVING FORWARD

Lessons Learnt

Increasingly, we are seeing instability on the continent brought about by fundamentalism and conservatism. This has led to erosion of gains previously made for gender equality and an increase in discrimination and acts of violence perpetrated against women and girls. With examples such as various terror attacks in Kenya, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in Nigeria, arrests and killings of women human rights defenders and formulation of laws that undermine the human rights of women and girls across the continent. FEMNET continues to join efforts with other stakeholders to demand African Governments and other stakeholders to prioritize sustained human security and safety guided by human rights and gender equality principles.

We are also witnessing shrinking spaces for civil society engagement and operation with laws that limit CSO access to financial resources, limiting the issues CSOs can work on including rights and advocacy, deregistration of NGOs with accusations of terrorism activities without evidence. FEMNET continues to collaborate with other CSOs to advocate for increased space for civil society.

Externally, we are also seeing the emergence of well funded organizations and individuals working to counter progressive human rights frameworks. At the recently concluded Commission on Population and Development, it was clear that there was support for a conservative agenda with alliances formed between representatives of the African Group and Family Watch International. We have experienced policy makers negotiating positions that are in contradiction with the policy/legal frameworks at the regional and national levels. To mitigate this FEMNET will increase its advocacy work with governments and hold them accountable to what their governments have already committed to. We have also started working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in capitals to overcome the challenge of disconnection between the policies on ground and the positions negotiators take at the regional and international levels.

Internally, we have noted a trend of reduced external funding for core support and a shift towards activity based funding, a situation that presents a challenge of sustaining strong organizations and the women's movement. This has especially affected women's rights organizations who continue to exist precariously. To mitigate this, FEMNET will continue to advocate for core support funding in order to ensure sustainability of organizations especially women's rights organizations and build on rather than erode gains made.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

