



**WOMEN'S VOICE
AND LEADERSHIP
IN GHANA**

Canada



REPORT OF THE 1st NATIONAL YOUNG FEMINIST CONFERENCE (NYFC)

**THEME: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH
INTERSECTIONALITY: UNITING VOICES,
DRIVING CHANGE**

9th – 11th August 2023

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Introduction

Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) is known for its work around Economic Justice and has Movement Building as one of its core pillars with which the organisation rides on to engage policy and advocate for gender transformative reforms. Over the years, there has been great recognition and visibility of young feminists with increased networking and social media activism denouncing socio-economic, violence against women and gender injustices among others. It is the basis for NETRIGHT’s legitimacy in promoting women’s rights and gender equality and has in the past few years placed emphasis on bridging the intergenerational gap by engaging and encouraging young feminists to join efforts together in building a collective voice for the desired future for women and girls.

Additionally, there has been increased discourse on bridging the inter-generational gap to ensure young activists and feminists are well equipped to take up the mantle and build stronger movements to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Intersectional approaches to promoting gender equality is also receiving more attention around the world in the light of increased awareness in the past few decades based on the fact that many women’s and girls’ lives are shaped by multiple vulnerabilities that can interact to exacerbate each other.

It is against this background and a strategic focus for NETRIGHT that this first National Young Feminist Conference (NYFC) was held with support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) through Plan International’s Women’s Voice and Leadership (WVL) Ghana Project.

Background

The 1990s were a time of hope and optimism in the international human rights movement and saw many positive changes for women’s rights and human rights more broadly. Sealed at the height of the post-Cold War era, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was part of this broader landscape. Yet the Beijing Platform for Action (BfPA) could not foresee the changing trends of recent years, including democratic reversals and attacks on women’s rights and their defendants. While opposition to gender equality and women’s rights is not new, 25 years after Beijing, feminists face a very different political context to that of the 1990s. Today women’s human rights and those who advance them face two connected and troubling developments: first, a questioning of gender equality and the institutions and policies aimed at achieving it; and second, the rise of anti-democratic forces whose agendas are imbued with discriminatory and patriarchal tendencies. These concomitant developments pose renewed challenges to the hard-won gains on women’s rights and limit the scope for feminist action to institutionalise non-discrimination, gender equality and women’s rights through laws, policies

and public action. Over the past decade young feminists have gained greater visibility with increased networking and social media activism denouncing violence against women, socio-economic and gender injustices among others. A 'new generation' of young women are actively involved in this activism, impatient with the slow pace of change and alarmed by the attacks on hard-won rights. The extensive use of social media has been highlighted as one of the attributes that sets younger activists apart from previous generations. While diversity and intersectionality have been defining features of feminist debates and movements since at least the 1970s, they have gained increasing attention in current feminist organising, which locates itself at the intersection of gender with race, class, and sexual orientation, among other factors. Apart from their participation in feminist movements across the globe, young women have also been at the forefront of struggles for democracy, economic, social and climate justice. Rationale Intersectionality recognises that individuals' experiences and identities are shaped by the intersections of various social categories, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability. It acknowledges that gender inequality cannot be addressed in isolation but must be understood and tackled in relation to other systems of oppression.

Focus of the Conference



Expected results of the Conference

The Anticipated results at the end of the conference were: Increased understanding and awareness of intersectionality as a framework for analysing and addressing gender inequality.

- Enhanced capacity of young feminists to apply intersectionality in their activism, advocacy, and policy engagement.
- Developed shared vision and strategies for empowering young feminists and advancing gender equality.
- Created a network of young feminists for ongoing collaboration, support, and knowledge exchange.
- Dissemination of conference findings and recommendations through various channels, including social media, publications, and policy briefs

Participants

This premier conference brought together sixty (60) young feminists from across the country to engage in a dynamic and inclusive dialogue on issues related to gender equality, intersectionality, and social change. There were representatives from Upper East, Upper West, Northern, Bono, Ashanti, Western, Eastern, Central, Volta and Greater Accra regions. The participants were carefully selected from tertiary institutions, trade unions, senior high school, women and youth led organisations, media, academia, civil society organisations among others with the youngest person being 16 years old.

Approach

Being young feminists and with high enthusiasm the conference employed array methodologies over the three-day conference with a combination of presentations, panel discussions, group discussions, self-reflections, plenary discussions and networking sessions. Additionally, the gathering utilised art, culture, technology and creative expression, and innovative ways in which activists can forge alliances, learn, celebrate activist creativity, and ultimately advance feminist leadership and movement building work.



DAY ONE: Setting The Tone - Getting Connected



Opening

Brief Akwaaba: Cynthia Sunu



The day's event commenced with a brief welcome from Cynthia Sunu, the Senior Programme Officer of NETRIGHT, reiterating her excitement for being able to pull this conference together and for having all participants turning up for the event. She remarked that, this initiative is a critical component of NETRIGHT's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 in reference to movement building which is one of its core pillars. She noted the support from Global Affairs Canada and Plan International for making this dream come true. She went on to highlight the reasons behind organising this first ever national young feminist forum and said it is a way

of increasing activism and mobilise more awareness on women's rights issues across the country. She urged participants to feel free and participate fully and ensure they do not leave this charge space the same but go back home with more knowledge and empowered. She also expressed her excitement to see the enthusiasm in the room and wished all participants a fruitful deliberation.

Setting the tone, creating safe space and Introductions.

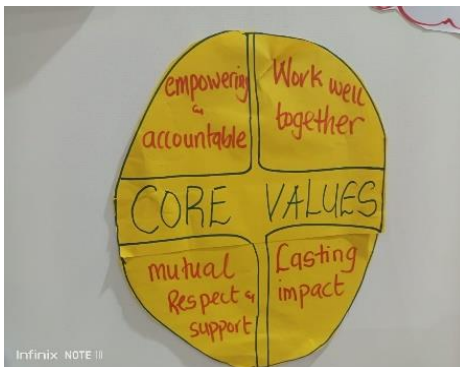
In order to set the right tone for the conference, and to ensure everyone is very comfortable to share and learn, the moderator for the Conference, Dr. Thelma Ohene Adjei opened up by creating a peaceful, reflective and inviting space where participants feel safe, welcome and free to express themselves. Participants were also assured of the physical and mental wellbeing indicating that there are key facilitators and leaders available in the space to provide any needed support when it becomes necessary. Clear boundaries were shared for learning purposes so to promote high confidentiality and effective communications among participants.



Considering the fact that, participants are coming from diverse backgrounds with different perceptions and experiences, the moderator led participants to introduce themselves by answering these key questions including name, organisation and what they do as well as provide an answer to the questions they randomly picked from a bowl.

Guiding Rules

- Mutual respect
- Confidentiality
- Respect personal boundaries
- one meeting at all times (can this be tweaked - No side meetings).
- All phones on vibration, silence or off
- Respect for time
- no sleeping (can this be tweaked – Be attentive and active
- respect other

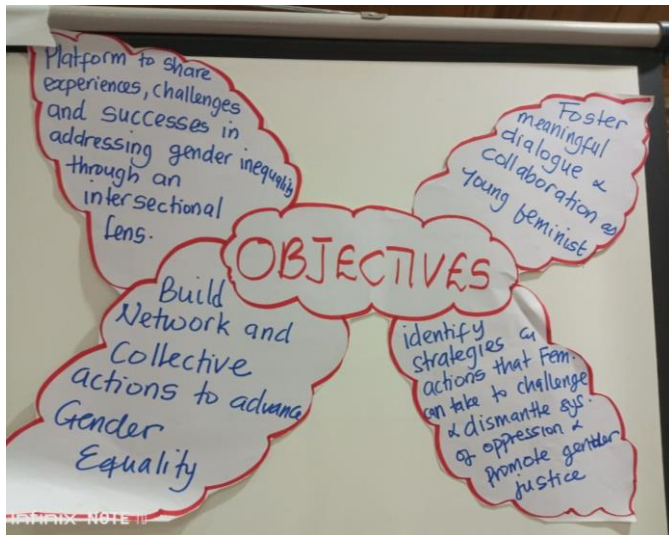


This activity opened the space for participants to share who they are and reflected on their journeys so far, acknowledging their challenges and gains along their river of life.



Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the conference were captured by the moderator as follows:



- ✓ Provide a platform for young feminists to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in addressing gender inequality through an intersectional lens.
- ✓ Foster meaningful dialogue and collaboration among young feminists, activists, scholars, and policymakers to exchange knowledge and ideas.
- ✓ Explore the ways in which intersectionality can be applied to various sectors, including education, employment, politics, media, and healthcare, to drive change and create more inclusive and equitable systems.
- ✓ Identify strategies and actions that young feminists can take to challenge and dismantle systems of oppression and promote gender justice.
- ✓ Build a network of young feminists committed to collective action and advocacy for gender equality and social justice.

Reflections and key messages for Day 1

DAY 1 - Reflections from Moderator and Key messages

- ✓ Be mindful of creating a space that is inclusive of all backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Use inclusive language and ensure that everyone feels valued and respected.
- ✓ Great reflections on how important parents especially mothers with little or no education were able to inspire their wards especially girls to move up the ladder and break the glass ceiling to become who they are today.
- ✓ Many were inspired by the speaking ability of every single participant in sharing their own live journey. "This conference looks and feels exactly like Women's Deliver, the event has a global feel for gender and development. (Participant)
- ✓ Most participants were thrilled with the diversity of experiences shared indicating the safety of the space we find ourselves.

DAY TWO : Official conference Opening



The day commenced with a physical exercise of participants empowering their bodies and minds and reflecting on their self-care and wellbeing. Participants had the opportunity to explore the powerful connections between feminist value and physical activities.

REMARKS

Opening Remarks: Patricia Blankson Akakpo – NETRIGHT GHANA

The Head of NETRIGHT Secretariat, Patricia Blankson Akakpo welcomed all the young feminists and guest speakers to the National Young Feminist Conference, the first of its kind to be held by NETRIGHT and in Ghana. She noted in her remarks that feminism in its truest essence, has always been about breaking barriers and challenging the status quo. Also “the concept of intersectionality underscores the undeniable truth that our individual experiences are multifaceted, that our identities are woven together by threads of



ethnicity and transformative stories are born” she reiterated that, the NYFC will provide a safe space for young feminist to discuss their issues and develop a common advocacy agenda that meets the needs and aspirations of younger generations. It is a good opportunity to celebrate the power of intersectional feminism.

She went on to urge participants to embrace the created avenues with an open mind and heart and to celebrate the stories and history of those who fought hard for our generation today. Also to remember that “ *our collective strength lies not only in our individual experiences but in the solidarity we forge and the alliance we build*”

In concluding, she expressed her heart felt gratitude to the organising committee and NETRIGHT Staff for bringing the event to life and extended her gratitude to GAC and Plan International for their support. She admonished all to inspire, learn and empower one another to drive the wheels of change.

Candace Holt – Programme Manager for WVL Ghana Global Affairs Canada



Candace Holt in her remarks could not hold her excitement in being part of this historic event. She took the opportunity to elaborate on the Canadian Feminist International Policy which led to the development of the global program dubbed “Women’s Voice and Leadership Program” which seeks to provide support to local women led organisations in promoting gender equality.

She emphasised Canada’s commitment to support women led organisations and movements in building capacity so that they can better advocate for changes in policies, legislation and services that challenges harmful and discriminatory practices.

In her remarks, she shared some successes from RUWA Ghana, WISE and FIDA and how they are contributing to changing

norms. She also mentioned other GAC supporting activities in Ghana to address women’s economic empowerment.

Importantly, she stated that: *“Canada feminist approach recognises that inequalities exist along intersectional lines and requires assistance to be informed by a gender-based analysis plus (GBA +) which acknowledges that in addition to differences based on biological and socio cultural, there are many other intersecting identities to be considered....”*

She concluded with the hope that, discussion will touch on how Ghana’s feminist movement can better support young people to raise their voices and be heard within the movement and outside of it.

Dr. Akosua Dakwa: NETRIGHT Convenor - opening remarks

The Convenor of NETRIGHT also added her voice to welcome participants to the first ever national forum for young feminists in Ghana and expressed her gratitude to NETRIGHT and the donors for making this event a reality. She went on to make a remark on creating a space that

“young activists can call their own and commit to the project that ensures that Ama who is born in 2015, Delali 2055, Fatima 2060 will grow up in different kind of light than the ones we had. We have a charge to keep ensuring that the world that our children and grandchildren will have, is one that affirms every toil and allows



then to be the best in themselves that they can. She wished all participants the best of the event and looked forward to a fruitful deliberation and networking.

Main Conference Sessions

Intersectionality and Identity: Understanding the Intersections of Gender with other Forms of Identify and Oppression.

Session1: Foundational Knowledge on Theories, Concepts and Approaches to Feminism BY PROF AKOSUA DARKWAHH

During the session, Prof Akosua Darkwah took participants through the key concepts and theories of feminism, what it means to us as Africans and the key approaches to feminism. This interactive session centred on appreciating the underlying factors and the various forms it takes.

Feminism was clearly defined as all genders having equal rights and opportunities. It was further discussed to include an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality as understood through social theories and political activism. Historically, feminism has evolved from the critical examination of inequality between the sexes to a more nuanced focus on the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality.

Prof. Akosua Darkwah highlighted the 4 main waves of feminism including: First Wave: 1848 – 1920: Second Wave: 1963 - 1980s: Third Wave: 1990s – Fourth Wave - Present Day. Noting that, each movement includes smaller, overlapping sub-groups, which are often at odds with each other. While the wave concept is certainly imperfect, it remains a helpful tool in outlining and understanding the turbulent history of feminism.

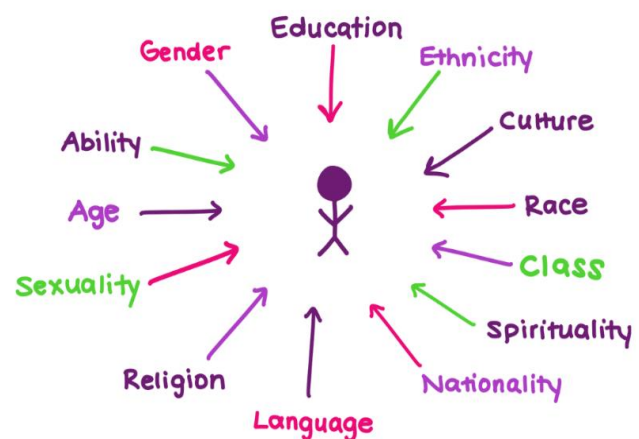
Prof. Darkwah also touched on the various forms/type of feminism highlighting the key distinctions:

1. **Liberal feminism** believes that explicit policies must be put in place, so women are not disadvantaged. There should be gender neutral laws that protect women as well as men.

2. **Radical feminist:** focused on the deep operative structures. Dismantle patriarchal structures (why do we create a system that produces these kind of things.....) they view the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture, and economic class. This is a movement intent on social change, change of rather revolutionary proportions.
3. **Socialist feminist:** Socialist Feminism is an off shoot of mainstream Feminism that emphasises the importance of class struggle in addressing social inequalities. Socialist feminists believe that pre-existing political, economic, and cultural structures must be challenged and rethink to create more fair and equal societies.

Key highlights and open discussions

- All these feminist theories now aims to interrogate inequalities and inequities along the intersectional lines of ability, class, gender, race, sex, and sexuality, and feminists seek to effect change in areas where this intersectionality create power inequity. As young feminists discussions of such inequities allow us to go into the world aware of injustices and to work toward changing unhealthy dynamics in any scenario.
- The session also placed much emphasis on and discussed *whether feminism is an alien ideology or an importation?* It was made clear that feminism has been with Ghanaians since time immemorial citing the case of Yaa Asantewaa, an Asante warrior with no education but fought for the rights of women and her country. Others who were cited included Agnes Akosua Aidoo, Adelaide Kingsley Hayford, Mable Dove Danquah wife of J.B. Danquah among others.
- As to whether we should call ourselves feminist or not? It was noted that the African Feminist Charter defines who we are as African feminist. We should take the name and self-define it and imbue it with meaning. Anyone can be a feminist and being one simply means believing in equal rights for all genders. It is not about hating men. It is not about women being better than men. It is not about eschewing femininity, it is all about equal opportunities for each and every one to live to their full potential.
- With the changing trends in our world today it is critical to see ourselves more as intersectional feminists to be able to recognise how different aspects of a person's identity might interact to change the way they experience the world and the barriers they might face as a result - example, being a Muslim, single mother, virtually impaired uneducated lady etc. in doing so, it provides an avenue to allow us to view the world outside of our own experience and better understand how different forms of marginalisation can unearth and amplify



each other to create unique vulnerabilities. Intersectionality as discussed is a tool for supporting equality and it rejects the one-size-fits-all notion.

- Other participants also shared their personal reflections and key insights for learning purposes and to encourage other sisters to keep the flag high.



“ My takeaway is in relation to the types of feminism that was taught by Prof and how we as individuals should identify where we want to belong. Be it liberal, radical or social.” Angela- TUC

Key messages

Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. It means a million things to a million people and for us as young African feminists, we need to tag on to our own African feminism and defines it as such. Feminism holds the position of fighting against gender stereotypes and respecting diverse women’s experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realise their full rights.

- As young feminists we need to stand in **solidarity** with one another, questioning power structures, and speaking out against the root causes of inequalities are critical actions for building a future that leaves no one behind.
- Acknowledging this can create a space for young feminists to be more analytical of how we view the systems of power and patriarchy we are trying to influence and be more focused in the ways we seek to better gender equality.



Session 2 Panel discussions- Intersectionality in Practice: Applying an intersectional approach in various sectors and spheres of influence.

Dr. Abena Kyere moderated the panel discussion on intersectionality in Practice and its applications in various sectors and spheres of influence. This was to unpack and bring to reality issues around intersectionality reflecting on personal lived experiences of some young feminists. The discussions brought to the fore great and inspiring experiences from Bilkis Nuhu



Kokroko, Ruth Osei-Asante and Nina Okoroafo placing emphasis on religion, social norms, discrimination and living with a disability.



Key pointers included:


- **Capability vs. Religion or Appearance** – in our working and public spaces, we should be mindful of the privileges we have, our backgrounds and beliefs and practised them in a way that they do not make anyone live in discomfort. It is important we explore our intersectionality and respect each other as shared by Bilkis.
- **Oppression and Discrimination** in private and public spaces: it is important to grow beyond the negative encounters we have each experience in our schools with teachers, colleagues and loved ones and made our voices heard. Forge ahead and pursue our dreams irrespective of how people who are expected to be our anchor ends up being the obstacle. (Ruth)
- **Take hold of our space and make ourselves heard** *“we are a lot at the labour front and must make our voice heard. Taking the initiative by bringing women together to fight with a common and collective voice to make issues of women heard and address affirmative action in leadership”* (Ruth)
- **Feminism, Disability and Intersectionality:** Nina also highlighted her feminist journey as a woman with disability. What it means to embody a woman with different kinds of disabilities. In her sharing she pointed out that, growing up she had always thought feminists were abled angry women who were not competent to do the work but want to be given recognition, all because she grew up in an environment as a visually impaired woman, who had to learn to do things by herself.
- **Patriarchy a fuel of inequality makes it more difficult for PWDs and those with different sexual identities to belong.**
- Patriarchy even happens in the feminist movement and for that reason, there is a call for action on intersectionality for an all-inclusiveness with no limitations. Involving all the different identities with no discrimination or tokenism. When it comes to PWDs,

advocacy is a matter for all. Women are disproportionately affected, and that same effect on people who are differently abled are enormous.



Open discussions

Questions, comments and contributions	Responses/Recommendations
<p>Do we give a voice or support the voice? Do we have the right to speak for those who hold the rights knowing that we are embodied with different identities?</p>  	<p>Most participants reiterated the importance of supporting each other by being the voice in areas where they have information and technical expertise. Alternatively, one can also support the voice that is affected for them to speak out because they may have the right information and experiences to share to effect the change. As in the case of <i>“hijab is my identity campaign”</i> there were many Christians who supported by sharing the post, taking pictures in their hijabs to promote the identity and acceptance.</p> <p><i>“Educating our selves on all the various angles that goes into what we want to know is key. As young activists we may not know all hence the emphasis on striving to improve ourselves to learn and understand the changing trends.” (NYFC Participant)</i></p> <p><i>“We should hold on to what makes us meet at that central point and learn outwards”. NYFC participant</i></p>
<p>Dealing with Struggles and lived experiences</p>	<p>Struggles and lived experiences are different for each person, it works well to support those leading the experience to speak up. It is essential to pay critical attention to little things that we hardly recognise and put up in our subconscious minds. Be your sister’s keeper and let us hold each other’s hands and collectively go through the gains by proving a shoulder for each other in solidarity.</p>
<p>How we overcome these challenges?</p>	<p>Determination!! irrespective of the barriers that confronts young feminists. There is the need to be</p>

	<p>determined and focus on the agenda of promoting unity and gender equality. It is essential to note that, what one brings to the table is critical. Know your worth and what you bring to the table.</p>
<p>Safeguarding and safety</p> 	<p>In the fight for equality, we usually forget about safeguarding and our own safety. How have you dealt with safeguarding issues? We recognise the unequal access to power that young feminists have in a patriarchal adult-centric world and trust that the duty of care to support and protect ourselves is a shared collective responsibility. Participants were encouraged not to put any family or personal issues on social media.</p> <p><i>Where one feels insecure, do not hesitate to take action and report to the security agencies. Take your own precautionary measures.</i></p>
<p><i>“Feminists across the country must be able to grab what they have and bring the value to the decision-making table. Some advantages come with tokenism and conditions. Go for what you want. Chose the battles and fight through to the end, respect your values and know the battle” (Nina t)</i></p>	

Key messages – moderators reflections There is the need to take the discussion on intersectionality more seriously and lean our voices to other voiceless people.

In the spirit of curiosity and agenda setting, when we find ourselves in spaces like this, we should create space to learn and understand each other especially on religious biases to be able to back each other in our course of promoting equality.



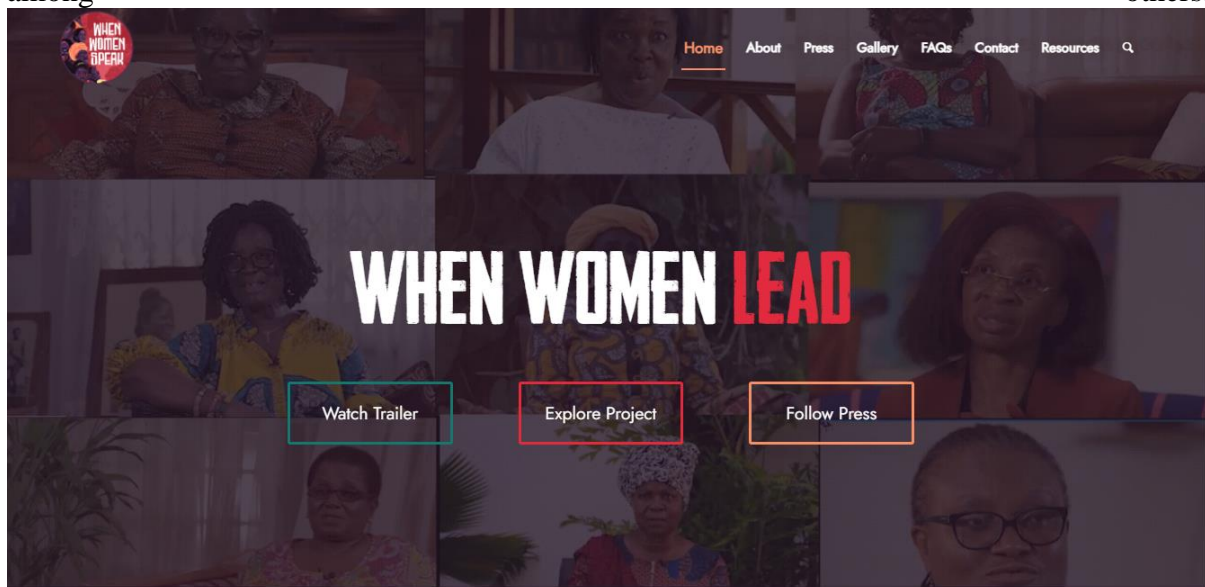


equality.

- The use of language in the discourse of gender equality is an essential part of the feminist journey. In advocating for equal rights, the language use must also be appropriate and promote unity.
- **Deliberate mentorships and recognitions.** We need to support each other deliberately and as we learn we should appreciate each other while they are still alive.
- Need to support each other on their journey. Make it an intention, talk to your siblings, friends etc.
- The forum also discussed at length how to engage men and boys in the struggles of gender

Session 3: Documentary: When Women Speaks

Participants were also thrilled with an insightful documentary of the struggles of feminism in Ghana, featuring interviews with key women leaders in Ghana recounting how far we have come with achieving gender equality in Ghana. They also detailed what the key challenges are and provided recommendations in moving the gains forward. Key among the women interviewed were - Prof. Florence Abena Dolphyne, Emerita Prof. Takyiwa Manuh, Ms. Joyce Aryee, Mrs. Marian Tackie, Prof. Dzodzi Tsikata, Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin, Mrs Elizabeth Apkalu, Madam Ekua Ansah Eshun, Mrs Dorcas Coker-Appiah, Mrs. Hillary Gbedemah among others.



Brief Reflections:

- Participants attested to the fact that the documentary has stirred up something in them, as young feminists and the highlights on the learning were awesome.

- Participants were able to clearly see the energy in these women and how far they have come moving the gender equality agenda forward. “These are strong women, and few truly celebrate them”. We need to recognise them as sheroes and honour their efforts.
- As much as they work collectively, they also work on their own calling and aspirations as well as provided solidarity towards one another.
- They were also happy about the call for action and the new wave of moving more women into leadership and being deliberate to see the change happen.
- Participants also encouraged themselves to sustain the momentum built by their predecessors.

Session 4: Unpacking What has been learnt and discussions on struggles around feminism.

Abigail Fati Abdulai led participants through to discuss and outline the following struggles and biases they have experienced in their journey as feminists and sort to provide avenues for redress.

Struggles/ Biases	Responses from participants
The distinction between being a feminist and a believer (religion vis-a-vis a scientist) Where does religion end and personal conviction begin?	You can be a feminist and be a good religious person or have a perfect marriage.
Confidentiality and feminism: How do we treat this in abusive cases especially when the survivor does not want to report or go public.?	Be conscious enough to know that what is being brought to you is not about you, but you are providing guidance for them to make an informed decision. Point on the options and the risk involved. Confidentiality is also a key ethics to the work we do whether as social or health workers. The survivor and be encouraged to report and seek assistance. Domestic Violence Act. DV Act 732 also provide room for health professional to disclose or report an abuse to the security services and also to testify in court.
Handling confidentiality e.g. dealing with specific people Queer/LGBTQ What is the right thing to do to share your feminist idea or religious belief?	Though we belong to different religion and faith, respect is very crucial, and there is the need to ensure we respect people’s positions and faith. Everyone should be respected and allowed to make their own decision. Religion – LGBTQ = in dealing with LGBTQI+++ the best that can be done in all situations is for us not to be judgemental but rather open up to show them love and provide protect their human rights and dignity.
Religion and tribe: in some religion women are not allowed to be seen as commanding men around and same	Engaging government agencies is quite difficult – hardly do you see the results. Struggle to receive justice.

for some tribes. How can this be handled professionally to ensure it does not affect your delivery at work.	
How to make the public to understand that feminism is not about hating men.	It will take some time for people to understand and appreciate the call for feminism. In any case we do not need any justification to fight for a good course.
Additional Questions and reflections	
Struggling with how to learn and teach toxic masculinity	
Dealing with cases and withdrawal of cases of abuse to settle at home.	
If we are working on dealing with certain socialisation but we put all efforts on girls and leaving the boys behind? Should look at engaging more men and boys.	
How mentally draining it is to be working in this space. Being able to say and advocate for more female in a male dominated field.... (dealing with our emotions – emotional cases) Self-care and mental care of women?	
Is it that we are not able to tell our story the way it is or we are telling our stories the wrong way and living contrary to what we say?	
Failure for government to deliver on their justice support call. What kind of feminist should one be and will be accepted by other feminists ... or should you even choose?	
How do I go through my work without being the black sheep of the family, when I receive push backs	
Being Muslim, married and a feminist. When you raise critical issues affecting women you are attacked of being a ‘feminist’. You are confronted with allegations that, you are raising these issues because you are going through same difficulties.	
Ethic of the profession and not being able to share certain thing and become difficult to share in their voices.	

The day ended with a movie dubbed “the Lion King”, where participants were thrilled with the power of women. The Woman King is the remarkable story of the Agojie, the all-female unit of warriors who protected the African Kingdom of Dahomey in the 1800s with



skills and a fierceness unlike anything the world has ever seen. Inspired by true events, The Woman King follows the emotionally epic journey of General Nanisca (Oscar®-winner Viola Davis) as she trains the next generation of recruits and readies them for battle against an enemy determined to destroy their way of life. Participants

reflected on the key scenes including, the power of a woman, abuse, support and solidarity and victory among others.

DAY 3 : Youth Activism, Empowerment and Feminist Leadership



Session 6: Youth activism and empowering amplifying the voice of young feminist and exploring strategies for empowerment.



The dance troupe from the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana enlightened participants with a learning dance matrix that highlighted abuse, exclusion, biases, stereotyping, unequal power relations and some root causes of injustice and inequality. Participants spent some moment to reflect on the performance and discussed some of these root causes outlined above coupled with some positive aspects that need to be encouraged.

Exhibition of the various forms of abuse: physical, psychological and other forms of verbal abuse and body shaming. These are daily occurrences that has to be dealt with from the root without any compromise.

The dance also showed moments of being supportive and creating safe space for survivors.

Providing a listening ear or fair hearing for both survivors and perpetrators to provide the needed support.

Set out boundaries and identify the red flags early and face it. You should be able to say no when it is a NO and Yes when it is a YES. "NO is NO"

Every situation is different. Be aware of the privileges we have so we don't promote rape culture/victim blaming

Be mindful of body shaming and use of innuendos about people, they can sometimes be very suggestive.

Session 7: Strengthening Young Feminist Leadership in Practice.

Becoming powerful feminist leaders requires working at making those around us feel empowered, able and respected. A feminist leader seeks power with others instead of power over others coupled with a positive and inclusive use of power capable of changing the world. Feminist leaders empower everyday individuals to achieve remarkable feats in the quest for worldwide justice.



In the quest to increase knowledge on feminist leadership and its applications, the facilitator Fati Abigail Abdulai introduced 10 key feminist principles from Action Aid and shared with participants after which they worked in 5 groups, with each group discussing two of the principles and its applications in a role play.

Highlights of the discussions are as follows:

1. SELF-AWARENESS:

Deals with keeping one's ego in check, so that to lead with empathy and an open mind. In order to do this, feminist will work towards accepting our vulnerabilities, as well as recognizing and valuing our strengths and those of others.

2. SELF CARE AND CARING FOR OTHERS

We must take care of our emotional and physical well-being, in order to renew our inner sources of inspiration and compassion so that we can continue to give our best to colleagues. We must encourage and support others to do the same, actively working towards a more flexible and supportive work environment, particularly for those with caring responsibilities



FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

P#3: SHARING POWER

- we must accept that the ultimate test of our leadership is the space we create for others to lead. Involving our team in setting shared goals, we must trust and empower them to share leadership with us in reaching those goals. Likewise, we must trust and support those in positions of authority to guide us in the best interest of our mission.

P#4: ACCOUNTABLE AND COLLABORATION

- We must ensure that goals are clearly defined and mutually owned, and hold all team members, including ourselves, strongly accountable for our individual and collective efforts to achieve them. We must measure our own achievements by the contributions we made to team success. Also recognise and value successful collaboration, while addressing poor performance fairly but decisively.

P#5 ZERO TOLERANCE:

- Call out any form of discrimination and abuse of power that is witness or experience in the workplace, and safely enable and support those around us to do same. we should ensure our own conduct is free from any form of harassment, exploitation and abuse.



6. INCLUSION :

Be mindful to create ways for everyone to be equally heard, respected and successful. challenge ourselves to build diverse and inclusive teams and to recognize and respond to different barriers to participation

7. DISMANTLING BIAS:

We must recognize that society gives us (and others) certain advantages that are not asked for or earned (for example, based on gender, class, race, caste, ability, sexual orientation, education or other factors). We should help to uncover and challenge these forms of discrimination in our day to day workplace practices and policies. We should be aware of how our own privileges can make others feel disempowered or inferior, as well as how we react to others' privileges and deliberately change our behaviour to treat all our colleagues as equals.

8. responsible and transparent use of power.

Be clear, timely and transparent in making the decisions entrusted to us, with appropriate consultations and in the interest of our mission. If involved in allocating resources and choosing partners, we must measure our own achievements by the contributions we have made to team success.

9. respectful feedback

Seek, give and value constructive feedback as an opportunity for two-way learning. Do not wait for formal reviews - instead practice continuous feedback - sideways (colleagues) and bottom up (manager and those above you) as well as top down (subordinates). Work to resolve conflicts through active listening, timely intervention and promoting non-violent and respect communication and behaviour

10. courage

Constantly aim for transformative change, seeking out new ideas and learning from mistake rather than fearing failure, and empowering teammates to do the same. When we encounter defeatism or cynicism in ourselves or others, we will strive to restore belief in our goals; where there is competition or insecurity over status and learn to build trust; and where we find complacency or mediocrity, we must help to renew passion and creativity to excel in our mission.



Understanding power is at the core of recognising how change happens and why. As we explore the feminist journey, there is the need to note that, there are different kinds of power. Feminist strategies use transformative power to foster equitable, inclusive associations throughout the change-making process which directly challenge patriarchy and all forms of inequalities (whether it be gender, race, class, ability, or other identities). Feminist strategies are also often holistic and intersectional, building connections to foster longer-term solidarity.



Session 8: Panel Discussions: on Intergenerational Leadership and Mentorship

Intergenerational leadership is said to be leadership defined by conscious generational awareness; by clear identification of leaders from various generations; by proactive, meaningful engagement between leaders across generations; by cross-generational partnerships on thought leadership and practice; and by mutual respect between leaders. Intergenerational leadership is politically horizontal, not vertical. It goes further to transfer leadership skills and knowledge across different generation. It involves passing of insights, wisdom and experiences from older and more experienced leaders to younger leaders.

For some time now NETRIGHT has strived to ensure to bridge the intergenerational gap to ensure that the network builds a strong movement for women's rights across the country. The purpose is to build a strong and sustainable leadership overtime. In doing this, NETRIGHT is able to nurture young women with the skills, experience etc to guide them in taking up leadership and the feminist agenda. Additionally, it improves collaboration between generations and promotes inclusion and ownership.



Gloria Kankam during this session hosted three strong women to share their stories on how they have journeyed through their leadership and mentorship world. This panel discussion focused on:

- How has intergenerational leadership worked? – The key moments, wins, success stories. These were shared through the various stages in each panellist life leveraging on the documentary on “*when women speaks.*”
- The Struggles
- Demystifying narratives around intergenerational leadership and mentorship
- Issues on thought leadership
- Strategies for developing intergenerational leadership and mentorship.
- Lessons Learnt

Panellist hosted for this session were unique and were made up of Gertrude Mensah the youngest participant, a 16-year-old Senior High School (SHS) student, Khadijah Abdul-Samed

a young feminist who manages a mentorship academy for over 300 mentees across the Northern Region and Patricia Isabella Essel who had had the opportunity to work and engaged with both old/senior and young feminists.

1. Many expressed their support to Gertrude and applauded her for her braveness and urged that in our feminist journey we should connect to the right supporting system. Some participants pledged their support to her leadership roles. Also, one need to accept godly counsel, sometimes they come with high criticism, but they are important to shape our leadership journey.
2. **To practice what we preach with all consciousness, bearing in mind the need to lead with the values of feminism in mind. Like we are doing as young feminists codifying those values and building a work culture that fosters them.**
3. To be a feminist **leader one needs to also be able to challenge all kinds of power** – whether it is formal or informal, visible or hidden. It is important to share power as feminist leadership is about valuing everyone’s contributions – and to put the process right to ensure it works well for all. It is important to share authority and power and make decisions collaboratively.
4. **Mentor and Empower Team members at a every Level of the learning journey.** Feminist leadership posits that we all have the capability to lead. Patriarchal notions of power pit us against one another. Feminist leadership challenges us to see the best in one another and help each other to grow and succeed.
5. Mentorship and coaching of young ones are very critical for movement building. Khadijah shared that, feminist mentorship has supported her growth and allowed her to identify and share the ways to positively impact on other people in society who devalues and oppresses women. Strategies for confronting and coping with all forms of oppression are mutually identified.
6. Recognition and celebrating the support from other feminists. Participants recognised the need to honour our mentors and the women or people who have played key roles in our lives.

Key Message-Moderator’s reflection

- Feminist leadership and mentoring in practice require addressing power in our organisations and world – most importantly, by unearthing the “deep structure” of our organisations/institutions.
- Examine and articulate our politics and purpose.
- Enunciating the principles and values that will frame / guide our practice.
- Additionally, we can design/re-design our practice to harmonise better with the others, ensuring mechanisms for checking how our “self” is intruding / obstructing our practice, and taking responsibility for dealing with this.

Along the way in my working history, I've been granted the opportunities to work with other fearless feminist leaders who value my input, imbue me with a sense of agency and self-confidence, and encourage me to take challenges, dream big, and even be a leader myself. As a growing feminist leader, I look forward to instilling in others the capacity to grow, go deeper, and go bigger. (Patricia Essel)

It is worrying if you don't get the support you need as a young lady and more worrying when you are not listened to when you make demands that are beneficiary to many girls in school. Getrude Mensah

It is important to celebrate those who have mentored us through this journey and also find others to mentor same – Khadijah Abdul Samed

7.

Session 9: Solidarity and Collaboration: building alliance and fostering collaboration among young feminist and different social justice - Bashiratu Kamal

Francisca Nancy Hagan, Fredrika Dede Ozoki and Hikmat Baba Dua were hosted in this session by Bashiratu Kamal to discuss how young feminists can build alliance and foster great collaboration in promoting gender equality in our generation. As done with other discussions panellist took turns to share the work they do and the respective roles they play as student leaders and young women-led organisations with the following key reflections and messages:

the work is huge and calls for all to be on board to support young ones through it. In this vein identify key players that have the potential to influence the desired change

we should work hard at ensuring language equity to ensure inclusiveness.

celebrate small victories and people who were helpful to building up our potentials. Young feminists were encouraged to acknowledge the progress made in the right direction. this will build momentum and motivate others to continue pushing forward.

an intersectional approach shows the way that people's social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination.

intersectional feminism puts the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and relationship among them in any given context.

Session 10 Closing: Unpacking lessons learnt and take aways.

The three-day conference was captured with a pictorial diagram to highlight the great lessons and the take aways from the conference. Illustrating the root of the tree to symbolise the root causes of gender inequalities that has been discussed including:

- Patriarchy
- Unequal power relation
- Ignorance
- Power
- Religion
- Social norms and believes.
- Tradition
- Poverty, socialisation
- Stereotypes etc

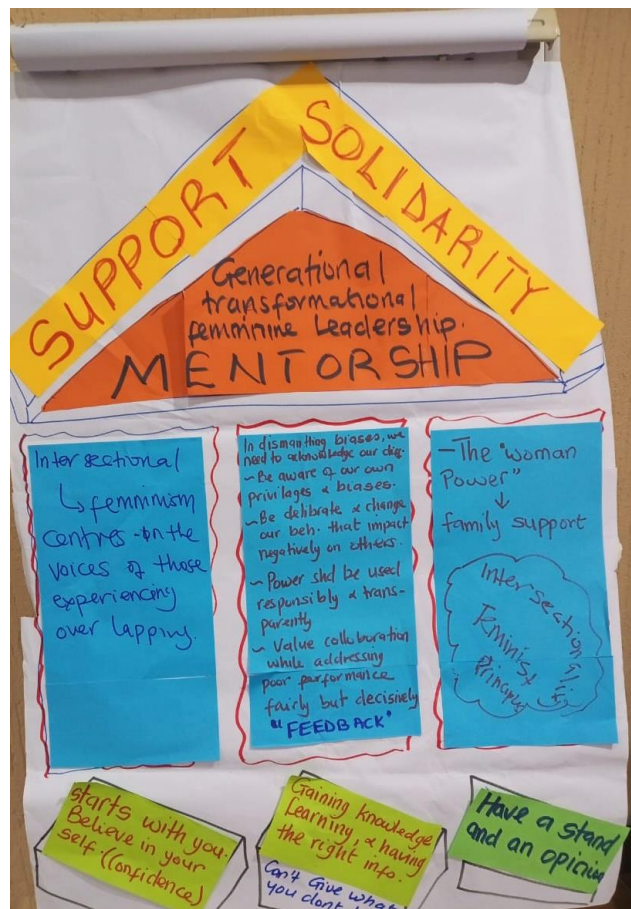


In order to build ourselves up and grow our tree we need:

- Commitments
- Solidarity
- Unity and support from each other
- Networking
- Legal frameworks
- Systems and structures
- Committed people.

The curtains were pulled down with the moderator, Dr. Thelma Ohene Adjei connecting the dots from all the sessions for the three-day journey. She highlighted the importance of young feminist coming together in such a safe space as this to learn, share and network towards gender equality. Again, in her remarks, she highlighted the fact the discussions unveiled how most mothers with little or no education were able to inspire their children especially girls to move up the ladder and break the ice ceiling.

Also, as young feminists confronted with faceted intersectionality it is key to be aware of the generational differences and their potential contributions to ensure various generations are clearly identified and mutually



respected. There should be continuous support for the voiceless and be mindful not to use our own privileges and biases to suppress others, we should all learn to walk the talk.

Additionally, as we move on to our various spaces, we should ensure to utilise the information and learning more positively and work towards building strong solidarity recognising our individual difference and biases and walking the talk to ensuring gender equality in our world.

Patricia Blankson Akakpo, the head of NETRIGHT Secretariate in her closing remarks could not hide her excitement for the learning that has happened over the days with the young feminists especially the openness to which they approach the various discussions. She assured participants of providing additional psychological support in future forums for anyone who may require same. She expressed her excitement for the enthusiasm to which participants had journeyed through and for their commitment in making the first ever young feminist forum a great success and prayed for more support from Global Affairs Canada through Plan international to enable NETRIGHT carry out this forum as a yearly venture. She also encouraged members to join the Network to ensure we all work collectively to promote economic justice of women and gender equality in general.

She expressed her sincere gratitude to the planning committee and the funders: Global Affairs Canada and Plan International for their immense support and making the first ever young feminist forum a great success.

Participants' Takeaways



Whether you use a radical, liberal or socialist approach, what all true feminists seek is justice, fairness, and equality.

Therefore, as a feminist, in using my own voice (per my own rights) or lending my voice to support equity and equality for all people, I need to equip myself with new learnings: Things that would help me be more considerate of other people's perspectives and give me a framework of intelligent understandings.

The women in the documentary 'when women speak' all stood out to me because they were smart

women who were confident in what they were talking about. They all became experts in their advocacy because they kept learning. It's not going to be easy sometimes, and that is why I am glad that in our conference, we acknowledged that self-care and mental health are good. My mind and my voice are powerful, I will sharpen them, and I will protect them. (Dorothy Barnes -FOSDA)

The maiden NETRIGHT- GHANA Young Feminists Conference for me was such an intellectually refreshing convening. The presentations by experts were deep yet very engaging. The incorporation of self-care activities and playtime was the highlight of the conference for me and very unique. I don't remember attending a conference that placed much weight on such activities. It connected us more as delegates. I also very much appreciated the honour of being a panellist to share thoughts on Intergenerational Leadership and Mentorship. The documentary 'When Women Speak' left such an impact on the way I view women activism. What I take home from the conference is a strength from our bold women of the past who have paved the way for women's activism in Ghana and a renewed spirit to continue where they left off. (Khajidah -SWIDA)



- To call ourselves weaker sex is a libel, hence it causes injustice to women. This point was derived from the documentary 'When women speak'. The power of women and what we have to offer to our fellow women for them to feel they belong.
- The second takeaway is in relation to the types of feminism that was taught by Prof??? and how we as individuals should identify where we want to belong. Be it liberal, radical or social.
- Role play session was another major takeaway where each group identified the various things that make us women and how as individuals we need to support each other's growth. A typical example is with self-awareness, self-care and the care for others.
- The movie 'The Woman King' admonished us not to fight for only the name feminist, but urges us to take all the freedom that comes with it. It further taught us the lesson of persistence, support for each other and growth.
- Furthermore, the word intersectionality was a key word at the conference. You can't be a good feminist if you don't welcome other women into a safe space. Every woman must be given an equal chance, be it a woman with disability, a woman who is educated or not.
- With this, our voices as women will be heard and we will drive the changes that we want. My takeaway pack will be incomplete if I fail to mention our individual biases and how we can work on those negative ones. 😊 Angela Esiano Medadues-Badohu from Public Utility Workers Union-TUC Gh. (E.C.G)



Hailing from northern Ghana where feminism faces all manner of criticism labelling assertive women as disrespectful. My experience at the conference has broadened my perspectives and insight on feminism and intersectionality.

It has really been an eye-opening journey. I have come to realise the importance of breaking down stereotypes and fostering understanding, ultimately promoting gender equality and social harmony in my community.

I cannot stop learning and strengthening my voice as I seek to advocate for the rights of other women and helping them find and use their own voices. And even though a lot has been achieved in seeking equality, more work needs to get done to ensure that girls and women have equal access to opportunities and feel safe.

Jennifer De-Graft Ninson



For this National Young Feminist conference, I have attained an in-depth knowledge on feminism and intersectionality in addition to networking with other feminists to rewrite the bad narratives, gender stereotypes towards women and girls.

Going forward working on my own bias and also working towards dismantle biases at my world of work. Lastly, it takes sacrifices, commitment, courage, teamwork, and continuous learning to achieve the required goal of gender equality. (Hajia Afusata)

From the summit, I have a better understanding of what feminism means and its diverse forms that it could be expressed. The underlying issue is that feminism is about giving women voice and equal opportunities in all fields to use their talents for the betterment of the entire world/universe and those that live in it.

Being a feminist does not mean fighting the men for their positions in life, but rather, making them understand that we have more to offer, we are not only born to make a home, but to help in making the world a safe and a better place as some of them have been trying to do.

To be a feminist, you do not need a bigger platform to make an impact in the world, you can start from your home, neighbourhood and community by instilling the idea of a woman also being capable of doing whatever men do in the young children (both boys and particularly girls) so that they grow up knowing that they deserve equal opportunities for everything and making sure that they have a say in whatever happens in their lives.

Though there may be many obstacles in feminism, there is no room to foster giving up. We all have to give our quotas wherever we find ourselves and strive to make a change no matter how small it may be.



It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the unique experiences and needs of individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. By recognizing and gathering the experiences of all individuals, intersectionality promotes a more inclusive and equitable feminist movement. (Amma Mirekua Antwi - ABANTU for Development)

The forum was an eye opener for me. It answered questions on issues I have been struggling with regards to feminism and faith, feminism and queer.

I have learnt to be supportive of others irrespective of our differences.

I have also learnt to be tolerant of others because their challenges could make them act in a certain way.

(Yvonne Nuoriyee)



“The Young Feminist Conference was a live play of intersectionality for me. Being in the same space with other young feminists with varying identities and listening to them share their lived experiences: their dreams and aspirations, family dynamics and how it impacts their lives, their struggles, successes, and passion to make the world a better place for women and girls, really brought to life the fact that women are not a homogeneous group. It was for me a reminder of how important it is to consciously center intersectionality in my work as a feminist activist”.

(Abena Beniwa)

Annexes

1. List of Participants



2. Programme National Young Fem

3. [Picture Galary](#)