



---

# **Expanding Women's territory in Leadership and Nurturing the Nation**

---

**✘ A GUIDE TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ✘**



# Expanding Women's territory in Leadership and Nurturing the Nation

A Guide to Women's Leadership

A PROJECT OF Women in Leadership and  
Decision Making Committee

---

15th October 2020

Published by REINVENT, Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development  
(CCGD) and African Women Study Centre (AWSC)



AWSC





## REMARKS FROM REINVENT

**W**omen's leadership emanates from inherent and environmental factors that contribute to her success, chief among them being her agency. A woman's intrinsic ability or belief in herself and awareness of her rights 'power within', as well as her ability to affect her life by having power to make choices and to control acquired resources. Women's collective agency is transformative, promoting change in society and policy. While individual women might have limited voice, acting together, groups of women and girls can exert much more pressure to overcome constraints to womanhood leading to outcomes on structural, legal and practice barriers to meaningful gender parity.

REINVENT has been privileged to walk with the Women in leadership Working Group as a member as well as partner whose purpose is to strengthen the agency of women in securing the peace, safety and security of Kenya. At REINVENT we believe that strengthening women's collective agency is central to achieving greater voice and power to leverage gender justice in peace, security. Unfortunately, the everyday experience of insecurity, negative normative values, dominating masculinities and societal construct undermines women's ability to participate and determine the course of justice in a community. Working with this Women in Leadership caucus, through this book, we challenge and hold to account all sectors of society to commit to promotion of opportunities for women leadership and decision making.

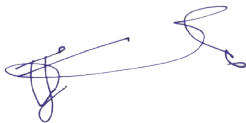
REINVENT sees this book, as a major milestone in the journey towards strengthening women's agency, power and voice because it is written by versatile women who are leaders in their own right, leading in various spaces, as academics, development strategists and practitioners, all deeply committed professionals with a vision to see more women in all sectors of





society (Governance, Peace, Security, Economy, Education, Media, Arts and Entertainment, Religious, Family, literally across the board arise and lead. Through this book, women are encouraged to build on the foundations of other women who pushed open the leadership doors by challenging deeply rooted cultural, patriarchal and structural barriers, norms and practices that otherwise deny girls and women opportunities to lead and contribute to a safe, secure, healthy and balanced nation. In such a nation, every citizen male, female, young and old, have equal opportunities to dream, and blaze new trails with boldness and courage.

“Expanding our territory” is a must read for all women (and men) who aspire to lead, from the very basic level, to the highest office in the land. I exhort you to learn from these pioneering women and be inspired to take women’s leadership a notch higher. To believe in the possibilities of Women Leadership!



**Jacqueline Mbogo**  
**Chief of Party, REINVENT Programme,**  
**Tetrattech International Development**





## FOREWORD



**T**he Government of Kenya in recognition of the importance of women's leadership is committed to support efforts to promote the participation of women at all levels. The "Expanding Women's Territory in Nurturing the Nation" guide is aligned to the Government's policy position that value what women bring to the decision-making table. It underscores the importance of actualizing the "not-more-than-two-thirds gender rule" in any elective or appointive position.

The publication celebrates women's organizations, women leaders and the women's agency dedicated to promoting a society where women's leadership make a difference to our families, communities, nation and indeed the Continent. The women leaders mentioned in this book include: H.E. Sirleaf Johnson, former President of Liberia; H.E. the late Winnie Madikizela Mandela; the late Hon. Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement and the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; Hon. Grace Onyango former Mayor of Kisumu; the late Grace Ogot, a renowned East African writer; the late Kamla Sikand; the late Mrs. Jane Kiano; Hon. Phoebe Asiyu; Hon. Charity Ngilu, and Dr. Eddah Gachukia, the celebrated leader in girls and women education, among other women of the earlier generation.





As we celebrate these pathfinders, we also recognise other emerging women leaders who have taken the baton and continue in different leadership positions. For this reason, I note with pleasure the inclusion of the following women leaders; H.E. Mrs. Margaret Kenyatta, the First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, Hon. Maison Leshoomo, Mrs. Edna Ole Lenku, Alice Nderitu, Stella Agara, Dianah Kamande and Ashura Michael.

Notably, this guide calls upon us to think broadly about leadership that expands our territory so that we take every opportunity to lead and encourage other women to take leadership roles. The guide also encourages us to promote alternative models of leadership which embrace motherhood, consultative leadership, and servant leadership as alternative women leadership models; and not to be limited by other traditional theories of leadership such as the big man theory. *Expanding Women's Territory in Leadership and Nurturing the Nation* guide is supported by the Ministry through the Gender Sector Working Group's Women in Leadership and Decision-making pillar. The writers as indicated are from different organizations including African Women Studies Center (AWSC), University of Nairobi (UoN), Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association (KEWOPA), Women Political Alliance, Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), Collaborative Center for Gender and Development (CCGD), Premier Peak Foundation and Re-Invent. This consortium demonstrates that women leadership achieves more through collaborative effort.

On behalf of the Ministry, I wish to thank the team for furthering our knowledge on women's leadership and call on all relevant stakeholders to continue to study the leadership models offered by women in order to nurture and humanize our society. My Ministry remains committed to promoting these kinds of leadership. Finally, I thank Re-Invent for supporting this publication.

**PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, Ph.D, MGH  
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF  
PUBLIC SERVICE  
AND GENDER**





## PREFACE

**T**his guide is the product of consultations among the members of the technical team of the Women's Leadership Taskforce under the Ministry of Public Service and Gender (MPSG) Gender Sector Working Group initiative. The members realized that though there have been a lot of literature and initiatives for promoting women's leadership, there still exists a gap in defining women's leadership. As such, there is no consensus on what women's leadership consists of among the various stakeholders. This prompted the members to start exploring and documenting the unique characteristics of outstanding African women leaders who have exhibited models of leadership that differs from the conventional masculine leadership characteristics. The guide aims to redefine leadership from a women's perspective, a departure from the conventional masculine perspective of leadership, often marked with violence and intimidation.

The authors have identified various models of women's leadership, such as motherhood and sisterhood, in various sectors including political, cultural, economic, civil society as well as emerging leadership areas such as peace mediation. The guide presents 17 emerging women leaders, who represent various areas of leadership from mayors, younger women in civil society, peace negotiators, those in the arts and culture, women in media and educationists. We take note of women who took advantage of their circumstances to positively transform the lives of other women, such as Kenya's First Lady H.E Margaret Kenyatta and county first ladies. The guide has briefly illustrated the type of leadership demonstrated by each of these women, which can be emulated by other women.

The leadership model presented in this guide provides guiding posts for young women who have passion and have taken their position in the line of women's struggle. It comes at a moment when women leaders who were in the forefront in the women's struggle during the second liberation struggles and in the making of the constitution are gradually handing over the baton to the younger generation of women. The guide also discusses the need to





infuse women's leadership at all levels in order to develop a new type of leadership of nurturing and humanizing institutions of governance at all levels including Nyumba Kumi, Ward Committees, and County Administration, which includes Chiefs, Sub County and County Commissioners. This is in line with the "utu" philosophy<sup>1</sup>. The guide provides useful strategies for promoting this new type of leadership and changing mainstream politics.

Women, who aspire to get into leadership in any sector, will find this guide useful in providing alternative leadership models that they can emulate, in order to restore 'Ubuntu' and create a healthy society.

**Masheti Masinjila**  
**Executive Director,**  
**Collaborative Centre for**  
**Gender and Development**

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary Kinyanjui (2019) *A lone ranger: My journey towards becoming a feminist geographer in Nairobi, Kenya*, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 26:7-9, 1159-1169, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1556616







# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**he Women in Leadership and Decision-Making committee thanks the State Department for Gender for giving the women a platform to harness and enhance women leadership at all levels hence expanding women territories

The working group is mandated by the State Department for Gender affairs to co-ordinate all efforts by stakeholders, both State and Non-State, including development partners in the gender sector towards enhancing women's participation in leadership and decision making at national and county levels through the existing policy structures. This entails working to synergize formulation and review of national priorities, policies, and strategies that promote women's participation in leadership and decision making and tracking progress in implementation of agreed actions and their impacts. It also involves establishing and strengthening linkages among partners within the gender sector; creating a platform for information sharing and joint knowledge management within the sector and beyond; coordinating mapping of partners' areas of work for effectiveness and non-duplication of efforts; coordinating funding mechanisms of development partners to the sector and promoting joint initiatives amongst stakeholders in the sector, all aimed at promoting, enhancing and tracking women's participation in leadership and decision making.

The writing of the material was coordinated by Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira who is the chair of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making Committee. Prof. Kabira coordinated the team that wrote the different sections of the manuscript. We gratefully acknowledge the role of Masheti Masinjila, the Director CCGD, who took time to review the drafts. The committee of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making Technical Committee is grateful to its members for their dedication to generating the content in this book. We are also grateful to the Ministry of Public Service and Gender Affairs for their support and contributions that saw the completion of this work.

The booklet is an initiative of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making Committee which is one of the task forces of the Ministry of Public Service and Gender. The following are the members of this Committee: Beatrice





Kamau from the Women's Political Alliance-Kenya (WPA-K), Jane Gitonga of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Milka Kariuki of the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), Wambui Kanyi of the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) at the University of Nairobi, Julia Nyokabi Chege of Premier Peak Leadership Foundation (PPLF), Mercy Mwangi of Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), Annastacia Kaberere of the Office of Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), and Jacinta Makokha from the Tetra Tech International Development / REINVENT Programme. The editorial input into the manuscript provided by Dr. Wanjiku Ngunjiri is gratefully acknowledged.

**Professor Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira,  
African Women Studies Centre  
University of Nairobi and chair of the Women in  
Leadership and Decision Making Committee**





# Table of Contents

<b>REMARKS FROM REINVENT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>13</b>
Introduction	13
Key issues in women's leadership	14
The need to create new leadership models	14
Political leadership, women and leadership theory	15
Patriarchy	15
Politeness	16
Perfectionist	16
Women adapt to societal changes	17
Proclaiming women's special attributes	18
Self-pride	18
Power	18
Passion	19
Proactive	19
Women's Alternative Leadership Models	20
Women leading has made gradual progress	20
<b>CHAPTER 2: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MODELS.</b>	<b>22</b>
Introduction	22
Cultural Change	22
Matriarchal contexts	23
Women's leadership from women's perspective	24
Women in traditional power systems	24
Motherhood as an alternative leadership model for African women	25
President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson	25
Phoebe Asiyó	27
Charity Ngilu – Governor Kitui	28
Wangari Maathai	28
Alice Wairimu Nderitu;	29
Winnie Madikizela-Mandela	30
Women's Consultative Leadership	31
African Women's Religious Leadership Models	31
Conclusion	32





### **CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING: A HISTORICAL APPROACH**

Women Leadership in Elective and Appointive Positions	33
Women and elective Leadership	35
The rise of women political leaders	36
Specific strategies of Promoting women's participation along the Electoral Cycle	36
Conclusion	38
Appointive Leadership.	41
Expanding our territories	42
Women in Decision Making Positions	43
	44

### **CHAPTER FOUR: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN OTHER FRONTIERS**

Emerging context of leadership in academia	46
Cultural Context of Women Leadership in Kenya	46
Economic Context of Women Leadership in Kenya	47
Religious Context of Women Leadership in Kenya	48
The often-Forgotten Categories of Women's Leadership	49
Women's organizations and women's movement	49
Leadership in Women Self Help Groups	49
Celebrating Women's Leadership in other Frontiers	50
Case Studies of Women Leaders	51
Conclusion	61

### **CHAPTER 5: TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN KENYA: OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES**

Introduction	63
Recreating a women's philosophy of leadership	63
Documenting their experiences	63
Knowledge of what women want	64
Transforming hidden leaders into visible leaders	64
Space for women's innovation	65
Develop a common women agenda	65
Building Strong Women Negotiations Teams	66
Strong Networking and Collaboration Among Women	67
Conclusion	68





## ACRONYMS

AWSC	—	African Women Studies Centre
BBI	—	Building Bridges Initiative
CA	—	Cabinet Administrative Secretary
CCGD	—	Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development
CEDAW	—	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CECs	—	County Executive Committees
CEO	—	Country Executive Officer
COK	—	Constitution of Kenya
COVAW	—	Coalition on Violence Against Women
CRDM	—	Child Rights Defenders Movement
CTWOs	—	Come Together Widows and Orphans
ECWD	—	Education Centre for Women in Democracy
FAWE	—	Foundation for African Women Educationalists
FEMNET	—	African Women's Development and Communication Network.
FGM	—	Female Genital Mutilation
ICCPR	—	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	—	International Commission of Jurists
IEBC	—	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
KANU	—	African National Union
KCA	—	Kikuyu Central Association
KEWOPA	—	Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
KNCHR	—	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
KWFT	—	Kenya Women Finance Trust
LKWVs	—	League of Kenya Women Voters
MCA	—	Member of County Assembly
MHM	—	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MPSGA	—	Ministry of Public Service Youth and Gender Affairs
MYWO	—	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization
NCWK	—	National Council of Women of Kenya
NGOs	—	Non-Government Organizations
PLWDs	—	Persons Living with Disabilities
SRC	—	Salaries and Remunerations Commission
YES	—	Youth Employment Summit
UoN	—	University of Nairobi
WA	—	Ward Administrator
WPA-K	—	Women Political Alliance - Kenya





# CHAPTER 1

## UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

---

### Introduction

**T**his chapter explains some key concepts in relation to women's leadership. The concepts shed light into the invisible, dynamic and always evolving attitudes and competencies that shape women's leadership. The journey of women's leadership in Kenya can be traced back to the pre-colonial and colonial era with the legendary figures such as Mekatilili wa Menza among the Miji-Kenda community to Wangu wa Makeri in Central Kenya (Kamau, 2010). Mekatililiwa Menza and Wangu wa Makeri represent the first generation of women leaders in Kenya. This struggle has continued into present day Kenya as women struggle to take up leadership in the different social, political and economic forums. These demonstrate that women are not just wives and mothers but leaders in their own right. This appreciation of leadership models will inform and encourage readers to understand their leadership disposition, its potential and then leverage on it to become better leaders.

Oxfam defines transformative leadership as: "A social change strategy which focuses on providing an enabling environment for the actualization of the leadership potential of individuals; influencing others to bring about fundamental change and facilitating the empowerment of others ... it includes every act of leadership identified in all arenas, including the home, formal and informal milieus, among others."<sup>4</sup> Leadership starts with oneself. From there it ripples outwards to the home, the community and beyond. (Kabira 2018).





## Key issues in women's leadership

### *The need to create new leadership models*

Women are equally interactive in their leadership. They have demonstrated high organizational skills in villages and churches. But these skills have not been acknowledged, in the tradition of men's world and men's definition of leadership. It is these observations that call on the need to redefine leadership, to the kind that includes women's experiences as seen across the globe. Leadership that stand out and is demonstrated through excellence in politics and business.

### *Political leadership, women and leadership theory*

Early philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle<sup>2</sup> justified why women should not be and could not be leaders. They developed theories about the nature of politics and leadership and their views on why women should not, and must not lead because they had no capacity to lead and because they were never meant to lead. These early classical scholars created theories that excluded women from leadership, as illustrated in the text below:



*“Wherefore women are more compassionate and more readily made to weep, more jealous and querulous, fonder of railing, and more contentious. The female also is more subject to depression of spirits and despair than the male. She is also more shameless and falser, more readily deceived, and more mindful of injury, more watchful, more idle, and on the whole less excitable than the male. On the contrary, the male is more ready to help, and, as it has been said, braver than the female; and even in malaria, if the sepia is struck with a trident, the male comes to help the female, but the female makes her escape if the male is struck”, (Aristotle, (History of Animals, Book IX).*

Arguments have been peddled that Jesus was a man and he only chose male disciples, applying biblical justifications in support for male leadership over that by women. This view completely ignores female leaders in the bible such as Queen Esther, the wife of King Xerxes, Hannah the mother of Samuel, Abigail the wife of Naboth, among others who provided leadership at different

---

<sup>2</sup> Borghini, Andrea. “Plato and Aristotle on Women: Selected Quotes.” ThoughtCo, Jul. 24, 2020, [thoughtco.com/plato-aristotle-on-women-selected-quotes-2670553](https://www.thoughtco.com/plato-aristotle-on-women-selected-quotes-2670553).





times. Drawing on these examples, women's leadership philosophy needs to be understood from this resilience exemplified by women in all religious texts including the Quran, and from African traditional contexts where women served as healers, prophetesses and community leaders.

There are African proverbs that have also been used to disparage women as leaders, and are often quoted to justify why women should not lead. A selection of these is listed below:

*'A woman is like the sky; she is not predictable'(Gikuyu)*

*"Don't marry a woman with big feet".*

*"A woman is a goat, a man bright red cola nut" (Zaire).*

*"A woman is like a guard, she cannot balance" (Gikuyu).*

*"There are no secrets before a woman" (Zimbabwe).*

Attention should now shift to new perspective of women's leadership, that peels beneath the myths of masculine leadership to expose models that have been demonstrated by women leaders such as: Ellen Sirleaf Jonson, the former President of Liberia, Phoebe Asiyo, Kenya's former Member of Parliament and a leader of women's movement for over six decades, Wangari Mathai, the Green Belt Movement leader and the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2004, Eddah Gachukia, a thought leader in education, Field Marshal Muthoni, a leader in the liberation movement of Mau Mau, Winnie Byanyima, a leader in the liberation movement of Uganda, and currently a leader in international development and humanitarian response, among others.

### *Patriarchy*

Patriarchy has been variously defined as a social system, where the role of the male as the primary authority is at the centre of the human ecosystem. When men have the overarching authority over women, children, resources and the natural environment, and it thrives on female subordination to this authority, (Walby, (1990)<sup>3</sup> . As already noted, the Aristotelian philosophy perceived women as inferior to men in all possible attributes, which justified male domination of women, (Johannsdottir, 2009)<sup>4</sup> . Notably, Aristotle believed that, '... women were the defective part of humanity, having developed as a mistake when the temperature during conception was too low', (Weitz, 2003)<sup>5</sup>. Discussions around patriarchy explains the thinking behind conventional

<sup>3</sup>Walby, Sylvia (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>4</sup> Johannsdottir, Nina Katrin (2009). *Patriarchy and the subordination of women. From a radical feminist point of view*.

<sup>5</sup> Weitz, Rose (2003). *The politics of women's bodies: sexuality, appearance and behaviour*. New York: Oxford University Press.







subordination of women, and how it determines their self-realization. Thus, in patriarchal thinking, women are not expected to be leaders, as it is a system of power that assigns roles to men and women, and women do not qualify for leadership within that set up.

It rationalizes why women must occupy the low status positions and then creates structures and value systems to keep them in that place. Because of the socialization process, many African women have taken over both their roles and those assigned to men in the structural arrangement of society. For example, among some communities, dowry is still paid for women. Some unmarried women even pay dowry for themselves either to their brothers, fathers or uncles to be free to then receive dowry paid by their daughters' in-laws. The language used, the symbols, clothes and the toys bought for girls and boys all indicate that patriarchy still dictates the management of day-to-day life.

When women become leaders, they join patriarchal leadership ideologies, where they do not challenge the entrenched political systems. Instead they try to become like men in order to fit into the limited spaces allowed for women. Women socially conform to roles, even those that are implicit. For instance, they constantly self-sacrifice, remain restrained in their approach, are often passive and modest, to fit into the expected behaviour. They prefer looking dignified and accept narrow roles because that is what the society expects of them.

### *Politeness*

Society demands that women never show anger, always smile. Mary Njeri Kinyanjui in her 'Utu feminism' acclaims her right to be angry with society, she will not say 'thank you' when she is ignored, insulted, if she is sat on, so she will not keep quiet<sup>6</sup>. She is right. While politeness is a virtue, you need to think about the context and what it does to us. We are polite, yes but we cannot allow our politeness to be misunderstood for foolishness. This virtue in the context of patriarchy, the masculine leadership negates women's interests and values. Women should claim the space to define politeness for themselves. Not the politeness that reflects a patriarchal philosophy, but one that demonstrates their power.

---

<sup>6</sup>Mary Kinyanjui (2019)





### *Perfectionist*

The society expects that women do everything right for everybody, including cooking. Nobody wants to imagine that cooking is an art and it requires resources and skills. This expectation makes some women feel immobilized. They are afraid of being seen as imperfect. Sometimes women in trying to beautify themselves do things that are detrimental to their health, the face, the eyes and hands. They think they are valuable if they decorate themselves and look pretty. This happens a lot with women from urban centres and elite classes. It is much less prevalent among peasant or a slum dweller, who have neither the time nor the resources, as they tend to be too busy making ends meet. Gender trainers and workers tell us they have been analyzing what men and women do in a 24-hourday. Women in most cases wake up earlier than the men and sleep later. As one-woman trader from Kariobangi, Wanjiru wa Kaguru said, “were it not for darkness, women would never rest. They would work for the full 24 hours”.

They have no word for leisure and the men cannot understand what women would do if they were not busy working. This is despite the fact that human beings need to reflect and to rest their body and enjoy wellness. Gender division of labour is key to women’s leadership, and where it is skewed in favour of men, it significantly affects women’s entry into leadership. This overbidding of women should be reviewed. Women will tell you that they leave leadership to men because they are too busy, while men have more time to spare. The truth is that this is not a coincidence but patriarchal by design.

### *Women adapt to societal changes*

African women often make decisions where they have space and often create their own networks to help them meet their own needs, this is particularly so now when even land is scarce and demands for their children are many and men seem to have been dislocated from their old traditional roles where they had power. Society is changing and women have had to adjust to changes including occupying the spaces that were traditionally defined as male spaces. In many cases women have taken over men’s roles. They offer security at home, they pay rent, they ‘put ugali on the table’, pay school fees, guide male and female children on career paths and goals. They have taken up roles viewed as traditionally men’s. They are security officers, touts, armed forces, truck drivers, pilots, in addition to being parents. In their groups, they create their own structures, their philosophy and leadership styles. The men





who are retiring seem lost when they go home and have no job to return to but their wives are busier in the community than the men can ever be.

## **Proclaiming women's special attributes**

As leaders, we need to build on some areas that will help us become feminist/women centered leaders. Below is a list of core attributes that women must uphold:

### *Self-pride*

- a) We must be proud that we are women and acknowledge that our experiences as women are unique and will contribute significantly to building our societies, to nurturing the Nation and humanizing the state. These experiences are legitimate.
- b) The reason why we are not automatically in elective leadership and appointive leadership is by design. We know this. We must change it and we are doing it. We are entitled to be leaders
- c) Women have to be proud that they are women, whether we are career women, working at home or 'kibarua'. We must be proud of the fact that we are women at whatever age. We must not internalize the negative definitions of woman. Self-pride is crucial for women leaders. We must speak for women and all other groups we take care of such as the elderly, children and marginalized groups.
- d) We must acknowledge that this has been a man's world where women have no place. We are not there because we do not qualify. This is a fallacy. It is by design and this too must change because we are not children of a lesser God.
- e) We should not aspire to be like men. It is absolutely unnecessary, instead, women should utilize their uniqueness to improve leadership.
- f) We are enough. We must be proud of our womanhood and claim our place in this God given world.

### *Power*

- a) We must know that we are the majority and that in itself is power.
- b) If we are organized as women, we will change this world, we will improve our society. We will create a new society.
- c) Even if we are older women, we must know that if we turn mom upside down, it will spell WOW, wonderful older women, wise older women, witty older women.
- d) We must claim the power we have, which is based on our knowledge





of our nations and our constituents for this is our mission, whether we are Members of Parliament (MPs), Senators, Members of County Assembly (MCAs), Cabinet Secretaries (CSs) Cabinet Assistant Secretaries (CASs) Permanent Secretaries (PSs) Chiefs, Regional Commissioners, heads of Nyumba Kumi, head teachers, business leaders etc. This is our mission as women leaders, transforming our societies and the world.

- e) We must walk in pride like Akoko the daughter of Chief Ogni of “The River and the Source” Margret Ogolla’s story<sup>7</sup>.

### *Passion*

- a) We must move away from being sleep walkers. If we do, we shall have a passion for life and our cause.
- b) Let us have passion to transform our societies for ourselves, our families
- c) Let us be proud African women at whatever age. Passion gives you a drive. We must tell our story as women and tell it passionately. Listen to other women, they will tell you how happy they are, you are their leader. (Kabira 2018)
- d) The starting point for knowing about what women think about themselves as leaders is women themselves. Ask them but use the language they understand.

### *Proactive*

- a) Women can take charge of their lives and their destiny wherever they are.
- b) Older women have experience and knowledge. Other women can build their experiences and knowledge. This gives them hope that they can bring the change they want in politics, the economy and culture. This includes both living such as Jael Mbogo, Eddah Gachukia, Juliah Ojiambo, Micere Mugo, Margaret Ogola, Asenath Odaga, Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyo, and those who have passed on such as, Wambui Kenyatta, Marjorie Oludhe, Prof. Grace Ogot, among many others on whose shoulders you stand. This is why you can see further. Being proactive in building knowledge on women’s leadership and learning from our history is very critical.
- c) Let us learn from women who retire and go back to their homes and join chamas, women’s guild, catholic women’s association, among others. Why do women elect them there? What about those women who have been leaders in the women’s movement?

---

<sup>7</sup>Ogola, M.A (2004). *The River and the Source*. Focus Books.





- d) This is what our mothers have done in the past. They have come together to assist each other. We can do the same. Through collective action we must; Change our identity from the one we were given by society to that one we want to be.

## **Women's Alternative Leadership Models**

We must think about how women get to leadership and what they do when they get there. We must challenge the gender-blind notions of leadership. We have to learn how to conceptualize leadership of women.

Some of the ideas that we need to focus on include;

- i. Changing the narrative. We must tell our story of women's leadership from women's knowledge and experiences. We must theorize on women leadership based on women's practical experiences. Let us ask our leaders, "why do you succeed"? Let them tell us their stories.
- ii. Creating new tools for feminist theorizing, where women's reflections on their lives and leadership begin to inform feminist leadership theory.
- iii. Countering leadership stereotypes that continue to be perpetual. Reject the stereotypes of Wangu wa Makeri, where women's leadership was portrayed negatively.
- iv. Dismantling "masters" house, male leadership must be humanized. It must introduce feminist perspectives.
- v. Make meaningful description of women leadership. We must review our notions of leadership.
- vi. Research on all aspects of women leadership. Develop a body of knowledge on women's leadership, replete with case studies of instances of struggles and excellence.
- vii. Generate woman-centered case studies. These would be useful in creating women's leadership models.
- viii. Women should endeavour to identify other women to take up leadership positions

## **Women leading has made gradual progress**

- a) When we look back there are changes that have taken place. We should be slow in condemning women for not being in leadership positions because we do not understand the structural and systemic problems they have had to overcome.
- b) We do not hear people using the old clichés such as, "women are their worst enemies", but nevertheless you hear young women saying "there





are no problems". They think it is normal that things have gone awry. In some cases, they will even say, "we don't need affirmative action", "my husband has no problem with cooking", forgetting that others have gone before them and fought for these spaces.

We must use cumulative knowledge of past analysis of the present and chart the path for the future of women as leaders.

- c) Some young women however, have passion and are positive about the future. They know there is much more fought for and they have taken their positions in the line of women's struggle.
- d) We have to be aware of other stories of women in our lives and how they have shaped the struggle and this will guide our future.
- e) Not many women reach leadership by pure coincidence. Research shows that women's progress in Africa has made strides because women have taken the responsibility to make it happen. They have taken the lead. They are the leaders not only of the struggle for women's liberation, but they are leading in Africa's liberation. These are exemplified by Winnie Mandela (South Africa), Ellen Johnson Sirleef (Liberia), Wangari Maathai (Kenya), Winnie Byanyima (Uganda), Dlamini Zuma (South Africa), Gertrude Mwangela (Tanzania), Joyce Banda (Malawi), and the following women, all from Kenya: Eddah Gachukia, Martha Karua, Phoebe Asiyo, Jael Mbogo, Field Marshal Muthoni, Charity Ngilu and many others both from Kenya and around the African region.

In this chapter, the context for women's leadership has been explored, where critical concepts and analysis on why women's leadership has been slow are explained. The next chapter broadens our perspective on the contexts that have defined women leadership in Kenya





# CHAPTER 2

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MODELS

---

### Introduction

**T**he history of Africa has had women in various spheres of leadership most notably as; queens, queen mothers, prophetesses and even warriors. Notably, women leaders were acknowledged and wielded power as life-givers, carriers of homes and nurturers of off-springs. Today however, many have missed the mark when they are insensitive to the powerful symbols of women's leadership as anchored in our African norms and values. This section puts forth a case that women's leadership criteria needs to be reshaped, to avoid the error of omitting feminine leadership.

### Traditional Context for Women's Leadership

Patriarchal underpinnings of the African society have traditionally undermined prospects of women in political leadership. According Maria Nzomo "progress towards women's access to formal political leadership positions, has been slow due to a combination of structural obstacles, which include deeply embedded patriarchal socio-cultural values", (Nzomo 2013). Nevertheless, with the dispensation of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, things are changing and it is no longer phenomenal to have women competitively go for elective leadership positions alongside their male counterparts.

The existence of matriarchal communities in African societies has not been given much thought by scholars and yet, in West Africa, there is evidence to suggest the existence of matriarchal societies among the Akan/Ashanti of Ghana. The Akan who are located in the Southern part of Ghana have a





long history of matriarchy in the society. This is emphasized by a saying from the Ashanti “womaamewuaa,naw’abusuaasa”(when your mother dies, your lineage is finished”, ( Clark,1994).

Senior or older women in Akan clans wielded a lot of power they ascended to a queenship role called *ohenmaa*, a title that was bestowed to the senior most female in a particular lineage. The *ohenmaa* has the power to select the next king and also has her own council who also are selected due to their lineage ties. There are no men who sat on the council. The Ashanti due to their uptake of matriarchy from the Akan, also have a similar structure. They have female chiefs called *ohenma*, in conjunction with these chief’s market women were able to take control of the markets in the Ashanti Empire, (Clark, 1994). Evidence points to women who were revered and honored for their role in giving birth and they associated some of their gods with feminine symbols. Thus, a matriarchal society had ties that made Motherhood and family to be revered institutions and they remain as a powerful symbol in the African context, even today. The symbolism and imagery of motherhood is what has propped the motherhood leadership model, which has worked in helping negate and nurture women’s leadership in Kenya and Africa.

The institution of motherhood is seen as a significant part of empowering African women and a means of challenging patriarchal structures and attitudes. Mothers of political prisoners for instance used the institution of motherhood to lobby the government for the release of their sons. However, we cannot ignore the fact that motherhood has also been used to keep







women from the public space due to assigned gender norms that delegate to women the domestic care work, often perceived to be unimportant and valueless and at the same time glorified. In addition, motherhood has been used as the “model” that every woman must conform to, while it is true that nurturing is a very important tradition that women have held on to, it must be noted that there is much more to motherhood than the biological role by women. Men must also be nurtured. They must be able to take care of their children. They must see it as a noble role that they can play. That is why women's leadership must bring these values to leadership and get the man to see them as human values that all of us should embrace.

### **Women's leadership from women's perspective**

Women's concept of leadership can be described as inclusive, participatory and motivational. In addition, often women's leadership is identified as humble resilience, a type of servant leadership. Only when women have lost sight of who they are, and begin to behave like men, when they join leadership. They adopt male behaviour in their approach to leadership largely because they have been sanctioned to look down on their own unique approach to leadership and instead admire male leadership.

### **Women in traditional power systems**

Often, women's leadership style as shown in the struggle for second liberation and constitutional reforms in Kenya is guided by the desire of 'not rocking the boat', avoiding conflict, negotiations and other soft skills. During the struggle for constitutional reforms, women came up with different scenarios of what they wanted and always pondered on what men would say and would later take the route of least resistance. This also led to discussions of who would lead them and at what negotiations, thereby often turning to women who were older, more seasoned, and political (Kabira & Mbote et al, 2018).

Older women can be witty, challenging and authoritative at negotiations. In some communities, men see older women as having reached the state of elders. These women would be the likes of Phoebe Asiyo, Jael Mbogo, Eddah Gachukia, Julia Ojiambo and Zipporah Kittony during the negotiations for the change of the constitution. Some young women think these women were always that powerful and authoritative. Looking at few examples in history, one realizes that they had started the struggle for space, when many of them were in their twenties or thirties. They had the passion to lead and to change the lives of their people, at a young age.





## Motherhood as an alternative leadership model for African women

Motherhood has been a source of power for women in the African context. It often gives women status. In this sense, women have been able to use their status in challenging patriarchal structures and institutions. In Kenya for example, mothers of political prisoners staged a protest in Nairobi's Uhuru Park in the 90s when protesting against the oppressive system of the former President of Kenya, the late Daniel Moi, who jailed their sons for speaking out.

When no man could speak for fear of being detained and tortured, they used their status as mothers to urge for the release of their sons. Resilience, courage, unity of purpose and determination kept them going. At one point the President ordered the police to arrest them and take them back to their homes. Those who were elderly used the only weapon allowed by culture to defend themselves by striping naked. Those who were taken home traveled back immediately and returned to 'freedom corner', a section in Uhuru Park that was thus named after these struggles. This is a clear indication of women's resilience and courage

The section below illustrates a selection of high-profile women leaders in the African context who beat the odds to rise to the top:



### Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson



 *Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson*

Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, a former President of Liberia is a notable example of a woman who has been instrumental in shaping the history of her country through visionary leadership. She had been involved with politics in Liberia for three decades before running for presidency in 2006 when she was elected as the first female president in Liberia, and Africa. She was tasked with the difficult task of rebuilding a war-torn country that had been through devastating





civil wars. She served for two terms and remains the only woman to ever achieve this feat in Africa.

During her presidency, she strived to ensure that the gargantuan public debt was written off to stimulate economic growth. Moreover, she recognized that one viable way to increase productivity was to increase access to education to which end she made elementary education free for all. During her tenure; she also made attempts to build good relations between the members of the opposition given the country's civil war background. She strengthened diplomatic ties with other countries as she sought assistance in her policies. Through her unique inclusive and participatory style, she sought to boost the country to economic and social development. She is perceived as the mother of Liberia. As a country, Liberia needed this model of leadership after experiencing brutal regimes during the civil war where soldiers often destroyed property and raped women and girls.

In 2011, she won the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in restoring Liberia. This is one of many other awards that she has received. Amidst many challenges with governance and restructuring systems that had been eroded decades of civil war, she was keen on women's empowerment and appointed several women in her cabinet. She is a fine example of resilience and vision for a better future as she left private employment to dedicate her life to public service. The hallmark of her administration was that of a good listener, a negotiator, humble and resilient. What was most notable in her leadership that was recognized by the Norwegian Nobel Committee which decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2011 was to be divided in three equal parts between Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work. It was her view that democracy and lasting peace cannot be achieved in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society.

---





## Phoebe Asiyu



*Phoebe Asiyu*

Phoebe Asiyu is a well-known Kenyan woman leader and astute politician. Asiyu taught briefly in a public school before she joined Maendeleo Ya Wanawake and became its first president in 1958, where she served for four years. While there she pushed for economic empowerment, learning new and better farming methods, the establishment of small-scale businesses and lobbying for the improvement of women's healthcare, especially

maternal child health, nutrition, hygiene, political empowerment and representation. She used her influential position to ensure that the plight of women was heard and she was aware that for there to be effective women leadership; women had to be educated. Her decision to plunge into politics in 1979 was prompted by the influential Luo Council of Elders through the recommendation of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga.

While she served as a Member of Parliament; she was keen to push for affirmative action and for women representation but this motion was rejected by majority of the male dominated parliament. After retirement from politics in 1997, she was appointed to the defunct Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) as a commissioner. She has since devoted her time and energies in community work and philanthropy. Her efforts would bear fruits during the constitutional reform that was taking place before the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution. In the making of the 2010 constitution; Hon Phoebe Asiyu, Zipporah Kittony, Julia Ojiambo, Jael Mbogo, Grace Ogot and Jane Kiano among other women, would appeal to many leaders as mothers in order to negotiate for women. These efforts bore fruit with the introduction of the two-thirds gender rule and affirmative action in all spheres of government at national and county level. It is important to note that for her plight for affirmative action to be implemented as law; the fight took nearly 5 decades. This shows her resilience in the fight for women representation in government.





## Charity Ngilu - Governor Kitui



 *Charity Ngilu*

Charity Ngilu has been in political leadership closer to 30 years now and she has always identified herself as a woman leader. She is proud of being a woman, of speaking for and about women and has provided exemplary leadership as the first female Governor of Kitui County. Her political career has spanned over three decades and she has been influential in building women's economic empowerment having influenced women to form groups in order to seek government support. This has been the hallmark of her administration as she is keen on

decreasing women's dependency. She has increased awareness in ensuring that local female farmers adopt new farming methods to boost productivity. Her tenure as Governor has been rough as she has faced opposition from her county assembly but due to her resilience, she remains unbowed.



## Wangari Maathai



 *Wangari Maathai*

Wangari Maathai was one of the greatest environmentalists to grace the African continent and is a woman of many accomplishments. She was the first female scholar from East and Central Africa to acquire a doctorate (in biology) and the first female professor in Kenya. In 1977; she started a grass-roots movement aimed at countering the deforestation that was threatening the means of subsistence of the agricultural





population. The campaign encouraged women to plant trees in their local environments and to think ecologically.

She left formal employment and thereafter formed the Green Belt Movement that she used to raise awareness on environmental matters. She rallied for international support to fund her that ended in an altercation with Moi's government over Uhuru park and Karura Forest. She was passionate about the environment and through her Movement; she planted millions of tree nurseries throughout the country, thus increasing Kenya's forest coverage. Her efforts were internationally recognized and in 2004, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace. This was also due to the protests against gross human rights violations that were committed during Former President Moi's reign.

Wangari Maathai demonstrates ecofeminism that challenges patriarchal leadership and destruction of model earth. Ecofeminism as demonstrated by Wangari Maathai is seen as guardians of land on behalf of the community and future generations



## Alice Wairimu Nderitu



*Alice Wairimu Nderitu*

Alice Wairimu Nderitu is a renowned author and armed conflict mediator, listed by the United Nations as one of only two percent of women in the world mediating armed conflict in formal processes. She has been recognized locally and globally for her immense contribution to peace building particularly her innovative approach to mediation using motherhood skills of storytelling and paving way for warring communities to start talking to each other. She stands out as an exceptional leader

on the African Continent in peace building, mediation and human rights

Alice worked with the NCIC when formal women mediators of ethnic conflicts were extremely rare. She showed that women in decision-making roles were part of peace building. For example, she was one of three





mediators (the other two were her fellow male commissioners) in a process resulting in a peace agreement signed by 10 ethnic communities in Nakuru, Kenya. For sixteen months, Alice was the only woman among the 100 male elders and 2 male mediators. Alice was also involved in mediating at political levels between and among political candidates and facilitating inter-ethnic dialogues between the A-Meru, Boran, Gabra, Nubians and Luo communities among others.

Her work has earned her many awards including; 2019-Diversity and Inclusion Peace and Cohesion Champion Award - the Kenya National Diversity Inclusion Award Recognition (DIAR awards) 2017-2018 Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue award for using dialogue to support conflict resolution including but not limited to roles in Kenya and Nigeria awarded by the Simon Fraser University, Canada. 2017 Global Pluralism Awardee awarded by Global Centre for Pluralism (His Highness The Aga Khan and the Government of Canada) for commitment to conflict prevention throughout Africa and innovative approach to mediation.



## Winnie Madikizela-Mandela



Winnie Mandela

Winnie Mandela, as she is commonly known, was an iconic figure in shaping South Africa's political emancipation history. She grew up in the apartheid system where as a child, she witnessed the systemic abrogation of equality whereby the apartheid government propagated racism. From early on, Winnie's displeasure grew and when she met Nelson Mandela, her efforts were only accelerated as they shared the same vision, which was equality for all. She was well educated and even got a scholarship to further her

studies which she duly turned down and instead opted for social work in Johannesburg.

Her activism began shortly after her marriage to Nelson Mandela and she participated in a mass action by mobilising women to protest against the





famous pass laws that were used in the apartheid system. She was heavily involved with the ANC's Women's League, which she used to organise for mass protests in fighting the government. When Nelson Mandela was arrested and thereafter imprisoned, she helped coordinate the activities of the ANC and bore continuous torment from police authorities. Her bold and undeterred stance was crucial in the attainment of independence and the pressure on the government that led to Mandela's eventual release. All these were done as she raised her children and engaged in running battles with the police that many times got her into political exile. Her style was aggressive and bold and after Nelson's release, he stated, "Her tenacity reinforced my personal respect, love and growing affection."

---

### **Women's Consultative Leadership**

Women's leadership tends to be more consultative and non-hierarchical. This is more visible in women's self-help groups where women do not normally conduct an election but will often just point one of them to lead the rest. They then allocate the one elected to lead assistants; a secretary, a treasurer and a vice chairperson. They will trust these groups with their resources and will treat them with the respect that they deserve. They do not often see the need for elections or written laws. When the leaders fail to perform according to their members expectations, the members will collude and start another chama leaving the other one an empty shell. This saves the women the energy of going through an election that may leave them more divided or shaming their leadership, (Kabira, 2018).

### **African Women's Religious Leadership Models**

Women spiritual leaders appear to be more acceptable in the African Context. Myths regarding women such as Nehanda, who was both a prophetess and a resistance leader of the Shona people in Zimbabwe between 1896- 1898 tell about this unique leadership model. Nehanda led a resistance movement against the British colonial rulers in Zimbabwe. In 1898 she and her male assistant were executed for leading the resistance. In Kenya we had Mekatili wa Menza of the Giriama people. Mekatili was a prophetess who travelled to each kaya (homestead) in the region persuading people not to join the British rule. During the process of organising the resistance she and Wanje were exiled to Western Kenya in 1914, (Lanoi, 2014).

Prophetess Moraa from the Gusii people in Kenya was part of a resistance movement against the British colonial administration. Moraa was a renowned







healer and prophet. She is reported to have given her son to go and fight the British. She prophesied the coming of the British, and she urged young men to fight against British occupation of Gusii land. She even gave young warriors protective potions to prevent them from being harmed by the bullets of the colonial army. Mora was revered during her time. These leaders were recognized in the communities and even today, the religious leadership mode for women is more easily acceptable than political roles. We have many religious women leaders, such as Judith Mbugua, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru. Rev. Natasha, the famous Lakwane of Uganda, Pastor Teresia Wairimu, among others (Kabira, 2018; Lanoi, 2019; Mwaura, 2020)

## Conclusion

One can easily say that women's leadership style is guided by the concept of servant leadership and resilience. They are not hierarchical in their structure. They negotiate rather than threaten others. They are persistent, do not give ultimatums, they sacrifice, nurture and are non-controversial. They are humble and consultative. Using the women's leadership models, we can change the mainstream politics, we can nurture the nation, we can humanize our institutions. We can build a better Kenya. As the Chinese say, 'the journey of 1000 miles begins with one step', we must begin this step by bringing women's leadership models at all levels, in mediation, in churches, in Nyumbakumi, in our institutions. We must change the mainstream.

This chapter has looked at women's concept of power and women's leadership styles. We have argued that politics can be reasonable, negotiated, resilient and flexible. It can be broad enough to address issues that are common to all of us without being dictatorial, that is why motherhood style of leadership is about nurturing and not threatening, negotiating not giving ultimatums, caring and not fighting, using togetherness rather than division, focusing on what unites and not what divides us, feminine and not masculine, humility, not aggression, love not hatred inclusive rather than exclusive.

This leadership from a woman's perspective is very different from the experience that we presently have with politics in our community and within the region. We have come this far using the same type of leadership. We need to use women's leadership models to transform our national leadership styles and our political leadership in particular. We must also take this leadership style to all other areas of leadership not just for politics. We must do it as chiefs, police commissioners, cabinet secretaries, church leaders and professional leaders. We can change mainstream leadership by mothering nurturing and humanizing the state and other institutions.





# CHAPTER 3

## WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING: A HISTORICAL APPROACH

---

**W**omen in Kenya have made tremendous progress in different spheres of leadership across all sectors political, social, economic, and religious areas. The journey of women's leadership in Kenya can be traced back to the pre-colonial and colonial era with the legendary figures such as Mekatilili wa Menza among the Miji-Kenda community to Wangu wa Makeri in Central Kenya (Kamau, 2010). Mekatilili wa Menza and Wangu wa Makeri represent the first generation of women leaders in Kenya. This struggle has continued into present day Kenya as women struggle to take up leadership in the different social, political and economic forums. This struggle demonstrates women's resilience in the pursuit of their right to participate in leadership and decision-making on matters that affect them. Though impressive, progress have been made in this struggle, women must not relent until their marginalization is fully eliminated in all sectors.

The second generation of women leaders is represented by a few educated women, and as a result found themselves in Parliament. Hon Phoebe Asiyo, Eddah Gachukia, Rose Waruhiu, Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Wangari Maathai, Grace Ogot and Nyiva Mwendwa, Charity Ngilu, Agnes Ndetei, Maria Nzomo, Jane Kiano, Jael Mbogo, Khamla Sikad, among others exemplify the generation of women leaders who helped to entrench women into political leadership despite the difficulties. These women were able to raise the issues





of women and to enact policies and laws to support affirmative action. Sadly, the affirmative action was repulsed by the political establishment (Kaimenyi, Kinyua & Samuel, 2013) particularly in 1997 and onwards.

Affirmative action sought equity in representation of men and women and was motivated by the third generation of women leaders, led by legal scholars, women leaders and women in academia. The women leaders and professionals included; Martha Karua, Charity Ngilu, Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Martha Koome Tabitha Seii, Nancy Barasa, Abida Ali Aaron, Maimuna Mwidau, Adelina Mwau, among others. A group of younger women including Mary Wambui Kanyi, Deborah Okumu, Ayoo Odiko, Daisy Amdany, Beatrice Kamau, Faith Kasiva, Jacinta Makhoha, Mary Njeri Gichuru, and Esther Mwaura among many others, who were also actively involved in this phase (Kabira, 2012). The women's struggle was extended to the constituencies and galvanized women leaders at all levels into a strong women's movement. This movement became very instrumental during the constitutional reforms. The work of these women leaders and professionals culminated in the inclusion of the two thirds gender rule in the Kenyan Constitution. (Mati, 2012) (Kabira, 2012) (Phoebe Asiyo, 2018) Kabira, Mbote et al (2018) and the introduction on women representatives in elective and appointive political positions that have increased the number of women political leaders in Kenya.

The fourth generation of women led by vocal Members of Parliament such as, Aisha Jumwa and Millie Odhiambo have now taken up the agitating for gender equality, better public governance and equitable representation and resources sharing for sustainable development. Indeed, the last general election saw a record three women governors elected to head the County Governments of Kitui, Bomet and Kirinyaga and three women senators; Margret Kamar from Uasin Gishu, Susan Kihika from Nakuru and Fatuma Adan Dullo from Isiolo Counties. This is a significant feat in women political leadership and governance. These women continue to champion for the removal of challenges in Women leadership especially that of the reluctance of Parliament to pass necessary statutes to realize the two thirds gender rule. Tremendous gains have been made in the political arena through civic education and particularly with the implementation of the affirmative action in the constitution. In the last general elections in Kenya, for example, three women Governors as the executives of three counties; Ann Waiguru of Kirinyaga, the late Joyce Laboso of Kericho and Charity Ngilu of Kitui and almost all counties have at least one-third female members of the County Assembly. This year (2020) we have seen a woman, Margret Kamar elected





as a deputy speaker in Senate for the first time in Kenya's history. A number of women have been involved in the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), and they include, Gladys Wanga, Priscilla Nyokabi, Aisha Jumwa and Alice Wahome. The following sections highlight women's participation in the elective and appointive positions in political arena in Kenya.

## **Women Leadership in Elective and Appointive Positions**

### *Women and elective Leadership*

Looking at the surface, it would be hard for an outsider to comprehend that eight years ago Kenya did not have the large presence of women in elective positions. The landscape is gradually changing. In 2013 there were 63 women elected in both houses and the number rose to 74 in 2017. Although we had no woman governor in 2013, 2017 saw three women capture the position. At county assembly level, 72 women were elected in 2013. This number then rose to 96 in 2017, which is the largest number of women ever to serve in Kenya's Parliament and county assembly. This explains why it has taken at least fifty-four years (1963 to 2017) for Kenyan women to enter the core of political leadership in Kenya.

### *The rise of women political leaders*

Kenyan political journey for women has not been easy. Their quest to enter, participate and become political leaders has stretched the Kenyan women to adopt various strategies. Before independence, they joined the freedom fighters and the maumau movement where, they provided food and shelter, transported weapons, provided intelligence or spied for the movement. At independence, women were not recognized or given any political leadership position. A few women like Phoebe Asiyo, Grace Ogot, Jael Mbogo and many others tried vying for political offices with varied success. It was always an uphill task as Phoebe Asiyo notes in her memoirs "it is possible" written in 2018. The women's movement organized themselves to push for women's inclusion in the political arena, particularly in the 1990's and the early years of this century when the struggle of constitutional reform was going on. Women made great progress particularly in areas of representation in elective positions.

With few women making it into the National Assembly, Kenyan women did not give up the struggle. The introduction to affirmative action provisions in the constitution which was a result of the women's struggle brought about the changes reflected in (2013 and 2017) women representation in the two





houses, (Kabira & Mbote. Nzomo (2018), Kimani & Mwaura (2018). In the 80s and 90s women, continued to be systematically marginalized and actively suppressed in political leadership.

The table below illustrates women's representation in leadership after the 2017 general elections:

ELECTIVE POSITION (2017)	ELECTED		NOMINATED		TOTAL	%WOMEN (elected & nominated)
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN		
President	1	0	-	-	1	0.0%
Deputy President	1	0	-	-	1	0%
Senator	44	3	2	18	67	31%
Member of National Assembly (MNA)	267	23	7	6	302	9%
Women Member of the National Assembly	0	47	-	-	47	100%
Governor	44	3	-	-	47	6%
Dep. Governor	40	7	-	-	47	15%
Member of County Assembly (MCA)	1334	96	97	650	2177	34%
TOTAL	1731	179	106	673	2689	32%

Current challenges faced by women in political leadership include the following:

- Establishment of women leagues that have no actual power.
- Parties have women office bearers who cannot make decisions.
- Quorum in decision making forums is not linked to the two-third gender hence women can and are be sidelined.
- Election Campaign Financing Act, 2013 has not been implemented to date yet it is meant to provide a level playing field for political players.
- The Code of Conduct under the PPA does not have penalties.
- Practical difficulty in implementing the Katiba Institute case; Parties will comply with the two-third gender principle in their list of nominations (for single majority elections). Nonetheless, women are likely to be nominated in electoral areas where the Parties are not popular (not strong holds).
- Repeated/ continued nomination of specific women (under the party lists election) into Parliament.





- There are currently 71 fully registered Political Parties, the Party leaders are men save for a few parties including National Rainbow Coalition Kenya, National Rainbow Coalition, Citizen Convention Party and Liberal Democratic Party
- Weak Internal Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Though the Constitution of Kenya (2010) is a progressive document its implementation has encountered specific barriers. In Okoth Ogendo's words, constitutions alone are inadequate as a lever towards achievement of balance in society.

### *Persistent barriers faced by women today*

The attainment of gender equality in representative politics popularly known as the 2/3rd gender principle, and non-implementation of Article 27 (c), where all elective and appointive bodies have to ensure that, not more than 2/3 of the opposite gender rule is adhered to has remained elusive. Women have now turned their focus to the Judiciary and the two Houses. It is hoped that a proper interpretation or a solution shall be arrived at for the win of Kenyan women.

*The law on elections campaign financing* has never been respected to date. A huge amount of campaign money which deters women from competing favorably with men continues to be a barrier. Focus is now on IEBC and Parliament to operationalize this law.

*Impact of Culture and traditional roles of women:* culture continues to impede the effective participation of women. In traditional societies, women were considered inferior and people who cannot lead effectively. Though, this attitude is slowly changing a lot of negative attitude still persists. "When a woman becomes aggressive, she attracts negative perception from both male and female supporters. To the men she becomes a threat, she is profiled and labeled 'prostitute', and to the women, she is labeled as a woman who has no responsibilities. In addition, a woman's role requires that she takes care of the family. To vie for office, she must hire additional help to watch over her children, and many may not have resources to do that. Finally, the campaign season often requires late night meetings. This is very challenging for women. She will be accused of abandoning her role as a wife or mother.

*Clannism and religion.* This is rampant in the northern and north eastern parts of Kenya. For instance, in Garissa and other northern frontier counties, women





face the negative impacts of 'negotiated democracy' on their ability to vie for office. They are thus forced to talk to their fathers, husbands and brothers or seek other male allies, who can lobby men and the council of elders on their behalf within the clans. Women's participation is also hampered by the challenge brought about by the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam in Kenya. There is thus need to change the belief in Kenya's Muslim community that women come second to men. If this perception is addressed, then, their ability to lead, will be enhanced.

Monitoring the Political Party's in the conduct of party nominations remains a contested issue. The nominations are marred with electoral malpractice. Effort to build the capacity of IEBC in ensuring compliance of parties is important. Cases of corruption, bribery, violence and total disregard of the law as captured in the KNCHR report of 2017. 'The fallacious vote' must be eliminated.

The law is *ambiguous on how parties* should nominate leaders under the special seats category at the county assembly. This omission has been abused by politicians where cronies are rewarded at the expense of bonafide party members.

Gender based violence and online bullying; despite the existence of electoral and political party code of conduct, women aspirants still face election-related gender-based violence. This is a major reason that keeps women out of any elective seat. Rape and threats by male opponents, or their supporters, keeps women aspirants away from vying, especially during party primaries. Women also face online sexual harassment. Their bodies are mutilated through Photoshop images leading to many women experiencing mental health issues. Name calling, assault, insults, slander, and propaganda are also a big deterrent.

The participation of young women elected or nominated out of the total 32% in 2017, needs to be raised. There is need to have the provisions inclusive policies within the women's affirmative action laws so that young women may have a chance of political participation going forward.

### *Specific strategies of Promoting women's participation along the Electoral Cycle*

The table below suggests ways of enhancing women's participation throughout the electoral cycle:





## PRE-ELECTION PHASE

TRAINING AND EDUCATION	VOTER REGISTRATION	PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	
<p>The IEBC should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and roll out gender sensitive Voter Education campaigns- this may include:</li> <li>• Implementing VE campaigns that encourage women to:</li> <li>• Participate in the electoral process;</li> <li>• Campaigns and civic education should reach rural and illiterate women</li> <li>• Mapping women information needs for the development of gender sensitive messages,</li> <li>• Mainstream gender specific outreach and delivery method</li> <li>• Collaborate with Media, FBOs CSOs and CBOs on gender-awareness outreach and reporting</li> <li>• Undertake awareness sessions/ train-ings of all voter education providers on unique challenges faced by women across the electoral cycle.</li> </ul>	<p>The IEBC should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure provision of sex-disaggregated data</li> <li>• Put in place women-friendly voter registration strategies</li> <li>• Institute gender-sensitive checklists and training</li> <li>• Deliver gender-sensitive outreach about registration</li> </ul>	<p>The IEBC should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage women to be-come members in dispute resolution panels</li> <li>• Ensure that polling cen-ters are accessible to nursing mothers and the elderly women</li> <li>• Ensure that women are recruited and appointed at all levels of the Commission</li> <li>• Ensure that women have information regarding electoral processes</li> <li>• Formulate women friendly legislation to realize the 2/3rd gender rule</li> <li>• Work with relevant organ-isations to ensure the safety of women candidates and voters</li> <li>• Oversee compliance of the political parties Act in relation to party nomination, internal party dispute resolutions and campaign finance, party list, and electoral malpractice</li> </ul> <p>The State Department of Gender has a role in ensuring that all institutions that work in Gender and elec-tions implement legislation that is relevant to women</p>	<p>The civil society should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby for women appointment in the electoral commission and as members of the various institutions involved in electoral processes;</li> <li>• Support women participation through presentation of Memo-randums in Parliament during public hearings on gender bills.</li> <li>• Participate in conferences where they will present policy recommendations for consideration by the various actors in the electoral process.</li> <li>• Develop gender tools for use during all electoral observation processes and in the monitoring the IEBCs implementation of electoral law by all actors.</li> <li>• Work to ensure the marginalized and women with disability are not disenfranchised;</li> <li>• Provide training on gender equality and human rights for members of electoral management bodies.</li> <li>• Training for IEBC and political parties' staff. We can begin setting agenda for Political parties. Who is training them on gender issues? We can make them a programme towards election.</li> <li>• Women do not know how to go to court when they have an electoral issue and how to lounge a memorandum</li> </ul>







<b>ELECTORAL PERIOD</b>		
<b>VOTER OPERATIONS AND POLLING DAY</b>	<b>VERIFICATION OF RESULTS</b>	<b>ELECTION CAMPAIGN</b>
<p>The IEBC in collaboration with partners should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure ballot paper education is done to women</li> <li>• Facilitate the establishment of a national and county based Early warning mechanisms</li> <li>• Ensure sanitary provision for women voters and polling staff</li> <li>• Collect data on nature of violence meted on women</li> </ul>	<p>IEBC /partners should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake specialized training to women party agents</li> <li>• Provide Gender desegregate data for voter turn out</li> <li>• Protocols to Facilitate women observers and party agents in accessing the Commission's server</li> </ul>	<p>The IEBC / partners should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Women are protected from harassment and intimidation</li> <li>• Lobby Media to offer more time to women candidates.</li> <li>• Ensure that party campaign resources are accessed by women.</li> <li>• Conduct gender sensitivity training for monitors</li> <li>• Institute and train all stakeholders on early warning mechanisms for risk mapping.</li> <li>• Provide technical assistance to political parties, ORPP, PPLC , FIDA and key women organizations to align electoral framework to constitution and Elections Act dispute resolution timelines.</li> <li>• Collect data on nature of violence meted on women</li> </ul>
<b>POST ELECTION PERIOD</b>		
<b>POST ELECTIONS</b>	<b>LEGAL REVIEW</b>	<b>CALL TO ACTION</b>
<p>IEBC /Partners should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze gender based violence and its impact on women political leadership</li> <li>• Establish a data base of on all women who tried to vie for a political seat</li> <li>• Undertake a post-election review with a chapter dedicated to women.</li> <li>• CSOs forum on review of women participation in elections should be undertaken</li> </ul>	<p>IEBC /partners should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a gender based legal gap Assessment across the electoral cycle</li> <li>• Conduct a mapping of all policies and processes to identify any gender inequalities within agencies working in the electoral process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earmark specific party funds and resources to support women membership drives and party candidates.</li> <li>• There is need to strengthen party election management boards, bolstering their ability to plan and conduct well-administered party primaries.</li> <li>• That parties set dates and locations in sufficient time to promote participation and factor in gender sensitive concerns.</li> </ul>

(Source, UN women, IEBC, International Idea)





## Conclusion

It is clear that for a woman to make it, she should be visible; be in a position to identify the specific social-cultural barriers and address them in advance. A woman should be known, seen and respected within the community, particularly as an honest person with integrity. A good example is Lina Kilimo, who worked with the women at the grassroots and fought the culture female genital mutilation. Her name became a household name in her constituency and when she vied it was easy to capture the seat because she had already won the heart of many people both men and women, by identifying with a cause. Women should also be confident and bring advisors, role models members, and spokespersons onto their team that complements them. In the case of Cecilie Mbarire, after facing her first loss, she identified a mentor, Charity Ngilu, through whom she was nominated as a member of parliament in the 2002 elections. When she vied in 2007, she became the first woman to be elected in her constituency as a Member of Parliament. A seat she held till 2017, when she decided to vie for gubernatorial position.

Again, it is critical that a woman aligns herself with a large movement or a well-known political party. Evidence shows that this halved the campaign struggle. Two women stand out; Alice Wahome, who has risen to the limelight for initiating 'Inua Mama' and defending the Deputy President, and Gladys Wanga, a fierce defender of the Opposition. Both have come out strongly to defend their political parties at critical moments, even being on the front line to start a women's movement within their respective political parties. In terms of movements the 'Women Embrace' and 'Inua mama' are good examples of formations that have given women a platform to discuss the popular 'handshake' and Building Bridges initiative (BBI). Although the two groups seemed to be opposed to each other and supporting two different political alignments, they had one common agenda of ensuring women got 50/50 allocation of seats if a referendum was to take place thereby protecting the gender gains in the current constitution. A woman too must develop a clear strategy for competing with male allies, as well as influential local leaders as is in the case of Linah Kilimo. Her strategy of engaging with all in the community without discriminating in terms of gender, age, clan or tribe won the hearts of her voters.





## Appointive Leadership

Getting appointments to key government positions for women have been an uphill task but thanks to women's movement and women leaders both in parliament and civil society, who have persistently reminded the appointing authority that women need to occupy key positions if Kenya is to be viewed as a democratic country. Although at times women got frustrated and ridiculed by men, they were persistent and resilient. A case in point is when more than 5000 women from all the 210 constituencies of Kenya picketed Parliament and called out their respective Members of Parliament to deliver copies of a petition asking them to vote for a bill that was on the floor to include women in parliament. Although male MPs came out to receive the petition, they were caught on camera laughing it off and some saying that women wanted to be handed positions on a silver platter. However, this fueled women's resolve to further push and demand their inclusion not only in political offices but in all fields. This prepared the ground for women to demand their agenda be included in the constitution and protecting the gender gains by being vigilant and speaking in one voice.

With the new Constitution (2010) the 2/3rd gender principle was entrenched, locked and protected under Chapter Four, which stipulates that for any changes of a clause to that chapter, there has to be a referendum. This clause has been a golden key that women have used to open many doors and gates from national to county level and all government institutions. Although we can't say that we have fully achieved the 'not more than two thirds' principle, there have been some milestones made and women have been appointed to various key positions. In 2013, Kenya made unprecedented history when President Uhuru appointed six women out of a cabinet of 18 to become cabinet secretaries. Among them Amina Mohamed who was the first woman to head Kenya's Ministry of Home Affairs, Rachel Omamo headed the sensitive Ministry of Defense, a docket that had never been held by a woman before. Ann Waiguru, an economic and public policy expert, was appointed to head the critical Ministry of Devolution and Planning, which coordinated the implementation of Kenya's new devolved system of government in 47 counties. Needless to say, that these three women performed their duties beyond people's expectations. Amina's track record in the Ministry of home affairs saw her being proposed for a UN position. Waiguru coordinated and managed to put in place a new ministry that was the heartbeat of devolution. Despite many challenges, among them high level corruption, Waiguru was able to start an elaborate project for NYS that has seen youth access gainful





employment. She was also able to see a peaceful transition of devolved functions of all the 47 counties from the transitional interim committee to full oversight by governors.

Sarah Serem another gallant leader was appointed to head the controversial Salaries and Remunerations Commission (SRC). Sarah's work in this commission put her at loggerhead with members of parliament but she stood her ground. She set up the commission from the scratch and she will be remembered for her courage, resilience and principles. Not even reduction of her commission's budget by parliament would make her bulge. The President, acknowledging that she was one of the best, hardworking and trusted Commissioners, deployed her as Kenya's Ambassador to China, where she has been very instrumental in handling the concerns of students and their parents during the unexpected predicament of Covid-19.

The women's movement on the other hand remained vigilant and rushed to court whenever the implementers tended to over-look the 2/3rd principle. A case in point is when the President appointed five men to the Supreme Court. Women rushed to court and he withdrew the names and followed due process which saw two women appointed to the Supreme Court.

## **Expanding our territories**

Women continue to be appointed to key positions at different levels from national to county, ward and even the village elders' committees have started recruiting women as members or office bearers of their committees. At county level we have nominated MCAs at county assemblies, female county executives committee members (CECs), constituency administrators (CAs) and ward administrators (WAs). Under the office of the President women have been appointed in various positions starting from regional commissioners, county commissioners, county assistant commissioners, chiefs, assistant chiefs and Nyumba Kumi leaders. These jobs were previously preserved for men but women have penetrated and are delivering just as well as or better than the men. This is illustrated in the table below:



*Women in Decision Making Positions*

Categories	2016				2017			
	F	M	Totals	%	F	M	Totals	%
Cabinet Secretaries	6	12	18	33.3	16	16	22	27.3
Cabinet Administrative Secretaries	-	-	-	-	3	18	21	14.3
Principle Secretaries	7	19	26	26.9	10	32	42	23.4
Diplomatic Corps	15	48	63	23.8	16	42	58	27.6
Governors	0	47	47	0	3	44	47	6.4
Deputy Governors	9	38	47	19.2	7	40	47	14.7
Senators	0	47	47	0	3	44	47	31.3
National Assembly	69	280	349	19.8	76	273	349	21.8
Speaker of Senate	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Speaker of National Assembly	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Members of County Assembly	761	1463	2224	34.2	745	1479	2224	33.5
County Commissioners	18	29	47	38.3	17	30	47	36.2
Sub County Commissioners	40	255	295	13.6	44	251	295	14.9
Supreme Court Judges	2	5	7	28.6	2	5	7	28.6
Court of Appeal Judges	7	18	25	28.0	7	15	22	31.8
High Court Judges	37	59	96	38.5	54	77	131	41.2
Magistrates	216	222	438	49.3	207	214	421	49.2
Khadhi	-	45	45	0	0	55	55	0
Chiefs	126	2464	2590	4.9	137	2453	2590	5.3
Assistant Chiefs	489	5397	5886	8.3	504	5382	5886	8.6
Lawyers	2581	4193	6774	38.1	5141	3859	9000	57.1

Source: Executive Order No.1 of 2018, economic survey, various publications.





Some of the common traits that describe how their leadership journey began include:

- a) Leadership auctioned by appointment /election. A woman's talents are discovered and she is offered a platform enabling her to shine nationally, regionally and sometimes globally.
- b) Access to or recognition by the media (social and traditional) that helped her reach beyond her immediate community and raised her profile.
- c) External factors: People, Environment and Events
- d) A woman's leadership potential is identified by an organization that proceeds to offer emotional, intellectual, and/or material support early on.
- e) Role models who provided inspiration.
- f) Mentors who offered guidance.
- g) Networks that offered support and resources to help a woman persevere.





# CHAPTER 4

## CELEBRATING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN OTHER FRONTIERS

---

### *Emerging context of leadership in academia*

The current women's leadership has expanded across many sectors of the Kenyan economy; from Education, Health, Academia, Aeronautics, Sports, Media and Economic leadership. In taking the example of education, Kenyatta University was the first public University to have a woman as a Vice Chancellor in Olive Mugenda. Egerton University, Maasai Mara and Eldoret University have had female Vice Chancellors. Egerton has Rose Mwonya, Eldoret University has Teresa Akenga and Maasai Mara has Mary Walingo. The private Universities in Kenya like Nazarene University, United States International University (USIU), Riara University had their pioneer women Vice chancellors and leaders. Nazarene University had Leah Marangu; Riara University had Eddah Gachukia and USIU had Freida Brown. Women are progressively gaining increasing numbers in academic leadership.

### *Cultural Context of Women Leadership in Kenya*

Social culturally, women have been regarded as wives and mothers with primary roles in nurturing families (Tundi, 2014). The traditional role has contributed substantially to women's domination by men using culture as an excuse. Culture proposes no place for equality between men and women and remains the position of defense justifying women discrimination. Cultural practices that have contributed to exclusion include the following;





- a) Culture on land inheritance, which has contributed immensely to women and girl child exclusion in land tenure policies over the years. Historically, girls' education was stifled in preference of the male child.
- b) Discrimination in the education of the girl child this excluded many from professional careers and opportunities because education plays a significant role in economic emancipation (Mondi, 2011).
- c) Perceptions and stereotypes based on cultural beliefs have contributed significantly to women's discrimination in promotions and appointments to leadership positions despite academic qualifications and experience. In a study to determine gender roles in board performance among commercial banks in Kenya, no significant difference in performance was found in mixed boards (Wachuli & Mboya, 2012). Onyango, Simatwa and Ondigi (2011) posit that there is need to promote attitude change through media, education and religion to enhance women representation in boards.
- d) The dual roles of women in supporting families present a challenge in balancing career and family. This burden of gendered labour burden has reduced women's career, economic and political advancement.

### *Economic Context of Women Leadership in Kenya*

Women play a significant role in Kenya's economy as in many other African countries. Entrepreneurship Activity in Kenya where women are the major players is characterized by its informality (GEM, 2015; Ogutu & Kihonge, 2016). The informal businesses operated by majority of women in third world countries are necessity based and contribute to sustenance and livelihood of households (Klapper, 2008).

- a) Business is driven primarily on land, agriculture and women are the major players.
- b) Education: The rise of women entrepreneurs has been motivated by access to education, competence and competitiveness of the individuals to compete for the same positions with men.
  - Mary Okello was a pioneer woman banker to scale corporate Kenya as a board member and management executive. She is also credited with investment in private schools to provide quality education through Makini schools.
  - Eddah Gachukia also excelled in creating Riara group of schools as well as Riara University.
  - In Industry, Keroche Founder, Tabitha Karanja has demonstrated that







one can take on the multinational corporations and win in the market place. The numbers of top leadership in listed companies led by women is on the increase.

- The Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT) started by Jennifer Riria played a pivotal role in bringing women to mainstream banking where their financial needs were catered and addressed.
- Other notable examples include the appointment of women i.e the Diamond Trust Bank lady CEO Nasib Devji; BOC another listed firm is led by Marion Gachogo; Kengen a power generation company is led by Rebecca Miano, while British American Tobacco is led by Beverly Batoyinbo.

The rise of women leaders demonstrate that women are capable and able to lead. Education is seen as a strong motivator to women economic excellence because it provides women with increased opportunities to self-empowerment from career to business.

### *Religious Context of Women Leadership in Kenya*

Although the indigenous African religions recognized women as potential religious leaders the mainstream religious groups have not been supportive of women's leadership in matters of faith. In the Catholic Church, for example, women do not become priests or bishops. Rather, they join religious institutions and become nuns. The nuns profess the vows to obedience and poverty and, for a long time they provided free labor in the church. Those who enter professions like doctors, teachers and nurses donate their earnings or work to support the church's social programs (Ngunjiri & Christo-Baker, 2012). With a strict religious tradition, Catholic women have not really challenged the leadership structure, which is believed to be divinely ordained. Like Catholicism, Islam does not admit women to the religious leadership structure because of similar reasons. Muslim women have been agitating to be legitimately included in decision making and in political leadership

On the other hand, most of the protestant churches have made progress in incorporating women in their leadership structures including pastors and bishops. Overall, the faith-based organizations have provided women religious leaders with fertile grounds to contribute their skills and leadership potentials. The mix of religion with social programmes like; health education, poverty reduction programs, and mercy services (Meyer, Siclair & Sparling, 2011) have provide opportunity to women religious leaders to actively practice leadership rather than remain spectators in the leadership realm.





## The often-Forgotten Categories of Women's Leadership

### *Women's organizations and women's movement*

Which have been globally acknowledged as having reached the highest peak of power and autonomy in 2005 and therefore prepared the ground for 90% of the gains of women in the current constitution. The movement has given birth to most of the women leaders in this country. Women's organizations and institutions have shown a significant contribution towards the poor women in rural, semi urban or urban areas for enabling them to build their skills sets, boost their income levels and living standards and give them much needed exposure.

Women's organizations have played a significant role in addressing prevailing social and cultural handicaps due to the gender-based inequalities and biases. For instance, the barriers that women entrepreneurs face in accessing credit from formal institutions, or in accessing justice due to their limited access to formal education, ownership of property, and social mobility. This background is what led to the establishment of Institutional arrangements, regulatory framework, and coordination through organizations like Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Women Political Caucus, The Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Women Political Alliance, Kenya (WPA-K), FIDA Kenya, CBOS, Nyumba Kumi and more recently the County First Ladies forum.

### *Leadership in Women Self Help Groups*

The livelihoods of women in the rural areas of Kenya is difficult due to social problems like early marriages, domestic violence and illiteracy or lack of water, fodder and firewood. This is partly attributed to historical patriarchal societies and the non-inclusion of women in family or community decision making. This situation then called for women to collectively take action and destroy the foundations of patriarchy. In Kenya this movements took root in the late 60s and early 70s, which saw the emergence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) lately called chamas. The chama usually begins with one woman often the founder. She then looks for like-minded women often from family, friends, neighbors or work colleagues, and invites them to the group. Upon coming together, they select their leaders, a chair, secretary and a treasurer. The others agree without objection because this kind of leadership is viewed as a servant leadership as opposed to competitive leadership. Members are then required to contribute equally in terms of cash and time towards the group's capital.





Chamas have contributed to improvement in women's livelihood and have helped the women at the grassroots to improve their households, and paid for weddings, funerals and other social events. They have jointly bought sufurias, tents, chairs and utensils that are kept and managed by women. Some even keep money aside for any eventualities. They have also been given soft loans to pay school fees or start up a business. Some of the big women entrepreneurs have the chamas to thank. If the members are not happy with the leadership, they will most likely quietly leave the group one by one without causing any alarm and the leadership will be left with a shell. Most of them do not bother with legal registration.

The primary motive of women in creating and joining a SHG is to improve their social and economic conditions. The results show that they are achieving this goal through an increase in their income from small investments like in livestock, farming cash crops. These programs tend to help greatly in changing the attitudes of men to the role of women in the household and the community in general. Nyakinyua women group organized and bought land which led to their families acquiring shelter. Women's association have given women an opportunity to reduce negative impacts of patriarchal systems.

## **Celebrating Women's Leadership in other Frontiers**

The section below highlights different women who have championed leadership in a variety of areas. It looks at key women, who have been exemplary in their respective fields. The previous chapters have assessed the struggles that some of these women have had to go through on the path of leadership. Furthermore, this chapter looks at seventeen women, who have been instrumental in society in areas related to; education, health, academia, media as well as in the political sphere. Many of whose success is attributable to their progressive nature and mentorship that has culminated in increasing the number of women in leadership.

### *Case Studies of Women Leaders*

This section describes how each of the women profiled has distinguished herself in her leadership and helped to transform the society and/or economy of Kenya





## Grace Onyango



*Grace Onyango*

Grace Onyango blazed the trail for women politicians as the first female councilor and later the first mayor of Kisumu in 1965 and later first Member of Parliament in 1969 where she served for fifteen years. Thereafter; she was the first temporary speaker, which at the time went against African cultural norms by elbowing her way to national politics her style was calm but bold when need arose, key traits in a male dominated space. She is known for her calm demeanor even while being the first female politician from her region and contributed towards the reduction of bicycle taxes in Kisumu which was most common mode of transport.



## Margaret Wambui Kenyatta



*Margaret Kenyatta*

Margaret Kenyatta was the daughter of the first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, and his wife Grace Wahu. By the time Margaret was born, her father was already a political activist.

She used this background and took part in women's advocacy including; Maendeleo ya Wanawake and the National Council of Women of Kenya. Given her background in politics Margaret was elected as the deputy Mayor of Nairobi in 1969 and as the Mayor of Nairobi for two terms from 1970 to 1976, thus becoming the first





African woman to become the mayor of Kenya's capital city and the second African woman mayor in Kenya.

During her tenure, she played a prominent role in the administration of public health in the city as she was the Chairlady of the Pumwani Maternity Hospital Sub-committee during the reconstruction and extension of the Hospital making it the largest in Kenya and was also a Chairlady of the Public Health Committee. In 1972; she visited Austria and convinced the Austrian President to open the SOS Children's Homes in Kenya, which continue to impact many lives of the less privileged in Kenyan society and used her position to increase access to health and welfare.



## Maison Leshoomo



*Maison Leshoomo*

For more than 20 years, Leshoomo has been a brazen political figure from the Samburu Community. As the current Woman Representative for Samburu County, she is known for her boldness and audacity which has been her style of leadership. Leshoomo got into the politics in the 1990s but her boldness paid off when she was nominated to Parliament by the Party of National Unity in 2008. In 2013, a position she retained in the 2017 General Elections. Ms. Leshoomo is one of the few women who used culture to her advantage. Moreover; she has helped women and the youth exploit opportunities and access government support and firmly believes that for women to win political contests, they need to get involved with the grass-roots women and youth long before they think of vying for elective seats. She has paved the way for women in her community to gain access to education.





## Stella Agara



*Stella Agara*

Stella Agara is a Governance and Youth Development Specialist with experience working on a broad spectrum of governance issues and vast experience on the execution of Youth Led Development programs for the last 11 years in East and Southern Africa. She is the 15th Laureate of the Bremen Solidarity prize, an award she won in 2017 for her work in tax justice and promoting Youth Led Development in Africa.

In pursuit of this cause, she embarked on a campaign for youth to demand accountability from

African Governments on the illicit financial flow from the continent, which earned her the award. In 2018; she was awarded AU Ambassador for Youth and Anti-Corruption in East Africa she was one of 5 young women awarded for the exemplary work they do in promoting youth participation in the fight against corruption. Stella is a Member of the National Steering Committee of the Kenya Multi- Sectorial Forum Against Corruption and the Global Alliance for Tax Justice Network as well as the Tax and Gender Working Group. At Age 26; she was one of the youngest board members in the Red Cross Fraternity

She was the secretary to the National Steering Committee of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) Youth Coordinating Committee and also served as a Member of the Advisory Group to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for the Seventh Session of the World Urban Forum – WUF 7- representing Youth Interests. She also served as a board member of the Kenya Red Cross Society Nairobi Branch first as a Fundraising officer and later as a Vice chairperson for one year and Chairperson for 4years at age 26; one of the youngest board members in the Red Cross and Red Crescent global leadership fraternity at the time. Her approach has been geared towards youth empowerment which has resulted in youth being educated and has inspired many women in the youth category to push the limits.





## Diana Kamande



*Diana Kamande*

Diana Kamande is a mother of two girls and a survivor of domestic violence as a young widow that left her in utter devastation after her husband killed himself during the ordeal. Thereafter; she channelled her resources and established the Come Together Widows and Orphans (CTWO), an NGO whose reach is of over one million widows across the country. She channelled energy into creating support groups that have supported women in sustenance and enabled them to move and includes orphans. Her

work has been instrumental through mentorship and in 2018, she received the Head of State Commendation for her work in the society that provides capacity building for widows in various forms.



## Ashura Michael



*Ashura Michael*

Ashura Michael is a young deaf lady, a human rights and gender activist in Kenya. She holds a Diploma in Law from IU in Nairobi and has a Civil Leadership Certificate from the University of Illinois. She also holds a special certificate from Michigan State University where she underwent women Professional Leadership Program. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Development from University of Nairobi and currently studying Law in the same University.





She is passionate in advocating for the rights of Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWDs) in Kenya as evidenced in her role as an ambassador of Slum Coder Family representing PWDs.

Moreover; she is a co-chair for the Youth Council of UNICEF'S Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities and has served as the Secretary General of Kenya National Association of the Deaf. She was recently appointed by President Uhuru through Cabinet Secretary Labour and Social Service to serve at Board of director for the National Council of Persons with Disabilities for the period of Three years which ends in 2021 and has been named as one of the most influential 100 young Kenyan 2019. She has empowered other women living with disabilities by using her leadership positions.



## Marjorie OludheMacgoye



*Marjorie  
OludheMacgoye*

Marjorie OludheMacgoye is one of the most prolific Kenyan women writers and is referred to as 'the mother of Kenyan literature'. She was born in Southampton, Britain, on 21 October 1928 and died on 1st December 2015 in Kenya at the age of 87 years. Marjorie is known to many as a British Kenyan writer and is credited for telling the story of her adopted country through literature that she used to bring out various societal challenges.

Her work paved the way for other female authors such as Bessie Head, Rebeka Njau, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ and Buchi Emecheta. These women all positively portray the image of African women, calling for their emancipation, liberation and independence and thereby helped to raise their status through literature. Her work is highly acclaimed and won her the Jomo Kenyatta prize for literature.







## AKIRACHIX



Linda Kamau, Angela Lungati and Marie Githinji, founded AkiraChix in 2010. As graduates of information technology-related courses, these forward-thinking women launched this non-profit organization with the aims to entice girls to embrace technology and offer them free basic training in; Web Design, Mobile Application Development, Graphic Design and Entrepreneurship. In just ten years, they offer ICT training with full scholarships. Following their success; they have received donor support from Infodev (the World Bank Innovation and Entrepreneurship arm), Google Rise, iHub, Computer Aid among many others in addition to teaching their students entrepreneurship skills, they mentor girls as they venture into small start-ups. They have expanded their programs to reach under-privileged girls and young women in primary and secondary schools and at universities. These women have focused on ICT and enabled girls to get training without government intervention





## Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot



*Grace Ogot*

Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot earned a distinctive position in Kenya's literary and political history. The best-known writer in East Africa, and with a varied career background, she became in 1984 one of only a handful of women to serve as a member of Parliament and the only woman assistant minister in the cabinet of President Daniel Arap Moi. Grace Ogot was one of the first women to publish a novel in 1962 and while doing so; inspired other women to a constellation of names and many more writers such as Margaret Ogola.



## Margaret Kenyatta



*Margaret Kenyatta*

Margaret Kenyatta's leadership style and strategies are instructive and offer a new vision for the continent. Her work is often collaborative, consultative and community-focused. Secondly, she is mindful of local customs and traditions. She recognizes the role of women and traditional values and practices. Moreover, Kenyatta also involves herself in national environmental campaigns and is affiliated with the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust that cares for baby elephants orphaned due to poaching. She has also

voiced her opinion on a number of health issues in Kenya ranging from mother and child wellness through her beyond zero campaign. This initiative





has raised a lot of money and as a result managed to provide mobile clinics in all the 47 counties in Kenya. On 24 October 2014, she was named Kenya Person of the Year. The first lady has also advocated for early screening for breast, cervical and prostate to fight cancer, as well as supporting a healthy lifestyle for patients to tackle diabetes. She has used her position as the First Lady to increase awareness and access to health.



## **Edna Ole lenku**



*Edna Ole lenku*

Edna Lenku, is involved in activities around Girl Child Education Support System, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), promotion of beadwork and environmental conservation. Edna has seized the opportunity of the first lady to champion the rights of girls and women. She has been implementing development projects for women and youth focusing on the following four critical pillars; social economic development, Waste Management through Taka Ni Mali Programmes, Education programmes and Health programme focusing on education

to fight against retrogressive Cultural practices among the Maasai. She has used her position to ensure awareness on renewable sources of energy and sustainable use of the environment, a pioneer in this field.





## Catherine Kasavuli



*Catherine Kasavuli*

Catherine is celebrated for being part of the founding team that saw the first privately owned station (KTN) go on air in March 1990. She was the first anchor to host a live broadcast at the station and did so as a single mother that was a challenge for her. She became a member of Royal Media Services management and was in the media for at least a decade. She has inspired many women to get into the media through her illustrious career.



## Njeri Rugene



*Njeri Rugene*

Njeri Rugene is a Media and Communications Consultant, focusing mainly on Gender, Development and Society, a Mentor and Journalism Trainer. A long serving Print Journalist with the Nation Media Group-East and Central Africa's largest Media House- Njeri has extensive experience in Parliamentary and Political Journalism and writing on issues affecting women and children, especially Gender and Sexual Violence. Njeri is also the author of *Women Changing the*

*Way the World Works*, a publication of the Democracy Trust Fund published in November 2018. The book profiles selected Kenya women and their positive contributions to their communities in different spheres of development and leadership.





## Jane Kiano



 *Jane Kiano*

World for the East, West and Central Africa in 1972. In 1984, after serving in the MYWO for more than a decade, Jane stepped down from her position to pave way for new leadership. She left behind a legacy of changing lives and transforming households in Kenya. In recognition of her work, she was awarded the Pan African Mercury Gold Award. She has used her influential position to improve child welfare.

---

In 1971, Mrs. Jane Mumbi Kiano took over leadership at the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO). Besides being the chair of the MYWO, Jane was also the Vice-president of the National Council of Women, a committee member of the Child Welfare Society of Kenya and a former commissioner at the National Cohesion and Integration Commission. She was also the vice-president of Associated Country Women of the



## Prof. Eddah Gachukia, MBS



 *Prof. Eddah Wacheke*

Eddah Wacheke's background as an educationalist led her to establish the Foundation for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) whose work is to encourage governments, international organisations and local communities to enact policies and provide positive learning environments that treat girls and boys equally even though the target beneficiaries and constituency are primarily girls and women through which she was involved with the





Starehe Girls' Centre & School to this end. Eddah's outstanding career as an educationalist saw her receive an honorary degree from Kenyatta University in 2008 where she was awarded The International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin for her exemplary contribution to education in Kenya.

The Dr. Edda Gachukia Science Prize at the University of Nairobi (UoN) stands in her honour and is also a holder of the coveted Moran of the Burning Spear in 2009. She harnessed her background to improve access to education.

---

## Conclusion

This chapter traverses' various fields and also assessed women's participation in elective and appointive positions in the political arena which traditionally have been male dominated. This chapter further looks at the struggle for women's participation in leadership and policy making institutions. In the various fields that have been mentioned, it is clear that women in positions of power seek to empower others thus ensuring that they not only uplift themselves but also girls and other women, to propel them to leadership in society. This is evidenced for example, by Eddah Gachukia in her involvement in education of the girl-child and Edna Lenku, who has used her position as the First Lady of Kaijado County in creating awareness on sustainable use of the environment and agitation against the retrogressive cultures such as FGM and early betrothal of girls. The chapter assesses the various instances where female leadership has impacted the communities by tackling the challenges to create good not just for personal gain which is the hallmark of male leadership but for communal gain and creation of future leaders.

The success of women in leadership and decision making remains in continued activism. Women leaders cannot rest until the following has been achieved;

- a) The two thirds rule enshrined in the constitution is implemented in full and even then, this is only the beginning.
- b) Removal of Kenyan patriarchal culture which affects gender power relations in society is replaced by policies and laws which will advance gender equality and women's empowerment in elective and appointive positions at all levels.





- c) The Women's Leadership Working Group addresses the major knowledge gap of women's leadership among the various stakeholders. Including building consensus on the concept of women's leadership.
  - d) All facets of women's leadership are addressed equally as opposed to the current trend of focusing on the political leadership only.
  - e) Our rich history with known women leaders like Wangu wa Makeri and Mekatilili wa Menza, phoebe Asiyó, Jael Mbogo, Priscilla Abwao, Jane Kiano, Tabitha Seii mentored girls to view leadership positively and as a potential career choice. The late Jane Ogowapit, Kamla Sikhad, Orié Rogo, Tecla Lorupe, Mumbi Ngaru, Lilian Mwaura, Terry Kantai, Ann Wambaa, Riria Ouko, Wambui Otieno, Michere Mugo, Margret Ogola, Kavetsa Adangala, Pamela Kola, Njoki Wainaina, Jacinta Makokha and many more are known for promoting women leadership in various fields in this country.
  - f) Media have a vital role to play in refocusing people's attitudes and perceptions regarding women and leadership
  - g) More documentation of women leadership in organizations, women's movements and groups needs to be done
- The next chapter looks at strategies and opportunities for promoting transformative women's leadership





# CHAPTER 5

## TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN KENYA: OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

---

### Introduction

In Kenya, we have continued to observe remarkable progress for women's opportunities to lead. However, with progress, comes resistance and there remains much more work to be done. A bold, vision accompanied by strategies will create the transformation we long to have in the country. This chapter thus, presents a leadership framework that will be useful to guide and expand women's leadership.

### Recreating a women's philosophy of leadership

Below are some of the ideas that women need to give more attention:

#### *Documenting their experiences*

Kenyan women have been on a long "journey towards the first season of harvest", (Kabira 2012) or what we popularly refer to as the gains in the various fields, constitutional, institutional and policy, among others. The main challenge is that most parts of this journey has not been systematically documented. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, in her book, *Time for Harvest: Women and Constitution Making Process in Kenya* (2012), is one of the few authors who have documented women's experiences in the constitution-making process. She documents the entire process from the National Women's







National Convention that was significant in setting the women's agenda to the delivery of a women friendly constitution in 2010.

Phoebe Asiyo has also documented part of the story in her autobiography entitled 'It is Possible' places Asiyo's life story in the context of Kenya's social and political environment. However, one publication is not adequate to document a journey that took almost two decades. In addition, the publication is not readily available to women. The consequences of this lack of access to information is that "women have not been able to learn from their past experiences or story", (Kabira 2018 p1). Current generations do not appreciate what their predecessors experienced. Therefore, they do not build on past achievements affecting the continuity of the struggle for women's empowerment. Women should, therefore, adopt the culture of documenting their experiences accurately and chronologically both as individuals and institutions, to avail the information to current and future generations. The documentation maybe in digital or analog media, such as audio tape or compact discs. This will provide a foundation for continuation in the struggle for women's empowerment.

### **Knowledge of what women want**

The idea of development is crucial in the aspirations of women in Kenya. This is a core driving factor in the thirst for more education, as seen in the numbers of women enrolling for further education in institutions of higher learning. In the same vein, the threshold set for political leadership requires academic credentials, which fuel the need for ongoing development of leaders and leadership skills. Training itself cannot lead to significant behavioral change; there must be follow-up practice in real-world settings. The basis of leadership is self-empowerment, strength from within and an ability to motivate others. The woman leader must be in touch with the women whom she purports to represent. Through dialogue and consultations, she should identify with the women's agenda. She must be the carrier of this agenda which embodies the women's dream in whatever position of leadership she holds, (Kabira 2018).

### **Transforming hidden leaders into visible leaders**

Hidden leaders are those individuals whose leadership capacity is limited by the suppression of their ideas, insights, knowledge and skills. This is the story of majority of women in Kenya. Due to Patriarchy, many women can be said to have become "hidden leaders". This has led to their engaging in self-limiting





patterns of thinking and in actions that prevented them from expressing their knowledge and abilities effectively. A key feature of this thought pattern is the belief that they lack “agency”, the ability to effect positive change on their environment. They attribute positive outcomes to others’ efforts, failing to see how they might also have contributed. Doubts about their abilities to effect change lead them to withhold ideas and perspectives and avoid taking risks. These beliefs also render them ineffective in resisting harmful psychological and physical practices meted against them by socio-cultural belief systems. These include abuse by more dominating or assertive behavior on the part of other people that drown their (women’s) potential contributions<sup>8</sup>.

Self-awareness<sup>9</sup> must occur for “hidden leaders” to enable them emerge from their cocoons. This can be achieved through intentional training to build confidence in their identity and image.

### **Space for women's innovation**

In the words of Lynne Doughtie U.S. Chairman and CEO-elect, KPMG “Own your career. Don’t wait for someone to tap you on the shoulder and present an opportunity to you.” points to the need for innovation as a strategy for leadership. Innovation entails the process of bringing near ideas to solve problems. It is also new ways of thinking that may be used to overcome obstacles. Women should adopt innovative ways to lead in business, poverty eradication, religious institutions, climate, ICT, environment, sports to overcome obstacles and challenges.

### **Develop a common women agenda**

Kenyan women are able to come together at the national level to articulate their concerns. They must set up a common agenda without waiting for someone else. This was realized, for example, in the pursuit of women’s agenda in the constitution-making process in Kenya. According to Kabira, NCWK and FEMNET organized a women’s convention which was held in 1992. This was the “first women’s meeting of its kind, it brought together Kenyan women... at the grassroots level and those at the national level to dialogue with each other on the women’s agenda in the democratisation process”, (Kabira 2012). From this convention women identified their concerns/issues and came up with the “women’s minimum agenda”. One of the key issues in

---

<sup>8</sup> *Inspiring Transformation: Lessons from the CGIAR Women’s Leadership Series*  
May, 2007 Gender & Diversity CGIAR

<sup>9</sup> *Women’s World Banking: Leadership & Diversity “How transformational Women Leaders are built”*  
January 16th, 2017





this agenda was the affirmative action for women's leadership and decision-making in institutions.

Women build consensus around the identified minimum agenda and it was cascaded to women at both the national and grassroots levels. They rallied support, among women and other allies, to support this minimum agenda. The key agenda, in regard to women's leadership, was the affirmative action to promote women's leadership in political and other forms of leadership at all levels. Women today can use similar strategies to set a common agenda and pursue the implementation of the constitutional affirmative action to ensure at least a third of women's representation in institutions of governance at national and grassroots levels. Increased women's participation in leadership will see the realization of the objectives that women pursued for decades, which include the numerical representation, transformative leadership, provision of role models and changes the patriarchal perceptions towards women's leadership. This will greatly contribute in promoting women's leadership at both grassroots and national levels. This will see an increase of women's leadership in Kenya.

### **Building Strong Women Negotiations Teams**

Women know that there is a time for everything. There is a time for coming out in large numbers and demanding for their space, there is a time for focusing on their goals but there is also a time for negotiating and lobbying. As mentioned earlier women take time to analyse and evaluate on the best leg to put forward and when to do it. As a result, the women's movement has transformed itself according to specific needs. They have chosen when to fight, when to demand and when to negotiate and all these have worked well for them. Eminent women form part of the negotiation team. They are; Zipporah Kitony, Prof Wanjiku Kabira, Jane Kiano, Phoebe Asiyo Martha Karua, Julia Ojiambo, Prof. Wangari Maathai, Jael Mbogo (first female member and political activist in Ford Kenya), Eddah Gachukia (educationist) among others. Spouses of the leading politicians and key political figures such Ida Odinga, Pauline Kalonzo and the late Lucy Kibaki were also lobbying their spouses.

The eminent women have played a big role in high level negotiations. One of their selling points is that they are highly respected and recognized, so that no male leader would turn them away. Secondly, they have no interest in positions of power and hence are not a threat to anyone and lastly, they are persuasive, highly skilled and by the time the movement use them, they





are armed with the necessary information and skills. Their chance of losing is almost none. However, the women movement is always very careful to use the eminent women only when it is absolutely necessary, like when the country is in crisis and leaders are thumping their chests or when women have been left out and there is need to include their representatives. For the many occasions that eminent women have been called upon, they have always delivered.

### **Strong Networking and Collaboration Among Women**

Kenyan women have a high level of organizing both as individuals and women's constituency around a common agenda. Due to their high level of organizing women were able to transcend the various divisions and work together and support the common agenda regardless of class, academic and professional qualifications, organizations and women's self-help groups, ethnic background among others. This unity of purpose enabled women to realize their expectations in the current Constitution which saw the entrenchment of the affirmative action for women's representation in leadership at the different levels. Women today can utilize their organizing capacity to mobilize support for women's leadership of the various positions created both in the constitution at all levels. This will see an increased number of women leaders at all levels.

The women's movement in Kenya has been the backbone of all the struggles and the gains that we have heard since independence. Although during maumau women are not mentioned to have been in a movement, their contribution can be likened to that of the present-day women's movement. They took charge and took care of the families, when the men went to the plantations. They toiled for their children and kept their faith through songs that gave hope and some that narrated the stories of their maumau heroes. They adopted the tones of Christian songs and the colonialist thought they were singing Christian songs. They went to the shambas together and they would organise how the maumau would get food without the knowledge of the home guards as they delivered guns and bullets under the cover of babies strapped on their backs.

The women movement, like their counterpart the human rights organizations, are amorphous, working independently and guided by their different goals, but when the need arises, they are able to quickly come together and move the necessary agenda to its conclusion. They are guided by one cardinal rule of focusing on what unites them and ignoring what divides them. Some





of these organizations have a long history and a large membership spread across the country and therefore mobilizing their networks they are able to shake the country to the right direction.

## Conclusion

There are abundant opportunities for women's leadership in both elective and appointive positions as provided for in article 27(8) of the Constitution of Kenya (2010). While traditionally the focus has been on the various constitutional bodies such as the national assembly, senate, national executive, the county assembly and county executive and, commissions, this guide encourages women to expand their leadership beyond these limited institutions to all aspects of society. They should also seek to take up leadership at all levels of the governance structures. In regard to women's leadership, most of these opportunities remain untapped. However, women's leadership must be transformative and different from the conventional men's leadership. They should not, for example, use or want to use violence and intimidation like the men.

This is the leadership that is characterized by feminine qualities such as motherhood and sisterhood. Such leadership will bring about a society characterized by Ubuntu rather than the current one characterized by corruption, poverty, illiteracy and disease. Women leaders, from all walks of life, must be in the forefront towards the transformation of their societies into such societies. This guide has presented cases of women pioneers from different phases of the struggle who have shown that it is possible to lead differently from the conventional hierarchical male leadership characterized by violence and intimidation and the other social ills.

Women's leadership, unlike the traditional masculine leadership that permeates all institutions of governance, should be motherly, nurturing, focuses on relationships, collective effort and not hierarchical authority. For women leaders to exhibit this kind of leadership, they must believe in themselves and must, "...have a vision of who you want to be, and no matter the challenge, just keep focusing and keep doing what you have to do to get to where you want to go." Furtado agreed: "Stay focused in your goals, and do your best in all that you do." Other women leaders who have exhibited this form of leadership must also mentor younger women and the latter must be willing to be mentored. This will enable them to emulate these experienced women leaders and to transform the leadership in the institutions where they find themselves. Above all women must learn to document their experiences





to ensure that current future crops of leaders will benefit from their experiences and transform leadership in general.

In addition, a woman leader must be in touch with the diverse categories on women whom she purports to represent. Through dialogue and consultations, she should identify with the women's agenda. She must be the carrier of this agenda which embodies the women's dream in whatever position of leadership she holds. This is when women and the entire society will benefit from women's transformative leadership.

The success of women in leadership and decision making remains in continued activism, organization in collaborative groups that are more objective in leading change agenda towards equal opportunities and equitable distribution of resources. Women leaders cannot rest until the two thirds rule enshrined in the constitution is implemented in full at all levels. Women being the majority need to use their grassroots networks and power of numbers to vote out all members of parliament who have refused to support the gender equality to serve as a lesson for serious engagement in future. Women need to consider supporting or organizing under independent candidates and educating women voters that they have a choice and power in determining leadership. It is obvious that women leadership have evolved and is becoming stronger. Women leadership can become even more effective with the use of social media for awareness creation and economic empowerment.

Women's transformative leadership in the different sectors and at different levels will contribute in challenging the social perception towards women's leadership. This will lead to increased support for women in elective positions. Above all women must embrace networking and collaboration in identifying and mobilizing around a common agenda such as putting in place mechanisms that will deliberately ensure that apart from achieving the two thirds gender rule, other women sub-groups have a fair chance of participating and being included in the political processes if democracy is to be truly inclusive" at all levels of society. As women continue with the struggle for participation in leadership and decision-making institutions and processes in the different sectors, this guide will remain an indispensable reference point. The role models for women's leadership provided are a living proof that it is possible. This is in the right direction towards transforming leadership which is essential in promoting Ubuntuism in our societies which is essential for sustainable development.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asiyo, Phoebe, It is Possible CGIAR Inspiring Transformation: Lessons from the CGIAR Women's Leadership Series, May, 2007 Gender & Diversity CGIAR
- Ibarra, H., Ely, R.J., and Kolb, D. M. (2013). Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers. Harvard Business Review 91, no. 9: 60-67.
- Mbote et al, Kabira Wanjiku Mukabi, Time for Harvest: Women and Constitution Making in Kenya, University of Nairobi Press (2012).
- Kabira, Wanjiku Mukabi, Challenging the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resilience - The Next Season of Harvest, University of Nairobi African Women Studies Centre (2018)
- Kimani, Elishiba & Mwaura, Philomena, Challenging the Mainstream: Celebrating Women's Resilience –Women's Organizations as Agents of Change (1985 – 2010)`, University of Nairobi African Women Studies Centre (2018)
- Uraia <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/civic-education>
- Women's World Banking: Leadership & Diversity "How transformational Women Leaders are built", January 16th, 2017

### Website sources

- document <https://www.dictionnaire.com/browse/document> Michelle Wright <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mwright216/> recent studies by Credit Suisse <https://publications.credit-suisse.com/tasks/render/file/index.cfm?fileid=8128F3C0-99BC-22E6-838E2A5B1E4366DF> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mentorship>
- Mentorship <https://yecomunity.com/blog/how-mentors-bring-advice-to-mentorship>
- Transactional Analysis [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional\\_analysis#The\\_ego-state\\_28or\\_Parent.E2.80.93Adult.E2.80.93Child\\_.28PAC.29.29\\_models](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional_analysis#The_ego-state_28or_Parent.E2.80.93Adult.E2.80.93Child_.28PAC.29.29_models)
- <https://afyawatch.co.ke/because-i-survived-domestic-violence-i-am-making-a-difference/> (December 31st, 2018)

### References

- Adler, N. J. (1997). Global leadership: women leaders. MIR: Management International Review, 1(Special Issue), 171-196
- .Eyeh, S. O. (2010). From Myth to Consciousness: The Novel as Mimetic Mode of Women's Sociocultural and political transformation in Nigeria. Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association, 13(2), 137-150.
- Wanjiru, E., & Kaburi, C. (2015). Social Construction of Gender in Gikuyu Community as Portrayed in Narratives, Songs and Proverbs. International Journal of Arts and Commerce. Amadiume, I. (2001). African Women: Voicing feminisms and democratic futures. Macalester International, 10(9), 47-68.
- Farrar, T. (1997). The queen mother, matriarchy, and the question of female political authority in precolonial West African monarchy. Journal of Black Studies, 27(5), 579-597.
- Maas, M. (1986). Women's Groups in Kiambu, Kenya: It is always a good thing to have land Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- Kinyanjui, Mary (2019) A lone ranger: My journey towards becoming a feminist geographer in Nairobi, Kenya, Gender, Place & Culture, 26:7-9, 1159-1169, DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2018.1556616 To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1556616>
- Kipuri N. 1989. Maasai women in transition: Class and gender in the transformation of a





- pastoral society. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University.
- Wanyoike, M. W. (2002). *Wangu wa Makeri* (Vol. 12). East African Publishers.
- Disney, A., & Gbowee, L. (2012). Gender and sustainable peace. In *Psychological components of sustainable peace* (pp. 197-203). Springer, New York, NY.
- Gbowee, L. (2011). *Mighty be our powers: How sisterhood, prayer, and sex changed a nation at war*. Beast Books.
- Kabira 2012- *Time for harvest*. Nairobi University press (2012).
- Kabira 2019- *African Women's and Public Policy*. Nairobi University publication
- Kabira, Mbote et al. *challenging the Mainstream*, African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi (2018).
- Lanoi2019 . *Women's leaderships Theoretical perspectives*, University of Nairobi (2019).
- Maloiy, L. (2016). *The impact of crucible events on the development of female political leaders in Kenya*. Unpublished thesis. University of South Australia. School of Education. Retrieved from: <http://search.library.unisa.edu.au/media/researcharchive/open/9916106910001831/53140206360001831>
- Muthuki, J. (2006). *Challenging patriarchal structures: Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya*. *Agenda*, 20(69), 83-91.
- National Gender and Equality Commission ACT, Revised Edition 2012 [2011] Published by the National Council for Law Reporting
- Samkange, Stanlake John Thompson (1980). *\_Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy\_*. Graham.
- Steady, F. (2011). *Women and leadership in West Africa: Mothering the nation and humanizing the state*. Springer. Films.
- Warren, K. (2000). *Ecofeminist philosophy: A western perspective on what it is and why it matters*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kabira & Lanoi: *Making Feminist Research Work for women*, a publication of African Women Studies Centre, University of Nairobi







## THE AUTHORS



**Professor Wanjiku  
Mukabi Kabira**  
African Women Studies  
Centre (AWSC) - University of  
Nairobi



**Mercy Mwangi**  
Kenya Women  
Parliamentary  
Association (KEWOPA)



**Annastacia Kabere**  
Office of Registrar  
of Political Parties  
(ORPP)



**Beatrice Kamau**  
Women's Political  
Alliance-Kenya  
(WPA-K)



**Julia Nyokabi Chege**  
Premier Peak Leadership  
Foundation  
(PPLF)



**Jacinta Atemba  
Makokha**  
Tetra Tech International  
Development / REINVENT  
Programme



**Milka Kariuki**  
Collaborative Centre  
for Gender and  
Development (CCGD)



**Jane Gitonga**  
Independent Electoral  
and Boundaries  
Commission (IEBC)



**Wambui Kanyu**  
African Women  
Studies Centre (AWSC)  
- University of Nairobi



# Expanding Women's territory in Leadership and Nurturing the Nation

## A Women's Leadership Guide

This guide was developed by members of the Women's Leadership Committee, an initiative of the Ministry of Public Service Youth and Gender. The team from African Women Studies Centre, Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Women's Political Alliance, Premier Peak Leadership Foundation, Kenya Women Parliamentary Association, Office of Registrar of Political Parties and Tetra Tech International Development, were of the view that the country needed to reflect on our concept of leadership in order to challenge the current big man theories of leadership which continue to create division, promote violence, are masculine in nature and often lack the humility of the leadership that women would wish to promote.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any of the funding agencies or their associates

