

AFROSAI Women Leadership Academy 2017



Consolider les compétences des femmes dans les domaines de la pensée stratégique et de la gestion du changement

Strengthening the skills of women leaders in strategic thinking and change management

AFROSAI Women Leadership Academy: Strengthening female leadership in External Audit in Africa

1. Background on Cooperation Partners

The regional **Good Financial Governance (GFG) in Africa** programme, implemented by GIZ on behalf of BMZ and EU, works towards empowering African decision-makers to implement reforms of Good Financial Governance in their respective countries. It cooperates with regional networks on: (1) Tax Policy and Administration, (2) Budget Reform, (3) External Audit, and (4) Legislative Oversight.

The **African Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI)** is our cooperation partner for the Action Field 3 “External Audit”. The network brings together 54 Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) and is the African regional grouping in INTOSAI, the international organization of SAIs. Its General Secretariat is based in Cameroon. Two major linguistic sub-groups of African SAIs operate within AFROSAI: AFROSAI-E for English-speaking SAIs and CREFIAF for French-speaking SAIs. GIZ cooperation with AFROSAI dates back to 2010.

2. Rational for cooperation on gender equality in external audit

The GFG in Africa is a G1 Programme. Its work to promote gender equality is captured in a module objective indicator:

“30 potential female decision-makers in the areas of Public Financial Management (PFM) are equipped to take over management and leadership positions.”

The above mentioned indicator reflects two key principles that guide the GFG in Africa Programme’s approach to gender:

1. In order to achieve Good Financial Governance that improves the lives of citizens, **competent leadership** is required to achieve the aspired changes on the ground.
2. The domain of public finances is male dominated. Women are seldom represented in decision-making positions. This has wide social implications. Decisions on public finances are often spending decisions that affect the implementation of key government policies that should serve all parts of the population. An **adequate representation of women** at the decision-making table is necessary to ensure their issues are taken up.

These principles are the reason why all HCD formats of GFG in Africa, including the Executive Master in Taxation and the PFM in Key Sectors Course, have special modules on leadership or female leadership.

With regards to external audit, a third rationale for cooperation on gender equality comes into play. Besides supporting gender equality in their own institution, SAIs can play a crucial role in **ensuring that national gender strategies are effectively implemented** by exercising their mandate of reviewing government policies and actions. SAIs can therefore effectively contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially to Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and ensure that “no one is left behind”.



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3. Run up to the Women Leadership Academy: SAI-specific Gender strategies

Cooperation to promote Gender equality as topic for SAIs started early in the history of the programme and is bearing its fruits now. GFG in Africa first supported a CREFIAF survey that inquired about the status of gender equality in 23 francophone SAIs. The results showed that although most countries commit to international conventions regarding gender equality and women empowerment, women are underrepresented in the audit personnel of francophone SAIs (20% of audit personnel) and particularly underrepresented in decision-making positions. With the programme's support, CREFIAF then adopted a gender strategy and trained gender focal points to support the implementation of the strategy, especially to establish gender mainstreaming, at SAI level. The survey and subsequent strategy served as a starting point for sensitisation of (Heads of) SAIs about the situation.

This strategy was later developed into the AFROSAI Gender and Development Strategy and adopted by the General Assembly in October 2014.

The AFROSAI Gender and Development Strategy focusses on three strategic priorities:

1. **Access of Women to Decision-making positions**, to the auditing profession, and to capacity building for women in SAIs;
2. Strengthening the institutional framework for **gender mainstreaming** in SAIs;
3. Establishing gender equality as a topic and a **criterion for performance audits**.

In its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan AFROSAI integrated the support to gender equality and the implementation of the Gender Strategy into its capacity building efforts.


4. The AFROSAI Women Leadership Academy

The Women Leadership Academy (WLA) forms part of the implementation of strategic priority 1 of AFROSAI's Gender and Development Strategy and aims at equipping motivated women of the middle management to become leaders in their respective SAIs. The objective is to strengthen their skills in strategic thinking and change management so that they can achieve and sustain extraordinary outcomes and become drivers of change in their SAI. The WLA combines personal leadership development with training on specific management skills and provides the participants with the opportunity to build a network of SAI female leaders. The Academy is bilingual (French and English) and thus fosters the formation of a pan-African identity as a female leaders.

More concretely, the WLA combines three presence modules with online engagement and individual online leadership coaching. A psychometric assessment of leadership styles is the entry point for the coaching on personal leadership development. Moreover, each participant is implementing a strategic reform project in her sending institution to practice her leadership skills and contribute to her career development. The participants can chose a project linked to these topics: a) SAIs auditing SDGs, b) Extractive Industries, c) Professionalisation of auditors, or d) Gender.

An important element of the WLA is of peer learning and exchange on the technical and at the leadership level. At the technical level, the WLA provides for exchanges with the African

“ When growing up most women were doing secretarial and nursing jobs. Accountancy was perceived too difficult for girls. I wanted to prove that a woman can be successful in a male dominated career when I joined my SAI. A stronger female leadership in SAIs is necessary because it can help to address gender inequality in the SAI and society in general. Girls will be inspired to become educated and successful in life if they have role models to look up to. ”



Christina Kachingwe
Assistant Auditor General, National Audit Office of Malawi

hosting SAIs, i.e. Gabon and South Africa in the pilot edition; Senegal and South Africa in the second edition. The phase in Europe includes visits to the German and European SAI, the Bundesrechnungshof and the European Court of Auditors. Leadership dialogues are an opportunity for the participants to discuss with inspiring female leaders who share how they made their way to decision-making positions and how they mastered their challenges. These leadership dialogues have



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helped the participants to find ways to overcome existing gender roles and assert themselves as leaders. Leadership dialogues in the pilot and the second edition up till now included:

- The Head of the Supreme Court and the Minister of Higher Education of Gabon;
- The French Member of the European Court of Auditors;
- Audit Directors of the German SAI;
- Member of the GIZ Board and the Head of the Africa Department;
- Deputy Auditor General of SAI South Africa;
- Aminata Touré, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal.

The following graphic presents the format of the pilot edition of the WLA in 2016 that was planned and executed with the support of the Academy for International Cooperation (AIZ).

11 women from ten countries successfully concluded the pilot edition. Three of them received a price for their project implementation (South Africa, Gabon, and Burkina Faso). After an evaluation and reconceptualization, the second edition 2017 is being conducted with the African Leadership Development Institute bringing in an African perspective to leadership. The second edition runs from September 2017 to April 2018.



5. Achieved results

The continuous engagement on gender has found a fertile ground in regional networks of African SAIs and GIZ is appreciated for its continuous support. At the level of CREFIAF, the gender issue has been integrated into the permanent Working Group Capacity Building, Gender and Development that follows up upon the implementation of the CREFIAF Gender Strategy. The Working Group has developed an approach to integrating gender as a criterion of performance audit based on the input of the strategic reform project of Gabon in the pilot edition. This shows how a successful strategic reform project can be up-scaled to the region. The second edition candidate of the SAI hosting this Working Group, Senegal, under her project plans to implement this approach in SAI Senegal.

Looking at Africa, where currently about 20% of the 54 Heads of SAIs are female, Gender has become a topic that is high on the agenda of the region, although it is sometimes still belittled by some. Currently, SAIs are taking steps to contribute to the achievement of SDGs, notably by undertaking performance audits of single goals and targets of the Agenda 2030. The CREFIAF region in their cooperation with another development partner, the INTOSAI Development Initiative, has picked Goal 5 out of all SDGs to put their focus on.

Some more results are noticeable. For instance, AFROSAI's efforts to sensitize on the lack of female decision-makers and auditors has led participants to note imbalanced workshop participation of men and women. In some instances, peer pressure has mounted on SAI representatives to explain what steps they are taking to put into practice the gender strategy in their SAI, especially to balance the gender ratio at decision-making positions.

Of course, the existence of the Women Leadership Academy itself is sign of a successful cooperation on gender, as AFROSAI and the member SAIs are mobilizing a significant amount of own resources for this leadership programme. All flights and accommodation costs except for Germany are born by either AFROSAI or the sending SAI. The WLA has added to AFROSAI's international prestige as it has triggered interest from other regional SAI groupings.



Evidence that links the first edition of the WLA to career changes of the participants can only be patchy yet as not enough time has passed to start the assessment. However, the evaluation of the pilot edition showed that participants were positive that they will benefit in this regard. Participants shared how they have changed in terms of confidence in their own abilities, taking up of responsibilities, and also visibility as a leader. The participant of Burkina Faso of the pilot edition is an example in point: She was already asked during the WLA to assume the position of acting SAI Head over several months. For 2018 a follow-up survey to gather more evidence on the career advancement of the participants of the pilot edition is planned. In the long term, we also expect to see more implementation of the Gender Strategy at SAI-level due to the WLA participants acting as ambassadors in their SAI.



“ This pilot edition of the Women Leadership Academy was a very rewarding experience both for my SAI and me personally. Through this experience, I discovered aspects of my personality that I never knew existed. And what was most impressive was that I helped in achieving a strategic objective of my SAI. In one year, I have grown tremendously professionally. I now feel perfectly at ease in asserting myself as a woman leader and I am grateful to be part of the WLA. An experience such as this is very worthwhile! ”

Lucie Kompaore Tindano
Counsellor, Court of Auditors of Burkina Faso

The case of Burkina Faso is also an example of successful cooperation between the regional and bilateral GFG programmes. After introducing the participant and her strategic reform project “Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement for SAI Visibility” to the Head of Programme, the bilateral project recognized the potential for utilising the project for advancing the achievement of the programme’s objective. Through the provision of technical expertise the bilateral GFG project enabled an upscaling of the strategic reform project.

Overall, we count 11 graduates in 2016. If all current 19 participants graduate, then the WLA alone (without other programme interventions) will achieve the gender module indicator.

6. Success factors

The Women Leadership Academy owes its success to intense **cooperation and continuous engagement at multiple levels**. The conceptualization was the fruit of AFROSAI-GFG cooperation on gender. AIZ came on board to provide the leadership curriculum of the pilot edition. For its implementation the hosting SAIs played a major role in presenting their best practices in terms of auditing and identifying inspiring female leaders that could share their story. Hosting SAIs are from both linguistic sub-groups as are participants, thus facilitating mutual comprehension and strengthening AFROSAI as a network of peers. The FMB and female leaders of the Africa Department and the Board were crucial for facilitating contacts to the German and European SAIs and making themselves available for leadership dialogues. Although it adds to complexity in terms of stakeholder management and language barriers, this multi-level cooperation is a success factor for the WLA and adds to its richness. Complexity, also in terms of logistics, has been addressed by longer planning horizons.

The second success factor is **linking Capacity Development at the individual level with the organizational level** and eventually the regional level. The strategic reform projects have proven to be a hands-on workshop for the participants. They spark the interest of the SAI leadership as they are getting something back for their investment, for instance, technical support as in Burkina Faso (see above) and other cases. The upscaling through knowledge sharing with other SAIs in the case of Gabon shows how the strategic reform projects can drive technical debate in the region. This is why one lesson learnt of the evaluation was to provide stronger individual project support in the second edition.

The third success factor is **peer learning and exchange**. The WLA is a leadership journey for female auditors. Engaging at a personal level as peers, sharing experiences, challenges, and solutions among equals, and being inspired by women who made it to the top, has been key for the participants to understand that they are not alone in their situations. They have come to believe that they can succeed and that they have their role to play in their SAI. The WLA has helped them to realise their potential and become the change actors they want to be.



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