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WOMEN ECONOMIC FORUM 2022

WEBINAR REPORT

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Introduction and Context Setting

The Women Economic Forum is an annual event organized by CRAWNTrust. The year 2022 event was a two-day event with the theme with activities including speeches panel discussions, entertainment and plenary sessions from policy makers Government actors the civil society , academia a civil society, to name just a few. The theme for the year 2022 event was: *Financing and market linkages for WEE in a post COVID environment*. The event was moderated by Shiru Waweru. She invited all the participants into the event. This was followed by a prayer and the National Anthem and the EAC Anthem.

Welcome Remarks

The welcome remarks were made by Daisy Amdany the Executive Director CRAWNTrust. She welcomed all the participants into the forum. She noted the Women voice and leadership supported by the Canadian High Commission in Kenya. The objective of the programme is to improve gender equality and increase the enjoyment of human rights in Kenya through improving management and governance programs and sustainability of women's rights organizations enhancing the ability to deliver quality services and increasing the ability to deliver quality services and increasing the effectiveness of Kenya Women's rights platform. She indicated that the program gives women the space to determine their key priorities according to what they saw as the needs of the women's rights movement in Kenya. Women's empowerment she said was the key component in enhancing women's voice in leadership this is what prompted the women economic series under which the women economic forum is held. She said that they had been able to do so much from training women in policy advocacy and alliance building, working with young women through their intergenerational forum to ensure there are no gaps in their work eve with upcoming generations. She said they had a database of women's rights organizations and so far, they had over 600 in the database which gives visibility to women's rights organizations. She then said that WEF which is in its second year will seek to unpack different topics in WEE. She said that the issues around businesses and financing in a post COVID environment is a major one and in the two days they would give stories about women which would inspire as well as provide a platform for sharing of market intelligence of opportunities locally , regionally and internationally. She hoped that the audience would be enriched by the conversation. She then invited the chairperson to make her remarks.

Opening Remarks Ms. Mirriam Cherogony

She invited the participants to the forum. She appreciated the support given to the program by CARE Kenya and the Canadian High Commission for actualizing the women and economy series under the auspices of the WVL project. She reiterated the importance of the theme for this years' forum given that we are coming from the devastating effects of the COVID 19 pandemic which has had a devastating impact on the economy and thus the feeling that this was an important discussion. She said that CRAWNTrust was committed in the economic recovery of the country by positioning women to contribute to the recovery. She let the participants know that much had been done on policy issues and enhancing women's capacity to contribute to the discussions around WEE. She noted that the partnership with the UON WEEHub had enabled them to get well researched and factual information that they had been using for their advocacy work. She said that through the National Women Steering Committee they had been able to disseminate a lot of information and build the capacities of women on WEE. This, she added, was being done in eight

counties: Kajiado, Nakuru, Kiambu, Kitui Siaya, Mombasa and Nairobi. They had also been convening National level forums to share the findings with duty bearers so that they could better inform government for planning and collaboration both at the National as well as the county level. She lay emphasis on the need to ensure that women are central in the economic recovery given that this is an election year and this she indicated, was what the conversation would be about for the next two days. They would also be keen on fair representation of women in politics and access to finance for women. She concluded by saying she forward to having fruitful and vibrant discussions.

Remarks by the CARE Kenya Director Dr. Maureen Miruka.

She expressed great delight at being in the Forum and recognized the support from all partners and pointed out that at CARE Kenya, they recognized gender equality and economic empowerment which were critical towards the realization of sustainable development and this was a major part of their strategy. She said that she was very passionate about WEE sparked by a personal experience growing up where her mother was economically empowered which expanded her agency, influence and choice. She further added that where we are at the time was unprecedented with the COVID 19 where the economic and social gains made had been reversed. Research shows that difficulties have worsened especially for women. She said that she was happy about what the forum was doing looking at bringing solutions to the table. Emphasis would still be placed on women's governance and political engagement. She ended by highlighting the importance of a holistic look at the COVID situation and work towards gender equality and women empowerment.

Remarks by The Acting Head of Mission at the Canadian High Commission Mr. David Da Silva

He began by recognizing CRAWNtrust leadership and expressed his delight at being in the forum and in the midst of all the women entrepreneurs' and business enablers. He said that he could feel the energy even without being in one place together. He observed that the participants were a powerful force not only for socio economic development of the country but for their communities and their families . He noted that The COVID pandemic had taken us back yet the majority businesses in retail, agribusiness, hospitality are overrepresented by women and these were the hardest hit by the pandemic. This is compounded by other challenges like unpaid care work, GBV etc. He underlined the importance of the WEF because women are key in economic recovery. He advocated for their inclusion and recognition as part of the COVID recovery strategy. He concluded by commending CRAWNTrust and her partners for hosting the second annual event.

Dr. Kennedy Nyakwoyo Director investment from the state Department of Trade.

Dr. Nyakwoyo said that he was representing the PS Ministry of Trade. He then walked the participants through international , regional and the National policy and regulatory framework geared towards WEE. He however decried the slow pace in the implementation process of some of the policies which has resulted in high poverty rates for women and low representation of women in governance positions. He reiterated the governments commitment for women inclusion in socio economic development of women through access to finance through the AAF programme. Moreover, the government was keen on capacity building for women. He the declared the forum officially opened.

Panel Discussion post COVID country economic outlook.

The panel discussion was moderated by Maureen Odera. The session started with an introduction of the panelists notably James ,Kelvin and Kwame . In the opening remarks the panelists each panelist was asked to introduce himself and highlight what they do and what they expected to at the end of the day. The Panelists were ;

James Muraguru is the Chief Executive Officer, Institute Public Finance. He was keen to share the insights about the economy and learn from the peers their perspective on post covid recovery affects women economic empowerment.

Kwame Owino is the Chief Executive Officer ,Institute of Economic Affairs. He underscored the need to explore and emphasize the importance of women economic empowerment to Kenya's growth and distribution and part of the transcending challenges that come with Covid and to look at what extend Government is going to meet women to ensure women empowerment is strengthened but also see that women have the momentum to sustain growth.

Kelvin Bwire of Tisa Okoa Uchumi said he was keen to participate in the economic discourse on the economic outlook post Covid viz a vi how that affects women and also learn from the participants and panelists and draw synergies to ensure that there is sustainable impact towards women empowerment and inclusion.

The panel looked at the state of the Kenyan Economy since The President had talked about women issues during his presidency, but how realistic was his interpretation of his economic interpretation, and where women fit because when there is an economic downturn ,women are the ones who struggle because women run the micro and the small businesses, whether the activities, programs and funds functional for women, what the Country's forecast growth post Covid 2022 and whether it is likely to be achieved

It was reported that the Government of Kenya, The National Treasury and Central Bank of Kenya are reporting that the momentum is behind because the last two years have been bad , 2020 for obvious reasons was because of Covid and 2021 people had learnt how to manage and avoid infections, the vaccinations ongoing and the opening of the economy towards end of the year . This year 2022 growth is expected to reach 5%-6% of GDP per year. The outlook looks rosy but it dependent on a number of significant risks; many Kenyans depend on farming activity and the rains between September last year to this year have not been good and this has a bearing on inflation and the prices of food and on the global space the pressure of the increase of fuel and conflict in Russia. What was clear was that the outlook was better this year regardless of the election outcome.

Since it was an election year realistically what had been witnessed is real GDP Growth decreased from 4.6% in 2012 to 3.8% . Everyone including businesses are cautiously optimistic about numbers .The Government has to give high level assurance that the election will not disrupt normal way of doing things. Generally, there was cautious optimism as depicted by increase in private sector credit and increased collection of revenues by Kenya Revenue Authority signaling the resumption of trade including global trade.

It was noted that over the last few years there is general optimism. The implication to growth and how women organize themselves economically? Where they fit in?

Fiscal Consolidation implies there was less money supply because a lot of cuts have to happen and consequently, low consumption and investment. The panel noted that there was opportunity among the women organizations to organize themselves to enjoy Government subsidies, affirmative actions would also need to be monitored closely. The panelists felt there was need to look at the regulations for programs that assist women including credit. Fiscal Consolidation may also imply Government will focus on its core business and other business may be left to specific groups. In addition, Fiscal Consolidation may also mean Government is limiting borrowing.

On the other hand, there were negative consequences which could come with Fiscal Consolidation and these include delayed payment for procured goods and services and political patronage to access business and payments thus further disadvantaging women. The panel looked at women's access to credit from mainstream banks which is a major challenge to women in business. They looked at the Credit Guarantee Scheme aimed at assisting women, people with disabilities and youth the uptake was noted was still low due to lack of collateral and awareness. They weighed in on how Government could facilitate women run enterprises by giving them business and by doing so assist women businesses to formally set up and be able to easily assess credit.

In conclusion, the discussants generally agreed that to further increase women economic empowerment post Covid Government may need to provide incentives specific stimulus packages in the areas of agriculture, health and basic education.

Her Story

The panel discussion was followed Elizabeth Mbogo sharing her entrepreneurial journey which started with a health condition she had. A herbal remedy was prescribed by her family and friends and this acted as a springboard for her thriving business named Botanic Treasures.

Panel discussion: Women's political participation and economic development

The Moderator was Samson Arao, the Head of Programs Action Aid. The Panelists were Caroline Gaitu of Mzalendo, Prof Grace Wamue, Advocacy Lead Kenyatta University WEE HUB and Ann Nderitu, the Registrar of Political Parties.

The panelists underscored the linkages between politics and economic empowerment. It was noted that one of key barriers to effective women participation is the high cost involved in running for elective seats. Majority of the women do not have access to resources like land, capital or collateral. Consequently, low numbers in decision making tables imply women responsive interventions or policies may not be given due attention. The discussants also observed the need to bring awareness to young women graduating from colleges noting that politics have consequences on their economic empowerment.

The Registrar of Political Parties , Ann Nderitu pointed out the need for women to join political parties as one way of mobilizing resources and enhancing their chances to getting into elective seats.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Panel discussion: Financing for women in the post COVID era.

The moderator was Dr. Musumba while the panelists were: Mr. Ronald Inyangala (The National Treasury) Beatrice Pamela(Ministry of Trade), Dr. Nkatha Kabira (UON School of law) and Njeri Karuru(WEEHub)

The panel discussed the CGS which is a project under the Vision 2030 which came into fruition in December 2020. An agreement was signed in seven Banks. The scheme seeks to derisk the MSMEs for them to access finances to facilitate the financial inclusion of women.

This is done through giving of loans and in case of a default the government pays part of the loan. The scheme targets at least 30% beneficiaries who are women. The panel covered the eligibility criteria. The panel also sought to answer the question why women are not involved in trade. They looked at financing of women businesses at the regional level. It was believed that things had changed but there were still a number of barriers to women participating in trade which has been addressed by the national trade policy.

The panel discussion looked at some research findings from the Kazi Mtaani Program and the AAF and the recommendations. They did a comparison of the findings of the two studies.

The day ended with a panel discussion women entrepreneurs breaking through and a prayer by Shiru.

DAY TWO

Morning Session

The day began with the playing of the Pathfinders' video. The video highlight the various ways through which women self-mobilized in the constitution making process by forming women caucuse , women's organizations among others. The video focused on Dr. Nancy Baraza, Dr. Aida Odinga and Vikand Sikand who mobilized women towards a common course in the constitution making process. The Video outlines the successes and challenges of women self-mobilization and the fruits thereof. This was then followed by a prayer by Shiru Waweru and the National and the EAC Anthems.

Power Talk by Lucy Kangethe – Bouncing back, on resilience in a post COVID Environment. Lucy Kangethe

She highlighted the importance of mental health at this particular time because the COVID pandemic took a toll on the mental well-being of many people. Resilience makes us stand after having gone everything that we have gone through. She lay emphasis on the need to build on the protective factors and survive through adversity.

Panel discussion one: Business mentorship and why it is important

The moderator was Shiru Waweru while the panelists were Frida Owindi, Agnes Mutua and Truphosa Hapisu. The discussion covered the importance of business mentorship for women in a male dominated environment. They looked at the availability of mentors , the pitfalls of

mentorship, the role of technology on women mentorship and noted that mentorship is not a competition but a collaboration.

Another panel discussion was titled *Trade Linkages: Market intelligence; Making EAC and AFCTA work for women*. The moderator was Beatrice Pamela while the panelists were, Joy Kyula, Lydia Gachoya and Florence Alice. They looked at how best to place women to ensure they benefit from regional trade. The third panel discussion was titled social effects of COVID 19 on women and women owned enterprises. This was followed by a session on 'Herstory' where Angela Ngethe shared her entrepreneurial journey.

Interlude

The third episode of the Pathfinders' video was played during the lunch break. The video was titled role of women organizations and individual commitment towards the process of constitution making. It featured Hon. Martha Karua, Phoebe Asiyo, Nancy Baraza, Eddah Gachukia, Prof. Wanjiku Kabira Kamla Sikand, Prof Julia Ojiambo, Alice Yano. It outlined women's resilience in the journey for constitution making which they did by coming together to negotiate for a place in the constitution.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Panel Discussion: Technology and Innovation: Bridging the gender gap in technology for business growth.

The moderator was Laurah Chite while the panelists were Nyevu Karisa, Yvonne Njeri, Evelyn Kamau, Katherine Maina. The discussion covered the agility of women to embrace technology, the available opportunities, the challenges and innovating gender responsive approach to the process and promoting innovation created by women for women.

The Launch of the National Alliance Building for WEE Platform

The launch was moderated by Elizabeth Auma who said that they were honoured to be part of the women entrepreneurs. She also noted that the WEE required concerted efforts and structured institutional response. She said that the WEE Hub fills this space in their research work. She noted that the WEEHub had organized a platform for women and they were calling on women to come together to share their knowledge, experiences and to learn from one another. She said that the alliance building for women will ensure that what government was doing was harnessed for WEE. She then requested that a clip be shared on the platform.

The video gave a brief overview of the NABWEE Platform, the mission vision and purpose for the network. It featured collaborating partners' passionate views on women's self-mobilization and alliance building. It also set the NABWEE Platform in the context of the wider WEEHub research mandate.

After the video show, Elizabeth invited Prof. Kabira to give her remarks.

Remarks by Prof. Kabira

She said that the day was important because it marked the start of a journey towards WEE policies which would change the lives of women. She said they had done this before. She introduced Prof. Hutchinson whom she said had worked together in the constitution making process and the only

thing that made a difference was bringing women together to speak in one voice and to speak with one voice in the constitution making process and that was the reason for the gains in the constitution. She said they were moving together in a journey of resilience that could do wonders in the development of the country. She emphasized the importance of women speaking for themselves otherwise they would be left behind. She gave an elaborate profile of Prof. Hutchinson she then invited her to make her remarks and launch the platform.

Launch of the NABWEE Platform- Prof. Hutchinson the DVC (Innovation and Enterprise Development)

She started by acknowledging the long friendship with Prof. Kabira and how they had walked together. She expressed her great delight at being invited to launch the platform. She said this is a milestone. She noted that women are underrepresented in the economic arena. She pointed that the University embodied the aspirations of men, women and the youth and more so the African woman are brought to the table. She said that there had been many firsts for the AWRSC and as a university they could not do it alone and when they look at the partnerships, they were very proud. She said that through the AWSRC, the University was looking at the strengths of women one of them being women self-mobilizing. She passionately expressed that there were many opportunities granted by the government but they were not fully utilized. She underlined the importance of the right policy and institutional frameworks as an enabler for WEE. She thanked all the stakeholders whom she said they could work together to achieve holistic societal development. She conveyed the greetings of the VC who said the Hub had the greatest support from the high office. She acknowledged Prof. Kabira's and Elizabeth for the high level of leadership and scholarship and she believed there would drive the Platform to higher levels. She then declared the National Alliance Building for WEE officially launched.

Closing

Shiru Waweru thanked all the participants and the partners and ended with a prayer.

