**HIGHER EDUCATION RESOURCE SERVICES EAST AFRICA**

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**Women Empowering Women**

**The Value of HERS-EA**

# WHAT IS HERS-EA?

Higher Education Resource Services, East Africa (HERS-EA), is an educational non-profit organization advancing women leadership and management in the East African Community (EAC) countries and Ethiopia. The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organization and economic community comprising more than 185 million people and over one million tertiary students combined [Trines, 2018]. It consists of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. In April 2022, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) joined EAC.

Established in 2014 HERS-EA is an affiliate of HERS based in Denver, Colorado, USA, and established in 1972 [HERS, 2020]. **The Mission of HERS-EA is** simultaneously to increase the proportion of women in leadership and management positions in higher education institutions (HEIs) in East Africa to at least 50% [Khaitsa et al 2017] and to increase the number of girls and women completing primary and secondary schooling (through traditional and alternative routes). Completion of primary and secondary is a pathway to higher education (HE) and a more immediate route to **self-sufficiency,** **better health, and community development for the majority of women in the region. The Goals of HERS-EA** are to develop women leaders in HEIs) in Eastern Africa; to empower women at multi-tiers of leadership across communities, organizations and institutions necessary for community development; and to integrate the results of this inclusive engagement to change systems to support gender equity and better outcomes for women of Eastern Africa [Khaitsa et al 2017]. **HERS-EA pursues these Goals through an inclusive women’s leadership model** focused on *empowering rather than helping* women across different tiers. The HERS-EA **Multi-Tier Leadership Model** includes: 1) Encouraging women researchers in HEIs to address unique research issues pertaining to women at all tiers [Khaitsa et al 2017] 2) Providing leadership development through the HERS-EA Academies and other academic development programs, with special emphasis on skills for addressing institutional gender equity and for engaged community development 3) Connecting these women researchers to support each other in seeking funding, publication, academic promotion, and in their inclusive engagement with community women; and 4) Facilitating appropriate leadership and management development for the multiple tiers of women participating in the research and community development projects undertaken by these women researchers.

**HERS-EA Core Values are**: 1) Excellence 2) Diversity and Inclusiveness 3) Transparency and accountability 4) Partnerships 5) Resilience and 6) Women transformation.

**The HERS-EA leadership model is unique** as it includes women at all levels (multiple tiers) from HE to the grassroots community women within the other tiers. The model integrates the researchers' academic success and advancement to leadership in HE, and their capacity for institutional change with the engagement that is necessary with women at the other multiple tiers for the broader outcomes of community development and greater educational success for girls and women at the lower tiers within the education system. With this model of women’s leadership through inclusive community engagement, HERS-EA is a uniquely positioned development partner for the achievement of gender equity and a higher standard of living for women, men and children of East Africa and the African continent.

# BACKGROUND TO HERS-EA:

Higher Education Resource Services, Eastern Africa (HERS-EA), is an affiliate of HERS, established in the USA in 1972. The curriculum incorporates elements of the signature HERS curriculum but has been adapted and enhanced by the directors of HERS-EA as appropriate, for the goals and needs of women in East Africa.

The HERS-EA core curriculum is culturally and regionally specific for women in HEIs in East Africa. The curriculum is **a multi-tiered** application of the **“Leader within Her Systems”** approach. Therefore HERS-EA targets women at different levels: 1) Top Executives, in higher education; 2) the **“returning learners”** who have some engagement with educational systems; 3) the **grassroots learners/leaders** who are outside those systems now but must learn to be advocates for girls in their communities, and 4) the **women in the educational systems** but not at executive leadership level.

# HERS-EA Operational Area:

Figure 1: Higher Education Resources Services, Eastern Africa (HERS-EA) Current Operational area (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Uganda).

# HERS-EA ACADEMY:

HERS-EA ACADEMY provides an intensive leadership and management development curriculum which equips women with skills needed to advance their personal career development and successfully navigate the institutional environment where they operate. The goal of the HERS-EA training is to raise the proportion of women in leadership and management positions in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Eastern Africa (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Uganda - Figure 1).

The program is focused on managing and leading change, human resource development and institutional effectiveness. Participants are expected to hold mid to senior-level positions and bring expertise from all parts of a college or university. They also represent a range of national groups, ages and years of experience in higher education. The ACADEMY prepares every participant to strengthen and expand her leadership skills by working closely with HERS-EA resource persons and staff. Participants find the ACADEMY to be a safe environment to share confidential matters.

# WHY HERS-EA IS UNIQUE:

1. The HERS-EA core curriculum is culturally and regionally specific for women in HEIs in East Africa.
2. The HERS-EA curriculum is **a multi-tiered** application of the **“Leader within Her Systems”** approach. ALL women at different levels of development are targeted for advancement wherever they are.
3. There is no known leadership curriculum ***for* women, delivered *by* women** like HERS-EA. Driven by passion to advance fellow women, a group of skilled, confident women leaders have volunteered as resource persons and mentors in HERS-EA programs since its inception in 2014 up to date.
4. HERS-EA ACADEMY Topics and delivery methods are informed by past participants’ views who help to shape future academies.
5. Participants take home **tangible outputs** such as a career map, a leadership project, and a network of potential mentors and collaborators for professional development.
6. HERS-EA programs are inclusive of **ALL women**, wherever they are, in their career.
	* Those in early stage will shape a career map, develop research and publishing skills, grant writing skills (including exposure to active connections) and receive ongoing guidance and mentoring.
	* Those nearing retirement will receive guidance about transitioning out of academia to setting up and running your own business or NGOs.
	* Women at grassroots will connect with women in higher education who will address their unique issues through evidence-based research to inform policy *(Lumutenga, et al, 2017; Khaitsa et al, 2022)*.

# THE VALUE-ADD OF HERS-EA:

Gender equality matters and gender inequality is very costly (World Economic Forum, 2021). First, there is unrealized potential of the impact of women on their families and the economy at large. A report by World Bank, *“Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings’* finds that if women had the same lifetime earnings as men, global wealth would increase by $23,620 per person, on average, in the 141 countries studied, for a total of $160 trillion (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, there are also costs that governments incur in terms of the provision of social services for domestic abuse victims which costs governments billions of dollars. Therefore, **by coming up with policies using data around gender inequality and achieving gender parity,** the world can eliminate such costs and in turn, it will lead to an improvement of their economies. HERS-EA strives to achieve these goals through support of women in HEIs to conduct research on these issues and inform policy for action.

Factors such as gender-based discrimination, child marriage, and the burden of fulfilling domestic chores have some influence in preventing girls globally from going to school (Jattani and Okadia, 2022). One area of primary interest for HERS-EA is the exclusion of girls and women from the benefit of education. There is a growing reservoir of marginalized girls and women in East Africa that drop out of school. The Mission of HERS-EA directly addresses these issues by increasing the number of girls and women completing primary and secondary school (through traditional and alternative routes). Completion of primary and secondary is a pathway to higher education (HE) and a more immediate route to self-sufficiency, better health, and community development for the majority of women in East Africa. The Goals of HERS-EA are to develop women leaders in HEIs in Eastern Africa; to empower women **at multi-tiers of leadership across communities, organizations and institutions** necessary for community development; and to integrate the results of this inclusive engagement **to change systems to support gender equity** and better outcomes for women of Eastern Africa

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