

Society. Equality. Africa – the Transformation (SEA-T)

Advancing gender equality and social justice in Africa

The challenge



Many African countries are making significant progress on promoting gender equality and social participation. However, deep-rooted social inequality remains. This is perpetuated by historical power and existing social structures. The situation particularly affects people who are marginalised due to their gender or identity

Especially Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working on social justice, gender equality and social participation face insufficient organisational resources to carry out their work, networking opportunities to build solidarity and data-based evidence for advocacy. Less than 1% of total ODA funds go to women’s rights organisations and movements and government institutions (excluding the volumes committed to government institutions such as women’s ministries). So far, there are only a few funding opportunities available in a direct, grassroots-oriented, demand-driven, non-project-based and low-bureaucracy manner. The resources available through international development cooperation are not only becoming less but are often tied to specific projects, making it difficult for CSOs to independently set their own thematic priorities.

Additionally, about 95% of African countries have restricted (online and offline) spaces for civil society actors, perpetuating repressive patriarchal power structures, hindering equality and inclusion and movement building. Incomplete data on gender and intersectionality hinders evidence-based support for transformative approaches and the lack of platforms for positive gender narratives hinders effective advocacy.

The Opportunity

The numerous challenges of social justice movements and civil society actors in Africa also present significant opportunities for transformative change. The *Society. Equality. Africa - the Transformation (SEA-T)* project recognizes this potential and aims to counteract shrinking spaces by collaborating with regional pan-African CSOs to strengthen local actors through inclusive support structures and sustainable partnerships. By promoting inclusive platforms, improving access to reliable gender-disaggregated and intersectional data, and fostering positive narratives of gender transformative processes, the project helps to amplify marginalized voices and create spaces for meaningful participation. Furthermore, by advocating for funding mechanisms that meet local context’s needs the project supports the autonomy of civil society to set their own priorities and collaborate with local stakeholders to meet specific needs. In doing so, it contributes not only to gender equality and social justice but also to the creation of peaceful, secure, and economically resilient societies. These goals reflect the profound opportunity to turn structural challenges into drivers of social change and inclusive development across the continent.

Project name	Society. Equality. Africa – the Transformation (SEA-T)
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project region	Regional Africa
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The approach

With the absence of a state /government partner, civil society actors are supported in addressing the issues most relevant to them, amplifying their voice in societal and political discourse, and thereby expanding their scope for action. The programme pursues a multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach, which is essential for social norm change. This approach is implemented on four tracks:



1. Funding for the Afro-feminist movement:

Structural strengthening of the Afro-feminist movement as a whole, not just individual projects. The focus is on financing that is as flexible, needs-oriented, and multi-year as possible, enabling local and regional civil society organizations to independently shape intersectional human rights work. A wide range of topics are supported, including inclusion, social and political participation of women and girls, rights of LGBTIQ+ communities, inclusion, and closing the digital gender gap.

2. Collaboration and advocacy:

Focus on building and strengthening spaces for collective action. The project supports joint processes and networks that enable cross-border exchange, joint learning, and solidarity-based cooperation between Afro-feminist actors. The aim is to promote alliances across countries, languages, and thematic contexts and to develop joint advocacy strategies.

3. Feminist knowledge:

Production and use of knowledge from an Afro-feminist perspective. The project supports partner-led research, participatory data collection, and knowledge production based on the experiences, analyses, and priorities of the actors involved. SEA-T focuses on local perspectives in its partnerships and builds on the commitment and expertise of civil society.

4. Sustainable mobilization:

Strengthening the long-term structural resilience of Afro-feminist civil society in an increasingly restrictive and regressive civil society environment. The focus is on strategies for the organizational, financial, and political sustainability of movements and organizations. This includes measures to strengthen internal structures, leadership, security and protection mechanisms within shrinking spaces and repressive implementation contexts and collective care.

The Right of Initiative

“The authority of civil society organizations (CSOs) to independently identify, prioritize, and address the issues that are most relevant to them, without the need for direct involvement or oversight.”

- Highlights the Right of Initiative to empower CSOs, fostering movement building and autonomy
- Supports Afro-feminist groups to act independently, addressing issues relevant to their communities
- Builds on lessons learned to challenge post-colonial legacies and promote feminist transformation

Project Regions

All project partners are organisations working regionally covering a broad geographic, thematic, and linguistic range and therewith supporting the development and dissemination of a continental-wide narrative on Pan-African feminism.

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