

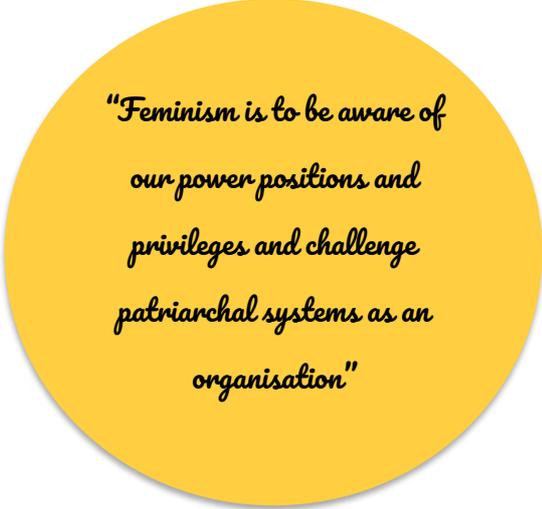
AFRIKAGRUPPERNA - A FEMINIST ORGANISATION

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Feminism, justice and circle of solidarity are fundamental principles crosscutting our theory of change. Afrikagrupperna is a feminist organisation where a feminist analysis shall inform all aspects of our being, on societal, operational and policy levels.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an accessible guideline for staff to practice in Afrikagrupperna's various commitments. In 2017 Afrikagrupperna decided to apply a strategic feminist approach and has throughout internal conversations, workshops and convenings travelled a feminist journey to define our position as a feminist organisation, impacting internal processes and partner cooperation.

Afrikagrupperna's understanding of feminism is inclusive, flexible and ours to develop. We believe the world and realities around us are constantly changing, and feminism can never be entirely boxed. The journey defining our feminist living and visioning will continue and carefully be explored together with partners.

A large, solid yellow circle containing a quote in a cursive font.

*"Feminism is to be aware of
our power positions and
privileges and challenge
patriarchal systems as an
organisation"*

What is Feminism for Afrikagrupperna?

Afrikagrupperna's strategic objectives are premised on the vision of a just society, where all human beings should enjoy equal rights and opportunities free from violence and discrimination. Human rights for women and other marginalised groups, fair power relations and gender equality are central for structural change and prerequisites for social justice. The radical root of feminism is the belief that inequality is wrong, and it confronts all oppressive systems such as patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, homophobia and racism. Feminism embodies this battle and aims to eliminate oppression particularly against women, lgbtiqa+ communities and other groups due to their sexuality, gender identity, race, class, culture, tradition, ethnicity, age, ability, geographic location, nationality, religion and/or other forms of social exclusion.

Patriarchy is the institutionalised and systemic dominance of men at the expense of women and everyone else who does not identify as masculine. These visible, invisible and hidden power structures and patriarchal norms we recognise in the world are upheld by how we live our lives and pushes Afrikagrupperna to be radical.

For us the personal is political and we believe that experiences and lived truths are rooted in political situations and equality/inequality. Being a feminist organisation is a serious commitment and the feminist struggle is individual, intersectional, builds positive power for the collective and will experience back-lashes.

A dark green circular graphic containing a quote in white, italicized text.

"Being a feminist organisation is a serious commitment and the feminist struggle is individual, intersectional, builds positive power for the collective and will experience back-lashes"

Since Afrikagrupperna is a solidarity organisation based in Sweden and in Southern Africa, in the north and the south, it's central for us to understand several locations. We shall relate to numerous feminist discourses and comprehend how partners might align with other theoretical frameworks. In Southern Africa there is an ongoing positioning and crafting of a black feminist movement. Afrikagrupperna support, take part and encourage this regional movement building and acknowledges how feminism is often seen as a western and white concept.

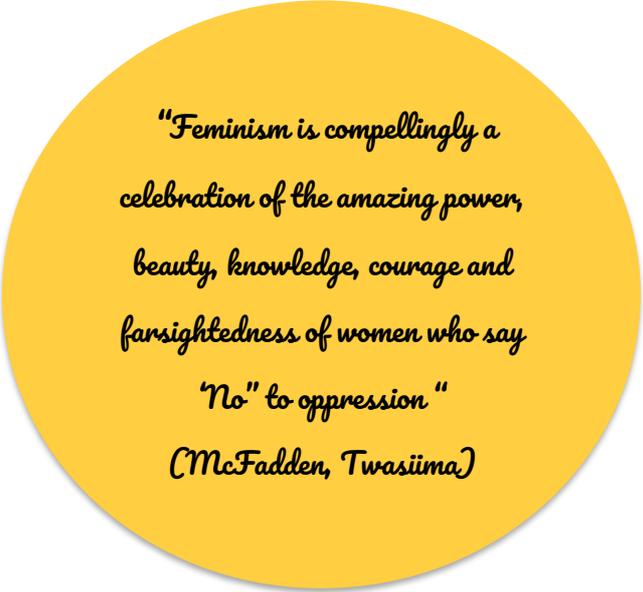
We root our advocacy work in the African experience and policies but are also using cases from the north, for example when actively promoting the Swedish governments feminist foreign policy and progressive policies on SRHR.

"Afrikagrupperna keep feminist thinking and questioning on its internal agenda, and appears to be successfully influencing partner knowledge and awareness of feminism"

(Mid-term evaluation 2019)

However, we believe Afrikagrupperna's everyday actions should be imbued with an intersectional perspective and a joint commitment to transform power relations. The concept of intersectionality is a theory and tool to analyse how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativity's based on gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and oppression. A feminist and intersectional understanding shall be applied in our internal conversations, budgeting, recruitments and fundraising-, operational- and visionary planning etc. Furthermore, feminism shall be visible in our internal and external communication using an inclusive language and a feminist framing. Afrikagrupperna shall create internal and external spaces for discussions on controversial issues and organise activities with a feministic agenda.

Afrikagrupperna promotes human rights for everyone and the freedom to organise against inequalities. Critical feminist issues for Afrikagrupperna are food, seed and land rights and ecofeminism; meaning we address climate- and environmental changes with a feminist lens. Other thematic areas are working and living conditions and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) including among others; access to safe abortions, comprehensive sexuality education and power issues related to norms, bodily autonomy and sex work and prostitution.

A large yellow circle with a subtle drop shadow, containing a quote in a cursive font.

*"Feminism is compellingly a celebration of the amazing power, beauty, knowledge, courage and farsightedness of women who say "No" to oppression "
(McFadden, Twasiima)*

2. Operationalising Feminism

Afrikagruppernas role is to be a partner, funder and facilitator. Our financial support contributes to the work of our partner organisations and the right bearers. An important part of our theory of change is to connect the work of our partners in Southern Africa to information, activism, fundraising and advocacy work in Sweden. Afrikagrupperna addresses local injustices globally and aim to connect the struggles. It's crucial for Afrikagrupperna to respectfully recognise the complexity of our work and address power within partnerships, our own organisation and aim to live our feminism through our strategic methods for change.

2.1 *Partnership and cooperation*

The core of existence for Afrikagrupperna is our partnerships. Therefore, partner organisations play a key role informing our understanding of feminism. When contracting partnerships, priority will be given to organisations or movements challenging power structures and systems.

Afrikagrupperna shall use a feminist perspective when identifying partnerships, recruiting partners and during the partnership cycle.

Feminism is to be aware of one's power and as Afrikagrupperna we are aware of our donor position and power in relation to partners. When a partner organisation doesn't align themselves with a feminist approach, Afrikagrupperna will act and start a dialogue with the partner in question. If there are major differences in our value base Afrikagrupperna will have to phase out the partnership.

"There is an ongoing dialogue between Afrikagrupperna and partners where all those involved contribute to an evolving deeper understanding of feminism in Africa.

(Mid-term evaluation 2019)

"Afrikagrupperna's definition of feminism is informed by partners and the African narrative"

Action include:

- Commitment to listen carefully and learn from partners who already work with feminism and/or have a feminist position
- Recruit new partners with a feminist agenda and/or wish to work with feminism
- Create partner exchanges to foster learning and inspiration
- Provoke debates and situate ideas on feminism and power on partner visits
- Link up partners with organisations who challenge power in the region
- Sharing of feminist analysis, reports and articles with partners (two way process)
- Create spaces and SRHR platforms for feminist training and sharing of experiences

2.2 Organising and Mobilisation

Afrikagrupperna promotes and support the mobilisation of people, including movement building and thus strengthening the civil society. Afrikagrupperna believe organising is a key force for change, hence our need to develop our ability to support mobilisation, movements and other agents of change. We focus specifically on finding and linking with vibrant women's and youth movements. Afrikagrupperna will continue to support existing local and global networks and solidarity initiatives, focusing on the creation of safe spaces.

In line with our feminist identity we address the power structures we see in our own organising and the donor position we have in relation to partners.

"The spaces created by Afrikagrupperna have been an amazing experience for me. I left the platform with a real sense of honesty and sincerity in how you are exploring the building of a feminist organisation"

(Evaluation, Afrikagruppernas SRHR conference in Ponta de Ouro, 2019)

Actions include:

- Create spaces for our own internal capacity building and for partners
- Create spaces for discussions on controversial feminist issues and organise activities with a feminist conceptualisation
- Linking Afrikagrupperna to other feminist organisations and movements
- Linking south to south and south to north networks and activists
- Learn about our own feminist journey from partners through exchanges and feminist platforms
- Promote an individual responsibility to build a respectful and feminist working environment at Afrikagrupperna

2.3 Communication, Lobby and Advocacy

It's never one side of the story!

Successful persuasion of politicians, policy makers and other stakeholders for the purpose of change at policy level, demands strong and well-grounded advocacy work based on concrete examples, evidence and authentic cases. In cooperation with those experiencing injustices, Afrikagrupperna will facilitate and enable them to bring their demands to the decision-makers themselves, both locally and globally. "Those who feel it should lead it" therefore Afrikagrupperna will let those experiencing injustices tell their own stories. Throughout our regional communication and campaigns Afrikagrupperna shall apply a feminist and intersectional framing. When communicating partners work Afrikagrupperna shall put spotlight on feminist issues using a participatory communication, a process driven method where communication is a tool for change building on a collective experience.

Actions include:

- Rethinking our language in our communication; make sure we don't commercialise feminism and depoliticise feminist theories and terminology
- Ally with vibrant women, lgbtiqa+ communities and youth movements
- Participatory communication including stories and photos/video content
- Portray women's actors and 'herstories' in our channels
- Involve feminist movements in our advocacy work
- Put the spotlight on patriarchy and unequal power
- Campaigns and fundraising letters should have a feminist framing

2.4 Knowledge and Awareness

Knowledge and epistemology are key to practice our theory of change. Internal knowledge and competence building are necessary in order to remain relevant as an organisation, to reassess problems and to engage in advocacy. Our partner organisations are an invaluable source of knowledge and geo-political context analysis, and as a regional organisation we are in a good position to collate information from partners for our own knowledge production and sharing.

Actions include:

- Reviewing and documenting the journeys of movements from a feminist perspective
- Collaborations with research institutes and universities
- Create time to read and construct our own researches, analysis and reports
- Create feminist discussion spaces e.g. feminist book clubs
- Acknowledge privileges and the locations of knowledge/research
- Respect for different opinions and what knowledge to be distributed/communicated
- Encourage documentation of lived experiences
- Have discussions on controversial issues to create awareness
- Constructive criticism; don't interrupt colleagues; positive feedback to colleagues; deliver messages with respect and humanity