



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

CONCEPT NOTE ON KENYA SIDE EVENT AT THE 67TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

EVENT TOPIC: ACCELERATING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: OVERCOMING TRADITIONAL BARRIERS

Date : Thursday, 16th March 2023
Time : 1:15PM – 2.30PM
Venue: Conference Room 2 (CR-2)

1.0 Introduction

African women entrepreneurs are fundamental key drivers of sustainable economic growth and widespread and inclusive prosperity and the positive contribution of women to economic growth, poverty reduction and societal well-being has been well documented in many studies. Women almost constitute 50 per cent of the world population and have been making substantial contribution to socio-economic development. Nevertheless, because of some social norms that are retrogressive in nature and application, women and girls are at greater risk of poverty, violence and abuse than men.

Besides, effects of COVID-19 adversely affected women's contribution to the socio-economic development in most countries in the African continent. Women's livelihoods were affected by loss of jobs for those in formal employment whereas the lockdown policies that were imposed due to COVID-19 pandemic hurt informal workers most of them who are women engaged in small and medium enterprises. On the other hand, responses to COVID-19 increased the adoption of digital technology. This has heightened the recognition of the potential of ICTs as a tool for promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and digital gender inclusion.

Context and Background

Throughout the last few decades, technology progress has significantly impacted business. There is evidence that the nation's economic growth benefits from the development of entrepreneurship based on innovation and technology. With the intention of leveraging electronic commerce, many start-up enterprises are changing their business plans and putting information systems in place. It has never been more important for business owners to comprehend how technology works and how current and future advances will impact the viability and growth of their companies.

The Kenyan government recognizes the benefits of business sector expansion as a key factor in the growth of the GDP and the creation of jobs. As a result, the government has started and

implemented a few entrepreneurship-related projects and tools to change information systems and avoid failure. The government has planned several technological advancements and programs by launching reviews in policy and legislative frameworks towards fostering women's entrepreneurship. These frameworks include the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, Affirmative Funds and Preference Procurement, Access to Information Act 2016, Data Protection Policy Act 2019, among others.

In this regard, the Government has invested in ICT infrastructure and the internet to expand coverage and access across the country including rural areas. There are several governments as well as Public, Private Partnerships initiatives implemented to increase internet access for women and girls in Kenya such as the "Women in Tech" initiative, the "Digital Literacy for Women" program, Ajira Digital Literacy Program.

2.0 Rationale

Article 56(1) of the CoK, 2010 provides for affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalized groups are provided with special opportunities in education, economic fields, and employment and have reasonable access to infrastructure. Through the new devolved system of government, Kenya has made progress by taking public and other services closer to the people and opening opportunities for trade and growth in previously hard-to-reach areas of the Country.

Minority and marginalized communities in Kenya, however, still experience challenges in accessing ICT services due to low literacy levels, availability of electricity and high rates of poverty common to rural areas where most of the population lives.

Despite the government's comprehensive objective to build a robust, secure, affordable, accessible, and reliable digital ecosystem, challenges exist. According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), 2021 vulnerable groups currently experience many challenges in the economy and have difficulty accessing jobs, healthcare, education, and Government services, due to various forms of discrimination such as gender identity, age, abilities, ethnicity, among others, which are exacerbated in the digital economy.

To improve gender equality, the current digital revolution offers women the chance to become more economically and socially autonomous.

Objectives of the Side Event

- i. To showcase positive progress made in policies and legislative frameworks that help accelerate women entrepreneurship.
- ii. To discuss opportunities that promote women & girl's equality and empowerment in the digital era.
- iii. To highlight government innovations in addressing the plight of widows as highlighted in Resolution 76/L.40 of the UN General Assembly; and,
- iv. To demonstrate the role played by a sustained partnership of various stakeholders in the women empowerment ecosystem.

3.0 Programme Methodology

The session will be modelled around discussion plenaries coordinated through a multi-sectoral approach. Discussion materials will be drawn from sector experiences but directly targeted to achieve the identified specific objectives. The panelists will showcase progress made so far on the achievements on women economic empowerment and their impact in enhancing women's businesses. Guest speaker from Republic of Gambia, Global Fund for Widows (New York) and Public and private sectors in Kenya and other regions will also be invited to share in their specific relatable experiences. The side event will be undertaken as follows:

- i. **Panel Discussions:** The moderator will guide the panelists in discussions on key issues that will expound ways that women are engaging in women entrepreneurship in the digital space.
Panelists:
 - a) **PS Aurelia Rono** – State Department for Parliamentary Affairs
 - b) **- Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare**
 - c) **Representatives** – Members of National Assembly
 - d) **Representatives** – KEPSA Foundation and Global Fund for Widows.
- ii. **Plenary Session:** A 15 min question and answer plenary session, guided by the moderator and panelists will actively engage the audience to offer participants a chance to further explore key policies for women economic empowerment and other special interest groups.
- iii. **Documentary:** A **5 minute documentary** to showcase women embracing innovation and technology.

4.0 Guiding Questions

- i. What are the legislative and policy frameworks in place in Kenya for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and what are their importance?
- ii. What is the role of the Government and other stakeholders in promoting innovations in women's entrepreneurship ventures? Opportunities and priorities for future action.
- iii. How is innovation improving access to credit and empowering women and girls? Lessons learnt.
- iv. What actions have stakeholders taken that demonstrate best practice of successful promotion of innovations that have enabled young women equitably access credit?
- v. What opportunities are in there for initiatives that promote women and girl's equality and empowerment.