Letter from the Interim Executive Director

I am pleased to share this report outlining the EJS Center’s activities and achievements over the course of 2022. I was humbled to take on the role of Interim Executive Director last year, building on the strong foundations laid by our inaugural Executive Director, Ophelia Weeks. As part of the inaugural cohort of the Amujae Initiative, I experienced the Center’s valuable work advancing women’s leadership firsthand. Now, as Interim Executive Director, I am delighted to have the opportunity to take stock of that work—and help shape the organization’s future.

Since the Center’s launch three years ago, it has supported African women leaders to advance on their leadership journeys. The year 2022 was no exception, and the Center made significant strides in its mission to break down the barriers that often hold women back from reaching the highest levels of public leadership.

Our flagship program, the Amujae Initiative, once again saw a remarkable year. The two cohorts of Amujae Leaders took part in unique training and mentorship opportunities, bolstering their leadership capacity and strengthening the bonds that tie them together. Through several workshops and world-class events, as well as the annual Amujae Leadership Forum and self-development activities, the Amujae Leaders honed their skills in public leadership and fine-tuned their strategic outlook and communications approaches. It is safe to say that, year after year, the Amujae Initiative is proving that women leaders are stronger together and that with the right support structure, there is no limit to what they can achieve. As we concluded the year, we were in the process of recruiting a third cohort of exceptional African women leaders to join the Amujae Initiative; we look forward to welcoming them to the sisterhood soon.

The year 2022 also saw the birth of our innovative and much-anticipated data tool – the EJS Center Data Hub for Women’s Leadership in Public Governance. With this tool, we are setting a new bar for access to data on women’s public leadership in Africa. With the click of a button, users can uncover detailed figures on women presidents, prime ministers, ministers, Board and committee chairs, and justices, in addition to insights on gender quotas and gender-sensitive legislation in 15 West African countries. Work is underway to expand the Data Hub to other regions across the continent.

We also continued our work to amplify the voices of women and girls across Africa through advocacy and strategic communications. We released two key reports over the course of the year—one addressing gender bias in media coverage of the Zambian general and presidential elections and the other taking stock of the status of women’s leadership on the continent. Through these reports, we shed light on the progress toward greater representation of women in public leadership and the obstacles that hamper their ascension to positions of power.

We ramped up our efforts to capture the inspiring legacy of our Founder, former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Through an ambitious project initiated in 2022, we aim to preserve, process, and digitize her archives and make them accessible to people across Africa and around the world.

To paraphrase our Founder’s comments last year, “we’re not slowing down.” We have much we can be proud of from 2022, but we still have work to do to ensure that women hold their rightful place as leaders.

Let’s keep going together!

Best regards,

Oley Dibba-Wadda
Executive Director, The EJS Center
The Amujae Initiative

Program Overview

The Amujae Initiative addresses the underrepresentation of women in public leadership in Africa. Amujae, pronounced ‘ä mōō jāēē’, means ‘we are going up’ in Kru, a Liberian language. The program seeks to ensure that women become equal partners in setting the national priorities and direction of their respective countries. It identifies African women who have a track record of impactful public leadership and challenges them to bolster their ambitions. The program provides each Amujae Leader with practical support so they can successfully pursue and take up the highest positions in public leadership. Through this initiative, Amujae Leaders are also connected with other illustrious women who pried open the doors of leadership before them. With their support and collaboration, they can tear down structural barriers to unleash a wave of women public leaders across the continent. The initiative’s main objectives are to:

- Enhance the capacity of women in public leadership and embolden them as they navigate different career paths, spurring them to aspire to and position themselves for the highest positions;
- Ensure Amujae Leaders have a cadre of experienced talent they can rely on for ongoing, personal mentorship throughout their respective leadership journeys;
- Strengthen ties among a growing and reliable network of women public leaders in Africa; and
- Positively influence public perception of women in public leadership on the African continent.

The main activities of this leadership development program include hosting capacity building and networking convenings, facilitating coaching and mentoring, and encouraging participants to take up self-development opportunities.

Since the Amujae Initiative’s launch in March 2020, the EJS Center has accompanied two cohorts of Amujae Leaders on their renewed leadership journeys – 30 women from 16 countries who are committed to a public leadership path.

In addition to amplifying the work, achievements, and profiles of Amujae Leaders, the EJS Center has complemented its program with thought leadership and advocacy activities that mobilize support for increased representation of women in public leadership.
The Amujae Leaders

2020

- Dr. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings – Ghana
- Clare Akamanzi – Rwanda
- Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, OBE – Sierra Leone
- Hadiza Bala Usman – Nigeria
- Oley Dibba-Wadda – The Gambia
- Kula Fofana – Liberia
- Yawa Hansen-Quao – Ghana
- Malado Kaba – Republic of Guinea
- Cornelia Kruah-Togba – Liberia
- Adv. Fadzayi Mahere – Zimbabwe
- Aida Alassane N’Diaye-Riddick – Cote d’Ivoire
- Angela Nwaka – Nigeria
- Dr. Jumoke Oduwole – Nigeria
- Upendo Furaha Peneza – Tanzania
- Blen A. Sahilu – Ethiopia

2021

- Tejumola Abisoye – Nigeria
- Farida Bedwei – Ghana
- Dagmawit Moges Bekele – Ethiopia
- Susan Grace Duku – South Sudan
- Dr. Yakama Manty Jones – Sierra Leone
- Isata Kabia – Sierra Leone
- Bogolo Kenewendo – Botswana
- Eng. Ghada Labib – Egypt
- Angèle Makombo – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- Fatoumatta Njai – The Gambia
- Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor – Nigeria
- Umra Omar – Kenya
- Dr. Adaeze Oreh – Nigeria
- Telia Urey – Liberia
- Anne Waiguru – Kenya
Program Activities

Convenings
The Amujae Initiative provides safe spaces for women leaders to forge relationships, engage in honest conversations, and exchange strategies on how to move up together. In 2022, the Center brought together the Amujae Leaders, coaches, and other experts around themed discussions in four virtual and two in-person convenings. Additional activities included online workshops and the distinctive Amujae Leadership Forum.

Amujae Workshops
Virtual workshops have become an integral part of the Amujae Initiative’s activities as they enable Amujae Leaders to periodically connect and learn together. The first online Amujae workshop of the year was held on 3 February. During this workshop, EJS Center Board Member and Chair and President of Big Win Philanthropy, Jamie Cooper, addressed the topic ‘Values: The Ultimate Anchor.’ Together with Big Win Philanthropy’s Chief Executive Officer and former Minister of Health of Ethiopia, Dr. Kesete Admasu, Ms. Cooper discussed the importance of having clarity on and remaining anchored in personal values when navigating the leadership journey. In turn, Dr. Admasu reflected on his career successes and challenges as a senior government official, sharing practical insights and examples on how to connect personal values to leadership goals and drive sustainable change.

The second Amujae workshop was held on 23 February. The facilitator at this workshop was 2020 Amujae Leader and current Interim Executive Director of the EJS Center, Oley Dibba-Wadda, who offered her unique perspective on the national elections held in her home country, The Gambia. Ms. Dibba-Wadda was part of a campaign team traversing the country to learn about the communities’ needs, the fundamentals of effective campaigning, and the challenges associated with voting and result verification. At the workshop, she shared the lessons learned from this experience as a campaign insider.

This was followed by a two-part workshop series on 24 May and 9 June in which the Amujae Leaders engaged on ‘The Principles of Systems Change and the Skills Required to be a Systems Leader.’ The workshops were facilitated by Katherine Milligan (Director) and Tad Khosa (Communications Manager) from the Collective Change Lab – a think tank that provides practical guidance, insight, and inspiration on how to attain transformational collective change. They introduced the Amujae Leaders to two South African organizations that have successfully applied systems approaches in their operations: Harambee – a youth employment accelerator that collaborates with government and various stakeholders to address youth unemployment, and RLabs – an organization that hosts technical training, entrepreneurship, and innovation programs that unite at-risk youth around their life experiences and passion for technology. The Amujae Leaders and representatives of these organizations (Sharmi Surianarain, Chief Impact Officer, and Chipo Hamukoma, Research Manager at Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, and René Parker, Chief Executive Officer of RLabs) engaged in insightful discussions on how to drive sustainable systemic change and achieve tangible results for both communities and nations.

The final workshop of the year aimed at helping the Amujae Leaders understand how to leverage the power of their networks to position themselves for greater influence. Held over two sessions on 16 and 18 August, the workshop entitled ‘Planning to Win: Building a Network’ was facilitated by Riva Levinson and Katherine Addy from consulting firm KRL International. The facilitators drew from their decades-long campaign advisory experience to offer the Amujae Leaders insights into how to leverage strategic networking approaches.

Amujae Leadership Forum
The Amujae Leadership Forums take the Amujae Leaders on a journey of discovery and introspection to stoke their ambitions for higher levels of public leadership. Through these convenings, the leaders are exposed to new leadership approaches and access peer support and opportunities to build wide and strong networks and relationships while advancing in their careers.
In 2022, the EJS Center hosted its first in-person Amujae convening of the year at The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center between 11 and 14 July. This Amujae Leadership Forum, themed ‘Enduring Bonds,’ brought together 14 Amujae Leaders to:

- Review and fine-tune their individual leadership goals and the support needed to achieve them;
- Reflect on the past two years of the Amujae Initiative and envision a future for themselves and for the initiative; and deepen the connections between them and engender a sense of sisterhood.

True to the initiative’s objective of enhancing the leadership capacity of Amujae Leaders, the forum was enriched by the virtual participation of Amujae coaches and speakers, including former President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; former President of Mauritius, H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim; Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Madam Zainab Hawa Bangura; EJS Center Board Member and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr. Jendayi Frazer; as well as CEO of KRL International, Ms. Riva Levinson. EJS Center Chief Operating Officer Amini Kajunju and Director of Programs Rumbidzai Chisenga facilitated discussions at the forum.

Coaching and Mentorship
Supporting African women who aspire to the highest positions in public leadership requires the concerted efforts of experienced and dedicated individuals and experts who share the EJS Center’s mission and vision. Through a network of coaches and experts, the EJS Center continued to provide advice, support, and mentorship to the Amujae Leaders in 2022.

There are currently 14 accomplished African women leaders who, together with former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, serve as Amujae coaches. They include four former presidents, one former prime minister, several former ministers, as well as former and current executives in multilateral organizations.

In addition to these coaches, the Center has facilitated connections with and made referrals to other experts and stakeholders – including current and former members of the board – to enable Amujae Leaders to access the necessary expertise as and when needed. Peer coaching and mentoring are also encouraged among Amujae Leaders who continue to share their resources, experiences, and strategies across cohorts.

Strategic Advisors
To complement the experience-based support provided by Amujae coaches with technical expertise on various aspects of public leadership, the EJS Center enlisted the services of KRL International, which provided the Amujae Leaders with group training and individual support on effective communications and publicity strategies. The KRL International team, led by Ms. Riva Levinson, offered tailored support to Amujae Leaders, consulting individually as requested to help Amujae Leaders hone context-specific strategic communication skills.

Self-Development Activities
The Amujae Initiative also supports Amujae Leaders to pursue self-development opportunities, including attending short-term courses, taking up speaking engagements, or advocating for issues related to the Center’s mission. These opportunities are key to achieving the wider objective of this unique program – to inspire and prepare women to unapologetically take up roles and excel in the highest echelons of public leadership.
Amujae Leaders’ Pursuits and Achievements

Throughout 2022, the ease of COVID restrictions presented opportunities for Amujae leaders to meet face-to-face at events across Africa and farther afield. Several high-profile events and conferences presented occasions for a number of Amujae Leaders to reconnect, speak about their achievements and leadership journey, and raise their public profile. These included:

- Lagos Employment Summit 2022, Nigeria;
- World Economic Forum 2022, Switzerland;
- World Government Summit 2022, United Arab Emirates;
- Commonwealth Heads of Government, Rwanda; and
- The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 27), Egypt.

Amujae Leaders have maintained strong ties and continue to express support for one another by attending each other’s speaking engagements when possible or amplifying them on social media.

Appointments and Achievements

The Amujae Leaders continue to ascend to the highest echelons of leadership, each in their own field. They are creating positive change and opening doors for other women to follow in their footsteps. Here is a snapshot of their appointments and achievements in 2022:

- Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr (’20, Sierra Leone) was invited to join the newly established, 12-member Global Commission for the Independent Review of the Economics of Water. She was also appointed to the Steering Committee of the U.N.’s Local2030 Coalition.
- Oley Dibba-Wadda (’20, The Gambia) was appointed the interim Executive Director of the EJS Center.
- Malado Kaba (’20, Guinea) was appointed Director of the Gender, Women, and Civil Society Department at the African Development Bank.
- Farida Bedwei (’21, Ghana) was appointed Principal Software Engineer at a leading tech multinational.
- Bogolo Kenewendo (’21, Botswana) was appointed U.N. Climate Change High-Level Champions’ Special Advisor, Africa Director.
- Angèle Makombo (’21, DRC) was appointed Southern African Development Community (SADC) Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration.

Recognition

- Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr (’20, Sierra Leone) was recognized as one of the Most Influential Africans of 2021 by New African Magazine.
- Adaeze Oreh and Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor (’21, Nigeria) were featured on Business Day Nigeria’s 50 Inspiring Nigerian Women list.
- Angèle Makombo (’21, DRC) received the 2022 Women in Politics Award at the Pan African Women Empowerment Summit.
- Bogolo Kenewendo (’21, Botswana) was recognized among this year’s TIME100Next honorees. Her TIME tribute article was penned by former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- Dagmawit Moges Bekele (’21, Ethiopia) received the Changemakers Leadership Award during the 4th Aviators Africa Towers Awards that recognize exemplary individuals and organizations in the African aviation industry.
- Anne Waiguru (’21, Kenya), Bogolo Kenewendo (’21, Botswana), Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr (’20, Sierra Leone), and Yawa Hansen-Quao (’20, Ghana) were recognized on Avance Media’s 2022 list of 100 Most Influential African Women, alongside Amujae Coaches former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Madam Amina Mohammed, and Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala.

Contests:

- Fatoumatta Njai (’21, The Gambia) successfully contested and retained her seat as a Member of Parliament in The Gambia.
- Anne Waiguru (’21, Kenya) successfully contested and retained her seat as Governor of Kirinyaga County, Kenya. She was subsequently elected as Chairperson of the Council of Governors, becoming the first woman to serve in this position.
- Umra Omar (’21, Kenya) contested as the first woman gubernatorial candidate in Lamu County, Kenya.
The Amujae Leaders have incredible knowledge and insight on some of the most critical issues facing the African continent—from climate change to inclusive economic development. Over the course of the year, we worked to amplify their voices on these pressing topics. In doing so, we are also showcasing the power and impact of women’s public leadership.

Examples of the thought leadership we supported Amujae Leaders to develop and publish in 2022 include pieces such as: Ways that Africa can unite to improve economic integration, Why Climate Leadership Needs More Women, Five key ingredients for economic recovery in Africa, and Let’s avoid an AfCFTA own-goal — why Africa must invest in connectivity now.
Strategic Communications and Research

The second major pillar of our work is driving positive change through advocacy and strategic research. By changing the narrative around women’s leadership while highlighting where there are still significant areas for improvement, we help to break down systemic barriers and mobilize support for change.

In 2022, we undertook a number of activities to keep the issue of women’s leadership high on the agendas of policymakers and public institutions, as outlined below.

The EJS Center Data Hub

One of our biggest achievements in 2022 was the successful launch of the EJS Center Data Hub for Women’s Leadership in Public Governance. The Data Hub is the first data tool to track women’s public leadership in Africa. The innovative initiative aims to harness the power of data to inform advocacy and policymaking and advance women’s representation in public governance.

Through a user-friendly dedicated website, policymakers, lawmakers, researchers, media professionals, activists, and the public can access the latest data on women’s representation in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, in addition to insights on gender quotas and gender-sensitive legislation. The data, much of which is not readily available on any other public databases, include specific statistics on women presidents, prime ministers, ministers, committee chairs, and justices. Whether advocating for gender equality, monitoring progress toward greater representation in government, or searching for resources to inform laws and policies that advance women’s leadership, users have access to recent, detailed, and easily accessible statistics.

Initially covering 15 West African countries, the Data Hub aims to provide data for the entire African continent and become the premier destination for information on women’s leadership in Africa.

The launch of the Data Hub was marked by a webinar on 18 May titled ‘Transformative Data: How research can improve the participation of African women in public governance.’ The event gathered speakers from leading organizations who spoke about the power of data. These included:

- Professor J. Jarpa Dawuni – Associate Professor of Political Science at Howard University;
- Ebere Ifendu – Lawyer, Chartered Mediator, Conciliator, Gender Advocate, and President of WIPF Nigeria;
- Joseph Asunka – CEO of Afrobarometer; and
- Linet Miriti-Otieno – Chief Gender Expert at the Africa Development Bank.
H.E. Monica Geingos, First Lady of Namibia and EJS Center Board Member, delivered the opening remarks.

Alongside the launch of the Data Hub, we began a campaign to raise awareness about the status of women’s public leadership in Africa and prompt people to reflect on what it would take to accelerate the pace of progress. Tailored infographics and easy-to-digest social media posts highlighted key insights and drove action.
Voices Forgotten by The Fourth Estate – A Report on Gender Bias in the Media Ahead of Zambia’s 2021 Elections

Following a series of training workshops we conducted with media in Zambia, Kenya, and Senegal on gender-sensitive reporting in 2021, we conducted a detailed analysis of gender bias in the media surrounding Zambia’s election.

We worked with in-country partners to conduct in-depth media monitoring and organized interviews with journalists and women candidates.

The report successfully attracted the attention of Zambian and pan-Africa news outlets following its launch on 14 March 2022. In addition, the general public also engaged with the wider issue of gender bias in the media through the social media posts published by the Center to promote the findings of the report. A selection of the report’s coverage can be seen below:

- New Dawn EJS Center for women and development research finds significant gender bias in Zambia’s election coverage;
- The Zambian EJS Center for Women and Development Research Finds Significant Gender Bias in Zambia’s Election Coverage;
- Georgetown Institute Women Peace and Security The Voices Forgotten by The Fourth Estate: A Report on Gender Bias in the Media Ahead of Zambia’s 2021 Elections;
- All Africa Zambia: EJS Center for Women and Development Research Finds Significant Gender Bias in Zambia’s Election Coverage.

Mapping Progress in Liberia: The 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance

Liberia, the home of the EJS Center, occupies a special place in our mission to advance the representation of women in public governance. In recent years, the country has made great strides toward ensuring that the appropriate systems of good governance are in place to deliver public goods, services, and results for all citizens—but there is still work to be done.

To help understand and respond to changes within Liberia’s governance landscape, the EJS Center hosted ‘Mapping Progress in Liberia: The 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance,’ in 2022. This event gathered 20 of the country’s most influential and accomplished leaders and policymakers. Joined by former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for a day of discussions, the participants explored and assessed Liberia’s past, present, and future governance trajectory.

Subsequently, the Center compiled the event’s proceedings and key takeaways in an original report that outlined and explained the panelists’ analysis and data drawn from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)¹ – a tool that measures and assesses governance performance in African countries across four key categories (Security and Rule of Law; Participation, Rights, and Inclusion; Human Development; and Foundations for Economic Opportunity).
Shifting the Landscape: The 2021 Year in Review

Each year, the EJS Center celebrates African women’s successes in public governance at all levels across the continent through a comprehensive annual report. In 2022, we released our second report titled ‘Shifting the Landscape: The 2021 Year In Review.’ The report mapped breakthroughs in African women’s leadership at the national, regional and international levels and identified opportunities to accelerate progress.

The report attracted significant media attention, including in the following outlets.

- Smart News Liberia: EJS Center Releases Second Annual Report on Women’s Leadership Across Africa
- New Dawn Liberia: EJS Center releases Second Annual Report on Women’s Leadership across Africa
- African News Agency: EJS Center Releases Second Annual Report On Women’s Leadership Across Africa
- News Public Trust: The EJS Center, Releases Second Annual Report On Women’s Leadership Across Africa
- Bay St. Post: Africa: EJS Center Releases Second Annual Report On Women’s Leadership Across Africa
- Front Page Africa: EJS Center Releases Second Annual Report on Women’s Leadership Across Africa

Events

Over the year, we hosted and participated in a range of events focused on advancing women’s representation in all spheres of life. Highlights from these are included below.

Liberia in Focus

Based in Liberia, the Center takes every opportunity to amplify the voices of Liberian women and girls across all sectors. In 2022, we continued our tradition of hosting a discussion with women leaders in Liberia to commemorate our launch anniversary in March, which coincides with International Women’s Day. Our Liberia in Focus event aligned with the International Women’s Day global theme of ‘Break the Bias,’ and focused on addressing the issue of gender-based violence.

Speakers advocated against all forms of violence against women and girls and exchanged recommendations to put an end to this scourge. The event also emphasized the crucial role of women’s leadership in the fight against gender-based violence and encouraged the audience to support women’s participation in addressing such societal issues at the highest levels of leadership.

Joining former President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the panel included Vice President of Liberia, H.E. Jewel Howard Taylor; Deputy Minister for Gender, Alice Johnson Howard; the University of Liberia Professor in Gender Studies, Dr. Tanya Garnett; Founder of the Initiative for Youth Empowerment and Economic Development, Vickjune Wutoh; Executive Director of Rescued...
Abandoned and Children in Hardship (REACH), Ne-Suah Livingstone; and Executive Director of the Organization for Women and Children, Mmondeybo Joah. The event also brought together a distinguished group of participants, including Deputy Minister for Children and Social Protection Lydia-Mai Sherman; and Amujae Leaders Kula Fofana, Cornelia Kruah–Togba, and Yawa Hansen–Quao.

**World Bank Fragility Forum**

Through the Amujae Initiative, the EJS Center is propelling African women changemakers to the highest echelons of public leadership. Advocating for the need to address the challenges women leaders face and to invest in women as agents of change, three Amujae Leaders joined former President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in a virtual panel discussion on the topic of ‘The Power of the Collective: Investing Women Leaders as Agents of Change.’

Held on International Women’s Day as part of the 2022 World Bank Fragility Forum, the discussion included Kimberly Gire, Founder of Global Women Leaders Strategic Philanthropy, and Amujae Leaders Oley Dibba–Wadda, Tejumola Abisoye, and Dr. Yakama Manty Jones who explored the importance of women’s collaboration to address fragility and the multiple ways in which women’s representation in top positions can be enhanced. The women also discussed how the Amujae Initiative has bolstered their leadership journeys, while former President Sirleaf shared the impetus behind this program and what she hopes it will achieve.

### Media Engagement

Commonly referred to as the fourth estate, the media play an important role in shaping the narrative around women’s leadership. The stories covered and the language used directly impact on women’s leadership aspirations—and can also affect how others see women leaders and their competency.

With this in mind, we continued to engage the media throughout the year to advocate for increased representation of women in public governance and showcase the work of the Center and the Amujae Leaders.

Several thought leadership pieces were published in 2022, attracting significant engagement from a wide range of audiences. These pieces included:

- Liberia: Closing the Gender Gap in our Lifetime is Not Impossible – written by Amini Kajunju, EJS Center COO
- Women, the backbone of Africa’s health care, need our support – written by Dr. Awele Elumelu, EJS Center Board Member

A key media milestone during 2022 was International Women’s Day, celebrated on 8 March. Activities included a statement from the EJS Center calling for accountability and a resolute stance against gender-based violence in Liberia.

Ammujae Leaders were also very active in promoting women’s representation in leadership roles across all sectors and showcasing their
distinctive leadership journeys. Several Amujae Leaders were featured in interviews with outlets such as Nigeria’s Business Day, Espace TV Guinée, and Radio Democracy. EJS Center Chief Operating Officer Amini Kajunju also joined the Forbes Woman Africa 2022 Leading Women Summit panel to discuss women’s game-changing role in the post-pandemic era. A blog published by the EJS Center highlighted the full range of activities and advocacy during Women’s month.

Digital and Social Media

The EJS Center is committed to leveraging our digital and social media presence to shine a spotlight on women leaders, highlight gaps in equality, and drive policy change through research and storytelling.

Through a combination of eye-catching infographics, engaging videos, and blogs, we have grown our following over the years and continue to reach new audiences. Over the course of 2022, there was considerable growth across all of the EJS Center’s social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram), ranging from 30% to more than 90%.

Raising the Amujae Leaders’ Profiles Through Social Media

The Amujae Leaders’ successes and achievements reflect their positions as role models and changemakers. To amplify the Amujae Leaders’ work and raise their profiles, we are using social media in a several ways; through retweets and reposts, dedicated blogs and thought pieces, and video interviews and graphics.

Driving the Narrative Through Blogs and Thought Pieces

Throughout 2022, the EJS Center published 85 blogs on our website, highlighting a wide range of issues related to women’s public leadership and showcasing insights from Amujae Leaders and EJS Center staff and board members. Examples include:

- Amujae Leader Umra Omar discussed her work in support of rural women with us here.
- EJS Center Programs Director Rumbidzai Chisenga shared her thoughts on the gender data gap here.
- Amujae Leader Dr. Yakama Manty Jones discussed her passion for promoting child literacy as part of our International Literacy Day celebration here.
- Several Amujae Leaders reflected upon the advice they’d give their younger selves in this original thought piece.
As the EJS Center continues to grow, we are committed to both preserving the legacy of our Founder, former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and to providing a one-of-a-kind space where fellow women leaders’ successes and achievements can be showcased to inspire and motivate. This work began in earnest in 2022, and below is a summary of our progress to date.

Archives

In 2022, we began processing former President Sirleaf’s personal archives with the aim of making the collection widely available for research and education purposes.

The archives team installed tailored equipment, continuously monitored the temperature and relative humidity of the storage spaces, and used protective sleeves and archival boxes for photographs to ensure that the archives are stored in a climate-controlled environment. Several training sessions were conducted to boost the capacity of the archives team covering topics such as surface cleaning techniques, disaster planning, collection security, and proper storage of audiovisual materials. In addition, an inventory of over 1,000 audiovisual materials, 700 objects (awards, gifts, memorabilia, etc.), and 200 photo albums and boxes of photographs were created.

The EJS Center also engaged in advanced discussions with a potential institutional research partner, and we are aiming to cement the partnership as soon as possible in 2023. This partnership aims to support the EJS Center in preserving, processing, and digitizing former President Sirleaf’s collection, making it accessible to students, scholars, researchers, analysts, and economists in Liberia and around the world and all those seeking to learn from and be inspired by her leadership journey.

Exhibitions

The EJS Center has also made significant progress towards the creation of a Presidential Center and Library, which will provide a space for inspiration and learning through attractive temporary and permanent exhibitions.

Temporary exhibitions hosted at the Center will explore African women’s many achievements in leadership across a broad spectrum of sectors. A permanent exhibition will also focus on former President Sirleaf’s life and legacy, showcasing photographs, artifacts, memorabilia, artwork, documents, clothing, and other objects drawn from her archives, along with resources from other collectors and repositories. Our hope is that through unique design and careful curation, we will create an inviting and engaging experience for visitors.

As part of this work in 2022, the EJS Center partnered with two firms – Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) and Library Special Projects (LSP) – on the content development for the permanent exhibition. Both firms visited Liberia in August 2022 and held several workshops with key stakeholders, including women’s groups, educators, religious leaders, cultural experts, government representatives, and youth groups. All participants were invited to share their thoughts on the future Presidential Center and Library and its importance to their communities. At the time of writing, work is ongoing, and our selected exhibition partners continue interviewing stakeholders and experts, identifying themes and potential content, and building out the narrative. The selected partners will collaborate with Counterspace Studios in the final conceptual design of the permanent exhibition.
Looking Ahead

2022 was a year of great progress for the EJS Center. We accelerated our programming and advocacy work and also invested in plans for the future – specifically the creation of a physical space where we can champion women leaders and house the legacy of our Founder, former President Sirleaf.

As we now look ahead to 2023 and beyond, the below will serve as key milestones on our journey to champion women’s ascension to the highest levels of leadership and challenge systemic barriers to girls’ and women’s advancement.

2023 Amujae Leader Recruitment
In the first half of 2023, we will announce our third cohort of Amujae Leaders. We are excited to welcome this diverse, talented, and ambitious group of women working to drive positive change through public leadership.

2023 Amujae Leadership Forum
We will host our annual Amujae Leadership Forum to bring together women from across all cohorts. This provides an opportunity for the Amujae Leaders to share stories and advice and lift one another up. They will also have the chance to hear from and be inspired by former President Sirleaf, as well as other mentors and coaches.

The New EJS Center Website
As times change and our efforts expand – so must our website. We look forward to launching a new EJS Center website in 2023, which will present all our original content, as well as new research, multimedia content, and updates on our key programs.

EJS Center Data Hub – East Africa
After the success of our Data Hub launch in 2022, we are now working on expanding the database to include data from the East Africa region. We hope to launch the updated Data Hub later in 2023.

In conclusion, we leave you with final remarks from our Founder, former President of Liberia H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf:

“As the EJS Center enters its third year of operating, I am both inspired and humbled by what our team and the Amujae Leaders have been able to achieve. Since leaving office, it has been my mission to ensure more voices are heard, talents are unleashed, and leaders are launched that prioritize the aspirations of women. We have made great progress, but we’re only just getting started.”
About the EJS Center
The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development (EJS Center) was founded in 2018 to be a catalyst for change across Africa by helping unleash its most abundant, yet minimally tapped power — its women.

Through a unique blend of programming, advocacy, research, and exhibitions, the EJS Center works to advance women’s public leadership and development on the continent. Through its work, it envisions more voices heard, talents unleashed, and leaders launched that prioritize the aspirations of women.

The EJS Center was founded by former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. As the first democratically elected woman president in Africa, Madam Sirleaf is passionate about supporting the next generation of women in public life. By helping women in public leadership to raise their profiles and advance their careers, the EJS Center seeks to amplify the voices of all women and girls across the continent.