

Powering Women Voices and Leadership

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PREFACE

Leadership is not confined to titles or positions, it is the ability to inspire, challenge injustices, and create meaningful change. The Women and Voice in Leadership project is rooted in feminist leadership principles, emphasizing collective power, inclusivity, and social transformation with support frm CARE International in Uganda. Through this initiative, we have worked with remarkable women leaders and Civil Society Organizations who embody these values, using their voices to challenge systemic inequalities, advocate for rights, and lead change in their communities.

These women are grassroots organizers, activists, community leaders, educators, policy advocates, and young feminists who have emerged as powerful agents of change. They lead in diverse spaces, mobilizing communities against gender-based violence, shaping policies on women's rights, driving social movements, and mentoring the next generation of leaders. Their leadership is deeply intersectional, recognizing and addressing the multiple layers of oppression that women and marginalized groups face.

This collection of impact stories highlights their journeys, the challenges they have overcome, the systems they have disrupted, and the lives they have transformed. Each story is proof of the power of feminist leadership, which prioritizes collaboration, empathy, and justice over hierarchy and individual gain. These women are not just leading; they are redefining leadership itself, proving that sustainable change comes from empowering others and building movements that uplift all voices.

Through these narratives, we want to celebrate, inspire, and reaffirm the role of women in leadership. We hope that these stories will spark conversations, challenge stereotypes, and serve as a call to action for a world where women's voices are not just heard but actively shape the future.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the women who have courageously shared their experiences, to the allies and mentors who continue to support this movement, to CARE International in Uganda for the continuous support, and to all who are committed to advancing women leadership. May these stories serve as an inspiration and a roadmap for those who seek to lead with purpose, integrity, and a commitment to justice.

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The Journey to Conscious Advocacy and Inclusive Justice

Before the training with MEMPROW, I called myself a feminist, but truthfully, I hadn't fully understood what that really meant, especially in my professional setting. I knew I was passionate about women's rights and justice, but I often struggled with how to be truly inclusive and conscious in the way I approached my work. The word "feminism" was part of my vocabulary, but it had not yet transformed into a lens through which I saw myself and the world around me.



The feminist consciousness training with MEMPROW changed everything for me. It helped me reflect inwardly, to truly understand myself. That self-awareness became my biggest turning point. For the first time, I grasped the essence of what it means to be a feminist beyond theory: to embody principles of equity, inclusivity, and social justice, especially when dealing with communities that are marginalized in multiple ways.

As a Legal Officer at FIDA Uganda, based in Arua City, I work with some of the most vulnerable populations, women, children, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and refugees. Each of these groups faces unique vulnerabilities, and prior to this training, I hadn't fully internalized what it meant to communicate and support them in a way that honors their different lived realities.

"Being a feminist isn't about having all the right words, it's about choosing to see and support others through a lens of justice, care, and inclusion. Once I understood that, I became more open, more grounded, and more effective."

Minala Rehema

Now, I listen differently. I engage differently. I support my clients not just with legal advice, but from a place of shared humanity and consciousness. I no longer assume solutions, I co-create them with the people I serve, with a deeper understanding of their backgrounds and perspectives.



This shift has significantly impacted how I report, plan, and advocate. I am now actively with rural engaging women. visitina schools and refuaee camps, and ensuring that their voices are reflected in the reports and plans I contribute to. My work has become more authentic. grounded, and intentional. It has even influenced how I conduct legal aid outreach, ensuring that we meet people where they are. rather than expecting them to adjust to our systems.

On a personal level, I've transformed. I used to stay quiet during planning sessions or advocacy meetings, not because I didn't have ideas, but because I was afraid they didn't matter. I preferred to listen, even when I had something valuable to contribute. But MEMPROW helped me realize that my voice matters just as much as the people I work with. Now, I not only speak up, but I also lead conversations, bring issues to the table, and design solutions that work. This new confidence has not only changed my work, it's changed me.





The Perspective then

Before joining MEMPROW's organizational leadership training, Bakoko Gloria was already engaged in mentorship as a volunteer in an organization. However, her approach to leadership and problem-solving was influenced by personal biases and a judgmental outlook. She often viewed issues through a rigid lens, forming opinions quickly without deeper reflection. Additionally, self-care was never a priority, she considered it a luxury rather than an essential need.

The Turning Point Embracing Feminist Leadership

Everything changed when Bakoko, along with her Executive Director (ED), attended MEMPROW's training on organizational leadership. The training had a strong emphasis on mentorship and feminist leadership, which profoundly shifted her perspective. It was a worthy experience that reshaped not only how she led but also how she approached people and issues.

Her ED, recognizing the impact of the training, stepped back from direct mentorship to focus more on administrative responsibilities and gave opportunities for Bakoko to take on greater leadership roles in capacity building within the organization. The trust placed in her, combined with the skills she gained from the training, paved the way for a major career milestone, her appointment as the Child Protection and Safeguarding Coordinator for the entire organization.

The New Lens

One of the most profound lessons Bakoko took from the training was the ability to view issues through a feminist lens one that is inclusive, fair, and non-judgmental. She realized the importance of self-reflection before making decisions and the value of listening without bias.



"Before, I used to form opinions quickly, but now I take time to understand every situation from all angles. The training taught me that leadership is not just about making decisions but about making informed, compassionate, and feminist decisions,"

Bakoko Gloria

A Commitment to Self-Care and Well-being

Beyond leadership skills, the training also instilled in her the importance of self-care, a crucial but often neglected aspect of feminist leadership. She learned that self-care is not selfish; rather, it is a responsibility for those working in emotionally demanding spaces.

"At first, I never took self-care seriously, but the training emphasized it repeatedly. Now, I ensure that I look good, smell good, and eat well. That's my personal motto," she shares with a smile."

Where She Is Now

Today, Bakoko Gloria is thriving in her role as the Child Protection and Safeguarding Coordinator. She is responsible for ensuring that child protection policies are effectively implemented and that mentorship programs create safe and empowering spaces for young people. Her leadership has influenced a more inclusive, empathetic, and structured approach to safeguarding within her organization.

Achievements and Impact

Successfully transitioned from a volunteer mentor to a leadership role within her organization.

Developed a feminist leadership approach that prioritizes inclusivity, empathy, and critical thinking.

Leads capacity-building initiatives that have strengthened mentorship and child safeguarding.

Advocates for self-care within feminist leadership spaces, ensuring that those in caregiving roles do not neglect their own well-being.





Carrying It All Alone

When I started Upendo ni Baraka Uganda, it was my vision, my dream, and my responsibility. Being a new and self-owned organization, I found it difficult to trust others with responsibilities. I handled everything myself, believing that no one else would be as committed as I was.

Even when it came to financial matters, I only allowed specific people I personally knew to access the bank, always with my direct authorization. I feared that delegating responsibilities too freely might lead to mismanagement or dishonesty. This approach, however, made running the organization exhausting and unsustainable.

Then came MEMPROW's leadership training, and everything changed.



My Motivation: Women Can Move Mountains

I have always believed that women are multipurpose beings, strong enough to be mothers, wives, and leaders all at once. We carry families, communities, and businesses on our backs while pushing for progress. This belief fuels my leadership journey.

I am also inspired by role models, women who have paved the way, broken barriers, and redefined leadership. Their stories remind me that leadership is not about doing everything alone but about building systems and trusting others to carry the vision forward.

Women in Organizational Leadership

Women in leadership, especially in organizational spaces, often face the challenge of being expected to "prove themselves" before being trusted with authority. According to global studies, only 29% of senior leadership roles in organizations are held by women despite the undeniable contributions they make in shaping businesses and nonprofits.

Many women, like I once did, feel the pressure to be the sole decision-makers, fearing that teamwork might lead to inefficiency or loss of control. However, true leadership is about trust, delegation, and teamwork, principles that I have now embraced fully.

Embracing Teamwork and Trust

After MEMPROW's training, I began to see leadership differently. I learned to delegate, to trust my team, and to build a structure that works for everyone. Now, the people I recruit are given full responsibility for their roles, and I no longer feel the need to micromanage. There has been a great improvement in teamwork, transparency, and efficiency in our organization.

This shift has not only strengthened our operations but also allowed me to grow as a leader. The weight I once carried alone is now shared, and Upendo ni Baraka Uganda is thriving because of it.



What I Am Doing Now

Achievements and Growth

People recognize me as a leader, and I have set a strong foundation for my leadership journey.

Greater Exposure and Networks: I have built connections with more people, learned from diverse groups, and expanded my leadership mindset.

Building a strong, trust-based team – I have created an organizational culture where everyone plays their part with honesty and accountability.

Encouraging women in leadership – I use my journey as a testimony that women can lead successfully when they empower and support others.



"Strive for your dream. The journey happens one step at a time, don't pressure yourself into achieving everything at once. Leadership is about attitude, confidence, open-mindedness, learning, relearning, and unlearning. Most importantly, it's about team spirit and pulling resources together. I strongly believe that through trust, teamwork, and resilience, women can build organizations, change communities, and lead movements. I am living proof of that"

Wuzu Betty.



HOW LEADERSHIP TRAINING TRANSFORMED MY VOICE IN DECISION MAKING

EZARU MERCY HR WN-CARD

The Struggle to be Heard

Before attending MEMPROW's Organizational Leadership Training, I was often sidelined in management meetings. Decision-making was a space where my voice was unheard, and I had little influence on shaping the direction of the organization. I felt like an observer rather than a contributor, even though I had ideas that could improve our work. Beyond that, our team lacked collaboration, everyone worked in isolation, which led to delays in reporting and inefficiencies in execution.

A Turning Point: Finding My Leadership Voice

The training was a revelation. It was not just about learning leadership theories but about understanding my power as a woman in leadership. It taught me how to assert myself, how to lead with confidence, and how to create an environment where teamwork thrives. Armed with this new perspective, I returned to my organization and shared my learnings with my colleagues. The impact was immediate, I started contributing in management meetings, and over time, I earned a seat at the decision-making table.

My Motivation

I have always believed that women bring a unique and necessary perspective to leadership, yet many of us are kept in the background. I wanted to break that cycle. The training fueled my determination to create space not only for myself but also for other women in my organization. Seeing the shift in how my input is now valued continues to motivate me to push for more inclusive leadership.

The Reality of Women in Leadership

Women's participation in leadership remains low in manv organizations. In Uganda, only 31% of senior and middle management positions held by women. are according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. Cultural norms. lack of confidence. and exclusionary workplace practices continue to limit women's decision-making However, leadership training programs like MEMPROW's are changing that narrative by equipping women with the skills and confidence to take their rightful place in leadership spaces.



"Leadership is not about waiting to be invited to the table, it's about pulling up a chair, speaking up, and showing that your voice matters. The moment you recognize your power, you create space for other women to rise too."

Mercy Ezaru





Leading with Confidence

Today, I am fully involved in management meetings and actively contribute to decision-making in my organization. I have also fostered a culture of teamwork, ensuring that no one works in isolation.

We now have structured collaboration, leading to more efficient workflows, timely reporting, and improved overall productivity.

Achievements: The Power of Teamwork and Inclusion

Full Participation in Leadership – I am now a key contributor to management decisions.

Stronger Work Relations – Staff members now work in collaboration rather than isolation.

Improved Reporting Systems – Timely and transparent reporting has become the norm.

Empowering Other Women – I actively encourage and mentor my female colleagues to step into leadership roles.

The journey has not been easy, but it has been transformative. Thanks to MEMPROW, I have gone from being a silent observer to an empowered decision-maker. My story is proof that when women are given the tools to lead, organizations thrive.



Before the Transformation

Before joining MEMPROW's leadership trainings, I held a common misconception about feminism, that it was about competing with men. Like many women in my community, I believed leadership spaces were predefined, and I had to either force my way in or step back.

I saw gaps in decision-making and leadership where women's voices were absent, but I hesitated to step forward. I questioned whether I was strong enough, whether I would be heard, or whether I belonged in political spaces.



My Motivation to Lead

Through MEMPROW's training, I realized that feminism is not about competition, it is about transformation. It is about standing in the gaps where leadership is failing and working alongside others to create meaningful change. I learned that leadership is about collaboration, not isolation. The concept of intersectionality reshaped my mindset, I understood that as a leader, I must consider and address the multiple challenges women face, from economic struggles to cultural expectations. It is this realization that has fueled my journey to vie for the position of **Women MP for Zombo District**.

As women, we do not just fill spaces, we redefine them. We bring solutions, we challenge the norm, and we lead with the strength of sisterhood. That is why I have embraced my slogan: "Positive energy is my choice." Because leadership is not just about ambition, it is about approach, mindset, and the courage to uplift others.

What I Am Doing Now

With my newfound confidence and knowledge. I have stepped forward to contest for the Women MP seat of Zombo District, I am engaging communities, speaking to fellow women, and demonstrating that leadership is inclusive transformative. I am not just running for office, I am shifting encouraging women to take up space, and provina that we belona in leadership.



Achievements & Impact

A New Political Path: My decision to run for office is a direct result of my empowerment through feminist leadership training.

Strengthening Collective Leadership: I now actively promote teamwork and intersectional approaches to leadership.

Breaking Gender Barriers: I am proving that political leadership is not reserved for men, and that women can drive positive change at all levels of governance.

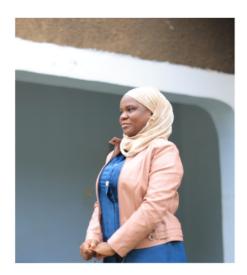
"Leadership is not about competing with men, it is about transforming systems and creating spaces where women's voices shape decisions. True power comes from collective action, from standing together to fill the gaps where leadership has failed. Positive energy is not just my choice, it is my leadership strategy."

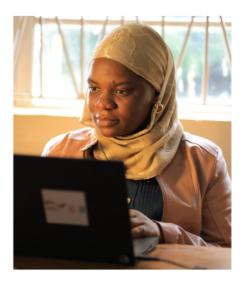
Oroma Glory



Before the Training: A Shift in Perspective

Before attending the feminist leadership training. I had a narrow perspective on leadership. I focused solely on my personal development, often overlooking the struggles of those around me. I held an "I don't care" attitude towards other people's behaviors, believing that everyone was responsible for their own path. I did not understand the power I had to influence change, not just in my life, but in the lives of others.





Finding My Motivation: The Call to Lead Beyond Myself

The training completely transformed my outlook. Learning about power. advocacy. leadership made me realize that leadership is not just about personal success, it's about uplifting others. I became aware of my ability to make a difference in my community, particularly for young girls who, like needed auidance encouragement to reach their full potential.

Changing One Life at a Time

One encounter in particular changed everything for me. I met a young adolescent girl who had dropped out of school due to indiscipline and a lack of motivation. She was on the verge of giving up on herself, and many in the community had written her off. But I saw something in her a spark that just needed to be nurtured.

Through continuous engagement, mentorship, and encouragement, I helped her change her behavior and regain interest in her future. She took my advice to heart, and today, she is in Kampala pursuing a short course in Decoration. She now considers me her mentor, always expressing her gratitude for the guidance that helped her find her way.

The Bigger Picture of Feminist Leadership and Community Transformation

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"Feminist leadership is about seeing power as a tool for transformation, not control. When you rise, rise with others. When you grow, create space for others to grow. Leadership is not about standing alone—it's about lifting others with you."

Siyama Bairu



What I Am Doing Now

Today, I continue to practice what I learned. I am actively mentoring young women in my community, ensuring that no girl feels alone in her struggles. I advocate for more leadership and empowerment programs for women, knowing firsthand the difference they make.

Achievements and the Way Forward

Successfully mentored a young girl back into education and skills training.

Transformed my perspective from self-focus to community-driven leadership.

Became a mentor and advocate for feminist leadership.

Strengthened my ability to influence and uplift others.

This is just the beginning. More training like this needs to be conducted to empower more women and young girls. When women lead, entire communities transform.



Before attending the Feminist Consciousness Leadership Training organized bv MEMPROW. understood leadership only in a general and somewhat traditional sense. I believed that leading was about taking charge and making decisions, but I now recognize that especially leadership. feminist leadership, goes much deeper. It requires an open mind, intentional reflection, and a commitment to core values like empowerment. social justice, and inclusion.



This training greatly shifted my mindset. For the first time, I truly understood what it means to apply feminist principles not just in theory, but in practice. I began to consciously integrate these values into my daily work, both personally and within my organization, ICS.



One of the most tangible outcomes has been the review of our organizational policies. Previously, many of our frameworks, such as those on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Safeguarding, Gender, and Human Resources, lacked inclusivity and did not acknowledge intersectionality. The training opened our eyes to these gaps, and we are now actively revising these policies to ensure they reflect feminist values and promote an environment of quality and inclusion for all.



The impact of this shift has been far-reaching. It has not only influenced how I perceive leadership, but also how we design and implement our programs. Our current governance and accountability project, for example, was designed through a feminist lens. We made a deliberate effort to identify and include marginalized and underrepresented groups as key beneficiaries.

Moreover, we've strengthened our leadership actions on the ground, recently training Parish Model District Committees and Community Monitoring Groups to equip them with the tools to demand better services and hold duty bearers accountable.

The training was a turning point for me, and for ICS. We now see growth in our approach to programming, policy-making, and stakeholder engagement. This experience has taught me that feminist leadership is not a one-size-fits-all model, it's adaptive, inclusive, and deeply personal.

"Feminist leadership comes in many folds. To succeed, you must focus on your personal and psychological state of mind, because if you're not prepared, leadership will overwhelm you. Strengthen your capacity, build your self-esteem, expand your network, and collaborate. That's how we grow, and that's how we lead."

Drijaru Emily

To every feminist leader on this journey: embrace change, reflect often, and lead boldly with values that center humanity and justice. Feminist leadership isn't just transformative, it's necessary.



WOMEN IN WESTNILE BREAKING BARRIERS AND CHAMPIONING LEADERSHIP