



## Reclaiming Popular Culture to Promote Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment





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## The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a grant making foundation, which aims to support the work of the African women's movement.

The vision of the AWDF is for African women to live in a world in which there is social justice, equality and respect for women's human rights. To this end, our mission is to mobilise financial resources to support local, national and international initiatives led by women, which will lead to the achievement of this vision.

AWDF awards grants to African women's organisations working in the following thematic areas:

- Women's Human Rights
- Economic Empowerment
- Political Participation

- Peace-Building
- Health and Reproductive Rights
- HIV/AIDS

These thematic areas have been chosen because they feature very highly on the agenda of the African women's movement. The themes are specific enough to be able to focus on work that is being prioritised by many women's organisations, and they are also flexible enough to enable potentially good projects to qualify for support. AWDF also funds programmes, which develop and promote women's leadership across all these themes.

Between 2001 and December 2009, AWDF has supported over 800 women's organisations in 41 African countries.



**Varbah Gayflor**

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### **The Launch of AWDF's Popular Culture Project**

Varbah Gayflor, Liberia's Minister for Gender and Development formally launched AWDF's Popular Culture Project at the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF V1) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> November 2008.

### **Justification for AWDF's Popular Culture Project**

In order to further promote gender equality and women's empowerment, there is a need for women's rights organisations to adopt strategies that can target a mass base of the population if perceptions, behaviours and attitudes are to be

influenced. Currently within the African continent and the Diaspora there is a keen interest in locally produced TV/movies, which tell stories that people can identify with. Local movies are often made in indigenous languages which make them accessible to people who do not speak English, French, etc.

Movies from the Nigerian Film industry (Nollywood) have a wide reach throughout the African continent and the Diaspora. This presents opportunities for engagement with screenwriters and filmmakers.

Popular TV, music and videos influence the attitudes of young people. Women's rights organizations have little or no control over forms of popular culture that originate from outside the continent. However there are opportunities to influence some local productions by engaging with the African film industry.

## Key Activities for AWDF's Popular Culture Project

AWDF will support the distribution of at least 3 locally made films which tell stories of women's empowerment and equality, and which challenge patriarchal norms. These films will be accompanied by training materials, which will en-



able facilitators to generate discussions in local communities.

A short film on women's rights will be commissioned and made available through a variety of channels.

AWDF will facilitate a dialogue on women's rights with movie producers and writers, and establish a Gender Dialogue with the 'Nollywood' sector in Nigeria and elsewhere.

AWDF will support community based arts and culture projects as a way of reframing what gets passed on from generation to generation, through songs, dance, proverbs, story telling, and diverse creative efforts.



Welcome Dance by Upper East Single Mothers Association, Ghana.



## AWDF's Support for African Women and the Arts

**A**WDF recognizes the importance of the arts of as a tool for social justice work and has supported a number of creative efforts including:

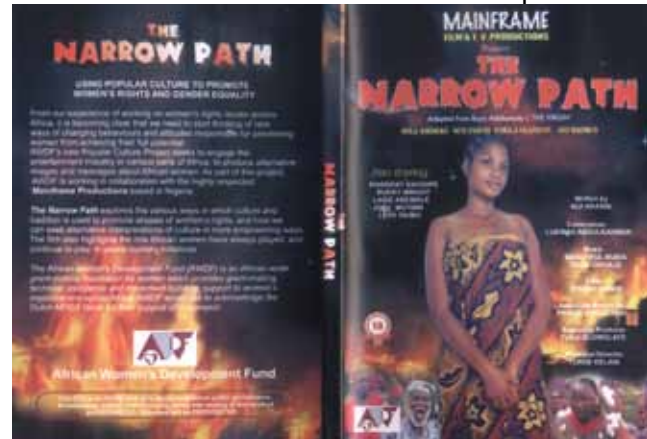
The reproduction of two films, 'The White Handkerchief' and 'The Narrow Path' by Mainframe Productions:



The White Handkerchief

*The White Handkerchief tells the powerful story of a young woman caught up in allegiance to deeply held cultural beliefs and the tragic consequences of flouting these norms. The story ends with the simple, yet complex question 'for how long will African women continue to suffer in the name of culture and tradition?'*

The Narrow Path explores the various ways in which culture and tradition is used to promote



The Narrow Path



abuses of women's rights, and how we can seek alternative interpretations of culture in more empowering ways. The film also highlights the role African women have always played, and continue to play, in peace-building initiatives.

AWDF has supported the Princess of Africa Foundation to produce educational materials for malaria control including a book, 'Moving Against Malaria'. 'Moving Against Malaria' is targeted at educating young people on how to protect oneself against malaria. The book has audio functionality and is narrated by South African singer and philanthropist Yvonne Chaka Chaka.

AWDF has supported Mbaasem (women's words/women's affairs) established by internationally acclaimed author Ama Ata Aidoo to organize weekday and residential retreats for African



**Yvonne Chaka Chaka.**

women writers. In response to the question ‘what has been the impact of receiving a grant from AWDF?’ Ama Ata Aidoo stated:

***‘Two of our writers have won the Macmillan prize. Our grant has enabled us to run a workshop that brought writers together. Some of these writers have not even had the courage to consider themselves as possible writers although they had written scripts. We have been able to provide a place that writers can come to... The grant provided by AWDF has enabled our continued existence.’***



Ama Ata Aidoo



**AWDF**  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT FUND



**LAPA**  
LIFE OF ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS

**THEME:**

**NOLLYWOOD: WOMEN AND THE DYNAMICS OF REPRESENTATION.**



**16TH & 17TH**  
OF JUNE  
**2010**



**VENUE:**  
THE COLONADES HOTEL,  
NO. 21 KINGSWAY RD.  
IKOYI LAGOS.

**TIME:**  
9AM TO 7PM DAILY.

**FOR ENQUIRIES CALL:**  
0803 710 0566

[WWW.WIFF.ORG.NG](http://WWW.WIFF.ORG.NG)

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Development Cooperation  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

