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# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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## Building Resilience to Lead Effectively at the General Auditing Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

Resilience is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective leadership in public institutions. For the General Auditing Commission (GAC) of Liberia, resilience is not only about individual endurance but also about institutional sustainability. As the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI), the GAC plays a critical role in promoting accountability, transparency, and good governance. Yet, this mandate is pursued in a context of limited resources, political sensitivities, and high public expectations.

This report examines how resilience can be cultivated to strengthen leadership effectiveness at the GAC. Drawing on Wilna Degenaar's *Human Operating System* framework and gender-responsive leadership insights, the analysis highlights how energy management, emotional intelligence, thought habits, and inclusive practices can empower leaders—particularly women, like myself—to navigate challenges with balance and impact. The central objective is to demonstrate that resilience is not simply about surviving adversity but about transforming challenges into opportunities for institutional growth, equity, and sustainable performance.

## The GAC and Leadership Challenges

The GAC operates in a complex environment where audit findings often intersect with political sensitivities. Leaders must balance technical rigor with diplomacy, ensuring that reports are credible yet constructive. This requires resilience in multiple dimensions:

- **Political Pressure:** Audit reports may expose inefficiencies or corruption, drawing scrutiny from political actors. Leaders must remain steadfast while managing external pressures.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited financial and human resources challenge the Commission's ability to deliver timely, high-quality audits. Resilient leadership ensures that teams remain motivated despite these constraints.
- **Gender Dynamics:** Women leaders face additional challenges, including underrepresentation, societal expectations, and subtle biases. Building resilience helps them assert their leadership authentically and effectively.

Resilience at the GAC is therefore both a personal and institutional imperative. It enables leaders to withstand pressures, adapt to change, and inspire confidence in their teams and stakeholders.

## Theoretical Framework: The Human Operating System

Wilna Degenaar's *Human Operating System* offers a practical lens for understanding resilience. It emphasizes four principles that directly shape leadership effectiveness:

- **Energy Management:** Leaders must regulate their energy states to avoid burnout and sustain performance. High positive energy (enthusiastic, hopeful) fosters collaboration, while low negative energy (anxious, passive) undermines effectiveness.
- **Mood Awareness:** Emotional intelligence enables leaders to lift team morale and maintain focus under stress. Recognizing moods—whether defensive, reflective, or creative—helps leaders intervene constructively.
- **Thought Habits:** Resilient leaders cultivate empowering beliefs that drive adaptive behaviors. Limiting thoughts ("I must be perfect to be credible") can be reframed into affirmations ("My perspective adds value").
- **Perception Filters:** Recognizing biases and blind spots fosters inclusive and fair decision-making. Leaders who understand that "things are not always as they appear" are more likely to seek diverse perspectives.

Applied to the GAC, these principles highlight the human dimension of leadership—how internal states directly influence institutional outcomes.

## Policies and Institutional Measures

Liberia's national gender policies and AFROSAI-E's regional frameworks emphasize equity and inclusion in public institutions. The GAC has aligned with these priorities by:

- **Gender Equity Committees:** Establishing structures to promote women's leadership and address institutional biases.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing senior leaders with emerging women leaders to build confidence and resilience.
- **Leadership Training:** Integrating modules on resilience, emotional intelligence, and balance into professional development.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Participating in AFROSAI-E initiatives that emphasize inclusive leadership and institutional resilience.

These measures reflect a growing recognition that resilience is not only personal but systemic, requiring institutional structures that support diverse leadership.

### Case Study: Women in Leadership at the GAC

A recent leadership seminar highlighted how women leaders at the GAC are applying resilience principles in practice:

- **Energy Awareness:** One senior auditor described how energy awareness helped her manage stress during a politically sensitive audit. By shifting from a defensive mood to a reflective one, she led her team with clarity and confidence.
- **Thought Habits:** Another participant shared how reframing limiting beliefs ("I must be perfect to be credible") into empowering affirmations ("My perspective adds value") enabled her to step into leadership roles authentically.
- **Mood Regulation:** A team leader explained how recognizing her mood as "overwhelmed" allowed her to pause, reframe, and communicate with clarity, reducing tension within her team.

These experiences illustrate that resilience is not abstract but practical, shaping how leaders respond to real challenges in audit environments.

### Gender-Lens Analysis: Human-Centered Leadership in the GAC

Resilience is particularly transformative for women leaders at the GAC. Applying a gender lens reveals several dynamics:

- **Energy Awareness and Gendered Expectations:** Women leaders often navigate dual expectations—to be both assertive and nurturing. Energy management helps them reclaim agency and lead authentically.
- **Mood Lift and Emotional Labor:** Women often carry invisible emotional labor, mediating tensions and supporting colleagues. Mood awareness validates these experiences and equips leaders to navigate them constructively.
- **Thought Habits and Internalized Bias:** Women may internalize limiting beliefs shaped by societal norms. Reframing these beliefs fosters confidence and career progression.

- **Balanced Leadership Styles:** Women often lead with empathy and collaboration—qualities undervalued in technical institutions. Recognizing these strengths validates diverse leadership styles.
- **Fear of Success and Gendered Barriers:** Women may hesitate to pursue promotions due to visibility or scrutiny. Institutional support—mentorship, safe spaces, and leadership development—helps dismantle these fears.
- **Perception Filters and Bias:** Gender bias may influence how women's contributions are perceived. Training leaders to recognize and challenge these filters builds fairness and trust.

By embedding resilience into gender equity strategies, the GAC can empower women leaders and strengthen institutional integrity.

## Practical Integration into GAC Systems

To translate resilience principles into institutional value, the GAC can take several practical steps:

- **Leadership Development:** Integrate *Human Operating System* concepts into training, coaching, and succession planning—especially for women leaders.
- **Team Check-ins:** Use energy and mood mapping tools in team meetings to build emotional awareness and cohesion.
- **Audit Planning:** Encourage reflective thinking and mood awareness during audit scoping and stakeholder engagement.
- **Performance Reviews:** Include self-reflection prompts and “I will...” commitments to foster ownership and growth.
- **Gender Equity Programs:** Use resilience frameworks to support women's leadership, address emotional labor, and challenge limiting beliefs.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Share best practices with AFROSAI-E partners, positioning the GAC as a model of inclusive, resilient leadership.

## CONCLUSION

Resilience as discussed is essential for effective leadership at the General Auditing Commission. It would aid leaders to withstand pressures, adapt to change, and inspire confidence in their teams and stakeholders. By integrating the principles of the *Human Operating System*—energy management, mood awareness, thought habits, and perception filters—the GAC can cultivate leaders, women leaders in particular, who are not only technically competent but also emotionally intelligent and inclusive.

For women leaders, resilience is particularly transformative. It empowers us to challenge biases, embrace authenticity, and lead with balance in male-dominated spaces. Institutional measures such as mentorship, training, and equity committees further reinforce this resilience, ensuring that leadership effectiveness is sustained across the organization.

Looking ahead I, as woman in leadership, am committed to embed resilience into leadership development pursuits, daily interactions, and all the while devicing gender equity strategies. Practically, I intend to expand my mentorship networks (becoming a mentor for upcoming women leaders and mentee to resilient women leaders), integrate reflective practices into audit processes, and fostering a culture that celebrates diverse leadership styles.

With these priciles applied, the GAC will not only strengthen its institutional resilience but also position the SAI as a model of inclusive, human-centered leadership in Liberia and the AFROSAI-E region.

## REFERENCES

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