



Women's Economic Empowerment in Narok County

Guest blog by Elizaphan Ogechi, Executive Director at Nguzo Africa

Advocating for the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and plans for female farmers and entrepreneurs is an important pillar of SNV's *"Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises (EOWE)" programme*. The EOWE programme is being implemented between 2016 and 2020 in Kenya and Vietnam, with funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands as part of the *Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW)* framework. Local partners play a key role in advocating for an enhanced enabling environment for female entrepreneurship. One of these partners in Kenya is the civil society organisation (CSO) Nguzo Africa. In the below guest blog, Elizaphan Ogechi, Executive Director of Nguzo Africa, describes the key challenges and opportunities to increase women's economic empowerment in Narok county.


Based on the referendum of 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution that devolves power and resources to the grassroots in the 47 counties. Such a devolved system requires meaningful engagement and cooperation by all stakeholders, including women farmers and entrepreneurs in agriculture and renewable energy, who are the primary beneficiaries of the EOWE programme. One of the main county plans is the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP); others are the County Sectoral Plan, the County Spatial Plan, and city and municipal plans.

The CIDP is a 5-year plan that informs the county's annual budgets. It reflects the strategic priorities of the county government. The CIDP should contain specific goals and objectives, a coasted implementation plan, provisions for monitoring and evaluation and clear reporting mechanisms. It should also contain information on investments, projects, development initiatives, maps, statistics, and a resource mobilization framework. It is therefore, crucial that all stakeholders are involved through public participation processes. The EOWE programme supports the women farmers and entrepreneurs, local civil society organizations and county government authorities in transparent and participatory decision-making at county level, including monitoring and reviewing county budgets, to ensure that the policy environment for women's economic empowerment and gender equality is becoming more conducive to enable these women to thrive in their businesses.

EOWE supports key actors in transparent and participatory decision-making at county level

An analysis of Narok's CIDP conducted by SNV and Nguzo Africa reveals that although women are recognised as key stakeholders in the development of the county, there is little or no budget allocation put in place to support and empower them. The Narok CIDP (2013-2017) recognises that there are 251 women groups and 260 youth



 Induction meeting with representatives of selected women entrepreneurs in Narok. (photo: Nguzo Africa)

that these groups are used as an entry point for both Government and Donor interventions on poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and environment conservation.

"Nevertheless, women and youth groups continue to experience unemployment incidences as well as difficulties in accessing the loan capital from mainstream financial institutions due to lack of collaterals. They also represent the poorest in the county and are scantily represented in top decision making levels in the county," describes the Narok CIDP (2013-2017).

However, when you go deeper into the CIDP, you do not find any tangible flagship projects that seeks to address the identified challenges. It is discouraging to note that women's empowerment issues are only confined to the gender section, where the plan originally proposed to create awareness on gender-based violence, address negative cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), provide sanitary pads and build rescue centres for girls threatened by early marriage.

Shiny programmes on paper, but no implementation

It is interesting to note that most CIDPs recognise agriculture as the main economic activity that contributes to women's empowerment. The Narok CIDP provides an elaborated list of agricultural value addition programmes focusing on e.g. product processing of milk, beef and livestock. The strategy also recognises the value of cereals, sugarcane, tea, tomato and honey processing and it proposes the establishment of a fertiliser processing factory.

Under marketing and trade, Narok's CIDP lists programmes aimed at catalysing cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises and informal trade. It mentions the provision of business information and the establishment of business incubation hubs. Regarding water, in order to reduce long distances in search of water for domestic use and livestock, the CIDP proposes the construction of water pans. It even mentions plans to establish a cooperative development fund of 1 billion Kenyan shilling (approximately 10 million USD Dollar) to build the capacity of self-help, youth and women groups.

However, a quick appraisal of the Narok CIDP reveals that most of these proposed programmes have not been implemented. Clearly, the proposed programmes in agriculture hardly benefitted women to increase access to credit, reduce workload or increase production, marketing and value addition.

Weak coordinating, monitoring and evaluation

The Narok CIDP provides an institutional framework to facilitate involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of proposed programmes and projects. The roles of various stakeholders and governance arrangements for implementation of the CIDP are well written on paper, but unfortunately not well implemented.

As we move on to the next phase of developing the new CIDP for 2018-2022 most counties have not held objective appraisals of their past CIDPs, including Narok. The monitoring and evaluation section of the CIDP had not

emphasized the value of collecting gender disaggregated data for beneficiaries of various projects. Also, there are no resources set aside to undertake objective monitoring or auditing of the past CIDPs. Most county governors, the elected leaders with the power to govern the executive branch of the county, pick sporadic projects that have done well to drum up support for their re-election.

Weak citizen's participation

Such challenges may also be attributed to weak citizen's participation in design, budgeting, execution and monitoring of county programmes. "The role of women in relation to their participation in policy planning, development and implementation is hardly mentioned," says Professor Anne Misia Kadenyi¹ who analysed the Narok CIDP.

New advocacy strategy

To address the lack of gender-responsiveness of current county policies and plans as well as the lack of public participation, SNV in collaboration with local partners such as Nguzo Africa has designed an [Advocacy Strategy \(2017-2020\)](#) to ensure the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) agenda will be included in the county development processes like the development of the new CIDP for 2018-2022.

The strategy is based on an [analysis of the current WEE policy environment](#) in Kenya, SNV's varied project experiences, information gathered from EOWE programme staff, and members of other CSOs that are partnering with SNV under the EOWE programme. It is anticipated that by pursuing the strategic objectives identified in this strategy, the EOWE programme can become more effective in its WEE advocacy work through working with key decision makers and influencers at county and national levels. The two objectives of the strategy are: 1) To improve the policy and legislative environment for women's economic empowerment; 2) To increase the capacity of civil society actors to advocate on women's economic empowerment issues.

The advocacy strategy proposes a range of activities that will ultimately result into improved gender-sensitiveness and implementation of relevant policies, plans and processes by County Governments. It shall also result into increased advocacy capacity of key actors (local and national levels) to advocate for and monitor implementation of gender-sensitive policies.



 Narok County Department of Finance and Economic Planning presents the CIDP process and budgeting cycle. (photo: Nguzo Africa)

SNV and Nguzo Africa WEE advocacy interventions in Narok

To ensure that gender-equitable legal frameworks are implemented in Narok, Nguzo Africa has mapped out key stakeholders to support the implementation of WEE advocacy plan. On the 29th of June 2017, the Narok County gender advocacy Multi Stakeholder Platform (MSP) was established to spearhead the execution of gender-equitable frameworks for increased income among targeted women's enterprises in the county. Each participating stakeholder of the MSP was given clear roles and responsibilities to support the gender advocacy work, particularly on influencing the upcoming development of the County Integrated Development Plan. The members agreed to analyse the currently ending CIDP, detailing strengths and weaknesses in regards to gender equality. Currently, a team is developing a roadmap and work plan for the inclusion of the Narok County gender advocacy and WEE agenda in the development of the new CIDP for 2018-2022.

The county stakeholders led by the Narok County Department of Finance and Economic Planning committed to support Nguzo Africa in the execution of gender equitable legal frameworks in Narok County for the 2017/18 financial year.

¹ Professor, Anne Misia Kadenyi has more than 26 years of working experience in education, research and community development. She served as a Deputy Vice Chancellor at Maasai Mara University in charge of Academics and Research. She is currently on sabbatical leave and supports Nguzo Africa to undertake women's economic empowerment advocacy work in Narok County.

In addition, to increase acceptance of gender equitable norms, Nguzo Africa is implementing a Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy by holding household and community dialogues. Two sites constituting 10 households each have been identified, one in Nairagie Enkare, Narok East Sub County and one in Ololulunga, Narok South Sub County. Initial pre-tests and introductory sessions have already been held. Nine household dialogue sessions on key gender norms are planned to be held by the end of this year.

Further, Nguzo Africa has mapped out key Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that will support in the implementation of the WEE advocacy plan. This will include developing their capacity to enable them to support the WEE advocacy. Some other key planned activities include: convening meetings with women entrepreneurs and CSOs to discuss their participation and consolidate their input on WEE issues to be included into the new CIDP. We will also establish the Women Business Association that will work closely with the Narok County gender advocacy MSP to hold regular Governor's Round Table meetings to sensitise county officials and inform the county's development plans.

Conclusion

As Kenya's 47 counties embark on developing their 2nd CIDPs (2017-2022), it is critical to appraise past plans. This will help reflect on the past mistakes that were inherent in those plans and provide tangible solutions in the upcoming CIDPs. This will eventually also result into the development of county plans and policies that are gender sensitive.

Way forward

- Promote the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) agenda. Based on the CIDP review as well as the needs assessment of the EOWE programme beneficiaries in Narok, advocate for their active participation and recognition of their requirements to be able to excel in their enterprises;
- Develop capacity of county government policy makers, local CSOs and women champions to enable them to include the WEE agenda in the upcoming CIDP;
- Close collaboration between county governments and key stakeholders to define clear roles and implementation plans in the new CIDP to ensure WEE and gender equality will be achieved;
- Encourage inter-county learning and sharing and networking to benchmark on success stories and opportunities available for replication.