



## **PRESS STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> EAC GENDER BAROMETER AT HOTEL AFRICANA ON 3<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2017**

The East African Community (EAC) is an inter-Governmental organization of six Partner States namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. The Treaty for the establishment of the EAC was signed on November 30th, 1999 and came into force on July 7th, 2000. Articles 5, 3 (e); 6 (d); 121 and 122 of the Treaty highlight gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights as one of the fundamental principles that will govern the EAC integration process.

In 2017, a groundbreaking achievement for the EAC was realized, as for the first time in history, the Community has got a legal instrument that promotes Gender Equality, the EAC Gender Equality and Development bill which was tabled at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) as a private members bill and later passed by the same body on 8th March 2017. The bill now awaits assent by the heads of state of the EAC Partner States for it to become a legally binding instrument dubbed the East African Gender Equality and Development Act. To fast track implementation of this bill, the first ever EAC Gender Barometer has been produced.

The EAC Gender Barometer has been produced by the Eastern African Sub Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI in partnership with Profemmes Twesse Hamwe in Rwanda, CAFOB in Burundi, Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) in Tanzania, Women Rights' Awareness Programme (WRAP) in Kenya and National Association of Women's Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU) in Uganda.

The EAC Gender Barometer is a researched consolidated report from the 5 EAC partner states of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi that contains information and statistical data from the different areas that need to be gender balanced. These areas include Legal and State Obligations to Protect Human Rights, Gender Based Violence, the Media, Education, health, Power and decision making, Economic Empowerment, Agriculture and food security, Land rights, Trade, Peace and security, Environment Management, Extractive Industries and Marginalized groups.

The Pilot EAC Gender Barometer is intended to serve as a participatory measurement tool to support substantive implementation and hence gender responsive governance. It sets in motion a process by which the EAC will periodically monitor, measure and document the progress of gender equality in key result areas and thereby facilitate a regional conversation on strategies for enhancement of substantive gender equality and sustainable development.

Lack of Gender disaggregated data has remained an impediment to implementation and achievement of gender equality commitments by the EAC Partner states. The Barometer will

now provide quality evidence based data on gender equality that will help in holding the governments accountable on gender and development.

The current overarching consensus and global framework for action on women's rights strongly emphasizes the significance of political will by governments to implement the regional and global gender obligations they have subscribed to. This stems from the realization that governments have broader legitimacy and other critical resources to support change in society. Governments in general have the command to generate political power, to effect change that would otherwise be extremely difficult to realize. Hence it is important to measure how well EAC governments are utilizing their generative potential to enhance sustainable change and thereby achieve gender equality. This is the spirit of this pilot EAC Gender Barometer and the subsequent ones.

The Barometer that is going to be an annual document, will be measured against 13 critical gender areas in the EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill. Once assented to, the Act consequently seeks to consolidate and harmonize the various commitments on gender equality that have been made at regional, continental and international levels in the context of the East African Community, so as to ensure that the rights of women and men are uniformly promoted, realized and protected in order to enable them to equally and fully enjoy all their human rights on an equal basis with men.

The Pilot EAC Gender Barometer shows that big strides have been taken by EAC in advancing gender equality but implementation mechanisms towards achievement of gender equality commitments are still weak.

For example, EAC countries have in place various mechanisms for response to GBV in terms of prevention and redress, but with the exception of Burundi, the citizens' perceptions on GBV reflects a discrepancy between the existence of laws and their implementation. The challenge of inadequate implementation of laws and policies can be heavily reflected in the lack of data on GBV by most of the countries.

Although women representation in Parliament has increased significantly in all the EAC Countries with Rwanda at 64%, Tanzania at 36.8%, Burundi at 36.4% and Uganda at 32%, Kenya still lags behind at 19.7%. There is a masculine political culture in which political parties and top Government positions at national and local levels are still male dominated.

Maternal mortality rate remains high way above the targets: Burundi at 712 deaths per 100,000 live births; Tanzania at 432; Kenya at 362, Uganda at 360 and Rwanda at 210 contraceptive use among sexually active women is below 50% across the five countries. In terms of HIV, the prevalence rate is highest in Uganda at 8.3% for women and 6.1% for men, followed by Kenya at 7.6 and 5.6 respectively. While a lot of interventions have been implemented, HIV/AIDS remains a big threat to the region.

These examples, are but pointers to the findings of the EAC Gender Barometer. It does not only identify the gaps but also provides success stories, lessons and solutions to many of the challenges, thus generating further debate and action on various issues.

As we launch the Pilot Barometer, we appreciate our development partners that have walked with us throughout this process. It wouldn't have been a success without the support of SIDA, Diakonia, and the Common Wealth Foundation. We also thank Gender Link for supporting and mentoring us throughout the process. The EAC Gender Barometer, was inspired by the SADC gender barometer that is produced annually by Gender Links.

We call upon presidents of the East African Community partner states to prioritize the assent to the EAC Gender Equality and Development bill and also commit to implementation of the key provisions for gender responsive governance.

We call upon Governments in the East African Community to embrace the EAC gender Barometer as a key reference and informative tool in ensuring gender responsive planning, implementation and monitoring for sustainable development.

We call upon Civil Society organisations to support the annual generation of sex-disaggregated data and key gender statistics for informed advocacy initiatives and better partnerships with Governments for gender responsive development in the region.

EASSI calls upon members of the media to amplify the need for an EAC gender Equality and Development Act and popularize the EAC gender Barometer as well as use the findings to enhance gender responsive reporting.

We hope you find this Barometer useful and make it a reference for gender correlated data in East Africa.

Signed

Dr. Christine Mbonyingingo

Chairperson Board of Directors-EASSI

Marren Akatsa-Bukachi

Executive Director-EASSI