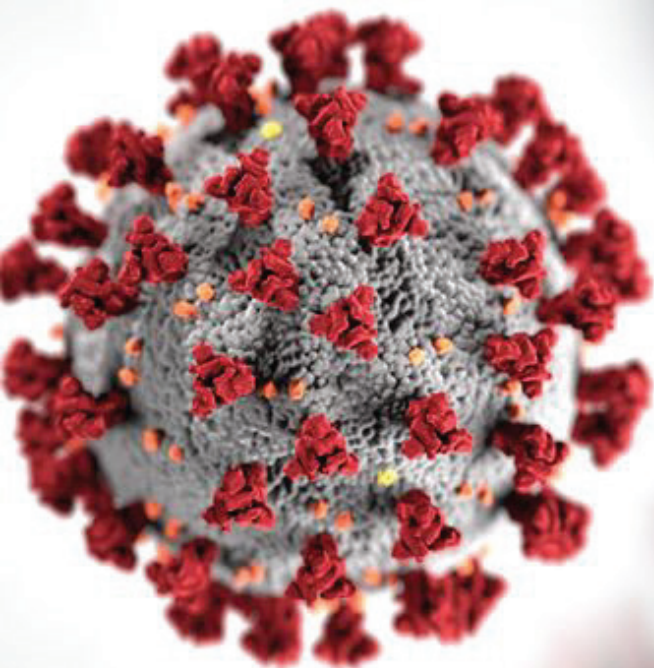


ENA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020 ISSUE



COVID-19

PANDEMIC

IN THIS ISSUE

- COWA Webinar Dialogues
- Democracy Trust Fund (DTF) Transitions into a LIP
- Girls in STEM Partners Forum
- Restoring dignity to the girl child
- Emerging Gender Issues in the wake of COVID 19 Pandemic

Word From The Group CEO

Covid – 19 exacerbating gender inequalities



Dr. Jennifer N. Riria
PhD, EBS, MBS, HRH/
Goodwill Ambassador,
ICON/HP
Group CEO, ENA

The year 2020 has been an eventful one for the global fraternity of women since it marks twenty five years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995.

Thousands of women from across the world were to gather in New York City for the 64th Session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to celebrate gains made, identify gaps and map out strategies

to accelerate full realization of gender equality for women and girls. All these grand plans came to a sudden stop when the world got hit by the crisis occasioned by COVID-19.

Suddenly, and not unexpected gender and social inequalities that have plagued the world before the pandemic have been brought to fore. While the pandemic is gender blind and does not discriminate between the male and female gender, there is no denying that women and girls are suffering the bluntest edges of the pandemic. As with all other crisis, COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the damaging impact of gender inequalities and underscoring why societies must invest in efforts to close gender gaps as real safeguards for the survival of all.

“ While the pandemic is gender blind and does not discriminate between the male and female gender, there is no denying that women and girls are suffering the bluntest edges of the pandemic. ”

In times of strife and scarcity women suffer, not only lack of access to market chains but also access to resources. The COVID-19 has exposed these inequalities as they mushroom. Right now, most of the frontline workers helping to curb the pandemic are women. There is also an increased violence against women and girls. Schools are closed and girls are locked up in their homes with no escape from sexual abuse resulting in unwanted

pregnancies and serious related mental illnesses.

Post COVID-19, there is need to apply a gender lens in addressing all development plans. Currently, women are not involved in the planning or execution of solutions in curbing the COVID-19 menace. This exclusion disempowers and dehumanizes women and girls. Consequently, their concerns and development needs are excluded.

Echo Network Africa (the mother of KWFT Bank) has undertaken to ensure that women's voices are heard and their inclusion is made a national agenda. The first step was to host a webinar on 6th of May 2020. The following planned webinars will not only enhance women's voices on their exclusion but will also demand for their inclusion in developing and driving post COVID-19 strategies and deciding what initiatives will be best suited for poor families and specially women.

COWA Webinar Dialogues

Professor Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Public Service and Gender led over 100 women leaders in a webinar hosted by Echo Network Africa (ENA) on 6th May, 2020 to discuss the issue of gender equality in Kenya within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme of the webinar was: Covid-19 Pandemic: Affirming the Importance of fully implementing recommendations of the Common Women Agenda (COWA) and is part of the initiatives organized by ENA's Positioning Focus Area with funding support from Family Health International (FHI) under the SADES-Kenya (Safeguarding Democratic Space in Kenya).

Quarantine experience can be different for men and women considering the difference in physical, cultural, economic and sanitary needs for both genders. ENA appreciates that during periods of uncertainty such as during a pandemic, women are at a greater risk of being unemployed. Further, young school going girls are unduly exposed as schools which are meant to be safe zones are closed. The search for food, clean water, shelter and other basic needs become an even greater burden for women especially women led households. These are some of the issues that Kenyan women have raised in the document: The Common Women Agenda (COWA). Echo Network Africa has reorganized the discussions on COWA to factor the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Be part of the conversation!



COWA WEBINAR DIALOGUES

THEME
COVID-19 PANDEMIC: Affirming the Importance of fully Implementing Recommendations of the Common Women Agenda (COWA)

Keynote Speaker



Prof. Margaret Kobia
PHD, MGH
Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Public Service and Gender

Guest Speaker



Hon. Raphael Tuju
(EGH)
Cabinet Secretary / Secretary General Jubilee Party

Guest Speaker



Hon. Charity Ngilu
Governor, Kitui County

Host



Dr. Jennifer N. Riria
PHD, EBS
Group CEO, Echo Network Africa (ENA) / Patron Democracy Trust Fund (DTF)

Partner



Phyllis Ombonyo
Chief of Party SADES-K (Safeguarding Democratic Space in Kenya)

Guest Speaker



Prof. Kameri Mbote
SC, EBS
Professor of Law University of Nairobi

Guest Speaker



Mary Ellen Iskenderian
President & CEO Women's World Banking (WWB)

Panelists from the COWA Technical Committee

#COWADialogues

WEDNESDAY
6TH MAY 2020

3.00 PM - 4.30 PM

Via 
Register now on
www.cowadialogues.org

This Webinar is convened jointly by the Ministry of Public Service & Gender and Echo Network Africa (ENA) in collaboration with the women of Kenya under COWA and supported by SADES – K (Safeguarding Democracy in Kenya).

For more information call 0719 604 081 or email cmbithuka@enafrica.org

DEMOCRACY TRUST FUND

The Power Fund

The Democracy Trust Fund is now the Local Implementing Partner (LIP) responsible for implementing the activities of ENA's Positioning Focus Area. Through DTF, ENA plans to catalyze initiatives on women's participation in decision making and in political leadership in Kenya. This strategy is in line with ENA's implementation approach of working with like-minded institutions and partners to triple the impact and accelerate attainment of results without directly implementing initiatives.

The weaning out of DTF came after one and a half years of testing the concept for relevance and responsiveness. Further, the decision was guided by ENA's Incubation Policy and a clear demonstration that women required extra measures to propel them into decision making spaces. Currently, DTF has acquired its own registration and has put in place a Board of Trustees along with other programmatic interventions.

In the interim, ENA has seconded a staff to spearhead setting up of the institutional structures for DTF including developing a Strategic Plan, supporting Governance structures, coordinating implementation of program initiatives and fundraising for the new institution.

On top of that, ENA has tasked DTF with the responsibility of implementing a project

supported by SADES-K (Safeguarding Democratic Space in Kenya) on scaling up the participation of women in the ongoing reform process. The mutually beneficial partnership allows ENA to implement initiatives within its Positioning Focus Area without jeopardizing its development mandate. On its part, DTF continues to pursue its core business of empowering women to participate in political leadership and contribute to bridging the gender divide in Kenya and in other parts of the African region where ENA has a footprint.

“ Currently, DTF has acquired its own registration and has put in place a Board of Trustees along with other programmatic interventions. ”

Girls in STEM Partners Forum

ENA's Youth Empowerment focus area engaged like-minded partners on a round table meeting to discuss various ways of progressing and shaping up the Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative.



Girls in STEM initiative partners from KCB Bank, Liberty Life Group, Family Bank, K2U Africa, AAR Insurance and Cooperative Bank pose with ENA Focus area heads after the forum.

The round table meeting was held on Thursday, 5th March, 2020 at Echo Network Africa. It was convened immediately after the 5th Charity Golf Tournament and had representatives from long time partners among them; KCB Bank, Liberty Life Group, Family Bank, K2U Africa, AAR Insurance and Cooperative Bank. The partners applauded the initiative on the positive trajectory of its mission and for fulfilling the mandate of their corporate social responsibility.

Further, the partners applauded the recent launch of Hesabu Club at Kithangari Girls Secondary School earlier this year in January. The purpose of the club is to compliment class work by addressing bottlenecks that hinder girls from achieving excellent marks in Mathematics as a core subject of STEM. Most partners had participated in some of the implemented activities and were elated to give their

positive feedback and advice on the ongoing activities. The partners complemented the initiative as impactful and promised to continue supporting it. They further reiterated that the initiative was a value add and in line with their vision.

On top of that, a common agenda that was addressed during the forum is the need to have a pool of mentors to encourage the students to raise their scores in Mathematics and Science as well as take up STEM courses in the future. The Partners once again affirmed their continued commitment, support and participation in the Girls in STEM Initiative.

Going forward, the initiative is committed to replicating the program to other needy public girls secondary schools and support schools in holding their inter school mathematics and science competitions among other activities.

Restoring dignity to the girl child

The past decade has seen great efforts by both levels of Government (National and County), NGO's and private sector in creating substantial awareness about menstrual health in Kenya particularly amongst young adolescent girls. The recent lock down and its ripple effects threatens access to menstrual products and the ability to maintain hygiene during periods

in privacy and with dignity for millions of adolescent girls and women.

This is particularly a challenge to the adolescent girls and women who depend wholly on free or subsidized supplies from schools and running programs. This may result in them using their menstrual products for longer than recommended, or turn to unhygienic alternatives such as old cloth or rags which ultimately may result to health issues.

Although sanitary pads are essential items, most families have to prioritize on basic needs and the purchase of hand sanitizers and face masks which are now mandatory to help curb the rapid spread of the novel Covid-19. This has caused strains to families living below the dollar as they cannot afford to purchase the sanitary towel.

On top of that, supply by small scale industries and units have been severely affected with reduced labor and restricted movement of goods and raw materials due to the lock down.

All women and girls have a right to enjoy their periods with dignity, free of shame and without discrimination. Menstruation with dignity and nondiscrimination is a driver and an enabling factor for change as it enables women and girls to fully participate in society. This can be done by ensuring that poor women and girls have free access to menstrual hygiene products.

The novel Covid-19 has a huge impact on menstrual hygiene on adolescent girls and women especially in rural areas. Now more than ever, let us come together as stakeholders, well-wishers and a country in a noble cause to contribute and supply menstrual hygiene materials and foodstuffs to vulnerable families.

“ All women and girls have a right to enjoy their periods with dignity, free of shame and without discrimination. ”



Dr. Jennifer Riria (5th from right), Group CEO Echo Network Africa, Mrs. Lucy Gitau (3rd from left), Principal Kithangari Girls Secondary School and Mr. Magiri (5th from left), the male brand ambassador celebrate with the girls after receiving the donated menstrual hygiene materials.

Emerging Gender Issues in the wake of COVID 19 Pandemic

The novel Covid-19 pandemic has affected women and men differently increasing the gender inequality gap. The following are some of the emerging gender issues affecting women and girls;

- **Gender Based Violence (GBV):** With the increasing rate of domestic violence being reported across the country, access to GBV services and referral pathways have been a challenge due to the curfew.

- **Access to Sexual Reproductive Health commodities:** Access to menstrual health items has been a challenge to the girls from marginalized communities. The distribution of this essential item has been disrupted by the closure of the schools indefinitely.

- **Loss of livelihood:** Women are the mainstay of the economy. They bear the brunt of any pandemic economically through the disruption of their small businesses. Further, the 'Stay at home' directive by the Government has led to a decrease in income generation for the women.

- **Increased risk of Covid-19 Infection:** Majority of the healthcare workers and care givers are women. This places them at a higher risk of exposure to Covid-19.

ENA is committed towards safeguarding the gains and progress made in gender inequality. Further, we will continue working with like-minded partners for inclusion of women in the National emergency preparedness and response teams at National and County level.

EVENTS IN MAY

1. COWA Webinar Dialogues on Wednesday, 6th May
2. Mothers Day on Sunday, 10th May
3. Menstrual Hygiene Day Thursday, 28th May

We are a
click away!



@ENAFRICA

Follow us on twitter



@en_africa

Visit our website



www.enafrica.org