



**TGNP Mtandao**

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**Gender Festival 2019**

Gender **Activists**  
**Transforming** the World





The 14<sup>th</sup>  
Gender Festival  
***Concept Note***





# The 14<sup>th</sup> Gender Festival

## Concept Note

### I. Background

The Gender Festival (GF) is an open and safe space bringing together women's rights activists from a wide variety of backgrounds. Here they can reflect on the progress of the Transformative Feminist Movement (TFM), celebrate its achievements, and share lessons, challenges and counteractive strategies. In the spirit of collective action, GF is organized by TGNP in partnership with other likeminded Civil Society Organizations. It provides excellent opportunities for sharpening the women/feminist agenda and building consensus on priority advocacy issues for women's rights, empowerment, gender equity, equality and social justice. The main objective of the Gender Festival is to promote women's collective voice and participation in the economic, social and political development arenas.

What is our working characterization of Feminism and the Transformative Feminist Movement? We understand Feminism to be the advocacy of women's rights based on the equality of women and men. This advocacy means struggling against and constantly challenging all forms of sexism and patriarchy; linking personal experiences and the public.

Feminism places patriarchal social relations, structures and systems that are embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures - class, age, race, disability, ethnicity - at the center of analysis. In Africa, our current feminist struggles are inextricably linked to the diverse pre- and post-colonial contexts - of slavery, colonization, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism and now globalization. Consequently, to effectively challenge patriarchy demands that we also challenge other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

The unequal access to, and control over resources by women and men, and their unequal rewards within the private and public spheres in all African societies derives their legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. Patriarchal ideology creates and legitimizes the structuring of every aspect of our lives by establishing the framework within which society defines and views men and women and constructs male supremacy. Our ideological task as feminists is to understand this system and our political task is to end it. Feminism fights the *system of patriarchy*, not individual men or women.

All the 13 Gender Festivals to date have attempted to clarify, build on and develop this understanding of Transformative Feminism, under the overarching theme of *Gender, Democracy and Development*. Between the first GF in 1996 to the last one in 2017, 20,000 people have been congregating at the TGNP headquarters in Dar es Salaam. The success of these festivals prompted the organizers to launch district gender festivals from 2010. These together have attracted 5,000 participants at local level since their inception.

This year's Gender Festival has special significance, in that the Movement is celebrating 25 years of TGNP Mtandao on the one hand, and approaching celebrations of 25 years of the Beijing Platform of Action, on the other. The TFM has linked the national and global women's movements, with the global collective voices being expressed in various forums from Mexico (1975), to Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985), to Beijing (1995). At the regional level, collective demands have resulted in regional commitments including the SADC Declaration, the Maputo Protocol as well as the East African Gender Policy. At the national level, collective action has resulted in new policy developments, legal reforms such as the Sexual Offences Special Provision Act (SOSPA), and constitutional provisions for affirmative clauses on women's rights, especially in political leadership for women. To that end, GF has continued to celebrate these achievements as well as raise collective voices on the oppression and exploitation that remain.

Every GF has built on previous festivals, guided by main themes and sub-themes drawn from a series of contextual reflections on women and girls' priority issues. For example, the 13<sup>th</sup> GF theme was: ***Transformation of Oppressive Social Systems is Inevitable***. The debates from that GF drove home the realization that, this transformation can only be a reality if women believe in it and as a

collective are willing to take a lead in the actions that would give us a more just, fair and equitable alternative world. This is the steppingstone from which we fly with this year's GF theme - ***Gender Activists Transforming the World.***

The 14<sup>th</sup> GF takes place in a context which offers opportunities for strengthening women's rights movements, but which also throws up new contestations. Globally, the continuing ascendancy of right-wing governments and institutions poses a great challenge to progressive movements generally and to women's rights movements in particular. Related to this, is the persistence of marginalization in political participation, access to economic resources as well as educational attainment. This is noted, for instance, in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2018), which measures gaps in four thematic areas - Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment. The Report states that in the area of political empowerment, the gender gap remains at 77.1% while economic and opportunity gaps stand at 41.9%. It further notes that, if measures are not taken to address these gaps, it will take countries in Sub-Saharan Africa 135 years to close them in all the four dimensions.

Related to the gender gap is the wealth gap within and among nations, posing yet another challenge to the women's rights movement. For example, the 2018 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report shows that the top 10% of adults own 85% of global wealth while 64% of adults own only 1.9% of global wealth, and that more than 90% of adults in India and Africa belong to this latter category.

Fortunately, the contradictions within the global system seem to have stimulated a consciousness among human rights activists generally and feminist/women's rights activists in particular, to demand for a transformed world with an alternative global system which is fairer, more just and more equitable.

This year's Gender Festival marks a historic milestone of celebrating 25 years of collective organization, expression and activism by TGNP Mtandao at global, regional and national levels. Globally, we are preparing for the 25-year celebrations of the Beijing Platform of Action which created a formidable force for national and global movements in women's rights. Indeed, the Beijing process was part of our coming into being.

Our sister Hon. Gertrude Mongella (the first president of the Pan African Parliament) led the process in Beijing and also led the initiatives of “Bringing Beijing Back Home”. While other activists from Beijing were met with serious opposition, Tanzanians received positive state support. The then President Benjamin Mkapa officiated at the “Bringing Beijing Back Home” ceremony and identified four priority areas of country focus from the 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

These were: a) Enhancement of women’s legal capacity; b) Economic empowerment and poverty eradication; c) Women’s political empowerment and decision-making and d) Women’s access to education, training and employment. This was a symbolic gesture of state support for the Beijing outcomes.

## **2. Our Achievements and Triumphs**

Since its inception, TGNP Mtandao has worked hand in hand with sister organizations at national and international levels. Nationally, our 25-year journey has been with a collective of women from the grassroots to the national level. Regionally, we worked with other feminists in Southern Africa to develop SADC advocacy towards a Gender Protocol of feminists/women as well as the Gender Index. This was a collective effort of Feminists in Africa leading to the development of the African Feminist Charter under the sponsorship of the African Women Development Fund. At the global level, TGNP has worked collectively with national and global CSOs/human rights groups in critiquing SAPs and globalization processes under campaigns such as *50 years is enough:WB go home*. Our journey throughout has successfully embraced four major components which have been instrumental in sharpening our engagement, discourse and organizing practices, as outlined below.

### **2.1 Our Ideological and Conceptual Journey**

The first dimension of our journey has been a learning process in identifying the intersectionality between women’s struggles and struggles within broader oppressive systems based on class, race, ethnicity and religion. In this respect, TGNP Mtandao and like-minded partners have taken the lead in challenging global inequalities and the neoliberal macroeconomic frameworks imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, such as the Structural Adjustment Programs

(SAPs). We have also challenged the commoditization of common goods which overburdened the care economy. This position has sharpened our feminist knowledge, bringing greater understanding to processes that have subjected women to multiple forms of oppression. Women face oppression on three fronts - as part of the toiling global citizens; as subjects of the oppressive social and economic systems which exclude and discriminate them from benefiting from national and global resources; and as targets of the patriarchal systems. It is on that basis that, TGNP Mtandao and other activists from women's rights movements decided on a transformative movement which would ease women's heavy burden in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres.

## **2.2 Strengthening Collective Organizing through Building a Transformative Feminist**

### **Movement**

The second phase of our journey has been the move from individualized struggles to more collective organizing over major issues, while retaining our individual organizational identities. This has been our strategy to strengthen the transformative feminist movement. We recognized the power of a collective voice from the very beginning. TGNP began as a network which facilitated but also brought together various networks, alliances, and coalitions of individual feminists/women. These included the Feminist Activist Coalition (FEMACT), the Young Feminist Forum (YFF), the Women and Water Network, the Gender Responsive Budget Alliance, the Anti-Sextortion Coalition, The Women Constitution and Leadership Coalition as well as the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) coalition. Through networking and coalition-building we have witnessed some major gains in areas of legal reform including the Sexual Offences Bill, The Land Act which incorporated women's rights to own property in the same way as men, and the inclusion of Gender Budget principles in our National Budget Guidelines.

## **2.3 Recognizing and Documenting “Our Stories” (Herstory)**

The third main junction in our growth process has been recognizing and documenting the contributions of women in the making of and building our nation and indeed our continent. The invisibility of women in all the collective struggles of resisting colonial occupation, in the decolonization processes as well as in the struggle against neo-liberalism reflects how patriarchy has been

easily absorbed into systems of knowledge which then excluded women's knowledge bases, experiences and indeed their contributions in the making of 'our collective' story as marginalized persons. We are on a journey in which we must question the basis of epistemological approaches which exclude women as knowers with rich experiences which need to be part of mainstream knowledge to be passed on to the current and future generations.

## **2.4 Generating Feminist Conceptual Framework, Knowledge and Animation Methodologies**

The fourth fork in our story has been our success in uncovering the less visible dynamics of gender discrimination, subordination and exclusion. We have done this through feminist popular education and animation strategies, Women begin to question the dynamics through self-organized processes of consciousness-raising that begin with an exploration of their unspoken feelings of discomfort about the structural and internalized forms of oppression. The process has catalyzed women's action, knowledge, collaboration and political creativity. One element of this strategy involves power analysis, which seeks to disrupt patriarchy and other intersecting power structures and ideologies that legitimize and prop up all forms of exploitation and oppression, exclusion and denigration. In order to be able to advocate and stimulate consciousness of various actors, the movement documents the work it does (e.g. reports, videos, audios), conducts research, writes think-pieces and uses all these to inform as well as to improve its strategies. Examples of studies are Transformative Movement Building,<sup>1</sup> Situation Analysis of Women's Movement in Tanzania,<sup>2</sup> Tanzania Gender Profile 2007 and 2017, Activist Voices: Feminist Struggles for an Alternative World and the SADC and East Africa Gender Barometers (annually).

## **3. Our Tools**

### **3.1 Information Technology**

Development and revolution in information technology is an opportunity for organizing and movement building, but it also creates exclusion and marginalization of those who are peripheral to that revolution, particularly rural and urban poor women. Developments in ICT have led to the so-called 'global village',

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<sup>1</sup> TGNP 2015

<sup>2</sup> Shamshad Rehmattullah & Hope Chigudu 2019.

making it possible for women and oppressed global citizens to organize and build global and regional networks, coalitions and movements. Such movements have inspired the creation of institutions supporting feminists' resource mobilization, such as: The Global Fund for Women, The African Women Fund, as well as the Women Fund Tanzania, to facilitate women's collective actions. These entities were developed when it became clear, after the Beijing Plan of Action, that reliance on government funding could not cope with the growth of the women's movements and their work of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The Feminist Women Funds have focused on providing feminist philosophy, objectives and approaches to philanthropy in Africa and beyond. This kind of funding allows feminists to question the mainstream funding modalities and raise alternative ways of investing in feminist/women's movement-building strategies in the present juncture as well as in future as we move forward with our Beijing+25 agenda.

### **3.2 Beijing +25**

TGNP and the women's rights movement in the country and beyond are looking at Beijing +25 years as a tool for future energizing and activating feminists to reclaim our spaces and voices. While taking stock of what has been attained in the 25 years of movement building, we shall also be reflecting on the range of interventions which have translated the national Beijing commitments at both national and community levels.

## **4. Hurdles in our Journey**

### **4.1 Resistance**

Our journey has been like climbing a rocky and thorny hill whose peak we are yet to conquer. The major challenge has been the growing resistance and lack of commitment to transform the structures of power and oppression. This is expressed in various ways, including the continuing enactment of legislation which legitimates discriminatory practices; restrictions which limit the space for organizing and articulating alternative voices, as well as backlashes which have undermined the few gains we achieved during our journey.

## 4.2 Gender Based Violence (GBV)/Violence Against Women (VAW)

Gender Based Violence/Violence against Women is used as a strategy of oppressing women who are voiceless and silencing those who are active in deconstructing unequal social relations. As an example, sexual corruption has been used at different levels as a weapon to prevent women from participating freely in leadership positions, employment opportunities and access to social services. This has led to the formation of the Anti-Sextortion Coalition in Tanzania to break the silence and call for accountability from those in positions to mitigate sexual corruption. At the same time, oppression and inequality continue to be visible at structural and service provision levels. Data from various official sources shows that 31% of girls experienced child marriage (DHS, UNICEF 2018 Global data bases). This subjects girls to social exclusion, traps them in poverty, limits their opportunities for self-development, interferes with their educational achievements and endangers their health in childbirth.

Similarly, data shows unacceptable levels of violence against women and children. Approximately 42% of women have experienced lifetime physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners.

This has not only caused permanent loss but also is a cost to individual families and to the national economy. Studies have shown that VAW/GBV cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.3 Divide and Rule Tactics and Ideological Confusion

Forces of resistance within human rights movements claim that the feminist agenda is a 'foreign' imposed ideology which undermines what they claim to be 'African culture'. A few who claim to be more 'progressive' within the male dominated Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) further allege that, the feminist agenda is a secondary contradiction which does not deserve primary consideration, the primary contradiction being 'class struggle'. Such divergences among even the progressives tend to detract from feminist efforts as well as cause some ideological confusion.

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<sup>3</sup> Tanzania Mainland], Ministry of Health (MoH) [Zanzibar], National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Office of the Chief Government Statistician (OCGS), and ICF. 2016. Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (TDHS-MIS) 2015-16. Dar es Salaam,

These challenges notwithstanding, TGNP Mtandao and the women's rights movement have stood firm to defend the feminist agenda, through providing conceptual clarity, role modeling transformative leadership, organizing safe learning spaces and mentoring young feminists through knowledge-sharing and intergenerational dialogue. This position has indeed facilitated our existence as part of the larger movement and informs the objectives of the 14<sup>th</sup> Gender Festival.

## 5. Our Objectives

### 5.1 Objectives of the 14th Gender Festival

- To celebrate and critically reflect on our transformative feminist journey in the last 25 years of our existence and its connections with 25 years of Beijing.
- To reflect, share knowledge and experiences of our collective and individual struggles for the past 25 years.
- To provide a learning space to expand our feminist knowledge and experience.
- To broaden and strengthen coalitions of likeminded individuals and organizations at the local, national and international levels to spearhead, influence and advocate for a more just, fair and equitable world.
- To recognize and reward individuals and organizations whose contributions in movement building have been exceptional.

### 5.2 Themes and Sub-Themes

The objectives specified in section 5.1 inform our main theme and six thematic focus areas for this year's GF.

The Main Theme is ***“Gender Activists Transforming the World”***. This covers the following Sub- themes:

1. Feminist leadership organizing and movement building.
2. Feminist knowledge generation and reproduction - validation and sharing within the movement and beyond.
3. Feminist discourses and the destruction of neo-liberal macroeconomic paradigms and discourses.
4. Sustaining the women's movement: agenda, finance, technology and methodology
5. Women and the Media: Changing our narrative.
6. TGNPs' 25-year transformative feminist journey: reflections, experiences and successes, including Beijing implementation.

### 5.3 Organization of the 14th Gender Festival

The 14<sup>th</sup> Gender Festival will include plenary discussions and workshops, spread over 4 days as detailed below:

#### Day One: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019

This will be the opening of the Gender Festival, with keynote presentations delivered in a participatory approach focusing on the main festival theme; followed by the launch of the GF Exhibition. The first day's sessions usually provide the conceptual framework for the GF. Day 1 will have the first of the two plenaries of the GF. It will be followed by brief sessions during Days 3 and 4. The first plenary session will feature 25 years of TGNP Mtandao, which will be linked to Beijing+25. The plenary session will walk us through our 25-year journey - sharing achievements, lessons and challenges of broadening and building our transformative feminist movement.

#### Day Two: 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Several workshops will be running in Days 2 and 3, guided by the sub-themes of the festival. Day

1 & 2 evenings will be open for participating organizations and individuals to meet, network, and/or create alternative encounters.

#### Day Three: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Apart from the workshops, Day 3 evening will be occupied by the African Feminist Night, in which participants will dine together and celebrate activism in various forms of artistic expression, including songs, poetry, storytelling and dance.

#### Day Four: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019

The last day will comprise the closing sessions which will synthesize the workshop discussions and tease out issues raised throughout the four days of the Festival. Based on the issues raised participants will develop action plans to be implemented back home.

Exhibitions will run throughout the Festival, providing space for TGNP Mtandao and other participating organizations and networks to share their work through a variety of media (videos, poster displays and photos). Publishers, CSOs and individual women artisans are also encouraged to display and sell their products. Separate spaces will be provided for special interest groups to create hubs for networking, information sharing and planning (including young feminists, women with disability and others). There will also be a 'Hall of Fame' where our mothers, sisters, daughters will be remembered for their contribution to the struggle for women's rights, gender equity and equality and social justice. Participants will be encouraged to display photographs and write short descriptions of their heroines.



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