



**Fostering Mentorship and Conversation Across Generations in Kenya with the Purpose of Strengthening Women's Empowerment**

**A Policy Brief**

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect those of CRAWN Trust and its partners.

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## Executive Summary

In this policy brief, a strategic approach to bolstering women's empowerment in Kenya is outlined through the facilitation of cross-generational mentorship and dialogue. The brief is rooted in harnessing the accumulated knowledge of individuals across various age groups, encouraging the fostering of conversations that span generations. This approach creates a valuable avenue for seasoned women to impart their wisdom and motivate their younger peers. The central focus of this policy brief centers on investigating the potential of this mentoring dynamic to catalyze comprehensive growth and advancement for women, thus nurturing gender equality and ensuring sustainable empowerment over the long term.

This mentoring dynamic, as demonstrated, has the ability to drive profound growth and advancement for women. By implementing well-informed mentorship strategies, the proposition is to create a dynamic platform that fosters shared insights, collaborative problem-solving, and the establishment of a resilient foundation to support ongoing progress in women's empowerment across Kenya. The essence of this strategic framework lies in facilitating cross-generational mentorship and dialogue, which in turn serves as a potent catalyst for enhancing women's empowerment. This strategic blueprint is expounded further in this brief, underscoring the significance of tapping into the diverse knowledge base of individuals of varying ages and fostering intergenerational exchanges. Ultimately, this approach empowers experienced women to guide and inspire their younger counterparts, propelling comprehensive growth and advancement among women. Through this policy brief, the call to establish a vibrant platform that encourages shared insights and collaborative problem-solving stands as a cornerstone for sustaining the continuous progression of women's empowerment throughout Kenya.

## Introduction

The recognition that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary precondition for the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development has driven the advancement of women's empowerment as a pivotal goal on the global development agenda. This recognition is driven by the fact that women's empowerment is a necessary precondition for achieving sustainable and inclusive development. The elimination of gender inequalities and the advancement of women's rights continue to present formidable obstacles in the context of Kenya, as they do in many other regions of the world. The promotion of mentorship and intergenerational conversation among women is one strategic approach that has gained a significant amount of traction in recent years. Kenya, with its richly varied cultural fabric and constantly shifting socioeconomic landscape, is currently observing a transformative journey toward the empowerment of women.

One of the most promising ways to propel forward progress is to make use of the potential that is inherent in the concept of harnessing the experiences, knowledge, and wisdom of different generations of women. This policy brief delves into the significance, benefits, and mechanisms of fostering mentorship and cross-generational dialogue to strengthen women's empowerment across a variety of spheres of life. This is in recognition of the power that mentorship and cross-generational dialogue possess.

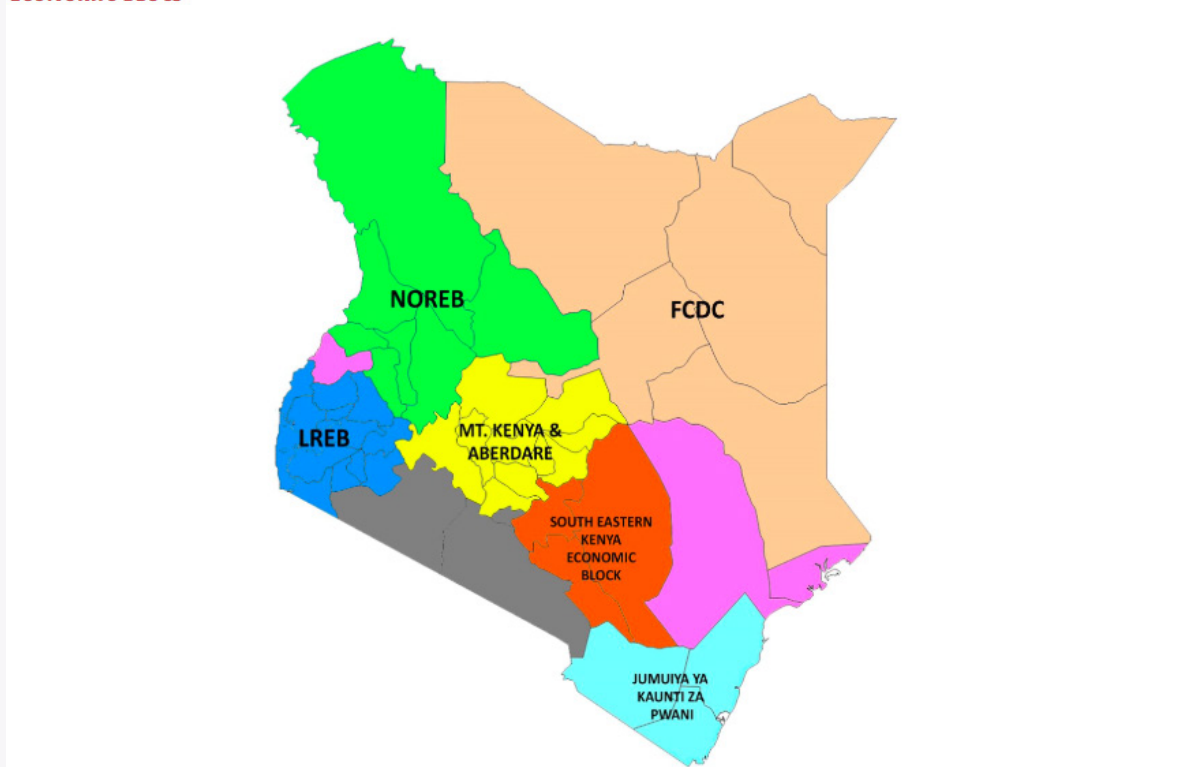
The purpose of this policy brief is to investigate the dynamic interplay between mentorship and intergenerational conversations as potential drivers for the advancement of women's empowerment in Kenya. This brief aims to provide insights into how various strategies can contribute to the removal of barriers, the enhancement of leadership opportunities, and the cultivation of an environment that is supportive of women at every stage of their lives by examining the evolving role of mentorship and the value of cross-generational exchanges. The brief delves further into the potential policy interventions, institutional frameworks, and collaborative approaches that can enhance the impact of mentorship and intergenerational dialogue on women's empowerment in Kenya.

Specifically, it focuses on the situation in Kenya. This policy brief serves as a call to action for policymakers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to harness the untapped potential of mentorship and cross-generational conversations. This call to action is based on a comprehensive analysis of existing research, case studies, and expert insights. The purpose of this brief is to contribute to the realization of a more equitable and empowered society in Kenya, one in which women of all ages are enabled to thrive and make meaningful contributions to both their communities and the nation. This will be accomplished by advocating for the integration of these strategies into larger gender empowerment initiatives.

The impact of mentoring in Kenya has the potential to reverberate across regional economic blocs and have a transformative effect on a variety of different fronts. The transfer of knowledge, skills, and best practices to Kenyan business leaders and entrepreneurs who are receiving mentorship enables them to become more empowered to foster the growth of the entrepreneurial sector. This growth translates into improved trade and investment capabilities, which in turn propel Kenyan businesses to compete more effectively within the economic blocs of the region. In addition, the inherent opportunities for networking that come with mentoring make it possible for cross-border collaborations to take place, which in turn contributes to broader economic partnerships and alliances. The impact is felt beyond the scope of individual companies, as mentees who are successful go on to become advocates for policies that are growth friendly.

As a result, the economic landscape is shaped not only in Kenya but also throughout the region. In addition, the cultural exchange that naturally occurs within the context of mentoring makes it possible for various nations to better understand one another and work together, which helps to cultivate a spirit of cooperation within regional economic blocs. As the influence of mentoring extends across generations and national boundaries, the role that mentoring plays in the dissemination of knowledge further solidifies its standing as a driver of economic progress across the entirety of the regional context.

#### ECONOMIC BLOCS



Source: The Kenyan Wall Street

## Challenge

Intergenerational mentoring programs hold a great deal of promise, but there are a few obstacles that prevent them from having their full impact. According to Wawire et al.'s research from 2021, a primary barrier that restricts outreach and compromises the quality of mentorship is a lack of funding. It is essential to ensure strong connections between mentors and mentees; however, misaligned expectations and limited availability on the part of mentors can weaken relationships (Muthee et al., 2018). In addition, differences in cultures make it more difficult to comprehend one another and make it essential to foster empathy between different generations (Kioko et al., 2019). According to Mbeche et al. (2019), factors like limited rural access, inadequate infrastructure, and limited internet availability can hinder participation. Furthermore, ageist stereotypes present a barrier to inclusivity (Ong, 2017).

Deep-rooted cultural norms and gender stereotypes can be barriers to facilitating open and meaningful conversations between different generations, in some cultures the younger generations may not be able to freely express their opinions because of hierarchical cultural norms, which is likely to occur in the presence of older generations. The older and younger generations also tend to communicate in different ways, use different languages, and have varying levels of technological literacy. These differences can impede effective communication and understanding. There is a possibility that misunderstandings will arise because of poor communication, which can impede the natural progression of meaningful conversation.

Another challenge might be the usage of technology. Although technology has the potential to improve communication, it also has the potential to widen generational gaps. The older generation are likely to have a lower level of familiarity with various digital platforms, their participation in online conversations and mentoring programs may be hindered as a result. This can lead to resistance to change as there is a possibility that older generations might be resistant to adopting new ideas or perspectives, and hence limit the effectiveness of efforts to mentor younger generations. If younger generations believe that older mentors are out of touch with the realities of the modern world, they may be reluctant to accept the guidance that these individuals have to offer.

There is a risk that certain cross-generational initiatives will, unintentionally, exclude underrepresented groups, thereby further entrenching existing inequalities. To have a meaningful conversation, it is essential to guarantee that all individuals have equal opportunities to participate. It's possible that younger people will question the relevance of the advice and direction offered by older generations, given the rapid pace of change in the socioeconomic and technological landscapes. which can restrict the breadth of topics discussed and the number of mentoring opportunities available.

# Key Findings

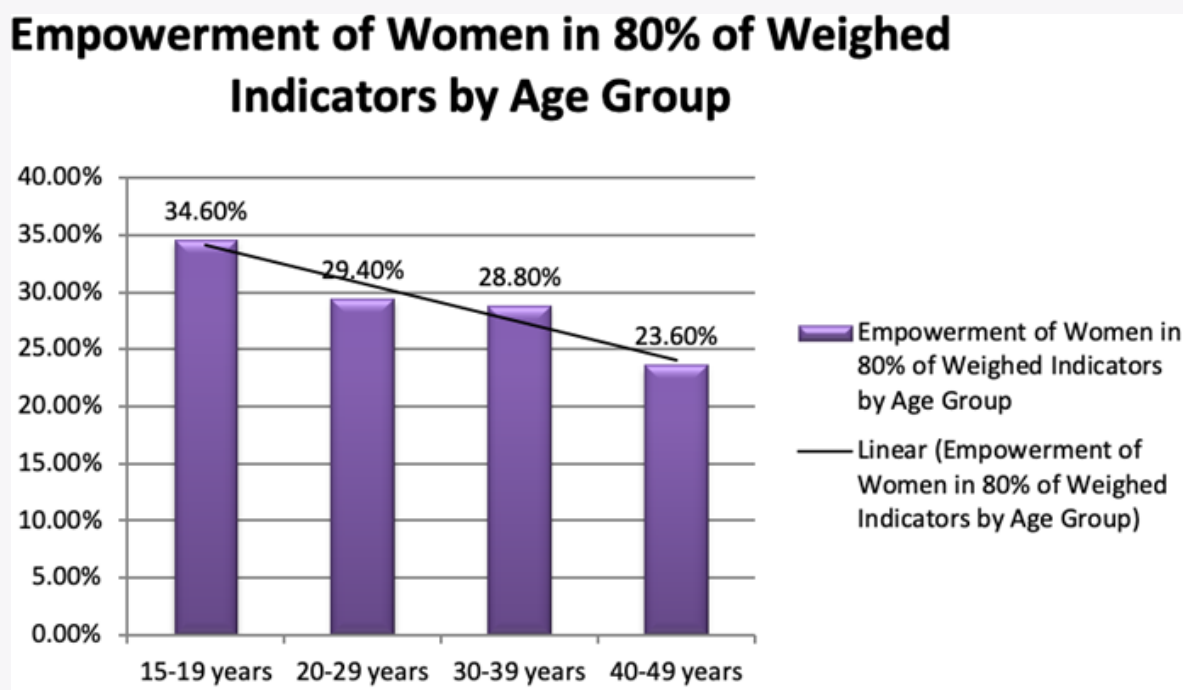
**Comprehending the Role of Intergenerational Mentorship and Conversation** Mentorship and dialogue across generations allow women of different ages to share their wisdom, expertise, and life experiences with one another. It fosters an atmosphere of camaraderie among women of varying ages and stages of life by fostering an atmosphere that encourages mutual learning and growth. Mentorship programs that span multiple generations can play a catalytic role in the growth and development of young people by fostering important characteristics such as self-confidence, decision-making skills, and the acquisition of new skills. Studies such as the one conducted by Thompson and Johnson (2018) have confirmed that these types of programs have the potential to instill increased levels of self-esteem and self-assurance in young people. In addition, Roberts et al. (2019) found that the mentorship dynamic is associated with improved decision-making as well as motivation. The importance of acquiring new information and skills through these programs is brought into sharper focus by the research carried out by Green et al. (2021).

**Generational Dynamics and Perceived Benefits** whereby older women gain new perspectives and cutting-edge ideas from younger women, while older women provide younger women with access to the accumulated knowledge and experience of previous generations. These interactions encourage resiliency, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging, all of which ultimately contribute to women's empowerment on a more holistic level. Mentorship programs that span multiple generations break down the traditional barriers that have traditionally existed between the sexes, thereby actively challenging the norms that have been established and fostering social cohesion. These initiatives serve as platforms for fostering relationships, enhancing empathy, and working together to address community issues. In their research, Anderson, and Davis (2018) and Johnson and Martinez (2019) demonstrate how the development of empathy and collaborative problem-solving within communities can be fostered using mentorship programs. These findings are bolstered by the utilization of a variety of research approaches.

**Cultural Influence** is dynamic in Kenya as interactions between people of different generations serve as a conduit for the transmission of accumulated knowledge, morals, and lessons drawn from the abundant and varied cultural traditions of the nation. Cultural practices such as "Kiama," "Kaya elders," and "Njuri Ncheke" all play significant roles as traditional mentorship platforms, acting as conduits for the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. For example, the term "Kiama" refers to a community get-together at which more experienced community members share their knowledge, experience, and advice with those who are younger in age. This routine not only teaches useful skills, but it also instills a sense of identity and a sense of belonging in its participants. Similarly, "Kaya elders" and "Njuri Ncheke" fulfill similar roles within specific ethnic groups, fostering respect for tradition while equipping the youth with the tools necessary to navigate the challenges of contemporary life. Similarly, "Kaya elders" and "Njuri Ncheke" fulfill similar roles within specific ethnic groups.

This activity demonstrates the continued importance of cultural mentorship mechanisms, as younger generations continue to place a high value on the experiences and knowledge that their elders have to offer. Heritage is protected by this cultural continuity, which also guarantees that age-old wisdom will continue to thrive and be relevant in the context of modern life. The government’s support of these time-honored practices of mentoring demonstrates a keen awareness of the mutual enrichment that can result from the intersection of cultural heritage and societal advancement. The adaptation of Njuri Ncheke’s focus from traditional rituals to the realm of agricultural practices is a prime example of this synergy. By doing so, Njuri Ncheke was able to align age-old wisdom with contemporary challenges faced in the agricultural industry. This dynamic approach emphasizes the compatibility of cultural practices with modern needs while also highlighting the evolution of tradition without compromising the tradition’s essential nature.

**Overcoming Challenges and Bridging Gaps** such as mentorship programs that promote active listening and open dialogue, can address generational biases. Creating safe spaces for discussions where both older and younger women feel valued and heard can help bridge gaps. A recent study conducted by The Youth Café on measuring *Women Empowerment Index, Perspectives, Uplifting women*, shows the differences in empowerment by age, looking at the following indicators - Gender Norms, Media, Decision-Making, Sexual Autonomy, Economic Empowerment.



Source: The Youth Cafe

Younger women are more empowered than older women considering these statistics. The linear progression shown indicates that those women over 40 in age are significantly less empowered than those between 15 and 19 years. This difference can be explained through the historical progression of Kenya. Older women did not have the quality of education that younger women have today. Education is a significant factor since it influences



several indicators in the WEI. Less education means limited economic opportunities, which also lead to an overreliance on men, who were prioritized in the past.

**Role of Education and Institutions** play a critical part in the process of fostering interactions between different generations. Educational institutions can provide young women with valuable guidance and insights if they incorporate mentorship components into their curricula and organize workshops that encourage intergenerational collaboration. In addition to this, it is essential to make use of digital platforms and modern technology. Virtual mentorship networks and other digital initiatives offer easily accessible avenues for barriers and different generations of women to connect with one another. This enables mentorship opportunities that transcend geographical barriers, making mentorship accessible to women even in rural areas.

**Policy and Legislative Framework** in Kenya is a vitally important cornerstone in the process of reshaping the societal landscape in the direction of inclusivity and empowerment. Kenya is home to policies that highlight the significance of gender equality and women's active participation in a variety of spheres. These policies are an acknowledgment of the pivotal role that women play in driving the progress of the nation. However, to take advantage of the full potential of these policies and to make certain that an all-encompassing approach is taken to empowerment, it is imperative that the scope of these policies be expanded so that it includes intergenerational mentorship and dialogue.

Policies have the potential to produce a more formalized framework for the purpose of facilitating interactions between people of different generations if they include provisions that expressly endorse and promote intergenerational mentorship. These kinds of provisions can encourage institutions, both educational and business, to incorporate mentorship components into their educational programs and organizational structures.

An environment in which seasoned professionals, particularly women, are encouraged to invest their knowledge and insights in younger generations can be fostered by legislative support for mentorship. This proactive exchange of experience goes beyond the bounds of traditional gender roles and is in line with the larger concept of constructing a society that shares knowledge. In addition to this, the incorporation of intergenerational mentoring into the realm of policy helps raise awareness of its importance and garner recognition of its value. It makes it abundantly clear that mentoring is not merely a haphazard activity but rather an indispensable instrument for developing leaders and promoting personal development. It strengthens the credibility of mentorship and highlights the contribution it makes to the larger empowerment agenda when the legal framework is used to create a place for mentorship.

The inclusion of intergenerational conversation within the framework of policy considerations has the potential to further enrich the environment. Policies can encourage platforms for candid discussions that bridge gaps in understanding, beliefs, and aspirations if they recognize the significance of conversations between generations and do so in a way

that encourages candid conversations. This strategy is consistent with the concept of holistic empowerment, which emphasizes not merely concentrating on one age group or industry but rather combining the knowledge gained from years of experience with the vitality of younger generations to advance all aspects of society.

## Recommendations

**Contextual Mentorship** whereby stakeholders need to collaborate towards establishing context-specific mentorship programs that address cultural nuances and unique regional challenges. Recognizing the diversity of Kenyan communities can be effectively achieved when mentorship initiatives are tailored to specific contexts. Collaborative efforts will ensure that mentorship programs resonate with local traditions, needs, and challenges, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact.

**Technology Integration** is imperative to prioritize the integration of technology to promote mentorship accessibility and overcome geographical barriers. Given Kenya's rapidly advancing technological landscape, incorporating digital platforms will expand the reach of mentorship initiatives, ensuring participation even in remote areas. Technology bridges geographical divides, enabling mentorship beyond physical constraints.

**Inclusivity and Diversity** to be enhanced through development of mentorship programs that are welcoming to all individuals, irrespective of age, gender, ability or background. Ensuring inclusivity and diversity in mentorship initiatives will foster a more comprehensive and representative dialogue. In turn, creating an environment that respects and values individual differences for the programs to provide a holistic and enriching experience for all participants.

**Partnerships for Sustainability** between government, NGOs, and stakeholders will serve to enhance the financial and operational sustainability of mentorship programs. Collaborative alliances enhance the longevity of mentorship programs by pooling resources, expertise, and knowledge. A more comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing financial and operational challenges will be ensured if diverse stakeholders are engaged.

**Gender Championing** incorporating the promotion of male mentors to champion gender equality and encourage inclusive dialogue and mentorship acknowledges that gender equality is a collective responsibility. Incorporation of male mentors who actively advocate for inclusivity and equality within mentorship programs will help challenge traditional gender norms and foster more inclusive intergenerational dialogues.

**Collaborative Planning and Strategy Development** by engaging relevant government ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Development, to establish a multi-sectoral approach supporting intergenerational mentorship initiatives and, collaborate with civil societies with expertise in women's empowerment, youth

development, and mentorship to facilitate knowledge-sharing and resource pooling.

**Contextual Mentorship Program Development** by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment in various regions to identify unique challenges and opportunities related to intergenerational mentorship for women. There is a need to design mentorship programs tailored to the cultural, economic, and social contexts of each region, considering traditional practices and modern needs. Develop mentorship curricula that address regional-specific challenges, fostering inclusivity and gender equality.

**Technology Integration and Accessibility** with technology organizations to establish digital platforms and tools that facilitate online mentorship interactions. There is a need to provide training for mentors, mentees, and facilitators on effectively using technology for mentorship, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Ensure offline options are available for participants who lack internet access, especially in remote areas.

**Mentorship Program Sustainability** by identifying diverse funding sources, including government grants, corporate partnerships, and philanthropic organizations. Alongside this, the development of income-generation models within mentorship programs ensures financial sustainability, such as mentorship-linked entrepreneurship initiatives, as this results in investing in mentor and mentee capacity-building programs to enhance skills and ensure program longevity.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** mechanisms by defining clear indicators to measure the impact of mentorship programs, including empowerment levels, knowledge acquisition, and community engagement. By establishing a regular assessment schedule to monitor program effectiveness, this provides opportunities for continuous improvement and mechanisms for mentors and mentees to provide feedback on the program's strengths and areas for enhancement.

**Pilot Programs and Scaling** in selected regions to test the effectiveness of recommended strategies and make necessary adjustments. Regularly assess pilot program outcomes and adapt strategies based on lessons learned to ensure optimal impact. Upon successful pilot outcomes, scale up mentorship programs to reach a wider audience, incorporating best practices and insights gained from the pilot phase.

**Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration** by organizing cross-regional conferences and workshops to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and best practice exchange among different mentorship initiatives. Encourage the establishment of mentorship circles within regional blocs, fostering peer support and cross-rational collaboration. Create reporting mechanisms for organizations involved to share progress, challenges, and successes, fostering accountability and collective learning.

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