



# Women's Conference Report

2025

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## Foreword

The 2025 Women's Conference convened at a defining moment in our collective journey toward gender equality—thirty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This milestone presents not only a moment of reflection, but more critically, a call to accelerate transformation. The Kenya School of Government, through the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development, was honored to host this timely gathering under the theme “Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality and Harnessing Innovation”.

At a time when innovation is rapidly reshaping the world, and gender disparities remain deeply entrenched, the Women's Conference 2025 offered a powerful platform for bridging the past, present, and future of gender equality. The dialogue drew together over 300 delegates from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector, reflecting a shared recognition that inclusive development cannot be achieved without the full and equitable participation of women.



This report captures the energy, urgency, and collective wisdom that emerged from the conference's robust engagements. From intergenerational dialogues to actionable policy recommendations, the proceedings reinforced our national commitment to dismantling structural barriers and building inclusive institutions. Importantly, the insights affirmed that innovation—be it in leadership, governance, or technology—must be shaped by those most impacted, particularly women and girls.

As the Director General of the Kenya School of Government, I reaffirm our institution's dedication to advancing gender equality through capacity development, public policy research, and inclusive leadership training. We believe that transformative leadership requires intentional investment in women's voices, agency, and ideas. The outcomes of this conference will inform our ongoing programming, partnerships, and advocacy for a more just and equitable society.

I invite all readers—policy-makers, educators, development partners, and citizens—to engage with the lessons herein and translate them into meaningful action. Let us continue to champion the cause of equality not as an event, but as a sustained effort, guided by courage, inclusivity, and innovation.

**Prof. Nura Mohamed, Ph D., EBS**

**Director General- Kenya School of Government**

## A Note from the Acting Director, Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development

The journey toward gender equality is both historic and urgent and the Institute for Gender and Social Development is proud to be at the forefront of this transformative movement. The Women's Conference 2025, held under the banner "Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality and Harnessing Innovation", marked a defining chapter in our shared pursuit of a more just, inclusive, and equitable society.

The Institute for Gender and Social Development, therefore, recognizes that gender equality is not merely a goal, it is a prerequisite for meaningful development. This conference brought together over 300 visionary leaders, change makers, and advocates across generations and sectors. Their voices, experiences, and innovations affirmed what we have always known: that when women and girls are empowered, entire communities are uplifted.

Throughout the three-day convening, we witnessed bold ideas, courageous storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving. From panel discussions on economic empowerment and digital transformation to heartfelt intergenerational dialogues and policy critiques, the conference underscored the urgent need to center women in national development, and to do so with intention, investment, and integrity.

As the organizer of this forum, the Institute reaffirms its commitment to equipping leaders with the skills, perspectives, and tools needed to challenge the status quo. Through our research, capacity-building programs, and partnerships, we will continue to foster environments where women can lead confidently, innovate boldly, and thrive fully.

This report is more than a record of what transpired; it is a call to carry forward the momentum. I invite all stakeholders; government actors, civil society, academia, development partners, and the private sector, to reflect deeply on the recommendations herein and act decisively in advancing gender equality in Kenya and beyond.

Let us continue to walk hand in hand, across generations, institutions, and ideologies, to reimagine leadership, reshape opportunity, and realize the promise of equality for all.



**Lynette Otwor**

**Acting Director, Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development and Conference Organizer**  
**Kenya School of Government**



## Executive Summary

The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark global commitment that continues to guide efforts toward achieving gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. In recognition of this milestone, the Kenya School of Government (KSG), through the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development, in collaboration with the Youth Innovation Centre hosted the **Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality and Harnessing Innovation Conference** from March 5th to 7th, 2025. The convening, held in the lead-up to International Women's Day, provided a timely platform to reflect on Kenya's progress in advancing gender equality, while also identifying new pathways for action, collaboration, and innovation.

The conference brought together about **300 delegates** from diverse backgrounds, including government leaders, policymakers, industry experts, development partners, activists, and scholars. Delegates united in their shared commitment to accelerate gender equality and harness innovation to address persistent disparities. Over three days, participants engaged in dynamic panel discussions, interactive workshops, innovation showcases, and strategic networking sessions, all designed to inspire bold action, foster collaboration, and promote forward-thinking solutions for building a more inclusive and equitable society in Kenya and beyond.

The conference was grounded on three key sub-thematic areas of discussion; **Accelerating Action to Bridge Barriers: Closing the Gaps, Leading Change** which had a particular focus on addressing systemic challenges and fostering actionable policy measures to promote inclusivity in leadership, business, and governance; **Inspiring and Impacting through Innovation and Empowerment** with a particular focus on enhancing women's competencies through leadership training, digital skills development, and entrepreneurial innovation to harness emerging opportunities; **Celebrating Achievements and Building Networks: From Inspiration to Collective Action**; which focused on recognizing the contributions of women leaders, fostering strategic partnerships, and unveiling initiatives to empower the next generation of women leaders.

This high-level convening provided an opportunity to assess Kenya's progress in advancing gender equality, address persistent challenges, and identify innovative pathways for fostering an inclusive and equitable future. The insights and recommendations from this conference and the Conference Communique will serve as a blueprint for action, guiding policymakers, organizations, and individuals in their efforts to advance gender equality and drive meaningful social transformation in Kenya and beyond. The Women's Conference titled **Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality and Harnessing Innovation** commenced with a series of keynote addresses that underscored the urgency and shared responsibility of accelerating gender equality in Kenya and beyond.

## Official Opening Ceremony

The Women's Conference titled **Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality and Harnessing Innovation** commenced with a series of keynote addresses that underscored the urgency and shared responsibility of accelerating gender equality in Kenya and beyond.

**Professor Nura Mohamed, PhD, EBS**, Director General of the Kenya School of Government, delivered the opening remarks. He reaffirmed the School's unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality through capacity development, research, and policy support. Professor Mohamed emphasized that gender equality is a critical pillar of inclusive governance and sustainable development. He highlighted the launch of the First Lady's Young Leaders Capacity Building Fellowship Program, which aims to enhance the leadership, entrepreneurial skills, and competitiveness of young women in the labor market. Through the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development, the Kenya School of Government continues to champion initiatives that promote financial inclusion, digital empowerment, and socio-economic transformation for women, especially those from marginalized communities. He called for sustained partnerships that extend beyond the conference, with a focus on long-term grassroots impact and institutional reforms.

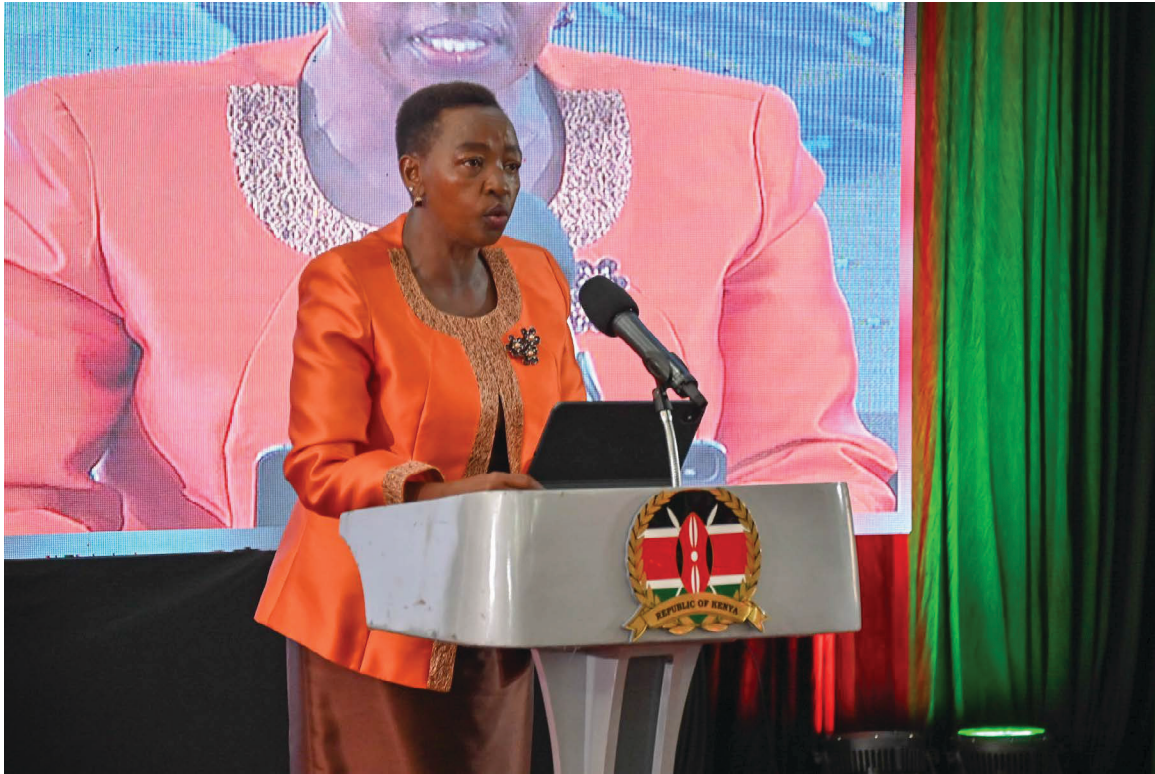
**Mr. Dan Bazira**, Deputy Country Representative of UN Women, reflected on Kenya's achievements and ongoing challenges as the global community commemorates the thirtieth anniversary of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. He emphasized the need to invest in women's safety, access to education, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Mr. Bazira highlighted the importance of strengthening systems for sex-disaggregated data as a basis for informed policymaking. He recognized the progress made through instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Maputo Protocol, and commended the Government of Kenya's ongoing commitment to the advancement of women's rights.

Representing the **State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action**, **Dr. Josephine Obonyo**, Secretary Gender outlined the collaborative efforts between the Department and the Kenya School of Government to design a course focused on empowering women in leadership, particularly those seeking to enter political and public service roles. She stressed the need to domesticate international protocols, address structural marginalization, and promote women's representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Dr. Obonyo reiterated the Department's commitment to achieving **Sustainable Development Goal Five**, and called on all stakeholders to draw lessons from past interventions in order to develop more inclusive, innovative approaches to empowerment.



## Keynote address by the Chief Guest Her Excellency, Mrs. Rachel Ruto, EGH, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya.

The keynote address was delivered by Her Excellency, Mrs. Rachel Ruto, EGH, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya. Speaking on the theme Gender Equality: A Cornerstone for Sustainable Development, Her Excellency honored pioneering women whose leadership and advocacy have advanced gender justice in Kenya. She shared landmark initiatives from her office, including the financial inclusion of over two hundred and fifty thousand women through table banking, the



distribution of seven thousand subsidized water tanks, and the Feed One End One initiative that supports school-based nutrition programs. She emphasized that gender equality is foundational to national development and sustainable progress. Her Excellency officially launched the First Lady's Young Women Leaders Capacity Building Fellowship Program, a transformative initiative targeting university students, graduates, student leaders, persons with disabilities, and youth from underserved communities. The program seeks to cultivate a new generation of women leaders equipped to contribute meaningfully to Kenya's development through innovation, ethical leadership, and resilience .

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## Conference Objectives

The key objectives of the conference were:

### 1. Promoting Gender Equality and Policy Advocacy

The forum facilitated discussions on policies that affected women in business, technology, and public service, while advocating for actionable measures to bridge the gender gap in leadership and other key sectors.

### 2. Capacity Building and Skills Development

The conference provided a platform for practical and empirical discussions on leadership, financial literacy, and digital skills, aimed at empowering women with essential tools for growth.

### 3. Inspiring Action

Participants shared their personal journeys and highlighted impactful projects and innovations led by women, inspiring others to take bold steps in their respective fields.

### 4. Creating Partnerships and Collaborations

The forum encouraged partnerships between women-led businesses, tech innovators, and women-focused organizations, and facilitated valuable connections between stakeholders and mentors.

### 5. Fostering Intergenerational Dialogue and Sustainability

The conference served as a cornerstone event that sparked ongoing intergenerational conversations, built momentum for sustained dialogues, and promoted projects that championed gender exclusivity and women's empowerment.

### 6. Addressing Challenges

Discussions explored practical solutions to persistent challenges such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, and barriers to education and leadership.

## Overview of Sessions

**Bridging Generations: Advancing Gender Equality, Harnessing Innovation.**

### *Sub-theme 1: Accelerating Action to Break Gender Barriers: Closing the Gaps, Leading the Change*

The focus was addressing systemic challenges that hinder women's progress in leadership, business, and governance through panel discussions, plenary and breakout sessions. This was achieved by identifying and analyzing the root causes of gender disparities, by also providing actionable policy measures that can close the existing gender gaps. The overarching goal was to inspire change-makers to lead initiatives that ensure equal opportunities for women in positions of power and influence, shaping a future of inclusivity and equitable leadership.



## Panel Discussion: Beijing +30 Years - Experience, Lessons, and Insights Sharing.

**Moderator:** Ms. Dinah Musindarwezo.

**Panelists:**

**Prof. Amb. Maria Nzomo**, Ph.D., EBS, MBS - The University of Nairobi

**Hon. Lady Justice (Rtd) Effie Owuor**, JA - Co-Chair, The FemWise Africa Network

### Key Takeaways from the Panel Discussion.

**Reflections on the Journey-** The first world conference on women's issues, held in Mexico City in 1975, set the stage for advancing women's rights globally. This historic milestone set the foundation for sustained activism, culminating in the pivotal Beijing 1995 conference, which remains a defining moment in shaping the global equality agenda. Women's voices and leadership at these conferences were instrumental in demanding systemic change in securing commitments to women's rights as fundamental human rights.

**Gender Advocacy in Kenya- Legal Reforms as a Foundation** - Kenya has made significant strides in gender equality since the 1995 Beijing Conference, including constitutional protections for women and children, policy reforms, legal frameworks, strengthening women's rights and increased representation in leadership and workforce. However, persistent deep-rooted societal and structural barriers continue to limit the full realization of gender equality. Achieving meaningful progress requires sustained advocacy, transformative policies, and systemic accountability, ensuring that commitments to gender justice translate into lived realities for all women.

**Education and Leadership as Catalysts for Change** - Women's political representation in Kenya remains low at 23% well below the 33% target. - This disparity is particularly striking in comparison to countries like Rwanda, which have achieved 63% female representation in Parliament, Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda follow suit with over 33% of female representation in parliament.

The judiciary has emerged as a leader in women's representation, serving as a benchmark for progress. This progress must be institutionalized across all sectors to dismantle the systemic barriers.

Education is a game-changer and key driver in dismantling gender biases. The fight for gender justice requires addressing systemic inequalities that drive school dropouts, limit career progression, and expose women and girls to gender-based violence (GBV). Unlocking areas resisting change and accelerating gains requires intentional affirmative collective

action, robust accountability mechanisms and structural reforms that move beyond tokenism to ensure meaningful representation.

**Strengthening Inclusion and Institutionalizing Change** - Achieving gender equality demands a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond mere participation to redistributing power and dismantling patriarchal barriers in governance, peace building, and decision-making spaces. Women's leadership must be prioritized not as an add-on but as a fundamental pillar of inclusive governance and sustainable peace. Rather than positioning men as "allies", efforts must centre women's agency and leadership while holding institutions accountable for gender-transformative policies.

The adoption of African Union's Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise Africa) Kenya chapter that is adequately resourced and institutionalized, would strengthen women's participation in peace and security. Strengthening policies on women's role in peace and security must go beyond tokenism inclusion, ensuring women shape and lead conflict resolution, security governance and policy implementation. This Will be crucial in ensuring sustainable progress.

## Panel Discussion 2: Policy Implementation: Bridging Gender Gaps in Leadership & Governance.

### Moderator:

Ms. Betty Gachire

### Panelists:

Hon. Lady Justice Patricia Nyaundi, SC – The Case for Affirmative Action

Ms. Judy Gitau – Gender-Based Discrimination in Leadership

credit, as well as market and investment opportunities are deliberate mechanisms of economic control that sustain male dominance in politics and leadership.

There is a need to address this through gender responsive financial reforms, alternative credit facilities for women, recognition of unpaid care work, and direct investment in women-led enterprises. Women's economic power should be positioned as a core driver of structural transformation.

### Key Takeaways from the Breakout Session.

**Legal Reforms Advancing Gender Inclusion** – The 2010 Constitution of Kenya (COK 2010) was a landmark victory for gender equality establishing key legal protections that have played a key role in advancing women's rights and promoting gender equality, such as maternity and reproductive health rights, land and property rights, economic and social rights inclusive of girls education rights, equal representation and provision of affirmative action, removal of customary provisions that do not adhere to equality, right to freedom and security, and protection from harmful practices. However, the provision of these laws do not automatically translate to justice. Patriarchal resistance, selective implementation, structural inequalities and cultural barriers continue to undermine women's progress.

To achieve transformative change, legal advocacy and dismantling patriarchal interpretation of law to ensure that legal frameworks serve as enablers of justice rather than symbolic tokenism (appreciation/gestures).

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV) - A Barrier to Women's Leadership:** GBV is a deliberate strategy to silence and exclude women from fully participating in politics, leadership and decision-making spaces. Physical, psychological, and online violence reinforce patriarchal control deterring women from political participation and public leadership. Technology has also enabled new forms of harassment and online bullying.

Ending GBV requires bold actions not just legal protections but preventative measures that promote a culture of human rights, development of digital safety frameworks, and institutional accountability to disrupt the cycle of violence.

**Economic Justice - Reclaiming Power and Resources** Financial inclusion is not incidental—it is systemic. The barriers that restrict women's access to financial

**Breaking Political Gatekeeping - Holding Political Institutions Accountable:** Political parties sometimes reflect systems where men often remain in dominant roles. While efforts such as gender quotas aim to encourage inclusivity, their limited enforcement, along with prevailing political norms and financial challenges, can make it difficult for women to take on leadership roles in a fully equitable way. As a result, women's participation may at times appear symbolic rather than substantive

Achieving gender parity requires structural interventions, mandatory compliance with gender-equity laws, adherence to regulations and campaign financing, and women-led political movements that hold institutions accountable for their role in perpetuating inequality.

**Beyond Affirmative Action: Dismantling Structural Barriers** – Has never been about 'giving women a chance'. It's about correcting systemic exclusion.

While affirmative action has been beneficial in unlocking doors, the patriarchal system remains firmly in place blocking substantive progress. True gender justice requires a radical shift in governance, education, cultural norms, economic structures to deconstruct the control of power and resources. This includes amplifying women's leadership, embedded an intersectional gender justice in all aspects of policy and decision-making.

## Breakout Session 1: Tackling Gender-Based Violence (GBV) - Policies & Practices.

**Moderator:** Ms. Betty Gachire

**Panelists:**

The Reality of GBV in Kenya - **Hon. Lady**

Justice(Rtd)Dr. Nancy Baraza

Personal Testimony & Advocacy-Lady, Dr. Wangu Kanja, OGW

Challenges in the Justice System - **Editor Ochieng;**  
Founder, Feminist for Peace Rights and Justice Center

The discussion spotlighted the alarming scale of gender-based violence (GBV) in Kenya, with over 700 women killed in GBV-related incidents between 2016 and 2023, and 79 deaths recorded in the first quarter of 2025 alone. A key challenge that was emphasized was the absence of a centralized GBV registry, which hinders effective data collection and policy interventions. Deep-rooted patriarchy, economic dependence, and weak law enforcement was also highlighted as major factors perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Systemic failures within the justice system, including prolonged case resolutions, victim-blaming, and inadequate survivor support continue to undermine efforts to combat GBV. Despite existing legal frameworks, enforcement remains weak, and resources for survivors—such as safe houses, mental health support, and economic empowerment programs are severely lacking. The discussion underscored the need for urgent reforms, including a dedicated GBV task force, stricter legal penalties, improved data collection, increased survivor support, and nationwide awareness campaigns. A multi-sectoral, survivor-centered approach is essential to addressing GBV effectively and fostering long-term societal change.

### Key Takeaways

**GBV Remains a Critical Crisis** – Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a deeply entrenched and escalating crisis, with rising cases underscoring the urgent need for systemic reform. One of the most pressing issues is the absence of a centralized registry or coordinated data system, which severely hampers efforts to track incidents accurately, monitor trends, and implement timely interventions. This lack of comprehensive data not only obscures the true scale of the problem but also weakens accountability mechanisms and delays justice for survivors. To effectively combat GBV, there must be a strategic push for improved reporting structures, cross-sector collaboration, and the development of integrated databases that support evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation.

**Justice System Failures** – The justice system continues to fail survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), creating significant barriers to accessing justice. Survivors often endure lengthy and emotionally draining legal processes, during which they are frequently subjected to victim-blaming attitudes and stigmatization. The lack of survivor-centered approaches, inadequate legal protection, and slow judicial responses contribute to a system that is not only ineffective but also traumatizing. These systemic shortcomings discourage many survivors from reporting incidents or pursuing justice, ultimately allowing perpetrators to evade accountability. Addressing these failures requires comprehensive legal reform, capacity building for law enforcement and judicial officers, and the integration of trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices at every stage of the justice process. Survivors face prolonged legal battles, victim-blaming, and inadequate protection, discouraging them from seeking justice.

**Survivor Support Services Are Limited** – Survivor support services remain limited, leaving many without access to the care and protection they need. Safe houses are few and often overcrowded, mental health services are limited, and economic empowerment programs are either insufficient or entirely absent. This lack of comprehensive support not only increases survivors' vulnerability to further harm but also hinders their ability to recover and rebuild their lives. Sustainable investment in these essential services is key to ensuring long-term safety, healing, and resilience for survivors of gender-based violence.

**Legal Reforms and Law Enforcement Must Be Strengthened** – Strengthening legal frameworks and law enforcement responses to gender-based violence is needed. Establishing a dedicated GBV task force can enhance coordination and accountability, while enforcing stricter penalties for perpetrators sends a clear message of zero tolerance. Additionally, improving witness protection is essential to ensure the safety and confidence of survivors and witnesses throughout the justice process. These reforms are critical steps toward a more effective and survivor-centered approach to combating GBV.

**Community Engagement is Key** – Community engagement plays a pivotal role in preventing gender-based violence. Nationwide awareness campaigns can educate the public and challenge deeply rooted gender norms, while actively involving men and boys in prevention efforts fosters shared responsibility and helps shift harmful attitudes. By promoting inclusive dialogue and collective action, communities can become powerful agents of cultural change and contribute to a safer, more equitable society for all.

## Breakout Session 2: Addressing Economic Disparities for Women's Empowerment

**Moderator:** Anne Kangethe

**Panelists:**

**Dr. Rukia Atikiya** – Acting Director, KSG Mombasa

**Mary Wandia** – Co-Impact Regional Director, Africa

**Stella Chepngeno** – Mama Doing Good

Despite various initiatives (notable efforts), significant structural and systemic gaps continue to hinder the realization of true Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Panelists underscored that WEE is not only crucial for poverty eradication and national growth, but also a fundamental human right. Yet, Kenya's ranking of 126 out of 189 on gender equality index, reflects persistent disparities and entrenched inequalities.

While progressive legal frameworks exist, their weak implementation has stalled meaningful progress/change. Speakers emphasized the need to move beyond tokenistic approaches highlighting the work and role organizations such as Co-Impact that addresses systemic inequalities, particularly in the informal economy by advocating for gender-sensitive policies, financial inclusivity and social protection. Grassroots insights and innovations such as table banking were highlighted for their transformative impact – enhancing women's access to capital boosting leadership at the community and contributing to the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). Panelists emphasized that the pathways to Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) must go beyond entrepreneurship and include pathways that expand political representation, corporate leadership, as well as key interventions such as gender-responsive infrastructure, recognition of unpaid care work, and systemic reforms.

Audience contributions brought attention to persistent gender bias in workplaces, the exclusion of women from STEM fields and disproportionate burden of household responsibilities. The session concluded with a call to action: achieving sustainable WEE requires integrating it with broader development goals including education, healthcare, and legal reforms, leveraging technology, data-driven policies, and collective funding mechanism. Ultimately the shift from rhetoric to action is essential to close economic gender gaps and realize the full spectrum of women's rights and agency.

## Key Takeaways

### **Economic empowerment is a right, not a privilege**

– Systemic exclusion of women from economic policies and opportunities is not only unjust but undermines inclusive and sustainable national development.

### **Implementation gaps hinder progress**

– While legal frameworks for gender equality exist, their impact is often undermined by weak enforcement, cultural resistance and systemic inertia. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires not only robust implementation mechanisms but also sustained political will and accountability to dismantle patriarchal structures.

### **Financial inclusion is a pathway to women's autonomy and rights**

– Community-driven models like table banking have proven effective in empowering women economically. These initiatives not only provide access to capital but also foster solidarity and collective agency among women. For lasting impact such efforts require deeper integration into formal financial systems through gender-responsive policies, inclusive financial products, and the dismantling of systemic barriers that hinder women's full economic participation.

### **The Imperative of Women's Leadership for Equitable Development**

– Women need stronger participation in politics, corporate leadership, and entrepreneurship. Research underscores that increasing women's representation in leadership correlates with positive outcomes, such as enhanced economic growth, and more equitable policies. Addressing these challenges requires intentional policies, mentorship programs, and institutional reforms that dismantle patriarchal structures and promote gender parity.

### **The profound impact of Cultural and social norms on women's economic empowerment**

– These norms, particularly those rooted in patriarchal structures, perpetuate gender inequalities by disproportionately assigning unpaid care work to women and girls.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work is critical for achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive economic growth.

### **Data-Driven Decision-Making is Critical for Advancing Women's rights and achieving Gender Equality**

– Empowering women effectively requires the use of data to shape policies and measure impact, ensuring informed decisions. Accurate, timely, and disaggregated gender data are crucial for crafting policies that address the diverse needs of women and girls. Such data illuminate

1. In Kenya, for instance, women dedicate an average of 4.6 times more hours to unpaid care tasks than men, equating to approximately 196 full-time workdays annually



systemic inequalities, inform targeted interventions, and enable the monitoring of progress toward equitable outcomes. Therefore, investing in robust gender data systems and ensuring their integration into all stages of policy development is a fundamental step toward dismantling structural barriers and promoting inclusive development

**Women as Social Capital** – In recognizing their collective potential as catalysts for societal development, women can lead significant advancements in various sectors. The transformative power of women's collective agency in driving societal development has been witnessed in key organizations.<sup>2</sup> Data suggests that women outnumber men in many communities. This demographic strength, when harnessed through collective action, can lead to transformative change.

## Breakout Session 3: Advancing Women in Leadership and Governance.

**Moderator:** Dr. Rachel Ngesa

**Panelists:**

**Ms. Victoria Wausi Justus** – Senior Program Officer, Institute of Public Finance

**Ms. Diana Gichengo** - Executive Director, The Institute for Social Accountability

**Ms. Daisy Amdany**- Executive Director, Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust

The session on advancing women in leadership and governance examined progress, challenges, and opportunities in achieving gender equality in leadership roles. Discussions emphasized key thematic areas, including public participation, mentorship, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and policy reforms. Kenya's 2010 Constitution marked a significant milestone in securing women's rights and leadership opportunities, with the Bill of Rights ensuring protection against discrimination. However, structural and cultural barriers continue to limit women's full participation in governance. Public participation remains essential for closing gender gaps, yet inadequate legal protections and weak GRB implementation hinder meaningful progress. Only Kisumu County has an approved GRB framework, revealing disparities in gender-focused budgeting nationwide. Mentorship and capacity-building initiatives were highlighted as critical tools for equipping young women with leadership skills, fostering networks, and ensuring a sustainable leadership pipeline. Strengthening collaboration between state and non-state actors, embedding gender analysis in policymaking, and enforcing gender quotas in leadership are necessary to sustain progress. Ultimately, accelerating gender equality in governance requires a multi-pronged approach that combines constitutional support, policy reforms, financial commitment, and cultural transformation to create an inclusive leadership landscape.

## Key Takeaways

**Policy frameworks exist but require stronger enforcement** – While Kenya's 2010 Constitution and affirmative action policies have laid a strong foundation for gender inclusion, their impact is limited by weak enforcement and inconsistent implementation. Despite progressive legal frameworks, many provisions remain unfulfilled due to lack of political will, resource constraints, and institutional inertia. Strengthening accountability mechanisms and ensuring these policies are fully operationalized is essential to achieving meaningful and sustained gender equality.

2. Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) has played a pivotal role in mobilizing women for political empowerment and community development. Similarly, the Green Belt Movement, has demonstrated how women's leadership in environmental conservation can yield substantial societal benefits

### **Public participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting need improvement**

Public participation and gender-responsive budgeting remain areas of concern, with weak legal safeguards and inadequate implementation limiting women's opportunities. The lack of inclusive, gender-sensitive planning processes undermines efforts to address structural inequalities. Establishing public participation directorates or units at the sub-national level can help bridge these gaps by ensuring more meaningful engagement, improving policy execution, and promoting equitable resource allocation that truly reflects the needs of women and marginalized groups.

### **Mentorship and capacity-building are essential**

Mentorship and capacity-building are critical to advancing women's leadership in traditionally male-dominated spaces. Initiatives such as strategic leadership training, scholarships, and exchange programs empower women with the skills, confidence, and networks needed to thrive. By investing in these opportunities, we can help dismantle systemic barriers, foster inclusive leadership, and cultivate a new generation of women leaders across all sectors.

**Collaboration is key** – Collaboration is vital for the effective implementation and tracking of the implementation of gender-responsive policies. Collaboration between government, civil society, and development partners can drive a coordinated action, share resources and expertise, and promote accountability. By working together, stakeholders can create a more cohesive and impactful approach to advancing gender equality and addressing systemic barriers faced by women and marginalized groups.

### **Legal and cultural shifts must go hand in hand**

– Achieving sustainable gender equity in governance and leadership requires both legal and cultural transformation. While policy reforms are essential, they must be accompanied by efforts to challenge and change deep-seated societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate inequality. Addressing structural and cultural barriers in tandem ensures that legal gains are not only enacted but also embraced, leading to lasting and meaningful progress toward inclusive and equitable leadership.

## **Sub-theme 2: Accelerating Innovation for Empowerment: Inspiring and Impacting Through Innovation.**

The second day highlighted the transformative power of innovation and its role in empowering women. It featured engagement with key role models and influential figures in society, who shared their expertise and experiences on enhancing women's competencies through innovation, digital skills, and leadership training. It aimed to motivate women to harness their skills and take on leadership roles, empowering them to create meaningful change in their communities.

## Round table Intergenerational Dialogue: Inspiring and Impacting through Innovation-

**Moderator:** Ms. Dinah Musindarawezo

**Panelists:**

**Mr. Daniel Murakaru**, Institute of Public Finance

**Ms. Catherine Nyambura**, International Development Consultant, Athena Network

**Mr. Peter Quest**, Head of Youth Programs, Kenya School of Government

**Ms. Rachael Mwikali Mueni**, Co-Founder and National Convener, Coalition for Grassroots Human Rights Defenders

**Ms. Wairimu Kagundu**, Associate Partner, AXUM

**Mr. Joseph Iha**, Financial and Investment Consultant

**Ms. Jane Anyango**, Founder, PolyCom Girls

The discussion highlighted the role of technology, intergenerational collaboration, and activism in advancing gender equality. The power of digital tools, such as social media and AI, in mobilizing communities and driving advocacy strongly sufficed. It was stressed that there is need for intergenerational partnerships, where older generations embrace innovation while younger ones learn from past struggles.

### Perspectives from Different Generations

**Generation X:** The speaker highlighted that Generation X played a crucial role in driving legal and policy reforms that established the foundation for gender equality. Their efforts were said to have shaped modern approaches to gender inclusivity, especially in the workplace to some extent. The need for targeted affirmative action policies to address issues like wage gaps, workplace discrimination, and work-life balance challenges was also strongly emphasized. The continued importance of these efforts, with a focus on ensuring equitable opportunities for women, was noted as a key theme of their advocacy, underlining the need for ongoing systemic change.

**Generation Z:** It was noted that Generation Z is leveraging social media and AI for advocacy, mobilization, and financial inclusion, with digital platforms increasingly reshaping gender conversations and opening up new economic opportunities for women.

**Baby Boomers:** The importance of grassroots mobilization in shaping gender equality movements was strongly emphasized, highlighting how community-led advocacy has had a lasting and transformative impact over the years. These movements have not only sparked significant

changes in societal attitudes but have also paved the way for policy reforms and greater gender inclusivity. The speaker stressed the need to continue building on these grassroots foundations, underscoring that strengthening local networks and empowering communities is essential for sustaining progress and ensuring that gender equality remains a central focus of future efforts.

### Mentorship & Intergenerational Collaboration

Mentorship emerged as a significant enabler of sustainable empowerment, specifically structured mentorship programs, leadership training, and investment in youth development. Bridging generational gaps through continuous engagement and collaboration is essential for meaningful progress.

### Activism, Civic Space & Media

The need to **protect civic spaces** where women can advocate for change was emphasized. The discussion underscored that activism today extends beyond traditional protests—**digital activism and peaceful advocacy** are equally effective in driving social change. **Media and technology** play a vital role in amplifying women's voices and enhancing economic empowerment.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Youth Leadership & Inclusion** – Youth leadership and inclusion are crucial components for achieving sustainable progress, particularly in the context of gender equality. Ensuring that women have full participation in leadership and decision-making processes empowers them to contribute their unique perspectives and talents, fostering more inclusive and effective solutions. When women are actively involved in shaping policies and driving change, it not only promotes gender equity but also strengthens the overall development of societies. By encouraging the leadership of young women and creating pathways for their involvement, we can build a future where leadership is truly representative, diverse, and progressive.
2. **Technology as a Catalyst for Economic Empowerment** – Technology has become a powerful catalyst for economic empowerment, offering young women unprecedented financial and entrepreneurial opportunities. Tools like artificial intelligence (AI), social media, and e-commerce platforms enable them to break traditional barriers, access global markets, and

create innovative solutions for business and financial growth. These technologies provide women with the ability to learn new skills, expand their networks, and reach customers worldwide, leveling the playing field and reducing the gender gap in entrepreneurship. By embracing these digital opportunities, young women can take control of their economic futures, build sustainable businesses, and contribute to a more inclusive global economy.

- 3. Evolving Activism & Digital Advocacy** - Digital activism is revolutionizing gender advocacy, providing new platforms for women to voice their concerns, mobilize communities, and drive social change. Through social media, blogs, online petitions, and other digital tools, gender equality movements are gaining global visibility and attracting diverse supporters. However, for digital activism to thrive, it is essential that civic spaces remain open and protected, ensuring that women can freely participate without fear of censorship or retaliation. Safeguarding these spaces not only amplifies women's voices but also fosters a more inclusive, participatory environment where gender advocacy can flourish and lead to meaningful change.
- 4. Policy & Institutional Reforms** - Governments should implement **affirmative action policies** to promote economic inclusion and gender-responsive policies.
- 5. The Power of Collaboration** - Intergenerational partnerships and mentorship are crucial for accelerating gender equality efforts.



## The Role of Emerging Technologies and Their Impact on Gender Equality

**Speaker: Ambassador Philip Thigo - Special Envoy on Technology, Republic of Kenya**

Technology was highlighted as one of the most powerful forces reshaping society, alongside climate change and demographic shifts. While digital innovations have transformed communication, education, business, and governance, they have also exposed and exacerbated social inequalities, particularly for women and marginalized communities.

### Bridging the Digital Divide

Although global internet penetration stands at 70%, disparities persist, with only 28.5% of East Africa's population connected. Even in highly connected nations like Kenya, technology is often underutilized for economic empowerment due to low digital literacy, infrastructural limitations, and restrictive policies.

### Key Challenges & Solutions:

1. **Beyond access**—ensuring that connectivity is not just about being online but enabling meaningful use through digital skills training.
2. **Bridging the gender gap**—ensuring women have access to affordable devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy programs.
3. **Inclusion in innovation**—women should not just be technology consumers but also creators, decision-makers, and leaders in tech-driven industries.
4. **The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and Gender Disparities**
5. **The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)**—driven by **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing, Block chain, and Automation**—is **rapidly transforming economies and job markets**. While these innovations **boost efficiency and productivity**, they also introduce **critical risks**, including:
  6. **Job Disruptions**—AI and automation are expected to displace 40% of global jobs within the next year, with women 1.6 times more likely to be affected.
  7. **Bias & Exclusion**—algorithmic bias, digital misinformation, and online harassment disproportionately impact women, limiting their participation in civic engagement and leadership.

8. **Regulatory Gaps**—governance and policy frameworks struggle to keep pace with the rapid advancements in AI and emerging technologies.

### Preparing Women for the Digital Economy

Current education and workforce training models are ill-equipped to prepare women for digital transformation. According to the World Economic Forum, the top skills needed for success in 2025 and beyond include:

- Digital literacy and computational thinking
- Problem-solving, adaptability, and creativity
- Interdisciplinary collaboration and leadership

However, gender biases in education and corporate settings continue to limit women's access to these skills, keeping them underrepresented in STEM fields and high-paying tech careers.

### Key Takeaways:

- **STEM inclusion**—Expanding programs that train and mentor women in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—is essential for fostering inclusive innovation and bridging the gender gap in tech. By creating more opportunities for women to access quality education, mentorship, and hands-on experience in these areas, we can empower them to lead in sectors that shape the future. Inclusive STEM initiatives not only help women gain valuable skills and career opportunities but also bring diverse perspectives into innovation, driving more creative and effective solutions. Investing in STEM inclusion is a strategic step toward gender equity and sustainable development in the digital age.
- **Workforce adaptability**—Workforce adaptability is increasingly vital in today's rapidly evolving job market, and corporate and government-led upskilling and reskilling initiatives play a key role in preparing women for the future of work. As industries transform through automation and digitalization, targeted programs that equip women with new skills—especially in tech, digital literacy, and emerging sectors—are essential for ensuring they remain competitive and economically empowered. These initiatives not only close the gender skills gap but also promote inclusive growth by enabling women to access better job opportunities, leadership roles, and entrepreneurial ventures. Investing in adaptable, future-ready female talent is crucial for building resilient and equitable economies.

- **Policy and advocacy**– Strengthening gender-responsive policies through targeted advocacy is essential to ensure that women have equal access to opportunities in the tech industry. This includes creating inclusive frameworks that promote access to quality education, equitable financing options, and pathways to leadership roles. Addressing systemic barriers through policy reforms not only levels the playing field but also fosters innovation and economic growth by tapping into the full potential of women in technology. Strategic advocacy efforts must continue to push for policies that are intentional about gender equity, ensuring that women are not just participants but leaders in shaping the future of the digital economy

## Digital Transformation: Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection

**Speaker: Ms. Immaculate Kassait** - Data

Commissioner, Office of the Data Commissioner

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) is instrumental in safeguarding personal data and ensuring compliance with Kenya's Data Protection Act. As digital transformation and AI reshape industries, governance, and daily life, the ODPC enforces data privacy regulations to protect individuals' rights while promoting transparency and accountability. Its key functions include overseeing compliance in both public and private sectors, investigating data breaches, enforcing corrective measures, and ensuring data localization for sensitive sectors like health, education, and elections. By balancing innovation with privacy, the ODPC fosters an environment where technology can thrive without compromising security or ethical standards. As data becomes an increasingly valuable asset, responsible data governance is essential for national security, business integrity, and individual trust. The ODPC remains committed to strengthening data protection frameworks, raising awareness, and ensuring Kenya's digital future aligns with both national and international privacy standards.

### Key Takeaways

- The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner plays a critical role in safeguarding individuals' personal data and ensuring that both public and private entities comply with Kenya's Data Protection Act. Through enforcement, investigations, and corrective actions, the office protects privacy rights and reinforces data governance.
- As digital transformation and AI reshape society, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner ensures that technological advancement does not come at the cost of individual privacy. By promoting transparency and ethical standards, the office creates a regulatory environment where innovation can flourish responsibly.
- With data becoming an increasingly valuable asset, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner underscores the importance of responsible data management for national security, business integrity, and public trust. Its continued efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, promote awareness, and align with global privacy standards are essential for securing Kenya's digital future.

## Panel Session: Digital Transformation and Women-Led Businesses

**Moderator:** Ms. Elizabeth Owino

**Panelists:**

**Amb. Phillip Thigo** – Special Envoy on Technology, Republic of Kenya

**Ms. Gladys Njiru** – Group CEO, Datasec Africa

**Ms. Lilianne Ndinda** – National Program Coordinator, International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Dr. Laila Macharia** – Founding Director, Aspen Initiative

**Ms. Immaculate Kassait, MBS** – Data Commissioner, Office of Data Protection

The discussions centered on the role of technology, AI, and digital transformation in shaping gender inclusivity, economic participation, and data security. Experts highlighted the persistent **digital divide**, where women face cultural, educational, and systemic barriers in accessing and utilizing technology effectively. Early digital literacy, mentorship, and private sector support were identified as key enablers to increasing women's participation in the tech industry.

AI is reshaping Africa's workforce, presenting both opportunities and risks. While automation improves efficiency, it disproportionately threatens jobs held by women due to limited access to digital skills. There is a disconnect between education and industry demands, necessitating reforms to equip graduates, particularly women, with AI and data-related competencies. Investments in AI literacy, women-led tech startups, and inclusive hiring policies were recommended to address this gap.

Biases and structural barriers persist in women's advancement in tech leadership and entrepreneurship.

Access to funding remains a challenge, with women-led startups often struggling to secure venture capital.

Targeted financial support, affirmative action policies, and leadership development programs were proposed as solutions.

In policy discussions, experts stressed the need to integrate women in the informal economy into the digital workforce. Many marginalized groups, such as rural women and refugees, lack access to technology and financial services. Policymakers must create inclusive frameworks that recognize and support women's economic participation in the digital space.

Finally, data protection and cybersecurity emerged as critical concerns. Businesses often overlook cybersecurity investments, leaving them vulnerable to data breaches. Experts called for stronger regulatory enforcement, national cybersecurity oversight, and a balance between privacy and innovation.

Overall, the discussions emphasized the need for **systemic change** in education, policy, investment, and workplace structures to create a more inclusive and secure digital economy, ensuring that women are not just participants but leaders in the technology space.

## Key Takeaways

### • Bridging the Digital Divide for Women

Cultural, educational, and systemic barriers hinder women's participation in technology.

Early intervention through digital literacy and coding programs can foster inclusivity.

Private sector involvement, mentorship, and policy reforms are crucial for gender equity in tech.

### • AI's Impact on the African Workforce

Automation is reshaping jobs, disproportionately affecting women due to limited digital skills.

Education systems must align with industry needs to equip women for AI and data-related roles.

Governments and businesses should invest in AI literacy, women-led startups, and industry partnerships.

### • Women in Tech Leadership & Entrepreneurship

Biases persist in leadership and venture funding for women-led businesses.

Affirmative action policies, dedicated funding streams, and mentorship programs can help close the gap.

Companies must actively recruit, train, and promote women in digital fields.

### • Inclusive Policies for Digital Workforce Integration

Many marginalized women (e.g., rural workers, refugees) lack access to financial and digital services.

Governments must develop policies that integrate women in the informal sector into the digital economy.

Tech solutions for childcare and household management could improve workforce participation.

### • Systemic Changes for an Inclusive Digital Economy

Education must shift from traditional STEM models to innovation-driven, problem-solving curricula. Investment in digital infrastructure, AI training, and broadband access will bridge the gender gap. A strong policy and regulatory framework is needed to ensure ethical, inclusive, and secure digital growth.

## Financial Inclusion and Access to Capital for Women

### Speakers:

**Mr. Orachah Teddy** – Senior Manager, Partnerships & Business Development, KCB Foundation.

**Dr. Annie Njoki Njau** – Manager, Loans and Credit, Uwezo Fund

**Ms. Eunice Nyala** – Chairperson, Board of Directors, Kenya Association of Women Business Owners.

The discussion centered on enhancing financial inclusion for women by addressing systemic barriers, improving financial literacy, and leveraging digital solutions.

Enhancing financial inclusion for women requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges their role as key economic actors and addresses the systemic barriers that limit their full participation. Women across diverse sectors continue to face challenges such as limited access to formal financial services, collateral-based lending models, and financial decision-making constraints. These challenges are often reinforced by institutional frameworks that do not adequately respond to women's specific financial needs and circumstances.

While access to credit remains important, financial inclusion must go further to include tailored financial products, flexible lending models, and policy environments that are sensitive to gender dynamics. Digital finance and fintech solutions are proving valuable in expanding access—especially in rural areas—through mobile banking and innovative tools that reduce transaction costs and increase convenience. For these solutions to be effective, they must be designed with women's diverse contexts in mind.

-Although financial literacy initiatives play an important role in improving knowledge and confidence, they should not be viewed as the sole solution to financial exclusion. Equally important is the responsibility of financial institutions to create services that are accessible, clear, and responsive to the realities of women in different social and economic settings.

Capacity-building programs such as business training, mentorship, and enterprise incubation continue to be essential in strengthening the sustainability of women-owned enterprises. Initiatives like the KCB Foundation's *Tujiajiri* and the *Uwezo Fund* demonstrate the positive impact of combining financial support with skills development and entrepreneurship training.

Despite ongoing progress, gender disparities in lending and

investment persist. Addressing these disparities calls for policy and regulatory reforms, gender-responsive investment frameworks, and inclusive credit assessment models that reduce reliance on conventional collateral requirements.

Sustainable financial inclusion is best achieved through collaboration. Governments, financial institutions, fintech companies, and communities all have a role to play in building financial systems that are inclusive, equitable, and supportive of women's economic empowerment.

### Key Takeaways

- **Women as Economic Leaders** - Financial inclusion should go beyond providing credit and focus on designing financial products that reflect women's diverse realities, including flexible repayment models and alternative collateral mechanisms. Women are not just recipients of financial services—they are active economic agents driving growth.
- **Accessible Digital Finance and Informed Decision-Making** - Digital banking and fintech platforms offer important opportunities to enhance women's access to finance, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Financial literacy remains essential, but the emphasis must shift toward ensuring that financial systems are transparent, user-friendly, and developed with women's needs in mind.
- **Building Capacity through Mentorship and Training** - Business development support, including mentorship, skills training, and networking opportunities, plays a critical role in enabling women entrepreneurs to strengthen and scale their enterprises. These interventions should be tailored to address the specific challenges women face in accessing and managing financial resources.
- **Addressing Gender Bias in Financial Systems** - Structural and institutional biases in lending and investment continue to limit women's access to capital. Financial inclusion efforts should be accompanied by policy reforms, gender-sensitive financial instruments, and inclusive credit assessment frameworks.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Inclusive Systems** - Advancing financial inclusion for women requires coordinated action by governments, financial institutions, fintech innovators, and communities. Collaborative efforts are key to building inclusive financial ecosystems that are equitable, sustainable, and responsive to women's economic contributions.



## Interactive Dialogue: Our Collective Vision for Gender Equality in Kenya.

**Moderator:** Dinah Musindarwezo

**Speaker:** Prof. Ruth Nduati, MBCHB, MMED, MPH  
(Epidemiology)

The discussions emphasized that gender equality is not just a moral issue but an economic and social necessity. It requires systemic changes across governance, business, education, finance, and cultural mindsets to ensure that women have equal opportunities to succeed. Achieving true gender parity is critical for national development, economic prosperity, and social cohesion.

### Key Discussion Points & Actionable Strategies

#### 1. Equal Representation & Leadership Inclusion

**Insight:** Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles across government, corporate, and community institutions. This limits their influence on policy decisions and economic development. Gender-inclusive leadership is crucial for creating policies that address women's needs and drive inclusive growth.

##### Challenges:

- Women are often overlooked for leadership positions due to unconscious bias and cultural stereotypes.
- Political and corporate structures favor men, making it difficult for women to rise through the ranks.
- Lack of mentorship and leadership training for young women hinders their professional growth.

##### Actionable Strategies:

- **Legislate and implement laws** to achieve equal representation of women in government and corporate leadership.
- **Introduce financial incentives** for companies that achieve gender balance in executive leadership.
- **Create leadership pipelines** by providing governance, negotiation, and policy-making training to young women.
- **Hold institutions accountable** by tracking and reporting gender representation in key sectors.

**Key Outcome:** A governance and business landscape where women have equal representation in shaping policies, decision-making, and national development.

#### 2. Economic Empowerment & Financial Inclusion.

**Insight:** Economic inequality remains a major challenge for women, with barriers such as wage gaps, lack of access to credit, and unpaid labor preventing them from achieving financial independence. Women's economic empowerment is key to national prosperity.

##### Challenges:

- Women earn less than men for the same work, and wage gaps persist across industries.
- Women struggle to access credit due to lack of collateral, financial literacy, or gender-biased lending policies.
- Unpaid care work, such as childcare and household responsibilities, disproportionately falls on women, limiting their economic opportunities.

##### Actionable Strategies:

- **Mandate equal pay for equal work**, ensuring regular salary audits for transparency.
- **Expand financial literacy programs** to help women build wealth and access financial services.
- **Provide government-backed grants and low-interest loans** to female entrepreneurs.
- **Recognize and compensate unpaid care work** through tax breaks or financial support programs.

**Key Outcome:** Women achieve financial independence, leading to stronger families, communities, and national economic growth.

#### 3. Education as a Catalyst for Change.

**Insight:** Education is the way to gender equality. However, millions of girls drop out due to financial struggles, early marriage, or cultural barriers. Investing in education is crucial for empowering women and ensuring they reach their full potential.

##### Challenges:

- Early marriage and teenage pregnancies force many girls to drop out of school.
- Lack of access to sanitary products prevents girls from attending school consistently.
- Gender stereotypes discourage girls from pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

**Actionable Strategies:**

- **Provide free sanitary products in schools** to ensure no girl misses school due to menstruation.
- **Strengthen laws against early marriage** and provide support for young mothers to return to school.
- **Introduce STEM mentorship programs** to increase female participation in technology, engineering, and sciences.
- **Eliminate gender biases in education** and encourage girls and boys to pursue diverse career paths.

**Key Outcome:** A future where education unlocks doors for every girl, ensuring equal opportunities in the workforce.

**4. Digital Literacy & Technology Access for Women**

**Insight:** Technology is a key driver of economic progress, but women remain underrepresented in the digital space. Ensuring women have access to digital tools and skills is essential for their participation in the modern economy.

**Challenges:**

- Women in rural areas have limited access to digital resources and the internet.
- A lack of technical skills prevents women from entering high-paying tech jobs.
- Cyber harassment discourages women from engaging in digital platforms.

**Actionable Strategies:**

- **Expand affordable internet access** in rural and marginalized communities to bridge the digital divide.
- **Create coding, data analytics, and AI training programs** specifically for young women.
- **Fund and support women-led tech startups** to drive innovation and inclusion in digital spaces.
- **Promote online safety initiatives** to combat cyber harassment and create a safe digital environment for women.

**Key Outcome:** Women become active participants in the digital economy, leading to greater innovation and economic inclusion.

**5. Changing Cultural Mindsets & Eliminating Harmful Traditions**

**Insight:** Cultural biases and traditional gender roles continue to limit women's opportunities. A mindset shift is

essential for breaking these barriers and creating a more inclusive society.

**Challenges:**

- Women are often viewed as dependents rather than as allies in gender equality discussions.

**Actionable Strategies:**

- **Leverage faith and community leaders** to advocate for gender equality in local communities.
- **Launch nationwide awareness campaigns** to challenge gender stereotypes and highlight successful female role models.
- **Engage men as allies** through forums that educate them on the benefits of gender equality.

**Key Outcome:** A cultural shift where women are seen as equal partners in development, not dependents.

**6. Strengthening Legal Frameworks & Policy Implementation**

**Insight:** While Kenya has progressive gender policies, enforcement remains weak. Stronger legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms are needed to protect and advance women's rights.

**Challenges:**

- Many gender-related laws exist but are poorly implemented.
- Workplace harassment and discrimination remain prevalent.
- Budget allocations for gender equality programs are often insufficient.

**Actionable Strategies:**

- **Enforce the two-thirds gender rule** in governance and penalize non-compliance.
- **Appoint the Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage Affairs** to promote gender mainstreaming in national development processes.
- **Make sexual harassment policies mandatory** in all workplaces, with strong reporting mechanisms.
- **Implement Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)** to ensure government spending and policies address the needs and priorities of both women and men, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Key Outcome:** Stronger legal protections and policies that ensure sustained gender equality.

### Implementation Strategy: Turning Vision into Reality

To ensure these strategies are implemented effectively, a multi-pronged approach is required:

- **Political Will & Accountability**  
Establish a **Gender Equality Task Force** to monitor progress.  
Require **annual gender progress reports** from the government and private sectors.  
Enforce gender policies through **legally binding commitments** rather than recommendations.
- **Public-Private Sector Collaboration**  
Engage corporates, NGOs, and government institutions in **joint gender equality projects**.  
Establish **public-private mentorship programs** to support young women in leadership and entrepreneurship.

### 3. Grassroots & Community Engagement

- Work with **community leaders to educate and shift local mindsets**.
- Set up **Women's Empowerment Centers (WECs)** in rural areas for training, legal aid, and financial support.
- Deploy **digital storytelling** to showcase real-life success stories of empowered women.

## Sub-theme 3: Celebrating Achievements and Building Networks: From Inspiration to Collective Action.

The final day sessions were dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the achievements of women leaders who have paved the way for future generations. The speakers emphasized on the importance of building strong networks and strategic partnerships that support women's leadership. It also spotlighted initiatives designed to empower the next wave of women leaders, fostering a collective spirit of collaboration and action that will lead to lasting, global change for women's rights and equality.

### Celebrating Achievements and Driving Collective Action

**Speaker: H.E Betty Kaari Murungi: First Lady Siaya County and Founding Director, Urgent Action Fund-Africa**

### Importance of Celebration in Movements

Celebration plays a crucial role in sustaining gender equality efforts by:

- Recognizing the contributions of past and present activists.
- Boosting morale and resilience within the movement.
- Strengthening unity and reinforcing shared goals.
- Renewing commitment to gender justice and social progress.

### Key Achievements in the Women's Movement

- **Constitutional Reforms & Women's Rights:** Advocacy efforts led to the inclusion of women's rights in Kenya's 2010 Constitution.
- **Gender Representation & Affirmative Action:** Legal frameworks enabled increased participation of women in leadership.
- **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Reforms have strengthened protections against gender-based violence and economic discrimination.
- **Strategies to Accelerate Progress**
- **Legal Reforms & Enforcement:** Strengthening laws to eliminate discrimination and protect marginalized women.

**Adequate Resources for Gender Programs:** Ensuring funding for institutions working on gender equality.

**Intersectional Approach:** Addressing challenges faced by rural women, domestic workers, and other vulnerable groups.

### Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- Recognizing early warning signs of violence, such as political unrest and rising misogyny.
- Strengthening response mechanisms, reducing stigma, and improving legal frameworks.
- Engaging male allies in promoting positive masculinity.

### Sustaining the Movement for the Future

- **Intergenerational Collaboration:** Sharing knowledge between past and emerging activists.
- **Mental Health & Self-Care:** Preventing burnout to sustain activism long-term.
- **Strong Women's Networks:** Supporting and mentoring young female leaders.
- **Building on Past Achievements:** Ensuring progress continues without setbacks. Celebrating Achievements and Building Networks: From Inspiration to Collective Action

## Panel Discussion: From Inspiration to Action - Stories of Resilience and Leadership.

**Moderator:** Dr. Florence Kithinji

**Speakers**

**Mrs. Rahab Mwikali Muiu**, HSC – Chairperson, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization

**Ms. Carole Osero-Ageng'o** – Board Member, FEMNET

**Dr. Stella Bosire** – Board Chair, Amnesty International Kenya

**Ms. Anne W. Ireri** – Executive Director, FIDA

**Mrs. Bernadette Resian Loloju** – CEO, Anti-FGM Board

The panel discussion highlighted the resilience, leadership, and innovation driving gender equality efforts. The panelists, representing diverse sectors, shared insights on overcoming systemic barriers, leveraging technology, and sustaining movements through mentorship and intergenerational collaboration.

### Key Takeaways

- **Resilience & Leadership in Gender Advocacy**

Women have historically turned adversity into action, shaping social, political, and economic progress. Leadership is cultivated through perseverance, mentorship, and inclusive policies.

- **Sustaining Movements Through Networks & Mentorship**

Seamless leadership transitions are vital for progress. Engaging men as allies and fostering collaboration ensures long-term impact.

- **Technology as a Tool for Advocacy & Protection**

Digital platforms enhance advocacy but also expose women to online threats.

AI and tech-driven solutions can bridge healthcare gaps and improve access to justice.

- **Legal & Policy Reforms for Institutional Change**

Strong legal frameworks are essential in eradicating gender-based violence and discrimination.

Justice systems must be accessible and effective in protecting women's rights.

- **Education & Mentorship as Pathways to Equality**

Keeping girls in school and providing mentorship unlocks leadership and economic opportunities.

Investing in education fosters systemic change and empowers future female leaders.

- **Intergenerational Solidarity for Lasting Impact**

Older women provide experience, while younger women bring innovation and digital fluency.

Collaboration across generations ensures the longevity and strength of gender equality movements.



## Cross-Cutting Findings

### Resilience as a Catalyst for Change

Women's resilience continues to serve as a powerful catalyst for social, economic, and political change. Across diverse discussions and contexts, it is evident that despite facing deeply rooted systemic barriers – including discrimination, limited access to opportunities, and restrictive social norms – women consistently demonstrate determination, innovation, and leadership. Their ability to persevere and drive progress has contributed significantly to community development, governance, and economic growth. However, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most persistent challenges undermining women's potential. Acts of intimidation, harassment, and violence create an environment of fear that discourages women from stepping into leadership roles and participating fully in political and public life. Addressing GBV through stronger legal frameworks, protective policies, and cultural shifts is essential to enabling women to lead without fear and continue acting as agents of transformative change.

### The Critical Role of Technology

Technology plays a pivotal role in driving social change, offering powerful tools for advocacy, economic empowerment, and education across diverse communities. Through digital platforms, individuals – particularly women and marginalized groups – can amplify their voices, access valuable resources, build professional networks, and engage in lifelong learning. These opportunities contribute to greater inclusion, innovation, and socio-economic development. However, the rapid expansion of technology has also given rise to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV), which includes cyberbullying, online harassment, doxing, and the non-consensual sharing of personal information or images. Such forms of abuse not only harm victims psychologically and emotionally but also discourage women and girls from fully participating in digital spaces, thus undermining the very empowerment that technology promises. Addressing this growing concern requires comprehensive action, including stronger legal protections, improved digital security measures, widespread digital literacy programs, and collaboration among policymakers, tech companies, civil society, and communities to create safe and inclusive online environments where everyone can thrive.

### Legal and Policy Enforcement Gaps

While there are progressive gender laws and policies to promote equality and protect against gender-based violence, their effectiveness is often hindered by weak enforcement.

Factors such as limited institutional capacity, inadequate funding, lack of training for law enforcement, and deeply rooted social norms continue to obstruct justice for survivors. As a result, legal frameworks that appear robust on paper fail to deliver tangible protection and accountability in practice. Strengthening enforcement requires not only dedicated resources but also the establishment of clear accountability mechanisms, continuous monitoring, and stronger partnerships between governments, civil society, and communities. Only through coordinated efforts and sustained commitment can legal protections lead to meaningful and lasting change.

### Education as the Foundation of Equality

Access to quality education is fundamental to breaking down gender barriers and fostering equal opportunities for all. Education empowers women and girls with the knowledge, confidence, and skills needed to participate fully in social, economic, and political spheres. However, beyond formal education, targeted mentorship and skill-building programs are crucial in preparing women for leadership roles and decision-making positions. These initiatives help bridge gaps in professional development, nurture talent, and foster networks that support women's advancement. By investing in inclusive education systems and creating pathways for continuous learning and mentorship, societies can cultivate a new generation of female leaders who drive progress and champion gender equality at all levels.

### Intersectionality and Inclusive Advocacy

The pursuit of gender equality cannot be fully realized without recognizing the intersecting layers of discrimination that many women face. Factors such as age, disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic location compound gender-based inequalities, creating unique and complex challenges for different groups of women. For instance, a young woman with a disability from a low-income background may experience exclusion differently from an older woman in a leadership position. Effective gender equality efforts must therefore adopt an intersectional approach – one that acknowledges and addresses these overlapping identities and barriers. By centering inclusivity and ensuring that policies, programs, and advocacy initiatives respond to the diverse realities of all women, societies can foster more equitable and lasting change.

### Intergenerational Collaboration for Sustainability

Sustainable progress toward gender equality relies on fostering collaboration between generations. Engaging both younger and older women strengthens advocacy efforts, enriches dialogue, and ensures continuity of movements over time. Older women contribute invaluable wisdom,

lived experience, and historical context that help ground and guide strategic actions. In turn, younger women bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and digital expertise that can propel movements forward in today's rapidly evolving world. When these strengths are combined, they create dynamic and resilient networks capable of adapting to new challenges and sustaining long-term impact. Encouraging intergenerational mentorship, dialogue, and shared leadership is essential for building inclusive, future-proof gender equality movements.

### **Economic Empowerment is Key to Gender Equality**

Economic empowerment is a cornerstone of achieving gender equality, as financial independence enables women to make informed decisions about their lives, families, and futures. When women have control over financial resources, they gain greater autonomy, confidence, and influence in both private and public spheres. However, significant barriers remain, including persistent wage gaps, limited access to credit and financial services, and the widespread undervaluation of unpaid care and domestic work. Bridging these gaps requires targeted policies that promote pay equity, expand women's access to financial resources and entrepreneurial opportunities, and formally recognize and support unpaid labor, which forms the backbone of many economies. By prioritizing women's economic empowerment, societies can unlock broader social and economic benefits, fostering more inclusive and sustainable development.

### **The Need for Male Allyship**

Gender equality is not solely a women's issue; it requires collective action and the active participation of men as allies and advocates. Engaging men in conversations around positive masculinity and gender equity is essential to challenging and dismantling deep-rooted patriarchal norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. When men understand their role in promoting fairness, respect, and shared responsibility – both in private spaces and in society at large – they become powerful agents of change. Encouraging male allyship involves raising awareness, fostering empathy, and providing opportunities for men to contribute to gender equality efforts meaningfully. By working together across genders, societies can create more balanced, respectful, and equitable environments for everyone.

## Summary of Key Recommendations

To effectively address the identified challenges and advance gender equality, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. This includes strengthening policy implementation, promoting digital and financial inclusion, investing in women's leadership, addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) systematically, fostering economic empowerment, and enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration.

Gender-responsive climate change mitigation requires a thorough review and revision of existing policies to ensure they address gender-specific challenges and opportunities. Policies should be designed to empower women, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, clean energy, and water management, where climate change has a significant impact. By integrating gender perspectives into mitigation strategies, women can be equipped with economic opportunities that enhance their resilience, promote sustainability, and contribute to broader environmental and social development goals.

Prioritizing the deployment of female teachers in rural areas is essential in addressing gender disparities in education. The Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should advocate for targeted recruitment and placement strategies that increase the presence of female educators in underserved regions. Female teachers serve as role models, inspiring young girls to pursue education and fostering an environment where gender equality in learning is promoted. This initiative not only enhances educational outcomes for girls but also contributes to long-term societal change by challenging traditional gender norms and encouraging greater female participation in leadership and professional fields.

Strengthening policy implementation to ensure gender equality frameworks are effectively enforced is also a priority. Governments and organizations should establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and hold stakeholders accountable. Gender-responsive budgeting should be institutionalized to guarantee adequate funding for gender-focused initiatives. Additionally, enforcing gender quotas in political, corporate, and institutional leadership is crucial for increasing women's representation. Data collection and analysis mechanisms must also be improved to identify gaps and drive evidence-based decision-making in gender policy formulation and execution.

Consequently, it was recommended that Kenya establish its national chapter of FemWise Africa, an AU initiative dedicated to women-led peace negotiations, to enhance the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

Promoting digital and financial inclusion is essential for empowering women economically. Expanding digital literacy and technology training programs can equip women with the necessary skills to participate in the digital economy. Ensuring equal access to financial services by supporting microfinance institutions, venture capital funds, and women-focused investment programs can help bridge the financial gap. Governments and financial institutions should develop policies that encourage the growth of women-led startups through grants, tax incentives, and business incubation initiatives. Additionally, cybersecurity measures must be strengthened to protect women entrepreneurs from digital fraud, cyber harassment, and financial exploitation in online business environments.

Investing in women's leadership is critical for breaking systemic barriers that hinder women from accessing decision-making positions. Structured mentorship and leadership development programs should be established to support aspiring women leaders, equipping them with the skills and networks necessary to succeed. Affirmative action policies, including leadership quotas, must be enforced to ensure gender-balanced representation in governance, corporate leadership, and public service. Leadership training should also focus on strategic decision-making, negotiation, and confidence-building to prepare women for influential roles. Moreover, fostering male allyship and promoting inclusive organizational cultures will help create environments where women can thrive in leadership positions.

Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) systematically requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. Specialized GBV courts should be established to ensure timely legal proceedings and justice for survivors. Strengthening survivor support services, including access to safe shelters, psychological counseling, legal aid, and economic reintegration programs, is essential. Leveraging technology for tracking and reporting GBV cases through mobile applications and AI-driven predictive analytics can improve prevention and response mechanisms. Additionally, increasing awareness through community education and advocacy campaigns can help challenge harmful gender norms and reduce societal tolerance for GBV.

Fostering economic empowerment for women is fundamental to achieving long-term gender equality. Governments and financial institutions should develop targeted financial solutions such as low-interest loans, grants, and gender-responsive investment opportunities tailored to female entrepreneurs. Expanding skills development programs in high-growth sectors, including STEM, digital finance, and renewable energy, will enhance women's participation in the workforce. Economic policies must

integrate gender perspectives to address barriers such as the gender wage gap, workplace discrimination, and unequal access to markets. Promoting equal pay initiatives and labor policies that support work-life balance can further ensure economic security for women.

Finally, enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration is crucial for driving sustainable progress in gender equality. Governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations must strengthen partnerships to coordinate efforts and maximize impact. Cross-border collaborations can facilitate the exchange of best practices and policy innovations to accelerate women's rights and empowerment. Encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that focus on gender-inclusive leadership and economic development can also contribute to long-term change. Furthermore, leveraging international development funds and donor resources will help scale gender-focused programs and initiatives, ensuring sustained progress in achieving gender parity across all sectors.

## Closing Ceremony

### Remarks by Dr. Josephine Mwanzia

#### Senior Director, Academic Affairs, Kenya School of Government

In her closing address, Dr. Josephine Mwanzia underscored the Kenya School of Government's core mandate: training, research, consultancy and advisory services, each focused on building the capacity of the public service and ensuring it remains responsive and people centric. She emphasized that gender empowerment is an integral pillar of this mandate, deeply embedded within the School's programs and institutional culture. Through the Margaret Kenyatta Institute for Gender and Social Development, the School continues to invest in developing leadership that is inclusive, ethical and transformative.

Dr. Mwanzia lauded the Women's Conference 2025 as a milestone event in the national journey toward gender equality. She noted that the convening had not only inspired robust dialogue and collaboration across generations and sectors, but also laid a strategic foundation for actionable outcomes. By harnessing innovation, collective expertise and lived experiences, the conference had amplified the urgency of removing barriers that hinder women's full participation in governance, development and economic life.

While acknowledging the commendable gains made through legal, policy and institutional reforms, Dr. Mwanzia underscored the need for greater urgency in confronting persistent inequalities. She pointed to challenges such as gender based violence, economic marginalization and underrepresentation in leadership as urgent fronts that require concerted and sustained action. In doing so, she urged stakeholders across government, civil society and the private sector to deepen their commitment to gender equality and to accelerate implementation of strategies and frameworks discussed during the conference.

In her final remarks, Dr. Mwanzia reiterated the Kenya School of Government's commitment to championing gender responsive leadership and governance. She called upon all participants to become ambassadors of change in their spheres of influence and to advance the cause of gender justice with renewed vigor. The School, she affirmed, would continue to play a leading role in shaping a professional, inclusive and people centric public service that reflects the values and aspirations of a gender equal society.



## Keynote Address by the Chief Guest Hon. Lady Justice Martha Koome, EGH.

The keynote address delivered by **Hon. Lady Justice Martha Koome, EGH**, during the closing of the conference aimed to reaffirm Kenya's constitutional and moral commitment to gender equality and justice. It served to assess the nation's progress toward gender parity, identify persistent challenges, and propose practical solutions that can be implemented across various sectors. Furthermore, the address highlighted the essential role of innovation in empowering women and tackling new forms of exclusion in digital spaces. By fostering collaboration between different generations and sectors, the keynote sought to inspire actionable change that would extend beyond the confines of the conference and translate into lasting societal impact.



### Key Strengths and Insights.

**Recognition of Persistent Barriers:** The Chief Justice candidly addressed critical gaps such as the underrepresentation of women in parliament (23.3% versus the constitutional two-thirds requirement), economic disparities, and widespread gender-based violence.

**Justice in Everyday Life:** The speech broadened the concept of justice beyond courtrooms to include equal access to opportunities, safety, education, and participation in leadership and innovation.

**Tackling Digital Exclusion:** By highlighting the digital divide and the prevalence of cyberbullying and harassment, the address positioned digital inclusivity as a contemporary justice priority.

**Bridging Generations:** The keynote emphasized the importance of mentorship and support across generations to equip young women entering leadership, technology, business, and governance spaces.

**Call for Collective Action:** The speech reinforced the role of partnerships among policymakers, civil society, development organizations, and grassroots movements in advancing gender equality.

### Areas of Significant Impact

**Policy and Governance:** The keynote is expected to stimulate stronger policy enforcement on gender inclusion, particularly the implementation of the two-thirds gender rule.

**Public Awareness:** Raised awareness on the importance of addressing structural barriers, digital safety, and societal attitudes toward women's participation in leadership.

**Catalyst for Collaboration:** Encouraged the formation of inter-sectoral and intergenerational alliances aimed at sustainable transformation.

**Influence on Innovation Strategy:** Positioned innovation as a tool for justice, highlighting the need to ensure technology is safe, accessible, and inclusive.

## Conclusion: A Call to Action for Gender Equality

The Women's Conference 2025 reaffirmed the collective commitment to advancing gender equality and fostering inclusive leadership. Throughout the discussions, panelists, industry leaders, and advocates discussed the urgent need for systemic reforms, policy enforcement, and multi-sector collaboration to dismantle barriers that continue to marginalize women across political, economic, and technological spheres. As the world moves forward, turning commitments into tangible actions will be critical in ensuring that gender equality is not just an aspiration but a lived reality. Governments, corporations, civil society organizations, and individuals must work together to implement the proposed strategies, including strengthening policy frameworks, increasing financial inclusion, fostering digital empowerment, and enhancing women's participation in leadership.

The conference served as a powerful reminder that sustainable progress requires ongoing advocacy, accountability, and investment in women's empowerment. By championing gender-sensitive policies, building inclusive institutions, and leveraging innovation and technology to bridge existing gaps, stakeholders can drive meaningful change that creates a more equitable, just, and prosperous society for all.

The momentum generated at the Women's Conference 2025 must now be translated into sustained action—ensuring that the next decade sees greater strides toward gender justice, economic empowerment, and leadership equity worldwide.





