Contents Page

1. Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 3
2. Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 4
3. The Amujae Initiative ............................................................................................................. 4
4. The Amujae Leadership Forum .............................................................................................. 5
5. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 13

Appendix 1: List of Amujae Leaders ...................................................................................... 14
Appendix 2: Photos .................................................................................................................... 16

“Amujae sisters are my tribe in this journey of female leadership in Africa and beyond. Now is the best time to be a woman!”

Amujae Leader
1. Executive Summary

Since the launch of the Amujae Initiative on International Women’s Day on 8 March 2020, the Amujae Leaders have demonstrated incredible resolve, tenacity, and resilience as they have continued their leadership journeys. They have run for office, assumed new appointed positions, weathered political attacks, and, most importantly, worked to help their countries build more inclusive societies in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021 Amujae Leadership Forum held from 29-31 October in Monrovia, Liberia was an opportunity for this diverse group of accomplished women leaders to convene, share their experiences, and offer solidarity and support. For the 2020 Amujae Leaders, it was a chance to see each other in person for the first time in more than 18 months. For the 2021 Amujae Leaders, it created a space to solidify relationships that had been forged virtually—and connect with the women who joined the initiative the year before.

Focused on the theme “Building Resilience,” the objectives of the Forum were to (1) deepen relationships among Amujae Leaders, (2) enable them to share strategies for getting through this time of increased vulnerability and high uncertainty, and (3) encourage them to focus on their goals.

Throughout the Forum, Amujae Leaders, coaches, and presenters were invited to share inspiring stories of resilience. The program addressed three facets of the theme: personal resilience, resilience for public leadership, and building a resilient network. Each day’s programming built on the last, taking the leaders through a journey of personal discovery and introspection and challenging them to keep their larger goals front-of-mind even amid setbacks.

The Forum created a safe space in which these ambitious leaders could openly and freely share their concerns and roadblocks as well as their successes. The power of the sisterhood that the Amujae Leaders have forged was evident as they supported and celebrated one another.

It also created an opportunity for the leaders to connect personally with former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, with some of the women meeting her for the first time. The celebration of Madam Sirleaf’s birthday created a moment of levity and much-needed respite for many amid a challenging year.

“Think big and dream big and your acts will follow. Be realistic when the time comes, but that should not stop the dream. That dream is the soul that you have. That’s what carries you to where you want to be. Stay with it.”

Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
2. Introduction

The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development (EJS Center) was founded to be a catalyst for change across Africa, by helping unleash its most abundant untapped 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.

The Center creates opportunities for driven women to further their ambitions and reach the highest positions in public leadership. Its vision is for an African continent with more voices heard, talents unleashed, and leaders launched that prioritize the aspirations of women.

As the first democratically elected woman president in Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led Liberia from 2006-2018. Having been recognized internationally for her leadership, she is passionate about supporting the next generation of women in public life across the continent.

3. The Amujae Initiative

The Amujae Initiative is the EJS Center’s flagship program which was launched on International Women’s Day 2020. Amujae, pronounced à mōō jāēē, means ‘we are going up’ in Kru, a Liberian language.

The Amujae Initiative aims to shift the landscape for women in public leadership in Africa, moving from a culture of tokenism to one that truly values women leaders. It inspires and prepares women to unapologetically take up roles and excel in the highest echelons of public leadership, and to bring other women along.

The Initiative supports women in public leadership across Africa who have proven their dedication to their communities and to uplifting fellow women. Now in its second year, the Amujae Initiative includes two cohorts, each consisting of 15 accomplished African women leaders.

The Amujae Initiative has four goals:

1. **Enhance the capacity** of women in public leadership, helping them to increase their effectiveness within their current roles.

2. **Embolden** women as they navigate career paths in public leadership, supporting them to aspire to the highest positions.

3. **Strengthen ties** among a growing, experienced, and capable network of women public leaders.

4. **Positively influence public perception** of women’s leadership across Africa, building a wave of support for greater women’s representation.

To achieve these goals, the Amujae Initiative conducts a set of integrated activities:

- **Leadership development:** The initiative hosts Amujae Leadership Forums and a robust schedule of online programming and facilitates ongoing coaching of leaders. Participants are African
women of proven talent already on a public leadership journey, with a track record of excellence and of supporting their fellow women.

- **Advocacy and movement building:** The EJS Center advocates for and helps to establish a sustainable environment for women in public leadership through traditional and digital media campaigns, gender sensitivity training for journalists, and media training for Amujae Leaders.

- **Research and thought leadership:** The EJS Center is a leading voice in highlighting women’s participation in public life in Africa, producing evidence-based research and promoting the insights of women leaders.

- **Documenting and storytelling:** To bring to life the challenges faced by women in leadership across Africa and how they can be overcome, the EJS Center documents the stories of the Amujae Leaders and other women in public life. This content is hosted on the EJS Center’s website and social media channels and is used in the development of other visual, print, and digital media.

Amujae Leadership Forums provide a critical opportunity for the Amujae Leaders to convene, build a network, and access coaching and training from accomplished leaders and world-renowned experts. The Amujae Initiative is generously supported by Big Win Philanthropy, which has provided funding and collaborated closely to design and implement the program.

### 4. The 2021 Amujae Leadership Forum

The EJS Center hosts a yearly cycle of Amujae Leadership Forums facilitating personal and professional development, as well as ongoing coaching and mentoring of identified women leaders. The 2021 Amujae Leadership Forum was held from 29-31 October 2021 at the Farmington Hotel in Monrovia, Liberia. It was the first gathering of Amujae Leaders since the official launch on March 8, 2020, on the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focused on the theme “Building Resilience,” the Forum aimed to equip the Amujae Leaders with the tools to continue their leadership journeys through uncertain times and support their respective countries in rebuilding following COVID-19.

Precautions were taken to ensure that the Forum could be held safely amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. PCR tests were required prior to traveling to Liberia and tests were carried out again upon landing and prior to departure. Masks and hand sanitizer were provided to all participants upon check-in at the hotel and Veronica buckets were stationed outside the conference hall. Social distancing was maintained within the conference rooms. The Center extends its gratitude to the Liberian health authorities for collaborating closely to ensure a safe event.
4.1 2020 & 2021 Amujae Leaders

Drawn from a diverse range of personal and professional backgrounds, the Amujae Leaders include members of parliament, a governor, a mayor, and several government ministers from 16 countries across Africa. They were selected through a rigorous process and they each have a track record of demonstrable achievements in public life and a drive to uplift African women and girls.

19 of the 30 Amujae Leaders across the 2020 and 2021 cohorts gathered for the 2021 Amujae Leadership Forum. Other Amujae Leaders were unable to attend due to high-level international commitments such as the G20 meeting in Italy, domestic obligations, or travel complications/precautions.

4.2 Coaches, Presenters, and Facilitators

The Forum brought together a distinguished group of coaches, presenters, and facilitators from around the world. These included leadership experts, campaign and communications strategists, and experienced facilitators. They are listed below in the order in which they appeared on the program.

- Rumbidzai Chisenga
- Ama Van Dantzig
- Dr. Ophelia Inez Weeks
- Amb. Deborah Malac
- Renee Ngamau
- Prof. Angela Ofori-Atta
- Eva Barboni
- Barkue Tubman-Zawolo
- K. Riva Levinson
- Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
- Jamie Cooper
- Dr. Kesete Admasu
- Amini Kajunju
- Dr. Chris Fomunyoh

4.3 Forum Objectives

The objectives of the Forum were to (1) deepen relationships among Amujae Leaders, (2) enable them to share strategies for getting through this time of increased vulnerability and high uncertainty, and (3) encourage them to focus on their leadership goals.

---

1 Refer to Appendix 1: List of Amujae Leaders
4.4 Summary of Activities

Throughout the Forum, Amujae Leaders, coaches, and presenters were invited to share inspiring stories of resilience. The first day, focused on personal resilience, took leaders on an inward journey. The second day concentrated on resilience for public leadership, and the third focused on building a resilient network.

It was clear from the start that the three axes of resilience are inextricably linked. The Forum was designed not only to explore each thread, but also weave them more closely together. During the Forum, Amujae Leaders opened up to each other, deepening their relationships and supporting each other in developing strategies for overcoming these challenging times. The contributions of Madam Sirleaf, the experts, and the Amujae Leaders themselves gave the needed encouragement to boldly pursue their goals.

Day 1: Personal Resilience

The first half-day, focused on personal resilience, included remarks and interventions by the Executive Director of the EJS Center, Dr. Ophelia Inez Weeks, former US Ambassador to Liberia Amb. Deborah Malac, Renee Ngamau, and Prof. Angela Ofori-Atta. The key topics explored were self-awareness, urgency, vulnerability, and courage. The powerful use of personal storytelling and poetry for introspection prepared Amujae Leaders for the second half of the day where they would dive deeper and more practically into strategies for resilience.

The day opened with setting rules of engagement for the Forum. Participants contributed their thoughts on how to approach the next three days. These included a commitment to being “frank” and “speaking the truth,” while ensuring that the participants “respect each other’s opinions” and “look out for signs of being unsupportive.” Participants also committed to “have fun and enjoy each other” despite the challenges they all face.
After the Amujae Leaders discussed and agreed upon the rules of engagement for the Forum, EJS Center Executive Director Dr. Ophelia Inez Weeks, (pictured) delivered an introductory address to provide context for the Forum. She shared how the Amujae Initiative fits into the larger ambition of the Center to champion women at the highest levels of public leadership. Amujae Leaders were reminded that each of them is working on something larger than themselves, and that the Center is there to support them as they pursue their goals. She highlighted that in this pursuit, resilience—the ability to quickly recover after a setback—is a crucial trait. Dr Weeks particularly noted the importance of self-awareness as a key factor for resilience, noting that the best strategy to bounce back from challenges is to dig down deeper.

The second address was delivered by Amb. Deborah Malac, during which she challenged the women to “refuse to leave the room,” even when they experience setbacks on their leadership journeys. She noted that the world needs women’s leadership more than ever before, highlighting how COVID-19 and other global challenges have added greater urgency for creating inclusive leadership. She also stressed the incredible ability of a single individual to make a difference, encouraging women to be intentional about moving from the “power of one” to the multitude of others. She also stressed the need for women to build relationships and support each other to overcome obstacles—as there will be many ahead.

Renee Ngamau, a Kenyan life coach, lawyer and an award-winning Radio and TV host (pictured), then told a captivating personal story of vulnerability, sharing how her situation forced her to move from perfect to priceless. “For you to become priceless, you must be broken,” she insisted – using the image of a rocket that gradually lets go of some of its parts as it rises. Allowing oneself to fall apart and then build oneself back is painful, but one must be willing to pay the price to grow on this journey. This was received as encouragement and affirmation by the leaders, many of whom recognized their own experiences in her words.

To close the morning, the facilitated session by Prof. Angela Ofori-Atta, a clinical psychologist and associate professor at the University of Ghana School of Medicine and Dentistry, emphasized the need for courage as a resilience factor in difficult times. Skilfully guiding the Amujae Leaders through honest introspection, she encouraged each leader to face their fears.
A quick agreement was reached that there is no blueprint for what Amujae Leaders are doing. Women aiming for positions of public leadership have to move forward and forge their own paths—despite facing failure, backlash, or outright hostility. This discussion highlighted why the theme of the Forum—building resilience—is so important. By creating space for the leaders to share their experiences openly, even vulnerably, and discover shared challenges, it helped to deepen the connections between the leaders, who could see themselves in each other. This not only resulted in a stronger network of support, but greater personal confidence, and commitment to continue on the journey.

During the second half of the first day, the Amujae Leaders participated in two interactive workshops.

The first workshop, facilitated by two communications and public relations experts, Eva Barboni and Barkue Tubman-Zawolo, focused on the power of storytelling and the importance of owning your narrative. The workshop explored different forms of storytelling, focusing on autobiographies and documentaries.

In the second workshop, Riva Levinson, a political and business strategist, demonstrated the essential role played by political strategists or advisors, and shared insights on “planning to win.” The workshop also touched on navigating social media and controlling one’s personal narrative.

Both workshops were provided tools, tips, and practical approaches to the shared challenges that Amujae Leaders face. Together, they provided building blocks for a strategic plan to position themselves successfully and build a platform of support in their respective contexts.

The day ended with an informal dinner, during which the Amujae Leaders were able to connect in small groups. This enabled them to continue to build relationships within and across the two cohorts.

Day 2: Resilience for Public Leadership

The second day of the Forum focused on strategies for building, maintaining, and galvanizing an ecosystem for strategic ascendance. Along with an excellent panel facilitated by the Amujae Leaders on fortitude, Renee Ngamau, Amini Kajunju, and Dr. Chris Fomunyoh highlighted themes including resources and resourcefulness, clarifying goals, mobilizing support, and building movements.
Following a reflection on the previous day’s discussion and takeaways, the day began with a panel discussion among Amujae Leaders (pictured) from across the two cohorts. Moderated by Yawa Hansen-Quao (2020), the panel included Fatoumatta Njai (2021), Fadzayi Mahere (2020), and Hadiza Bala Usman (2020). This was an open-hearted discussion about cultivating fortitude for the uneven road. The discussion highlighted the importance of holding onto your ideals and finding the “few who will walk the walk with you.” The leaders shared the driving forces behind their ambitions, including a commitment to ethical leadership and good governance and a passion for change.

After the panel discussion, Madam Sirleaf (pictured) delivered an address to the Amujae Leaders, during which she reminded them of the importance of resilience. She urged the leaders to set their goals, stay the course, and be fearless in the face of failure.

“No failure is success upside down. It prepares you for the next phase of your journey.”

Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Madam Sirleaf acknowledged that being a leader is difficult, particularly for women, who must penetrate spaces where men have kept women out. She also highlighted that politics can be dirty and unfair, and that to endure this, it is critical to find the joy in it. She noted that politics is about people, whether engaging with ministers and heads of state or sitting on the ground to eat and drink with people in the constituencies.

Madam Sirleaf reminded the Amujae Leaders of her support and her investment in seeing them unapologetically take up the highest positions in public leadership. She urged them on, saying “Stand out and make a difference.” The Amujae Leaders then had an opportunity to ask Madam Sirleaf about her experiences and seek her advice about their own leadership ambitions.

The discussion about the need for both personal resilience and collective support, which were key themes in Madam Sirleaf’s remarks, continued throughout the day. In the next session, Renee Ngamau reminded leaders of the African imperative to bring along other women into leadership. The women discussed how to harness the potential of other talented African women already in their networks to build an army made up of women-led, women-owned platforms.

The program proceeded into a group discussion on movement building facilitated by EJS Center Chief Operating Officer, Amini Kajunju. First, she noted the importance of distinguishing between a campaign and a movement. She highlighted that campaigns are launched to win or learn, have a single figure at the head—often a candidate—and focus on a single issue. In contrast, movements are about longer-term structural change, and gather a larger group of people for collective intentional action. In the discussion, the Amujae Leaders debated the different ways that “insiders” and “outsiders” can drive change.

Continuing on this strategic note, Dr. Chris Fomunyoh (pictured), a senior associate and regional director for Central and West Africa at the National Democratic Institute, gave a rousing presentation on strategic planning. He encouraged the Amujae Leaders to consider their goals, ways, and means when determining their next career steps.

The second day of the Forum concluded with a dinner to celebrate Madam Sirleaf’s 83rd birthday, a joyous evening that gave the leaders the
opportunity to express their gratitude for one another and for Madam Sirleaf and to reflect on the discussions over the previous two days.

**Day 3: Building a Resilient Network**

After a night of bonding, the Amujae Leaders gathered for the final day of the Forum. They were invited by EJS Center Director of Programs Rumbidzai Chisenga (pictured) to share their ideas for how the Center can better support them, and how to strengthen the network.

The day concluded with acknowledgements led by Rumbidzai Chisenga, who thanked the Amujae Leaders, coaches, presenters, and facilitators for their candid and open contributions over the previous three days.

4.5 Key Takeaways

The Amujae Leaders also shared some of the biggest takeaways or “aha moments” that emerged from the three days in their evaluations of the forum. Here is what some of them had to say:

“That most people are facing challenges and are looking for solutions, uplifting and inspiration. There's strength in unity and having a network that one can lean on.”

“We must refuse to leave the room.”

“I am here for a reason. I am priceless, not just perfect.”

“I should master telling stories if I want to go global.”

“Remain focused on a noble idea. It will keep you (grounded).”
5. Conclusion

The second Amujae Leadership Forum was an intensive gathering that deepened the connection between the Amujae Leaders. The 2020 Amujae Leaders had the privilege of convening for the second time and meet the 2021 cohort. The 2021 Amujae Leaders met each other in person for the first time after many online sessions, allowing them to deepen connections among themselves and with the first cohort of leaders. By the end of the Forum, Amujae Leaders had forged connections within and beyond their cohorts.

With the Forum held amid the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that many of the Amujae Leaders have been through challenging times, whether personally or professionally. The Forum created a safe space in which these ambitious leaders could openly and freely share their concerns and challenges as well as their successes, knowing they would be supported and celebrated. Throughout the Forum, the Amujae Leaders arranged moments to connect, share, and challenge each other informally. Through those connections, leaders could open up, be more authentic and vulnerable, and ultimately learn from each other.

The leaders worked hard to clarify their ambitions and gained input to develop intentional and strategic plans, all the while deepening their relationship with their sisters—forming a new wave of women to reach the highest levels of public leadership in Africa.

“We hope you will leave more emboldened, more empowered, and more ready to take on whatever comes your way as you seek to achieve your leadership goals.”

Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Appendix 1: List of Amujae Leaders

2020 Amujae Leaders

- 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
- Cornelis Krugah-Togba
  - Liberia
- Adv. Fadzayi Mahere
  - Zimbabwe
- Aïda Alassane N'Diaye-Riddick
  - Cité d'oulore
- Angela Nwaka
  - Nigeria
- Dr. Jumoke Oduwole
  - Nigeria
- Upendo Furaha Peneza
  - Tanzania
- Blen A. Sahlu
  - Ethiopia
2021 Amujae Leaders

Tejumola Abisoye  
Nigeria

Farida Bedwei  
Ghana

Dagmawit Moges Bekele  
Ethiopia

Susan Grace Duku  
South Sudan

Dr. Yakuma Manty Jones  
Sierra Leone

Isata Kabbah  
Sierra Leone

Bopolo Kenewendo  
Botswana

Eng. Ghadu Labib  
Egypt

Angèle Makombo  
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Fatoumatta Njai  
The Gambia

Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor  
Nigeria

Umra Omar  
Kenya

Dr. Adaeze Oreh  
Nigeria

Telis Urey  
Liberia

Anne Waiguru  
Kenya
Appendix 2: Photos

Amujae Leader Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Amujae Leader Hadiza Bala Usman (top row left), The 2020 & 2021 Amujae Leaders gather with Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the end of the Amujae Leadership Forum (top row right), Renee Ngamau (second row left), Dr. Ophelia Inez Weeks (second row right), Amujae Leaders Yawa Hansen-Quao, Fadzayi Mahere, and Fatoumatta Njai (bottom left), Amujae Leader Dr. Adaeze Oreh (bottom right)
Rumbidzai Chisenga and Ama Van Dantzig (top left), Eva Barboni and Barkue Tubman-Zawolo (top right), Dr. Chris Fomunyoh (second row left), Ama Van Dantzig and Prof. Angela Ofiri-Atta (second row center), Jamie Cooper (second row right), Amujae Leaders Fatoumatta Njai, Umra Omar, and Ghada Labib (third row left), Amujae leaders Hadiza Bala Usman, Dr. Yakama Manty Jones, Kula Fofana (third row center), K. Riva Levinson (third-row right) Amujae Leaders Cornelia Kruah-Togba, Dr. Yakama Manty Jones, Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor, Yawa Hansen-Quao, Telia Urey (fourth row left), Amujae Leaders Jumoke Oduwole and Cornelia Kruah-Togba (fourth row center), Amini Kajunju (fourth row right)