



**Kenya Healthcare
Federation**

The Health Sector Board of KEPSA



**Strathmore
UNIVERSITY**

BUSINESS SCHOOL

Women in Health Leadership

Nyanza & Western Region Dissemination Workshop Report

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western and Nyanza Region Dissemination Workshop, held in Kisumu on October 1, 2024, provided an important platform for stakeholders to engage in discussions about advancing gender equity in healthcare leadership. The event primarily aimed to tackle the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles within Kenya's health sector and to devise actionable strategies for their advancement.

The report opens by contextualizing the "Driving Country Level Change: Women in Health Leadership" project, which is led by Strathmore Business School (SBS) in collaboration with the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF). This initiative seeks to foster an environment conducive to women's leadership by identifying and addressing the systemic barriers that impede their career progression.

A significant part of the report highlights research findings presented by Dr. Angela Ndunge, Principal Investigator and Faculty at SBS. Her study, "Advancing Women's Leadership in the Kenyan Health Sector: Are the Rungs on the Organizational Career Ladder Broken?" provides critical insights into the obstacles women face in pursuing leadership roles. Key barriers discussed include policy gaps, challenges related to work-life balance, and societal expectations that often hinder women's advancement. Dr. Ndunge concluded with essential recommendations for creating gender-responsive workplaces that empower women leaders.

The workshop also featured a welcome address by Dr. Benjamin Induswe, County Director of Health for Vihiga County, who emphasized the importance of adopting inclusive policies and practices to support women's leadership in healthcare. His personal reflections on gender inequity underscored the need for a more inclusive society that values diverse voices.



Meeting participants introducing themselves during an interactive session

Three breakout sessions were pivotal to the workshop's structure, each focusing on vital aspects of gender equity. The first session addressed the impact of organizational culture and policies on women's advancement in health leadership. Participants evaluated current practices and identified necessary changes to foster a more supportive environment. The second session highlighted the significance of mentorship in developing future women leaders, with participants discussing strategies for creating effective mentorship programs to help women navigate their career paths. The third session concentrated on practical strategies to promote gender sensitivity in healthcare settings, revolving around innovative interventions to enhance women's representation and effectiveness in leadership roles.

Following these breakout sessions, the report details group presentations and plenary discussions where participants shared insights and recommendations from their sessions. This collaborative

environment allowed for deeper engagement and provided an opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions and offer feedback, enriching the overall dialogue.

The workshop concluded with a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) session. Participants were encouraged to make pledges aimed at implementing the workshop's recommendations, highlighting the importance of accountability in promoting gender equity within the healthcare sector.

In summary, the Kisumu Dissemination Workshop served as a critical gathering for stakeholders to confront challenges and explore solutions for achieving gender-responsive strategies in healthcare leadership. Discussions during breakout sessions emphasized the need for comprehensive policy advocacy, transparent recruitment and promotion processes, and robust capacity-building initiatives for aspiring female leaders. The workshop underscored the significance of collaborative efforts among healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders to cultivate an inclusive environment that supports women's leadership. The insights and recommendations outlined in this report offer a clear roadmap for advancing gender equity in the sector, contributing to the development of a more equitable healthcare system in Kenya.

2. INTRODUCTION

Strathmore Business School (SBS), in partnership with the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF), is partnering together on a project titled, 'Driving Country Level Change: Women in Health Leadership.' The project aims to address the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles and support their professional advancement. As part of this project, KHF and SBS have completed research titled, '*Advancing Women's Leadership in the Kenyan Health Sector: Are the Rungs on the Organizational Career Ladder Broken, or Is There No Ladder at All?*' The objective of this study was to examine how organizational elements such as structure, leadership, culture, and policies constrain or promote women's career advancement within Kenyan health sector organizations.

Dissemination of research findings is a critical path towards change in practice as it provides the project team with the opportunity to share valuable insights with the right audience. The workshop was well attended by leaders in the field and health experts who were considered most likely to be early adopters of the research recommendations into practice. The workshop also facilitated a personal interaction between the project team and the health professionals by enabling a detailed explanation of the research findings and inviting feedback that may be helpful to future research. Following the information-sharing sessions, the interactive breakout session provided the facilitator and participants with an opportunity to share ideas on the designated theme.

3. SYNOPSIS OF THE DISSEMINATION MEETING

3.1 OPENING REMARKS

The dissemination event commenced with a warm welcome from Nancy Ndirangu Kibunja of the Strathmore Business School (SBS). In her opening remarks, she emphasized the importance of the gathering, stating that it was a unique opportunity to discuss vital issues surrounding gender equity and leadership in the healthcare sector. To foster a sense of community and engagement, Nancy facilitated a round of introductions among participants. This practice not only allowed attendees to familiarize themselves with one another but also set a collaborative tone for the discussions that would follow.

By establishing a protocol for introductions, Nancy underscored the significance of inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives in the room. She encouraged participants to be open and

forthcoming in sharing their thoughts, experiences, and insights throughout the event. This focus on creating a welcoming atmosphere was crucial in promoting active participation, particularly as the session aimed to explore complex and sometimes sensitive issues regarding gender dynamics in healthcare leadership.

3.2 WELCOME ADDRESS

Dr. Angela Ndunge, Strathmore University Business School (SBS) introduced herself as the Project Lead, setting the stage for a vital discussion on advancing gender equity in healthcare leadership. In her remarks, Dr. Ndunge provided an overview of SBS, outlining its growth and commitment to excellence in education and professional development. She emphasized the institution's core values, including a strong ethos of service and integrity, which are fundamental to its mission of empowering future leaders across various sectors, particularly in healthcare.

Dr. Ndunge's introduction framed the context of the event and highlighted the collaborative spirit between SBS and the healthcare community. She encouraged active participation from all attendees, emphasizing that their diverse backgrounds and expertise could lead to actionable insights and strategies. This call to action underscored the importance of collective knowledge and shared experiences in fostering meaningful dialogue about gender equity.

Following Dr. Ndunge, Charity Kamau from the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF) addressed the audience, expressing her gratitude for their engagement in the dissemination event. Charity spoke with a sense of purpose, emphasizing KHF's pivotal role in representing healthcare actors across Kenya. As the apex body in the healthcare sector, KHF advocates for policies that benefit the private sector, ensuring that diverse stakeholder voices are included in decision-making processes. She highlighted the partnership between SBS and KHF, illustrating how collaboration between educational institutions and healthcare organizations can lead to significant advancements in gender equity and leadership.

Charity announced that KHF is forming county chapters to decentralize efforts and empower local stakeholders to champion women in healthcare leadership. This initiative aims to address the unique challenges and opportunities present in different regions, allowing for tailored approaches to promote gender equity. Her acknowledgment of KHF as a champion for women resonated with the audience, as she called for sustained efforts to dismantle the barriers women face in pursuing leadership roles within the healthcare sector. Charity reinforced the importance of collective action and advocacy in creating an inclusive environment that values and amplifies women's contributions.

The county welcome address was delivered by Dr. Benjamin Induswe, the County Director of Health for Vihiga County. Dr. Induswe shared a personal reflection on the theme of inequity, drawing from his experiences during his formative years. He recounted how his upbringing, being one of four siblings in a household of girls, shaped his understanding of gender roles and household dynamics. He noted that chores in their home were divided based on skills and abilities rather than gender, illustrating a more equitable approach to family responsibilities. This early exposure to gender equality within the family context fostered a strong awareness of the disparities that exist in society.



Dr. Benjamin Induswe, the County Director of Health for Vihiga County giving his welcome remarks

Dr. Induswe's address poignantly highlighted the broader societal issue of underrepresentation, stating, "Women are under-represented in all sectors. And when they are under-represented, we are limiting an important voice in society." His emphasis on the necessity of inclusive representation in leadership positions resonated with attendees, reinforcing the need for concerted efforts to elevate women's voices in all sectors, particularly in healthcare.

Moreover, Dr. Induswe spoke of the transformative influence that female mentors had on his professional journey, noting that he was trained by two women during his education as a paediatric dentist. This personal testimony underscored the critical importance of mentorship and support for women in advancing their careers. He concluded his address by advocating for an inclusive society where everyone, regardless of gender, can contribute meaningfully and be represented in leadership roles.

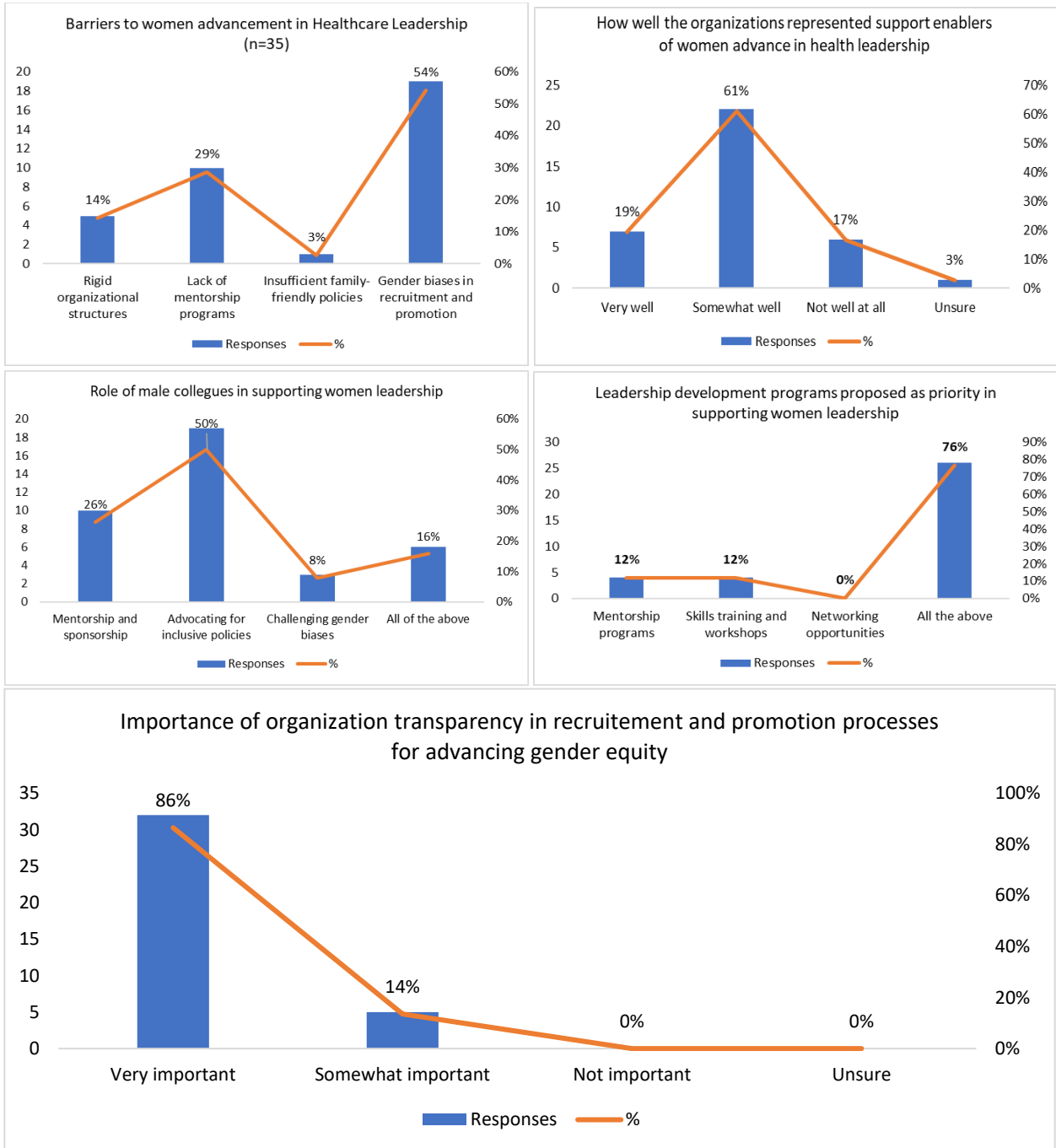
His reflections, alongside those of Dr. Ndunge and Charity Kamau, collectively underscored the event's overarching theme of fostering gender equity in healthcare leadership through collaboration, advocacy, and mentorship.

3.3 MONITORING & EVALUATION SURVEY

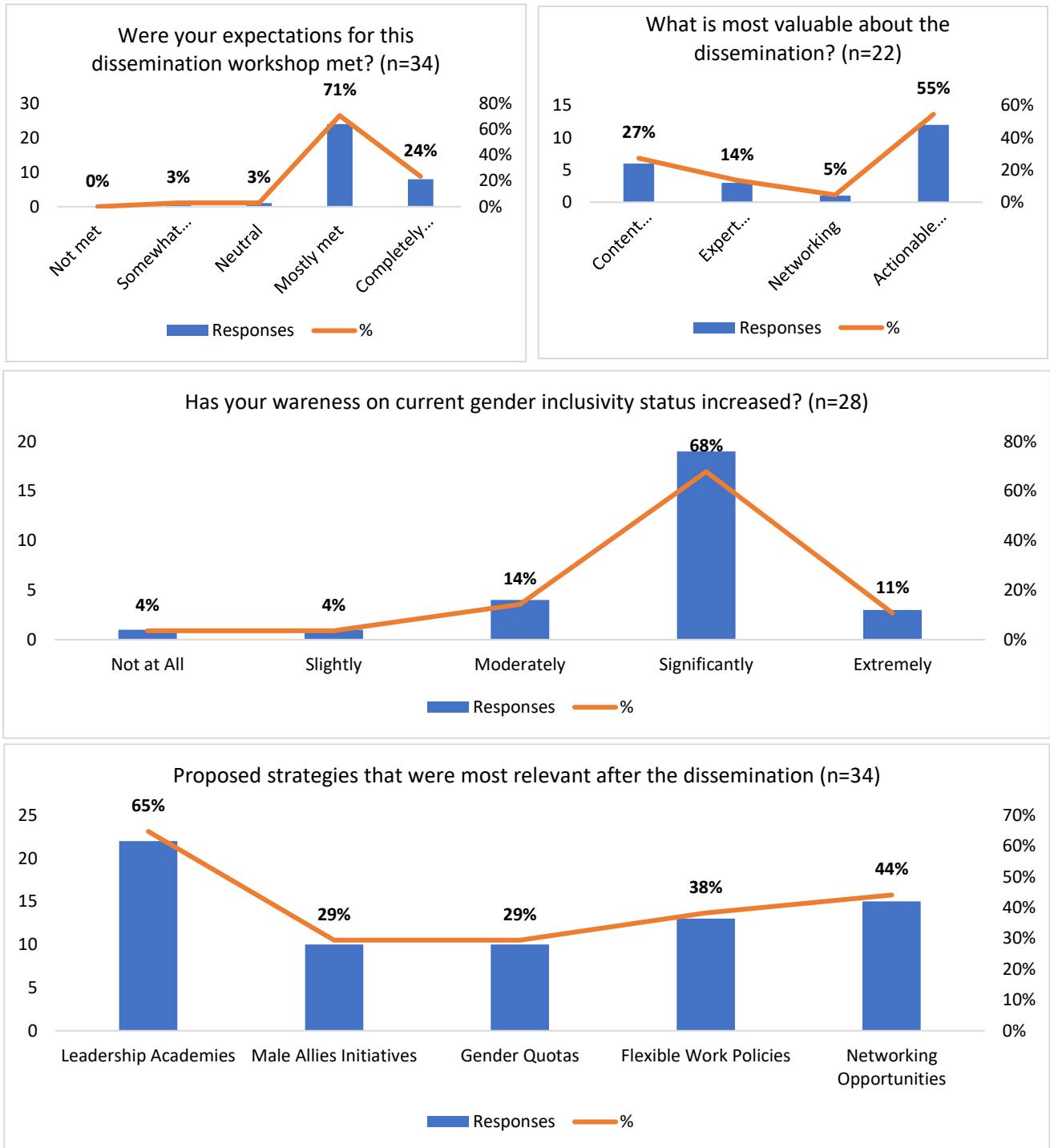
To engage participants actively, the session included a quick pre-session survey using Mentimeter, which aimed to assess attendees' expectations regarding barriers to women's leadership, enablers of progress, and the role of male allies in advancing gender equity. This interactive element not only provided valuable insights into participants' perspectives but also set the stage for deeper discussions throughout the session.

The survey results highlighted key issues that would inform the subsequent conversations, allowing participants to express their thoughts on the existing challenges within their respective environments. This initial engagement through Mentimeter served as a crucial touchpoint for identifying common themes and priorities among the attendees.

Nyanza and Western Pre-Dissemination Survey



Nyanza and Western Post-Dissemination Survey



3.4 PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

Dr. Angela Ndunge transitioned into the project introduction by initiating a group exercise aimed at assessing participants' understanding of common terms used within the gender space. This exercise

included terms such as gender equality, gender equity, glass ceiling, sticky floor, leaky pipeline, glass cliff, and labyrinth. The discussion that followed was vibrant and informative, as participants shared their definitions and interpretations of these concepts.

One participant articulated that gender equality refers to ensuring that all individuals are placed on equal footing, without considering external factors that may affect their opportunities. Another contributed that the glass ceiling symbolizes an invisible barrier that prevents individuals, particularly women, from advancing to higher positions despite their qualifications and capabilities. The exploration of these definitions helped to clarify the language surrounding gender issues and fostered a deeper understanding among participants.

Dr. Ndunge emphasized that leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone for discussions surrounding gender equity. She pointed out that equity is a journey, not a destination, highlighting the importance of focusing on progress rather than perfection. This perspective is vital for encouraging ongoing dialogue and commitment to change, as it acknowledges that while challenges persist, there is room for growth and improvement.



Dr. Angela Ndunge SBS Project PI, presenting the study findings

Moreover, Dr. Ndunge addressed the systemic issues that hinder progress, noting that many existing systems fail to support equity due to “systematic disintegrity” often perpetuated by male leaders. Her remarks underscored the need for a cultural shift within organizations and sectors that actively engages all individuals, regardless of gender, in promoting inclusivity and equity.

The opening segment of the dissemination event successfully established a foundation for the discussions to follow. Through personal reflections, insightful introductions, and engaging activities, speakers highlighted the systemic challenges women face in healthcare leadership while emphasizing the importance of collaboration, mentorship, and inclusive practices. The call for active participation, advocacy, and the need for male allies in these conversations resonated strongly among attendees. As the event progressed, participants were encouraged to reflect on their roles in advancing gender equity and the importance of collective action in overcoming barriers to women’s leadership.

3.5 KEYNOTE SPEAKER ADDRESS

The keynote address by Dr. Neema Mbaruku, an accomplished orthopedic surgeon and the first registered female orthopedic surgeon in Kenya, offered a profound reflection on the journey of women in medicine and the broader societal challenges they face. Dr. Mbaruku began her speech by expressing deep appreciation for the women who had influenced her life and career, recognizing their crucial role in shaping her identity and professional aspirations. Her remarks resonated with the audience, as she shared personal experiences that highlighted the resilience of women in the face of adversity and the importance of solidarity among them.

Dr. Mbaruku discussed the systemic challenges women often encounter, particularly in male-dominated fields like orthopaedic surgery. She vividly illustrated her observations of how women have frequently been marginalized and silenced by the men around them, emphasizing the need for women to find their voices and assert themselves in both personal and professional spheres. The family dynamics that shaped her upbringing played a significant role in her perspective; having been raised in a household of girls and being particularly attached to her father, she reflected on the supportive environment that empowered her to pursue her dreams.

A particularly striking point in Dr. Mbaruku's address was her metaphor comparing her skills in surgery to her abilities in the kitchen: "I not only hone the skill of holding a knife in the operating room, but I also hone the skill of holding a knife in the kitchen." This analogy underscored the multifaceted roles women often play, balancing professional ambitions with traditional expectations of womanhood. Dr. Mbaruku highlighted the societal pressures that dictate women's lives, lamenting the sad reality that many women feel they cannot "have it all," often leading to difficult choices where something must give.

Despite these challenges, Dr. Mbaruku encouraged the audience to maintain focus on their goals, stating, "Sometimes challenges will hit us, but the focus should be on the finish line." Her own journey as one of the pioneer women in orthopaedic surgery in Kenya served as a powerful testament to perseverance and determination. She urged women to "stand out and unapologetically shine," advocating for a mindset that embraces individuality and confidence.



Dr. Neema Mbaruku giving her key note address

Dr. Mbaruku's address encapsulated the essence of resilience and empowerment, inspiring attendees to confront the obstacles they face and to support one another in their journeys. Her call for women to be bold and proud in their pursuits resonated deeply, reinforcing the importance of fostering a supportive community among women in all fields, especially in medicine.

Dr. Neema Mbaruku's keynote address was not only a celebration of women's achievements in orthopaedic surgery but also a clarion call for continued advocacy and support for women in all sectors. By sharing her personal experiences and insights, she illuminated the paths that women can take to assert themselves and succeed, despite societal barriers. Her words serve as a reminder of the strength that lies in unity and the importance of uplifting one another as women strive to make their mark in traditionally male-dominated spaces.

3.6 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

3.6.1 TOPIC 1: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & POLICIES

The breakout session on "Organizational Culture and Policies," facilitated by Charity Kamau, Head of Programs at the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF), aimed to explore the influences of organizational culture on women's career trajectories in health leadership. Participants engaged in discussions that highlighted leadership styles, socio-cultural norms, and barriers to advancement, mentorship roles, and the importance of technological inclusion. Personal experiences shared by attendees underscored the systemic challenges women encounter as they seek leadership positions.

Key Themes

A central theme discussed was the significant impact of organizational culture on women's willingness to pursue leadership roles. Leadership styles within organizations shape this culture, either fostering or hindering women's ambitions. Predominantly hierarchical leadership often discourages women, while participatory and collaborative styles encourage inclusivity. Participants noted that organizations should strive to cultivate a culture that motivates women to take on leadership responsibilities.

Socio-cultural norms emerged as another barrier, particularly in areas like Kisumu County, where women in public health often face skepticism regarding their capabilities. These entrenched societal attitudes influence organizational behaviors, limiting women's advancement. Addressing these norms through gender-sensitive policies and awareness programs is essential for fostering a more inclusive environment.

The gap in leadership skills and training opportunities for women was also a significant topic of discussion. Many women hesitate to pursue leadership roles due to a lack of formal training or fear of the unknown. Initiatives like "Women in Insurance" provide mentorship and training, essential for equipping women with the skills to navigate leadership complexities. Participants emphasized that leadership transcends titles; it requires mastery of effective communication, strategic decision-making, and relationship management—all of which are best developed through continuous mentorship.

Technological inequality was another crucial barrier highlighted during the session. As technology plays an increasingly vital role in leadership, women often lack the necessary digital skills to compete effectively. Participants advocated for organizations to invest in training programs to enhance women's technological competence, thereby leveling the playing field in leadership roles.

Exclusionary decision-making practices were identified as another significant challenge. Key decisions often occur in informal settings—such as golf courses—where women may be excluded due to personal responsibilities or societal norms. This marginalization limits their participation in critical decisions. A call for inclusive decision-making processes emerged, emphasizing the need for formal settings that allow equal participation.



Charity Kamau, Head of Programs at KHF presenting her group discussion points

Promotion and recruitment biases further complicate women's advancement. Participants noted that these processes often lack transparency and are influenced by informal networks that favor men. Recommendations included automating these processes to ensure decisions are made based on merit rather than personal connections or gender biases.

Lastly, the importance of open communication within organizations was emphasized. An open-door policy, where leaders are approachable and employees feel empowered to share ideas and concerns, is crucial for fostering an inclusive work environment. Such a culture promotes transparency and builds trust, which is vital for women's advancement in leadership.

Recommendations

The session concluded with key recommendations aimed at creating a more supportive organizational environment that promotes women's advancement into leadership roles. One significant recommendation was to adopt participatory leadership styles. Leaders must actively foster an inclusive culture where women's voices are valued. This shift is essential to encouraging more women to pursue leadership roles and dismantling existing gender barriers.

Addressing socio-cultural norms and biases was highlighted as critical. Organizations should implement gender-sensitive policies and awareness programs to challenge entrenched cultural attitudes. These initiatives can help shift mindsets and promote a progressive view of women's potential in leadership.

Investing in leadership training specifically tailored for women was another vital recommendation. Many women lack formal training that prepares them for leadership, making them hesitant to pursue such roles. Providing targeted training and mentorship opportunities can bridge this gap, empowering women to gain confidence and essential skills. Networks that offer such training should be expanded across various sectors.

Technological inclusion was also emphasized. Organizations are urged to provide training that enhances women's access to technology, ensuring they possess the skills needed to compete effectively in modern leadership landscapes.

Inclusive decision-making processes were called for, as many important decisions currently occur in informal, exclusive settings. By ensuring that work-related decisions are made in environments accessible to all, organizations can eliminate exclusionary practices and create a more equitable atmosphere.

Furthermore, reforming promotion and recruitment practices to remove biases is crucial. Automating these processes would foster transparency and fairness, allowing women to advance based on merit rather than subjective judgments or personal connections.

Finally, fostering a culture of open communication is essential for supporting women's advancement. Leaders should adopt open-door policies to make themselves approachable, encouraging all employees, especially women, to share their ideas and concerns. This inclusive culture builds trust and ensures that women are actively involved in discussions about their career progression.

Conclusion

In summary, the session highlighted the profound influence of organizational culture and policies on women's advancement into leadership roles, particularly in the health sector. For women to thrive, organizations must adopt inclusive practices that challenge entrenched socio-cultural norms and biases. Embracing participatory leadership styles is essential for creating environments that empower women to pursue leadership positions.

Investing in tailored leadership training and ensuring technological inclusion are critical to equipping women with the skills they need for success. Additionally, fostering inclusive decision-making processes and automating promotion and recruitment can help eliminate gender biases and promote fairness.

Ultimately, cultivating a culture of open communication is vital for building trust and supporting women in their leadership journeys. By implementing these recommendations, organizations can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace, advancing women's leadership in the health sector and contributing positively to society as a whole.

3.6.2 TOPIC 2: LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP

The session led by Dr. Angela Ndunge focused on the crucial role of leadership in advancing women to health leadership roles, highlighting mentorship, policy development, and cultural change. The discussion began with the fundamental question: "What role does leadership play in advancing women within the health sector?" Participants shared experiences that explored how leaders can foster inclusivity, fairness, and capacity building for women, revealing insights into the relationship between leadership and women's professional development.

Key Themes

Several themes emerged around leadership, mentorship, and cultural change as essential elements in advancing women into health leadership positions. Leaders are vital in creating environments where women can thrive and assume leadership roles. They must serve as role models by actively demonstrating inclusivity through mentorship, opportunities for skill development, and fair resource allocation. Empathy and emotional intelligence are also critical traits for leaders, as they help cultivate supportive environments that promote organizational excellence. Such leaders can create a culture that recognizes the potential of all staff, particularly women, enabling their growth into leadership roles.

Policy development and implementation were central to the discussion. Participants stressed the need for clear, actionable policies that support women's career progression. Dr. Neema Mbaruku emphasized that leaders must articulate a vision for gender equality that resonates throughout the organization. This vision should be backed by policies that provide transparent pathways for career advancement. Effective communication and engagement in policy implementation were underscored, with examples illustrating how a lack of awareness can hinder the effectiveness of succession plans and other initiatives.

Mentorship emerged as a critical tool for supporting women's advancement. Effective mentor-mentee relationships, built on trust and clear boundaries, are essential for guiding women leaders. Participants highlighted the necessity of formalizing mentorship within organizations, ensuring that

guidelines clarify expectations. This formalization is particularly important in settings where power imbalances can arise. Mentors should be trained to offer both career guidance and personal development support, addressing the unique challenges their mentees face. Additionally, mentorship programs should align with mentees' interests and career goals, providing exposure to leadership roles.

Despite the advantages of mentorship, challenges can arise in these relationships. Issues such as sexual harassment, power imbalances, and mismatched expectations can disrupt effectiveness. To mitigate these challenges, participants recommended enforcing safeguarding policies to address harassment and ensure a healthy dynamic. Recognizing and rewarding mentors for their contributions, through financial incentives or certifications, can also help sustain their commitment. Establishing clear expectations at the onset of mentor-mentee relationships is vital for preventing misunderstandings and ensuring productive partnerships.

Organizational and societal culture was identified as a significant factor influencing career progression. Leaders must cultivate an organizational culture sensitive to gender differences and supportive of gender mainstreaming. Training on cultural diversity is essential to create an inclusive environment where employees from various backgrounds are valued. Leaders should also protect vulnerable individuals from cultural discrimination, promoting a culture that values and actively safeguards diversity.

Involving men in mentorship programs emerged as a crucial strategy for fostering inclusivity. Participants agreed that men in leadership positions should receive training to mentor effectively and support women's career development. While women may naturally seek out female mentors, encouraging men to participate actively in mentoring can bridge the gender gap in leadership. Training programs should equip male mentors with the necessary skills and knowledge to assist women in their leadership journeys.

These themes underscore the multi-faceted role of leadership, mentorship, and culture in advancing women in health leadership positions. Leaders must be intentional in creating inclusive policies, fostering supportive mentorship relationships, and shaping cultures that promote gender equality.

Recommendations

The session's recommendations focused on a comprehensive approach to advancing women into health leadership, emphasizing inclusive leadership, structured mentorship programs, effective policy implementation, and cultural sensitivity. Leaders should serve as role models, actively demonstrating inclusivity and supporting women's career growth through mentorship and equitable resource allocation. Empathy and emotional intelligence are critical in fostering environments conducive to women's advancement.

Policy implementation is essential for ensuring transparent career advancement pathways. Leaders must prioritize the development of gender equality policies and ensure that they are effectively communicated to all employees. For instance, succession plans, like those in Kakamega County, should be understood by all staff to facilitate equal participation in career progression.

Establishing formal mentorship programs is another key recommendation. Organizations should create structured mentorship programs with clear guidelines and mechanisms to address potential

power imbalances and harassment. Mentors must be trained to support both professional and personal development, aligning their guidance with the mentee's career goals.

Addressing challenges within mentor-mentee relationships is crucial. Safeguarding policies should be enforced to tackle issues like harassment and power dynamics. Recognizing mentors for their contributions—financially or through certification—can help maintain their motivation. Clear alignment of expectations between mentors and mentees at the start of their relationship is necessary for fostering productive, long-term partnerships.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity must also be prioritized to support women's career progression. Leadership should actively promote a culture that values diversity and respects gender differences. Implementing training programs that enhance cultural appreciation among employees fosters an inclusive environment. Leaders must protect individuals from cultural discrimination, ensuring that organizational culture embraces and safeguards diversity.

Lastly, involving men in mentorship programs is vital for fostering gender inclusivity in leadership development. Men need training to become effective mentors and support women's career progression actively. By encouraging male mentors to engage meaningfully, organizations can help close the gender gap in leadership roles within the health sector.

These recommendations create a holistic framework for advancing women into leadership roles by combining strong leadership, formalized mentorship programs, effective policy implementation, and cultural inclusivity. By addressing these areas, organizations can cultivate a supportive and equitable environment that enables women to succeed in leadership positions, ultimately benefiting the entire health sector.

Conclusion

The session emphasized the pivotal role of leadership in advancing women into health leadership positions. By implementing effective mentorship, developing supportive policies, and fostering cultural change, leaders can create pathways for women's career progression. Formalizing mentorship programs, addressing mentor-mentee challenges, and promoting cultural sensitivity are essential for achieving gender equity in leadership. Empowering women in leadership not only benefits the individuals involved but also strengthens organizations and enhances overall performance within the health sector.

3.6.3 TOPIC 3: GENDER SENSITIVE STRATEGIES & INTERVENTIONS

The session led by Dr. Benson Mutuku focused on gender-sensitive strategies and interventions designed to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. The discussion was dynamic, covering practical steps for policy implementation, addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and fostering mentorship and cultural shifts. Key ideas centered on embedding gender inclusivity into organizational and societal frameworks, enabling women, men, and marginalized groups to thrive equally.

Key Themes

Dr. Mutuku's session explored a broad spectrum of strategies to foster a more inclusive workplace. The discussion emphasized the need for systemic and cultural shifts, policy reforms, and practical interventions to challenge gender norms. A central theme was the need to rethink organizational practices that perpetuate traditional gender roles. For instance, women are often relegated to housekeeping tasks, such as serving tea or taking minutes in meetings, which limits their visibility and participation in decision-making. To change this dynamic, organizations must model inclusive behavior, starting with leaders who take on roles traditionally assigned to the opposite gender.

A significant focus was also placed on ensuring gender inclusivity in decision-making spaces and grievance mechanisms. Participants agreed on the importance of addressing mental health concerns in the workplace, ensuring that support structures are accessible to both men and women. Regular gender audits were recommended to ensure fair representation in leadership roles and decision-making bodies.

The session also addressed policies aimed at preventing GBV in the workplace. Ratifying and implementing ILO 190, which tackles violence and harassment, was seen as a crucial step. However, it was noted that organizations must move beyond policy formulation to ensure that grievance mechanisms are fair, transparent, and accessible to all. Another critical area discussed was the stigma surrounding infertility, which often leads to forms of gender-based violence. Participants emphasized the need for open discussions about reproductive health, engaging men in these conversations to create supportive environments for women.

Cultural impediments to gender equality were discussed extensively. Traditional gender roles, such as women being assigned housekeeping duties, were identified as significant barriers. These roles often become ingrained in organizational culture, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting opportunities for women. To combat this, deliberate cultural shifts within organizations and society are necessary, particularly as younger generations, like Gen Z, redefine gender roles and embrace equal partnerships. The discussion highlighted positive cultural values, such as 'debul' for men and 'sivindhe' for women, which can be harnessed to promote gender equity and empower both genders.

Recommendations

Mentorship emerged as a crucial strategy for fostering gender equality, particularly through the involvement of male allies and established women leaders. Creating mentorship programs that guide young women through professional spaces and help them confront gender biases was deemed essential. Building a strong network of successful women willing to support and guide emerging leaders was highlighted as key to empowering the next generation. Such networks provide tangible role models and a supportive community for young women navigating their careers.

Work-life balance, especially during the reproductive stages of a woman's life, remains a significant challenge. The session underscored the importance of gender-sensitive policies that facilitate equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities. Normalizing men's involvement in family life is crucial to supporting women's professional and personal growth. The idea of gender quotas was also discussed, with calls to revisit their application to ensure they promote true inclusivity rather than serve as token gestures.

Education was emphasized as a vital equalizer in achieving gender equity. The group acknowledged that education empowers girls, providing them with equal opportunities to succeed. However, the 'nitapewa' culture—teaching women to wait for opportunities instead of actively pursuing them—

was criticized. Participants called for a shift in mindset, urging women to be proactive and strive for the same level of achievement as men, rather than being passive recipients of opportunities.

Labour unions play a critical role in addressing gender-related issues, particularly in combating harassment and ensuring safe, inclusive work environments. Unions must be vocal and active on matters of gender equality, collaborating with management to protect the rights of all workers, regardless of gender. This connects to the broader need for social change in decision-making processes. For true inclusion to be realized, organizations and society must undergo a profound transformation prioritizing fairness and representation in leadership.

Another key point raised was the necessity of holding political leaders accountable for their commitments to gender equality. Participants stressed the importance of amplifying voices that demand action on gender issues and ensuring leadership accountability through public forums and policy commitments. This accountability should be accompanied by efforts to embrace positive cultural values and promote behavioral change at organizational and societal levels.

Sharing stories of successful role models was seen as an effective way to inspire and challenge traditional gender stereotypes. By amplifying the narratives of women who have succeeded in various fields, organizations can broaden perceptions

of women's potential and encourage others to follow suit. Behavioral change initiatives must be embedded within organizational cultures to ensure that gender inclusivity becomes the norm.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the session led by Dr. Mutuku presented a multi-dimensional approach to fostering gender-sensitive strategies and interventions. It highlighted the need for practical steps towards policy implementation, fair representation, cultural shifts, and sustained mentorship. Creating gender-inclusive environments requires systemic changes, from leadership to grassroots levels. These changes must be supported by a broader social movement that challenges traditional gender roles, embraces inclusivity, and fosters behavioral changes that support gender equity. As Gen Z enters the workforce, the opportunity for a legacy of shared leadership, equality, and mutual empowerment is at hand, paving the way for a more inclusive future for all.

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kisumu Dissemination Workshop provided valuable insights into the current landscape of gender equity in healthcare leadership, revealing both challenges and opportunities for advancing women's representation and leadership within the sector. Key findings from the event highlighted systemic barriers to women's advancement, such as significant underrepresentation in leadership roles, which limits the diversity of voices and perspectives essential for effective decision-making. Deeply ingrained cultural norms and societal expectations often discourage women from pursuing leadership positions, as traditional gender roles shape both the opportunities available to them and societal perceptions of their capabilities.

The prevailing organizational culture within healthcare institutions was identified as another barrier to women's advancement, with many organizations employing hierarchical leadership styles that hinder open communication and inclusive decision-making. Furthermore, existing policies often lack

the necessary frameworks to promote gender equity, creating a critical need for gender-responsive policies that facilitate career advancement for women.

Mentorship emerged as a vital component for supporting women’s career progression, with participants emphasizing the need for structured mentorship programs that connect aspiring female leaders with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support. Additionally, there is a demand for targeted training and development opportunities that equip women with the skills and confidence needed to excel in leadership roles. Advocacy for women's leadership and gender equity is crucial at both organizational and policy levels, with an emphasis on engaging male allies to create a supportive environment.

The formation of county chapters by organizations like the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF) was identified as a promising strategy for localized advocacy, allowing for tailored approaches that address regional challenges and opportunities. The workshop underscored the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders—including healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders—in fostering an inclusive environment that supports women’s leadership. All participants were encouraged to take collective responsibility for driving change, emphasizing that achieving gender equity requires a unified effort from all sectors.



Dr. Matiko Gaibe County Director of Health (CDC) Kisil County giving his input during the meeting

Discussions during breakout sessions revealed that many organizations lack the cultural framework necessary to promote gender equity, highlighting the urgent need for cultural shifts and policy reforms. The critical role of mentorship and the establishment of supportive networks for women was emphasized, alongside the identification of practical strategies to promote gender sensitivity in healthcare settings. These strategies include training programs, advocacy initiatives, and inclusive decision-making practices.

The Monitoring & Evaluation session facilitated the formulation of actionable commitments from participants, focusing on implementing the workshop’s recommendations and fostering accountability in promoting gender equity. Overall, the findings from the Kisumu Dissemination Workshop offer a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equity in healthcare leadership. The discussions emphasized the need for systemic changes, collaborative efforts, and targeted interventions to create an inclusive environment that supports women's leadership.

Based on the findings, several recommendations have been proposed to advance gender equity in healthcare leadership. First, healthcare organizations should adopt inclusive leadership styles that foster open communication and encourage women to express their ideas and take on leadership roles. Implementing training programs focused on cultural sensitivity and gender equity for all staff,

particularly those in leadership positions, is essential to address existing biases and norms that hinder women's advancement.

Second, organizations should establish structured mentorship programs to connect aspiring female leaders with experienced mentors who can provide support and encouragement. Investing in targeted training and development opportunities for women in healthcare is also critical to enhance their leadership skills and professional networks.

Third, organizations must review and reform existing policies to ensure they promote gender equity and provide clear pathways for women to advance into leadership roles. Actively engaging male colleagues as allies in advocacy efforts for gender equity is vital in fostering an inclusive workplace. Additionally, the establishment of county chapters by organizations like KHF can facilitate localized advocacy efforts tailored to specific regional challenges.

Fourth, enhancing recruitment and promotion processes by implementing automated systems can help ensure decisions are based on merit, reducing biases that may disadvantage women. Establishing transparent criteria for promotions and leadership positions is crucial to ensure all employees understand the pathways to advancement.

Finally, fostering partnerships among stakeholders is necessary to create a unified approach to promoting gender equity in healthcare leadership. Organizing regular forums and workshops will facilitate ongoing dialogue on gender equity issues, allowing for continuous engagement and shared learning among stakeholders.

To ensure accountability, organizations should develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress on gender equity initiatives, with regular reporting mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of strategies and gather feedback for continuous improvement.

In conclusion, these recommendations aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment for women in healthcare leadership. By addressing systemic barriers, fostering mentorship, advocating for policy reforms, and promoting collaborative engagement, stakeholders can collectively advance gender equity in the healthcare sector. Implementing these strategies will not only benefit women aspiring to leadership roles but will also enhance the overall effectiveness and diversity of the healthcare system in Kenya.

5. CONCLUSION

The Kisumu Dissemination Workshop on Gender Equity in Healthcare Leadership served as a vital platform for stakeholders to confront and discuss the pressing challenges faced by women in advancing to leadership roles within the healthcare sector. Participants engaged in enlightening discussions and breakout sessions that illuminated the multifaceted nature of gender inequity, the systemic barriers perpetuating it, and the collaborative solutions needed to dismantle these obstacles.

The workshop underscored the alarming underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions. Despite strides toward inclusivity, significant hurdles remain, including entrenched socio-cultural norms, biased organizational practices, and inadequate support structures. As noted by speakers like Dr. Neema Mbaruku and Dr. Benjamin Induswe, these barriers stifle women's voices and limit the healthcare sector's effectiveness, depriving it of diverse perspectives necessary for innovative solutions.



A photo opportunity with some meeting organizers and participants as we reflect on the interactive workshop

A critical theme that emerged was the role of organizational culture in facilitating or hindering women's advancement. Many healthcare institutions still operate under hierarchical leadership styles that fail to promote collaboration and inclusivity. This calls for a cultural transformation within these organizations, advocating for leadership models that encourage participation and actively dismantle the glass ceilings preventing women from rising to positions of influence.

Discussions around mentorship revealed a pressing need for structured programs that provide women with the guidance, skills, and confidence to navigate their career trajectories effectively. Mentorship is essential for empowering women to challenge the status quo and assert their place in leadership. Participants emphasized the importance of involving male colleagues as allies and advocates for gender equity within their organizations.

The workshop also highlighted the necessity for robust advocacy and policy reforms aimed at creating gender-responsive workplaces. Existing policies often inadequately address the unique challenges women face, indicating a critical gap that must be bridged through concerted efforts. Engaging male allies in advocacy will be pivotal in changing the narrative around gender equity and fostering an environment where all individuals contribute to inclusive leadership practices.

Accountability and monitoring within organizations were also emphasized. Establishing clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be crucial for tracking progress and ensuring that commitments to gender equity are realized. The pledges made during the Monitoring & Evaluation session reflected the collective commitment of participants to drive change in their spheres of influence.

Reflecting on the outcomes of the workshop, it is clear that the journey toward gender equity in healthcare leadership is not solely the responsibility of women but requires active participation from all stakeholders. The breakout sessions revealed a wealth of knowledge among participants, highlighting the need for ongoing dialogue and collaboration to address complex issues. The workshop has sparked a movement toward fostering a healthcare environment that values and empowers women leaders, but this momentum must be sustained and amplified.

In conclusion, the discussions and commitments made during the workshop represent a significant step toward achieving gender equity in the Kenyan healthcare sector. While progress is possible, it requires unwavering dedication, bold actions, and a collective refusal to accept the status quo. The path forward is illuminated by the voices of both women and men committed to advocating for change. Together, we can create a healthcare system that is inclusive, equitable, and capable of meeting the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

6. APPENDIX

a. Attendance List



Registration Form (1).pdf

b. Meeting Program



Agenda-KSM-Dissemination.pdf

c. Commitment Forms



Compiled
Commitment Forms