Empowering girls through the TUSEME “Speak Out” girls’ empowerment programme

... No meaningful gender transformation can be achieved unless the efforts to eliminate gender inequalities include the empowerment of women from the time they are young girls
The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is a pan-African non-government organization, founded in 1992, whose goal is to increase access, improve retention and enhance the quality of education for girls and women in Africa. FAWE’s members are African women ministers of education, permanent secretaries and university vice chancellors who come together to wield their positions and influence in pursuit of FAWE’s goal.

FAWE’s mission is to work at continental, national and local levels, together with partners, to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices that promote equity for girls in terms of access, retention, performance and quality by influencing the transformation of education systems in Africa. To put the goal into operation, FAWE has facilitated the establishment of National Chapters in 32 countries across the continent.

FAWE’s strategic direction for 2002-2006 calls for action in four key areas:

- Education policy
- Advocacy
- Demonstration interventions
- Replication and mainstreaming

Underpinning these is a renewed focus on capacity building at both regional and national levels. Particular attention is given to developing the skills of National Chapters to influence policy formulation, implementation and monitoring through advocacy, and to demonstrate what works. The ultimate aim is to influence governments to replicate and mainstream such best practices, with an overall emphasis, in line with Education For All goals, on action on the ground. FAWE is supported by a variety of agencies, foundations and other donor partners.
An idea that has grown bigger with time

This issue of FAWE News takes a long look at the TUSEME “Let’s Speak Out” girls’ empowerment programme. FAWE is committed to TUSEME because we are convinced that no significant gender transformation can be achieved unless the efforts to eliminate gender inequalities include the empowerment of women from the time they are young girls.

Empowerment is the process through which marginalized people, such as the poor, minorities, girls and women, become aware of their subordination and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome their marginalization. In other words, empowerment is about giving voice to the voiceless and strength to the powerless.

We all know that the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All galvanized a host of efforts to improve the participation of girls in education. We also know that girls continue to face persistent challenges in terms of their access to and retention and performance in education. Changing that situation is so important that gender equality in education is a featured target of the Millennium Development Goals (Goal 2, target 2, and Goal 3, target 4) as well as the Jomtien Declaration.

MDG 2 sees education for girls and women as the major route to women’s empowerment. FAWE agrees with this, but takes it a step further - the empowerment of girls must be a systematic component of their education. The gender imbalance in schooling reflects that of the wider society and is basically the result of the whole gender construct in society. Our girls need to be equipped with appropriate skills to topple the entire pattern.

The articles in this issue explore the roots of gender imbalance, illuminate the concept of TUSEME and its rationale, and portray the National Chapters’ experience on the ground in mainstreaming the TUSEME process. Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Zambia are just a few of the countries in which the chapters have taken up the TUSEME challenge. And Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya are some in which National Chapters have played a role in mainstreaming TUSEME into national curricula and education systems.

Some of the stories illustrate typical cases of disempowerment as they demonstrate TUSEME’s effectiveness as a counterweight. The TUSEME process provides a platform for discussing issues related even to otherwise taboo subjects such as the practice of female genital mutilation. Still other stories highlight the impact of TUSEME on the lives of girls, for example, in the success of an impoverished 18-year-old girl - a member of a FAWE Club - who took part in a UNESCO sponsored documentary film and went on from there to address an international conference of leading education policy makers.

Finally, in an exclusive interview in this issue, my old colleague Amandina Lihamba, Professor of Performing Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam and co-founder of TUSEME, draws an insightful parallel of the process from the works of Tanzanian playwright, Ebrahim Hussein. She tells us that Hussein shows how the momentum for a process can generate its own dynamics, taking on a direction and pace unplanned for by those who started it. Quoting Hussein, she says, “The word gets bigger and bigger, grows bigger than the person who first uttered it”. That is the story of TUSEME.

TUSEME is the living embodiment of a word that grew bigger than those who first spoke it - of the power of empowerment. A dynamic process, TUSEME should never be allowed to remain static but needs to be nurtured so it can continue to grow - bigger and bigger - as an effective long-term response to girls’ participation in education.

**POINTS TO PONDER**

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education – Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women – Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015
The Millennium Development Goals are among the latest efforts to eliminate the gender inequalities that have for eons put women in an inferior position to men. MDG 3 calls for promoting gender equality and empowering women. The MDGs join a wide array of policies, legislative instruments and laws put in place to uphold equal human rights for men and women. Gender perspectives and considerations have been mainstreamed into development policy and practice to create equal opportunities for both men and women. Intensive lobbying and activism have consistently put the agenda on all development issues.

Much has been achieved in terms of providing more opportunities to women to access education, health services, legal protection and employment, including high-level positions, as well as participation in decision making process.

But much remains to be done. Gender inequalities are still rampant in many areas of life. Even where people have acquired a sufficient level of awareness, this does not translate into action especially in terms of their personal behaviour. There are many cases of gender inequalities, discrimination and oppression in the home, at the work place, in the school and in the community in general.

The Roots of Gender Imbalance

Many factors explain the difficulty in attaining gender equality. The socio-economic construct of most societies is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and systems that uphold and reinforce gender inequalities. Both men and women are socialized to accept the superiority of men and the inferiority of women.

Values, attitudes and practices are firmly in place to ensure the continuation of this unequal status quo.

Men are reluctant to change a relationship that is to their advantage. They do not wish to alter a situation in which they own the land and control the property, where they are served by women, where they are treated as superior to women and wield a lot power over women regardless of the quality of their character and their socio-economic

“\textit{It has become clear to those engaged in gender transformation that there cannot be meaningful gender transformation unless the efforts to eliminate gender inequalities include the empowerment of women from the time they are young girls.}”

\textbf{Prof. Penina Mlama}  
FAWE Executive Director, Tuseme Co-Founder

\textit{TUSEME is a dynamic process.}
Moreover, because men are in charge, the lack of gender responsiveness characterizes many policies, development plans and implementation programmes.

At the centre of all this is the inability of women to challenge and effectively fight the forces of their oppression, discrimination and unequal treatment. Brought up in structures, systems, values, attitudes and practices in which they are always the underdogs, women accept their inferior status even though they may be suffering gravely. Many women therefore display lack of self-confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem. They are unable or reluctant to make decisions. They are afraid to challenge injustices and helpless in fighting the injustices meted out to them. They lack the courage to speak out or fight for their rights.

This complex of attitudes is inculcated in girls very early in life. By the time they reach teenage, socialization processes have put them in their place as inferior to men and boys and they simply accept the situation as it is.

The lack of empowerment of girls emerges from that larger picture of unequal gender relations in the society and the vicious circle continues. There is discrimination in school enrolment that gives preference to boys; there is discrimination against girls in classroom participation, discrimination in learning materials and so on.

**Rationale for TUSEME**

The TUSEME programme was established to specifically address this need. TUSEME aims to empower girls to identify and analyse the problems that hinder their academic and social development, to speak out and express their views about the problems, and to take action to solve them.

TUSEME uses a theatre for development approach, which gives a voice to everybody. The same process has been used to empower boys to understand their unequal gender positioning, and to support and accept gender equality as a human right.

TUSEME was pioneered by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts in the University of Dar es Salaam,
TUSEME is a complete concept and an answer to many concerns. It is an original human right-based approach, gender responsive and inclusive. Because of its inclusiveness, the Tuseme process is persuasive and effective for social mobilization, which offers a distinct advantage in the effort to promote girls’ education.

Tanzania, in 1996, as an approach to girls’ empowerment. Its influence has crossed the borders and has reached 13 additional countries in sub-Saharan Africa - Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, The Gambia and Ethiopia.

Does It Work?

In all these places, TUSEME has proved to be a very effective strategy for building confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem in girls. Girls’ ability to analyse situations, make correct decisions, and challenge the systems, decisions and situations that negatively affect their welfare has been significantly enhanced. In addition, girls participating in TUSEME have recorded significant improvement in academic performance.

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FAWE recognized the significance of the TUSEME approach straight away. Besides empowering girls, TUSEME is a useful and extremely effective tool for bringing communities on board to buy into and support girls’ education in general, and Centres of Excellence in particular. The “vision workshops” that kick off deliberations on establishing Centres of Excellence use TUSEME to elicit maximum participation of the community, give them a voice to speak out and express their views on the identified problems. Then, like the girls, they find possible solutions and take initiatives to solve them.

A facilitator introducing the TUSEME club formation session.
The Origin of TUSEME

The TUSEME project came about as a result of the concerns of educationalists, parents and other social groups in Tanzania who saw that the academic performance of girls in secondary schools was less than satisfactory. Thus, TUSEME was established in 1996 to give a platform to girls - a platform for speaking out and expressing views on problems that affect their academic and social development. The objective is to empower girls to understand and overcome problems that hinder their academic and social development. TUSEME was initially undertaken in 27 schools in Tanzania. In 1999 the TUSEME project was officially adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Tanzania as one of its many projects. The University of Dar Es Salaam, however, remained with the roles of coordination and implementation of the project.

Girls presenting their ideas in a skit.

The Structure of TUSEME

It is important to note that TUSEME is a school-based project. The entire school community – teachers, workers, and students – participates in its activities at different stages. Form two students are the focus group, however, and their progress is monitored until they finish form four.

At the national level in Tanzania, TUSEME is run jointly by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the University of Dar es Salaam’s Department of Fine and Performing Arts (DFPA).

The TUSEME planning and coordinating committee includes the coordinator and the administrator as well as people from different stakeholders, like other FPA staff, facilitators and an official from the Directorate of Culture Development who represents the ministry.

Within the schools, students themselves administer the programme. Normally each school has a student administration – chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer and editorial board. In addition, the head of the school is the overall patron. TUSEME leadership tenure lasts for one year, except for the TUSEME teachers, whose tenure shall be terminated if they fail to adhere to the vision and mission of TUSEME.
The experiences of several schools in Tanzania - Bagamoyo, Mgugu, Msalato and Songea - illustrate the impact of TUSEME at the school level. The TUSEME process was initiated at different times in these schools and results are clearly visible.

Two important changes stand out. For one, the academic performance of the girls in these schools has improved since TUSEME was introduced as compared with previous years. Girls’ empowerment through the TUSEME process is perhaps even more visible through the reduced number of schools dropouts and pregnancies over the years from 1997, when the process was introduced at Msalato, Mgugu and Bagamoyo Secondary schools, to 2004.

At Msalato Secondary School, for example, the average scores in the national examination and for those selected for advanced level secondary school have not gone below 55% since the inception of TUSEME, and for the year 2003 the average was above 90%. Before TUSEME, sometimes the scores were as low as 14%. The same improvement can be seen for Bagamoyo and Mgugu Secondary Schools.

Furthermore, according to an external evaluation of the TUSEME project submitted to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in 2002, the ability to analyse issues critically that girls acquired from the TUSEME process is “what has helped to reduce the problem of pregnancies”. That report noted that in 1999, before the introduction of TUSEME at Songea Girls’ School in Tanzania, 15 girls dropped out of school due to pregnancies. However, when the process was introduced in the following year (2000) there were eight cases of pregnancies and in 2001, only three cases were reported. Within a space of two years, the cases of dropouts due to pregnancies dropped by 65.5% in the schools studied, and the situation is even more promising.

The scenario clearly indicates that the empowerment process instils life skills in the girls. At Bagamoyo, for example, since the introduction of TUSEME in 1997, only one pregnancy case has been reported and no dropout for female students. Msalato has experienced four cases and three dropouts, whereas Mgugu reported only one pregnancy case.

Apart from academic improvement and high rate of girls’ retention, the impact of TUSEME manifests itself in other aspects of girls’ social life within or outside the school milieu. Community members, parents and teachers are convinced that students who have gone
through TUSEME are “different”.

In his study, “An Impact Assessment of the TUSEME Project: 1997/98”, Mategero reported this testimony from students at Msalato Secondary School: “When they were in form two they did not understand one of their teachers and demanded a replacement. They were ready to be left without a teacher in that subject than to continue with the one they had. When the matter reached the school administration, it resulted in the changing of the teacher”.

It is clear that the TUSEME process enables the students to look critically at their situation. They no longer accept the problems as given, but analyse them by identifying their root-causes, effects and possible actions to solve them.

At the policy level, the TUSEME process in Tanzania has been a success because of the supportive environment that exists within the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry, gives autonomy to all implementing stakeholders from the region to the local community level.

This reinforces the acceptance and support without which nothing could be realized, especially when it comes to the ownership of the process.

### Mgugu Secondary School

The school is located in Berega village, Kilosa District, Morogoro Region. It was inaugurated as a Centre of Excellence in April 2001. The vision workshop was conducted on 7–12 May, followed by the TUSEME workshop on 11–14 September.

Mgugu is a mixed school. Boys are day students while girls are boarders. TUSEME was introduced because of poor academic performances and social well-being.

### Msalato Girls Secondary School

Msalato Girls Secondary School is about a 20-minute drive from Dodoma town, the capital of the region of same name. It started as Bugiri Girls School in 1927. In 1992, the school was selected to be among the special schools in Tanzania, but even so, its academic performance continued to remain poor. This is what attracted stakeholders interested in girls’ education to initiate the TUSEME process. The first TUSEME process was conducted from 16 to 26 March 1997.

### Bagamoyo Secondary School

Located at Bagamoyo town in Coast Region, the school was officially opened in 1973.

At the beginning, it enrolled only male students but a year later it started with 20 girls.

Up to 1997 the overall academic performances were not impressive, especially for girls. Among issues that were thought to cause the poor academic performances were intimate relationships between students and teachers, inappropriate class streaming, and poor learning standards. TUSEME was regarded as a way to counter these problems, and was introduced in May 1997.
As a part of the effort to assure the effectiveness of the TUSEME process on the ground, FAWE collaborated with the Miali Training Centre and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), to develop a handbook for teachers involved in the TUSEME process.

The handbook recognizes the paramount importance of teachers in TUSEME because of their role in the learning process. In fact, if teachers are not positively involved, they can be a barrier to the achievement of TUSEME objectives.

Hence, the sensitization and empowering process is always undertaken with teachers in order to equip them to cope with, understand and help the empowered students. Without that awareness, TUSEME believes, the empowered students could end up being seen as trying to antagonize teachers and the school administration in general.

It is also understood that although reinforced both within the community and at the household level, the lack of empowerment is exacerbated by the school systems and practices, which are not gender responsive. Consequently, girls do not participate effectively in their own education process. This in turn hinders their academic and social development.

Teachers should thus be prepared to explore the different factors behind the disempowerment of girls, including the link between gender and empowerment, the lack of gender responsiveness in teaching methodologies, the school environment and the school management system, and the link between empowerment and cultural identity. Only trained and informed teachers can be expected to handle the process properly.

**Purpose of the Handbook**

The purpose of the TUSEME Handbook for Teachers is to equip the teacher with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate the introduction and running of TUSEME in the schools with the purpose of empowering the girls for their social and academic development. The handbook is divided into
three parts:

• The first, consisting of the introduction and Units 1 and 2, reviews the TUSEME process, including its historical background and objectives. It explains the preliminaries, which are preparatory steps that the teacher has to undertake so that the process is properly introduced in the school and accepted by all stakeholders.

• The second section, Units 3–6, tackles the question of why is it necessary to establish TUSEME. It highlights the fact that in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, girls are not empowered to stand up for their rights. Further discussion concerns issues related to gender and empowerment, teacher gender responsiveness, gender responsive school management systems, and empowerment and cultural identity, all of which have a bearing on the empowerment of girls.

• The third part, Units 7–16, provides a detailed account of how to undertake the 12 stages of the TUSEME process. These stages include the preliminaries, familiarization, data collection and data analysis. Other aspects are theatre creation, theatre performance and post-performance discussion. The process then moves on to developing an action plan, training in life skills for action, creating TUSEME clubs, taking action to solve the problems, and monitoring and evaluating the process.

Contributors

The content of the handbook is drawn from the experiences of many practitioners who have refined the TUSEME approach through their practical work over the years. Among these are the two women who have been the engine behind the concept, Prof. Amandina Lihamba, who is now the Dean of the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts at UDSM, and Prof. Penina Mlama, now Executive Director of FAWE. As co-founders of TUSEME in 1996 they worked over the years with a team of resource persons from Tanzania. Professor Mlama brought her passion for the process with her when she came to FAWE.

Dr. Marema Dioum, Lornah Murage and Rose Washika, as FAWE Programme Officers, have been at the centre of FAWE’s effort to introduce TUSEME in schools throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Girls as well as boys and the teachers of all TUSEME schools all over Africa have also made a wonderful contribution to this work.

The TUSEME process invariably challenges the existing practices.
Experience has shown that in introducing a concept that may challenge the status quo, it is important to involve all those who may be affected - the stakeholders - so as to ensure its acceptance and success. This truth applies also to TUSEME. A number of preparatory steps need to be taken so that it is properly introduced in the school and accepted by all.

At the school level, the stakeholders include the head, the teachers, non-teaching staff, school board, all the students, the parents and the community. These partners need to understand TUSEME because TUSEME deals with problems that may have their roots in the behaviour, values, attitudes or practices of any or all of these stakeholders. In solving the identified problems, TUSEME will also depend on them to take necessary action.

Central to TUSEME is an empowerment model based on theatre for development techniques. This is a community-based process of theatre production that involves research, analysis and finding solutions to social and development problems. The clear implication here is that everyone should participate in the process.

The process involves a sequence of specific stages beginning with those that lay the groundwork - familiarization, data collection and data analysis. Theatre creation, performance and post-performance discussion take that analysis to the people, and from there, communities formulate an action plan for addressing problems. But other critical steps are training youth in life skills for action, creating TUSEME clubs and tackling action to solve the problems identified.

The TUSEME Process has 12 Stages

1. **Preliminaries**: This is the stage where the school community and other stakeholders are sensitized about the TUSEME process.
2. **Familiarization**: At this stage students familiarize themselves with the school history, geographic location, environment, demographic data, teaching and learning facilities (library, classrooms, laboratories, toilets), and social amenities. They should also familiarize themselves with the community surrounding the school including its people, their socio-economic status, languages, religions, political leanings and so on.
3. **Data collection**: Data collection is the process of gathering information on issues in and out of school related to the academic and social development of both boys and girls.
4. **Data analysis:** Data analysis is the examination and discussion of the collected data in order to seek deeper understanding of the issues and problems, their root causes, effects and possible solutions.

5. **Theatre creation:** At this stage, the students translate the problems they have identified and analysed, as well as the suggested solutions, into a theatre performance. The stage involves some basic training in production issues.

6. **Theatre performance:** The performance is a platform for communicating the issues analysed to other members of the community to provoke their involvement in the discussion and persuade them to take action.

7. **Post-performance discussion:** This forum is held immediately after the performance to discuss the issues highlighted in the performance. The audience is encouraged to discuss the issues, find solutions and propose strategies for action.

8. **Action planning:** An action plan is a tool to guide the implementation of the actions suggested to solve the identified problems.

9. **Training in life skills for action:** The training into life skills is the process whereby students acquire a set of skills to empower them to deal with gender-based impediments to their education and self development. The training includes building self confidence and esteem, speaking out, decision making, assertiveness, negotiation, leadership and self control.

10. **Creation of TUSEME Clubs:** TUSEME clubs are a student-centred structure to facilitate the implementation of activities towards the empowerment of girls, including those in the action plan. They also serve as speaking-out forums for students to discuss issues related to their social and academic welfare. The clubs are in fact the pillars of the existence and development of TUSEME activities in the schools.

11. **Taking action to solve the problems:** In this stage, the students are trained in the different strategies they can adopt to solve the problems. The students are equipped with skills for engaging and convincing school administration, teachers, other students and community members to take action to improve the social and academic situations at the school.

12. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring
and evaluation is a system of regular tracking of progress in
- The level of empowerment of girls in:
  - Speaking out, self confidence, negotiation and other personal development skills
  - Engaging with school management, teachers and other students
  - Taking action to solve the problems identified
- Implementing the TUSEME action plan
- Assessing the gender responsiveness of the overall school environment (socially, physically and academically).
- Documenting the outcomes and activities through reports and other forms such as video, photographs, and posters.

**Ground Rules for the TUSEME Process**

The TUSEME process is conducted in the form of a workshop in the school that ideally lasts 5–7 days. The process is guided by a number of ground rules, including the following:
- TUSEME is a participatory process, so efforts should be made to involve everyone.
- Democratic principles should be observed in all the process such as choosing leaders and assigning tasks.
- Gender should be taken into account, including observing gender equality in participation, both in terms of numbers and levels of participation by both girls and boys.
- Everybody’s views and opinions must be respected
- Ethics and etiquette should be observed
- Punctuality and discipline should be maintained
- When creating the groups, the teacher should mix students across lines of gender, social class, academic ability, religion, ethnicity, and any other. Use of existing peer groups should be avoided.
- New leaders should be elected for each day of the workshop to allow the broad participation. The teacher should allow the students to choose their leaders democratically: These leaders are:
  - 2 chairs for the day (in case of a co-ed school, gender should be taken into account – 1 girls and 1 boy).
  - 2 recorders for the day (in the case of a co-ed school, gender should be taken into account – 1 girl and 1 boy).
  - 2 time keepers for the day (in case of co-ed school, gender should be taken into account – 1 girl and 1 boy).
Achieving the Millennium Development Goal of empowering women requires that girls be empowered from the time they are young. At the least this means from the time they are in school.

In 2004, FAWE organized two major regional training of trainers (TOT) workshops on the TUSEME process with the purpose of developing a core group of trainers to train other persons with skills to carry out girls’ empowerment activities at the country level.

The workshops acquainted the trainers with the reality of girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa and FAWE activities. They also provided practical skills training for carrying out girls’ empowerment programmes and developing an action plan to strengthen girls’ clubs formed in their different countries.

The first training, for the West Africa region, was conducted in Conakry, Guinea, on 26–29 May, while the second took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in East Africa, on 18–21 November. Countries that participated in the West Africa event were Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad. The East Africa TOT gathered countries from eastern, central and southern regions: Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Both workshops aimed at establishing pools of national TUSEME experts who would facilitate TUSEME processes in their respective countries. They also drew participants from FAWE National Chapter offices.

At the implementation level, countries in the West African region decided to start the TUSEME movement by facilitating it in five schools in each country, whereas in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, they went for ten schools in each country.

Looking forward to multiplying the effect, the two regional workshops were followed by four-day national TOTs in which a number of teachers from selected schools were trained on how to facilitate the TUSEME process.

The national workshops involved virtually all the stakeholders - teachers, students, FAWE chapters, government officials, community leaders, as well as facilitators. They all had one goal in mind, that of promoting the TUSEME movement in their respective countries.

For all countries, it has been recommended that first, all chapters fully involve their trained trainers in facilitating as many TUSEME workshops as possible so as to build their facilitation skills and gain a deeper understanding of the TUSEME process. Second, besides the trained facilitators, the chapters need pools of experts who can shepherd the TUSEME process.

As the TOT sessions gathered steam, it became apparent that there was need for a training manual as a tool that could be carried home and internalized by all facilitators who guide the process. FAWE thus worked with the Miali Training Centre Tanzania and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Dar es Salaam, to develop Empowering Youth through TUSEME: “Let Us Speak Out” – A Teacher’s Handbook (see review on page 15).

Since the regional TOTs, TUSEME has been carried out in several countries with FAWE National Chapters, including Tanzania, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, Rwanda, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad, where TUSEME girls’ clubs have been formed.
Following the successful launch of the TUSEME programme at Msiteli Secondary School in Bulawayo, in June 2005, activities in FAWE Zimbabwe have taken new shape.

A total of 488 students – 246 girls and 242 boys – participated in the initial workshop in June and were taken through the TUSEME process, together with 30 teachers from ten pilot schools. The beginning of the third term, in September, saw the successful launch of the programme in the remaining nine schools.

Like a veldt fire, the national core team of theatre for development (TFD) facilitators moved from one school to the next beginning with the five Harare schools and moving on to the four Bulawayo ones, much to the envy of the neighbouring schools who wondered why they were being left out. But, as there is always a starting point to everything, assurance has been given to them that as the movement unfolds, they too will be taken on board in the very near future.

Permission was granted to have all the form two students from the pilot schools excused from their classes for two full days to attend the programme.

A total of 488 students – 246 girls and 242 boys – participated in the initial workshop in June and were taken through the TUSEME process, together with 30 teachers from ten pilot schools.

One facilitator even exclaimed that the whole process felt like a gospel crusade. “I could feel we were touching and changing lives”, she said. Indeed, the programme came as something of a miracle to the disempowered pupils, and fortuitously in the last term of the year, when there are significant cases of pregnancy related dropouts and alcohol and substance abuse, usually by the outgoing students.

A total of 4,183 students from ten schools are direct beneficiaries. Seven out of ten of the launched clubs were given an opportunity at their end of year speech and prize-giving days to perform theatre creations highlighting their identified problems. These were followed by post-performance discussions with audiences that largely consisted of school authorities, parents, business people, fellow students and other key stakeholders, including political figures.

The TUSEME spirit has already been tested and led to an instant result. At Mabel Reign Girls’ High School, one of the identified problems was the issue of winter wear. According to the school regulations, the students were only allowed to wear pinafore dresses with long sleeved shirts in winter in place of the usual summer dresses. Over the years there had been growing concern about the discomfort of the winter dresses. The students felt they were not warm enough and they wished to
be allowed to wear winter trousers. Apparently the school is in one of the very cold suburbs of Harare, but the school authority would not budge.

One of the form two classes identified this problem and drew up an action plan proposing activities such as holding meetings with the other students and the prefects’ board and then drawing up a petition for presentation to the school head.

Indeed, the TUSEME committee met before the end of year exams in October. Three separate meetings held by the students and the prefecture followed. Then, a petition was drawn and handed over to the school head by the prefecture.

Starting winter 2006, the girls will be allowed winter trouser uniforms. Many thanks go to Mrs. Mangava for not only lending an ear to the girls’ issues, but also giving a nod to the TUSEME initiatives.

In Bulawayo, things have also started happening. The Founders High School TUSEME committee met twice and consolidated its proposed plans. Owing to the outcry for inclusion in TUSEME, the participating form-twos have opened their programmes to include students in form one. A panel discussion has been held on “Teenage Dating”. The Committee, which comprises representatives from the special class of deaf and dumb students, has also agreed to fund raise for the disadvantaged students. This will be done by opening a tuck shop at the school, even though one already exists.

The girls, and boys, have come to appreciate the saying, “For every motion there is a resistance”. Even TUSEME has not been without challenges. The fact that students highlighted and spoke out on issues affecting them, regardless of sensitivity, has caused some teachers to take offence.

An immediate challenge, however, has been finding appropriate information and the girls have indicated the need for more reference materials. The only resources available are the TUSEME Teachers’ Handbook and a few magazines and newsletters on girls’ empowerment.

FAWE ZIMBABWE
The TUSEME Process, first introduced in Rwanda at the FAWE Girls’ School in Kigali, has now been replicated throughout the 12 provinces of Rwanda. FAWE Rwanda has 38 active Senior Clubs, 12 pilot Senior Clubs and 29 Junior Clubs.

The current pilot programme includes 12 schools, one in each province of Rwanda. Benefiting from the assistance of teachers and theatre for development experts, the 12 school programmes were launched over a month, from mid-September to mid-October of 2005, with a focus on the secondary school form 2 students, both boys and girls. The clubs bring together 2,000 students. A teacher, assisted by the theatre for development experts, heads each club. FAWE Rwanda hopes to consolidate the activities of these initial programmes, making them a model for future activities.

With the collaboration of UNICEF, FAWE Rwanda has also launched 29 pilot Junior TUSEME programmes in the two provinces of Kigali Ngali and Giseny, while the process is being replicated in Kibungo, Umutara and Byumba provinces.

Moreover, the school administration is very involved in the process. The TUSEME meetings are incorporated into the school time-table, ensuring that they can take place at the most convenient time for teachers and pupils without interfering with the academic activities.

For records and archives, all the activities are documented in multimedia formats. A 15-minute radio programme with segment on TUSEME is aired two Saturdays of every month.

The least to say is that TUSEME process in Rwanda has been very successful. Girls are getting more and more effectively empowered and are able to speak out.

The bottom line is that with the involvement of boys, the TUSEME process is bridging a gender gap by permitting enriching exchanges.

FAWE RWANDA

With the collaboration of UNICEF, FAWE Rwanda has also launched 29 pilot Junior TUSEME programmes in the two provinces of Kigali Ngali and Giseny, while the process is being replicated in Kibungo, Umutara and Byumba provinces.
“It is by correcting each other through the TUSEME clubs that I eventually mastered the English language.”

As an 18-year-old, Winfred Ingabire has already achieved what many adults only dream of. Given her age and humble family background, no one would expect a disadvantaged girl to attain what she has reached.

She not only took part in a UNESCO sponsored documentary film, “Messages of the Youth”, which was presented at the 47th International Education Conference held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2004. Indeed, she also made a presentation at the same conference, which was attended by a host of high profile personalities including ministers of education from around the world.

At first she didn’t know she had been selected to take part in the documentary. It all started when UNESCO officials visited Rwanda to get acquainted with the country’s education system. The Ministry of Education referred the visitors to FAWE Rwanda, who in turn got in touch with Ingabire. The outcome was an amazing opportunity for a girl whose hopes for secondary education were negligible before she joined FAWE Girls in senior one after her primary level.

Ingabire perceives FAWE Rwanda as her knight in shining armour against the backdrop of her parents’ financial constraints and illiteracy. “Nobody in our family had finished school. All my sisters got married when they were still very young without completing school”, she recalls. With all that, even her parents view her current progress in education as a miracle. She emphasizes that FAWE Girls School is different from the rest of the schools in the country in countless ways, one of which is that students are never chased out of school for lack of school fees. At this school, “they are patient until one receives a scholarship”.

About TUSEME she says the clubs have played an imperative role in moulding her into what she is today. “When I first joined FAWE Girls School, I was very timid. I could not even utter a world of English then”, she reveals with poise.

In attesting to this, the young girl is today articulate and full of life, to the amazement of anyone who may have known her previously. “When people used to laugh at my grammatical mistakes, I did not mind”, she says, clearly at ease. “It is by correcting each other through the (TUSEME) clubs that I eventually mastered the English language”.

Ingabire had previously visited Tanzania for a student festival, and believes she was selected to take part in the international conference in Geneva because of her academic performance and discipline.

During the Geneva conference, Ingabire had the chance to share with other participants from different countries of the world. She strongly believes that the TUSEME process has implanted in her a feeling of self-assurance, which has enabled her to even address conferences. “When I came back home, the feeling was good. Other students did not expect me to do that. Within five years, I was able to stand in front of an international conference”, she points out.

Moreover, she has always maintained first and second position in her class, which climaxed with her emerging tenth in the “O” level examinations in the country. Besides conquering the world of academics, Ingabire moves with equal assurance from class to co-curricular activities, in which she has excelled. In fact, she was once voted the best actor in a previous edition of the national drama festivals.

When she returned to Rwanda from Geneva, many of her colleagues began probing what she did to be what she is today. Her answer to this question is resounding and reflects assertiveness: “Just put effort in everything you do and you need to study hard”.

Ingabire’s message to fellow girls is to put everything else aside and concentrate on their education: “Education is the key to success in the world”.

FAWE RWANDA
On Sunday, 20 November 2005, FAWEMA launched a TUSEME Club at St. Joseph’s Teachers Training College, an all female institution with a population of 360 students. All of them attended the launch and automatically registered as members.

For Esther Msowoya, the FAWE National Coordinator, “It is an historical achievement registered by FAWEMA, for, firstly, it is the first ever club established in that college. Secondly, it was established within one day - on a Sunday - and without any funding and facilitation. Instead they catered for us”.

She adds, “Usually TUSEME targets secondary and primary schools, but we targeted a TTC and it is going as a test case”.

In fact, the college presented the opportunity to reach 360 future teachers all at once. Now TUSEME is established and those 360 female students and 4 female tutors have been trained in the TUSEME process. They will, in turn, be the movement facilitators in their respective schools. In addition to the training, St. Joseph’s elected its TUSEME Executive Committee.

Several lessons were learnt: TTCs represent a supremely suitable catchment group because they will be the custodians of the pupils and the TUSEME training directly addresses their strategic interest.

Even though the introduction lasted only one day, the students could still manage to grasp the TUSEME process and actively participate in the whole exercise. This was evidenced in their organization and plays/dramas that depicted the lived realities on the ground. The interest shown by some community members who were present clearly indicated the need to involve community members - they requested a re-launch, which will involve the entire community participation.

Now, it appears that TUSEME clubs need to be established in all TTCs as a matter of urgency and the chapter is considering replicating this process in the remaining five TTCs.

FAWE MALAWI

“It is an historical achievement registered by FAWEMA, for, firstly, it is the first ever club established in that college. Secondly, it was established within one day – on a Sunday – and without any funding and facilitation. Instead they catered for us”
In April 2005, the Ethiopia National Chapter began to implement the action plan it had developed during a TUSEME training of trainers workshop in Nairobi the previous year. The chapter launched its TUSEME-Speak out programme in ten high schools, comprising 20,577 students, that were selected jointly with the government Education Bureau. Three of the selected schools, located outside Addis Ababa (in Ambo, Nazareth and Awassa) were already working with the National Chapter on the bursary programme.

A total of 110 students, directors, vice directors and teachers from the ten schools took part in that first TUSEME TOT workshop. Six of the teachers were women. In addition to the Ethiopian team of three, five people from Kenya and Tanzania provided critical back stopping support during the workshop. The workshop was facilitated by Kenya and Tanzania teams.

Ethiopia is a heterogeneous country with a population of 77 million people and over 80 distinct nationalities and ethnic groups distributed in different regions. The prevailing cultural beliefs and practices give more value and authority to the roles and activities of men than to those of women, and of boys more than girls.

Tradition discriminates against the Ethiopian girl-child from birth throughout her adult life. The prevailing culture prescribes her life as a silent, perpetual subordinate to men irrespective of their age. Girls are not expected to enjoy similar human rights as boys and men such as speaking their minds. As a result, girls and women silently suffer sexual harassment, rape, abuse and exploitation in the environments of the family, school community and the society at large.

Furthermore, the culture of silence influences girls and women to be socialized in a way that places less emphasis on individual success and achievement and more on marriage and domestic life, service and sacrifice to the family, to the community and to the nation at large.

TUSEME is catching up in Ethiopia. The National Chapter expects that other schools will be able to replicate this programme in due course.

FAWE Ethiopia

A FAWE girl in a post-performance discussion
The Tanzania Ministry of Education and Culture has mainstreamed TUSEME into its Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP), under the girls’ retention and achievement component of the quality improvement strategy. The plan is that TUSEME will be mainstreamed in all secondary schools – a total of 1,890 – by the year 2009.

FAWE Tanzania has a memorandum of understanding with MOEC and has already started the mainstreaming process. To date, 122 teachers from 44 secondary schools have been trained on TUSEME and those 44 schools will institutionalize the programme. In fact, the programme is already present in 26 secondary schools, bringing to 70 the number of secondary schools in Tanzania that had mainstreamed TUSEME by 2005.

A seven-member technical committee has been formed in order to ensure a focused approach to mainstreaming TUSEME into SEDP. The committee consists of representatives from MOEC, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), FAWETZ and the FAWE regional secretariat.

In line with the SEDP objectives, the technical committee has elaborated a work plan that will be presented to stakeholders for review and approval. Once approved, the work plan will become the basis of the whole process.

FAWE TANZANIA

A warming up session during a TUSEME Training of Trainers Workshop in Tanzania.
Zambian National Chapter recognized as unique during the TUSEME launch workshop

During the training of trainers workshop held in November 2004 in Nairobi, FAWE Zambia with other participating chapters drew up action plans that aimed at establishing ten TUSEME clubs per chapter by the end of 2005; thus bringing a combined total of 70 TUSEME projects. Acting on this commitment, FAWEZA launched the TUSEME process on 9–11 June 2005 at Kamulanga Centre of Excellence-designate in Lusaka. The launch was officially opened by Her Excellency Chrissy Chawanga Mughogho, the High Commissioner for Malawi to Zambia and former Chair of the Malawi FAWE National Chapter.

Five local trainers facilitated the training, which gathered 30 teachers representing ten schools, and 74 students of whom 50 were in grade 10 and 24 from Kamulanga High School. These schools are located in nine different provinces.

As emerging key issues of the TUSEME launch, the training team recognized the unique state of the Zambian National Chapter in that the Student Alliance for Female Education (SAFE) Clubs were already established in most schools where FAWEZA had bursary programmes.

It was decided therefore that since the SAFE Club concept was similar in mission and objectives to those of TUSEME, the chapter would incorporate the TUSEME methodology into the SAFE concept. This process would entail getting best practices from the two concepts and integrating them in the training. All teachers participating in TUSEME would train in SAFE overseer training and vice-versa.

The school system in Zambia entails that each grade stream contain more than one class. In most cases, a school could host a maximum of up to ten streams. Multiplied by 45, which is the number of pupils per class, the total number of pupils in a school can reach 450. FAWEZA will target a single grade 10 cohort per school per year, in the hope that the targeted cohort will eventually educate whole school communities in the TUSEME concept.

During the launch workshop, it emerged that the most common challenges facing the nine SAFE/TUSEME schools were the lack of reading materials, poor school infrastructure, teen pregnancies and early marriage.

As a way forward, FAWEZA will in the first term of 2006 conduct the following activities: launch SAFE/TUSEME and conduct school-based training at David Kaunda National Technical School, disburse funding to the ten schools hosting SAFE/TUSEME, and monitor and evaluate the SAFE/TUSEME activities.

FAWE ZAMBIA
The road to mainstreaming best practices in girls’ education has been full of experiences and challenges. The wide-ranging partnership of the FAWE Kenya Chapter with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other stakeholders has given the process a great impetus for success.

The exercise started taking better shape right after the FAWE regional secretariat held an international policy consultative forum, in June 2005, that brought together people from a number of African countries to share some of the best practices in girls’ and women’s education.

The best practices included the TUSEME “Speak out” girls empowerment programme, the Centres of Excellence concept, specific efforts to protect girls from HIV/AIDS, and management of sexual maturation among girls and boys.

In Kenya, the process of integrating the best practices into the mainstream of education policies and programmes actually began in 2003 during a national conference on education and training organized by MOE. The conference report coalesced into Session Paper No. 1 of 2005, on Education and Training. This paper forms the supreme policy framework that will guide education and training in the country.

In this policy framework, gender and education was given prominence by adding weight on the best practices in girls’ education and providing clear gender responsive policy statements that support the best practices.

FAWE Kenya was mandated to lead the development of the country’s strategies on gender education. Thus, the four best practices were articulated in the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), which provides the operational framework for Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005. Accordingly, KESSP has mainstreamed the TUSEME girls’ empowerment programme with clear indicators, targets and budget lines for its roll out into the country.

Currently, the FAWE Kenya Chapter is holding consultative forums aimed at refining the roll out strategies and issues on budget allocations by the Ministry of Education as well as exploring capacity issues in the mainstreaming of the TUSEME at districts levels.
Even time-honoured taboos cannot stand up to the scrutiny nurtured by the TUSEME process, as participants in a training of trainers workshop at Athwana Secondary School discovered.

Located in Meru District, Kenya, Athwana was one of the FAWE Centres of Excellence from seven countries that took part in a November 2004 TOT workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya. Athwana then kicked off its follow-up exercises by organizing its own TOT on 24–26 June 2005. Participants in the event included 30 teachers representing ten schools and the students and teachers of Athwana Secondary School. The intention of the workshop was to enable participants to articulate problems, find solutions through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and hence help the students achieve best results. It was expected that the other schools would go on to become the representative Centres of Excellence in their regions.

In the ceremony opening the workshop, a local chief decried the negative attitude toward education in the community. He cited minimal investment in education, retrogressive cultural practices and certain rites of passage such as female genital mutilation (FGM) as challenges that hinder the social and academic development of a girl-child in this district.

Besides the physical act itself, he said, the problem with the rites of passage is that their curriculum, which is secret, actually undermines accepted codes within the community. As an example, the official pointed to the lack of respect for elders exhibited by initiates, and the instructions girls get to engage in sexual acts at a tender age.

The chief’s comments opened the way for the data collection step of the TUSEME process. This is the stage concerned with getting information on issues that impede the social and academic development of girls in the area concerned. The process elicited a very rich analysis of the issues.

One father asserted that it was the mothers who knew what was happening with their daughters. He said male circumcision is proclaimed in the Bible, but not the female.

For the students, the parents are the one who make the arrangements for FGM. The girls have the right to say no. They should fight or use all methods to escape and seek refuge with authorities – say, the chief or some responsible person.
procedure. He insisted that parents educate their children because education triumphs over FGM.

A mother responded by pointing out that fathers insist their daughters get circumcised so they can be married, because the fathers want cows [dowry]. She emphasized that it is not always mothers who press for the rite.

Another response from a mother was that fathers who cannot afford school fees for their daughters are the ones who opt for FGM so that they marry them off. Or, girls discriminate against each other, so girls themselves demand it.

For the students, the parents are the one who make the arrangements for FGM. The girls have the right to say no. They should fight or use all methods to escape and seek refuge with authorities - say, the chief or some responsible person.

One student asked how the chief could protect other girls from undergoing FGM when the chief himself had upheld the practice in his family. The chief admitted that his first daughter had been initiated under the guidance of her grandmother, and he was not consulted. His other daughter said no, and he respected her position and protected her. One cannot undo the done, he said, but one can preserve the undone. He went on to say that in the early days most people married locally, so all engaged in the same culture. But now, with new blood from outside, things are changing. Furthermore, new government initiatives are also bringing about change.

The community members recommended social education for parents and insisted that both parents must be involved in the upbringing of their daughters.

But now, with new blood from outside, things are changing. Furthermore, new government initiatives are also bringing about change.

TUSEME prepares girls to challenge and fight injustices.
Why Girls Quit School

Many pupils, especially girls, face myriad problems that cause them to drop out of school before they can even sit for their end-of-primary examinations.

The three sisters, who were standard five pupils in a rural primary school, had been kneeling down on a hard concrete floor for three hours after receiving a thorough beating from their class teacher that morning. The reason for this harsh punishment was that they had come late for the morning prep that usually begins at six thirty. The punishment was inflicted on them despite their pleas to their teacher to pardon them for being late because they had tried their best given the circumstances under which they operate. The teacher could not even wait to hear a word, but went ahead and severely punished them all the same.

The girls had left school late the previous day because it was their turn to do domestic chores in one of the teachers’ houses after class hours before they could be allowed to go home, which is some kilometres away from their school. On reaching home, more work was waiting for them. This is besides their homework.

First, they had to fetch water from the river and then cook and tidy up before they could sit down to do their homework. By the time they were retiring to bed, it was well past midnight. They still had to wake up at four thirty the following morning and start the long trek to school with empty stomachs, having taken nothing for breakfast because their mother was still asleep by the time they left, and besides, there was nothing really to be eaten because of the biting poverty in the home.

After that long trek, the girls were 15 minutes late for school. Their pleas to their teacher for pardon fell on deaf ears. First, they each got four strokes of the cane and were chased out of class. Then they were commanded to kneel on the concrete veranda as their classmates carried on with their studies. By the time they were allowed to stand up, the youngest, 13-year-old Rita, was crying. Her knees were bleeding, and she was hungry and cold. By the time the girls got home that evening, they had made up their minds never to step in school again. That marked the end of their schooling - they had dropped out in class five.

Such a scenario is typical to many school-going children in sub-Saharan Africa. Many pupils, especially girls, face myriad problems that cause them to drop out of school before they can even sit for their primary school or secondary school examinations. The problems, which could be addressed, literally push them out of school even though some of these children would have wished to continue with education. The scenario makes the usefulness of the TUSEME approach all the more apparent. TUSEME helps to address such issues as it fully involves all the stakeholders and gives a voice to the communities where the schools are located.

In fact, it has been found that if girls speak openly about the problems that affect their academic and social development, then issues that cause them to drop out of school can be addressed and possible solutions found. Hence, they are able to continue with school and finish, with a better chance of finding gainful employment as opposed to keeping silent and dropping out of school.

The 12-step TUSEME process recognizes the importance of involvement by all stakeholders, and insists on beginning by sensitizing the school communities about the process and its benefits. Parents are made aware of the importance of education for girls, and teachers are made aware of the potential impact of some of their actions. All this information can be communicated through theatre for development techniques.

Rhoydah Nyambane
W hen Zipporah, a standard four pupil in a primary school near her home, returned from school one evening what had started as an ordinary day saw her world turn up-side down. Her mother informed her that arrangements had been made for her to get married to a man, as she was to learn later, who was her father’s age mate.

Zipporah’s mother had known of the plan all along and was opposed to it. But there was nothing she could do to prevent the marriage because, as a woman, she too had no say in anything that affected her daughter. All she could do was to hide in the kitchen and cry as her daughter got married off forcefully.

The girl herself did not approve of the marriage either, but she was powerless to refuse. At age 14, against her wishes, Zipporah was forced to assume responsibilities that were beyond her ability. Her education came to an abrupt end because her father had not seen the need of wasting his time and resources for a girl’s education when he could “sell” her for cash and commodities.

He is not alone in this attitude. Many communities think that a girl cannot make any positive contribution to the family. The girl’s position is always defined from birth and demonstrated by her mother - i.e. in the kitchen. Girls are to be seen but not heard, to be quiet, timid and look down as they talk to men.

A girl-child is regarded as a source of cheap labour or wealth in terms of the cows paid to her father as dowry. Whatever she does in the home is a by-the-way as she waits to be married off.

Nobody really wants to invest in the girl-child. Decisions at family level are made in favour of the boy-child because he is the one to inherit his father’s property and keep the family name going. There are many instances when a girl is married off so the dowry can be used to pay for the boy’s education. Many decisions affecting girls are made without their knowledge. This gender imbalance is a practice that has been perpetuated from time immemorial.

Early and forced marriage persists in many ethnic groups in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This repugnant practice, in addition to the circumcision rite of passage to adulthood - known as female genital
mutilation - is a major stumbling block to girls’ schooling access and retention.

In Kenya, early and forced marriage is prevalent among the Maasai, the Kamba, the Luhya, the Somalia, the Kuria and many other tribes. The Maasai are nomadic people who are entrenched in cultural practices among them FGM and early marriage. They value cows so much that they can exchange anything for them. Women and girls are oppressed so much that men think it’s demeaning to even just have a conversation with a woman!

Girl’s education is not valued at all. Early and forced marriage is prevalent - a girl is “booked” from the time she is born, and upon circumcision she goes to her husband straightaway.

For FAWE, there is an answer to this persisting constraint to girls’ education. The TUSEME programme has helped to empower girls to say “NO” and free them from the bondage of repugnant cultural practices that hinder their education and impede their socio-economic development.

The girls no longer have to walk with their heads down or dig the ground with their toes as they talk to men. With its variety of activities, among which is theatre for development, TUSEME is an effective tool for empowering girls to “Speak Out” and say NO!

In fact, the manifestations of low empowerment in girls are mainly characterized by the way a girl talks, walks, sits, makes decisions, takes initiatives and generally presents herself. And that is what the TUSEME process tackles. Speaking out enables girls to acquire a wider knowledge base. It empowers them to face different situations, for example to deal with teachers, especially male teachers, with sexual harassment situations, with relationships with boys, with making responsible decisions. TUSEME also helps them handle their parents, especially in rural communities where the issue of early marriage and FGM is rampant. It also enables girls to seek solutions, help and assistance from a trusted person.

Rhoydah Nyambane

Nobody really wants to invest in the girl-child. Decisions at family level are made in favour of the boy-child because he is the one to inherit his father’s property and keep the family name going.
Once upon a time, an organization known as FAWE - acronym name that stands for Forum for African Women Educationalists - discovered AIC Girls Kajiado and its zeal to ensure that girls not only access school but also have quality education.

One of FAWE’s objectives was to ensure that AIC Girls School became a Centre of Excellence where the girl-child would be able to confidently express herself. Thus was introduced ‘TUSEME’, a girls speak-out club at AIC. The club is a group that encourages young girls like me to express themselves in and outside of class. As an individual, I want to give sheer gratitude to ‘TUSEME’ Club because after joining it, it has really helped me to speak out and express myself in different ways. Like in class I am capable of participating by asking and answering questions, and by doing so I improve in my academics.

I am also assured to have a bright and wonderful future since I know what I want in life as in career and day-to-day life as well.

I enjoy being in school since TUSEME encourages me to participate in cocurricular activities such as music and drama, as well as expressing my thoughts through poetry. It has helped me to have good rapport with my fellow pupils and my teachers.

In the community we have girls with problems like early forced marriages and forced female genital mutilation (FGM) and because I am empowered through TUSEME, I encourage them by telling them that they shouldn’t give up in life and that education is very important. And this helps so much because many girls would like to come to school and this will reduce early forced marriages and FGM.

I hereby wish to encourage as many girls as possible to join TUSEME Club in the school as it goes a long way to ensure the holistic development of girls like me.

Bravo ‘TUSEME’ you are a true friend.

Grace Nyawira
AIC Girls, Kajiado
Standard 7
Prof. Amandina Lihamba

A
manda

mandina Lihamba is a Professor of Performing Arts and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Dar es Salaam. As one of the founders of TUSEME, FAWE News sought her comment on the process she and her colleagues at UDSM had set in motion.

FAWE NEWS: How do you assess the TUSEME process several years after its introduction in Tanzania, in terms of effectiveness and quality of the outcomes?

DEAN LIHAMBA: In one of his plays, Kinjeketile, the famous Tanzanian playwright, Ebrahim Hussein shows how the momentum for a process can generate its own dynamics, taking on a direction and pace unplanned for by those who started it. “The word,” he says, “gets bigger and bigger, grows bigger than the person who first uttered it”.

I have the same feeling about TUSEME now, a decade after we started it in 1996. We know through the monitoring that we and our colleagues have done, as well as through some research, that TUSEME has been effective. Remarkable changes have been reported at both academic and social levels in many of the schools we have worked in.

TUSEME needs to be understood as an intervention that responds to the need to empower girls with skills to deal with the difficulties and problems at different levels of their lives. Even at the time that Tuseme was established it was known that girls exist within inequalities that are a result of the gender construct in society. Systems, practices, values and attitudes carry and reinforce gender oppression and discrimination. Socialization not only perpetuates these, but also reinforces the disempowerment of women and girls, whose status is deemed inferior to that of men and boys.

The consequences are that girls tend to be made to feel unequal and thus their performance is not always equal to their abilities. The disempowerment is especially evident in the education system, where many girls show lack of
Empowered girls can challenge gender inequalities.

confidence, courage and skills to achieve academically and socially. TUSEME was started to create a forum through which girls can develop the skills needed to understand their reality, speak out about that reality, and empower themselves to challenge and posit interventions to solve problems as well as provide peer support.

Obviously there have been variations in achievements in the schools where TUSEME has been introduced, but practically all have shown evidence of girls tackling their disempowerment and acquiring skills to challenge gender inequalities and discrimination. Tusem\’s effectiveness has been so clearly demonstrated that it has been - or is being - adopted and mainstreamed by institutions and several countries. The interest in TUSEME spread much faster than we originally envisioned. In Tanzania, the process of mainstreaming TUSEME within the secondary school system began in 2004 and is expected to cover all secondary schools by 2009. Rwanda has adopted TUSEME and integrated it into the secondary school programme throughout the country. Kenya is in the process of doing so. The Tuseme approach has also been initiated and continues in Zambia, Namibia, Senegal, and Ethiopia, to mention just a few African countries.

As a process, Tuseme has also evolved over the years, with continuous impact on its quality. Not only has there been constant monitoring, but also the process has continued to take on new challenges, new realities. Tuseme is a dynamic process that cannot - and should not - stay static, but needs to be responsive itself. Where this has happened, the quality of the process has been enhanced.

FAWE NEWS: But what makes TUSEME unique as a methodology, since all classroom teaching and learning, in one way or another, is supposed to engage students in different ways including speaking out?

DEAN LIHAMBA: It is correct that classroom teaching and learning is supposed to engage
students in different ways including speaking out, but this does not always take place. The problem is for both the teacher and the learner. The conventional method is for the learner to receive from the teacher and answer appropriately according to what has been taught. Not only are students perceived as only knowledge consumers and not producers. They are also regarded as operating in silence and with ignorance of the context of their learning environment.

TUSEME as a process and methodology takes a holistic view of the teaching and learning environment as well as those involved within it. Speaking out encompasses understanding the factors that inform and engender the teacher’s and learners’ existence at the school, the education system, and society at large, their interrelationships and linkages with other factors that enhance or impede their performance.

The process recognizes that teachers are not necessarily aware or sensitive to the gender issues that create obstacles for girls, so that they do not speak out either as communicators or as social and academic performers. For the girls, the process of disempowerment they have lived with all their lives inhibits achievement. Among other things, TUSEME aims at unleashing the learner’s potential so that she can overcome the inhibitors and be part of knowledge creation. In the process, it strives to make the teachers and the environment gender responsive in order to move towards excellence in performance.

**FAWE NEWS: The theatre for development approach is a pivotal component of the TUSEME process. What is it and what is the rationale behind it?**

**DEAN LIHAMBA:** Theatre for development is premised on a number of factors. First of all, there is recognition that development has to entail the betterment of the lives of the majority of the people who, for the most part, are disadvantaged, exploited and faced with numerous inequalities. A number of systemic and social factors have been recognized that serve to

![Theatre helps girls to express themselves effectively.](image-url)
disempower people, especially the poor, with the result that they are made to feel helpless to fight the tremendous odds that work against their aspirations, possible opportunities for advancement and achieving goals. Second, while the disadvantaged groups know what their problems are, they may not necessarily know the root causes of the problems and how they are interlinked with other factors and phenomena.

A third factor is that forms of cultural communication such as the theatre have always played a major role in enabling certain groups to express themselves effectively. This is because the people concerned own the forms of communication and also because the forms are very effective in facilitating expression. Theatre for development builds on those premises to harness both development issues and the aesthetics of performance. Theatre for development not only facilitates communication. It is also an empowerment process for groups and communities that use it well.

Our work with community groups, especially in rural areas,
made it clear that the form could equally be effective with other groups, including women and girls. Being both a political and education forum, the theatre facilitates speaking out, analysing, underscoring conflicts, contradictions and interrelationships between and among groups, individuals and issues. The theatre then became the relevant cultural communication for Tuseme.

**FAWE NEWS: What is your advice to those - students, teachers, school management, community members - who wish to introduce the TUSEME process in their schools? Put another way, what is required to ensure an effective launching and sustenance of this process, according to your experience?**

**DEAN LIHAMBA:** A plan that incorporates the involvement of all stakeholders is a good place to start. To begin here is also to have some knowledge of the process from those with experience. Considering that the Tuseme process invariably challenges existing relations and systems and their effects on members of the community or school, the school or community needs to be open and ready to accept such challenges. Embarking on TUSEME requires an attitude that can embrace change and exploit it for social and academic gains.
6th FAWE General Assembly

Before this, three sub-regional general assemblies were held, in Kenya, Malawi and Burkina Faso, that gave the National Chapters the opportunity to share experiences on the achievements, challenges and lessons from their work and their efforts to improve girls’ participation in education.

Other Governance Meetings
The FAWE Executive and Management Committees met from 16 to 18 November 2005 in Nairobi. Participants were: Hon. Simone de Comarmond, former Minister of Tourism and Transport Education of Seychelles, Chair; Hon. Mrs. Beth Mugo, Vice Chair, Assistant Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Kenya; Hon. Alice Tiendrebeogo, Hon Secretary, FAWE Burkina Faso; Dr. Emebet Mulegeta, Hon Treasurer, Senior Research and Associate Professor, Institute of Gender Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia; Prof. Esther Mwaikambo, Vice Chancellor, The Hubert Memorial University (HKMU), Tanzania; Hon. Mme. Francisca Espirirot Santo, Deputy Governor of Luanda Region, Angola; and Prof. Penina Mlama, Executive Director, FAWE

Donors Consortium
Continuing a practice started to build a true partnership for girls’ education, the annual FAWE Donors Consortium met for the third time at FAWE House, Kenya, with 11 donors committing to support the financial requirements specified in the Strategic Plan. Representatives of five FAWE National Chapter (Swaziland, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Tanzania) also attended.

FAWE on the International Scene
Quite a number of international events have marked the FAWE calendar in recent months. FAWE hosted the steering committee meeting on Communication for Education Development (COMED) in August 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya, the UN-organized Beijing+10 meeting in New York; the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Science and Maths, organized by ADEA and Kenya’s Ministry of Education, and held in Nairobi; the UNICEF Water and Sanitation organized in New York in order to address education, especially girls’ education in relation to water and sanitation; the 2005 ADEA Steering Committee meetings and seminars in Paris; the Commonwealth of Learning’s Board meeting held in Vancouver, Canada where FAWE’s Executive Director is a member; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Sub Regional workshop on mainstreaming women’s rights in education organized by the UNECA/AU/Human Rights Commission this meeting in Kigali, Rwanda

Graca Machel Stars at Fund Raising Dinner for FAWE
Graca Machel, arguably the first among Africa’s first ladies, as well as a prominent member of FAWE’s Endowment Task Force and the Chair of the FAWE Mozambique Chapter, graced a fund raising dinner for FAWE on 12 October 2005 in Nairobi. The dinner brought together members of the business and corporate world in Kenya.

Dr. Machel addressed 32 chief executive officers and expressed the need to explore with them innovative ways of partnering with FAWE in the development of the education of girls and women in Kenya and beyond. She appealed for contributions from the corporate community to enhance the Forum’s long-term financial sustainability in order to ensure the continuation of the programmes.