

# Happy International Women's Day 2026

*“Give to Gain”*

*“To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, what mentorship do women need and what knowledge are you prepared to give to gain it?”*

To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, mentorship must be structured as a pathway to leadership, innovation, and societal transformation. Institutions of higher learning carry a responsibility to not just educate women, but to cultivate ecosystems in which women lead research, shape policy conversations, and drive community impact across sectors.

Our approach to mentorship as Africa University is anchored in developing ethical, globally minded leaders who are prepared to address Africa's most complex challenges through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and service. We prioritize models that connect students with faculty, practitioners, and peer networks in ways that translate academic knowledge into lived leadership. This includes creating platforms where young women engage in dialogue, lead initiatives, conduct research, and contribute meaningfully to development outcomes while still in formation.

In the spirit of “Give to Gain,” we invest institutional knowledge, access, and mentorship capital into the next generation. What we gain is equally transformative: fresh perspectives, socially responsive innovation, and a leadership culture that reflects the diversity and dynamism of the continent we serve. Mentorship, when embedded into education and community engagement, becomes a force multiplier for inclusive development, advancing not only women, but the sustainability of societies as a whole.



**Africa University,  
Zimbabwe**

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**Charlene Mugalula**  
**Public Relations Officer of**  
**Ndejje University**

TAs the Public Relations Officer of Ndejje University, I believe that to build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women need intentional mentorship in academic excellence, leadership, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and personal development to strengthen their confidence, resilience, and capacity to influence systems.

They must be guided to excel in research, governance, innovation, and ethical decision-making while gaining exposure to opportunities that position them as change-makers. Ndejje University is prepared to offer knowledge grounded in integrity, sustainability, digital transformation, and community engagement, equipping women not only to succeed individually but to transform families, institutions, and nations for lasting development.

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**Adebayo Oluwaseun  
Adetomiwa,**  
**Federal University of Technology  
Akure**

International Women's Day is a moment to honor the remarkable contributions of women across Africa and around the world, particularly those whose work sustains families, strengthens rural livelihoods, and advances research and innovation.

Across Nigeria and the African continent, women play indispensable roles in agriculture, livestock production, food processing, education, and community leadership. Yet many still face barriers to land access, funding, training, and leadership opportunities. Empowering women through inclusive policies, education, mentorship, and equitable resource distribution is critical for food security, economic growth, and sustainable development.

Today, I celebrate the resilience and achievements of African women and reaffirm the shared commitment to building systems where every woman and girl has the opportunity to succeed and lead

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Giving encourages togetherness, in forging gender equality through abundant giving. The IWD 2026 Give To Gain Campaign encourages a mindset of generosity and collaboration. Women have always been generous with their time, love, labour and family provisions for everyone. They are tirelessly working for an equitable and just world and society where everyone has equal opportunities, access, control and benefits from the economy. The power of reciprocity and support is central to women giving to gain. It recognises that when people, organizations, and communities give generously, opportunities and support for women increase. Giving is not a subtraction, it's intentional multiplication. When women thrive, we all rise.

I am ready to mentor, coach, act as a role model and an Allie for gender equality, women and girl's empowerment. My support will be given through advocacy, lobbying, training, facilitating, coaching and being a thought leader on gender equality policies, strategies, programming and information dissemination to influence change.

I appeal to funding agencies to dedicated resources and support, to gender equality to achieve positive progress and eliminate the barriers. I am here supporting all the Supporters to elevate the visibility of their impact. Please join the call to-action for all IWD Events to promote all women-focused fundraising. During the IWD useful opportunity are provided to organizations in the IWD Giving ecosystem to raise awareness, showcase impact, and call for donations. As a speaker I am ready to raise my voice through the RUFORUM Platform to legitimise the campaign of asking the nonprofit organisations to distribute resources and establish ongoing giving for Gender equality. To enable groups like mine to implement the gender equality programmes and advance women and girls' opportunities.



**Mary Shawa,**  
**Chair Board Executive Finance**  
**and Administration Committee,**  
**RUFORUM**

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Some leaders command attention - loud, visible, unmistakable.  
And then there are leaders like me - submarine quiet.

Moving beneath the surface, unseen by design, yet carrying a force capable of shifting tides. Influence felt, even when invisible.

Across African history, power was never singular. Kings ruled, yes, but their wisdom was anchored by queen mothers and aunties whose counsel shaped kingdoms. Their leadership was quiet, strategic, and transformative - not loud, but decisive.

To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women need mentorship that redefines power: leadership is multidimensional, impact can be whispered yet world-shifting, and visibility is not the only measure of strength. In the spirit of "Give to Gain," I give women permission to lead as they are - whether roaring or resonant, visible or unseen. I offer strategy over spectacle, precision over performance, and the reminder that depth, not volume, sustains progress.

What I seek to gain is a generation of women who embrace the full spectrum of leadership, those who command the room and those who quietly steer its course. Women who understand that every form of power is valid, necessary, and capable of reshaping the future. Impact begins beneath the surface. Let's mentor women not just to make waves, but to shift tides - quietly, steadily, and with purpose.



**Evelyn Chiyevu GARWE**  
Curriculum development, Quality  
Assurance, Policy, Research and  
Strategy Expert

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It is essential to appreciate that mentorship for women is not merely a supportive gesture; it is a strategic approach for dismantling systemic barriers and unlocking potential. Women need multifaceted mentorship that addresses both personal and professional growth. In the professional realm, this includes guidance in navigating male-dominated fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), where women and girls have for a long time faced implicit biases and limited access to networks. Effective mentorship here involves pairing young women with seasoned female leaders who can provide insights into career advancement, research opportunities, and innovation.

Emotionally, mentorship should foster resilience against societal pressures, including cultural norms that prioritise domestic roles over ambitions. For instance, in rural African contexts such as Uganda, women require mentorship to balance family responsibilities with entrepreneurial pursuits, such as in agribusiness or artisanal mining communities.<sup>1</sup> This holistic approach builds confidence, hones leadership skills, and encourages women to challenge inequities.

Beyond individual growth, mentorship must emphasise collective empowerment. Women need programs that teach advocacy, financial literacy, and policy influence to drive sustainable development. In a world grappling with climate change, economic volatility, and health crises, mentorship should equip women with tools to lead community-based solutions. For example, training in gender-sensitive research methods<sup>2</sup> enables women to identify and address issues like reproductive health disparities or unequal access to resources. Such mentorship cultivates a ripple effect: mentored women become mentors themselves, perpetuating a cycle of inspiration. At Makerere, we recognise that without this, efforts toward equity remain superficial, failing to translate into tangible societal benefits.



**Makerere University,  
Uganda**

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For me, building a truly equitable and sustainable world begins with something simple, yet essential: sharing knowledge with intention and commitment. Women need mentorship that is close, practical, and inspiring someone who not only teaches, but walks alongside them, opens doors, and helps transform challenges into real opportunities.

Throughout my journey, I have worked on projects related to Agroecology and Food Systems, with a special focus on empowering girls in communities. My experience in community based work has shown me that when we invest time and knowledge in girls, we are planting seeds for lasting change.

International Women's Day, to me, is a moment to reflect on the path we still need to walk, but also on the power of collaboration among women. It is a day to recognize achievements, renew commitments, and reinforce the importance of creating inclusive opportunities where no girl is left behind. Very often, what they need is not only technical training, but also confidence, guidance, and someone who believes in their potential. They need mentorship that strengthens their voice, their economic autonomy, and their capacity for leadership within their own communities.

The theme “Give to Receive” deeply reflects what I believe in. Whenever I share my experience whether through implementing community projects, promoting agroecological practices, or training future professionals in agricultural sciences, I receive in return collective growth, more resilient communities, and young women who are more aware of their value.

I am willing to continue sharing what I know, while also learning from other women. Because when women support women, the impact is not individual it is transformative, sustainable, and capable of crossing generations.



**Hermenegilda Guilherme  
Petersburgo  
Universidade Licungo,  
Mozambique**

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As a woman in the field of economics working at the intersection of policy, natural resource, agriculture, and inclusive development, I have learned that talent alone does not transform systems mentorship does. To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women need mentorship that intentionally transfers power: opening access to knowledge, professional networks, research leadership, financing opportunities, and decision-making platforms where policies and investments are shaped.

The knowledge I am committed to giving is practical and transformative how to turn research into policy influence, how to design inclusive value chains that work for women, and how to lead with evidence, confidence, and purpose. I mentor not only to guide careers, but to expand the number of women who sit at the tables where economic decisions are made.

"Give to Gain" is not just a theme; it is a strategy for structural change. Every time a woman shares knowledge, creates space for another woman, or intentionally builds the next generation of leaders, she multiplies the power of progress. The more we give skills, opportunities, and courage the more equitable, resilient, and prosperous the world we gain.

*"When women intentionally give knowledge, open doors, and mentor boldly, they do more than build careers they reshape economies and create a future where leadership is truly inclusive."*



**Innocensia F. John**  
**University of Dar es Salaam,**  
**Tanzania**

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For me, building a truly equitable and sustainably developed world begins with mentorship that is both intentional and reciprocal. Women do not only need access to opportunity; we need sponsorship, spaces of intellectual courage, and intergenerational alliances that ground our authority to lead, innovate, and shape systems. The mentorship we require must transcend symbolic inclusion and shift to the transfer of power, confidence, and decision-making agency.

As a young woman serving in executive leadership, I have learned that growth accelerates when mentorship is honest, stretching, and grounded in shared purpose. I have benefited most from mentors who did not only advise, but who opened doors, trusted my voice at the table, and expected excellence. That is the model I am committed to giving in return.

To "Give to Gain" means I offer what I once sought: visibility for emerging women leaders, practical knowledge on navigating institutions, and the assurance that leadership does not require women to diminish their authenticity. In exchange, I gain the insight, innovation, and moral clarity that come when diverse women shape solutions together. Sustainable development will not be achieved by women being included in existing systems, but by women mentoring one another to transform those systems altogether.



**Jeanette Dadzie**  
**Director of Advancement and**  
**Public Affairs, Africa University**  
**Zimbabwe**

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Makerere University has, for over a century, championed the transformative power of education as the cornerstone of societal progress. We have embedded gender equity into our core mission, offering curricula and programs that prepare women to lead in building an equitable world.

Makerere University stands ready to deliver the knowledge essential for this transformation. In partnership with organisations such as the Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors (FAWoVC), we strengthen higher education's role in promoting gender-inclusive participation in science, technology, and innovation. Our Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) provides foundational knowledge on gender dynamics, equipping students with analytical tools to critique and reform patriarchal structures.

We impart knowledge on inclusive development, emphasising how women's perspectives can inform policies for sustainable agriculture, health, and education. One flagship initiative is our mentorship program for female students in STEM, launched to address the underrepresentation of women in these fields. Through such interventions, Makerere University equips women with the intellectual capital to innovate sustainably, from digital tools for health monitoring to climate-adaptive farming.

Furthermore, Makerere's Gender Equality Seal initiative champions institutional reforms to mainstream gender in the public sector. Makerere also advances gender-responsive programming, which involves designing interventions that recognise and address gender-specific vulnerabilities and strengths. By carefully implementing gender-responsive programming and fostering inclusive development led by women for women, Makerere honours our mandate to secure a prosperous future for all.



Makerere University

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**Nancy Mungai**  
Egerton University

Throughout my work in academia and development, I have witnessed the transformative power of education and mentorship in advancing gender equality. My academic journey has been profoundly shaped by transformative support, beginning with a Government of Kenya Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) loan for my undergraduate studies at the University of Nairobi, followed by a Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) scholarship for my MSc, and culminating in a Research Assistantship at the University of Missouri for my PhD. I am deeply aware that without these opportunities, and the dedicated availability of great mentors, my path would have unfolded very differently.

My education journey has shaped my involvement in research and academic leadership, where I have supported initiatives that strengthen research capacity among students and young scholars, especially women, and promote innovation in sustainable agriculture and food systems. By guiding students in research, critical thinking, and problem-solving, I seek to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Mentorship is a reciprocal process. As we share our knowledge, experience, and support, we also gain new insights, innovation, and collective strength. By investing in young people, and in particular women's growth, we create a ripple effect that advances gender equality, strengthens communities, and promotes sustainable development for present and future generations. Through mentorship, we not only transform individual lives but also build a more equitable and sustainable world for all.

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To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women at NM-AIST and across Tanzania need mentorship that empowers them to excel in science, technology, and leadership. Mentorship should provide not only guidance on academic and professional growth but also inspire confidence, resilience, and innovation in traditionally male dominated fields.

In the spirit of this year's theme, "Give to Gain," we are committed to sharing our knowledge and experiences with emerging women leaders at NM-AIST and beyond. By guiding them in research, innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership, we hope to equip them with the tools and confidence to succeed. Mentorship is mutual by giving our time and support, we gain the joy of contributing to a generation of women scientists, innovators, and leaders who will shape Tanzania's sustainable development.

We are fortunate to have strong role models, including Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, whose courage, determination, and transformative leadership inspire women across the nation. Her example reminds us that when women support women, we create networks of opportunity that strengthen gender inclusive leadership and innovation throughout Tanzania and the continent. Truly, when women give, we all gain.



***Nelson Mandela African  
Institution of Science and  
Technology (NM-AIST), Tanzania***

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To build an equitable and sustainable developed world, women need to be fully involved through a generational transfer of knowledge in order to build and sustain equity in our world today. Such can be achieved through leadership and empowerment of women. Through leadership, the young and older generations of women look up to a role model/ mentor who helps them to build their confidence and believe in themselves to break barriers in male dominated society and make impacts in agroecology/STEM and the society.

Women need mentors who can help them identify their skills, set realistic goals, navigate career paths and overcome obstacles. Mentorship program aimed at creating a stronger networks and alliances is crucial for the growth of women and in creating an equitable and sustainable world. Women need empowerment through formal and informal training to gain knowledge and skills to become independent in order to take care of their personal needs and family. Through knowledge gain and skills, poverty cycles are broken since empowered women become emotionally and financially stronger to raise a nation.

I am prepared to offer knowledge on good agricultural practices that sustain the environment without degradation. This can be achieved through research and demonstration on the farm. I can share knowledge on soil moisture conservation techniques, climate adaptation strategies and other intervention plans. I am prepared to reach a wider audience of women globally through digital literacy (video technology), academic writing and critical thinking skills that strengthen women's ability to access global knowledge systems. I am also willing to collaborate, offer technical knowledge and promote gender-responsive projects that women are co-designers and partakers for inclusive learning and adoption. I will also teach women how to manage multiple roles as mothers and wives while pursuing their career and maintaining self-care. Finally, I will build and leverage on networks for support and opportunities to help women excel in their career.



**Nneka Angela Okoli,**  
**Nnamdi Azikiwe University,**  
**Nigeria**

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To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women need mentorship that is intentional, reciprocal and empowering, and rooted in the belief that their voices matter. Women benefit from mentors who give their time, open doors, share networks, cultivate confidence, and provide guidance not only through success, but also through the courage to rise after setbacks.

As a leader in academia, I am prepared to share the knowledge that has shaped my own journey to strengthen the next generation of leaders—knowledge about ethical leadership, navigating structural barriers, claiming space with confidence, and anchoring one's work in integrity and purpose. I am also committed to sharing the tools necessary to create gender-responsive institutions, leading to a world where every woman's potential becomes our shared progress.



**Prof. Sunungurai  
Dominica Chingarande,  
Vice Chancellor, Women's  
University in Africa**

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Para a construção de um mundo verdadeiramente equitativo e sustentável, proponho uma mentoria que possibilitasse a consciencializar a mulher da capacidade de ela estar envolvida profissionalmente nas áreas das Ciências, especificamente, das Ciências Agrárias; trabalhado na disseminação de conhecimento no meio acadêmico e estendendo tais conhecimentos para e na comunidade local, em forma de atividades de extensão agrária.

Como mulher estaria à disposição de compartilhar o conhecimento que tenho em uma série mentoria com o tema – Como sensibilizar as raparigas pelo gosto pelas Ciências Agrárias a partir da Escola Secundária? O objetivo dessa mentoria seria contribuir para mais jovens raparigas abracem as Ciências Agrarias no Ensino Superior.

To build a truly equitable and sustainable world, I propose a mentorship program that would raise women's awareness of their ability to be professionally involved in the sciences, specifically agricultural sciences, working to disseminate knowledge within academia and extend that knowledge to and within the local community through agricultural extension activities.

As a woman, I would be available to share my knowledge in a mentorship series on the theme – How to sensitize girls to the interest in Agricultural Sciences starting in secondary school? The objective of this mentorship would be to contribute to more young girls embracing Agricultural Sciences in higher education



**Stélia Mariana A. C. Nahia**  
Universidade Licungo  
(Moçambique)

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To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women require intentional mentorship that strengthens their leadership capacity, secures their economic independence, and amplifies their voices in decision-making spaces. From being a high school dropout, I am now an/a author, adjudicator, lecturer and mentor in gastronomy tourism, and have come to deeply understand that the contribution of women in this sector is immeasurable. Their influence is not peripheral — it is foundational.

Women are central to global food systems and are increasingly recognized as drivers of sustainable gastronomy and economic growth. They constitute more than 37% of the rural agricultural workforce worldwide, rising to nearly 48% in low-income countries, and are responsible for 60–80% of food production in developing nations. Yet their role extends far beyond production. Women safeguard biodiversity through traditional agricultural knowledge, nurture sustainable practices, and stimulate local economies through entrepreneurship. They are not only nurturers, but custodians of culture, heritage, ethics, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

However, structural barriers remain — limited land ownership, restricted access to credit and training, and underrepresentation in leadership. Addressing these inequities requires systemic change: securing land tenure, expanding financial and technical support, strengthening women-led cooperatives, and embedding gender-transformative approaches into agricultural and tourism policies.

Building an equitable and sustainably developed world is not possible without investing in women's mentorship. When women are equipped with knowledge, resources, and leadership opportunities, they do not simply participate in development — they shape it. And as mentors, our responsibility is not only to teach skills, but to open doors, amplify voices, and ensure that the future of gastronomy tourism is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.



**Tiny Gango,**  
**Lupane State University,**  
**Zimbabwe**

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Ao longo da minha trajetória acadêmica e profissional, aprendi que a construção de um mundo verdadeiramente equitativo e de desenvolvimento sustentável não começa com grandes discursos, mas com escuta, reconhecimento e partilha. Foi a partir das minhas vivências com mulheres em contextos comunitários e acadêmicos que compreendi, de forma muito concreta, que as mulheres não precisam de uma mentoria única ou padronizada. Elas precisam de mentorias integradas, transformadoras e, acima de tudo, bidirecionais.

Trabalhando de perto com mulheres, especialmente em comunidades rurais de Moçambique, percebi que mulheres carregam um profundo conhecimento local e ecológico, essencial para a gestão sustentável dos recursos naturais, para a agricultura resiliente e para a segurança alimentar, porém enfrentam barreiras profundas: baixo acesso a rendimento próprio, limitações na tomada de decisão, fraca inserção em redes de conhecimento e uma histórica desvalorização dos seus saberes. Estas realidades ensinaram-me que a primeira mentoria de que as mulheres precisam é a mentoria de empoderamento socioeconômico. Quando uma mulher aprende a gerir recursos, a empreender de forma sustentável e a aceder a mercados, ela ganha autonomia e rompe ciclos de dependência que atravessam gerações.

Sendo mulher, a vida me preparou para oferecer conhecimento situado e experiência prática construídos ao longo da minha trajetória acadêmica e comunitária, nomeadamente: saberes locais e ecológicos relacionados com a gestão tradicional de recursos naturais, práticas agrícolas resilientes às mudanças climáticas, conservação da biodiversidade e segurança alimentar; liderança colaborativa e inclusiva, bem como conhecimento acadêmico e técnico nas áreas STEAM.



**Tiny Gango,**  
**Lupane State University,**  
**Zimbabwe**

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Women need access to quality education. Not only academic training, but also provision of experiences and opportunities that foster self-knowledge and contact with different worlds and realities. These experiences enrich us and enable us to grow, both personally and collectively.

I attended poorly equipped primary school that, unfortunately, has barely improved in more than twenty years. Only after experiencing better schools in different parts of the world did I truly recognize the disparity: schools where children have access to nutritious school meals, interact with researchers and writers, and benefit from opportunities that broaden their horizons from an early age. This comparison highlighted my sense of stagnation and the teachings of my professors taught to observe the world critically and constructively.

I realized that I am also a product of that school and, despite its limitations, it was able to educate someone who is now dedicated to contributing to the community. Inspired by this acknowledgement, I wrote a children's book and decided to launch it at the same primary school. It was a moment of celebration and joy. The children could meet one writer of a book that they read, showing them that even with limited resources, it is possible to dream, transform, and inspire. I felt realized to give that gift to my community!

It is very important that we create spaces and opportunity for women and celebrate every women's achievements, even small it may seem, each step is fundamental in building a truly equitable and sustainably developed world. I recognize my own worth as a woman and as a human being: I observe the details in everyday life, and, combining my expertise with genuine care for people, my students and others gain!



**Marta da Graça Zacarias  
Simbine**  
Licungo University,  
Mozambique

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To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women need mentorship that recognizes equity, not merely equality, as the foundation of progress. Mentorship must focus on empowering women with what they need to thrive, rather than offering uniform opportunities that ignore existing barriers.

Equity means ensuring women are not denied opportunities simply because they are women. Sustainability becomes achievable when individuals are allowed to contribute fully based on knowledge, competence, and capability rather than gender.

The mentorship women need is rooted in confidence grounded in competence and self-awareness. Throughout my career as a scientist, lecturer, researcher, mother, and wife, I have observed that many young women hesitate to pursue leadership or scientific careers because society has gendered roles that are inherently gender-neutral. **“Science is gender-neutral, it is society that genderizes positions.”**

In the spirit of this year's global theme, **“Give to Gain,”** I am prepared to give confidence, perspective, and practical guidance drawn from experience. By giving belief and mentorship to emerging women scientists and leaders, we gain something greater: a generation that sees opportunity instead of limitation.

Just as improved crop varieties lead to stronger harvests, I believe that empowered women cultivate stronger, and more sustainable societies. Giving confidence today is how the world gains equity and sustainability tomorrow.



**Miriam Kinyua,**  
**University of Eldoret,**  
**Kenya**