

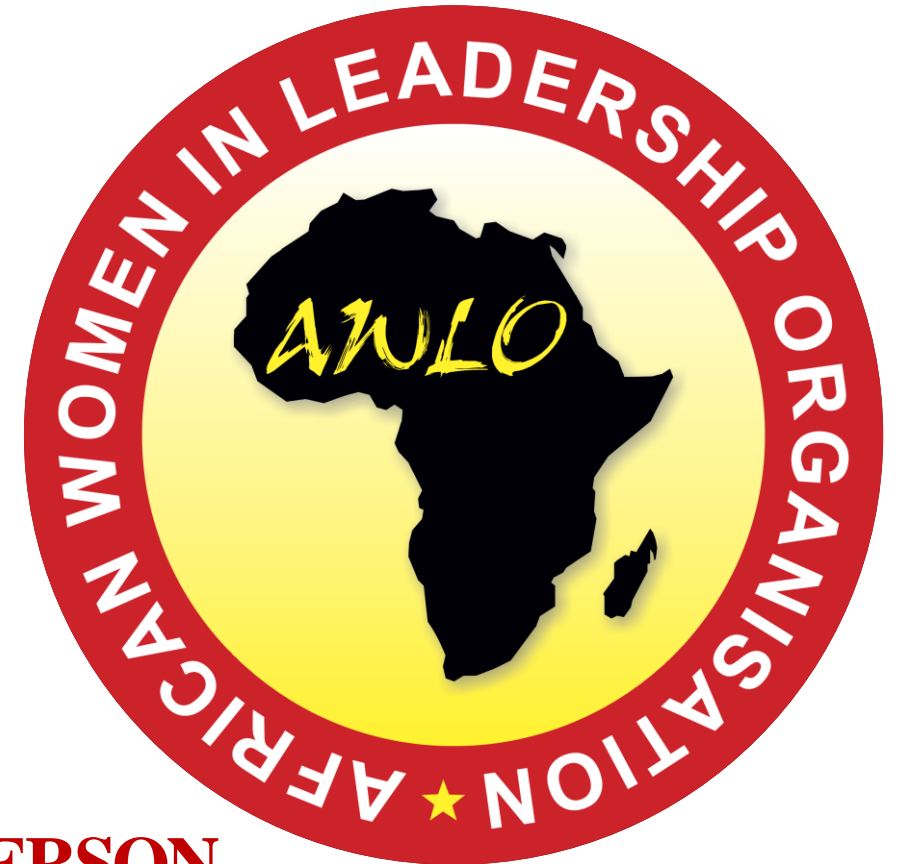
Communiqué

**Women in the Frontline in Crisis
Time: Rethinking Impact and the
Challenges of Leadership'**

Date: May 6, 2020



On Wednesday 6th May, 2020, the African Women in Leadership Organisation (AWLO) convened a virtual panel discussion on the theme 'Women in the Frontline in Crisis Time: Rethinking Impact and the Challenges of Leadership'. The virtual panel was attended by up to eighty-one (81) participants from Africa, North America, Europe and Asia. Moderated by Prof. Uduak Archibong MBE of the University of Bradford, United Kingdom, the panel discussion expanded discourse on the sociology of women participation in leadership at different levels and sectors, namely the media, the arts, politics, family and at personal levels.



**COMMUNIQUÉ FROM AWLO FOUR-PERSON
PANEL CONVERSATION WITH OSASU
IGBINEDION, ANZE MOFOR, GUY MURRAY-
BRUCE, YILING LI AND MODERATED BY PROF.
UDUAK ARCHIBONG ON WEDNESDAY MAY 6, 2020**

Précis from Panelists' Preliminary Remarks

In her remark, Anze Mofor made the case that, besides being the feminist or the 'liberated' woman, the woman has got the dominant influence in her own life and surrounding contexts as women have the super power to create influence. As such there is an urgent need for the revolution of the African mind as the man-and-woman relation is concerned.

Yiling Li, in her remark, stated the position that women have got the power and obligation to deliver peace and happiness to the world they live in. Mr. Guy Murray-Bruce shared the observation that few women are visible in the frontline of healthcare at this time of global coronavirus crisis. According to him, women are the heartbeat of any home and nation but many Public Health media taskforce constituted by governments do not have visible women representation. Yet, many female doctors and nurses in their thousands are in the fight against the pandemic, even when they are not represented in the public dialogue on Covid-19.

For Osasu Igbinedion, education is the foundation of every viable society or community but this is poorly reflected in the statistics showing that 89% of women in Sub-Saharan Africa work in the informal sector. Hence, women are needed to be actively present in the frontline.



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM GENERAL DISCUSSION AND QUESTION-AND-ANSWER

- Rejoining an early observation and question from a participant about the image and perception of the African woman in media and entertainment, Guy Murray-Bruce noted that political issues around the objectification of the woman came to a positive turn-around in 2001 with the emergence of Agbani Darego on the global stage.
- In Anze Mofor's further submission, women don't need to ask, but must show the power they hold to bring change and affect an environment. Women do not need to try to do this, but the government need to be inspired to see the value and solutions women present to the society, and drive them to produce it.
- According to Yoling Li, when women go into education, they have prospect. However, there is the need to respect people who stay at home to raise their children as many women in the world have been seen to be successful despite these additional burdens.
- From Anze's view, women have more organizational skills. It is innate for women to be able to investigate issues that come up quickly, and they have learnt to master the idea of leadership in a way that is solution-driven. Complementing this, Guy Murray-Bruce reasoned that women tend to have the kind of empathy that men do not have. They do whatever it takes to ensure the safety of the populace, in this respect Covid-19.
- Altogether, the panel pontificated, among other opinions, that women have power to put their emotions aside before stepping into the business arena, or leadership. The bigger picture is how women manage the stigma, and garner support. In addition, so many women and teenagers are going through abuse and suicidal thoughts, but, at the same time, shy away from counselling. Hence, the government must be proactive in getting free counselling to such women. Also, victims must be encouraged to speak more, as victims tend to become apprehensive to share when they are not sure they are in a safe space. Hence, the need for a working and productive partnership (e.g. NAPTIP) is key, so there's need for continued training of counsellors with respect to patient-counsellor confidentiality
- Going forward, women must be self-confident and know that the genders are equal. They must be positive in their thinking. As Mr. Murry-Bruce noted, the more women come out for elective positions, the more people vote for them. But more women still tend to shy away in this respect. The narrative, however, can change, but the only way that can change is through education.
- In her further contribution, Chief Osasu Igbinedion stated that affirmative action is far from tokenism, because women have indeed been shut out of the political sphere for a long time. A level playing ground must be created where everyone can compete, especially women who are brilliant and know their own worth.



COMMUNIQUÉ

Following the major highlights of the Panel discussion, the following position was reached:

1. That, much as the philosophy of 35% affirmative action was good, women do not need to *ask* but must make themselves *heard*;
2. That self-education for women will play a key part in personal leadership development and confidence-building;
3. That, if the preconditions for opportunities for women are not yet in place, women should be proactive to create such preconditions;
4. That women must adopt the idea of 'Intentional Visibility' if they must be reckoned with in the larger society;
5. That women need strategic collaborations and digital presence and they should be able to use their power to create whatever they want to see;
6. That there must be solution to crisis, such as domestic violence which is on the rise during the period of the current lockdown;
7. That more women should be in the frontline of affairs, and this by deliberate action;
8. That women in leadership should develop the culture and practice of finding more persons to mentor, as this is the way to become leaders;



Signed

Elisha Attai

**Dr. Elisha Attai,
Founder/President African Women in
Leadership Organisation**

