

Title: Strengthening the SDGs Kenya Forum as an Accountability Platform for Gender and Development

Project Summary:

The SDGs Kenya Forum, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation, is currently implementing a 3 year program titled '***Strengthening the SDGs Kenya Forum as an accountability platform for Gender and Development***'. The program seeks to engage decision makers in the SDGs process and hold the government accountable for its promotion, planning, financing and implementation, specifically on gender equality priorities under Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) in six counties namely Nakuru, Bomet, Kitui, Kisumu, Kilifi and Kajiado.

Background

Global evidence shows that investment in gender equality and women empowerment is positively correlated with growth in wealth and rapid economic development. Yet globally, gender equality is significantly underfunded with only less than 10% of official development assistance (ODA) targeting women and even lesser proportion reaching farthest and hard-to-reach women and girls. At country and community level, gender equality and women empowerment related policies, legislations, programs, and emergency programs targeting women remain unfunded through domestic resources. Kenya like many other African counties expects to reverse the trend and close the gender gaps through accelerated financing for implementation of gender equality and women empowerment programs, and policies defined in the Sustainable Development Goal Five. To this end, Kenya has identified and adopted 13 out of the 14 possible indicators in SDG5 to monitor its commitment towards promoting gender equality.

Beginning halfway the implementation period of the MDGs and post adoption of SDGs, Kenya made significant strides in the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. The 2010 Constitution recognizes women rights as human rights and prohibits discrimination on basis of sex, gender, residence, pregnancy among other grounds. Since 2010, Kenya has also enacted several laws promoting women participation and recognition in governance and development agenda. Women representation structure changed drastically in 2013 and 2017 elections. More women were elected in the executive and legislature at both county and national levels. Kenya has also witnessed a progressive judiciary credited for making land mark rulings promoting gender equality and protecting women reproductive, economic and social rights.



Figure: Training of Gender Champions in Kitui, Kenya

Despite availability of favorable legal and policy framework, the implementation of the gender agenda still lags behind. In fact the pace of planning, financing and implementation of the gender equality SDG indicators at both national level and county governments is disturbing. So far three years have been spent on administrative function mainly preparation and domestication of the SDGs. There is absolutely slow progress towards implementation of SDG 5 and by extension Kenya may be off- track in achieving gender equality by 2030. UN through its *check-up* report of 2018 has already warned States that the progress on the SDGs is uneven and is not moving fast enough as planned.

The Sustainable Development Goal 5-Achieve Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Implementation Snapshot

This goal focuses on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. To this end, Kenya has identified and adopted 13 out of the 16 possible indicators in SDG 5 to monitor its commitment towards promoting gender equality. Kenya has also volunteered in the past for self-evaluations and reporting on levels of preparedness towards implementation of gender mainstreaming. The Kenya Parliament in 2016 volunteered to have a self-assessment on extent to which the legislature has integrated principles of gender equality in their operational systems, legislative function, and conduct of business. In 2017, the Judiciary also benefited from an intra-review process on the extent to which the judicial reform program initiated in 2014 had resulted to meaningful impact on gender equality and women empowerment within the Judiciary and its core function.

Project Overview

This project is conceived to increase level of responsibility and accountability from the duty bearers and to create informed demand from CSO and grassroots women to see more effective gender equality and women empowerment programming happen in Kenya at the County Level. The combination of these approaches is fundamental in ensuring Kenya is on accelerated path to implementation of gender equality programs.



Figure: Gender Stakeholders in Kajiado, Kenya

Most County Governments in respect of the Gender Equality Principle in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 have established the mandate of Gender Equality and Women's empowerment in one of the ministries created. The structure of the ministry at sub government level seems to be similar with variations adopted by different Counties. For instance Nairobi County has the *Ministry of Education, Youth, Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services*. Kilifi - *the Ministry of Gender, Social Services, Culture and Sports*. Similarly Bomet - *the Ministry of Youth, Gender, Sports and culture*. Kajiado, Nakuru and Kitui all have named their ministry as: - *the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Gender and Social Services*. Kisumu has in place the department of Gender under ministry responsible for education.



Figure: Community members in Naretoi, Kajiado, Kenya

The presumption has been that the County Governments have the mandate to mainstream gender equality and hence establishment of an Institutional framework for advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. This is also because the current county development plans of 2018-2022, are already mainstreaming gender policies into their county development plans; and this project focuses on subnational (county) governments policy and practice on implementation of SDG5. But measuring progress under Goal 5, may be challenging for County governments Kenya unless they draw specific gender policy statements to guide implementation at the sub national level. The Kenyan parliament has already passed a number of enabling legislative frameworks that give implementation impetus to the Gender Equality and empowerment policies found under the Bill of Rights and SDG5.



Figure: Sub-county groups nominating gender champions, Nakuru, Kenya

The advocacy activities under this initiative will focus on citizen's capacity building programs intended to build a strong understanding and momentum of citizens to be well informed of the gender agenda within the sustainable development goals with an entry point being the County Government. The proposed program shall provide evidence for duty bearers to step up efforts to fully address gender equality and women empowerment commitments; increase the political good will to gender equality agenda as follows;

1. Ensure that the National and sub national governments increase resource allocation to gender equality and women empowerment programs,
2. Involve citizens more in the design and planning of gender equality programs,
3. Embrace social accountability calls and reports made by CSOs and grassroots women on gender equality and women empowerment.