



---

## Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 13

### Conversation with Lydia Zigomo (Zimbabwe)

#### **African Feminism**

The Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network that builds the capacities of women and other groups in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach. CVPP- Africa equips women to contribute to peace processes in decision making roles.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series began in the wake of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic has hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. These are the people members of CVPP work with. Members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by speaking to each other every week. Sharing stories, learning new skills from each other all through the WhatsApp platform, to enable reach to those of our members without access to facilities such as Zoom or Skype.

**Convener:** Susan J eptanui Maina, Kenya

**Coordinator:** Selina Kwamini, Kenya

**Moderator:** Diana Demba-Mutondo, Chad

**Panelist 1:** Lydia Zigomo from Zimbabwe and the Regional Director with Oxfam for the Horn, East and Central Africa region based in Nairobi.

**Participants:** Members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism Africa

Copyright © Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism. First published in

2020.

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism asserts the right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the written permission of the presenter, Lydia Zigomo.

This Seminar Series is available through the Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism website, <https://peaceandpluralism.org/>. The publication of this Series was made possible through the voluntary work of members of Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism.

**Susan Maina, Kenya; Convener's introduction of the workshop seminar:**  
Greetings CVPP family, where ever you are in the globe.

What a good time to convene and be part of today's session on African Feminism.

I invite all of you to today's Seminar Series 13, a WhatsApp seminar to be facilitated by Lydia Zigomo from Zimbabwe.

In Kenya, we say, "karibuni" which is Kiswahili for welcome.

Take a seat, grab a cup of "chai"(tea) or coffee (kahawa) and let's dive in. We look forward to an interactive session.

I welcome our sister Diana Demba from Chad who will moderate our session.

If you are in the house give me a .

Susan J eptanui, Kenya.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** It is great to be moderating session...looking forward to everyone's input.

**Prabha Sankaranarayan, India:** This is indeed where the 'magic 'happens and where the 'precious gems' are. Serious power here.

Looking forward...-

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Hi All, this is Lydia and happy to be presenting in this session!

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Allow me to introduce Lydia once again. Lydia Zigomo is a lawyer from Zimbabwe and the Regional Director with Oxfam for the Horn, East and Central Africa region.

Lydia, we welcome you and look forward to your presentation.

You have the floor!

One more point: Just for housekeeping, may I invite colleagues and friends to feel free to share their questions directly to me or onto the group

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Thank you Diana!

Hello my name is Lydia Zigomo and I am a Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer as you've been advised. But I think some of the things I would like to introduce myself with in this session which is focussing on African feminism is that, I also represent much of what African feminism colleagues in academics have been trying to elaborate and bring to light to the mainstream feminism movement in terms of the fact that I grew up in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa but lived also for 15 yrs plus my life as a migrant plus in the UK and worked there, brought up kids there. I'm currently living in Nairobi where I work with Oxfam as the Regional Director for Eastern and Central Africa.

African feminism has many strands and I am not going to try and unpack those strands which have been written about by some of our famous writers mainly from West Africa but increasingly from other parts of the continent. What that breadth and scale of work shows us is that we cannot have a single/one dimensional approach to African feminism lest we lose the depth and the richness of what African feminism brings to the mainstream movement. I think the particular contribution of African feminism is to really unpack our lived realities as African women and black women.

There are many dimensions. For instance, those of you on the continent who were born, bred and lived all your lives here. Those who were maybe born in the continent but moved to other parts of the world or are first generation

diaspora babies but of African descent. And those who left the continent through their ancestors many centuries ago and are of black African descent. More recently with all the political turmoil in parts of our world, there are those who find themselves as refugees or internally displaced people. So, history has played a role in shaping that lived experience and reality of African feminism responding to feelings of exclusion from the mainstream white feminist movement. And also trying to look at the position of women and their relationship in their societies in pre-colonialism and also during colonialism and post colonialism, clearly, there were very powerful African women in some of our tribal kingdoms and ethnic groups in the continent.

But that positioning of women has not necessarily been the experience of majority of women. So, the intersectional issues and aspects that impact our lived realities and experiences are important to bring into this space and reflect upon. We are not homogeneous because of our social status, economic status, marital status, whether we have children or not, rural and urban divide, educational status, our sexuality and disabilities.

Also, the interplay of religion and culture with our identity, roles and how we are socialised are factors too. What is common to all of us African feminists is I think the issue of male privilege, dominance and power often played out through patriarchy. But for African feminists and black feminists in particular, the impact of colonialism, racism and slavery resulting in white privilege and white power and domination must also be a central part of the picture.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Lydia has shared her introduction on today's topic of African feminism. As we delve into her introduction one may keep in mind or think about the questions

- a) How do we understand feminism at large and African feminism?
- b) What are the pillars of African feminism?
- c) What defines African feminism?

**Prabha Sankaranarayan:** Very informative opening.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** And the question, what are the challenges?

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Now the way in which male privilege operating as patriarchy and connected with colonialism often as white privilege and power work out in our lives as African women is often through a number of systems and structures in particular our laws i.e. customary, civil and criminal laws. They have evolved over the ages and determine the rights or lack of rights of women in terms of issues such as marriage, inheritance, custody and guardianship of children, rights to property and assets such as land. They also impact on gender roles that women and girls often have to play in our families, societies and in work places. This also is often linked to the access they have to education and different levels of education or even types of education.

One of the ways in which women have found themselves subjugated is in the area of violence against women and girls. I am not necessarily convinced that this only occurred as a result of colonial and post colonial era. I do wonder whether we can sometimes have a utopian view of the positioning and power in general women held in our societies even in the pre-colonial era. That is not to say that certain women did not aspire to and achieve greatness in the pre-colonial eras. Some of them even in the colonial era, if we look at the role some played in the independent struggles on our continent, there are certainly famous women who did great things in the struggle of freedom.

But this violence against women and girls seems to be pervasive. It takes different forms such as forced marriages and elopements, the issue of dowry and how it objectifies and commodifies women. The issue of who owns women's bodies, their virginity and their labour. These types of issues, we are still grappling with to great extent in African feminism.

But most recently, we are getting challenged about the generational divide in African feminism between the older generations of African feminists who were often very active in the liberation struggles of our countries as well as very politically active and the young emerging African feminists who speak more about issues of the body politics, very savvy in relation to social media and technology. Their activism often takes a different structure and way of working than what we have been used to as the older generations. Sometimes the clash between these generations often compromises the ability to have a collective movement fighting for real progress in the rights of women and girls

in this continent and beyond.

Just to finish setting the scene to the introduction...

**Christine Mutimura, Rwanda:** Karibu Lydia

**Prabha Sankaranarayan, India:** The idea that there isn't one monolithic but multiple streams- can anyone share names of the west African writers Lydia refers to?

**Mireille Tushiminina, DRC:** Welcome Lydia...!

**Salim Omar, Nigeria:** Good afternoon to you all. Looking forward to positive engagement this evening.

**Patricia Nyaundi, Kenya (Responding to Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** Catching up now! Great introduction.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Thanks, so much Lydia!!! You have highlighted some pertinent issues on the subject matter which is African feminism.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** The African feminist writers range from Naomi Nkealah, on West African Feminism and their challenge, Filomena Chioma Steady (diaspora Sierra Leonian), but also from as far as Egypt, Sudan to Zimbabwe, etc.

**Prabha Sankaranarayan (Responding to Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** Thank you, much appreciated!

**Diana Demba, Chad:** I would like to invite colleagues and friends to share their thoughts and engage with Lydia on her presentation..

I believe we can all benefit from the wealth of knowledge in this forum.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** In the main African feminism asserts it existed as long as mainstream white feminism, but that white feminism has excluded and marginalised the voice of essential the majority of women and their lives realities and struggles...

**Wasye:**

**Diana Demba, Chad:** I would like to throw a question on the floor. Lydia spoke about the generational divide of afro-feminism and I wondered how do we reconcile both "schools" how can the older generation work with the younger generation?

**Patricia Nyaundi, Kenya:** Thanks Lydia! Very solid introduction to the topic. I wonder whether by virtue of our history African feminism finds itself defined by what you refer to as white feminism. It is not self-defining but is defined by its distinction from western feminism.

**Prabha Sankaranarayan (Responding to Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** There are ways I know it has happened in the West- USA and UK. What does that marginalization look like in countries on the African continent?

**Selina Kwamini, Kenya (Responding to Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** I relate to this. With the 'Me Too Movement'. The white victims are more believed than blacks. Blacks were considered to be more problematic.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** In African feminism the role of women as for instance mothers in the concept of mother-ism and of course the role they have in relation to children and child bearing as well as wider role of nurturing in society is emphasized. But beyond that what African feminism brings to the table is to unpack that women as we think of them in Africa play many roles and it is not just about emancipation in rights for instance in work places. But it is about understanding the ways in which women operate within the society and ways in which they interact with patriarchy.

Additionally, understanding the ways in which within the feminist movement the issue of white privilege and power can result in unequal situation as between the white feminists and black and African feminists. That there is another level of violence that African women and women of colour encounter not just in terms of male privilege and domination but also the 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect of white privilege and domination and the interplay of these in terms of reinforcing the subjugated positioning of women in many societies including the economic and political spheres of the societies.

The other thing I think African feminism seeks to do is correct certain view

points about whether African women have only been victims but also leaders. It is highlighting in some of our history, the role women have played in key struggles, different moments in times pre colonial and colonial times which are often erased from History books and need to be resurrected in terms of understanding that there are examples we can call on the continent and in Diaspora in terms of women who did lead and were part of key struggles and were actually effective in those roles as well.

Indeed, African feminism seeks to highlight the interplay of male privilege and domination with white privilege and domination..

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Lydia I have a few questions from the floor for you

1. The word feminism is used almost as an insult in some places. When someone says “you feminist” it’s sometimes usually an insult. What is a feminist definition?
2. How do you respond to someone who says feminists hate men?
3. Is there one African feminism or do some African countries have their own feminism?

**Salim, Nigeria:** Feminism as a whole is facing a lot of misinterpretation and understanding in our own African context. What do you think should be done to enable our communities to understand, appreciate rather than see it as a conflicting norm to some cultures?

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Just turning to the issue of the intergenerational aspects of feminism and particularly African feminism, I think what I see on this issue when I have held discussions or workshops with young African feminists, they feel somewhat marginalised by the traditional African feminist movement. They feel that they are not necessarily taken serious in terms of the issues they feel they are encountering and have to live through as millennials.

Further, ways in which African women organized in earlier times when we think of Beijing and other times are perhaps not so relevant to them. I've heard young African feminists challenge many of UN structures and platforms



which the older feminists took so seriously and fought hard for e.g. the Commission on the Status of Women, going to those meetings every year and march in New York and even the work that has been happening on Beijing plus 25 and feeling that it is in fact still reinforced mainstream white feminist thinking and ways of operating when in fact , they were maintaining the point that many of the African women who should be seeking to be in those spaces and their voices to be heard, cannot be heard.

For instance, they cannot get the visas to go to America and we are still being influenced to think that we must go to the West and be brought out to be a tokenistic representation in Western styled conferences rather than actually seeking to hold these types of events and meetings more in the Global South countries in Africa, Asia and Middle East, and, seek to ensure that the voices of the majority of women are actually represented in those conferences rather than being the minority. I found that being an interesting challenge back to traditional women's rights organisations too.

They young people also challenge our ways in which we interact or fail to and be fully represented in social media saying that these are new platforms feminists may not be using as effectively and prominently. Thus, they lack role models actively engaging in those spaces. For example, you African women journalists were challenging all the women activists to say why they are not occupying those spaces. "Why don't you quit then?" "Why are you not on social media more?" So, I think that these are voices we need to hear, listen and respond to.

**Patricia Nyaundi, Kenya:** Why is it that when in the boardroom there is such clarity on what feminism is and what it aims to do but when it comes to using it to allow for improved status of women in society met with such hostility and at times people have to tiptoe around these conversations? Is it strategy, is it framing or is it choice of words?

**Mandiedza Parichi (PhD), Zimbabwe:** Thank you Lydia I understood and relate to your introduction. My take is that the feminisms that are often popularised through narratives often show the originators, who are largely white women and therefore often highlight the struggles of women from that divide. Most of

the realities of African black women complexities and struggles are not well represented. My question is how can we as African black women also situate ourselves in order to have some of our challenges that are not universal addressed?

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Lydia I will let you respond to these questions before directing other questions to you.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Feminism has come back in recent times probably linked to Me Too and Black Lives Matter movements. There was indeed a time feminism was seen as a dirty word both in the West and on our continent. Part of that I think has been the labelling of women who are different from the norm of what is expected in societies, or women and girls who seek to fight for a different reality, being seen as rebels and outsiders...

**Diana Demba, Chad:**

**Please here are the specific questions asked of you above.**

1. Feminism as a whole is facing a lot of misinterpretation and understanding in our own African context. What do you think should be done to enable our communities to understand, appreciate rather than see it as a conflicting norm to some cultures?

2. Why is it that when in the boardroom there is such clarity on what feminism is and what it aims to do but when it comes to using it to allow for improved status of women in society met with such hostility and at times have to tiptoe around these conversations? Is it strategy, is it framing or is it choice of words?

3. Thank you Lydia I understood and relate to your introduction. My take is that the feminisms that are often popularised through narratives often show the originators who are largely white women and therefore often highlight the struggles of women from that divide. Most of the realities of African black women complexities and struggles are not well represented. My question is how can we as African black women also situate ourselves in order to have some of our challenges that are not universal addressed?

Second wave of questions and comments if you haven't touched on that yet

! One more question Lydia if you allow me:

On the generational divide. Very interesting that the older generation focused on liberation movements and the younger in many instances (my familiarity is with Liberia, S. Africa and Kenya) on body/identity issues. There is not a trans generational transmission and that is a loss. How can we bridge these gap better?

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** So, on some of the questions coming through about dominance of white feminism in defining and articulation of feminism and how to bring the African feminism concepts more into the space. I think there is practically a decolonisation and anti-racism process even on the continent that we need to go through.

I think one of the things we must accept is that many of us have been educated in a particular manner. Much of that education has been pretty much western dominated. The representations, definitions, and the ways in which the world has been understood has been through the lenses of middle-class white people and particularly middle-class white men. This has flowed into the way which our education systems have been designed in the main. We have to look at that in terms of even the way we organise particularly in the civil society.

The sad thing is to realize that as many of us have come up and started organisations, joined existing organisations and international organisations, we join a dominant narrative that defines organisation space of civic societies in a particular way. It interests me because I sit where you can see that very much of the concepts, principles and ways of thinking are still dominated by the West. For instance, we think good governance must be dominated by the Westminster model and the way it is done in the UK, France or America, yet we have plenty of evidence now that, that type of governance is not necessarily any better or worse than ours.

We are told that white is right in subliminal messages in terms of the way in which we look at how it is all about capacity building, our local partners, our local organisations and community-based organisations. Meaning that essentially what we are saying is that they don't have capacity and skills and

therefore we are bringing it in from the West to the South. I think these are the things we have to work on.

We have to interrogate the systems we interact with and begin to understand how white privilege and domination and male privilege and domination interact and then impact even how we in the continent and diaspora have also been sometimes and many times co-opted into the mainstream and therefore, have not been challenging the mainstream system enough. It is a political struggle and one that we will find that there will be push back. There is a tendency that when you are seeking to take power from those who have traditionally held it, there will be a backlash. It is not easy. It is a painful process. It is taken years and a long time because the tendency is to go back and backslide into default position that people are comfortable in. Decolonising and seeking to be anti-racist is a work in progress and it's not just achieved overnight.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Thanks Lydia.

Here is another question: In some quarters women of colour including African women have contested the name feminism and coined other names such as womanist in its place. What is your take on this?

Colleagues, please note that you may also contribute to responses.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Also remember the ones who get to sit at the table often determines and shape the agenda. White women are now occupying more spaces of power and to a great extent reinforce male and white privilege and domination.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** 15mins remaining! Thank you, Lydia.

**Prabha Sankaranarayan (Responding to Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** This is the most helpful description yet of the generational divide: brilliant...thank you Lydia.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** We still have some time for more questions and comments.

**Susan Maina, Kenya:** Do you think the emergence of homosexuality and the

challenges in African culture will affect the African Feminism movement?

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Here are more questions from the floor

1. Many of our African societies socialise girls to serve. You often find eight-year-old girls serving their ten-year-old brothers with food. Will this ever change? How can feminism help this to change? Is patriarchy too entrenched for us to ever see real change?

2. Do you think with the emergence of homosexuality and the challenges in African culture will affect African Feminism movement?

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** There is a book in my country called 'We Need New Names' by NoViolet Bulawayo. It comes back to me when I see questions like the ones in the chat around coining new names and do we always have to stick to the old? Maybe I'm a bit of a rebel but I don't think we should be limited by the ways in which names have evolved and we shouldn't be scared to come up with new ones. I think they add to the diversity of thoughts.

We need to continue as African women to come into the faces of producing academic pieces and also developing our own theories on various aspects of the lived realities of our lives and how to an extent we are claiming back our power. I think that to me, it's the way in which the world is enriched in terms of its thinking in this area of women's struggle of equality and also in terms of what we want to influence in the mainstream feminist movement.

On the issue of generational divide, we must make much more effort to listen to each other on both sides of the divide and begin to work on common agenda. There is no doubt that in Africa, we are still fighting certain battles we thought we'd won 20 years ago but we're still finding problems rolling back to certain rights. So, yes, we've more women in political leadership, parliament. There are more women leading NGOs and in all kinds of professions. But we find overall, certain issues that have affected women and girls continue to persist and they are highlighted particularly when we use inequality lenses.

Look at what is happening with COVID -19 now and how that has shaken girls' access to education. It is reinforcing and bringing back things we thought we were getting mileage on such as early marriages, Female Genital Mutilation

(FGM) and Female Genital Cutting (FGC). The rate of high school drop out of girls will impact how many girls will make it to tertiary colleges and university education. Therefore, it limits their economic opportunities. It has highlighted again the rural-urban divide i.e. social status divide between the working middle class and the lower class in terms of even access to digital technologies that can liberate women and girls' minds in terms of being able to access alternative information and alternative ways of organising.

Clearly, we have much to do. We've not won the battle on land and property rights. Too often we are still seeing issues whenever there is any shock in the world in relation to violence against women and girls and we are seeing that with Covid-19 at the moment. So the fragility of the advancement of women and girls' rights in the continent means that it requires really targeted and sustained actions and that can only be achieved by bridging the generational divide and working together, the young and the old using multiplicity of strategies and also making sure that we are documenting, we are writing, we are disseminating and we are actually beginning to occupy the spaces that traditionally have been occupied by the mainstream white feminists in shaping the narrative of women and girls in this world.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** How do we end practices such as wife beating? In many cases the police don't even consider wife beating a crime.

**Prabha Sankaranarayan:** Lydia's response and explanation of the generational divide reminds me of Degan Ali's comments about decolonization. What I am thinking of is that so much of the early work has been done in spaces created by colonialists and in the West, right? as you say. Thinking then as a mediator- it is really far more effective to link the generations and find new spaces and forums. In the Global South as you say...isn't it time to not simply show up at the old spaces but to create new ones, that are powerful and resonate for so many more with a completely different sensibility? Like this platform for instance.

**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya:** Can we say that, the fact that others name and conceptualise our experiences disadvantage us?

**Diana Demba, Chad(responding to Prahba Sankaranarayan)** Very good input!

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** On the issue of homosexuality, African culture and African feminist movement and its relationship to additional issues like lesbianism and transgender, I think we've a very long way to go. It is emerging, there are LGBTQI women, writers, activists who are seeking their voices to be heard. The mainstream African feminist movement struggles still to relate to the issue of sexuality. This is mainly because we have to navigate much of what our cultures and our religious beliefs say.

Though we are challenged by that, I think it's an opportunity for us to present our own thoughts and also ways in which we understand human rights, the ways we understand whether indeed women's rights are human rights and are rights for all. Also, whether there is room in African feminism to also celebrate the differences while acknowledging that we may not always all believe exactly the same thing but can we be in solidarity with the different struggles of different marginalised groups on the continent?

We should understand the issues of inter-sectionalism in many women's lives. For instance, a woman could be gay, transgender, mother and at the same time she could be of a particular ethnic group living in a particular context. Then there are those with disabilities from mental health issues to physical disabilities. All of these intersections between sex gender and all other conditions that affect women's lives impact their positioning within our society and their acceptability within those societies. Often times the way in which they are either given a voice or particularly marginalised also impacts how violations happen.

Violence against women for me arises from the point of view that of male privilege and dominance; a woman's body is owned by somebody. It is not her body that she owns and has rights to make decision about. It's owned by somebody else who usually is of the male sex. That is a big challenge that we still have because of ways in which religion and cultures are often interpreted and the need to ensure women's voices are heard and we ourselves are clearer about our understanding of issues and how we are coming to the table, how we are trying to ensure there is no divide and rule among women.

Remember in our cultures often particularly where negative aspects of culture,

women are sometimes in our cultures, families and societies used to reinforce negative cultural practices. So, we play a role also in maintaining male privilege and dominance and patriarchy and patriarchal system. The question therefore, is if we are also prepared to do the work to liberate our minds such that the collective voice will be strong enough to start to challenge the whole system in such a way that we can really begin to make inroads into understanding that women and girls' bodies are not owned by men and are not at their disposal to make decision about. There is the issue of autonomy of the person and how do we support that struggle?

**Diana Demba, Chad:** I would like to invite colleagues' comments or add on that before I ask Lydia to add some final comment since we have 5mins left

**Prabha Sankaranarayan:** Very intriguing question Florence. Am thinking that if we simply adopt it and it remains static then it risks that. But rather- if we keep it dynamic and relevant by evolving- and renaming...might that not take truer ownership?

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Final question from the floor:

My nine-year-old niece asked me, auntie, what is feminism? What would be a good response to her?

Lydia, I invite to kindly respond or comment on these last two question has we reach to the end of our time unfortunately.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** Indeed we need to lead in creating our own spaces and platforms and then collectively pushing for these to become the mainstream...And indeed we need new names to both name the issues we face but also propose the solutions that work for us to those struggles...No one can do that for us, and it requires joining hands both older and younger African feminists and the entirety of the African women's movement. We also need in the process to identify positive examples of achievements of African feminism and African women's leadership, and to celebrate these too!

**Patricia Nyaundi, Kenya:**

**Florence Mpaayei, Kenya:** Thanks, Prabha. Exactly, ownership gives legitimacy.



To achieve this requires listening in order to create understanding on both sides.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Last comments before we close and handover to the organizers of today's session?

**Mandiedza Parichi (PhD), Zimbabwe, responding to (Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe):** I totally relate. My other question is how to deal with women enablers of patriarchy. This is rife in politics. I'm talking about women who would rather support males even though they are clear of the disadvantages and challenge of patriarchy to the development of women.

**Lydia Zigomo, Zimbabwe:** On the last 2 questions; indeed, we need to start to own our experiences and our own understanding of multiple identities. To understand the ways in which we interact with all the issues of patriarchy and white privilege within our societies both in the continent and beyond. Remember the continent has been shaped so much by the colonial era and it continues to be shaped by it whether it's in the impact of Britain, France, Germany and other parts of Europe, also China and the Middle East.

We are always being appropriated and dominated in some shape or form. All these have an impact on the role and place and positioning of women and girls in our society. I think we have to begin to celebrate the process of more of our black African women as academics both on the continent and those who've gone to study in other parts of the world and be in solidarity with them as they seek to do the work of doing the academic theories on our behalf. This is because we all can't be academics or theorists. At the same time, I think we also have a role to playing terms of continuing to explain this concept of feminism.

A common question by younger people, the older people and even men is what feminism is. It is hard for me. Feminism is this issue of the fact that the world doesn't just work as the way it does by accident. There are specific ways in which the world has been shaped by systems, customs and processes and laws, regulations as well as attitudes and behaviours about the roles and positioning of women and girls in our societies at large. They have to do with the fact that we are born women and girls but also how we are

socialised and taught how to interact with others in the societies we belong.

This often means that we are placed at a disadvantage and often don't get the same opportunities as men and boys. This is not okay or fine. There is a need to change that because it's a system and systems can change. Therefore, our role is to ensure that the equality of men and women as God created them is beginning to be achieved and realized in our lifetime. And that girls can do anything that boys can do or even more. Therefore, they should be allowed to pursue whatever they are interested in without limitations. That is what I would answer the 9-year-old.

Thank you everyone for welcoming me into your space, and engaging so well. The power of women never ceases to amaze, uplift and excite me. I hope to join more of these great sessions from now on! Asante Sana!

**Diana Demba, Chad:** Thank you so much Lydia

**Prabha Sankaranarayan, India:** You know the one thing that is easy to do: is Lydia's last comment about stories of African women's leadership. Let me share one small example: I NEVER finish a training without using Alice's two brilliant case studies in Nigeria. And when, after describing the complex process over years...I quietly drop the name of the peacebuilder and the audience's eyes widen- I then walk away smiling! There are soooo many examples. We can do this.

**Diana Demba, Chad:** We appreciate each and single one of your comments and questions. It has been a fruitful discussion! We have reached the end of the session.

**Susan Jeptanui Maina, Kenya; Convener's closing remarks of the workshop seminar:** Wow. Big topic, great facilitator and moderator Thank you all for the warmth in the house.

Our deepest thanks to our very able facilitator Lydia for bringing out great insights and triggering our thoughts on African Feminism.

I think we hardly scratched the ground as far as this topic is concerned.

Thanks to Diana for great moderation.

They both deserve a hearty clap . And a clap to you all for participating.

Clap for ourselves . I give each of you a flower. ...Till next session,  
Bye Thank you all for participating.

**Selina Kwamini, Kenya (Coordinator)** Thank you so much team for availing yourself.

Thank you, Lydia, Diana and Sue, for leading the session.

Kindly if you feel you need/want to present, remember to inbox me your name and topic you would want to tackle.

We would gladly slot you in.

Otherwise, let's keep interacting and supporting each other in all the important issues we are engaged in such as the campaign on Gender Based Violence and Josina Machel, supporting those engaging with Mali as the country navigates changes as well as any other that might come up.

As always, please, as usual, see our guidelines below;

### **Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism (CVPP)-Africa**

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism – Africa is a non-profit network of peace workers that offers expertise in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict through a Peace and Pluralism approach, contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We set up this group to bring together women leaders working across various thematic social justice areas particularly peace building and women's meaningful participation in decision making roles.

We have enabling guidelines, for the users of our WhatsApp group and website, not rules;

1. The CVPP group was formed as an inclusive space for women safeguarding diverse spaces for dialogue by all generations, transforming and resolving violent conflicts, contributing to human dignity and social justice. Ensure your post is relevant and purposeful.

2. Avoid forwards unless they are relevant to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Avoid cross posting by going through what has been shared to confirm you are not reposting and cross-posting. Links are encouraged. Spamming will pile chats, meaning most will then not follow the discussions.
3. Analyse and give your view or perspective on a subject with respect.
4. We are guided by values and principles as well as our standing as leaders in society and sexist, ethicist, racist, homophobic, political party specific and other demeaning comments or attacks are not allowed. Avoid narrow group views. Stereotypes shall not be entertained on CVPP. Be tolerant and respectful.
5. CVPP is not a place for rumours, innuendo, propaganda, myths or conspiracy theories. Members are asked to share or present what they know to be the truth, facts, evidence or data/information on a subject being discussed.
6. Before posting or replying, always ask yourself this: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it relevant? Is it necessary? Is this a good time to post? Is this going to encourage discussions or degenerate into animosity? Freedom of expression does not relieve you of your obligation to courtesy, decency and decorum.
7. Contribute regularly and share information on what you are doing to promote our stated common objectives. Consider this a conversation. It is not okay for you to just read other people's input without contributing, asking for information, or suggesting improvements.
8. Do not personalize your chats. Always stick to the issue being discussed or ventilated on without attacking or discussing the person who originated or has commented on the subject.
9. Announcement of events your organization or others are doing is encouraged. However, you cannot initiate causes or activities on CCVP without approval from the forum admin before circulation.
10. We may at times, after discussion here on the forum, support a cause we see as key to encouraging members on CVPP or communities that CVPP

Members support or are part of. If such causes are acceptable, the admins shall set up a separate group to advance such an activity or cause.

11. Any information that is produced here in a facilitated manner, such as the Seminar Series is Copyright to CVPP.

To protect this as a safe space, no one is allowed to upload or use any conversation here without obtaining permission. The Seminar Series on the CVPP website <https://peaceandpluralism.org/> carries the following information “Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism asserts the right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the written permission of the presenter.

This Seminar Series is available through the Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism website, <https://peaceandpluralism.org/>.

12. CVPP exists because members make what we do possible through their voluntary work. We wish to thank you most sincerely for being members of this CVPP family.

Good night all and blessings galore.

Selina Kwamini

## BIOGRAPHIES



### **LYDIA ZIGOMO (NYATSANZA)**

Lydia is a human rights lawyer from Zimbabwe with over 20 years' experience working on various aspects of human development and human rights at a national and international level covering the broad areas of women and children's rights, constitutional reforms, health systems strengthening, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, access to safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene education, food security, including in humanitarian settings. She currently works as the Regional Director with Oxfam for the Horn, East and Central Africa region, covering 10 countries. Previously, she has worked as the regional head of East Africa with WaterAid, the Africa regional manager for Interact Worldwide, and the national director for Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association.

Lydia has held various positions over the years including deputy chair of the Zimbabwe Institute, a policy think tank trying to support the peaceful resolution of the Zimbabwe situation. She has also previously held the position of chair of the Zimbabwe Women's Coalition, chair of the Zimbabwe Women's Network in the United Kingdom, board member of the Legal Resources Foundation in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, the National Association of NGOs in Zimbabwe, and was a task force member of the National Constitutional Assembly. Lydia has also been a core partner of the USAID Good Governance and Democracy Programme in Zimbabwe, an advisory group member of the UNDP's Conflict Transformation Programme for Zimbabwe, and chair of the Non-State Actors Forum and the EU / Zimbabwe Decentralised Cooperation Programme.

Lydia is an Eisenhower Fellow (USA) and a former participant of the British Council Leadership Programme in Zimbabwe and holds a Masters Degree in Human Rights and Civil Liberties from the University of Leicester, UK, and a Bachelor of Law Honours Degree from the University of Zimbabwe.



### **DIANA DEMBA-MUTONDO**

Diana Demba-Mutondo is a young and dynamic woman from Chad. She was born in Cote d'Ivoire and raised in Ethiopia, Rwanda, France and South Africa. She is currently working in South Africa for the African Peer Review Mechanism as a researcher and country coordinator.

With a background in Marketing and Management, Diana began a career in the private sector before joining the public and developmental sector. She is passionate about all things communication and technology. She is also an advocate for gender equality as well and initiatives against Human trafficking. Diana is a member of the Community Voices for Peace Pluralism-Africa and the A21 organisation which works towards abolishing modern-day slavery.

Her motto is to always go "Forward and Upward".



## **Susan Jeptanui Maina**

### **Founder: Uasin Gishu Peace Forum.**

Susan, the Peace Builder, works with Local Communities for peace and cohesion in Kenya's Uasin Gishu County.

She's, also, into Hospitality; currently working at Biblica Guest House, as a Manager. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Management University of Africa and is an alumnus of Kenya Utalii College. Her 25 years' experience in the hospitality industry, dealing with people from all walks of life and nationalities, informs her people-skill at community level.

Peace building is natural to Susan: she has been able to connect with networks of great people who have become her mentors and motivators; most of whom are in the CVPP forum.

Susan's crave for Peace-building knowledge has seen her search for empowerment and train in various institutions such as Hekima University, MBBI and USIP.

Her passions are, singularly, on building local peace processes and, extensively, works at achieving this at the grassroot levels.

Her mission will be fulfilled when Uasin Gishu County not only becomes the most peaceful and accommodating County in Kenya but also an example to be emulated by the other 46 counties.



A united, peaceful, Kenya is her goal with Africa being the showcase.