

EXCHANGE PROGRAM

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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**PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND  
INCLUSION (DEI) IN SAIs TO ENABLE  
LEADERSHIP THAT TRANSFORMS  
SOCIETIES.**

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## **1.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I was recently entrusted and nominated to attend a training organised by PROINTER in conjunction with AFROSAI-E that took place in their Headquarters in Pretoria South Africa from 13th to 17th October, 2025. This was a leadership training targeting women aspiring to be great leaders and I must say, it's an opportunity that I will forever be grateful to Assistant Auditor General Corporate Division(AAG/C) and top management for the consideration from SAI Uganda. This training was rich, enlightening and an embodiment of empowerment of an aspiring leader.

The training sessions were vigorous, participatory and equipped with practical sessions based on experience sharing amongst women from various international organisations. The training equipped participants with instruments that that I believe will transform their leadership skills and will enable them influence performance in teams, inspire colleagues, contribute to the strategic objective of their respective SAIs, and transform their communities. In this respect therefore, allow me share with you some of my key insights as follows;

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) is a conscious approach that allows organisations to create policies that enables an inclusive consideration for all employees regardless of gender and other social constructs. It involves the application of concepts like gender mainstreaming aimed at addressing challenges that deter women from achieving their full potential in different spheres of life. DEI requires a conscious approach by organisations to incorporate gender equality concerns in all their administrative policies and financial activities. It encompasses being gender responsive, sensitive and empowerment of women. In this regard, women empowerment in organisations enables female employees contribute to decisions that affect them including having equal access to resources and opportunities for career growth, (**The Uganda Gender Policy, 2007**).

At SAI level, creating and promoting an inclusive environment is an intentional act of ensuring a work atmosphere that allows all employees to thrive in their respective fields and professional inclinations by recognising the contributions from all staff. It involves management's commitment in ensuring a platform that promotes participation of all staff in the achievement of the overall objective of the SAIs as they transform their communities.

## **3.0 Main measures implemented by SAI Uganda related to diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI).**

### **3.1 DEI Focused Institutional Arrangements within SAI Uganda**

In recent years, SAI Uganda has increasingly provided a platform that enables women to participate in leadership positions. The internal capacity building drives and programmes have been very inclusive aimed at increasing professional training for both men and women in the various professional spectrum within the SAI. This has created an enabling environment for competition for leadership positions geared towards fostering Diversity, equality and inclusivity. In this regard, SAI Uganda has a considerable number of women that are certified professional Accountants, AFROSAI-E trained performance Auditors and professional social



scientists among other professional inclinations. This is being achieved through the promotion of equal access to professional studies under the professionalization programme for the entire office.

In addition, SAI Uganda has over the years initiated and implemented numerous initiatives aimed at stimulating office wide mind set change amongst staff in respect to enhancing an inclusive and safe working environment. Several sensitisation workshops have been held spanning from professional spheres and personal development for employees. As an example, SAI Uganda Organises several health camps both at headquarters and regional offices for all staff to conduct routine health and medical checks. Also, there are numerous presentations and continuous trainings that are routinely made for the benefit of all staff in topics like; personal financial management, personal health and social topics.

In respect to work life balance, SAI Uganda has incorporated in its work routines activities that promote both physical and mental health for staff. These activities include; OAG monthly Jog/Walk marathon and weekly no lift challenge, an initiative that has attracted the participation of most staff both in head office and across the regional offices and has promoted a balanced physical and mental health for most staff engaged in these activities.

In addition, there SAI Uganda facilitates annual staff retreats and workshops across the various directorates of the entire organisation. During these sessions, staff have the opportunity to have informal conversations with top management, create social support networks and strategic bonds with members of Top management.

I a bid to foster critical updates on the changes in work environment and improvements, SAI Uganda on a quarterly basis holds an office wide breakfast meetings in headquarters and across the regional offices. This has also served as an avenue to continuously sensitise staff of the professional code of conduct, their roles, promote socialisation and creation of strategic network and partnerships among staff.

Also, currently women occupy leadership positions in the regional offices, a testament that placements and deployments within SAI Uganda is not primarily premised on gender. In the same vain, Top management has structurally made intentional changes to plan and recruit employees taking into consideration DEI and gender equality. This has led to a steady increase in the number of women joining SAI, Uganda and will eventually have an incremental bearing in the number of females that will seize and occupy leadership opportunities in SAI Uganda. By embracing diversity in recruitments, SAI Uganda as created a platform that has encouraged inclusion of diverse perspectives, stimulated creativity and innovation amongst staff and has led to increased staff productivity in the recent years.

### **3.2 Women Forum Activities**

SAI Uganda constantly budgets and funds activities geared towards the promotion and enforcement of gender equality and inclusion by facilitating the activities of the SAI Uganda Women Forum dubbed **"OAG Women Forum"**. In this forum, women have a platform to demonstrate their leadership abilities by occupying several leadership positions within the jurisdiction and structure of the forum. This has also provided a platform to amplify the opinions and the voices of women in SAI Uganda.

To augment its role, the forum provides a safe space for women to share experiences in all spheres of life from work, family and social structures in the community. These engagements allow younger women to learn from experienced women, thereby providing insights to the aspiring female leaders on how to position themselves for career growth and achieving a “work life balance”.

Key to note, Top management has relentlessly demonstrated intentional and tremendous support for this forum. Constant funding of the forum activities aside, all scheduled meetings, presentations, social activities and external engagements are attended in person by representatives of top management. This has instilled confidence in the forum members about the Top Management commitment in empowering the female leaders of SAI, Uganda. The gender mainstreaming initiatives has also been explicitly enshrined in its strategic plan, **2020-2025 of SAI Uganda.**

### **3.3 Advance DEI practices in external engagements**

SAI, Uganda is committed to sending female representation in external activities thereby exposing its women to international experiences and practices. This involves participation in international trainings and exchange programmes, degree programmes and international workshops.

Externally, as part external strategies with the communities and advancing external initiatives for DEI, SAI Uganda created the Citizenship feedback app. This allows the Auditor General to get direct feedback on service delivery issues from all the members of the community regardless of gender or any other social constructs. In addition, there are also scheduled engagements with key stakeholders like; Members of parliament, civil society, Accounting officers and political heads among others.

## **4.0 How women can position themselves in SAIs to occupy leadership positions**

### **4.1 Resilience to the thorns of leadership**

The fear of failure and self-doubt is one of the greatest self-imposed impediment that women subconsciously exhibit that deter them from being seen from the crowd and increasing their visibility. Dear women, if you dare to lead then be ready to be criticized, scrutinised and judged. Don't be alarmed, just make sure you master your craft and the subordinates will respect your knowledge and your leadership style.

Furthermore, female leaders in SAIs are encouraged to continuously improve on their craft as this is paramount for seizing leadership opportunities whenever they fall due. In essence, it's vital for women to constantly inquire, diversify their skills, continue to build their capacity and embrace divergent views, this does not show weakness but rather makes women well equipped with information that will enable them leave a remarkable leadership trail.

Women aspiring for transformative leadership are also advised to consistently deliver results and achieve set goals, and strive to be the best in their roles as do their male counterparts. Women can achieve this by regularly monitoring their strength and weakness, maximising their

strength and refining their weak points. Also remember, as a leader intending to inspire others, ensure to change something either from scratch or from existing structures.

#### **4.2 Breaking stereotypes and social norms as a female leader**

One of the most common stereotype about female leaders is the connotation of “softness for weakness”. Because customarily a woman is viewed as soft, she may feel the need and pressure to excessively assert herself to be viewed as a strong leader. In a sharp contrast, she may respond by fearing confrontation, staying on the side-lines, shrinking her voice and withdrawing from competition. Female leaders are however, advised to exhibit high emotional intelligence and resilience at all times in the face of prejudices. As a woman, embrace and demonstrate your full potential, face discrimination with facts and objectivity, this will help you competently subdue and tackle most gender related leadership stereotypes.

For laddies aspiring for leadership positions, think, walk and express your opinions as a competent leader. Being assertive does not make you a man, but rather makes you a confident leader. I will have you know however that it is vital to be respectful, show discipline and display your feminine energy, without shrinking your ambition, vision and confidence.

Being assertive also means being in position to express your ideas and opinions in a diplomatic, clear, sound and understanding way. For a woman to vehemently and eloquently express her opinions without fear, it requires technical knowledge and competence in the area of presentation. In this respect, female leaders need to invest in their knowledge, competence and assert themselves beyond the gender leadership stereotypes and stand out from the crowd.

#### **4.3 Personal and professional Branding**

It’s important for the most part, to control the narrative of how you want to be perceived in your work environment or communities while taking into account that you may not please everyone and that’s expected in leadership. Your actions, words and presentations should speak volumes and set the tone for how you want your subordinates and supervisors to perceive you. Always remember, that reputation is volatile therefore, your actions should mostly be consistent to enable you inspire others and influence performance in your SAI.

As a female leader in a SAI, have you ever made an external survey of how you are perceived? Could it be that you are branded as dependable, competent, can influence performance of teams, can always get things done, your work is always of high quality, an expert in some field or you have always been deemed otherwise? In case you have not, it’s never late. Swiftly make an assessment and start the journey of transformation from negative connotations and drive back towards positive references to broaden your career growth opportunities and horizons.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- It’s paramount for SAIs to ensure that their internal structures align with the promotion of equality in the communities that they serve. These practices can be enshrined in their manuals, instruments and guidance’s to staff. For instance, in SAI Uganda, high

emphasis is made on promotion of customer care by explicitly highlighting that staff should ensure that services are available and applied equally to all while according courtesy, empathy and fairness to all customers with special attention to persons with disabilities, the aged, sick and expectant mothers (**Ethics and code of conduct, March 2024**).

- SAIs are advised to amass and consolidate their gender transformative interventions through intensifying avenues that provide for equal opportunity for career growth and development. This can further be achieved through constant sensitisation of all staff on topics related to Diversity, Equality and inclusion and creation of organisational platforms that fosters women participation in leadership positions.
- SAIs can also package and provide an inclusive capacity building for all staff aimed at ensuring that women are also equipped with instruments that transform their leadership skills and enables them influence performance in teams, inspire colleagues, contribute to the strategic objective of their respective SAIs, and transform their communities.
- Female leaders should master the art of situational leadership and self awareness. This involves swift adaptation to people, circumstances and environment and responding to challenges depending on how they occur. Female leaders therefore, ought to always conduct a rapid scan of the leadership situations they are operating in and respond to them accordingly. Above all, female leaders should always prioritise their activities and energy, set boundaries, structures and limits, to help them set a clear tone for their leadership style in every situation.

***In conclusion, "Creation of an inclusive SAI benefits all by amassing the wealth of diversity through building a SAI that transforms the societies within which they serve".***

#### **REFERENCES**

- 1. The Uganda Gender Policy, 2007.***
- 2. OAG strategic plan, 2020-2025.***
- 3. OAG Ethics and code of conduct, March 2024.***
- 4. PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION - Search***