



**AAK** | PROMOTING EXCELLENCE  
IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Rapporteur Report

### Intergenerational Dialogue - International Women's Day 2023

Date: Wednesday, March 08, 2023  
Time: 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION OF KENYA INVITES YOU TO

### Instagram Live

Intergenerational Dialogue celebrating  
**International Women's Day 2023**

**08 March 2023, 7:00pm-8:00pm** Virtually on IG live, @arch\_Ke

**Speaker**  
**Arch. Mugure Njendu,**  
Immediate Past President, AAK

**Speaker**  
**Plan. Juliet Rita,**  
Network Coordinator, African  
Network for Walking and Cycling

**Speaker**  
**Yassin Munyanya,**  
Graduate Architect & Former  
Students' Rep in AAK Council

**Speaker**  
**Rehema Kabare,**  
Urban Assistant at the GoDown  
Arts Centre, Graduate Construction  
Manager

**Moderator**  
**Brenda Ngoya,**  
Graduate Urban Designer and Blogger

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## Preliminaries

The session was held on Instagram Live and adopted the form of a panel discussion followed by a plenary session. It had a total of 50 live attendees and 318 views. The space was opened by Brenda Ngoya, the moderator of the session, who also set the agenda for the session.

## Introduction

An intergenerational dialogue on International Women's Day provided a platform for participants to share experiences and insights, of different generations of women including the challenges they have faced and the solutions they have developed to overcome them. Also, to discuss the importance of mentorship, networking, and support for women in the industry. It also focused on the role of younger generations in promoting gender equality in the built industry. Younger people bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to the table, and their voices can help to drive change and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the industry.

## Panel Discussion

### 1. Arch. Mugure Njendu

#### **How can we better support women in leadership positions in the industry, and what barriers need to be addressed to achieve this?**

This conversation is exciting and timely as we have been grappling with the challenges of Women in the built industry and increasing the numbers of women in the industry over the years. A 2022 report by Dalberg in partnership with the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and Buildher showed the number of women in different professions in the built environment to be below 20% cutting across all professions.

The Architectural Association of Kenya, a membership organization of professionals in the built environment has only 18% of women in its membership, and 12% of registered and practising female architects. However, the industry has been making progress this far: AAK has voted in 2 female leaders to be presidents in recent years; in the 2023 AAK elections, the 2 candidates vying for the presidential seat are women; and more organizations in the built environment are celebrating and hosting events geared toward celebrating and highlighting the achievements of

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women.

### **What does support look like for female leaders in the built environment?**

- a. Ensuring representation by having female leaders in prominent roles can inspire and encourage younger women to pursue leadership positions.
- b. Ensuring that opportunities for leadership are equally available to all, with fair and transparent processes.
- c. Encouraging men to support and advocate for women's leadership through support systems like "HeForShe."
- d. Creating an open dialogue around what equality means and how we can improve opportunities for everyone in leadership spaces and circles.
- e. Acknowledging and addressing microaggressions that may be preventing women from thriving in leadership roles.
- f. Actively seeking out and mentoring promising female leaders to continue progress towards gender equality.

### **How can we encourage girls and young women to join careers in the built environment?**

- a. Ensure representation of women in the field by highlighting successful women in the industry and showcasing their achievements.
- b. Create intentional mentorship programs for women and encourage both seeking and offering mentorship opportunities.
- c. Joining professional and networking organizations that promote gender inclusivity and diversity, and provide support for women in the industry.
- d. Holding both the public and private sectors accountable for creating inclusive structures and systems that allow women to thrive in their careers, including accommodating different aspects of their lives. Flexibility and agility are key to ensuring women's success in the industry.

*There is a case to be made that companies do better when they have women in executive and leadership positions. Research has shown that any team/company that has women and a large percentage of women matching the men, tends to outperform other companies by 30%. If you want*

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*a business case, this is it for the company to thrive.*

## 2. Pln. Juliet Ritta

**How can we celebrate the contributions of women in the built industry and ensure that their voices are heard and valued?**

- a. Seek out opportunities to connect with and learn from women's experiences in the field.
- b. Start celebrating personal achievements and then other women's achievements, by recognizing even small milestones and successes.
- c. Encourage mentorship and create opportunities for women to connect with other women in the industry.
- d. Build a network of support and collaboration among women and other professionals in the built environment.
- e. Amplify the visibility of women in the profession by highlighting their contributions and creating more opportunities for their voices to be heard.

**What are some of the opportunities for young women to succeed in the built environment?**

- a. Re-evaluate the way networking is perceived and embrace it as a positive tool for career growth, regardless of personality type.
- b. Recognize and navigate the unique challenges and responsibilities that women often face, such as multitasking.
- c. Be intentional in mapping out career goals and identifying targeted opportunities, including networking to achieve them.
- d. Acknowledge and find ways to balance personal and professional responsibilities.
- e. Strategize and identify the resources needed to advance in one's career - the direction you want to take and the resources you need to achieve your goals.
- f. Embrace authenticity in networking, and find communication and networking styles that work best to complement your individual strengths and personalities.
- g. Understand that networks are transitional and constantly evolving, and be open to letting go of old connections while embracing new ones that will help progress towards career goals.

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- h. Seek out professional associations that offer safe spaces for women to connect and grow in the industry.

*Young people get lost waiting to perfect something instead of just starting. If you hold back waiting to perfect your skills you will never grow. If you think you have a skill and you can do something, just start with all your imperfections, you will perfect it along the way.*

### 3. Rehema Kabare

#### **How can we ensure that young women are represented and included in decision-making processes in the industry, and what barriers need to be addressed to achieve this?**

- a. Through mentorship programmes. Women need guidance in various aspects of life, such as appearance, communication, and overall professional development. Mentorship programs can provide valuable support and guidance for young women.
- b. Amplifying and encouraging young women to join professional and networking organizations like the Women in Real Estate (WIRE) Society that can provide opportunities for young women to connect with industry professionals, fostering greater representation and inclusion.
- c. Encouraging women to be brave and take up spaces; daring to take risks and believing in themselves can lead to great success and help break down barriers that exist for women in the industry.
- d. Changing mindsets about the roles of men and women in the industry is crucial for achieving greater inclusion and representation.
- e. Being a catalyst for change by leading by example can inspire others to do the same and promote greater inclusion and representation.
- f. Encouraging innovation and finding creative solutions to problems can help break down obstacles and foster greater participation for young women.
- g. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to achieve gender equality and we all have a role to play in shaping a more inclusive built environment.

#### **What challenges do young women face in the industry?**

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- a. Age and gender discrimination can make it challenging for young women to be taken seriously in leadership positions, requiring them to work harder to gain recognition and respect.
- b. Overall harshness in the industry can be demotivating and draining, making it challenging to maintain a positive outlook and persevere in the face of obstacles.
- c. The exploitative nature of the industry can create a sense of mistrust, hence young women prefer to work with other women, rather than with men, as they may feel safer and more understood by other women.
- d. Inadequate support and mentorship for young women can make it challenging to develop the skills and experience necessary to advance in the industry, highlighting the importance of role models and mentors.
- e. Inadequate infrastructure to support women, who have a unique set of needs compared to their male counterparts. For instance breastfeeding or breastmilk expression facilities in offices.

*Mimi ndio mkubwa.*

### **Plenary Session**

#### **What can young women do to increase their employability in the built industry?**

1. Put themselves out there.
2. There is no good time, they need to start as early as possible.
3. Build their networks.
4. Volunteer.
5. Learn new skills.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the built environment industry presents a number of challenges and barriers for young women. Gender discrimination, inadequate support and mentorship, and the exploitative nature of the industry can all make it difficult for women to succeed and be recognized for their contributions. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to provide opportunities for women to succeed and be represented in decision-making processes, to encourage mentorship and networking, to address gender biases, and to provide a safe and supportive work environment. It is

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also important to recognize the contributions of women in the industry, celebrate their achievements, and amplify their voices. By addressing these challenges, we can create a more equitable and inclusive industry that benefits everyone.

Use this link to access and listen to the live -

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CpiTy7EoEf4/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CpiTy7EoEf4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

**Rapporteur: Oloo Adhiambo, Advocacy Officer.**

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