KENYA AND EAST AFRICA
GENDER EQUALITY & FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

OVERVIEW

Kenya is a large and diversified economy with a population of nearly 50 million people (50.1 percent female). A leader in mobile-money with a vibrant mobile telecommunications industry, the country has a young, ambitious and well-educated workforce eager to contribute to the development of the country.

The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 ranks Kenya 76 out 144 globally with significant inequalities between males and females in education attainment, health outcomes, representation in parliament and participation in the labor market. Moreover, gender-based violence is pervasive with almost half (45 percent) of women aged 15-49 having experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their life (Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2014).

Changes to societal attitudes and cultural beliefs around gender roles, norms and female empowerment at the community and household levels have been slow especially due to systemic gender barriers fueled by deeply held and persistent stereotypes. Limited access to land and credit constrains the full participation of women in the economy, particularly as producers and business owners. Despite the introduction of the gender equality requirements into property and inheritance laws, there is still a significant gender gap in access to land. Access to formal sources of credit is also limited, and is more pronounced for women. Unpaid care and domestic work burdens limit women’s contributions in and benefit from productive activities, constrains their mobility, and limits their access to market resources.
Transition to secondary and tertiary education is limited and illiteracy rates for women remain high. Women are not as adequately represented at either the county government level (female representatives: 3 out of 47 governors; 10 out of 47 deputy governors; 96 out of 1430 members of county assemblies and 5 of 47 county speakers) or at the national level (female representatives: 23 out of 290 members of parliament; 3 out of 47 senators; and 6 out of 22 cabinet secretaries). Hence, there remains a need for continued gender integrated programming across all sectors to address the limited understanding of gender perspectives among the population, and to increase community buy-in – specifically that of men and boys – to ensure successful implementation of gender sensitive laws, policies and strategies.

To address these issues, USAID Kenya and East Africa (KEA) integrates gender into its strategies, projects, and activities – which align with USAID’s Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy – to make certain that all individuals- men, boys, women, girls, as well as all vulnerable and marginalized individuals are included and benefit from economic and social transformation in Kenya.

PROMOTING WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

Participation of women in electoral politics is still low. Out of the 14,501 candidates in 2017 general elections, only 1,259 (8.7%) were female. Of the 1,862 persons elected, only 172 (9%) were women – among them 3 governors, 3 senators, 23 single constituency members of parliament, 47 members of parliament in the affirmative action seats, and 96 members of the county assemblies -- far below the minimum one-third of any gender required by the 2010 constitution.

USAID KEA’s election related programs enhanced women’s ability to participate meaningfully in their political party’s decision-making structures and increased the number and capacity of women running for office. The activities created a more enabling environment by encouraging political parties and the electorate to support women, and through strengthening women aspirants’ capacity to vie for political office by conducting leadership and media training, cultural outreach and mentorship events.

USAID KEA’s flagship devolution activity supports the capacity development of county executive and county assemblies in 22 counties. Many women get their first opportunity to serve as elected representatives through county assemblies, which are nascent institutions and yet are required to perform similar roles to that of the National Assembly. USAID provides training and mentoring to members in order to enhance their competencies in areas such as law making and oversight functions, including understanding the budget-making process and its relationship to county development plans.

USAID KEA’s devolution activities provide gender-sensitive planning and budgeting training to county officials and support target county governments to draft gender-sensitive livestock sensitization messages and develop initiatives that will enable women to access credit, land, technology and market information. As a result, one county’s agriculture sector policy and plan includes specific objectives and provisions to address gender equity, while the Ministry of Education’s Special Needs Education Policy specifically addresses the needs of vulnerable boys and girls to enhance equity and gender mainstreaming in educational services.

INCREASING WOMEN’S SHARE IN THE ECONOMY

In Kenya, about 2.5 million young people are unemployed, and only five percent enter the formal labor market each year. Women still lag behind men in various sectors of the economy and are only one third of formal wage jobs. The challenge of youth unemployment is compounded by the fact that 90 percent of all unemployed young people have limited or lack vocational and soft skills required by the market.

USAID KEA’s youth workforce development activities address the root causes of inequality by focusing on barriers especially for young women where access to training is difficult and often blocked and employment is not allowed. USAID KEA’s partners with the private sector and other development
partners to support disadvantaged Kenyan young women and men through innovative education, empowerment and employment transition activities. These efforts improve young women and men access to quality education and ensure their completion through scholarships, mentoring, work readiness training, internships and job placement.

USAID KEA’S ACHIEVEMENTS SNAPSHOT (2017)
- 9,094 young women and 7,215 young men gained new or better employment,
- 2,709 young women and 2,308 young men access credit, grants, and loans in the core workforce readiness activity.
- Generation Kenya graduated 2,321 young women and 1,854 men with improved employability skills, and 1,956 females and 1,638 males were placed into jobs.
- 118,287 women (52 percent of the total) received increased economic benefits from sustainable resource management and conservation enterprises.
- Women accessed nearly $13 million in loans for investment in farming systems and microenterprises.
- 89,000 women had savings accounts and insurance policies, increasing household resilience by creating important buffers during shocks.
- In partnership with International Trade Corporation (ITC), an estimated $1m of sales for 100+ women exporters through their participation in international trade exhibitions and business-to-business (B2B) meetings.
- Women represented 63% (3,084/4864) of the Hub-supported new jobs
- 14,108 women traders increase their incomes through access to markets as they can formally trade across borders.
- The export apparel industry alone employs 300,000 people, approximately 50% are women.
- 6,815 adolescent girls and young women aged 10 to 24 years trained under Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-free Mentored Safe lives (DREAMS) on HIV/AIDS prevention, gender norms transformation, and gender-based violence.
- Over 5,000 women identified from over 20 political parties equipped with the leadership skills and knowledge through a series of trainings and mentorship to enable them to compete in the 2017 general election.
- Eight women attended an 18-month peacebuilding and leadership program at Eastern Mennonite University in the United States.

Feed the Future (FtF) activities increase the productivity and incomes of smallholder farmers and other actors across the strategic value chains of horticulture, dairy and staple crops. This creates economic opportunities for women and specifically targets women for nutrition interventions. These activities also promote technologies and management practices that increase productivity and save time for women. Less time spent on farming is important for women, who are often responsible for childcare, food preparation, and other tasks.

Through community conservancies USAID KEA provides pastoralist women with skills and opportunities to earn a steady income through beadwork and by supporting efforts to brand and ship their products internationally. The conservancies’ activities train the women to standardize their beadwork and meet quality expectations so their products are attractive to a large range of consumers. The women acquire skills to transform their unique beadwork to other products that reach buyers in local, regional and international. On average, each woman earns KES 5,000 per month from the sales.

TRADE AND CROSS BORDER INTERVENTIONS

Kenya is ranked the lowest in gender equality in the East African Community region according to the latest study (2018) by Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA) and UNCTAD. USAID KEA’s East Africa Trade and Investment Hub and TMEA work to improve the policy environment for the East African Community (EAC) integration, trade and investment. In addition, the activities work to increase the competitiveness of select regional agricultural value chains, bolster regional trade in staple foods and promote intra-regional and export trade. In particular, under the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) the projects work to address the hurdles and eliminate barriers that both women and men face as they engage in regional trade and integration.
The activities resulted in the adoption of a policy recommendation submitted by Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce, which required government procurement actions to have 30 percent consideration for women. In addition, the East African Women in Business Platform revived its operations and has established a partnership with the EAC Secretariat for the dissemination of EAC simplified guides for micro-small and medium enterprises. Monitoring data from TMEA partner, Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women, showed that through implementation of the simplified trade regime, and trade capacity building, average trade values increased for cross border women traders at Busia, Taveta, Katuna and Mutukula.

**PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

USAID KEA’s interventions in Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are aligned with national and regional objectives, to influence policy reforms and strengthen delivery of quality SGBV, post-rape care and community support services to populations that are vulnerable and most-at-risk as well as those with special needs. Working in line with national standards, the activities work with health facilities to help form and manage support groups for survivors and strengthen organizational capacities and coordination among partners. SGBV survivors receive various services, including emergency contraception, sexually transmitted infection screenings and treatment, HIV testing and counseling, trauma counseling, post-exposure prophylaxis for those eligible and referral for other services.

USAID KEA’s SGBV activities reach key populations at risk of GBV, including adolescent girls and young women, female sex workers, fisher communities, injection drug users and men who have sex with men, to mobilize communities and peers for a full spectrum of GBV prevention and response activities, such as HIV testing services and linkage to, and retention on treatment.

Activities targeting orphans and vulnerable children expand gender-responsive services that include violence prevention, services for survivors, and training for case managers.

To improve access to critical services for survivors of violence, and to track instances of violence against women in elections (VAWIE), USAID KEA partnered with Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK). HAK operates a nationwide 24-hour GBV helpline. During the highly contested 2017 general elections, HAK’s helpline enabled Kenyans to report VAWIE, as well as receive emergency tele-counseling services and referrals to services they need. USAID KEA’s Cross-Border Health Integrated Partnership Project (CB-HIPP) worked closely with participating health facilities through the Cross-Border Health Units to ensure access to quality integrated health services. CB-HIPP ensures access to health services by female populations at high risk of infection due to such factors as GBV, provides gender-appropriate and sensitive services, particularly for vulnerable women and girls (15-24 years). Young females at risk of entry into sex work were also reached through targeted messaging by trained cross-border peer educators.

**USAID KEA’S ACHIEVEMENTS SNAPSHOT (2017)**

- GBV interventions reached 13,241 (95 percent female) survivors of sexual violence,
- CB-HIPP trained 95 health care workers (HCWs), cross-border peer educators (CBPEs).
- A total of 3,038 mobile cross-border clients were reached with GBV messages.

**USAID CONTACTS**

Betty Mugo, Mission Gender Specialist
Tel: +254 (0) 20 862 2394
Email: bmugo@usaid.gov

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Email: usaidke@usaid.gov
Website: www.usaid.gov/kenya
Facebook: USAIDKenya
Twitter: @USAIDKenya and @USAIDEastAfrica