

STORIES OF CHANGE: CHOUCOUNA LOSALE

The Making of an Outstanding Female Civil Society Leader in The Congo Basin



By Jimm Chick

Chouchouna Losale, as Vice Coordinator with the Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CFLEDD), is a prominent leader championing women's participation in the management of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this story Chouchouna shares how taking part in Well Grounded's ecofeminist leadership programme gave her greater awareness of what leadership means, and equipped her to balance multiple competing demands on her time and energy.

Chouchouna Losale, Vice Coordinator in Charge of Programmes at the Coalition of Female Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CFLEDD), in the Democratic Republic of Congo. CFLEDD is a network of women and women's organisations in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Losale is described by her colleagues as an outstanding leader because of her determination and dedication to her vision. She is at the helm of an African-based, African-owned and women-led organisation championing women's active and effective participation in the management of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Today, few women hold leadership positions in society. Very few are women within the civil society sector like Losale, and fewer still within the Central African region. This, to an extent,



Chouchouna speaking at a network meeting

contributes to the positioning of women on the fringes of decision-making spaces. As such, either women's voices aren't heard at all, or their plights and priorities are not sufficiently considered.

As noted by Oxfam[1], "this lack of voice functions as a critical factor in the maintenance of gender inequality and poverty, effectively

Key Information

Country: Democratic Republic of Congo

Period of collaboration

CFLEDD collaborated with Well Grounded from 2017 to 2020.

Domains of collaboration

Well Grounded supported CFLEDD to conduct an organisational diagnosis, reflect on and develop a strategy, harness the leadership potential of key staff and develop key policy documents such as the organisation's procedures manual.



Well Grounded designed a leadership programme that nurtures good leadership qualities in its participants. The programme targets leaders of civil society organisations with a focus on female leaders, and incorporating the principles of ecofeminism

blocking women's access to decision-making and agenda-setting processes, and beyond that, opportunities for leading these processes”.

In the Congo Basin Forest zone, the situation can be categorised as dire. In the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, many civil society organisations are led by men. More so, few women work at the management level in these organisations. In a study conducted by Well Grounded (2021) 78% of women surveyed indicated that they had difficulties accessing decision-making spaces.

This calls for the need to empower women to take up leadership positions in civil society organisations in the Congo Basin.

Recognising this critical gap, Well Grounded designed a leadership programme that nurtures

good leadership qualities in its participants.

The programme targets leaders of civil society organisations with a focus on female leaders, and incorporating the principles of ecofeminism.

“This leadership programme encourages civic actors to be more conscious of their roles and responsibilities as leaders; to discover their real selves and raise their self-awareness, discover their talents, competencies and put these into use”, attests Losale.

Losale took part in the leadership programme organised by Well Grounded between 2017 and 2018.

According to her, the programme enabled her to appreciate the behaviours that a leader must have in society.

The programme's holistic approach to leadership development enabled her to realise that she was



Chouchouna facilitating a network meeting

“This leadership programme encourages civic actors to be more conscious of their roles and responsibilities as leaders; to discover their real selves and raise their self-awareness, discover their talents, competencies and put these into use” **CHOUCHOUNA LOSALE**

faced with personal internal conflicts and was struggling with work-life balance.

“I had a self-conflict problem. I couldn’t really manage my personal life with my professional life. I mixed up the two. So, my professional life was taking on so much that it was affecting my private life. It affected me, and I lost a lot of opportunities”, Losale admits.

The leadership programme helped her to discover the need to take responsibility and address the problems she identified.

“Today, through the leadership programme, I’ve learned to prioritise my tasks”, she testifies. Losale confirms that the programme has helped her to differentiate between her private and professional life.

She adds that the programme has enabled her “to manage my private life well, while also respecting what’s my responsibility within our organisation, and to stay on top of [my] tasks,” Losale admits.

According to the Finance and Administration Director of CFLEDD, Eyere Apek Chérie Fa who has worked with Losale for over ten years, the leadership programme enabled Losale to improve her work ethic, supporting colleagues to be at their optimal performance levels.

“The fact that she works and leads the team to work towards achieving the assigned objectives enables me to give my best”, Chérie Fa testifies.

The programme also enabled Losale to boost her self-confidence. She capitalised on this to transfer her newfound knowledge to other women in CFLEDD and the communities they work with. It helped these women to improve their personal leadership skills. This created a resounding ripple effect in her organisation and the women they work with.



Chouchouna Losale

“The leadership development has helped us a great deal and has enabled us to have truly capable women today,” she says.

To her, this has enabled CFLEDD to have “women leaders, with skills, abilities, capable of facing and sitting on the different decision-making tables”.

This has increased the pool of capable and confident female community leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This pool of leaders presents the views of women in decisions geared towards the effective management of natural resources in the country.

Through this, CFLEDD has increased the representation and active participation of women in decision-making spheres. Hence, making a forward leap towards reducing the marginalisation of women in the country.

The author

These stories were collected and written by Jimm Chick, an organisation development and communication specialist, based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

