WELLBEING FOR WOMEN

WA WIMBI REPORT

WELLBEING FOR WOMEN STUDY

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WBW   Wellbeing for Women Africa
FGDs   Focus Group Discussions
KIIs   Key Informant Interviews
FGM/C   Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GBV   Gender-Based Violence

1.0   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is the outcome of an online and offline study conducted by Wellbeing for Women Africa (WBW) targeting non-state agencies and actors, globally.

First and foremost, the lead Consultants would like to thank WBW for according us the opportunity to conceptualise, lead, facilitate and document this study as a learning model for its current and future programming actions, interventions and/or collaborations in Africa. Secondly, we would like to thank all individuals and teams that participated in this study for donating their personal and professional time despite other competing professional priorities. We thank you and acknowledge all the submissions you shared that subsequently formed and informed the basis and focus of this entire report. Thirdly, we thank all those who took part in our Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) - these two processes were key in the analysis and triangulation of findings, as well as providing further context to the outcomes. We also acknowledge responses made by organisations. These were key to providing the strategic grounding and organisational policy position to contextualise staff submissions and perceptions.

Lastly, we appreciate the effort taken by WBW in supporting the Consultants in dissemination of the survey. WBW afforded youth partners an opportunity to lead the study, further cementing their vision of affording young people a voice and facilitating meaningful youth engagement. Our kind and humble gratitude goes to WBW's social media, email and web networks without whom this assessment would not have been successful. We acknowledge their time, thoughts, and efforts.

2.0   ABSTRACT

In ascertaining access to leadership and governance spaces in a demand-driven system in the context of development, it is imperative to involve women in all components of development programming. Institutions must recognise and take up this driving factor as an enabler to achieving equity and ensuring strategic opportunities for all.

Young women's leadership is undermined in the civic space despite the advances in youth engagement over the years. The current configuration of youth organisations is not enough to ensure or sustain the effective leadership of young women in international development and any progress within youth spaces is still largely affected by the preferences of young men in power. Within the current global context, women are given promises of equal representation but often find the reins of power in the hands of others.

The study included a total of 239 participants both on and offline, there were 75 online respondents, 19 KII and 145 particiapnts from 15 FGD. The study involved responses from 18 African countries namely Botswana, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Cameroon, DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to this survey on the bottlenecks women face in leadership and governance, on a broad scale most respondents find women indistinguishable from men on key leadership actions such as influence, merit, capacity and mental willpower to lead, organise and implement. The study analysis presented in this report confirms that presently, leadership and governance are dominated by men despite the existence of administrative and policy provisions in many organisations seeking to frontload women as equals in merit. Furthermore, the submissions by the survey respondents indicate that whilst there is a general push for women to take up leadership positions, as evidenced in access to leadership spaces (albeit limited), policy provisions and merit over gender among others, there are still overbearing social and cultural norms which seem to continually limit the spaces and counter strides made.

Discussions held at the FGDs go a step further to evidence that women are equal to men as pertains to merit in performance and delivery of tasks professionally. On the same front, besides delivering on their assigned tasks, they have the same competencies to influence policy and decision making. On the other hand, study responses show situations where organisational leaders often advocate for women to engage in leadership and governance spaces. However not many female professionals take up high leadership positions. This raises the question; 'is overall training not premised on confidence building to enhance equal competition by women?'

3.0   THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
3.1.1   ABOUT WELLBEING FOR WOMEN AFRICA

WBW - A global non-profit organisation supporting the engagement of young people globally in discussions around women's issues. WBW appreciates that whilst there are many young people-led or serving agencies, there is no deliberate policy position or action to front-load young women competitively, and limited spaces for professional growth as an affirmative action at organisational level for young female professionals.

3.1.2   THE GUIDING NARRATIVE TO THE SURVEY

The political, social and economic dispensation in Africa is highly defined and structured whereby culture defines the socio-economic and political discourse. Furthermore, there are pockets of scenarios where leadership is passed from generation to generation. Potentially, these situations can lead to conflicts and partisan control of public resource and access to opportunities. While these factors are not solely the causes of strife and conflict - where women suffer the most - they are a catalyst.

Through human capital development especially for young people, there are opportunities to initiate and drive socio-economic processes to socially and economically empower young professional women. As a build up to this action, WBW engaged its youth partners to conduct a survey, the primary objective of which was to provide empirical data on probable bottlenecks faced by young women in access to and uptake of leadership and decision-making opportunities across Africa. The survey sought to:

a) Collect and analyse cultural and socio-economic scenarios faced by young women in leadership and decision making spaces;

b) Analyse the current employment market to identify professional opportunity trends where sustained and dignified professional engagements are attained based on merit;

c) Document constraints and barriers faced by young and vulnerable women in the labour market; and,

d) Provide an analytical review of the most viable scenarios that could help young women as beneficiaries.

3.1.3   ABOUT THE WA-WIMBI CAMPAIGN

Leadership and Governance spaces and discourses are mostly influenced and taken up by men. In the long-term, the negative impact to society as a result of this is that learned and experienced women are forced to do much more to access leadership positions and

influence governance discourse, therein limiting opportunities to address the gender-based challenges faced by women in the workplace. This was supported by a study conducted that showed that women face a double hurdle to power, with formidable obstacles not only to obtaining access to decision-making positions and processes but also to having influence within them[1]. Once they do, they have to do even more to keep those positions or have their opinions listened to. This begs the question; what are the existing barriers to the engagement of women in leadership and decision making ?

To study the above scenario in depth, WBW convened the Wa-Wimbi Campaign. The goal of this focused campaign is to better understand the leadership barriers for women in grassroots organisations across Africa. In doing so, WBW can take informed action towards transferring financial and political power into the hands of young women leaders to solve developmental issues affecting women and girls. Through its Wa-Wimbi Campaign, WBW envisions that a radical transfer of political and financial power to young and professional women would provide a more stable, sustainable platform to achieve qualitative and quantitative impact across different spheres - local, national, regional, African-wide and globally. The campaign runs on the basis that the development of any agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected by it is not credible.

3.1.4   THE SURVEY'S METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH
3.1.4.1   ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey was the main component of the research methodology. It provided the basis for the KIIs and FGDs as well as being cross-country in focus. The online survey applied both a qualitative and quantitative approach. To ensure that the online survey provided space for comments and queries by both parties (respondents and administers), there was a deliberate action to establish follow up skype calls for further discussion – a facility which was used multiple times over the course of the campaign.

3.1.4.2   KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

KIIs targeted key decision makers in organisations as well as funding partners with significant information on the key drivers/limitations to young women in decision-making positions. This was done in a participatory manner ensuring equal gender representation in the selection of the KII participants. The discussion guide was standardised to allow for in-depth discussions and follow up questions and clarifications. The total number of KIIs

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1 Tam O'Neil and Pilar Domingo (2016), Women and Power: Overcoming barriers to leadership and influence

conducted was nineteen (19) across different countries comprising of; Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Ghana, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Australia.

3.1.4.3   FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As with KIIs, FGDs were used to develop an in-depth understanding of the barriers to women in leadership and the cumulative effect to the communities, families, social amenities, livelihoods and socio-economic opportunities available particularly for women. The FGDs were conducted in a participatory manner ensuring equal gender representation in the selection of each FGD group. The FGDs consisted of approximately 8-10 respondents, though in some cases FGDs had more (but not exceeding 12), or fewer participants.

4.0   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure the utmost ethical considerations were upheld, the Consultants were guided by the fundamentals of human rights and dignities in the course of the assignment without fail. The process was bound by research principles of confidentiality and anonymity of study respondents and their information. This includes seeking consent before conducting any interviews, explaining to the respondents the objective of the evaluation, confidentiality of the information gathered, and purpose to which the information collected will be used. Consultants did not share any information gathered under this study – online and offline - with any third party without express consent from WBW.

5.0   THE SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents detailed survey findings and further analyses.

6.0   SUMMARY OF ONLINE RESPONSES
## 6.1.1   IS YOUR ORGANISATION YOUNG PEOPLE-LED OR YOUNG PEOPLE-SERVING?
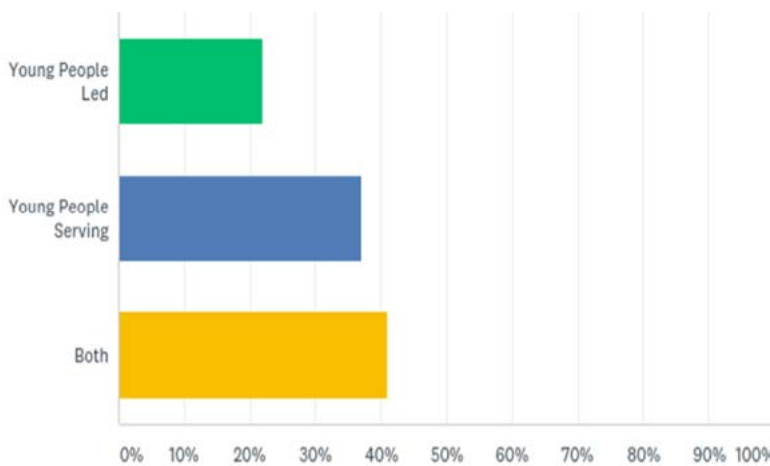
According to the survey, slightly over 21% of the total respondents are affiliated to some form of young people-led organisation whilst about 36% are associated with young people-serving organisations. Slightly over 41% of the responses indicated that their organisations are both young people-serving and young people-led organisations

## 6.1.2   IN WHICH COUNTRY IS YOUR ORGANISATION BASED?

Being an online process, the survey was open to interested persons or organisations across Africa as a target demographic, but also globally. Some responses were organisation-based, i.e. organisations sat and deliberated as a team and undertook the survey as a collective response. In other instances, individuals within and outside of organisations undertook the survey. In total, Kenya had the highest number of responses online at 17.81% of the total online engagement followed by Nigeria at 16.44%. Uganda came third with an engagement rate of 10.96%. Beyond Africa, responses were from the United Kingdom and Australia.

6.1.3   WHAT IS THE NATURE OF AFFILIATION WITH THE ORGANISATION?
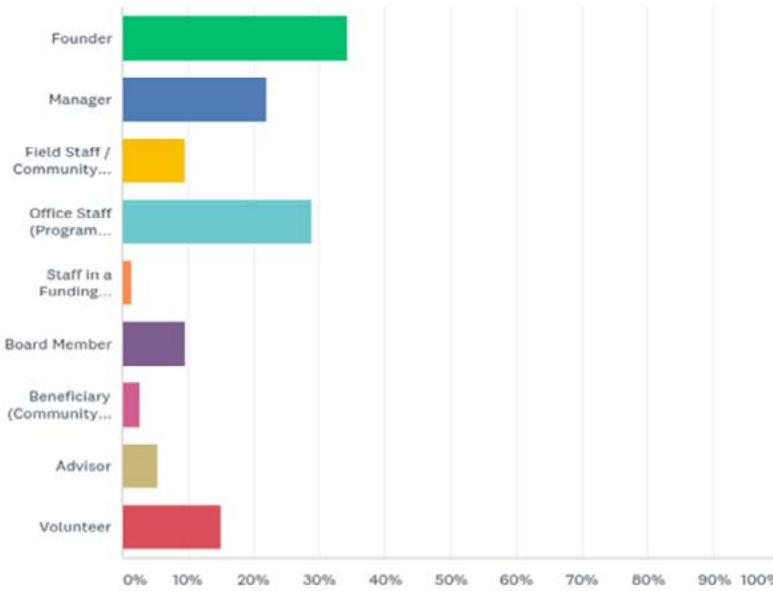

Most of the responses were by founding members of the organisations, operational managers, staff (programme and finance) and volunteers. There were minimal responses from beneficiaries and funding organisations.

6.1.4   WHAT IS THE PROGRAMMING FOCUS OF YOUR ORGANISATION?
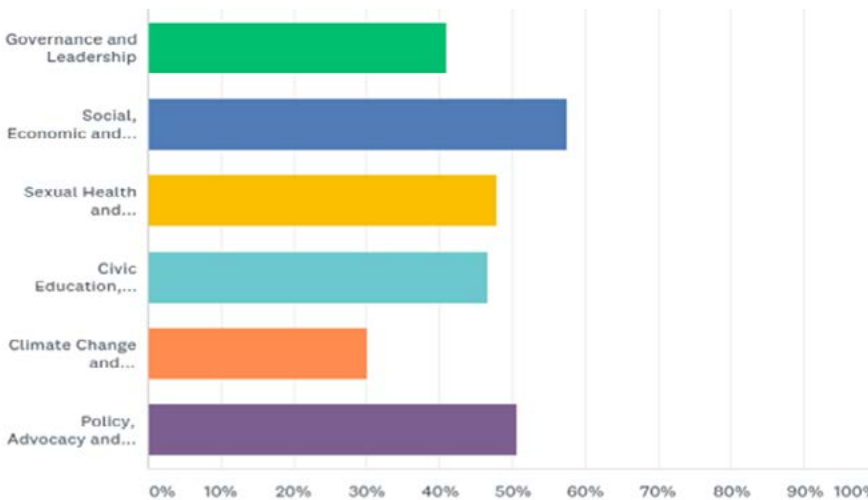

On the question of organisational programming focus, responses by individuals working with or affiliated with Social Economic and Political Empowerment was highest rating at 58% closely followed by Policy, Advocacy Campaigns; Sexual Reproductive Health; Civic Education Mobilisation and Awareness; and Governance and Leadership.

## 6.1.5   HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK IN YOUR ORGANISATION?
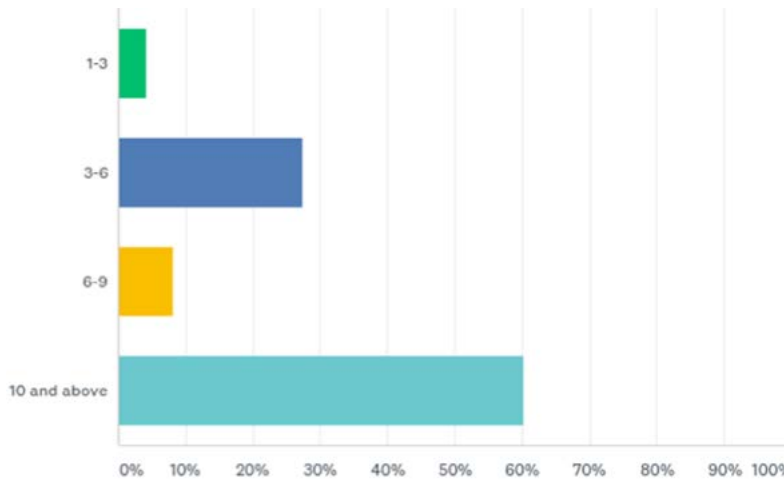
Most respondents to the survey indicated that they are affiliated with organisations that have more than 10 members of staff. These were followed by organisations with a staffing of 3-6, whilst those with staffing of less than 3 were the least.

6.1.6   WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR LEADERSHIP (E.G., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MANAGER OR COORDINATOR AND ABOVE) ARE REPRESENTED BY WOMEN IN YOUR ORGANISATION?
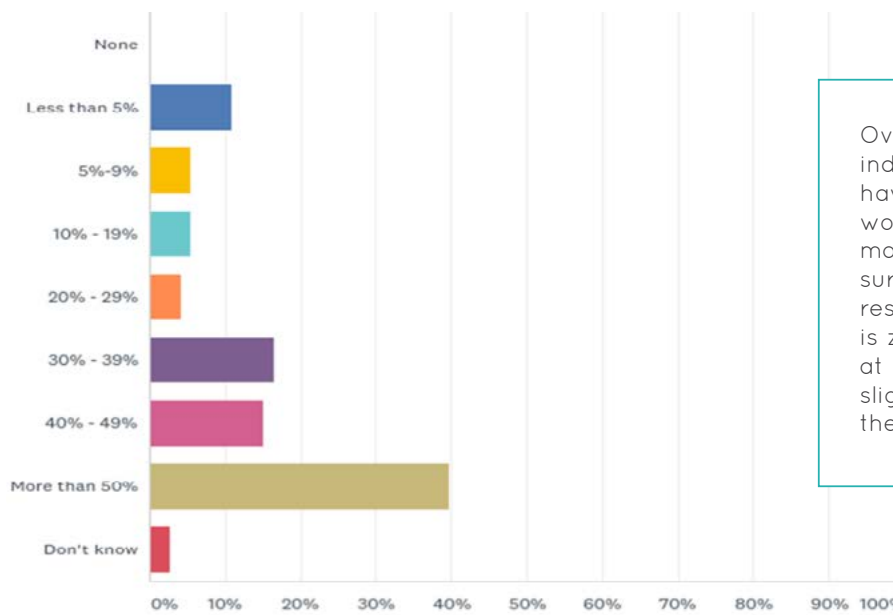

Over 50% of the respondents indicated that their organisations have adequate representation of women in leadership and decision making positions. Uniquely, the survey shows that none of the respondents indicated that there is zero representation of women at decision making level while slightly over 2% indicated that they do not know.

### 6.1.7   WHAT GENDER IS THE HEAD OF YOUR ORGANISATION?
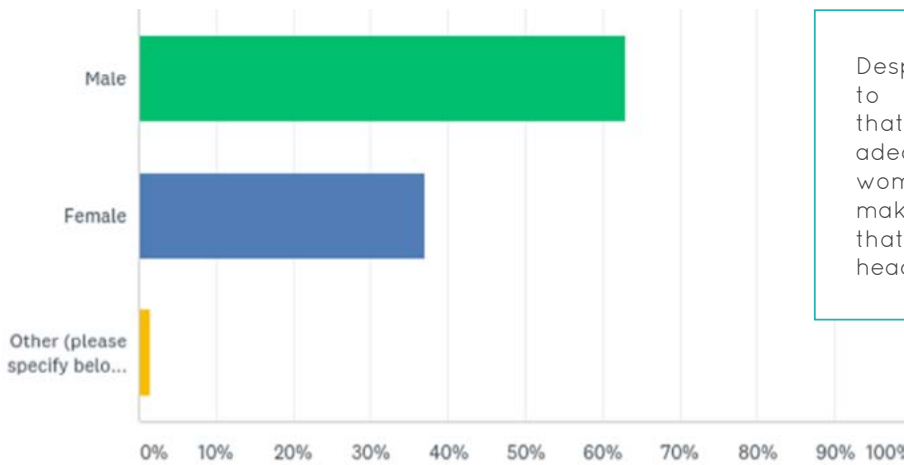
Despite over 50% of respondents to question 6.1.6 indicating that their organisations have adequate representation of women in leadership and decision making positions, 63% confirm that the same organisations are headed by men.

6.1.8   HOW MANY YOUNG WOMEN HAVE EXECUTIVE AND DECISION-MAKING POSTS IN YOUR ORGANISATION?
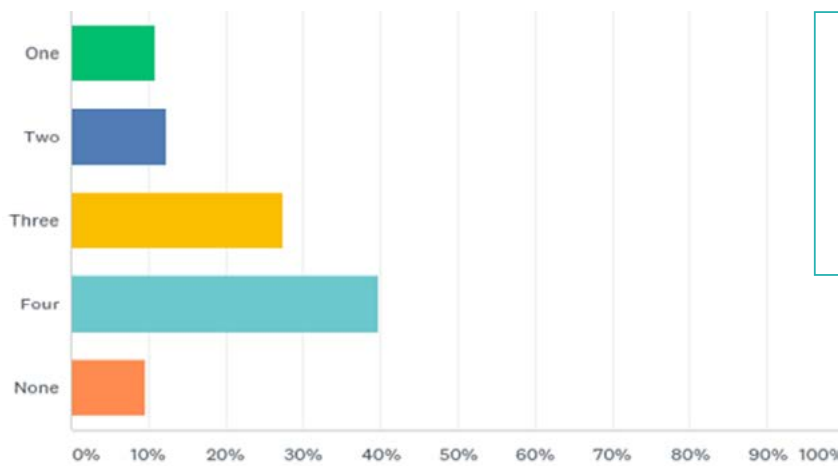

In relation to question 6.1.6 which cites women in leadership position at 50%, Question 6.1.8 only registers an average of 39% of women in executive decision making positions.

6.1.9   DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A CODE OF CONDUCT?
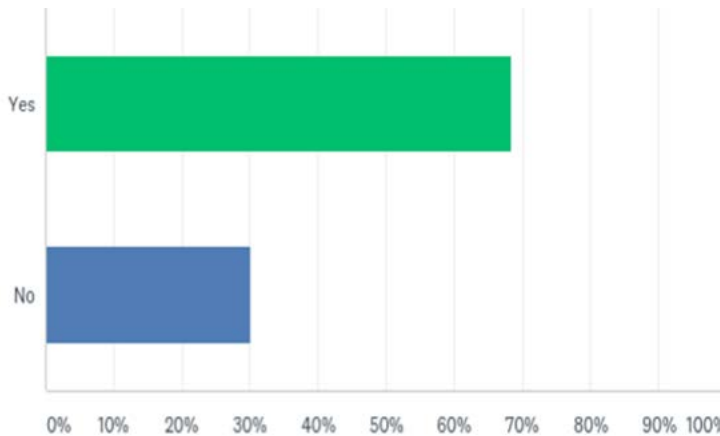
A little bit over 68% of the respondents indicated that their organisations had a code of conduct in place while slightly over 30% have no code of conduct.

6.1.10   DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A POLICY PROVISION THAT BINDS IT (YOUR ORGANISATION) TO COMMIT TOWARDS PROVIDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR LEADERSHIP BY YOUNG WOMEN?
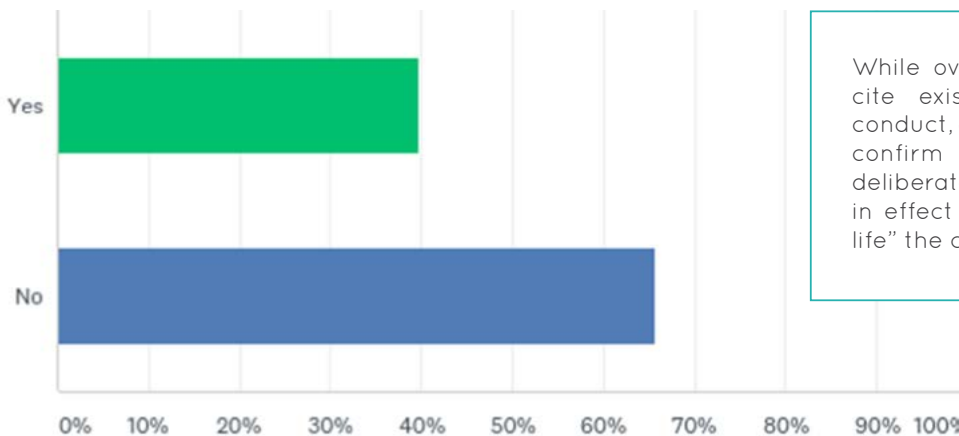
While over 68% of respondents cite existence of a code of conduct, over 65% of respondents confirm that there are no deliberate policy provisions that in effect actualise / "breathe to life" the code of conduct.

6.1.11 IN CASE OF "YES" TO QUESTION 6.1.10, WERE WOMEN INVOLVED IN CRAFTING THE POLICY?
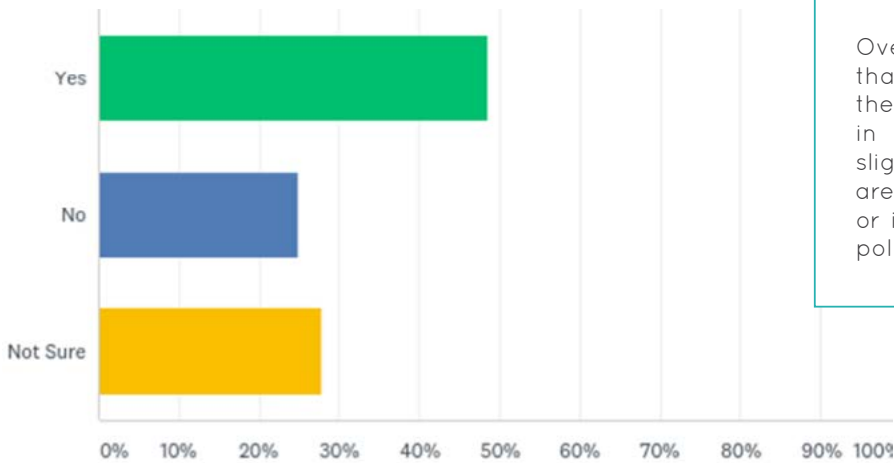
Over 48% of respondents confirm that women were involved in the policy formulation process in their organisations whilst slightly over 27% note that they are unaware of any participation or involvement of women in the policy process.

6.1.12 USING ANY NUMBER FROM 0 TO 10, WHERE 0 IS THE LOWEST LEVEL POSSIBLE AND 10 IS THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PRACTICE OF THE POLICY IN YOUR ORGANISATION OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

10 BEST LEVEL OF POLICY PRACTICE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0 WORST LEVEL OF POLICY PRACTICE
12.33%	6.85%	13.70%	10.96%	13.70%	16.44%	4.11%	4.11%	1.37%	5.48%	10.96%
9	5	10	8	10	12	3	3	1	4	8

Over 13% of the respondents think that there is some good level of policy practice at organisational level whilst nearly 11% think there is poor policy practice against slightly over 12% who cite best policy practice.

6.1.13   SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

To deepen our understanding of the results of the survey, and the gender barriers to leadership further, the Consultants through their networks facilitated group discussions across different parts of Africa. The focus of the group discussions was on the **questions of**; Culture – what is the role of culture in determining women's access to decision making spaces? Context – what is the role of women in initiating and driving the development narrative? Religious beliefs – while different countries celebrate different religions and beliefs, what are the unique experiences for women in different religious contexts? The FGDs were conducted with secretariat staff of different organisations based in Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Somalia effectively administering 15 FGDs across the six countries.

In Somalia and Cameroon, religious beliefs and culture came out as a strong determinant in how young women are engaged in or have access to decision making spaces at different levels. The discussions evidenced that whilst a young woman may be well read and exposed, their career progression is anchored on what culture and religious beliefs dictate for them. In Zimbabwe and Uganda, culture came out as the dominant factor where age old practices over and above the concept of equality determine opportunities for men and women. In Kenya and Tanzania no pronounced cultural and religious beliefs were found to limit women's access and engagement in leadership opportunities. However, uniquely in Tanzania, the FGDs evidenced that there are no vibrant and deliberate efforts to either limit or qualify young womens progression to leadership and decision making spaces.

6.1.14   SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Nineteen (19) KIIs were conducted with founders, directors and high-level decision makers from organisations based in Rwanda, Ghana, Zambia, South Africa and Malawi through the support of the Consultants' professional networks. Out of the nineteen (19) KIIs conducted, thirteen (13) of the informants were men therein reaffirming that there are more men in decision making positions. The female respondents generally cited gender as the second most considered determining factor to accessing merited positions (the first being qualifications) where they are/were perceived as non-conforming or non-befitting to lead. Those in leadership positions cited numerous challenges to accessing the posts and even more challenges maintaining the posts. The men who responded cited that most young women despite being educated and sufficiently meriting of high positions, were not as assertive as men and for those who are assertive and get to high positions, have their rise associated with their gender as opposed to their merit.

The scenarios described in these KIIs are evidenced by the limited number of women who engage in elective political processes, leading blue chip companies and driving innovation hubs among others.

7.0   SALIENT FINDINGS

• Key findings include the impact and influence of culture and beliefs surrounding women and the roles that they could take up. In most instances women did not feel qualified or deserving enough for those positions due to their own perceptions of position in society. We were observant of various contexts and the challenges that women are facing. Although the entire study was focused on the non-governmental sector, we had conversations with women in various professions including academia, law and corporate and they alluded to how they also face the same discrimination, regardless of how qualified they are, they are unable to go up the ranks by virtue of being women. Some face sexual violence and exploitation within the work place and most of their cases have gone undocumented or reported as those they are meant to report to are the perpetrators. The study helped the consultants understand that women were indeed working in a male dominated industry and that evn in different fields, corporate, development or academia, they face the same challenges when it came to accessing leadership positions.

8.0   ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

• **To Donor Agencies;** Whilst organisations seeking funding from donors are autonomous and as such cannot be dictated to by the donor in relation to policy and leadership matters, there are opportunities for donors to insist on the formulation, adoption and practice of codes of conduct that ensures that decision making and leadership opportunities are shared equally. This can be a prerequisite that can form the basis of a funding partnership especially in young people-led/serving organisations.

• **To Implementing Organisations;** A deliberate action to ensure that all programmatic interventions are clearly pronounced on how they address the unique challenges women face at society level. These challenges, where left unaddressed, will continue to manifest overtime and reduce the participation of young women in leadership from a community level outwards

• **In relation to the Global Commitments;** Young people-led/serving organisations through their leadership should be supported in capacity in linking their community/county or country level interventions to the global commitments such as sustainable development goals. Further engagement of grassroots organisations in global development agenda discussions is needed, and support from donors and INGOs.

9.0   SUMMARY OF KEY TAKE-AWAYS

• The countries with the highest number of engagements in terms of respondents are those which have strong and vibrant non-state agencies, parliamentary processes and constitutions which advocate for and are in turn documented as sustainably pushing for equality in all sectors.

• Minimal responses by community beneficiaries and funding organisations depict a situation that women's leadership is probably not an end-to-end priority focus area. On the flip side, this shows that the individuals who oversee day-to-day operations have more say or influence. This analysis is furthered by the subsequent points below.

• A study of the responses to programmes run by organisations shows that the organisations with the highest engagement of women in leadership positions not only had policies but also had programmes to support female staff to rise to the ranks. They empowered women in and outside their organisations creating an environment conducive to women reaching leadership level. This demonstrates that we not only need policies but the will to bring those polices to life. Such engagement includes; health and reproduction, women's place in society and the prioritisation of womens' issues at policy, planning and budgeting level. Others focused on ending harmful practices such as teen marriages, FGM/C & GBV and womens' empowerment.

• Analysis of the representation of young women shows that despite over 39% of the respondents indicating that women are well represented in decision making, cumulative analysis shows that there are still less spaces and opportunities for women. This may be caused by other underlying factors such as the influence of heavily cultured societies. This evaluation is highly reinforced by the graphical representation captured under question 6.1.7

• Question 6.1.7 denotes that whilst women are accorded spaces at the decision making level within organisations, the ultimate leadership positions are predominantly still reserved for men. The probable resultant aspect of this is that young women or gender equality as a programme priority may not necessarily be planned for, budgeted for or implemented at societal level.

• Uniquely, the study also showed that persons of different sexual orientations are also limited in accessing leadership level within organisations, let alone featuring as a programming prerogative. As such, there exists a critical need to consider these intersectionalities when responding to or planning gender programmes.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is imperative that decision making, leadership and governance spaces, which are at the heart of economic growth and development, must deliberately be structured to enhance responsiveness to young women's needs. This study has reiterated the fact that perception of skill and knowledge levels of women are not a bottleneck that women face. This indicates the need to investigate deeper, the strategic actions needed to address the underlying factors that are limiting women's acess to leadership and decision making spaces.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS
11.1.1 MARKET NEEDS ASSESSMENT

• The survey also pre-empts that young women face a host of constraints and to reverse these, there is need to invest in opportunities for non-traditional economic activities for women.

• There is need for strategic engagement to link young women to available opportunities at all levels. Further to this, these engagements can inform design and formation of programmes targeting young women, or gender equality more broadly.

• Women taking up space. Women need to access opportunities and spaces to not only sit at the table but be part of the decision making process especially on issues that affect them. There should be a deliberate move to shift away from tokenistic posts.

• This is a strategic opportunity for investors and donors to invest in initiatives that accord women space and opportunity to reach leadership levels. Ensuring that as we respond to issues of girls' access to education and safe spaces with a long-term view of the tools and support they will need to reach leadership level.

• International Organisations play an important role in driving reform in developing countries to ensure engagement with grassroots organisations and support for 'women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life' (SDG Target 5.5: Gender Equality).

11.1.2 DONOR AGENCIES' ENGAGEMENT

• In order to ensure a mutually beneficial partnership between donors and organisations, stakeholders should maximise opportunities to prioritise and promote the adoption and practice of codes of conduct that ensure decision making and leadership opportunities

are shared equally. This should be a prerequisite of any funding commitment especially with young people-led/ serving oraanisations.

• Invest in existing organisations, not those you wish existed. Donors need to support and work with organic, locally anchored organisations able to work with their members and the wider community or society to change exclusionary gender relations and advance women's rights and wellbeing. The main objective should be to help women to organise around common interests and problems, and facilitate connections among different organisations (peer–peer, grassroots–elite), not to determine their agenda.

• The main barriers are cultural and traditional and these cannot be solved in the short term. We are talking about deep rooted cultural norms that will take a generation to resolve. We need to shift to long term programme funding focusing on behavior change and targeting gender perceptions and norms.

11.1.3 IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

• **To Implementing Organisations;** A deliberate action to ensure that all programmatic interventions are clearly pronounced on how they address the unique challenges women face at society level. These challenges, where left unaddressed will continue to manifest overtime and reduce the participation of young women in leadership from as low as community level.

• Policy-makers and practitioners need to capitalise on the high-level momentum regarding women's rights and leadership, and ensure that good intentions do not get stuck at the level of commitments and conferences.

12.0   BRIEF ON APPENDICES
12.1.1   APPENDIX 1: VERBATIM VOICES

The study made an effort to capture voices of the respondents verbatim in an effort to capture perspectives that were not detailed in the FGD, KII or the online survey.

"The role of women in Kenya's development agenda is something that needs to be based on political support and will. This is the entry point towards ensuring that opportunities for leadership are taken up by women on multiple societal level."

- Joseph Ojuki – Youth Advocate, Organization of African Youth (OAY) – Kenya

"Women can only be understood if they are at the driver's seat of any existing agenda"

- Jude Theodore – Programmer and Advocate – Sexual Reproductive Health Rights Action, Cameroon

"The number of women in this focus group discussion should show how far we still have to go as young women professionals"

- Lydia Aballa – Law Student, Uganda

"According to me, campaigns aimed at pushing for issues where women are concerned are highly dictated by culture, socialization. As young professional, women are required by society to do more as compared to my male counterpart. This in itself is a broken system which results to entrenchment of the position of men at the cost of growth and opportunities for women"

- Bryce Chawiya - Malawian Entrepreneur

"The era of men being better than women should not only end in paper, but in practice. That's the paradigm shift we need to focus on in this current day and age."

- Joseph Madzvamuse – People for Change Advisor from Zimbabwe currently working in Liberia

"'Are women really safe in these work spaces?' I think this is the question we really need to be asking ourselves and then we will ultimately understand how it's impossible for them to attain leadership positions. The system is created by men, for men and unless we dismantle the system it's impossible for women to go up the ranks. Institutions should not only have pro women policies but they must also implement them."

- Ms Portia Loeto PhD Candidate Gender and Culture University of Sydney

12.1.2   APPENDIX 2: LIST OF COUNTRY-BASED RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY
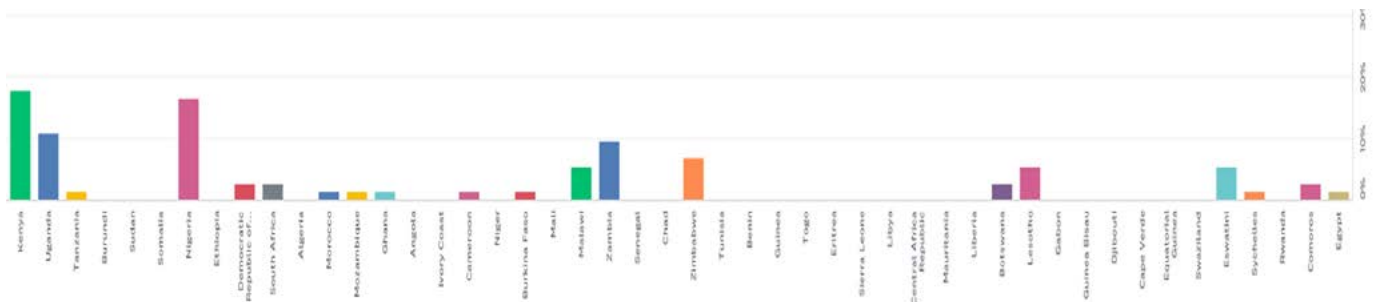
12.1.3   APPENDIX 3: KII TOOL

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The KIIs will be used to collect information from management of the organisations - this being the policy formulation and enforcement entity within the organisations.

1.0 What is your level of interaction with young people-led or young people-serving organisations?

2.0 What is the evaluation of programming focus of these organisations?

3.0 What is your perspective of young women in leadership and professionalism?

4.0 What is your position on gender?

5.0 What is your understanding of a code of conduct?

6.0 According to you, what can be done to improve the access to leadership opportunities for young women?

12.1.4   APPENDIX 4: FDG TOOL

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION / QUESTIONNAIRE

This FGD will be used to collect group information from management of the organisation - this being the policy formulation and enforcement entity within the organisation.

1.0 Is your organisation young people-led or young people-serving?

2.0 What is the programming focus of your organisation?

3.0 What is the nature of your interaction with the organisation?

4.0 What is your perspective of young women in leadership and professionalism?

5.0 What is your position on gender?

7.0 What is your understanding of a code of conduct?

8.0 According to you, what can be done to improve the access to leadership opportunities for young women?

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