



**Guest: 2024 ALC Fellows**

**Host: Desmond Davies**

**Show: Discussion Programme**

**Time: 48:54**

**Date: 2024**

## Transcript

00:00:26

The.

00:00:31 Mounira Chuaeb

Hello and welcome to the ALC Pan-African radio's discussion programme. The discussion programme brings together experts to reflect on a variety of current security issues facing Africa at local, national and international levels.

00:00:48 Desmond Davies

Hello. I'm Desmond Davies. My guests are Marceline Odhiambo from Kenya, founder of grassroots women and Politics, a community-based organisation.

00:00:59 Desmond Davies

Kaltumi Abdulazeez Abdulaziz from Nigeria, who is the founder of Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support initiative (LEGASI).

00:01:06 Desmond Davies

Both of them are currently fellows at the African Leadership Centre. Marceline is doing the masters in leadership and development in London, while Kaltumi is a Women's fellow in Nairobi. Marceline, can you please tell us a bit about your organisation, grassroots women and politics?

00:01:24 Marceline Odhiambo

Thank you. Grassroots women and politics organisation is based in.

00:01:29 Marceline Odhiambo

In Ndhiwa constituency that is in Homa Bay County, in Kenya, our focus group is Widows who are living with HIV and the windows that are invisibly disabled. We have the visibly disabled windows and also the invisibly disabled, so they invisibly disabled.

00:01:47 Marceline Odhiambo

Have often been neglected, so they're part of the focus group and we focus on creating political awareness, sexual reproductive health and rights.

00:01:56 Marceline Odhiambo

It's conflicting peace resolution and also we deal with financial literacy within the community.

00:02:04 Desmond Davies

Come to what about your organisation LEGASI?

00:02:07 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

LEGASI is a women-led organisation with a mission to raise a generation of highly empowered, educated and independent women. And of course, we put a lot of resonance in building women's capacity to be able to be part of decision-making especially.

00:02:26 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

In their communities.

00:02:26 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Which is also a resonance to some of the values expressed within the United Nations Security Council Resolution 32 five.

00:02:33 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We're.

00:02:34 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

A lot of emphasis was made on the role of women in peace.

00:02:37 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Especially participation prevention and also imposed conflict reconstruction. So specifically we work with women and youth. However, we put more emphasis in supporting women in grassroot communities.

00:02:51 Desmond Davies

Marceline, how have you been coping with the entrenched societal deals with women whereby they should be seen and not heard? I mean has has been a struggle.

00:03:00 Desmond Davies

Cool for you to establish your organisation.

00:03:03 Marceline Odhiambo

Yes, that has been a great challenge, especially in the rural areas where there is the gender roles and stereotyping of women. So in most cases you find that in most discussions that are held within the Community that is from.

00:03:19 Marceline Odhiambo

The local barazas and all that women don't participate in those conversations. Yet important conversations are hard that affect their lives.

00:03:27 Marceline Odhiambo

So we have left to just have conversations in the market and all that. But when it comes to these spaces, they don't give the opinion because they feel this is a male area and they're the ones who are supposed to dominate. This also trickles down even into the churches because Kenya's predominantly a Christian community. So when that even in the churches, women are supposed to carry.

00:03:48 Marceline Odhiambo

Particular way so this also hinders them in participating, especially for us who are engaging them on political awareness, where the political space is again male.

00:03:59 Marceline Odhiambo

Dominated area, so it becomes a little bit tricky for them to change this space.

00:04:04 Desmond Davies

Khaled, what about Najee? I mean, you are pretty middle in the north, isn't it? Which is a Muslim area of Nigeria.

00:04:12 Desmond Davies

G encounter the same problems about men's reluctance to give women space in society.

00:04:18 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

That is correct and permit me to say that, you know, this is no longer a new news because there has been an intergenerational assessment.

00:04:28 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

You know, ostracised from being part of decision making and of course, including in governance, as my colleague Marcellin have just talked about, and this has not changed. Yeah, I mean, this is the 21st century, but it hasn't changed. There is still, you know.

00:04:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Insignificant representation of women, even the recent United Nations General.

00:04:49 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Then please further the tresses. You know my stance to say that women are still under represented because, you know in 1945 we have just four women signed the United Nations Charter and this has a change watch because 2022.

00:05:05 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

He had.

00:05:05 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We represented in the General Assembly, So what this means is that yes, there is a beautiful document with honest intention about women. Inclusivity. However, implementation is yet to set in. There is a there is a huge gap between virtually conviction versus reality because.

00:05:25 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Women are often and continuously, you know, marginalised, ostracised and and and.

00:05:31 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

From taking part in meaningful engagement, I mean, I have been told so many times to go get married that I'm wasting my time in peace building work.

00:05:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

So many times that yes, not meant for a woman that I'm doing this not meant for a woman. I have been told so many times that it's not that what I'm doing is not going to be successful and I think this is the major motivation that gives me that sense of commitment, you know, to continue to do what I do.

00:05:57 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To stereotype at the status quo of how community perceive women and the role of women in the community.

00:06:04 Desmond Davies

Marcella, we also been.

00:06:06 Desmond Davies

To get married and forget about your project.

00:06:08 Marceline Odhiambo

Yes, not only my project, even at the time when I was intending to contest for the county assembly position, I was told that I needed to get married fast and also why am I intending to contest in an area where my dad comes from? I'm supposed to get married and go and contest from that.

00:06:16 Desmond Davies

Goods.

00:06:25 Marceline Odhiambo

But.

00:06:25 Marceline Odhiambo

You look at it in the political dynamic, women are.

00:06:28 Marceline Odhiambo

You should contest in an area where you are married.

00:06:31 Marceline Odhiambo

Those who contest in the areas that they are married, like our current Governor, Gladys Wanga, you're also still being told to go back to your father's home and and and contest there. Well, men don't experience this. This same challenge also with the organisation itself.

00:06:47 Marceline Odhiambo

The name grassroots women and politics. It was an issue even when I was trying to register it because.

00:06:52 Marceline Odhiambo

There is a way that politics is perceived. It's like when you talk about politics. It means you are already aligned or something. So you are expected to use more feminine names like women empowerment and all that. But then this is what I want. This is what I'm focusing on. So that was also an issue and then most organisations don't focus on the political dynamics.

00:07:13 Marceline Odhiambo

Within the organisation, so they see that the politics only of those contesting for political positions and all that. Yet we don't understand that politics is even played within the household. So yes, for me it has been a great challenge.

00:07:27 Desmond Davies

Yeah, but 'cause to me. I think that this thing about women not coming forward is well entrenched. They're themselves are not too keen to come forward in the 1st place, aren't they? They just assume that everything should be done by men. That's what the society has always prescribed them.

00:07:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Yeah, well, but then I think I kind of have a different perspective to that, because I mean, women are custodians cultures and can't blame too much on them because there's a lot of influence.

00:07:56 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Of sometimes you see women you know, not owning their own decision because they're influenced by their husband, by their brothers, by family. There's a lot of societal expectations for women as to how we should live our lives. So that's existence, that patriarchy, you know, have kind of.

00:08:14 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Caused you know, an imbalance in power, and I mean, how many times have we heard about elimination of discrimination against men? It doesn't exist. There's no such thing as fighting for men's rights.

00:08:26 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Compared to women, I mean, look at the 1979 Cedar Conference that the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. I mean, look at the Beijing Conference of 95, look at.

00:08:38 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

The United Nations Security Council resolution 3025. All of these resolutions focuses to amplify and advance the role of women in terms of leadership, in terms of their right in terms of their opportunities. What that entails is that there is an existing gap and the world knows that there is an existing gap, however.

00:08:57 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Putting an implementation plan has.

00:09:00 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

You know, difficult and that is because we cannot run away from our reality with that. Their cutting expedition of women, only politics. Yes, we keep talking about women's participation and all that. How about women's protection? We have seen a lot of women come out to vie for elective positions and they are killed in the process. And I can give you several examples.

00:09:21 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Thank you. Thank you.

00:09:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Election I can give you example of Natasha.

00:09:25 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Foggy state. She was humiliated. There were seven attacks on her. What is her offence? Just because she showed interest to be a leader? So there are many factors.

00:09:36 Desmond Davies

Who are attacking the weather, both men and women was just men. I'm sure women were also telling her to step down, weren't they?

00:09:41 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

No, not in her case. This case is different. I must tell you.

00:09:45 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Activist women are changing dinner with women are coming up with serious intention, you know, to be part of the process because we know that this has affected us in so many ways that we are unable to fulfil our potential and aspirations. So the narrative is changing and are quite disagreed to that because in cognitive state, women came out in large numbers.

00:10:07 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Forms to protest and advocate to secure their right. To say that the mandate of women are taken from them, especially in the case of Natasha, so that case was different. Look at the women that are out in Yola, the same experience.

00:10:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Still, one that demanded was forcefully and intentionally taken away from her because of the notions and, you know, statement as women cannot lead us, you know, and they always have a way of bringing cultural and religious.

00:10:36 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

You know.

00:10:37 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

The kind of, you know, betray some of this belief of theirs. So it has nothing to do with women not mobilising women. I do not agree with that. I agree that, yeah, there are areas to be improved on, but women are ready to be part of the process if only we have that safe space.

00:10:53 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To exercise and also to bring in our skills to the table. And that table is not there even as we speak, but we are ready to create that table.

00:11:02 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Ourselves, yes.

00:11:03 Desmond Davies

But Marcelline, that's the point. African women have always been the bedrock of the African family. They have maintained stable families. They have brought up the children they've paid for school fees.

00:11:15 Desmond Davies

The families quite well. So why can't they then be allowed to help in running the country?

00:11:20 Desmond Davies

Rather than just a small family unit, maybe things will change for the better because men have left the continent down, haven't they? In terms of leadership?

00:11:27 Marceline Odhiambo

Well, I think the main problem is patriarchy and patriarchy is deeply rooted in us, be it men and women, because we are a product of it. So you look at a case where, yes, a woman can be a natural and can be able to lead the family provide and all that. But.

00:11:43 Marceline Odhiambo

This end at the service level like the the lower levels. But when we are sent into the power hierarchy then predominantly the men why are women not in those spaces? Because sometimes there is internalised surgeony within women themselves through like there are cases where we doubt ourselves.

00:12:01 Marceline Odhiambo

You find that for example, when you.

00:12:02 Marceline Odhiambo

Doing an application for a job.

00:12:04 Desmond Davies

Yes.

00:12:04 Marceline Odhiambo

That's what I want. If she doesn't have like 2 qualities, she will automatically dismiss herself. Like I I don't think I'll be able to succeed, but for a man, even if he only has two of those qualities and the rest he doesn't have, he'll take the shot. It comes with the level of confidence building that we need to build out for the women.

00:12:22 Marceline Odhiambo

Make them feel like they're also capable of venturing into these places, but also another hindrance is the kind of violence that women experience when they.

00:12:30 Marceline Odhiambo

Maintained to areas that are predominantly male, this is the physical abuse the social media abuse that people experience. I've been a victim of cyberbullying, so I know how it affects you as a person and.

00:12:43 Desmond Davies

But there are two types of women in Africa, the rural women and the city women. The city women seem to have their way. They seem to make a lot of impact, whereas in rural areas there is still a traditional society.

00:12:57 Desmond Davies

Does that work? The difference is in women living a city or urban areas and those in the rural area, or are they all lumped together?

00:13:05 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

You are correct to sort of give a kind of hierarchy. You know when you're talking about women in the rural areas and also those in the urban areas. However, I would like to also.

00:13:16 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Attest to the fact that women in the rural areas are doing a lot, you know, to make changes is just that nobody is there to capture their stories. And that is where the gap there.

00:13:28 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

What exist women are doing amazing. There are so many women who are taking upon advocacy, you know, to change narratives in their communities. There are women who are leading and also creating changes, no matter how little, is just that oftentimes we do not recognise and capture the stories of these women.

00:13:49 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To say that you know, just saying that everything rises and falls with leadership.

00:13:53 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And it is funny how women are often believed not to have the intellectual capacity and competencies to be leaders. However, these same women are the ones who is still the

skills that men have. I mean, who gave birth to men? It's a woman who give them the skills that they have to lead. It is women. But when it comes to.

00:14:15 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Leadership rules.

00:14:16 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We do not remember that women are custodians and women are the teachers and that women are the resilient group of people who, despite different circumstances, still come out strong and happy.

00:14:31 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And and able to accommodate you know all forms of atrocities that is being committed. And also I would like to also highlight the fact that when you talk about leadership, it is not a competition. Sometimes people make it seem like, oh, women are trying to forget about their roles and to take upon leadership role, which is not.

00:14:51 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

He ascribed role to women.

00:14:54 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

In 2017, research that 1.8 billion of the global population are young people and half of this population are women. And as we're getting it wrong.

00:15:05 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Women in leadership spaces we should be asking ourselves these questions. There are so many stories that we should learn from. I mean, look at the Liberian women. Look at the level of commitment and efforts that they put to bring about peace and women inclusivity.

00:15:20

Yes, yes.

00:15:21 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

There is a lot women have in built.

00:15:24 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Skills that is yet to be harnessed because they're not given the opportunity to explore them.

00:15:28 Desmond Davies

What Marceline massacre?

00:15:31 Desmond Davies

Did quite well in the election last year as well. Doing is really late. I mean, did that make a difference in the way women were viewed in the political sphere in Kenya?

00:15:43 Marceline Odhiambo

Well, all we know about matter is that she's not corrupt, as it's proven on. And also it was felt like by having the gender balance in women to feel more represented because like.

00:15:48 Desmond Davies

Please.

00:15:56 Marceline Odhiambo

Half of the population in Kenya is female, so when you see a woman in a particular position, you feel like that should represent my interest and all that. But then now when we went back to the elections and then she couldn't even win in her own polling station, it brought a lot of question marks because women also come from that area.

00:16:15 Marceline Odhiambo

And there are also voters and women are also still the majority of the voters. How come she even lost in the in that?

00:16:20 Desmond Davies

Well, yeah, they didn't vote for her. So what's the problem?

00:16:23 Marceline Odhiambo

It doesn't bring in the conflict that people think women are against each other. People have their preferences.

00:16:29 Marceline Odhiambo

In the same same county.

00:16:32 Marceline Odhiambo

Why Guru is also a female? So I it's not about women not supporting other women, but it's about the preferences that someone have another woman can be better in a particular situation and another is not. So it also plays on the dynamic of politics. Where did she align herself and?

00:16:47 Marceline Odhiambo

Where is the political situation of the country heading toward?

00:16:51 Marceline Odhiambo

It's.

00:16:52 Marceline Odhiambo

About the alignment, if we can teach and political parties dynamic.

00:16:56 Desmond Davies

But God, to me, I mean this issue of women trying to shut their authority is not just focus on Africa. It's a global issue. And where is Africa?

00:17:07 Desmond Davies

And the hierarchy of all these, all these problems is Africa. We're down on us. Africa made a lot of progress in terms of women's empowerment.

00:17:17 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Yes it is. But I must say that there are some level of progress. However, there is still.

00:17:26 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

A lot of effort to be put in place to ensure that we kind of strike some certain percentage.

00:17:32 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Of women inclusivity because taking Nigeria now speaking to context, taking Nigeria for an example, I think you know the opportunity for women to kind of take upon elected positions has drastically reduced in the year 2000 down to 2023 percentage.

00:17:50 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Has reduced to five as at 2000 was about 12% and drastically it deteriorated to a point of 5%, meaning that it is not improving, you know, to be precise usually.

00:18:02 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Yes, we see women who are giving up, you know, appointed positions. But in elective positions, no. I mean, when last did we have a female governor in Nigeria. So the question we should be asking when last did we have a woman as a vice President? You know, those kind of positions that allows for women to have.

00:18:20 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Influence, you know, and the ability to speak to power, to influence policies that can impact lives. I mean, the essence of power is to be able to make a change.

00:18:29 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

There's limitations as to what we can do as women and the position that we hold as women, because at the end of the day there's a level of hierarchy like Marceline have rightly pointed out where people are able to assert power to make certain changes and those are the levels that we are.

00:18:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We've been taking a.

00:18:46 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Such rules, we're not talking about, Secretary. We're not talking about personal assistance or special adviser. No, that is not what we're talking about. We're talking about issues and can contribute in a meaningful and in a constructive way. And that is why it is important.

00:19:03 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

That we begin to institutionalised cultures and frameworks that allows.

00:19:07 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

For meaningful engagement of women giving women chances and safe spaces for them to contribute because you know one of the areas of research that can really, really interested in is to begin to talk about those hidden violences that women go through.

00:19:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

In politics, women don't talk about it because of the society, the society we use it against you, you know, it's so easy for a woman to be called all sort of name once you come out as a woman to vie for a political position, you have, oh, she's a prostitute. Oh, she's stubborn in fact.

00:19:38 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

They're hardly differentiate between confidence.

00:19:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Being called stubborn.

00:19:43 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

They're all manner of name.

00:19:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Will be called, but that is not because.

00:19:45 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

For men, nobody calls him man a prostitute. No, this name is always attributed to women. Why? Because you come out to seek for your fundamental basic right. This is the reality. And this is what we are talking about. Recently I was in a panel of discussion with some group of men.

00:20:03 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And somebody I was him to say, traditional leader, he said. How can a woman be a leader, for instance, now we can be having a meeting and she's having her menstrual cycle or we are told that a woman is in Labour and I mean.

00:20:17 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Kind of idiosyncrasy. What kind of mindset is that? A woman give birth to this person that is saying this type of thing. How is it something that stops a woman to participate? You know, as a leader, I mean, it is not an offence.

00:20:33 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Menstrual cycle. It's natural. It is not an offence for women to be held onto that fact. To say that you know.

00:20:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

But these are factors that can limit them. So yeah, I think we have a lot of work.

00:20:45 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Be done.

00:20:46 Desmond Davies

Yeah, there's been retrograde situation regarding women because, I mean, W African history is replete with women leaders who fought against the colonialist, including.

00:21:01 Desmond Davies

Fella kouti's mum. She was a solid opponent to the to the British colonial rule in Nigeria and she was fitted once you have Africans in charge, they then sidelined women.

00:21:12 Desmond Davies

Went wrong, then in Nigeria, you know, W African women have been very powerful before independence in terms of challenging the status quo.

00:21:20 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Absolutely. You can also highlight and give an example of Queen Amina of Zaria, who led her.

00:21:28 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

If she led men, solid men to war to secure, you know, her state, that is for you to see that women are capable if given the chance to take upon these rules, and we cannot again over emphasise issues around.

00:21:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And what you know, cultural norms, those to the mind.

00:21:48 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

People because that is the very first step of sense of discrimination that is often ascribed to women. They said, oh, our culture does not allow women to do this or our religion does not allow women to do this. There are so many innovations that are deviation.

00:22:06 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

There are so many neologies that are extreme, you know, and that is why we also talk about moderation and sense of inclusion when we are designing programmes whose focus is to kind of change the narrative as to how people think.

00:22:20 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

About women or who?

00:22:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Is and the roles of the women in the society and well, it hasn't been easy, but I will say that we are heading there. We hope that in the future and sooner enough, you know the society begin to realise that.

00:22:37 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Without women in the society, we still have a long way to talk about development because women are natural peacebuilders women are natural leaders. Women are natural mediators. Women are natural problem solvers. Women are.

00:22:52 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

A lot of a group of people.

00:22:54 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

So that they are able to bring a solution to.

00:22:57 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

At all levels that you engage them all that we need is a safe space to harness all these skills. That is it. And for our mental real, it's not a competition. It is not feminism. Because when you begin to talk about women's right, because women's right are human, right, when you begin to talk about it, the first thing they call you, oh, she's a feminist or or a.

00:23:06 Speaker 1

Yes.

00:23:18 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Centrist. No, nobody is saying centrist. We do not hate men. I mean, we have fathers, we have brothers, we have husbands. I am married. So why will I hate him? And no, we are saying that as much as we understand the role of men, their natural roles and the socially ascribed roles given to men, we also need women to play their roles also, so that at the end of the day, we have.

00:23:39 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

The link of connectivity. We have a holistic approach in bringing about development to our society and not just focusing and giving opportunities. You know, to men, but also giving and supporting women to allow them to bring their skills.

00:23:54 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And to harness their potentials in bringing about constructive and transformational changes in the society.

00:24:00 Desmond Davies

Yes, Marcelina, I mean, do you have the same problem in Kenya? Because I'm sure during the fight against British colonial rule, women also played a strong role in the Mao Mao struggle. Can you give us some examples of how things?

00:24:14 Desmond Davies

Developed over the years.

00:24:15 Marceline Odhiambo

I think women like Mecate really played an important role, but.

00:24:19 Marceline Odhiambo

When you look at the role that women played, even during that colonial period during the Maji Maji rebellion and all that, it was not recorded in history like it's just not locally within the storytelling, but history.

00:24:33 Marceline Odhiambo

Has often ignored or not recorded that all that women played, or even if it's recorded, it's made to look like it's what they're supposed to do, like ensuring that the men had their food. The women who hid the warriors and all that. It's. It's meant to look like.

00:24:50 Marceline Odhiambo

It's. It's what they're supposed to do and it's something small. I think it's not downplayed, it's not recorded. So we have so many women who played a role. But just because they're not in the history books doesn't mean that they don't exist. So that's why they're all of men has often been downplayed and ignored.

00:25:06 Desmond Davies

Well, since I'm a journalist and a communicator, why don't I mean you your organisation start recording these things in writing.

00:25:14 Desmond Davies

That will help to change perceptions of women in Kenya and also Nigeria Muslim.

00:25:21 Marceline Odhiambo

Yes, I I don't have a choice because at least for the sake of their own visibility and also for people to understand the history of where women come from and not to make it look like women are not supposed to be in the leadership positions like some of us have got political interests.

00:25:36 Marceline Odhiambo

And we really want to be in the political space to be in those tables, that decisions are being made and also to bring different kind of changes that you want to experience in our countries. But then we have also our limitations, but some are because of how we were raised.

00:25:53 Marceline Odhiambo

The way I keep on saying that patriarchy is deeply rooted in us, so even if you want to make these changes, it will take a longer time. Changing the mindset of older people as compared to the younger ones. That's why the focus area should be more of teenagers than the younger women and the.

00:26:09 Marceline Odhiambo

Good, because that is where we form the mindset that we have. We also need to change the way that people relate within the environment because environmental factors affect how we make our decision, no matter how firm I am with my decisions and how I do things. If I'm in an environment that.

00:26:27 Marceline Odhiambo

Is predominantly patriarchal. I'll internalise all these things and I'll later project them in one way or another and, knowingly or unknowingly.

00:26:36 Marceline Odhiambo

Yes, my environment also should be a factor to consider when we are trying to educate. We are trying to empower the women to be active and also to participate in different areas of leadership.

00:26:49 Speaker 1

You're listening to the discussion programme on the ALC Pan African Radio. Stay tuned.

00:26:55 Desmond Davies

Welcome back my guest, Marceline Udambo from Kenya, the founder of grassroots women and Politics, a community based organisation, and Khal Tumi. Abdul Aziz from Nigeria, who's founder of Ladies Empowerment Goals.

00:27:08 Desmond Davies

And support initiative, I guess they're both actually current fellows that African leadership Centre MASSEIN is doing the Masters in London and Khartoumi is doing a women's fellowship in Nairobi.

00:27:23 Desmond Davies

So what?

00:27:23 Desmond Davies

Financial support for your organisation, Marceline, I mean, is it strong enough to help you to achieve what you want to achieve? Where is the financial support coming from?

00:27:33 Marceline Odhiambo

Well, the major challenge that most organisations face, including mine, is the financial support, and that is something that is a problem because it has hindered me from being able to engage and empower more women. So we have to limit ourselves to maybe.

00:27:50 Marceline Odhiambo

Per quarter or maybe like 10 women. If we had better financial support, we would maybe.

00:27:55 Desmond Davies

Yes.

00:27:55 Marceline Odhiambo

Like more than that, maybe 30 or so.

00:27:58 Marceline Odhiambo

But the financial support that I have currently comes from my own savings or investments and also donations from friends, especially when I post on social media and then someone says, oh, you can use this for this and.

00:28:13 Marceline Odhiambo

So and also applying for grants here and there, which is unpredictable because understanding the dynamic of how organisations give.

00:28:21 Marceline Odhiambo

Grant, it's so difficult. Plus also with the application process when you are getting grants, there are also some things you need to adhere to that favour that particular organisation,

whether it's maybe it's something that is going against your principles, you can either choose to.

00:28:38 Marceline Odhiambo

The money or decline because it's something that you're not championing for, so there's also those issues that come into.

00:28:44 Marceline Odhiambo

But generally, finances is a big issue. I think it's it's the elephant in the room.

00:28:49 Desmond Davies

Cartoon new organisations seem to be doing quite well actually. How solid is it financially and and morally, in terms of sports?

00:28:58 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Yes, thank you for that question. When Legacy was founded in 2017, it was like a movement of passionate, you know, I had an amazing team. Well, so passionate about the work that I was doing. So basically we did kind of I used personal funds and also got donations as well from community members who believed.

00:29:18 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

What's doing? However, that couldn't really make a lot of impact because I mean the funding it's, I'll call it, a tool, you know to facilitate programming and what have you, but in 2020.

00:29:34 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Peace Direct is an internal governmental organisation in the UK. They found me through.

00:29:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

There was a platform where I spoke as a panel and I made a lot of.

00:29:44 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Passes on the need for decolonization and localization of funds for locally led initiatives, especially those led by women, because oftentimes when there is a call for application and when you look at the huge requirement, it automatically just gets us out of the competition.

00:30:03 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And then use.

00:30:04 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

See there's so many bureaucracies, and there are so many. Like I said again, criteria, for instance, that we ask you for like 15 years of experience and then they will ask you for five years of audited account. I mean that I'm a young person. You don't expect me to have all that years of experience. I mean our Rome is not built in.

00:30:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

There is need for you know, INGO's to also begin to change their strategy.

00:30:26 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

As to giving funds to organisations because you know there is need to build the capacity and the structures of existing organisations who are doing amazing, because, I mean, there are always ways of doing your due diligence check to ensure that these organisations have the power and the system and the structures to handle funds, not just in an effective way but in an efficient way.

00:30:48 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

That today, Legacy has funded more than 10 locally led initiatives by women and Youth in local communities.

00:30:56 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Communities legacy has been able to fund these organisations, even individuals, as long as you have an amazing and innovative idea that is authentic and genuine and that brings out real change in your community, we found you.

00:31:11 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And so we've been doing that for three years now and you'll be amazed and you'll be awed by the impactful stories that we have captured, you know from communities and what this entails or what this tells is that when you allow people affected by conflict themselves.

00:31:28 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Process of.

00:31:29 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Building and you support them. You know, you guide the process, but you allow them to own the the design, the planning and implementation of this home grown solutions. You'll

see that it is more sustainable when you form structures or when you leverage on existing structures in the communities by strengthening the structures and maybe creating a link.

00:31:50 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Between community level and state level engagement, you see that there is a holistic and there is a genuine, you know, approach to the peace building initiatives in communities and so far so good. I would say that we are moving beyond conflict resolution to conflict transformation.

00:32:07 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Where we are focusing on the root causes of conflicts and not treating symptoms as a lot of society organisations have done for a long time. We do need assessment, we have what we call the Community Accountability Reporting and reflection mechanisms that allows us to get suggestions from conflicts, habituated communities.

00:32:25 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To give us feedback on how they want our intervention to suit the context of the conflict in their communities, and we also have the gender equity, diversity and social equity.

00:32:35 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

That allow us to design specific activities that target young people, women and youth in a way that it builds their capacity and their interpersonal skills to be able, facilitate dialogue and even formal mediation process at Community level. So, so far, we also document these stories.

00:32:53 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And the reason why we integrated visual documentation is because sometimes you know written narratives or report does not show emotions. You know, it does not show people's passion. But when you do, you know, documentaries where you allow people to tell their own stories, it allows.

00:33:09 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

The audience and people who don't even know.

00:33:11 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Look at go to see the passion in fields that they have and the effort that they're making in changing the narratives in their.

00:33:19 Desmond Davies

Communities marcelline.

00:33:21 Desmond Davies

Mean the opposition women and young people.

00:33:23 Desmond Davies

Are facing Africa.

00:33:26 Desmond Davies

I think should be highlighted because I mean the African Union, which is talking about 2063 for a better Africa. Who are you talking to? Well, you are the young people who should now be prepared for leadership in 2016, but not these leaders. They won't be around. So how can you then try to let them know?

00:33:43 Desmond Davies

You know that they should support you and your organisation to ensure that the right leadership is in Africa by 2063 or else, I mean the continent will be open for the exploitation.

00:33:55 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Well.

00:33:55 Marceline Odhiambo

I think it's for the young people to start by supporting each other first. Like if I like water, for example, culturally is doing, she's in the peace building and I'm in the political space. These things are intertwined and related. So if you can start by supporting each other at the local level first.

00:34:13 Marceline Odhiambo

And also starting from where you are like I'm not that financially capable.

00:34:18 Marceline Odhiambo

But because I saw a gap within the community and decided like, this is what I want to do and this is the match that I can be able to do and then you see another young person doing something almost similar, maybe in relation to, for example, peace building, the way culturally is.

00:34:33 Marceline Odhiambo

You partner and come together. You start from within you. You start by working together and this will also attract other young people to come and volunteer and work with you and all that.

00:34:41 Marceline Odhiambo

With that, I think you'll be able to rise and with the numbers, you can push forward one person or more people so that the leaders who are currently existing to know that this is a different generation, how they approach things and how they view things and how they view leadership is not the same as the way we've been doing things. So how can we incorporate them? How can we?

00:35:02 Marceline Odhiambo

Order to also bring in the different perspective that they have based on their generation, because most of the things that are done with the older leaders, the younger people cannot relate because.

00:35:14 Marceline Odhiambo

They have a different experience. They have different challenges, they have different approaches in how they handle things. The older generation may be, for example, really prioritise having a formal employment as compared to the current generation that everyone wants to do something from the cell so that they have freedom.

00:35:31 Marceline Odhiambo

To learn more skills.

00:35:34 Marceline Odhiambo

To explore their Italians and all that, it's not particularly academic related like in the olden days, but then now the approach really matters and it's so different for different generations. So by looking at this dynamics and also for the young people to come together and support each other.

00:35:49 Marceline Odhiambo

Because in most cases you see like when we have young leaders like, for example, the Bobby wine from Uganda. Yeah, you come into a space where you find that there is this say that young people in Kenya like saying.

00:36:04 Marceline Odhiambo

As a youth, if you decide to go for a position, you have to use one hand to fight for that position, and you also have to use the other hand to fight the other youth fighting you. So how can you fight when you're already divided? You know? So we also need to be.

00:36:19 Marceline Odhiambo

Of each other.

00:36:20 Desmond Davies

The division is fine, I mean, that's what.

00:36:23 Desmond Davies

But the point is, I mean, why do young people?

00:36:28 Desmond Davies

Mainly men fall for that. The trap which the politicians place for them every five years. They use them, and then they discard them. Look at what's happened in Kenya. President Ruto promised all sorts of things. Now young people who backed him are struggling.

00:36:45 Desmond Davies

So how can your organisation, in terms of not just women, young people, who are the future of the continent, strengthen their own control over politicians?

00:36:55 Marceline Odhiambo

By first acknowledging that power and position will never be handed to you, sometimes you have to be radical and take up space. It starts from you and the knowledge that you already have, and I think the young people are often used because of.

00:37:10 Marceline Odhiambo

Availability. Young people are often available and have a lot of energy. So.

00:37:16 Marceline Odhiambo

Among the young people we are so gullible. Like if we see an opportunity that we are able to be seen on the limelight or and all that you find that young people actively participate and this also comes from the point of not having something to do after graduation or something.

00:37:32 Marceline Odhiambo

People don't have jobs, so when they see such an opportunity to be out there, they take it as an advantage of something to keep them going and keep the days going so it's easier for leaders to use young people and then now when division is being done in terms of.

00:37:46 Marceline Odhiambo

Allocation of roles.

00:37:47 Marceline Odhiambo

It's allocated to the old people like even if you look at the dynamic of the CS positions in Kenya and also the CS positions in Kenya, it's supposed to be for the youth. But if you look at it predominantly it's it's for the rich and the old people who have been in politics as people call them political riders, people who campaign.

00:38:08 Marceline Odhiambo

Bite and lost. Now they're being rewarded for those positions and the youth are supposed to be there. But why is this happening? Because the young people are also so much disadvantaged in terms of finances.

00:38:17 Marceline Odhiambo

And when it comes to leadership positions, especially in Africa, financial muscle is a powerful tool.

00:38:23 Desmond Davies

Yeah, that's the point. I want to make to come to me, this is the problem last 30-40 years. What do young people know about politics? It's just to get there, hang on to power and steal money left, right. And said we do not have leaders who can show them the way like 40-50 years ago.

00:38:40 Desmond Davies

So what can young people do to make sure that things change because they don't know anything else about politics apart from hanging onto power and lining your pockets? What you're resisting doing in terms of changing this perception, this perception about politics?

00:38:53 Desmond Davies

Some people.

00:38:54 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

I'll respond to that by saying that it is the older generation who created that mindset in the.

00:39:03 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We'll also have come to, you know, to that term of of mindset that you know, the politics is just about looting and in some cases, states capture. I mean, when you begin to divert.

00:39:18 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Public funds, you know, into a private belonging, as if it's a family wealth. You know that is that capture as well and.

00:39:24 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

I will also like to reiterate and to add some points to what Marcelin have highlighted, because if you recall vividly, you may be aware there was a time that there was this huge advocacy on the not too young to run Bill yes.

00:39:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

It did not long to run. Bill was quite successful because it was able to capture a lot of audience, but I would categorically say that I am not too young to run, but I am too poor to run because, I mean, if for me to come out to vie for a political position in, for instance, my country, Nigeria, I can't even afford to buy.

00:40:00 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Reformed because just to get the form of interest so that you're interested. It's in millions. So it is an intentional, you know strategy to to kind of \*\*\*\* young people from participating. And that is why democracy has become, you know, something that is only meant for the rich and that is why you see the leadership. It has become like a cycle.

00:40:21 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Where people move from one political party to the other, but you have the same people moving from one political party to the other with no room for an ordinary Kal, Tumi or an ordinary Marcelin, you know to compete with them or or to come into that space because we do not have the financial capacity and capability to do.

00:40:40 Desmond Davies

That, yeah, but I mean.

00:40:43 Desmond Davies

Actually you can join the system, join the parties and start changing from within the. Don't you agree with that? You can't just go into loan, join a party?

00:40:49 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Yeah, I agree with you.

00:40:52 Marceline Odhiambo

But when you're.

00:40:54 Marceline Odhiambo

Saying parties, parties are already formed, they already have the existing structures and even if you look at it, yes, they have the youth focus. Even if you start at that, their politics that is played especially within the political parties is even worse than the politics being played outside the political parties.

00:41:12 Marceline Odhiambo

Because they're keeping makers, there are people who are stuck in those places. They're the ones who make the rules. I've seen so many young people align themselves with political parties.

00:41:22 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Fight.

00:41:22 Marceline Odhiambo

So hard they campaign, but then now when it comes to allocation of.

00:41:27 Marceline Odhiambo

Position or even for them to contest in a particular area. They don't get funding from this political party. They will have to look for something unique about themselves that they can capitalise on. You know, you really have to work twice as hard as someone older and who is financially capable.

00:41:44 Marceline Odhiambo

Not because you're young, but because, like culturally says, you don't have the finances and.

00:41:50 Marceline Odhiambo

Financial muscle is important even within the political parties. When you are going to buy the membership card, what are you going to use as a young person and look at it in the dynamic that you don't have lots of income. So are you going to look for your survival or you're going to invest in something that some people are using?

00:42:06 Marceline Odhiambo

The extra money they have but you you're using the money you have for your basic needs, so it's still a.

00:42:11 Desmond Davies

Problem but, but that's very good. I mean both.

00:42:15 Desmond Davies

And very ambitious, and they did quite well, don't you think that this is a start? It's better for you, such organisations to form have a solid network throughout the continent and then that will start bringing about changes. What do you think about that cultural?

00:42:30 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We are correct, Jerry is saying that you know an ability without an opportunity is nothing.

00:42:36 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And I think that is personally I do not take for granted, you know, the importance of networking and building my interpersonal capacity because you know, sometimes the only way.

00:42:49 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

That we are able to prove to people that we can do it is when they see us doing it is when they see that you have the capacity to do it. So that is why.

00:42:57 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

It is important that we continuously build our capacity to be able, you know, to sit on that table and when given the opportunity, you know you do the needful networking. It's something we already doing. Trust me, for instance, I partnered with the African Women Leaders Programme.

00:43:15 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

They are based in the UK.

00:43:16 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

The French in Nairobi I also partnered with how many other?

00:43:21 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Just to see that we create a strong network where we are able to begin to change that the status school and where we are to begin to push for ideas that support women, inclusivity in the democratic space. And trust me, I agree with you to say that for us to make some of these changes.

00:43:39 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

We need to be part of the process. I totally agree with you. But.

00:43:42 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

You will be surprised that young people are joining politics personally. There was a time I transitioned into politics. I was part of the young Progressive Party where I took the position of the deputy. I've even forgotten the position.

00:43:58 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

It wasn't working. People continued to look at me as a young person, and when they're going out for, you know that high level engagement and discussion, they're going to go with me. They leave me behind just to take notes and all that.

00:44:09 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

This is the reality. So even even the democracy that we are talking about, it is now a democracy of selection and not election. Most of these positions that are given to people is like a reward for your role as a campaigner or for giving financial.

00:44:25 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Contribution or for for mobilising. You know, these are now ways where positions are given.

00:44:32 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To people, it has gotten as bad as that. So what would you have us do as a young person when you fight yourself with that kind of space, you cannot force it things to happen your way. So the only thing we can do is to continue to campaign, continue to advocate and continue to have platform like the one you're giving us right now.

00:44:35

Mm.

00:44:50 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Where our voices can be heard.

00:44:50 Desmond Davies

Yes.

00:44:53 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Opportunities can be given to us, you know, to give us a chance to see what we can do.

00:44:57 Desmond Davies

I I was about to say the.

00:44:58

Yeah.

00:44:59 Desmond Davies

And that's what.

00:45:00 Desmond Davies

My mentorship media communications will bring the weakness we have in Africa. It's lack of communication. I mean those in authority, including your organisation, don't communicate effectively with the people. You're like, Europe and America.

00:45:15 Desmond Davies

The communication from those in authority is very effective, so that's what we'll try and develop. Yes, it's a good idea.

00:45:20

Developer.

00:45:22 Desmond Davies

You will be able to communicate effectively, but Marceline, I mean you have plans to enter politics in 2027.

00:45:31 Desmond Davies

Is that correct?

00:45:32 Marceline Odhiambo

They do.

00:45:33 Desmond Davies

How about you, khalchui? Are you going to go into full-fledged politics?

00:45:37 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Absolutely. I have plus transition into politics. In fact, sometimes my dreams do scare me because I am intentional wanting to President.

00:45:47 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Country. Someday I do not know how fast that is.

00:45:49 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

What is going to? But I believe that it is something that is possible if I have the right network. If I have the right mentors, if I have the right platform, where people recognise the work that I am doing and showcase the work that I am doing and where I continue to prove myself to show to them that I'm not just making noise, it's not just talk but walking the talk through actions to prove.

00:45:55

Yes.

00:46:10 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Intellectually and capacity wise to show that I have what it takes to take upon you know, leadership roles and with of course support from people, we create platforms for intergenerational dialogue, where we talk about some of these challenges.

00:46:24 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

And how we can proffer solutions to how we can better work together and for young people not to be seen as agent of violence, but to also see us as ambassadors of peace, to see us as ambassadors and future, you know, of Africa as the continent. I think this will go a long way to change.

00:46:40 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Narratives of what our society looks like today.

00:46:43 Desmond Davies

Celine, despite all the problems.

00:46:45 Desmond Davies

Are you confident that your organisation will make a change? Because I mean, I have seen such organisations around in my years of journalism, they're worn down by the pressures in society and then the collapse. I mean it's organisation resilience.

00:47:01 Desmond Davies

To survive all the socio economic pressure in Kenya.

00:47:05 Marceline Odhiambo

So much and also I think we have local support which was very important initially. We didn't have that, but we have the local support. So with that we can navigate any other thing as long as we have the local support in a Community based organisation.

00:47:21 Marceline Odhiambo

Your search could go.

00:47:22 Desmond Davies

OK, come to my you're also confident.

00:47:25 Desmond Davies

The legacy will eventually make a difference. It's not Nigeria.

00:47:30 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Absolutely. We are standing the test of time and trust me, we are crossing wires to create sparks starting from Community level international level. We are trying to maintain that standard that ensures that we we are intentional we are.

00:47:38 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

2.

00:47:45 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

Committed and we are forming, you know, a genuine structure with a genuine vision and mission, and not just for any sort of financial benefit, not at all. We are very, very much intentional and passionate to bring about real change, constructive change and transformational change.

00:48:03 Kaltumi Abdulazeez

To the society at large.

00:48:05 Desmond Davies

From Kenya, founder of Grassroot Women in politics ex community based organisation, and Kal Tumi disease from Nigeria. Found of ladies and girls.

00:48:17 Desmond Davies

And support initiative legacy. Thank you very much.

00:48:20 Speaker 1

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00:48:33 Speaker 1

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00:48:34 Speaker 1

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00:48:43 Speaker 1

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