

## Gender Equality and the Politics of Presence among the Maasai in Kenya

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**Abstract :** Underrepresentation of women in governance structures is a global phenomenon, with patriarchal considerations being among the main, if not the top, reason for this in Sub Saharan Africa. This paper demonstrates that gender norms and informal rules have perpetuated a culture of stereotypical gender roles that have limited women's public participation and leadership in society. To achieve this, the paper explores barriers to women's political engagement, and how these are navigated in the face of gender equality laws. Situated in Kenya's Maasai community, the paper investigates the influence of set laws on the increased involvement of women from the patriarchal community in the political economy. It gives special attention to the intersectionality of formal and informal laws and the subsequent interpretation and implementation of gender equality. The paper then concludes by demonstrating the benefits of exploring alternative gender equality pathways, as informed by contextual realities of settings such as patriarchal communities.

**Keywords :** equality, Kenya, patriarchy, public participation, women

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