



UON WEE HUB NEWSLETTER



MOTTO: Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment through African Women Centered Research, policy change and collaboration with women's organizations, policy makers and other stakeholders.

INITIATIVES FOR WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (IWWEE)

MESSAGE FROM THE UON WEE HUB LEADER



I hope this new year, 2024, brings hope, peace, good health and financial independence to you and your loved ones.

At the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub of the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC), now in its fourth year of implementation, we have made substantive progress in the implementation of the program working towards the full realization of women economic empowerment. During the past years we have worked with sector partners to enhance WEE through research and policy advocacy in a landscape where statistics show a marginally narrowing gender gap. Available data promises to demystify long-held myths about women's experiences such as their inability to work with banks to access credit and that women in marriage institutions are not able to make business decisions.

Data collected by the AWSC WEE Hub and other WEE actors and partners will shape the direction of WEE through entrepreneurship, a key sector of focus in the Kenyan economy and globally. The Hub is particularly testing the impact of a women-focused business incubation model for replication.

Some key highlights of the year 2023 include:

- i The completion of consultations with policy makers on strategies aimed at making Access to



INSIDE

- Intergenerational Dialogue On Climate Change
- Submission Of Memorandum On Two-Thirds Gender Principle: Women In the Business Incubation Project...and more

Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) Program work for the target groups and achieving its intended objectives of creating employment, promoting local industries, and transferring technology.

- ii The WEE Hub worked with the State Department for Social Protection to develop a transformative social protection draft bill which has undergone public participation before being tabled in Parliament. While Kenya is one of the leading African countries in the investment in social protection, having set aside 0.35% of its GDP for Social Protection in 2016, a gap analysis by the WEE Hub indicates that further commitment of resources and gender mainstreaming of social protection programming are key to maximizing the benefits. As a multidisciplinary Centre, we recognize the fundamental right to social security and an adequate standard of living as enshrined in universal and regional human rights frameworks.
- iii In response to the need for women's meaningful participation in climate action, the AWSC through its maiden research program on Climate Change and Biodiversity, contributed to the development of the Kenyan position on global climate action through the Africa Climate Summit (ACS) 2023 and CoP28 platforms side events hosted by Kenya and UAE United Arab Emirates (UAE), respectively. This Program provides a strategic opportunity to influence high level policymakers, practitioners, businesses, and civil society on WEE and examine the risks, vulnerabilities and capabilities in climate

Editorial team

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Photography: Emilly Owiti, Maryanne Mbogo, Fredrick Kimotho and Gideon Muendo. **Coordinator:** Dr. Dorothy Njiraine.

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adaptation based on research evidence. Through the Program, the AWSC contributed to the review of Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP) Kenya strategy.

- iv Under the care economy and women's economic empowerment cluster we conducted the second wave of monitoring of the Project on *"enhancing participation of women in Cross-border trade through access to childcare"* During the exercise we reviewed the contribution of Day care centre to the nutritional status and dietary practices of children. Child development emerged as a critical factor to the study which previously focused on the impact of childcare services on the growth of women's enterprises. The importance of child wellbeing, health and nutrition cannot be ignored in this study and we plan to disseminate these findings within this quarter. Childcare and women's work remains a central area of focus for the realization of women's economic empowerment. Despite global statistics indicating a drop in working hours per person, this does not apply to women, who spend longer hours on unpaid care work. The global unemployment rate for men stands at 4.3 % against 4.5% for women, yet women work longer hours. Our research findings indicate that investing in services and infrastructure that reduce the time and burden on care work by providing childcare facilities is important for women's economic empowerment. Moreover, it shows that more than 40% of women who need childcare services do not get access to quality and affordable care.
- v The Hub continues to record benefits from incubating women's enterprises and documenting the project progress. We will share the specific progress of the 320 individual women enterprises incubated in collaboration with TechnoServe as well as the progress of the 16 women's collectives incubated in partnership with Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), The Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE) KIE, The UoN Environmental and Biosystems Engineering (EBE) , CRAWN Trust and TechnoServe, among other partners as we continue to grow partnerships.
- vi Our researchers are at an advanced stage in the publication of the book on African Feminist Epistemology for Women's Economic Empowerment and the Pathways to African

Feminist and Development journal, featuring articles by Kenyan scholars and scholars from other regions. We will share the journal in our next issue.

- vii Through our communications and knowledge management unit we have enhanced access to and visibility of the Hub's knowledge products. Interestingly, these research findings and knowledge products are accessed more frequently by scholars from China and Russia than our colleagues in Africa. We challenge the local scholars to access these products which are easily accessible and available on the E-repository and our WEE Hub website.
- viii The commitment of the Government of Kenya to the full implementation of the not more than Two-Thirds Gender Principle, which has been elusive for many years, holds the potential to access to women's rights and gender equality. For this reason, our Networking and Alliance Building for Women's Economic Empowerment (NABWEE) Platform presented the women's views to the Multi-Sectoral Working Group Committee, commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary Gender and Affirmative Action Hon. Aisha Jumwa to develop the best strategy for its implementation.
- ix To this end, NABWEE Platform builds networks of women and strengthens their capacity to influence WEE policy. NABWEE conducted a national baseline survey of 400 women in during which women at the community level were engaged to develop their capacity. We shall share the findings of this study within this quarter.
- x We are happy to share that we graduated our first cohort of Research Fellows who underwent rigorous practical training in research work, the fellows have graduated to Researchers.

The year 2024 marks the beginning of a new dawn to strengthen and entrench WEE into the AWSC programming in order to advance its agenda globally for sustainability.

I wish you all a fruitful year 2024.

Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira.

Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira,

University of Nairobi WEE Hub Leader and
Director, African Women Studies Centre

Championing Progress: Highlights from the Journey of the WEE Hub in 2023



As we reflect on the research and policy transformative strides we made throughout 2023, it is with immense gratitude that I share key points of the WEE Hub journey. Our commitment to advancing economic opportunities for women has led to a year brimming with impactful initiatives and profound achievements in all our research and advocacy thematic research areas of affirmative action and women entrepreneurship, women in formal and informal employment, care economy and women's work, women collectives and policy advocacy.

Incubation Project

Under our Incubation Project we were proud to be the initiators of several custom-tailored technology training programs which equipped women collectives with skills on value addition to products produced in their home areas. Women collectives in Meru County were trained on banana value addition techniques while for those on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kisumu and Busia counties, value addition to fish was the focus. Milk value addition techniques were transferred to women collectives in Kajiado County, while women from Kilifi and Kwale counties received similar training for cashew nuts and cassava. Women collectives in Kitui were trained on value addition in honey, while those from Nyandarua and Trukana counties were trained on value chains in maize milling and potato respectively.

The Kenya Food Event Exhibition held at the Sarit Centre, Nairobi was the pinnacle where selected women collectives who participated in these training programs showcased and sold their products and made contacts with a number of consumers, and further got exposure which is critical for their products marketing

Financial Inclusion

Recognizing access to funds as a pivotal driver for business success, WEE Hub continued in its proactive engagement with financial institutions including Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), UWEZO Fund, and Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Authority (MSEA); the Equity Bank and

the Cooperative Bank to ensure financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs, with the aim of linking women businesses to financiers. These efforts were recognized by the highest office of the land when during the International Women's Day celebrations President William Ruto awarded the WEE Hub under the category of Economic and Financial Inclusion for women and girls through innovation and technology.

Yet another milestone was the commencement of the AGPO (Access to Government Procurement Opportunities) research project which aimed to uncover pathways for optimizing the effectiveness of this government affirmative action fund for targeted groups. Months of dedicated research, analysis, and collaboration culminated in November 2023 with the presentation of a comprehensive technical report. This not only stands as a testament to our commitment to advocate for meaningful change but also serves as a blueprint to refine and enhance the impact of affirmative action initiatives.

It was an honour for WEE Hub to lead in the development of the Social Protection Bill, hosted by the State Department of Social Protection. We are grateful that WEE Hub can provide expert leadership in this process and contribute to shaping the country's Social Protection landscape. Such participation confirms the WEE Hub's expanding visibility both locally and internationally and underscores our recognition as experts in the economic empowerment of women.

Engagements and Collaborations

Where engagements and collaborations are concerned, 2023 was a great year as the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) participated in and hosted key events such as the Vital Voices Engage Forum which brought together influential women in political leadership from various parts of the world. Additionally, we enjoyed active involvement on global platforms such as the AWSC's engagement at the Africa Climate Summit in September 2023 and our collaboration with CRAWN Trust to host a landmark side event at COP 28 in Dubai.

These initiatives just a glimpse into the outstanding achievements and activities of 2023. Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate a year marked by even more impactful strides and ground-breaking achievements in the area of policy research and advocacy. I must acknowledge that these milestones are a result of the collective effort and immense dedication of our entire team. Each individual's contribution has been instrumental in realizing these successes, and for

this, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every member of our team for their dedication and contributions. Wishing You a Blessed and Prosperous 2024.

Dr. Mary Mbithi

Director of Research UoN WEE Hub



Message by the Coordinator, Knowledge Management and Communication

As we delve into the final edition of the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub's quarterly newsletter for 2023, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our readers' unwavering support and encouragement. Your positive feedback on our previous editions has been invaluable.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to indulge once again in the informative content we have curated for this edition.

We start by exploring the collaboration between the State Department of Social Protection and the WEE Hub to draft the country's Social Protection Law. We then uncover life-changing impacts of the WEE Hub's Childcare Centre in Busia County on Cross border trade, highlighting how the initiative is not only strengthening women's businesses but also combating gender-based violence.

The Intergenerational Dialogue on the Climate Change event reminds us of the crucial role to be played by the youth of Africa in addressing the negative effects of climate change. Next, we get details on NABWEE's submissions on the two-thirds gender principle, followed by celebration of women in the business incubation project after they got the opportunity to join local and international entrepreneurs exhibiting their products at Kenya's annual Food Event Expo at Sarit Centre.

We gain insights into ongoing collaborations between the WEE Hub and financial institutions such as the Equity Bank and the Cooperative Bank, aimed at advancing financial inclusion for women, then we discover how women are being empowered to overcome vulnerabilities heightened by climate change.

Finally, we present findings from the WEE Hub's study on the AGPO (Access to Government Procurement Opportunities) program and close with a tribute to a legendary woman of our soil – Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima. Commemorating her exceptional role as the sole woman to reach the highest rank of leadership during Kenya's struggle for independence.

I extend warm wishes to you and your loved ones as we embrace the year 2024.

Dr. Dorothy Njiraine

Knowledge Management and Communication
Coordinator,
UON WEEHUB and
Chairperson and Senior Lecturer
Dept. of Library and Information Science

IMPACT OF CHILDCARE ON CROSS BORDER TRADE

By Emily Owiti



Nutrition specialists from the WEE Hub monitor the growth and well-being of the children at the Childcare facility in Busia during a monitoring exercise.



Dr. Mary Mbithi and Mwangi Kahenu of the WEE Hub interviewing a key informant during the monitoring exercise of the Childcare project in Busia.

Global research anticipated growth in the global child day care services market from \$289.09 billion in 2022 to \$290.87 billion in 2023 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.6%. UNICEF, on the other hand, projects that by 2030, only one in four children will live in countries where 70 per cent of the child-related SDG targets will have been met. These global statistics align with the Kenyan situation also reflected by the research findings of the UoN WEE Hub.

The mortality rate for children under five currently stands at 37.2%. There is a steady decline from one hundred deaths per one thousand live births in 1980 to less than 50 in 2021. High-quality childcare ensures safety and good health of children, in addition to providing children with life skills such as social, emotional, communication skills and basic numeric abilities. The child-related SDG targets are monitored across children surviving or thriving, poverty, environment, protection, and learning.

Under the broad thematic research area on Care Economy and Women's Economic empowerment, the UoN WEE Hub periodically analyses the National Budget and Policy Statement to identify gaps in the sectors directly related to women and care work, including health, water, education, social and food security (Article 43 of the Kenya Constitution 2010). The



A care giver minds the children at the Childcare facility in Busia. The Hub established the facility in collaboration with the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development Studies

evidence generated by the WEE Hub is used to make proposals for budgetary allocations to these sectors. In addition, the WEE Hub reviews policies, regulations and implementation frameworks adopted by the East Africa Community and the African region to evaluate the effect of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) on small scale women's businesses.

Increased care giving responsibilities are a hindrance to female participation in the labour force. Worldwide reports point to female participation in the labour force at 46%, a stark contrast to 75% of the male counterparts. The Kenyan statistics show 72% participation of women in the labour force which is below male participation at 77%. This restricts the female's outputs. Fraym's global data analytics Report, 2022 *Estimating the Return on Investment of Child Caregiving Programs* found potential for economic returns of investing in early childcare programs in Kenya, identifying two dimensions: increased participation in the labour force and increased income for primary care givers.

In response to the challenges that women entrepreneurs engaged in cross-border trade experience working with small children in the market, particularly in Busia, the University of Nairobi Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub, in collaboration with the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) established a daycare centre in Busia town to provide childcare support to business women with children under the age of four years.

The Hub monitors the impact of the facility on women entrepreneurs in cross border trade, to gather evidence on the impact of childcare on women's participation in entrepreneurship and employment. The findings from the study are used to recommend upscaling and replicating of family friendly childcare facilities that contribute to changing gender norms across the counties.

Impact of Daycare on Children's Nutrition Status

The Hub's periodic monitoring of both the intervention and the comparison group assesses the impact of the daycare on the nutritional status and dietary practices of children as well as the well-being and dietary practices of the caregivers. Recent reports indicate that 91% of the intervention group (research participants: parents and guardians) do not worry about the safety of their children whereas in the comparison group safety concerns were more pronounced. The were confident that their children were safe at the Centre because they can always phone the staff, find out about their children and visit them if necessary. They are well fed, neat and clean through-out the day" one mother said.

According to the findings, the Centre provides well balanced and diverse meals throughout the week. However, consumption of animal source foods at home was low for both the comparison and intervention groups. The Centre managers also demonstrated significant awareness and knowledge of the existing government childcare related policies and guidelines.

Chart 1. Awareness, knowledge, and practice of child-related policies by Caregivers
Chart 2. Daycare vs home-based consumption by food groups

Chart 1.

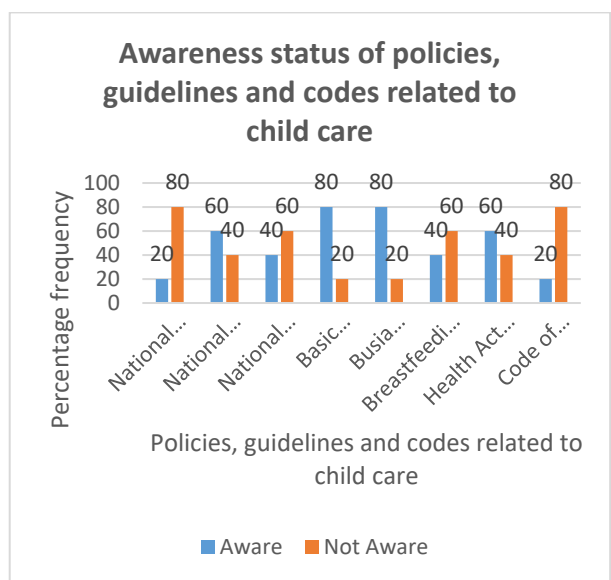


Chart.2

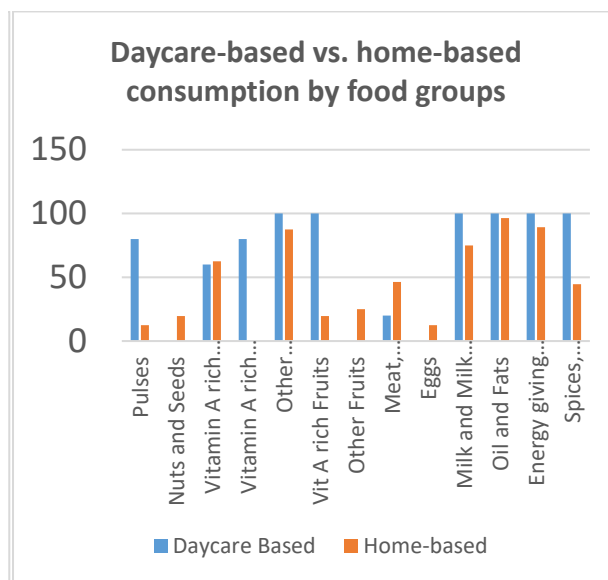


Chart Source: WEE Hub Monitoring report, 2023

Even though the participants expressed support for men’s participation in childcare work as a joint parental responsibility, the community still frowned upon this and viewed childcare work as the sole responsibility of women. This traditional belief calls for community sensitization to encourage more men to assume childcare duties as the women get engaged in paid work and other family matters. Sensitization could contribute to change in gender norms. The participants also felt that the level of awareness and education on the role of men in child development is critical in having more men accept childcare responsibilities.

The study also observed a moderate shift in the community’s viewpoint regarding care work with more men taking up childcare responsibilities and specifically, preparing and taking children to the Centre. The participants felt that sharing of domestic work builds strong relationships among family members and helps the children to bond well with

their fathers. Nevertheless, some women held the view that childcare and domestic work was largely a preserve for women. “It’s great that men can assist us with care work” but one female participant retorted that at household level extended family members, particularly the in-laws, discouraged husbands and young boys from doing domestic and childcare work.

The childcare Centre has benefited women and men, beyond their businesses, in such areas as child development, safety and security of the children, improved family relations and reduced GBV. The participants have more time for their businesses which translated to more profitability. Children also acquired basic skills such as dressing, consciousness about cleanliness and good feeding habits. In recognition of the recommendations by the participants on gender norms about care work, the WEE Hub shall consider organizing a dialogue on gender norms.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Emilly Owiti

Today Africa loses between five to fifteen billion dollars a year to climate change, yet only 3% of the climate change effects can be attributed to Africa.

The youth constitute over 42% of the planet's population and it would make a significant change if they challenged their leaders to fulfil the commitment they promised for the purpose of achieving a safe and sustainable environment.

"Almost nine out of ten people live in developing nations which are adversely affected by climate change. They include 42% of the planet population which is under 25 years", the former UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon said during the Intergenerational Dialogue that took place on September 4, 2023, at the University of Nairobi, Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies. The high-powered side event was part of the Africa Climate Summit 2023.

To support the global rally for adaptation financing, the African Development Bank (ADB) launched a \$1 billion fund for Youth Adaptation efforts in Africa.

The announcement was made by Dr. Adesina Akinwumi, President of the ADB. The bank has been instrumental in supporting action towards the climate adaptation efforts of the University in collaboration with the Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA). The ADB has also committed 25 billion USD to climate adaptation and, together with the GCA, launched the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP). One of the programs under the AAAP is the Youth Adapt in which four billion USD have been invested to grow youth business in climate related action.

Today Africa loses between five to fifteen billion dollars a year to climate change, yet only 3% of the climate change effects can be attributed to Africa. This disproportionate burden demands local solutions and immediate action. As climate change impacts surge, women have been forced to invest more time in meeting family needs. They often have to travel longer distances to collect water, which further strains their time use and exposes them to heightened risks of gender-based violence.

Recent research indicates that on average women spend 4.2 hours a day in unpaid or domestic care work globally, unlike their male counterparts who spend less than two hours. Women's reliance on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods and gender disparities in ownership and access to resources such as land, credit, and technology, makes them vulnerable to climate variations. These challenges propel the AWSC's quest to champion women's empowerment to overcome climate aggravated threats.

It is projected that the number of young people in Africa will rise to 830 million by 2050. The lives and career aspirations of these young people are threatened by climate breakdown and lack of ambition by the developed nations to vigorously push adaptation interventions. "Unless climate financing is scaled up, the future will be incredibly bleak for this and the



Youth engage in climate adaptation dialogue with climate experts led by H.E Graca Machel at the Wangari Maathai Institute.

next generation,” Ban-Ki-Moon stressed with concern. The latest report by the Global Centre on Adaptation recommends a tenfold increase in adaptation funding in Africa from 11 billion dollars to sixty billion dollars per year to counter the climate change effects. Unlocking the untapped potential of the African youth to drive the resilience agenda is one of the pillars of the AAAP, the largest world adaptation program. The program was developed by ADB and GCA and has already invested over one billion dollars towards the provision of skills for job creation and climate adaptation solutions.



Former UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon plants a tree before the intergenerational dialogue, a side event of the Africa Climate Summit at the Wangari Maathai Institute.

Despite the efforts towards climate adaptation by GCA and ADB, the AAAP cannot deliver the adaptation solutions on their own. It is, thus, imperative to unlock private sector financing towards climate adaptation. “To be successful in the climate adaptation journey, we must be dedicated and compassionate towards people and the planet, the future lies in the decisions and pledges we make towards climate action,” Professor Patrik Verkooijen, CEO Global Centre on Adaptation claimed. The meeting was hosted by the UoN Vice Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama, officiated by the then Cabinet Secretary for Youth Affairs, Sports and the Arts and attended by other dignitaries and climate adaptation enthusiasts



Intergenerational dialogue panelists join hands as a sign of unity at the end of the session held at the Wangari Maathai Institute.

NETWORKING AND ALLIANCE BUILDING FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

By Emily Owiti



UoN WEE Hub's Networking and Alliance Building for Women's Economic Empowerment (NABWEE) members present their submissions on the not more than two-thirds Gender Principle to the Committee at the Maktaba Kuu in Nairobi.



Dr. Agnes Meroka of the UoN WEE Hub presenting the NABWEE memorandum to the Committee Chair Daisy Amdany

Women's empowerment movements and feminist mobilization are central to fostering women's economic empowerment. Women's economic empowerment has gained traction as an important instrument in the promotion of their capacity to achieve their rights and welfare, while reducing poverty at household level and increasing overall economic growth.

In realization of the goal of the University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub to achieve full realization of WEE through women's self-mobilization, the Hub established the Networking and Alliance Building for Women's Economic Empowerment (NABWEE). This is a network of women entrepreneurs, women's organizations, and women's rights advocates where women use evidence generated through research to self-advocate for WEE. Since its inception, NABWEE has consistently advocated for the implementation of policy reforms to improve women's access to

economic opportunities across various sectors in Kenya, using several policy advocacy strategies.

NABWEE collaborates with women's movements to advance women focused policies for meaningful gender justice. Women's movements provide platforms for raising public consciousness about issues of gender bias and advocating for policy changes. The promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 reawakened the push for gender parity shining a ray of hope on gender equality for Kenyan women. The Constitution made specific provisions for legislative and other measures to implement the *not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender* principle and provides for a fair representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Articles 27(8) and Article 81 which expressly direct the electoral system to comply with the principle.

Implementation of the Two-Thirds Gender Principle would be a springboard to secure affirmative action, yet it has been elusive for more than ten years since the enactment of the provision in law. Following the Call for participation and submission of memoranda by the Multi-Sectoral Working Group on the realization of not more than Two-Thirds Gender Principle, the members of NABWEE made oral submissions and a hard copy of the Memorandum summarising their considered opinion and recommendations as women of Kenya before the Working Group at the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) (Maktaba Kuu Building) on 14th November, 2023.

Members of NABWEE and other like-minded organizations have previously made, with little success, attempts to challenge the failure of the Parliament to pass the law. These like-minded organizations include Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and the Law Society of Kenya, among others. Despite the challenges, His Excellency President Ruto's expression of commitment by his administration to the implementation of the Two-thirds Gender Principle has revitalized the UoN WEE Hub NABWEE's resolve towards the attainment of this goal.

NABWEE's Contribution towards the Implementation of the Principle

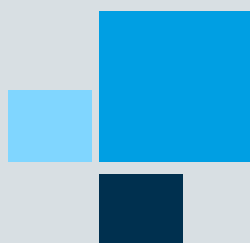
The contribution of NABWEE towards the implementation of the two-thirds gender rule includes:

- Tracing the history of the attempts at legislation on the two-thirds gender rule, to inform discourse on its implementation.
- Analysis of the President's Memorandum of December 2022 and presentation of suitable proposals for implementation of Two-thirds Gender Principle.
- Consultative meetings with the government on the most suitable ways of implementing the two-thirds gender Principle.
- Together with the Gender Sector Working Group on Women in Leadership and Decision-Making drawing a road map of how the women's movement can build momentum to advocate for implementation of the two-thirds gender rule.

NABWEE'S Key Recommendation

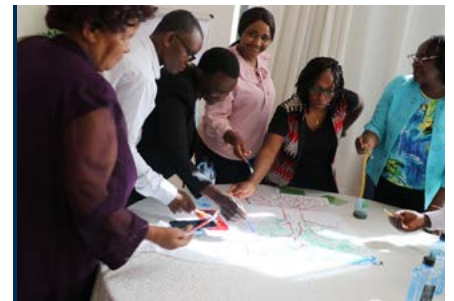
NABWEE recognizes the numerous legislative attempts made at implementing the not more than two thirds gender rule. These attempts have particularly focused on amending Articles 97 and 98 of the Constitution, to anchor the road map to achieving the two-thirds gender rule in the composition of the National Assembly and the Senate under the Constitution. A similar road map already exists with regard to the county assemblies under Article 177.

NABWEE notes that a previous attempt to implement the principle proposed a roadmap for its attainment to be anchored in an Act of Parliament, rather than within the Constitution and recommends the latter. The NABWEE Memorandum proposed an amendment of the Constitution to insert a road map for the attainment of the not more than two-thirds gender rule in the National Assembly and Senate. The amendment should be guided by the procedure under Article 256 which provides for amending the Constitution through a Parliamentary process. The second proposed option is legislation for the establishment of gender electoral units, supported by the necessary constitutional amendments.





Scenes from the end of year by WEE Hub staff graced by the Dean, FASS, Prof. Jack Odhiambo, and WEE Hub Leader Prof. Wanjiku Kabira.



The event was held on 20th December 2023



WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS EXHIBIT AT THE KENYA FOOD EVENT

By Emily Owiti



WEE Hub leader Prof. Kabira receives a certificate of participation at the Food Event from Meshack Ndisi of Montgomery

The Kenyan Food Event (KFE) is the biggest exhibition serving the food and drink industry across East Africa



Dr. Mary Mbithi, during a plenary session at Director of Research makes a presentation during plenary at the Kenya Food Event.

On the third floor of Sarit Centre, in a huge hall with an assortment of lighting fittings on the high ceilings, a myriad of products is neatly arranged on branded tables in cubicles. There are about eight hundred exhibitors who readily display their goods to the guests streaming into the Kenya Food Event 2023 at the Sarit Expo Centre.

At one of the cubicles, women entrepreneurs under the Women in Business Incubation Project of the University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment Hub are engaged in discussion with guests visiting their exhibition stalls. These women joined other global entrepreneurs at a four-day exhibition at the Annual Kenya Food Event 2023 held between September 5 and 7.

The Incubation Project, one of the flagship projects of the WEE Hub aims to achieve the growth and expansion of women-owned businesses through the provision of incubation services including access to credit, linkage to information and technology, capacity building, market access, and mentorship. The Hub facilitated representatives from eight of the women collectives participating in the Incubation Project to exhibit at the event the



Women entrepreneurs under the Women focused business Incubation project display their products at the exhibition

products of their collectives and thus access markets and create links with consumers, which is the main goal of the Incubation Project.

The Kenyan Food Event (KFE) is the biggest exhibition serving the food and drink industry across East Africa. The event offers a pivotal platform for organizations and individuals in the food and hospitality industry looking for new suppliers, producers, and service providers to enhance their business. Moreover, the event provides the opportunity to meet national and international brands, discover industry opportunities, and network with key market leaders. The Exhibition attracted participants from three key industry segments, bringing together over 2,500 stakeholders for the duration of the exhibition.

Women leaders sponsored by the WEE Hub represented over three hundred women entrepreneurs who belong to collectives from different parts of the country including Kisumu, Kwale, Kilifi, Tharaka-Nithi, Meru, Kitui and Busia counties. The collectives have undergone value addition training supported by the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) and exhibited roasted and spiced cashew nuts, cashew nut butter, spiced honey, cassava, and banana crisps, and fried *Omena* (silver cyprinid).

The entrepreneurs were able to network with other entrepreneurs across the globe, sell their products and benchmark the standard of their products. Zipporah Kamau, leader of the Lunga Lunga Cross border traders' collective in Kwale said "I have not only sold the products I brought but I met new partners from South Africa and Egypt, and I hope to export my products to those countries."

The Kenyan Food Event also featured panel discussions and presentations by key industry leaders. The WEE Hub was recognized as a key industry player due to its contribution to the industry through capacity building and equipping the women with skills for value addition. Dr. Mary Mbithi, Director of Research at the Hub reiterated the commitment of the Hub to support the women under the five pillars of the business, "As the women go through value addition training, we are concurrently linking them to financial institutions for access to finance, taking them through capacity building and business management skills training" she said. Montgomery, the organizers of the Food event invited the Hub to participate in the event recognizing the immense contribution to the sector and having come across the Hub's work in the news media.



Valarie Udalang', a Research Assistant at the WEE Hub, shares product information with customers at the Food Event where women exhibited their products.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

By Emily Owiti

Women-owned enterprises contribute about 40% to economic development globally. They create employment and wealth through innovation, yet they still face limited access to finances which hampers their growth.

Agenda 4 of the UoN WEE Hub's Priority Agenda for Women's Economic Empowerment on *Access to Business Finance* is informed by the research findings of the Hub which show inadequate funding to support women enterprises. This inadequate funding is further complicated by the prevailing gender dynamics in ownership and control of assets, with men having more control over land and property which can be used as security for loans. For instance, a report by the Hub shows that more men applicants received higher levels of credit than women. More women received credit of between KES 500,001 and 1 million while more men received credit of KES 1 million to Ksh.3 million. The design of credit facilities and financial products also favour men. The Kenya Credit Guarantee Scheme targets formal enterprises which are predominantly male-owned of which 76% had applied for credit as compared to 71% of women-owned enterprises. Moreover, 18% of the male applicants are likely to get their loans approved compared to only 10% of the female applicants (UoN WEE Hub 2022).

Women also have limited access to procurement opportunities. The value of tenders issued by reporting public procurement entities for the financial year 2020/2021 was KES 217 billion. Access to the Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) utilization accounted for about 17 percent, valued at about KES 37 billion, of which women utilization rate was only 8.8 percent (KNBS, 2022).

Women also have limited access to procurement opportunities. The value of tenders issued by reporting public procurement entities for the financial year 2020/2021 was KES 217 billion. Access to the Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) utilization accounted for about 17 percent, valued at about KES 37 billion, of which women utilization rate was only 8.8 percent (KNBS, 2022). Similarly, the UoN WEE Hub's analysis of the AGPO reports indicates a systematic exclusion by the required pre-requisite to show experience, which disadvantages many women who lack experience, even though they may have the capacity to deliver on complex, complicated and high value projects. The Hub also documented occasions where women failed to execute awarded contracts due to lack of finances and collateral to access credit.



The WEE Hub business incubation team pose for a photo with the Equity Bank Group team after a successful consultation to women entrepreneurs access to credit.



The WEE Hub researchers consult with the Cooperative Bank Trade Financing team on access to business finance for the Women in Business Incubation Project at the Coop Bank offices.

The key pillar of the Women focused Business Incubation (WBI) Project of the WEE Hub is Access to Credit which includes access to Affirmative Funds, access to credit guarantee schemes, collaboration with financial institutions, access to banks and banking services, and improved technical knowledge on credit acquisition. The Hub has facilitated linkages with Affirmative Action Funds providers and commercial banks that offer products targeting MSMEs owned by women to provide training and sensitization regarding suitable products for women, requirements, and support with the application process. Consequently, with these partners, the WEE Hub has led sensitization sessions on financial literacy and inclusion of women entrepreneurs.

Recently, the Hub has closely consulted with the Equity Bank Group and the Cooperative Bank of Kenya, Trade Finance Units towards financial inclusion of the women. The Equity Bank Foundation has conducted financial needs assessment for various groups within the WEE Hub's WBI project. Some of the groups visited are Oltillili Women Dairy and Kajjado Women Dairy in Kajjado County, Keega and Ntharene Women Groups in Meru and Tharaka-Nithi counties and women groups dealing in honey value addition in Kangundo and Kitui counties. The Women focused Business Incubation project seeks to evaluate the extent to which women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of enterprises in Kenya for replication. In the words of Melinda Gates, "investing in women means investing in the people who invest in everyone else."

INVESTING IN WOMEN FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Emilly Owiti



The WEE Hub Director of Research, Dr. Mary Mbithi, contributes to the panel discussion on investing in women for WEE.



Beatrice Kamau, a researcher at the WEE Hub, engages panelists during a session at the Annual Women Rights Conference 2023 held in Panari Hotel.

Allocating resources in sectors where women work could bolster the quest for women's economic empowerment. Investing in women was the focus of the panel discussion led by the UoN WEE Hub at the Annual Women's Rights Convention 2023 held at the Panari Hotel.

The pivotal point of the panel discussion was to establish how the government and private sector could work together to invest in women's capacity building and the enhancement of opportunities for participation in gainful work in food production and preparation, as well as health and care work. Unpaid care work remains a major burden and hindrance to women's participation in productive work and subsequently lowers their contribution to the economy. According to a report by the World Bank 2023, women constitute 47% of the labour force globally. However, 42 % of women in the working age group, compared to 6% of men, are outside the paid labour force because of unpaid care responsibilities, Oxfam 2021. Care work remains largely a responsibility apportioned to the women by the society because of the retrogressive cultural practices and norms.

Commitment of resources by the private sector and development partners in sectors where women work augments government efforts towards women's economic empowerment. "Investing in women has a ripple effect on children, the community and the economy," Dr. Mary Mbithi, Director of research at the WEE Hub said. A recent Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) report estimates prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Kenya at 15%, necessitating quick action and investment in the well-being of girls today for their brighter future.", she added.

Consideration of political, socio-economic, and technological perspectives of women's empowerment may boost trade which, in turn, would spur the growth of women's enterprises. Nancy Gitonga, a business leader who participated at the Forum admitted that investment groups, commonly known as chamas, are a good starting point for micro entrepreneurs despite the lack of "regulations" and have worked well for women in informal micro enterprises, but recommended investing in cooperatives and infrastructure bonds for medium and large enterprises.

Women face challenges related to access to finance, capacity development and poor access to investment information, coupled with gender aggravated barriers. Access to finance continues to be a hindrance to women economic empowerment despite the existence of affirmative action funds. Research conducted by the WEE Hub found that only 49% of women entrepreneurs are aware of the funds and applying for the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) is a challenge they face. Proposed solutions to accelerate women's economic empowerment include investing in women's higher education to increase their competitiveness in accessing employment opportunities; alleviating the burden of childcare for women; strengthening grassroots women's movement to encourage women's participation in leadership and development discourse; development of infrastructure for the care labour, including building creches, affordable and quality childcare facilities; and technology that brings efficiency in the management of care work.

Furthermore, research conducted by the UoN WEE Hub found that investing in childcare facilities has enabled women to increase business profits by 25%. Scaling interventions such as women's businesses incubation spurs the growth of enterprises as women are able to diversify, add value and access broader markets through increased access to financing and market linkages.

The Annual Women's Rights Convention 2023 also recommended disability inclusion and creation of intergenerational dialogues to challenge some retrogressive cultural norms and encourage mentorship while enhancing the use of indigenous knowledge. Intergenerational dialogues foster leveraging social networks and institutional memory of the older generation to embolden the younger generation.

Research conducted by the WEE Hub found that only 49% of women entrepreneurs are aware of the funds and applying for the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) is a challenge they face.



REIGNITE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT FOR GENDER PARITY

By Emily Owiti, August 2023



Dr. Agnes Meroka moderates a panel discussion during the Annual Women's Rights Conference held at Panari Hotel.



The WEE Hub team pose for a group photo with some women entrepreneurs who attended the Annual Women's Rights Conference in Panari Hotel.

*Political participation of women in leadership emerged as a critical catalyst to inclusive governance, bringing into sharp focus the **two-thirds** gender principle.*

According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2023 Kenya has made a significant progress in closing the gender gap, ranking 77 out of the 146 countries studied.

Despite this progress, the pace in the implementation of the gains made by the women's movement in the 2010 Constitution, more particularly the two-thirds gender principle, has slackened. Cabinet Secretary for Gender and Affirmative Action, Aisha Jumwa said during the Annual Women's Rights Convention 2023 held at Panari Hotel. The two-day event convened by the Community Advocacy and Awareness (CRAWN) Trust on August 23rd and 24th 2023 at the Panari Hotel sought to address gaps that hinder women from exercising their constitutional rights. These barriers are an impediment to women's economic development and empowerment and curtail gender equality. The Convention brought together high ranking government officials, policy makers, civil society, women leaders, rights organizations, academia, development partners and the private sector to dialogue and identify strategies that ensure inclusivity in governance, equality, and women empowerment in Kenya.

Political participation of women in leadership emerged as a critical catalyst to inclusive governance, bringing into sharp focus the two-thirds gender principle. During a panel discussion hosted by the

UoN WEE Hub on the two-thirds gender principle in elective and appointive offices, former Deputy Chief Justice Dr. Nancy Baraza reiterated assertions made by Ms. Anne Nderitu from the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties that there has been an increase in the number of women vying for political positions from 1300 women in 2013 to 1959 in the 2022 elections. However, she warned that, while the increase seemed significant, the number of women elected in leadership positions was still very low compared to the number of elective positions in Kenya. *“The increase notwithstanding, we should now focus on analysing the quality of decisions made in Parliament,”* said Dr. Baraza.

Advancement in leadership and inclusive governance is evident in the increase in the number of elected female leaders in the country: 29 MPs (up from 23), seven Governors (up from three) and 115 representatives of the County Assembly (up from 97) in the previous election. *“For women to fully enjoy their constitutional rights and achieve gender equality in Kenya, they must build back strong movements and challenge the power relationships, status quo and lived traditions,”* the Hon Aisha Jumwa noted in her remarks as she officially opened the third Annual Women’s Rights Convention.

The participants included the Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association (KEWOPA) representatives the Hon. Beatrice Elachi, the Hon. Esther Passaris, Dr. Joyce Osogo, Dr. Lillian Gogo, and the Registrar of Political Parties Anne Nderitu.



Cabinet Secretary for Gender and Affirmative Action Aisha Jumwa confers with Dagoretti North MP Hon. Beatrice Elachi during the Annual Women Rights Conference 2023 held at Panari Hotel.

Also, in attendance was the UoN WEE Hub leader Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, the UoN WEE Hub Director of Research Dr. Mary Mbithi, and other WEE Hub researchers. The development partners re-affirmed their commitment to support initiatives towards women’s economic empowerment and gender equality. The event was convened by Daisy Amdany, Executive Director of CRAWN Trust.



Advancement in leadership and inclusive governance is evident in the increase in the number of elected female leaders in the country: 29 MPs (up from 23), seven Governors (up from three) and 115 representatives of the County Assembly (up from 97) in the previous election.



Empowering Women to Overcome Climate Aggravated Vulnerabilities

By Emily Owiti

The spike in global temperatures has resulted in the loss of habitat, subsequently altering the distribution of plant and animal species. These effects are largely felt by women, who persistently bear the brunt of climate change, intensified by their low adaptive capacity, poor diffusion of appropriate technology, cultural practices, and gender norms.

Climate-aggravated threats and disasters resulting from enormous increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions continue to threaten the livelihoods and health of women. Global statistics project that ninety million women will be food insecure by 2050. These women dominate the agricultural sector at 53% while in Sub-Saharan Africa, between 60-80% of women are engaged in the agricultural sector which currently faces adverse climate change, endangering the women's livelihoods. The low adaptive education and awareness creation on sustainable agricultural production and climate financing support towards women's empowerment.

To address the unique climate-aggravated challenges that women face, the University of Nairobi African Women Studies Centre partnered with the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the State Department for Housing and Urban Development to host a side event during the Africa Climate Week on September 8, 2023. During the event that took place at the Mount Nimba Hall in KICC, participants discussed how to empower women to overcome threats and climate-aggravated vulnerabilities.

The side event featured leaders, climate experts and enthusiasts from diverse parts of Africa. The panel

discussion was moderated by Mr. Mohammed Nbou, Director of United Cities and Local Governments Africa, and included Prof Wanjiku Kabira, Director University of Nairobi African Women Studies Centre and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub Leader, Prof. Margaret Kobia, Adjunct Prof and Program Lead Climate Action, Environment, and Biodiversity, UoN AWSC Dr. Ruth Kattamuri Senior Director of Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate at the Commonwealth Secretariat and Rohey Malik Lowe, Mayor of the City of Banjul in the Gambia and President of REFELA(Network of the Locally Elected Women in Africa).

In her opening remarks delivered by a representative from the department, the PS Gender and Affirmative Action, Veronica Nduva observed that women face an increased risk of insecurity, food scarcity, and risk of exposure to gender-based violence because of climate change effects. She stated, "We must appreciate and prioritize these unique challenges women face, such as unpaid care work, energy for cooking and water scarcity in addressing climate solutions and women's resilience."

Critical issues highlighted by the meeting include the need for multi-sectoral collaborations, alliance building, climate financing, coherent policies, and gender mainstreaming of all programs. "*When women are empowered, the whole community is empowered,*" Prof. Kabira declared while reaffirming the commitment of the University of Nairobi to continue providing research evidence to inform program implementation. Prof. Kobia echoed Prof. Kabira's assertion, underscoring the role of the academia in research. "*We have done well in policy*

development, however, there's a need to develop monitoring tools to measure the progress of the interventions."

The uncoordinated implementation of programs within the sector was cited as an area that requires improvement to facilitate the targeting of resources for impactful action. The impact of strategic women's leadership and inclusion in women empowerment is demonstrated by Togo's success story. In Togo local women leaders collaborate with the community in sustainable agriculture; manufacturing natural green soap from a derivative of cacao. In addition, the Hon. Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, emphasized the need

to change policies and include women in climate discourse and policy decisions. "Those of you whose countries already have devolved governments, respect and protect them while ensuring that resources are shared at the grassroots" the mayor said. On her part, Dr. Kattamuri reiterated the spirit of *Harambee* (collective) coined by Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta. "Let's do this together, women with men for inclusive climate action" she said.

The side event was a launching pad to the participation of the AWSC at the COP 28 held in Dubai in November 2023.



The WEE Hub Leader, Prof Kabira second left with partners from ULCGA, State Department for Urban Housing during the AWSC Side event at the Africa Climate Week 2023.



The WEE Hub Leader Prof. Wanjiku Kabira making her presentation during the Climate Week side event at KICC



Dr. Kattamuri of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the AWSC side event during the Africa Climate Week



Climate, Environment and Biodiversity Project Lead, Prof. Margaret Kobia delivers her presentation during the Climate Week side event at KICC.

Women, Climate, and Action: AWSC & CRAWN Trust Lead the Change at COP28

By Maryanne Mbogo



Participants at the AWSC side event at COP 28 in Dubai

COP 28 (short for the 28th Conference of the Parties) is the world's stage for climate conversations and is a fundamental international gathering for individuals and organizations dedicated to tackling the pressing challenges of climate change. At this year's conference of the Parties (COP28) in Dubai, The United Arab Emirates, the UoN African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) and her partners CRAWN Trust, hosted a momentous side event to bring to the fore of the global platform a crucial intersection within the world's climate crisis: The Impact of Climate Change on Women.

While the global crisis occasioned by climate change is well known, little is appreciated about the impact it has on women. Research shows that women's vulnerability to the effects of climate change is exacerbated by inequity and marginalization linked to gender. This is particularly evident in indigenous women who continue to experience more adverse effects of climate change, which in turn, impacts negatively on their social and economic wellbeing.

"The climate crisis is not 'gender neutral.' Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety." UN Women Report; 28th February 2022.

In numerous rural communities globally, women shoulder a disproportionate burden in ensuring access to essential resources such as food, water, and fuel. When faced with droughts or unpredictable rainfall patterns, these women, primarily responsible for procurement, face intensified challenges. Their efforts to secure food become more laborious and time-consuming, often requiring longer journeys to obtain water and fuel. Consequently, this increased workload reduces their opportunities for paid employment and potentially exposes them to higher risks to their personal safety.

In conflict-affected regions, climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier', exacerbating existing political,

social, and economic tensions. Amidst this turmoil, women and girls encounter heightened vulnerability. Instances of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, human trafficking, and child marriage, become increasingly prevalent.

Effects of Climate Change in Kenya

Studies confirm that in Kenya unpredictable, extreme weather events such as prolonged drought, water scarcity and flooding directly affect women's productivity by pushing low-income women, many of whom are in the agriculture sector, out of their weather-dependent ventures. Many get displaced into low-income urban settlements which are equally climate vulnerable environments.

The primary objective of the event titled *Empower HER Climate: Kenya's Journey to Gender-Responsive Climate Justice* was to confront the daunting challenges faced by women in Kenya and across the continent in the wake of climate change, as well as to offer tangible solutions to empower them. It is hoped that these exchanges will catalyse discussions even long after the event and eventually, produce concrete long-term pathways towards gender-responsive climate action.

Besides dissemination of research findings on climate-related work, gender equality and women's empowerment, the hosts also took the opportunity to launch the AWSC's 3-year plan on Gender and Climate Action. The team also celebrated the pre-launch of Kenya's National Climate Change Gender Action Plan by CRAWN Trust.

With its origins in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), these gatherings serve as a global platform for nations to negotiate and implement strategies, policies, and commitments to mitigate the catastrophic effects of climate change.

Some of the overall objectives of COP 28 include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering adaptation to environmental changes and fostering international collaborations. These conferences have become instrumental in shaping global climate policies key in driving international efforts towards a sustainable and resilient future.



Panelists watch a video on climate change effect on women during the AWSC side event in Dubai

Conclusion

As we celebrate the immediate gains of this side event at COP 28, we forge forward in anticipation of the ripple effects and long-term benefits that will emanate from these discussions and collaborations. As the insights gathered resonate far beyond the conference halls, we continue to hope for a future where climate action and gender equality go hand in hand.



In Quest of Inclusive Procurement: WEE Hub's AGPO Study

Maryanne Mbogo

Among notable achievements of the WEE Hub in 2023 stands the completion of a landmark study titled: "Making Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) Work for the Target Group." This research, conducted by the UoN WEE Hub in collaboration with the AGPO Secretariat at the National Treasury and the Public Procurement and Regulatory Authority (PPRA), sought to unravel the persistent deficit plaguing AGPO's aspirations.

Ensuring that all segments of society can engage in business with the government holds immense significance in promoting inclusive economic growth and empowerment. Studies show that public procurement is the largest spending entity in developing economies, therefore, presenting an unparalleled avenue for driving economic progress for those who are able to access contracts.

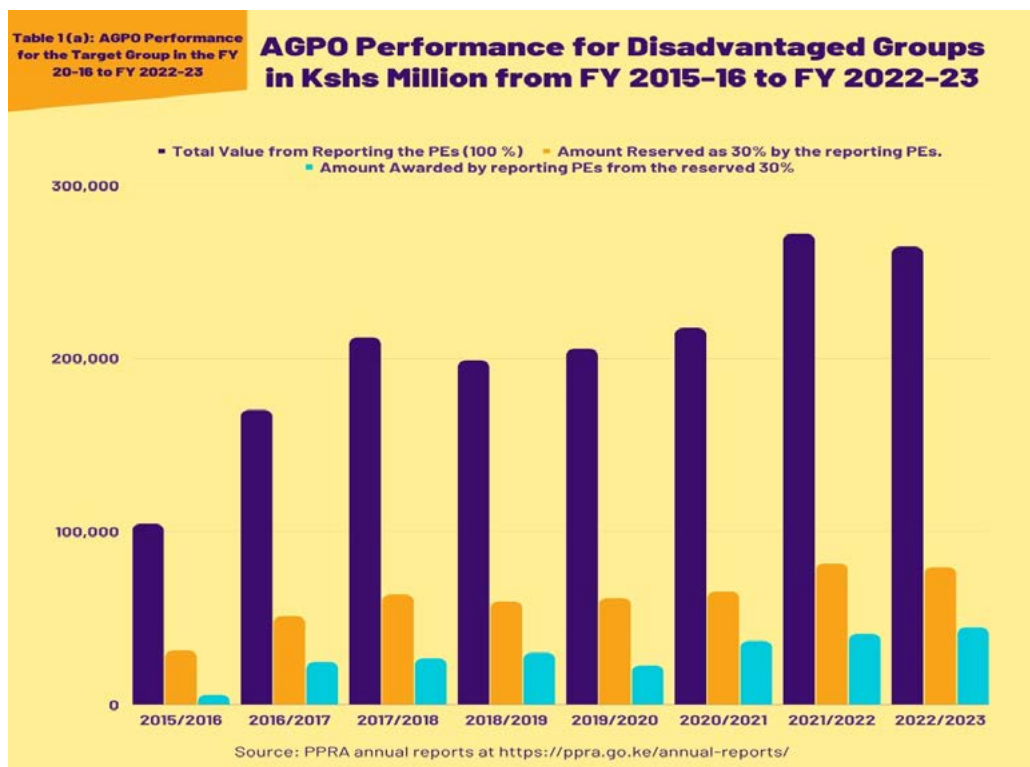
Therefore, ensuring equal access to these opportunities is not merely a matter of fairness but a strategic way to unlock economic potential and promote societal growth and equity.

Consistent Shortfalls

Over the last decade, AGPO, which was established to empower marginalized groups (the youth, women and persons living with disability) to do business with the government, has faced a persisting challenge.

The program's goal to allocate at least 30% of government procurement opportunities to these demographics has fallen drastically short. Figures from the 2022 Economic Survey indicate huge shortfalls. Less than 10% of procurement opportunities have been awarded to women; 6.02% to the youth and a mere 1.42% to persons living with disability.

This table shows the trend of AGPO's performance from 2015 to 2023.



AGPO performance for disadvantaged groups in Ksh. Millions from FY 2015/ 2016-FY 2022-23



Ms. Hannah Wangombe contributes to discussions during the meeting



Prof Regina Kitiabi presents a review on the AGPO report



Prof Wanjiku Kabira makes comments on the AGPO report - looking on Prof Tabitha Kiriti and Dr. Dorothy Njiraine

With this reality being the fulcrum of the study, the WEE Hub team set out in July 2023 with the aim of not only dissecting AGPO's deficiencies, but also to identify ways to revise or recalibrate the program in order to achieve its goals.

More specifically, the study sought to:

- Establish the extent to which procuring entities comply with the various laws, regulations, guidelines, and circulars related to AGPO;
- Identify strategies and mechanisms as solutions to ensure the aims of the program are met;
- Identify and propose comprehensive mechanisms to improve access to AGPO by the target groups.

Respondents interviewed during the study were procurement officers, accounting officers and finance officers from public procurement agencies at both national and county level. Those from national level included representatives of five state departments, twenty-five state corporations, seven universities and colleges and two commissions. Eight counties were targeted with representatives from Nairobi, Kilifi, Busia, Nyeri, Narok, Siaya, Kitui and Marsabit.

Study Approach

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, examining both the program's structure and its implementation process. Regarding the program's structure, it scrutinized the governing structures and regulatory framework. Concerning implementation, it assessed the delivery to beneficiaries and also considered the perspectives and attitudes of implementers and policymakers.

Findings and Proposals

The AGPO program, which is tasked to allocate 30% of procurement budgets to the youth, women, and persons living with disability, faces significant challenges when it comes to adherence to the reservation quotas as well as reporting.

Analysis reveals that many procuring sections fail to meet the mandated 30% allocation. This impacts on both compliance and reporting standards, by diminishing transparency.

Key proposals stemming from these findings advocate for introduction of consequences for non-compliance, stricter enforcement measures, and enhancement of a monitoring authority for PPRA as a regulatory body.

Conclusion

The collaborative effort among academia, government entities, and regulatory bodies in conducting this study confirms a collective dedication to inclusivity and empowerment. Implementing the suggested mechanisms becomes imperative as they go beyond the acknowledgment of shortcomings, to actionable change capable of bridging the existing procurement gap. It is our hope that this study will serve as a catalyst for tangible transformation, not confined to a report but a commitment to unlock opportunities for marginalized groups.



Saluting an Extraordinary Legacy: A Tribute to the Late Field Marshal **MUTHONI KIRIMA**

Maryanne Mbogo

The mention of 'Field Marshal' often conjures the image of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, a renowned figure in Kenya's struggle for independence during the Mau Mau rebellion.

While Dedan Kimathi stands as a central figure in the narrative of the rebellion, it is crucial to recognize the invaluable contributions of the many women who rallied behind this cause. Among them was one outstanding personality who not only supported the rebellion but courageously immersed herself in the heart of the conflict, ultimately earning the revered title of Field Marshal.

Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima, who had her roots in present-day Nyeri County, was born in 1931 into a life shadowed by the plight of her father, a labourer at a pyrethrum plantation. From her formative years, she bore witness to the injustices inflicted upon native Africans by colonialists. She was raised within the confines of the Pyrethrum farm and remained there until her marriage to General Mutungi in 1949.

She had been married for about a year when she decided to join the rebellion.

How she Joined the Rebellion

In her early twenties, newly married and fervently dedicated to the cause, Muthoni Kirima played

a pivotal role in supporting the Mau Mau fighters concealed within the forest.

While the Mau Mau generally relied on women within the communities for food, ammunition, and crucial intelligence, Muthoni Kirima assumed the covert role of a spy. As a clandestine informant she gathered vital intelligence from home guards within the villages and relayed it directly to Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau leader orchestrating the rebellion from the heart of the Aberdare Forest.

When home guards discovered what she had been doing, she endured a brutal, merciless beating that left her gravely injured, seemingly left for dead. Fortunately, a group of women found her, carried her to safety, and nursed her back to health.

Immediately after recovering from the brutal attack, driven by a potent mix of fury and resolve to end the oppression, she made her way into the forest to join the comrades she had previously supported solely as an informant.

For two torturous weeks, she navigated the dense wilderness in search of the fighters who were strategically concealed deep within the forest.

“...It was very dangerous because of the wild animals... I would sleep on top of trees at night and come down in the morning to continue with the search...”

When she finally located them, she was seamlessly integrated into the rebellion and soon became an integral member of the movement.

Swiftly ascending through the ranks, she attained the esteemed title of Field Marshal in 1955, only one year after the celebrated Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, who is credited for spearheading the creation of formal military structures within the movement, received the same commission.

The title of Field Marshal stood as a revered mark of distinction, bestowed exclusively upon leaders and distinguished figures demonstrating exceptional bravery, strategic acumen, and remarkable leadership qualities. Dedan Kimathi affectionately nicknamed her ‘weaver bird,’ recognizing her unparalleled skill in weaving brilliant strategies to navigate the challenges of the rebellion.

Only four individuals were honoured with this title within the years of the movement. Alongside Dedan Kimathi and Muthoni Kirima were Field Marshal Baimungi M'marete and Field Marshal Musa Mwariama both from Meru County.

Post-independence life

After the cessation of the rebellion in 1960, Field Marshal Muthoni and many of her compatriots remained in the forest until 1963.

“We couldn't go home until we were certain that the war was over... we had to witness our flag being hoisted and that of the colonialists coming down...”

Emerging from years in the wilderness, she returned to a liberated country, yet found herself with no means for personal sustenance. It was after unsuccessful business ventures that she approached the then President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, presenting a compelling case. She persuaded him to grant her a license for ivory trade based on her unique knowledge.

She argued that during their time in the rebellion, she and fellow Mau Mau fighters had hunted elephants

*The title of Field Marshal stood as a revered mark of distinction, bestowed exclusively upon leaders and distinguished figures demonstrating exceptional bravery, strategic acumen, and remarkable leadership qualities.
gender principle.*

for sustenance, burying their tusks as hidden reserves. With her knowledge of these burial sites, she proposed unearthing them to generate income.

Notably, instead of exporting the ivory, she opted to sell it to the National Museums of Kenya, providing a unique avenue for sustainable income.

Conclusion

Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima passed away on September 4, 2023, at the age of ninety-two. Interestingly, this was just one year after she made the significant decision to voluntarily cut her six-foot-long dreadlocks. These locks had been a part of her identity since her time in the rebellion and had vowed never to shave them until she witnessed tangible benefits of independence.

Her life and journey of perseverance echo the themes and aspirations explored within the WEE Hub's thematic area 4: 'Assessing the Women's Movement, Self-Mobilization, and Collective Action to Women's Economic Empowerment in Kenya.' Her resilience and unwavering commitment to justice laid the foundations for the great strides achieved by women in the pursuit of economic empowerment.

PUBLICATIONS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Publications

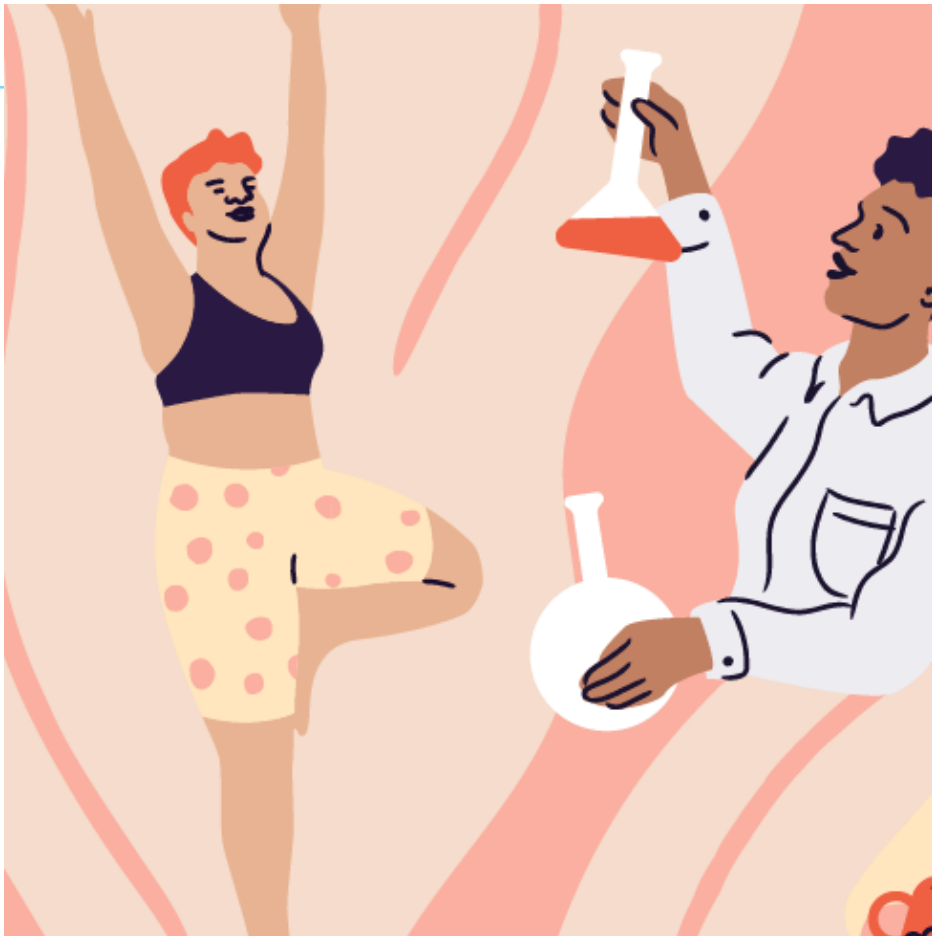
- i. Making women count in Climate Action, Environment and Biodiversity
 - a. Video documentary on women's resilience in the face of climate change presented at the COP 28 in Dubai
 - b. UoN-African Women Studies Centre and CRAWN Trust report on CoP28 proceedings:<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/jy0iw9jvyrdo404bbmu94/UoN-AWSC-CRAWN-Trust-COP-28-Kenya-Pavilion-Side-Events-Report-05.12.2023-1.pdf?rlkey=a2k6i1bvv2qhh0xkt08h2fdb5&dl=0>.
 - c. UoN WEE Hub proposals on Budget Statements: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/b7coreaa4vfpva24jhytt/h?rlkey=fj10k3267jtkgb26nq3ixpu9b&dl=0>.
 - d. Analysis of the parliamentary bills on the not more than Two-thirds Gender Principle: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/h8ztfh99lgt7t0qwfsp1d/Analysis-of-parliamentary-Bills-on-the-two-third-gender-rule-1.docx?rlkey=sng8iu0cqa0roxa02z1k6b62x&dl=0>.

Upcoming publications

- i. African Feminist Epistemology for Women's Economic Empowerment book.
- ii. Assessing the Impact of Accessing Childcare Services on Women's Businesses and Child Development: A Case of Women in Cross Border Trade:
 - a. First Monitoring Report on the impact of childcare on women's business
 - b. First Monitoring Report on the contribution of the day care center to the nutritional status of children and the well-being of care givers.
- iii. Evaluating the Implementation of the Employment Act 2007 and the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 2013 on Employment in Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in Formal and Informal Employment:
 - a. A publication on the Social Legal Digest
 - b. An Overview of the Labor Laws
- iv. Assessing What Works for the Implementation of AGPO: Making the AGPO Program Work:
 - c. Technical Report
 - d. A policy brief on 'Making AGPO work for Kenyan women' Views and analysis from implementers

Upcoming events

1. Program review workshop
3. International Women's day 2024



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