



Newsletter



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A Journey of Creativity and Feminist Storytelling Background

Background.

Soma is a Multimedia Feminist Storytelling Hub and Archive whose mission is to nurture innovative storytellers with pan-African feminist consciousness and skills to author transformation. And it envisions a prosperous and equitable Tanzanian society where women and young people re- imagine and author transformation. In its current strategic frame (2023-2027), Soma plans to a) grow a vibrant storytelling hub where women, youth, children and diverse identities engage creatively, collaborate and network to contribute to the Transformative Feminist Movement; b) Facilitate the growth of a strong cadre of feminist authors to safeguard visibility of women's agency and integrity in mainstream Tanzanian and pan-African political, social and cultural memory; c) Sustain vibrant public discourse amplifying. pan-African feminist and sustainable earth ideas; and d) Grow a sustainable and resilient institutional base the efficiently accesses and utilizes resources and opportunities for transformative feminist storytelling with a pan-African ecofeminist edge.

<https://www.somabookcafe.com/>



Discovering New Horizons in Creative Writing

Once upon a time, in the vibrant creative spaces of Tanzania, Soma embarked on a transformative journey in the first quarter of 2025. Supported by UNESCO, OSF, and WFT, this adventure unfolded through three groundbreaking initiatives the UNESCO-Alwaleed Creative Change Project, the KK Mentorship Program and Vavagaa. But that's not all! Parallel to these exciting endeavors, the Vavagaa initiative was also making strides, focusing on feminist storytelling and discourse. These programs aimed to bridge gaps, empower voices, and create platforms for emerging talents in creative writing and feminist storytelling. Let's dive into the story of their remarkable progress, challenges, and achievements.

The UNESCO-Alwaleed Creative Change Project: A Tale of Opportunity

The story began with a bold vision: to connect emerging creative writers with professional opportunities. SOMA launched the UNESCO-Alwaleed Creative Change 6 months Project under the banner of Professional Development Opportunities in Creative Writing Spaces. Through training sessions, surveys, focus group discussions, and curriculum development meetings, SOMA sought to uncover untapped potential among youth and women in creative writing and multimedia.

Picture this: 58 participants gathered insights from surveys and discussions, revealing their passions for poetry (17.95%), video storytelling (15.38%), fiction (12.82%), illustration (7.69%), and podcasting (5.13%). These interests became the foundation for tailored vocational education programs designed to align with their aspirations. But every great story has its challenges. Stakeholders demanded high payments, timelines stretched thin, and attendance issues loomed large. Yet SOMA persevered, validating findings, refining curricula, and creating platforms that connected creative writers with technical institutions. The project empowered participants to explore new career paths while fostering inclusivity and cultural sustainability in the arts sector.

As the curtain fell on this chapter, SOMA celebrated milestones like curriculum validation, stakeholder engagement, and enhanced skills among participants. The project proved that creativity could indeed be a bridge to professional growth, a testament to SOMA's unwavering commitment to nurturing talent.



Focus Group Discussion with Youth in Creative Writing



The Kestoria Kavazi Mentorship Program: Cultivating Feminist Storytellers

Meanwhile, another story unfolded a tale of feminist storytelling under the Kestoria Kavazi Mentorship Program. This six-month initiative aimed to nurture a new generation of young publishers, storytellers and digital creators with a focus on feminist storytelling approaches. Monthly convenings centered around feminist theory and digital storytelling tools brought together mentees eager to amplify feminist discourse through essays, poems, short stories, videos, and social media campaigns.

Imagine mentees diving into themes that resonated deeply with their identities, crafting narratives that bridged generational perspectives while refining their skills in digital literacy tools like Canva and Adobe Premiere. Their journey was not without hurdles: university schedules clashed with program timelines; mentors struggled with follow-through; stipends were delayed; resources were scarce for visual storytelling efforts. Yet these challenges only fueled Soma's resolve to improve processes for future cohorts.

Through resilience and creativity, mentees emerged as masters of feminist storytelling writing poems that echoed empowerment and crafting narratives that celebrated intersectionality. Peer networks flourished as mentees collaborated on projects that fostered trust and learning. The next initiative will include display and publication of mentees creative works.



Vavagaa: Amplifying Feminist Discourse

In a parallel narrative, Vavagaa took significant strides in fostering feminist storytelling and discourse. The first quarter of 2025 was marked by strategic planning and content development. Key activities included identifying discussion topics and guest speakers to ensure diverse and insightful conversations. Comprehensive scripting was undertaken to enhance narrative coherence, while a panel of experienced editors ensured high editorial standards.

Vavagaa's journey included mapping out locations for Vavagaa Mtaani and developing an editorial framework to enhance efficiency in content creation. The initiative finalized its guest list for the podcast and scouted venues for recordings and community engagements.

Podcast production was a highlight, with recording sessions executed to align with the thematic structure.

Interactive content, including audience engagement games and discussion prompts, was developed to enhance participation. Preparations for Vavagaa Mtaani Phase 2 involved identifying key themes and assessing optimal locations.

Like any good story, challenges arose. Scheduling conflicts with speakers were mitigated through proactive planning, and minor technical disruptions were addressed with additional production support. Our next initiative will be posting of Vavagaa episodes, and Vavagaa Online.

Achievements That Inspire

These initiatives left an indelible mark on Mtaani landscape:

- **Skill Development:** Participants gained expertise in poetry, fiction writing, video storytelling, podcasting, illustration, feminist narratives, and digital tools.
- **Community Building:** Collaborative efforts fostered trust among mentees while bridging generational gaps.
- **Platform Creation:** Sustainable systems were established to connect emerging talents with professional opportunities.
- **Content Strategy:** Vavagaa significantly advanced its content strategy and production efforts through meticulous planning and execution.

Looking Ahead: Recommendations for Growth

As Soma and Vavagaa reflect on their journeys so far, recommendations for improvement shine brightly on the horizon.

- Emphasize audience engagement and continuous refinement of production processes.

| Call to Action

Join Soma on its transformative journey to amplify feminist storytelling and nurture the next generation of creative voices in Tanzania and beyond. Whether you are a writer, artist, mentor, or supporter of gender equity, your participation is vital in building a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable storytelling ecosystem.

- Aspiring storytellers and creatives: Take part in upcoming mentorship programs, workshops, and creative writing opportunities to develop your skills and share your unique perspective.
- Community members and partners: Engage with Vavagaa's podcasts, events, and community dialogues your voice and feedback help shape the future of feminist discourse and cultural memory.
- Supporters and stakeholders: Collaborate with Soma to provide resources, mentorship, and platforms that empower women, youth, and diverse identities to author transformation and drive social change.

Let's write the next chapter together one where creativity, equity, and collaboration lead the way. Visit Soma's website or connect with us on social media to get involved, support our initiatives, and help amplify the stories that matter most. The future of feminist storytelling starts with you be part of the movement!

| Conclusion:

- Writing a New Chapter Together
- The first quarter of 2025 was a testament to Soma's and Vavagaa's dedication to fostering creativity and amplifying voices through innovative programs. These initiatives not only bridged gaps but also empowered individuals to write their own stories that inspire change and celebrate diversity.
- As Soma and Vavagaa continue their journey into the next chapter of 2025, one thing is clear: creativity knows no bounds when nurtured with passion and purpose. Let us all celebrate these achievements as we look forward to more stories waiting to be told!



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