



**NGEC**  
National Gender and  
Equality Commission



# REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN CELEBRATIONS

Ruiru Constituency, Kiambu County October 14 2016

*"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises to leave no one behind. To deliver on that, we must help rural women to thrive, and to access the support and information they need, so that they can fulfil their potential without leaving their communities."*  
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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## List of Abbreviations

Ag	Acting
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
IDRW	International Day of Rural Women
NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission
NHIF	National Hospital Insurance Fund
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence

## **Acknowledgement**

The National Gender and Equality Commission wishes to thank all the stakeholders who were involved in planning and execution of the International day of rural women celebrations in Ruiru, Kiambu County. Special recognition goes to the Golden Vision and Nyakinyua women groups for their exemplary exhibitions.

We recognize in a special way the role of CBOs and mobilizers who played a crucial part in ensuring the celebrations went on successfully. We cannot forget the support of the local administration led by deputy county Commissioner Jacob Ouma for assuring us of security during the celebrations.

Finally my sincere thanks to the members of secretariat<sup>1</sup> for planning and executing the event successfully.

**PAUL KURIA**

**Ag. CEO**

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Kuria, Daniel Waitere, John Munene & George Wanyonyi

## **1.0 Introduction**

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) is a Constitutional Commission established pursuant to Article 59 (4) and (5) of the Constitution and the National Gender and Equality Act, 2011 with an overall mandate of promoting gender equality and freedom from discrimination as per Article 27 of the Constitution. NGEC's target groups include men and women, youth, persons with disabilities, children, minorities and marginalized groups.

### **1.1 Background**

Rural women, the majority of whom depend on natural resources and agriculture for their livelihoods, make up over a quarter of the total world population. In developing countries, rural women represent approximately 43 per cent of the agricultural labor force, and produce, process and prepare much of the food available, thereby giving them primary responsibility for food security.

Bearing in mind that 76 per cent of the extreme poor live in rural areas, ensuring rural women's access to productive agricultural resources contributes to decreasing world hunger and poverty, and make rural women critical for the success of the new Sustainable Development agenda for 2030.

The first International Day of Rural Women was observed on 15 October 2008. This new international day, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/136 of 18 December 2007, recognizes "the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty.

The 2016 theme for IDRW is "Ensuring the Empowerment of Rural Women through the Sustainable Development Goals"

### **1.2 Rationale**

In July 2016 the Commission convened 47 women groups from all the 47 counties to showcase various innovations in Nairobi. The forum themed as "celebrating innovativeness in the counties by women and their role in the domestication of the sustainable development goals" showcased a raft of unique projects run by dedicated women from the counties. Some of the projects on display included beadwork, weaving and basketry, textile design, social work among others.

## **2.0 International Day for Rural Women 2016**

Cognizant of the fact that rural women hold the key to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Commission did a follow-up of one of the rural women groups that exhibited in July conference to assess the extent to which the projects are contributing to the realization of sustainable development goals and application of lessons during the July meeting.

The Commission visited Kiambu County where a rural women's group is involved in production of weaving and basketry as an income generating activity.

The objectives of the visit were to:-

- Advocate for increased resources by the county government to support innovation by women groups
- As part of the Communication strategy implementation sensitize communities about the work of NGEK in order to demystify the term 'gender' which seems to be misunderstood. This will help to engender development projects so that men and women work as partners in improving their communities' welfare

### **3.0 Day One-Afternoon**

#### **3.1 Ruiru Constituency-Kiambu County**

Ruiru Constituency is an electoral constituency in Kenya. It is one of the constituencies in Kiambu County. The Constituency has 8 wards namely Gitothua, Biashara, Gatongora, Kahawa Sukari, Kahawa Wendani, Kiuu and Mwioko.

The sub county headquarters are located in Ruiru town and headed by the County deputy Commissioner. Ruiru town covers an area of 292 km<sup>2</sup> (113 sq mi). As of 2009, Ruiru's population stood at 238,858<sup>2</sup>. The rapid population growth being a response to the shortage of available housing in Nairobi.

The town has struggled to adapt to the influx of people. Ruiru is also an industrial town with several major factories, including Devki Steel Mills, Super Foam, Spinners & Spinners Garment Factory and Ruiru Feeds. It is well served by banks and shopping malls and currently is enjoying a housing boom, as many coffee estates are converted into residential areas, including an upcoming multi-billion Tatu Estate<sup>3</sup>

#### **Community Mobilizer**

Ann Wanjiku Njogu is a community mobiliser in Ruiru constituency, Kiambu County and coordinates several rural women groups. Ann is also in charge of the cash transfer programme for vulnerable persons in Ruiru sub-county. She began her charity work in early 1990s as a community health worker. Ann was contacted to mobilize the women groups under her charge to assemble at a convenient location where they could bring their merchandise for exhibition and also get a forum to share with NGEK on the progress and challenges they were experiencing.

The NGEK team left the office on Thursday, October 13, 2016 and headed to Ruiru for a reconnaissance mission. By close of day the team had met with the mobiliser and secured a

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<sup>2</sup> Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

<sup>3</sup> Ruiru Fact Sheet

venue and made logistical plans for hosting at least 50 rural women for the international day of rural women 2016

### **3.2 Day Two- Ruiru**

#### **3.2.1 Courtesy Call to the Deputy County Commissioner**

The Commission led by AG. CEO Paul Kuria made a morning courtesy call to the Deputy County Commissioner Mr. Jacob Ouma Oluoch at his offices. Mr. Ouma thanked the Commission for choosing Ruiru to mark the international day of rural women and pledged to offer all necessary facilitation.



*NGEC Acting CEO Paul Kuria signs the visitor's book at Ruiru sub county headquarters. With him is deputy county commissioner Jacob Ouma*

On his part the Ag. CEO Paul Kuria, explained the mandate of the Commission as a constitutional oversight body and

pledged continued mutual engagement especially in the coordination of special interest groups to realize equality and inclusion in all spheres of life.

### **3.3 Exhibitions & Conference**

#### **3.3.0 Exhibitions**

Two women groups i.e. Golden Vision Women's Group and Nyakinyua Womens' Group all drawn from Kiambu County arrived at the PCEA Ruiru social hall. Arrangements had been made for an open space with tables to exhibit.

NGEC Ag. CEO Paul Kuria who was the chief guest arrived to a lively venue with excited exhibitors busy showcasing various products ranging from ceramics, art sculptures, wall hangings, beads, traditional baskets (ciondo) and necklaces.

#### **3.3.1 Emerging Issues on Business Projects**

##### **3.3.2 Marketing of products**

The women groups expressed concern that despite pooling seed capital to commence income generating activities, they were experiencing challenges in marketing their products. According to Grace Nyakiringa who weaves baskets, she has accumulated a huge number of them but rarely gets customers. This she says was demoralizing and threatening the viability of the entire venture.

### 3.3.3 Access to markets

The women groups raised concerns that it was difficult for them to access international markets despite producing some of the finest indigenous products.

### 3.3.4 Value Addition

The women groups expressed concern that they did not have the expertise to undertake value addition for the raw products. This they said was undermining the competitiveness of their products as it meant, other people could buy them at a cheaper price, do value addition and dispose them at huge profits



*NGEC Acting CEO Paul Kuria admires some of the items on display by the rural women groups*

### 3.4 Conference

After the open air exhibition, the exhibitors and other rural women numbering at least 50 retreated to a hall for a conference. The aim was to gather and share more information about the role of the rural women in contributing to the realization of the sustainable development goals through innovation and protection of their social welfare.



*NGEC Head of Communications Daniel Waitere speaks to the women during the celebrations*

### 3.4.0 Emerging Issues

#### 3.4.1 Social Welfare

The women informed the Commission that those within the social safety net were receiving the government stipend under the cash transfer program. However it emerged that some had been turned away because they could not register due to faint fingerprints. This they said had led to some deserving cases being ignored.

#### 3.4.2 NHIF program

The women informed the Commission that they were receiving treatment in select hospitals under the National Hospital Insurance Fund. However they requested that the number of

beneficiaries to the scheme be expanded to include their young grand children who had been abandoned by their daughters. Most women revealed that their daughters had abandoned their children to live with them and they were struggling to fend for them and cater for their medical needs.

### **3.4.3 Sexual and Gender Based Violence**

The women raised concerns over rampant cases of sexual gender based violence. It was observed that the perpetrators are usually young idle men who out of lack of gainful employment, opt to engage in crime and alcoholism. The women requested for deliberate government interventions to engage the young men in the county in useful ventures to deter them from engaging in crime.

### **3.5 Children Issues Highlighted During the Conference**

During the conference, a Community based organization ‘**Happy Victorious**’ dealing with children issues made a presentation to the Commission with the following highlights and requests:-

- i) Training on SGBV
- ii) How to properly refer and follow up on SGBV cases
- iii) A round table meeting that will bring together all stakeholders on SGBV cases to discuss the gaps in the case process. (These includes court officers i.e., the judiciary.
- iv) Training of Volunteer Child Officers in the community who work tirelessly but have no tools.
- v) Networking community groups with viable organizations that can help uplift and empower caregivers of the many orphans in the community.
- vi) Caregivers of the cash transfer to Orphans and Vulnerable Children program wish those children that were not captured during the enrolment to be added so that they can enjoy benefits like NHIF

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Rural women hold the key to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are proud with the projects you are undertaking and wish to encourage you to continue working hard.

The government has rolled out a number of empowerment initiatives such as The Uwezo Fund, Youth Enterprise Fund, the Women Enterprise Fund and the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) whose intended goals is to reduce poverty.

NGEC will continue to facilitate the realization of sustainable development goals through monitoring, advising and coordinating government programmes that address each of the stated goals. The Commission believes that if the right strategies for mainstreaming equality and inclusion principles are employed, the pace of achieving the sustainable development goals will be accelerated.

The Commission will continue to monitor the government's empowerment programmes for all special interest groups and ensure they are an integral component and beneficiaries of the SDGs.

Following the discussions it was agreed that the Commission would facilitate further engagements with both levels of government to address the issues raised.

The women expressed immense gratitude to the Commission saying this was the first time, they had had an opportunity to interact face to face with a government agency to air their views and explore ways and means to address the challenges facing them

### **5.0 Recommendations**

Both National and County Governments:-

1. Implement empowerment programmes to improve the status of women in rural areas.
2. Promote rural women's employment, decent work, and social protection;
3. Ensure rural women's access to land and productive resources; and
4. Increase rural women's food and nutrition security
5. NGECC to follow-up on Cash Transfer issues raised by the women;