



GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063: THE CASE OF KENYA 2016-2020ⁱ

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Abstract:

The paper examines triumphs, challenges, and paradigmatic shifts in terms of whether the African Union agenda 2063 has translated to any tangible change in Kenya's quest for gender equality and development. The institutionalization of gender issues at different levels globally demonstrates the primacy of gender parity in development paradigms. AU's agenda 2063 aspiration 6 explicitly talks of gender equality and development and provides Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) strategy which looks toward women's inclusion in Africa's development. The Union outlines strategic pillars for implementation by member states. This paper provides a critical analysis of the integration of these pillars in Kenya's development agenda. The study relied mainly on secondary data from journal articles, relevant documents from Kenya's Gender Commission and Ministry, relevant legal instruments, and websites. It shows that no country has fully achieved gender equality but can only be categorized as either friendly or unfriendly towards it; Kenya has attained quite substantial strides in the integration of the GEWE strategy pillars; systemic and structural factors are the biggest challenges to the full realization of aspiration 6 in Kenya; quantity doesn't necessarily translate to quality with reference to the presence of women in key institutions and positions of influence. Conclusively, the paper indicates the importance of feminization of development in Kenya; emphasizes the agency of both genders in the implementation of aspiration 6, and notes that society has failed gender equality. It recommends the collaboration of all development actors as key in the implementation and realization of aspiration 6.

ⁱ PERSPECTIVES SUR LE GENRE DANS LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DE L'AGENDA 2063 DE L'UNION AFRICAINE : LE CAS DU KENYA 2016-2020

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Résumé :

Cet article vise à examiner les avancées, les défis et les changements paradigmatiques en vue de déterminer si l'agenda 2063 de l'Union africaine a apporté des changements concrets dans la quête de l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes ainsi que dans le domaine du développement au Kenya. L'institutionnalisation des questions de genre à différents niveaux dans le monde démontre la primauté de la parité hommes-femmes dans les paradigmes de développement. L'aspiration 6 de l'agenda 2063 de l'UA parle explicitement d'égalité des sexes et de développement et fournit une stratégie d'égalité entre les sexes et d'autonomisation des femmes (GEWE) qui vise à inclure les femmes dans le développement de l'Afrique. L'Union définit des piliers de stratégie à mettre en œuvre par les États membres. Ce document fournit une analyse critique de l'intégration de ces piliers dans l'agenda de développement du Kenya. L'étude s'appuie principalement sur des données secondaires tirées des articles de journaux, des documents pertinents issus de la commission et du ministère kenyan chargé de l'égalité des sexes, des instruments juridiques pertinents et des sites web. Elle montre qu'aucun pays n'a pleinement atteint l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, mais qu'il peut être classé comme favorable ou défavorable à cette égalité ; le Kenya a réalisé des progrès considérables dans l'intégration des piliers de la stratégie GEWE ; les facteurs systémiques et structurels sont les principaux obstacles à la pleine réalisation de l'aspiration 6 au Kenya ; la quantité ne se traduit pas nécessairement par la qualité en ce qui concerne la présence des femmes dans les institutions clés et les postes d'influence. En conclusion, le document démontre l'importance de la féminisation du développement au Kenya, souligne le rôle des deux sexes dans la mise en œuvre de l'aspiration 6 et note que la société n'a pas réussi à instaurer l'égalité des sexes. Il recommande la collaboration de tous les acteurs du développement comme élément clé de la mise en œuvre et de la réalisation de l'aspiration 6.

Mots-clés : Union africaine, développement, égalité des sexes et autonomisation des femmes, Agenda 2063, aspiration 6

1. Introduction

For many years Africa's development has been analyzed from the development frameworks of the North. Progress in the growth and sustainable development of individual nation-states have been elusive. As such the continent through its continental body, the African Union (AU), has devised new strategies for development based on African experience and aspirations. One of these strategies is Agenda 2063, dubbed, "*The Africa we want*". Among the dimensions that the plan is looking at is the primacy of gender equality in the implementation of the development process especially what

concerns women's inclusion. Gender equality is a matter of human dignity as well as a matter of respect for increased global prosperity. The major areas of concern with this strategy are education, health, politics as well as economic participation. The fear is that sustainable development will not be achieved because less than half of the world's population is active in the development process. As such the Union through its member states has put forth the implementation process of attaining gender equality within the socio-economic and political multi-sectoral settings. Kenya, just like other African states is in the process since the launch of the 2063 agenda of implementing the strategic goals and targets of the gender equality and women empowerment program.

Women's empowerment and gender equality are not new concepts. Since the 1980s they have been at the helm of many debates for decades. Many international policies and legal measures have since been adopted to advance Gender equality and women's concerns at various levels, and power positions to allow women to make meaningful contributions to the social, economic, and political spheres of society. There has been good progress in each of these three spheres. However, there are still a lot of challenges, especially in Africa. One of the issues underlying these challenges is the aspect of implementation whether progressing, successful, or failing. This paper is focused on the implementation of aspiration six of Agenda 2063 in Kenya to determine the bottlenecks, triumphs, and tangible results attributable to the increase of women in the three spheres of development with a focus on the period 2016 to 2020. This period falls within the second quarter of the first ten-year implementation plans of the fifty years set out by the Union attainable by 2063. The years before these can be considered to be majorly base-setting prior to the actual implementation of targets of the gender equality and women empowerment strategy.

During celebrations in May 2013 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the AU, the Summit agreed upon landmark Solemn Affirmation in which they set-out a lasting development continent-wide vision for the next fifty years, from 2013 to 2063. This vision was shaped not only by the experiences and successes recorded but also by the challenges the continent had faced in the fifty years since the birth of OAU. The vision states that by 2063, there should be *"An Africa that is united, affluent, and peaceful, led by its people and represents a strong force in the world arena."* It lays out a plan for Africa's socio-economic and political development based on a single vision, as outlined in the AU's Agenda 2063. This Solemn Declaration is a passionate call for the transformation of the continent in a manner that would place it on a level playing field with the rest of the globe. When the African Union was launching its vision, the global community, through the United Nations, was already developing a successor to the Millennium Development Goals. These MDGs which had been the leading global framework for development were coming to an end after fifteen years of implementation. Except for the "Afro-centric" and Pan-African provisions contained in Agenda 2063, there are remarkable similarities with Global Agenda 2030 making the case for a holistic approach in their implementation and monitoring.

Agenda 2063 is a vision as well as a plan of action painted by a united African voice of the desired picture for its future generation and the continent at large. It has seven aspirations namely, in ascending order; Africa's prosperity based on inclusive growth and long-term development.; An integrated continent that is politically united and founded on Pan-goals Africanism and the African Renaissance vision; an Africa characterized by excellent government, democracy, human rights respect, justice, and the rule of law; An Africa that is secure and with peace; an Africa with a strong identity in culture, ethics, and shared values; an Africa whose growth is people-centered, depending on the African people's potential, particularly women and youth, and child care; and lastly, a powerful, cohesive, resilient, and important global participant and partner. Each of the Seven Aspirations makes up a key to Africa's future on the world stage.

To operationalize Africa's development blueprint, The First-Ten-Year Implementation Plan, which covers the years 2013 to 2023, was designed and approved at the Union's June 2015 Summit. The AU Member States have been implementing Agenda 2063 since its advent, albeit with varying levels of results and experiences. In 2020, the five regions of Africa are still focused on finalizing all the aspirations with some having done better than others. In terms of Aspirations one, two, and four, Southern Africa has achieved great progress. Significant progress has been made in East Africa under Aspirations four and six. Since 2013, the number of women with access to sexual health and reproductive services has increased dramatically. Several states, on the other hand, have been unable to develop powerful governmental structures to address issues such as human rights. The legal and policy frameworks that guide GEWE among others include; the UN 1979 CEDAW, the 1995 Beijing pronouncement, the UN convention on women's rights, the Maputo Declaration, the AU gender directorate and consequently the 6th aspiration.

Africa has had considerable growth over the last decade, averaging 5% per year, and has made progress toward achieving some of the global development agenda's goals. However, economic growth has not always translated into improved living conditions for everybody; African countries have lost chances to pull their sexes from poverty. Every nation-state through its various levels and institutions is expected by the Union to create relevant policies, institutional frameworks, and implementation frameworks and monitor and evaluate these to ensure GEWE is achieved by the stipulated periods. So how is Kenya fairing in this process? How far have we come? Is there any positive progress? How has it been integrated into Kenya's development plans as part of its implementation framework in advancing gender-responsive inclusive development in the African continent? What more does the stakeholders need to do towards attaining this important objective? This study hopes to answer these questions.

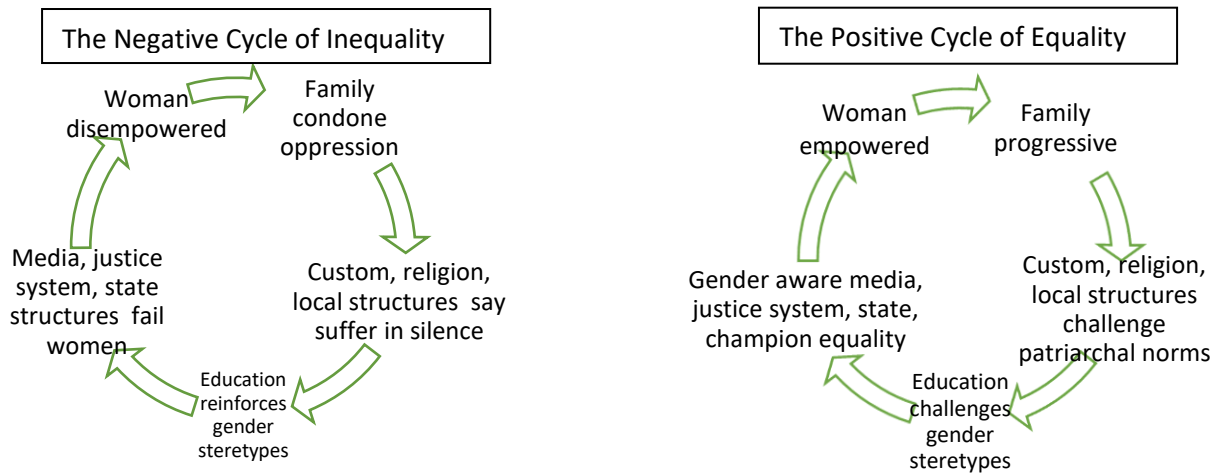
2. Literature Review

2.1 Issue of Gender Equality in Africa

"Gender" refers to socially created variations in the characteristics and possibilities associated with being a woman or a man, as well as social interactions and relationships between men and women. In a given setting, gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or man. In most communities, men and women have different roles and duties, engage in different activities, have different access to and control over resources, and have different decision-making chances. The history of social connections shapes these distinctions and inequities between the sexes, which fluctuate over time and throughout cultures. Inequalities between men and women in Africa are among the worst in the world. Women and girls in Africa are among the poorest in the world, with the greatest rates of illiteracy. Africa will not be able to sustain its growth or achieve its development goals unless it invests extensively in gender equality. Most women's lives are marked by gender inequity and inequality from birth to the grave.

Despite improvements in laws and constitutions, majority of women are treated as minors their whole lives, living under the control of their fathers, spouses, and even sons, or as widows who are dependent on male relatives. Gender inequality is a human rights violation and goes unnoticed due to the level at which it has been normalized. In spite of the global agendas, policies and legal frameworks focusing on GE being the cornerstone of development program, the gender gap is still wide in the continent. Many women are still excluded from household economic decision-making, get less pay than men yet do long working hours. The African Society has traditionally been described as majorly patriarchal or male-dominated. Despite women being the largest of the African population and recent decision-making improvements, most of them remain vulnerable and poor due to normalized marginalization in all facets of life. Hanbasri et al. (2022) inform that in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, women's rights to own land and transfer ownership rights are disproportionately reduced. On the other hand, according to Yishay et al. (2016) and Kondylis et al. (2014), due to male-controlled agricultural extension networks women have little reach to relevant information in Malawi and Mozambique respectively. Research shows that Women's economic opportunities are generally hampered by a lack of access to production inputs and hence the common negative cycle of inequality is dominant over the much-sought positive cycle of equality (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Negative Cycle of Inequality Verses Positive Cycle of Equality



2.2. Aspiration 6 and GEWE strategy

Aspiration 6 envisions a people centred African development, relying on African people's potential, particularly women and youth, and care for its children. It focuses on the African woman and her fight to secure her proper place in society, ultimately bridging Africa's gender gap. Gender equality is not a new concept in Kenya's development discourses; from 1970's-affirmative action, years of gender parity activism, Beijing 1995 consensus, 2010 Constitution and 2/3rd gender rule, MDGs, SDGs, Agenda 2063, Vision 2030, to EAC gender equality goal. Main actors in Kenya's quest for gender equality have been, women activists and women organizations, the government through the gender ministry and commission, women groups, media, and interest groups among others.

The aspiration lays focus on the following important parameters for women's empowerment: decision-making positions against any discriminatory factor; equal rights in all domains especially property and productive resource access, ownership, and control; establishing businesses and contract signage; access to loans and sources of finance; end of evils such as GBV and discrimination and; full attainment of gender parity. With this in mind, the AU hopes that by 2023 under the implementation program of the FTYIP Africa will have achieved the following in this aspiration: All barriers to women abolished; for every five women, at least would have access and control of productive assets; norm of gender parity in all continental and regional organs; reduced violence against women; abolition of harmful traditions and norms and child-directed cultural evils like early marriages and soldiering. In 2009, AU adopted the gender policy, a year later it marked the 2010-2020 African women's decade, three years later it celebrated its 50th anniversary and adopted agenda 2063. Two years later it joined the rest of the world in adopting the 2030 agenda and hopes that the 2063 agenda will be fully attained in the stipulated stages of implementation.

The GEWE approach is made up of: increasing economic outcomes, opportunities and technology e-dividends; resilience, security and dignity; institutions, policies and laws that are effective; and Visibility, voice and leadership. To create an economically empowered woman, the first pillar emphasizes the same access to quality education as

well as ownership of productive assets. In so doing this will lead to financial inclusion and economic empowerment, training and educational programs, females becoming active influencers and users of digital space, and enable a gender-focused E-solution. The second pillar essentially sees gender-based violence, especially against women, reproductive health rights abuse as both a consequence of societal and systemic norms and practices of communities therefore their security and bodily integrity remain critical for gender equality. As such proper management of these two will achieve higher survival chances and generally protected rights. It also leads to reduced, condemned and criminalized violence against women and provides equal peace process participation. The third pillar espouses the gap between the gender equality provisions and the daily women's realities. Without proper legal reform and government initiatives, gender equality will remain on paper. Calls for the implementation of Maputo protocol which concerns upholding all rights for women such as inheritance and ownership, education, physical integrity, civil liberties and equal wage through national laws and judicial processes. At the same time, it sees a fulfilled woman based on agenda 2063 goals. The last pillar calls for equivalent participation of female gender executive organs for their voices to be heard and seen. To achieve these, there must be equal participation and presence of women in leadership and positions of influence nationally, the ability to exercise roles in public spaces, community and home; be seen as equal participants in media, cultural and literature resources. The AU advocates for the GEWE strategy to be included in national development plans. The GEWE strategy's impact on African genders, particularly those from poor and underprivileged areas, will be determined by the specific character of the policies and actions taken by each country.

3. Methodology

This study is a desktop case study research design. It is qualitative in nature and utilized the content analysis method of data collection. Babbie (2010) notes that document analysis is a method of data collection that involves analysis of content from written documents such as books, websites, laws, reports etcetera, in order to make certain deductions based on the study parameters. The types of documents analyzed for this study include both national and Global Reports and Records that touch on Kenya's place relative to gender equality and Women Empowerment parameters. These records were analyzed with the aim of retrieving key information relating to AU aspiration 6 with a focus on country profiles and singling out Kenyan cases. It examined both government and institutional documents written and published between the years 2015 to 2021 by the Kenyan government and affiliated gender commissions and departments, National Democratic Institute as well as United Nations agencies and Global Economic Forum reports. These singled-out documents mainly provided records on various gender equality and Women empowerment variables hence able to demonstrate the continuity and or change in the subject matter under this study, that is, the implementation of the 6th aspiration of Africa's Continental agenda 6 by Kenya. This method helped facilitate

the collection of huge quantities of reliable information without necessarily questioning many people. As a tool of qualitative analysis, the method allowed a suitable narrative based on the statistical measures available. The study has cited the correct sources of these key documents within the text to validate the documents. It also explains that the documents were relevant for this study up to a certain level since some could not answer certain questions concerning this study but the authors were able to fill this gap after analyzing the various contents with respect to the problem under study.

4. Results

4.1 Integrating Aspiration 6 into Kenya's National Development Plans (2016-2020)

The Kenyan historical story on gender inequality is linked to many root causes that GEWE strategy highlights. It pervades all levels and layers of life and learning. Kenya has incorporated the implementation of global and continental agendas into its national development plans like Vision 2030. Integrating aspiration 6 involves domesticating its contents within the national implementation frameworks to address specific gender gaps (Dolata,2014) and promote GEWE. As a member of EAC, Kenya is bound by the EAC Equity Bill 2015 and AU 2009 gender policy. Between 2016 and 2020 the nation has achieved quite some strides as demonstrated by both table 1 and the triumph summary herein. However, it has also faced challenges in the process.

The 2021 World Economic Forum (WEF) report demonstrates that from 2021 it will take an estimated 135.6 years to achieve gender parity. Political Empowerment (PE), Educational Attainment (EA), Health and Survival (HS) and Economic Participation and Opportunity (EPO) are all assessed in the report. From global gender-related statistics, findings show that Kenya has both improved and dropped in different gender parity-related sub-indexes. The table below provides an overview of the global gender gap index report for Kenya's Profile between 2015 and 2021.

Table 1: Kenya's Comparative Global Gender Gap Report, 2015-2021

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2020	2021
	Global rank/No. of states reviewed	48/145	63/144	76/144	76/149	109/153	95/156
	Overall Global Rating	0.719	0.702	0.694	0.700	0.671	0.692
1.	Economic Participation Opportunity	0.778	0.710	0.720	0.734	0.598	0.672
a.	Labour force participation rate	0.860	0.864	0.865	0.914	0.921	0.943
b.	Wage equality in similar work	0.620	0.651	0.679	0.682	0.680	0.673
c.	Earned income estimate 1000 \$	0.930	0.653	0.646	0.646	0.704	0.719
d.	Decision Making position%	-	-	-	-	0.329	0.329
e.	Professional and technical workers	-	-	-	-	0.000	0.558
2.	Education Attainment	0.942	0.943	0.929	0.929	0.938	0.929
a.	Rate of Literacy	0.92	0.924	0.883	0.883	0.920	0.920
b.	Primary Level Enrollment	1.00	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
c.	Secondary Level Enrollment	0.97	0.969	0.442	0.442	0.934	0.896
d.	Tertiary level enrolment	0.70	0.703	0.703	0.704	0.737	0.737
3.	Health and Survival	0.973	0.973	0.980	0.980	0.980	0.975

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a.	Birth Sex Ratio	0.94	0.944	0.944	0.944	0.944	0.944
b.	Healthy Life Expectancy, years	1.04	1.038	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.044
4.	Political Empowerment	0.182	.182	0.147	0.159	0.169	0.193
a.	Parliamentary Representation	0.25	0.246	0.241	0.278	0.278	0.276
b.	Ministerial Positions	0.43	0.429	0.294	0.294	0.333	0.437
c.	Presidents in the last 50 years	0.00	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: Collated Data from 2015-2021 country profiles from World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Reports

The table presents some of the gains and losses of Kenya towards aspiration 6 and GEWE strategy implementation between these periods. In the 2018 report, it ranked 76 a score of 0.700 out of 1. In each of the standard indicators used by WEF in 2019, it scored as follows: EPO (0.734) EA (0.929), ES (0.980), and PE (0.159). In the gender inequality index 2020, Kenya ranked 109 out of 153 reviewed states. This was a global score of 0.671 out of the 1 benchmark score ranking Kenya 20 within the sub-Saharan region in the same year. This was up from the 2006 score of 0.649 which had the sub-index indicators of EPO at 0.598/1, EA at 0.938/1 that was supported greatly by the enrollment rates in the three literacy levels, HS at 0.980/1 with focus on healthy life expectancy and the sex ratio at birth, and PE at 0.169/1 characteristic of the increased number of women in the 13th parliament compared to previous years, women in ministerial positions and also negated by lack of women in presidential positions since the birth of the nation (GGGR,2020).

The 2021 report came a year post-Covid-19 pandemic declaration. It ranked Kenya at 95 with an overall score of 0.692 based on similar sub-index indicators. EPO at 0.672 recorded a slight increase from the previous report with a decrease in wage equality for similar work, a rise in employment and income, and a rise in professional and technical support from 0.000 in the 2020 report to 0.558 in the 2021 report, EA at 0.929 dropping from the previous year majorly due to drop in enrolments, HS at 0.975 a slight decrease from the previous year, with a slight decrease in healthy life expectancy from 1.060 in 2019 to 1.044 in 2020, and PE at 0.193 a surprise increase from the previous year, especially with the increase in women in ministerial positions scoring 0.333 in 2020 report and 0.437 on 2021 report.

Through the 2010 constitution, women can now offer citizenship to children born of foreign men and spouses. The Kenya Women Senators Association (KEWOSA) and Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) are women caucuses existent and functional courtesy of the constitution and they push for gender-related policies and laws both at the counties and national levels. As a contributing factor to women and peace, Kenya through the UN resolution 1325 gives women a platform to engage and share their thoughts in the resolution of conflicts, especially which affect them such as Gender-based violence (GBV) and criminal acts directed on women, occurring as a result of political conflicts including internally displaced persons and refugee-related crisis. However, there are still few women in Kenya's security sector, especially in the leadership ranks and security organs such as the National Security Council (NSC) which has been a historical trait that only sees women placed within the support service or the softer

functions including managerial and secretarial duties. This is contrary to the gender parity mark within the judiciary that exhibits an equal playing field between male and female genders in all positions. Within the decision-making positions, the Kenyan judiciary has demonstrated the presence of women at the apex since 2016. Contrary to the pre-2016 years, the top two positions have been distributed between males and females. The Federation of Women Lawyers-Kenya (FIDA) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), note that women have made significant gains, especially since the 2017 elections. Women made history when an additional 29% ran for elective positions compared to previous elections and produced three governors leading to an increased number of women in political positions. From the 2017 elections, women held 172(9%) of 1862 (IEBC, 2017) elective seats compared to 145(7.7%) in 2013 except for the presidential position which has remained male-dominated since the birth of the nation.

Irrespective of the gains, research shows that there are greater obstacles for women as opposed to men looking for political posts. The required 33% bare minimum mark provided by the 2/3rd gender rule has not been met since the promulgation of the 2010 constitution. The 2017 election made 23% of women parliamentarians inclusive of the women representative reserved seats. In comparison to the 2013 and 2017 elections, women members of the national assembly increased from 16 to 23, and members of the county assembly increased from 82 to 96. This means, Kenya still falls short of women's political empowerment and hence continued gender inequality towards the end of the first phase of attaining aspiration 6.

4.2 Triumphs

From national statistical measures, Kenya has seen major improvements in the legal and policy documentation in areas that seek to level the playing field between both genders. Examples include; the implementation of the 2010 constitution with the provision of the 2/3rd gender rule. The provision of free primary education for all; gender-focused budgeting which allocates women's development funds to help them in financial access. The Constitution has given women better access to higher education; opportunities for more women representation in political positions and devolution to distribute services close to the people at the grassroots and benefit women.

There is also a surge of interest in capturing the economic potential for women in male-dominated industries such as mining, as well as active participation by civil society and Women's Rights Organizations. The gender mainstreaming directorate won Kenya a gender scorecard for skill development and education in 2017. Under the GBV program, there have been helplines originating from partnerships between the government and the private sector to ensure response and appropriate referrals for victims and or survivors. The lines include; The helpline 1195 National GBV, helpline 999/112 Police, helpline 116 Childline Kenya, UWIANO SMS Platform 10, helpline 1193 *Kimbilio* GBV, one 2 one youth helpline 1190 LVCT and 21661 FIDA SMS platform. In 2016, the Kilifi GBV recovery center was launched. 2014 KDHS report had singled the county as the most prevalent on GBV. GBV 1195 offers initial tele-counseling and rescue coordination

through the *Komesha Dhuluma* Mobile app launched in 2021 hence improving access to delivery of service. The government has also prepared a national policy for the response and deterrence to GBV, as well as national development and gender policies and FGM eradication policies since 2017.

The socio-economic empowerment directorate has provided for girls and women empowerment in terms of entrepreneurial skills, access to government affirmative action funds, and procurement opportunities for the marginalized with almost 4000 women and youth between the years 2015-2018, sanitary towels program for the girls in school which in 2017/18 was allocated 470M in the national budget. Between 2013 and 2016 there has been various activism to push for bridging the gap in key sectors (Gok report, 2017) for instance; International Days on Gender, including Widows' Day, Women's Day, GBV activism day, among others are commemorated to raise awareness about GEWE. Kenya also participates in the End Child Marriage Campaign which it launched in 2017 and HeForShe Global Campaign.

Gender Equality levels among the EAC party states were studied by UNDP showing different factors that improve as well as challenge the attainment of this regional goal (UNDP, 2015). From the report, there was an increased adult literacy and primary enrollment rates showing 90% for women literacy in 2015. However, the implementation of equal property rights had not been enough to bridge the land ownership imbalance between men and women. When it comes to land in both Uganda and Kenya only 35% goes to Women as opposed to 51% and 46% in Burundi and Rwanda respectively. Financial accessibility in both Uganda and Kenya remains majorly family and friend loan borrowing. Research shows that about 14% of women and 18% of men seek lending from a financial institution (UNCTAD, 2019). Globally, out of 100 states, Kenya ranks 81 on the Women, Business, and the Law 2020 index.

4.3 Challenges

Despite the achievements, pitfalls also still abound. In relation to GEWE's pillar one-achieving parity in both secondary and primary schools-, problems such as child marriages, career guidance and curricula stereotypes with regard to gender, teen pregnancies among others, hinder the progress of the girl child and hence gender inequality. Secondly, most women fail to access proper services concerning their sexuality and reproduction. In education, higher education has the highest level of disparity compared to both high and lower academic institutions. The education ministry notes an 85% progression to high schools but only 30% of those manage to reach the tertiary level with 1/3rd of total enrolments being females. Many are confined to private settings as a consequence of limited opportunities, demeaning societal traditions and norms as well as ignorance. There are more school-going female dropouts in Kenya as opposed to the male gender according to the education ministry. Reasons attributable to this include poverty and insecure learning conditions. Although these challenges face both genders, the females face increased additional hazards. On a long-term basis, these limit girls/women's access to employment opportunities and consequently financial

empowerment. This means they will be prone to most human rights abuses and harmful traditional norms. Despite increased access to higher academic institutions for women, transition and rates of completion haven't improved and there is still inequality with respect to balancing the soft and hard study programs as well as fairness in promotion in the workforce. With respect to the women's fund, those who have been able to access are mainly from privileged backgrounds.

On the leadership pillar, the larger representation of women in parliament and public life has not translated to Kenya achieving the gender equality goal. By 2021 implementation of the 2/3rd gender rule has not fully taken place throughout all spheres of public life either. Studies show that 2017 was the most violent election for women, especially with evidence of rising instances of abductions and sexual harassment that made many of them back out hence negating the gains of yesteryears. Within the political party structures, most women need someone at the top levels to endorse them for certain positions. Their political voices, therefore, remain in the margins of political power. Choosing the political journey for women in Kenya calls for the trait of respect on the part of the woman. Respect here is described in "*societal boxes*" such as being married to a respected man, having kids, be free from societal gossip or scandals among others. In county levels, despite the increased presence of women participation, their representation in 2017 was lower than that of men with only 96 women and 1450 males overall.

Despite a lot of strides made in combating GBV, especially among the female gender, the vice is still highly affecting women and girls' health, sexual, and reproductive health. Results also show that women and women organizations have demonstrated their agency in the quest for gender parity for years. In 2020 the social media presence of the Twitter campaign "we are 52%", demonstrations against female genital mutilation, Gender-based violence, the sanitary pads movement, and caucuses that pushed for women's election in 2022 among others show their agency in the push for change. A recent study demonstrated that most young people are prone to elect a man more than a woman to political office. When told to draw a leader, 89% drew a man and 11% drew a woman. Research showed that despite the fact that 13% of women in the 2017 election race won, which was similar male success rate the challenge is few women, only 9% presented themselves for elective positions. Women have to therefore rise up and offer themselves in increased numbers for political positions to raise the bar on gender equality. According to the Isiolo Country Senator Dullo Fatuma, interviewed by NDI, "*The women work extra hard than men to attain these positions*", (NDI, 2017). NDI report also informs that women seeking elective positions face certain persistent obstacles over time. These include; insufficient support from their party primaries, limited or lack of finances, gender-based violence, stereotypes and a discriminative patriarchal society.

Other challenges that have affected the proper implementation of aspiration 6 include; between 2020 and 2021 a lot of gains of GEWE have been negated due to covid-19 trickle down effects of the lockdown, loss of jobs, and subsequently reduced incomes; lack of sufficient inter-generational dialogue; weak implementation of progressive

normative frameworks and the continued dominance of the root causes of patriarchal societal norms and attitudes which has made mind-sets and behavior difficult to change. Research demonstrates that only 45% of urban women in Kenya are employed. This means 55% are without critical access to capital. GEWE's effect in Kenya, however, is that access to productive assets limits women's economic potential, particularly in rural areas where they are women farmers or micro-entrepreneurs. According to the 2017 Afro-barometer, Kenyans view progress in GE, while support for WE remain irregular (Mitula, 2017).

5. Discussion: What characterized Kenya in this period?

Through the passage of the 1995 Beijing Declaration, countries from around the world, including Kenya, came together and pledged to advance gender equality. The period 2016-2020 characterized an international system marking one year after the end of millennium development goals and slight achievement of gender equality goal by Kenya; a one-year-old Kenya into SDG 5; seven years into the implementation of the first 10-year plan for aspiration 6.

From the findings, in Kenya, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels decades after independence. A high fraction of their time lies in domestic caregiving and duties including; long-distance firewood and water fetching. All of which diminish their academic focus and by extension future employability as opposed to their male counterparts (Gender Equality Kenya Factsheet, 2019). Their continued inadequacy in access to and control of resources like land worsens their situation further. USAID assistance to Kenya towards raising the number of women participating in the national development process might boost and yield progress in Kenya's journey to parity in gender (USAID, 2022). There are significant gaps, and few organizations are focused on the social and behavioral change initiatives that are required to shift the narrative surrounding female leadership. Too many timelines emanating from both the globe and African continent can be confusing to states. For instance, if the global agenda 2030 requires states to achieve gender equality by 2030 while AU agenda 2063 aspiration 6 first timeline requires them to achieve by 2023, it makes a state lagging behind to relax and focus on 2030 or 2063 for that matter hence creating an imbalance of attainment of similar goals but different structural levels complicating developmental achievements. It creates a scapegoat for "lazy" regimes on primate issues like gender equality.

Secondly a lot has been done by Kenya in support of aspiration 6 but there are problems with enforcement, and awareness of the legal and policy regulations and a lot of focus seems to be short-term as opposed to sustainable. Most government programs do not reach the rural, marginalized and minority societies and persons, who are majorly women. People with access to information have the privilege of taking advantage of the programs against the majority of the minority even in this age of technology. Rarely do women in remote regions hear of these opportunities and even if they did access funds,

without proper training on workable business ideas, they are again relegated to disadvantaged cycles. The increase in women's representation in legislative positions has slightly positively impacted women, youth and children because some have pushed for policy action that has benefited a section of these marginalized entities in Kenya. On the other end, gender equality has not been attained in this area mostly because running for elective positions in Kenya is exceptionally expensive. You will most likely find women engaged by government officers where the subject matter touches on maternal health care or nursing as opposed to macro issues that eventually affect women such as road construction and public finance budgeting yet, they are the most likely users of these facilities.

The results above show that within this period Kenya's global gender equality index dropped significantly. The main reason can be attributed to the Covid-19 Pandemic which reduced the gains of the years before. In 2019 when Covid-19 struck, both genders faced dire effects of the pandemic, however, it mostly affected women and girls. In Kenya when it first reported the case in March of 2020, followed by a nationwide lockdown and curfew, most families were forced to stay home, others lost jobs and hence little to feed due to reduced income. A section of males went home drunk and prone to physically, emotionally, and sexually abuse their wives. With men being the most property owners, women in marginalized areas could not report these abuses meaning there was an increased level of risk of GBV during this season in Kenyan households. The inadequacy of government-run safe shelters for individuals at risk of sexual and GBV is among the highly visible gaps that continue to deprive females of access to their rights. Due to the limitation of these safety nets, the female gender is subjected to continued violence and is at the mercy of their abusers. Furthermore, due to limited "one-stop centers" that provide legal, physical, and psychosocial care under one roof, Kenyan survivors of sexual and gender-based violence are routinely re-victimized. Throughout judicial process, traumatized individuals are frequently obliged to retain evidence and transfer from hospitals, to police stations, to counsellors and back.

Despite the major gains over the years in the post-2010 constitution, GEWE is far from being achieved based on these findings. When it comes to land inheritance and ownership; fair eco-politico-human rights for women, few researchers declared parity. This is due to societal structures that have restricted certain privileges to men solely. To bring Kenya closer to gender equality, both men and women should be active in promoting equality in various domains. The Covid epidemic, suggests that both health emergencies and economic collapse harmed women more than men, partially negating the yester gains. Having noted these, there is a close correlation between gender-focused inequalities or discrimination and a peaceful society and by extension a nation. Abuse and mistreatment of one gender breed contempt and resentment which means there is a level of disagreement based on latent unattained human rights and interests. This in itself is a basic definition of conflict which is a societal evil. Successful implementation of relevant policy frameworks on gender equality and women empowerment towards aspiration 6 is but one way towards solving this problem.

6. Recommendations

This paper recommends that other actors such as educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations can do more to help fight against GBV and sensitize on women's human rights to contribute to human security and peace. This can be done well by implementing reforms and ensuring safe learning spaces on matters of culture, traditional norms, and marginalization of women and girls. Secondly, if all stakeholders harmonized their gender-responsive programs then a better outcome would emerge for GE in Kenya. Thirdly, it is necessary to build stronger gender management systems, movements, and collaborations for the success of GEWE including documenting what has worked/working both domestically and elsewhere, upholding good practice, and doing away with what doesn't work. For instance, if Rwanda has succeeded in major gender equality strides, especially in political representation, what can Kenya borrow? If South Africa has succeeded further in gender budgeting, what lessons can Kenya draw from it? Duty Bearers also have the responsibility of ensuring gender insensitive practices are punishable by law among other prescribed norms. Finally, the government needs to raise girls' aspirations through societal awareness, and public forums and raise the bar in breaking the silence, and strictly work towards changing traditions that are discriminatory against one gender.

7. Conclusion

Gender equality and women's empowerment are becoming increasingly acknowledged as critical to long-term development and the establishment of effective national development policies and programs. Through regional, African, and global agreements, governments have made promises to achieve GE. However, there is still a significant difference between talk and reality. Looks like society in Africa still fails women and hence the national objective of gender parity in all spheres of life. The time older men despise marrying underage girls, boys assist their sisters and girls in traditionally female-defined duties, boys and men fully support the fight against female genital mutilation among other gender insensitive cultural norms that constraints women and girls from self-love, self-dependence and contribute to the sustainable social, economic and political development of African societies, gender equality agendas will continue to stagnate. On the other hand, however, society and societal rules were made by human beings and it is up to both genders for the good of and survival of future generations to collaborate and involve every stakeholder towards the achievement of all concerns pertaining to national, regional, continental and global gender equality. Conclusively, for aspiration 6 targets and goals to be attained in Kenya, the root causes of marginalization need addressing. The normalized societal treatment of women calls for a paradigm shift to change mind-sets, the dragged implementation of gender equality policies, especially what concerns women empowerment needs fast-tracking and full commitment by all stakeholders. It is possible to conclude that Kenya will not be able to attain the intended targets of the first

ten-year plan under aspiration 6 by 2023. Secondly, the country has a positive outlook on policy creation to promote equal opportunities for all, but the conversion of this policy to action has been problematic. Therefore, Kenya is not yet where it would want to be. It has however demonstrated commitment and some progress better than yester years, especially with increased number of women in key positions in society.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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