Women's empowerment role in leadership, Kyengera Town Council

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ABSTRACT

The paper assesses the role of women empowerment in leadership and governance in Kyengera Town Council, Wakiso district, Uganda, focusing at how can women's participation in leadership and governance be enhanced? How does women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development? The paper employs a case study design using both quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches. A sample of 27 respondents was selected using Slovene's formula from 30 women in leadership positions in Kyengera Town Council. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires and interviews was edited, cleaned coded and entered into SPSS for analysis to generate descriptive statistics for interpretation and analysis of the results. Findings indicate diversification of talents of women, support for women in local elections, societal awareness of women's leadership on civic education, create cross-party women caucuses, and build capacity for female leaders as the ways in which women's participation in leadership and governance could be enhanced. Further, it was reported that, women's participation in leadership and governance could enhance sustainable development through, sustainable resource management, inclusion of women in political participation, promotion of women's participation in governance and the removal of barriers that marginalize women, and dialogue and networking. The paper concludes that involving women in leadership and governance is a mechanism to achieving sustainable development. The paper recommends that, government through inclusive policies should embrace women's interests in all leadership and governance platforms, provide rights to and ownership of property to women for sustainable development, and local governments should place women at the forefront of decision making to ensure sustainable leadership and governance. The paper contributes to the avenues in which women empowerment enhance leadership positions in decision making.

Introduction

The United Nations' focus on the post-2015 development goals strongly aligns women's empowerment and gender equality with women's leadership in economic development (UN Women, as cited Hinds, 2015, p.2). On the other hand, Sustainable Development Goal 16 provides for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and a key component of an inclusive society is active participation by women in political processes (WFUNA, n.d). This implies that, the promotion of women's empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing; and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends. There is a growing recognition of untapped capacity and talent of women and women's leadership and it can be

noted that, there was 49.6% of the global population in 2016, but only 23.6% had parliamentary positions (WFUNA, n.d) and 23.8% in 2017 (Policy Belief, 2018). However, the number of women parliamentarians in Sub-Saharan Africa was 23.9%, 27.5% in Europe and 28.2 % in the Americas (WFUNA, n,d). The brief indicates that the least percentages were in Asia (19.7%), Arab States (18.2%) and Pacific (14%) respectively. This reveals that, women's share of parliamentary seats have increased by almost 0.6 percentage points each year since 2007, approximately doubling women's representation in parliaments since 1995 (UN Women & IPU, 2017; IPU, 2018). It can be noted that, in 2017 only three countries had achieved the parity in their single or lower house parliaments including; Rwanda, Cuba and Bolivia (IPU, 2018). Despite the growing evidence in the numbers and of the benefits of women's leadership, women are underrepresented in decision-making positions across all sectors (Policy Belief, 2018). Consequently, women's meaningful participation in politics is affected in many ways which lower the full participation in political decision making (Policy Belief, 2018; WFUNA, n.d). Thus, a legislator's gender has distinctive impact on policy priorities making it critical that women are present in leadership and governance and other responsibilities (Policy Belief, 2018). Interestingly, there is strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, they impact on more policy making decisions imperative to good governance (Policy Belief, 2018; WFUNA, n.d). Notably, women's ability to attain financial autonomy or access to economic resources to enhance their participation in decision making is paramount for sustainable development and governance too (Hinds, 2015; Policy Belief, 2018). This implies that, when women are empowered, their communities experience higher standards of living which give rise to increased housing, health education and infrastructure. For example, in Wakiso district, women councilors occupy very influential leadership positions; the district Vice Chairperson is a woman and three other heads of sectorial committees of education, health and works are headed by women (FOWODE, 2017). This justifies the need for and inclusion of women in leadership and governance as it enriches decision making for viable community growth and development.

Literature review

How can women's participation in leadership and governance be enhanced?
Studies show that cultural, structural, and educational barriers continue to challenge women's participation and inclusion, limiting their ability to ascend to leadership positions which means that, various approaches need to be undertaken to enhance women's participation in leadership and governance.

Hill (2017) asserts that, ensuring women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies contributes to an enabling environment for women to thrive. He adds that when women cannot exercise their full reproductive rights, they may forgo advancement of opportunities and leadership positions since there is a high degree of overlap between childbearing and career-building years. This makes family planning services and comprehensive sexuality education available for girls and women throughout their life paths necessary to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions.

Hill (2017) continues to state that, a number of seats need to be reserved for women, setting a minimum share of women on political candidate lists or corporate boards, or writing measures into statutes of political parties increase female leadership. Globally, it is estimated that women won more than 30% of political seats across 21 countries with transitional quotas compared to 15.4% of seats in 19 countries without transitional quotas in 2017 (Hill, 2017, UN Women, 2013 & IPU, 2017, Policy Belief, 2018). They further note that, the strategic use of transitional quotas in businesses also led to an increase in women on corporate boards in Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands.

World Economic Forum (2017) indicates that when women are in leadership positions, they tend to encourage more women to fill leadership roles, and more women are hired at all levels. On average, companies with female CEOs have more women occupying board seats than companies with male CEOs, 29% and 15% respectively (Zarya, 2018). In politics, countries with women in leadership positions have become "role-models," influencing politics between parties and in neighboring countries (Hill, 2017).

Providing women with skills-based training and mentorship programs that prioritize and support women's leadership through educational and skills-building programs for professional development help ensure that women can fully engage in the workplace and excel in leadership positions (Hill, 2017; DeLaurentis, 2014). This includes investment in and support for training, mentorships, peer networks, and other systems. A qualitative study of women leaders in academia found that women in senior positions benefited from mentoring relationships throughout their careers, supporting the notion that mentorships for women can improve the number of women in decision-making positions (Hill, 2017).

IPU (2017) & Hill (2017) contend that, combating Sexual Violence in Politics and Businesses is a key for enhancement of women's empowerment in leadership positions in various countries for example the Feminist Movements like #MeToo, #BalancetonPorc, #NiUnaMenos, and many others, are exposing the magnitude of sexual harassment, misogyny, and gender-based violence in communities, corporations, academic institutions, governments, and the media. The movements have ignited debates within parliaments on how to prevent and combat gender-based violence, leading to the establishment of advisory boards specialized on harassment and initiatives within political parties to build environments in which women can thrive and exercise their human rights. (Mitigation of effects of gender based domestic violence)

Hill (2017) informs that changing the narrative including reshaping the global narrative around girls and women from victims and vulnerable people to drivers of progress, improves girls' and women's chances of becoming leaders. Women who identify and are portrayed as agents of change are powerful role-models who can influence their peers, communities, and younger generations. The media can play a crucial role in changing the narrative (UN Women & IPU, 2017). The Unstereotype Alliance, launched in 2017, is an industry-led initiative convened by UN Women to use the power of advertising to address harmful masculinities and gender inequality through better marketing practices (Unstereotype Alliance, 2017). Members who include leading consumer brands and Fortune 500 companies commit to portray all people as empowered actors, directly addressing unconscious bias in advertisements, and challenge each other to deliver only the best, un-stereotyped marketing content (Unstereotype Alliance, 2018).

Hill (2017) mentions that, 'walking the talk' is paramount to companies that publicly commit to improve gender diversity in senior positions are more likely to increase the share of women leaders within their businesses and to create accountability and play a crucial role in advocating for changes in laws, attitudes, behaviors, norms, and practices. A study by Weldon & Htun (as cited in Policy Brief, 2018, p.5) found strong autonomous women's movements to be the most important factor influencing and achieving a broad range of government responses to violence against women, thereby addressing a main barrier to women's ability to fully participate in leadership and decision-making opportunities.

It is of great importance for funding agencies to financially support Women's Organizations especially in leadership positions or even those willing to take part in the political leadership. Policy Brief (2018) indicates

that women's rights organizations, movements, and participation in policy dialogues are important catalysts of social progress. In Uganda for example whoever comes up strong either on the side of opposition or the government in power is weakened especially by the state.

How does women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development?
The United Nations' focus on the post-2015 development goals strongly aligns women's empowerment and gender equality with women's leadership in economic development (UN Women, 2013, as cited Hinds, 2015, p.2). This implies that, the progress of women into political roles has been positive but slow, and based on current trends the UN Millennium Development Goal of gender equality in political representation is likely to take another half century to achieve (McCann, n.d, as cited in Hinds, 2015, p.2). This affirms that, gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. The UN General Assembly 2012, paragraph 31 states that, "we reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making" (Hinds, 2015).

On the same note, the Section XII, Charter of the Commonwealth, 2013 states that, "we recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development" (Hinds, 2015).

Proportional representation systems not only afford more opportunities for women participation, but 'contagion' is more likely to occur in a proportional representation system than plurality/majority systems. Contagion is the process by which parities adopt policies initiated by other political parties. In the women's political participation context, once one party nominates women in prominent positions, parties in proportional representation systems will be "much quicker to adopt this policy." (WFUNA, n.d)

This acknowledges that, women are powerful agents of change, and the far-reaching benefits of diversity and gender parity in leadership and decision-making are increasingly recognized in all spheres of society (Domingo et al., 2015; Policy Brief, 2018). It can be noted that, when women hold more executive leadership positions, their companies are more profitable. Thus, companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 21% more likely to outperform the national average (Policy Brief, 2018, p.5). Women hold over 12% of board seats at the world's best-known companies, a rise of only 3.1% since 2009 (Hinds, 2015). A study by Dow Jones concluded that the 'overall median proportion of female executives was 7.1% demonstrating the value that having more females can potentially bring to a management team for start-ups with five or more females, 61% were successful and only 39% failed (Hinds, 2015).

Women as leaders and decision-makers at all levels are critical to advancing gender justice and gender equality and to furthering economic, social, and political progress for all (Policy Brief, 2018). When women are meaningfully represented and engaged in leadership bodies such as legislatures, courts, executive boards, and community councils, rulings and decisions are more likely to be inclusive, representative, and taking diverse views into account (OECD, as cited in Policy Brief, 2018, p.1).

Proportional representation systems feature greater women participation than plurality/majority system. In a proportional representation system, the electoral system is designed such that the overall votes for a party

corresponds to the proportion of seats in parliament. That is, a party that wins thirty percent of the vote will get approximately thirty percent of the seats in parliament. In plurality/majority (also known as winner-take-all), the candidate or party with the most votes is the electoral winner (WFUNA, n.d).

Interestingly, International organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have gender equality monitoring mechanisms in place and report on these regularly, although not all refer to women's leadership (Hinds, 2015; WEF, 2017). For that note, women's leadership within households, including decision-making over land and household income, improves access to education and healthcare for their families (IMF, as cited in Policy Brief, 2018, p.1). This implies that, elevating women in decision-making benefits politics, businesses, and communities (Policy Brief, 2018). The Policy Belief also indicates that, women's leadership is intrinsically linked to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals including and beyond Sustainable Development Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

Countries with a greater proportion of women as top decision-makers in legislatures have lower levels of income inequality (UN Women, 2013; Di Lanzo & Deliver, 20140. Studies have demonstrated that boards on which women are represented are more likely to be financially successful, have less likelihood of governance scandals and are less likely to operate in tax havens (MSCI, 2014, as cited in Hinds, 2015, p.3). Over the past several decades, there have been notable gains in women's leadership, with more women in decision-making roles in politics, businesses, and communities than ever before. Globally, there are fewer women CEOs, fewer women members of boards and only a small proportion of organizations with three or more women on the board (Hinds, 2015).

Methodology

The paper employed a case study design which utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches. The study involved a total of 30 women in political positions like the councilors, women council leaders, town council leaders and chairpersons on various levels in Kyengera Town Council Wakiso district, Uganda. Out of the 30 women in leadership positions, a sample of 27 respondents was determined using Sloven's formula and the participants were purposely selected from Nsangi Sub County (currently, Kyengera Town Council) and included in the study. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources where, secondary sources included; journals, research papers, books and newspapers while the primary data sources were the respondents whom the questionnaires were administered and also interviewed. Using the questionnaire, authors collected information on how can women's participation in leadership and governance be enhanced? How does women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development? The data collection tool was revised and validated by experts in leadership and governance. The questionnaire included both close-ended and open-ended questions which the respondents gave their responses as per their understanding on the research questions. After data collection, the responses from open-ended questions were edited and coded to provide an inspection and correction for a better consensus. On the other hand, close-ended responses were coded to transform raw data into numbers. Thereafter, data was edited, cleaned and entered into SPSS for analysis to generated descriptive statistics from which interpretation and analysis of results was done.

Results

This section presents the results and findings from the participants based on the various statements posed to the respondents by the researchers on the role of women's empowerment in leadership and governance in Kyengera Town Council and the responses are indicated in the various subsequent sections below:

How can women's participation in leadership and governance be enhanced?

Based on the study, the respondents were required to provide their answers on the ways in which women's participation in leadership and governance can be enhanced as indicated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Enhancement of women's participation in leadership and governance

Response	Frequency (n=27)	Percent
Diversification of talents of women	20	74.1
Capacity building of women leaders	26	96.3
Sensitization and awareness	25	92.6
Support women in local elections	26	96.3
Respect for women's rights and decision	27	100.0
Establishing quota system for women	23	85.2
Mitigation of effects of gender domestic violence	26	96.3
Walking the talk	20	74.1
Create cross party women caucuses	21	77.8
Provision of incentive to best performing female readers	18	66.7

Source: Primary Data, 2019

Results in Table 1 (See: Appendix 1) indicate that majority of the respondents (100%) reported respect for women's rights and decisions as the main approach through which women's participation in leadership and governance can be enhanced. The respondents also reported that capacity building of women leaders and mitigation of the effects of gender domestic violence were also key in promoting women's participation in leadership and governance, and these accounted for 96.3% respectively. These were followed by sensitization and awareness (92.6%) among the women to enhance their ability to participate in democratic governance and decision making. It was further reported that establishing women quota (85.2%) in any political system of governance was an important engine to enhance women's participation in leadership and governance across various political positions in the country. Results also revealed that creating cross party women caucuses (77.8%) enrich women's participation in leadership and governance in any country. Additionally, 74.1% of the respondents noted that, diversification of talents of women and 'walking the talk' were influential in ascertaining women's participation in leadership and governance respectively, and the least reported was provision of incentive to best performing female leaders (66.7%). This implies that, respecting women's rights, building their capacity and mitigating the negativity of gender based domestic violence empower the women and enhance their participation in various leadership positions at different levels. In countries where women are educated and supported in their location elections through civic education and financial support respectively, more women have participated in the political leadership of their regions and promoted sustainable decisions for their states as compared to their men counterparts. It can be noted that in achieving economic growth of any region, women play a key role and that is why it is better to enhance their participation in leadership and governance through the approach represented and analyzed above.

How does women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development?

The paper sought to assess the approaches in which women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development and the responses from the participants are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: **Women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development**

Parameters	Frequency (n=27)	Percent
Proportional representation	25	92.6
Gender equality in political representation	27	96.3
Inclusion of women in political participation	16	59.3
Removal of barriers that marginalize the women	24	88.9
Sustainable resource management	25	92.6
Access to and ownership of resources	21	77.8
Sustainable Peace	15	55.6
Advancement of human rights and education of the girl child	26	96.3
Representation of marginalized persons	26	96.3
Dialogue and networking	20	74.1
Involvement of women's groups in policy making	18	66.7
Promotion of women's participation in governance	19	70.4
Cooperation and Collaboration with various women groups	21	77.8

Source: Primary Data, 2019

Results in Table 2 revealed that majority (96.3%) of the respondents reported advancement of human rights and education of the girl child, gender equality in political representation and representation of marginalized persons were the paramount approaches through which sustainable development is achieved as per women's participation in leadership and governance respectively. These were followed by proportional representation and sustainable resource management accounting to 92.6% respectively. It was also revealed that, removal of barriers which marginalize the women (88.9%) was substantial for sustainable development. Some respondents mentioned access to and ownership of resources like land and cooperation and collaboration with various women groups (77.8%) ensured sustainable development too; whereas, 74.1% represented those who asserted that dialoging and networking were key for sustainable development, only 70.4% stated promotion of women's participation in governance would ensure sustainable development. On the other hand, respondents (66.7%) reported about 66.7% of involvement of women's groups in policy making promote sustainable development. Regrettably, 59.3% and 55.6% of the respondents indicated that, inclusion of women in political representation and sustainable peace within and beyond families was bound to result in sustainable development. Women are good managers of resources as compared to their men counterparts which they undertake through efficient use of resources. Further, they are able to cooperate with their women fox through dialogue and networking. Additionally, removing barriers to the marginalized groups enhances sustainable peace and promotes gender equality resulting in proportional representations.

Discussion

How can women's participation in leadership and governance be enhanced?

Results revealed that, respect for women's rights and decisions play a key role in the enhancement of women's participation in leadership and governance. In most cases women cannot exercise their full reproductive rights and leadership positions since there is a high degree of overlap between childbearing and career-

building years. This means that women's rights including rights to their bodies, rights to vote, rights to quality education, rights to participate in politics and land ownership must be encouraged. In areas where women's rights are respected, more and more women have been able to participate in a number of political activities. The results agree with the findings of Hill (2017) who claims that sexual education for girls and women throughout their life time is necessary to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. This empowers them to participate in various positions of leadership in their communities especially when their rights are respected. Additionally, more organizations should train female legislators on how to engage with the media as this enhances women's leadership and serve as encouragement for African girls and boys. DeLaurentis (2014) adds that countries need to develop a curriculum for civic education that emphasizes women's leadership and dispelling cultural norms against it will ensure that future generations are more receptive to female political participation. Policy Brief (2018) confirms that women's rights organizations, movements, and participation in policy dialogues are important catalysts of social progress.

It is further revealed that, supporting women in local elections is a fundamental mechanisms in promoting women's participation in leadership and governance. When women are supported in terms of financing, civic education, capacity building and mentorship, their ability to participate in political aspirations increase. For example, in countries where women are sensitized on how to manage political leadership, governance and service provision, they have been able to perform incredibly. This implies that women need to be given funds to help them in their political activities and service provision to their electorates. Therefore, supporting in training, mentorships, peer networks, and other systems improve the number of women in decision-making positions (Hill, 2017). Programs that give women confidence and space to run for local office would increase the pool of experienced female candidates running for national seats. DeLaurentis (2014) adds that supporting women for local elections would reassure both potential female candidates and party leaders that women can win competitive elections. Therefore, it is of great importance for funding agencies to financially support Women's Organizations especially in leadership positions or even those willing to take part in the political leadership contests (Policy Brief, 2018).

Mitigation of effects of gender domestic violence is evidenced in combating sexual violence in politics and businesses as a key for enhancement of women's empowerment in leadership positions in various countries. Therefore, it is through this approach that feminist movements like #MeToo, #BalancetonPorc, #NiUnaMenos are exposing the magnitude of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in communities among the women and how it can affect their participation in leadership and governance (Hill, 2017; IPU, 2017). This encourages political parties to build environments in which women can thrive and exercise their human rights. Despite Hill (2017) focusing on the Feminist Movements as mentioned above, he forgot to present the value and importance of the Black Lives Matter Movement which fights against the discrimination of blacks in all aspects of their development. Htun (as cited in Policy Brief, 2018, p.5) explains that, women's movements are important factors influencing and achieving a broad range of government responses to violence against women, thereby addressing a main barrier to women's ability to fully participate in leadership and decision-making opportunities.

Findings revealed that diversification of talents of women was successful for women participation in leadership. This implies that women have a unique capacity to shed light on the often obscured needs of marginalized groups. In cases where women have successfully participated in leadership, they have been

able to urge both national governments and political parties to diversify the women chosen to run for and hold quota seats which is also influenced by international organizations to benefit the inclusion women in various leadership positions. Hill (2017) mentions that gender diversity in senior positions increase the share of women leaders within their businesses and creates accountability as well as playing a crucial role in advocating for changes in laws, attitudes, behaviors, norms and practices.

In any country, knowledge and skills are fundamental for women's participation in leaderships positions, hence a need for capacity building among all the women leaders. Interestingly, capacity building programs are long-term strategies for increasing the efficacy of female lawmakers which involves enhancement of women's political leadership. This implies that when women are in leadership positions, they tend to encourage more women to fill leadership roles, and more women are hired at all levels (World Economic Forum, 2017). Accordingly, capacity building for female parliamentarians enhances their knowledge around various issues and connect with civil society activists who liaise to create new beneficial policies (DeLaurentis, 2014). It is important to note that, providing orientation sessions prepare the women to cultivate their leadership potentials which helps them to make a meaningful contribution to governments and societies at large.

Results also showed that establishing quota system for women is very important for women's participation in leadership and governance. However, DeLaurentis (2014) asserts that, though quotas can be a powerful tool for elevating more women to political office, they can also function as a glass ceiling, with representation typically not surpassing the number that is required by law. Hill (2017) continues to say that a number of seats need to be reserved for women, setting a minimum share of women on political candidate lists or corporate boards, or writing measures into statutes of political parties increase female leadership. On the global scale, because of the establishment of the quota system, women won more than 30% of political seats across 21 countries with transitional quotas compared to 15.4% of seats in 19 countries without transitional quotas in 2017 (Hill, 2017, UN Women & IPU, 2017, Policy Belief, 2018). Zarya (2018) asserts that on average, companies with female CEOs have more women occupying board seats than companies with male CEOs, 29% and 15% respectively.

Findings also indicated that creating cross party women caucuses is a key in ensuring women's participation in leadership and governance. This means that most women lack the accrued power and influence of their male colleagues who are part of the "old boys' club (DeLaurentis, 2014)." Thus, in a way of supporting and advising the creation of women's caucuses, international organizations could amplify the voices and contributions of female legislators. This implies that, cross-party caucuses serve as important mediators of inter-party disputes, curbing disagreements before they interrupt the democratic process and civil society operations. To justify this, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, for instance, was the first cross-party caucus in a dangerously split post-genocide Rwanda (DeLaurentis, 2014) and this comprised of women from all ethnic groups. This implies that via cross-party caucuses, women can also play a critical role when it comes to cultivating leadership capacities among their female colleagues.

How does women's participation in leadership and governance enhance sustainable development?

Results indicated that women's participation in leadership and governance was through representation of marginalized persons in a given location. This implies that as the marginalized persons are represented they are able to work together and perform their duties effectively and efficiently. The marginalized persons like the women, the girls and people with disabilities are represented at the district and local councils as well

as other leadership positions in the area. Doing this has enhanced women's participation in a number of decision making which are effective for sustainable development. Consequently, under-representation of women at any level of governance and decision-making results in a democratic deficit which proves time and again that diverse groups make better decisions. This is particularly true when it comes to a task as challenging as representing the interests of citizens at the local level. This often influence policies in housing, security, transport and the economy. Local governments make important decisions that affect the lives of women and men for better development.

Results also revealed that advancement of human rights and education of the girl child was an important tool for ensuring sustainable development. It also stated that when you educate the girl you have educated the Nation. Since women are good managers for resources, when they are educated it stimulates resources conservation across the society. This ensures that resources will exist for both present and future generation. Therefore, in women's political participation context, once one party nominates women in prominent positions, parties in proportional representation systems will be much quicker to adopt the policy (WFUNA, n.d). Additionally, this is also paramount in the provision of environmental services and resources as required by a number of people in the community. The findings concur with Hinds (2015) who reaffirms that advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development. On the other hand, proportional representation systems not only afford more opportunities for women participation, but 'contagion' is more likely to occur in a proportional representation system than plurality/majority systems. All in all, the freedom and right to participate in the life of the community is a right protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and covers all members of the society.

Findings from the study indicated that gender equality and proportional representation in political positions encourage sustainable development. This implies that, gender equality related to having equal representation of political aspirants is key to women's empowerment for leadership and governance. It therefore, calls for both women and men to be equally represented. This is clarified by the UN General Assembly 2012, paragraph 31 states that, we reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making. It further stipulates that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future (Hinds, 2015). Thus, women's leadership within households, including decision-making over land and household income, improves access to education and healthcare for their families (IMF, as cited in Policy Brief, 2018, p.1). Interestingly, women's equal participation and representation in local decision-making processes is critical for prioritizing women's practical needs and issues in local governments' agendas and for localizing sustainable development.

The study revealed sustainable resource management is achieved through women's participation in leadership and governance. This implies that access to and ownership of resources like land is key to sustainable development. It can be noted that, in many societies, women are unlikely to own land and only 20% of the land owners globally are women (UN Women, 2017). This signifies that, in order for women to own family property, societal customs and cultures need to be amended to reflect non-biasness in the access to and ownerships of land (UN Women & IPU, 2018). Interestingly, this gives women a sense of ownership which is vital in sustainable resources management in any society. Therefore, ownership of land and property empowers women and provides income and security. Without resources such as land, women have limited

say in household decision-making, and no recourse to the assets during crises.

The findings indicate that, promotion of women's participation in governance and inclusion of women in political participation were the ways in which sustainable development was achieved. This means that, good governance requires good representation. Thus, it is not enough to simply increase the number of women in politics as a token of diversity and inclusion; it is important to promote the contributions of women in that transformation towards competence and ability (UN Women, 2013; UN Women & IPU, 2017). Democracy increases citizens' involvement and participation in governance while elections promote meaningful female participation at all levels of government and create space for women in politics. In addition women's democratic participation in the leadership creates space for all voices to be heard including their own, that of marginalized groups and people living with challenges. On the other hand, women's participation in leadership promotes accountability and transparency in governance, an engine for sustainable development. It can further be noted that, the ability of women to attain financial autonomy is necessary for their involvement and participation in political life because women have access to fewer economic resources and they are often unable to pay the cost associated with gaining a party's nomination and standing for election.

It is worth noting that, in order for any country to develop, dialogue and networking along with cooperation and collaboration with various women groups are crucial. This is based on the fact that, women are faced with resistance from male leaders which obliged them to establish cross-community coalitions to foster dialogue. It is further noted that, dialogues and networking build a bond between nations which may help to ensure sustainable peace and natural resource conservation. Similarly, women's political participation results into tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen's needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and more sustainable peace. During the dialogue, women provide better decisions as compared to their male counterparts which in turn, provide tangible benefits to the communities. In areas where there is conflict/struggle between the people and the owners of the resources, without dialogue it may be very difficult to ensure that the resources are sustainably utilized. Additionally, networking helps to bring to one's attention the responsible persons for resource management and environmental protection. Such lobbying and liaising encourages interaction and streamlining of resources.

It is very important to remove barriers that marginalize the women such as limited access to quality education, sex abuse, and gender based domestic violence. It is therefore, noted that involvement in civil society gives women the opportunity to influence government, gain visibility, credibility, respect, and help remove barriers to women's political participation (IPU, 2017). Creating strong partnerships among women in civic organizations and women in political parties and elected office helps to advance women's agenda in a structured manner (UN Women, 2017). It is further stated that planning and financial allocation of engagement of women and men enhances gender equality.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper concludes that, gender equality must not be seen as an end in itself but also as catalyst to development. The investment made in women and girls are of themselves multipliers of development progress. Failure to make those investments, and failing to boost the status of women and girls, thwarts the political thrust not only of individuals, but also families, communities and nations. Additionally, fair representation and participation of women in governance and leadership are two of the preconditions for

achieving genuine democracy. There could be no real democracy if half the population is excluded from participation and power. A democracy which favours one gender over the other will not suffice in the 21st Century. Women's full participation in leadership and governance are fundamental for sustainable development. When women are "out of sight out of mind", meeting their needs does not get prioritized. Conversely, when there is a critical mass of women decision makers, the issues which previously went on unaddressed can become priorities. Thus, active and meaningful participation of women in decision making processes regarding the use and management of resources is critical for effective leadership. It hoped that as more women take their rightful place in the ranks of decision makers, critical issues of importance will come to the top of political, legislative and budgetary priorities. Such an approach will help address the concerns of the marginalized within society.

The paper recommends that, government through inclusive policies should embrace women's interests in all leadership and governance platforms and positions in order to enhance their leadership aspirations, the government should provide rights to and ownership of property to women for sustainable development, and local governments should place women at the forefront of decision making to ensure sustainable leadership and governance.

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