



**The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network**



FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists
Forum des éducatrices africaines



WOMEN MUST LEAD

“Women as Marshalls of Political Leadership in Kenya”



6th - 7th May, 2021

Sosa Cottages, Vihiga County

Introduction

FEMNET in partnership with the International IDEA has been implementing the project: Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa, with a view of advancing the goal of gender equality in politics and governance. FEMNET has been running a Women Must Lead campaign to increase the quantity and quality of Women's Political participation in Kenya, Tanzania and DRC.

In the Peer-to-Peer thematic dialogue with women rights organizations and young activists in the Lake Region, FEMNET alongside the consortium; Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE), International IDEA, WPP and Sweden Sverige; pooled 48 women leaders and female opinion shapers from 8 counties within the Lake region.

With the main objective of convening grassroots and national gatherings of women leaders, the delegation deliberated on issues around the impediments against women's political participation and made resolutions rallying towards the renewal of their solidarity and movement building under women's political leadership in the counties of Vihiga, Kakamega, Kisumu, Nyamira, Busia, Homabay, Nyamira and Kisii.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the two day dialogue, it was established that patriarchy, a concept rooted in the cultures of communities residing in the lake region, is a major hurdle women face in the quest to gender equality in politics and governance.

Furthermore, inclusion of marginalized groups of women such as those living with disabilities and those with a different sexual orientation is also an emerging issue that needs urgent attention to ensure that the established and upcoming women movements represent all female voices and principles of an all inclusive caucus.

Kenya's commitment to various declarations including the AU protocol on the Rights of women in Africa, the Beijing declaration and the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development among others has seen the formulation of policies that have allowed women financial freedom over the years, the financing of women movements still remain a grey area, calling for urgent action to breed financial independence of women's caucuses to have the liberty to make

independent choices.

The future is indeed female within the Lake region having attained milestones in the recent past. Out of the 4 female speakers in Kenya, two are from Vihiga and Homabay counties. Vihiga county assembly elected a female Muslim into the county assembly speaker's seat, with the Kisumu county government showing gender sensitive progressive leadership where a female PLWD with a solid portfolio is the Kisumu county governor's advisor on matters of people living with disability in the county.

At the end of the two-day dialogue, three women who were part of the delegation declared that they would be running for elective positions in the upcoming 2022 general elections. Others committed to train and capacity build women in the grassroots to participate in the women must lead campaigns, form caucuses and build a strong movement that will mentor young women and girls to speak up against violence and involve themselves in political process more intentionally.

NOTES

On the inaugural day, speeches were kicked off by Hon. Hasna Mudeizi, the Vihiga County Assembly Speaker, Rachelle Ouko the Women's Peer to Peer Programs Officer at FAWE, Hon. Gladys Analo, the only elected female member of Vihiga County Assembly representing Busali Ward, Caroline Agwanda, the Kisumu County Government disability advisor and Easter Oketch, the executive Director at Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO).

Day two was kicked off by a recap of the previous day's dialogue, in an interactive session moderated by Tuli Tulitu of Watoto Musilie. Janet Anyango of FIDA then led the dialogue on matters of ending violence against women in politics. Dr. Joyce Osogo, the Kisumu County executive member for Roads then took to the podium, with Mercy Atieno of Ujamaa Africa leading the delegation in a lesson on self care.

The two-day dialogue was then crowned by the call to action where representatives from the eight counties committed a pledge that would assist in the attainment of the main objective of solidarity and movement building under women's political leadership.

Opening Remarks Memory Kachambwa – Executive Director, FEMNET

In a virtual opening remark, Mrs. Memory Kachambwa reinforced to the women in the Lake Region that it is critical for them to hold their ground and fight for a transformative leadership agenda. She

also reiterated that it is pivotal as women marshals of political leadership, that they support each other and hold the hands of upcoming women in political spheres through offering mentorship, training and capacity building to ensure that they do not face the same challenges you encountered while scaling up the leadership ladder. Memory challenged the women leaders and young activists in the lake region to rise and continue to advocate for a no violence policy and inclusion of women to enhance the quality and quantity of women's participation in politics and well as advance transformative leadership.

THEMATIC AREAS

Women Movement Formation

Strategic formations are critical in marshaling a sustainable movement for the attainment of gender equality in political participation. Communities where patriarchy is entrenched and gender roles dictate that women are secondary to men predominantly occupy the Lake Region. For this reason, the women that have broken the glass ceiling in attaining leadership and political positions overall have been heavily influenced by caucuses where each female member puts in the effort to build a strong portfolio for the women leaders.

In Vihiga, the election of honorable Hasna Mudeizi into the position of the county assembly was cemented by the involvement of Hon. Gladys Analo, who has been serving in different capacities at the political sphere for close to a decade. Though meted with opposition in the initial stages due to the gender role perception at play in the county, and Hon. Mudeizi's religion (Muslim), the assembly eventually warmed up to her candidature, flooring 18 men and clinching the seat.

Since her official term as speaker begun, Hon. Mudeizi has ensured that all the women in the assembly occupy leadership slots in the various house committees, having a PLWD female in her speaker's panel. This move, she says, is critical in rallying support from women to have an influential circle that can offer support for the inclusion of women's voices in the course of legislation.

The milestone achieved by this was the ratification of the Vihiga County Public Participation Bill 2020, which requires the assembly to hold sittings in the sub counties on rotational basis depending on the specific need of the sub counties. This bill is a game changer, as it will encompass the voices of women in the grassroots in the law making process, which has been conspicuously missing in the formation of previous laws.

Farida Salim, a politician from Kisumu, emphasized on the need for the formation of solid women movements. She is a Citizen's Convention Party (CCP) member that is led by firebrand politician, Grace Akumu. In her experience, the party had a more welcoming structure which ensured that her candidature in the 2017 elections and general career as a politician was based on merit unlike other political parties which she explained had tendencies of unleashing violence against women in different capacities.

In the formation of the movements and caucuses, the founding principles should be based on amplifying each other's strengths to build a robust solid foundation. As explained by Rachelle Ouko (FAWE), it is critical that women cover for one another by offering their expertise to set up a dynamic portfolio for the front-runners aspiring to clinch political seats. The formation will ensure that the women enrich one another to develop an unbreakable chain of experience that will ensure that they still prosper not only within the political space, but also beyond their political careers and emerge as leaders that champion for gender equality in leadership in general.

Step out of the history that is holding you back. Step into the new story you are willing to create -
Oprah Winfrey

Drama is very important in life: You have to come on with a bang. You never want to go out with a whimper - Julia Child

Vihiga County: Breaking Barriers

After the 2017 elections, Vihiga county assembly had one elected female legislator out of the 24 elective seats. The assembly however managed to secure the 2/3-gender rule by way of nomination where different political parties nominated women members of the county assembly in to the house.

Vihiga is also one of two counties in the Lake region to have elected a woman, Hon. Hasna Mudeizi into the speaker's seat. The election was however accompanied by sexual harassment, where Hon. Mudeizi faced malicious claims against her person as published in the gutter press.

Her honorable has however proven her track record excelling in her work and proving that women are indeed capable, overseeing the passing of the Public participation Bill 2020, amongst other crucial bills that seek to address the inclusion of women voices.

Terming it her brainchild, the honorable speaker has received commendation from the US Embassy, with the former US Ambassador to Kenya Kylie McCarter visiting and addressing the Vihiga county

assembly to commend their efforts in taking political conversations to the grassroots where they matter most.

The speaker has attributed her success to the rallying force of women, citing the need to build strong communities. Hon Gladys Analo, the only female elected MCA in the Vihiga county assembly was instrumental in rallying support for Hon. Mudeizi. With an excellent track record in the timely implementation of development projects in her ward, the Vihiga county assembly is the classical example to show the power of women alliances and that indeed, the future is female.

Capacity building and Mentorship

With an increasingly informed electorate, it is pivotal that women positioning themselves for a career in politics familiarize themselves with critical information concerning the legislative process and the politics of the position they are aspiring to rise to.

With the largely patriarchal systems in the lake region, women must be ready to push back and fight for their voices to be heard, putting forth sound manifestos that are in tandem with the constitution and drive towards ending discrimination against women and foster gender equality in political leadership.

Easter Oketch, the executive director at Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO) has been running mentorship and training to assist women aspirants in building a strong portfolio to wade through the murky waters of women political participation that is often flooded by propaganda and outright violence. The targets are based on religion, sexual orientation and people living with disability. These threats and forms of violence can be thwarted by strategic communication developed in the women network that will also offer training to the forerunner to equip them with various skills including public speaking and appearance.

The women aspirants should also familiarize themselves with the political terrain they are about to indulge in by reading extensively to give them a better edge in raising and sustaining an intellectual discourse. Dr. Joyce Osogo, the Kisumu county executive member for roads emphasized on the intellectual up scaling for women in leadership, pointing out that once the propaganda tool fails, women should be ready to challenge their counterparts in the law making discourse to overall include the quality of women participation in politics and hoist the competition from gender roles, to a battle of wits.

The building of a sound strategy from the target messaging, branding and in person campaign is also a critical component in improving the quality of women participation in politics within the Lake Region. Archbishop Betty Onyango, who sits at the Kisumu branch National Council of Churches, pointed out the need for women to demystify the gender roles and be bold enough to sell their policies from a point of knowledge. It was established that women should use their current resources to amplify their participation by building up a strong strategic network that will offer mentorship and training to those aspiring political roles as well as young girls and women to take up leadership positions at the tables where decisions are made.

Ending Violence Against Women

Violence against women in the political sphere manifests in many forms. From verbal abuse, sexual harassment, intimidation, gender discrimination and objectification, the women are disadvantaged compared to their counterparts. In particular, a few cronies who have enough resources to influence the rigging of the primaries intentionally delay the delivery of ballot boxes for holding party primaries. When ballot boxes are delivered at 6pm, a majority of women have already left the polling stations for security reasons as well as the aforementioned gender roles that are common in the lake region.

According to Janet Anyango (FIDA), such scenarios are deliberately created to make women easy targets for violence and often as a tool for intimidation to scare women off political participation. Women were also found to be vulnerable in terms of spies that work for their opponents from within, often presenting themselves as philanthropic funders of their political ambitions but end up acting as sellouts by giving away the aspirant's strategy. Financial constraints were therefore identified as a red flag in making women easy targets of violence.

Apart from the law, the training of women on self care is critical in eradicating violence against women in politics, with the capacity building and strategic communications offering a lifeline to enhancing the quantity and quality of women's participation in the political cycle. Amplifying women's voices is also critical in rooting out violence, especially on social media that is emerging as a new frontier where women in political leadership encounter the different forms of violence. The existence of a community of women online is critical in taming the vice if it rears its ugly head on social media.

RESOLUTIONS: CALL TO ACTION

In the session led by Esnah Nyaramba, the representatives from each of the eight counties committed by word of mouth to an array of resolutions. Though related, the collective efforts of each of the women will bring about an attitude change and enhance the inclusion of women in governance and politics by instilling confidence and skills of women in participating in the women must lead campaign, strengthen the capacities of women to speak up against discrimination, create networks with women involved in politics, challenge women and girls to get involved in political parties and movements and to inspire women and girls to vie for political seats.

1. The formation of Gusii Women caucus to spearhead the Women Must Lead campaigns in Kisii and Nyamira counties
2. Deliberate with women occupying political seats in Kakamega county and carry out mapping, training and mentorship for women and girls aspiring to vie for political seats
3. Influential women in Vihiga county will carry out resource mobilization to secure funding for women's movements
4. Busia county will carry out grassroots sensitization to enlighten women on their political rights to inspire a generation of strong women leaders
5. Homabay county will work with the existing women groups in the sub counties to offer mentorship to aspiring women leaders
6. Kisumu will continue with the capacity building of marginalized women's groups to ensure they come out in large numbers to grab space on the political arena
7. Siaya will carry out campaigns to create awareness among women on their role in decision making to enhance intentional participation in the political cycle and the need to diversify

CONCLUSION

In the Lake Region, there have been significant efforts by women to take up leadership roles in the political arena, despite the glaring hindrances often fueled by patriarchy that is entrenched in the cultures of the communities in the Lake Region.

The collective efforts of trailblazers and fiery women activists has seen the region make commendable and significant steps, having two out of the four female speakers of county assemblies across the 47 counties.

These are the kinds of achievements that prove that indeed women from the eight counties have the capacity to renew solidarity and build movements under women's political leadership and enhance

the inclusion of women in political participation by improved quality of the participation and having even more women rising to these roles.

With proper funding and capacity building, the women in the lake region will attain major goals in inspiring confidence among women to participate in Women Must Lead campaigns, strengthen the capacity of women to speak up against violence and discrimination against women, create networks with women involved in politics and have an unbreakable link from the grassroots to the top leadership, challenge more women to take up roles in political movements and parties as well as have more women vying for political seats.

Total Number of persons attending: 48

Profiles of persons attending: 2 PWDs

Organizers:

Dorothy Otieno, Julie Okiro and Jared Awatt (FEMNET)

Partners:

FEMNET

FAWE

International IDEA

SVERIGE, SWEDEN



Group Photo with Vihiga County Assembly Women Caucus on 5th May 2021 during a courtesy call to the Office of the Speaker.

Concept Note

Women Must LEAD: Women as Marshals of Political Leadership in Kenya

Peer-to-Peer Thematic Dialogues with Women Rights Organisations and Young Activists in the Lake Region

7th and 8th March 2021, Sosa Cottages, Vihiga County

1. Background

Since its establishment in 1988, the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) has played a leading role in building the women's movement and amplifying the voices of African women to influence decisions made at national, regional and global levels, that impact on their lives. FEMNET continues to mobilize African women to hold governments accountable to women's rights and gender equality commitments including: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among others.

2. Introduction

FEMNET in partnership with the International IDEA has been implementing the project: *Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa* with a view of advancing the goal of gender equality in politics and governance. FEMNET has been running a Women Must Lead campaign to increase the quantity and quality of Women's Political Participation in Kenya, Tanzania and DRC.

3. Objectives of the Peer-to-Peer Activity

The main objective of the peer-to-peer dialogue is to convene grassroots and national gatherings of women leaders, young activists and women rights organizations from the Lake Region of Kenya to renew solidarity and movement building under women's political leadership.

4. Expected Outcome

The Peer-to-Peer thematic dialogue is expected to:

- Increase the confidence and skills of women and young activists to participate in Women Must Lead Campaign
- Strengthen the capacities of women to speak out against discrimination against women
- Create networks with women involved in politics
- Challenge women and girls to get involved in political parties and movements
- Inspire women and girls to vie or occupy political seats

All COVID-19 protocols will be adhered to.

DRAFT INVITATION LETTER

3rd May 2021

The Women Caucass
County Assembly of Vihiga

Dear Speaker Hon. Hasna Mudeizi,

**RE: "Women Must LEAD" Dialogues: Grassroots Women as Marshals of
Women's Political Leadership in Kenya**

Greetings from the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

FEMNET in partnership with the International IDEA has been implementing the project: *Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa* with a view of advancing the goal of gender equality in politics and governance.

As part of the campaign dubbed **Women Must Lead**, FEMNET will convene women's rights organizations, women leaders and young activists around the lake region of Kenya for peer-to-peer dialogue to marshal support for women's political participation and decision-making. This conversation is geared towards enhancing the quality and quantity of women political leaders ahead of the 2022 general election and beyond.

The peer-to-peer dialogue will take place in Vihiga County between 6th and 7th May 2021 and for this reason we would be happy to pay a courtesy call to the women caucus in the County Assembly on Wednesday, 5th May 2021 from 10am.

We are glad that Vihiga County has set a standard in advancing women's political leadership through the Speaker of the County Assembly and it would be a great opportunity for us to learn more and continue being inspired about women's mobilization, organizing and influencing of the current and future generation of leaders in the county.

Looking forward to your confirmation.

In Solidarity!

Memory Kachambwa,
Executive Director, FEMNET

DRAFT INVITATION LETTER

28th April 2021

Dear Hon. **Hasna Mudeizi**,
Speaker, County Assembly of Vihiga

RE: Invitation to “Women Must LEAD” Dialogues: Grassroots Women as Marshals of Women's Political Leadership in Kenya

Date: 6th and 7th April 2021
Venue: Sosa Cottages, Vihiga County
Time: 9am – 4pm

Greetings from the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

FEMNET in partnership with the International IDEA cordially invites you to the “**Women Must LEAD**” thematic dialogue forum with women leaders, young activists and women’s rights organisations around the Lake Region of Kenya towards enhancing women’s political participation in Kenya.

This peer-to-peer thematic dialogue forum will provide an invigorating space to renew solidarity and movement building. The heart-to-heart session aims to increase awareness among women as political actors and citizens of existing electoral laws, rules, and practices, to form an active defence of their own rights to participate, represent, and be represented. The session will also address women’s political leadership journey, the existing structural gaps, gender stereotypes and opportunities for realizing women’s full and effective participation in politics and governance by ultimately inspiring more women to vie for political seats.

We are pleased to invite you to join us and share the intricacies of your political leadership journey; the joy, the tears, the milestones and future of women in politics by dissecting: ***Women as Marshals of Political Leadership in Kenya.***

Learning from the rising political mood in the country, we desire that the conversations during this forum remain impartial to political positionings and rather spur the much-needed candid discourse of how women leaders, young activists and women’s rights organisations can amplify women's political participation.

We look forward to your confirmation and participation in this forum. Kindly note, FEMNET will be giving a token of appreciation to all our speakers. We are also working closely with the venue management to ensure all COVID-19 protocols are clear and adhered to throughout the event.

In Solidarity!

Memory Kachambwa,
Executive Director, FEMNET

DRAFT PROGRAM

| | DAY ONE: Thursday, 6 th May 2021 | Moderator: Dorothy Otieno |
|---|---|--|
| Time | Topic | Speaker |
| 09:00 – 10:00 | Arrival/Registration/Breakfast | Julie Okiro, FEMNET |
| 10:00 – 10:10 | National Anthem/WPP Explainer Video | Jared Awatt, FEMNET |
| 10:10 – 11:00 | Introductions/Guardian Angel/Expectations | Dorothy Otieno, FEMNET |
| 11:00 – 11:10 | Welcome Remarks | Memory Kachambwa Executive Director, FEMNET |
| 11:10 – 11:40 | Opening Remarks: Grassroots Women as Marshals of Women in Political Participation | Hon. Hasna Mudeizi Speaker, County Assembly of Vihiga |
| 11:40 – 12:00 | State of WPP in Kenya and Africa | Rachelle Ouko, FAWE |
| 12:00 – 13:00 | Women Movement Building: Recruitment and Mentorship | Dr. Joyce Osogo ODM Women League |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | LUNCH | |
| 14:00 – 15:00 | The Power of a Woman: Role of women in Shaping Politics | Easter Achieng, KEFEADO |
| 15:00 – 16:00 | Inclusion of Women in Political Leadership | Caroline Agwanda Government of Kisumu County |
| | TEA BREAK | |
| 17:00 – 18:00 | Mindful Movement – Exercise for the Soul | Faith Ajema, Dance Fitness |
| DAY TWO: Friday, 7 th May 2021 | | |
| TIME | TOPIC | SPEAKER |
| 09:00 – 09:30am | Recap of Day 1 | Hellen Apiyo, Watoto Musiliye |
| 09:30 – 10:30am | Personal Experience in Political Leadership | Hon. Gladys Analo Elected MCA, Vihiga County |
| 10:30 – 10:50am | TEA BREAK | |
| 10:50 – 11:30am | Ending Violence Against Women in Politics | Janet Anyango, FIDA |
| 11:30 – 13:00pm | Self-Care – Being Aware of Our Bodies | Mercy Atieno, NO Means NO |
| 13:00 – 14:00pm | LUNCH | |
| 14:00 – 15:00pm | Call to Action: I Choose to Challenge | Women Must Lead, Lake Region |
| 15:00 – 15.10pm | Vote of Thanks | Dorothy Otieno, FEMNET |
| TEA/DEPARTURE | | |

#IChooseToChallenge #WomenLeadAfrica #WomenMustLead