



Significance of Leadership in Women's Self-Mobilization for Policy Advocacy for Women's Economic Empowerment

**Mary Wambui Kanyi,¹ Grace Bosibori Nyamongo,² Nancy Mahokha
Baraza³ and Mary Lucia Mbithi⁴**

¹Department of Sociology, Social Work and African Women Studies, University of
Nairobi | Kenya

²Department of Sociology, Social Work and African Women Studies, University of
Nairobi | Kenya

³Department of Private Law, University of Nairobi | USA

⁴Department of Economics and Development, University of Nairobi | USA

Abstract

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 has been hailed as the most women friendly constitution among the world's constitutions. It is the outcome of women's effective participation at all stages of the Constitution making process. In addition to the affirmative action provisions which contributed to quantitative representation of women in decision-making institutions at different levels, the Constitution has many provisions aimed at addressing women's practical and strategic gender needs. Women's constitutional gains have been ascribed to women's self-mobilization to influence the Constitution making process. The question this Paper is interrogating is whether the strategies women used to influence the Constitution making process could be replicated in influencing the formulation and implementation of economic policies so as to enhance women's economic empowerment with similar outcomes.

The Paper analyses some of the strategies that women used to ensure their concerns were entrenched in the Constitution and underscores the significance of committed and strategic leadership for the success of any of the strategies women used during the Constitution making process. The

Paper concludes that similar leadership would be crucial in influencing the economic policies. The Paper is based on secondary data gathered from internet sources and publications on women's participation in the Constitution making process in Kenya. The authors have also put in undocumented information based on her personal experiences in the Constitution making process.

Key words: Affirmative action, Constitution, Economic Empowerment, Leadership, self-mobilization, social capital

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Paper

Women organizing themselves in groups for various purposes is not a recent phenomenon. It is common at all levels of society - global, regional, and local. The unprecedented engagement of different women's groups, at different levels, is basically provoked by a need to combine consciousness raising with political and social action (Afolayan 2019). To raise the consciousness of the different women's groups on the 'perceived' need and mobilise them for targeted actions, requires committed, focused, and strategic leadership. To sustain the momentum over several decades, as it happened during the Constitution of Kenya Review Process, required visionary and very passionate and committed leaders as the carriers of the vision. Unfortunately, though there exists a vast body of scholarly works on 'women's movement,' they all suggest that 'women's movement' is a collection of different groups with diverse patterns of organisations and different goals (Abdullah, 2018; Tripp, 2004; Amadiume, 2000). There has been little attention on the role of the leadership in the women's movement.

Women's movement is not a new phenomenon in Kenya, either. Its origins lie in the precolonial period, when women formed self-help groups and work parties to assist one another during periods of economic or social stress (Oduol & Kabira, 1995). In recent times, such mobilization was demonstrated by the role women collectively played during the Constitution making process in Kenya. With a focused leadership women mobilized themselves around a common agenda to influence the creation of a more women friendly new Constitution. Kenyan women used collective forms of agency to tackle the structures of gender injustice (Kabeer, 2020). They employed diverse strategies that were devised by the leadership and diffused at all levels. The outcome of their collective action, effective strategies and strategic leadership was the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which has been hailed as the most women friendly constitution among the world's constitutions. Women's constitutional gains have been ascribed to the effective

women's self-mobilization to influence the Constitution making process. It is worth noting that the significance of women's leadership has not been given the significance it deserves in most of the literature focusing on women's self-mobilization during the Constitution making process. It is this gap that this Paper seeks to address. The argument is that committed, focused and strategic leadership will be more effective in influencing economic policies to promote women's economic empowerment in Kenya.

The Paper is based on information gathered from existing literature in published books, journals and website sources as well as personal experience of the first author who was actively involved in the Constitution making process. The Paper underscores the significance of committed, strategic and focused leadership for the success of the women's agenda as entrenched in the Kenyan Constitution.

1.1 Problem Statement

It is more than ten years since the promulgation on August 10th, 2010, of one of the most women friendly, among the existing constitutions around the world. The Kenya Constitution 2010 includes provisions for affirmative action for increased women's participation in decision-making institutions, including the national and county governments as well as other constitutional bodies. Unfortunately, the women of Kenya are yet to enjoy their rights and privileges enshrined in the new Constitution such as the right to opportunities in economic spheres (COK 27:3) and economic and social rights (COK 43:1). Due to the existing gender power dynamics, they lack ownership and/or control to productive resources as well as access to the more lucrative employment opportunities. They comprise the majority of an estimated 38.9% Kenyans living below the poverty line. This is despite the fact that since independence, poverty reduction has been one of the key government development agenda in Kenya.

According to Karanja, the High Commissioner for Kenya to the Commonwealth (1966),

The economic task that face us, and in fact faces most of the African countries, is rapid economic development. I believe that it is in this area that the effectiveness and success of all our governments will be judged, (p289)

Subsequent Governments have had poverty reduction as a key agenda in their development agenda. It is during the Nyayo era that poverty reduction

consultations took place; in the Kibaki era - the Vision 2030 Development Blueprint was designed; while in the Uhuru era - the Four Development Agenda was planned. Despite these initiatives spanning more than half a century, a significant proportion of Kenyans that is 38.9 per cent (KNBS, 2020), live below the poverty line according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Throughout Kenyan independent history, women have comprised the majority of Kenyans living below the poverty line. According to (Kariuki, 2013), *“poverty develops a feminine face as it becomes more of a women issue than men’s. Thus, men are less ravaged by poverty compared to women”* (p. 372). The situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as *“most of the economic activities have so far been slowed down by restrictions resulting from containment and cessation of sections of the population, the nationwide curfew and stoppage of international passenger travel”*, (KNBS, 2020. p. 9) all of which affected the service sector where the majority of the women entrepreneurs are involved.

There have been various public and private initiatives towards women’s economic empowerment and poverty reduction. For example, the Kenya Government has established several funds such as the Women’s Enterprise Fund, the Uwezo Fund, the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF), the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO), among others, aimed at promoting women’s economic empowerment. However, it is worth noting that such initiatives have been male driven and women have been on the periphery as a result of their marginalization in economic decision-making institutions and processes.

Though women have organised themselves into economic empowerment groups that are involved in diverse activities, such as table banking and merry-go-round, which are to be found throughout the country, they have not widely mobilized themselves for economic empowered as they had done during the Constitution making process. Consequently, most of their collective initiatives remain small, with limited impact towards women’s economic empowerment and have not bridged the gender gap as women continue to bear the brunt of poverty. To mobilize themselves in the magnitude they did in influencing the Constitution making, there needs to emerge focused and strategic leadership committed to women’s economic leadership. According to Kabira (2018),

Women have not yet made fundamental changes but there is room for moving forward to the destination which we keep defining and clarifying. We must continue to focus on how to think differently and from feminist theoretical standpoints. We must conceptualise our “utu” feminist alternatives and add politics, economy, social-cultural changes, and gender equality, among others (p. 4). Women must therefore embark on the journey towards the next season of harvest (p. 15)

The journey towards the realization of a just and equitable society, including equitable distribution of resources has started. However, to realize this goal calls for a committed, focused, and strategic leadership within the women’s movement.

1.2 Justification of the Study

Empowering women economically will not only be fundamental for gender equality but instrumental in realizing the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly those linked to social transformation, among them, No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth and Reduced Inequality, among others. Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) comprises women’s ability to participate equally in existing markets; have access to and control over productive resources; have access to decent work; control over their own time, life, and body; and increased voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions.

In addition, empowering women in the economy and bridging existing gender gaps is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as enabling women to effectively contribute to the GDP which will boost productivity, *“increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes”* (UN Women) as well as contribute towards women’s participation in the political arena. This Paper will add to the existing literature on possible strategies and interventions for promoting women’s economic empowerment.

1.3 Methodology

This Paper uses secondary data from research papers, journals and published books, research papers found in hard copies and on the website. The data collection included desk review of the research papers, journal articles and published books found in hard copies and on the website. The first author also uses information from personal experience as she was actively involved in the Constitution making process.

2.0 Background and Context

Human societies are characterized by a distinctive division of labour between males and females, leading to gender roles. Traditionally females dominated the reproductive roles that were critical for the sustainability of their families and communities. Men, on the other hand, dominated the lucrative decision-making roles. According to Mbugua, women's place in the traditional society was always defined by an unequal relationship between women and men in both private and public spaces. Maria Nzomo (2018) notes that *“human relations, including gender relations are fundamentally organized around power relations”* (p 45).

Since time immemorial women have been collectively mobilizing themselves to address concerns relating to these unequal gender power relations. According to Afolayan (2018), *“the unprecedented engagement of different women's groups, is basically provoked by a need to combine consciousness raising with political and social action”* (p 2). This engagement towards a common agenda maybe at different levels. For example, at the global level women organized themselves to push their agenda during the United Nations World Conferences on women held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, and Beijing in 1995. The outcome of the fourth conference, held in Beijing, China were the twelve critical areas of concern whose aim was to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The twelve critical areas are:

- Women and Poverty;
- Education and Training of Women;
- Women and Health;
- Violence against Women;
- Women and armed Conflict;
- Women and the Economy;
- Women in Power and Decision-Making;
- Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women;
- Human Rights of Women;
- Women and the Media;
- Women and the Environment;
- the Girl-Child.

After the Beijing Conference, women have come together every five years and held conferences at New York, the USA, to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Women have also engaged on regional levels to push for their agenda. Such were the Istanbul Convention European Union (2011) for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the African Maputo Protocol (Bonini).

Women have also been mobilizing themselves at local levels. In Bangladesh, for example, the women's movement has been marked by the activism of poor women, who have not only raised their voices against subjugation concerns but have also fought domestic violence (Kabeer, 1988; Ahmed, 2004; Jahan, 2018). In the USA poor women, especially coloured women, have reconfigured the priorities of the women's movement and sustained it against all odds (Wolfe and Tucker, 2018) in South Africa women unified to resist the pass law through organized protests that lasted for days. In Cameroon, women resisted colonial rule and sanctioned male dominance through name shaming rituals of those who disrespected them. But these gains were progressively eroded as the new African states came into being. *"The gains made during the liberation struggles were quickly being clawed back, shrinking women's space and public roles in nation building"* (Mbugua, May 2017 p 2).

The origins of the women's movement in Kenya lie in the precolonial period, when women formed self-help groups and work parties to assist one another during periods of economic or social stress (Oduol & Kabira, 1995). It was a major strategy in their struggle against marginalization in leadership and decision-making at all levels. Their aim was to restructure the social order that condemned them to poverty, poor governance, corruption and poor leadership. According to Kabira (2018), *"in all our communities there are examples of women organizing to deal with their social-historic and economic situations"* (p14). Mbugua notes that *"women struggled for equal treatment with men during pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa"* (p 1). According to Aili Mari Trip (2001), *"the 1990s was a decade of beginnings for women in politics in Africa and all indications are that we will see even greater pressures for female political representation and participation in the decade ahead"*, (p 1). The desire to improve their situation in society is what motivated Kenyan women to become actively involved in the Constitution making process in their country with the aim of reclaiming their place as equal human beings where their experiences, knowledge and world view may find their way into shaping the destiny of their nation, our nation, for the benefit of all.

They were negotiating with a society which had for centuries not accorded them their place as equal members, delegating them to the margin when it came to power and decision-making and treating them like children of a lesser god. *“Women seized the Constitution making opportunity to change the mainstream that had been guided by patriarchal philosophies, systems and structures, a mainstream guided by the philosophy of male power that privileges male values while marginalizing female values and philosophies.”* (Kabira, 2018 p2).

The Constitution review process provided an opportunity to address women’s marginalization by entrenching the affirmative action that they had been agitating for since the 1990s. The struggle for affirmative action was driven by the popular critical mass theory at the time. After years of unsuccessful struggle to have Parliament legislate the affirmative action for women’s increased leadership in decision-making, they seized the constitutional review route to realize this goal. Since women’s leadership had already been mobilizing and sensitizing women countrywide to support the affirmative action, *“their collective action and agency became very instrumental in negotiating for a gender-progressive constitution”*, (Domingo, McCullough, Florence 2017 p8) during the Constitution making process whose outcome was a constitution that has been hailed as the most women friendly among the existing constitutions around the world’s constitutions. This was as a result of a focused women’s leadership, at all levels, throughout the review process. Kabira (2012) vividly presents the significance of women’s leadership in the following excerpt, noting,

For many years, Kenyans were involved in the search for a new constitutional dispensation. For many of us women leader, our focus had been ensuring that women’s interests were taken on board the process and in the body and soul of the new constitution. As we used to say during the constitution making process, we breathed the constitution – the water and food had the taste of a draft constitution, and even roses smelt like the draft constitution. We were involved in negotiating the law for the review process, in collecting the views from the public, collating the views and in drafting of the new constitution (p. 1)

She notes, *“the story of women and constitution making in Kenya is the story of women’s struggle towards a new constitutional dispensation. It is the journey of thousands, of millions of Kenyan women. It is our collective story, the women’s story”* (Kabira, 2012, p 3). According to Aili Mari Trip (2001), *“the 1990s was a decade of beginnings for women in politics in Africa and all*

indications are that we will see even greater pressures for female political representation and participation in the decade ahead” (p 1).

It is worth noting that focused and strategic leadership was very instrumental in mobilizing women to influence the outcome of the Constitution making process. Through focused and strategic leadership, Kenyan women mobilized themselves and actively and effectively participated in every stage of the Constitution making process. Their efforts to influence the Constitution making process were rewarded abundantly in the outcome of a constitution that has been hailed as the most women friendly among the existing constitutions around the world. In the words of Domingo, McCullough, Florence (2017) the Kenya Constitution 2010,

Is a progressive text that advances women’s participation on political, social, and economic life and establishes important gains on women’s rights and gender equality. In terms of the normative content, it establishes an ambitious Bill of Rights that contains specific gains in relation to women;s rights – as well as on the justifiability of rights. The Constitution also establishes a set of values and principles trumping any discriminatory law, practice, or action – including in relation to customary norms and tradition. Affirmative action measures compensate for historical inequality and discrimination – an especially important victory for women. It furthermore sets up an institutional framework of checks and balances, including through strengthening judicial review something women activists actively lobbied for. In sum, the Constitution potentially provides an enabling institutional architecture for the realisation and protection of women’s rights and gender equality principles.

Since the promulgation of the new Constitution on August 10, 2010, women’s organizations returned to their individual agenda. This is despite the fact that Kenyan women are yet to enjoy the rights and privileges enshrined in the new Constitution such as the right to opportunities in economic spheres (COK 27:3) and economic and social rights (COK 43:1). Due to existing gender power dynamics, they lack ownership and control to productive resources as well as access to well-paid employment opportunities thus comprising the majority of an estimated 38.9% Kenyan’s living below the poverty line. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated this situation with women being hit the most by the pandemic. This is despite the many initiatives by women themselves such as table banking and merry-go-round, which development public and private partners

have found to be a convenient entry to support women's economic empowerment by giving them seed funding in the form of grants and loans. This Paper argues that the continued feminization of poverty is due to lack of focused leadership for women's self-mobilization for economic empowerment. Learning from the Constitution making process a focused women's leadership will be able to mobilize women to influence economic policies for Women's Economic Empowerment at all levels.

3.0 Strategies that Worked for Women During the Constitution Making Process

To realize their goal in the Constitution making process, the women leaders ably led the women by coming up with key strategies. This section discusses some of the key strategies that worked for women and led to the resounding success in negotiating for the inclusion of women's issues in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The strategies included unity of purpose among the Kenyan women leaders; collaborative resource mobilization; networking and collaboration; lobbying and advocacy; and targeting the gatekeepers in the process. The success of these strategies was dependent on the leadership that steered women towards the realization of the constitutional gains. Though there are different definitions of leadership, this study uses leadership to mean *the act to influence other people's behaviour so that they can be driven towards a certain goal* (Miftah Thoha, 2013; 121).

On the other hand, Iswahyuni (2021) refers to a leader as,

Someone that is capable and has the abilities to influence and guide others to work together towards a common goal. Someone who leads by initiating, ordering, moving, organizing, oand controlling others' action towards a common goal in the process of influencing the group by devising a plan for the common goal (p. 239)

3.1 Unity of Purpose among the Kenyan Women Leaders

The 1990s saw the emergence of many women's organizations, among them the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya chapter, *ABANTU for Development*, the League of Kenya Women Voters (LKVV), the Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness (CREAW), the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW),

the Education Centre for Women in Democracy (*ECWD*), the Kenya Women Political Caucus (*KWPC*) and the Women Political Alliance – Kenya (*WPA-K*), the Green Belt Movement, the Business and Professional Women’s Organization and the African Women and Children Feature Service (*AWCFS*), the League of Muslim Women in Kenya, the *Family Support Institute (FSI)*, the Widows and Orphans Welfare Society of Kenya (*WOWESOK*), among others. The leadership of the women’s organizations was united and focused on one common women’s agenda: Affirmative Action (*AA*). Earlier women’s CSOs such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake (*MYWO*), the National Council of Women of Kenya (*NCWK*), media organizations, including the *Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK)* were also looped into this great women’s movement. According to Kabira (2012), “*thousands of women who had been in the struggle came together, walked on this path, hundreds of them, tens of thousands of women*” (p 4). According to Tripp, “*despite the many divisive factors and intersectionalities, the women’s agenda trumped the imperative of ethnically based patronage*” (p7). The women leaders unified women from all walks of life to speak in one voice.

3.2 Research, Data Collection and Gender Analysis

Research was a critical aspect for women in an effort to equip themselves with evidence-based policy advocacy on issues of critical concern to African women. According to Kabira (2012), at a meeting organized by the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (*CCGD*) in January 1998, Prof Okoth Ogendo made women realize the need to prepare themselves with relevant knowledge in the process of reviewing the Constitution (p 31). In order to arm themselves with knowledge and articulate women’s issues in the Constitution, women carried out a lot of research, using diverse research methods.

The research took the form of feminist research with the researchers holding the view that “*women have been subordinated through men’s greater power, variously expressed in different arenas*” (Kabira & Maloyi, 2018, p 11) and they saw the constitutional moment as an opportunity to correct this situation. Literature review was key to understanding what was happening in other parts of Africa and the world on issues pertinent to women such as affirmative action for increased representation in decision-making institutions and processes and other fundamental rights for women and girls such as citizenship, land ownership, gender-based violence, among many others. This was done by feminist and social science researchers, both from the research institutions such as the University of Nairobi among them Prof Maria Nzomo and Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Dr

Ruth Kibiti, Prof Shanyisia A. Khasian and from women's organizations as well as consultants such as Mr. Wachira Maina and Billington Mwangi Gituto, among many others. There were also researchers from the women's civil society organisations such as the author, Mary Wambui Kanyi, Ayoo Odiko, Rosemary Mueni and Margaret Wanjiku Nguniri from the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD). Other women's organizations involved in the research included, FIDA Kenya, ABANTU and CREAM, among many others. The research findings were shared with women leaders and organizations from all walks of life at consultative meetings and national forums to enable women articulate and own up the issues. This empowered women with information that enabled them to confidently knock at any door and lobby for support for women's issues.

Kenyan women also learnt from what was happening in the region, particularly from the implementation of Affirmative Action in Uganda and Rwanda which had already entrenched the affirmative action principle for women's participation in Parliament in their constitutions. The Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) took the lead by organizing in 2001 a national workshop and invited the Hon Winnie Byanyima (Founder, Forum for Women in Democracy {FOWODE}, which champions women's equal participation in decision-making in Uganda¹) to come and share with their Kenyan counterparts the experience of the Ugandan women with the District Affirmative Action mechanism. The Workshop was held at the Pan Africa Hotel, Nairobi at the height of the constitution consultations in Kenya.

In 2003, the CCGD sent three female National Constitutional Conference (NCC) delegates on a benchmarking tour to Rwanda, among them the author, Dr Ruth Kibiti (UON) and Caroline Wambui Nganga, chair of the NCC Committee on representation of the people. The three were commissioned to go and learn about how the Affirmative Action initiative was being implemented in Rwanda. Upon their return, they shared with the Kenyan women what they had heard, read, and seen in Rwanda, so as to enable them to make informed choices on the issue.

Research was, thus, a key strategy for Kenyan women as they strived to get facts on the women's constitutional agenda. Equipped with factual information gathered through research, women were able to confidently debate and present their agenda at any fora and lobby and advocate for it with anyone who could influence the review process in their favour. This contributed to their great

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/authors/winniebyanyima>

success in entrenching the women's agenda in the making of the constitution of Kenya.

3.3 Remaining Vigilant

Furthermore, women remained vigilant and, under the able leadership particularly of academicians, such as Dr Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira and women leaders such as Martha Koome, the Hon Martha Karua, and the Hon Charity Ngilu, among many others, they monitored every step of the review process. Women in the different review organs would pass information to the leaders in the women's movement and they would agree on the appropriate action to ensure the women's agenda was protected at every stage. For example, while drafting the legislation on the review process, women parliamentarians would inform the women leaders and avail the draft law. Gender analysts by the women in the movement, would then quickly carry out a gender analysis of the proposed legislation and share the findings with the women parliamentarians as well as lobby other male parliamentarians to support the women's agenda.

When the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) was putting in place the review structures or preparing their reports, the women commissioners became very handy in sharing the information with the women's movement. The women would quickly carry out a gender analysis of such materials. They identified any gender gaps and/or any gains and came up with recommendations to bridge the gaps and safeguard their gains. The findings were shared at the national women leaders' consensus building forums where they would agree on what position to take. The information was also packaged in simplified forms and circulated among the women leaders who cascaded it to their constituents at the different levels and in the different parts of the country. These recommendations would be shared, not just with the women commissioners but also with the male commissioners at lobbying sessions organized by the women lobbyists. This ensured that all the regulations and legislations and other documents linked to the constitutional review process emanating from Parliament and/or the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission took the women's agenda on board.

3.4 Consensus Building among Women

The women's movement for the Constitution review was very well coordinated at all levels. At the national level women leaders built consensus on the specific women's constitutional issues, among them citizenship, affirmative

action, right to own property including land, elimination of gender-based violence, social and economic rights (GoK, 43), including right to education, health, and food, among others. The leaders of the women's organizations put in place coordination units that would bring together the leadership for consultations as well as geographical mapping to prevent overlaps among the various organizations. The women leadership, drawn from different walks of life, including the Hon Phoebe Asiyo, the Hon Charity Ngilu, the Hon Martha Karua, the Hon Wangari Mathai, the Hon Julia Ojiambo, the Hon Tabitha Seii, Rukia Subow, Dr Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Martha Koome, the current Chief Justice of Kenya, Jane Kiano, Wanjiru Kihoro, among others, would come together and set the agenda. This would then be cascaded to the next level of institutional leadership, comprising Executive Directors and Program administrators such as Jane Ogot, Cecilia Kimemia, Deborah Okumu, Mary Njeri Gichuru, *Jane Wambui Thuo*, *Maimuna Mwidau*, *Wambui Kanyi*, among many other women leaders. They would then mobilize their networks, social capital members, affiliates and constituents, at all levels, on the common women's constitutional agenda. These organizations had their regional representatives who would get the information and sensitize women in their respective regions. For example, the CCGD had Alicen Chelaite in Central Rift Valley and Martha Rop in Moi's Bridge, Eldoret, Jane K. Kamwaga in Murang'a, Caroline Akinyi from Migori, Rhoda Maende from Makeni, Mumina Konso in Isiolo, Happy Gloria from Busia, Beatrice Mwaringa from Mombasa, among others. This ensured a national coverage and nationwide mobilization of women in support of their constitutional agenda, including the Affirmative Action, for women's participation in decision-making at all levels. It also ensured that women from all walks of life, NGOs leaders, Members of Parliament, the academia, executives and women leaders from grassroots organizations and groups, were part of the women's constitutional movement. It was a very inclusive process. It was a moment in the history of the women of Kenya when their diversity relating to skills, region of residence, ethnicity, religious and political affiliations and class, among other allegiances, became a source of strength for the movement. They identified each one's strengths and social capital amongst themselves and utilized them for the realization of the movement's goal and objectives.

Kabira (2012) notes that "*the struggle for women's liberation was a long and tedious and the concerted efforts and utilization of all available human resources, skills and expertise as well as financial resources from the various women NGOs and development partners was used*" (p338). Women at all levels

were thus equipped with the same message regarding the women's agenda in the Constitution. They were able to take a common stand on the women's constitutional agenda at any forum, whether at the national or grassroots level. This was critical in the lobbying and advocacy, as well as influencing the policies related to the constitutional review process.

3.5 Training and Capacity Building

Women came from different background and had diverse skills. The women leaders, therefore, coordinated and organized training workshops at both the national and regional levels to equip them with relevant skills for moving the women's agenda. Numerous training and capacity building workshops were held at national and regional levels to equip women leaders with relevant knowledge, skills and information related to their role during the process. For example, women lobbyists were equipped with lobbying and advocacy skills. This made them confident in lobbying support for the women's agenda with diverse stakeholders. Others were involved in conducting civic education at the community level and were similarly equipped with skills and an information pack, including civic education manuals, to effectively conduct civic education.

3.6 Mobilization of Women's Social Capital and other Resources

Women leaders volunteered their social capital, economic and other resources at the women's movement disposal. Coleman (1988) defines social capital by its function "*as a structure of relations between and among individuals*" (p. 98). The '*durable networks*', '*social ties*' and '*structure of relations*' is important in understanding how social capital works.

Firstly, networks facilitate the flow of information. An individual with connections in strategic locations can gain information about opportunities otherwise unknown (or unseen). Allied to this is the second function of influence. Connections in high places can not only give access to information but also exert influence in favour of the individual. Finally, networks provide reinforcements of identity and recognition. Members of social groups with similar interests and resources derive identity from their membership and claim to resources of the group (Lin, 1999). The women leaders enabled the women lobbyists to access and lobby their colleagues in the political and other positions of influence. For example, the Hon Phoebe Asiyo would organize meetings with the former Prime Minister H.E Raila Odinga, the Hon Julia Ojiambo would organise meetings with the late Minister for Justice Hon Mutula Kilonzo while the late Jane Kiano would

enable women to access the former leader of the opposition, the Hon Uhuru Kenyatta. Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira would organize meetings with commissioners of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC), including the Chairman, Prof Yash Ghai, among other key personalities such as Members of Parliament. In addition to the social capital, women leaders, willingly volunteered their resources to facilitate women's participation in the Constitution making process. For example, when there were no external donor funds for women to hold consultative meetings in the hotels, the late Kamla Sikand would volunteer her homestead in Westlands for women to meet and brainstorm on strategic moves to protect their gains in the draft constitution. On sunny days meetings were held outdoors while during rainy days meetings would be held on her picturesque veranda. During such meetings she provided meals, including lunch and her sweet banana cakes thus volunteering both spatial and financial resources to the women's movement.

3.7 Lobbying and Advocacy

The women's leadership strategically identified the gate keepers at all levels of the Constitution making process, the community, the executive, and the legislature/Parliament. Women's intersectionalities of class, ethnicity became an important asset for the women's movement during the Constitution making process in Kenya. This is the area where women's intersectionalities came in handy as the social capital among them was useful in getting the gatekeepers everywhere and at every level. They established lobbying and advocacy committees. Through the able and focused leadership, the women identified influential individuals and institutions such as parliamentarians and the national executive as well as CKRC and organized sessions to market their agenda to various stakeholders. The women leaders employed various strategies to market women's constitutional agenda to the different stakeholders. They skilfully employed appropriate strategies for each stakeholder. They included consultative meetings, one-on-one physical meetings, or telephone calls. Whichever strategy was used, the objective was the same: market and lobby the stakeholder's support for the common women's agenda in the Constitution, using pre-prepared information kits.

3.8 Collaborative Resource Mobilization

For effective self-mobilization at national and grassroots levels, which included awareness creation, training, and capacity building, lobbying and advocacy,

aimed at mainstreaming women's agenda in the constitution, Kenyan women required massive human and financial resources. Under the able and focused leadership at the time, women's organizations developed common home-grown programmes such as the Engendering Political Party Processes (EPPP) which evolved into Gender and Governance Programme. They mobilized resources from the international donor community, mainly through fund raising. The EPPP

EPPP was implemented for 18 months leading to the 2002 elections while GGP II was implemented in the period leading to the 2007 elections. The Programme and Finance Management (PFM) for the GGP II was by Action Aid Kenya (AAK) from 2002-2004 before management was transferred to UN Women in July 2006 following review recommendations. The first phase of GGP II was funded by governments of Canada, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The second phase, which had a budget close to US\$ 5 million, was funded by Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK, and Sweden and had a total of 30 implementing partners. GGP II, a 3 year programme (2009-2011) was funded by the governments of Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Canadian International Agency (CIDA). The programme has a total funding of US\$ 12.1 million supporting between 22-26 implementign partners. (p. 7)

was coordinated by the then two broad women's networks comprising the Kenya Women Political Caucus (KWPC) and the Women Political Alliance, Kenya and was supported by several donors. Zimbizi, K'Opiyo and Owiti (2011) state,

Other donors, not is the funding basket, also continued to support the women's common agenda. Domingo, McCullough, Florence (2017) report,

Such collaborative programmes enabled the Kenyan women, through their national and grassroots leaders, to clearly articulate, programme and implement their collective agenda.

Some of this funding was flexible, which allowed women's groups and civil society groups to access funding for short term initiatives in the lead up to the 2010 Referendum on the Constitution (p. 9)

3.9 Networking and Collaboration

Kenyans from diverse background who felt the need to entrench their rights in the Constitution were actively involved in the Constitution making process. The majority of them, were those, who, like the women, felt they were victims of marginalization in the Kenyan society. These groups included the Kenyan youths, marginalized communities, religious minorities and persons with disabilities, children's rights and human rights organizations. Others were groups from the media fraternity and the labour unions. The women identified these groups and forged strategic alliances and lobbied them to adopt and advance the women's constitutional agenda and vice versa. This, more particularly, was made possible because women constituted an indispensable component among those other stakeholders.

3.10 Challenges for Employing Similar Strategies to Influence Economic Policies

To think that employing the strategies women employed during the Constitution making process for the purpose of influencing economic policies will contribute to promoting women's economic empowerment may be a little simplistic. This is because it was easier for women to engage in organized collective action in the Constitution making process since the Constitution embodied the interests of their various intersectionalities. However, women are involved in diverse economic activities. For example, there are women employed in the private or public sectors, others are self-employed, and some are unemployed. There are women entrepreneurs of various enterprises and of various sizes, there are women farmers, there are women who are home managers. These different economic sectors require different economic policies and programmes.

A different set of challenges face women who are engaged in informal livelihood activities, running their own enterprises and farms or working as casual wage labourers. While they make up the majority of working women in the global South, there are few trade unions. Moreover, the dispersed nature of their activities, the irregularity of their earnings, their location at the intersection of multiple inequalities, the social and self-devaluation of their work and, very frequently, their lack of awareness of any rights they might enjoy, make the spontaneous emergence of self-organized collective action unlikely (Kabeer, p 5) if not impossible. Strategic, focused and committed leadership will, therefore, be required to mobilize women nationwide, to influence economic policies so as to promote women's economic empowerment.

The human society has been characterized by unequal power relations between men and women with the latter being the disempowered sex. In an effort to address various concerns relating to this unequal gender power relations, women have been collectively mobilizing themselves at the local, national, and global levels. The Kenyan women's efforts were abundantly rewarded with a women friendly constitution. However, though the women's constitutional gains have seen an increase of women in decision-making institutions and positions, there has been little impact on the transformation of the lives of most women as they continue to languish in abject poverty.

It is therefore of utmost importance to embark on a common agenda aimed at empowering women economically. This is not only fundamental for gender equality but instrumental in realizing the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly those linked to social transformation, among them, No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Good Health and Well-being; Quality Education; Gender Equality; Clean Water and Sanitation; Affordable and Clean Energy; Decent Work and Economic Growth and Reduced Inequality, among others. As illustrated in this section, the success of the women's economic empowerment program requires broad ownership among the Kenyan women, as per Kabira's proverbial saying, it must be a *journey of thousands, of millions of Kenyan women* (Kabira, 2012, p1) with their leaders marching together showing the way to women's economic empowerment. It will also require the collaborative support of both local and international donor agencies willing to walk with the Kenyan women's movement leaders and offer both economic and technical support in their economic empowerment journey until their collective dream is realized. Enormous resources will be required to conduct research, training, and capacity building; to strengthen women's self-mobilization; policy advocacy for WEE; strategic targeting and lobbying opinion shapers; and as Kenyan women learnt from the Constitution making process, it is doable.

4.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

4.1 Recommendations

- Conduct research and identify economic sectors where the majority stakeholders are women and design strategic interventions, including policies and programmes, for promoting women's economic empowerment. Through a consultative process with the women leaders in the selected sectors, build consensus and mobilize women to own and support the agenda. Market the concept of women's economic

empowerment (WEE) and the identified interventions as common women's agenda among women civil society leaders; women politicians, among others, and mobilize their support.

- Leadership is critical for the realization of women's collective gains. Therefore, there is need for a committed, strategic, focused and passionate women leaders within the women's movement for women to realize their collective economic empowerment. The women leaders from the identified sectors, must therefore, be united in the struggle for women's economic empowerment. They must mobilize their followers or constituents to own and support the common women's economic empowerment agenda.
- The National and County Governments must prioritize gender-sensitive budgeting and allocate adequate resources towards advancing women and girls rights (The Hunger Project, 2021, p6).
- Women's economic empowerment must take a multisectoral collaboration approach involving the different stakeholders such as women's organizations; the media fraternity; local and external donors, as well as the County and National Governments. Implementation of the strategies women employed will require a lot of resources both human and financial. Therefore, both local and international donors, must be willing to invest in programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment. The donors should increase *"the quality and quantity of funding available to support women in public life through the creation and financing of specific funds that prioritize direct funding to women's organizations and feminist movements"*, (The Hunger Project, 2021, p7).
- *Conscientization* and capacity building of women leaders, women's organizations and groups at all levels to ensure they are speaking in a common voice or women's collective voice in matters relating to economic policies and programmes.
- Educate and create awareness among the various stakeholders on the impact of women economic empowerment, and vice versa, at the family, community and national levels
- Collaborative monitoring of the implementation of women friendly economic policies and programs relating to poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment at all levels.

- Conduct a needs assessment of women’s NGOs, CBOs and groups to identify strategies for strengthening them in an effort to ensure their sustainability including adequate funding
- Mainstream women in all economic and development policies at both the County and National Governments.
- Develop tools for gender responsive budgeting, including monitoring and evaluating county and national governments budgets.
- Technology is very important for economic empowerment in this day and age. Therefore, there is need to develop policies on training women, including women entrepreneurs, in the use of technology to promote their economic empowerment.
- Finally, identify strategic partnerships, including strengthening collaboration between women’s NGOs, CBOs and groups with other stakeholders, including the media, local and external donors and the County and National Governments

4.2 Conclusion

Kenyan women have demonstrated that, with committed, focused, and strategic leadership, it is possible to rise above the various intersectionalities that divide them and join their forces for a common agenda, as they did during the Constitution making process. However, though they realized the constitutional gains, more than ten years since the promulgation of a very women friendly constitution in August 2010, the majority of them are still languishing in poverty. It is, therefore, important for the women leaders and organizations concerned about women’s empowerment to once again mobilize the women to set on another journey for women’s economic liberation. However, it will be important to take into consideration the fact that women are involved in diverse economic activities, and it may be important to conduct a baseline survey to identify economic activities and sectors where the majority of women are involved and that may have a greater impact in promoting WEE. This information will be important in strategically identifying, through a consultative process, the economic policies and programs that will have the greatest impact in promoting WEE.

It will also be important to identify women leaders and organizations/groups involved in the identified sectors to be part of the drivers of WEE. A strong, committed, focused and strategic women’s leadership should be

established around the selected sectors. Through a consultative process the women leaders can set the common agenda, sensitization, training, and capacity building. The women leadership should own up the agenda and take lead in mobilizing women as well as lobbying support for the agenda at all levels. This will result in a formidable women's force to influence policy makers and society at large on the significance of women's economic empowerment in promoting development and poverty reduction at the family, the community, and the society at large. This will require massive resources, both financial and human. To cater for this, women leaders must be willing to mobilize resources from local and international donors to enable them implement targeted activities to realize their goal. This will contribute to the transformation of economic policies at the county and national levels and to the promotion of women's economic empowerment. This will greatly contribute not only to women's economic empowerment but also to the overall national development and poverty reduction and the realization of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

References

- Abdullah, Hussaina, (1995). *Wifeism and Activism: The Nigerian Women's Movement*; chapter in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms* 1st Edition Routledge eBook ISBN9780429492921
- Afolayan, Gbenga. (2019). *Hausa-Fulani Women's Movement and Womanhood*. Agenda. 33. 1-9. 10.1080/10130950.2019.1609786
- Ahmed, S. (2004). *Affective Economies*. Social Text 22(2), 117-139. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/55780>.
- Amadiume, Ifi; Rutherford, Blair, (2000). *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion & Culture Anthropologica; Waterloo Vol. 42, Iss. 2,; p243*
- Bonini, Valentina and Rahime Erbaş, (2021). *The 10th Anniversary of Istanbul Convention Italian – Turkish Conference Pisa, 18th June 2021, Pisa University Press*.
- Coleman, James S, (1988). *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*. American Journal of Sociology: Vol. 94, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure, pp. S95-S120 (26 pages); Published By: The University of Chicago Press

- Dana Wittmer, Women's Leadership_SSRN-id1643682.pdf
- Dennis Tourish, (2014). Leadership, more or less? A processual, communication perspective on the role of agency in leadership theory, sagepub.co.uk/journals
- Dianova News, (2018). Poverty vs. Empowerment of Women in Kenya.
- Domingo, Pilar and Aoife McCullough with Florence Simbiri and Bernadette Wanjala. (2017). Women and Power: Shaping the Development of Kenya's 2010 Constitution ODI Research Reports.
- Emmanuelle Bouilly, Ophélie Rillon & Hannah Cross, (2016). African women's struggles in a gender perspective, Review of African Political Economy; <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2016.1216671>
- Houlihan, Erin C., (2019). Women Constitution-Makers: Comparative Experiences with Representation, Participation and Influence First Annual Women Constitution-Makers' Dialogue, Edinburgh, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral (2020) Assistance.
- <http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/2322UN%20Women%20Analysis%20on%20Women%20and%20SDGs.pdf>
- https://ke.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2014/01/women_in_political_leadership_in_kenya-_access_influence-.pdf
- International Monetary Fund (2018). *Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment* <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31/pp053118pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment>
- Iswahyuni, Angela Efianda, (2021). Political Leadership and Transactional Leadership in (c) International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v8i9.3020>
- Jahan, Roushan, Men in Seclusion, (1995). Women in Public: Rokeya's Dream and Women's Struggles in Bangladesh chapter in The Challenge of Local Feminisms 1st Edition, Routledge eBook ISBN9780429492921
- Kabeer, Naila, (2020). Three Faces of Agency in Feminist Economics: Capabilities, Empowerment and Citizenship.
- Kabira, Nkatha, (2020). Constitutionalizing Traveling Feminisms in Kenya.

- Kabira, Wanjiku M. & Maloiy, Lanoi, (2018). *Feminism and Feminist Research Methods*, African Women Studies Centre University of Nairobi.
- Kabira, Wanjiku M. (2012). *Time for Harvest: Women and Constitution Making in Kenya*, University of Nairobi Press.
- Kabira, Wanjiku Mukabi, (2018). *The Next Season of Harvest in Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resilience*, African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi.
- Karanja, J. (1966). Kenya after Independence. *African Affairs*, 65(261), 289-296. Retrieved July 31, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/719673>
- Kariuki, J. G. (2013). *Feminization of Poverty in Kenya: The Case of Abagusii and Agikuyu Women of Kenya*. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship*, 1 (5), 3 72 - 3 8 3. University of Nairobi, CHSS Kenya Case Study Report, Management Systems International (Wip)
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Economic Survey, 2020 ISBN: 978-9966-102-16-4
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a Network Theory of Social Capital. *Connections*, 22, 28-51. http://www.insna.org/PDF/Connections/v22/1999_I-1-4.pdf
- Mbugua, R. W., (2017). *Women's Organizations and Collective Action in Kenya: Opportunities and Challenges - The Case of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization, Pathways to African Feminism and Development - Journal of African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi* (<http://www.uonbi.ac.ke/journals/>), Volume 1, Issue 5, ISSN 2309-3625.
- Miftah Thoha, (2013). *kepemimpinan dalam manajemen*, edisi 1 - PT Raja Grafindo, Jakarta, (2013) quoted in *Iswahyuni, Iswahyuni, Angela Efianda, Political Leadership and Transactional Leadership* in (c) 2021 *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v8i9.3020>
- Mishra, Prabuddh Kumar, (2018). *Women and Sustainable Development Goal*, Research Gate.
- Nzomo, Maria, (2011). *Women in Political Leadership in Kenya-Access Influence*

- Nzomo, Maria (2018). *Gender and Governance in Kenya: Women's Journey Beyond Numbers in Changing the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resilience*, African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi.
- Oduol Wilhelmina, and Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, (1995). *The Mother of Warriors and Her Daughters: The Women's Movement in Kenya in The Challenge of Local Feminism: Women's Movement in Global Perspective*, pp 187 – 208. Westview Press.
- Onditi, Francis, Josephine Odera, (2021). *Understanding Violence Against Women in Africa*, Springer Science and Business Media LLC.
- The Hunger Project, (2021). *Mobilizing Women's Leadership for Transformative Change*, White Paper #1.
- Tourish, Dennis, (2014). *Leadership, more or less? A Processual, Communication Perspective on the Role of Agency in Leadership Theory*, Sage Reprints.
- Tripp, A.M. (2001). *New Trends in Women 's Political Participation in Africa*.
- Tripp, Aili M., (2016). *Women's Movements and Constitution Making after Civil Unrest and Conflict in Africa: The Cases of Kenya and Somalia*, Copyright © The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association.
- Tripp, Aili Mari, *New Trends in Women's Political Participation in Africa*
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.542.5398&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Tripp, Aili, (2014), *Women's Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment: Kenya Case Study*, Management Systems International (MSI).
- Program to Help 28,000 Kenyan Micro-Enterprises Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis (Website 2020)
- Wolfe, Leslie R. and Tucker, (1995). *Jennifer Feminism Lives: Building a Multicultural Women's Movement in the United States* chapter in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms* Edition 1st, Routledge, ISBN9780429492921.
- Women and Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Zimbizi, George, Gertrude K'Opiyo and Jeremiah Owiti, *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Gender and Governance Program III in Kenya 2008-2011: Final*

Website links

- [1] Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment | UN Women – Headquarters
- [2] UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*. Available at: <https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwoment/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en>
- [3] International Monetary Fund (2018). *Pursuing Women’s Economic Empowerment* <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31/pp053118pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment>
- [4] See Cuberes, D., & Teignier, M. (2016). *Aggregate Effects of Gender Gaps in the Labour Market: A Quantitative Estimate*. *Journal of Human Capital*, 10(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683847> and Ferrant, G. and A. Kolev (2016), *Does gender discrimination in social institutions matter for long-term growth? Cross-country evidence*. OECD Development Centre Working Papers, No. 330, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5jm2hz8dgl6-en>