

LEADING WOMEN OF AFRICA
FUTURE IS FEMALE AND MALE CHAMPIONS & HONORARY AWARDS

7 May 2026

HOSTED DURING
THE AFRICON MSIS SUMMIT
5-7 MAY 2026, DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

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STRATEGIC CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Despite decades of commitments to gender equality, Africa continues to experience slow and uneven progress in translating policy frameworks into tangible outcomes for women. The COVID-19 pandemic further reversed gains in women's economic participation, leadership, and safety, while gender-based violence escalated across communities.

Africa's transformation agenda, anchored in **AU Agenda 2063**, the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, and the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, cannot be achieved without women as equal partners in decision-making, economic growth, and governance.

Recognising that men still occupy the majority of leadership positions, the **LWA Awards** intentionally promote collaborative leadership between women and men as a catalyst for inclusive, sustainable socio-economic transformation.

The Future is Female, Men Champions & Honorary Awards provide a credible continental and International platform to honour leaders and institutions that are actively advancing gender equality in measurable action.

Kind regards,


MS. MADELEIN MKHULU

Email: madelein@leadingwomenofafrica.com

Website: www.leadingwomenofafrica.com



AWARDS CATEGORIES STRUCTURE

A. COMPETING AWARDS

1. LWA Future is Female Awards

Celebrating women leaders who demonstrate exceptional leadership, resilience, and impact in advancing women's empowerment and Africa's socio-economic development through collaboration, innovation, and systemic change.

2. LWA Men Champions Awards

Established in 2015 and endorsed by the late **Dr. Kenneth Kaunda**, former President of Zambia and Patron of LWA, these awards recognise male leaders who have demonstrated sustained commitment to recognising women as equal partners in political, social, and economic development.

"The 21st century is the time for men to look at women as equal partners in political, social and economic development.", Dr. Kenneth Kaunda

A. COMPETING AWARDS CATEGORIES LIST

I. Public Sector Category (Individual & Institutional)

- Most Gender-Focused Head of State / Prime Minister / Speaker
- Most Gender-Focused Minister / Governor / Mayor
- Most Gender-Focused Public Institution

II. Corporate Sector Category (Individual & Institutional)

- Most Gender-Focused CEO / Chairperson
- Most Gender-Focused Head of Procurement
- Most Gender-Focused Head of CSI
- Most Gender-Focused Corporate Institution

III. Civil Society Category (Individual & Institutional)

- Women's Rights Advocate of the Year
- Humanitarian Excellence Award
- Most Gender-Focused Civil Society Organisation

IV. Entrepreneurship & Youth (Individual)

- Most Gender-Focused Entrepreneur
- Most Influential African Youth Leader

B. HONORARY (NON-COMPETING) AWARDS

These awards are conferred by LWA in recognition of exceptional lifetime or strategic contribution.

- African Individual Honorary Award
- African Institutional Honorary Award
- International Individual Honorary Award
- International Institutional Honorary Award



AWARDS CRITERIA

A. COMPETING AWARDS CATEGORIES

The **LWA Future is Female & Men Champions Awards** recognise both individuals and institutions whose leadership, policies, and practices have demonstrably advanced women's empowerment, gender equality, and inclusive development.

I. PUBLIC SECTOR CATEGORY (INDIVIDUAL & INSTITUTION)

1. Most Gender-Focused Head of State / Prime Minister / Speaker of Parliament

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Description:

Recognises national leaders who have demonstrated exceptional political will and leadership in advancing gender equality through governance, policy reform, and institutional transformation.

Assessment Criteria:

- Representation of women in Cabinet, Parliament, and senior public service
- Allocation of strategic portfolios and decision-making authority to women
- Gender-responsive budgeting and national gender policies
- Public sector employment equity
- Procurement and economic inclusion of women-owned enterprises
- Advocacy for women's rights and protection mechanisms

2. Most Gender-Focused Minister / Governor / Mayor

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Gender-responsive policies and programmes within their portfolio
- Measurable impact on women at national or sub-national level
- Budget prioritisation for women-focused initiatives
- Institutional reforms advancing women's participation

3. Most Gender-Focused Public Institution

(National, Regional or Local Government Institution)

Description:

Recognises a public institution that has embedded gender equality into its policies, leadership structures, operations, and service delivery.



Assessment Criteria:

- Existence and implementation of a Gender Equality Policy & Action Plan
- Women's representation in senior leadership and decision-making roles
- Gender-responsive budgeting and reporting
- Procurement from women-owned enterprises
- Impact of institutional programmes on women and girls
- Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms

II. CORPORATE SECTOR CATEGORIES (INDIVIDUAL & INSTITUTION)

1. Most Gender-Focused CEO / Chairperson

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Women on boards and executive committees
- Leadership pipeline and succession planning for women
- Workplace equity, parental policies, and inclusion frameworks
- Enterprise and supplier development focused on women
- Measurable social and economic impact

2. Most Gender-Focused Head of Procurement

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Percentage of spend directed to women-owned enterprises
- Supplier development and capacity-building initiatives
- Sustainability of gender-responsive procurement strategies

3. Most Gender-Focused Head of Corporate Social Investment (CSI)

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Percentage of CSI budget allocated to women-focused programmes
- Scale, sustainability, and reach of funded initiatives
- Community-level transformation outcomes



4. Most Gender-Focused Corporate Institution

(Private Sector Company or State-Owned Enterprise)

Description:

Recognises a corporate institution that has demonstrated systemic commitment to gender equality across governance, operations, supply chains, and community investment.

Assessment Criteria:

- Gender diversity at board and executive levels
- Gender-responsive HR and workplace policies
- Procurement from women-owned businesses
- Enterprise and supplier development programmes for women
- Transparent reporting on gender impact
- Long-term sustainability of initiatives

III. CIVIL SOCIETY CATEGORY (INDIVIDUAL & INSTITUTION)

1. Women's Rights Advocate of the Year

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Policy influence and legislative advocacy
- Public awareness and mobilisation
- Protection and empowerment of women and girls
- Sustainability and scale of impact

2. Humanitarian Excellence Award

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Impact in GBV prevention, health, education, or humanitarian response
- Innovation and reach of interventions
- Systems change and long-term outcomes

3. Most Gender-Focused Civil Society Organisation

(NGO, Foundation, or Development Organisation)

Description:

Recognises a civil society institution whose programmes, advocacy, and partnerships have delivered measurable and sustainable outcomes for women and girls.

Assessment Criteria:

- Strategic focus on women's empowerment
- Programme reach and measurable impact
- Policy influence and advocacy outcomes
- Institutional sustainability and governance



IV. ENTREPRENEURSHIP & YOUTH (INDIVIDUAL)

1. Most Gender-Focused Entrepreneur

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Women in ownership, leadership, and workforce
- Investment in women-owned enterprises
- Skills development, mentorship, and job creation
- Community socio-economic impact

2. Most Influential African Youth Leader

(1 Female | 1 Male)

Assessment Criteria:

- Leadership innovation and influence
- Impact on women and youth
- Advocacy and social transformation

B. HONORARY (NON-COMPETING) AWARDS

The **Honorary Awards** are conferred by Leading Women of Africa (LWA) in recognition of exceptional leadership, legacy, and strategic contribution to advancing gender equality, inclusive development, and Africa's transformation agenda.

These awards are by invitation and selection only and are not subject to public nomination or competition.

Each Honorary Awardee will receive a bespoke citation reflecting their unique contribution and legacy.

1. African Individual Honorary Award

Description:

This award recognises an African leader whose vision, leadership, and sustained contribution have significantly advanced gender equality, governance reform, peace and security, education, economic inclusion, or social transformation on the continent.



Eligible Recipients May Include:

- Heads of State or Government
- Former Heads of State or Government
- Senior public servants or policymakers
- Traditional leaders
- Distinguished business leaders
- Renowned advocates or thought leaders

Selection Considerations:

- Demonstrated long-term commitment to women's empowerment
- Influence on policy, institutions, or national development outcomes
- Legacy impact beyond a single programme or term of office
- Alignment with AU Agenda 2063 and SDGs
- Ethical leadership and public credibility

2. African Institutional Honorary Award

Description:

This award recognises an African institution that has demonstrated systemic, sustained, and measurable commitment to advancing women's empowerment and gender equality through policy, practice, and institutional culture.

Eligible Institutions May Include:

- Government ministries, agencies, or authorities
- Regional or continental African institutions
- Public entities or state-owned enterprises
- African private sector institutions
- African foundations or development organisations

Selection Considerations:

- Institutionalisation of gender equality (policies, structures, budgets)
- Women's representation in leadership and decision-making
- Long-term impact on women and communities
- Accountability, transparency, and sustainability
- Replicable models of institutional best practice



3. International Individual Honorary Award

Description:

This award recognises a global leader or international personality whose leadership, advocacy, or philanthropy has made a significant and sustained contribution to advancing gender equality and development in Africa.

Eligible Recipients May Include:

- International statespersons or former leaders
- Global philanthropists
- Multilateral or international organisation leaders
- Global advocates for women's empowerment

Selection Considerations:

- Depth and consistency of engagement with Africa
- Tangible outcomes for women and girls
- Respect for African ownership and partnership
- Ethical, inclusive, and impact-driven leadership
- Contribution to long-term systemic change

4. International Institutional Honorary Award

Description:

This award recognises an international institution whose work in Africa has delivered measurable, transformative, and sustainable outcomes for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Eligible Institutions May Include:

- Multilateral organisations
- Bilateral development agencies
- International foundations
- Global development or humanitarian institutions

Selection Considerations:

- Integration of gender equality into institutional strategy
- Scale and sustainability of impact in Africa
- Partnerships with African governments and institutions
- Accountability, learning, and reporting mechanisms
- Contribution to systemic and policy-level change



JUDGING & GOVERNANCE

Competing categories

- Independent, multi-sectoral judging panel
- Transparent scoring system
- Judges' decision is final
- LWA reserves the right not to award a category

Honorary categories

- Honorary Awardees are selected by Leading Women of Africa, in consultation with its Advisory Council and partners
- No application or nomination fees apply
- Awards are conferred at the AFRICON 2026 Awards Ceremony
- Each award is accompanied by a customised citation reflecting the recipient's unique contribution and legacy

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- Continental and international recognition
- Enhanced national, institutional, and corporate profile
- Strengthened partnerships and visibility
- Contribution to Africa's gender and development agenda

CONFIDENTIALITY & ETHICS

- All submissions treated as confidential.
- No sponsor or LWA contractor eligible for nomination.

NOMINATION TIMELINE

LEADING WOMEN OF AFRICA FUTURE IS FEMALE AND MALE CHAMPIONS & HONORARY AWARDS			
Nominations Open: 26 th January 2026 to 27 th February 2026	Adjudication: 9 th - 20 th March 2026	Announcement of Awardees: 23 rd March 2026	Awards Ceremony: 7 th May 2026 Daar Es Salam, Tanzania
WWW.AFRICONMSISUMMIT.COM			



ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

Leading Women of Africa

Headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa, **Leading Women of Africa (LWA)** is registered as a Section 21 Company. Leading Women of Africa (LWA) is a Pan-African organisation dedicated to advancing women's leadership, entrepreneurship, and regional integration.

LWA mission is to equip women to become influential leaders, successful entrepreneurs, and active contributors to Africa's socio-economic transformation.

Through strategic programmes, partnerships, and media engagement, LWA supports women to participate fully in the continent's development agenda and in the realisation of Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want

LWA also hosts Beyond Boundaries, a Pan-African thought-leadership platform amplifying African perspectives on geopolitics, governance, leadership, and development through high-level virtual and in-person events.

Tanzania Association of Small-Scale Industries and Manufacturers (TASSIM)

A representative organization for micro, small, and manufacturing industries in Tanzania advocating for members, facilitate cooperation with the government, and support the growth of small industries.

CONTACT US:

EMAIL: awards@lwacorporate.com

Summit Registration: registrations@afriiconmsisummit.com

Media & Sponsorship: communications@afriiconmsisummit.com

TZ: +255 747 741 741

SA: +27 71 646 9286

WEBSITE: www.leadingwomenofafrica.com

www.afriiconmsisummit.com

