



Informal Economy Feminist Transformative Leadership Training manual:

February 2023



Acknowledgements

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About VISET

Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) is a union of informal traders with structures throughout Zimbabwe. The organization was formed and registered as a Trust in 2015 to spearhead the social and economic transformation of street vendors by championing their quest to earn livelihoods in the current harsh economic circumstances. Furthermore, the organization was formed pursuant to the need for a solidarity centre for street vendors who continue to be victims of human rights violations. The organization has a national membership database of over 68 000 vendors located in all major cities, towns and growth points in Zimbabwe. VISET envisions a society with informed and proactive Informal Economy players who are able to contribute effectively to the development of the national economy. VISET strives to ensure that informal economy workers have an understanding of constitutional provisions and how their participation in mainstream decision-making processes has a bearing on the policy outcomes. VISET's programming pillars are all anchored on the VISET motto of *"promoting the participation of the informal sector actors in economic, policy and legislative processes."*

As VISET, we strongly believe in the importance of a vibrant citizenry as an agency for socio-economic transformation. We believe that as vendors and actors in the informal economy, our constituency must benefit from sound governance policies and institutions that promote the rule of law and uphold the rights of all citizens, particularly those operating in the informal economy that is fraught with risks, particularly human rights violations. We believe that the state and other duty bearers have the responsibility to, protect, respect and fulfil the rights of all citizens in society. However, we also believe that for states and other duty bearers to be more accountable, we need an active citizenry that ensures that the demand side of goods and services from the state is vulnerable and thus increasing citizen agency for more democratic governance in the informal economy.

VISET Business model

VISET has accrued vast experience implementing citizen engagement and mobilization activities. At formation in 2015, VISET instituted its "Champions in the Streets" Campaign which led to the organization of its countrywide membership into clearly defined structures led by Socio-Economic Champions (**SOCHAMPS**) of 30 leaders in the informal economy for every major city/town and ten leaders for every growth point/township. These structures include women, youth and vendors with disabilities, and represent a robust implementation infrastructure for VISET activities.

Continuous efforts to capacity-develop communities is an important building block for sustainable socio-economic transformation. Community capacity building is the continuous process required to foster the pride and appropriate local leadership that allows communities, through their members, to take responsibility for their own development. VISET believes that this will bring local ownership and local voices to development processes particularly in the informal sector. The organization's strategic plan places emphasis on advocacy, research, documentation and knowledge management. As VISET, we firmly believe that the organization can only grow if our programmes are evidence-based and informed by scientific research.

1. Unpacking Feminism

Feminism stands not only for gender equality but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalize any set of people on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, ability, class, caste or ethnicity. It also recognizes the intersecting nature of people's identities and social locations and the fact that we experience discrimination, exclusion or oppression in intersecting and simultaneous ways. Hence, feminism no longer seeks simplistic parity between the sexes but a more profound transformation that accepts multiple gender identities and creates gender equality in an entirely new social order. In this new order, people live individually and collectively in societies that are based on social and economic equality with all their human rights, free from discrimination, violence, conflict and militarization and in harmony with the natural world. Most importantly, feminism has always linked the personal and the political. Issues that were once considered 'private' such as sexuality, gendered division of labor in the home and workplace, domestic violence or abusive relationships are actually political and the responsibility for their transformation lies with the society at large and not with the individual. Feminism has also stressed the importance of applying and practicing these beliefs and values in one's own life and of trying to live the change that we seek in the world at large¹.

Feminism has transformed the concepts of patriarchy (the social order of male rights and privileges) and gender (socially constructed relations of power between men and women and other gender identities). It has created a range of analytical tools and methods for unpacking the power imbalances between men and women in various social institutions and structures (e.g. gendered division of labour in the household and economic activities, control of women's sexuality and reproductive life, etc.).

Feminism prioritises the empowerment of women and other marginalised genders, the transformation of gender power relations and the advancement of gender equality within all change interventions. Feminism believes that change that does not advance the status and rights of women is not real change at all.

What is Transformative Feminist Leadership?

Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others – especially other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realization of human rights for all.”²

“Leadership from a feminist standpoint is informed by the power of the feminist lens, which enables the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppressions and inspires her to facilitate the development of more inclusive, holistic ... communities. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice and equity and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and ability at the forefront.... The elements particular to ... feminist leadership ... include a focus on both individual or micro-level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring

¹ “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity”, London, Routledge; and 2004

² https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CREA_2014_Achieving-Transformative-Feminist-Leadership.pdf

marginalised voices to the centre of the conversation and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda.”³

Feminist Principles

The personal is political:

This is the key principle that distinguishes feminism—the belief that what we do in our personal lives has a political meaning and impact and what we do politically—such as through our activism and social change strategies—has impact and meaning in our personal lives. No other ideology has linked these two as strongly as feminism!

Biology is not destiny:

Feminism was the first ideology that challenged the social differentiation that is based on biology— that is, on the sex of the individual—and the idea that one’s sex should form the basis of one’s social destiny, or the opportunities, rights, privileges, duties and private and public roles that one is permitted. The principle that biology should not be the basis of one’s role in the world has had enormous and continuing significance, also in the movements of people of different sexual orientations and abilities.

Equality:

Feminism has put the principle of gender equality at the centre of social change processes in a way that no other social 60 achieving transformative feminist leadership justice movements (movements for racial or class equality) have been able to do. Feminists have demonstrated both in concept and practice, that equality without gender equality is incomplete.

Inclusion and diversity:

Going a step beyond equality, feminism recognised that it is easy to have formal equality, such as in law, without any real change in the daily practices of power. Or that equality for women as a category has little meaning as long as women of specific castes, classes, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, occupations or abilities continue to be excluded or discriminated against. Feminism therefore, advanced the notion of ‘intersectionality’¹, and embraced the principles of celebrating diversity in identities. It has also promoted the principle of inclusion. This means looking out for women who get excluded in any set of social arrangements, and working to ensure they are brought into the social spectrum. Diversity and inclusion go much further than the older principles of ‘tolerance’ and ‘acceptance’.

Peace and security:

With some exceptions, feminism has largely advocated peace and non-violence, though there are examples of feminist struggles that have been quite militant. The principle of security has become very important in recent years with the rise of war and conflict and particularly the rise of crimes against women as a part of conflict. Security is also important in the sense of women’s right to move about freely in the world, such as on a city street at night, without becoming

³ Tracy Barton, “Feminist Leadership: Building Nurturing Academic Communities”, in *Advancing Women’s Leadership Online Journal*, Vol.21, Fall 2006

targets of sexual violence. It also includes the right to live securely in one's communities and pursue one's livelihood without fear or disruption.

Bodily integrity and freedom from violence of any kind:

In the same vein, feminism has long stood for women's right to their physical integrity and freedom from mental or physical abuse or violence. Disabled women in particular have applied this principle to fight for their right to be treated as complete human beings, regardless of the nature of their disability. This principle includes women's right to reproductive and sexual choice and freedom — the right to make decisions about their bodies, without fear of violence, ostracism or exclusion.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE MASTERS' HOUSE

Requirements

Pen and paper, markers, manila charts

Time: This session will take 2 hours

Objective

- To understand the different structures and systems of oppressive powers, and how young women and girls can dismantle the Masters' House for their freedom and leadership

The facilitator will introduce the concept of the Masters' House, giving a detailed explanation on what this is and explaining the major pillars of the house. In simple terms this is a house composed of denial of our voices, violent-patriarchal oppression, and other forms of power that subjugate, exclude and harm us and, ultimately, destroy the social fabric of our communities. Below are the pillars of the Master's house:

- Culture: (informal through customs, traditions, practices etc)
- Education: (what should and should not be done, what boys and girls should do)
- Religion: (Religious doctrines and practices)
- Media: (How media portrays men and women)
- State: (how formal laws and policies shape the behaviours of women and girls)

Exercise

Put participants in 5 (or more) different groups representing the pillars of the Masters' House. Ask each group to identify the different aspects of the pillars of the house and how those aspects are used

to oppress women and girls (or minority groups in general). Each group should write their findings each on a different piece of manila charts. Use the feedback to construct the Masters' House on the wall.

3. Personal is political: My leadership journey

Facilitator Notes

- The role of the facilitator is to hold the space and to make it safe for self-expression, reflection and learning.
- She recognises that knowledge is dynamic and it is contained in the bodies of the people in the space.
- Therefore, their knowledge, agency and experience are honoured. Facilitator will make it possible for participants to trust each other as well as the process

Objectives

- To allow participants to reflect on their relationships with family and how these have a bearing on their way of life

Transformative change means change that is fundamental, lasting, and which challenges existing structural inequality. This exercise reflects the belief that families and relationships have their politics as well because power dynamics are operating everywhere.

Exercise

- Allow each participant to tell their story on how the "personal is political" and how this motivates them
- Create a safe environment where women are able to share their stories by starting with the basic, what they eat, their first point of call, continually ask why and then such that real life stories are captured.

4. The Power Highway

Objectives

- To understand the different dynamics of power and how best they can hold and use power as responsible community leaders

Exercise

Facilitator will ask participants to think of a time they felt powerful. What had happened, who were you with and what did you do; what prompted or encouraged you to behave the way you did?

Dynamics of Power

Expression	What does it mean in practice
<i>Power to</i> : individual ability to act	This is rooted in the belief that every individual has the 'power to' make a difference by acknowledging her own sources of power and acting on them in ways that allow others to access their own sources of power.
<i>'Power with'</i> : collective action, when a person or group uses their sources of power to share resources and decision-making, or to allow others to make their own decisions.	<p>'Power with' helps build bridges across different experiences and knowledge and is about bringing together resources and strategies.</p> <p>Reflects relations based on an empowerment model where there is dialogue, inclusion, negotiation, consensus - the power of people working together to solve a common problem.</p>
<i>'Power within'</i> : inner qualities that a person or group has or can develop to overcome obstacles and	Power within helps individuals build their capacities to envision and come together to work collectively for change

Exercise

In groups allow participants to brainstorm on the different types of power and what they mean to them using the terms below: use examples from the local informal economy sector

- Visible power
- Invisible power
- Hidden power

Power	Explanation
Visible power	<i>Visible power</i> includes the aspects of political power that we 'see'– formal rules, structures, institutions and procedures informing decision-making. In other words, it is about how people in certain powerful positions use existing procedures and structures to control / influence the actions of others.
Hidden power	<i>Hidden power</i> is when people with power maintain their power by creating barriers to participation, by excluding key issues from the discussion, or by making decisions 'behind the scenes' Examples could include predetermined meeting agendas made without consultation, or contentious issues always being pushed to the end of an agenda and never getting addressed; a lack of clarity around how decisions of hiring or promotions are made; or women being told they are being too emotional or sensitive about issues that affect them, undermining their legitimacy.
Invisible power	<i>Invisible power</i> is the internalisation of dominant belief systems and ideologies that blame people for the marginalisation and oppression they experience. People are made to feel powerless to challenge abuses of power because of the prevailing view that domination is 'natural,' cannot be changed, or is somehow their fault ⁵

Advertising campaigns notoriously perpetuate invisible power by, for example, marketing products in ways that make women feel inferior, incomplete, and only valued for their beauty. Within political parties, female politicians may silence themselves, or are not consulted, because they are presumed to lack experience and therefore their opinions are not valuable.

5. Resilience building

What is resilience building?

Resilience is the ability to recover from challenges and difficulties and continue with our goals and intentions. It involves building personal character to hold self-belief, determination and inner strength. It is the capacity to remain flexible in thoughts, behaviors and emotions when under stress or any adversities. Resilience is the strength and speed of our response to stress & adversity – and we can build it!!!

Exercise

In pairs discuss challenges that are faced by female leaders within your communities. What do you suggest they can do to overcome that?

After experiencing the above-mentioned challenges in leadership, people find themselves experiencing one of the following:

- Loss of self-confidence.
- Difficulty in decision making.
- Difficulty in managing their emotions.

- Reduced creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.
- Reduced desire for social contact.
- A changed outlook: optimists turn into pessimists, and pessimists lose their counterbalancing perspective.

Strategies of building resilience as a woman leader

- + Maintain your well-being.
- + Communicate powerfully and consistently.
- + Building strong and trusting relationships.
- + Take more risks.
- + Encourage and support others to develop.
- + Eat healthy
- + Maintain clear boundaries – learn to say ‘NO’
- + Develop a daily routine that works for you
- + Have a social base of women you can count on to support you as a leader

What Resilience Building can do for you!

- + Helps you to bounce back from negative events.
- + Helps you to build confidence in your abilities, strengths, and resources.
- + Helps you to raise awareness of negative attributions / a pessimistic style e.g. ‘all or none thinking’.
- + Supports the process of learning, insight, growth and development from setbacks and mistakes.
- + Helps you to increase positive expectations about outcomes.
- + Provides space, support and exercises that enable you to re-energise.
- + Helps you to enhance positive emotions which increase your capacity for creativity and big picture thinking.
- + Helps you heighten hope – one of the strongest predictors of success and overcoming adversity
- + Helps you support others

6. Team building

Facilitator Notes

The facilitator will hold the space as it closes to allow women to share their experience with other women in space.

Objectives

- To allow participants to describe how a working relationship as women would look like and reflect on how being part of team looked like and how can women ideas be supported by women.

Team Building includes the personal development of a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the defects of internalized oppression. It allows developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it. This includes involvement in local level and a national level decision making platforms'

In closing the facilitator will emphasize the importance of branding as a woman leader. It is important that the women leaders create their own brands, taking into consideration social graces expected of them. Emphasis is made on how women leaders continue to fight against patriarchy.

The end