

MUUNGANO WA WANAVIJIJI

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

"Because of marginalization, discrimination and various economic and social factors, women and people with disabilities (PWDs) may experience climate change effects more intensely and disproportionately than others"

By Patricia Songoro (KYCTV), Jacob Omondi (KYCTV), Kilion Nyambuuga and Jackline Waithaka.

Little is known about the level of incorporation of women and persons living with disability (PWLD) in climate change discussions especially in strengthening their capacities to engage in decision-making related to the adverse effects of climate change. Nakuru County Climate Change Act sets in motion the deliberate emergence of empowering public spaces that ensures inclusive participation of women and persons living with disability. The Climate Change Act provides a framework that brings together all relevant stakeholders to respond collectively and effectively to climate change. The Act spells out the composition of the ward Climate Change Committees that are essential in ensuring active community participation in climate change discussions and actions. The ward committee comprises of 12 representatives including women and persons living with disability and ultimately ensures an appropriate gender balance and inclusivity is considered.



Women are uniquely positioned to be agents of change and aid find means to address the effects of climate change. Often, however, women still face unequal access to decision-making aimed at curbing the harmful effects of the changing climate. Climate change also has heavier impacts on individuals with disabilities both directly and indirectly thereby it is critical to ensure they are equally included in decision-making and addressing the climate crisis. Their participation and voices ultimately matter within the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees.

Gender inequality and role expectations impact an individual's resilience to climate change. Main tasks such as fetching water, firewood, are performed by women. Women have multidimensional roles as providers, household heads, and mothers. These activities are time-consuming and require commitment. Adding the effects of climate change further exacerbates the existing challenges and poses unique threats to their health and safety.





In collaboration with the county government of Nakuru, Slum Dwellers International, Muungano wa Wanavijiji, the Adaptation Consortium (ADA), and the Sub-County environmental officer set out to Olkaria ward to fulfill the requirements of the new Climate Change Act of Nakuru, 2021. One vital requirement is public participation in forming committees which will aid in educating and increasing the community's awareness of climate change and how it affects them. The committees later prioritize urgent climate change issues to address.

The process rolled out in Raplant, was equally implemented in the other 8 wards in Naivasha County. On a typical afternoon, a meeting begins at noon, but upon surveying the attendance, only 1/3 of the population are women. They arrive in the forum and keep to themselves at a corner. They appear to detach themselves from the ongoing discussions. Within the Maasai community, women are often not regarded as elders, and ideas from women may not be considered as much as those shared by men in a meeting.

Further, women are not usually primary decision-makers. Women are involved in decision-making mainly on issues about family matters. Their participation is limited by social-cultural factors and limiting cultural practices however in some contexts, women's roles are changing. Constant sensitization is paramount in ensuring participation of women is embraced.

Have you ever seen a sports match where only half of the team plays? It is highly likely that if only half of the team plays, it will lose. Underrepresented groups are disproportionately affected by climate change hence the primary need to ensure they are included in spaces where decisions regarding their well-being are discussed. It is key to also ensure all groups are included. While two women out of 12 ward committee members is an upgrade from none at all, it is evident that some communities still have a long way to go.



Climate change has shown both indirect and direct effects on how individuals enjoy their human rights including individuals with disabilities. PWDs are at heightened risk of adverse climate change effects such as threats to sanitation, food security, livelihoods, water and health. In emergency cases such as flooding, fires or a landslide, there are high chances of mortality among individuals that may experience difficulty in mobility or have hearing and visual impairments. In addition, climate change has exacerbated extreme weather patterns and one critical event is global warming.

These erratic weathers are not easily predictable and have changed the ways which people live and work ultimately affecting PWDs disproportionately.

The meaningful inclusion of individuals with disabilities and women and their respective representative organizations within climate-related decision-making and disaster risk management depends on a climate action approach that recognizes the rights of women and persons with disabilities.





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Various efforts are evident in counties such as Vihiga, Wajir and Nakuru that have included Women in the Climate Change Ward Committees thus creating opportunities at the national and local level to educate and train women and PWD on climate change. These opportunities stimulate capacity building by assigning specific resources to secure women's and PWDs' equal participation in the benefits and opportunities of mitigation and adaptation measures. In Nakuru, Slum Dwellers International (SDI-Kenya) and Muungano wa Wanavijiji in collaboration with the Nakuru County Government, following the Climate Change Act of 2020, spearheaded the formation of Climate Change Ward Committees. Veronicah Kwamboka is an albino, and elected female youth representative for communities with special needs in Hell's Gate Ward Naivasha, Nakuru County.

Before being elected into the committee, she pitched her 'manifesto' saying:

"Everyone is aware of the increasing temperatures that affects their ability to work or walk in the sun for extended periods. It is a perfect opportunity for me to encourage people to grow trees and increase the shades and provide favorable environments for recreational activities."

The effects of climate change on people with multiple vulnerability factors such as women and persons with disabilities need to be addressed.

The Ward Climate Change Committees are one step towards considering the specific needs of all and guaranteeing participation in the planning for climate disasters.

SUPPORTING LOCALLY-LED CLIMATE INNOVATIONS



The crowd present has a life on its own. The vibrant music pulls multitudes to the venue, most of them in groups. At the exhibition arena, individuals swarm past each other each observing the vast array of the creative innovations set up. Exhibitors explain in-depth more about their various exhibits as individuals pause questions for clarity. Over 60 groups from Nairobi's informal settlements are present during the day's event, each running unique, creative initiatives aimed at tackling climate change.

By Jacob Omondi (KYCTV), Monicah Mwai, Killion Nyambuga, Stanley Mburu, Elvira Songoro and Jackline Waithaka

On 26th August 2022 Muungano wa Wanavijiji in partnership with Slum Dwellers International Kenya (SDI-Kenya) invited youth groups, state and non-state actors and members of the fifth estate to an event that led to offering of financial support to 67 climate action groups in Nairobi. Groups present included those that implement practical actions that prevent, mitigate or reduce exposure to climate impacts. Selected groups were drawn from Nairobi's informal settlements where the effects of climate change are most acute and where resilience should be strengthened.

Groups present exhibited inspiring innovations geared towards addressing climate change and received an opportunity to network with various climate change actors while receiving insights instrumental in strengthening their existing innovations



To identify groups qualified to receive support, Muungano wa Wanavijiji issued a call inviting groups to apply for the 'Innovative Urban Climate Change Solutions' fund. The call published on Muungano's online platforms ran from 21st August 2022 till 4th September 2022 and secured 1,160 applications and the following comprises of the call's online reach; 8,983 Twitter impressions and 2,592 Facebook impressions.

Upon closure of the call, the collected data was cleaned and analyzed, and a total of 562 completed applications were compiled. Committees were formed and tasked to select groups among the applications received. From the process, 107 climate action groups were selected from Nakuru, Naivasha, Kisumu and Nairobi.

The support issued to the 107 groups in the various regions is aimed at building a climate change movement made up of local community climate change actors. Building a climate movement to address the climate crisis requires collective efforts to mobilize communities to action and ensure community voices are heard by the relevant stakeholders. A strong movement can also further propel communities to negotiate with the government to pass laws and policies that will aid in overseeing environmental conservation.

Secondly, efforts such as these further support the local groups to lobby for the implementation of climate actions at the community level and hold relevant actors accountable to their climate promises. Lastly, the support issued through the federations Voices for Just Climate Action program (VCA) is designed to support groups be aware of the climate change policies in place and determine alternative ways through which awareness on climate change can reach the general public and trigger conversations around climate change.



Hon. Yusuf Hassan, Kamukunji constituency member of parliament who graced the event promised to further advance the climate change agenda to parliament to influence conversations around climate change among members of parliament. Supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation should be the number one factor to consider when it comes to solving the various climate change challenges including food insecurity.

Muongano wa Wanavijiji in partnership with Slum Dwellers International (SDI-Kenya) offered support to the various climate action groups setting the pace in recognizing and strengthening locally-led climate action innovations and increasing the visibility of these existing efforts.

