

# Gender-responsive planning for the water-energy-food nexus in the context of devolution

## Reflections and lessons from Laikipia and Machakos in Kenya

*This Policy Brief offers some reflections and recommendations on gender-responsive planning at the county level, given devolution of power to counties in Kenya.*



MAASAI FAMILY CELEBRATING AND DANCING, Kenya.  
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6% in 2017<sup>1</sup>. The Kenyan economy is dominated by agriculture (32.4% of total GDP), which also accounts for more than 61.1% of employment<sup>2</sup>, and is particularly important source of employment for women. Against this backdrop of a growing economy, Kenya is also currently undergoing profound changes in its system of governance, which impacts on how planning occurs. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya devolved some functions from national institutions to counties, thus aiming to bring the Kenyan government closer to its citizens. While there is still contestation regarding powers and functions, significant functions now lie with county governments, thus creating both opportunities and challenges in how gender-responsive planning occurs.

### Introduction

The economy of Kenya is growing, and rates of poverty are declining. The World Bank's Kenya Economic Update (KEU) March 2016 projected growth of 5.9% in 2016, rising to

*Gender-responsive planning for the water-energy-food (WEF) nexus acknowledges and addresses power differentials among men and women in the water, energy and food sectors in*

<sup>1</sup><http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/overview>

<sup>2</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/3\\_JRC\\_KenyaWS\\_Kosura.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/3_JRC_KenyaWS_Kosura.pdf)



*Kenya. For gender integration to be meaningful, government initiatives must acknowledge the different roles of women and men, and support voices and engagement in policy and decision-making processes. This should also entail creating outcomes that support functional as well as strategic gender needs (Reeves and Baden, 2000).*

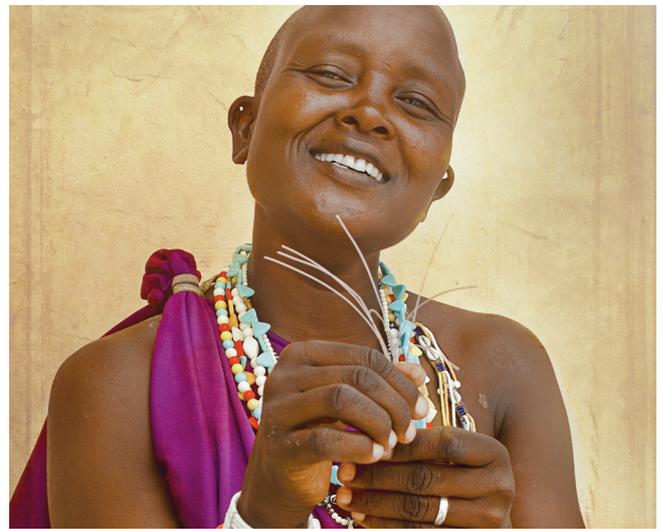
Gender sits within a complex and dynamic policy context in Kenya. National policies acknowledge that if Kenya is to advance climate-resilient strategies in the areas related to water, energy and food, consideration of gender is crucial, both from gender equality and operational effectiveness perspectives. Kenya sits at the forefront of many other countries in the integration of gender in development policy: The 2010 Constitution of Kenya guarantees equal rights regardless of gender, including to land, inheritance, court access, nationality and freedom of movement<sup>3</sup>, and crucially includes a strong impetus for women's representation in structures (the so-called 2/3rds rule). In addition, gender considerations are included in the National Climate Change Bill, the 2013-2017 Climate Change Action Plan, and in sectoral water, energy and food security policies (GOK, 2013). However, while gender is included in a number of legislative and policy mechanisms, gender-responsive planning remains a real challenge, as elaborated below.

## Gender Considerations and the 2010 Constitution of Kenya

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya resulted in Kenya adopting a decentralised system of governance with 47 county governments and national government institutions sharing a variety of functions, including in the water, energy and food sectors. The introduction of this decentralised system of governance brings challenges in integrating policy and legislation across national and county levels. Central government agencies are attempting to maintain their influence while county structures are trying to carve out a new, independent place for themselves.

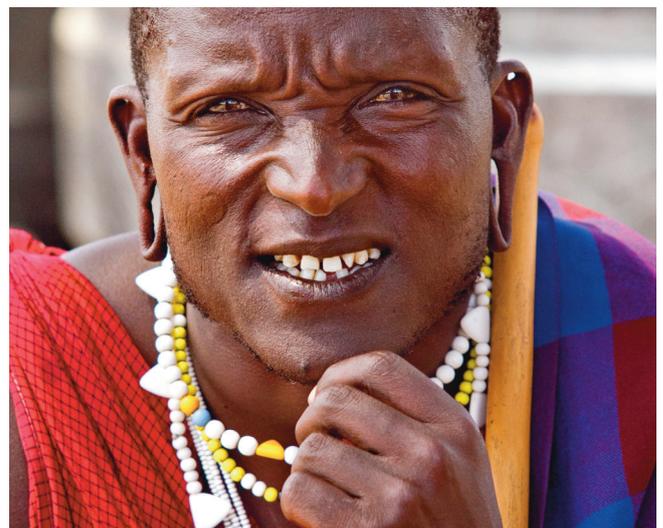
<sup>3</sup><https://www.nature.org/science-in-action/leading-with-science/kenya-gender-analysis.pdf>

***The extent to which gender and social inclusion considerations are taken into account at the county level and the outcomes for climate-resilient planning will be shaped by the interplay between the national and county-level institutions.*** Added to this are challenges related to capacity, funds and political power struggles at the county level. What is clear is that if planning integration challenges are not well addressed within the devolution process, devolution could lead to further marginalisation of the vulnerable, thus undermining the 2010 Constitution's progressive approach to equity and social inclusion of Kenyan citizens.



**Maasai Woman**

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**Maasai Man**

*Copyright: Editorial credit: Netta Arobas / Shutterstock, Inc.*



Maasai men go to graze cows, early in the morning and to spend the ritual of Maasai Mara.

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Importantly too, the Constitution emphasises public participation and gender representation: One of the gender aspects in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya is on the representation of women, the so-called 2/3rds rule which states that “**...no more than two thirds of the members of representative bodies in each devolved government shall be of the same gender**”. While this provision in the Constitution creates an important space for representation of women and women’s voices, it has not come without its own challenges. Some of these challenges are illustrated by examples and experiences from Laikipia and Machakos counties in the following section<sup>4</sup>.

## Gender Considerations in Planning: Experiences from Laikipia and Machakos

In much of the discussion on gender-responsive planning in Kenya, gender has been equated with a

<sup>4</sup>These examples and experiences are from a Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN)-funded project called Enhancing Institutional Arrangements for Integrated Water, Energy and Food Security through Improved Planning and Implementation in Kenya. The study was conducted by the Pegasys Institute and its partners during 2015 and 2016.

focus on women and girls as particularly vulnerable to climate risks, and therefore needing particular support. The challenge with this approach is that women are painted as “weak and vulnerable”, thus ignoring the agency and capacities of women as well as men.

Laikipia and Machakos are in the early stages of implementing the devolved governance structures of the 2010 Constitution, which provides a window of opportunity for integrating gender into integrated WEF planning and policies at the county level. While the 2010 constitution emphasizes public participation, and the introduction of the 2/3rds rule is meant to address gender imbalances in decision making, complexities arise with how this is implemented at county levels.

As far as policy is concerned, gender is frequently mentioned in county-level policy documents of relevance to climate resilience and the water, energy and food nexus. A notable example is the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP). The CIDP for

Laikipia (2013-2017) makes reference to a number of gender focused areas, and the CIDP for Machakos highlights the importance of human development approach in its economic development planning, which includes taking account of a Gender Related Development Index (GRDI). Likewise, the Machakos County Development Fund Bill has a component on gender.

In practice, although the awareness of gender as an issue of social relations between women and men is increasing, cultural biases continue to undermine progress being made to address gender gaps in planning. **Gender in Laikipia and Machakos is still commonly perceived narrowly as an issue related mainly or only to women's traditional roles.** In Laikipia, the notion of gender differentiated roles has made it challenging for female participation in WEF climate resilient responses. Some respondents noted that a view of gender as being about "promoting women's rights" had prompted a backlash against gender<sup>5</sup>. Persistent cultural attitudes such as 'men are better decision makers' were also mentioned. These kinds of attitudes manifest themselves in every day decision-making, for example, women in both counties are often prohibited from discussing matters related to land with their husbands, and water permits are typically registered in the name of the husband yet women are in most cases the custodians of water points. These types of challenges provides barriers regarding how women participate in planning and decision making processes.

Furthermore, despite the existence of an increasingly strong gender narrative in legislation and policy in Kenya, women's participation is seen superficially as a "number's game" rather than a commitment to address structural imbalances. **Women's voices, roles and needs are neglected, and the attention to gender is on practical rather than strategic needs, with little focus on a commitment to address structural gender imbalances.** Representation by gender in Laikipia and Machakos is still about how many women are involved in processes, with less attention to what happens as a result of these processes, and the ability of both women and men to make their voices heard and influence processes. Thus, gender is commonly thought of as the number of women in various

<sup>5</sup>Policy dialogues, October 2015, Laikipia and Machakos

positions, with less attention given to impacts or outcomes. Rather than addressing gender issues from a structural power imbalance encompassing representation, participation and decision making (and the outcomes thereof), the emphasis seem to overplay the 'representation' narrative.

In Laikipia county, 50% of county ministerial posts are held by women, and women have been recruited in high positions including public administration posts. However, responses suggest there is little regard for effectiveness, i.e. whether or not these women are able to take part in decision making. The Machakos CIDP, for example, lack a structured way of reporting against gender goals, or how the GRDI is included in actual programming. In addition, there is still insufficient capacity support structures to encourage women to apply for other leadership and management positions across the county governance structure with some women not wanting to take a risk in a governance structure that is not well anchored.

Thus, the assumption that women's representation is all that is required to fulfill the 2/3rds rule needs to be addressed, and that active and meaningful engagement of women in development matters to address the differentiated needs of the two genders is required. It is also important to be able to understand how both the devolution and the 2/3rds gender rule translates in getting poorer and ethnically diverse women, as well as other marginalized groups' voices heard, particularly in counties like Laikipia which has people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

## Policy recommendations for gender-responsive planning

### Enabling meaningful and substantive participation of women

For planning to be gender-responsive, it is necessary for there to be meaningful and substantive participation of women in planning processes. This can be enabled in a number of different ways, but requires enabling of both county officials as well as communities in understanding gender nuances, considerations and challenges.

**Training and sensitization:** There is confusion over what the 2/3rds rule means, given that the government has not put in place a systemized framework or guidance on how the rule should be implemented. Furthermore, gender seems to be generally conceptualized as gender-differentiated roles. Training and sensitization is thus required both around how the 2/3rd rule is implemented and around what gender-responsive planning means.

**Training manuals and tools should be developed to give guidance on 2/3rds rule,** and to enable women to engage more effectively in planning, including more nuanced understanding of county institutional structures. Platforms such as GROOTS Kenya have successfully instilled advocacy campaigns to help unpack the 2/3rds rule amongst members, and more of these types of initiatives should be pursued by the county.

**There is also a need for communities to be involved in identifying where gender biases exist, and to document this information to help enable reflective learning.** In Laikipia, for instance, a group of men have been involved in awareness raising campaign and training programmes to encourage their support for women in accessing land, property and inheritances. In both Laikipia and Machakos counties, training and sensitization by collaborating partners in communities regarding gender has yielded considerable success, and should be further pursued. In Laikipia in 2013, women were trained and funded to compile data on land and water with the support of consultants and GROOTS technical staff. These types of advocacy campaigns encourage women to push for change, using the data they have themselves compiled and tracked. Awareness raising programmes in Machakos have also played a role in the increase of formation of women's groups.

**Gender champions and role models: Gender champions and role models can play a significant role in sensitizing the county government on the need for additional resources to address gender.** There is already significant presence of these champions as members of parliament, patrons or members of staff, and evidence shows that gender-related discussions have been factored in the policy discussions at county and national levels by these

champions. Encouraging local women to become role models to support and inspire young girls and women is also critical. At the village level, engaging the customary elders and actively opening dialogue with husbands and fathers to champion the gender discussion will help to enable better gender outcomes.



**Couple carrying water with donkeys: Utajo Village, Kenya**  
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**Improving tracking of progress:** In order to facilitate gender-responsive planning, it is important to understand how initiatives translate into outcomes and impacts. Thus, **to strongly champion gender in policy processes at the county level, clear indicators need to be developed to identify what policy-makers are seeking to achieve with transparent processes of how these goals will be met.** Stronger monitoring and evaluation systems need to be instilled, including capturing appropriate disaggregated data to track gender.



Panorama of Tsavo East National Park in Kenya

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### System and structures that enable women to contribute

**Platforms for engagement:** There is a critical need for there to be appropriate platforms for women to participate in planning processes. One of these platforms is the Water Resource User Associations (WRUAs). Women in Laikipia are considered to have very high participation in WRUAs, and the 2/3rds rule is regarded as important. Beyond WRUAs, there are other forums like LAICONAR which facilitates dialogue with communities, and local county government. Laikipia has also developed initiatives like the Household Economic Empowerment Programme (HEEP), amongst others, to target more vulnerable women. Without access to data however, it is difficult to evaluate what additional impact these platforms have on generating participation of women and other minority and marginalized groups in these initiatives. **Counties need to not only ensure**

**that there are adequate platforms for engagement, but also to continually evaluate whether these platforms are working appropriately, particularly for the most disadvantaged.**

#### **Platforms for women to work together:**

Joining forces and working collectively in groups has assisted more women to apply and access available government funding schemes. These include, amongst others, UWEZO, Affirmative Social Development Fund and Micro-Enterprise Support Fund. As their confidence and knowledge has grown, starting with simple bids, a few women have managed to pursue government tenders. Other women (and youth) find it difficult to access these tenders because of the inflexible bureaucratic processes and elaborate requirements. **Through activities which enable women to work together, it is envisioned that women and the youth can be incorporated into government activities, be protected, and build their confidence around financial and business management.**



**Making use of intermediaries: *There is a need to sustain and encourage the existing role played by intermediaries, including NGOs and donor agencies in promoting gender in planning.*** These intermediaries have been found to be critical in getting local grassroots organisations active in planning processes on water, energy and food, as well as in socially inclusive economic development<sup>6</sup>. They also work with community members in the formation of WRUAs and assist in developing sub-catchment management plans.

**Wood fuel for cooking on a fire**  
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**Take advantage of the opportunity under the next CIDP (2017-2021): *County governments are required to spell out their county development plans through the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). County governments can use development of the next CIDP to reflect on progress made and to ensure that gender considerations are being taken into consideration at the county level*** by convening key stakeholders including other CSOs and networks such as the Gender and Climate Change Group Network who are developing a Gender Advocacy Strategy.

<sup>6</sup>Examples of intermediaries in Laikipia include; Laikipia County Natural Resource Network (LAICONAR), banks, water companies, YAAKU Laikipia Trust, IMPACT, and CETRAD. In Machakos, they include INADES and Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KARLO). The Machakos County Development Fund, Greening Machakos programme and funds provided by the umbrella women groups such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake and the Joy for Women Organization are also some of those highlighted as important.



**A staple meal in parts of Kenya; Ugali (stiff porridge) with fish and vegetables**

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Publications from the project, available on the Pegasys Institute website, include:

- Policy Brief 1/16: Integrating Water, Energy and Food Planning for Climate Resilience in Kenyan Counties
- Policy Brief 2/16: The water-energy-food nexus and poverty eradication in Kenya
- Policy Brief 3/16: Gender-responsive planning for the water-energy-food nexus in the context of devolution - Reflections and lessons from Laikipia and Machakos in Kenya
- Policy Brief 4/16: Integrated Planning for Enhanced Water, Energy and Food Security in Africa - Lessons from Kenya

- Water, Energy and Food Security: A Literature Review of Water-Energy-Food Nexus approaches for Sustainability in the Context of Climate Change
- Managing the water, energy and food nexus in a decentralised system: the case of Kenya

These documents are available on the Pegasys Institute website: [www.pegasysinstitute.org](http://www.pegasysinstitute.org)

An online training course in WEF planning in the context of climate change is available on <https://versal.com/c/e7nipl/integrated-water-energy-food-nexus-planning-in-the-context-of-climate-change>

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