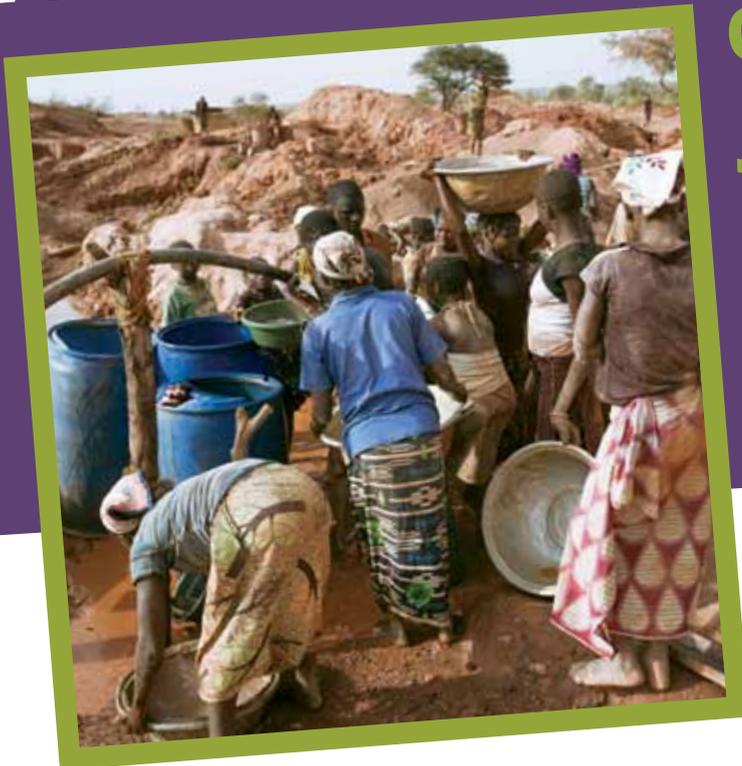




AFRICAN WOMEN RISING:

ORGANISING FOR JUSTICE & DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES



All it takes is a snapshot survey of the headlines in African development news. In April of this year, the *Madagascar* Council of Ministers approved the construction of infrastructure (roads, ports etc.) to support the Toliara Sands mining project in the “public interest.” The decision **led thousands to take to the streets** in protest. The mining project threatens the lives and livelihoods of the Mikea indigenous people and thousands more who depend on the land and local water sources. In *Kenya*, plans for the Lamu Coal Plant continue apace even as communities raise their voices to contest it; two activists **were arrested** and a demonstration halted and deemed “unlawful” in May this year. The Sh200 billion power plant is expected to generate 1,050 megawatts of electricity. *South Africa's* draft **Integrated Resource Plan** promises to “energise and unlock regional industrialisation” by moving forward with the

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Highlights

January – July 2018

RSA-DRC treaty on the Inga Hydro Power Project, which they predict will yield 2500 megawatts of power to the country in 2030. *The Democratic Republic of Congo's **Inga hydropower mega-dam project*** has already displaced communities, and if the Inga 3 Dam goes ahead as promised, even more will suffer the same fate. In Bomboré, *Burkina Faso*, a story covered in this newsletter, **Orezone Gold Mine** has forcibly evicted artisanal miners from their allotments, destroying a primary source of income and threatens to dislocate over 12,000 people, all with the backing of the state.

In every corner of the continent the stories are similar – government-sanctioned, corporate-driven development agendas that prioritise profit and economic growth at the expense of people, communities, and the environment.

As the global climate crisis deepens, African women who are feeling the effects in their daily lives are saying: NO MORE! Women are organising in often adverse and hostile contexts to defend their land, demand the right of consent, and denounce the failure of leaders. They're also coming together to build local, economic alternatives like micro-renewable energy, and agroecology, and craft strategies and powerful narratives of collective resistance from the roots up. In Uganda, community women leaders use stripping as a radical way to convey their deep-seated anger at land being taken away from them. In Somkhele, women continue to demand the space to speak and are asserting their right to land through agriculture. Through the South Africa Climate Camp, young women are building their voices and analysis on climate change. And through WoMin's FPAR, we are supporting women activists and their allies to build knowledge from below to deploy in their resistance.

Thanks for reading!



Women leaders in Bombore say NO to mining!

At the end of July, WoMin and ORCADE (Organisation pour le Renforcement des Capacites de Developpement) organised information sessions, training and discussions on the right of consent, women's rights, and mining and its impacts with more than thirty women leaders from five villages in Bombore impacted



by the Orezone gold mine. The mining company, Orezone Gold has secured Mining Exploration and Industrial operating permits in a contiguous block spanning 16,600 ha.

The Ganzourgou Province, where Bombore is located, is a semi-arid region which 'enjoys' only three months of the wet season and the rest are dry. When we visited there was scarcely any greenery and the livestock were quite emaciated. The population in the vicinity of the mine are subsistence farmers who supplement their earnings from artisanal gold mining. In mid-2016, miners from the villages of Bombore were barred from their mining, cutting of a key source of revenue for families and communities. Artisanal miners are arrested and their tools confiscated if they are caught mining. Many men have migrated outside of Bombore in search of mining opportunities, and women are left behind with children with no idea if and when the men will return. It has become harder for them to feed their families and send children to school.

The mine has met with the residents of the villages to be effected and indicated that they will compensate. When members of the community raised their concerns about the low compensation amounts, the mining company refused to negotiate with them. The community also contested the relocation site proposed by the company and government, as they believe the area is haunted by bad spirits. The farming lands reserved to Orezone by permit cannot be ploughed by the villagers, already seriously undermining their livelihoods and family well-being. They are also forbidden from fetching firewood in the land granted to Orezone.

And so, the mine with state support, has forcibly evicted artisanal miners from their allotments, destroying a primary source of income. And the mine will take people's farming fields, with inadequate compensation, thus destroying the second livelihoods stream. And what solution does the mining company offer people for the loss of livelihoods – jobs? No. Women were invited to pick waste from the side of the road and fill potholes for 25 US cents daily. The community said NO!



To make matters worse, the mine requires significant water resources for its mining operations and to run the camp. The camp will operate using boreholes and, during wet season, the mine proposes to draw more than 2 M m³ from the Nobsin River to cover the six months of operation during the dry season. This is a significant volume of water in a semi-arid region and will impact smaller tributaries and streams upon which villagers depend for drinking water and for their farming activities. And this water grab will, no doubt with time, be compounded by water pollution, an inevitable outcome of gold extraction.

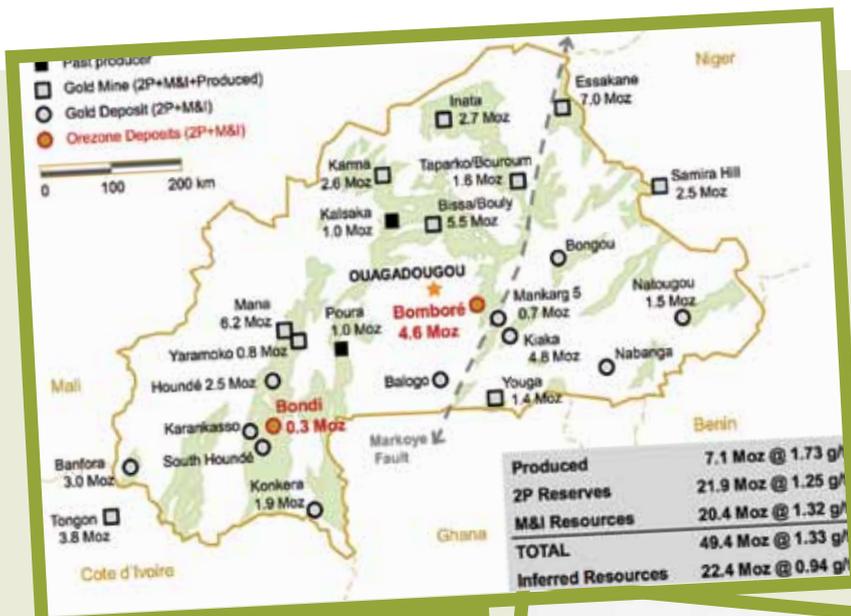
In the workshop, women community leaders shared their frustration that some community members (mainly wealthier and powerful men) had been invited to meetings with the mine, but, to their mind the process of consultation was not clear and decidedly exclusive. The women reported that their families had been merely informed of the mining and that some of them would be relocated to another site. None of them knew exactly when mining would start and for what period. They witness day after day, the Orezone camp site growing and more security people patrolling the villages day and night.

The workshop offered a space for women to be informed, think through their position, and start to discuss how they could strengthen their unity as women and organising in their communities more generally. Because mining has not yet started and the company is still in the phase of exploration (though at an advanced stage) there is still space for women and their communities to organise, demand an inclusive and transparent decision-making process and assert their right of consent. For this community, it is also a question of having the right to define what development looks like for them, an aspiration that many other communities engaged in the same struggle across the continent and around the world share.



The women in the room were unequivocal in their rejection of the mining on any terms. They planned to return to their communities, speak to the men in their families and communities, and initiate a community dialogue about the mining. They were resolute and strong, and with the solidarity and support of national, regional and international allies they stand a fighting chance of winning their right to SAY NO!

By Georgine Kengne-Djeutane and Samantha Hargreaves.



South African women VS. Dirty Energy: Women Building Power Climate Camp



The drive from Johannesburg to Ogies, Mpumalanga, South Africa's coal capital is littered with power plants and mines on either side of the road. Currently, fifteen coal mines surround Ogies itself, dotting the road to the larger city of Witbank, with the construction of more mega projects on the horizon. One such project, Kusile, a mega coal-fired

power plant belonging to the national energy utility Eskom is still under construction. When completed, it will transmit 4800 MW of power, making it one of the five biggest plants in the world and the biggest in South Africa apart from its sibling Medupi. It was no mistake that the Women Building Power Campaign decided to host the first ever energy and climate justice camp in a town where the reality of what a dirty modern South Africa means for women hits home each day.

The Greater Phola/Ogies Climate Camp comes under the banner of the **Women Building Power Campaign**, which is a grassroots women-led and women-driven campaign supported by **WoMin**. The campaign aims to build an ecofeminist African women's movement for democratised renewable energy and climate justice. For attendees at the Climate Camp, it was a powerful opportunity to learn together, share strategies of resistance and organise at a national level to face the onslaught of climate injustice and energy inequality.

Finding energy is like trying to find gold. We walk long distances to collect firewood; in our areas there is no forest anymore. Where we used to collect wood the places are now being shut down by mining. We have to buy wood, paraffin including coal to make fire which is not sustainable but just to satisfy our basic needs which is for lighting and cooking.

"...a climate refugee camp"

Front and centre for participants at the climate camp was the issue of water. Each day, sisters woke at 4AM to first fill up buckets of water, then light a fire to heat the water, and take quick baths, making sure to leave enough for the whole group of 70+ participants to bathe too. This was a "learning and organising" camp, but it was also a "climate refugee camp." The experience is one that sisters from Phola/Ogies are more than familiar with:

We ... lack water. The reason why we lack water is that we have so many mines. They are not putting back to the community because the mines are using our water and they are using a lot more water than the community. In the mines, they don't lack water. But in the community, always we don't have water. Maybe in the morning, as early as 4AM we have some water. But by 6AM the water is finished. Sometimes the whole week happens that we don't have water. It's difficult because even the municipality doesn't help to bring the water tanks. Even if the ward councillors who work with the community are calling the municipality to bring the trucks for us, they don't come. They just don't care. Nontokoza, Phola

Many participants, who came from communities across the country, could easily relate. From access to basic services such as water and energy, to the encroachment of mines and displacement from their land, and to the degradation of their environment and the pollution filling their bodies, life is a struggle. The sharing of experiences through stories of resistance against destructive projects was a pivotal part of the camp, revealing not just how women are impacted but also how to collectively build a movement to resist and transform their communities.

“This camp made it possible for us women to be open and not be silent. We have to talk to each other. Whatever is hurting inside, share it with someone else. I found something here being with other women like this. We have to solve it together.” Lerato, Lephallale

Creating space for solidarity, strategy & security

High on the agenda for the camp were new developments in national energy and climate politics so that struggles could be located within a larger context. The South African government is currently developing a national climate change bill and electricity plan, and is pursuing public engagement on the mining charter. But, these policies and pieces of legislation are being hotly contested by civil society groups for the lack of consultation with people, particularly women, who are affected by climate change, mining and lack of electricity. The SA Women Building Power campaign aims to ensure women's voices are heard in those critical policy and decision-making spaces from the local to the national.

“I want to take [what I have learnt here] back to my community, those who are willing to listen we will start there. Even if we are just ten or twenty, we can start small and grow. I want to share this information [of] how much we are affected by climate change, how much the mines are taking away from the community, how much our rights are being violated by these mines. How much the government is working against us with the mines. All of this is going to be very useful for our struggle....” Nontokoza, Phola

For many women there is no escape from energy poverty. Even though South Africa possesses large electrification rates, there are still many households that are not connected to the grid. On

top of that, millions are connected to the grid but can't afford electricity, which is the leading factor for women to use cheaper dirty and dangerous fuel.

Women have to face a double burden of violence in trying to access resources for themselves and their families. South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world, and violence against women is particularly alarming. This violence manifests itself in many ways, from the security apparatus of the corporations, to the everyday violence and abuse women face as they go in search of wood and coal to meet domestic energy needs. The stories were painful to hear, but it was essential for women to have a space to cry, comfort each other, and start to heal.

The camp is just one strategy of a larger campaign that can push the leaders to act against climate change, energy inequality, and the violence perpetrated against women.

By the National Steering Committee of the South Africa Women Building Power Campaign; and Caroline Ntaopane & Trusha Reddy of WoMin. A version of this article was published by [CIDSE](#).



Our land is our life: Women of Nwoya stand their ground against big oil

First **discovered** in 2006, Uganda's oil resources are estimated at about 6.5 million barrels with almost 90% of those reserves located in Nwoya district, located in northern Uganda. With oil production slated for 2020, the region has **been rife** with land grabbings, disputes and violence as communities rise up to defend their land and livelihoods. The struggle for the people of Northern Uganda follows a long period of civil war which impacted hundreds of thousands of people. They are only just



beginning to reclaim their lives. At the Uganda Feminist Movement Builders School, Alice and Sarah* from Nwoya shared their stories of radical resistance against encroaching oil and other mining interests in their area. Through the Women Building Power Campaign, WoMin supports ecofeminist movement building schools regionally as spaces for dialogue, shared learning and strategising, solidarity and alliance-building with women from across the continent. The Uganda school brings this same ethos of transgressive feminist politics and cross-learning to bolster local and national movement building and action as part of the Women Building Power campaign.

"... people are filled with a lot of fear"

Alice and Sarah, in their own words –

Oil was identified about five years ago in Nwoya district. They have started to install infrastructure and the [extraction site] is under tight security. Since people discovered the oil there has been land grabbing. Most of the land is surrounded by a national park in the Albertine region, so now people are buying up the land – government officials, prominent business people—in the name of investment. The rich and middle class are now buying from the poor people for a lower price because many of the people are ignorant that their land has oil. So the people who are grabbing the land are mostly the wealthy and the investors. If these powerful figures discover that the people don't have land titles, we will just wake up and find ourselves with nothing. And the situation is worsening and worsening. People are buying huge pieces of land, most of them are top government officials.

*Names changed to safeguard privacy and security.

Many people were beaten, some arrested and one person even died. The reality for us is that if you talk you are finished. One MP tried to intervene and he was quickly silenced. Local government are struggling to recover the land but in vain. The military (Red Tops) are used to silence people so no one is talking.

People are filled with a lot of fear.

For women, the situation is tough. It's the women who are displaced. The men will take the compensation money and find their own way to cope: concubines, drinking, drugs. But now the women with children have to find a place to live with squatters. The trouble is that those children can't go to school, the mother can't provide for them to go to school or any basic needs. To survive, many are forced to become casual labourers on big plantations owned by these top government officials, and they are paid peanuts.

Some of our husbands have been arrested. Some of those who have raised their voices disappear naturally. And us women don't know where to start. Now the women and children have been resettled in a camp in one of the sub-counties in the North.

Women's radical resistance

In the face of certain backlash and violence, women are finding creative ways to self-organise in their communities – from music, dance and drama as well as the building of handicraft skills that allow women to make a living. Alice shares a powerful story of how women in the Amuru district fought back when government-backed investors tried to take their land:

In Amuru district there was an investor brought in by the government to see some virgin land there. After the long war, people had not gone into that land but they still saw it as theirs. So when the government saw that there are no people there, they thought they could take it. So without any negotiation, they just ordered to say we are giving this land to an investor. The people refused. When the government saw that the people are refusing to comply, they deployed military and police, the Red Tops. Still, people refused!

In 2015, some government officials were sent to force women and the community to accept. They told women that this is government land, that they better accept or the government will take everything. So the women said in our culture, the land is everything. If you take it from us then we will remain without anything, not even our clothes. And they began to remove clothes in that bitterness and anger. They kept rolling on the ground and throwing their legs up. The **ministers were so afraid that they ran away** because in our culture it is an abomination.

For the Acholi people of northern Uganda, "a woman stripping in public is laden with meaning. It is more powerful than fighting as it is believed such actions invoke the worst of curses on the woman's enemy." Because of that action, ministers were forced to launch a programme to negotiate with the community for a "fair price" for compensation.¹

¹ Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32938779>.



Surviving in post-war Northern Uganda

As communities in Northern Uganda **grapple** with the ghosts of over two decades of war, the trauma of those experiences lingers for Alice, Sarah and thousands of others:

What the war did which was so bad. Number one, in the twenty years the children were not able to study. Like me, I was forced to be a child soldier. You don't desire to be a child soldier but you find yourself like me as a victim of circumstances. That has tortured us emotionally in that the soldiers came and burned the houses, the rebels came and they burned. It destroyed Northern Uganda and reduced it to zero. Most of the young girls were raped and some ended up pregnant and ended up child mothers, some of them were infected with HIV and AIDS. For me, I studied up to P5 and then I was kidnapped. I cried, I was abused in every way. What I miss is that I would have wanted to study but it was too late. My future was ruined. – Alice

So children, many people, were all put in the camps. People were raped, [they were forced to] drink blood, to cut the remains of their friends and eat, to steal people's food in the compounds. It was torture. [The people of Northern Uganda] are really going through a lot of trauma. The government is doing nothing to rehabilitate. And now they are coming to grab their land. That's the only thing we had, our land. But because we are vulnerable, they are coming and taking their land. – Sarah

The violations from land grabbings and disputes continue to add to the burden that communities already face. "Our land is our life," says Alice. "Our place used to be the food basket of Uganda. So I feel with more knowledge that glory can come back again. This land is ours. As women, we can resist!" For these two activists, their communities are far from helpless and they aim to continue organising and training to build a powerful movement for women in Nwoya and beyond:

I believe women can do it. We need more training and capacity building. Let women be trained and brought on board to understand about feminism and this movement. People believe that when you say "movement" you mean a political party. I want women to have this political training so that they understand what is this movement and they be empowered. I am a mobiliser, I would want to share this with my sisters and get all the women from the sub-counties in Nwoya district. Then when Nwoya is on fire, we can roll to other districts to enlighten them as well! – Alice

Sowing seeds for a better tomorrow in Fuleni and Somkhele



When the Tendele Mine started to operate in Somkhele in 2006, the community could not have known the impact the mine would have on their lives and health:

“Ever since Tendele started to mine here in Somkhele in 2006, my grandmother started to cough and when she went to the doctor it was said that she has a layer of coal on her chest. She was asked if she lives next to a mine, and she said yes. The doctor then gave her a letter to take to the mine for the mine to pay for her medication... but the mine always said they will get back to her and they never did till we lost her... she passed away in 2016.” Nosipho Nqulunga, Somkhele

It was ten years after the mine’s launch that the community women began to organise against the mining, joining hand in hand with the nearby town of Fuleni, which was also facing mining encroachments. Since 2016, women from Fuleni and Somkhele have been coming together holding meetings and workshops to inform and empower each other to be able to advocate for themselves. These are women from rural areas who do not have the space to hold meetings in the community. They started by holding meetings in one woman’s house, mamNkosi in Somkhele, and at Gogo Fakazile’s church in Fuleni.

“[Since the start of the mining] our life has changed not for the best but for the worse because now we are losing our livestock, which we use to sell to be able to afford to pay for our children’s’ higher education.” Zonke Dlamini-Somkhele

The women from both Fuleni and Somkhele have been working together to speak out on the impacts of mining on their lives and communities. Before, life was easier, they did not face

many problems with water and air pollution. There was no sickness that people are being affected by these days. Now, because of the mining, water sources for their livestock have been contaminated and many animals are dying. Many natural remedies, indigenous herbs and plants, are disappearing as the environment is increasingly degraded by dirty mining practices. Before the mine, women had herbs that could heal wounds, diabetes and other illnesses as alternatives to Western medicine but these are no more.

Organising for food and livelihoods

Earlier this year, women from Fuleni took part in a second training on the agroecology system of farming, an efficient mode of farming that people in the area use due to drought conditions that make water scarce. Recognising a powerful opportunity, the fifteen are building a farming cooperative – organising together to feed their families with good, healthy food and support their livelihoods by selling food that they have grown themselves. The project has already begun to generate income for the women in the cooperative:

“This farming project has really helped us a lot, we have been farming for a long time but ever since Tendele coal mine started mining in 2006 in Somkhele water has been an issue for us... because this mine is taking the very same water that belongs to us as community members. And the most painful thing is we don’t have any mine in Fuleni but we stopped farming because there is no water... until WoMin supported us go for training. Now we are doing what we love and are good at doing. We are happy that now we know very well that the kind of food that we are eating with our families is 100% healthy.” Khanyisile Mathe, Fuleni

In June 2018, women from Somkhele and Fuleni joined the first Women Building Power Campaign Climate Camp in Phola-Ogies, Mpumalanga. There they found solidarity. They strategised with women who are facing similar challenges across the country. And they learnt practical tools of resistance, such as wonder bags as an alternative for energy. Since the camp, women in the cooperative have started to contribute R10 every Wednesday to raise money to craft their own wonder bags. With these, the women say they will be able to save time instead of spending up to five hours per day collecting firewood. Now they will only need firewood for boiling water and other things.

Somkhele and Fuleni woman are doing everything in their power to resist mining in the community and are fighting for a better life for them and their families and for a better South Africa.

By Lebohang Ngobeni.

HIGHLIGHTS



REGIONAL | African women talk climate catastrophe and alternative energy in Nairobi

As the planet hurtles towards climate catastrophe, women from across Africa came together in Nairobi over five days in March 2018 to build strategies for climate justice and imagine a more sustainable world. Living at the frontlines of destructive, climate-destroying mining and infrastructure projects these women form part of an emerging women-led resistance coming under the banner of the *Women Building Power* campaign. The campaign supports resistance against fossil fuel and mega energy projects and organises and advocates for localised, democratised, and climate just renewable energy solutions.

This was the second region-wide convening of the campaign and drew in 35 participants from Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. Using a highly participatory and varied format, the meeting incorporated dance, music, poetry, art, film and storytelling. It also opened space for women organisers to take the lead in presenting country level analysis, national campaign-building progress, and raise critical issues arising at the local level. Women also got a chance to share and celebrate the development of women's leadership since the last time they met as a group in late 2016.



The space also provided an opportunity to grapple with the concepts and politics on energy and climate justice and the meaning of building an ecofeminist campaign to address the complexity of extractivism in Africa today. Mela Chiponda, regional coordinator of the Women Building Power Campaign explains:

Surely there should be an alternative to this fossil fuels driven agenda? We should have something that is driven by women and peasants, that is off-grid and not centralised the way that it is now, that African women and peasants have control over. This is what the Women Building Power Campaign is all about. We are saying there is another energy system that is not fossil fuels-driven...That is not targeted at giving energy to corporates but instead a system where the energy is for us.”

UGANDA | Fighting to defend land, lives and dignity

The minute we sell our land, we are going to lose the right to it. The land is a form of our identity, it gives us a sense of belonging. This land is also our home. When we lose that we can find ourselves as refugees or squatters in our own land with no place to go. We can lose our livelihoods and source of food, water and our wealth. We will lose our ancestral grounds [...], our pride and dignity.”

In June 2018 the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) and Kwataniza Women Farmers Group, in partnership with WoMin, convened the very first national ecofeminist movement-building school in Hoima, Uganda. Drawing thirty women activists from across the country, the school was a space for collective learning and exchange as each participant brought her stories and experiences of resistance against extractivism and militarism and protecting lands, lives and livelihoods in their communities. The school lays a strong foundation for ecofeminist movement building around natural resource rights and climate justice in Uganda.



REGIONAL | Celebrating African feminist knowledges from the ground up

“Every human being has knowledge and therefore every human being has power,” Blandine Bonianga says. “There are different forms of knowledge, from fisherwoman to farmer, and these forms of knowledge complement each other and it has nothing to do with intelligence.. it’s how the knowledge is applied. Patriarchy has a role in defining whose knowledge is important.” In January 2018, WoMin and our partners embarked on a year-long feminist participatory action research process to challenge patriarchal, mainstream forms of knowledge production and put women’s experiences and knowledge front and centre.

Drawing thirty-four women activists from eight African countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, DR Congo, Madagascar, Burkina Faso and Senegal), this FPAR process is grand in scope yet grounded in and led by communities. Constructed as two modules (the first in January 2018 and the second held in May 2018) with sustained support from solidarity organisations in each country and WoMin, women activists are learning-by-doing, designing their research methods as collectives while deepening feminist community organising. The FPAR is underway in each of the eight countries, each proceeding with a different theme and space. We aim to conclude this phase in early 2019.



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