



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CONFERENCE 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
ABBREVIATIONS	3
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.1 BACKGROUND	4
TABLE 1: THEORY OF CHANGE	4
1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE	5
1.3 KEY FINDINGS	6
1.4 CONCLUSION	8
2. SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS	8
2.1 THE PLENARY SESSION: SETTING STAGE	8
2.2 THE PANEL DISCUSSION: CREATING GENDER-INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS	10
2.3 FROM THE BREAKOUT SESSIONS	11
2.3.1 IMPLEMENTATION AND UPTAKE OF GENDERED POLICIES	11
2.3.2 ESTABLISHING MENTORSHIP, COACHING, AND ALLY SHIP STRUCTURES IN THE WORKPLACE	13
2.3.3 DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATIONS	15
2.3.4 ENHANCING LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR GENDER INCLUSION	17
2.4 EMERGING THEMES	18
3. REITERATING AND DEVELOPING THE CASE FOR WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP IN KENYA: ENABLERS AND BARRIERS	18
3.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION	18
3.2 ENABLERS	19
3.3 BARRIERS	19
4. CALL TO ACTION AND FUTIRE DIRECTIONS	20
5. EVALUTATION OF THE CONFERENCE ACHIEVEMENTS VIS A VIS THE DESIRED OUTCOMES	22
6.CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	23
7. REFERENCES	24
8. APPENDICES	24



FOREWORD

International Women's Day is a significant occasion that celebrates the remarkable achievements of women across social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. In keeping with this year's theme, 'Inspire Inclusion,' Strathmore University Business School (SBS) collaborated with the Kenya Health Federation (KHF) to host a conference titled, "Inspiring Gender Inclusion: Empowering Leaders, Bridging Gaps." This event aimed to bring together women leaders, male allies, and influential figures in the healthcare profession and beyond.

The chosen theme aligns seamlessly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality). This conference directly addressed the gender data gaps identified in the UN SDG Goals report for 2023, emphasizing the imperative to empower women and bridge existing leadership gaps.

Building on reported progress, SBS actively contributes to achieving the SDGs, specifically SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), through the Women in Health Leadership project. This initiative, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in collaboration with the Kenya Healthcare Federation, has gathered crucial research on the status of women across various healthcare sectors, directly addressing the data highlighted by the SDGs.

The research findings have provided optimism as we continue to raise awareness about the benefits of gender diversity and inclusion in organizations. However, challenges persist in the representation of women in middle and senior management levels, illustrated by the phenomenon known as the "Leaking Pipeline Syndrome," where female talent is lost from entry-level through senior management. Progress on increasing women's representation in management has been slow, with only a 1.0-percentage-point increase since 2015, according to the SDG Progress Report 2023.

Addressing this issue remains a priority as we strive for greater gender equality in leadership positions. SBS and KHF curated a distinguished group of speakers from diverse backgrounds who will delve deeper into this year's theme. They will share their career journeys, successes, and challenges.

Thank you for joining SBS and KHF as we celebrated this year's International Women's Day and reflect on the theme centered on "Inspiring Gender Inclusion: Empowering Leaders, Bridging Gaps." This occasion provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the holistic contributions of women on a global scale. Together, let us inspire inclusion and empower leaders to bridge the gaps that hinder gender equality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for their generous support and funding of the Women in Health Leadership project. Without their commitment to advancing gender equality and healthcare leadership, this initiative would not have been possible.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the entire Strathmore University and our implementing partners, the Kenya Healthcare Federation. Their collaboration and efforts were instrumental in the success of this conference.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the speakers and presenters for their valuable contributions that was essential in advancing our shared vision of gender

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ABBREVIATIONS

NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission	WEF	Women Economic Forum
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	WHA	World Health Assembly
USAID	United States Agency for International Development	WHO	World Health Organization
		WIGH	Women in Global Health

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

Kenya has made significant strides in promoting gender equality, but women’s representation in leadership roles, especially within the healthcare sector, remains an area of concern. This report captures the findings of a study that aimed at developing a nuanced understanding of how organizational elements interact to constrain or promote women’s advancement in Kenyan health sector organizations.

Strathmore University Business School has been funded to lead and coordinate country level (Kenya) efforts aimed at identifying organizational level dimensions that impact women in healthcare leadership; and to stimulate locally driven and nationally relevant advocacy to support health sector institutions and organizations to adopt practices that enable more women to rise and thrive in positions of authority and influence.

Table 1: Theory of Change

PILLAR	DOMAINS	FOCUS AREAS	OUTCOME	OUTPUT
Organizational Change	Individual	Soft Skills	Acquisition of soft skills that enable achievement of outcomes	Self-esteem, efficacy, resilience Fulfilled aspirations
		Hard Skills	Leadership and management education and skills that enable achievement of outcomes	- Efficacy in leadership and management - Individual empowerment as measured by voice and agency - Fulfilled aspirations (career growth, advancement)
	Organizational	Organizational structure, culture, policies and processes	Organizations plans, processes, and policies reviewed	Creation of an enabling intra-organizational environment
	Leadership	Gender and leadership	Capacity development in the gender dimensions of leadership	Leadership effectively playing its role in culture formation/ reformation, social normalization, ring-fencing of resources to support women develop their technical, leadership and management skills
Social Impact	Social-Relational	Access to Peer networks	- Formation of female leadership circles - Access to networks and to networking opportunities	Supportive relationships for knowledge sharing, character building and leadership
		Access to role models	- Formation of female leadership circles - Access to networks and to networking opportunities	Supportive relationships for knowledge sharing, character building and leadership

Societal/ Community	Policy and Regulatory Frameworks	Advocacy toward development, enactment and operationalization of appropriate policy	Supportive policy environment
	Industry and Sectoral Ecosystem	W+ certification standards established and accepted	Organizational role-modeling Public recognition
	Impact Stakeholders – men	Training, Capacity development and advocacy leading to the transition of men from ‘resistant’ to ‘ready’ states about supporting female leadership advancement	An empowered and supportive community

On March 8, 2024, Strathmore University Business School, in partnership with the Kenya Healthcare Federation, held the International Women’s Day Conference. Strathmore has been organizing this conference on International Women’s Day for the past eight years. This year, the conference honored women in health leadership in Kenya focusing on the theme “Inspiring Gender Inclusion: Empowering Leaders, Bridging Gaps”. It was held at the Movenpick Hotel and Residences in Nairobi. Participants came from various disciplines across the country, with a significant representation from the health sector. The conference provided an opportunity for women to reflect on and celebrate their holistic contributions on a global scale. The purpose of this report is to summarize the key points made during the International Women’s Day Conference.

1.2 Objectives of the Conference

The aim and objectives of the conference were derived from the global agenda of promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality. Consequently, for this in-country event, the conference’s general aim was to offer a platform fostering women’s leadership and advocating for gender equity in various sectors.

The objectives of the conference were outlined as follows:

1. To inspire the next generation of women to seek leadership roles and actively participate in decision-making processes.
2. To Sensitize society to appreciate the pivotal role women play in leadership and their contributions to social and economic development.
3. To challenge the notion that a title alone equates to effective leadership, emphasizing the importance of ethical and transformative leadership qualities.
4. To promote the development of ethical transformational women leaders who can drive positive change in their communities and beyond.

These objectives were designed to address specific challenges and opportunities related to women’s leadership and empowerment, aligning with broader global efforts to achieve gender parity and advance women’s rights and opportunities. The conference aimed to inspire actionable strategies and initiatives that support women in breaking barriers, accessing leadership positions, and contributing meaningfully to society.



Persistent gender disparities



Importance of mentorship and capacity building



Need for institutional change



Advocacy for male allyship and cultural shifts



Multi-faceted approach to address challenges

1.3 KEY FINDINGS

Based on the extensive discussions and insights shared during the International Women's Day event

focusing on women in healthcare leadership, several key findings have emerged:

1. Persistent gender disparities: There is a continued existence of gender disparities within healthcare leadership, characterized by underrepresentation of women in senior positions and unequal opportunities for career advancement.

2. Importance of mentorship and capacity building: Mentorship and capacity-building programs tailored specifically for women in healthcare leadership are crucial for empowering women professionals. These initiatives provide leadership development, networking opportunities, and skills enhancement to support women in advancing their careers.

3. Need for institutional change: Healthcare organizations must prioritize institutional changes to promote gender-responsive practices. This includes implementing flexible work arrangements, providing childcare support, and adopting family-friendly policies to create supportive environments for women professionals.

4. Advocacy for male allyship and cultural shifts: Advocating for male allyship and challenging traditional gender roles is essential to foster an inclusive culture. Active involvement of male allies can contribute significantly to breaking down stereotypes and promoting diversity and gender parity within healthcare leadership.

5. Multi-faceted approach to address challenges: Addressing the challenges faced by women in health leadership requires a multi-faceted approach involving policy changes, educational initiatives, and cultural shifts. Creating an environment that values and supports women in leadership roles is key to harnessing the full potential of the healthcare workforce.

Based on the key findings during the conference, we provide the following set of recommendations to address the multitude of challenges faced by women in healthcare Leadership, enhancing gender equality, social inclusion, and equity in the healthcare operations.

1. Establish Women’s Leadership Academies:

Create specialized leadership academies tailored to the needs of women in the health sector. These academies can offer training, mentorship, and networking opportunities specifically designed to empower women to excel in leadership roles. By providing targeted support and skill development, these academies can help women overcome barriers and thrive in their careers.

2. Implement Gender Quotas for Leadership

Positions: Introduce gender quotas or targets for women’s representation in leadership positions within health sector institutions. While controversial, quotas have been effective in increasing women’s representation in leadership roles in other sectors. Implementing quotas can help break down systemic barriers and accelerate progress towards gender parity in health sector leadership.

3. Promote Male Allies and Advocates:

Engage male leaders as allies and advocates for gender equity in health sector leadership. Encourage male colleagues to mentor and sponsor women leaders, advocate for inclusive policies and practices, and actively challenge gender biases and stereotypes within their organizations. By fostering a culture of allyship, organizations can create more inclusive and supportive environments for women in leadership.

4. Incorporate Gender-Sensitive Leadership

Training: Integrate gender-sensitive leadership training into professional development programs

for health sector leaders. Equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to recognize and address gender biases, foster inclusive team dynamics, and champion diversity and inclusion initiatives within their organizations. By embedding gender sensitivity into leadership development, organizations can cultivate a more inclusive leadership culture.

5. Establish Women’s Leadership Networks:

Create formalized networks and support groups for women in health sector leadership roles. These networks can provide opportunities for peer support, knowledge sharing, and professional networking, empowering women to navigate the challenges of leadership and build strategic alliances. By fostering a sense of community and solidarity, women’s leadership networks can amplify women’s voices and drive collective action for change.

6. Implement Flexible Work Policies:

Implement flexible work policies that accommodate the diverse needs of women in health sector leadership roles. Offer options such as remote work, flexible hours, and job-sharing arrangements to support women’s work-life balance and facilitate their career advancement. By prioritizing flexibility and work-life balance, organizations can attract and retain top female talent and promote gender diversity in leadership.

7. Foster Gender-Inclusive Organizational

Cultures: Foster gender-inclusive organizational cultures that value and celebrate diversity at all levels of leadership. Promote inclusive language and communication practices, challenge stereotypes and biases, and create opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes. By fostering a culture of inclusivity

and belonging, organizations can create environments where women feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

8. Invest in Research and Data Collection: Invest in research and data collection efforts to continually monitor and evaluate gender dynamics in health sector leadership. Collect disaggregated data on leadership representation, career progression, and workplace experiences to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement. By leveraging data-driven insights, organizations can track progress, identify barriers, and inform evidence-based interventions for advancing gender equity in health sector leadership.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the call to action extends far beyond the boundaries of this conference report. It resonates through the corridors of healthcare institutions, resonates within policy-making chambers, and fuels the aspirations of women striving to ascend the leadership ladder. The future of women in health leadership in Kenya is not a mere forecast but a dynamic evolution shaped by deliberate interventions, systemic transformations, and a collective determination to cultivate an environment where leadership transcends gender. Addressing the challenges encountered by women in health leadership demands a comprehensive approach involving policy reforms, educational initiatives, and cultural transformations. By nurturing an environment that honors and empowers women in leadership roles, the healthcare sector can unleash the full potential of its workforce and contribute to enhanced health outcomes for all members of society.

2. SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS

2.1 The Plenary Session: Setting Stage

The opening session of the International Women’s Day Conference commenced with a captivating plenary featuring esteemed speakers, each delivering profound insights on critical themes surrounding women’s empowerment and leadership. Dr. Caesar Mwangi, the Executive Dean at Strathmore University, commenced the session by emphasizing a poignant message: health as the true measure of wealth. Dr. Mwangi urged attendees to shift their focus towards personal well-being, stressing that partnerships and societal collaboration, such as those fostered by Strathmore Business School, are instrumental in unlocking Africa’s potential.



Dr. Mwangi highlighted the indispensable role women play in shaping societies, particularly underscoring the nurturing influence of mothers right from birth. His address underscored the intrinsic link between personal well-being and genuine prosperity, advocating a shift from material wealth to prioritize health as the ultimate measure of richness. His insights illuminated the vital role of collaborative partnerships in Strathmore Business School's endeavors to unlock Africa's potential for

societal impact. Dr. Mwangi's discourse set the stage for Dr. Vinod Guptan, a Board Director of the Kenya Healthcare Federation, who celebrated women as unsung heroes within the healthcare sector. Dr. Guptan exhorted the audience to summon courage in catalyzing change, advocating for breaking down barriers impeding women's ascent to leadership positions.

Dr. Vinod Guptan passionately highlighted the indispensable contributions of women in healthcare, portraying them as unsung heroes and champions of change. Dr. Guptan stressed the importance of courage in dismantling barriers that impede women's progress into leadership roles, advocating for equal representation and equitable opportunities. His call for mentorship, education, and the rectification of gender bias in remuneration echoed as essential strategies for advancing gender equality. Ida Norheim Hoigm, Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, subsequently shed light on global gender inequalities, pinpointing societal norms as drivers of persistent disparities. She candidly shared her personal challenges as a female leader, stressing the imperative of relentless advocacy for gender equity.

Dr. Angela Ndunge showcased Strathmore University's proactive initiatives in nurturing women leaders, including leadership development programs and entrepreneurship skills training. Stressing the universality of challenges faced by women across sectors, she called for policy interventions to promote women's leadership and economic empowerment.



The key takeaways from this compelling session resonated deeply: prioritizing personal well-being as the cornerstone of wealth, embracing courage and advocacy to forge pathways to leadership, and cultivating mentorship while addressing ingrained gender biases are pivotal for advancing gender equality. There is a resounding call for courage—courage to challenge existing barriers, defy stereotypes, and forge new paths towards gender parity. Secondly, the importance of mentorship and education emerged as instrumental in equipping women with the skills and confidence needed to assume leadership roles. Finally, addressing systemic gender biases, whether in remuneration or societal expectations, is pivotal for fostering inclusive and equitable environments. The speakers' insights furnished actionable strategies for dismantling gender disparities, advocating for inclusive societies, and promoting collective action towards the objectives of International Women's Day. This plenary opening session not only set a robust foundation for the conference but also underscored the urgency of collaborative endeavors to propel women's leadership and empowerment. The session's discourse illuminated the transformative potential of concerted efforts in nurturing inclusive and equitable societies, embodying the spirit of International Women's Day to effect enduring change worldwide.

2.2 The Panel discussion: Creating Gender-Inclusive Organizations

The panel discussion on creating gender-inclusive organizations within the healthcare sector, moderated by Professor Frank Wafula, brought together a diverse group of insightful panelists: Norah Obudho, Stephanie Koczela, Dr. Rose Wangeci, and Roselyn Mungai. Each panelist contributed valuable perspectives on transformative leadership, gender parity, mentorship, and policy advocacy, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for women in leadership roles.

Norah Obudho strongly advocated for transformative leadership, stressing the need for continuous improvement and mentorship among women leaders. She emphasized the critical role of male allyship in advancing gender equality within healthcare organizations, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting women's leadership development.

Stephanie Koczela emphasized the necessity of critical thinking around women's roles and remuneration within healthcare settings. She highlighted the importance of workplace policies that support women at different life stages, including the normalization of paternity leave to encourage shared responsibilities in caregiving.

Dr. Rose Wangeci shared insights into KEPISA's efforts to promote gender inclusivity and support women's representation in organizational boards. She addressed challenges such as tribal and political barriers that impede women's leadership, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures to overcome these obstacles.

Roselyn Mungai provided a regional perspective, showcasing Nakuru County's policies aimed at ensuring women's representation in decision-making forums. She highlighted Governor Susan Kihika's endorsement of female leadership, illustrating the impact of supportive political leadership on advancing gender equality.

The key takeaways from the panel discussion centered around several critical themes. Firstly, there was a unanimous call for transformative leadership as a catalyst for empowering women and driving meaningful change within healthcare organizations. The importance of implementing progressive workplace policies, tailored to women's needs at different life stages, was highlighted to foster inclusivity and support women's career advancement.

Additionally, the panel emphasized the pivotal role of male allies in supporting women's leadership journeys and fostering gender equality within healthcare settings. Finally, policy advocacy emerged as a crucial strategy for addressing systemic barriers that hinder women's progression into leadership roles, underscoring the importance of advocating for gender-responsive policies at all levels.

In conclusion, the panel discussion provided a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities faced by women in healthcare leadership, offering actionable insights to create more gender-inclusive organizations. The collective expertise of the panelists underscored the imperative of collaborative efforts and proactive measures to advance gender parity and empower women leaders in the healthcare sector.



2.3 FROM THE BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

2.3.1 Implementation and uptake of gendered policies

The breakout session focused on the implementation and uptake of gendered policies within healthcare settings, addressing critical issues related to promoting gender equality and empowering women in leadership roles. Moderated by Dr. Tim Theuri, the panel discussion featured insights from esteemed panelists: Dr. Joy Mugambi, Dr. Hilda Gikunda, Dr. Liz Gitau, Paul Kuria, and Dr. Frida Njogu Ndongwe. Together, they delved into challenges, successful initiatives, and the pivotal role of leadership and advocacy in driving policy adoption.

The session began with an exploration of unconscious bias and resistance within healthcare workplaces. Panelists highlighted the importance of understanding and challenging biases, such as

the expectation for women to perform certain tasks like serving tea, and advocated for organizational reforms to accommodate diverse family structures effectively.

A key focus of the discussion centered on identifying and addressing unequal policies that perpetuate disparities in healthcare settings. This included recognizing the inadequacies in supporting women with gender-specific needs, like childcare during work-related activities, and emphasizing the need for policy reforms to bridge these gaps.

Leadership and advocacy emerged as crucial factors in advancing gender equality. Panelists stressed the significance of leadership in advocating for constitutional measures, such as the two-thirds gender rule, and implementing corporate policies that prioritize gender equality. Local advocacy efforts were also highlighted as instrumental in promoting women's leadership participation.

The session also explored protection measures and evaluation methods aimed at safeguarding women's rights and well-being. Examples

included implementing company policies that reserve positions for women, fostering strategic partnerships to promote gender diversity, and developing gender-responsive programming within healthcare organizations. Success stories were shared to illustrate effective policies enabling women's advancement in leadership roles, such as increased representation in professional associations and organizational policies ensuring female leadership representation. The importance of strategic partnerships in supporting gender diversity initiatives was also emphasized.

The session addressed specific challenges faced by menopausal women in the workplace, including physical symptoms, stigma, and impact on professional relationships. Panelists discussed strategies to overcome these barriers and promote inclusivity and support for women throughout their careers.

The breakout session highlighted several emerging themes crucial for advancing gender equality and empowering women in healthcare leadership through policy reform and organizational change:

Firstly, data-driven policy reform emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the importance of leveraging data to identify disparities and drive evidence-based policy changes. By analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, organizations can pinpoint areas of improvement and tailor policies to address specific gender-related challenges effectively.

Secondly, cultural transformation was underscored as essential for fostering diversity and inclusivity within healthcare settings. Promoting cultural shifts involves challenging existing norms and biases, cultivating inclusive environments where all individuals, regardless of gender, feel valued and supported in their professional journeys.

Another significant theme was leadership advocacy, highlighting the pivotal role of leadership in championing gender equality measures and driving policy implementation. Strong advocacy from leaders at all levels is crucial for creating systemic change and fostering a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes gender parity.

The session further emphasized on inclusive organizational practices, stressing the need to reform organizational structures and practices to accommodate diverse family structures and meet the specific needs of women in the workplace. This includes implementing flexible work policies, providing childcare support, and ensuring equitable opportunities for career advancement.

Lastly, empowerment through education emerged as a transformative theme, emphasizing the importance of education and skills development programs to empower women leaders. By investing in education and training initiatives, organizations can enhance women's leadership capabilities and equip them with the tools needed to thrive in healthcare leadership roles.

These emerging themes underscored the multifaceted approach required to promote gender equality and empower women in healthcare leadership. By embracing data-driven policy reforms, fostering cultural transformation, advocating for leadership engagement, implementing inclusive organizational practices, and prioritizing empowerment through education, organizations can create inclusive environments where women can succeed and contribute to meaningful change in healthcare settings.

In conclusion, the breakout session underscored several key takeaways. There is a clear need for a comprehensive understanding of workplace policies related to gender equality and organizational reforms to foster inclusivity. Utilizing data to highlight disparities and implementing quotas or targets for female representation in leadership were identified as effective strategies. Cultural shifts, diversity promotion, and continuous tracking of women's retention and advancement were emphasized as critical components of successful policy implementation.

2.3.2 ESTABLISHING MENTORSHIP, COACHING, AND ALLYSHIP STRUCTURES IN THE WORKPLACE

The breakout session centered on the crucial topic of “Establishing Mentorship, Coaching, and Allyship Structures in the Workplace” within the context of empowering women leaders and bridging gender gaps in the healthcare sector. Moderated by Charity Kamau, Head of Programmes at the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF), the panelists—Dr. Margaret Lubaale, Dr. Daniel Monehin, Faith Muigai, and Thomas Mundia—provided valuable insights into the significance of mentorship, coaching, and allyship in fostering gender equality and supporting women’s leadership development.

Thomas Mundia initiated the discussion by distinguishing between coaching and mentoring, emphasizing the role of mentors as custodians of experience and coaches as facilitators of self-discovery through guided questioning. Dr. Margaret Lubaale highlighted the importance of effective communication skills for women and emphasized leveraging mentorship, coaching, and allyship to navigate workplace power dynamics successfully.

Faith Muigai emphasized collaborative networks and supportive structures for women in leadership, advocating for men to become active allies and sponsors in promoting gender equality. Dr. Daniel Monehin introduced the concept of “male allyship” and “sponsorship,” stressing the importance of men unlearning and relearning behaviors to effectively support women in leadership positions.

The session delved into key issues raised by participants, including the barriers women face in corporate leadership environments characterized by cutthroat competition, and the consensus on the need to upskill men and establish formal coaching and mentoring structures within

organizations. Discussions also addressed evolving gender dynamics in the workplace and the importance of addressing imposter syndrome and self-doubt among women.

The main takeaways from the session underscored the essential role of mentorship, coaching, and allyship as tools for empowering women leaders and bridging gender gaps. There was a call for men to actively engage as allies and sponsors to support gender equality initiatives and for organizations to embed coaching and mentoring in their development plans, fostering supportive cultures that enable women’s growth.

The session’s participants highlighted the need for formal policies against sexual harassment and the creation of supportive environments to protect women at all levels of leadership. Women were encouraged to proactively seek mentorship, engage in self-coaching, and develop their personal branding to advance their leadership journeys effectively.



The breakout session highlighted several emerging themes critical to empowering women leaders and advancing gender equality within the healthcare sector, emphasizing the transformative impact of mentorship, coaching, and allyship.

Holistic development emerged as a foundational theme, stressing the importance of integrating mentorship, coaching, and allyship into comprehensive development plans. By embracing these elements as integral components of professional growth, organizations can empower women leaders with the skills, support, and networks needed to succeed and thrive in leadership roles.

Male allyship was highlighted as a transformative force in advancing gender equality and supporting women's leadership aspirations. Recognizing the pivotal role men play as allies and sponsors, the session underscored the importance of engaging men in actively championing gender parity and fostering inclusive workplace cultures.

Organizational support was identified as essential for creating an enabling environment for women's professional growth. The discussion advocated for organizations to establish formal coaching and mentoring structures, along with fostering supportive cultures that nurture women's development and advancement within the healthcare sector.

Skill enhancement was emphasized as a critical aspect of promoting male allyship and sponsorship. Acknowledging the need to upskill men to effectively engage in supporting women's leadership journeys, the session highlighted the importance of providing resources and training to cultivate inclusive workplace behaviors and attitudes. Empowerment through networks was promoted as a strategy to facilitate women's advancement and overcome barriers in leadership. By promoting collaborative networks and supportive structures, organizations can empower women leaders to leverage collective resources,



share experiences, and navigate challenges, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable healthcare landscape.

In summary, these emerging themes highlight the holistic approach needed to empower women leaders and promote gender equality in healthcare settings. By embracing mentorship, coaching, and allyship within comprehensive development plans, engaging men as allies and sponsors, establishing formal organizational support structures, enhancing skills to promote inclusive behaviors, and fostering networks for empowerment, healthcare organizations can drive meaningful change towards a more equitable and inclusive future for women in leadership.

In conclusion, the breakout session underscored the imperative of mentorship, coaching, and allyship in cultivating inclusive and supportive workplaces where women can thrive as leaders. By embracing these principles and fostering organizational support, healthcare organizations can drive meaningful change towards gender equality and empower women to reach their full

2.3.3 DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATIONS

The breakout session centered on the imperative of developing inclusive workplace cultures within organizations, particularly focusing on gender dynamics and the critical role of leadership in fostering transformative change. Moderated by Dr. Ben Ngoye from Strathmore Business School, the panelists—CHRP Quresha Abdullahi, Dr. Joan Osoro-Mbui, and Sabina Saiti—offered valuable insights into historical challenges, infrastructural biases, and innovative approaches to promoting inclusivity and support for women leaders in healthcare and beyond.

This panel discussion generally underscored the pivotal importance of addressing workplace culture and inclusivity as fundamental drivers of progress in contemporary organizations. The discussion commenced with members of the panel sharing insights on historical challenges entrenched in achieving gender parity and the ongoing need to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities across various industries.

Highlighted during the proceeding was the infrastructural biases within organizations, such as repurposing lactating rooms to accommodate diverse needs, emphasizing the necessity of adapting spaces to support women’s specific requirements in the workplace. During the discussions, it was also brought out that there is a need for advocacy for leveraging male spousal support in healthcare leadership contexts, proposing innovative approaches to foster inclusivity and create a supportive environment for women leaders.

Key issues raised from the floor echoed the historical struggles to achieve gender parity within organizational structures, emphasizing the importance of balancing inclusion without perpetuating biases against any gender. Participants highlighted the pivotal role of leadership in nurturing inclusive workplace cultures characterized by empathy, equity, and support for individual experiences.

Challenges associated with implementing gender-responsive policies, garnering leadership support, and fostering a culture of accountability were discussed, along with broader considerations of cultural and religious factors influencing workplace dynamics.

The session emphasized the need to respect diverse beliefs while championing inclusivity. The main takeaways emphasized on a collective commitment to championing inclusive workplace cultures characterized by empathy, equity, and mutual respect. Participants emphasized the ongoing efforts to implement and refine gender-responsive policies, with a focus on leadership development and real-world impact assessment.

Facilitated discussions and workshops addressing cultural and religious sensitivities were proposed to foster mutual understanding and inclusivity within organizational frameworks, highlighting the importance of value-driven leadership development initiatives and leveraging male spousal support to normalize conversations surrounding challenges faced by women leaders.



The breakout session on developing inclusive workplace cultures within organizations unveiled several compelling emerging themes that underscored the critical importance of fostering diversity, equity, and support for women leaders in healthcare and organizational settings.

Adaptive infrastructure emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the need to repurpose spaces and facilities within organizations to accommodate diverse needs and support women's specific requirements. This includes reimagining lactating rooms and other workplace amenities to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all employees.

Leadership empathy was highlighted as essential for nurturing inclusive workplace cultures characterized by empathy, equity, and support for individual experiences. Effective leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for organizational inclusivity, fostering environments where diverse perspectives are valued and respected.

Innovative approaches to promoting inclusivity, such as leveraging male spousal support and proposing creative strategies, were emphasized during the session. By engaging allies and sponsors within and outside the workplace, organizations can create supportive environments that empower women leaders to thrive and succeed.

Cultural sensitivity emerged as a critical consideration, acknowledging broader cultural and religious factors that influence workplace dynamics. The session underscored the importance of respecting diverse beliefs while championing inclusivity, promoting mutual understanding and collaboration across different backgrounds.

Continuous improvement was highlighted as an ongoing commitment to implementing and refining gender-responsive policies and practices. Participants emphasized the need for continuous assessment and leadership development



initiatives to drive sustained progress towards fostering inclusive workplace cultures.

In summary, these emerging themes encapsulated the multifaceted nature of developing inclusive workplace cultures that prioritize diversity, equity, and support for women leaders. By embracing adaptive infrastructure, empathetic leadership, innovative approaches, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to continuous improvement, organizations can create environments where all employees feel valued, empowered, and able to contribute their best towards organizational success and societal progress.

2.3.4 Enhancing leadership support for gender inclusion

The breakout session centered on enhancing leadership support for gender inclusion in healthcare, focusing on policies that recognize and value women's contributions while supporting their growth into leadership positions. Moderated by Dr. Benson Mutuku, the panelists—Violet Muthigu, Dr. Muthoni Ntonjira, and Dr. Renson Murima—provided comprehensive insights into systemic challenges and advocated for gender inclusivity in healthcare leadership.

Violet Muthigu highlighted the ongoing struggle for adequate women representation in society, emphasizing the need to actualize the 2/3 gender rule. She discussed shifts in community health roles due to remuneration changes and advocated for diversity and inclusion within healthcare systems. Muthigu also stressed the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes and maintaining professionalism when engaging with male allies.

Dr. Muthoni Ntonjira urged women leaders to overcome the "only woman" mentality and create opportunities for more women in leadership. She encouraged women to seek support, be open to opportunities, and build strong support networks. Ntonjira emphasized the significance of self-belief and the need for meaningful male allyship in advancing gender inclusion.

Dr. Renson Murima advocated for strategic approaches in women's leadership and policy considerations to support women in leadership positions. He highlighted the importance of addressing gender violence and promoting gender mainstreaming in healthcare workplaces. Murima also encouraged women to embrace personal growth and avoid dwelling on past mistakes.

Key issues raised from the floor included concerns about the influx of men into previously female-dominated roles in healthcare due to

remuneration changes, calls for critical policy considerations to support women's leadership, and addressing gender violence in healthcare settings. There was an emphasis on the need for systems and structures to promote gender mainstreaming and create supportive environments for women.

The main takeaways underscored that women leaders should challenge stereotypes, advocate for gender inclusivity, and support other women in their leadership journeys. Women were encouraged to seek support, embrace opportunities, and believe in themselves to excel in leadership roles. There was an urgent need for policy interventions to address gender violence and promote gender mainstreaming in healthcare workplaces. Building strong support networks and creating conducive environments for women's professional growth and development were deemed essential.



2.4 Emerging Themes:

Policy-Driven Inclusion emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the importance of critical policy interventions to support women's leadership and address systemic challenges such as gender violence and gender mainstreaming in healthcare workplaces. Policies that recognize and value women's contributions are fundamental to fostering an inclusive environment.

Empowerment through Networks: the session highlighted the significance of building strong support networks for women. Creating opportunities for mentorship, collaboration, and support among women in leadership positions is crucial for professional growth and development.

Strategic Leadership Development emphasized the need for strategic approaches in nurturing women's leadership. This involves creating pathways for women to assume leadership roles, advocating for the 2/3 gender rule, and promoting diversity and inclusion within healthcare systems.

Male Allyship and Advocacy underscored the transformative role of male allies in supporting gender inclusion. Meaningful male allyship and advocacy are essential for advancing women's leadership and ensuring equitable representation in decision-making processes.

Resilience and Self-Belief: The conference focused on encouraging women to overcome self-doubt, embrace personal growth, and build self-belief. Women leaders were urged to challenge the "only woman" mentality and create opportunities for more women to succeed in leadership roles.

In summary, the session highlighted the multifaceted approach required to enhance leadership support for gender inclusion in healthcare. By prioritizing policy-driven inclusion, fostering empowerment through networks, developing strategic leadership pathways, promoting male allyship, and encouraging resilience and self-belief among women leaders, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women's professional growth and leadership advancement.

3. REITERATING AND DEVELOPING THE CASE FOR WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP IN KENYA: ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

Women's representation in healthcare leadership positions remains a critical yet underexplored aspect in Kenya's healthcare landscape. Despite strides towards gender equality, barriers persist, hindering women's advancement into leadership roles within the healthcare sector. This report aims to reiterate the importance of addressing these challenges while exploring both enablers and barriers to women's leadership in Kenyan healthcare.

3.1 Contextualization:

In recent years, initiatives such as conferences and panel discussions, exemplified by the collaboration between Strathmore University Business School (SBS) and the Kenya Health Federation (KHF), have shed light on the significance of gender inclusivity in healthcare leadership. Such platforms have provided opportunities to dissect the intricate nuances of fostering an inclusive workplace culture, acknowledging gender dynamics and their impact on organizational settings.

3.2 Enablers:

Advocacy and Awareness: Initiatives aimed at inspiring inclusion and empowering women, such as the 'Inspire Inclusion' conference aligned with International Women's Day, have catalyzed advocacy efforts. These platforms facilitate dialogue, raise awareness, and inspire the next generation of women leaders in healthcare.

Mentorship and Coaching: Mentorship and coaching programs play a pivotal role in nurturing women's leadership potential. By providing guidance, support, and skill development opportunities, these initiatives empower women to navigate the complexities of leadership roles effectively.

Male Allies and Sponsorship: The emergence of male allies and sponsors in discussions about women empowerment signals a shift towards collaborative efforts. Men can play crucial roles in supporting gender equality by advocating for women's advancement and actively sponsoring them for leadership opportunities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Acknowledging and respecting cultural and religious considerations fosters an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued. By integrating cultural sensitivity into organizational frameworks, healthcare institutions can create spaces conducive to women's leadership development.

Value-Driven Leadership: A paradigm shift towards value-driven leadership emphasizes the importance of instilling values such as empathy, integrity, and compassion alongside professional growth. By prioritizing these values, healthcare organizations can cultivate inclusive cultures that empower women leaders.

3.3 Barriers:

Structural Biases: Inherent infrastructural biases within organizational settings, as exemplified by the provision of lactating rooms, underscore systemic challenges. Addressing these biases requires proactive measures to repurpose existing spaces and accommodate diverse needs effectively.

Gender Stereotypes and Bias: Pervasive gender stereotypes and biases entrenched in traditional male-dominated frameworks pose significant barriers to women's advancement. Overcoming these challenges necessitates concerted efforts to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities, transcending gender norms and biases.

Lack of Formal Structures: Many organizations lack formal structures to embed coaching and mentoring in their staff development plans. Without robust support systems in place, women may face barriers in accessing leadership opportunities and advancing their careers.

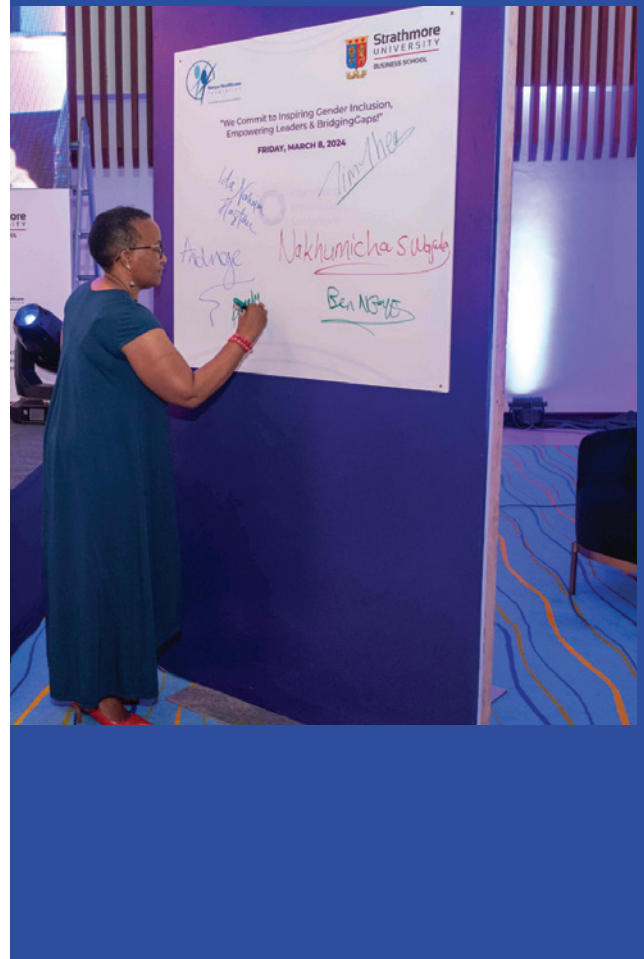
Cultural and Religious Norms: Deep-rooted cultural and religious norms can perpetuate gender inequalities, particularly in conservative societies. Overcoming these barriers requires strategies that respect diverse beliefs while championing inclusivity and diversity within organizational frameworks.

Self-Doubt and Imposter Syndrome: Women's tendency to second-guess themselves and experience imposter syndrome can undermine their confidence and hinder their career progression. Combatting these internal barriers necessitates fostering environments that validate women's experiences and empower them to embrace their leadership potential.

4. CALL TO ACTION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The call to action and future directions for advancing women in healthcare leadership in Kenya are grounded in a comprehensive approach aimed at achieving tangible progress towards gender equality and empowerment. To initiate transformative change, there is a pressing need to advocate for the implementation of robust gender equality policies within healthcare institutions across the country. These policies should encompass specific measures addressing gender disparities in leadership roles, equitable pay structures, and provisions for work-life balance.

Advancing gender equality and empowering women in healthcare leadership requires a comprehensive call to action and strategic future directions. The International Women's Day event hosted by the Kenya Healthcare Federation (KHF) and Strathmore Business School (SBS) served as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and collaboration towards this goal. There is a pressing need to advocate for the implementation of comprehensive gender equality policies within healthcare institutions across Kenya. These policies should address gender disparities in leadership positions, ensure equal pay for equal work, and support work-life balance initiatives. This aligns with global efforts to promote gender equality in healthcare leadership. Secondly, capacity-building and mentorship programs tailored to women in healthcare leadership are essential. Such initiatives focus on leadership development, networking, and skills enhancement to empower women professionals. Capacity-building and mentorship programs tailored to women in healthcare leadership play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality and empowering women professionals within the healthcare sector. These initiatives are specifically designed to address the unique challenges and obstacles that women encounter as they strive to advance their careers and assume leadership



positions. By focusing on leadership development, networking, and skills enhancement, these programs aim to equip women with the necessary tools and support to succeed in healthcare leadership roles.

Institutional change is crucial, with a focus on institutionalizing gender-responsive practices within healthcare organizations. This includes promoting flexible work arrangements, providing childcare support, and implementing family-friendly policies to create supportive environments for women. Institutional change focused on gender-responsive practices within healthcare organizations is essential for advancing gender equality, promoting women's leadership, and creating inclusive workplaces. By implementing flexible work arrangements, providing childcare support, implementing family-friendly policies, addressing biases, and establishing accountability mechanisms, healthcare organizations can foster supportive environments where women professionals can succeed and excel. Additionally, institutional change involves establishing accountability

mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress in gender equality initiatives. Healthcare organizations can set specific targets for gender representation in leadership positions, track outcomes, and regularly assess the effectiveness of gender-responsive practices.

Advocacy for male allyship and cultural shifts is imperative to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Encouraging the active involvement of male allies can foster an inclusive culture that embraces diversity and gender parity. Advocacy for male allyship and cultural shifts is essential for challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes, promoting gender parity, and fostering inclusive environments. By encouraging the active involvement of male allies and promoting cultural change, the healthcare space in Kenya can accelerate progress towards achieving gender equality and creating a more equitable society. Encouraging male involvement in advocating for gender equality helps shift societal norms and perceptions. When men actively support gender equality, they contribute to dismantling the barriers that hinder women's advancement in various sectors, including healthcare leadership. Male allies can use their privilege and influence to advocate for policy changes, workplace reforms, and cultural shifts that promote gender parity and inclusivity. Moreover, fostering an inclusive culture that embraces diversity requires collective efforts from both men and women. Male allies can participate in initiatives such as mentorship programs, leadership development workshops, and diversity training to enhance their understanding of gender issues and promote inclusive practices within their spheres of influence.

Collaborative partnerships and networking among academia, government agencies, healthcare organizations, and civil society are vital. These partnerships facilitate knowledge-sharing, resource mobilization, and collective action to advance gender equality in healthcare leadership. Collaborative partnerships and networking among academia, government agencies, healthcare

organizations, and civil society are essential for advancing gender equality in healthcare leadership. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, sharing resources, and aligning efforts, stakeholders can collectively address gender disparities, promote women's empowerment, and create inclusive environments where women thrive as leaders in healthcare.

Academia serves as a critical hub for generating knowledge and conducting research on gender disparities and leadership dynamics in healthcare. Collaborative partnerships with academic institutions enable the development of evidence-based strategies and policies to address gender inequalities and promote women's leadership. Through joint research projects, conferences, and training programs, academia contributes valuable insights to inform gender-responsive practices within healthcare organizations. Government agencies also play a key role in promoting gender equality through policy development and advocacy. Collaborative partnerships between healthcare organizations and government entities facilitate policy dialogue, capacity-building initiatives, and the implementation of gender-responsive regulations. By working together, stakeholders can influence systemic change and create an enabling environment for women's leadership in healthcare.

Furthermore, partnerships with healthcare organizations are essential for translating research into action and implementing gender-responsive practices. These partnerships enable the sharing of best practices, mentorship programs, and professional development opportunities tailored to women leaders in healthcare. By leveraging industry expertise and resources, healthcare organizations can champion inclusive policies and initiatives that support women's career advancement and leadership aspirations. Civil society organizations contribute to the advancement of gender equality by advocating for women's

rights, providing support services, and mobilizing communities for collective action. Collaborative partnerships with civil society enable healthcare organizations to engage with diverse stakeholders, amplify advocacy efforts, and address systemic barriers to women's leadership. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, these partnerships drive sustainable change and promote gender-inclusive practices across the healthcare sector.

In conclusion, the call to action and future directions outlined for women in healthcare leadership in Kenya represent a significant opportunity to drive meaningful change and

advance gender equality in the healthcare sector. By focusing on capacity-building, institutional change, advocacy for male allyship, and collaborative partnerships, stakeholders can collectively contribute to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering inclusive environments where women can thrive. Moving forward, it is crucial for stakeholders to remain committed to these action-oriented strategies and initiatives. By aligning efforts, leveraging resources, and sustaining momentum, we can collectively advance the agenda of women in healthcare leadership, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive healthcare sector in Kenya.

5. EVALUTATION OF THE CONFERENCE ACHIEVEMENTS VIS A VIS THE DESIRED OUTCOMES

The International Women's Day conference aimed to achieve several key outcomes centered around empowering women in leadership roles, advocating for gender equality, and fostering transformative change within healthcare organizations. This evaluation assesses the achievements of the conference in relation to its desired outcomes.

One of the primary goals of the conference was to empower women in leadership positions. This objective was successfully met through various sessions that provided platforms for sharing experiences, challenges, and success stories. Panelists like Dr. Jackline Kitulu and Dr. Elizabeth Itotia shared practical insights on scaling the leadership ladder, emphasizing the importance of mentorship, courage, and continuous improvement. Attendees gained valuable guidance on navigating leadership roles, overcoming barriers, and advocating for gender parity in healthcare settings.

Another key outcome was to advocate for gender equality within the healthcare sector. The conference facilitated discussions on policy advocacy and workplace inclusivity. Panelists highlighted the importance of gender-responsive policies, male allyship, and organizational diversity. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers hindering gender equality and explored strategies to promote inclusivity and diversity in healthcare organizations.

The conference also aimed to foster transformative change within healthcare organizations. Key discussions revolved around transformative leadership, cultural shifts, and policy influence. Panelists like Norah Obudho emphasized the need for transformative leadership and continuous learning. Attendees were inspired to drive transformative change within their organizations, challenging stereotypes and fostering cultures that support women's advancement.

The conference successfully achieved its objectives by equipping attendees with actionable insights, tools, and strategies to advance women's leadership in healthcare. The panel discussions, keynote speeches, and networking opportunities created a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Overall, the conference on women's leadership in healthcare was a significant step towards

advancing gender equality and empowering women leaders. The achievements reflect a collective commitment to driving transformative change and fostering inclusive healthcare environments. Moving forward, it's essential to sustain momentum and translate conference outcomes into impactful actions that promote women's leadership and gender parity in the healthcare sector.

6. CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, there are several key learnings and recommendations arising from the conference.

Firstly, sustained advocacy efforts are essential to drive policy changes and promote gender equality in healthcare organizations. Secondly, establishing formal mentorship programs can further empower women leaders and facilitate knowledge transfer. Thirdly, it's crucial to encourage organizations to translate conference insights into tangible actions, such as implementing gender-responsive policies and fostering inclusive workplace cultures. Lastly, extending conference outcomes to broader community engagement initiatives can encourage grassroots organizations to champion women's leadership and gender equality.

In conclusion, the case for women in healthcare leadership in Kenya requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both enablers and barriers. Advocacy, mentorship, male allies, cultural sensitivity, and value-driven leadership serve as catalysts for women's advancement, while structural biases, gender stereotypes, lack of formal structures, cultural norms, and self-doubt pose significant challenges. By acknowledging

these complexities and implementing targeted interventions, Kenya can pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable healthcare leadership landscape, where women are empowered to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of healthcare delivery.

The International Women's Day event held on March 8th, hosted by the Kenya Health Federation (KHF) in collaboration with Strathmore University Business School (SBS), stands as a testament to the power of collective action and advocacy in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. As the curtains draw on this momentous occasion, it is imperative to reflect on the key highlights, outcomes, and future implications of this impactful gathering.

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8. APPENDICES

IWD Conference booklet



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