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The resonance of the Me Too movement in Africa and the Africa's lesson to the world on supporting women at work, in the society and in education.

Resonance means the quality in a sound of being deep, full, and reverberating. In this essay it will be referred to as an interpretation, the view or the opinion that people generally have on a subject. Me Too movement has shaken the world in less than 6 months it's been existing and has achieved a lot in creating sympathy and awareness on women's rights especially on the sexual violence. This essay explains the major two resonance of this movement in Africa as an additional effort to the governments and regional organizational efforts in women empowerment as well as having come to challenge the cultural beliefs that had accelerated women rights violence. This essay will also go on to discuss two lessons that the world should learn from Africa in as far as women empowerment is concerned such as positive discrimination in education as well as gender equality a priority.

Me Too movement started in October 2017 as a harsh tag on social media, it was founded by Tarana Burke to help in creating awareness on sexual assault and harassment of women especially in their work place. The Me Too movement came up to break the silence of women who have been in one way sexually harassed. Women harassment and sexual violence have been estimated by World Health organization to affect one third of all women worldwide¹.

The movement was born in United States, spread all over the world where women were encouraged to share their stories on sexual harassment with an aim of empowering women through empathy. The movement wants to expose the weight of this problem by showing how many people have experienced such harassment themselves.

In Africa too, some brave women shared their stories using this hashtag. In Ghana a 4 year old girl led to a massive outcry in October 2017 especially due to the fact that a local chief was involved. In Nigeria, 3 brave women shared their stories of sexual harassment with CNN. In South Africa, Jackie Phamotse also share her story of being gang raped at the age of 17 by a government official who was by then a deputy Minister².

The Me Too movement in Africa has mainly two major resonance. From the testimonies of different women across the continent, Me Too movement challenges the taboo in different African

¹ Radu, Sintia (October 25, 2017). "How #MeToo has awoken women around the world". *US News*. Archived from the original on January 6, 2018. Retrieved January 6, 2018.

² **BRIDGET BOAKYE** (December 12, 2017) "Dear Me too movement, africa is waiting!". *Face to face Africa* retrieved March 12th 2018 at <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/dear-metoo-movement-africa-waiting>

countries that do not allow women to talk about sexuality in public. Like in Senegal, some women said that the movement inspired the first conversation they had ever had in about sexual harassment and they were relieved to share with their friends those stories. Some girls said it is a taboo to talk about such things and it would result in them failing to find husbands in future.³ Me Too movement therefore challenged the cultural beliefs and taboos that have been part of what contributes to the women rights abuse in Africa.

Another resonance is that the Me Too movement came as an addition to the efforts already made by governments and regional organizations to promote gender and empower women. In Ethiopia for example, last year in November, nine middle-school aged girls organized together and spoke out about an abusive teacher in their school, saying they got the idea from the "Me Too" movement. The teacher was dismissed and referred to law enforcement.

Looking at women's rights in the angle of sexual violence alone would be myopic, we have to look at also, their rights in communities/societies, also in the education and work sector. Many African countries have achieved a lot in empowering women in both the workplaces and in education. This has been a result of efforts made by governments, regional and sub regional commitment to gender equality and women empowerment. For instance Rwanda's parliamentary seats are taken up by women on account of 64%⁴. On average, enrolment in primary school is now higher for girls than for boys. The gender parity index (GPI) for net enrolment stands at 1.01, meaning there are 101 girls against 100 boys in primary school in the eastern and southern African region.⁵

It is true that since some countries of Africa still face the problems of insecurity there is still human rights abuse especially the women rights, however as seen above, there is already a great progress and achievement made in the biggest part of Africa. Without a doubt there are some lessons that the world should learn from African countries in as far as the women empowerment is concerned especially in the areas of education, work and society at large.

Making gender equality a priority has been a key champion factor in empowering women in Africa. President Kagame Paul of Rwanda said on international women's day 2018 that "any place that does not make gender equality a priority is probably getting other important things wrong"⁶ African leaders launched the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 and the Fund for African Women to accelerate the implementation of all commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment on the continent as an effort to make gender equality a priority in Africa.

³ Nellie Peyton (OCTOBER 20, 2017) "Me Too challenges taboo against admitting sexual abuse in Africa" Reuters news. Retrieved on March 12, 2018 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-women-sexcrimes/metoo-challenges-taboo-against-admitting-sexual-abuse-in-africa-idUSKBN1CP1CG>

⁴ UN Rwanda. (October, 6, 2013) "Women secure 64 per cent of seats in Rwandan parliamentary elections" retrieved March 12th 2018 at <http://www.rw.one.un.org/press-center/news/women-secure-64-cent-seats-rwandan-parliamentary-elections>

⁵ UNICEF "Gender and education" retrieved on 12th March 2018 at https://www.unicef.org/esaro/7310_Gender_and_education.html

⁶ KT Press Team December 13, 2017 "The Feminist President? What KAGAME Has Said On Women Over The Years?" Kigali Today news retrieved on March 12 2018 at <http://ktpress.rw/2017/12/the-feminist-president-what-kagame-has-said-on-women-over-the-years/>

This has dramatically changed the status quo of African women's role in workplace and society of Africa. The world should learn this too. The world could learn this from Africa.

Positive discrimination gives a favor to girls a little bit higher than boys to access in education through National examination performance. This has been done in Africa especially in Rwanda and has led to significant and tremendous achievement in education of girls and women in general. Rwanda has literacy rate ratio of 78% to 77% females to males⁷. The world could learn this from Africa too.

Conclusively, Me Too movement has done a lot to challenge the beliefs and customs from African cultures that had for so long deprived the women to speak out, without speaking out there was no way to which such kind of violence would have been exposed. Me Too movement also added to the efforts of Africans to women empowerment by inspiring women to share their stories of sexual harassment. Positive discrimination in education sector, gender equality as priority in employment and in society have been a key for African countries in empowering women that the rest of the world should learn as lessons from Africa.
