

MAPPING INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Global South women reimagining power and shifting structures



For over a decade, the Instituto Update has studied, connected, and strengthened political innovation initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Throughout this journey, we have come to understand that women — young, Black, Indigenous, and rural women — are at the forefront of democratic transformation in the region.

We believe that this phenomenon is not just Latin American—it's a phenomenon of the Global South.

That's why we turned to the African continent and carried out **Amefricanas**: our first mapping of initiatives supporting women's political leadership in Africa, in partnership with WALPE (Zimbabwe), Nalafem (Kenya), and Unidas Somos Mais Fortes (Angola).

More than just data collection, it's a deliberate effort to understand the ecosystem, identify partners, and build alliances — convinced that the political innovation we need is already being built here, in the hands of women.



BY THE NUMBERS

79

mapped
initiatives

21

African
countries

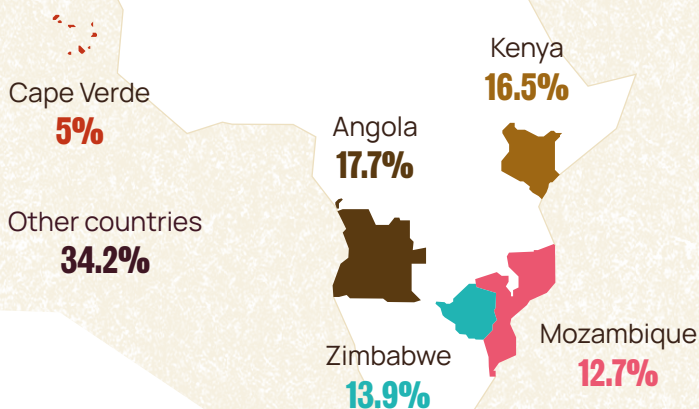
23

online interviews +
in-person meeting
with 13 initiatives

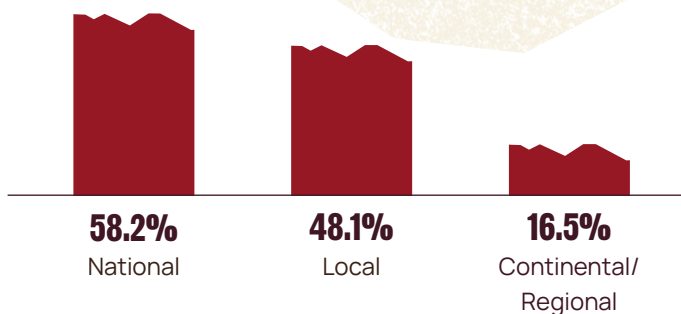
THE INITIATIVES

The mapping brings together **79** initiatives from **21 African countries** — women's rights groups, feminist collectives, LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, and local, national, and regional NGOs. Most initiatives work primarily with women and young people between the ages of 18 and 35, operate nationally or locally, and are led exclusively by women.

Distribution by country



Scale of operation



VISUALIZING THE INITIATIVES

At a glance:



Leadership

- **50.6%** led exclusively by women
- **22.8%** by young people
- **15.2%** rural women



Supported groups

- **93.7%** women
- **83.5%** young people
- **58.2%** rural communities
- **50.6%** people with disabilities
- **27.8%** LGBTQIA+



Main areas of work

- **86.1%** Women's rights and feminisms
- **69.6%** Education
- **57%** Youth rights
- **44.3%** Health
- **43%** Peace and security
- **35.4%** Climate justice
- **23%** LGBTQIA+ rights
- **19%** Right to land and territory



Political violence

- **78.5%** are involved in combating gender-based political violence



Party affiliations

- **79.7%** have no ties to political parties



Electoral support

- **34.2%** support or have supported candidates



Teams

- **63.3%** volunteers
- **36.7%** paid

MAIN FINDINGS

A VIBRANT BUT UNDERFUNDED ECOSYSTEM.

We identified a diverse and active ecosystem, but one that operates on modest budgets: **63.3%** rely on volunteer work, and only **36.7%** can pay their teams.

FEMALE LEADERSHIP IS THE RULE.

50.6% of the initiatives are led exclusively by women. Another **22.8%** have young people and **15.2%** have rural women in leadership positions — revealing a grassroots ecosystem with strong territorial roots.

REAL ADVANCES, UNEVEN PROGRESS.

Female parliamentary representation in Sub-Saharan Africa jumped from **9.8%** (1995) to **27.1%** (2025). But the progress is not uniform across the continent: the electoral system, quotas, and the strength of civil society make all the difference.

CIVIC EDUCATION LEADS — INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS LAGS BEHIND.

86.1% of the initiatives focus on women's rights and feminisms; **69.6%** on education. But only **16.5%** relate to political parties, and only **34.2%** support candidates, revealing a gap between training and direct impact.





Democratic innovation is
in the hands of women in
the Global South.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AS A BARRIER.

78.5% of initiatives work to combat gender-based political violence. In Zimbabwe, **92%** of female candidates reported experiencing some form of violence during the 2023 elections. In Africa, 80% of female parliamentarians from **50** countries reported experiencing psychological violence while in office.

UNSTABLE FUNDING THREATENS THE ECOSYSTEM.

Fundraising is the main challenge identified. Funding agencies are withdrawing support, eligibility criteria are shifting, and language barriers continue to exclude grassroots organizations — particularly in Portuguese- and French-speaking countries.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH RECOGNIZES ITSELF.

When we look across both the African and Latin American ecosystems, we find common ground — shared challenges, similar strategies, and a wealth of knowledge to exchange.



KEY STRATEGIES

POLITICAL TRAINING

Training in leadership, civic education, and electoral skills — with a focus on young women, rural women, and women with disabilities.

POLICY & LEGAL ADVOCACY

Strategic litigation, agenda setting, lobbying for parity reforms, and protection against political violence.

SOLIDARITY NETWORKS

Legal, psychological, and organizational support; creation of safe spaces for reporting, sharing, and collaboration among leaders.

INNOVATION AND DIGITAL SECURITY

Protection of civic organizations, strengthening of cybersecurity protocols, and digital inclusion in rural contexts.

This mapping is a starting point. The data presented here are preliminary findings from a process still unfolding. If this work resonates with you, let's connect — info@institutoupdate.org.br

INSTITUTO

UPDATE

ABOUT INSTITUTO UPDATE

A Latin American organization led by women who believe that more resilient and just democracies are born when diverse women with transformative ideas meet the political power needed to make them a reality.

We connect and empower a vibrant ecosystem of organizations that support innovative women in their political journeys.

With the support of

