



AFRIKAGRUPPERNA - A FEMINIST ORGANISATION

THIS A LIVING DOCUMENT (2020, REVISED 2024)

The purpose of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding for staff and elected representatives on how to practice feminism in Afrikagrupperna's various commitments.

Afrikagrupperna is a feminist, member-based organisation with roots in the solidarity movements in the 1960s. Afrikagrupperna works through partner organisations in Southern Africa, while in Sweden active members are organised in local groups working through advocacy, campaign participation, popular education, cultural and fundraising events, and solidarity actions. Feminism, Solidarity, Human Rights and Democracy are fundamental principles crosscutting our theory of change. Therefore, a feminist analysis shall inform all aspects of our being.

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 partner organisations and members.

1. 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 groups, in all their diversity, facing marginalisation, fair power relations and gender equality are central for structural change and prerequisites for social justice. The 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 in all their diversity, LGBTIQ+ communities and other groups due to their sexual orientation,

gender identity and/or expression, race, class, culture, tradition, ethnicity, age, ability, geographic location, nationality, religion and/or other grounds for discrimination and social exclusion.

“Although women are not self-identifying as feminists, they continue to challenge power every day.” – Winnet Shamuyarira, WoMin, Afrikagrupperna’s platform, Pretoria, 2023

A patriarchal society is one where men hold more power and authority which subsequently leads to male privilege. It is the institutionalised and systemic dominance of men at the expense of women, children, and queer people. These visible, invisible, and hidden power structures and patriarchal norms we recognise in the world are upheld by how we live our lives and the way to change requires us being radical.

For Afrikagrupperna, 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 backlashes.

Afrikagrupperna supports, allies with and encourages regional feminist movement building while acknowledging how feminism is often seen as a Western and white concept. Afrikagrupperna relates to both African and Western discourses and definitions of feminism. Members, staff, partner organisations and their constituencies all carry different experiences from the past that determines one’s locations within feminism. Since Afrikagrupperna is a solidarity organisation based in Sweden, supporting organisations in Southern Africa, it is central for us to recognize several locations. Because of this, feminist solidarity becomes crucial. Black/African feminism is crafted by African women in all their diversity and is aimed at addressing their conditions and needs on the continent. It’s about African women telling their stories and lived realities. Afrikagrupperna aims to live its feminism through our strategic methods and approaches for change.

“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

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 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.

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

2. Operationalising Feminism

Our world is characterised by unequal power structures and unfair distribution of resources. Feminism (together with solidarity, democracy and human rights, and sustainability) is crucial when challenging oppressive structures and systems of power. Afrikagrupperna addresses local injustices, and their global causes and effects, and aims 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.

A feminist and intersectional understanding shall be applied in our internal work: conversations, budgeting, recruitments, and fundraising-, operational- and visionary

planning etc. It is important to look at our own organisation and reveal, address, and challenge visible, invisible, and hidden power structures.

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 non-formal actors/movements challenging power structures and systems.

It is important to respectfully recognize the complexity of our work and address power within our own organisation as well as within our partnerships. Feminism is to be aware of one's power and as Afrikagrupperna we must be aware of our donor position and power in relation to partners, hence the need to acknowledge our privilege and positionality. When a partner organisation doesn't align itself with a feminist approach, Afrikagrupperna will 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

Actions include:

- Commitment to listen carefully and learn from partner organisations who already work with feminism
- Create safe spaces where partner organisations can challenge us as part of our learning cycle
- When recruiting new partner organisations make sure they have a feminist agenda
- Create exchanges between partner organisations to foster learning and inspiration
- Provoke debates and situate ideas on feminism and power when visiting partner organisations
- Link up partner organisations with organisations who challenge power in the region
- Sharing of feminist analysis, reports and articles with partner organisations (two-way process)
- Create safe spaces and SRHR platforms for feminist training and sharing of experiences
- Enable psycho-social support for WHRD and LGBTQI+ rights activists
- Include moments of self-reflection and capacity building in our feminist practice
- Challenge patriarchy wherever and whenever possible

2.2 Organising and Mobilisation

Afrikagrupperna promotes and supports the mobilisation of people, including movement building and thus strengthening civil society in Southern Africa as well as in Sweden. Afrikagrupperna believes organising is a key force for change, hence our need to develop our ability to support mobilisation, movements/non-formal actors, and other agents of change. We focus specifically on finding and linking with vibrant women's and youth movements in all their diversity. Afrikagrupperna will continue to support existing local, regional, and global networks and solidarity initiatives, focusing on the creation of safe spaces. We accept that we carry different burdens from the struggles from our past. It is therefore crucial for Afrikagrupperna to, through feminist solidarity, provide support for wellness and time for self-care.

"The space 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, Afrikagrupperna's platform, Ponta de Ouro, 2019

In line with our feminist identity we reveal, address, and challenge the visible, invisible, and hidden power structures, as well as the power tactics and master suppression/domination techniques, we see in our own organisation.

Actions include:

- Create spaces for our own internal capacity building and for partner organisations
- 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 platforms
- Promote a collective and individual responsibility to build a respectful and feminist working environment at Afrikagrupperna

2.3 Communication, Fundraising and Advocacy

Successful dialogue with 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 aims to let those experiencing injustices tell their own stories as far as possible. However, limited financial, and environmental, resources make it difficult to let stakeholders always represent themselves.

When communicating the work of partner organisations, Afrikagrupperna shall put spotlight on feminist issues preferably using participatory communication, a process driven method where communication is a tool for change, building on collective experience. Throughout our external communication and campaigns Afrikagrupperna shall apply a feminist and intersectional framing, showcasing people’s diverse perspectives and experiences. We shall make room for a variety of voices and representation, recognising how individuals' various social and political identities result in unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. By addressing gender structures and social change showcasing women’s experiences through storytelling, we can find strategies for achieving justice.

Furthermore, feminism shall be visible also in our internal communication using an inclusive language and an intersectional understanding. Afrikagrupperna shall create internal and external spaces for discussions on controversial issues and organise activities with a feministic agenda.

Actions include:

- Always using a feminist language in our communication and making sure we do not commercialise feminism and depoliticise theories and terminology
- Using an intersectional analysis to avoid enhancing stereotypes
- Ally with vibrant women, LGBTIQ+ communities and youth movements
- Using participatory communication including stories and photos/video content
- Mindful of representation, portray a variety of voices of human rights defenders in all their diversity and 'herstories' in our channels
- Involve feminist movements in our advocacy work
- Put the spotlight on patriarchy, gender norms and structures and unequal power
- Campaigns and fundraising letters should have a feminist framing

2.4 Knowledge and Awareness

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

"[The sessions] have inspired me to rethink, reimagine and think more deeply about how we can be more deliberate about programming with different groups of women, getting outside our comfort zone." - Evaluation, Afrikagrupperna's platform, Pretoria, 2023

Our partner organisations are resourceful and play a key role in using a transformative approach. Those resources are vital to the dynamic learning and exchange spaces provided by Afrikagrupperna. External sources are fundamental to boosting partners' and Afrikagrupperna's knowledge and awareness, inspiring and aligning strategies and networking.

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 research, 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; do not interrupt colleagues; positive feedback to colleagues; deliver messages with respect and humanity
- Share experience on Feminist Participatory Action Research

3. Monitoring progress

We will continuously monitor our feminist progress in reflective spaces together with partner organisations, through partner assessments and partner monitoring visits, in online dialogue meetings, conferences and platforms, as well as internal Afrikagrupperna spaces such as PO/PA meetings, staff meetings, and regional meetings.

We make the path while walking accompanied by continuous reflections.