

THE WALLS WE CAN'T SEE

Public Policy Lethargy on Women's Political Participation in Kenya

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Auditing Women's Agency at National and County Levels

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Key Points

- This paper summarises the findings of a study that applied the three levels of leadership model (Scouller, 2011) to auditing women's leadership in Kenya.
- It has been observed that women "often lack social capital because they are often not heads of communities, tribes or kinship groups." This lack of a constituency base has far reaching implications for their means of political participation.
- This study finds that A sense of leader identity is extremely important for women leaders because the way women perceive themselves, and their identity as leaders is influenced by indigenous culture and has profound effects on the way women feel, think, and act, and on what they strive to achieve in politics.

Summary

The 2010 constitutional dispensation for a 'not more than two-thirds' of the same gender representation in any public office and the provision for gender equality as articulated in the *Political Parties Act (2011)* was supposed to increase women's agency, yield more voice, presence and identity at the national and county levels. Yet women are struggling to make an impact within parties in their quest for political power, despite the implementation of gender equality provisions at the national and county levels. This audit of women's agency at the national and county levels reveals the urgent need to move from over reliance on a one-dimensional, one-size-fits all approach, driven by past experiences that rely on affirmative action policies and the training of women on systems, processes and techniques.

Women who join politics in Kenya could benefit from a leadership development approach, informed by the principles of three levels of leadership at the personal, private and public strata. Such an approach must shift focus from training programs based on static "best practices" and delivered by "experts" in a monologue to development programs in a dialogue driven by reflection on felt needs. As Myatt observes, we must stop training (women) leaders (in politics). We can coach them, develop them, disciple them, but not attempt to train them.

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INTRODUCTION

This is an investigation into the association between the three levels of leadership model (Scouller, 2011) and women's political leadership development in Kenya. The model is "designed as a practical tool for developing a person's leadership presence, knowhow and skill" and 'explains clearly and simply how to grow ones'leadership presence, knowhow and skill. Women in Kenya have been excluded from politics on account of "social and political discourse; political structures and institutions and the socio-cultural and functional constraints that put limits on women's individual and collective agency." It has been observed that women "often lack social capital because they are often not heads of communities, tribes or kinship groups." This lack of a constituency base has far reaching implications for their means of political participation.

From the onset of multiparty democracy in 1992, various strategies have been applied with the goal of increasing the level of women's political participation in Kenya. These include nurturing and developing a vibrant women's movement for political mobilization; developing specific programs on gender and governance; developing training manuals for women in political leadership; gender awareness training and lobbying of political parties; sensitizing society to women's right to political participation; enacting gender sensitive legislation; developing context sensitive policy frameworks and implementation mechanisms.

Lack of social capital and political capacities is seen as a major barrier to women's participation in politics on an equal basis with men.

Despite these initiatives, the number of women successfully contesting political positions has remained significantly low. Women's participation in national politics in Kenya has been dismal over the years. In the first Parliament (1963-1969) no woman was elected or nominated, while in the second parliament (1969-1974), only one woman was elected and another one nominated. Limited improvement is seen in subsequent parliaments until the ninth parliament (2002-2007), when ten women were elected and eight nominated, constituting 8.1% of the total members of parliament. In the tenth parliament (2007-2012), sixteen were elected and six nominated constituting 9.9% of parliamentary representation. The 11th Parliament (2013-2017) was expected to have many women as a result of the increased constitutional gains for women and Kenya's legislative and electoral reforms over the past years. This environment was expected to transform the structural, institutional and systemic constraints to women's equal and inclusive participation, thereby resulting in increased uptake of electoral and political spaces by women. This was not the case.

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With the introduction of the devolved government, Kenya's 11th Parliament is now made up of the National Assembly and the Senate, with the National Assembly having 290 directly elected members from 290 constituencies. Of the 290 elected members, only 16 are women. Another 47 are women representatives elected directly from individual counties on women's only seats, as an affirmative action measure. No woman was elected as an independent candidate, compared to 2 men. Political parties nominated 5 women of the 12 members nominated to the National Assembly.

At the County level, only 82 women were elected out the 1450 members of the county assembly.

The total number of women in the current national assembly is therefore 68, representing 19.4% of the total membership of the National Assembly as shown in the following diagram.

ELECTED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN DUAL GENDER CONSTITUENCIES DURING THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 2013 IN KENYA: GENDER TABLE IN PERCENTAGES

	PARTY	ELECTED FEMALES	%	ELECTED MALES	%	TOTALS
1.	TNA	8	11.11	64	88.89	72
2.	WDM	2	10.53	17	89.47	19
3.	URP	3	4.83	59	95.17	62
4.	ODM	1	1.28	77	98.72	78
5.	KANU	1	14.29	6	85.71	7
6.	NARC	1	33.33	2	66.67	3
7.	Affirmative Action Seats	47	100%	0	0	100%
	TOTAL	16	5%	274	95%	290

Adapted from Gender Ranking of Political Parties in Kenya, CMD-Kenya Nairobi February 28th 2014

Of the 57 political parties currently registered in Kenya, 54 participated in the March 2013 General Elections and only 6 parties, TNA, WDM, URP, ODM, KANU and NARC, managed to have women elected as members of the National Assembly. The National Alliance Party (TNA) had the highest number of women elected to the national parliament through the party, followed by URP, WDM and ODM, KANU and NARC.

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Various political parties sponsored 13 women to run for the post of senator, with one woman running as an independent candidate. No woman was elected as senator. Political parties then nominated 16 women as senators. The political parties had sponsored 5 women to run as governor. None was elected. From the above, one independent women candidate was cleared, but she was neither reflected nor nominated. This may be an indication of the compounded difficulties women independent candidates face. The following table shows the number of women who were nominated to Senate by individual parties.

WOMEN SENATORS BY PARTY

Party	Cleared	Nominated	Elected
TNA	3	4	-
WDM	2	1	-
URP	-	3	-
NARC-K	3	-	-
ODM	2	4	-
KANU	-	1	-
UDF	-	1	-
NARC	1	-	-
KADU ASILI	1	-	-
PICK	1	-	-
APK	-	1	-
FORD K	-	1	-
Independent Candidate	1	-	-
Total	14	16	-

Adapted from Gender Ranking of Political Parties in Kenya, CMD-Kenya Nairobi February 28th 2014

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JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Gender quotas have emerged as a global fast track strategy to redress the exclusion of women from the formal arena of politics. Kenya has instituted gender quotas through legislation and political party regulations and policies. The Political Parties Act of 2011 stipulates that political parties have to comply with the requirement that no gender shall constitute more than a third of the total number in National Executive Committees in order to be registered. 57 political parties were registered by the office of the Registrar of Political Parties in 2012, in preparation for the March 4th 2013 General Elections. All registered parties complied with the gender quota requirement.

Out of the 57 political parties, 54 participated in the elections, but women's performance in politics did not significantly improve in the elections and in key decision making processes. This is why the Supreme Court ruling of 2012 that parliament enacted laws on the realisation of the two thirds gender rule in the National Assembly by August 27 2015. In the meantime, emphasis also continues to be placed on highlighting the poor performance of nominated women members of the County Assembly, frustrations resulting from affirmative action seats as reflected in the reactions of County Women Representatives and the perception that women are to blame for their poor level of representation as they do not elect women leaders, despite their numerical strength.

It is instructive that women civil society leaders and members of parliament are appealing to the leadership of the two main political parties, Jubilee Alliance Party (JAP) and the Coalition for the Restoration of Democracy (CORD) and not strategizing to push for the articulation of a clear party position through party policy organs, such as National Executive Committees (NEC).

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TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN IN NEC OF POLITICAL PARTIES AS COMPARED TO MEN

Party	Total NEC Members	Men	Women	% Women
1. TNA	12	8	4	33%
2. URP	28	18	10	36%
3. WDM-K	20	13	7	35%
4. ODM	16	11	5	33%
5. NARC KENYA	22	14	8	36%
6. UDF	14	8	6	43%
7. MDP	32	17	15	47%
8. MP	14	10	4	36%
9. NARC	16	12	4	25%
10. GNU	12	7	5	42%
11. APK	27	18	9	33%
12. NFK	40	24	16	40%
13. NVP	14	8	6	43%
14. FPK	27	15	12	44%
15. SAFINA	18	9	9	50%
16. AP	20	10	10	50%
17. FORD KENYA	75 ?	45?	30	40%
18. CCU	17	12	5	29%
19. TIP	16	7	9	56%
20. FORD PEOPLE	24	15	9	38%
21. KADU ASILI	11	7	4	57%
22. PDP	15	10	5	33%
23. DP	27	18	9	33%
24. PICK	21	10	11	52%
25. FORD ASILI	20	10	10	50%
26. KENDA	50	40	10	20%
27. Farmers Party	26	18	8	31%
28. SPK	14	8	6	43%
29. Shirikisho Party	14	8	6	43%
30. Federal Party of Kenya	27	15	12	44%

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STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN KENYA TO DATE

Current expressions of commitment to gender equality as a fundamental goal in political party manifestos, policy documents and even pronouncements by top party leadership have not yielded much fruit. Moreover, the presence of women in leadership in compliance with the constitution has not made a significant difference.

One explanation is that political parties are simply not ready, in terms of capacity for practical application of gender quotas. Current commitments have remained at the level of rhetoric and cosmetic interventions that only include women during the electioneering period and in an ad hoc manner. Gender quotas cannot address disparities that are structural and systemic. The issue of gender roles also, defining the home as the natural domain of women, and confining them to roles as mothers and wives while men occupy the public sphere. This public-private dichotomy prevents women from being elected to powerful positions within party structures, because of the preference for male leadership models. Such models perceive women as deficient in political skills, economic resources, education, training and access to information.

Women have to negotiate their entry into the public sphere according to opportunities available in a cultural social context.

Despite these observations, political parties in Kenya continue to be encouraged to uphold the spirit of the constitution and put in affirmative action measures to ensure equality and equity in politics. It is argued that political parties hold the key to women's entry and effective participation at national as well as county levels. Therefore, women are encouraged to participate in the decision making processes of their parties and to present themselves for election and appointments to senior party positions, as an important strategy, with the hope that this will increase women's political muscle and increase their success in elective and nomination politics.

Other strategies employed to redress the gender gap in politics include supporting the networking of women politicians and tackling the interlocking layer of gender inequalities in power structures at the national and international levels. There is consensus that the presence of a strong women's movement and civil society that indicates women's consciousness of their political rights is a critical element for women's individual and collective agency. However, those who hold this view have not confronted the general feeling that the women's movement is dead, and that even those who continue to speak for women do so in search of personal benefits or on behalf another interest group, ethnic, religious or political. Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization has representation all over the country, but appears to be waiting on the headquarters, the government or the political parties to show them the way with regards to the two thirds gender rule. The Women's Political Caucus (now Caucus for Women's

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Leadership) is represented through inclusion of the chair in national deliberations and statements which the regional convenors are unaware of. The Women's Political Alliance has metamorphosed into the National Steering Committee, through an open door policy that neither questions member organization's commitment to the women's agenda nor commands the trust of women individual women.

It is also notable that the beneficiaries of the women's only seats, elected County Women Representatives are reluctant to be identified with the women's agenda. Their focus is more on their preferred change of title to County Members of Parliament and to ensuring that they also command a budget, like their elected colleagues who operate at the level of constituency. This is the case despite the recognition that their allocation is dismal, given the size of the Counties they are supposed to cover, about six or seven constituencies on average. Most nominated women members of the County Assembly have been intimidated in addition into thinking that they owe their positions in parliament to some male leadership, the governor or influential political leader at the constituency or ward level. The opportunity to strategize and draw on their shared experience and collective space and use respective caucuses to set targets, plan and begin to eat the elephant of patriarchy in the room, one bite at a time is what needs to be seized.

AUDITING WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A STUDY

A sense of leader identity is extremely important for women leaders because the way women perceive themselves, and their identity as leaders is influenced by indigenous culture and has profound effects on the way women feel, think, and act, and on what they strive to achieve in politics. The study on how women who succeed in politics develop their leadership identity reveals that it is a developmental process.

Our study also revealed women leaders who were successful in securing political party nomination and subsequent election by voters displayed a stronger sense of leadership identity, at the personal level in their pre-election engagements in respective political parties, campaign programs and political rallies. This enhanced their leadership presence, knowhow and skill in the political game at the private and public levels of leadership and set them for success. In this sense, the women's increased ability to make a contribution that impacts the political activities comes more from their greater sense of self-awareness, acceptance of themselves and discipline to confront weaknesses, manage threats and exploit available opportunities. In fact, the women leaders who were observed in the study described their leadership identity as moving from a leader-centric view to one that embraces leadership as a collaborative, relational process.

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Those elected or nominated had a higher sense of leadership identity at the personal level of leadership that helped them to negotiate past social cultural bias. They also displayed an elevated sense of purpose that enabled them to display a high level of performance at both the public and private levels of leadership.

The women leaders observed in this study who were elected are:

- Naomi Shabaan elected as the Member of Parliament Taita Taveta on a TNA ticket;
- Cecil Mbarire elected as the Member of Parliament for Runyeges on a TNA ticket;
- Alice Wahome elected as the Member of Parliament for Kandara on a TNA ticket;
- Esther Murugi elected as the Member of Parliament for Nyeri Town on a TNA ticket;
- Millie Odhiambo Mabona the only woman elected as Member of Parliament for Mbita on an ODM ticket;
- Rachel Shebesh elected as Nairobi County Women Representative on a TNA ticket;
- Alice Nganga elected as Kiambu County Women Representative on a TNA ticket;
- Danita Gati elected as Migori County Women Representative on ODM ticket ;
- Gladys Wanga elected as Homabay County Women Representative on ODM ticket;

The women leaders who were observed in the study and who were nominated are :

- Elizabeth Ongoro nominated Senator on an ODM ticket and elected Vice Secretary General of the party;

- Janet Ongera nominated Senator on an ODM ticket and immediate past Executive Director of the ODM party;
- Dr Agnes Nzani nominated Senator on an ODM ticket and serious contender for the post of Secretary General of the party. Now one of the recognized national party leadership;
- Beth Mugo nominated Senator TNA and two time elected member of parliament for Dagoretti constituency in Nairobi
- Amina Abdalla nominated Member of Parliament on a TNA ticket on a record third nomination by her political party.

The study also included following women who were cleared by their party to stand for election. Even though they were not elected, they command name recognition in their political parties, constituency and the country as political leaders:

- Rosa Akinyi Buyu who ran for the post of Member of Parliament for Kisumu West on an ODM and lost to a man running on Ford-Kenya ticket. She has since been elected as the organizing secretary of her political party and is regarded as one of the key players nationally;
- Lina Chebii who ran for the post of Member of Parliament for Marakwet East on a TNA ticket and lost. She has since been appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the Anti-FGM Campaign by the President;

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- Mary Mwangi (Double M) who ran for post of Member of Parliament for Embakasi on a TNA ticket and lost to a man who ran on an ODM ticket. The public consider her a formidable opponent of the sitting member of parliament and expect her to take the seat in 2017;
- Susan Owino who ran for post of Women Representative for Migori County on an ODM ticket and lost. The consensus is that Susan is a formidable politician whose only challenge was the coalition seat negotiation that worked against her on ethnic grounds in cosmopolitan County of Migori.

Stages of evolution in leadership identity include self-assessing, as well as accepting and implementing a strategic plan to grow levels of personal, private and public leadership. Women *can consciously cultivate a deliberate sense of their leadership identity, and therefore realize at what stage they are to begin to address this complex issue.* Thus incorporating an identity lens into auditing women's leadership and development efforts in Kenya by all actors is long overdue (Day and Harrison 2007).

The three levels of leadership model (Scouller 2011) is a practical tool that can be used to audit women's leadership presence, knowhow and skill, and to enable them to develop a desirable leadership identity and agency in a culture sensitive and gender responsive manner. Programs for the effective development of women's political leadership in Kenya should incorporate a leadership identity as an

important lens and priority. The political engagement of women who have been successful as politicians since independence demonstrates that applying the three levels model can contribute to breaking major social and cultural barriers. It is a useful model for developing women leaders since it does not emphasize traits but encourages individual women to assess where they are in their leadership identity and define clear parameters for growth.

There are some key problems with respect to the waning women's movement and the reduced profile of the would-be key actors to amplify the women's voice. It is clear that in its current form we cannot expect serious women's leadership viability or transformation from the women's rights movement in the current Kenyan contentious and male dominated political environment. The women leaders at the national and county levels, civil society organizations and those seeking to support the women's agenda must therefore distinguish between approaches that work towards women's well-being and those that work towards women's agency.

Despite the effects of cultural and policy factors that appear to diminish the impact of women's leadership, women are still able to make important contributions through their leadership and networks as agents of change, if they develop their capacity for political organizing. This can be achieved through a cultural and gender responsive application of the leadership model advanced by Scouller.

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Through this model the conceptual innovations on leadership identity, presence knowhow and skill can be embedded in the ground that African women stand on as leaders in order to take full account of their cultural identity and values and how they can develop their leadership in the Kenyan. In this way can push women leaders out of their comfort zones so that as innovative, critical thinkers they can borrow while remaining authentic to the African spirit and cultural history. While we cannot develop our leadership and transform our societies purely on the basis of exogenous models, it is clear that we must go beyond focusing on the maintenance of current approaches to exploration and growth to be effective. These are questions that we can look at in the quest for a new women's leadership that has agency, is strategic and therefore strategic.

By involving the women politicians and other key actors in the Kenyan political scene the discussion will provide an opportunity to interrogate Scouller's model from an African perspective and from our political practice. It would also enable African scholar-activists, male and female to go beyond affirmative action and undertake research and analysis on the broader question of how to develop women's leadership in politics. It would further meet the need of practitioners, policy makers and students who continuously strive to hear the African feminist voice in all the research and analysis that we carry out and "ensure that we are speaking with our own voices, from the ground we stand on as we look to powerful analytical models from around the globe" (Achola Pala 2015).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Explore, identify and implement specific actions that can “strengthen women’s leadership presence, knowhow and skill so that they can develop a desirable leadership identity at the national and county levels” (as modified by Achola Pala 2015);

Convene a multi-generation panel discussion on this topic involving key gender experts, with seasoned women politicians as discussants and commentators. The discussion should also include political strategists, political party leaders and other opinion leaders. The central question to address would be to establish the efficacy of the leadership principles contained in Scouller’s model for “Strengthening Women’s leadership presence, knowhow and skill so that they can develop a desirable leadership identity at the national and county levels” .;

Interrogation of Scouller’s model from an African perspective and from Kenya’s political practices by engaging seasoned women politicians, political party leadership, political campaign strategists and managers, emerging women politicians and gender experts in productive and innovative dialogue;

Designing a leadership development framework that provides steps and guidelines for personal reflection, learning and practice of the three levels of leadership (personal, private and public) by women leaders in the context of the political experiences of county and national governance;

Making the proposed framework available for action research and dialogue with women leaders at the county and national levels;

Using the three levels of leadership model as a practical tool for auditing women’s leadership presence, knowhow and skill in specific areas at the national and county levels;

Creation of opportunities and linkages for individual women leaders to be mentored, coached, by seasoned male and female politicians and political leaders;

Making the proposed framework available for critique and review by African scholars and students in women and gender studies programs in academic institutions.

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