



Uneven gender representation Women missing in influential decision making committees

...By Ruth Omukhango

According to an audit of the 2013 General Election, the figures in the current parliament represent an improvement in that it is the highest number of women ever elected and nominated in Kenya's history.

However considering the Constitutional provisions and legal requirements that set aside various seats for women members, as well as nominated seats, which would have led to a more gender-sensitive House, the performance still falls short.

The audit in the book *Key Gains and Challenges: A Gender Audit of Kenya's 2013 Election Process* was carried out by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya. It notes that women had to endure a number of hurdles and an environment void of political will resulting in fewer women winning in the elections.

Gains

The National Assembly and Senate have a total of 86 women parliamentarians as compared to the previous 22 women in the 10th Parliament. While previous women parliamentarians managed to achieve significant gender gains with an extremely low number and a far less gender consciousness than today, it is anticipated that the current Parliament will achieve the greatest impact in gender responsive oversight,

legislation and influence on parliamentary culture.

The analysis indicates that 16 women out of the total of 290 Constituency members of the National Assembly were directly elected from single constituencies. This number accounts for only six per cent of the directly elected members of the National Assembly. This compares to the previous Parliament which had eight per cent where 16 women were elected out of the 210 constituencies. Out of the 12 members that were to be nominated by the political parties, only five women were nominated. Considering that the 10th Parliament had six nominated women, the current number has fallen.

Women's representation at the county level was realised by direct election of 47 women to the National Assembly, which was a benefit from the creation of the 47 county governments. Overall, the National Assembly has 68 women which translate to 19.4 per cent of the total number of membership.

There was no woman directly elected to the Senate. As per the constitutional requirement, the 16 were nominated from political party lists in proportion to the number of seats held by political parties represented.

Women who are in the youth category and those living with disability were also nominated for both Senate and the National Assembly. This brings the total number of women in the Senate to 18, which is 27 per cent of



Women parliamentarians in deep consultations after a meeting. Women in the National Assembly are not in decision making bodies PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

the Senate membership.

In the counties, although there was a total of 1,450 persons who were directly elected as respective County Assembly Members, only 82 women were elected as members representing only five per cent of those directly elected. In order to achieve gender parity in relation to affirmative action principle, 680 women were nominated increasing the

percentage of women representation in the county assemblies to 34 per cent.

The involvement of women to effectively participate and influence the legislative arms of the government remains crucial. On average women currently comprise 20 per cent of members in the National Assembly committees of the 11th Parliament. However, the report indicates that only two women

in parliament hold influential positions; these are the Deputy Speaker and Deputy Majority Leader.

As regards women leadership in National Assembly committees, seven out of the 27 committees are chaired by women, while in another eight committees, women serve as vice-chairpersons.

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Women have a constitutional right to head public service

The swearing-in of Anne Amadi as the new Deputy Chief Registrar of the High Court is a good sign for Kenyan women that this year will be a better one for them as far as appointments to senior position in and out of Government is concerned.

Experience and merit confirm that time has come to promote affirmative action as a Government policy and no longer as a sign of tokenism as has been the case in the past.

The appointment of six women of substance as Cabinet Secretaries to join their 12 male counterparts last year was a big boost by President Uhuru Kenyatta to address the gender imbalance in top Government positions. This was a right move in the right direction in tandem with the spirit of the new Constitution which has embraced affirmative action.

Indeed, most Kenyans were shocked and impressed by the world-class CVs of the new women members of the Cabinet. They are: Diplomat Amina Abdallah (Foreign Affairs), lawyer Rachele Omamo (Defence), Economist Ann Waiguru (Devolution), Scientist Prof Judy Wakhungu, Investment banker Phyllis Kandie (East African Community) and politician Charity Ngilu (Lands).

Those appointments and the recent one of Amadi confirm that the low number of women in senior Government and private sector jobs is not because of lack of academic and work experience, but other factors. Let us call a spade a spade and not a big spoon.

The number of school and college girls who excel in KCPE, KCSE and the universities year in year out is in the public domain is proof that Kenya has talented women.

Gender

Amadi's appointment after a thorough vetting process was sweet music to the ears of the women's movement as it came hot on the heels of the gender-blind appointment of senior state officials by the Jubilee Government despite having full knowledge of the two third rules in the new Constitution.

The new Deputy Registrar has been an advocate of the High Court since 1989; she practiced law in Mombasa between 1997 and 2003 after serving as a magistrate for six years from 1991. Until May 2008, Amadi was the Deputy Executive Director and Head of Litigation with Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA).

In light of that, a new study (featured on page one of this magazine) entitled *Key Gains*

And Challenges: A Gender Audit of Kenya's 2003 Election Process, notes that women had to endure a number of hurdles and an environment void of political will resulting in fewer women winning in the hotly contested polls last March.

The audit by FIDA shows that the National assembly and Senate combined have 86 women parliamentarians up from the previous 22. In the Tenth Parliament, 16 women MPs were elected while five were nominated.

Overall, the National Assembly has 68 women members which translate to 19.4 per cent of the total membership. This is well below the two thirds rules envisioned in the Constitution.

The case in the Executive arm of the Government is not any better going by the recent appointments of parastatal heads by the Head of State where most of the 36 people named to steer them were men, and former political allies of the powers that be.

One third of the 16 appointees to chair commercial-orientated state corporations did not meet the minimum academic threshold of Masters Degree as recommended by a task force named by the President.

The task force was led by former Man-

dera Central MP, Abdikadir Mohammed, and banker Isaac Awuondo, and was to set parastatals on a new path. It gave its recommendations in a report that was widely publicized late last year.

In its report, the task force had observed as follows: "There are cases where some functional illiterates have been appointed as board members."

It is with that in mind that we urge the President to review his policy on appointments and ensure that future appointees not only reflect the face of Kenya but are also gender sensitive in line with the spirit of the new Constitution.

Merit

Kenyan women are hopeful that merit and not other considerations would be followed to address the gender imbalance in decision-making positions in the public sector.

The case of Amadi, who replace Gladys Boss Shollei, as Deputy Registrar, was a good sign of the road ahead in the affirmative action route.

Women deserve more and the goodwill was shown by the President in his appointing Cabinet secretaries. More is expected from him.

Women must be included at planning and production level to enhance food security

...By Robert Nyagah

Involvement of women in food production and management might be the remedy to feeding about 11 million Kenyans who are presently classified as being undernourished.

According to Simon Muhindi, a food analyst with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Kenya, women are better placed to deal with nutritional issues if they receive professional skills in food production and management.

Muhindi noted the need to involve women in plans for food production, security and management.

"Although the gender mark up involved both sexes and had gained support widely, women should always be incorporated in the planning of food production and management," Muhindi reiterated.

He called for women's support in partnering with experts since they are the real handlers of food at domestic and regional level.

Funds

Speaking at a meeting in Nairobi, it emerged that men at times ended up misappropriating funds meant for food at the family level by going for items which affect family food budgets.

Commenting on the recently released FAO 2013 State of Food Security which indicated that 11 million Kenyans were undernourished, Muhindi challenged Kenyans to diversify their eating habits and avoid over dependence on maize.

"Governments should allow free flow of food within the East African states to help improve food availability," Muhindi suggested.

He warned against increase in taxes on food noting that with more than 80 percent of the key food pro-



Women have been engaged in farming for a long time. What they now need is the translation of the policies. PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

ducers in Kenya being small scale sectors, higher taxes would be reflected through higher food prices.

Muhindi noted that prices of inputs needed to be maintained at an affordable level to encourage production by small scale investors in agriculture.

He said that although the Government had come up with attractive policies to spur food production, implementation of the policies remained poor.

"The Government should ensure that producers in the agricultural sector are enlightened about new policies because by understanding the new laws, they will fight for their implementation," Muhindi said.

He called on the Government to implement checks and balances to ensure that small scale food pro-

ducers were not at the mercy of increasing unscrupulous middlemen who offered poor gate prices but ended up increasing shelf prices to unbearable levels.

Muhindi, while supporting the recently launched KSh250 billion Galana-Kulalu food security programme, stressed on the need to ensure that Kenyans in Kilifi and Tana River counties where the project was situated appreciated and owned it to avoid its failure.

Project

He reiterated that the Government should encourage more small scale irrigation projects to be managed by county governments and investors in the private sector rather than pursue such large scale government sponsored projects.

He noted that that the Galana-

Kulalu project created confidence that Kenyan was on way to achieving food security.

However, water experts are not sure that the water to be tapped from the rivers Tana and Galana would be adequate to drive the magnitude of irrigation at the Galana-Kulalu project.

Muhindi stressed on the need to put into consideration the demands of pastoralists and create corridors within the Galana-Kulalu irrigation project to minimise conflict between crop and livestock farmers.

He urged the county government to be careful about the type of taxes they introduced at the grassroots level.

"Higher taxes might affect food production leading to food insecurity which in essence could reflect on regional security," he warned.

Fish mongers cry foul over low business

...By Yusuf Amin

Women fishmongers in Kilifi town want local leaders and the Kilifi county government to come up with marketing strategies that will boost their livelihoods and alleviate poverty in the region.

The women mostly from the Kilifi Beach Management Unit (BMU) said they were experiencing harsh times as there are no ready markets to sell their produce.

Led by Florence Taura, their chairperson, the fishmongers said that was no markets to sell fried fish in Kilifi.

Taura asked the Kilifi County government to set up markets in convenient places to help them sell their fish in large quantities.

She noted that they were faced with a myriad of challenges that range from lack of space, equipment and resources.

Markets

"We are calling on the county government to set up fish markets in Kibaoni, Charo wa Mae and Mtaani where people flock during the evenings so that we can tap on the ready market," Taura said.

She noted that they did not have enough storage facilities and this was why they were not maximising on profits leading to low income.

According to Rehema Chivatsi, one of the fish mongers, they have formed groups to access loans given by financial institutions to enable them boost their businesses.

The fish mongers further discounted allegations that they were forced to have sex with fishermen in exchange of fish.

Community Action for Nature Conservation which is in the frontline of making sure that the fishing sector has been improved urged the women fishmongers to cooperate with the county government so that their businesses can be improved.

According to Hadley Becha, Director of Community Action for Nature Conservation fishermen have not been getting enough fish from the Indian Ocean due to lack of modern fishing devices.

He noted the diminishing fish at the Indian Ocean was to blame for the high cost of fish in the area.

Hygiene

"The fishmongers buy fish at a high price from the fishermen who should be taught on the use of modern technology to improve their catch," Becha said.

He asked the Government to come up with programmes that will empower the fishermen along the coastline.

Chairman Mnarani Beach Management Unit Ali Chivatsi welcomed the idea of forming an organization and promised to cooperate with others to make sure that fishmongers are well trained on how they can boost their business.

Kilifi County Executive Member of Agriculture and Fisheries Mwalimu Menza asked the fishmongers to exercise hygiene in their business so that they can get customers from the tourism sector.

Kilifi County Government would be interested in buying the fried fish but Menza pointed out that lack of proper hygiene would bring down the number of customers.

He promised the fishmongers that the request of putting up a market will be considered.

"We will come up with the plan to resolve the challenges you are experiencing," Menza said during a meeting with various stakeholders in Kilifi.

Demystifying menopause and beyond

...By Hellen Kivaya

Menopause is a transition time in a woman's body yet though expected, many are not able to tell the symptoms or understand how menopause can lead to mood swings.

Myths and misconceptions surround the subject of menopause and how it affects one's sexuality. As a result, many remain in the dark on how best to manage it.

According to Dr Lisa Larkin, associate professor at the University of Cincinnati, in the United States of America, there are three types of menopause. Natural menopause is when a woman goes for 12 months without her menstruation. In the US the average age is 51, while in East Africa it is 48 years. Induced menopause comes as a result of illnesses such as cancer and the chemotherapy that is carried out on the woman. Premature menopause is one that sets in before a woman reaches the age of 40 and this is due to ovary failure.

Larkin, an accomplished medical researcher on women's sexuality

with over ten years experience on women's issues, has answers the issues unknown around menopause that give women sleepless nights. "Bloating, sweating, vaginal atrophy (vaginal dryness), hot flashes, memory problems, weight gain (abdominal), decreased libido, mood changes and pain during intercourse are some of the symptoms experienced during menopause," explains Larkin.

She was speaking at a public lecture in at the School of Law campus, Mt Kenya University in Nairobi where she presented a paper "Riding the Waves of Menopause and Beyond".

Change

These symptoms occur due to hormonal changes. "The big three hormones that are responsible are estrogen, progesterone and testosterone," says Larkin.

Health experts note that estrogens regulate menstruation, progesterone is involved in preparing the body for pregnancy while testosterone provides energy and aids in sex drive in women though its levels are lower in women com-

pared to men.

Before the start of menopause in women, all their hormones are produced in steady levels and the graph is consistently high at all times. During pre-menopausal period, the levels of the three hormones are all over the place and hence the reason for the mood changes and irregular periods. During this period the ovary has many eggs.

However, during the post-menopause period the ovary is air free, hormones are quiet and low.

What are the sexual concerns that arise during menopause? According to Larkin, women experience issues such as vaginal dryness, urinary tract infection, bleeding during intercourse, pain in intercourse and a decrease in sex drive.

"Vaginal atrophy can be managed in three ways: behavioural which involves one stopping smoking and engaging in regular sexual activity," explains Larkin. She adds: "Non-hormonal vaginal therapy can be managed by applying moisturizers and lubricants or vaginal (local) oestrogen therapy that in-

cludes creams, rings and tablets."

According to Larkin, menopause can be managed best through lifestyle measures, over the counter supplements and post-menopausal hormone therapy.

Manage

In as far as lifestyle is concerned, a woman has to avoid alcohol, smoking and stress. Further, some of the over the counter supplements that a woman can use are: Vitamin E, tropical progesterone creams, soy, Dehydroepiandrosterone, commonly known as DHEA, yoga and tai chi. Tai chi ch'uan often shortened to tai chi in English usage, is an internal Chinese martial art practised for both its defence training and its health benefits.

Post-menopausal therapy includes the use of estrogen plus progesterone in the body. It lessens many symptoms, improves moods and some cardiovascular risk factors. This therapy was started in the 1970s after the widespread use of estrogen therapy was discovered to cause increased incidences of endometrial cancer.

Ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka

Makes footprints in supporting sexual and reproductive health rights

...By Jane Godia

A mother of four boys, Yvonne Chaka Chaka is a legend who has used her celebrity status to better people's lives.

Growing up in Soweto during the apartheid period, Chaka Chaka says things were difficult. It is the music that kept her going and out of it she became a star.

Having lived through apartheid and the difficulties that came with it, Chaka Chaka says her duty now is to represent the poor and be their mouth piece.

"I have learnt humility, that if you want to make a difference in people's lives you must work with them without giving hand-outs," she stresses.

Chaka Chaka got to be a goodwill ambassador in the fight against malaria by default when one of her musicians contracted the disease in Gabon and died.

"Before then I did not know that malaria kills. I learnt through research that malaria can be treated," says Chaka Chaka.

A Christian who believes that God plans and determines people's destiny, four months after this death she was invited to Ethiopia to celebrate Bob Marley's 60th anniversary. It was in 2005 that she was invited by UNICEF and asked to be a goodwill ambassador.

Status

UNICEF had looked at her status and popularity so that she could spread information on their behalf. She was appointed special ambassador on malaria for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Although she accepted, Chaka Chaka wanted to do more. She wanted to be in the humanitarian work.

Today Chaka Chaka has joined other fields and is now working with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) on sexual and reproductive health rights. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is recognised as a global service provider and leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

Addressing journalists during her tour of IPPF projects in Ethiopia at the Family Guidance Association offices in Addis Ababa, Chaka Chaka notes that previously she had no understanding of abortion until November 12, last year.

Speaking after a tour of various facilities managed by Family Guidance, Chaka Chaka agreed to work with IPPF because of the work it does at the grassroots.

"As leaders who want to change people's lives, we must emulate what IPPF is doing," Chaka Chaka reiterated at a media briefing. She added: "We must work with communities to know their problems."

She notes: "If you want to change the world, the people who must be helped are the communities and it must begin bottoms up."

Appreciate

A visit to a sex workers clinic left Chaka Chaka's heart sinking. While appreciating IPPF for the work it is doing with sex workers, she regrets that people were always pushing down sex workers.

"If this work by IPPF could be replicated around all countries of the world, people would not be sitting in their own corners desperate and the vulnerable would not be on one side because people do not care for them," she reiterates.

Noting that the Family Guidance Association is a centre of excellence that seeks to empower vulnerable populations, Chaka Chaka observes that education and empowerment enables people to tell their leaders what they want.

"Education is not about sitting at a desk. It is about empowering people to think positively. It is about empowering a girl child to be able to be a better person tomorrow so she is able to take care



Chaka Chaka helps promote healthy living by encouraging the youth to always wash their hands. She is now promoting sexual and reproductive health rights. Below is Chaka Chaka.
PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

of the family," Chaka Chaka explains.

She notes: "Women bring life into this world and this makes women (we men) organised men. I love being a woman because a woman has a strategic place to organise things and change the world."

However, Chaka Chaka appreciates that change will not come easy because there are still a lot of challenges. "Changing people's mind-sets can be done so that the next generation can be appreciated," she says. "When people see you doing good, then funding will come easily if there is collaboration and strategy," she advises.

Chaka Chaka reiterates that there must be partnership with government. "It is government that makes legislation and policy. The people are also government. The people will rule after being elected. These people in government are there for them," she explains.

Plan

Chaka Chaka observes: "Ordinary people doing ordinary things just need a clean space to be able to do their work. Sick and dead people do not pay taxes. Governments should come to the level of the people to be with them."

Working on creating awareness around unwanted and unplanned pregnancies, Chaka Chaka says though her husband is a prince, who is allowed by culture to have three wives, she would accept another woman encroaching on her space. She knows that her mother-in-law can ask her son to take another wife to bear him more children. However, knowing that they already have enough children that they are taking care of, she would not encourage that.

However, preaching women's reproductive health and sexual rights remains a key priority for her. She has been asked by the South African Government to do a song a teenage pregnancy. "Teen pregnancy is a challenge. We have teenagers heading households. They are enticed by goods into sexual relationships for survival. They are not engaging in early sex because they want to, but because men are taking advantage of the socio-economic challenges that young girls are facing."

According to Chaka Chaka the burden of care left in the hands of young people remains a challenge. "We need to educate our children from an early age. We need to go back to the drawing board to say that when people see young girls, they should be left to be children."

A mother of young adults, Chaka Chaka says

that conversation with girls must start early. "They go with older men through human trafficking. As communities, we need to start talking about girls being careful with male relatives. We know that uncles no longer protect children," she observes.

"It is important to start talking to our children now about safe sex and family planning. Sexuality education starts with the family, then it goes to communities."

Even though we should respect culture, Chaka Chaka says we should not hide behind culture to mutilate our girls. "We should constantly educate our people to give them information."

According to Chaka Chaka, educated women will know when to space children. Poor rural women are not educate or empowered and therefore, they are less informed.

"The people with information need to put themselves in the shoes of poor women. Not dictate to them but give the right information that can be useful to them," Chaka Chaka advises. She intones: "No family wants to continuously have many children. We need to target children from large poor families about why they need to have smaller families in a language and culture that they understand."

Giving her own life history, Chaka Chaka says her father died when she was only one year old and her mother, then a domestic worker, empowered her children never to depend on men.

"My mother's main message for us was to get education so as to get out of poverty and not rely on men," she says.

Family

She reiterates the importance of the institution of family and women who make decisions over the number of children they want. She notes that everything starts with the family, then goes to the community before spreading out to the nation and religion.

For Chaka Chaka, governments need to listen and help in protecting and empowering young people.

Even those who are vulnerable like people living with disability need to be made to feel good about themselves. They need to be treated well and work places should be disability friendly.

"People living with disability need to be given jobs like any other persons because they are not mentally challenged but only affected physically."

"Leaders must also come out and talk to



"It is important to start talking to our children now about safe sex and family planning. Sexuality education starts with the family, then it goes to communities. Even though we should respect culture, we should not hide behind culture to mutilate our girls. We should constantly educate our people to give them information."

■ CHAKA CHAKA

young people, treat them as equals so that they become responsible parents. They should be included in everything being done."

Chaka Chaka notes that there is still a lot of stigma around HIV and Aids. "Stigma around HIV should end. We should not judge people because of their circumstances," she says, adding "young people must take ownership of their lives and projects".

From experience, Chaka Chaka notes that youth groups and sex workers centres are owned by young people. "There is need to bring our children closer to us so that as a family we come together and get strengthened as a community."

Affirmative action still a long way to actual realisation

...By Ruth Omukhang'o

The promise of the Constitution to expand the political space for women was welcomed by women who for the first time turned up in large number to contest for the various political positions that had been established.

Despite the challenges, the 2013 General Election witnessed a historical and impressive improvement of women who turned out to contest in both elective and appointive positions but there is need for urgency for the passage of laws necessary to actualise the two-thirds principles of gender for women's participation in all spheres of development.

Continuous vigilance by stakeholders needs to ensure that the gains in the Constitution are fully realised is becoming more apparent now than never before. The recent media reports on the Presidents' appointment of various parastatal heads clearly articulates the need for proper legal mechanisms that will enhance women's participation in both elective and appointive positions. It is worth mentioning that out of the 26 positions only three were given to women, a fact that completely ignores the not more than two-thirds principle.

Audit

According to a gender audit report on Kenya's 2013 election process on the gains and setbacks observed with regard to the participation and representation of women in the 2013 elections carried out by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya, the failures to implement the gains in the Constitution include structural gaps as well incomplete implementation of the laws and, in some instances, complete violation of the law.

The report assesses and documents the compliance of key institutions in safeguarding gender gains in the Constitution. It notes that despite the progress in constitutional dispensation, most organs analysed

took a very passive and minimalist approach to putting measures that would have enhanced the space for women in their pursuit of civic and political rights.

"Women constitute only 20 per cent of the National Assembly," notes Lisa Mclean, County Director National Democratic Institute. She adds: "This calls for more to be done to enhance women's political participation in light of the challenges experienced by women including more education to the electorate as well more institutions to be vigilant.

Mclean further emphasises the participation of both genders in building a vibrant democracy to sustainable development and great responsiveness to the needs of the citizens.

Role

According to Cecily Mbarire, Chairperson Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) and Member of Parliament Runyenjes Constituency: "Monitoring and evaluating the General Election from a gender lens indicates we still have a long way to go." She adds: "The role of women in political participation has always been low and further sidelined by discrimination. If we did not have affirmative action we would only be having 16 women in Parliament."

Article 27 (3) of the Constitution provides that both women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

It goes further on 27 (6) to direct that "the state shall take legislative and other measures including affirmative action programmes and policies to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination".

Mbarire notes that Affirmative Action is only a temporary measure and even with it, there is need to work hard to increase the number of women who will run in the single member constituencies. This will also include



Mclean: More women need to be involved in politics to help make changes for all women. PICTURE: RUTH OMUKHANGO

strengthening the 47 women county members of Parliament to give space to more women representation at the constituency levels in 2017.

It is imperative to note that the 16 women who were elected represent only 12 per cent of the total women who vied for parliamentary positions and accounts for a mere five per cent of representation in the National Assembly. At the county representative level, 623 women vied and only 85 were approved by voters.

According to Mbarire, between 1963-2012, Kenya has only elected a total of 50 women members of parliament as compared to 1,806 men for

the same period.

According to FIDA Kenya Chairperson, Ruth Aura, the report presented opportunities and challenges that can be used to improve democracy for women in Kenya. "It also brings in a different perspective that women's concerns need to be integrated at policy and legislation level in order to improve the status of women in political processes," observes Aura.

Giving testimonials of women leaders on the challenges faced by women during the electoral process, Alice Wahome, Member of Parliament for Kandara notes that political

parties remain a great challenge for women who are unable to get into the party structure as well as understand how it works and be able to position themselves in politics. This situation was made worse by party coalitions that were created as Kenyans went to the polls last year.

"We need to strengthen political party democracy mechanism in order to open space for women participation. We have to think outside the box and come up with programmes that will strengthen women in both parliament and county level," says Wahome.

The report offers several recommendations targeted at the legal framework, the institutional role of the duty bearers such as the Independent Electoral Boundary Commission (IEBC), political parties, Registrar of Political Parties as well as the National Police Service.

FIDA Kenya emphasises that the IEBC must ensure compliance to the Electoral Code of Conduct during electioneering periods as well as exercise its authority to regulate and oversee all political party nominations.

Accountability

According to Rozzah Buyu who had contested for the Kisumu West parliamentary seat, reinforcement of the IEBC code of conduct needs to be placed on IEBC officials rather than on the IEBC as an institution for accountability purposes.

Other recommendations related to stakeholders include the media as well as women leaders and civil society organisations to undertake advocacy measures to play an active role in advocating for electoral reforms necessary to enhance democratic space and inclusion for all as well as exercise vigilance in monitoring compliance with constitutional and other legislative women's gains.

In light of women's historical marginalization, the media was urged to give women's leadership a boost and fair advantage through consistent positive profiling of women leaders.

Women missing in influential Committees

Continued from page 1

In the Senate, women comprise 24 per cent of the membership of all the Senate committees. Only two women hold leadership positions; one as the Majority Chief Whip and the other as a Minority Deputy Chief Whip. As compared to leadership in Parliament, there are more women in the Senate in that one of the 11 committees is chaired by a woman while women serve as vice chairpersons on six other committees.

In the bicameral body which has joint committee members drawn from the National Assembly and the Senate, there are two joint committees; the Joint Committee on National Cohesion and Equal Opportunity and the Joint Parliamentary Broadcasting and Library Committee, in both committees, women represent less than a third of the membership. This report raised concerns and the irony that the two committees are critical for the promotion of equal opportunities for women in Kenya and yet fails to respect the constitutional rule. The report recommends a gender responsive approach to this mandate to ensure that women are suitably portrayed in the media and female citizens are engaged in parliamentary business.

Women to a large extent do not hold influential positions in the National Assembly and the

Senate. In both houses, key leadership positions exercise the following parliamentary functions; automatic leadership in key committees; direction of house debates; setting of the legislative agenda; and influence on parliamentary traditions, practices and procedures. So far, the uneven gender representation limits the potential of women's effective and influential participation in Parliament.

Female representation in majority of committees in Parliament fails to satisfy the two thirds rule of gender representation. While it can be assumed that the low representation in the various committees can to some extent be attributed to the relatively low number of women legislators, more could be done to select women legislators to serve in several committees, thereby increasing representation in the committees.

Arm

Unlike the previous governments where elected parliamentarians served as ministers in government, Cabinet secretaries have now been appointed to form part of the executive arm of the government. Six women are Cabinet secretaries out of 18 members who were nominated and subsequently appointed to the Cabinet by the President. This was the first time women

were appointed to key cabinet portfolios which remain fundamental in guiding the economic and security direction of the nation's relations with external partners.

In the County executive committees, county level akin to the Cabinet positions at the national level, only 16 out of 47 counties (about a third) have satisfied the two thirds gender rule of representation in county executive appointments. Kiambu County has the highest representation of women as county executives which comprise of 86 per cent.

In the county assemblies, men constitute 44 out of the 47 County Assembly Speakers. Due to the delay in nominating women, elections for the speakers were conducted raising a disproportionate number of male dominated assemblies at that time. Female speakers were only elected in Kisumu, Kirinyaga and Nakuru counties.

The report summarises the women candidates' perspectives as related to the 2013 General Election in view of the different aspects of the electoral environment that had an impact on their participation in terms of law, as well as acts and omission of duty bearers and stakeholders. Although women candidates that were successful attributed their success to their involvement and visibility in their communities, they faced many

challenges that need to be addressed.

Some of the issues include selection of political parties which is a key factor to the success or failure of women aspirants and candidates. Most women candidates attributed their success to the choice of popular political parties. Party hopping during political party nominations was a notable trend where defeated candidates were able to obtain nomination certificates from different parties.

Penalties

During the campaign period security remained a challenge for women candidates, despite the Electoral Act that provides stiff penalties for election malpractices, the challenge lay in the enforcement of these laws, particularly related to electoral offences. As a result women were subjected to threats and intimidation, underhanded actions by opponents and smear campaigns. Some women candidates reported of the use of propaganda aimed at tarnishing their reputation and denting their image.

Inadequate financial resources remained a challenge during the electoral process and it is hoped that extra effort will be made towards assisting women candidates. Cultural and patriarchal stereotypes and belief continue to be a setback for women in leadership.

Reforms needed to enhance women's participation in future electoral processes

...By Ruth Omukhango

Having highlighted pertinent issues and challenges that affected women as they pursued their civic and political rights during the 2013 elections in Kenya, FIDA Kenya concluded in their analysis *Key Gains and Challenges: A Gender Audit of Kenya's 2013 Election Process* that there was no justifiable reason for the consistent and systematic exclusion of women in politics, electoral processes and consequently representation.

The gender audit report summarised recommendations that need to be put in place to enhance women's participation and representation in future electoral and political processes. The recommendations were targeted at the legal framework, institutional role of the duty bearers as well as other stakeholders.

Legal reforms

- The most pressing need is the enactment of the Supreme Court's Advisory opinion to give full effect and provide a mechanism for the actualization of the two-thirds rule in elective bodies, which is Parliament. While the responsibility falls in the office of the Attorney General and Parliament, there is need to ensure that the legislation is place by August 27, 2015.
- Enhance fairness of the electoral processes for all including women such as the establishment of suitable timelines through electoral regulation, a return to the original enacted timelines by an amendment to the Elections Act as well as the enactment of legal provision that prohibits election timelines at least one year prior to the General Election.
- Enactment of campaign finance legislation Amendment to the Elections Act to provide more guidance on the rules to guide political parties in development of party list.
- Amendment of Elections Act to review the high fees for filing an election petition.
- Amendment of the Political Parties Act to require parties to submit an affirmative action policy, along with other party policies and plans already required of them to be more inclusive.

Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

- IEBC as the body charged with the authority over the conduct of electoral processes and their inclusiveness should develop a policy to ensure participation in elections of women, youth and persons with disability.
- IEBC to exercise authority to regulate and oversee all political party nominations.
- IEBC to monitor strict compliance with the Electoral Code of Conduct during the electoral period, be they general elections, by-elections or referenda.
- IEBC to develop campaign finance regulations and conduct timely voter education in all elections and ensure that education programmes target women and other special interest groups.

Political parties

- Political parties hold the key to women's entry and effective participation in politics and, therefore, should develop and revise their party documents to provide specific affirmative action measures that increase women's participation within parties.
- Political parties put in place measures to ensure that women are not only represented in party governing bodies but also exercise gender parity in the appointment to leading positions.



Members of Parliament during a session. More women need to be elected into parliament. PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

- Political parties to ensure all decentralised units of the party require gender parity in their composition.
- Political parties to respect and uphold the Constitution, legislation and party rule in all party exercises including nominations, development of party lists, party membership and disputes.
- Political parties put in place affirmation action measures that will lead to the interested candidacy of women in elections.

Registrar of Political Parties

- Registrar of Political Parties be equipped with wide powers in the regulation of political parties and to have great influence in ensuring gender responsiveness of party structures and processes.
- Registrar of Political Parties should conduct an audit of the membership of political parties to verify the authenticity and compliance with the gender representation rule.
- Registrar of Political Parties to enhance monitoring of political parties and withdraw registration from parties that are in violation of the legal requirements on gender representation or other provisions.
- Registrar of Political Parties to develop additional guidelines to provide guidance to political parties on positive measures they can take to include women.
- Registrar of Political Parties to develop guidelines on the Political Parties Fund and in particular the utilization of at least 30 per cent of the fund envisaged for promoting participation in Parliament.

National Police Service

- The National Police Service should play a pivotal role in preventing violence as well as holding various civil and political rights that serve to encourage women's participation in political and electoral process and should

in taking the measures in the culture of police in action to be quashed as it is a single most potent ingredient of the flourishing impunity; train policy officers on electoral offences in order to enforce accountability for offences and fairness in the election environment; train police on how to be more affable, less intimidating and more responsive to the electorate in order to encourage reporting and enhance the principle of community policing and; develop regulation that take into account the provisions of the Public Order Act, the Bill of Rights and regulations on these of force.

Other strategic recommendations include securing gains through faithful and generous implementation of the Constitution and other laws at the County and national levels as well as correcting injustices and eliminating obstacles that women have endured as they pursued their civic and political rights.

Space

Some of these roles include key partners such as the civil society in playing a role in expanding space for women in politics and representation and hence need to undertake urgent measures in advocacy and lobbying for the passage of the laws necessary to actualise the two-thirds principle of gender representation; take active role in advocating for electoral reforms to enhance democratic space and inclusion of all; foster collaboration with duty bearers and undertake institutional strengthening programmes to enhance the institutions abilities to be gender sensitive and inclusive; develop and deliver capacity building programmes aimed at enhancing the capacity of women leaders to be gender-responsive in law making, lobbying and consensus building; exercise vigilance in monitoring compliance with constitutional and other legislative women's gains; react to and pursue action against threats to or violation of these gains through necessary measure and; maintain interaction among organizations in the pursuit of strategies and actions to enhance women's

status and increasing number of women in leadership positions.

The National Gender and Equality Commission as the oversight and facilitative role in the State's promotion of gender equity, inclusiveness and protection from discrimination in accordance with the Constitution should develop a comprehensive gender monitoring matrix tool to provide indicators of various stipulations required by various laws and policies and of state offices, public offices, independent institutions, elections and appointments; monitor continuously and meticulously compliance with two-thirds gender rule of representation in elective and appointive positions.

Role

The media as the watchdog of society should use its wide platform to boost participation of women in the public sphere through highlighting gender issues that inform the public on the status of women in Kenya, their rights, their challenges and their achievement; ensure that reporting is balanced between men and women and gender responsive by portraying how current issues markedly and disproportionately affect women leaders; and give women leadership a boost and fair advantage through consistent positive profiling of women leaders as well as place emphasis on positive work of women avoiding negative stereotypes.

Women leaders in both elective and appointive positions need to set and control the gender agenda in various spheres of influence in the implementation of constitutional women's gains and agitating for additional positive measures; liaise and consult with civil society, that are multi-skilled and multi-resourced for provision of technical support, skills-building, strategy formulation and advocacy; display distinguished leadership by espousing the principles of leadership and integrity and; undertake to increase women's participation in leadership through unity or purpose among the current crop of women leaders and genuine mentorship of new or potential women entrants.

Expectation on women's performance remains high

...By Ruth Omukhang'o

The pre-elections campaigns geared towards having more women in political representation bore fruits by seeing an increased number of women in both national and county assemblies.

However, so are the expectations from the society. It is not going to be a smooth ride for women as the pressure for them to justify their election and or nomination based on the gender card is quite high. As a result, it is time for women to roll up their sleeve and serve their constituents.

Despite extremely low numbers and with far less gender consciousness than today, women who previously served as parliamentarians managed to achieve significant gender gains which are being enjoyed by those in the 11th Parliament today.

"In our time, we did not have any machineries as well as support from civil society, but we worked as a team as women parliamentarians in partnership with the men to achieve for the women of Kenya," said Phoebe Asiyo, a former Member of Parliament.

According to Asiyo, with more women now in legislative positions, there is need to cultivate a common agenda between the women's movement and the women in the National Assembly in line with what is happening in the gender equality debate to make meaningful change for the future of the Kenyan woman and girls.

The women in the current parliament have an advantage of using numbers to position themselves to influence policy and legislation so as to expand space for more women.

Vision

The gender agenda is a journey that has made significant inroads over the years with gender advocates and women leaders taking it upon themselves to ensure that the change they want to see is visualised and actualised as asserted by Zebib Kavuma, UN Women Kenya Country Director.

"The sense of urgency now is to interrogate ourselves on how we can get committed to make change in our little spaces and to have common glue that sticks us together," observed Kavuma.

Only eight months after the last General Election, it is apparent that there are still many hurdles that require both women parliamentarians and those in the women's movement to overcome. They can do this by continuously taking stock of the challenges and mapping out strategies that will chart a way forward to ensure actualisation and enjoyment of celebrated constitutional gains.

One of the key issues alluded to by Mishi Juma, Mombasa Women County Member of Parliament was the need to strengthen women's voices and visibility in Parliament to speak with one voice if women are to realise these gains.

"Currently there are different agendas from the women parliamentarians due to party affiliations," said Juma.

The other notable issue is the cold relationship between women legisla-



Women leaders pictured during a previous event. There is need to enhance the gender agenda.

PICTURE: RUTH OUMKhang'o

tors and hence the need to develop a unity of purpose.

According to Juma, the rift between the 16 elected women parliamentarians and 47 County Women Members of Parliament has weakened their strength in Parliament. This has affected their effective participation.

"Women legislators have to separate issues but when it comes to commonality, they have to work together despite the differences because they are holding space on behalf of other women," noted Daisy Amdany, Executive Director Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust).

Amdany's sentiments are echoed by Miria Matembe, a former Member of Parliament in Uganda who says that regardless of whether women parliamentarians were elected or nominated, what matters most is the capacity to utilise their numbers in order to improve the lives of women who constitute more than half of Kenya's population.

"Women leaders have to adopt innovative strategies to ensure that their spaces are effectively used and representative of the people instead of whining about resources," reiterated Matembe. She added: "Women are one common class of those who are discriminated in leadership positions; this should draw us to one agenda."

The women were speaking during a reflection retreat that brought together women parliamentarians and the women's movement to assess whether the expanded space for women in the political arena is working for women and critically look at the challenges facing women and the movement within the new dispensation.

The need for a common agenda

for women was further supported by Florence Mutua, County Women Member of Parliament for Busia who admitted that: "We have been groping in the dark ever since we were elected and this is the first time we are hearing about the women's movement."

Movement

According to Amdany challenges were apparent but mainstreaming the women's agenda within devolution and the unfolding political scenarios was a key issue that needed planning. Some of the issues that were discussed during the retreat was to come up with a cooperative approach between legislators and the women's movement that would enable women to move forward in a common bond united for the empowerment and advancement of the women of Kenya.

"Let us not sweep issues under the carpet but be honest and look at the challenges as well as opportunities for women. If we do not stop for a moment to think and strategize, we will lose all the gains in the Constitution," noted Makena Mwobia, County Director Action Aid International- Kenya.

"With more women now in legislative positions, there is need to cultivate a common agenda between the women's movement and the women in the National Assembly in line with what is happening in the gender equality debate to make meaningful change for the future of the Kenyan woman and girls."

■ DR. PHEOBE ASIYO FORMER MP KARACHUONYO

Matembe cautioned that unlike men, women's leadership is judged harshly and differently, adding there has to be commitment to deliver for women. Calling on women legislators to have a vision that is distinguished from ambition, Matembe said: "If there is any agenda you can have, it is to make a difference in a woman's life. This will entail working closely with both men and women within the constituency."

Crucial to the discussions was the linkages between the women legislators and women's movement through networking in order to focus on key issues affecting women including the no more than two thirds gender rule that would guarantee more women into leadership positions.

Amdany noted that the women's agenda has for years been catalysed by the women's movement and for years there has been a united front between the women's movement and women Member of Parliament.

"Many women owe their success to the women's movement. While the women legislators were to raise issues for women on the floor of Parliament, the role of the women's movement was to articulate all so-

cial development agendas as stipulated in the Constitution in order to inform the legislators," explained Amdany.

According to Sophia Noor, a former Member of Parliament the missing link between women at the national level and those in the grassroots contributed significantly to lack of visibility of women. This has to be dealt with if more spaces have to be created to make a meaningful change.

Equality

"We need to harmonise our activities especially between women legislators and women's movement to strengthen each other," noted Deborah Okumu, Executive Director of Caucus for Women's Leadership.

This was reiterated by Alice Wahome, Member of Parliament for Kandara Constituency who noted that the meeting was a beginning in the right direction in the fight for gender equality.

"The effort would also require building the capacity of women parliamentarians to articulate issues strategically on the floor of Parliament," noted Wahome.

She added that there was need for subsequent meetings to bridge the gap between the women's movement and women legislators.

"We should be able to come up with a common agenda whose messages are clear and known to every Member of Parliament," said Wahome.

She concluded that development partners had a role to re-evaluate themselves on the support for women leaders and how to engage women leaders in order to assist them deliver on their mandate.

We are watching, women tell President Uhuru

...By Henry Kahara

President Uhuru Kenyatta recent appointment of Chief parastatals has raised eyebrows among different groups and leaders in Kenya.

Women, youth and people with disability feel short changed by Uhuru's appointment of 36 heads of various parastatal late last year.

Among the 36 appointees, were only two women Linah Jebii Kilimo and Agnes Ndeti. The two were appointed to chair the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Board and the National Drought Management Authority Board for three years.

Opportunity

Article 27 (3) of the Constitution states that, women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

In the same article (8) it continues that the State shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.

Furthermore the document also says that the state is supposed to take measures of affirmative action programmes, to ensure that youths, women and the physically challenged have opportunities to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life.

But many Kenyans now feel that the President was against this spirit of the Kenya's Supreme Law while making the appointments.

"I think Kenyans need to be very watchful, we need to guard the constitution. The President's appointment doesn't reflect both genders," Says Felix Ouma a resident in Nairobi.

According to Abdullahi Boru a consultant at the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Kenya's constitution can easily be compromised.

"Kenyans' need to be vigilant to avoid the country going back to the old dictatorial days where the constitution was easily manipulated," warns Boru.

Boru doubts whether the Jubilee government is committed to carry out reforms having in mind Deputy President, William Ruto campaigned against the constitution.

Although many Women in parliament shied away from addressing the issue some of them are in frontline demanding for womens share in the National government.

Meru Women County Representative Florence Kajuju urges the President to look at gender balance while appointing leaders.

Kajuju says that the President is discriminating against women hence working against the spirit of the constitution.

"We are asking the president to be fair to both genders while appointing people to head various parastatals and

other positions," urges Kajuju.

According to Kiambu County Women Representative Anna Nyokabi the women in parliament are still waiting for the President to appoint more women in his future appointments.

"There is still more appointment yet to be made and as women we know the President have women in mind adding that it's still early to judge the President.

Cabinet

"We can't crucify him; he has really tried to include women in his government. Even his Cabinet is well represented by women," she notes.

Nyokabi's sentiment was echoed by Nyeri town Member of Parliament Esther Murugi who said that they are expecting more women appointment.

"Failure for the President to appoint more women in the parastatal shows that he doesn't recognize women and at that time we will not keep quiet," threatens Murugi.

"We have decided to keep quiet because there are still more appointment he has not made and we are expecting his government to have both genders represented," adds Murugi.

Since independence President's Uhuru's cabinet is the first to have many women. The Jubilee Government has six women Cabinet Secretaries of whom many of them are leading powerful ministries.

Women Cabinet Secretaries in the jubilee government: Ambassador Amina Mohammed Ministry of



Jebi Kilimo former minister one of the two women appointed recently.

PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs, Miss Ann Waiguru Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Mrs Phylis Kandie East Africa Affairs Commerce and Tourism, Professor Judy Wakhungu Ministry of Environment Water and Natural Resources and Charity Ngilu Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development.

For long women in Kenya has been discriminated against whereby they have been subjected as minor in-

dividual.

But currently Kenya Constitution demands all State organs and all public officers to address the needs of vulnerable groups within society, including women, older members of society, and persons with disabilities, children, and youth, members of minority or marginalized communities, and members of particular ethnic, religious or cultural communities.

Land rights for women is key to curbing global hunger

...By A Correspondent

A recent report by United Nations Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) links upholding women's land rights to the achievement of global food security and sustainable development.

Women play a central role in managing their household's resources, producing food, and determining the overall nutritional well-being of their households, even though they have little control over how the land they farm is used.

Many development advocates and practitioners have recently begun placing a stronger emphasis on land rights as part of their campaign to end global hunger.

Right

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is advocating for more secure land rights as part of its campaign to meet the Millennium Development Goals, two of which include the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of gender equality.

"This missing infrastructure is at the root of so many of today's deep-seated challenges, because a key to reducing poverty and addressing a host of other problems, from gender inequality to conservation to food security, is providing women and men with the security they need to make long-term plans and invest year-to-year, rather than survive day-to-day," says Tim Hanstad of Landesa, a global development non-profit that advocates for land rights for the poor, wrote:

He says that the amount of deci-

sion-making power that women have over how to dispose of the land and other natural resources is disproportionate to the amount of work and responsibility that are put upon them in the actual management of the land.

"Women account for nearly half of all smallholder farmers and make up a large proportion of all farmers," he adds.

According to a Rutgers Center for Global Women's Leadership study, women are also primarily responsible for raising food for the family by producing subsistence crops on more marginal lands.

A number of development studies and experts propose that establishing a set of land tenure policies to strengthen land rights, with a focus on women, is imperative to achieving food security.

A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has found that households in which women have secure land rights often have higher rates of calorie availability and dietary diversity.

While technological advances have increased the overall amount of food produced worldwide, some experts have attributed continuing food insecurity to poorly enforced or non-existent land rights.

Food

In present-day Ethiopia, where people are better fed than in previous decades, increased food security is being attributed not only to the use of modern agricultural techniques but to recent changes in law and policy that have strengthened citizens' land rights.

Moreover, some studies about food security in African countries suggest that food security strategies need



Women account for nearly half of all smallholder farmers and make up a large proportion of all farmers. PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT

to include land rights reforms.

A study from the University of Toronto finds that land use policies that consider rural farming practices are necessary as a foundation for the ongoing food security projects in South Africa in order for the projects to have

meaningful impact on hunger.

IFPRI study shows that women farmers in Ghana has also found that more secure land rights for women increases their incentives to invest in sustainable farming practices.

The study shows that cultivat-

ing better land use policies will lead to more stable food production in the future.

Various governments worldwide are considering taking steps to give women greater control over their property and land. Some states in India, have begun issuing land title deeds with both husbands' and wives' names, and in some cases, under the woman's name alone.

Laws

Several African governments, including Uganda and Tanzania, have passed laws to give women more secure rights to land in the past decade, and initiatives are currently underway to better enforce the laws and make them more accessible to women. In Kenya, recent amendments to the constitution have catalyzed reforms that promise to strengthen the rights of women farmers.

"The right to food does not require a set of policy recommendations to help end hunger. Rather it provides legal protections against developments that threaten peoples ability to produce food," Says Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur in thanking African governments for including land rights for women as part of the anti hunger agenda.

For farmers in developing countries, land assets and the control they have over them determine the subsistence of their households.

USAID and other development practitioners believe that removing legal impediments that prevent farmers from having full autonomy over how to make the best use of their land is vital to their livelihoods and a sustainable food future.

Levying maternal health in counties will roll back gains achieved

...By Jane Godia

In 2000 at the United Nations headquarters in New York member states put in place goals and targets that would among other things see an improvement in maternal health and a decrease in child mortality through the Millennium Development Goals, commonly referred to as the MDGs.

Each of the eight millennium development goal has specific targets and dates for achieving those targets and the countries agreed to achieve all the set goals by 2015.

Consequence

Maternal health and child mortality reigned high because many women were dying while giving birth as well as from other pregnancy related consequences. This meant that there had to be joint partnerships in place to help reduce the number of women dying while giving life.

It is from the prism, that the Jubilee Government in its manifesto came up with a policy to ensure that women are able to access maternal health services for free. In its manifesto, and through a presidential decree, women giving birth should not be charged if they seek skilled health care in public hospitals. This is something that would work well if facilities and personnel are put in place.

Currently Kenya loses about 8,000 women from pregnancy related complications. Imagine...a mini

bus carrying 16 passengers, having an accident and everyone dying. Then imagine 500 of these buses having accidents and all the passengers dying within a year. That will be 8,000 people dying out of mini bus accidents every year.

Lack of access to skilled health care has been cited as the main reason why women die while giving birth.

However, through the implementation of the current constitution of Kenya 2010 and the presidential decree by Uhuru Kenyatta it is hoped that women will be saved from dying.

The Constitution in Article 43 (1) (a) states: "Every person has a right to the highest attainable standard of health, which includes the right to health care services, including reproductive health."

However, while the President is in charge of the national governments, governors are in charge of the county governments and are also making their own laws some of which are contrary to national values. Governors are already coming up with various taxes that are specific to each county. While this is a way of raising revenue for the counties, there are some services that would have far reaching consequences should they have a price tag on them. One of these is maternal health which the Busia County intends to put charges on.

Initially the county planned to

charge KSh700, but is said, according to Florence Mutua, County Women Representative, that it has been reduced to KSh200.

The bone of contention here is the charges and this means that women seeking maternal health services in Busia will have to pay and those who cannot raise KSh 200 or KSh700 will have to continue being assisted by traditional birth attendants.

Mutua says that the Governor, Sospeter Ojamoong did not consult when he started the Finance Bill with relevant stakeholders including the County Women Representative.

"I think the governor should first ensure that there are good things that lead to good service," says Mutua. She adds: "He needs to work on the facilities to ensure they are offering good service so patients know what they are paying for."

The charges need to be commensurate with facilities. Mutua who is now creating awareness on national hospital insurance fund, is enrolling women to the fund and paying for the first monthly instalment. "This way when they are admitted in hospital they will not have to pay," she notes.

According to Mutua, NHIF has failed to create awareness around the fund and that is why women are suffering and being detained in hospitals with their children when they could have walked free without paying a cent.

Her sentiments are echoed by Daisy Amdany, Executive Director Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust) and also chairperson National Women Steering Committee.

Amdany says the rationale behind Busia County to charge maternity fees is completely out of touch with reality. "It is shameful that the governor of Busia is asking that women pay for maternity fee while there is a presidential decree that these services be offered for free," says Amdany. She adds: "He needs to align the county budget with the national one to ensure that women are able to enjoy free maternity care."

Amdany wonders if Busia county is not part of Kenya. She observes: "We are already grappling with high level maternal and child mortality. It is the government, whether county or national, which needs to look for

money to cover costs of maternal health."

Amdany asks: "How many women can afford KSh200, let alone KSh700?" She is worried that this could only be the beginning of charges and that there could be other hidden costs that are going to be slapped on women giving birth.

"We need to know what percentage of the county budgets is allocated for health and health care," says Amdany.

She is also worried that governors could be levying maternal health just to raise money to take care of their shopping list.

Fund

Even as governments strategize on how to raise money for their counties, they must bear in mind the consequences of some of the choices they are going to make. Taxing child birth will definitely come with dire consequences.

There will be a roll back on the gains the country has made towards achieving the millennium development goals and especially goal number five: Improving maternal health.



Mothers with their babies after delivering at Pumwani Hospital in Nairobi. Access to free skilled health care will reduce maternal deaths. PICTURE: COURTESY

Glaring gaps of inequality still exist within law

...By Asher Omondi

Kenya's legal system incorporates many laws concerning women, however, these laws including the Constitution are discriminatory and have resulted in violating their rights hence leaving them with little or no place for recourse.

There have been several unsuccessful attempts to amend the Constitution in order to revise or discard laws and provisions that discriminate laws or allow for discrimination of women. Dominant areas of discrimination are concerned with inheritance or succession as well as sexual and gender based violence.

Being a patriarchal society, Kenya has a Succession Act Cap 160 that discriminates against women who have been left destitute following the death of their husbands and fathers or after a divorce. Many of them succumb to threats and hostility from their in-laws and are forced to move away from their homes to live in abject poverty.

The dominance of patriarchy in society has also led to acceptance of gender based and sexual violence as normal behaviour. Traditionally, women in some communities expect beatings from their husbands as a sign of love.

The Sexual Offences Act 2006 introduced stiffer penalties for sexual offenders in Kenya, but enforcement and implementation is yet to be mainstreamed despite the rising sexual and violence offence statistics. Marital rape, which is rampant, has not yet been criminalized as a crime punishable by law.

The most prevalent issue affecting women rights is lack of enforcement of the already existing legal protections. For example, despite the Children's Act, 26 per cent of children are still involved in child labour. Despite the Trafficking Act, human trafficking continues to rise and women and girls remain the biggest victims.

In spite of these challenges, Kenya has put in place important pieces of legislation that protect women.

These include provisions in the new constitution that prevent discrimination based on sex, ensuring equity of women and men, providing for representation of women in government as well as indicating that international agreements ratified by Kenya, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women be treated as law.

Domestic laws have provided additional protections including most recently the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act, National Gender and

Equality Commission Act and Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act. Unfortunately glaring gaps still exist within the laws.

Parliament failed to meet the full requirements of Article 45 of the Constitution to pass legislation providing for equality of men and women in marriage and in protection of matrimonial property.

There would be a breakthrough should Parliament pass the Marriage Bill 2012. It is noteworthy that the Sexual Offences Act criminalizes false accusation of rape, which in turn deters reporting by victims and the Act is silent on spousal rape in marriage. Of particular concern is the status of women and girls living in the slums and informal settlements.

These women face risks of gender based violence daily due to minimal policing and convictions which also prevent adequate access to the already limited sanitation facilities available.

All these are indications that the legal fight for women rights all over the world have not been without challenges and Kenya of course is no exception.

There is need to increase access to justice and legal education for all women in Kenya irrespective of class, regional background and similar denominators. This access needs to be equitable, if

not equal.

There is also need to strengthen the culture of promoting human rights and social justice advocacy in Kenya to protect the rights of women. This will go a long way in putting in place the necessary legislation for the protection of women's rights in the country.

Kenyan society in general needs to be transformed into a community of people who respect, defend and actualise women's rights. Parliament's enactment of legislation with a strong foundation leaning towards this will be of great importance.

As a nation, we need to develop an efficient, modern and professional communication management for the strategic initiatives of gender based organisations with a view to promoting welfare of women and girls.

As a pillar of cohesive nation, the issue of sustaining national peace building and providing immediate psychological support to traumatised women especially of HIV and maybe other disabilities need to be underlined by all stakeholders.

The spirit of enhancing capacity building among Kenyan women, as has been a core mission of several women's non-governmental organisations in Kenya, need to be continued.

Catherine Samba-Panza

Mother courage chosen to save Central African Republic

...By Hellen Kivaya

Cheers broke out in the national assembly building in Bangui as representatives chose the mayor of Central African Republic's capital (Bangui) to serve as the interim president of the Central African Republic, a country that is facing mayhem.

Catherine Samba-Panza, 59, will be the first woman to lead the nation and will probably serve for a little over a year, with the goal of leading the country to national elections.

Samba-Panza was elected in a second-round vote by the National Transitional Council, which serves as the acting parliament with 135 members in all, voted by secret ballot to replace Michel Djotodia, who was forced to step down on January 10 after he failed to contain the stemming anarchy in the country.

In the first round of the election, Samba-Panza secured 64 votes, one less than the total needed for an outright win. This was against 58 for Desire Kolingba, the son of a former Central African president. In the second round Samba-Panza secured 75 votes against 53 for Kolingba.

Weapons

"Show your support for my nomination by giving the strong signal of laying down your weapons" to "stop the suffering of the people," Samba-Panza said in a speech to lawmakers after she was elected.

Samba-Panza was born in Chad to a Cameroonian father and Central African mother. She studied corporate law in Bangui, then in Paris, and founded an insurance brokerage firm when she returned.

The mother of three, a Christian, turned from the private sector to politics in 2003 after former President Ange-Félix Patassé was overthrown in a coup by François Bozizé, who Djotodia ousted. She has participated in enough mediation to become what

some called "incorruptible".

It is hoped that her appointment will allow strife to shift into calm. "I strongly call on the fighters to show patriotism in putting down their weapons," she said in her inaugural address. "The ongoing disorder in the country will not be tolerated."

Samba-Panza will only be president for a year, however, as elections must be held by February 2015 and the interim leader is not allowed to stand. Until then the scale of the challenge is immense as the Christian majority now seems in the ascendant and African and French troops are struggling to keep the peace.

Disarmament is just the beginning of the enormous task Samba-Panza faces. If the cycle of killing ends, she will have to restore a functioning government so refugees can begin returning to their homes and restart their lives. As the promises of aid pour in, that will mean pushing for transparency despite more than five decades of the opposite. The first female leader of Central African Republic, and only the third in Africa, has inherited a hellish legacy that leaves her trying to pull the country back from the brink of civil war. The emphasis on her sex is no mere media contrivance. Many Central Africans say that a woman, and mother, is best placed to bring reconciliation.

But "mother courage", as she has been dubbed, takes on a state that has been barely functional since independence from France in 1960. Its presidents, including Jean-Bédél Bokassa, who named himself emperor with a Napoleonic coronation to match, have found their writ seldom runs beyond the capital. Last March, the most recent of many coups brought a mostly Muslim rebel coalition to power over the majority Christian population, and conflict soon erupted.

Why did the Central African Republic, where the level of early and forced marriage is above 60 per cent, choose a woman to save it? One an-

swer is that nations often do in their hour of need. Minna Salami, a feminist commentator on Africa, said: "We can observe the same old patterns. It is historically and globally the case that women are more prone to access institutions traditionally reserved for men during crisis, for example the second world war, pan-African independence struggles, Burma, postwar Rwanda, Liberia. In that regard, it is no surprise that the Central African Republic now has a female president. The country is facing a crisis and it is not simply Samba-Panza's background but also her gender that is key."

Asset

A Christian, she has earned respect from both sides of the sectarian divide. In her victory speech last week, the new mother of the nation called on "my children" to lay down their arms and declared: "From today, I am the president of all Central Africans." She cited her "sensibility as a woman" as a vital asset that could bring reconciliation.

Samba-Panza's victory was received positively by the women in the republic. "Everything we have been through has been the fault of men," said Marie-Louis Yakemba, who heads a civil society organisation that brings together people of different faiths, and who cheered loudly when the speaker announced Samba-Panza's victory. She added: "We think that with a woman, there is at least a ray of hope."

Annette Ouango, a member of Central African Women's Group says that as a woman she can understand the sufferings of the people and as a mother, she will not tolerate all this blood shedding.

"The men have done nothing but fight and destroy the country. I believe this woman would change things for the better," said Judicelle Mabongo, an 18-year-old student in downtown Bangui.

All this positive feedback show



resident Catherine Samba - Panza. The first woman to lead Central African Republic and the third woman President in Africa.

PICTURE: INTERNET

how the society has faith and shows support in women leadership.

Samba-Panza joins Ellen Johnson (first-elected African female President), Malawi's Joyce Banda and Aminata Toure' prime minister of Senegal.

The rise of female leaders in Africa is a hugely positive statement of the direction Africa is headed to.

Since the beginning of time women have always played important roles in the society. The natural tendency that women possess in taking care and nurturing their children makes them loyal citizens. As a result of this, women tend to readily contribute to the development of their various societies.

Children

"Biological clock" seems to be the most popular case against women leaders in African societies. Many believe that as a result of a woman's metabolism and her duty of bearing and upbringing children she has little time for anything other than the upkeep of the household.

Women are also considered not able to perform to the best of their ability in stressful situations. This is because women are viewed as sensitive and very emotional.

Africa is headed to a good direction in accordance to women leader-

ship. With unity and support from their various nations women will be empowered for the betterment of the society.

Empowerment

Negative energy is all that puts women down for them not to pursue leadership positions in their nations. For instance, one western diplomat close to selection process said that numerous members of the transitional council that selected Samba-Panza had approached her for bribes, offering to sell their vote but she refused.

Such actions are only barriers to the success of women in their nations. Women should stand firm, be aggressive and pursue whatever they wish for.

Samba-Panza is among the many African leaders that other women should emulate.

Caesar Poblacks, of the London-based consultancy Conciliation Resources, said: "Expectations on her are so high that the international community needs to say, 'We cannot let her fail. There is respect for her resilience because she decided to stay in Bangui but, without humanitarian assistance and law and order, it will disappear very quickly.'"

Additional information from agencies.

Women perpetuate violence against fellow women

...By Godlisten Malisa

It is half past five in the morning and Hadija Shemahonge, prepares breakfast for her employer ready to leave for work to avoid traffic jam in Dar es Salaam in the morning.

14 years old Shemahonge has been working from 5:30am to 10:30pm as a house maid for two months and a half now.

"This has been like my home in the past months" says Hadija. Long working hours to her is like a donkey which is over-loaded. Being provoked and some abusive language by her female employer are just as normal as her first name.

"I never sleep early, sometimes I go to bed at around 11:00pm, and I am supposed to wake up early to prepare breakfast for my boss. My boss does not even care, she always provoke

me even if I have not done anything wrong," says Shemahonge.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) to the house maids is not the question of long working hours.

"I pay my house girl forty thousand per month, because she eats and sleep in my house you know," Shemahonge employer says insisting anonymity of her name.

Abuse

"I remember in my first days to work here, I broke a plate when washing utensils and my boss's wife slapped me insisting she will deduct my salary," says Rehema Shabani a 15 years old house maid.

Employment contracts to the house maids is like a dream, they work for the sake of offering their energy without any guarantee of how tomorrow is going to be. Some of them cannot even be able to report GBV that

they encounter from employers for fear of being dismissed.

"She beats me when she comes home from work. I fear telling our neighbours because when she finds out my job will be over. I do not want

"She beats me when she comes home from work. I fear telling our neighbours because when she finds out my job will be over. I do not want to lose my job, my family depends on me," says Monica Masatu, a 15 years old house maid.

to lose my job, my family depends on me," says Monica Masatu, a 15 years old house maid.

Even women themselves do not show mercy on the fellow women. They are perpetrators of GBV. One said she cannot hire a house maid of more than sixteen years old because she might tempt her husband.

"My house maid is 13 years old and is still young to be paid much and she too cannot be easily seduced by my husband," Says Lucy George.

Rights

The rights of house maids from GBV are not yet recognized because currently there is no specific provision in Tanzania which strictly applies to domestic workers. Domestic workers under Tanzania laws are considered together with other employees, so their rights are provided for under the Employment and Labor Relations Act,

2004 and Regulation of Wages and Terms of Employment Order, 2010.

Poverty and low level of education hinders house maids from knowing their rights even hence they are unable to report cases of violence against them to the Police.

Conservation, Hotel, Domestic and Allied Workers Union (CHO-DAWU) have tried to push the government to enact laws which would recognize domestic workers by challenging the current Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004 and Regulation of Wages and Terms of Employment Order, 2010 to put specific laws to recognize domestic workers.

Domestic workers in Tanzania seeks protection against long working hours, low payment and child labour as well as seeking for employment contracts besides being able to report their complaints when they are mistreated to Police.

Teenage pregnancies shoot up numbers of maternal deaths

...By Henry Kahara

Teenage pregnancies have been on the rise in Kenya. Hundreds of girls have been dropping out of school due to pregnancy every year. The scenario cuts across the social divide in both rural and urban schools.

At the Kibera Soccer Girls Academy, most girls have dropped out of school. The community girls' school has a population of 137 students. Located in the middle of Kibera, the largest slum in sub-Saharan, a stranger can hardly tell that there is a learning institution in such place but the school has been in existence since 2006.

According to Fridah Wanda, the principal, teenage pregnancy is a common scenario at the school. "By the close of 2013 we had recorded five pregnancy cases," notes Wanda.

Rape

Teenage pregnancies are not only a common phenomenon in the school, but also within its environ. "The pregnancies are mostly as a result of rape while others are driven by poverty where girls are forced to fend for themselves," says Wanda.

Kibera Soccer Girls Academy consists of less privileged students who face a lot of challenges in their day to day life.

"Some are orphans but others have parents who are unable to cater for their needs," she explains.

The school only admits girls from the area who have scored 270 marks in their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams and their parents cannot afford to pay for their secondary school fee.

Wanda openly agrees that most girls have had their future ruined due to unwanted pregnancy. "Sometimes girls drop out of school due to pregnancy due to stigmatization from the fellow students."

Wanda says that the most surprising thing is the fact that men who impregnate these school girls are not

their age mates and are unreliable.

"Many of these men lure these girls with just a few shillings. I get surprised when I disclose circumstances under which they conceived because some will openly tell you that it was their first time and may be it took place by the road side."

Girls

Wanda observes: "Some of the girls here are also bread winners in their house. They live on their own, may be their parents died or have deserted them."

She gives an example of a Form Four girl who was sitting for her Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) last year but was pregnant at the same time.

"The girl conceived as she was looking for KSh5,900 to enable her register for the exam."

According to the girl, her mother was sick and could not raise the amount required.

"This forced her to get money from her boyfriend but not on a silver platter because she had yield to sex before she could get the money," explains Wanda.

According to the girl claims that it was her first time to sleep with that man but the unexpected happened.

"For the last one term the girl had run away from school but she has come to sit for the exams."

The school conducts counselling sessions every week but Wanda doubts whether this can stop the menace.

"We need to address the root cause of the problem, if we really want to fight early pregnancy. We need to look at the issues making our girls to indulge in early sex," says Wanda.

Kibera Soccer Girls Academy offers free education for girls who come from low income families and does not charge any fee. The school in collaboration with well-wishers provides



Kibera Soccer Girls Academy. Some of the girls here are also bread winners in their house. They live on their own, may be their parents died or have deserted them. PICTURES: HENRY OWINO

sanitary towels to the girls.

According to a report released on June 2013 by National Council for Population and Development in collaboration with Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and Population, premarital sex is common in Kenya.

The report notes that nearly 40

"Some of the girls here are also bread winners in their house. They live on their own, may be their parents died or have deserted them."

FRIDAH WANDA, PRINCIPAL KIBERA GIRLS SOCCER ACADEMY

percent of unmarried women between 15 to 24 years have had premarital sex, and more than one in seven are sexually active.

Teenage pregnancy persists for a number of reasons, including inadequate access to reproductive health information and services as well as cultural and religious taboos and

poverty.

The research notes that childbirth can be risky for adolescent girls and their babies. Maternal death rates for young women ages 15 to 19 are twice as high as that for women in their 20s. Research suggests that girls of ages 10 to 14 are five times more likely to die of maternal causes than women of ages 20 to 24. First-time, adolescent mothers are at most risk.

Millennium Development Goal number five aims to reduce the number of global maternal deaths by 75 percent between 2000 and 2015.

In Kenya, maternal deaths were estimated at 360 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010, a decline of less than 10 percent since 1990. A significant portion of women dying from pregnancy-related causes is under age 18.



How one slip, made teenager lose journey to a bright future

...By Victor Ouma

Sixteen year old Zippy Achieng, from Busia County got married as a teenager and is already experiencing a lot of difficulties in her life due to the early marriage.

Achieng dropped out of school after being cheated by an older woman from her village that she was going to get a well-paying job.

However, soon after she arrived in the city her life changed. "Niliambiwa niachane na mambo ya shule nika njia Nairobi kwa ajilli ya ajira. Kwa ukweli nilipofika Nairobi nilipata kazi kwa nyumba ya tajiri fulani, enyewe hiyo kazi ilikuwa ngumu na mshahara ulikuwa wa kunidharau (I was told to leave school and get employment. I arrived in the city and went to a rich home, but the salary was miserable)".

Achieng left the village for Nairobi without her parents being aware. She was proud that she was going to earn money in the capital city where most of her age-mates and friends had never reached and some may never

come to.

However, her joy was short lived. Soon, she started experiencing some difficulties. There was too much work in the house. She was also under tight control compared to the way she lived with her parents in the village.

On realising that she was being underpaid, she decided to leave and look for another job. Things turned out to be harder because everywhere she went, Achieng was asked to produce an identity card, which she did not have because she was underage.

She walked round the estate hustling for what to eat but could not find anything. One day she got a job in a butchery where her duty was to clean.

This was to be done daily at exactly 6.00 am before the butcher opened for daily operations. Though it was a strenuous job, she had no alternative because this was the only way she could put something into her stomach.

Achieng was lonely most of the time. All her colleagues were men and she was not comfortable. After a few weeks she became familiar with the other workers and soon they became

friends.

After a few months her boss decided to give her a place to sleep. "This was a good idea but I did not agree to it because a young girl was being made to sleep in the same room with four men who are adults."

Although she had her reservations, Achieng did not complain about this. Soon all the men were having sex with her. Unfortunately, she got pregnant and could not tell who was responsible.

She then decided to get married to one of the men. This was again organised by the boss and she found herself in teenage marriage.

Teenage marriages and school dropout among girls are associated with negative outcomes including higher rate of poverty.

Teenage marriage is a union of

two adolescents from age 13 to 19 years old or of a girl or boy within the stipulated age getting married to an older person.

Many factors contribute to teen marriages such as infatuation, pregnancy, religion and security as well as family and peer pressure, economic and political reasons. Studies have shown that married teenage couples are often less advantaged. Many come from broken homes, have little education and work in low status jobs in comparison to those who marry after adolescence.

Although a majority of teen marriages suffer from complications and often lead to divorce, some are successful.

Achieng now calls herself a woman even though she is not yet 18 years. The man who married her is

not taking care of her as required in marriage. Many a time she has had to endure domestic violence from the man she calls her husband who in most cases does not provide for their daily needs.

"I am forced to look for casual domestic jobs within and outside the estate so as to get something for my daughter to eat," explains Achieng. She adds: "I cannot just sit waiting for my husband to bring something to put on the table. I also have to struggle."

Teenagers who get married suffer due to lack of education which is very important in life.

Not having gone through primary school is expensive and can put stress on the marriage because the partners' goals and plans cannot be met.

Achieng is talented in music but she cannot do anything substantive due to lack of funds.

"I hope that one day I will be able to have a fulfilling career from music. I even rejected going back to school because I believe music will remain my occupation in life," says Achieng. She is calling on well-wishers to support her towards achieving this goal.

Although she had her reservations, Achieng did not complain about this. Soon all the men were having sex with her. Unfortunately, she got pregnant and could not tell who was responsible.

Child marriages a threat to the future of girls

...By Ben Orok

Childhood marriage is a violation of human rights whether it happens to a girl or boy. It also represents the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls.

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines child marriage as any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old.

While child marriages affect both sexes, girls are disproportionately affected as they are the majority of the victims.

Child marriage is now widely identified and recognised as a violation of children's rights, a direct form of discrimination against the girl-child who as a result is deprived of her basic right to health, education, development and equality.

Young married girls are also more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence.

Traditions

Harmful traditional practices, religion and poverty continue perpetuating the practice of child marriage, despite its strong association with adverse reproductive health consequences.

Today child marriages continue marking the end of education for girls in Gusii, depriving them of associated benefits.

According to Mary Mose, a parent from Kisii County, child marriages can be blamed on parents' failure to take up their parental roles responsibility, leaving their daughters to fall prey to early marriages.

Mose admits that child marriages remain a serious challenge, especially among communities which practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), where underage girls are socialised to behave as adult women after the cut, hence engaging in early marriages.

"Female Genital Mutilation among some communities, continue to driving many underage girls out of school into child and early marriages with a false belief that they are grown-ups who can bring up their families" observes Mose.

Her sentiments were echoed by Gilbert Oloo, Kisii South District Education Officer who decried the increasing cases of child marriages involving school girls, including those who have been registered as candidates for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations. These girls are said to disappear and only re-appear during examination period compromising the district's national performance.

Marriage

Speaking to Kenya Woman in his office, Oloo warned parents against allowing their children to be lured out of school to seek refuge in illegal marriages which destabilise their future education and life careers.



School girls posing for a group photo after their KCPE examinations. Many are living in fear of being married early. PICTURE: BEN OROKO

"The Government will not hesitate to take legal action against any parent found abetting such vices," he reminded them.

Last year, a 14-year-old girl, from Matongo DEB Primary School in Kisii South District who enrolled for KCPE left school in June 2013 and got married to a boda boda operator in the area as her parents failed to report the matter to the school administration and other relevant law enforcement agencies to rescue the girl from the illegal marriage.

"Information from the school administration indicated that the girl allegedly

"Parental obligation is crucial if the affected communities wanted to address cases of child marriages that are threatening education and life careers of school girls in the region. Parents must stop marrying off their daughters as this destabilises their education and future careers"

■ GILBERT OLOO, KISII SOUTH DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER

got married to a boda boda operator in the area," said Oloo. He added: "The parents were uncooperative in assisting the school and local provincial administration rescue the girl from the marriage."

Oloo blamed the situation on the parents and guardians for failing to cooperate in assisting apprehend perpetrators of child marriages and have them prosecuted.

Career

"Parental obligation is crucial if the affected communities wanted to address cases of child marriages that are threatening education and life careers of school girls in the region," said Oloo.

The United Nations population survey predicts a steep climb in young girls giving birth in sub-Saharan Africa unless child marriage is banned.

The report indicates the number of girls giving birth before the age of 15 in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by more than one million by 2030 unless urgent action is taken to end child marriages, get more girls into school and ensure their rights are protected.

Despite international commitments to end the practice, one in three girls in developing countries is married before the age of 18 and 50 million girls are at risk of being married before they are 15 years old between now and 2020, the report indicates.

Girls overburdened by tough responsibilities

...By Henry Kahara

Poverty, peer pressure, absent parents and lack of information are some of the major contributors of teenage pregnancy.

Seventeen-year-old Consolata Lumumba, a Form Four student in Kibera Girls' Soccer Academy is an orphan who lost her parents at tender age and has no one to look to.

She and her younger siblings live on their own. Being the eldest, she has been forced to look for casual jobs to fend for the others.

"My father died in 2011 while my mother died in 2012. At that time, I was in Form Three and since then I assumed parental responsibility," explains Lumumba.

Besides doing casual jobs, Lumumba is expected to attend school and perform well at the end of the term. "I wash people's clothes or plait hair and on bad days I am able to raise KSh500," Lumumba says. She charges KSh100 per head, so one weekend she at least plaits five people.

Job

She further budgets for the amount where she buys basic commodities like flour and rice which can last the family for a week.

"After my mum's death, my brother dropped out of school at the age of 16. He was able to secure a casual job and now he helps out in paying the rent," Lumumba says. She adds: "Initially, my aunt was helping us to pay for the house rent when my mum was sick but for now my brother has taken over since he is working in the construction sites."

For now Lumumba's aim is to put her education on hold, then work hard to support her only sister who is in class seven.

"I have always obtained a mean grade of C minus and I am not sure whether I should proceed to Form Four. I want to dedicate my earnings towards supporting my sister's education."

According to the recent World Bank report, unemployment rate in Kenya stands at 40 per cent. This is attributed to the slow growth and weak labour absorptive capacity of the economy, mismatch in skills development and demand, imperfect information flow and inherent rigidities within the country's labour market.

According to Fridah Wada, principal Kibera Girls Soccer Academy, many girls in the school double up as students and breadwinners.

Studies

"This burdens them much leaving them exhausted and unable to concentrate in their studies," says Wada. She adds: "As a teacher I am lost and do not know how to help them out. Some of these girls are very stressed."

Poverty has forced many girls to indulge in sex hence early pregnancy which automatically ruins their future.

Wanda is bothered that lives of many girls go astray in this stage while trying to carry on with responsibilities above their age and capability.

A recent study by The Kenya Population Situation Analysis found that four in ten Kenyan girls have had sex before the age of 19, many of them as early as the age of 12. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) shows variations in early sexual debut.

About 40 per cent of women in the general population are estimated to carry the human papilloma virus (HPV) a leading cause of cervical cancer. Studies have shown HPV is higher among young, sexually attractive women who have unprotected sex with multiple sexual partners.

The study further revealed that sexual debut occurred earlier in the poorer wealth quintiles regardless of place or origin and acknowledged the existence of combination of factors at play among many young women who turn to sex as a source of livelihood, such as transactional sex, lack of economic opportunities and poverty.

According to the World Health Organization WHO 2008 report there are consequences of early child bearing on pregnancy outcome and on child survival. The consequences touch on the young mothers and on the infants. The study report that, children born of teenage mothers experience greater health problems and mortality risk than those born to older mothers. The report continues that pregnancy related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for 15-19 year-old girls worldwide.



JADELLE 1



JADELLE 2

Slum health centre scales up family planning uptake

...By Jane Godia

At only 26 years old and one child, Eunice Atieno knows what she wants in life and that is to space her children and have them at a time when she and her husband are ready.

Unlike in most relationships where women have to hide from their husbands that they are on family planning methods, Atieno and her husband discussed and agreed that they needed to give their 10 month old baby time grow in a healthy way before they could have another one.

Deep in the sprawling Mathare slums where she was having the long term implant Jadelle inserted in her upper arm at the Mathare North Health Centre, Atieno noted that Jadelle was ideal for her because she did not have to make frequent monthly visits to the clinic.

She said: "Family planning is good for the man because they are not many children to disturb him and he is able to give good care to the family," observes Atieno.

Planning

Atieno is just one of the few women who have had access to modern family planning methods. There are about 2.7 million women in Kenya who do not have access to family planning and worldwide 230 million women need family planning. It is hoped that 120 million women will be on modern contraceptives by 2020. It is noted that 10 million women of reproductive health age are not accessing family planning.

Jadelle is just one of the methods that have opened frontiers for women to plan and space their children. According to the skilled health care workers at the Mathare North Clinic, the long term implant is effective immediately it is inserted. They note that the client must be counselled for about 30 minutes before the contraceptive is inserted. After it has been inserted, the client is observed and if she notices anything strange she is to be report.

The client is also barred from lifting anything heavy before seven days have passed to allow healing. A client is also given a card which she can use to go to any other public clinic if she is not near where the implant was inserted.

Implants are thin flexible rods that are inserted under the skin of a woman's arm and provide sustained contraception ranging from three to five years.

Summit

This was during a media field visit organized by Global Health Strategies, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Jhpiego and the ministry of Health ahead of the International Family Planning Conference in Addis Ababa towards the end of 2013. The event was organized to showcase concrete progress since the London Summit and highlight the Government of Kenya's leadership and commitment to Family Planning 2020 goals and demonstrate the role public-private partnerships can play in expanding contraceptive access and options for more women in Kenya and globally.

According to Klaus Brill of Bayer International, a research based pharmaceutical company committed to providing women with quality family planning products, Jadelle is easily accessible, safe and effective.

Once inserted under the skin in the inside of a woman's arm, they slowly release a hormone called progesterone. Implants can stop the body from releasing an egg each month. They also thicken the mucus in the cervix so that sperm cannot travel up to meet an egg.

Implants are more than 99 percent effective in preventing pregnancy (this means that only a few women out of a thousand will get pregnant each year).

The two-rod Jadelle implant system is the successor of Norplant is the first contraceptive implant prequalified by the World Health Organization since September 2009.

When implants are removed, fertility will resume immediately. However, should a woman wants to get pregnant before the five years are over she can easily have it removed at a health facility.

By the end of 2013 about 2.1 million units of Jadelle had been given out to help in preventing unintended pregnancies.

However, even with implants there are limitations that women who opt for them must be aware of. Implants will not protect a woman from HIV infection or any other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), such

as chlamydia, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, human papilloma virus and syphilis.

Implants should not be inserted in a woman during the first six weeks after child-birth if they are exclusively or partially breastfeeding or in women with serious liver disease; or those with problems of blood clots; or those who suffer unusual vaginal bleeding or women who have breast cancer.

Pattern

The major side effects of implants in change in bleeding patterns — frequency, duration and amount. Spotting may be experienced but according to health experts this is normal as the body adjusts to the implant. Some clients may not experience their menses for the five years that they will be on the implant. However, according to the health experts at Mathare North Clinic, there are those who receive missing their monthly periods positively while others respond negatively. This is medically known as amenorrhoea, a term that describes abnormal suppression or absence of menstruation.

While there are women who take this negatively, others are positive about it. According to the personnel at Mathare North Clinic, periods being suppressed "enables a woman to economise by not buying sanitary towels and allows her to have a healthy sexual relationship with her husband".

Other potential side effects include weight gain, headaches, abdominal pains, acne, dizziness, nausea, breast tenderness and mood change.

Ovarian cysts may also occur but usually do not require treatment. Rarely, infection will occur at the site of the implant.

According to Dr Moses Owino, Medical Officer of Health at Mathare North Clinic, the centre serves as a health facility and management seat in Kasarani Constituency which has a population of about 600,000 people. "The clinic serves a population that is urban poor," explains Owino.

He notes: "We promote family planning as a primary intervention. We promote long acting reversible methods because it is cheaper and more convenient for the mother because she does not have to come here often."

According to Owino, they have been making progress and are government supported at various levels. However, the



JADELLE 3



JADELLE 4

JADELLE 1: A nurse showing family planning method. **JADELLE 2:** Packets of Jadelle one of the recommended family planning products. **JADELLE 3:** A client is taken through counselling. **JADELLE 4:** A nurse administers the Jadelle method. PICTURES: THOMAS BWIRE

Mathare North Health Centre has been set up under a community strategy. They also provide youth friendly services noting that young people have the biggest unmet need. Owino notes that they also try to demystify myths and misconceptions around family planning and encourage male involvement.

According to Angela Njiru Moki, Reproductive Health Coordinator for Nairobi County, the health centre receives frequent revisits from clients but they also gain new clients regularly.

She notes: "Between 2011-2012, there was an increase in the number of new clients compared to previous years," explains Moki. She adds: "We have also seen changes between 2012-2013 with an increase of 11 percent in new clients and 16 percent in revisits."

In 2011 there were 191, 523 new clients while between 2012-2013 there were 238,645. During the same period there

were 274,882 revisits in 2011 and 379,002 between 2012-2013 for Nairobi County.

According to Moki, among the new clients 40 percent preferred condoms. "However, there was an increase in family planning injectables and implant inserts," she explains. The increase in injections was 11 percent, insertions 54 percent, and use of condoms has increased by 46 percent.

Moki says an increase was noted in all methods but a significant increase was in implants and that more people are using the condoms.

However, although this is significant, there is still a need to train more health workers to be able to give the methods, counsel clients as well as encourage uptake.

Staff at the Mathare North Health Centre hope that the county government will come in because it is closer to the problems the facility is facing.

The irritating culture that kills family planning

...By Patrick Mutisya

Kenya's population is growing rapidly and has more than tripled from 10.9 million people in 1969 to around 40 million people in 2013.

According to the Kenya population data in 2011, given the high number of births per woman, the population will continue to increase steadily. Even if the total fertility rate declines from an average of 4.6 children per woman in 2009 to 3.7 by 2030, the population will still grow to 65.9 million.

Population growth is the driving force to a reduced amount of arable land per capita available to rural farmers and their children. Nearly 70 percent of Kenyan people live in rural areas, and two out of three rural farmers do not believe the land they own is sufficient for their children to live on and farm.

Access

The only remedy to this is to ensure quick access to voluntary family planning and its awareness in order to prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce maternal and child mortality. Currently, one in every four women who desires to delay or prevent pregnancy does not have access to modern contraceptives.

Among married women aged 15 to 49, the poorest women and those with the lowest level of education have the highest unmet need for family planning while women in the lowest wealth report the greatest need for spacing and limiting their births. In fact almost half of the poorest women report that their most recent pregnancy wasn't planned for.

During its fiscal year 2013/2014, the government of Kenya committed more than Kshs 700 million for family planning and even though this shows the government's commitment in getting a healthier, better educated and more productive society, the hurdles ahead are enormous.

In Ganze, Kilifi County the number of children a family has stands between eight to 14, and however many women wish to plan families, their cultural beliefs and tradition doesn't allow them.

"Traditions and cultural beliefs are a stumbling block to many women who bear the burden of carrying the pregnancy, giving birth and even taking care of their family," says Ganze Nursing Officer in charge Winnie Muriuki.

She says that the communities believe that

women should give birth until all the children in her womb are over and a woman doesn't have any powers over her life to decide for herself whether to family plan.

She reveals that it is mandatory for a woman to be granted authority by her man in order to family plan.

"We have a problem with the women because, we give them all the required education on family planning but at the end of the day, they tell you, the husband has the final word," she notes.

Muriuki explains that the cultural belief is rampant in the area and has given them headache as they try to educate the society on the importance of family planning.

She adds that they have a problem with men too because they do not want their wives to plan their families.

"They think it's a right for the women to give birth, even if it's 10 or 15 children, she has the right to give birth," she observes.

Fertility

The nurse says that the men say they can't practice family planning while God has blessed them with fertility and therefore they must make good use of it.

The climatic condition of Kilifi County and especially around Ganze area is dry and only little rainfall is received each year. Much of the income is derived from selling of few coconuts that a family may have though not every family has.

As a result, most men in Ganze don't have any source of income and due to the pressing needs of their big families, they end up becoming drunkards.

"Most men can't even afford chicken not even a goat because most of them aren't employed anywhere but only loiter around the area to seek casual work as others make charcoal to get money for their family upkeep. Due to the scarcity of the casual works, most of them have ended up becoming drunkards," explains Muriuki.

According to Ruphence Rimba, a Community Health Worker (CHW) in the area, a man doesn't rest until he gets children as equal as the number of people in their clan.

She says that even though many women wish to give birth to few children, the tradition is an irritating culture that can't easily be wiped out from the community.

Rimba's husband is a casual labourer and although she regrets not knowing about her rights and family planning earlier, the mother of seven



A community health worker educating members of the public on the benefits of family planning.

PICTURE: PATRICK MUTISYA

now urges women to family plan in order to bring up a health family which one can easily and properly take care of.

"Most of my work is urging women to open up their eyes and have a changed thought not to be like older women. Older women were only associated with kitchen matters but today majority of women have got their own businesses, and devoted in searching for a good life for their children," said Rimba.

Through the involvement of community health workers, some women have broken down the taboo and decided to risk their marriages by secretly using family planning.

Cards

They leave all the documents and clinic cards with the nurses at the clinic to avoid them being seen by their husbands who would know that they are using contraceptives secretly. Either women that are caught using contraceptives by their husbands risk being beaten up and divorced.

"The result is that the wife risks being divorced. In Giriama community, a woman shows her contribution into the family by giving birth to many children. If that doesn't happen, they say, they are feeding someone who isn't beneficial," says Rimba.

Bahati Mutheke gave birth to his fourth child less than one and half years ago. Due to heavy do-

mestic role, his wife's fourth pregnancy was affected by excessive bleeding during its seventh month, something that saw her being admitted at Kilifi General Hospital, just a year after she gave birth to her third child.

She was forced to go into a cesarean to rescue her life and that of the child.

"I expect to add some more children because there is our traditional belief that requires children to be named both from the sides of the grandfather and grandmother and has to be followed. But that is a secret between my wife and I. Secondly, considering that the girl child will be married off while the boy child is to be left to advance the family," reveals Mutheke.

According to health experts family planning helps reduce the number of abortions and maternal and child deaths.

Muriuki made it clear that, family planning doesn't stop women from giving birth at all but only enables them to space their children, bring up healthy and limited number of children whom they can take care of easily.

Despite the fact that the government has devoted to increase access to modern contraceptives, a lot of information on family planning and government's intention on this matter needs to come clear to everybody in order to clear up the misconceptions associated with it.

Women in danger of cervical cancer

...By Omar Mwalago

Out of 400 women screened for cervical cancer in Kwale County, 11 tested positive. The number could be a pointer to the fact that women in the county are at a high risk of the disease.

According to Dr Athman Chigudzo, Kwale County Executive Officer of Health, urgent attention needs to be taken to save the life of women in the county as many of them cannot afford treatment due to poverty.

Speaking during the handover of Cryotherapy machine at Ukunda Medical Centre sponsored by Population Services International (PSI) and Tunza Clinics, Chigudzo noted that time has come for the medical services to be availed in the grassroots and at affordable costs for every resident to be treated especially women who are at risk of several diseases like sexually transmitted illnesses.

"Every local mwananchi (citizen) must access medical services at an affordable cost. We expect medical services to be devolved under the county government," said Chigudzo.

He noted that Kwale County resi-

dents will now have the cancer cell in the cervix treated before it becomes full blown.

The machine was handed over to Ukunda Medical Centre where locals from the entire Kwale County and other neighbouring counties especially women will be getting services at affordable costs.

Women in the area were freely screened and treated after the machine was officially handed over to the health facility.

"The availability of cervical cancer treating machine in the area is a major step towards addressing health issues," said Chigudzo. Area residents have suffered due to lack of the machine which is only available at the Coast General Hospital to serve the entire coast region.

"We ask locals to be screened and treated because machine is here now," said Chigudzo.

He advised those of the female gender from the age of 15 to 49 years to be screened for cervical cancer at least once per year and get treated once found to be affected. "Any woman can get cervical cancer as it is caused by a virus which is sexually transmitted and it is easy to

prevent and easy to treat if discovered early," explained Chigudzo.

Screening

He noted that the Ministry of Health will start sensitising residents across the county on the importance of screening for cancer. "By next year the county government will purchase one cryotherapy machine for Msambweni District Hospital before buying another for Kinango and Kwale district hospitals," he explained.

The Coast PSI coordinator James Makiri said that the machine will be available for residents at reasonable fees of KSh1,000 which will go a long way in complementing the few machines in the region.

Makiri noted that Cervical Cancer is the second most common cancer in Kenya at 19 per cent but is leading cause of death from cancer. "It is easy and affordable to cure if discovered at the pre-cancer stage," said Makiri. He explained that there are no signs or symptoms that will be seen at the pre-cancer stage until one is screened.

"It takes more than 10 years for a woman to move from pre-cancer to full cancer, so it is rare to find a woman

below 30 years having cancer. No signs or symptoms at pre-cancer stage but are seen at full cancer stage where they include smelly vaginal discharge, bleeding after sex, bleeding after menopause which does not respond to treatment, frequent and urgent passing of urine, back ache and lower abdominal pain," Makiri explained.

Other signs and symptoms of cervical cancer include the constipation, haematuria, fistula and urethral obstruction. As the disease advances, the cervix shows abnormal appearance with erosion, ulcer or mass development. The rectum may also show an external mass or bleeding from the tumour. Urinary problems arise due to blockage of kidney or urethra.

It is estimated that 2,454 cervical cancer cases are diagnosed every year with around 1,676 recorded deaths over the same period.

"Most women get the Human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a DNA virus from the papillomavirus family that is capable of infecting humans. The HPV virus infection that causes cervical cancer at least once in 50 years, but only a few women develop a cervical cancer, for most women the infection is cleared

by the body's natural immune system," explained Makiri.

According to Dr Bernard Mackenzie who represented the County Director of Health, once cervical cancer is detected it can be treated. He urged area residents to take advantage of the machine in the county.

Stages

"Cervical cancer usually begins from the pre-cancerous stages and takes several years to develop into cancer. If detected in this early stage, cervical cancer can be cured completely and the onset of the disease is usually above the age of 40 years. The disease can be easily detected through cytological studies called Pap smear screening," he said.

Mackenzie noted that epidemiological studies show that living styles of the population worldwide is related to the onset of cervical cancer. Epidemiological studies have shown that Human papilloma Virus (HPV) which is a sexually transmitted infection is an important etiological agent for cervical cancer. It is estimated that about 400,000-500,000 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed each year worldwide.

New lease of life for Tunisian women

...By Naveena Kottoor

Tunisia's new constitution could usher in momentous change for women, following the adoption of a clause which guarantees gender equality in legislative assemblies and for steps to be taken to protect women against violence, a first in the Arab world.

"This article is a revolution in itself. It's a big, historic step, not only for Tunisian women," says Lobna Jeribi, who celebrated until the early hours of the morning after the constitution had been adopted.

Jeribi is a member of the Ettakatol party, one of the secular coalition partners within the Islamist-led government.

"It was a very emotional moment for me when we passed it," she says.

Leadership

Jeribi, a scientist, admits the issue of guaranteeing women and men equal representation in parliament never crossed her mind until she became a member of the constituent assembly in 2011 to chart a new course for Tunisia following the uprising that overthrew long-serving ruler Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.

"I always thought it was very much a feminist thing," she says.

She says that they were struggling to find women to participate in the political process since the culture and mentality of masculinity is the order of the day and we had to start the process on our own instead of waiting for unknown people to come on board to lead the process. But not everyone in the assembly agreed with her.

Her proposal led to a heated and emotional debate that lasted for three days and threatened to derail the vote on the constitution. One of the sceptics was 60-year-old Fattouma Attia, an independent member of the assembly.

"I was one of the first businesswomen in

Tunisia," she says. "Not because someone decided there should be more women in business and handed me the opportunity, but because I wanted to run a business. I claimed my equal rights," Attia says.

Attia is convinced that a woman must take her place by herself, through her own will and her competence.

A key ally in Jeribi's fight to get Article 45, the clause promoting equality, passed was Ms. Meherzia Labidi, vice-president of the assembly from the governing Islamist Ennahda party and the most senior female politician in the chamber. Ennahda has the highest number of female lawmakers - 41 out of 90.

"We survived despotism and dictatorship due to female resistance, while the men were in exile or in prison," says Labidi.

She had been campaigning in favour of the amendment, despite resistance within her party, which for the first time failed to maintain party discipline during the vote.

"It's one of the articles in the constitution that I am most proud of," she says with a beaming smile.

Labidi vehemently rejects the suggestion that women should strive for opportunities in political life themselves, without any support.

"I have always achieved everything I wanted myself. Sometimes I wonder whether men could compete with me," she says.

Opportunity

"But I am being realistic. Not all women can do this, they need to be given opportunities, that help them become leaders," she adds.

Labidi points to the fact that she herself benefited from a parity clause that was applied for the first time during the 2011 election of the constituent assembly.

The election law had required that every electoral list include 50 percent women and 50 percent men and ensure they were placed alternately



Lobna Jeribi tells the press that she is proud of the article in the constitution.

PICTURE: NAVEENA KOTTOOR

on the list.

"I could have said: 'I am a female leader now, that's enough for Tunisian women.' But I want to bring women along with me," Labidi says.

It's music to Eya's ears. She is a 24-year old chemical engineer from Tunis who thinks the time has come to think big.

Potential

"I would love to see more senior female politicians," she says. "We have the potential.

"I dream of having a woman as Prime Minister, or even President - like Angela Merkel, she just rocks. We have so many brilliant women in Tunisia. They could make a change," Eya says.

By law Tunisian men and women have been equal since the 1950s, when President Habib Bourguiba passed the Personal Status Law of 1956.

But for many Tunisian women like Souhir, a 33-year-old university lecturer who teaches at the University of Kairouan, the country still has a long way to go to reduce sexual discrimination and reach gender equality.

"There is a huge gap between the law and what actually happens on the street adding that women have to say that they are married to be left alone. Once I was forbidden from sitting in a cafe because they were only men (there), and they told me women were trouble," she says.

On the contentious issue of Islamic law, the constitution, unlike those in other Arab countries, does not make any direct reference to it.

Instead, it acknowledges Tunisia's Arab and Muslim identity, guarantees religious freedom, prohibits apostasy and vows to protect "the sacred".

"We managed to reconcile things that are not easy to reconcile," says Selim Ben Abdesslem, a member of the largest opposition bloc Nidaa Tounes.

"We have combined references to our Muslim identity with references to universal human rights and freedoms. I think the vote and the text represent a large part of the Tunisian people," he observes says.

Courtesy of BBC

Sense of power enables women to negotiate assertively

Women may be less likely than men to advocate for themselves via negotiation, research suggests, but they perform at least as well as men when they are negotiating on behalf of others, such as their subordinates.

These differences in how men and women negotiate often are attributed gender differences in socialization: boys are generally raised to be assertive and self-focused, traits that serve grown men well when it comes times to forge a professional path, while girls are typically socialised to be communal and nurturing traits that clash with the motivation to claim value for oneself negotiation.

Given that a sense of power has been found to trigger personality traits such as dominance and assertiveness, researchers ALAIN P.C.I. Hong and Per J. van der Wijk Tilburg University in the Netherlands conducted an experiment to determine whether encouraging women to feel powerful would lead them to be more competitive and achieve better outcomes for themselves in a subsequent negotiation.

The Dutch university students who participated in the study each engaged in a negotiation simulation with researcher Hong, who posed as a participant.

Before negotiating some participants were primed to feel powerful by recalling and writing about an incident from their lives in which they had power over one or more people. By contrast, those in the control condition were simply asked to write about how they usually spend their evenings.

During the negotiations that followed, Hong — playing the role of a home seller — asked each participant, playing a home buyer, to make the first offer for his house. Hong then drove a hard bargain, challenging each offer the participants made and the rationales behind them. The negotiations concluded when the participants made their final offers.

Women who were primed to feel powerful made much more aggressive first offers and negotiated better outcomes for themselves than did the women in the control condition. The performance of the high power women matched that of men in both conditions. Men reached similar outcomes, however, whether or not they were primed to feel powerful.

The results suggest that women — but not men — receive a real psychological lift from feeling powerful, one that motivates them to negotiate more forcefully for themselves, at least in distributive negotiations in which parties are haggling over a single issue

such as price.

The findings imply that women in low power positions may be able to improve their negotiation performance simply by reflecting on a time when they had more power or even, according to research by Harvard Business School professor Amy Cuddy, by striking powerful, expansive poses prior to negotiation.

Negotiation

A sense of power may enable women to negotiate more assertively, but what happens next?

Past negotiation research has found that women — but not men — who initiate negotiations on their compensation suffer a backlash: People are less willing to work with them than with women who don't ask for more money, according to one study by Hannah Riley Bowles of Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass, Linda Babcock of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and Lei Lai of Tulane University in New Orleans.

Women often are reluctant to advocate for themselves at work because they anticipate such a backlash.

Researchers have speculated that women trigger a backlash when they behave contrary to stereotypes of women as accommodating and communal. In a new study, Professors Emily T Amanatullah of the University of

Texas at Austin and Catherine H. Tinsley of the Georgetown University in Washington examine the alternative explanation for the backlash effect — namely, the low status often ascribed to women — and find that it can be overcome.

Consider that women traditionally have held lower status positions in society relative to men, as reflected in job titles and earnings. Consequently, when people lack information about a woman's status, they tend to assume that it is relatively low. When their statuses were high, people are likely to react negatively and punish them, Amanatullah and Tinsley theorised.

In their first experiment, the researchers asked each participant to imagine that he or she was a hotel manager dealing with an event planner named Chris. Chris asked to cancel some rooms and receive a refund soon before an event, a favour that would violate the hotel's policy. Participants were asked whether they would grant the request or not. Chris was presented as either a man or a woman and as having either a low status or high status — "newly hired junior officer" vs. "executive vice president."

Chris was least likely to get the refund when she was a low-status female. She suffered a financial backlash

for asking for the favour. By contrast, high-status female Chris was significantly more likely to receive the favour, as were men in both status conditions. Male low-status Chris did not experience a backlash.

In a second, similar experiment, Amanatullah and Tinsley found that participants viewed the request of a low-status woman but not that of a low-status man to be illegitimate, leading to a wave of negative reactions; In addition to having her financial request rejected, the woman was deemed undesirable as a potential colleague, friend and leader. By contrast, participants viewed high-status women's request to be legitimate and did not penalise them on any of these dimensions.

Past research had suggested that all women risk a backlash when advocating for themselves in negotiation. By contrast the results of this study suggest that high status women may benefit from signalling high status when initiating and engaging negotiations.

Overall, the results of the studies described here suggest that female negotiators can claim more value by reflecting on past experiences with power and communicating high status.

Courtesy of the Business Daily New York Times Syndicate

Sexual gender violence on the increase

...By Henry Owino

When sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is mentioned, everybody thinks of girls and women as targets. This is not true as the reality is that sexual and gender based violence is physical, mental or social abuse that is directed against a person because of his or her gender.

Statistics from Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) indicate that there were 2,532 rape and defilement cases from 2011 to 2012 while between 2010 and 2011 there were 2,524 cases reported with women and girls accounting for 90 per cent of them.

In the year 2012, Child-line Kenya received 1,253 sexual abuse cases out of all reported cases of abuse through the Child Helpline Service 116.

According to the statistics by Gender Violence Recovery Centre, 90 per cent of reported perpetrators are men. Again 64 per cent of survivors of violence reported that the offenders behind their ordeal were known to them.

Cases

The Police Annual Crime report registered 2,242 reported defilement cases in 2009 and 2,660 cases in 2010. These were just gender based violence cases reported to police stations excluding the unreported whose statistics are not accounted for.

According to Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) 2008-2009, children aged 11 and below make up the largest group of rape-defilement survivors. About 45 per cent of women aged 15-49 years have experienced either physical or sexual violence.

This means that at least one in five Kenyan women at the age of 21 has experienced either sexual violence or Gender Based Violence.

Women Empowerment Link (WEL) and the GBV Prevention and Response working groups in Nairobi, report on sexual and gender based violence cases between January 2012 and September 2013 indicate that there were 150 defilement cases representing 32 per cent of all related crimes.

One hundred cases of child neglect representing 21 per cent of the crimes, rape 90 cases (19 per cent), attempted rape 50 cases (11 per cent), sexual exploitation 30 cases (six percent), attempted defilement 23 cases (five percent), gang rape 15 cases (three percent), and last but not least sodomy 15 cases (three percent).



“The doctor will provide a survivor of sexual and GBV with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. This should be done within 72 hours from the time of attack.”

■ GRACE MBUGUA,
CEO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT LINK

According to Grace Mbugua, Director Women Empowerment Link, any form of sexual and gender based violence is illegal and prohibited under the Sexual Offences Act 2006, Penal Code, Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Children Act 2001.

Mbugua notes they are illegal and prohibited due to the negative effects felt by individuals at community and national level.

“Sexual and gender based violence are normally associated with human, social and direct

financial to a wider economic costs,” Mbugua explains. She adds: “Many sexual and gender based violence results into physical harm, psychological harm, withdrawal from society and bitterness.”

She notes that covering financial costs for medical and psychosocial services for the survivor of sexual and gender based violence is very expensive.

According to Mbugua, there is interference with intellectual productivity of survivors over a long time due to fatal injuries caused by female genital mutilation and they also attract further medical care and more for rehabilitation cost.

At the end of the day, Mbugua notes, the economically productive individuals are turned to recipients of charity from families, communities and organisations hence loss of revenue to the nation from formerly productive citizens who are now incapacitated by gender based violence.

“At the end of the day, accelerated rates of gender based violence crimes destabilise the economic growth of any nation and county governments like in Kenya,” she explains.

Mbugua advises survivors of any form of sexual and gender based violence to report attacks to a safe place like a hospital and police station. However, she cautions them to desist from showering, brushing teeth, cutting nails or throwing away clothes before reporting.

Evidence

“The clothes should be preserved in a brown paper bag because polythene bags interfere with the evidence,” she added.

Mbugua notes that survivors are not supposed to urinate but if a must, they should store the urine in a bottle and present it to a doctor for evidence.

“The doctor will provide the survivor of sexual and gender based violence with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. This should be done within 72 hours from the time of attack,” Mbugua clarified.

It is advisable that survivors seek psychological counselling from psychosocial facilitators or counsellors as well as any community or faith based organisations as soon as possible.

The incident should be reported to the nearest police station and post-rape form obtained and filled by the doctor who attends to survivor.

Morocco scraps law allowing rapists to marry young victims

...By AFP

Morocco recently scrapped a highly controversial law allowing a child rapist to evade punishment if he marries his victim, as rights activists pressed the government to legislate to protect women from violence.

The amendment to Article 475 of the penal code, first proposed by the country's Islamist-led government a year ago, was adopted unanimously by lawmakers, parliamentary sources said.

The offending article made international headlines in March 2012 when Amina Filali (16) killed herself after being forced to marry the man who had raped her, and who remained free.

Right activists hailed the amendment, while stressing that much more remained to be done to promote gender equality and protect women from violence in the North African country.

“It's a very important step. But it's not enough... We are campaigning for a complete overhaul of the penal code for women,” said Fatima Maghnaoui, who heads a group supporting women victims of violence.

Global advocacy group Avaaz said it had handed a petition signed by more than a million people to Morocco's parliament demanding that the government adopt promised legislation to combat violence against women.

Amnesty International said the amendment was a step in the right direction but “long overdue”, and urged a comprehensive strategy to protect women and girls from violence in Morocco.

“It took 16-year-old Amina Filali's suicide and nearly two years for parliament to close the loophole that allowed rapists to avoid accountability.

“It's time to have laws that protect survivors of sexual abuse,” said Has-siba Hadj Sahraoui, the group's deputy regional director.

As in numerous other Arab countries, sexual harassment of women is commonplace in Morocco, despite the adoption of a new constitution in 2011 that enshrines gender equality and urges the state to promote it.

An official study published last month said nearly nine percent of Moroccan women have been physically subjected to sexual violence at least once, while the proportion of women subjected to conjugal violence is much higher.

A bill proposed by the Islamist-led government, threatening prison sentences of up to 25 years for perpetrators of violence against women, is still in the drafting stage.

— Courtesy of AFP

Justice for sexual survivors hangs in the balance

...By Dr Joan Nyanyuki

In January 2008, a group of Kenyan police officers broke into Mary's home and raped her in front of her daughter. Then two looters raped her again. Yet Mary summoned the extraordinary courage to report the crimes.

Remarkably, Mary has persisted in her demand for justice last Wednesday, on January 22, in a Nairobi courtroom, Mary and other women as well as some men, who were sexually assaulted during the post-election violence sought to be heard.

Even in normal times, sexual violence in Kenya is commonplace, and the Government is derelict in its responsibilities to protect victims, punish perpetrators and provide redress to victims. Well before the post-election violence, sexual violence was the most under-reported category of crime in Kenya.

When widespread violence erupted for two months following disputed December 2007 elections, it was no surprise that women on all sides were targeted. However, the machete-wielding attackers also singled-out some men for forcible circumcision or mutilation. A commission of inquiry found that the 900 reported cases of sexual violence during the period were just the “tip of the iceberg”. Most victims, hearing of the futility, never went to the police.

The Kenyan government repeatedly asserts that its domestic justice system can address these crimes. At the International Criminal Court it insists that Kenya's president and vice-president,

both accused of crimes against humanity, should face trial at home. In Kenya and before the African Union, the Government spouts this line, and has taken steps to establish an International Crimes Division in the High Court of Kenya. However, even if judges are positioned to hear cases, there have still been very few investigations and prosecutions, and none of high-level perpetrators. Many victims who did report crimes have not been contacted by investigators, and prosecutors are seemingly indifferent to significant evidence held by hospitals and other institutions. Agencies responsible for providing survivors with medical care and compensation as a result of the attacks have failed to act.

Rape

The Government's acceptance of mass sexual violence during the post-election violence has perpetuated conditions for an appalling incidence of sexual violence in the ensuing six years. Last year, police punished perpetrators in the notorious gang rape of a schoolgirl by making them mow the lawn at their station.

The political deal that ended the post-election violence also ultimately led to adoption of a new constitution and other promising reforms — including police reform. Despite some progress, there has been little or no attention to sexual and gender-based violence. Even if they wanted to, police still lack many of the skills they need to effectively tackle Kenya's epidemic of violence against women. Since the post-election violence, the incidence of rape has continued to rise in Ke-

nya, even as fewer women report violations to the police. Perpetrators and victims alike know the Government does not take these crimes seriously. The rare cases where perpetrators of sexual violence are prosecuted stand as exceptions rather than the norm. Survivors, activists and ordinary Kenyan women have begun to stand up and demand an end to socially accepted impunity fixed in government policy.

Eight survivors of sexual violence during the post-election violence and four Kenyan civil society organisations have brought a constitutional complaint against the Attorney General and five other senior government officials. Perhaps it is no surprise that these officials, echoing the laughter of police at a rape victim, had initially refused even to respond to the complaint despite two court orders to do so. They later on Wednesday said they were opposed to the case after the petitioners asked the court to compel the Government to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators and to provide redress for the crimes. The case has been postponed to March 25.

During and after her ordeal, Mary lost all of her personal belongings, her husband left her, and today she struggles to care for herself and her children. Her government has abandoned her and other survivors of sexual violence in every way imaginable. Today they persist in their demands for justice, for themselves and for all Kenyans.

Dr. Joan Nyanyuki is Executive Director of the Nairobi-based Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)

Women and children bear brunt of conflict in South Sudan

...By Kenyan Woman Correspondent

Since fighting broke out in South Sudan in mid-December between rebels led by Dr Riek Machar and the government headed by President Salva Kiir a lot of suffering has been witnessed going by the pictures that have been aired by various media houses.

According to Nobel Women's Initiative, nearly 400,000 people have been displaced by violence that has spread throughout South Sudan since mid-December. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the escalating violence and reports show that a disproportionate number of women have been displaced by the fighting.

United Nations officials and aid workers on the ground have reported increasing cases of gender-based violence, including rape.

A statement released by a group of South Sudanese women expressed concern for the increased suffering of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, and have called for a swift end to the ongoing crisis.

Peace

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, general-secretary of the World Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), recently pointed out that while women bear the brunt of the escalating abuses, they are conspicuously absent from the peace talks that have been ongoing in Addis Ababa since January 4.

Gumbonzvanda had highlighted that there are no female advisers in the delegations or among the mediators participating in the negotiations.

A former Minister for Public Affairs in South Sudan, Josephine Abalang, also advocated for a more inclusive peace talks, saying that women would furnish the dialogue with insightful information about the situation on the ground.

Although a small number of women have been incorporated after complaints, the numbers are not enough.

The United Nations Security Resolution 1325 reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Resolution

UN Security Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.

"We want to see that our people live in harmony and in peace. We are here pushing for peace as women because the majority of the population in South Sudan are women, 65 percent," said Sophia Pak Gai, an opposition negotiator during a press briefing in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Gai said the role of women during war should not be underestimated adding that women suffer a lot as they look after children and food for the whole family in uncomfortable environment.

"Women participate in many fronts by taking



South Sudanese women and children fleeing the wartorn regions of the country as the unrest escalates. PICTURE: KENYAN WOMAN CORRESPONDENT.

care of families, nursing wounded soldiers, preparing food for soldiers and even fighting in the front line," Gai noted.

She said that leaders from both sides should further show true leadership by stopping the bloodletting and displacement of innocent civilians and bring a swift end to the current crisis.

Violence erupted in the capital Juba on December 15, 2013, following what President Salva Kiir describes as an attempted coup led by former Vice President Riek Machar. Fighting between rebels and the government forces has since spread throughout the country and claimed over 1,000 lives. Despite the worsening crisis, negotiations between the warring parties have stalled.

According to Roland Angerer, Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa Plan International, South Sudan urgently needs support from the international community to prevent the country from collapse.

"The great majority of internally displaced people are women and children. We are very concerned about the increasing number of separated and unaccompanied children, possibility of presence of military personnel; women delivering in boats and possibility of children being recruited as fighters in the on-going conflict," Angerer said.

He noted that aid agencies were struggling to find a way how to best address the current crisis, and the figures of the internally displaced persons were likely to be considerably higher than what has been reported as agencies were not able to capture all information of where the IDPs are scattered due to lack of accessibility.

Plan International has been providing supplementary feeding to children as well as pregnant and lactating women in Awerial County in Lakes state and Juba, since the start of the conflict.

Plan South Sudan Country Director, Gyan Adhikari said they had agreed with World Food

Programme (WFP) to start distributing food to 12,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) in Nimule, Magwi County, which is accommodating more than 34,000 displaced people at present.

"Many children are separated from parents when they flee and even in IDP camps people are struggling to get space. Food, safe drinking water, health, sanitation and child protection are major challenges. People are living in fear and they are moving every day to find a place for safe haven," Adhikari said.

He added: "We have come to save the children by bringing them here. Most of the people here are women and children. There are also a few young men who have brought them here before going back to see the situation."

He condemned the use of military force saying it is aggravating the situation.

The delegation of South Sudan's government does not include any women except for three from the opposition. Acting lead negotiator and Minister of Information Michael Makuei said the delegation was appointed by presidential decree.

"What is important is not the gender representation but the achievement of the objective irrespective whether women are represented or not," said Makuei.

Absence

However, UN Women said that for the most part, there was a striking absence of women in formal peace negotiations around the world.

The agency said the role of women as negotiators, mediators, signatories or even witnesses remained notably low.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has known affirmative action for a long time, assigning at least a quarter of seats to women in every party body. In parliament, 100 out of 332 seats are women. According to UN sources, the number of displaced people in South Sudan has shot up from 350,000 to about

487,000 in days and countries neighbouring the strife-torn state are seeing a heavy influx of refugees fleeing the conflict.

About 74,300 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, with the numbers of refugees in Ethiopia estimated at 18,600, Uganda 38,700, Kenya 7,000 and Sudan 10,000.

A young woman, Alwat, 30, who fled the heavy fighting around the city of Bor with her husband Aret, arrived at a camp in Awerial and she gave birth to her second child in the early hours of Friday January 10th.

"The journey was difficult and we were running at night while I was heavily pregnant. My back hurts a lot. We ran from midnight until morning," she said.

"It is the pain. I gave birth here on the ground and it was very cold. I have not seen a doctor, I do not think there is a doctor."

Abior, 18, from Duk County in Jonglei State, is one of the young people who arrived in Mingkamman by boat after a two day journey.

"There was a lot of overcrowding, no food, and no facilities. Children were vomiting. It is very cold on the water and there are a lot of mosquitoes around. I alone spent almost 700 South Sudanese Pounds (\$140) to get here from Duk County," said Abior.

The peace delegations have been in Addis Ababa for negotiations on a cease-fire since the beginning of January. Each delegation consists of 10 members.

The conflict began as a division in South Sudan's ruling party, the SPLM. The party is no stranger to war as it fought against its northern neighbour Sudan for decades.

The conflict continues to produce incredible human suffering, deprivation, fear and forced displacement for an increasing number of children and women forcing women leaders to demand for an opportunity in peace negotiations.

Courtesy of various agencies



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