

AMwA Beijing Herstory

The 1995 **World Conference on Women** was certainly a defining moment for many African women's journey of gender equality and women's empowerment individually and collectively. For Akina Mama wa Afrika; the conception of the African Women Leadership Institute began 3 years ago when by coincidence, a number of women such as Jerusha Arothe-Vaughan founder member of Akina Mama wa Afrika and former President and other members decided to realize their dream of returning to Africa, This left the leadership of the organization in the hands of a younger generation of women.

The concerns of AMwA members around continuity and leadership in the women's movement was shared and confirmed by other young women from Africa especially during the flurry of the global conferences over the past 5 years including the 1995 Beijing Conference. It is within this context that



the African Women Leadership Institute (AWLI) was born, with the ultimate goal of preparing the next generation of African women for leadership

AMwA decided that it was not enough to just organize adhoc activities around leadership, since there were several leadership initiatives going on within the region. This is why the AWLI was designed as a

network to link emerging African women leaders. AMwA then moved to set up the African Women leadership Institute (AWLI) in 1996 as part of the Africa Program and as a contribution to the post Beijing process. As an African women's development organization based in the North, AMwA felt that it was important to play a proactive role in contributing towards strengthening the African women's movement by helping generate both human and financial resources from within and outside Africa.

In affirming the AWLI's critical contribution to Beijing Dr. Wandira Kazibwe the then Vice President of Uganda, in her key note address emphasized the relevance of AWLI to meeting the objective G.2 of the Platform for Action *"The organization of this Institute is a significant achievement in efforts by African women to actively implement the 1995 Beijing Platform for action. Strategic Objective G.2 of the platform for action enjoins us to increase the capacities of women to participate in leadership and decision making. I would like to thank all who have contributed to this endeavor both intellectually and financially making the Beijing document a reality in Africa."*

To date the Institute has trained over 4,000 women; strengthening their leadership capacities in support for women's rights and gender equality. Majority of the alumni of the AWLI have and/or are continuing to influence the 12 critical areas of concern of BPFA in various forms within the African continent and beyond.

