



GENDER SECTOR SUCCESS STORIES

ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PARLIAMENT

As part of advocacy efforts to strengthen women's voices in the reform and affirmative action agenda, a National Women's Meeting was held with the support of the UN Women's Gender and Governance Programme (GGP). The meeting brought together more than 400 women leaders from all over Kenya to take stock of progress on the implementation of the constitution and its gender equality aspects within it. It aimed to ensure that all participants understood the implications of any amendments to the two-thirds principle (Article 81 (b) of the new Constitution states that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender), together with the amendment proposals that had been put forward in Parliament. As news reached the meeting that Parliament was rejecting the proposed amendments, the women quickly regrouped, deciding on a more aggressive and public approach. Dressed in green scarves, the colour of hope, hundreds of women marched to Parliament with a petition demanding women's equity and the retention of delegated women's elected seats in the constitution. They blocked the streets and attached themselves to the gates of Parliament, drawing heavy media attention. The march made a large impact on the parliamentary process and a working group of experts was later established to look into ways of ensuring that the two-thirds principle is retained in the constitution. The women's organizations also contributed to the working group, creating models that would ensure adherence to the provision.

As a result, a new proposal for adherence to the two-thirds principle tabled by Cabinet is currently before Parliament. Women's Groups like the Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness (CREAW) and FIDA continue to convene meetings of women leaders to discuss and propose alternative means to amending the Constitution to ensure that the two-thirds principle is upheld.



Women benefit from health sector support. Photo: Danida

PROMOTING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN THE COMMUNITY

In June 2011, Danida made the largest commitment yet to the health sector by embarking on the third phase of its Health Sector Programme Support (HSPS). Agnes Munke, a teacher at Naigire Enkare, benefited from this support. As she queued with her two coughing sons at Naigire Enkare health centre, she remembered how different the health centre was five years ago. "We are beginning to see some good changes here," she said.

“I am told the government is giving more money to the hospital”, she continued. “Even those who used to go to private hospitals have started coming here”. Agnes added that although the queues are now longer due to the improved services, she does not mind waiting to be served.

Rebecca Njeri’s youngest son, Ben Waikigo, was born at home because she did not have the money to pay for maternity services at the nearest government facility. ‘I wish HSSF had come earlier’, she pondered, “though nowadays, I always bring my son here for immunisation as it’s free”. She concluded by saying that her neighbour gave birth here last month and that she (Rebecca) intends to come here for her next delivery.



*Women are essential to the economic growth of Kenya.
Photo: Danida*

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF WOMEN

Kyome Fresh is a micro-enterprise supported by the Danida Agribusiness Development Programme (ABD). ABD was until last year a part of the agriculture sector programme support and now constitutes private sector participation programme components of both the Natural Resources Management Programme and the Business Programme of the Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

Kyome Fresh was registered in November 2003 as a limited company by its executive director, Mrs Grace Nyaa, who was inspired by the horticultural

potential of her village, Kyome, which is in the semi-arid area of Eastern Province. To her, one of the main challenges in sustaining farming as a business is access to water. “If the villagers of Kyome were shown how to harvest water, and commercial dams and boreholes were sunk strategically, poverty would be a thing of the past.”

With support from the Embassy of Denmark, a water management survey was conducted to help farmers from Kyome and other areas improve water management at farm level, using the most appropriate technology and where possible renewable energy options. The Embassy has also supported Kyome in attaining various international certifications such as the Global Gap (Global Partnership for Good Agricultural Practice).

Seven years since its inception the company has grown immensely and now has established consistent markets in the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany and the Middle East. Kyome Fresh’s annual growth is 20%, shipping an average 170 tonnes of mixed fruit and vegetables per month by air. Their product range includes

avocados, aubergines, baby corn, chillies, French beans, snow peas, sugar snaps and passion fruit. Most employees of the company are women.

FEEDING THE FUTURE

Annett is a thirteen-year-old pupil at Nazarene Self Help School in Kibera (a Nairobi slum), full of energy and quick to smile. Born into a family of five children, as the only girl Annett is constantly helping her mother, who encourages her to be active in and out of school.

Soon after her eleventh birthday, Annett’s father left the family and although he promised to keep in contact

and pay her school fees he has not done so. With five children to look after alone, Annett’s mother had to find ways to ease the financial burden. Although the school that the siblings attended was part of the World Food Programme (WFP) school meals programme, Annett’s mother still needed to pay for the food, included in which was the cost of firewood. This expenditure, plus uniforms and books placed a heavy burden on her mother, so she decided to take Annett out of school for her to begin earning an income.

Even though her mother said that she would pay for her to learn other skills when things got better, for Annett the news was devastating. But just when she thought her life would change forever Annett’s school acquired a fuel efficient stove from the WFP which consumed less firewood than before, and in turn reduced the cost of school meals. In fact, the family saved the equivalent of just over USD3 per month – money which could be used for other essentials.

With this saving, Annett’s mother reconsidered her decision to take Annett out of school and although life is still difficult, Annett will complete her primary education.

“That stove has helped to keep me in school”, she says with a smile.

Other advantages from the new fuel-efficient stove include the fact that the children do not have to wait for meals while the cook searches for firewood. In addition, there is no smoke in the classrooms – a health hazard of the old stove.

For Annett the benefits are not just physical: in the last year she has gone from being an average performer to being within the top five in her class. Her ambition is to become a nurse – which, thanks to the fuel-efficient stove at her school, is now well within her reach.