



POLICY BRIEF

A Sustainable Networking and Alliance Building Strategy

For: Women's Rights Organizations and Movements in Kenya

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Community Awareness and Advocacy Trust (CRAWN Trust)

About CRAWN Trust:

The Community Advocacy and Awareness (CRAWN) Trust is a change catalyst providing African women and girls with the tools, voice, and platforms in which they can effect change at individual, family, community, regional, national, and continental levels in economic, social, and political spheres. CRAWN Trust is the host organization and permanent secretariat for the National Women's Steering Committee, a coalition platform that brings together individuals and organizations working for women's political and economic emancipation.

Policy Brief Published by:

Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust)
4th Floor, Bishop Ibaim House
All Africa Conference of Churches Complex
Off Waiyaki Way, Opposite Safaricom
P.O. Box 943-00621,
Nairobi, Kenya

@ Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust), 2023

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This work may be cited as:

CRAWN Trust, 2023, Sustainable Networking and Alliance Building Strategy for WROs and Movements in Kenya: A Policy Brief, Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Policy Brief is as a result of collaboration between Community Advocacy and Awareness Trust (CRAWN Trust), TransPolicy Network Consultants (TNC), Stakeholders and our Partners.

We wish to acknowledge Mr. Karanja Chege who was engaged as the consultant in developing this Policy Brief on behalf of TransPolicy Network Consultants (TNC). Your generous contributions and dissemination of thoughts were useful in development of this Paper.

We also acknowledge the CRAWN Trust team for their support and dedication in the delivery of this work. We thank our Programs Manager Ms. Velona Oketch for your Leadership role, and the support by Ms. Winfred Kimeu and Ms. Wanjiru Kinyua and working in close collaboration with stakeholders and the consultant.

We thank all stakeholders who availed themselves for your valuable insights and suggestions which helped us to develop this brief.

We would like to extend our appreciation to our donors Global Affairs Canada through CARE Kenya for making sure that this research was successful.

Special thanks go to our partners for your support throughout this process.

God bless you all!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This policy brief provides the basis for policy recommendations in realization of sustainable WRO networks and alliances in Kenya. The brief has been developed from the findings and recommendations of the strategy about sustainable networking and alliance building for Women Rights Organizations and Movements in Kenya by CRAWN Trust.

It seeks to promote the status of women in society and full realization of human rights. In this regard, it highlights the key challenges affecting efforts by women in claiming their rightful position in society. For example, women are generally excluded from the social, economic, and political discourses while most of their efforts ends up with minimal impact. Other challenges include; lack of awareness and development remoteness, stereotypes about gender and the place of women in society, gender inequality, patriarchy, lack of capacity, restricted operational capacities due to limited cohesive action, technical incapacities, limited resources for action, illiteracy and limited access to education among women and girls, and political patronage.

The policy brief acknowledges the progress that Kenya has made in advancing the women's rights agenda as a result of the second liberation and the constitution making process. It takes into account the importance of women's organizations in shaping the social, economic, and political human rights landscape of the society.

It also recommends the need for a collective action by like-minded women's rights organizations in advocating for their agenda on issues of common interest such as elimination of exclusion, violation of women's human rights and the push for their rightful space in the society.

As a result, this brief realigns with the constitution of Kenya, 2010 which enshrines the social, political, and economic rights of all groups of the citizenry where women and girls are included. This resonates with SDG five that encourages all nations to work towards realization of gender equality on empowerment of women and girls.

The policy brief is a tool for policy makers and agencies involved with empowering women to establish organizations and/or networks and alliances where they can advance their social, economic, or political rights in society.

Daisy Amdany

Executive Director, CRAWN Trust

SUMMARY

This policy brief highlights key elements of the strategy about sustainable networking and alliance building for WROs and movements in Kenya by CRAWN Trust. It conceptualizes the women's rights organizations and movements and outlines the main challenges they face in networking and alliance building. It therefore documents the best strategies to promote networking and alliance building for women's rights organizations and movements. The brief also suggests best policy recommendations in enhancing sustainable networking and alliance building both to government and the women's rights organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights organizations and movements permeate the social, economic and political spheres of the society. Their contributions to the recognition and implementation of women's human rights are immense. This has however been achievable through collective action around common interests. Here, women organize themselves in various forms such as civil society organizations, groups, cooperatives, and professional associations. Coming together helps them to assist each other in pushing their agenda of eliminating exclusion and violation of human rights and to claim their space in the society.

On this note, Kenya stands out as one of the African countries that has made progress by having women advance their agenda. Women have a role to play in promoting activities aimed at improving their status in society and championing for full enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, they have come together through individual efforts, self-help groups, social welfare groups, occupational associations, and business communities.

Exponentially, women's rights networks and alliances have established themselves as platforms of bringing together women from the like-minded groups to further amplify their interests. For example, women's rights organizations have featured prominently in key historical epochs such as during the second liberation processes in the 1990s and the constitutional making process. Their advocacy involving strategies such as boycotts and peaceful demonstrations to push for reforms were key drivers of women's rights.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts and the underlying potential within their strength in numbers; women continue to be marginalized in the society. They are equally excluded from the social, political and economic discourses. Also, women's rights organization are often marginalized or invisible in the mainstream societies despite their existence, largely due to their minimal impact. This points out for the need for inclusivity and to strengthen their coming together as a strategy to advance their voice. It also suggests the development of strong networks and alliances through which they can share experiences, information, and partner to shape their collective agenda. These platforms assist women to better conceptualize prevailing situations and to strategize on how to lobby governments and to advocate their rightful position in society.

POLICY PROBLEM AND THE CHALLENGES FACING NETWORKING AND ALLIANCE BUILDING

There exist many bottlenecks which continue to hamper the full realization of women and girls' rights in Kenya. Women's rights organizations and movements emerge as a result of structural inequality, historical and cultural factors, power relations, and institutional practice. These breed into inequalities, exclusion, and oppression to women. Therefore, women's right organizations and networks find their way as platforms for advocacy and collective action to deal with impacts of these setbacks on the social, economic, and political women's rights.

Women's rights organizations and networks are vulnerable due to the multiple reasons. First, the society is characterized by pronounced patriarchal dominance and repressive sociocultural practices which render women-based initiatives a marginal role. This has continued to hamper the impact that women have had in championing for their emancipation in social, economic, and political development.

Second, internal structure of the women's rights network itself accounts for the problems they face. For example, there often lack clarity about the level of engagement with the mainstream political administration. Generational differences across diverse organizations and movements accounts for a fraction of these challenges. Also, there is infighting from within and uncertainties surrounding the management of day-to-day activities of organizations which pose challenge on and how to move forward.

Third, another set of challenges is rooted within the deep social structure where women's rights organizations operate. Apart from patriarchy, other challenges affecting networks and alliances include; lack of awareness and development remoteness, lack of capacity, gender inequality, and stereotypes about gender and the place of women in the society. Also, there is informality of norms, rules, and processes, and inadequacy of policy to support their existence and formalization.

Fourth, there has been limited cohesive action among women rights organizations. This is coupled with restricted operational capacities. Women rights organizations lack adequate information, technical capacities, literacy, and resources for action. Collectively, this has led into their invisibility and hence very few people recognize their presence, significance and impact.

Fifth, another set of collective challenges facing women's rights networks and alliances is disjointed understanding in the areas of focus for advocacy among WROs. There is variance of capacities and an undeveloped forum for collective learning among organizations operating in different parts of the country. There is also limited political space for action due to inadequate access to the established political networks by most women. In addition, absence of platforms for coordination of information sharing, and interests and values among organizations disincentivize the formation of sustainable networks and alliances.

Sixth, challenges related to poor performance of women's rights networks undermine formation and sustainability of networks and alliances. These include individual differences among members, poor prioritization of activities, illiteracy and lack of education, lack of professionalism in management, impaired financial capacities, and lack of participation and corporate ownership of organizations' activities among members. In connection, poor leadership, lack of transparency and accountability in management, conflict of interest, poor decision-making, and lack of networks with like-minded organizations or mentors due to remoteness account for these challenges.

Seventh, there are challenges rooted within the political landscape. For example, influence by political patronage has led into many women in organizations to turn against themselves. It has also influenced their internal structures hence affecting their activities which subsequently derail them away from their focus. Deductively, there has been less action from the women's networks in advocacy for implementation of the two thirds gender rule under the constitution since 2010.

STRATEGIES FOR NETWORKING AND ALLIANCE BUILDING

Strategy Mapping

A strategy map should clearly spell out the mission and vision, perspectives, strategic themes, and strategic objectives of an organization or a network. It needs to pronounce a clear and concise means to understand and communicate the course of action. The process should describe how an organization or a network can generate value by visualizing its strategic objectives. It should also clearly utilize the databases, information systems, and innovation capabilities. It should also prioritize, human capital, customer relationships and brands, and culture in the interest of women's rights organizations and networks. By pronouncing a clear and concise means to understand and communicate an organization's course of action, a strategy map helps women's rights organizations and networks to efficiently conduct their activities and effectively implement their programs.

Membership and Recruitment

This needs to capitalize on establishing links among individuals or organizations through which they can communicate, arriving at common issues, getting used to each other; learn from each other; and share tasks.

Coping with the contemporary upcoming challenges necessitates for innovative humanistic administrative and managerial approach. For example, fluid organizational structure is an imperative for organizations, networks and alliances. The purpose for such a structure is to overcome the challenges of mechanistic vertical or horizontal hierarchies that are inherent with redtapes which inhibit sustainable networking and alliance building.

Mapping and Identification of Women's Rights Organizations and Movements

The strategy should assist in discovery of women and girls' conditions which are common in a given area. The process should therefore reflect the general interests of WROs in an area, impacts, general demographics, community resources, and employment statuses of women. It should also focus on education levels and specific human rights issues affecting women and girls.

Capacity Building

A capacity building strategy should help WROs to manage their affairs independently. It should capitalize on improving skills, knowledge, experiences, and performance of individual women and girls whose human rights are vulnerable to abuse. It should involve training, literacy programs, motivation, awareness, knowledge transfer, and skill development. It should also help WROs to build sustainable support systems with like-minded partners within networks.

Leadership and Management of WROs

There is need to relook at women's rights organizations and movements from within by focusing on a leadership that promotes positive internal culture among members. For example, commitment in decision-making, keeping the organizational goals at heart, allocation of resources, setting up accountability mechanisms, a supportive system, and having a consistent operationalization of set activities is of great essence.

Decision Making

A decision making strategy needs to be decisive and facilitate choosing between complex alternatives. Decision makers should possess resolute ability to guide an organization to a choice that all members can support and execute collectively. The process should be rational, objective, consistent, logical, reflective, inclusive, consultative, participative, and representative. It should also consider potential implications of choices and contextualize them to the organizations and networks where they belong.

Role Sharing and Accountability

Such a strategy should promote collective ownership of the organizational processes among team members while improving the value of individual and collective outputs. It should also ensure that members at all levels are effective in their roles. This can be achieved through training, understanding the roles, agreeing on expectations, follow-up and assessment of performance, and continuous feedback.

Conflict Management and Dispute Resolution

There is need to understand that conflict is inevitable whenever people team up as they will always have differences. WROs and networks should promote diversity and embrace differences about beliefs, values, interests, and ideas. This way, they can mobilize the necessary skills to resolve warring issues. They should put measures in place to prevent conflicts before they occur or to deal with them in the event they arise.

Resource Mobilization.

A resource mobilization strategy should focus on generating new wealth, accessing existing wealth, or expanding other non-financial assets for utility. It should also facilitate WROs and networks to unlock resources for the effective running of operations

through partnerships. By coming together, women's rights organizations can collectively consolidate resources and effectively promote the common interest.

Intersectionality, Interconnectedness, and Inclusivity

A women's rights network strategy should define a clear purpose or mission and justify its existence. It should converge organizations and individuals who share the mission and mutual commitment through a participatory and collaborative processes. A strategy should also recognize diversity based on gender, ethnicity, age, culture, and abilities as a recipe for sustainable networking and alliance building.

Branding and Communication

A communication strategy should prioritize reaching the right audience at the right time with the right messaging. It should also be defined by certain key elements such as; a target market, audience, and main benefits or value propositions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation strategy should effectively measure performance and assess impact. It should involve the recording of progress, reflecting about such progress, identification of failures and challenges, and learning any further actions necessary. It needs to contextualize women's rights organizations and movements to their respective areas of interest, resources available, timelines, and scopes of operation. It should also take note of the challenges affecting them in their working environment and their relations with like-minded counterparts within a network.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Implications and Recommendations to Women's Rights Organizations and Networks

Where different women's rights networks or alliances exist, common challenges hampering their operations often arise. This necessitates deployment of approaches to help them strengthen resilience and sustain their operations. As such, this helps in improving awareness creation, advocacy, and subsequently sustainability of alliances and networks. It also promotes information sharing, solidarity, and collective action among different women's rights organizations and individuals. This subsequently contributes to success in women's rights advocacy. Therefore, in view of the above, certain policy interventions are important.

First, the pronounced patriarchal dominance is a pointer for the need for policy change. This is to reform and reverse the existing social practice and the entire socialization process which perceive women as minor. Such a reform should take note that sustained patriarchal administrative spectrum often block attempts by women to maneuver through the existing structures. It accounts for the limited women's voice and enjoyment of human rights among women and girls. Having addressed these obstacles, this reform will come with many benefits such as increased women rights advocacy networks and contribute to social, economic, and political emancipation of women in society.

Second, existing women's rights networks and alliances should strengthen their internal structures to effectively carry out their operations. A functional organizational structure should be defined by certain

salient elements which include legitimacy, strong leadership, coordination and information sharing, as well as accountability.

Third, backbone support structures specifying how different women's rights networks operate for sustainable operations is imperative. A well-defined support structure is critical for collective action by women's rights organizations as it establishes a momentum which pools many actors for collective action. It also enhances a balance between formal and informal networks which helps to strengthen the overall collaboration to sustain a collective engagement.

Fourth, there is need to build cohesive and a well coordinated women's rights network. The women's rights network has in most cases been inactive because women's rights organizations are often uncoordinated and fragmented. Lessons from past history reveal that strong alliances and collective action has always impacted positively. For example, this has happened during the fight for independence during the 1950s, during the democratization process throughout the 1990s, and towards the 2010 constitutional reform process.

Fifth, there is need to improve visibility of women's rights networks and alliances. This can be enhanced by putting up measures to help them overcome operational challenges they face. Such include limited resources, limited human and technical capacities, lack of funds, lack of work equipment, poor managerial skills like budgeting, accounting, book keeping and report writing.

Sixth, there is need for a roadmap to guide women's rights organizations in seeking to form networks or alliances. By so doing, the roadmap should:

Develop an outreach and technical support framework for reaching out to organizations or networks;

Enhance partnerships with counterpart organizations about their operations and perspectives about growth;

Promote capacity building to enhance skills and abilities through strategies such as training programs on finance management;

Create awareness about existing policies about women's rights and the role of organizations and movements in advocacy;

Mobilize women to participate in national and international arenas where they can network and share experiences, exchange knowledge, find opportunities, and get exposure about international practice;

Develop audible women led forums where they can showcase experiences and skills to build formidable networks and alliances to lobby for equality and inclusivity in the social, economic and political fora.

2 Policy Implications and Recommendations to the Government

For the government, actors should embrace the gender perspective in all spheres of development such as politics and decision making. Indeed, the constitution of Kenya, 2010 enshrine the social, political and economic rights of all groups of the citizenry including women and girls. Therefore, there is need to actualize the constitutional provisions about gender representation and accord women their rightful share in governance and the management of affairs in society.

Cognizant of the challenges affecting women and girls and aware of the role of women's rights organizations, networks and alliances, the government should intervene by:

Promoting access to education and employment among women and girls;

Enhancing the existing policies to protect the vulnerable women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence;

Providing the necessary infrastructure that promotes women's economic rights such access to financial support to groups to promote their economic opportunities. This should also involve increased budgetary allocation to the women kitties such as the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF) and the women's enterprise fund;

Creating an enabling economic, political and social environment where women's rights organizations and networks can continue to thrive and promote women's rights;

Promotion of a society that is free from gender discrimination in accordance with the national policy on gender and development;

Incorporating gender equality and inclusion of women in all aspects of government policies and programs such as affordable housing, land and environment, universal healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture;

A multisectoral approach that respects gender mainstreaming and access for women's rights by government ministries, departments, legislative and judiciary arms of government, constitutional commissions and independent offices, as well as county governments;

The government should also promote a policy friendly environment that accommodates non-government actors in women's rights advocacy such as non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and civil society organizations;

Promote access to justice through simplification of court procedures, encouraging gender responsive access to justice, policy making, and facilitation of legal aid to the vulnerable groups.

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