

WOMEN LEADING

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP REPORT



MAY 2021



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1. OVERVIEW

Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA) held a workshop on improving practices within universities and colleges to increase female leadership on 27th May 2021. The workshop was organised as part of ESSA's Women Leading initiative.

The workshop brought together the stakeholders that engaged and contributed to research that led to the development of ESSA's first **State of Women Leading** report. The objectives of the workshop were to:

a



Share ESSA's research on the **'State of Women in Leadership in sub-Saharan Africa'**

b



Engage stakeholders in ESSA's approach to turn research evidence into action

c



Co-create concept initiatives to be taken forward for development and implementation

This note provides a summary of the stakeholder workshop, including the introductory presentations of the key findings from the **State of Women Leading** report and the results of the breakout sessions to co-create concept initiatives.

2. INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATIONS

2.1 ESSA's Women Leading Initiative

ESSA initiated a **Women Leading Initiative** that aims to unlock the potential of female leaders in education. The focus is on increasing the number of women in leadership positions within universities and colleges and supporting female students to develop leadership skills for their career beyond college or university.

The women leading initiative was initiated following the recognition, through research, of a stark disparity between men and women in leadership positions in universities and colleges in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

In 2018, ESSA in partnership with Association of African Universities, Population Reference Bureau and Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, formally NCTE previously conducted a study of the demographics of faculty in Ghana which revealed that only 8% of professors at public universities were women. Furthermore, initial discussions with faculty members in SSA highlighted a lack of evidence about the role of universities and colleges in sub-Saharan Africa in equipping women with leadership opportunities.



2.2 Research Highlights

The State of Women Leading report was the first project and output of ESSA's women leading initiative. The report captures insights from existing research and the current perspective of women in Africa that are engaged in tertiary education, and who are at different stages in their leadership journey. It brings together insights from a diverse group of individuals, organisations, and networks, including Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), All African Students Union (AASU), Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Inter-University Council

for East Africa (IUCEA), the Mawazo Institute and the African Union Youth Council (AUYC).

The results presented in the report are based on a survey of over 400 female faculty, students, and early career graduates. This sought to collect information on broad perspective of the state of play, including the barriers preventing more women from transitioning into leadership, existing solutions and the further action that is needed. The survey was rolled out from November 2020 to February 2021.

The report addresses some of the pressing challenges and recommendations in promoting women leadership and the pandemic response for the tertiary education sector:

➤ The barriers that persist

Women still face barriers to leadership, including socio-cultural expectations, limited access to mentorship and networking opportunities, unhelpful working environments and policies and barriers relating to mindset. The Covid-19 pandemic is also particularly impacting women.

➤ The critical skills for leadership

The research highlighted conceptual skills as the most important skillset for leadership development of women in all sectors such as critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, analytical abilities and logical reasoning. This is followed by skills relating to leadership ethics and values, such as integrity, trust, empathy, emotional intelligence, self-awareness and self-confidence.



➤ Focus areas for action

The research points to four key types of further support that will have a high impact on leadership development for women:



Scholarships



Leadership training
and development
programmes



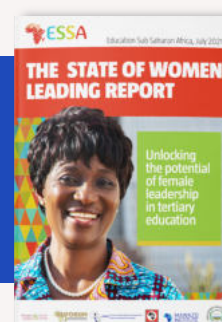
Gender sensitive
organisational/
structural policies



Networking
programs and
opportunities



Link to the full report:
State of Women Leading Report



3. BREAKOUT SESSIONS



The workshop facilitated a one-hour breakout session, where participants were introduced to basic elements of design thinking to enable the group to incorporate this approach in exploring further work to turn the evidence that had been generated by the women leading project into action.

The participants were invited to reflect on the research findings, their experience, and institutions, and create a **persona** of a typical female in a university or college who is impacted by a particular research theme i.e., What are their professional fears? What are their limitations? What are their aspirations? Using this persona, participants defined unique **challenges** and progressed to co-create actionable **ideas**

(concept initiative) that could be taken forward for development and implementation.

The breakout sessions were moderated by the ESSA team and supported by Sprint for Social Good (<http://sfsg.amplifiglobal.org/>), an organisation that uses Design Sprints to support stakeholder engagement, and the collaborative development of solutions to social problems.

The breakout sessions provided a forum for participants to discuss one of four key thematic areas identified through the research: (1) scholarships, (2) leadership training and development, (3) structure and policy, and (4) networks and networking.



3.1 Group 1: Scholarships

Persona:

Ruth, an undergraduate female student, does not have enough access to scholarships because of inadequate information regarding available scholarship opportunities. She also lacks guidance following her studies.

Challenges Identified:

- Female students and graduates have limited access to scholarships in part because there is inadequate information available about scholarship opportunities.
- Female students have a fear of falling prey of misinformation regarding scholarships e.g., scholarship frauds.
- Female students are concerned about what happens after their studies and anticipate difficulties in managing work-life balance given societal expectations regarding the home and family.
- Female students currently receive limited career and professional guidance regarding career and leadership development pathways after they graduate.
- There is a lack of mentorship for female students at various stages of their education. More needs to be done to create/facilitate a smoother roadmap to leadership positions for female students.

Ideas and Potential Concept Initiatives:

- Conduct further research to understand and address the challenges as they pertain specifically to scholarship recipients.
- Develop a trusted and credible comprehensive scholarship database specifically targeting women.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation tools to regularly monitor impact of existing scholarships (e.g., case studies) to support improvement in outcomes and impact.
- Partner with national and regional education stakeholders to regularly disseminate information on scholarship opportunities for young African (female) students.
- Organise scholarship stakeholder meetings for the purposes of advocacy, providing guidance to institutions and the provision of funds.





3.2 Group 2: Leadership Training and Development

Persona:

A female Uganda student has limited soft skills including confidence and self-belief, required to attain leadership roles.

Challenges Identified:

- Female students have limited access to information on available training, resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities, to support their leadership development.
- Some young women are weighed down and held back by the archaic societal expectations of women (e.g., women to be seen and not heard), which in turn, limits their confidence and discourages them from pursuing any positions of leadership.
- There is a need to further support the soft skills development at the undergraduate level, to ensure female students develop mindsets.

Ideas and Potential Concept Initiatives:

- Conduct further research into the availability and effectiveness of leadership training for undergraduate female students (and also female researchers).
- Develop and deliver of leadership training programme to be held across universities/colleges, particularly for female students. These training courses should be carefully organised and developed to meet the needs of students at the different levels (e.g., undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral).
- Develop a mentorship programme to help connect young (female) students with mentors within and outside education.
- Develop a campaign to share success stories of relatable women in leadership positions (in and out of education). This will support in encouraging young female students to pursue leadership, as well as help build their confidence and self-esteem.



3.3 Group 3: Structure and Policy

Persona:

Stella, a vice chancellor has a problem translating enthusiasm into results because she has a weak pipeline of female leaders and limited access to the information required to improve structures and policy. This is leading to inefficient use of resources. Not using the right staff has negative implications on thought leadership and action.

Challenges Identified:

- In some cases, gender equality is still not being recognised as an urgent priority at the higher levels within academic institutions, as such there is still no urgency to recruit more female faculty. In other cases, there is a lack of evidence to inform gender-focused policy and structures within the academic institutions. Hence both a knowledge and implementation 'gap' exists at the institutional level.
- Recruitment processes within education institutions are inadequate.
- Institutions have limited access to (and awareness of) the pipeline of female leaders. Institutions that do have appropriate policies and a desire to recruit more female faculty are finding it difficult to source appropriate candidates.
- Regarding specific policies, there still exists limited facilities/support for nursing mothers.

Ideas and Potential Concept Initiatives:

- Develop policy briefs to educate universities on current research into gender sensitive policies and structure and their outcomes.
- Develop practical policy (and/or programme) implementation guidance notes, to support institutions in the implementation of gender-sensitive policy.
- Organise 'practitioner workshops/stakeholder working groups' to connect university leaders (e.g., vice chancellors) who are working to improve female leadership in their various institutions, to help them network, learn from one another and engage in joint action.
- A regular evaluation of the performance of universities and the steps they are taking to support female leadership. Develop and undertake institutional leadership capability and capacity assessments.
- Restructure the university leadership appointment process. This should include treating supporting gender equality in higher education as a professional skill/experience, when making hiring and promotion choices.



3.4 Group 4: Networks and Networking

Persona:

Tosin, a postgraduate student, has a problem with enabling a network she has created and turning her knowledge into impact. She is unable to create solutions to support female leadership for her community of female leaders.

Challenges Identified:

- Difficulty transitioning from education back into work after postgraduate studies.
- Many women are not accessing relevant resources and opportunities (coaching, networking, training) about professional development and opportunities.
- There is limited knowledge and insights on how to enable networks for women, which is required to develop practical solutions that lead to impact.

Ideas and Potential Concept Initiatives:

- Further research into the requirements of women and the support they need through networks and networking.
- Develop networks for female entrepreneurs that cuts across the various sectors.
- Create mentorship programmes to help connect young women with women employed/experienced in the various fields.
- Implement mandatory business/entrepreneurship courses across universities to help students, particularly women develop essential soft skills for employment .
- Improve advocacy and information flow in various communities to increase awareness of existing networks and enable access to them.

The concept initiatives that were identified during the workshop can be categorised into three areas:

1. **Further Research** to gather deeper insights into the challenges, requirements for success and the existing solutions, within each of the four themes considered.
2. The development and implementation of a **monitoring, evaluation and learning** Framework for female leadership within education institutions, which considers each of the four themes.
3. New ways to drive the **implementation and use of research and evidence: e.g.**, working groups that will engage further in gathering and sharing evidence and lead on evidence-informed actions.



4. NEXT STEPS

There are many existing interventions that address different aspects of women in leadership in SSA. Through their initial work in this area, ESSA has sought to consult broadly within and outside of the tertiary education sector to understand the current barriers and challenges, identify key players, and scope potential ideas and concepts for further development and implementation. This collaborative approach to research has been undertaken to ensure that they avoid the duplication of effort, enable knowledge exchange, and facilitate productive and effective partnerships that increase impact for women in SSA.

The stakeholder workshop was the final component of ESSA's first women leading project however, it is the beginning of their work and ambition to unlock the potential of female leader in education.

Follow on Actions

1**Further development of concepts initiatives:**

- Host further sessions and convenings.

2**Partnerships and funding proposals:**

- Co-Impact Gender Justice Fund.
- Establish a working group that will engage further in gathering and sharing evidence and lead on evidence informed actions.

3**Annual State of Women Leading Research:**

- Develop and continue our research in this area, to support universities, colleges and organisations to increase women leadership in education.

4**Share Research:**

- Share our research findings with your network.
- We can tailor research findings for different audiences.

Towards the end of the workshop options for follow-on actions (see above) were presented to participants to identify their levels of interest in further collaboration and action. ESSA is currently engaging existing and potential partners to continue sharing their research findings and to gather and share further insights and evidence, which will be used to inform further action and funding proposals. This includes (and is not limited to):

1. Webinar: Women in Leadership in Higher Education: Global and Regional Perspectives.





- The International Association of Universities (IAU), The European Women Rectors Association (EWORA) and Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA) will host a webinar for International Women's Day 2022 (8th March 2022), to facilitate a forum and launch a global conversation on women in leadership in higher education. The partners bring together insights from policymakers, educators, female leaders, funders, and other stakeholders.
- The focus of this initial conversation is one of the core themes identified by ESSA's women leading project – Gender sensitive institutional structures and policies.
- IAU will share Global perspectives, including data on women leadership from the IAU WHED and IAU Global Cluster work on SDG 5. EWORA will share European perspectives, including insights to gender equality in European Higher Education and research with a special focus on Spain. ESSA will share insights from the **State of Women Leading Report**, including the barriers, the skills required and recommendations for further interventions.

2. Funding Proposals and Opportunities

- ESSA has an ambition to develop an Annual Research Study on the State of Women Leading in Education in Sub Saharan Africa. ESSA's ambition is to generate and synthesize information and evidence relevant practitioners, policymakers, and funders, to increase understanding and influence of evidence, and to support the development and implementation of impactful solutions.
- So far ESSA's women leading initiative has piloted an approach to turning evidence into action, which they intend to repeat as a contribution to the continuous improvement of practices that unlock the potential of women leaders in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Potential funding sources include the Co-impact Gender Fund (<https://www.co-impact.org/gender-fund-announcement/>) designed to drive progress towards gender equality, accelerating systems change and advancing women's leadership. ESSA is particularly interested in submitting joint proposals in the research/learning category, which opens in 2022. However, ESSA can contribute, in a research capacity, to all categories of the grants within the Co-impact Gender Fund.
- **ESSA is keen to explore joint funding opportunities for research and learning**, with partners, including (and not limited to) locally rooted, women-led organisations in Africa

We hope all stakeholders find the State of Women Leading report useful for their work. We hope current and aspiring female leaders find the report useful for your own leadership journeys. If you would like to share your ideas, skills, or partner more formally with ESSA, please do get in touch: info@essa-africa.org

Table 1 Summary of the Discussions with Stakeholders

Theme	Challenge/Problem	Concept Ideas
Scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Access to Scholarships ➤ Inadequate information about scholarship opportunities ➤ Lack of guidance follow graduation regarding career and leadership develop pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Further research into challenges ➤ Measurement, monitoring and evaluation of impact of scholarship incl. case studies ➤ Scholarship stakeholder meetings/community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provision of funds ○ Advocacy ○ Guidance for institutions
Leadership Training and Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of soft skills, mindset of female undergraduate students ➤ Societal norms and expectations of females ➤ Lack of mentorship and networking opportunities ➤ Visibility and access to resources and training opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Further research into effective leadership training for undergraduate female students (and/or researchers) ➤ Training and mentorship programme ➤ Campaign to share success stories
Structure and Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Evidence to inform policy and structure at institutions ➤ Inadequate recruitment processes ➤ Access to (and awareness of) pipeline of female leaders ➤ Lack of guidance on how to implement gender sensitive policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop practical policy (and/or programme) implementation guidance notes ➤ Develop and undertake institutional leadership capability and capacity assessments ➤ Establish a stakeholder and practitioner working group ➤ Restructuring university leadership appointment process
Networks and Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enabling networks and turning knowledge of what works into practice and solutions that lead to impact. ➤ Access to networks and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Further research into the requirements of women and support they need through networks and networking ➤ Advocacy to increase awareness of existing networks and how to access them
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How to address the socio-economic barriers to female leadership ➤ Networks and Networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding (mapping) of existing networks ○ Gap Analysis ○ Knowledge on how to sustain networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Further research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investigating how to build the most important skills that have been identified in the research, into leadership programmes ○ Develop understanding and map existing networks to produce a gap analysis ➤ Development of a network for women in higher education ➤ Evaluating the impact/effectiveness of existing solutions (e.g., leadership training, mentoring, scholarships etc.)

5. LIST OF ATTENDEES

Anthony Egeru

Programme Manager

Organization: RUFORUM

Country: Uganda

Veronica Dzeagu

Senior Programs Officer

Organization: All-Africa Students Union

Country: Ghana

Aaron Nanok

Agri-Nutrition

Organization: TCG

Country: Kenya

Emily Buyaki

Communication Officer

Organization: FAWE

Country: Kenya

Monique M. Sognigbe

Student

Organization: RUFORUM

Country: Benin

Nodumo Dhlamini

Director

Organization: AAU

Country: Ghana

Samuel Agyapong

Senior Research Manager

Organization: ESSA

Country: Ghana

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Chief Principal Exchange Programmes,
Links and Partnerships

Organization: Inter-University Council for
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Country: Uganda

Krista Samson

Research & Communications Assistant

Organization: ESSA

Country: Ghana

Maina Wachira

Research and Analytics Manager

Organization: Mawazo Institute

Country: Kenya

Pauline Essah

Director of Research and Programmes

Organization: ESSA

Country: United Kingdom

Martin Gideon

Former Research Manager

Organization: ESSA

Country: Kenya

Jennifer Udeh

Former Head of Programmes and Partnerships

Organization: ESSA

Country: UK

Petrider Paul

Africa Union Youth Advisory Council

Organization: AUC

Country: Tanzania

Hilda Bekoe

Secretary

Organization: AASU

Country: Ghana

Francisca Willis

Member

Organization: All-Africa Students Union

Country: Ghana

Awurama Kyei-Baffour

Executive Assistant

Organization: All-Africa Students Union

Country: Ghana

Ama Duncan

Founder

Organization: The Fabulous Woman Network

Country: Ghana

Nora Naa Atswei

Member

Organization: All Africa Students Union

Country: Ghana

Claudia Quartey

Gender Desk Officer

Organization: All Africa Students Union

Country: Ghana

Iyaloo Sheyavali

Ruforum alumni

Organization: RUFORUM

Country: Namibia

Kari M

Consultant

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Country: South Africa

Fiona Moejes

Director of Programmes

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Country: Kenya



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