



Institute of
Economic Affairs



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT HUB AND
THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS**



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**WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S PERFORMANCE IN THE
PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

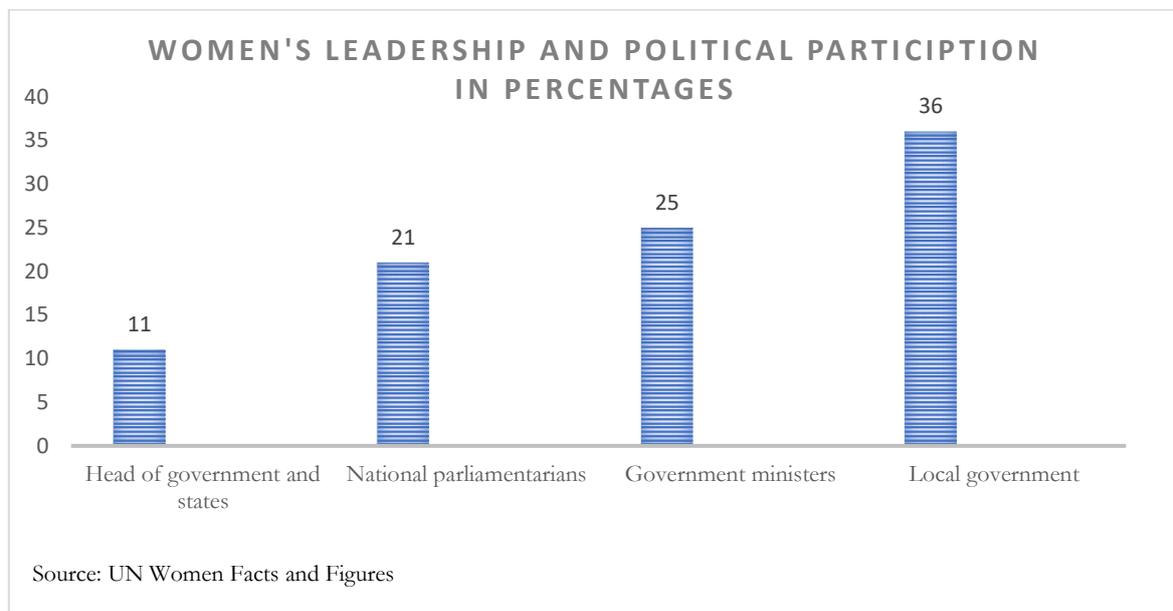
Gender equality shouldn't be treated as an optional agenda that some societies ensure it is achieved while others don't as it benefits everyone in society. Globally, the commitment to achieving gender equality is evident in the sustainable development goal number 5 which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In Kenya, the mandate to achieve gender equality is embedded in the 2010 Constitution. Gender equality is not only a requirement of social justice but also an important contribution to the growth of an economy. The government through the parliament has enacted various policies to enhance women economic empowerment and eliminate various forms of gender discrimination and violence against women. The various efforts towards achieving gender equality has borne fruits. Progress has been made over the years to increase women representation and increase the access to resources through income, asset ownership and government policies and programmes. Women across the globe have taken up positions and ventured into business fields that were believed to be male dominated.

Despite efforts to achieve gender equality, women still face challenges in accessing the same opportunities as men in political, economic and social sector. In Kenya, some institutions have failed to meet the two third gender rule that mandates members of elective or appointive positions shall not be of the same gender. More women are in unpaid care work compared to men and even though there is higher share of female participation in the ownership of firms in Kenya, the share of female workers in the categories of permanent full time, production and non-production is still lower as compared to men. It confirms that barriers for women to enter into the labour market exists.

This year's international women's day (8th March) theme is "*Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world*" in order to celebrate the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19

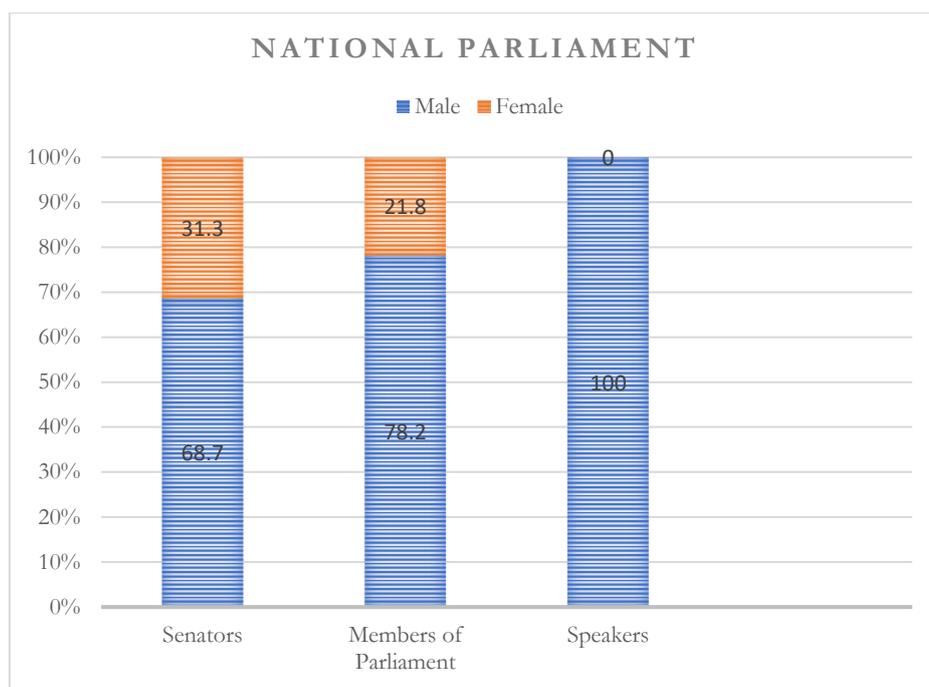
pandemic. The economic shock during the pandemic has made gender inequality salient but so is the role of women in the economy. An inclusive response to the effects of the pandemic requires incorporation of women’s perspectives in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in all stages of pandemic response and recovery because women’s tremendous contribution in the public space cannot go unnoticed in the management of this pandemic, despite them being underrepresented.

Table 1: Women’s Leadership and Political Participation in Percentages.



Globally, out of the 194 countries, 22 countries are headed by women. Conversely, only 25 per cent of government ministers are women, with only 14 countries having achieved 50 per cent or more women in cabinets. In relation to national parliamentarians, only four countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda with 61 per cent, Cuba with 53 per cent, Bolivia with 53 per cent, and the United Arab Emirates with 50 per cent.

Chart 1: Gender Representation of Kenya’s Two Houses in Parliament.



In Kenya, Article 27(8) and 81(b) of the Kenyan Constitution 2010 recognizes that, ‘Not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive positions shall be of the same gender. Today, both the executive and legislative arms of government are lagging behind in realizing the gender parity goal. All the positions in executive have a male majority aside from that of chief administrative secretaries. Generally, the number of women at the county governments’ executive level is below the constitutional threshold i.e. for the positions of Governors, Deputy Governors and County Executive Committee (CEC) members. For Parliament, the senate is closer in achieving the two-thirds gender requirement compared to the national assembly in terms of its composition. The constitution of Kenya doesn’t state that there is meant to be a deputy speaker in both national assembly and senate, despite there being no female speaker in national assembly, currently, there is a deputy speaker in senate.

The Claim: Women Leaders Are Better at Fighting the Pandemic.

Table 2: Average Number of Total Covid-19 Cases and Deaths at Lockdown.

Study Variable	Female-led mean	Female-led SD	Male-led mean	Male-led SD
Total Covid-19 cases	19,064 (N=19)	41,040	26,468 (N=171)	127,125
Total Covid-19 deaths	1,107 (N=19)	2,681	2,021 (N=148)	9,104

Source: Supriya Garikipati & Uma Kambhampati, 2020

The table above presents COVID-19 cases and deaths by gender of the country’s leaders. They took a sample size of only 19 and 171 countries being led by women and men respectively.

The conclusion then is not only did the female led countries have less cases than their male counterparts but also the male led countries had a nearly double number of deaths. The timing of the lock down played an important role. Female countries locked down when they had fewer deaths compared to their male counterparts. For example, Taiwan locked down the country when it had only 6 deaths. The lock down had various implications on the economy as people were not able to go to work and earn a living. Therefore, in as much as it helped to save lives, locking down early may have greater economic implications in the female led countries

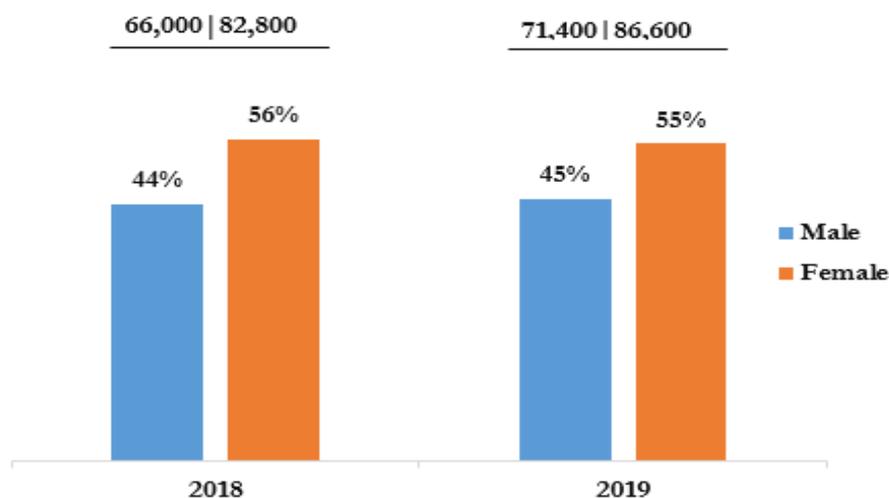
Contribution of Kenyan women in provision of public service during the pandemic

Globally, Covid 19 caused disruptions in the economy that led to closure of schools affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in 190 countries¹ and health care workers were on the frontline to fight against the pandemic. Contribution of women to the health and education sector is quite evident with women globally making up over 70% of workers in the health sector². Similarly, in Kenya women make up a greater share of people employed in the health sector. The same is the case for the education sector where women are the majority at the preprimary and primary level of education.

Employment in the Health Sector

In 2019, women comprised 55% of the total number of people employed in the health sector, compared to 56% in 2018. There were a total of 71,400 men in the health sector in 2019 and 66,000 in 2018 contributing to 45% and 44% respectively to employment in the health sector. The number of women in the health sector grew from 82,800 in 2018 to 86,600 in 2019. This shows that contribution of women to the health sector is growing and data shows that the health care sector is the fastest growing employment sector for women.

Chart 2: Employment in the Health Sector in Kenya



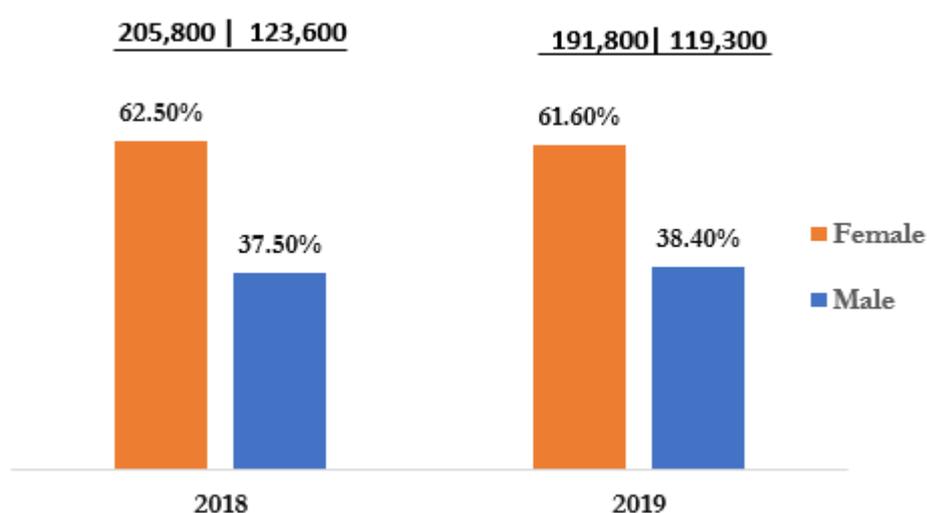
Source: Economic Survey 2020

¹ (United Nations, 2020)

² (Mathieu Boniol, Michelle McIsaac, Lihui Xu, Tana Wuliji, Khassoum Diallo, Jim Campbell, 2018)

The covid-19 pandemic has increased the burden women have to bear due to longer working shifts and additional care work at home. Women spend more hours on unpaid care work, this is not only in Kenya but across the world. With the closure of schools, children had to stay at home increasing the work load at home, that is in most cases handled by women and girls. Women in the health sector additionally had to handle the fear of carrying the virus home and infecting their families. This was worsened by the design of the personal protective equipment (PPE) which were not a perfect fit for most women. It is important to note that the design of PPE's have been an issue even before the pandemic, the crisis has highlighted the need to incorporate gender differences in the design of PPE's.

Chart 3: Employment in the Education Sector



Source: Economic Survey 2020

In the education sector, women comprise a higher share of employment in the preprimary and primary level of education. As demonstrated in the chart, 205,800 women were employed as preprimary and primary school teachers in 2018 and 191,800 in 2019, contributing 62.5% and 61.6% of the total number of people employed at the two levels. Due to the measures put in place to stop the spread of Covid-19, teachers were tasked with implementing distance learning. The sudden nature of the pandemic meant that teachers were largely unprepared to adapt to the new teaching methods while still offering quality education to students. Female teachers had to adjust to the new normal while bearing a disproportionate share of unpaid care work at home.

The different choices of distance learning tools like radio, television programs and online classes via zoom and teams were not accommodative of learners with disabilities and teachers had to step up to ensure these learners are not left behind. Preprimary (1-6 years) and primary (6-14 years) schools' students are the most challenging due to their ages hence more burden on the teachers handling these levels. With the reopening of schools, teachers' physical health is put at risk due to face to face interaction with different students. Furthermore, preprimary and primary school students are less likely to adhere to wearing of masks throughout the day.

Women in the private sector also played a role during the pandemic in their different capacities. For example, when there were shortages of masks across the country, women in Chamas in Kilifi, Machakos, Narok, Kwale and Taita Taveta counties came together to make masks and sale to the people within the community. This not only gave the women a source of income but it also meant that the spread of virus due to unavailability of masks was avoided. Various tools have been used by the government to cushion citizens against the effects of the pandemic on the economy. Organizations like FIDA and Kenya Female Advisory Organization came up with alternative tools and policies that the government should consider to cushion both genders.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Women's performance in provision of public services during the pandemic is evident, from the exemplary performance of women led states to the frontline health care workers. Since women make up the majority of people employed in the health sector, it is equally important to involve them in decision making process. Issues like the design of personal protective equipment not fit for female health care workers can be addressed if women are also at the table.

This pandemic has highlighted the qualities that women have such as risk aversion, empathetic and decisiveness that contributed to their performance in responding to the pandemic. Risk averse nature of female leaders when it came to loss of lives reduced the number of deaths in their countries while male led countries chose to keep the economy open at the risk of high number of deaths. This points out that gender matters in leadership as both male and female have qualities that when combined can yield better results.

In conclusion, women's perspectives should be considered in the formulation of policies and programs in all stages of pandemic response to facilitate effective recovery and building back a better economy that is all inclusive.

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and%20all%20continents.&text=Education%20is%20not%20only%20a,of%20all%20other%20human%20rights.