

MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION NETWORK (FEMNET)



Reclaiming Our Power: The May Dispatch!

May was a month of pure, unadulterated African feminist fire! We gathered our collective brilliance in Nairobi for the monumental Bold Circles convening, where we were all about dismantling patriarchy and reclaiming our narrative power.

From locking arms in deep sisterhood to diving into strategic labs on feminist legal advocacy, digital safety, and survivor-centered organizing, we can analyse systemic violence—briefly and boldly, we co-created a fierce, unified African Feminist GBV Action Agenda to disrupt the status quo and rewrite the continent's future!



The Bold Circles Convening



The convening **Reshaping an African Feminist Agenda to End Gender-Based Violence** held from **19th to 21st May 2026** brought together feminist organizers, advocates, and women's rights organizations from across 17 African countries to strengthen collective advocacy, deepen movement building, and advance coordinated feminist action to end Gender Based Violence.

The meeting created space for critical conversations on accountability, feminist legal advocacy,

narrative power, digital safety, trauma-informed organizing, coalition building, and survivor-centered approaches, while reflecting on the growing challenges facing feminist movements, including rising femicide, shrinking civic spaces, online violence, and weak implementation of gender justice frameworks across the continent.

Click [here](#) to read more on the discussions held on [day 1](#) and [day 2](#) of the convening.

Steering Collective Action: The META (Meaningful Engagement for Transformative Action) Steering Committee Convening!

Talk about putting democratic action into motion! From **May 20th to 21st, 2026**, the META consortium led by the SDGs Kenya Forum, in partnership with FEMNET and Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) and support from the European Union Delegation to Kenya, successfully brought together its Civil Society Steering Committee in Nairobi under the rallying theme, '**From Dialogue to Democratic Action: Strengthening Governance, Civic Participation and Inclusive Partnerships**'.



Gathering civil society champions from all six Regional Economic Blocs alongside government and development partners, this intensive two-day strategy session was an absolute incubator for forward-looking electoral preparedness ahead of the Kenya 2027 elections.

We threw ourselves into the co-creation of a rollout strategy for our brand-new Online Dialogue Platform, mapped out the onboarding blueprint for the next Youth Sounding Board (YSB) cohort, and synthesized critical insights from ARFSD-12 to form a unified advocacy position for the upcoming High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2026. To top it all off, we engaged in vital accountability checks regarding PBO Act compliance strategies, ensuring our collective movement remains legally fortified and radically resilient!

Frontline Accountability: The Hybrid CSO-EU Governance, Peace and Security Dialogue!

On the sidelines of the steering committee meeting, we shifted gears into high-stakes, multi-stakeholder advocacy on May 21st, 2026, with our hybrid EU-CSO Dialogue on Governance, Peace and Security in Kenya. This highly anticipated dialogue served as a vital, values-based platform for Kenyan Civil Society Organizations and the EU Delegation to Kenya to lock horns on institutional accountability and civic protections as the country transitions into a critical pre-election cycle.

The energy was unmatched as participants explicitly confronted the rise of identity-driven political mobilization, unpacked the digital frontiers of electoral interference like state disinformation, and championed youth participation in democratic processes. Featuring vibrant panel sessions detailing the unique barriers faced by women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the dialogue moved past general talk to build concrete, actionable recommendations for grassroots election monitoring and civic education. We made it beautifully clear that transparent governance and human rights are not optional, and civil society is firmly in the driver's seat to steer Kenya's democratic trajectory!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Teach-in Session 2 on Data-Driven Advocacy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) 10th June 2026

FEMNET, in collaboration with Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) under the ACT Programme supported by UN Women and the European Union, will convene Teach-In Session 2 on Data-Driven Advocacy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) on 10 June 2026, stay tuned! Building on the success of the first session, this interactive learning space will equip women's rights organizations, feminist advocates, and movement actors with practical skills to collect, analyze, interpret, and strategically use data in advocacy and accountability efforts. Through guided demonstrations, practical exercises, and collective learning, participants will explore how to transform evidence into compelling advocacy messages, policy demands, and recommendations that drive action towards ending violence against women and girls across Africa.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Youth-Led Non-Profit Innovation Award Programme

This global funding mechanism explicitly targets youth-led non-profits working at the community level to advance social justice and sustainable development goals. It is perfectly suited for young feminist collectives and youth-led gender equality networks across Africa.

- **Focus Areas:** Grassroots advocacy, community-led service delivery, social impact scaling, and responding to localized emergencies.
- **Target:** Non-profit organizations led by young changemakers aged 15 to 30 (applicant must hold a founder or C-level role).
- **Grant Value:** Up to \$10,000 in equity-free funding, plus a two-year acceleration journey, leadership mentorship, and global networking opportunities.
- **Restriction:** Ineligible if your organization already has secured funding of \$100,000 or more.
- **Deadline:** July 12, 2026 (Note: While this closes exactly one week after your target date, early preparation throughout June is highly recommended).
- **Link:** [Youth-Led Non-Profit Innovation Award](#)

2. Together Women Rise Featured Grants Program (2026–2027 Cycle)

This program funds impactful grassroots organizations committed to women's empowerment, gender equality, and locally led solutions in marginalized communities across the Global South, including Africa.

- **Focus Areas:** Launching new gender justice initiatives, expanding existing advocacy programs, or strengthening internal organizational capacity (such as monitoring and evaluation frameworks or staff training).
- **Target:** Grassroots, women-led NGOs operating in low-income or marginalized communities.
- **Grant Value:** \$35,000 to \$50,000 disbursed over a 24-month period.
- **Eligibility Note:** Organizations must have a minimum annual operating budget of \$100,000 to qualify.
- **Deadline:** June 5, 2026 (5:00 p.m. ET) (This falls directly within your window and requires immediate action if your NGO matches the budget threshold).
- **Link:** [Together Women Rise Featured Grants](#)

3. Female Founders Growth Programme 2026

If your women-led or youth-led NGO operates on a social enterprise/technology-enabled non-profit model or manages a revenue-generating wing to sustain its feminist advocacy, this investment readiness program offers massive capital pathways.

- **Focus Areas:** Strategic guidance, financial restructuring, operational strengthening, and direct positioning for large-scale debt or equity capital.
- **Target:** Viable, tech-enabled entities that are at least 2 years old and feature a female founder (50%+ ownership) or have a woman in a C-suite role (CEO, COO, CTO).
- **Grant/Funding Value:** Access to a curated investor network with a combined potential of up to \$2 million in debt and equity financing.
- **Deadline:** June 11, 2026
- **Link:** [Female Founders Growth Programme](#)

4. Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-Africa) Rapid Response Grants

For African feminist organizations and youth-led collectives needing immediate funding to respond to sudden, unforeseen civic pushback, security threats, or time-sensitive advocacy windows before early July, UAF-Africa remains the ideal partner.

- **Focus Areas:** Security/evacuation grants for women human rights defenders, emergency litigation, and rapid-response strategic movement building.
- **Target:** African feminist organizations, human rights defenders, and unregistered woman/youth-led grassroots collectives.
- **Grant Value:** Varies based on immediate emergency needs.
- **Deadline:** Rolling / No Fixed Deadline (Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis with a rapid turnaround time of 24–72 hours).
- **Link:** [Urgent Action Fund-Africa Emergency Grants](#)

OUR CONTINENTAL FOOTPRINT THIS MONTH



- Kenya
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Ethiopia
- Cameroon
- Zimbabwe
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa

- Libya
- Congo
- Malawi
- Uganda
- Lesotho
- Morocco
- Tanzania
- Mauritius



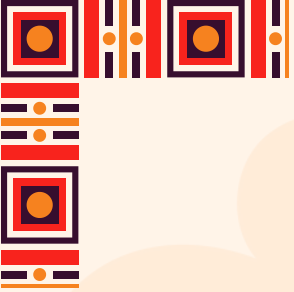
The Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)

The Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) is a national non-profit and women's rights organization committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and advancing gender equality in Kenya and beyond. For three decades, COVAW has worked with survivors, communities and institutions to challenge harmful norms, influence policy and build a society where women and girls live free from violence and discrimination. With a vision of a violence-free and non-discriminatory society where women and girls thrive, COVAW works on four strategic areas: Prevention, Mitigation and Response to SGBV, Access to Comprehensive SRHR Services; Access to Justice and Women's Leadership and Governance.

COVAW is actively engaged in **intersectional coalition** and **movement building**, which has seen it advance the voice, participation and leadership of women with disabilities in **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)** and Feminist movements in **East and Southern Africa** region. This has ensured that women and girls with disabilities are increasingly at the centre of EVAWG efforts rather than at the margins. The milestone has been achieved through the Inclusive and Empowered Feminist Movements in Africa project implemented in Kenya, Rwanda and Malawi in partnership with Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) from Malawi.

The initiative is supported by the **UN Trust Fund** to End Violence Against Women under the Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence Against Women (ACT) programme. The initiative seeks to address the invisibility of women and girls with disabilities in EVAWG initiatives and broader gender equality and feminist movements that help influence GBV policies. COVAW has supported the formation of a subregional network of women with disability advocates from Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda. Women with disability advocates from the network have participated in the Forum for NGOs preceding the 85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in Banjul, the Gambia centering their voices, perspectives and lived experience in the regional platform.

COVAW's other programmes include **Komesha FGM Sasa!** Programme, implemented in partnership with UNFPA and the European Union which has enabled provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) training for frontline and healthcare workers and strengthening community-based protection systems. COVAW also leads Kenya's response to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) through the Making All Spaces Safe (MASS) Programme, in partnership with UNFPA, by training multi-sectoral service providers in Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa and spearheading the development of Kenya's first TFGBV Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures. In addition, the Action for Paid Childcare Sector Transformation (ACT) Project supports the professionalization of childcare across Kisumu, Nairobi and Kakamega counties ensuring that the voices, rights and lived realities of women in paid childcare sector are recognized, respected and prioritized.



"To change the world, we must change how we think. African feminism offers a lens that does not just critique power, but radically reimagines how we care for one another, our communities, and our continent."

_ Minna Salami (Nigerian-Finnish Feminist Author and Academic)



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Questions or comments? Email us at m.anzaya@femnet.or.ke

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