

TARGET EVENT: WOMEN'S SUMMIT

THEME: BEST PRACTICE IN ORGANISATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

PAPER TITLE: INCLUSIVITY OF WOMEN IN THE WORK PLACE

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Abstract

Gender Mainstreaming, refers to a strategy towards realizing gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination. The number of women joining the construction industry in Kenya is on the rise. However, there are challenges when comes to the transition from student to graduate and later professionals in the field. Some women prefer to leave the construction industry altogether.

This paper aims to investigate the broader technical, logistical and financial regulatory challenges that may undermine increased uptake of women in the construction sector. It also addresses ways in which to make sure women are included and retained in the industry through; Evaluation of the policy gaps and proposed legislative interventions, affirmative action during admission into training institutions for courses such as Engineering addressing pay gap issues, making the workplace convenient e.g. implementation of the Health Act that provides for breastfeeding rooms in office spaces and borrowing actionable steps and best practices from other jurisdictions.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Gap, Gender Parity, Women Inclusivity.

1 Introduction

Gender Parity is the ratio through which one can quantifiably measure the representation of men and women or boys and girls in different spheres. It is an instrument at the service of equality. This ensures both genders have access to the same opportunities and rights.

Statistics show that worldwide women make up 20% of the graduating class in the engineering field but only 11% of them transition into the work force. This is mainly due to the leaky pipeline phenomenon; The loss of female talent especially in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field due to systemic bias and gender blindness. Where most organizations are not aware of the different ways men and women are affected by situations due to their different roles, needs, status and priorities in the society.

The goal of this paper is to bring to light the challenges faced by women in the work place that leads to them being underrepresented in the field, despite women making up an average of 50% of the population in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). The paper also looks into best practices in order to bridge the gender gap that according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) it would take 121 years to bridge in (SSA).

2 Methodology

This paper was written mainly through literature review of paper, articles and publications. A survey was undertaken where women were given the World Health Organization Gender Assessment tool. The Gender Assessment Tool (GAT) is comprised of critical questions, as in gender analysis. The GAT helps you determine the gender-responsiveness of a policy or programme.

3 Results

Kenya has been ranked 95th out of the 156 countries in gender parity with a rating of 0.69. This means that women have a 31% less likely to have the same opportunities as men in the country. The education parity is 0.92 but economic opportunities and political empowerment are 0.365 and 0.053 respectively. When it comes to engineering, manufacturing and construction it drops even lower to 0.29 gender parity.

A total of 22 women in the engineering field were surveyed using the Gender Assessment Tool (GAT). The 22 women were from different institutions. The words policy and programme have been taken to mean organization. The first 18 questions were to measure whether the organizations were gender-responsive that is either gender-sensitive, gender-specific or gender-transformative. The last 5 questions were to measure whether the programme may be either gender-blind or gender unequal and is therefore not gender-responsive.

	QUESTION	YES	NO	% GENDER RESPONSIVENESS
1	Do the vision, goals or principles have an explicit commitment to promoting or achieving gender equality?	2	20	9.09%
2	Does the policy or programme include sex as a selection criterion for the target population?	1	21	4.55%
3	Does the policy or programme clearly understand the difference between sex and gender?	3	19	13.64%
4	Does the target population purposely include both women and men?	20	2	90.91%
5	Have women and men participated in the following stages? Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	18	4	81.82%
6	Have steps been taken to ensure equal participation of women and men?	19	3	86.36%
7	Do both male and female team members have an equal role in	22	0	100.00%

	decision-making?			
8	Does the policy or programme consider life conditions and opportunities of women and men?	5	17	22.73%
9	Does the policy or programme consider and include women's practical and strategic needs?	4	18	18.18%
10	Have the methods or tools been piloted with both sexes?	4	18	18.18%
11	Does the policy or programme consider family or household dynamics, including different effects and opportunities for	2	20	9.09%
12	Does the policy or programme include a range of stakeholders with gender expertise as partners, such as government affiliated bodies, national or international non-governmental organizations or community organizations?	5	17	22.73%
13	Does the policy or programme collect and report evidence by sex?	2	20	9.09%
14	Is the evidence generated by or informing the policy or programme based on gender analysis?	5	17	22.73%
15	Does the policy or programme consider different health needs for women and men?	4	18	18.18%
16	Does the policy or programme include quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor women's and men's participation?	9	13	40.91%
17	Does the policy or programme consider gender-based divisions of labour (paid versus unpaid and productive versus reproductive)?	0	22	0.00%
18	Does the policy or programme address gender norms, roles and relations?	0	22	0.00%
19	Does the policy or programme exclude (intentionally or not) one sex but assume that the conclusions apply to both sexes?	1	21	4.55%
20	Does the policy or programme exclude one sex in areas that are traditionally thought of as relevant only for the other sex, such as maternal health or occupational health?	0	22	100.00%
21	Does the policy or programme treat women and men as homogeneous groups when there are foreseeable, different outcomes for subgroups, such as low-income versus high-income women or employed versus unemployed men?	22	0	0.00%
22	Do materials or publications portray men and women based on gender-based stereotypes?	22	1	100.00%
23	Does the language exclude or privilege one sex?	21	1	95.45%

4 Discussion

There have been great advancements made in bridging the gap when it comes to education. However, the same cannot be said about the economic empowerment of women especially in the STEM field. There 'leaky pipeline' is especially potent when it comes to transitioning from the tertiary level into the workforce. The GAT questionnaire has shed some light as to the areas that contribute the lack of inclusivity of women in the workplace.

Some key points that were raised by the sample group were: The gender pay gap; men are more likely to earn a higher salary right from the entry level. This becomes a demotivating factor for women to joining the work force. There was the working place flexibility; Women are expected to be the primary care givers at home, therefore, they require flexible working hours and accommodation in the office spaces like lactating rooms and daycares for their children. Most organizations only give the required 3month maternity leave, while some spaces like construction sites have no safety protocols for pregnant and breastfeeding women. These put women at a great disadvantage and most opt to leave work all together or not seek other managerial roles until they are done with their maternal duties. Women also experience sexual harassment in different ways in the work place, being the minority gender and the lack of policies that protect and help safeguard their well-being becomes a hindrance

and stifles them in the work place. COVID 19 has also affected women disproportionately, they are more likely to be lose their jobs work leave work due loss of domestic workers and the long quarantine period increases their hours of unpaid domestic work.

There are toolkits that have been developed and tested organizations, mainly in the finance industry and may be adopted in the engineering field to ensure inclusivity in the work place. The toolkit employs three fundamental principles which are:

1. **Commit;** The organization must acknowledge the gender bias and understanding where the gender gaps will be communicating clearly the importance of gender parity and inclusion in the work place. This will be done by defining what inclusion is and how an inclusive culture will look like. This must be done from the top to bottom of the organization with set targets and ways to monitor them.
2. **Embed;** Addressing the gaps and effecting gender responsive objectives. Putting in place policies and guidelines to make the workplace inclusive. This will be done through bridging the pay gap as economic empowerment is key. Employing gender blind hiring processes, performance reviews, mentoring and sponsoring development and management training and putting flexible work hours and inclusive working environments.
3. **Scale;** Proactively embracing every opportunity to bring about change that will enhance gender parity in the community, industry and value chains.

5 Conclusion

The STEM field has always been gender bias in but inclusivity is the key to Sub Saharan Africa in doing its part in achieving its sustainable goals. Gender parity can only be achieved when both genders champion it. Gender Mainstreaming is the only way to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs.

The public sector is encouraged to lead the gender positive recovery policies and practices as this sets a precedence to the rest of the field. This can be done by advancing women in leadership and management roles in order to have their interests taken into account while developing policies that affect them within the organizations. Putting in place social safety nets for women in the work place because they are always disproportionately affected. The public and private sector may also take a broader focus on diversity by targeting parity among suppliers and distributors. Develop principles on diversity for your wider value chain and prioritize business with those who meet these requirements.

Awareness is also important in tackling gender bias because it has been entrenched in the society that some careers are male roles while others are women led. Therefore, to make inclusivity to be sustainable the whole organization leadership buy-in is a key component in the success of any initiative aiming to increase female representation. Both male and female leaders should become champions of gender parity in their organizations, setting the tone for the whole organization and demonstrating their commitment.

It is important that women are able to be comfortable and included in their work place. This will bring about positive impact on an organization's financial performance, increase motivation, productivity and retention and finally have greater innovation and creativity which is a great business case for ensuring gender mainstreaming in organizations.

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