



At a Glance

FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALISTS

In the area of girls' education and gender norms transformation, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) operates a set of complementary, multi-level interventions and models, such as the Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP), the Tuseme youth empowerment model, and Mothers' Clubs. Together, these initiatives integrate academic learning, critical reflection on gender and power dynamics, and community engagement across schools and communities. Through its capacity building of educators, whole-school transformation models, youth-led participatory approaches, and intergenerational community mobilization, FAWE links questions of gender equality to educational quality, social inclusion, and long-term development outcomes. Supported by policy advocacy and evidence-based learning, FAWE's approach engages teachers, school leaders, policy makers, students, and communities in practical action and reflective practice to shift harmful gender norms and advance equitable, transformative education for girls across Africa.

Founding Background

FAWE was formally established in 1992 and registered in Nairobi, Kenya in 1993 after a series of dialogues between donors and political leaders that began in 1991 at the World Bank when five African women ministers of education raised serious concerns about the education of girls. The organization's inception was solidified at the Rockefeller's Bellagio Center in Italy where nineteen senior African women policymakers in education mapped out a Pan African network for sharing resources and strategies and the secretariat was established in Nairobi, Kenya.

Overview of Programs Offered

FAWE offers a range of gender equality programs that target different stakeholders including teachers and school administration, communities, and adolescents. The five pathways through which FAWE aims to bring about change for adolescents are through policy advocacy, capacity building of teachers and other educators, the implementation of FAWE demonstrative models, community mobilization and research and knowledge building. FAWE's signature program that directly works with adolescents is Tuseme.

Tuseme

The Tuseme model works to enhance self-esteem, leadership skills, and promotes positive attitudes toward girls' education. This model equips learners, both boys

and girls, with a platform to voice the issues that affect their academic and social development and address school dropout, poor academic performance, child pregnancy, sexual harassment, and other gender-related barriers identified by the girls themselves. The model was adopted by the Ministry of Education in Tanzania in 2005, mainstream into secondary education, and scaled to primary schools in 2007 with the support of UNICEF.

Target Population

FAWE's target beneficiary population is girls and women. In order to create change in the lives of girls and women, FAWE engages with diverse stakeholders and partners who play critical roles in working towards gender equality, girls' education, and women's empowerment in Africa. Therefore FAWE's programs target a range of stakeholders including: adolescents;

Relationship to Formal Systems

FAWE has strong relationships to government systems across the continent, and this is its primary mode of operating in efforts to bring about systemic change. For instance, FAWE digitalized and deployed gender-responsive pedagogy for teachers and school principals in fifteen (15) countries - Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zambia, Liberia, DR Congo, Mali, Benin, Senegal, Gabon, and Burundi, and promoted the integration of the digital

GRP into the professional development of educators in African countries. FAWE designed a SRGBV manual designed to equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to facilitate changes in attitudes, behaviors, relationships, practices, and systems enabling more effective responses to SRGBV within and around schools. This model is being implemented in over 15 countries including Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. FAWE's strong suit is capacity building for systems-level leaders including: teachers, school managers, policymakers, CSOs/development partners, and communities using its demonstrative models (Centers of Excellence) and other interventions towards the development of local ownership and sustainability in change.

Program Delivery

FAWE takes a multi-pronged approach for creating change. While its adolescent target population age is 10-25, due to

its multi-layered approach, it targets different stakeholders including teachers and school administration, communities and adolescents. For instance its Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) program targets teachers and school administration. Its Tuseme youth empowerment program focuses on adolescent youth and uses theater-for-development techniques as a medium of relational change. And Mothers Clubs focus on supporting female caregivers as advocates for girls' education.

Geography and Reach

As a pan-African organization, FAWE proudly stretches across 33 African countries and 34 chapters and across urban and rural communities. The organization's membership includes female ministers of education, vice-chancellors, and other education leaders. FAWE began as a group of five African women ministers, and has grown into an influential pan-African organization reaching over 3 million girls through its educational programs.

For more information, see: fawe.org



OVERVIEW AND MISSION

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) emerged from discussions between African female ministers of education and donor agencies in the late 1990s. During a World Bank conference in October 1991 during which research was presented that highlighted the significant obstacles faced by girls and women in education, women ministers from Africa along with donors discussed the potential of influential women in policy creating a network for change within the education system. FAWE was established as a formal network to share resources, experiences, perspectives and strategies based on the belief that women in decision making positions needed a supportive network across the continent to shape educational policy. It was formalized as a body in 1992 at the Bellagio Center by five pioneering African women ministers of education including: the late Hon. Vida Yeboa of Ghana, Hon. Simone de Comarmond of Seychelles, Hon. Paulette Missambo of Gabon, Hon. Dr Fay Chung of Zimbabwe, and Hon. Alice Tiendrebéogo of Burkina Faso. FAWE was later registered as a Pan African non-governmental organization in Nairobi, Kenya in 1993.

Over the last three decades, FAWE has grown its base and influence across the continent, currently operating through 34 national chapters. FAWE has shaped a pan-African leadership network in gender-responsive pedagogy, policy advocacy, and girls’ education access. FAWE has worked with a number of actors including governments, local partners, schools, and communities towards gender mainstreaming through the development and implementation of policies and programs that work towards gender equality in and through education.

FAWE’s vision is a future where every girl and woman in Africa has access to quality education across all levels of the educational system, unlocking their full potential and changing their lives for the better. As a pan-African organization dedicated to promoting gender equality and education, FAWE’s mission is to promote gender responsive policies, practices, and attitudes in education to enhance equal opportunities for African girls and women.

Approach to Shifting Adolescent Gender Norms

FAWE's approach to shifting gender norms amongst young people involves multi-pronged mechanisms at various scales including: strengthening capacity of education sector professionals; engaging stakeholders and influencing policy; and implementing programs focused on gender equity for young people.

FAWE's signature program for strengthening capacity around gender for educators, school managers, and civil society organizations and developmental practitioners is through its Gender Responsive Pedagogy Model and Toolkit. The model prepares administrators, educators and school management committees to foster gender responsive classrooms and schools. Topics include fundamental knowledge about gender and power; analyzing gender biases; school-based gender based violence; and sexual and reproductive health; and creating assessment systems that are gender responsive. To increase access to the GRP training modules, FAWE digitized the modules into a self-paced e-learning course in collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO. Some core themes within these modules include fundamental concepts around gender and power; intersectionality; bias and self-assessment of biases; and sexual and reproductive rights.

The second feature of FAWE's programming is its collaboration with like-minded organizations to influence policy & practice at scale. FAWE's Centers for Excellence is

one such example of scaling a best practice. FAWE's comprehensive whole-school approach to changing ordinary schools into schools that are gender responsive. This approach includes gender responsive school management training for school directors, head teachers and teachers, STEM programming for girls, bursaries for girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and gender responsive school infrastructure. FAWE engages in regional and country level advocacy groups to disseminate best practices in pursuit of systemic change. For instance, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) clusters on girl education presence in various advocacy spaces at regional and country levels to disseminate our collective lessons and good practices for scale-up. FAWE has also collaborated with Ministries of Education to advocate integration of the Gender Responsive Pedagogy Model (GRP) in its teacher training curriculum. Replicated in over 20 other African countries, the model has reached more than 80,000 individuals, in teaching and non-teaching roles within education since 2005. In 2024 alone, FAWE trained 1,569 teachers on GRP. FAWE Malawi has successfully partnered with its education ministry to implement GRP across all teacher training colleges. And at the regional level, FAWE participates in documenting lessons on gender and education in efforts to call for increased financing of gender equality through education, for instance through the CESA clusters on women and girls' education, and teacher development.

FAWE's direct service interventions work to directly intervene in harmful gender norms

for adolescents. These programs include: Tuseme Model and Mother's Clubs. Tuseme is a program intervention that equips girls to voice themselves around gendered issues that prohibit their academic and social development including: child pregnancy; sexual harassment; poor academic performance and reasons for dropping out of school. Tuseme combines knowledge about gender and power with life skills such as leadership development, decision making and confidence. Mothers Clubs are intergenerational learning units where

mothers and other women caregivers are supported to advocate for girls' education. There are around a 1000 Mothers Clubs in operation and are recognised by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare for their contribution to improving the status of girls' education. These clubs seek to advocate for rights, promote educational access and quality, support reentry policies, and engage with families & communities. In Malawi, the Mother Groups have been integrated into the Ministry of Education's efforts to support the access and retention of girls in school.

THEORY OF CHANGE

How FAWE's Approach Attempts to Shift Adolescent Gender Norms?

FAWE leaders believe that gender inequality is a result of unequal power relations and socioeconomic issues; these gendered inequalities manifest in and through education. The structural inhibiting factors that perpetuate harmful gender norms identified by FAWE include: material poverty, marginalization, harmful traditional practices, and conflict and displacement. And therefore, FAWE believes that disrupting and reshaping gender norms through education must occur in a multifaceted and multiscalar fashion. The organization's goal is the creation of an equitable and inclusive society where African girls and women are thriving. Its long term outcomes include: the development of relevant skills and competencies for women and girls; improved employability; quality and well-paying jobs for girls and women; and cessation of harmful traditional practices within the region. Immediate outcomes include: improved educational outcomes including enrollment, literacy; improved access to quality education; mindset shifts towards progressive orientations, and gender responsive policies within educational systems.

FAWE works to bring about change towards these outcomes through the following pathways: policy advocacy, capacity building of teachers and other educators, implementation of FAWE models, community mobilization and research and knowledge building. In order for these change pathways to operate towards the established organization goals, enabling conditions need to be as follows: regional and national chapters need to be able to foster government commitment, communities need to be willing to engage, political stability, supportive

partnerships, and institutional stability within FAWE's regional and national chapter. Enabling conditions for FAWE's theory of change to effectively work include: resource mobilization; evidence-based research, effective organizational governance, and strategic partnerships.

Finally, Room to Read has two operating models: Deliver and Accelerate. Under the Deliver model, Room to Read directly and through implementing partners designs and delivers programming in schools, communities or other educational settings. This model includes instances where the organization leads program design and implementation, or co-design and co-implement with key stakeholders. The primary use cases for this model include testing and evaluating program improvements and innovations, as well as showcasing and providing a proof of concept for potential system and program partners. The Accelerate model benefits more children more quickly. Under the Accelerate model, Room to Read and our implementing partners provide technical assistance or educational content to program and system partners as they (1) improve the implementation of their own programs, or (2) to achieve a defined set of programmatic outcomes, due to a funding arrangement or other strategic initiative.

Research and Program Evaluations

Research findings in the 1990s that illustrated the significant obstacles facing girls and women in educational access and quality lead to FAWE's establishment. Therefore, FAWE has long been committed to research and program evaluation. FAWE has collaborated with researchers in the African continent as well as international collaborations such as University of Cambridge and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

FAWE conducted studies regarding teenage pregnancies and young mothers with funding from Echidna Giving. In 2022, a study investigated the impact of conflict/post-conflict settings and political insecurity on increasing teenage pregnancies and young women's educational access using Nigeria as a case study. Two-hundred and fifteen interviews were conducted of community leaders, ministry representatives, parents,

principles, and young people across ten states. Findings included: political instability resulting in severe social, psychological and economic impacts on young women, pregnancy resulted in school drop out, and communities lacking knowledge about re-entry policies for young women. FAWE used these research findings to advocate for community use of the country's re-education program which aims to facilitate re-entry for out of school youth such as young mothers. Relatedly, FAWE also conducted a mixed methods study of the Early and Unintended Pregnancy Policy (EUPP) in Eswatini. The purpose of the study was to understand contributing factors to high rates of teenage pregnancy between 2021-2022 during the height of covid and civil unrest to support policy makers in program design and barriers to re-entry. Barriers included: material poverty; parental disapproval; stigma and bullying; psychological trauma and limited social support. The report advocates for

gender responsive programming to address challenges faced by young teenage mothers.

Most recently, FAWE conducted qualitative case study research on their Tuseme school-based club program. The study examined the enabling and limiting factors of the Tuseme program in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda through key informant interviews and focus group discussions paired with administrative data from schools. Across the three country cases, benefits to young people included: stronger communication skills; self-expression; and navigating problems. Participatory pedagogies such as drama and peer-led discussions supported the development of safe environments for practice. Findings highlight the importance of community ownership, facilitator capacity-building, and flexible, contextually relevant programming

What Works

FAWE stands out in its position as a Pan African leader galvanizing momentum for gender norms change through education across the continent. As such, one of its key promising practices is its commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement. FAWE has excelled in fostering collaboration between governments, civil society, and international partners, amplifying its impact at local, national and regional levels.

Another promising practice is its focus on sustainability and intergenerationality. FAWE has developed strong mentorship programs and alumni networks to ensure the benefits of its interventions stretch across generations.

Interventions such as the Mothers Club involve elders and caregivers as key actors in prompting sustainable change within communities.

Finally, through multistakeholder engagement and collaborative partnerships with ministries of education across the continent, another promising practice for shifting gender norms is FAWE's efforts to scale innovation through capacity building. FAWE's models such as Gender Responsive Pedagogy which aims to address gender norms through capacity building of teachers and school leaders have been scaled across multiple countries. FAWE targets shifts in gender norms through changes in conditions for young people, and therefore works with teachers and school administration to examine their biases, and shift curriculum so that it is attentive to gender and power.

Through its multi-layered, systems level and sustainable approach, FAWE demonstrates how to shift gender norms through thoughtful collaboration within and across multiple systems and through key actors such as teachers, school administrators, and female caregivers.