



Photo: Amb. Gertrude Mongella in a group photo with some of the Beijing icons and the Guest of Honour.

30+ Years After Beijing Declaration: Reflections on Progress and Challenges on Women's Empowerment in Tanzania

On April 16, 2025, the Women, Constitution, Election, and Leadership (WCEL) Coalition, in collaboration with Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T), organized a national convening in Dar es Salaam to commemorate the 30+ anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

The event brought together representatives from women's rights organizations, gender equality stakeholders, civil society groups, government institutions, and development partners. Held under the theme **"Kusherehekea Miaka 30+ ya Beijing: Tumetoka Wapi, Tulipo na Tuendako"** ("Celebrating 30+ Years of Beijing: Where We Came From, Where We Are, and Where We're Going"), the convening provided a vital space for reflection on Tanzania's journey in fulfilling the promises of the Beijing Declaration. Participants explored the historical significance of the Declaration, reflected on the current status of gender equality in Tanzania, and discussed strategies for ensuring its full and future implementation.

In her welcoming remarks, Professor Penina Mlama, Chairperson of the WCEL Coalition, stressed the importance of continuing to mainstream gender in national policies. She remarked:

"There have been many initiatives to achieve gender equality, including working with ministries to ensure gender-responsive budgeting. We urge you, as a representative in a key ministry, to help ensure that no ministry receives funding unless it integrates gender equality in its plans." –Professor Penina Mlama.

As part of the celebrations, the coalition celebrated and recognised Beijing Icons—women who participated in the original Beijing process for their contributions to women's empowerment and the enduring legacy of the Beijing Declaration. Among the honorees were Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, Mary Rusimbi, Professor Ruth Meena, Hellen Kijo-Bisimba, and TAMWA founders Eda Sanga, Fatma Aloo, Penzi Nyamangumi, Deborah Mwenda, and Rose Haji. Others recognised included Ave Maria Semakafu, Demere Kitunga, Chiku Lweno, Bernadeta Ndunguru, Elizabeth Twisa, and Prof Marjorie Mbilinyi.

The event culminated in a powerful intergenerational panel discussion featuring emerging young activists. In a symbolic and emotional moment, the older generation of feminist leaders ceremonially passed the torch to the younger generation—signifying a continued, shared commitment to advancing the legacy of Beijing for generations to come.

Beijing 30+ Reflections– Key Messages

A Call for Gender-Responsive Budgeting – Amb. Gertrude Mongella

During the 30+ Celebration event, Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, the special guest of honour, made a powerful call to action: urging the government—particularly the Ministry of Finance—to adopt gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in national planning and resource allocation.

She emphasized the importance of directing specific budget lines to women in agribusiness to support value addition in agricultural production and ensure their full economic participation.

“If we are serious about transforming Tanzania, then gender-responsive budgeting must begin where the majority of women are—agriculture. I urge the Ministry of Finance to stop treating GRB as a side note and start embedding it at the heart of national planning. Allocate deliberately. Track intentionally. Women farmers deserve more than promises—they deserve resources.”— Gertrude Mongella, Former UN Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the 1995 Beijing Conference.

She also insisted that while significant portions of the national budget are often allocated to large infrastructure projects, there remains a critical need to invest directly in sectors where women are most active, particularly agriculture.



Photo: Amb. Gertrude Mongella in a photo with WCEL Coalition chair Prof Penina Mlama.

Empowering Women is key–Hon Hamad Chande(Guest of Honour)

Guest of Honour, Deputy Minister of Finance Hamad Chande, echoed this sentiment, affirming that the foundation of national development lies in empowering women. He acknowledged the lasting impact of the women who attended the 1995 Beijing Conference, noting that their advocacy continues to benefit future generations.

“Women are the major drivers of global development. I believe if it weren’t for your struggles and the changes you brought to the world, many of us would not be where we are today.”

–Hon Hamad Chande
The Guest of Honour
Deputy Minister of Finance



He assured WFT-T of his continued support, especially in pushing for gender-responsive budgeting.

“We’ll be together in this, and I will do everything possible to support your efforts. One of the fruits of the Beijing platform should be an increase in the number of women in leadership positions,” he concluded.



Photo: Hon. Hamad Chande (right) chatting with some members of the WCEL Coalition upon his arrival at the event.

From Beijing to Budgeting– Mary Rusimbi

In a panel discussion titled “Progress and Gaps in Beijing Commitments”, gender budgeting advocate Mary Rusimbi urged a new generation of activists to intensify efforts toward gender-responsive policies and budgeting frameworks. She reflected on how civil society once mobilised to push for gender-sensitive planning, including direct engagement with the Ministry of Finance to integrate gender considerations into national budgets.

She insisted that public budgets must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and marginalised groups. She also emphasised the importance of continued training and awareness-building around budget processes to influence equitable outcomes—and that real change demands bold, sustained advocacy. ***“Don’t wait to be invited,”***

Through persistent advocacy, Mary and her peers helped usher in Tanzania’s first gender-responsive budget in 2000—an achievement that marked a pivotal moment in the country’s policy landscape.

“Gender Responsive Budgeting is not just a technical tool, it is a feminist strategy for economic justice. During my time at TGNP, we championed GRB to challenge how national and ministerial budgets reflect or ignore women’s realities. We linked grassroots women with policymakers, proving that when women organise, they can shift priorities and power. We must demand that ministries institutionalise GRB and ensure that budgets speak to the lives of all Tanzanians, especially women and girls.

–Mary Rusimbi
Board Member & Founder of WFT-T

"The Secret Was Unity"- Edda Sanga

Eda Sanga, a veteran media and women's rights advocate and founder of the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) recounted the collaborative momentum that led to one of Tanzania's most significant legislative victories: the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA).

"The collective strength we had in tackling gender-based violence helped us secure the SOSPA law," she said. **"It was through this unity that we were able to openly address these issues—issues that were once shrouded in silence due to customs and traditions."**

She noted that the years following Beijing involved tireless campaigning across continents—from Copenhagen and Vienna to Senegal and Beijing—and back home, strong coalitions were built.

How do we move from here?- Mentorship and knowledge transfer is vital

From the intergenerational dialogue titled *"Where do we go from here? Envision the future"*, the panellists insisted vital role of mentorship and knowledge transfer between established and emerging feminist leaders

They advised a need to establish formal mentorship programs to pair young feminists with experienced leaders in the women's rights movement and promoting intergenerational dialogue and collaboration through joint workshops, conferences, and advocacy initiatives.

"The energy and innovation of young feminists are crucial to the future of our movement, but we must also honor the wisdom and experience of those who have paved the way". Sylvia Kijangwa- Pannelist



Photo: Pannel Discussion- Reflections on Beijing Platform



Photo: Pannel Discussion- Where Do we go from here?



Photo: Young feminists in a group photo with Amb. Gertrude Mongella during commemoration of the 30+ anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



Photo: Bootcamp participants in a group discussion during the training session

Empowering Coastal Women and Youth to Lead in the Blue Economy

On 15th, June 2025, Regenerative Seascape for People, Climate, and Nature (ReSea) project, in collaboration with its project partners—Mission inclusion, Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and OceanHub Africa—with support from Global Affairs Canada, launched a seven-day Blue Economy Entrepreneurship Incubation Programme in Tanga Tanzania.

The initiative is designed to equip coastal women and youth groups from the Tanga-Pemba Seascape with the skills and tools necessary to engage in the Blue Economy actively.

The event was officiated by the Tanga Regional Commissioner, Dr. Batilda Buriani, and featured the launch of two key resources: the Blue Economy Entrepreneurship Trainers Manual and the Soft Skills Manual.

The boot camp brought together 24 women and young people from 12 groups across the Tanga-Pemba Seascape. Participants hailed from Mkinga and Pangani (Tanga Region), and from Mkoani, Micheweni Chake Chake, and Wete in Pemba.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Buriani encouraged participants to apply the knowledge gained to drive transformation in their communities through enterprise development and innovation. The two manuals launched during the event will serve as practical tools throughout the seven-month mentorship program that follows the boot camp.

The resources introduced are designed to address existing barriers and unlock the potential of women and youth to thrive in the Blue Economy.

During part one of the training, sessions focused on building key soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and conflict resolution. Facilitators employed interactive and inclusive methods to ensure a participatory and engaging learning experience.

Participants such as Saada Salehe Ali from Wete District, Pemba, and Mohamedi Zuberi from Mkinga District, Tanga, expressed hopes that the training would enable them to improve their products and access markets for their marine-based goods.



Photo: Soft skills training session during the bootcamp



Photo: Mid-Year Reflection – WCEL Technical Committee meeting

Mid-Year Reflection – WCEL Technical Committee

On June 11th, 2025, the Women, Constitution, Election and leadership(WCEL Coalition convened a mid-year reflection session for its Technical Committee members at Nendive Wellness Centre.

The purpose of the session was to provide a much-needed space for members to pause, reflect, reconnect, and reimagine their shared goals at this midpoint of the year. It also offered a chance to explore how they can collectively engage in upcoming coalition activities.

The session aimed to:

- Deepen understanding of how current political, economic (including funding), and social/personal contexts affect movement work and individual and collective wellbeing.
- Explore strategies for collective protection, resilience-building, and healing
- Identify practical tools and practices for wellness, boundary setting, and community care within organizing spaces.
- Develop shared commitments and an action plan to strengthen the women's movement amidst national political and policy shifts.

During the session the discussion focused on the vital role of self and collective care in dismantling systemic oppression. The facilitator emphasized that wellness is a polistrategy and a foundation for sustainable, transformative change.

Participants were encouraged to recognize their individual and collective accountability in taking action, and to remain aware of the political context in which movements operate. The facilitator reminded everyone that each of us holds a responsibility to care for and protect one another—an act that builds trust, nurtures solidarity, and strengthens collective power.

A deep reflection followed on how coalitions and movements, particularly in the current context, can disrupt systems, pose threats, and create tensions—but also offer healing, restoration, and resistance. Healing was framed as a core element in reclaiming rights and advancing political justice.

The facilitator stressed that these intersecting challenges highlight the urgent need for intentional wellness, healing, and reflection, as well as the reclaiming of voice, agency, and power.

Participants raised several critical concerns, including:

- Widespread fear
- Threats, and hostility toward activists
- Increased challenges in speaking out, particularly due to threats to human rights, peace, and safety
- Escalating incidents of abductions, killings, and gender-based violence targeting activists and communities

The session concluded with a forward-looking discussion, which led to the following action points:

- A small taskforce will be formed to catalyze actions, reflect on key insights, and assess emerging strategies within the coalition.
- A clear messaging framework will be developed to guide collective engagement.
- Engagement with individual organizations should be approached with caution, acknowledging potential risks and responsibilities.
- Dialogue will be initiated with donors and funders to clarify their roles and reinforce support for both protection and progressive advocacy.
- The movement must revitalize its collective voice and presence—centering care, safety, and solidarity as core pillars of activism.

Long-term structural programs will be prioritized to promote resilience, wellness, and healing.

At the end, participants agreed that the way forward must center care, safety, and solidarity in activism. Reclaiming our voices, building resilient structures, and promoting collective healing are non-negotiable. The future demands bold yet thoughtful actions—including forming dedicated taskforces, refining messaging, and deepening engagement with donors to ensure advocacy and protection go hand in hand.



Staff Wellness Session: Prioritizing Collective Care and Inner Wellness”

On June 12, 2025, Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T) organized a staff wellness session designed to prioritize emotional well-being, nurture individual and collective resilience, and foster a safe space for reflection and healing. The session offered participants an opportunity to pause, reconnect with themselves and their colleagues, and explore the personal and institutional experiences that shape their work.

The session aimed to:

- Deepen awareness of how Tanzania’s current political, economic, and social realities impact staff well-being, work, and commitment to the feminist agenda
- Reflect on how stress, burnout, and structural injustices manifest at both individual and team levels
- Explore practical tools for collective care and healing, such as yoga, breathing techniques, meditation, and journaling
- Strengthen team cohesion through feminist trust- and team-building exercises
- Co-create sustainable wellness practices and commitments for long-term healing and institutional resilience

Facilitated through a participatory approach, the session encouraged open dialogue, emotional expression, and peer learning. Participants shared personal reflections on the purpose of the session, highlighting the value of “knowing each other” recognizing each team member’s unique strengths, contributions, and growth areas. This collective recognition created space for empathy, appreciation, and reaffirmation of each other’s roles within the organization.

A key component of the session focused on understanding how the broader context influences staff well-being. Participants reflected on challenges such as; National insecurity and policy uncertainty, Fear stemming from political dynamics and shrinking civic space, The pressure of managing high expectations from grantee partners and movements, particularly regarding WFT-T’s role in funding and advocacy.

In addition, staff discussed internal sources of stress, including: Concerns over the sustainability of WFT-T’s agenda and funding, High expectations from grant applicants, Gaps in accountability and decision-making processes. The conversation also centered on values essential to fostering a caring feminist work culture: authenticity, empathy, accountability, rights-centeredness, feminist principles, and digital security.

A session on collective healing introduced gentle, chair-based yoga exercises aimed at relaxing the mind and body. Affirmation practices were also incorporated to reinforce self-worth and collective strength.

To close the day, participants collaboratively developed a Wellness Action Plan focused on:

- Navigating external pressures and misinformation.
- Managing backlash from grantee partners.
- Planning for personal financial sustainability and retirement.
- Designing actionable, institutionalized wellness programs.
- Ensuring access to wellness leave and resources.

This wellness session reaffirmed WFT-T’s commitment to sustaining a feminist, caring, and resilient work culture—one that recognizes healing as both a personal journey and a collective responsibility.



Photo: Amina S. Hamisi delivering her presentation during one of the meetings.

Rising Beyond Limits: Amina's Bold Journey in Leadership

At just 13 years, Amina made history, she emerged as a bold voice for children's rights. On June 12th, she was elected Chairperson of the Shinyanga Regional Children Council, following a vibrant and well-contested election held in Shinyanga Municipality. Her victory did not just earn her a new title, it symbolized the awakening of a new generation of bold, confident girl leaders.

Amina's leadership journey began five years ago when she was elected as school club and Village level Junior Council chairperson. In 2023, she was elected as ward level chairperson and then elected as District level Council Chairperson, representing Children from Shinyanga District Council into Regional level Children Council, where she also served as Secretary of the same council.

"I want to be a voice for every child who is still afraid to speak. I believe we can build a Tanzania where every girl can dream, lead, and succeed." — Amina S. Hamisi

As a young leader, she served all the positions embracing humility, discipline, and vision. While many girls her age remained on the sidelines, Amina chose to stand at the frontlines, raising her voice against violence, rallying her peers to demand dignity and safety, and working hand in hand with local leaders including her teachers to hold systems accountable. From organizing school-based awareness campaigns to championing protection services for vulnerable children.

Amina's leadership vision is constant, she dreams of classrooms where girls thrive without fear, communities where leaders act with urgency, and policies that truly centre the voices of young people. Her leadership became a force for change driven by purpose and rooted in courage and determination, inspiring many of her peers to speak out and act.

Behind her strength lies the power of intentional collective efforts among actors. Amina was not only seen she was invested in. Through Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T)'s Children rights project in Shinyanga, Children's rights actors and Local Government were supported and facilitated to implement interventions aimed to empower children with different like skills and encourage child participations, which included capacity building, trainings and long-term mentorship to increase children participation and increase children's agency.

Such platforms gave children tools to lead and the confidence to rise. They also learned to speak truth to power; to understand systems of governance; their rights and responsibilities; and to mobilize fellow peers in collective action. It was in these nurturing spaces that Amina's leadership seed was planted and it has now blossomed.

Amina's journey is not just her own. It is the story of every girl who dares to lead; of every community that chooses to believe in its daughters; and of every organization that chooses to invest in girls not as victims, but as visionaries. Her footsteps echo far beyond Shinyanga, reminding us all that when girls are empowered, the future changes. Her rise is not just a personal milestone, it's a beacon of hope for girls in Shinyanga and beyond.



"I want to be a voice for every child who is still afraid to speak. I believe we can build a Tanzania where every girl can dream, lead, and succeed."

— Amina S. Hamisi



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Pictorial



Photo 1: Participants in a group photo with the Guest of Honour Tanga RC Amb Batilda Buriani (third from left front line) and project implementing partners



Photo 2: Intergenerational dance during commemoration of the 30+ anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



Photo 3: "Knowing each other session" during the staff wellness session



Photo 4: WCEL Coalition technical committee during the reflection session



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