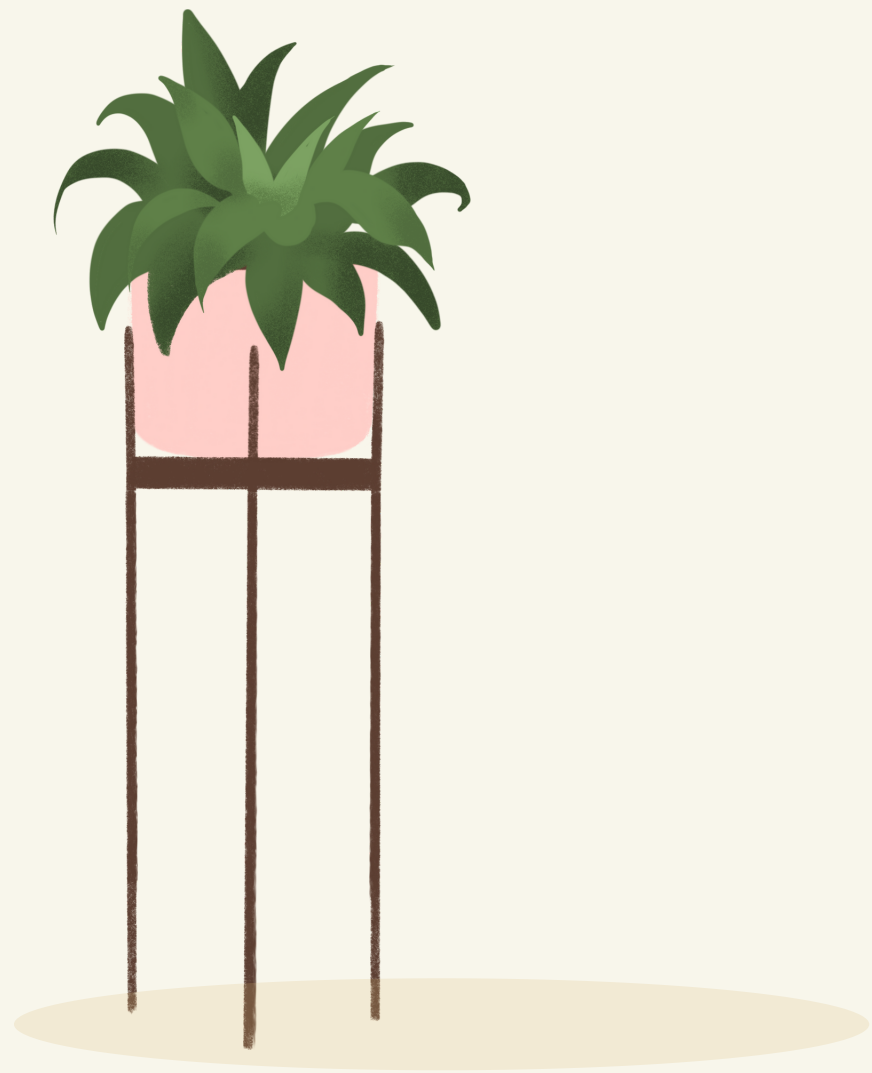


2020 CY Report

www.chooseyourself.website



Doing right by women with women in the diaspora throughout the African continent



Foreword from our Executive Director

There is no doubt this year stretched all of us. For some, it demanded we re-evaluate the core of our community work. For others, it highlighted how so little was being done for the marginalized. It is still incredibly sad that it took a pandemic, millions to die, millions more to suffer economically for all of us to reach the urgent moment of making the world safe for everyone to live dignified lives.

At Choose Yourself, this year was not our easiest, the same for many other small community-centered organizations. But Women are worth fighting for, over and over again. You are reading this because the entire team persevered this year regardless of being underfunded. We continued, served our members and communities, and showed up for ourselves.

For everyone in the team, this work is collective and personal. We continue to believe young women and girls, our queer and trans siblings, our sisters living with disabilities, sex workers, our fellow immigrants, refugees,... our black and African communities are worth every sacrifice and hard work made this year to keep the organization open.

We are grateful for our partners, our donors, our members, and everyone who makes this work possible. This report highlights the work done this year. But it mainly highlights our undying commitment to gender equity and the economic and social liberation of women. The journey is indeed still exceptionally long, and we count on you to stay on our side to sustain this work.

2021 is going to be an exciting year and we expect so much growth. Our team in Maine is working tirelessly to deliver the first Immigrant Youth Conference. For Girl talks in Africa, We secured a partner, allowing us to bring the program into 6 more countries.

For Home Away from Home, We added more books to our library in Nakivale Camp and plan to start hosting SRHR workshops. For " Grow with us fellowship", We are hosting our first Bootcamp in May for the fellows.

We promise to continue our best and sustain the work of doing right by young women and with young women

With gratitude and in solidarity,

Judicaelle Irakoze

Community Integration in Maine

Girl talk in Maine started operating in 2017, as space for young immigrant women to take up leadership, organize and convene the community in conversations centering on gender and racial equity.

In 2019, We started Girl Talk as an after-school class at Lewiston High school, offering immigrant girls, a space to unpack and humanize their experiences.

We started 2020 excited, we had entered a partnership that allowed us to bring Girl Talk as an after school program at Deering High School. By March, with few sessions in, we had to stop the program with Covid19 spread all over the world.

However, we transitioned digitally our usual Girl talk conversations in Maine. Zoom became our convenient organizing tool. We are grateful for Maine Humanities and Maine Initiatives that gave us the grants that allowed us to cover the digital costs.



Picture from Girl Talk at Lewiston High School

Feminist movement building



Picture taken during Girl Talk in Kinshasa

Girl Talk Africa



Picture taken during Girl talk Zambia

The vision of Girl Talk Africa is to create a feminist movement that gives young African women spaces to strategize and organize for the recognition of their rights and humanity in their community. Our mission has never stopped pushing conversations such as Rape culture, SRHR, gender-based violence, the culture of silence, and many more that dismantle the patriarchy and sustain sisterhood as political resistance.

When we started 2020, Girl Talk has already grown into a pan African program with our members organizing and leading the needed conversations in their communities from Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda. In February 2020, Girl talk launched in Zambia, as a safe space for young Zambian women to name and strategize on how to carry social change in their communities. In March, DRC became our first francophone African country where the program was piloted but with a specific target for young girls. We made it our mission to join the fight and struggle against teen pregnancies in the country mainly rooted in sexual violence, lack of sexual and reproductive health

Girl Talk Africa

When the pandemic was declared, the entire team did not hesitate to quickly adapt and switch to digital organizing. We started with a collective place for young feminists all over the continent. Within our future near plans, we had planned to gather together organizers in our Girl talk spaces to share about the particularity of the program in their communities but mainly learn from each other and also build sisterhood across borders. We then saw an opportunity to start the concept digitally. We gathered over 700 young African feminists from all over the continent to unpack how Covid19 and the lockdown have affected their communities and their work. We learned from each other, some from countries they didn't know young feminists were present and organizing. It was refreshing for the entire team to keep the good work.

This particular transition digitally was also made possible by our partner Urgent Action Fund Africa.



Picture during Girl talk in Uganda

Milestones and learnings from our Girl talk program in 2020

Milestones

We hosted 15 Girl Talk Webinar sessions. Three of which Girl Talks were organized for all African feminists as a tool used to build an online community, build solidarity, connect and get to know what other feminists across the continent are doing. bit of body text

With care of what was happening in the world because of the pandemic and the political violence in Africa, Girl Talk Africa also introduced meditation sessions, musical and visual productions during the GT sessions and discourse on community and feminist self care.

Learnings

- We found that many of the online Girl Talks that received a great amount of engagement and feedback from dialogues around the topics of sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- We can still be able to organize online Girl Talks, post-COVID for African feminists.
- As we design the agendas for each GT, there should be a considerable amount of time left for the attendees to engage, ask questions, for exercises.



Home Away From Home

Since we started this program in 2017, it is still being piloted and designed with the communities we are serving. This is mainly rooted that the entire leadership team wants to give the refugee communities we serve the front leadership. We are community-centered, and we do it intentionally.

By December 2019, we opened a library in Nakivale Camp in partnership with Cebuna and Ubumwe Foundation. The library with more than 400 books today, came from the big idea of building in the future a school to reduce the number of girls not in school and more vulnerable to forced marriages.

The library welcomed many readers starting January 2020 until March 2020, when the world was invaded by the Pandemic. For safety reasons, we had to close the library to ensure the safety of everyone coming to read the books as well as for the librarian taking care of the library



Picture of the library in Nakivale Camp

Home Away from Home 2021

Agenda

- We reopened this January 2021 with a lot of safety measures, with a weekly literacy program within the library.
- We are piloting our sponsorship program which consists of sending to school refugee kids who are not in school with 4 girls and 1 boy to attend school outside the camp since the one that is in the camp is full capacity. These 5 children will be going to school in 2021 and once a week will be followed by the librarian who will facilitate them in their HomeWorks or studies in case they are having difficulties to understand certain lessons.



Picture Taken during a community event at our library in Nakivale Camp

Grow with us fellowship

The fellowship was designed within our mission of contributing to the economic power of young African women entrepreneurs. The piloting of the program in 2018 and 2019, helped us design a curriculum of classes for the fellows such as: Understanding the why, root, of the problem they are trying to solve
What is the solution? Is it going to solve an existing problem? And many more.

For 2020, we selected 10 fellows from Uganda, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana, Burundi, Gambia, South Africa. Our fellows were extraordinary this year. We could monitor the growth and how the lessons they were getting from our selected mentors were impacting their projects and ideas.

Biographies of the fellows

Balakis Akinjobi is a Nigerian mental health advocate who is passionate about leveraging technology to provide on-demand emotional support and counseling services to millions of people in Africa. She is the Executive Director and Co-founder of *Mental Care Foundation*, a financial Analyst and an avid change maker.



Margaret Aoko is Kenyan entrepreneur passionate about empowering youths in business. She runs *Papshops* a platform that enables entrepreneurs to access markets easily connecting them to local and international consumers. Thus enabling them to easily build their brand awareness and increase sales as they engage with a wider audience both offline and online.

Grow with us Fellows 2020

Yao Raissa, from Ivory Coast, is a Head of operations at Bora Teacher; Where she ensure the training of Ivorian's people for contributing to their wellbeing. It consists in coaching professionals, undergraduate and postgraduate students, workforce to succeed their exams, get new jobs, and be at ease in their job. She co-founded *YakroCompost*, a startup that produce bio-fertilizer though household waste (dry leaves, banana and cassava peelings,...).

She also works as a volunteer for "FEEDME" where joy is providing to people by sharing love, foods and goods.



Aisha Kombhe Jatta is Gambian entrepreneur and accountant by profession. She is the founder of *Sunka Transportation and Logistics Services*. She is the first Gambian to win the Reforum West African Competition Award 2019.

She is an alumni of YALI Ghana and Youth Initiative Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA AFRICA NIGERIA)

She also hold an executive position as the Secretary General of Young African Change Makers Gambian Chapter (YACM) and country Director for Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD AFRICA)



Lilian Nakigozi, Founder and Executive Director of *Women Smiles Uganda* is a social entrepreneur who is passionate about agriculture and women empowerment. As an advocate for female financial inclusion and a hunger free world, she provides all the necessary platforms to enable women in urban slums have food and improve their standards of living through vertical farming mechanism.

Karabo Mokgonyana is a South African Law student from the University of Witwatersrand. At the university, she serves as a tutor and a writing consultant. She is a YALI RLC SA alumni, a feminist and an advocate for social justice and socio-economic freedom. She is the Program Director at a women empowerment social enterprise called *Sesi Fellowship and Skill Hub*. Late October 2018, she was appointed as one of 15 young South Africans to stand as a *Youth Advisory Panel for United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*. Karabo's anti-corruption innovation was short-listed in the top 10 across the globe and as the only African female for Transparency International's Corruption Competition and she is one of 25 Cosmopolitan's Next Generation Voices in Africa. She is a published legal journal author and a textbook editor for Southern Africa Oxford Press. She will be serving as 1 of 5 African Youth Ambassador for Peace with the



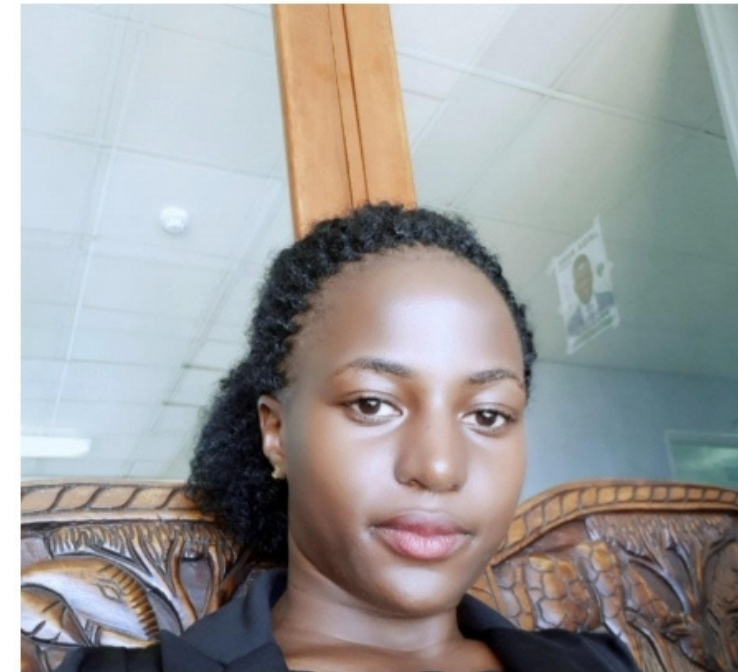
Grow with us Fellows 2020



Adwoa Fosua is a young Ghanaian woman interested and working towards the participation and development of women in entrepreneurship, leadership and Technology. She is the Founder and CEO of an African Female Innovation Hub, *Women's Haven Africa*. Her aim is to support young women to create jobs for themselves and others in order to reduce unemployment. She acts as a board member for the Ghana Tech and Business Hubs Network, which consists of entrepreneurial ecosystem enablers across the country. Adwoa is also the West African Lead for the African Youth in Philanthropy Network. Currently, She is supporting over 500 women in her community and has facilitated the creation of about 30 jobs since 2017.

Mfurayacu Diora Gabriella

is a Burundian currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in International Business management at Africa Nazarene University in Kenya. She has always been passionate about entrepreneurship and until recently being an entrepreneur has been just a dream. However, now is the ideal time to embark on the journey.



Joanitah Kajoba is a Ugandan social entrepreneur pursuing a master's degree in Public Health at Clarke International University. She is a passionate advocate for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.

She is the Cofounder of *Femminae Uganda* a start up social enterprise with a mission to help all girls and women experience cheaper, healthier, eco-friendly and more comfortable periods.

She strives for a world where female health matters greatly and gender equality prevails.

Sedinam Akosua Ameku

is a Ghanaian Financial Literacy and Inclusion Advocate. She is the founder of *Females & Finance Organization*. She believes the financial well-being of women correlates with economic development and seeks to raise more female financial literates through her organization.



We are endlessly grateful to our partners

Our gratitude goes to our partners who have made this work very possible:

- Innovation village
- Akina Mama Wa Africa
- Maine Initiatives
- Maine Humanities
- Urgent Action Fund
- Sparkplug foundation
- Haymarket fund
- Coffee by Design
- Lewiston 21st Century
- Grassroots fund
- Resources for organizing Change
- The Hawkins project
- Groundswell fund

• Our board members, our communities and anyone who hold this work closer.

• Thank you. We promise to do more and better

How to get involved with our work

- Visit regularly our website: www.chooseyourself.website to stay connected to our work and also don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter
- Become a donor, join our monthly donors who sustain this work , via this link: <https://www.chooseyourself.website/donate-here/>
- We are always open to partnerships. Contacts:
 - Executive leadership: Judicaelle@chooseyourself.website or Lydia@chooseyourself.website
 - For Girl talk Africa : email Bonitah@chooseyourself.website
 - For Girl talk Maine: Carla@chooseyourself.website
 - Grow with us fellowship: carole@chooseyourself.website

