KENYA'S WOMEN LEADING THE WAY: EMPOWERMENT AND INTEGRATION

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Abstract

This study examines the imperative role of women in fostering national cohesion, integration, and sustainable peace, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Kenya. National cohesion and integration entail fostering a collective sense of belonging and engagement within a community to collectively address shared challenges and opportunities. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) in Kenya has been established to promote peaceful coexistence among diverse populations. However, the role of women in such processes has often been sidelined, despite their crucial contributions to development and integration. Women's active involvement in peace negotiations remains limited, although they constitute a significant portion of conflict-affected populations.

This paper underscores the necessity of including women in peace processes, emphasizing their capacity to serve as agents of change rather than solely as victims of violence. Traditional narratives portraying women merely as victims inadequately address their multifaceted roles in peacebuilding. Efforts to enhance women's participation in peace mediation have led to the growth of women mediator networks, bolstering their leadership and coordination abilities. The study also underscores that women's contributions extend beyond passive roles, with examples of women participating as decision-makers, negotiators, peace activists, and even in military struggles during conflicts.

To foster sustainable peace and development, it is imperative to recognize and amplify women's active involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on women's agency in peace and security

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processes and highlights the need to transcend traditional gender stereotypes to ensure holistic and effective peacebuilding.

Introduction

According to Kumalo and Sigsworth (2016), national cohesion and integration is defined as a process and an outcome of instilling and enabling all citizens to have a sense as well as a feeling that they are members of the same community engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and opportunities. National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) is a governmental body mandated to build a national community and promote peaceful co-existence among Kenyan populations.

The role of women in the development in Kenya can never be underestimated. They are indispensable in national development and integration of any country. According to Ellerby, (2016), women are rarely represented adequately at peace negotiations yet they make up half the population of any country in conflict or at war. This remains the case despite increasing global policy awareness on how women are affected by conflict and the importance of including them in peace and security processes. For instance, the UN's landmark framework on women, peace and security reaffirms the important role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Walton (2015) observes that women are still largely absent from peace and national integration process from the local to the global spheres. As a result of this side-lining, peace agreements and ceasefires rarely address the perspectives, needs, and concerns of women and other vulnerable groups, and a subsequent lack of planning for those needs in post-conflict recovery. Brounéus (2014) argues that this has endangered the long-term sustainability of any peace agreement. The demand for more women in peace processes is being met by an expansion of women mediator networks (Olofsson, 2018). These networks work to strengthen women's leadership, offer coordination and make synergies among actors, and share tools and information to strengthen the capability of women mediators (Ellerby, 2016).

Shepherd (2016) on the other hand establishes that women need to be advocates of change rather than being victims of violence. Kumalo and Sigsworth (2016) further notes that previously, many scholars argue that men are the perpetrators while women are the victims of violence in conflicts. However, Khalifa (2017) avers that the masculinized story of war does not describe the complexity of men's and women's role in any peace building initiatives. Further, McQuinn (2013) contends that by only letting women be represented as victims of violence undermines their agency role and thus the development of peace building activities, in which women can participate and all their experiences of conflict are addressed is undermined. Similarly, Goswami (2015) argues that women in conflicts often take part as decision-makers, negotiators, peace activists and participating in the military struggle.

Statement of the Problem

While some women benefit from emerging opportunities nationally, many continue with traditional gender roles and suffer from increased burdens and stress hence their efforts towards nation building are curtailed (Murithi, 2017). Research shows that existing peace structures in Kenya, both traditional and modern, have in one way and the other put women at the periphery from peace building initiatives and processes, yet they play a vital role in harmonization and resolution of conflicts in many communities (Peace Net Kenya, 2019). The continued exclusion of women from peace building and cohesion initiatives has exacerbated their vulnerabilities holistically.

In peace building and national integration initiatives women tend to be excluded (McKay, 2014). Despite this empirical evidence, most studies have failed to exhaustively document the role and importance of women in peace building process and the impediments to women participation in these initiatives. Women's level of contribution in peace processes remains one of the most unfulfilled aspects of the women peace building agenda (UN Women, 2010) yet women and children make up 80 % of the people affected by lack of peace and security in Kenya.

Women participate in different roles in peace building at the household, community and national level. Their substantial contributions to peace, social unity family and community survival are not necessarily recognized at the political level. The thrust of this paper is to unearth the existing gap on the involvement of women in peace building and national integration by focusing on the challenges and opportunities they have in trying to fit into the ever changing world in relation to peace building initiatives.

Objectives of the Paper

Main objective of the paper

The main objective of this paper is to establish the role of women in promoting national cohesion and integration for sustainable development in Kenya with key focus to establishing their challenges and opportunities

Specific objectives of the paper

   i.   To establish challenges faced by women in promoting national cohesion and integration in Kenya
   ii. To examine opportunities available for women in promoting national cohesion and integration in Kenya

Literature Review

Global Situation of Women in Peace building and Integration

Building lasting peace requires women's participation. Half of the world's population cannot make global peace. Over a decade after the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on increasing women's participation in matters of global security, the numbers of women participating in peace settlements remain marginal. While improvements have been made, women remain underrepresented in public offices, at the negotiating table, and in peacekeeping missions. The needs and perspectives of women are often overlooked in post conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), as well as in security sector reform, rehabilitation of justice, and the rule of law.

Many conflicts have been marked by widespread sexual and gender-based violence, which often continues in the aftermath of war and is typically accompanied by impunity of the perpetrators. A continuing lack of physical security and the existence of significant legal constraints in post conflict societies hamper women's integration into economic life and leadership. Best practices for increasing women's participation include deployment of gender balanced peacekeeping units, a whole-of-government approach to security sector and judicial reform and more intentional solicitation of the input of women at the community level on priorities for national budgets and international programs (UNHCR, 2006).

The concept of protection includes three important dimensions ranging from legal protection, social security and economic security. These three dimensions are interdependent because in principle, the recognition of women's rights (legal protection) should act as a safeguard for the social and economic security of women. Legal protection should also guarantee the socio-political rights of women, including the right to participation and representation. Unfortunately, many African countries lag behind in a number of important areas, such as land rights, education, and HIV prevention and care (UN 2000). Scholars and practitioners alike understand that peace building efforts are more likely to be sustainable if they include women generally, and that focusing on

women deepens and broadens the narrower and more traditional view of peace work (Maria, Kristina, & Rachel, 2010).

Accounting for the different experiences of women in conflict and their responses to conflict helps to break free from traditional, and often limited approaches to conflict resolution that tend to be dominated by elite perspectives. Ralph (2005), further argues that to exclude women is to neglect a particular set of opportunities that have often been neglected. Women's skills and social positions gives them different perspectives on issues of peace and conflict, and across the globe, women have demonstrated their abilities to achieve common ground and work effectively to better their communities in instances where men have failed.

Role of women in Peace building

Advocates of Peace

According to Dunaiski (2014), the struggle for a sustainable world is to start identifying women as agents instead of victims and strengthen their roles as agents for social transformation. For instance, when the Arabic spring came to Yemen in 2011, the Yemini women were at the front of the revolution by engaging in a non-violent protest and demanding a better future for themselves (Bastick, 2017). When the conflict became violent, some women became combatants or smuggled arms (Aeby, 2017). However, most women decided to serve the combatants by delivering food and water to them, caring for the wounded and guarded checkpoints (Wolff, 2011). Later women have helped to engage in humanitarian relief, mapping internally displaced persons (IDPs), providing aid by smuggling medicine and food (Visoka, 2012).

Women have also demonstrated for the detained civilians and kidnapped persons to be released and negotiated for the release of detainees. Women have worked to reintegrate child soldiers back into society (Anderlin, 2013). For instance, women in Sudan have had a big impact on conflict resolution and have also had a significant role in peace building, especially concerning healing, reconciliation and building bridges between divisions created by the conflict. According to Alexander (2015), Sudanese women were in the 1990s involved in peace building at the grassroots level where they were part of the" People to People" initiative which was an initiative to heal the internal conflicts that were present in the country at the time. In 1994, over seven hundred women attended a women's conference for civic groups (Lo and Hiscock, 2014).

According to Paffenholz (2016) since the 1990s, many of the peace building initiatives worked on by women in Africa at large have focused on grassroots levels of the conflict and by using their mediation skills and establishing indigenous peace processes, women have worked towards a more peaceful society. The forums that the women created in Sudan have been used to working towards ending inter-ethnic conflicts (McQuinn, 2013). The focus has also been on a national level where many women in Sudan were engaged in groups, NGOs and different networks (Lynch, 2013). This as a way to spread a message where they advocated for peace and wanted to draw attention towards the conflict in their country, which then often was referred to as 'the forgotten war' (Posa, 2014).

Human Rights and Democracy Activists

Despite ongoing exclusions, women have managed to claim civil society as a space of their own from which they engage actively with other aspects of society in peace building processes (Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2010). According to Wiebelhaus-Brahm, (2010) informal actors are in general afforded limited attention. In addition, informal actors are sometimes usurped when newly consolidated state actors in the post-conflict phase move in to take control of the issues (Demirel-Pegg & Moskowitz, 2009).

A study done by Paffenholz *et al.* (2016), established a clear link between sustainable peace and the involvement of women civil society organizations. According to the study, in all cases where civil society and

had been directly involved in peace negotiations, resulted in sustained peace. Examples include Guatemala in 1996, Sierra Leone in 2000 and Mozambique 1992. UNSCR 1325 was introduced onto the national agenda, and attention was given to key processes such as Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) to which a gender perspective has been added Developments are often driven by a number of key individuals who also fought hard for a gender perspective within their international organizations (Gichuru, 2014).

The chances of lasting peace increase dramatically if not only the warring parties but also representatives from different groups in civil society, including women, sit at the negotiation table (Mugarura, 2013). This comes as no surprise to women activists who have advocated for decades that peace processes need to be inclusive to be sustainable (Nemoto, Bödeker, Iwamoto & Sakata, 2014).

Peace building

Priest (2015) avers that women generally engage in four kinds of peace building, for example, they work as advocates and activists for peace, they pursue democracy and human rights, and they are peacekeepers, relief aid workers and work as mediators, counsellors and policymakers and in education. Asaf (2017) examines the phenomenon that women who are present in peace building seldom get the same recognition as the men who are present. Gorsevski (2012) argues that women are to a large extent present, however, they are not as visible. Miller, Pournik and Swaine (2014), posit that the women who work in peace building often use their knowledge and power to help other women and increase their influence. This is further explored by Goswami (2015) who notes that since women are the subordinate gender and thus disempowered and not recognized in the same way as men.

Materials and Methods

To achieve its goals, this paper used a descriptive research design and secondary methods of data collection in form of content analysis of documents, records, reports and periodical articles. To this end, several publications were analyzed on issue regarding women and national cohesion and integration in Kenya. The paper further examined the challenges and opportunities that are available for women on National cohesion and integration in Kenya.

Results and discussions

Challenges Facing Women in Peace building and National Integration

This paper argues that paying special attention to the different experiences of women and men is critical in designing successful conflict management and peace building programs. It examines the role women play and the obstacles they continue to face in post-conflict resolution and peace building. Conflicts often force women to organize themselves to safeguard basic necessities and to carry out activities related to like education and healthcare. These activities have a role to play in ensuring lasting peace and governments must ensure women are included in key peace negotiations at all levels.

There are obvious reasons why women are important to the peace building process. For example, they constitute half of every community and the difficult task of peace building must be done by men and women in partnership. Women are also the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when they are excluded from peace building initiatives. Women are also advocates for peace, as peacekeepers, relief workers and mediators. Women have played prominent roles in peace processes in the Horn of Africa such as in Sudan and Burundi, where they have contributed as observers.

Additionally, the society has denied women chance to effectively address peace issues according to the values they hold most dear. Burke (2012) recognizes that the male gender dominates in initiating conflicts and fighting during war. The female gender on the other hand takes an active role in seeking peace. Burke (2012) recognizes

that the roles gender play in conflict can lead to more conflicts if the society is male dominated. Men have excluded women in almost all spheres of life. This is because of the view that wars create more female heads of households and force more women to become active in informal markets so their families can survive. Reconstruction offers countries the opportunity to take a new look at the constraints women face in building businesses.

However, efforts to foreground the perspectives of women in peace processes and to prevent gender-based violence have met with limited success. Women's participation in conflict resolution and peace building is limited by a number of factors, including:

Gender based Violence

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security have been adopted since 2000. These commitments mandate the international community to ensure women's participation in all aspects of peace building, protect women's rights in conflict and address violence. UNSCR 1325 was ground-breaking because the first-ever Resolution to recognize the actual impact of violent conflict on girls and women and the role of governments in supporting survivors to recover (Shepherd, 2016).

Violence against "political" females speaking up publicly, defending human rights or seeking political office is very common in post-conflict countries and strongly dissuades women from participating in public life, let alone seeking political office. For instance, in Afghanistan in nine months alone, 70 women in leadership positions were assassinated (Fritz, 2009). Resources need to be prioritized to operationalize the protection of women and girls and to support gender training, sensitizing and capacity building for police, judiciary and social services professionals to enforce the law (Lee-Koo, 2014). Olsson and Gizelism (2015) posit that it is important to remember that in many contexts, security forces are the perpetrators of SGBV. The need for improving legal accountability and prosecutions is thus crucial for the legitimacy of post-conflict institutions (Miller, Pournik & Swaine, 2014).

Gender Roles

Further, women's gender roles place them as subordinate to men where they are considered to have limited or no impact on conflict or reconciliation since this is something that has to be dealt with by the men (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Due to these factors, women are often placed in a situation where they are perceived as only victims. Women do suffer from sexual abuse and are victims of war, however, this is only one part of the role that women have in conflict and in the peace making process afterwards (McMains & Mullins, 2014). The need for improving legal accountability and prosecutions is thus crucial for the legitimacy of key institutions where women are involved in peace making (Miller, Pournik & Swaine, 2014). Local women's NGOs in post-conflict scenarios should be involved in the monitoring, documenting and publishing of the human right violations of women and the gender training of professionals

Prejudice and Patriarchy

Another dimension of the problem is that common obstacle within the African continent such as deeply entrenched patriarchal values which perceives women as second-class citizens and undervalues their roles, to a large extent, have limited women from adequately being recognized as central key players in peace building processes (Menze, 2014). An indication that women's powerful potentials in bringing war-torn societies back to peace aren't completely utilized in mediation and conflict resolution in the continent (McQuinn, 2013). There are multiple feminist theories within which one of the common grounds for all feminist theories are to highlight the gender roles (Paffenholz, 2014). Gender roles are the basic way of how society is symbolically divided.

Gender can be explained as to how society reproduces individuals raised to be masculine or feminine (Yassine-Hamdan & Pearson, 2014).

According to Kabongah (2011), due to the cultural roles in Yemen, women are seen as passive beings who do not have the expertise or capacity to engage in the peace process (Webber, 2013). Even though the national peace reconciliation process has not included women in a meaningful way, when it comes to the work regarding the peace building and mediation on a local level, women are very much engaged and have a big impact on the society (Westendorf, 2013). In Libya, women have been excluded from the formal work in the peace process and especially the mediation and reconciliation part. Yuhas (2013) states that the inclusion of women is difficult as the male elders who are the ones who usually take part in the mediations would not allow women to participate.

A woman, who does not have the male attributes can thus not engage in the same activities as men (Stamp, 2013). Autesserre (2017) cites Sir Henry Maine's work from 1861, where he argues that the eldest male in the family was the supreme power over the rest of the family. For example, boys are taught to be strong and powerful while girls are taught to be nurturing and caring (Menze, 2014). This results in that there is an internalized motivation to why women and men behave in different ways and how they regulate their behavior to adapt to their gender schemas and the gender roles that are existent in the structure of a society (Miller, Pournik & Swaine, 2014). Gender norms that associate "being a man" with domination and aggression can fuel conflict and violence (Schirch, 2015).

Poverty and Economic Inequality

Peace building processes present major opportunities for advancing women's rights and gender equality (Duflo, 2012). But a gender perspective must be more effectively operationalized in post-conflict establishments and peace building processes. A key challenge for the United Nations (UN) and its member states in progressing the women, peace and security agenda in post-conflict settings is bridging the gap between the interdependent political and economic security pillars of peace building (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). Well intentioned gender mainstreaming objectives are usually undermined by the post-conflict political economy context, which reinforces structural gender inequalities between men and women (Elsawi, 2013).

This is a major setback for peace, reconciliation and the long-term recovery of societies. Peace building institutions typically do little to create livelihoods and economic opportunities for girls and women or to empower them politically and economically after conflict (Gichuru, 2014). Often, dire economic conditions after conflict foster corruption and criminality, while marginalized groups of women experience extreme income inequality, working in the informal economy and the most precarious employment positions in the labor market (Gleditsch, 2015).

Women's capacity to access economic resources after conflict affects their access to justice and physical security (Domingo *et al*., 2015). If key economic and social rights such as those to land and housing, to transact in one's own legal name, to equality in marriage, and to freedom of mobility are not secured early enough after conflict, then many women who are already poor and marginalized will be denied opportunities for both economic and political participation in peace and reconstruction (Ramirez & Franco, 2016). For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, the 70% of households headed by females fell into poverty at greater rates than male-headed households because they lost their access to or ownership of land (Moreno, 2016). Empowering girls and women and strengthening gender equality in fragile settings will help remodel vicious circles into virtuous ones, supporting inclusive societies, sustainable peace and development (Asaf, 2017).

Meaningful participation by women in peace, negotiations and associated constitutional reform processes will increase the likelihood that an agreement will be reached and enforced (UN Women, 2017). In fact, the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least 15 years is 35% higher when women participate (Bräuchler, 2015). Women's economic empowerment can also contribute to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction (Canning, 2014). In addition, women play an important role in building peace, recovery and resilience at family, community and sub-national levels (UN Women, 2017). According to Baylis Smith and Owens (2017) women often lack access to legal recourse because of prejudice, weak law enforcement, and corruption. The use of unofficial, traditional, religious, and tribal justice systems to settle disputes involving women is common. Women play important roles in building peace and advancing security, yet they remain underrepresented in official peacemaking processes (Beza, Johnson & Fuentes, 2017).

Opportunities for women to thrive in Peace building and National Cohesion

The paper establishes the following in order to improve women affairs from the global to the local perspective. The key aspects that women need to galvanize for themselves include the following;

There should be establishment of National and International Truth and Reconciliation Commission on violence against women in armed conflict as a step towards ending impunity from the global to the local arena. This Commission needs to be convened by civil society with support from the international community and will help fill the historical gap that has left crimes against women unrecorded and unaddressed. By so doing, the dignity of women will be restored and cherished. Furthermore, this will promote a trickle-down effect to nation states across the globe including Kenya.

There is need for psychosocial support and reproductive health services for women affected by conflict to be an integral part of emergency assistance and national integration. Special attention should be provided to those who have experienced physical trauma, torture and sexual violence. All agencies providing health support and social services should include psychosocial counselling and referrals. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) should take the lead in providing these services, working in close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNHCR, and UNICEF.

Gender experts and expertise needs to be included in all levels and aspects of peace operations, including in technical surveys, the design of concepts of operation, training, staffing and programs. There is need to harmonize all the key stakeholders in globally in order to establish strong linkages and collaborations up to the grass root level

Globally and locally, there is need to increase the number of women in senior positions in peace-related functions. Priority should be given to achieving gender parity in all sectors encompassing peace building and national integration. In this regard, women need to galvanize their effort towards achieving the same.

Gender equality to be recognized in all peace processes, agreements and transitional governance structures. International, regional and local organizations and all participating parties involved in peace processes should advocate for gender parity, maintaining a minimum 30 per cent representation of women in peace negotiations, and ensure that women's needs are taken into consideration and specifically addressed in all such agreements.

Globally, there is need to renegotiate on the establishment of Trust Fund for Women's Peace-building. This Trust Fund would leverage the political, financial and technical support needed for women's civil society organizations and women leaders to have an impact on peace efforts nationally, regionally and internationally.

Furthermore, there is need to ensure that gender issues are incorporated in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction in order to integrate gender perspectives in peace-building and to support women's full and equal participation in decision-making. Also, there is need to strengthen women's capacity in conflict situations.

Increased donor resources and access for women to media and communications technology, so that gender perspectives, women's expertise and women's media can influence public discourse and decision-making on peace and security. The systematic collection and analysis of information and data by all actors, using gender specific indicators to guide policy, programs and service delivery for women in armed conflict.

Operational humanitarian, human rights and development bodies to develop indicators to determine the extent to which gender is mainstreamed throughout their operations in conflict and post-conflict situations and ensure that 'gender mainstreaming' produces measurable results and is not lost in generalities and vague references to gender. Measures should be put in place to address the gaps and obstacles encountered in implementation.

Gender budget analysis of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction to ensure that women benefit directly from resources mobilized through multilateral and bilateral donors, including the Consolidated Appeals Process, the Bretton Woods Institutions, local institutions and persons and donor conferences.

Conclusions

From the above discussion, the paper concludes that first,, there is need for deliberate efforts at addressing and combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Kenya with the aim of equipping women to participate in some of these key issues.

Secondly, there is need to coordinate and focus on mechanisms of preventing full scale violent conflicts by watching and reading the signs of conflicts closely. By so doing , women need to capitalize on their networks as well as the capacity to stop violent conflicts even before they happen, start peace building before violence erupts and use their numbers to transform situations of conflict.

Thirdly, it is important to pay particular attention and involving young people and women in issues of social justice and especially conflict resolution mechanisms. To this end, it is important to equip women with the necessary skills to get involved in conflict resolution mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation and arbitration. This will make it possible for them to prepare the people and especially women in the continent and specifically in Kenya in addressing injustices and bringing about reconciliation, justice and peace.

Furthermore, it is important for women and mothers to offer an alternative education that fosters cohesion, and a culture of peace and reconciliation. Since women are caregivers and nurturers, they can be able o use that position from the global to the local perspective in order to raise a general that is conflict free and adheres to values of nation building and integration for sustainable development from a global to a local perspective.

Also, there is need for greater women participation in decision making processes by providing ethical leadership that takes into consideration social justice realities of our countries. Women should be part of sanitizing our politics and bringing about the much needed political good will for creation of a culture of peace and reconciliation. Women need to support fellow women in politics given our numbers so that there can be women leaders who not only understand women issues but also defend them proactively.

Lastly, there is need to form well-coordinated and mutually enriching networks within the women organizations of the continent and Kenya as a whole and strengthen the regional movement and make far reaching contributions to the global network of women, making marks in reconciliation, justice and peace paradigms.

Recommendations

The paper is guided by the following recommendations.

Continue to invest in women's movements which include organizational and logistical support to facilitate cross-country networking, consolidation of experience, knowledge and lessons learned, and providing opportunities for the development of political apprenticeship acquired in different spaces of social mobilization

and political activism. Support can also aim to facilitate creative exchange between older women's movements and younger generations of feminist activism in to allow for knowledge transfer and exposure to historical trajectories of political contestation, experiences of backlash and lessons on political strategy – including in support of activism in formal political life and political party engagement.

Support accountability, oversight and constitutional implementation mechanisms, and women's engagement with these. This includes support to implementation of constitutional oversight mechanisms and to strategic litigation strategies that can activate judicial review and oversight. This means first working with public and state bodies, and engaging with reform champions inside these accountability mechanisms (such as High Court judges as well as magistrates and Kadhis who work on frontline issues of access to justice). Second, it includes supporting social movements and organizations with legal standing, such as FIDA and COVAW that can advance strategies to protect newly constituted rights for women. Third is investing in oversight mechanisms relating to application of the quota, but also to implementation of subsequent legislation, such as the 2011 Political Parties Act.

Invest in political and technical capabilities to advance on legal change to align with the 2010 Constitution. This includes engaging with hard issues like violence against women and women's access to land rights and property. Change in these areas can be transformational – and thus also susceptible to resistance and backlash. Women activists in Kenya are aware of the merits of ongoing iterative and progressive gains in formal legal change and of the need to pursue and oversee implementation.

Abolishing retrogressive norms and cultures across the country. Social norms are a formidable barrier to progress on legal change. Addressing these includes engaging with national level political actors and local power brokers, custodians of customary norms and gatekeepers of power structures. It also includes working to broker engagement with community elders, religious leaders. Deep knowledge of and sensitivity to legal pluralism and how it is manifested in different parts of the country should underpin engagement on support to awareness-raising and sensitization.

Invest in national capacity for knowledge production. The most valuable sources of evidence to inform policy and practice are national-level research. Support can be directed to local think tanks or knowledge producing organizations working on gender equality and women's rights, or on concrete thematic and sectorial issues that this research has found to be relevant to supporting women's voice and leadership. This includes research on reproductive health needs (thus medical and other sciences), on women and girls' access to education, on violence against women and access to justice and on women's access to economic assets. Investing in women's research capabilities is an underdeveloped and underappreciated form of international support, but the dividends can be far reaching in terms of providing context-specific evidence to inform policy and programming to contribute to women's technical knowledge, and thus to enhance the prospects for locally owned, locally relevant and locally driven agendas. This includes investing also in deeper comparative analysis of sub-regional experiences of how to support implementation of the Constitution (Ohman and Lintari, 2015).

Invest in higher education for women, to support the development of technical skills and expertise required at different stages of policy and legal change and implementation, as well as recourse to different oversight, accountability and legal redress mechanisms. It is clear that, without the high levels of education members of the women's movement enjoyed, women would not have been able to achieve as much influence. To build capacity across all women in Kenya to participate in and inform the women's movement, it is necessary to provide incentives and support to rural women to access higher education across a range of disciplines, include

law, public administration, economics and medicine. Women are increasingly reaching parity levels in primary and secondary education, but higher education remains elusive for women and girls (Mulongo, 2013).

Invest in flexible support and programming structures that can adapt to emerging political opportunities as these arise. This can allow for responsive support to changing conditions. Some opportunities structures in institutional and political reform can be planned for, such as the process of devolution. But even here there are many unknowns with regard to what this will involve in practice and the nature of the obstacles and problems that will be encountered. Moreover, subnational variation in Kenya is important.

Maximize the fact that women's empowerment is a powerful agenda driven and owned by Kenyan women and gender activists. Drawing on locally owned knowledge and strategy to identify entry points and modes of engagement to shape programming choices will contribute to more effective support and to minimizing the risk of doing harm (including in terms of contributing to patrimonialism).

Invest in brokering networks and strategic alliances, including through creatively navigating informal norms and institutions in political and social space.

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