

Gender representation in Kenyan sanitation institutions

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Quick read...

- Across six national and County sanitation-related institutions in Kenya, an average of 37% of top-level staff were women. Corporate leadership roles are particularly unevenly split between genders.
- This mapping exercise is part of a wider analysis of attitudes of decision-makers in the sanitation sector in Kenya and the barriers to these roles for women.

Rationale

Gender roles are strictly imposed in Kenya with socio-cultural factors feeding into decision-making and restricting women's empowerment and contribution to their households and society. In Kenya:

- 62% of women are excluded from economic activity.
- Women occupy lower paying jobs and the gender wage gap is 55%.
- Only 26% of managerial positions in companies listed in the Nairobi Securities Exchange are currently filled by women. Only 26% of directors and 15% of chairpersons of state-owned enterprises are women.

Gender inequity in sanitation has wider negative implications; exclusion of women from meaningful participation in WaSH can lead to sub-optimal outcomes and gender-specific failures, further perpetuating inequities.

Against this background, the Urban Sanitation Research Initiative aims to analyse the internal workings of organisations that make and implement sanitation policy, regulation and services to address four specific questions: (a) the gender balance in decision-making/technical roles in these organisations; (b) how attitudes to sanitation vary between male and female decision-makers; (c) the key barriers to female participation in these roles; (d) provide recommendations for equitable recruitment, placement and career advancement of women.

Urban Sanitation Research Initiative Kenya

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Women working in Kenya's sanitation sector

We map six organisations across the sanitation value chain that are responsible for planning, funding, service delivery, monitoring, regulation and education and training in Kenya to collect:

- Gender disaggregated data on full-time employees across the organisational hierarchy.
- Gender disaggregated organograms to understand female representation at managerial levels.
- Source and extent of application of HR, sexual harassment and affirmative action policies.
- Availability of employee benefits such as paid maternity leave, flexible working hours.

Findings

1. A disproportionate number of employees across the organisations are male (see Table 1 overleaf).
2. All organisations except one have clear human resource policies.
3. All six organisations have sexual harassment policies, either specifically drafted or borrowed from the sexual harassment policy governing public bodies.
4. All organisations provide paid maternity leave and flexible working hours. Only two reported institutionalised processes for availing of flexible working hours; the other organisations reported that this could be done on a special arrangement with their respective managers.
5. No organisation had support services such as creche or childcare facilities but two have special facilities (an allocated room and refrigerators for storing breast milk) for lactating mothers.

Table 1. Gender map of employees of six sanitation-related bodies

Organisation	Full-time male employees	Full-time female employees	HR policy?	Sexual harassment policy?	Paid maternity leave?	Flexible working hours?	Childcare facilities available?
Water Services Regulatory Board	22	12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Special arrangement	No (lactation facilities available)
Water Dept., Kiambu County	19	1	Yes	Yes (gov't policy)	Yes	Special arrangement	No
Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Co.	2,173	1,266	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ministry of Water, Sanitation & Irrigation	326	129	Yes	Yes (gov't policy)	Yes	Special arrangement	No
Kenya Water Institute	59	29	Yes	Yes	Yes	Special arrangement	No
Water Sector Trust Fund	47	31	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (lactation facilities available)

Preliminary inferences: gender-disaggregated data of top-level employees

- Men seem to be favoured over women at all levels in all organisations: average female representation was 37%.
- Corporate management (CEO, members of the County Executive Committee such as the County Governor, head of the institution) has the lowest proportion of female representation across all organisations.
- WASREB has roughly equitable hires at all levels except at the director-level.
- The water and sanitation department of Kiambu County has only two females across its leadership hierarchy.
- The Ministry of Water, Sanitation & Irrigation is the only organisation to have gender equity at the director level but this is not reflected throughout the organisation: female representation is only 36% across the other levels. Almost three times the number of men head functional departments.

Table 2. Gender-disaggregated data

Organisation	Directors		Corporate leadership		Functional heads		Managerial heads	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Water Services Regulatory Board	5	3	1	0	7	6	3	4
Water Dept., Kiambu County	0	0	2	0	6	1	16	1
Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Co.	8	3	1	0	5	3	4	3
Ministry of Water, Sanitation & Irrigation	1	1	16	7	163	46	110	52
Kenya Water Institute	5	4	0 (currently vacant)	0	5	0	4	3
Water Sector Trust Fund	4	3	1	0	24	4	6	1

Directors: Only members of board of directors or chairpersons; **Corporate leadership:** Positions such as CEO, COO, other top management positions that head the institute or similar; **Functional heads:** Includes heads of different departments or directorates. Deputy directors or asst. directors also considered under this category if there are separate managerial positions under each dept.; **Managerial heads:** Positions that are responsible for specific activities under each dept./directorate such as asst./deputy directors or senior dept. officials.

Next steps

- Establish root causes of gender inequity in the sanitation sector, from relevant educational background to technical training and socio-cultural norms.
- Analyse the impact of institutional policies on addressing workplace discrimination and other gender-related professional barriers.
- Develop recommendations and guidelines on how to address these barriers and advance women's meaningful participation in sanitation governance.

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