



UON WEE HUB NEWSLETTER



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EDITOR'S NOTE



In this newsletter we are happy to share with you updates on the activities of the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub of the University of Nairobi.

We will highlight our experiences, the impact of our programs and the teams we have had the pleasure to work with.

The Hub has considerably grown in size and capacity since the beginning of this year. In this issue we have introduced a new column to share with you some new concepts and novel approaches to our research. In the section on the concept of African Feminist Epistemology (AFE) we delve into the details of demystifying AFE from the perspective of a "user" documenting the experiences of women.

In our new section on Knowledge Management, we shall share with you our inspirations, experiences, and our research findings on what works in the field of Knowledge Management.

In yet another section we shall elaborate on our approach to policy development and how we utilize our research to provide technical guidance in the development of legislation to impact women economic empowerment (WEE) programs. Moreover, our commitment to supporting women leaders is espoused in how we recognize and celebrate women trailblazers.

Having launched a fresh Strategy Plan for the period 2024-2025, the African Women Studies Centre where the WEE Hub Program is domiciled is geared to scale new heights, among many other insightful stories.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue and we look forward to your feedback!

Emily Owiti,
Editor

Taking stock of the WEE Hub Program



As we embark on the 5th year of implementing the WEE Hub Program, it's an opportune time to take stock of our progress and accomplishments. This milestone offers a chance to celebrate the Program's impact and success, as well as to eagerly look ahead to the possibilities and opportunities that lie before us.

In this issue I am glad to share some of the important milestones the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub Program, funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has reached during the four years since its implementation.

Incubating small business women entrepreneurs

Over the past three years, in partnership with Technoserve, we have incubated 320 women on entrepreneurship, using an incubation model that covers capacity building, access to credit, market linkages, access to information and technology, mentorship, and networking.

To date over 250 women have successfully completed the three-year incubation project and graduated on 23rd August 2024. We sincerely thank Technoserve whom we partnered with from the implementation of this project to its successful completion.



WBI graduates celebrate with the UoN WEE Hub, TechnoServe and partners during the graduation ceremony at UoN Kenya Science Campus in August 2024.

Our research findings indicate that a third of the businesses of the participants in the project increased their area of operation by 29.5%; business registration rose from 53.1 % to 67.1%; while Micro-sized businesses experienced a 33.9% increase in monthly sales. There is also an increase in ownership of capital investment. We

will soon share the final report on the successes of the Women's Business Incubation project on our website which we believe should be replicated elsewhere.

In addition to individual women entrepreneurs, there is a similar incubation for women's collectives

MESSAGE FROM THE UON WEE HUB LEADER

drawn from nine counties (Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Kajiado, Kilifi, Kwale, Kisumu, Busia, Kitui, and Turkana) aiming to establish twelve cottage industries with a specific focus on value addition. We hope to share more news about this initiative sometime in 2025.

Child-care centre in Busia County

The child-care centre project in Busia County is an exciting story that started three years ago and has given remarkable results <https://t.co/12k0eeMiCK> Providing child care services to cross border women traders has made a lot of difference to their businesses. Freeing women from the burden of child care has led to an increased participation of women at their workplace and an increase in average sales per month from KES 47,351.35 to KES 69,243.24. Moreover, 32% of the cross-border women traders recorded sales of over KES 50,000 per month during the monitoring survey period, as compared to about 22% with the same size of sales during the baseline period while 64% reported increase in profits of an average of KES 9,861 to KES 19,444.

These results, with more details, will be shared in a Monitoring Report that will be uploaded on our website and the repository in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Research and Policy Advocacy

The research on the *Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) Program*, in collaboration with the National Treasury and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA), has been successfully concluded. The Technical Report shaping the implementation of AGPO has been finalized and is awaiting publication and launch for public discussion. In addition, the (PPRA) in collaboration with the WEE Hub, has constituted a committee to work on the creation of a monitoring and evaluation body of the Program and enhance the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This Program remains one of the great achievements of the WEE Hub and a continued advocacy for the full implementation of AGPO will remain a priority.

The Technical Report will also be uploaded on the WEE Hub website.

Our research and policy advocacy have led to the development of several policies at various levels. In collaboration with the State Department of Social Protection we developed the *Social Protection Bill* and the *Social Protection Policy*. A *National Policy for Women's Economic Empowerment*; a *National Policy on Women's Care Work* and the *Busia County Gender Policy on SME Women Entrepreneurs* are now at an advanced stage of development as a result of our collaboration with the State Department of Gender and Affirmative Action.

Furthermore, we have given recommendations on various Bills, both at the national and county levels, most of which have been adopted. These Bills include: *the Finance Bill, 2022*; *the Nairobi County Finance Bill 2021*; *Busia County Fiscal Strategy Paper 2022/23*; *Budget Policy Statement 2022* (forwarded by the Budget Appropriation Committee to the National Treasury); among others.



Our research findings indicate that a third of the businesses of the participants in the project increased their area of operation by **29.5%**; business registration rose from 53.1 % to 67.1%; while Micro-sized businesses experienced a 33.9% increase in monthly sales.



The WBI graduate entrepreneurs light success candles signifying continuity of their enterprises.



R-L Alice Waweru TechnoServe Deputy Country Director, Catherine Ichoya, WEE Hub Leader Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, DVC RIE Prof. Stephen Mulaa and Prof. Jack Odhiambo Dean Faculty of Arts Cut the celebratory cake during the WBI graduation ceremony.



A graduand receives her completion certificate from Prof. Mulaa UoN DVC Research , Innovations and Enterprise (RIE).

Networking

The Wee Hub has successfully collaborated with the State Department of Gender and Affirmative Action and UN Women on the development of the *Credit Guarantee Scheme Bill* and the Credit Guarantee Scheme Regulations which are now at an advanced stage of development.

We continue to strengthen collaborations with Government Ministries, such as the Ministries for Gender and Affirmative Action; Labor, Urban Development and Social Protection; the East African Community, and the National Treasury. Other Government entities include the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, the Kenya Industrial and Research Development Institute, the Kenya Industrial Estates, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, and the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), among others. In addition, given the multidisciplinary nature of the AWSC, we have worked with some of the UoN departments including Environmental and Biosystems Engineering. Other collaborations include Civil Society Organizations, women's organizations, County Governments, and Community Based Organizations, among others. We intend to build and expand these networks and collaborations.

The WEE Hub County network is growing by leaps and bounds. Strong links have been established with 15 counties with active network leaders such as Edna Chelangat Lenku and Beatrice Mampei

(Kajiado), the Hon Rose Wanjiru (Kirinyaga), Julia Chege and Jane Kamwaga (Murang'a), Ruth Mumbi and Ruth Okindi (Kiambu) Sharon Ngaira (Busia), Betty Muya and Elizabeth Kelitu (Machakos) who continue to surprise us by their commitment to public participation in their counties. Other dedicated network leaders who zealously monitor effective public participation in policies, especially those affecting gender budgeting include Fatuma Makuru Maro (Tana River), Joyce Muriuki (Meru), Rebecca Otachi, Cllr Muthoni Kihara, and Sophie Dolla (Nairobi), Cecilia Gibore (Siaya County) and Maimuna Konso (Isiolo).

The Future

I am happy to note that the second cohort of our research fellows are growing at an amazing speed. We are proud of the achievements of Brender Akoth, Valarie Udalang', Esther Kyalo, Linet Njeri Thuku, and Diana.

The next five years will be critical for the African Women Studies Centre as we continue to focus on Women's Economic Empowerment; Women, Climate Change and Biodiversity; African Women and Leadership; African Women's Health; Bringing African Women's Experiences and Feminist Perspectives into the Academy; and Knowledge Management, Communication and Publications.

The AWSC Management Board



African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) Management Board with the UoN Vice Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama during the Strategy 2024-2029 launch at UoN Towers.

For better management and growth of the different programs, we have established an AWSC Management Board chaired by Prof Margaret Kobia to promote and strengthen the growth and expansion of the work and visibility of the African Women Studies Centre.

As we surge forward, it is important to remember that whatever policy development, program implementation or institutional change we may initiate, they should be based on evidence obtained through scholarship, research, and knowledge creation and that the basis of our knowledge creation is women's lived experiences, realities, and perspectives.

Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira

UoN AWSC-WEE Hub Leader



Knowledge Management as a Tool in Research Data Dissemination



One may wonder why should an organization engage a knowledge manager or even go to the extent of establishing a Knowledge Management and Communications (KMC) docket. This way of thinking may not be out of ignorance but because of lack of adequate information on the significance of such a unit.

However, we can confidently argue that the KMC unit of the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub at the African Women's Studies Centre (AWSC), University of Nairobi is the heartbeat, if not the foundation of the AWSC. It plays a pivotal role in amplifying the impact of research findings, ensuring that the knowledge generated is effectively disseminated, accessed, stored, re-packaged and utilized to inform policy formulation and implementation in practice.

The Knowledge Management and Communications Unit achieves this purpose by:

1. Documentation and Archiving which ensures that all knowledge generated from research findings is systematically documented and archived, thereby creating a repository of knowledge that is easily accessible to researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Please take a trip to our knowledge hyper-stores at: <http://awsc.uonbi.ac.ke/> <https://weehub.uonbi.ac.ke/http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/155053> and https://www.youtube.com/@WEE_Hub for more details.

2. Dissemination of Research Findings is another critical function of the KMC Unit, whereby different platforms are used to circulate research findings, such as, policy briefs, newsletters, media houses such as the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), online platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, academic journals, such as the AWSC Journal *Pathways to African Feminism and Development*, which is in the process of being indexed and is accessible through <https://uonjournals.uonbi.ac.ke/ojs/index.php/aws>.

The contribution of the KMC Unit to the AWSC - Women's Economic Empowerment Hub cannot be underestimated as it has disseminated information on the diverse activities of the AWSC, reaching a wide audience and providing significant visibility. The KMC Unit continues to effectively bridge the gap between research and practice, thereby creating greater awareness and understanding of women's economic issues, influencing policy decisions, and contributing to socio-economic development in Kenya, Africa and globally.

Dr Dorothy Njiraine,
UoN-WEE Hub, Knowledge Management
Coordinator



POMP AND COLOUR AS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS GRADUATE

By Emily Owiti and Maryanne Mbogo

Two hundred and fifty-six (256) women entrepreneurs graduated from a three-year transformative women-focused business incubation program at the Kenya Science Campus (KSC), University of Nairobi on August 24, 2024.

The Women's Economic Empowerment Hub of the University of Nairobi partnered with TechnoServe to implement the women-focused incubation program in 2022. "When the WEE Hub was searching for a partner to implement the program, TechnoServe was identified as the best partner, and three years later the graduation and testimonies of the women are evidence to this" said Prof. Kabira during the graduation event.

The Women's Business Incubation Program was launched in 2022 with the primary aim of addressing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in growing their businesses. Recognizing that women often encounter unique barriers that hinder their economic progress, the WEE Hub identified critical growth indicators and targeted outcomes. With these insights, the curriculum for the Women's Business Incubation Program was developed through a collaborative effort between the WEE Hub and TechnoServe. The program was based on a specially designed incubation model which focused on five key areas crucial for business success: linkage to information technology; capacity building; access to finance; access to markets; and mentorship.

To ensure that the program would effectively meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, the WEE Hub began by conducting a comprehensive baseline study in 2022 that documented the status of the women's businesses. This would be used at six-months monitoring intervals to compare and measure the growth of the business and would finally be completed with an end line study.

The program covered a range of essential topics critical for business success, including sales and marketing strategies, legal requirements such as taxation and compliance, financial management,



Women entrepreneurs join in the celebration of the graduates

and business record keeping. The curriculum also explored broader issues surrounding women's economic empowerment, focusing on affirmative action programs and initiatives designed to uplift women in business, and succession planning to ensure sustainable business growth.

Training sessions were delivered virtually by TechnoServe, allowing entrepreneurs to access the content from various locations and apply the lessons to their businesses in real-time. The graduation ceremony marked the culmination of three years of hard work and dedication, and included vibrant testimonials from the graduates, who shared inspiring stories of how the program had transformed their businesses and their lives. Many participants spoke of how the program had not only equipped them with critical business skills but had also instilled in them the confidence that women often lack. This newfound confidence empowered them to market themselves more effectively and seize new opportunities, therefore transforming their approach to business and life.



Witnessing the program come full circle, from its inception to this moment of celebration, was a proud and fulfilling experience.

During the graduation, the leadership of both the WEE Hub and TechnoServe reflected on the program's journey, recalling how it began as a promising idea in 2021 and evolved into a robust initiative that has made a tangible impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs. Witnessing the program come full circle, from its inception to this moment of celebration, was a proud and fulfilling experience.

The ceremony was attended by seventy-five women entrepreneurs from Nairobi and the

The ceremony was attended by seventy-five women entrepreneurs from Nairobi and the surrounding counties physically present, while graduates from other regions across the country joined the event virtually.



Prof. Kabira speaks to the graduands during the women entrepreneurs graduation from the Incubation project at the Kenya Science Campus

surrounding counties physically present, while graduates from other regions across the country joined the event virtually.

“When we started the business, I only sold honey, however, after joining the incubation program I now have a range of nine products,” an elated Brenda Gitau of Honeywell said during the graduation.

The event was presided over by the University of Nairobi’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research, Innovation, and Enterprise Prof. Francis Mulaa, hosted by Prof. Nelson Amugune, Associate Dean in charge of the Kenya Science Campus who was represented by Prof. Genevieve Wanjala and Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Director of the African Women Studies Centre and Leader of the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub. The graduation was co-hosted by TechnoServe, led by the Deputy Country Director and East African Entrepreneurship Director Alice Waweru. Other partners represented at the event were Medium and Small Enterprises (MSEA), SBM, and Equity Bank.

Prof. Mulaa reiterated the commitment of the University of Nairobi to supporting entrepreneurship by embedding the course as a core unit in all the university’s courses. “The University recently passed a resolution to have

entrepreneurship as a common course for all students of the UoN,” Prof. Mulaa said. Through this program, the entrepreneurs will gain practical experience from industry partners.

Furthermore, the African Women Studies Centre has been deeply involved in evidence-based research for policy development evidenced by the technical leadership and support provided to different government departments to develop several policy documents such as the National Policy on Women’s Economic Empowerment (NPWEE); the Social Protection Bill; the EAC Gender Score Card; the National Food Security Policy as well as some other actionable programs through the transformative knowledge from research.

The graduation ceremony was not only a celebration of the women’s achievements but also a powerful reminder of the profound impact that targeted support and training can have on women’s economic empowerment. These women stood as living testaments to the program’s success. This graduation marks the end of the incubation program, yet it is the beginning of growth for the women entrepreneurs,” Alice Waweru remarked.

Demystifying African Feminist Epistemology

By Beatrice Nzovu-Ouma



Beatrice Nzovu-Ouma presents on African Feminist Epistemology (AFE) during a past Writers' Workshop.



“ Before undertaking my doctoral research in 2020-2021 in Majengo, Nairobi, I had presumed to know what the mothers of sons who joined al Shabaab would say.

African feminist epistemology (AFE) is a holistic and humanising approach to capture the inherent knowledge of African women. It aims to create an inclusive social change by dismantling male-centric ways of knowing. AFE promotes the African woman's voice, agency, and power by enabling her to speak for herself. It aims to diversify knowledge sources by including the African woman as a valid source of knowledge. This is important as knowledge on and about African women has largely been told by men, based on their patriarchal perceptions, power and positionality as the default 'knowers.'

Before undertaking my doctoral research in 2020-2021 in Majengo, Nairobi, I had presumed to know what the mothers of sons who joined al Shabaab would say. That, of course, they had no idea their sons had wanted to join a terrorist organization, otherwise they would never have allowed it. This was, however, my story, informed by my own biases as a mother, not their narrative. I had ignored the 'knower' and overlooked the fact that AFE is informed by placing the African woman at the core, the knower's experiences as an individual.

After learning about the AFE, I embraced it and used it as the research methodology for my study in Majengo, Nairobi. Using narratology as my method I talked with each one of the mothers not only about how their sons joined al Shabaab, which the larger society defines them by, but about their story from their childhood to date. In addition to their own experiences, the mothers shared knowledge about history and women in their past who



Esther Kyalo, an entrepreneur under the incubation program records her daily sales at her shop in Kawangware

had contributed to their journeys. Focusing on the African mothers lived experiences enabled me to have a deeper understanding of the depth and breadth of their knowledge through exploration of their background, context, culture, education, politics, relationships, and religion. Through systematization, I built on the diverse experiences of these individual African mothers to inform a coalesced contribution to African feminist epistemology. This process revealed that the African mothers' knowledge spans the political (patriarchy, manipulation, repressive cultures, systemic barriers), socio-economic (health, money matters, religion, social ills) and peace and security (crime, terrorism) spheres. What makes the AFE transformative is the fact that it is transdisciplinary.

Despite this, African feminist epistemological approaches have received criticism from some scholars who argue that it is subjective, not objective because it is informed by an individual's knowledge and not the collective. Others argue that it is not scientific because it considers individual experiences, intuition, and emotion. Some critiques say that AFE is just qualitative research by another name. Others state that AFE is a way of challenging the knowledge status quo.

Because it challenges male-dominance in knowledge, AFE is in some spaces considered a form of advocacy. This is rightly so, because it aims to raise consciousness amongst African societies on African women as knowledge sources not only on issues affecting women but, on all matters, affecting African communities. Achieving this is often met with doubt, and suspicion that African women want to take space from men in the knowledge sphere, yet African women should have always been part of African knowledge production.

African feminist epistemology is not delinked from traditional epistemologies, rather borrowing from certain schools of thought, including Marxism, socialism, and anthropological approaches, it identifies the gaps and makes the needed improvements.

Excluding the voices of African women in knowledge production means that only half the story is told, therefore, the knowledge is incomplete. AFE is thus about making deliberate efforts to capture the African woman's knowledge and foregrounding it in academic, literary, and practitioner discourses, making it the norm, not the occasional exception

Gender-Transformative Social Protection

By Emily Owiti



Research statistics show that only 47 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit

47%

effectively covered

WEE Hub leader Prof. Wanjiku Kabira makes a point during public participation on the Social Protection Bill 2024

Have you envisioned a country where all persons have equitable access to social protection throughout their lives, against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being?

Research statistics show that only 47 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, revealing that about 4.1 billion people have no income security from a National Social Protection system. The International Labour Organization (ILO) 2020-2022 Report shows that Europe and Central Asia have the highest coverage at 84% of the population accessing at least one benefit, as compared to Africa with only 17.4% coverage.

Whereas Kenya has made progress in providing coverage and access to social protection through its Social Assistance and other flagship programs, there is need to anchor these programs in law for effective implementation and impact. In the pursuit of an inclusive and transformative Social Protection for Kenyans, the State Department for Social Protection enlisted the support of the University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment Hub to draft a Social Protection Law in alignment with the Social Security Policy, 2023 which aims to protect every individual from adverse

shocks, and secure households' and individual's health and economically.

Guiding Principles

The joint team envisioned a law that is aligned with the guiding principles of the Social Security Policy which includes adequacy, affordability, sustainability, flexibility, and responsiveness. Furthermore, it should be evidence-based and should incorporate a common standard for state and non-state actors to support and implement programs with clear financial management and reporting standards.

The proposed law is anchored on the four pillars drawn from the Social Security Policy, 2023: (i) income security; (ii) social health protection: access to essential healthcare, including maternity and emergency care; (iii) shock-responsive social protection: complementary programs that promote human capital development programs, social and economic incomes.

This exercise was preceded by the development of a Policy Framework by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection where the State Department for Social Protection is domiciled. The arduous task of drafting the legislation necessitated a thorough understanding of the trajectory of the history of Social



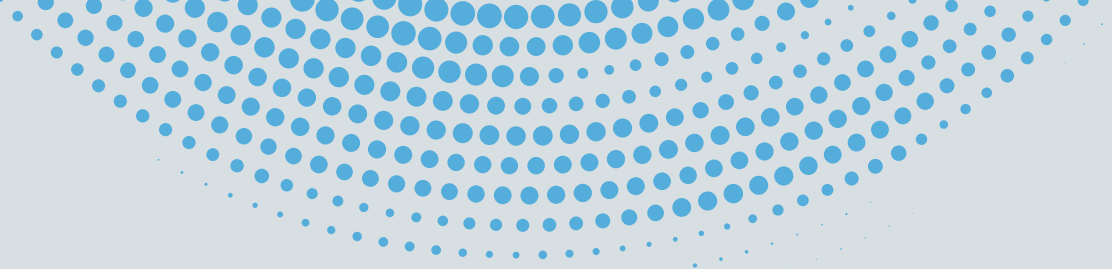
A participant contributes during public participation on Social Protection Bill 2024 at the Hill Park Hotel Nairobi in February 2024

Protection in Kenya, the spirit of the policy framework and the need to address gaps illuminated by research.

Research Process

The multidisciplinary team of researchers from the UoN WEE Hub analysed policy documents and laws, borrowing from countries, arguably with the most inclusive and related Social Protection laws, among them South Africa. The team Lead, Dr. Nkatha Kabira, a senior researcher at the UoN WEE Hub argued that while some laws may seem to be the most appropriate to replicate "it is important to take into account the Kenyan realities."

As part of its research work, the Hub has evaluated the effect of social protection on decent domestic work through the study "Evaluating the Impact of the Government of Kenya's Economic Stimulus Packages: A Case Study of Kazi Mtaani and Inua Jamii Programs," working closely with the State



Department for Social Protection. This study found, among other issues, that social protection programs, particularly excluded poor women and youth who can hardly afford the contributory schemes and similarly, the Cash Transfer Program, under the Economic Stimulus Package by the government of Kenya, excluded deserving persons.

These study findings and the gap analysis of the social protections laws and policies from a gender perspective, yielded key recommendations on how to develop a social protection law that is responsive to the Kenyan socio-political realities. A comprehensive literature review on best practices showed inadequacy of existing interventions and lack of coordination in the social protection sphere in Kenya. Moreover, most frameworks focus on protecting those in the formal sector rather than those in the informal sector, who need social protection the most. As a result, those in the informal sector, who are predominantly women are excluded. Thus, most women are, precluded from existing social assistance interventions due to the nature of work and the responsibilities they take on in their day-to-day lives.

Legislative Drafting Process

To effectively translate the existing policy into a legislative instrument the team considered the landscape and context within which the process was taking place. In the face of global financial downturn, characterized by constrained incomes and increased poverty levels, questions such as “should this be a money bill? can the country afford a universal social protection program?” were foremost on the minds of the team of drafters and stakeholders. Whereas there’s need to address the gaps identified by research, a tactful balance and financial muscle is critical for the successful implementation of an inclusive social protection law.

The repeal and replace approach to the development of the Bill involved a review of the law to be repealed, the Social Assistance Act

2011, and the Social Security Policy 2023, and then to translate the existing policy framework into a draft Bill. Subsequently, drafting of the Bill, informed by research evidence and existing legal provisions, encompassed a rights-based life cycle approach. “Our needs change at different stages of our lives” Prof. Kabira said during one of the sessions in support of the life-cycle approach. Whereas a life-cycle approach acknowledges the needs of people at dissimilar stages in their life cycle, a rights-based approach incorporates human rights into development of policies to address inequalities and discrimination, as well as to implement socio-economic rights to enhance social protection.

The proposed law considers lifecycle risks and vulnerabilities within the socio-economic context, including poverty rate, levels of inequality, as well as institutional and delivery mechanisms. Enhanced incomes and empowerment are some key outcomes expected from the implementation of the law and are anchored on protection, prevention, and promotional strategies.

Multi-Disciplinary Nature

The process, led by the government team, included diverse resource persons and stakeholders drawn from different sectors comprising legal researchers, social scientists, labour experts, economists, legislative drafters, academia, civil society, and private sector, among others. As a multi-disciplinary research institution, the WEE Hub has played a critical role in shaping the Social Protection Law which is currently under development. This proposed law envisions a gender transformative, shock responsive strategic social protection with an enhanced single registry for coordination/harmonization of interventions.

As at the time of publication, the draft Bill was still under review and inputs by relevant stakeholders, as well as public participation, for an enhanced input to incorporate the views from all and fulfil the legal obligation are still forthcoming.



Members of the Networking and Alliance Building for Women's Economic Empowerment (NABWEE) present a memorandum on during public participation of Social Protection Bill 2024 at the Hill Park Hotel, Nairobi.

National Women Caucus NABWEE Submits Memo on Social Protection

By Emily Owiti

Despite the progress witnessed in recent years in extending social protection coverage globally, many countries still face a challenge in providing social protection as a right to its citizens, especially in the global south. More than four billion people, that is, about 46.9% of the world population still lack social protection. Masked in this global average, are inequalities across and within regions such as Africa with coverage at 17.4%. This broad gap is attributed to underinvestment in social protection in those regions.

The Networking and Alliance Building for Women's Economic Empowerment (NABWEE) is a platform of women entrepreneurs, women's organizations, relevant state departments, and women business leaders working in the WEE sector to support the implementation of policy reforms to improve women's access to economic opportunities across various sectors in Kenya.

NABWEE, an initiative of the UoN WEE Hub has worked closely with the Hub researchers to consolidate the evidence-based research on women's economic empowerment for policy advocacy and development. NABWEE recognizes the need for enhanced social protection in Kenya owing to the gaps that exist in the sector. In Africa for instance, 85.5% of the population is in informal employment according to the ILO 2020 Report. The informal sector is largely constituted by women who are highly vulnerable to poverty with irregular incomes and often excluded from employment related contributory social protection schemes. The report further notes that 25.9% of women, compared to 15.8% of men, were not engaged in employment, education, or training.

This paints a grim picture of how women are disproportionately affected by the low coverage of social protection.

Despite Kenya's investment in social assistance, slow economic growth and financial constraints have diluted the impact on the backdrop of various gaps in the sector such as a lack of a comprehensive framework for social protection. Historically social protection has focused on health insurance, social security, and social assistance. The new Bill, however, proposes to build on the 2023 policy that reorganized social protection in Kenya into four pillars: income security, social health protection, shock responsive social protection and complementary programs. This Bill intends to provide a comprehensive framework for social protection, regulation, and administration of social assistance.

As part of NABWEE's mandate and in response to the Call for Participation and Submission of Memoranda by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs, on the Zero Draft Social Protection Bill, 2024 the members of the National Caucus submitted a memorandum summarizing their recommendations.

The NABWEE National Caucus acknowledges the prospects of investing in social protection for a successful and sustainable market economy across low- and middle-income countries. The Caucus believes that by offering all citizens the guarantee of income security, social protection can effectively tackle poverty and inequality; enhance human capital; help build a strong and productive workforce; encourage risk-taking and investment in businesses; protect against shocks and crises and build social cohesion which would result in a peaceful society.

Most women giving birth in Africa and in Kenya do not have maternity cash benefits. A large number of women in both formal and informal employment are excluded from adequate maternity protection which increases the risks of maternal morbidity



Most women giving birth in Africa and in Kenya

do not have maternity cash benefits.

and mortality, coupled with discriminatory practices against women in the labour market.

Some of the key recommendations NABWEE made after careful review of the Zero Draft Bill include:

- i. Provide gender-disaggregated data on existing and potential beneficiaries and their respective interventions and make the information available in accessible formats;
- ii. The data to be compiled in a Register which should be the sole source providing information on the number of beneficiaries and benefits accrued. The information collected should be for specific necessary use;
- iii. The register should allow for accountability and real time scrutiny;
- iv. Ensure seamless transfer of payments to beneficiaries that allows flexibility to household needs.
- v. Creating diverse levels including non-state actors' data could undermine the utility of the register as a sole source of information on benefits.



KMC Coordinator Dr. Dorothy Njiraine comments on the NABWEE Memorandum on the Social Protection Bill 2024 at the Hill Park Hotel.



African Women Studies Centre leaders and scholars during a strategy workshop at Lake Naivasha Lodge.

Reflections on the AWSC Journey

By Emily Owiti,

Over the last twelve years the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC), has invested in building women's leadership capacity and ability to influence policies and programs. This year, the leadership felt that it was time to review the strategy to align with the changing times and convened a strategic planning workshop in Naivasha for this purpose.

Right from its beginnings the Centre realised that the experiences of African women in almost all spheres of life had not been a source of public and legitimate knowledge and had, thus, remained invisible. It is this reality that led Prof Wanjiku Kabira, then a Professor at the Department of Literature, to write and present a concept paper at a departmental meeting in 2008. In her paper she noted that African women's experiences had not been a source of legitimate knowledge "Women have not spoken for themselves, neither have their experiences been utilized to shape, order and name the world we live in" Prof. Kabira said.

After extensive consultations and deliberations, the proposal to set up the Centre was adopted in 2009. Subsequently in 2011 the Centre was established in the University of Nairobi Statutes as a Centre of excellence committed to promoting African Women's experiences and worldview in research, scholarship, policy, and institutional development. Since its inception, the Centre has witnessed both a tremendous success and a number of challenges in equal measure.



Right from its beginnings the Centre realised that the experiences of African women in almost all spheres of life had not been a source of public and legitimate knowledge and had, thus, remained invisible.

During the strategy development workshop held at the Lake Naivasha Resort, one notable achievement acknowledged was the establishment of the Master's and PhD programs in Women and leadership and entrepreneurship and graduating students from Africa and beyond. Some of these students have risen to become leaders in the Kenyan government, the private sector, and the world. The Centre has since expanded its programs to include establishment of research, policy advocacy and outreach units. The Centre was on an upward trend until the recent restructuring of the University which split the Centre by retaining the research unit and advocacy programs but moving the academic programs to the Department of Sociology, Social Sciences and African Women Studies. It is under the Research unit that the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub is domiciled. While the restructuring weakened the link between research and academic programs, the WEE Hub remained a flagship program implementing over fourteen WEE projects with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The three-day workshop was, therefore, significant as it involved a reflection and review of the AWSC's journey by its leadership, founder members, staff, and students. The participants comprised Professors Wanjiku Kabira, Maria Nzomo, Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga, the former Cabinet Secretary Gender Prof. Margaret Kobia, Anna P. Mwangi, Dr. AKinyi, Dr Njiraine, Dr. Mbithi, Wambui Kanyi, among others. During the workshop participants freely but strategically reflected on and shared their knowledge and experiences, which were documented to be incorporated into the Centre's five-year strategy.

The new strategy will focus on strengthening the academy by mainstreaming feminist epistemology, advancing women's economic empowerment for sustainability, climate action, advocacy and knowledge generation and dissemination, among other key programs. "The AWSC should be a resource Centre for feminist knowledge and approaches to research and knowledge generation and dissemination," Prof. Kiriti said during a session. The workshop re-energized the AWSC team and all I can say is that "if it can be thought, it can be done." Look out for a revived and more impactful Centre!



"The AWSC should be a
resource Centre
for feminist knowledge and
approaches to research and knowledge
generation and dissemination,"

African Women Studies Centre's New Strategic Direction

By Emily Owiti



The AWSC is a multi-disciplinary research centre that promotes intellectual inquiry by and on African women.

African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) Management Board with the UoN Vice Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama during the Strategic Plan 2024-2029 launch at UoN Towers.

women. The AWSC promotes the experiences and worldviews of African women in scholarship, policy formulation, as well as in institutional and community development. Through evidence-based research, the AWSC engages with policymakers, women's, and civil society organizations for the purpose of bringing the perspectives of African women into scholarship and development in Kenya, Africa, and the world.

Over the last ten years, through the Master's degree academic program in Women, Leadership and Governance and extensive research, the AWSC has been investing a lot of effort in building women's leadership capacity and ability to influence policies and programs. In addition to its successful implementation of the academic programs, the AWSC has strengthened its position as a thought leader in WEE research through its women's economic empowerment program. Having experienced growth and challenges posed by the increasingly dynamic environment, the Centre found it fit to adapt to the changing landscape of education and research.

On 24th June 2024, the Strategic Plan 2024-2029 of the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) of the University of Nairobi was officially launched. The AWSC is a multi-disciplinary research centre that promotes intellectual inquiry by and on African



This strategic plan shall advance the vision and mission of the African Women Studies Centre focusing on sustainability.

Process

In response to transformation in the global trends in leadership, scholarship, and governance, particularly with regard to women's participation, the African Women Studies Centre resolved to redefine its strategy for the next five years in line with the national, regional, and global priorities. Max Mckeown, an expert in strategy, leadership and innovation reckons that "All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation." The Centre needed to reflect on its journey spanning over a decade since its inception in order to adapt.

To kick-start the process, the leadership of the Centre, students, scholars, staff, and friends retreated to a three-day workshop in Naivasha to undertake a reflection of the journey; the successes, the challenges, and opportunities. The reflection brought more clarity of thought into the direction the Centre needed to take towards the attainment of its vision. The workshop yielded clear guidance on the Centre's research focus areas and a clear approach to support the academic unit. Thereafter, a technical team embarked on the drafting of the AWSC's Strategy 2024-2029.

Strategy Launch

After rigorous review of the Strategic Plan, it was time to launch it to the wider university fraternity. Subsequently, on 24th June 2024, the WEE Hub team, led by Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, gathered at the University of Nairobi Campus to officially launch the AWSC Strategic Plan 2024-2029. The Plan, which outlines the key programs and initiatives for the next five years, was presented to the UoN Vice Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama.

The VC commended the Centre's leadership for the noteworthy progress made in the implementation of its plans and for the new strategic direction. This Strategic Plan shall advance the vision and mission of the African Women Studies Centre focusing on sustainability. The Vice Chancellor expressed his support for the plan and urged the WEE Hub team to diligently pursue the outlined programs.

Strategic Focus Areas

The Centre's Strategic Focus areas for the next five years 'will be:

- Research in areas related to African women and the growth of knowledge in African Feminist Epistemology.
- Evidence-based policy advocacy for policy transformation networking and alliance building to bring African women to the centre of national and regional socio-economic and cultural transformation.
- Scholarship through multi-disciplinary PhD and master's programs in African women studies.

The Centre also appointed a new Management Board to steer its activities for the next three years.

WEE Hub at the International Women's Day 2024

By Emilyy Owiti



Each year the world marks the International Women's Day on March 8th and the year 2024 was no exception. In 1975 the United Nations General Assembly declared 8th of March as a day to commemorate the International Women's Day (IWD) and this day has since been commemorated each year. The day is dedicated to addressing pertinent issues affecting women such as gender equality, reproductive rights, violence and abuse against women, discrimination based on sex, exclusion, women's role in society, among others. The WEE Hub has consistently been involved in planning the national event convened by the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action while also holding its independent events to honour and celebrate women.

Left: A visitor engages WBI entrepreneurs Belinda and Brenda during the international Women's Day Celebrations in Embu.

Right: Visitors sample Yoghurt from Dr. Otieno a WBI entrepreneur at the Embu Stadium

This year, the WEE Hub participated in the national event hosted by the Embu County Government and held at the county stadium in Embu town. As part of its participation, and in a bid to live up to its call to support women's economic empowerment, the Hub facilitated women entrepreneurs involved in the Women-based Business Incubation (WBI) Project of the Hub to showcase and sell their merchandise at the event as part of the market access pillar of the Project. Individual entrepreneurs and collectives drawn from the twelve counties where the Hub implements the WBI Project and groups such as Ntharene, Keega and New Kisumu Small Fish, Patel's, Bada Plus, Lunga Cross-border, Good Neighbours, CAVACS and Honey Bee exhibited a variety of products from the value addition training they have undergone. The products exhibited included cassava and banana crisps, spiced cashew nuts and cashew nut butter, fried silver cyprinid (omena), yoghurt, fruit juices, cassava flour, honey and by-products such as propolis, hand cream, and candles.



"I have interacted with many business women and also sold my honey products"



National Women Leaders join CS Aisha Jumwa at the International Women's Day Celebration in Embu County.

"I have interacted with many business women and also sold my honey products" Brenda, an entrepreneur who exhibited at the event said.

His Excellency President William Ruto graced the event, which was attended by five thousand participants, including women leaders, other national leaders, development partners and members of Embu County.

During the celebration President Ruto announced three critical steps the government had taken in order to empower women economically: eliminating the requirement of a collateral to access Women Enterprise Funds (WEF); reduction of the Fund's interest rate to 6%; and enhancement of the Fund to reach more women. The President also lauded the exemplary performance of women leaders in his Cabinet. "In my Cabinet, women lead in four out

of five priority items in the UDA manifesto and as part of the celebrations, I have appointed 10 women Ambassadors to different parts of the world because I believe in women leadership" President Ruto said.

In their speeches the leaders repeatedly stressed the challenge of unpaid care work. The Embu County Governor H.E Cecilly Mbarire narrated how a typical woman spent her time, which led to the crowd bursting in laughter in agreement. She pointed out that women needed better healthcare, access to clean water and proper infrastructure to promote trade and agriculture and for economic empowerment. "In addition to house chores, women still have to perform reproduction duties, within the same 24 hours" to which the president encouraged men to change their perspectives and support women.



International Women's Day 2024: Celebrating Outstanding Women Leaders

By Emily Owiti,

Women leaders, students and scholars were among the audience that gathered at the University of Nairobi Taifa Hall to honour and celebrate women Trailblazers in leadership. As part of the global celebrations to mark the International Women's Day 2024, the UoN WEE Hub collaborated with the School of Law to fete outstanding women who have broken barriers in leadership. The Hon. Susan Gathungu graced the colourful event, the Auditor General

and Ms Faith Odhiambo, the President of the Law Society of Kenya who was the Chief Guest.

The Hon. Susan Gathungu and Ms Faith Odhiambo, both alumni of the University of Nairobi, were honoured for taking leadership in sectors that were historically male dominated. In her speech Ms. Odhiambo emphasized the need to pave way for a country where women leadership was not an exception. The 51st President and second woman to hold the position since the establishment of the LSK in 1948, was elected after the first female President, Ambassador Raychelle Omamo. "We are proud of this accomplishment by Faith Odhiambo and the faith that LSK bestowed upon women leadership" Prof. Wanjiku Kabira said.

The University of Nairobi Vice Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama who presided over the event, lauded the UoN WEE Hub for honouring the women leaders. "I am proud of the UoN WEE Hub under the leadership of Prof. Wanjiku Kabira for honouring our women leaders. This should be an annual event," the Vice Chancellor said. The VC also emphasized that gender equality is at the core of the university's strategy, noting that women are part of the leadership of the university.

Even though women constitute more than 50% of the total global population, only a paltry number are in top and influential leadership positions, due



Right from its beginnings the Centre realised that the experiences of African women in almost all spheres of life had not been a source of public and legitimate knowledge and had, thus, remained invisible.

to the widening gender gap. The World Economic Forum Report 2023 shows that no country had achieved gender parity and that the progress made in bridging the gender gap was diluted by the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This gloomy state calls for concerted and deliberate efforts towards gender equality. “As Supreme Audit Institutions, we are obligated to make an indelible mark in gender equality,” Hon. Gathungu said. This is yet to be accomplished as indicated by the 2020 Global Supreme Audit Institutions stock take report. The Report revealed that despite having a gender balance in the composition of the staff within public audit institutions, leadership positions remain male-dominated with the majority of women at the bottom ranks. According to this report 61% of audit institutions are headed by men and less than 40% are women-led.

“The Office of the Auditor General is committed to gender equality, and we are intentional about holistically incorporating gender in the work we do,” the Hon Gathungu said. She also encouraged public institutions to work with the Office of the Auditor General for prudent financial management. “The office of the Auditor General is not to be feared, but to be consulted for prudent management of public funds in public institutions,” she added.

The celebration featured a panel session by women leaders Amb. Prof. Maria Nzomo, Prof. Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga, entrepreneur Mercy Mwendu and Dr. Mary Mbithi, Director of Research at the UoN WEE Hub. Young women were encouraged to follow the footsteps of the Hon. Gathungu and Ms Faith Odhiambo.



Prof. Stephen Kiama hands over a plaque to Hon. Nancy Gathungu, Auditor General during the celebration in UoN Nairobi as Dr. Marygoretti Akinyi looks on.



UoN Vice Chancellor Prof. Stephen Kiama (Seated middle) with the AWSC & School of Law faculty members and guests after the ceremony in UoN main campus.



Chief Guest, LSK President Faith Odhiambo receives a plaque of honour from the Auditor General Hon. Nancy Gathungu.

Catalysing Growth: The Journey so Far in the Women's Business Incubation Project

Maryanne Mbogo



Emily Owiti of the UoN WEE Hub interviews Susan, an entrepreneur under the Women's Business Incubation Project.



54.9% of businesses that fold before their fifth year are owned by women

The Women's Business Incubation (WBI) Project, which was launched by the WEE Hub in March 2022, aims to catalyse success and expansion of women-owned businesses; more specifically, to address concerning statistics which indicate that 54.9% of businesses that fold before their fifth year are owned by women (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.)

As its name suggests, the Project works by incubating both individual women's businesses as well as women's group enterprises, focusing on specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. This approach is intended to identify effective strategies and initiatives that can be replicated for broader success.

In this article we examine the progress made in the implementation of the project since its inception, with regard to the women's group enterprises. We proudly display the remarkable advancements of women-owned businesses as a result of the implementation of the WEE Hub Women's Business Incubation Model.



Currently the WEE Hub is working with thirteen collectives based in the counties of Kilifi, Kwale, Kitui, Kajiado, Turkana, Busia, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Murang'a and Kisumu. The Incubation Model is based on five key pillars that are essential for enterprise growth. These include:

- Linkage to Information Technology;
- Capacity Building;
- Access to Finance;
- Mentorship;
- Access to Markets.

Through implementation of the model, the groups have undergone technology transfer training in value addition from KIRDI (Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute), KIE (Kenya Industrial Estates) and UoN EBE (University of Nairobi Environmental and Biosystems Engineering).

In terms of capacity building, most groups have received training through a specially tailored business curriculum. Mentorship goals are being achieved through guidance from *Sweet and Dried Enterprises Ltd*, a registered food processing company with whom the WEE Hub has signed a service level agreement.

To help groups access growth finances, the WEE Hub collaborates with financial institutions such as Equity Bank and Pezeshu, as well as government affirmative funds such as the Hustler Fund and

The Women's Business Incubation Model

NGAAF (National Government Affirmative Action Fund). Additionally, participation in exhibitions has significantly expanded markets and market linkages for the groups.

Achievements so Far Linkage to Information Technology

Concerning the first pillar, Linkage to Information Technology, considerable progress has been made so far. The **Good Neighbours Self-Help Group** from Kitui, which deals in honey production, received training on value addition to their product from KIRDI Nairobi. The same institute also conducted value addition training for representatives of three groups from the Coast. The *Futsetsezane Self-Help Group* from Kilifi County received training in cassava value addition while the *Patanisho Self-Help Group* from Kilifi County, and the *Lunga Cross Border Women Traders* from Kwale County both received training in cashew nut value addition.

KIRDI's Western Region Centre in Kisumu hosted three groups involved in the sale of fish: *The New Small Fish Women Group*, the *Fire Queens Women's Group*, and the *Busia Women Cross Border Traders* who all received training on fish value addition.

Two groups from Kajiado county (*Olitilli Lewangan Dairy Group* and *Maasai Kajiado Women Dairy Cooperative*) which are large scale producers of milk, have received training on value addition of their product from KIE. This has provided them with skills in the making of dairy products such as



Hamida Mutheu, an entrepreneur under the incubation project dealing in second hand clothes speaks to Maryanne Mbogo during an interview at her shop in Jamuhuri Estate.

yoghurt, sour milk, and cheese. Two groups from Meru and Tharaka Nithi counties also received training in banana value addition from KIE.

In November 2022, representatives of the *Kachengor Lobur Women's Group* from Turkana County underwent a week-long training on grain processing, conducted by the WEE Hub in collaboration with the University of Nairobi's Department of Environmental and Biosystems Engineering. Following this training, the group established a posho mill in Turkana County, providing the community with much-needed maize milling services. This is a significant milestone for the women in the community, who previously had to grind maize using the traditional stone method to prepare meals for their families.

Capacity Building and Access to Finance

All groups, except one, have received training from CRAWN Trust on record keeping, governance, and business management. Most groups have received financial training from Equity Bank, leading them to open bank accounts and begin active saving which gives them access to finance for their growth and expansion. Thanks to the support and guidance from the WEE Hub's Incubation Project team, the *Kachengor Lobur Women's Group* in Turkana has received funding from NGAAF on two occasions. They received Ksh500,000 in 2022

and Ksh250,000 in 2023.

Mentorship and Access to Markets

The ongoing mentorship of all the collectives under *Sweet and Dried Enterprises Ltd* will see the groups learn first-hand from the proprietor of a well-established food

processing company.

Where markets are concerned, several groups who have exhibited their products at various WEE Hub exhibition stands such as the UoN Nairobi Innovation Week and the Kenya Food Expo can attest to the benefits of increased or expanded markets through the incubation project.

Additionally, through interaction with the Kisumu County Governor Prof. Anyang Nyong'o during the launch of the value addition training program, the *Kisumu Small Fish Traders Women's Group* has since secured official allocation of space at the Kisumu market. This will greatly improve their ability to access local markets.

Conclusion

The Women's Business Incubation (WBI) Project initiated by the WEE Hub has made substantial progress since its launch in 2022, effectively addressing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs through its five key pillars: *Linkage to Information Technology*, Capacity Building, Access to Finance, Mentorship, and Access to Markets.

The targeted training programs of the Project, strategic financial collaborations, and mentorship initiatives have empowered women's groups and led to remarkable achievements. These successes continue to confirm the potential of the Incubation Model to drive sustainable growth of women-owned businesses and foster economic empowerment among women in Kenya.



Busia Daycare Centre: Safe Haven for Children

By Emily Owiti

Care givers at the Busia Daycare Center play with the children

Micro and small sized enterprises are critical in stimulating economic growth in Kenya and Africa. Klopp and Wiseman 2021 found that despite the significant role small-scale cross-border trade plays as key livelihood provider at the border points, challenges of insecurity, harassment and violence hamper the efforts, particularly of women traders to thrive.

Research conducted in 2022 by the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub of the University of Nairobi revealed that 49% of the women cross border traders need childcare services, yet they cannot access quality care due to associated high costs. Parents are concerned about the safety and well-being of their children, especially when they leave them to the care of others, hence the quality of a formal childcare facility is a defining factor when parents make decisions whether to use formal childcare services or not.

The Childcare facility established by the UoN WEE Hub, in partnership with the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD),

and with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is one such haven for children. The Centre is located in Busia County and was part of the Hub's research study under the broad thematic area Care Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment. The study aimed to Assess what Works in Childcare Provision, Policies, Regulations, Processes and Programs in Promoting Women's Participation in Entrepreneurship for Upscaling and Replication: A Case of the Busia Childcare Centre.

The preliminary findings of the study show that 70.9% of the cross-border traders in the Busia and Namanga border counties deal mostly in food items and locally manufactured goods. These findings confirm UNCTAD's Report which indicates that more than one third of recorded Kenyan exports mainly comprise food items and manufactured goods which end up in African countries. The Report further shows that cross-border trade is dominated by informal trade with women constituting 70-80 % of the traders engaged mainly in informal micro and small business. Trade across the Kenya-Ugandan border is on agricultural products and represents 80% of official trade flows, followed by manufactured goods.

Outcomes and Impact

A monitoring visit to the Childcare Centre in May 2024 revealed tremendous progress. The childcare facility has attracted employed women who were originally not the target and men who bring their children as they go to work. They said that they find it more convenient and prefer to take their children to the Centre rather than leave them under the care of neighbours or relatives.

Testimonials

Here are some of the comments recorded from some parents who use the services of the daycare facility.

Millicent Okumu - Fruit Vendor, Busia



Millicent is a cross-border trader who buys fruits from Uganda and sells them in Kenya. She started bringing her child to the Centre in 2020. "When I brought my child to the Centre, she couldn't speak, however, she can now speak fluently and has developed hygiene" Millicent says her daughter has learnt basic life skills for toddlers such as feeding self, toilet use. Before bringing her child to the facility she took the child with her to her work place, and this was not only challenging but costly "akiona mayai ama vyakula vyovyote vikitemezwa anataka" (the child would ask me to buy eggs, and all sorts of foodstuffs sold by hawkers on the streets by vendors). In addition to experiencing growth in sales, she can now go to the market more often "I used to go to the market only two days a week but now I can go to the market for four days a week" Millicent said.

Dorine Achieng-Clearing Agent, Busia

As a young working mother, Dorine Achieng carried her five-month-old baby to her workplace "My work is very involving. I have to run to the yard to find cargo and shuttle between the yard and customs offices to clear the cargo." She did all this with her baby on her back until Agnetta, the Childcare Centre Administrator urged her to take the child to the Centre. When we asked her about the nutrition of the child, Dorine quipped, "this child is healthy, he has been fed well by the Centre for the last three years and they give him good food." This has freed her to grow her business, and she has created employment for ten young people in Busia. "Through the Childcare I have set up a food Centre and a barber shop where I have employed 10 workers; four in the Centre and six in the barber shop and I have more time to manage my businesses," she said.



John Mugo-Clearing Agent, Busia

John brought his child to the Centre to free up his time and to enable his wife to deal with her water supplies business. John's wife often requested him to help look after their child when she attended business errands. "I made a decision to bring my child to this Centre the very first time I visited because I was impressed by the cleanliness and the conducive environment" Since then he has brought the child to the Centre religiously for three years. "I am so impressed, if I get another child, I will bring them here because now I have more time to travel for work and even support my wife in her business."



Michael Odera-fruits hawker, Busia

Michael takes his three children aged five, three and one to the Childcare Centre before embarking on his day-to-day work of hawking fruits in the town centre. Michael's wife is away hence he has to prepare and bring the children and collect them at the end of his day. "Since my wife left three days ago, without this day care centre I would not have been able to deal with my business, at least I know my children are safe here and all I need to do is to provide dinner. Michael feels that the Centre charges reasonable maintenance fees that he can afford.



The highlight of the WEE Hub monitoring exercise was the filming of one successful woman entrepreneur, Veronica, who exports fish.

Veronica is a young mother with two children who often travels to the dangerous Lake Turkana and port Victoria to source her fish, a journey she says takes between one to three weeks. During her travel she leaves her two children behind and her husband takes them to the childcare Centre. Veronica's husband supports the family and prepares the children before taking the younger one to the Centre. "My daughter graduated from the Centre and is now in a primary school." The dried fish is exported mainly to Congo by road. On this day, a crowd of jolly young energetic men is milling around the market in readiness to offload the truckloads of fish. It is a chilly breezy morning with mild rain drizzles. They brave the cold to offload the dried fish with exporters waiting to purchase. The fish is first graded then the traders only select the export quality. The rest of the fish is sold at the local market to the small-scale women fish traders who resell it locally.

"My mother and I have done this fish business for a lifetime. We travel to Lake Turkana in turns." Veronica's business has grown tremendously, she and her husband support each other, both financially and in care work.

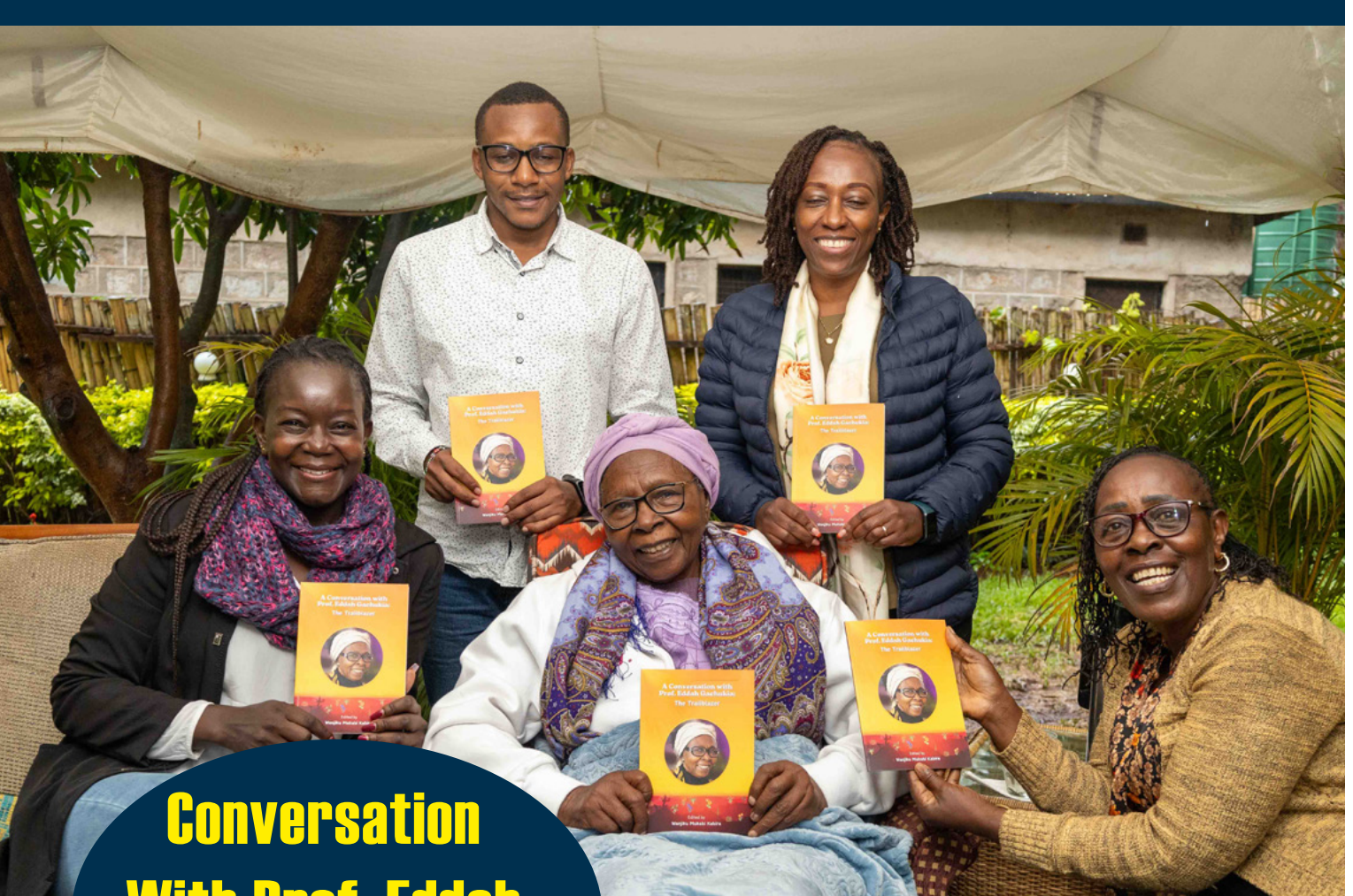
Veronica's story is one out of so many success stories of women cross border traders who have benefited from the childcare facility and the intervention by the UoN WEE Hub.



Agnetta an Administrator at the Busia Daycare Center receives a child from the parent at the Day Care Center



Veronica, a cross border trader at the Busia Market, and beneficiary of the Busia Daycare Center displays her fish as she prepares for export



The WEE Hub team and Prof. Gachukia display the book.

Conversation With Prof. Eddah Gachukia

By Emily Owiti

We set out to meet with Prof. Eddah Gachukia at her home in Murang'a County to extend a conversation that had been documented into a book and to present to her the first part of this conversation about her leadership journey.

After driving several kilometres off Murang'a highway we arrive at the driveway leading to Prof. Eddah Gachukia's home and are met by staff beaming with smiles, and little raindrops falling on the cool lawn. As we are ushered in through the imposing gate, I am struck by her knack for brand building. I can see the Riara brand, a clear indication that we are right at Prof's doorstep. We drive through the gate into a lush green garden that is not only well manicured but also home to nature... I can hear the sound of a pigeon and some more birds chirping... the staff are warm.

The book *A Conversation with Prof. Eddah Gachukia: The Trailblazer* is about her journey and contribution to girls' and women's education and empowerment through her various roles in leadership, politics, and academia.

We settle down to have this conversation that we have yearned to continue. Prof. Gachukia tells her story with a smile, laughter or, occasionally, a frown when stressing important points. What impressed me was her sharp memory. She speaks with delicate but intricate detail. I can discern authority behind Prof. Gachukia's infectious smile and soft voice. An educationist and

...her journey and contribution to girls' and women's education and empowerment through her various roles in leadership, politics, and academia.

trainer par excellence, Professor has also walked leadership and political paths as her legacy.

Prof. Eddah Gachukia is one of the pioneer female educationists and pathfinders. Her perspectives were influenced by her parents who were incredibly supportive. However, her mother died when she was only five years' old. She narrates how loneliness bit. "I was the only girl in a class of 20 and had to walk more than 20 kilometres alone to school." Her father noticed her distress and tried to enrol her into a boarding school to save her the agony of walking a long distance. "My father's attempts to enrol me at a boarding school were thwarted! The Principal said I was too tiny to cope with boarding work," she quipped.

Finally, her situation got better when she joined high school. "When I finally moved to the African Girls High School, now Alliance Girls' School, there were more girls there. However, they were just a handful if compared to modern day national schools which are awash with girls," emphasizing that empowering education has enabled many girls and women to participate in leadership and decision making.

She has entrenched girls' empowerment in her prestigious schools which she co-founded with her husband. "Our girls shine when the teachers are gender responsive. Teachers do not tell the girls that mathematics or science is difficult," she emphasizes. Prior to her nomination to Parliament Prof. Gachukia joined Maendeleo Ya Wanawake which she used as a vehicle to educate women. Her direct involvement with women gave her a better understanding of the challenges women and girls face. With this knowledge she established adult literacy programs, teaching women how to read and write in order to participate in development activities and in politics and academia. Upon her nomination to Parliament, she championed women's rights and initiated programs to support women's education and leadership.

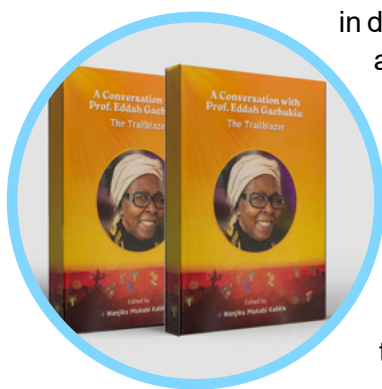
Indeed, Prof. Gachukia is an icon. I was enthused by her commitment to women's empowerment.



Top: Prof. Gachukia and Prof. Kimani admire the book cover.



Bottom: Right to left: Emilly Owiti, Ruth Wamuyu and Prof. Elishiba Kimani follows as Prof. Eddah Gachukia share her story at her home in Murangá County.



Indeed, Prof. Gachukia is an icon. I was enthused by her commitment to women's empowerment.

HIGHLIGHTS

Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira Bags Podium Position in EA Women of Excellence Awards 2024

Prof Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira came third in the East Africa Women of Excellence Awards, 2024 under the category of Women of Impact. She was nominated alongside three other women of impact. This is an award by BH Media Agency in collaboration with Hope Media which seeks to honour the top women in corporate and business across East Africa who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and impact on their respective industries.



The primary objective of the East African Women of Excellence Awards is to recognise and celebrate the exceptional achievements, leadership, and contributions of women in various fields, including business, politics, education, arts, and social activism. By doing so, the awards aim to inspire and empower women across the region and highlight their remarkable accomplishments.

Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira Feted as a Visionary Leader

Prof. Kabira was recently feted as a visionary for women's rights and gender equality.

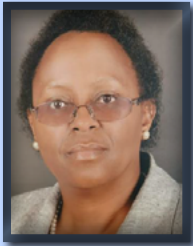
The journey towards gender equality and women's rights improvement has been long and winding and continues, albeit with significant improvement. The gains realized in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 for women were the result of contributions by diverse stakeholders where Prof. Kabira played a significant role. She served as the Vice Chair of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission and has been instrumental in the progress made towards Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (GEWEE) in Kenya and beyond.

Recognizing her enormous contribution, the African American Health Network of Dane County in the United States of America held a reception in honour of the eminent Professor where colleagues and mentees celebrated her. The Foundation for Black Women's Wellness and the Creator's Cottage hosted this auspicious event on Wednesday, April 10, 2024.



Prof. Kabira, the founding director of the African Women Studies Centre (AWSC) and Leader of the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub program at the University of Nairobi was recognized for her relentless fight for gender equality and women's rights through her scholarship and fervent participation in the constitution-making process. Prof. was instrumental in the establishment of affirmative action in the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

The reception was attended by eminent women leaders among them Dr. Fabu Carter, an alumna of the African Women Studies Centre, and Dr. Edd Poe among other leaders.



WEE Hub Director of Research Promoted

The WEE Hub Director of Research was recently promoted to Associate Professor of Economics at the School of Economics. We are proud of Prof. Mary Mbithi's achievement.

Meet the AWSC Management Board 2024-2027



PROF. MARGARET KOBIA, CHAIRPERSON



PROF. WANJIKU MUKABI-KABIRA (DIRECTOR AWSC)



PROF. LUCIA MARY MBITHI



PROF. TABITHA KIRITI NG'ANGÁ



PROF. TOM ONDICHO



DR. MARYGORETTI AKINYI



DR. NANCY BARAZA



DR. DOROTHY NJIRAINI



DR. SAMWEL WAKIBI



DR. AGNES MEROKA MUTUA



WAMBUI KANYI



ANGELA MUMO

Publications

1. An overview of Labour Laws in Kenya: Seeking Pathways to Empowering Women in the Labour Sector in Kenya- <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/165160>
2. Evaluating the Effectiveness of incubating Women's Collectives/Group Business for Replication- <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/164402>
3. Legal Digest on Women in the Formal and Informal Labour sectors <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/165140>
4. A Study on Women in the Labour Force in Kenya - <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/165145>



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