

Portrait of courage: Women and survival in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*

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Abstract

The Zimbabwean challenges witnessed between 1998 and 2008 brought about various survival strategies. Whereas some sought to create coping mechanisms within Zimbabwe, others went into exile. These two groups, nonetheless, needed to confront the massive challenges during the decade of the Zimbabwean considerable suffering (1998-2008). These included hyperinflation, unemployment, food shortages, violence and the high death rates. Creative writings played a significant part as authors depicted Zimbabweans who sought to survive in varied ways. Of particular importance to this article, is how one particular Zimbabwean female creative writer Tagwira employed her creative imagination to challenge the status quo. In *The Uncertainty of Hope* Tagwira (2006) represents her female characters in a more empowering way. She shows how they seek to overcome major challenges to ensure that their families survive the challenges.

Introduction

Tagwira's novel explores the livelihood strategies that were employed by Zimbabwean women at the height of the decade of challenges in Zimbabwe. She tackles issues such as HIV and AIDS, Operation Murambatsvina (Clean-up trash), gender-based violence, retrenchment and unemployment. The novel catalogues the lives of different women: Onai Moyo, a market woman; Faith and Melody, who are university students; Katy Nguni, a vendor and black market dealer; Sheila and Gloria, who are sex workers, and Ruva, a secondary school pupil. One thing that is common about these different women is that they are all determined to earn their living in various ways, in spite of the stifling social, political and economic environment that they find themselves in during the decade of challenges in Zimbabwe.

Tagwira challenges the negative images of women in Zimbabwean literature (Gaidzanwa, 1985). Whereas some earlier writers portray women as hapless victims of patriarchy, in her novel women are dynamic and assertive. The women do not wait for their husbands or male partners to "save" them. Instead, they embark on various survival strategies in order to negotiate the massive crisis that confronts them. In an economy characterised by "kukiya-kiya" (informal trade) and "kurohwa pasi petsoka" (profiteering) (Kadenge, 2012), the women manage to defy the odds. Tagwira shows women as the pillars of their families. This confirms the popular adage, "when you strike a woman, you strike a rock."

As I have indicated, at the centre of the novel, are women characters. Their various and complex lives give insights into the challenges that face those who try to earn a living in difficult economic conditions. *The Uncertainty of Hope* is set in the overcrowded suburb of Mbare, Harare, and interrogates the intricate lives of Onai Moyo who is a market woman,

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mother of three children, and wife to Gari Moyo. Her best friend is Katy Nguni, a vendor and black-market currency dealer who is married to an international truck-driver. The women of Mbare are Tagwira's focus: socially and culturally constructed as dependent on men, yet struggling on their own for survival during the years of economic and social hardships. The central character is Onai Moyo, a kind, loyal wife and deeply caring mother of three children. She is faithful to her husband even though there is no love between the two. Her husband is a womanizer and very abusive. This is why Katy urges her to leave Gari, "do you want us to take you out of this house in a coffin?" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 6) Onai does not yield to this idea because of socialisation, yet her husband reduces her to a mere possession. In the following section, I focus on the status of women in Zimbabwe in order to highlight Tagwira's creativity and determination to transform women in the contemporary period.

Tagwira's construction of women characters in the context of Zimbabwe

A longer narrative is required to do justice to the theme of the status of women in Zimbabwe. However, it is important to acknowledge that prior to colonialism, women enjoyed considerable space in indigenous Zimbabwean societies. They occupied important positions as spirit mediums and as producers of food by tilling the land. However, colonialism introduced the cash economy. Men were absorbed into this economy, leaving women on the margins. This had a negative effect on the economy as it meant that only men became the visible economic players (although women continued to support the same economy informally).

From the foregoing, it is clear that modern nation-states need to appreciate that there has been some missing female input in a number of social, political and economic issues. It is, therefore, desirable to concentrate on progressive cultures that acknowledge women's efforts duly, instead of upholding stifling cultural definitions of a woman. African women have been missing in a number of scenes in patriarchal societies. The discourse of life in Africa thus became male dominated. This gave the wrong impression that women were incapable beings who had to rely on their male counterparts in society. According to Chipso Hungwe, (2006, p. 37) "when it came to controlling women, the various patriarchies (colonial, rural, missionary, indigenous) often collaborated across racial lines." This left a legacy of regarding women as minors who need male protection and guidance.

The status of women in Zimbabwe has, therefore, been compromised by the coming together of various patriarchies. Colonial patriarchy placed emphasis on men as "bread-winners" and gave men a privileged status on towns and cities. Rural and indigenous patriarchy created the myth that women who ventured into urban areas were "loose and dangerous." Missionary patriarchy communicated the idea that "responsible" women were housewives. The net effect of these patriarchies was to domesticate women and to suggest that women could not be regarded as serious economic actors. These negative images of women have persisted.

Despite the challenges, the women's movement in Zimbabwe has been actively involved in transforming the status of women. To begin with, women were critical to the success of the liberation struggle of the 1970s. As Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) has demonstrated, women played various roles in the execution of the struggle. After independence, the nationalist government managed to pass some progressive pieces of legislation that promoted women's advancement. However, as Shireen Essof (2012) has shown, much more remains to be done for women to enjoy their rights. According to Essof, "*shemurenga*," meaning, women's struggles for gender equality, must be sustained.

Tagwira, through Emily, the woman doctor, and Faith, a law student at the University of Zimbabwe, challenges negative cultural perceptions and shows that some avenues are not a male-preserve. Inclusion of the female models such as Tagwira's Faith and Emily helps to show that it is possible for women to engage in gainful thinking, without fear or prejudice.

Tagwira seeks to cultivate and promote the independence of female intellectuals and demonstrate their relevance to society. Just like Freedom Nyamubaya's concerns in *On the Road Again* (1986), Tagwira contends that the struggle has never been over for women as they seek recognition by fighting all cultural restrictions imposed on them in patriarchal social settings.

As women of courage, the female characters in *The Uncertainty of Hope* are 'on the road again' as cross borders, (Maya), vendors, (Onai), or as black market dealers (Katy). All these women persevere in a bid to fend for their families. According to patriarchal formulations, it was the man who was expected to provide for the family. Even during the Industrial Revolution, it was the man who was taken away from home to work in industries for a wage, while women stayed at home and concentrated on caring for dependants and unpaid domestic tasks. The 'reformations' imposed created processes of fundamental material changes which were, in turn, to transform social relations and culture, (Gecau, 2001, p. 52). According to Oyewumi, the combination of male wage labour and migrant labour produced a new cultural definition and social identity of females, as dependants and appendages of men (Cole, et al., 2007, p. 241-2). This, however, was to change after the Second World War. There was an increase in women's labour force due to increased needs for income. Therefore, women who go to work remain crucial to a country's economy. This is demonstrated in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Most of the women characters are depicted as a force to reckon with in the economic sector. Tagwira places emphasis on women's agency and solidarity, themes I explore in greater detail in the following section.

Women's agency and solidarity

In the foregoing section, I outlined the changing status of women in Zimbabwean society. This has been a dominant issue that has dominated scholarly reflections in postcolonial Zimbabwe and other parts of the world. In literature, Zimbabwean women creative writers such as Dangarembga and Vera have engaged issues of constructions of gender and the relationships between women and men in the Zimbabwean society. Of particular significance to this article, are published works that tackle issues that deal with the position of women in Zimbabwean literature. As noted above, these include the assessment by Gaidzanwa (1985). Gaidzanwa observes that most authors tend to have negative images of women. Another scholar Berndt (2005) has explored the portrayal of female identities in Zimbabwean literature, but has not focused on the concept of agency in the discourse of women's issues.

One other publication that has tackled the nexus between literature and gender is Mguni, et al. (2006). These texts are helpful as they facilitate an appreciation of women in Zimbabwean literature. Overall, they contend that women are largely portrayed as second class citizens in the indigenous culture. This will help to clarify the responses of Zimbabwean women writers such as Tagwira as they seek to give agency to their women characters and subvert the stereotype of women as passive, helpless and always seeking male protection and provision. This article shows a refusal by women to subscribe to oppressive social values and norms in times of hardships. It shows how these women assume different forms of **agency** that allow them to change their circumstances. Thus, this article utilizes the notion of agency to understand Tagwira's characters during the decade of c in Zimbabwe. According to Chitando (2012, p. 11):

When it appears reasonable for women to give up, they gather the courage to create a new identity in order to survive. It is such inspired action that allows women to move out of subjectivity. This innovative aspect is crucial to an understanding of the ways in which women and men negotiate changes within gender relations. Female agency in this context would therefore mean a rejection of female powerlessness.

Tagwira's is a narrative of women who make use of their agency to survive oppressive cultural practices, violence, unfair economic systems and other factors which seek to leave women at the bottom of society. Tagwira's different women characters adopt various strategies to ensure the survival of their families, whether condoned or condemned by society. Defying the dictates of patriarchy, the women dare to access public space to earn a living. They demonstrate a lot of courage and creativity. They challenge oppressive systems and press on in the face of debilitating forces. In an environment saturated with violence and insensitivity, the women in *The Uncertainty of Hope* manage to survive. They are a living testimony to the indomitable nature of the human spirit.

For Tagwira, women's agency is tied to women's solidarity. Her novel shows women from diverse social locations coming together to form a united front. Young women studying at university collaborate with women from the high density area of Mbare. A woman medical doctor tackles gender-based violence. Tagwira suggests that women must strive to overcome the artificial distinctions that have been imposed upon them by patriarchy. It is patriarchy that classifies some women as "respectable" and others as "unrespectable." Such a classification must be resisted as it only serves to further the interests of patriarchy. Women must overcome such distinctions and come together to fight for their rights. Tagwira would therefore fully endorse the following observation by Hungwe (2006, p. 45):

Thus the distinction between "respectable" and "unrespectable" women in terms of age, class, race, and marital status has the lasting effect of ensuring that women "carry their burdens with strength" and do not present a united front as women in Zimbabwean gender struggles.

Hope in times of despondency: A critical analysis of *The Uncertainty of Hope*

The decade (1998-2008) of economic challenges and political instability in Zimbabwe saw the status of women in Zimbabwe being affected negatively. In addition to the harsh realities that the economic and political problems had on the general populace, women in Zimbabwe also witnessed an increase in violence committed against them, by both individuals and the state. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Onai's husband, Gari faces retrenchment because of economic structural adjustment programmes. Instead of sharing his difficult moments with his wife, he drowns his sorrows by drinking heavily, engaging in extra-marital affairs with Sheila and Gloria and abusing his wife and children.

The troubles that Onai gets from her husband are worsened when their shack, a source of income, is demolished by the state under Operation *Murambatsvina*. The destructive effects of *Murambatsvina* on informal traders are clearly spelt as they destroy people's sources of livelihood. This explains why Onai and Katy continue to sell their wares, contrary to the government's warnings. The levels of violence inflicted upon the individual are more than physical abuse. They take on innumerable forms of violence, including the economic and psychological ones. In the history of Zimbabwe, such kinds violence have explanations linked to the long history of colonialism, political transition, economic crisis and adjustment, as well as changes in expected gender roles for women and men (Kaulemu, 2011).

The different women in *The Uncertainty of Hope* deserve recognition as they see to redefine themselves outside cultural and societal definitions of a 'respectable and obedient' woman. In situations where women define their own destiny, retrogressive masculinities often fear that their power and position in society are threatened. Thus, they turn to violence against women. This happens to Onai. When Gari is retrenched, Onai takes the sole responsibility to fend for the family. Instead of appreciating Onai's efforts, Gari resorts to violence against Onai. Onai does not, however, give up as she continues to fend for their children when Gari is at Gloria's place.

In the midst of such crises, where women are subjected to violence, non-governmental organizations such as the Musasa Project attempt to address violence against women. They castigate gender-based violence as a form of discrimination against women. It erodes their rights to life and to physical and mental health. Onai faces similar challenges in her life because of her abusive husband Gari. In the course of the novel, she is advised to visit such organizations.

At one point Onai is admitted into hospital after she is physically assaulted by her husband Gari and sustains head injuries. However, in spite of all the hardships they may face, the women in *The Uncertainty of Hope* do not allow their life situations to reduce them to helpless people. Tagwira portrays them as extraordinary people, playing important roles in their communities as they care for the young, the vulnerable, the destitute and the sick. They manage to trudge on, putting one foot in front of another when their stomachs are almost empty, their hearts are breaking and their heads are spinning with worry and despair. They are a new breed of women who reject cultural constructions of patriarchy that view them as solely dependent upon the male, who at times assumes abusive tendencies. It is sad that Onai only comes to know peace when her husband dies, as if to tragically suggest that Gari's death is the one good thing that happens in her life. Gari's death seems to have opened new avenues. Onai's story has the ideal happy ending. She finds a job she had been looking for throughout her life, and escapes Mbare (a high density suburb in Harare that is characterised by poverty) to work and live in Borrowdale (a low density suburb in Harare that is defined by abundance).

Surviving in *Nyika YaMadzibaba* ("A Nation for Men/Fathers")

In many parts of Africa, men continue to dominate women in varied ways, in spite of efforts being made by governments and non-governmental organizations to try and address gender imbalances. The Zimbabwean nation, for instance, has been portrayed in masculine terms as *nyika yamadzibaba*, ('a nation for men/fathers'). This is a Shona phrase that shows a predominantly patriarchal society that favours men and masculine values. In such set-ups, serious challenges often arise when principles of gender equality and equity are to be practiced. Men may resist change where their interests are shaken. Such men are informed by deeply entrenched attitudes that accord an inferior position to women.

Studies on masculinity in African literature (Mugambi & Allan, 2010) and Zimbabwean literature (Muchemwa & Muponde, 2007) show that most men find it difficult to accept independent and assertive women. Such women destabilise patriarchy and contribute to the crisis of masculinity. Women who became successful cross-border traders had to learn to deal with the negative labels that were attached to them. They had to contend with men who felt emasculated. When women earn bread, men feel helpless and challenged. In many instances, this leads to violence. The following observation from Kenya is instructive:

The problem is men who have not hunted, gathered, killed a lion, raided cattle, possessed an AK 47, Mercedes Benz or been bestowed with knighthood, and therefore lack evidence of being providers, protectors and owners, resisting to relinquish their entitlement to eat and mate more and before others. History, religion, taboos and law hold them hostage to a false material consciousness. This shift from hunter-gatherers into farming triggered a gender revolution in which women started cultivating their own food, building houses for themselves, owning AK 47 and Mercedes Benz. Women in taking up the activities that were previously performed by men only made the masculine consciousness irrelevant and outdated (MEW, 2008, p. 46).

In the wake of men's dwindling status, they have fought back with a vengeance. They have sought to monopolise all positions of power. Women's marginalised positions are

often manifested in different spheres of life, where men are in more privileged positions than women. While activists, (the likes of Tagwira's Emily and Faith) may endorse egalitarian ideals, negative social attitudes in African societies continue to retard the progress. Kazembe (1987, p. 390) calls it the "African way of life" that seeks to promote male superiority and female inferiority. While the Zimbabwean government, for example has made great strides towards promoting and protecting women's rights, there is still need for continued effort in order to eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence.

Negative stereotypes of women persist in spite of all the contributions different women have made to national development. This is why in *The Uncertainty of Hope* the chatterbox woman, Maya, is portrayed in negative terms. She is a colleague at the vegetable market stalls who seems to enjoy the misfortunes of other people. Although a minor character, Maya's gossiping nature does not go unnoticed. Her earnest efforts as a cross border trader are overshadowed by her big mouth, and for one moment, one may forget that Maya too, just like Onai, struggles to make ends meet in a society that swims in economic hardships. She too deserves the reader's sympathy, and may be admiration, as she does relatively well as a cross border trader. She is an epitome of the new generation of Zimbabwean women determine the course of the lives.

This generation of women does not continue to allow patriarchy to dictate their lives. They are dynamic and take the responsibility to define who they are. They break away from oppressive conventions that are informed by retrogressive patriarchal ideology. Tagwira challenges traditional women stereotypes and shows that cultural constructions can continually be contested and renewed. According to Fanon and Cabral, culture is fluid, hence the need to "reject tendencies to define culture in terms of concrete behavior patterns and customs" (Cole, et al., 2007, 223). Fanon stresses the importance of moving away from the reification of culture. He appreciates "culture's contemporariness and its continually transforming and contested aspects." This explains why Tagwira presents her women characters assuming influential roles and making their lives more meaningful.

Women of Courage

The lives of Tagwira's informally employed women are difficult, but these women continue to fight relentlessly, even when they have been disempowered, and have very little or no means with which to make their lives better. There is so much poverty in Zimbabwe during the period under review. What makes it worse is that women are more likely to be less empowered because of culturally rooted biases. This makes them more vulnerable to abuse by men. Onai suffers because of Gari, her abusive husband. However, she finds it difficult to walk out of this abusive marriage. For her, marriage defines respectability. It is through the help of her liberated friend, Katy, that Onai finally leaves Gari. This break from Gari is however short-lived, for, soon after the separation, Gari falls sick and Onai has to nurse him. Gloria, Gari's girlfriend, vacates the scene when Gari gets sick. All she had wanted was Gari's retrenchment package. She is later heard of as having deteriorated in health, with undertones that she is infected by HIV and AIDS.

Both Onai and Katy are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. When they pin their hope and safety upon the condom, it shows that their married lives are no longer modeled along mutual love, but on self defense. Tagwira even hints that Gari is infected with HIV and AIDS. His former girl-friend Sheila is dying from this. It is Onai who nurses Gari until he dies. This in itself shows women's extra burden as caregivers. Onai and Katy persevere to the end and survive against the odds. One's sympathy could easily be drawn to these courageous women. They remind one of Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood*, (1962) where we see women who confront the oppressor when their men seem to be giving up, during the strike by the Dakar rail workers.

This young generation of women Tagwira brings into her story displays a free spirit as they make their own choices in life: Faith is training to become a lawyer, Emily is a medical doctor, and Ruva hopes to become a journalist. It is through these inter-connections between the market place, the university, the school and the rural areas, that make the novel sophisticated, and covers a wider range of the different types of life people lead in contemporary Zimbabwe. Melody's (university student) story demonstrates how female students find themselves in very difficult material conditions. Melody ends up going out with a married man, Chanda, in order to raise tuition fees and get luxuries, an endeavour that society condemns. Tagwira, however, moralises when she redeems Melody by the end of the novel. Melody realizes that "there's more dignity in begging from my father's brothers ... and they will make me beg all right," (Tagwira, 173), than getting money through immoral behaviour. Thus, Melody is made to symbolize goal-oriented women who approach life with the aggression.

Unlike Melody, Faith's relationship with Tom is based on mutual love. She must decide whether to marry her long-term boyfriend Tom Sibanda (a 'new farmer' and businessman, who plays it safe and sings the official song), or lead the independent single life suggested by her career and modern outlook. She has a free spirit that Dangarembga's educated Maiguru lacks in her novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988). Her way of life is not informed by oppressive cultural dictates of 'respectable and marriageable women' (Barnes, 2005). Faith is liberated from this and does not hesitate to question injustice. Tom is at one point alarmed when she asks him whether the white owner of the farm, Mr. Johnson, had to die for Tom to get the farm and also when she calls the demolitions in Mbare "a gross abuse of humanity," (Tagwira, 158). Indeed, Tom understands the suffering of people, but it is just that he wants to get on with life. He has benefited from the land redistribution and cannot afford to bite the hand that feeds him - he has to speak the same language with his benefactors (Wermter, July 2007).

Faith is a promising activist who will speak for the marginalised. She challenges Tom, "who will speak for the voiceless, if we all let fear crush us?" (Tagwira, 162). She reminds one of Gramsci's organic elite. These assume conscious responsibility (Hoare & Smith, 1971, 3-23), and advance the cause, even of the common people. She does not hesitate to say out what she believes in so as to win Tom's hand in marriage. Education is portrayed by Tagwira as a tool that emancipates her, unlike some female academics and students who may go to the extent of sacrificing their ambitions in order to save their marriage or relationships. Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions*, (1988) is one such character who is not totally emancipated by education. Her domineering husband, Babamukuru runs the show. Maiguru, like her husband Babamukuru, attained a university degree from abroad. However, she is deprived of the opportunity to achieve the most of herself. Neither the Shona society nor the colonial system allows black women to fulfill their intellectual aspirations, or lead independent lives, (Berndt, 2005, 106). She expresses her disappointment from time to time when she says:

What it is ... to have to choose between self and security. When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if - if things were - different - but there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realize, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one thinks about the things I gave up (Dangarembga 1988, 101-102).

Through her independent women professionals, Tagwira imagines a peaceful world for postcolonial Zimbabwean women. She looks forward to an era when Zimbabwean women will no longer be subjected to different forms of violence. She shows possibilities of a world in which women no longer lead suffering and dependent lives, but articulate their own vital demands and imaginative space. This, we see in Tom's sister, Emily, who shares Faith's point of view in as far as the welfare of women is concerned. As a doctor, Emily meets Onai when she is first brought in with a badly beaten head and expresses so much concern. Later in the novel, she convinces Onai that things ought to change if women are

to continue in meaningful existence, and advises her to visit the women's project. The beauty of Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* lies in the support women give each other in challenging times, in spite of class differences.

Furthermore, Tagwira depicts a variety of relationships between women and men. For example, in Mawaya and her husband, the author portrays offensive women who abuse their husbands. In line with Clenora Hudson-Weems' *Africana Womanism* (2004), Tagwira seems to yearn for a meaningful co-existence between women and men. (Hudson-Weems 2004) emphasises complementarity between women and men. The relationship exhibited by John and Katy is close to the type of relationship that Hudson-Weems advocates, where women and men have complementary roles in society.

Tagwira largely succeeds in capturing the various activities that women engaged in during the crisis years in Zimbabwe (1998-2008). Unlike the colonial and patriarchal narratives that depict Zimbabwean women as passive and dependent, she shows the extent of their courage and creativity. As the formal sector collapsed, women became key players in the informal sector. Tagwira's novel shows them buying and selling commodities in order to guarantee the livelihood of their families. One is forced to sympathise with the women who toil so hard while their husbands blow their meagre earnings on beer and sex workers.

Although she is cautious in her criticism, Tagwira accuses the postcolonial state of letting down the women of Mbare. Instead of supporting their various activities, the state has turned against its citizens. Operation Murambatsvina confirms the big gulf that now exists between those in charge of the state and the citizens. Operation Murambatsvina compounds women's poverty and increases their vulnerability. Tagwira is challenging the men who are in charge of national affairs to take women's issues more seriously. Although they do not depend on the state for survival, it is clear that the women of Mbare would thrive if the state would at least avail quality social services. Unfortunately, the health delivery system has collapsed. Instead of providing security, members of the police are corrupt and vicious as seen through characters such as Police Inspector Nzou. Corrupt police officers arrest black market dealers during the day, and go to buy foreign currency from them at night.

Conclusion

With uncertainty, comes hope. Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* catalogues the challenges women face in society, and shows how these women overcome them. The uncertainty about the future of Zimbabweans is evident as most of the characters seem to hover between uncertainty and hope. Those who have been affected by Operation Murambatsvina pin their hope on the promise of a house in the distant future, under Operation Garikai (good living). Married women such as Katy Nguni feel vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. HIV and AIDS is a reality in their society, where many have lost their loved ones. Corrupt police officers engage in illegal foreign currency dealings. It seems corruption and immorality have been institutionalised, to the detriment of the underprivileged. When wrong-doers are arrested and punished, Tagwira moralises the challenges people face, without quite addressing grassroots fundamentals. While Tagwira's characters continue to find hope in a world of uncertainty, drastic changes still have to take place in order for the lives of ordinary people to improve. These include empowerment through education, employment creation, affirmative action where necessary, and making resources available to the population. This can be driven by government leaders who are the policy-makers. They are also responsible for allocating funds to various sectors. Non-Governmental Organizations may also assist governments in their efforts to improve the lives of marginalized women and children. Just as is the case in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, communities and families also play an important role of caring for disadvantaged persons.

Much as they face uncertain futures, hope keeps the characters in *The Uncertainty of Hope* going. There is some window of hope in that if women can continue to work together towards a common objective, they can bring desirable changes in patriarchal societies which put men's interests before those of women and children. Tagwira defies stereotypical depictions of women and shows their sagacity and resilience. Tagwira authors empowered, resourceful and courageous women who negotiate a devastating crisis in an admirable and inspirational way.

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