



Unleashing Women's Potential
to Transform Lives

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027



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INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2010, Wezesha, Swahili for 'empower or enable,' is an African Diaspora led development organisation. Wezesha work is focused on the empowerment of African women, youth and children affected by conflict, violence, and poverty. Working with local partners and stakeholders, Wezesha seeks to raise awareness and end sexual and gender-based violence and poverty. Since its establishment, Wezesha chose to pilot work in two countries, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya. Wezesha Kenya and Wezesha Congo are two separate registered entities with their own legal and governance structures in their respective countries. A lot has been achieved by the organization in the last 10 years. Advancing further through the implementation of this strategy, Wezesha will extend work in two other countries, Nigeria and South Africa. Previous work has been delivered through making links and providing technical support with partners in these countries.

Wezesha operates from its strategic vision with actions based on empowerment, solidarity, and capacity building models. Through a sustainable development approach, the organisation works to support the economic independence of African women, assisting them to invest in small businesses and income generating activities, providing them with necessary training, information access to medical, legal, and economic resources, and support in the development of skills-based programmes. Women are interested doing agriculture mainly through horticultural business. In Kenya for example Wezesha women living in slum settlement (Majengo) have bought land in rural setting where they are doing farming for agriculture products.



While the slum is overpopulated the ultimate goal for the women overcome the repeated generational poverty trap by relocating to rural area where they have bought land in this slum, they face many challenges including environmental and health challenges posed by Nairobi river which is often a discharge for industrial and domestic waste

In 2011 the adventure started in Kenya with the mobilization of women and in 2013 with women in Kinshasa. Wezesha expanded then significantly in these two piloting countries. In Kinshasa, the Organisation counts over a thousand committed members, they own a land purchased with financial support from the African Diaspora in Ireland, and the plan is to build a Multipurpose Center for Women's Advancement. Likewise, the Kenyan group became a consolidated group from the initial different autonomous sections. They are registered as a community-based organisation and have more than 800 members. They have demonstrated strong ability in the management of small income generating activities supported financially by the diaspora. Since 2016 the two co-founders of Wezesha have been striving for its implementation and expansion, with organizations and groups of women in South Africa and Goma, Eastern DR Congo; discussions have also been held with organisations supporting women in Nigeria, specifically in Edo State. These groups have showed great interest to join the organization. It is envisaged that during the cycle period of this strategic plan, all these groups from the Nigeria, Goma and South Africa will become full members of Wezesha.

Wezesha's work is mainly focused on three main areas: **Sexual and gender-based violence, Alleviation of poverty, and Migration and development.** Since these three issues are the most important challenges faced by African women, Wezesha applies them as key areas of intervention in its strategic approach which consist in increasing awareness, working with grassroot women at community level and supporting the organizations effectiveness and efficiency.





Wezesha is a sister organisation to AkiDwA who work to support African women living in Ireland. Over the years, the two organizations have held conferences, seminars and workshops focusing on peace and security, and diversity inclusion targeting women and youth. AkiDwA has a strong reputation with the migrant community in Ireland as trustworthy and credible Organisation, and Wezesha is an extension of the same reputation in Africa. Salome Mbugua, one of the founders of AkiDwA also helped to establish Wezesha to connect AkiDwA to those living in Africa. AkiDwA is connected to international groups and the EU to raise awareness on the challenges African women face both in Ireland and Africa. Through its connection with AkiDwA, Wezesha has access to a wider network. Wezesha is an affiliate member of the Wheel, European Network Against Racism, European Network of Migrant Women and Dochas. In October 2016, Wezesha was invited in the UN Geneva headquarter by the UN Migration to make a presentation of its work during the 2nd International Dialogue on Migration attended by the majority of Foreign Affairs Ministers of African countries but from other part of the world as well.. The organisation also has links with the Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT). In accelerating the 2030 agenda and with the notion of leaving no one behind, Wezesha works collaboratively with partners and groups towards achieving sustainable development goals.

WEZESHA VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Wezesha's **vision** is to empower African women and children so that they live in peace and dignity, are healthy and have access to resources.

Wezesha's **mission** seeks to support and promote human rights for women and children in Africa to achieve an equal and just society.



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The **values** behind Wezesha are focused on the well-being of African women, youth and children and working to address challenging issues they face every day. Assisting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as well as empowering women to seek economic independence through trainings and financial support. Overall, the following values underpin the work of the Organisation: :

Respect for personal dignity- We believe in a non-judgmental approach that respects the dignity and rights of those whom we engage with, including staff, volunteers, members, partners, and targeted groups.

Integrity and honesty- We believe that our work should be undertaken with integrity, honesty, and professionalism.

Openness to learning- We believe in being open minded while continuing to learn from stakeholders and partners, and remaining passionate and enthusiastic about our work.



Empowerment- We believe in independence and long-term solutions to problems through sustainable projects.

Solidarity and partnership-We believe in being part of an international network as adding value to our work, especially by connecting with the wealthy experiences of the African Diaspora community as well as using a global partnership approach in our work. .

Accountability and transparency-We believe we should be responsible to each other and to the people and organisations with whom we engage and strive to make our work transparent and accountable vis-à-vis of stakeholders

Equality, justice, and human rights-We believe in an equal and just society where people live in peace and dignity and have access to the necessary resources and opportunities for sustainable growth.

Participation- We endeavor to ground our policy and advocacy work in the experiences of those in Africa and work towards building sustainable long-term solutions. We believe equally in incorporating the voices of those in the African Diaspora community and our partner organisations.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2015-2019

- Mobilization of members in Kenya and DRC- over 2500 members
- Registration of Wezesha Kenya and Wezesha DRC as Companies in both countries and development of Organization governance
- 2 Conventions held on SGBV, one in each country
- 2 summits on health and economic empowerment held
- 3 publications issued- Healing the wounds of the war, Champions of transformation- African diaspora in Ireland; and Embracing diversity: how people of African descent and service providers experience diversity in Dublin 15
- Members in both DRC and Kenya purchased lands for development projects
- Education support for 6 girls in Kenya
- Presentation on the role of Diaspora in sending and receiving countries at UN- Geneva
- Involvement on Humanitarian role of Diaspora
- Involved in the development of Ireland 3rd National Action plan on women peace and security and sitting on oversight group, monitoring the implantation of the plan.
- Engaged on two EU- Europe for citizens projects, hosted 2 international conferences.
- Mobilized diaspora youth to make them aware of the sustainable development goals
- Support for women from armed conflict and establishment of Tumaini group in Monaghan
- Held four charity and fundraising balls

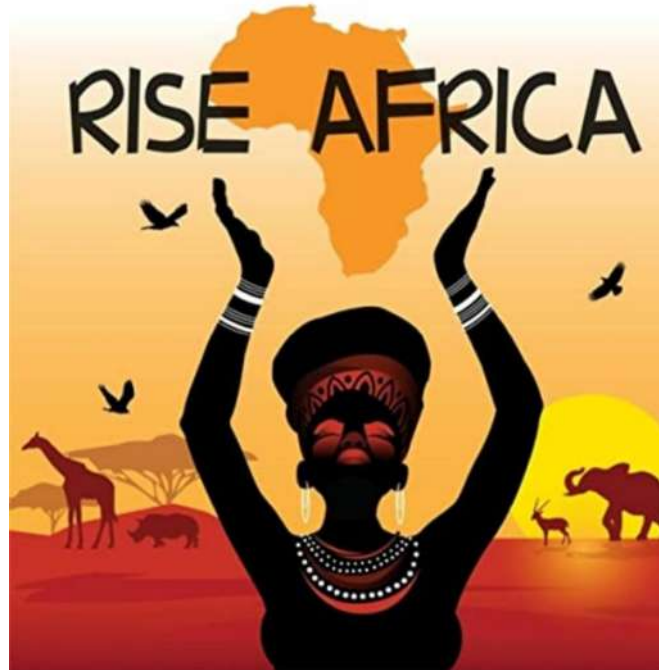


Launching Wezesha Publication - Healing the wounds of the war Dublin 2016

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. ERADICATING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Wezesha work is focused on supporting African women who are facing sexual and gender-based violence. According to United Nations, GBV refers to “any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.[1] Statistics show that despite the existence of legal frameworks protecting women, GBV is still prevalent in areas with high levels of conflict and poverty throughout the World. Survivors in these areas have limited access to essential resources and are left helpless, without physical or economic autonomy.



The current scholarship on sexual and gender-based violence suggests that globally almost one in three women are subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both in their lifetime². However, less than 40 per cent seek help. This is due to the lack of support and resources available to survivors as well as socio-economic conditions around the world. Women and girls do not have proper access to health resources, shelters, or legal protection from the justice systems in their respective countries. Cultural norms also have influence over how women are treated and viewed within societies. In rural places facing poverty and conflict, women's bodies are often viewed and used as a battlefield. Much of the scholarship surrounding sexual and gender-based violence are known to be underestimating as well due to under-reporting which signifies the emphasis for action to eradicate violence of any kind against women and girls. Impact of violence leaves lasting or lifetime marks in the lives of women and girls with children born out of rape and some of the women and girls contracting STI and HIV.

[1]UN general assembly. In Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; UN: New York, NY, USA, 1993.

[2]UN Women. Facts and figures: Ending violence against women.



Map of Intimate Partner Violence Timelines Worldwide -WHO Report

The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated the issue of sexual and gender-based violence globally. There has been an increase in domestic violence and women face even more barriers to seek proper care and protection. Due to worldwide lockdown measures, women in sub-Saharan Africa who lived in rural impoverished areas could not leave their home to get legal or medical help, let alone go to a shelter for security and refuge. Instead, they were confined to their homes, many with their violent partners. The global pandemic exposed areas where support is needed to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence and there are only few countries who have taken effective steps in combating violence against women and girls during this time.

Key priorities on this objective will be:

- National mobilization of women to join Wezesha, hold discussions, share learnings and experiences.
- Deliver education and awareness raising programme targeting women, girls, and youth
- Increase understanding of SGBV among the general public to foster citizens' involvement achieving sustainable development goal number 5 on the eradication of SGBV based on an empowering, non-stigmatizing communication approach
- Engage and contribute to women, peace and security agenda, ensure voices and experiences of grassroots women are heard
- Monitor and support the implementation of existing National and international commitments and instruments on SGBV in relation to the prevention, protection, and provision of support and services, as well as any other measure.
- Engaging men, faith, and religious leaders.

2. ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY



Africa has made widespread progress at the international level to addressing poverty. However, despite positive results, Africa still has a long way to secure equal access to education, health services, and economic empowerment. According to the United Nations, Africa made substantial progress in the last 15 years, but it lacked consistency. Various international plans, such as the UN 2030 plan and the African Union's 2063 plan, have actually sought to help African

countries to alleviate poverty. With the sustainable development goals set up by the UN, African countries are continuing to address poverty. The African Union has assisted in these efforts as well. Working towards 2063, the AU is focused on achieving the goals of the UN SDGs as well as turning Africa into a global powerhouse. Agenda 2063 has key programmes working to boost Africa's economic growth and development.

The main factors contributing to poverty in sub-Saharan Africa are weak economic systems, environment and climate change, as well as high instability due to conflict and violence. This leads to internal displacement, food insecurity, and gaps in health, education, and skills development. Women who live under the poverty line are exposed to precarity and violence while striving to ways of resourcing their families.. Many women attempt to set up small businesses or participate in income generating activities such as sewing, farming, baking, tailoring, weaving, and jewelry making. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, there are areas where cultural norms have a high influence over women's access to economic independence. Patriarchal structures give men authority over material supplies, markets, and overall, they have more economic autonomy than women.[3]

In counties of interest for Wezesha, the alleviation of poverty is essential to creating women's empowerment. Nigeria has roughly 83 million, or 40 percent of the country living below the poverty line.[4] Of those in poverty, 70 percent are women.[5] In South Africa, 55.5 percent of the population live in poverty and 13.8 million experience food insecurity.[6] The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) estimates that 73 percent of the population live on less than \$1.90 a day.[7] In Kenya, there is the lowest level of poverty in comparison to other countries of interest.

[3] Musa, Zara. "Factors Determining the Engagement of Rural Women in Income Generating Activities, in Yobe State, Nigeria." IMPACT: International

[4] World Bank. "Nigeria Releases New Report on Poverty and Inequality in Country." World Bank, May 28, 2020.

[5] ADEPOJU, Adunola. "Feminisation of Poverty in Nigerian Cities: Insights from Focus Groups Discussions and Participatory Poverty Assessment." University of Lagos.

[6] World Bank. "Poverty & Equity Brief: South Africa." World Bank -Data Bank. Apr. 2020.

[7] World Bank. "The World Bank in DRC." World Bank. April 02, 2021.

While the poverty line has declined from 46.8 percent in 2005/06 to 36.1 percent in 2015/16, it is still projected to remain significant in 2030.[8] However, despite the poverty levels throughout these countries, there are important efforts at the international and domestic levels to alleviate the hardships that many people are facing.

Economic empowerment of women is key, and we see it as a process by which women increase their right to economic resources and power to make decisions that would benefit themselves, their families, and their communities. This requires equal access to and control over economic resources, assets, and opportunities as well as long term changes in social norms, societal attitude and economic structures



that benefit women and men equally. To support these efforts, Wezesha will work with local and international partners to provide resources and support to women who are engaged in income generating activities. In this Strategic Plan, Wezesha looks to mobilize women to foster their incentives to create small businesses and overall encourage women's entrepreneurship. Wezesha will continue to work towards generating economic sustainability for women through various efforts, including training programmes, loans to support small businesses, link with local opportunities and community engagement activities to raise awareness.

Key priorities on this objective will be:

- Provide economic empowerment training programme for women: upskilling, technology, running business, banking, improve literacy
- Support women engagement in agribusiness and facilitate access to training, extension services, and technical information
- Market facilitation approach to encourage pro-poor, inclusive economic growth in horticultural value chains
- Improve women's access to innovations and provide education and technology on agribusiness and Support Programme
- Work with allies and partners in both the public and private sectors to address and scale up women's economic opportunities and to improve marketing opportunities for their products
- Seek targeted ways to increase women's access to finance and resources



[8] World Bank. "Poverty Incidence in Kenya Declined Significantly, but Unlikely to be Eradicated by 2030." World Bank. April 2018.

3. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT



Women Mini Marathon Dublin 2018

Sub-Saharan Africa is a hotspot for migration, both domestically through internal and regional displacement and globally with many people migrating to Europe. In recent years, migration has increased drastically and has become an important agency in poverty reduction, sustainable development, and investment. As such, migrants offer a strong potential force in undertaking international development initiatives.

Migrants who move within the region gravitate toward larger economies such as Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa. As the population in the region has increased, so has the migration patterns.[9] In 2013, there were 20 million sub-Saharan Africans who lived outside their countries of origin, and 13 million who migrated within the region.[10] With this increase, there has also been a recent feminization of migration within sub-Saharan Africa. Migration used to be male dominated, but now women are seeking to fulfill their own economic independence. Whether single or married, women are leaving their homes to secure jobs in richer countries to ensure financial support for their families.[11] The goal of migration for many women is for their family's survival. However, as women migrate through the region, they are exposed to various challenges.

Sub-Saharan Africa has become a hotspot for human trafficking, targeting both women and children. Women migrants are at high risk for human trafficking, specifically in countries such as South Africa and Nigeria. South Africa is identified as a country where women and children are trafficked not only within Africa, but globally. With unemployment, poverty, the HIV-epidemic, and migration, South Africa becomes an ideal climate for traffickers to target women and children.[12]

[9] International Monetary Fund. "Sub-Saharan Migration: Patterns and Spillovers." International Monetary Fund. Nov. 2016.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Masanja, George F. "The Female Face of Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa." St. Augustine University of Tanzania.

[12] Ibid, 63.



In South Africa, of those who are trafficked, 79 percent of cases are related to sexual exploitation. In Nigeria, women are generally trafficked to Europe. Of all women trafficked to Europe, 94 percent are originally from Nigeria. Women and children have continued to be trafficked for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, with poverty being a root cause of the issue.[13] Other causes include conflict by armed groups such as Boko Haram, and a weak legal system.[14] Overall, in addressing migration and development in sub-Saharan Africa, it is important to raise awareness on human trafficking and take it into consideration when creating intervention strategies. .

Through the Strategic Plan, Wezesha aims to continue research on migration and development. Wezesha will work with African Diaspora groups to support migrants and offer mentoring programmes and other resources to address the issues related to migration practices. In the Strategic Plan, Wezesha will specifically advocate against human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa and work to raise awareness with a community engagement approach. The organisation will make links and work with Diaspora networks, European Union and African Union.

Key priorities on this objective will be:

- Research on trafficking of women and mapping on situation of women from armed conflict
- Hold programmes and projects with African diaspora community mainly targeting women and youth
- Provide technical support in all the piloting countries
- Hold conferences and seminars on role of diaspora in international development and on areas such as trafficking, SGBV, conflict and violence, sensitize diaspora and wider society on the work of the organization, SDGs agenda 2030 and African Union 2063 agenda
- Map and document examples of projects by diaspora to home countries

[13] Adepelumi. "The Root Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria." African Center for Advocacy & Human Development. UN Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons. 13th UN Crime Congress. Apr. 13, 2015.

[14] Ibid.

STRATEGIC APPROACH



EU for Citizens European partnership project Malta 2019

Wezesha five-year strategic approach for 2022-2027 will focus on expanding the organisation into surrounding African countries, strengthen development and outreach, and continue to raise awareness and advocate against Wezesha's core issues. From the organisation's origination in 2010, Wezesha has established programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Kenya. Through partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders, Wezesha provides support, resources, and training to women living in the DRC and Kenya. The approach the organisation seeks to take over the next five years is one of sustainability and empowerment.

Currently, in the programmes established in the DRC and Kenya, Wezesha works to invest and support women's economic empowerment through trainings and providing resources. The organisation also works to raise awareness on key issues facing women in these countries by partnering with other local NGO's. Through the continued mobilization of the African Diaspora community and African women, Wezesha seeks to expand its reach in Africa to begin pilot programmes in South Africa and Nigeria. The strategic approach aims to intervene in these countries and create similar programmes to those in the DRC and Kenya.



Strategic meeting women in DRC 2019

Other aspects of the strategic approach look to strengthen the organisations support of income generating activities and to combat the barriers women face in these four key countries such as poverty, conflict, and sexual and gender-based violence. This strategic plan will be implemented largely in two ways: prevention and intervention. Prevention seeks to raise women's autonomy and independence physically, economically, and socially. Intervention seeks to raise awareness through advocacy campaigns, emergency support, rehabilitation, and integration.[15]



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Engagement

- Provide resources by working with local partners to increase women empowerment such as:
 - Small loans or funds for women looking to start small businesses
 - Create programs to train women and increase income generating activities
 - Provide spaces for women to engage in income generating activities like markets and community centers
- Encourage women to take active role in conflict resolution and peacemaking
- Create programs to give women technical training, equipment, and supplies to engage in income generating activities
- Income generating activities: sewing and embroidery, baking, tailoring, weaving, jewelry making, etc.
- Aim to support survivors of GBV and alleviate poverty in areas of conflict, and to support migration & development

Raise Awareness

- Advocate for survivors of sexual violence by providing them with support and resources about where to receive help, partner with local shelters and centers
- Create campaigns to promote economic empowerment of women
- Work with the community to increase engagement with organisations like Wezesha to create partnerships and offer women wide range of support
- Work with government and international partners to recommend and suggest steps forward in combating GBV and poverty in DRC
- Work to develop DRC plan to apply to Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa

Organisational Development

- Improve communication: refurbish Wezesha website and develop other communication tools and support partners in Africa to have their own communication tools as well
- Improve the governance and Structure of the Organization, nationally and internationally
- Work with stakeholders and partners in South Africa and Nigeria and together develop similar sustainable approaches as taken in DRC and Kenya

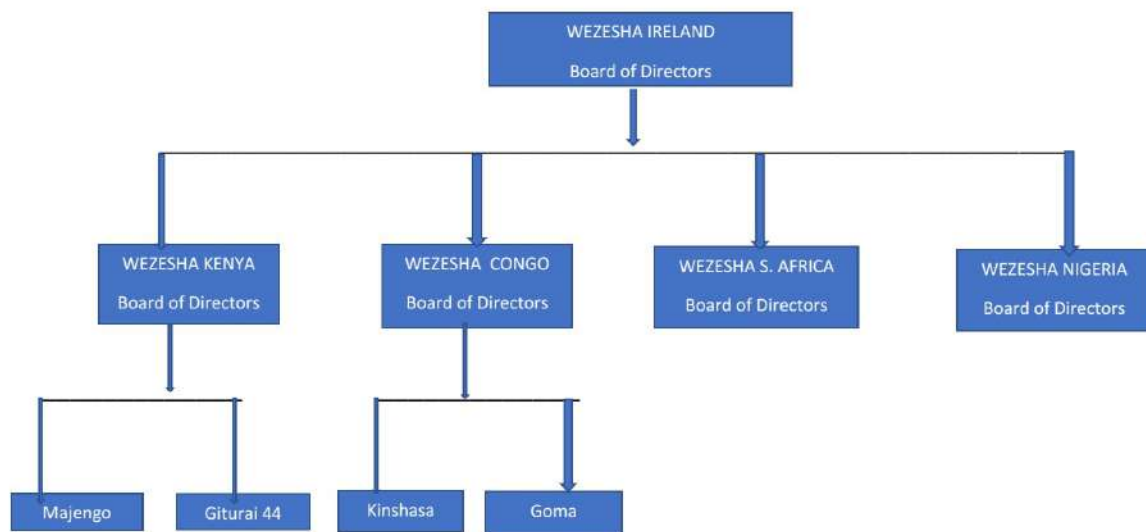
DEFINED OUTCOMES

- Provide African women with a platform for their voices
- Create positive outcomes for women and families
- Generate programs to enhance women's economic empowerment
- Establish Wezesha presence in South Africa and Nigeria
- Generate support
- Work to secure funding to provide loans to women owning small business and engaging in income generating activities
- Raise awareness on sexual and gender-based violence along with human trafficking women face in sub-Saharan Africa
- Work with local partners to form entrepreneurial training programs for women
- Creating mentoring programs and resources to support female migrants
- Create linkages between EU and Africa



Wezesha Meeting with Kumi Naido founder of African Rising Dublin 2017

Wezesha Organigram





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