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*A study on the Political Participation of Kenya's Hunter Gatherer Women  
in international and national Political Spaces*



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## 1. Introduction

S. Marks and A. Mahal (2007) define the principles of human rights as the requirement that policies, programs and their supervision should ensure equality, participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency. In Kenya, this has not been the case for hunter gatherer communities. However, there is growing participation of citizens in decision making processes. The constitution provides not only for this right to participate, but further targets women rights to participate in political spaces. And as the country gears up for the first general election under the new constitution, it is expected that women across the country will rise up to fill the different political spaces opened up by the new constitutional order. This prompts us to ask: are women from hunter gatherer communities also mobilizing to fill the political spaces?

Historically, hunter gatherer communities have been and still remain the most marginalized sections of society not only in Kenya but in the African continent. A visit to their territories is a lesson in exclusion; lack of roads, hospitals, schools among other essentials. According to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people these communities suffer the lowest levels of education, highest incidences of poverty and are the least able to respond to the most basic needs (Stavenhagen, 2007). According to the ILO Kenya country Report (2009), lack of a legal framework to recognize and respect the rights of hunter gatherer communities coupled with pro- agriculture economic policies has been the main driver of their marginalization and exclusion.

However, numerous windows for the recognition and respect of rights of hunter gatherer communities as well as other indigenous peoples are opening up in various fronts internationally, nationally and even locally in the Kenyan case.

At the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) held in May, 2011, for example, indigenous women from Africa met at a breakfast meeting organized with the support of the Ford Foundation and strategized on increased participation in various processes and at various levels.

This was followed by a meeting in Nairobi in October, 2011 that further deliberated on a strategy that included the establishment of a steering committee. Indigenous women from Africa including those from hunter gatherer communities also participated at the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the UNPFII held in May 2012. And together with indigenous women from around the world through the Global Indigenous Women caucus, requested that the UNPFII undertakes a global study on the political participation of indigenous women at the international, national and local levels.

As a follow up to this request, the UNPFII, in its recommendation 104, appointed Mr. Kanyinke Sena to undertake a study on the political participation of indigenous women at international, national and local levels from an African perspective (UNPFII, 2012). The study is to be submitted to the Forum at its

twelfth session. To undertake the study, support was sort from Ford Foundation, East Africa in June, 2012. Thankfully, the support was granted, and this report is the product.

The report focuses on hunter gatherer women political participation in Kenya. This was deliberate as hunter gatherers are the most marginalized section of the Kenya society. It is hoped that their experiences both positive and negative, coupled with their aspirations captures the essence of the situation of the political participation of hunter gatherer women across Africa, but also other indigenous communities.

## **2. Methodology**

To gather as much data that would result in a meaningful study, various data collection methods were used. This included

- Desktop review of available literature on the subject matter.
- A virtual survey that was distributed to both men and women from hunter gatherer communities in Kenya and civil society organizations supporting or promoting women leadership at the national level
- Field based interviews with hunter gatherer men and women in Narok, Nakuru, Trans Nzoia and Laikipia counties.

The survey and interviews were designed to focus on three topics of inquiry:

- The participation of indigenous hunter gatherer women in Kenya's political spaces.
- The principal obstacles, if any, that the women face during this process.
- The strategies that could be used to strengthen their political participation.

The literature reviewed involved visiting libraries in Nairobi and Narok and online research. Workshop reports from various NGOs working with the communities or women issues were also studied.

The survey involved sending out an email in the English language to hunter gatherer leaders (both women and men) and civil society organizations working on women leadership issues in Kenya. The email was send to 15 leaders (9 women and 6 men) from the Ogiek community both in Narok and Mt. Elgon, 3 women and 4 men from the Sengwer, and 1 woman from the Yiaku. These were the people known to have reliable internet access within these communities. All the leaders responded to the questionnaire though in the majority of the cases, the answers were very brief and lacked the in-depth details desired.

The NGO's reached out to included CLARION, COVAW and the Centre for Multiparty Democracy among others. These were specifically identified as they are the most vocal in the country on the issue. Unfortunately, there was no response from the national NGO'S reached out to.



The field based interviews were undertaken in Kiswahili and local languages with the assistance of a translator where necessary. Conversations were held with about 80 hunter gatherer leaders either as individuals or groups between July and November 2012 in the various places mentioned above. The interviews provided greater insights into the political participation of hunter gatherer women, the challenges they faced and steps that could be taken to strengthen their political participation. Some of the women interviewed in smaller groups were perceived as giving “fuller answers” (more elaborate answers) as the women could take support in what the others said and elaborate on others answers. This meant that more women would mean that they were less shy to speak. However, this set-up also complicated the filling in of questionnaires and may have led to a situation where many things went unsaid.

The education levels of the interviewees were mostly low. For example, 70% of the women interviewed have not attended school at all. 20% had completed forth form while 8% have attended some form of education that includes primary school, part secondary school or adult education. 0.2% of the women hold university education with only one having a Masters degree. This can be attributed to the following factors; very few schools in hunter gatherer areas thus most of the older populations have not had any formal education, high rates of school dropout due to early marriages and those with post secondary education have moved to urban centres or married off to other communities.

### **3.0 Hunter Gatherer Women Political participation**

#### **3.1 Who are hunter gatherer communities?**

Hunter Gatherers are communities who, until very recently, lived primarily by hunting of wild animals and gathering of wild fruits, roots and nuts. This is a livelihood system that is different from pastoralism and agriculture. According to Minority Rights Group International's World's Directory of Marginalized and Indigenous Peoples (Minority Rights Group International, 2008), several hunter-gather groups in Kenya have been grouped together under a derogatory term *Dorobo* (meaning 'primitive and poor') in the 1989 Kenya Population Census.

Hunter gatherer communities comprise of the Ogiek of Mau and Mt. Elgon forests, the Sengwer of Cherangany forest, the Yaaku of Mukogodo forest in Laikipia, the Boni (Awer) of Boni forest and the Sanye of the Tana Delta. Pockets of “Dorobo” communities are also said to be scattered in forests across Narok, Laikipia and Samburu districts. Others communities considered to be hunter gatherers include the Elmolo of Loyangalani in Lake Turkana, the Ichamus around Lake Baringo, the Dasenach near the Ethiopia border and the Malakote in the Tana Delta. There are an estimated 11 000 Ogiek in Kenya. Other communities include the Boni-Sanye 10,891, Elmolo 3,600, Yiaku 4,000 (Kenya Population Census, 1989). However, these figures are subject to confirmation.

### 3.2 Hunter gatherer women political participation

According to the Oxford University Press online resource centre, no definition of political participation is universally accepted (see Uhlaner 2001). What many definitions share however, is the limitation to activities that are addressed towards influencing the "state", the state being the political authority that exercises monopoly control over the means of coercion, whether in a democratic or non-democratic way. To Huntington & Nelson (1976: 3) political participation is the activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making. And to Verba et al. (1995: 38) *political* participation refers to activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies. Political participation may be either voluntary or involuntary. It may also be either through legal or illegal activities. However, this study will only focus on legal and voluntary participation of hunter gather women in political spaces within Kenya's democratic setting.

Historically, hunter gatherers like the Ogiek were not socially stratified. They had no chiefs or headmen or wealthy people or any *formally* organized council of elders. At no time did all members of a group or representatives of those members participate in *formally* organized political activities (Blackburn, 1971). However, besides belonging to a particular household, an individual belonged to an extended family, a sub lineage (Kot), a lineage (Kurget), a clan (Oret) and an age set (Ipinta) and an age grade (Ipin). His/her rights, duties, responsibilities and obligations went hand in hand with one's intelligence, skills, age and gender. These cross cutting relations existed in a framework which has come to be known as kinship (Kimaiyo, 2004). Strict social rules enforced compliance of rules. Male elders, with advice from their wives, made decisions by consensus on community matters.

Leadership among women was a spontaneous process through which gifted and socially accepted individuals evolved to address social issues affecting women. Women could choose amongst themselves those who will preside over issues like marital conflicts and advising girls (Muchemi, 2011). Certain women among the Ogiek were also recognized for their ability to foretell events and for their herbal knowledge. These women were often consulted widely (Sena, 2012).

In modern, democratic states, indigenous peoples all over the world find themselves part of political systems that are not their own but created and defined by governments with alien rules and led by politicians. Over the last centuries, indigenous peoples have gained experience in dealing with these imposed systems of politics and with hitherto unknown social structures (IWGIA, 2011).

For hunter gatherer women, their legal and voluntary political participation in modern, democratic Kenya can be viewed in three different ways:

- Involvement in the public arena to advertise and communicate demands to anyone willing to listen internationally and nationally.

- through activities targeting policy-makers both in the executive and legislative arms of government at the national and local levels
- their involvement in the selection process of policy makers either through running for office or voting for those who aspire to be policy makers

### 3.3 Legal framework for participation

The legal and regulatory frameworks for which hunter gatherer women can participate in international, national and local spaces in the Kenyan context are wide and diverse. Article 2 (5) of the Constitution of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2010) states that “the general rules of international law shall form part of the law of Kenya” This provides the basis for international human rights instruments to be applicable in the Kenya. Some of the instruments that directly address the issue of women political participation include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in paragraph 1; article 21 which states that "everyone" has the right to participate in the government of his/her country directly or through freely chosen representatives. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) addresses issues of discrimination against women and affirms their right to participate in political, social and economic spaces. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has several principles for women political participation. These include the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination, participation, free, prior and informed consent and the duty of state to consult and cooperate with indigenous peoples. These are in addition to International Labour Organization Convention 169 and recommendations by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues among others.

*Many of the women interviewed had not heard of the many international laws and processes while some have heard of Kenya's constitutional processes but do not fully understand the new constitution and its implications for them include the right to political participation.*

At the national level, Kenya's Constitution 2010 provides for the recognition of hunter gatherer communities. The constitution is also explicit on the rights of citizens to participate in governance, legislative processes, financial and environmental matters among others. A devolved system of government will also encourage increased political, social and economic matters both at the national and local levels. The constitution also provides for gender equality, equity and mainstreaming in national development. Under Article 27 (2) for example, the constitution provides that the State shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. Article 60 (1) (f) provides for the elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land (Republic of Kenya, 2010).



### 3.4 Hunter gatherer women in international and national processes

#### 3.4.1 Participation in international indigenous Peoples rights processes

Participating in international processes is critical for indigenous peoples to focus world attention on the obstacles that they face in obtaining greater protection of their lands, cultures and communities (University, 2000) with a view of obtaining change at the national level. The primary avenues for participation in indigenous rights spaces include the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous



Issues (UNPFII), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (AFRICOM) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Others include Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and numerous environmental platforms that include UNEP major groups platforms, UNREDD and Forest Carbon Partnership Facility dialogues with Indigenous Peoples.

Out of the total population of estimate of 40 000 comprising the six communities, only 25 individuals have or are participating in international processes. Of these, only 5 are women of which 3 are from the Ogiek primarily from Mau forest. Two are from the Yiaku community. There has been no participation of Sengwer, Sanye and Awer and Ogiek of Mt. Elgon women in international indigenous rights spaces.

#### 3.4.2 Participation in national processes

Though participation of hunter gatherer communities in national process has been non-existent or minimal in the past, the trend is changing with more of their representatives participating in various national forums in the recent past. This can be attributed to more proactive steps by the representatives to participate, donor support and increasing recognition of the plight of these communities by mainstream society especially civil society organizations. About 100 Ogiek from the various blocks of Mau forest are visible in several national processes. Less than 10 Ogiek from Mt. Elgon and Yiaku respectively are visible. Only about 5 Sengwer participate while there is no visibility of the Sanye and Awer in national processes.

The constitution review process was the first major national political space for hunter gatherers. 5 representatives participated in the constitution review process. Of the five, two, an Ogiek and a Sengwer, were delegates while the rest, 2 Ogiek and a Sengwer, were observers. Delegates had the power to move motions for consideration by the rest of the delegates and the two were directly responsible for all language that touches on hunter gatherer issues in the new constitution. The hunter

gatherers representative presented memorandums and petitions for consideration and moved a total 26 motions (Kesendany, 2012). Unfortunately, none of the representatives was a woman.

There is increasing recognition and participation of hunter gatherers in the new constitution dispensation in Kenya. Hunter Gatherer representative's voices are being sought in land policy and environmental processes among others. However, men still dominate participation in these national processes among all the hunter gatherer groups.

### **3.5 Hunter Gatherer women activities targeting policy-makers**

Hunter Gatherers generally have for the last 10 years organised activities targeting both the executive and legislative arms of government. These activities have included petitions, meetings, and demonstrations among others. Hunter Gatherer women especially from the Ogiek, Yiaku and Sengwer communities have participated in these activities in solidarity with their men.

However, policy makers, including mainstream civil society, have attempted to reach out to hunter gatherers including their women. 30 % of the women interviewed acknowledge that they have been invited to meetings on women issues. 35% have been invited to environmental related processes, 40% to land rights processes, 30% to forums on violence against women, 25% to forums on education and less than 2% to law making and entrepreneurship development processes.

### **3.6 Hunter Gatherer women involvement in the selection of policy makers**

Participation of hunter gatherer women in selecting policy makers is either through their running for office or voting for those who aspire to be policy makers. There is no data indicating the number of hunter gatherer women voters that could help determine their political influence nationally and locally. Their participation in national politics has been restricted to voting for aspirants for presidential and parliamentary seats. There is also no data on the number of hunter gatherer women who turn out to vote. Since Kenya's independence, no hunter gatherer woman has ever been or contested to be the President. None has ever been a member of parliament. Only one hunter gatherer woman, Ms. Jennifer Koinante from the Yiaku community, has ever contested a parliamentary seat although she did not go beyond the party nomination stage (Towett, 2012).

Similarly, in the new constitutional order, less than 5 hunter gatherer woman are aspiring or showing interest in political seats within the national or devolved governance structures. Ms. Judy Nagol from Sasimuani in Narok County is expressing interest in being nominated as a county representative within the special interest quota as both from a marginalized Ogiek community and also a person with disabilities. Ms Jane Majani and Ms Agnes Salim have both expressed interest in the county representatives seat for Nessuit and Mariashoni wards in Nakuru county respectively. Ms. Annah Naramat Sena from Ololulunga in Narok County is not contesting for any political seat but is the county

gender representative for a leading political party and a leading women mobilizer in Narok County while Ms. Jennifer Koinante is considering being a running mate (deputy governor) in Laikipia county. Both Anna and Jennifer also serve as officials of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, a national women organization, in their respective counties.

#### 4.0 Advocacy efforts targeting hunter gatherer women

Advocacy efforts targeting hunter gatherer women specifically have been minimal. Most advocacy arenas where hunter gatherer representatives have participated include workshops, seminars, public baraza's and sometime trainings. These have been organized by government and civil society organizations including those registered by hunter gatherers themselves.

20% of the women interviewed felt that the advocacy efforts have been effective while 70% felt that they have not been effective. 10% were not sure. The interviewees cited many reasons for this that included language constraints, time allocated, methods of delivery and the few numbers of people targeted.

90 % of the women interviewed felt that they have faced discrimination in advocacy and political processes. This has been manifested in different forms that include men not allowing women to speak even where women have been invited to meetings, being allowed to speak or participate but their ideas are not taken on board and sometimes being considered merely as window dressers in the processes.

*"Men do not remember women. Once when I was attending a Narok County Council meeting, I was the only woman there and the men would not let me talk. I stood up and said that I wish to speak on behalf of women and after some opposition I was allowed to speak" Anna Naramat Sena, Ololulunga*

#### 5.0 Obstacles in and for participating in political spaces

Both women and men interviewed cited various obstacles in and for the political participation of hunter gatherer women. This included both internal and external obstacles.

##### 5.1 Internal obstacles

##### 5.1 (a) Cultural stereotyping

65% mentioned cultural stereotyping as the greatest obstacle faced by hunter gatherer women. Indigenous communities are looked down upon by mainstream communities in Kenya. Hunter gatherer communities in particular have historically been viewed as poor and primitive by other communities including other indigenous peoples. It is also a fact that hunter gatherer communities are patriarchal

societies. Hunter gatherer women therefore suffer triple discrimination as indigenous peoples, then hunter gatherers then women. Hunter gatherer women with disabilities suffer a fourth layer of discrimination.

As a result of these cultural stereotyping, hunter gatherer women often have to seek permissions from their husbands to participate in any processes. 70% of the women interviewed asserted this. However, after further discussions, it emerged that the real problem is deeply ingrained inferiority complex that makes them shy and afraid to state their positions on issues. Coupled with other family commitments, 80% felt that it is a herculean task for hunter gatherer women to participate politically.

Further, 85% felt that men would hardly vote for a woman for any other elective seat other than the women representative seat. And for hunter gatherer women, contesting for the women's representative seat whose mandate covers the entire County is not even imaginable. However, three Ogiek women are seeking county representative seat in Narok and Nakuru County respectively (Nagol, 2012).

#### **5.1 (b) Poor leadership skills**

35% cited lack of commitment to women issues. They argued that none is willing to take the initiative and responsibility. The few that could, especially those employed as teachers for example, are in far off stations and do not have the time and resources necessary to drive processes at local levels. The few, including men, who have registered community based organizations and are locally based, lack the expertise, the will, the commitment and the networks to adequately mobilize women politically. It is a question of being proactive as they have the vision.

#### **5.1 (c) Poverty**

65% of those interviewed mentioned poverty as barrier to their active participation in politics. To them, politics is a rich man's turf. Almost all of them depend on small scale agriculture and rarely make more than a dollar a day. There is no service based economic activities in hunter gatherer territories.

All hunter gatherer communities visited, except the Ogiek in Narok South, have land tenure issues. Ogiek in Sasimuani in Narok North, Yiaku in Mukogodo, and Sengwer in Kapolet (Cherangany) are settled but have no titles to their lands. The Ogiek in Mt. Elgon are considered squatters and constantly face evictions threats though they are practising very small scale agriculture and livestock keeping. The Sanye around Hola have been allocated 10 acres next to Hola but as the town expands as result of the LAPSET corridor, they are constantly being threatened with evictions. Without clear land tenure,

In Narok South, land sales are the underlying cause of poverty among the Ogiek. Land ownership was communal ownership historically then this was turned to group ranches from 1974 to 1995 when the group ranches were subdivided into individual freeholds held mostly by men. Interestingly, around

Olooloipangi area in Narok South, Ogiek women also have title deeds to their parcels of land and they are selling too. This is despite practising small scale, agriculture and owning cross breed dairy cattle.

The greatest challenge observed is lack of financial literacy and understanding of how the market economy works. These are communities that are still in transition from a barter economy and yet to grasp the dynamics of demand and supply including the value of land. Where some understanding of the market economy exists, there are no roads to access markets.

The Women Enterprise Fund and Youth Enterprise Fund established by the government to support women and youth enterprises are not reaching hunter gatherers.

### 5.1 (d) Low self esteem

This is triggered by historically being looked down upon and exacerbated by low education levels. 70% of the women interviewed have not attended school at all. 20% had completed fourth form while 8% have attended some form of education that includes primary school, part secondary school or adult education. 0.2% of the women hold university education with only one having a Masters degree. This can be attributed to very few schools are in hunter gatherer areas thus most of the older populations have not had any formal education, high school dropout rates due to pregnancies and early marriages, female genital mutilation and those with post secondary education have moved to urban centres or married off to other communities. Historical discrimination and ridicule also affects academic performance of hunter gatherer girls. Even among the literate, they still look down upon themselves on the basis of their community origins. The older generation believe that it is only formal education that matters as they have not understood the value and importance of traditional knowledge.

Linguistic barriers that go beyond simply being fluent in the language that the political platforms and meetings use to include being familiar with the technical language that must be used to articulate their demands and proposals to ensure that they are incorporated and understood in the decision makers terms (FIMI, 2011) is also a factor driving of low self esteem among hunter gatherer women.

There is a high level of brain drain where the few educated hunter gatherer women get married outside their communities citing lack of suitable partners. Rarely do they come back and build their communities. Educated hunter gatherer men also tend to marry outside of their communities for the same reasons. Their wives rarely want to be identified with the hunter gatherer community nor are they easily accepted as such. They do not make any efforts to empower women from the communities.



## 5.2 External obstacles

### 5.2 (a) Infrastructure

There is no single tarmac road in all hunter gatherer territories. And the existing dust roads are mostly impassable during the rainy seasons. In many cases, hunter gatherer women have to walk for between 1-3 hours to access public transport on the dusty roads. This becomes a hard task especially during the rainy season. To reach the nearest executive or legislative offices therefore becomes a difficult and expensive task that discourages frequent participation. Workshop organizers, in most cases, do not understand or factor in this transportation challenges when inviting hunter gatherer women to meetings.

### 5.2 (b) Insecurity

For the Boni and the Awer in the Tana Delta, insecurity is biggest obstacle to their political participation. They can rarely contest for positions or try to influence political processes because the dominant majority communities that they seek to compete with or influence are often armed. However, there is no data on the impacts of the conflicts in the Tana Delta on the Awer and Sanye hunter gatherer communities.

### 5.2 (c) Information and communication technology gaps

Hunter gatherer women access to information is limited. Though many households especially among the Ogiek and Sengwer and Yiaku own radio sets, this are not frequently listened to for lack of power. All rely on dry cell batteries which are expensive for the communities. The communities do not have access to solar chargeable batteries. Similarly, national newspapers do not reach hunter gatherer territories.

Internet penetration is also almost zero in all hunter gatherer territories. However, many community members especially among the Ogiek, Sengwer and Yiaku have mobile phones that may have access to the internet. However, there is no data on the penetration of both mobile phones and internet among hunter gatherer communities though the youth from these communities may be accessing the internet on their phones. Computer literacy is also zero, contributing to the lack of internet access.

## 6.0 Political Empowerment of Hunter Gatherer Women

Hunter gatherer women empowerment is intimately linked to speaking out, taking up the specific demands of women and proposing them in a public space, thus breaking the silence and openly and publically participating in and contributing to the construction of ones' own political spaces and paradigms. speaking out is not limited to simply speaking *per se*, but also being heard and the inclusion of their voice and proposals in the spaces of participation and their outcomes in different levels. It also includes the demand to be respected as different, a distinct vision and the autonomy of speaking for oneself (FIMI , 2011).

Hunter gatherer women identified key factors for building and strengthening their political participation and leadership. This include:-

### **I. Awareness creation**

90 % of all the women and men interviewed express concerns that they were not fully aware of the constitutional provisions, the laws that are being formulated, reviewed or amended to align with the constitution. Despite some of them having been invited by the government or mainstream civil society to some meetings on diverse issues, there is a feeling that this is too little and specific programs targeting hunter gatherers should be supported.

There was also lack of adequate awareness of international indigenous peoples platforms. This can be attributed to lack of resources for activists who participate in these platforms to share with their communities. Intergenerational exchange of information is also critical.

Awareness at the donor level is also critical to strengthen the political participation of hunter gatherers.

### **II. Capacity building**



Ogiek Woman leader at Mt. Elgon

This is both at the individual and community levels and includes institutional strengthening for organizations working with hunter gatherer communities. Leadership training would be the starting point to build proactivity, vision and a sense of purpose.

At the individual level, this would involve training of trainers and enabling the trained to run capacity building programs at the community level. Not only will this bolster confidence of the trained community member, but it will also be easier for communities to understand the often difficult concepts as the trained community member will be able to deliver in a local language. Institutional capacity building will include administrative funds to support dedicated office work and training of the staff in fund raising, financial and project management.

Current efforts being undertaken includes capacity building in natural resource management through the government constituted and support of the 45 member strong Ogiek Council of elders. This institution has 9 women as part of the elders. Consultations through the national REDD+ program though this are yet to be specific to hunter gatherer women due to resource constraints. This need to be better coordinated and targeted to women as they are custodians of the environment.

At the individual level, there is need for training individual women and men on women issues. They in turn should be supported to share the developed capacities with their communities.

It is also critical to sensitize mainstream civil society including the National Equality and Gender commission. It is encouraging that during the course of this study, the commission has expressed interest in hunter gatherer issues.

### III. Entrepreneurship development

Financial security will strengthen women's ability to defend and pursue their rights including the right to political participation. As the majority of the hunter gatherers interviewed are small scale farmers or keep livestock, they are often conned by middlemen who buy their products cheaply. Interestingly, hunter gatherer territories are full of diverse resources that can be developed to generate income for women and communities at large.

What would be necessary is the undertaking of a study to understand the gaps in the food system and explore avenues for value addition to the diverse resources. Organizing women around the product would foster cooperation and leadership. Market access would also be critical.

*For example, Ogiek Peoples Development Program (OPDP) in partnership with the Ogiek Women Empowerment Program are running a poultry keeping program for Ogiek women in Sogoo, Narok South.*

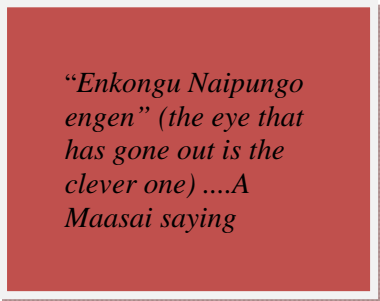
### IV. Networking and Alliance building

Networking and alliance building will build and strengthen hunter gatherer political participation. Through networks and alliances, they will learn about themselves through others, bolstering their courage and ability to participate politically. This will help discover self-esteem and confidence to speak out is an essential factor in all the formative processes of indigenous women's leadership.

Networking and alliance should be not only through workshops but also exchange visits. For, during the course of this study, Daughters of Mumbi, a NGO based in Limuru offered to host such a visit for hunter gatherer women to visit Kikuyu women.

Though ICT penetration is low, it will be useful to develop this mode of communication. Use of community Radio stations or using current vernacular stations to educate hunter gatherers on the various laws and processes could be organized. Through these exchanges, especially at the county level, hunter gatherers could negotiate and dialogue with their neighbouring communities for inclusion in political leadership.

The first allies that hunter gatherer women need to nurture are the male members of their communities. This will be necessary to garner men support and cooperation. It will also be important to reach out to national and international organizations and networks as part of the enabling political participation.



*“Enkongu Naipungo engen” (the eye that has gone out is the clever one) ....A Maasai saying*

Obviously, intergenerational alliances within and among the different hunter gatherer communities will help strengthening their collective bargaining power.

## 7.0 Conclusion

Hunter gatherer women are the most marginalized in Kenya. Their political participation will be a bridge of emancipating not only the women but also their communities. The legal progress made towards the recognition and inclusion of hunter gatherer communities in Kenya provide the firm stepping stones for the speedier political participation by hunter gatherer women. The process of building their political participation should start with self-recognition and self-empowerment. It is encouraging that this is already taking root among some communities and there are other numerous examples that hunter gatherer women can borrow from. Dialogue within their communities and neighbouring communities should follow closely. National and international organizations and networks and the donor community will be instrumental in enabling this dialogue.

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