



# TuWezeshe Akina Dada

Young Women's  
Feminist Leadership  
Programme

INSPIRING A GENERATION OF  
AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS

**FORWARD**

# ABOUT FORWARD

## Our Vision

**We are working for the day when African girls and women will live in dignity, and enjoy equal rights, free from violence.**



## Our Mission

FORWARD is an African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls. From female genital mutilation and child marriage to domestic and sexual violence, we tackle abuse and discrimination – enabling African women and girls to achieve the dignity and equality that they deserve.

At FORWARD, we focus on both personal stories and the bigger picture. That's why we support affected women and girls on the ground – bringing communities together, fostering skills and knowledge, and nurturing young women leaders of tomorrow. And it's why we work strategically to challenge and support decision-makers and practitioners – conducting community research, building long-term partnerships and creating opportunities to transform lives.

For over 35 years we're working to create a world free from violence for all African women and girls – and we won't stop until we get there.

# WHY WE BELIEVE IN LEADERSHIP

Women's active participation in policy development, social political processes and economic structures at all levels is critical to achieving gender equality and building a more just and equitable society.

At FORWARD, we believe that empowering young African women to become confident, resilient and effective leaders is key in helping us to reach our goal of ending all forms of violence against women and attaining gender equality.



## Our Young Women's Feminist Leadership Programme

Our young women's leadership programme, **'TuWezeshe Akina Dada'** – Swahili for 'empowering our sisters' – is a feminist leadership programme that seeks to inspire a generation of young African women to engage in both civil and political spaces and to take collective action against VAWG.

TuWezeshe Akina Dada is a one-year fellowship programme, during which the young women Fellows build up core leadership skills, are mentored by established female leaders and ultimately receive funding to initiate their own Social Action Projects.

TuWezeshe Fellows learn how to shape the policy agenda on VAWG, to build solidarity with other young women activists and to voice their concerns and demands through a range of national and international platforms.

# HOW TUWEZESHE WORKS

The programme consists of the following five components:

## #1

### Leadership training

Young women first take part in residential feminist leadership training. The training teaches Fellows practical feminist leadership skills, improves their knowledge of their rights, and equips them with confidence and resilience to become effective leaders.

## #2

### TuWezeshe sisterhood

Fellows become members of country-specific fellowship networks. The networks provide them with opportunities to develop their ideas, to receive inspiration from one another, and to work collaboratively to combat the challenges that they face.

## #3

### Social media activism

By building TuWezeshe-specific social media pages and followings, Fellows can exchange information and make links across countries, confronting issues of women's and girls' rights on a global level.

## #4

### Social action projects

Once Fellows complete the feminist leadership training, they are provided with a sub-grant, tasking them to initiate their own Social Action Project and apply the skills and new knowledge that they have acquired.

## #5

### Mentorship

Each Fellow is paired with a mentor to guide her through her fellowship journey. Supported by experienced female leaders, Fellows thus have access to role models who provide them with coaching, and networking opportunities that shape their personal development.



# THE TUWEZESHE IMPACT



As a result of taking part in TuWezeshe...

90%

of young women say  
they 'value themselves  
more highly'

88%

of young women agree  
that they have become  
more resilient in the  
face of challenges and  
setbacks

95%

of young women say  
that they are more  
confident in their  
abilities to create  
change.

# STORIES OF CHANGE

## Testimonials

“My experience of the TuWezeshe training could very easily be described as transformative. I learned so much about myself and how I relate to the world that I was previously blind to. I feel so much better equipped to be a change maker within myself, my communities, and society at large.”

**Wales Fellow**

“The most significant impact of TuWezeshe on me has been my confidence. Walking with my head held high, talking to anyone and looking at them in the eye, volunteering first for leadership roles, being confident in myself as a black woman – unique in her own right, and still standing in constant solidarity with my black sisters.”

**England Fellow**

“Before joining TuWezeshe, I was passionate about making a change but I didn’t know how to. TuWezeshe has enabled me to believe in my abilities and improve my capacity to lead and influence change in the community.”

**Tanzania Fellow**

“When I joined TuWezeshe I learned the true meaning of power, self-assurance, sisterhood, and leadership. The training helped me discover truths about myself and guided me through self-care. But most of all it taught me what it really means to be a leader and how I hold the potential of becoming a leader myself.”

**England Fellow**

“The TuWezeshe sisterhood has been a life changing experience! Through the other Fellows I have learnt a lot, such as focussing and moving with great passion in whatever plan of life, as well as avoiding all setbacks that life throws at me to obstruct my plans.”

**Tanzania Fellow**

“Before joining TuWezeshe, I was passionate about making a change but I didn’t know how to. TuWezeshe has enabled me to believe in my abilities and improve my capacity to lead and influence change in the community.”

**Tanzania Fellow**

“Being a TuWezeshe Fellow has helped me to have a great sense of identification. Especially being identified as a member of a strong women-led organization. I have now been identified as one who will always fight for women and actually challenge my family to fight the patriarchy system that might be visible in our daily lives.”

**Uganda Fellow**

“I got to know about transformational and feminist leadership, critical thinking, self-care and the power we hold as human beings, standing for my rights, [and] self-assessment as a leader.”

**Uganda Fellow**

# STORIES OF CHANGE

## Activism



### Hadeel Elshak

#### England

Hadeel Elshak created Bodily Integrity, a photography exhibition at the University of Sussex, to spark conversations on VAWG. Her exhibition featured photographs of young women from the African and Caribbean Diaspora, displaying what womanhood means to them. Since TuWezeshe, Ms. Elshak has become an Ambassador of the End FGM European Network. She has also won the 2018 ITV 'Breaking into News' competition for her report on the impact of the Grenfell disaster on young people's engagement in politics.

"TuWezeshe has developed my skills in public speaking so much so that I won a nationwide journalism competition. I believe this demonstrates the long-lasting impact TuWezeshe has had on creating advocates for causes that we care about".



### Khadija Ismail

#### Tanzania

Khadija Khalid Ismail's outreach project engaged teenage students to empower them to become confident advocates for change. Her project aimed to encourage young people to share their knowledge of VAWG, report any violence that they saw and help survivors by directing them to available support.

Ms. Ismail engaged 70 students, and invited the Deputy Minister for State in the Prime Minister's Office, Antony Peter Mavunde, to speak with her students. Khadija says: "My project is already having an impact. One of my students reported that her neighbour was being severely beaten by her husband. She raised the issue with an elder neighbour who could take the case to the police. The incident was reported and the man was eventually convicted."

# Nura, Nusayaba & Jama

## Somaliland

Nura Salaad Ali, Nusayaba Abdirahman Jama and Asma Omar Ahmed collaborated on their project 'Toghdeer', which aimed to provide women and girls within their community with a safe space to discuss the practice of FGM and broader issues of VAWG. They carried out a range of VAWG awareness campaigns to reach out to the community's women. They extended the scope of these campaigns by working through the area's Mother & Child Health Centres and educational medical institutions, thus also challenging the medical students' perceptions of FGM. Their outreach successfully engaged 78 women, 107 girls and 7 men. They said of their experience as Fellows: "being members of TuWezeshe, we now have a sense of power within us, which we want to shine on to others."



# Tendo Namata

## Uganda

Tendo Namata's project sought to create structures that would empower communities to fight VAWG. She delivered sexual health rights training to over 100 pupils and teachers, and sensitisation training to community members. She further helped to establish a Village Gender Team, who now act as the first point of referral on cases of VAWG and draft by-laws for the community.

Ms Namata won the 2018 World Bank award for her blog on her community-led approach and she has since founded her own organisation, the Embimbo Gender-Based Initiative. 'Finding yourself as a feminist and what you want to do cannot be done alone, you need people to show you, mentor you and provide a sisterhood. That is what TuWezeshe is to me'



## **FORWARD**

Chandelier Building, 8 Scrubs Lane,  
London NW10 6RB

**Telephone:** +44 (0)208 960 4000

**Email:** [forward@forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:forward@forwarduk.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.forwarduk.org.uk](http://www.forwarduk.org.uk)

**Twitter:** @FORWARDUK

**Facebook:** FORWARD UK

**Instagram:** @FORWARDUK

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