

Effects of International Non-Governmental Organizations development Programmes on the Socio- Economic Empowerment of Women in Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract: The study sought to assess the effects of International Non-Governmental Organization development programme on the social and economic lives of the rural women in Makueni county. The research employed mixed Approach (qualitative and quantitative method) and descriptive research design in data collection. The study targeted women beneficiaries in Self Help Groups (SHGs) of World Vision and ActionAid programmes and key informants such as project and government officials in Makueni County. A total sample size of 162 members were selected using various sampling techniques which included multistage, purposive, snowball and random sampling. Open and closed headed questionnaires, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides and interview schedules were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and Chi square tests were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21) software. The study revealed that INGOs development contribution to socio-economic empowerment of women in Makueni depended on the specific program. The effect was more on some programs such as provision of water and sanitation, women awareness on their rights and Gender Based Violence. However, there was low contribution to access to and control over productive resources, training on entrepreneurship and involvement of women in development projects. Generally, beneficiaries felt that the INGOs intervention programmes were inadequate in empowering women and the programs seemed to be creating more dependency among women beneficiaries hence high levels of poverty.

Key Words: Women socio economic empowerment, poverty, SHGs, Development, INGOs

Date of Submission: 12-06-2020

Date of Acceptance: 29-06-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, local, national or international Non-Governmental Organisations have sought to initiate development programmes in many parts of the world. According to Duflo (2012), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) offer great input in the development agenda worldwide and are generally concerned with issues relating to social change in the society. Although the contribution of these INGOs development programs is expected to yield significant results in many parts of the World, there is need to ensure that they are meeting their mandate of empowering women.

According to World Economic Forum (2014), globally, the society and especially women, seem to be lagging in aspects of social economic empowerment. It is for this reason that women empowerment is one of the key issues in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no 5. It is therefore vital to understand the concept of women empowerment and social economic empowerment from different perspectives (Kabeer, 2012). Development practitioners, feminists, and scholars agree that for human development to be meaningful, the focus of development processes must be inclusive of everyone in the society. Lack of participation by women in development processes leads to problems such as high levels of food insecurity and increased poverty at household and national levels (Minh 2004, UNDP, 2010). According to Dibia and Dibia (2007), INGOs have initiated development programs aimed at empowering women politically, socially, and economically. This empowerment initiatives have not in all instances resulted in women's social and economic autonomy as noted by the Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD, 2011).

Women are emerging as a development force that policy makers and INGOs cannot ignore. Despite the high influx of INGOs in Makueni County aimed at empowering women socially and economically, the poverty levels in the county remain high and gender inequalities continue to persist. This is evidenced by increased poverty levels, low participation in decision-making, limited access to and control over resources, high prevalence of domestic violence, lack of income generating activities, low literacy levels, low self-esteem, and poor health. This study therefore sought to assess the contribution of INGOs on the socio-economic empowerment of women in Makueni County.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

The target population comprised 193 SHGs of the women's INGOs' funded development projects, key informants and INGOs officials of WVK and AAIK in Makueni county and the total sample size was 162. The study employed purposive method to get the number of sub-counties, wards, and key informants from the county and INGOs. Multistage was used to get SHGs while snowball was used to get men respondents and simple random was used to get the total number of women beneficiaries. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from the 162 respondents because the area covered was vast. The researcher distributed a total of 114 copies of the questionnaire to the women beneficiaries and interviewed the rest. Out of the 114 copies distributed, more than 60% were returned.

The questionnaires were administered to the women beneficiaries from the two INGO, namely WVK and AAIK at three places namely; Kanzokea, Kalawa and Kithuki. The interviews, which were semi-structured with open- and closed- headed questions were used for key informants, WVK and AAIK officials. The FGDs comprised of twenty-four women leaders from the four locations from each of the sampled SHGs. The FGD guide had open- and closed ended questions on the study objectives to allow in-depth discussions and explore aspects of concern in the study with the beneficiaries. Further, the FGD was administered in *Kikamba* to enable the researcher gather information from beneficiaries in a language they (the respondents) understood. Data was also obtained from secondary sources which included books, WVK and AAIK reports, journals, theses, and dissertations. This was done from several libraries including Kenyatta University Library.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study generated both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21. Qualitative data was processed and analyzed through identification of main themes from the in-depth interviews as per study objectives. The next step was the classification of responses according to objectives. The responses were then integrated into the themes then presented in narrative and verbatim form.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Demographic Information

The demographic characteristic for the respondents who had accessed the INGOs projects that are analyzed includes gender, Age, Education level and occupation as shown in the following frequency tables:

The survey involved 162 respondents who are the main beneficiaries of the INGOs programs, drawn from various sub counties in Makueni County, whereby 81.8% were female respondents and 18.2% were male respondents. This group was drawn from various age group whereby a majority 44.2% were from the 41 to 50 years age bracket. In its quest to empower women who otherwise wouldn't get a chance in the formal sector due to their low education qualification the INGOs have enrolled majority of members/beneficiaries who have primary level education qualification i.e. 57.1% or the respondent only primary level education and 84.4% of respondents were involved in farming as their main occupation.

This cluster of respondents' presents set of characteristics that will help clearly manifest how the INGOs are playing a role in empowering women in Makueni County through the various empowerment programs. For example by having a higher percentage of respondents, who are the INGOs programs beneficiaries, being females it's a clear manifestation that the INGOs have the intentions of empowering women in the county.

3.2 Effects of INGOs Development Programs on Women Socio-economic Empowerment.

Improved access to water and sanitation.

Majority of the respondents (60.4%) said that INGOs programmes had highly contributed to improved access to water against 7.3% who indicated the programmes had low contribution to water access (Table 1). The study found out that age bracket of respondents had significant association with the improved access to water ($p=0.028$) (Table 1). About 26% of the respondents aged 26 to 40 years and 24% of those aged 41 to 50 years indicated that the programs had highly contributed to improved access to water against 9.3% of those aged more than 50 years. Pearson Chi square test also showed significant association between improved access to water with educational level ($p=0.029$). The findings established that before the INGOs' initiatives, there were women who walked more than 10 kilometres in search of water, and this reduced to 2 kilometres. Water is a resource that is key in Makueni County and its accessibility affects many other aspects of women lives such as health, education, job creation, and poverty levels.

The study noted that through the water and sanitation program, AAIK supported seven schools with water harvesting tanks with 10,000 capacity. During baseline survey by AAIK, it was noted that failed rains led to loss of livestock due to lack of pasture and crops hence increased poverty in the County. To address this challenge, AAIK started Nguumo irrigation project to increase food security in the area. The project was launched in 2016 and has acted as a Model for the national and County governments for replication and scaling.

There was also provision of 5 mega earth dams, 3 sand dams, and 8 boreholes and provision of piped quality treated water extended to households for domestic use (AA, 2018). This is also in line with SDGs' goal number six and Vision 2030 which recognise the importance of universal access to water and sanitation. The findings also communicated that there was reduced early pregnancies among the girls who initially used to be enticed by men on their way to fetch water, especially at night.

Table 1: Effects of INGOs development programmes on the social and economic lives of the rural women in Makueni County

Effects of INGO programmes	Percent responses (%)			Test of significant associations by Pearson Chi Square (χ^2)	
	Low	Medium	High	Age of respondents	Education level of respondents
Improved access to water	7.3	32.3	60.4	$\chi^2=14.122, p=0.028$	$\chi^2=10.833, p=0.029$
Improved awareness on women rights	26	15.6	58.3	$\chi^2=19.235, p=0.004$	$\chi^2=8.803, p=0.066$
Enhanced HIV/AIDS support	31.3	21.9	42.7	$\chi^2=6.339, p=0.386$	$\chi^2=9.880, p=0.042$
Cash for Assets (CFA)	8.3	62.5	26.0	$\chi^2=12.958, p=0.044$	$\chi^2=8.675, p=0.070$
Livelihood and Resilience	8.3	52.1	39.6	$\chi^2=3.889, p=0.694$	$\chi^2=6.290, p=0.178$
Education	20.8	33.3	45.8	$\chi^2= 10.632, p=0.100$	$\chi^2=4.039, p=0.401$
Enhanced leadership and governance	32.3	53.1	14.6	$\chi^2=7.867, p=0.248$	$\chi^2=6.225, p=0.183$
Reduced Gender based violence	34.4	52.1	13.5	$\chi^2=10.597, p=0.102$	$\chi^2=5.166, p=0.276$
Access to and control over resources	71.9	19.8	8.3	$\chi^2=7.992, p=0.239$	$\chi^2=15.914, p=0.003$

****Significance levels when $p \leq 0.0$**

The above findings demonstrate that water and sanitation development program has had a positive impact on the community. There was also reduced family household responsibilities on women, leading to more participation in development activities, hence more confidence and assertiveness among them (Ulleberg, 2009).

The study revealed that, provision of water was not adequate, and this was indicated by 32.3 % of the women respondents who felt that the contribution of the INGOs in this aspect was medium, thus more provision of water was necessary (Table 1). Water is very useful and as reported by UNICEF (2007), over 1.1 billion people lack access to an improved water source, while over three million people, mostly children, die annually from water-related diseases. Therefore, the INGOs in collaboration with the county government have made considerable efforts about provision of water in Makueni county. Although the situation has improved, it is not as expected as the water points provided are scattered and not evenly distributed within the wards. As a result, in some areas people are still covering long distances to get water from provided water points.

Improved awareness of women rights/GBV

The study showed improvement on awareness of women rights with 58.3% of respondents saying the contribution was high as compared to 26% who indicated that the contribution was low (Table 1). Chi square test showed significant association between age bracket of respondents ($p=0.004$) but no significant association on educational level of women respondents ($p=0.066$). These findings connote that AAIK has done a lot of awareness on women rights, hence a reduction in GBV. INGOs programs used girls' forums to raise awareness and the program has yielded high outcomes. Through ActionAid Kathonzwani (KWLRP) awareness has been made to over 1800 women who participated in International Women Days in 2014 and 2015 and 16 Days of Gender Activism in 2014 (AA, 2015).

As explained in the above table more women are aware of their rights as women, and their role in the family and community levels is being felt. As a result, there has been increased participation and involvement of women in decision-making in the family and community development agendas. This is in line with SDGs no. 5 which focuses on elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation (Osborn, 2015). During the baseline survey domestic violence was considered as a private issue to be discussed in low tones within the confines of the household walls as it was considered as normal or acceptable under certain circumstances (AA,2018). According to AAIK strategic plan for 2018 -2028 evaluation which analysed attitudinal change as a result of assessing people's perception on women rights; majority (70%) of the male respondents and 69% female respondents stated that the vice had reduced since the start of LRP. Awareness of women rights also led to construction of one rescue center in Makueni County level five through Kathonzweni Women Movement (KWM), one of the AAIK, partner in Makueni County. The KWM was also pivotal in the formation of multi-sectoral GBV working in Makueni County which came up with GBV training manual. The group has some of the members trained as paralegals through the support of AAIK and they offer legal support for survivors of violence. They have reporting mechanisms within the community and this has impacted positively on socio-economic empowerment of women.

Awareness of their own rights has empowered the women, enabling them to participate in all aspects of life including understanding the new constitution of Kenya; as well as understanding documents about land ownership and inheritance issues. There were however about 15.6% of the respondents who felt that the program was not doing enough in creating awareness on women rights, and hence according to them the program was gender biased.

Enhanced Support Groups

As presented in Table 1, 42.7% of the respondents stated that there was increased awareness on matters of HIV/AIDs, while 21.9% said that the program was medium and 31.3% indicated that the program was low. According to chi square analysis age had no significance influence on the program ($p=0.386$) but education had significance influence of ($p=0.042$). This shows that education level influences HIV/AIDs since majority of the respondents were primary and secondary leavers. Education empowers women to have more income and more income means that women are not likely to be more vulnerable to prostitution and drug abuse which can lead to HIV/AIDs infection. The INGOs established support groups for the infected and affected members. Through these support groups, the affected families were given support through awareness creation on HIV/AIDs, as well on their rights. This helped to reduce stigma and discrimination among the infected and affected. In order to address their economic needs, INGOs provided those infected and affected with IGAs ideas, such as machines for brick making.

The INGOs play an important role in fighting for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDs (Tiessen, 2005). Through collaboration with the county government, the INGOs created forums in schools, and through these forums, they have been sensitizing the students on the effects of HIV/AIDs. The HIV/AIDs support program has helped the affected by teaching them healthy living styles and giving each support group some special red beans, known to be rich in protein. This has led to improved health status for the infected members. Bringing the women together enhances their cohesiveness because of the support they get from the community. This concurs with Backstrom's (2006) finding that all formed groups require a medium of cohesiveness and therefore the community and the INGOs act as the medium for the empowerment of women living with HIV/AIDs.

Nevertheless, about 21.9% of the respondents indicated medium and 31.3% indicated low that the program was not being implemented as it was expected from the initial stages. Some of the reasons given included financial constraints, as well as a claim by some beneficiaries that funds meant for the infected members were being channelled to other uses (AA, 2015). High reliance on crop farming that depended on rains led to low income for women; hence influence behaviour of women to look for alternative sources of income such as prostitution leading to more spreading of HIV/AIDs.

Cash for Assets

As shown in Table 1, 62.5% of the respondents agreed that the contribution of INGOs' development programs on CFA was medium, while 26% believed the INGOs contribution on the same was high and 8.3% said it was low. Chi square test showed an association of age and education to CFA contribution whereby age had significance level ($p=0.044$) while education had no significance ($p=0.070$) to the program contribution. This means that medium aged women were willing to be involved into CFA but there were barriers such as control of the resources when it came to income usage. According to the study findings women make a joint decision with their husbands although they are the ones involved in CFA programs. The program enabled starting of VSL Groups by the beneficiaries, which led to income generation but there were more challenges on the implementation of the program. This is the reason why only 26% of the respondents indicated that the

program was high. The program was also influenced by other factors such as unreliable rains which affected crop farming which is main IGA in CFA program.

According to the findings, through the CFA program, the INGOs have helped the women beneficiaries to borrow big loans from MFIs such as KWTF and K-Rep. The program has also enhanced women's participation in development processes as a form of promoting socio-economic empowerment as revealed by women respondents. This is because the women groups have to meet together every week to contribute, refund and borrow money. When they meet, they strengthen their social life and through borrowing money they gain economically. This is an effective mechanism for poverty reduction and general improvement of standards of living. Nonetheless, some women respondents felt that the program had its own challenges, among them insecurity of the money which was being kept in homes, and lack of support for women from their spouses. This was supported by an INGOs' official during an interview who explained as below:

Livelihoods and resilience

The results manifest that livelihoods and resilience development programs contributed positively towards the socio-economic empowerment of women in the study area but not as expected. This was expressed by 39.6% of the respondents who indicated that the contribution was high, while 52.1% expressed that the program was medium and 8.3% indicated it was low. According to chi square tests in table 1 above, age ($p=0.69$) and education ($p=0.18$) had no significance influence on these programs. The main aim of the livelihoods and resilience program is to ensure adequate long-term measures on food security which can be achieved without the influence of education or age levels. ActionAid has made food security one of its main pillars in Kathonzwani LRP and livelihood as a key focus area. This is in line with SDGs no 2 which aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The program enabled starting of IGAs (such as poultry keeping, goat keeping, micro irrigation and pasture regeneration) by the beneficiaries.

The Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity within the population is one of the key indicators to ending hunger as per the SGD no 2. This is based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) which is used by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to standardize the measurement of food insecurity worldwide. Food availability, access, utilization, and stability are now widely recognized as the fundamental "pillars" of food security (Caley, 2015).

The findings agree with the following: Manyasa's (2003) deduction that the income levels of women in groups is much higher than of those outside any group. The result of all these has been improved women's socio-economic status. Therefore, the livelihood and resilience development program has left the beneficiaries better in terms of empowerment.

Improved education

According to the findings (Table 1), about 33.3 % of the respondents agreed that the contribution of INGOs on the education program was medium, 45.8% indicated that the program had high positive results, and 20.8% expressed that the contribution was low. This shows that the education program had some positive impacts in the area, thus, it was a beneficial program within the intended community. According to chi square analysis, age ($p= 0.1$) and educational level ($p=0.401$) of the respondents did not have any significance association on the contribution of INGOs to improved education. Other factors such as income could have influenced education because increased income means parents are able to educate their children. The study established that AAIK through *KAKIKA* formed pressure groups in the community to advocate for implementation of increased budget allocation, education laws and transparency for education. Through these pressure groups, committees were established in every public schools in Kathonzwani ward in Makueni County. The committees drawn from the community positively influenced the larger community on the importance of education and therefore increasing the enrolment rate. Studies have suggested that improving access to education and business gives women decision-making power at the household level and gives opportunity to needy children. Khan and Sajid (2011) posited that education and socio-economic empowerment are effective in enhancing decision-making process at the household level

Enhanced leadership and Governance

As per the outcome illustrated in Table 1, 53.1% of the respondents indicated that there was enhancement in involvement in leadership and governance due to the INGOs' development intervention programs. According to chi square tests in table 1, age ($p= 0.248$) and education ($p=0.183$) did not have any significance meaning to the program of leadership and governance. This could have been attributed to creation of awareness by AAIK which led to more empowerment on women rights. During the baseline survey 2013, the AAIK noted low participation of women in distribution and utilisation of the public resources. The programs did a lot of training, especially to women leaders in aspects of leadership skills, how to deal with group conflicts, record keeping, transparency, and accountability. Even so, some of the women respondents (32.3%) expressed that the effects of the INGOs' leadership and governance program was low. This was also revealed through mid-

term review study in 2018 which established that 30% of the study population felt that they were adequately involved in the distribution and utilisation of public funds in Kathonzwi, while the majority (65%) feel that they are not involved. This was attributed to lack of transparency and accountability in scrutinising devolved funds by the public.

However, this was an improvement considering that before the sensitisation the community stated that they did not know the channels of scrutinising projects. The findings are clear that women's socio-economic empowerment can be affected by poor organisation of the groups, as well as the lack of accountability and transparency on the part of the groups' leadership. Kilby (2006) highlighted that accountability entails transparency in decision-making and honest reporting of how and what resources have been used and ultimately, what has been achieved. The findings indicated that there was increased level of inclusion of women to occupy leadership position and participation in distribution and utilization of public funds. However further discussion with the women groups revealed that women still felt that there was need for more awareness to improve on women participation in the distribution and utilisation of public funds.

This study ascertained that through the leadership and governance program, women have been empowered socially in that they have gained confidence that has helped them to participate in the development agenda without fear. This has enhanced their self-esteem and enabled them to wisely exercise their voting rights when selecting leaders. This coincides with Kannan's (2009) argument that socio-economic empowerment of women leads to more decision-making and participation on the part of the women.

Reduced gender-based violence

The fight against the GBV program influences the reduction in GBV. About 52.1% of the respondents believed that the contribution of INGOs had reduced GBV at a medium rate (Table 1). This achievement was attributed to the raising of awareness on women rights done by AAIK through the KLRP. About 13.5% of the respondents felt that the INGOs' development programmes had reduced GBV. It was noteworthy that there were forms of GBV that drastically reduced due to the INGOs' programs. As noted earlier, introduction of boarding facilities and secondary schools led to a drastic reduction in teen pregnancies. This was an indication of reduced GBV against girls. This translated into increased enrolment of girls in schools as opposed to what was the situation before as reported in the County records (ROK, Makueni County Government, 2013). The cases of GBV have reduced in the study area, although a lot more needs to be done to protect the young girls from defilement cases which seem to be common in the area. In some cases, the GBV victims are threatened or coerced by being given money to change their stories, especially when the case involves a minor. Additionally, cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are not discussed openly as the community treats such as taboo and the community elders often wish to settle the cases quietly.

The GBV victims are therefore silenced by the community elders so that they do not pursue justice through the proper mechanisms. This is a global problem and as articulated by Joshi (2008), violence against women is a global epidemic that crosses boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity, and age. ActionAid Kenya carries out training on empowering the community with the relevant information on how to deal with issues of GBV. The organization trains women on issues of GBV and SGBV and then uses the women it has trained to create awareness on women rights in the community and in schools (AA, 2015). This has given women more freedom to participate in fighting GBV. Kannan (2009) stated that women with greater freedom are more likely to participate in GBV issues, especially in rural areas and this enhances their socio-economic empowerment.

On the other hand, a high population number of the respondents (34.4%; low & 52.1%: medium) indicated low contribution of AAK towards GBV. During baseline survey 2013 the study established that there were high issues of early pregnancies, child labour, defilement, drug abuse and negligence by parents. This is a pointer to the need for GBV issues in Makueni County to be addressed so that the fight against GBV can be successful. Other studies, such as Joshi (2008) have maintained that violence against women is a global issue and that the best way to deal with it is to empower women socially and economically with the relevant information.

Access to and control over resources

Majority of the respondents (71.9%) said that INGOs programs had not contributed much on access to and control over resources as compared to a mere 8.3% who indicated a high contribution (Table 1). The main resources that the study considered were land, crops, cattle, goats, chicken, and loans. Chi Square test showed that there was no significant association between age of respondents and access to and control of resources ($p=0.239$) as indicated in Table 1. However, there was significant association between education level of respondents and access to and control over resources ($p=0.003$). About 83 % of the respondents with primary school education level said that the INGOs programs had low contribution and only 1.7% indicated high contribution. However, 50% of respondents with secondary level of education said the programs had low contribution against 20.5% who indicated high contribution towards access to and control over resources. The

significance level is an indication that education level of women contributions positively towards improvement on access to and control over resources. Gender-based violence also influences control of resources, since married women are expected to surrender resources such as their personal income to their spouses. Men are socialised to have power and exercise control over women's resources by marriage (Asiyanbola, 2005).

In addition, owing to the patriarchal nature of the Kamba society, in Makueni County the perception is that men have more rights and power to control resources. In 2013 Kenya strengthened women's land rights by passing the Matrimonial Property Act 2013. This reinforced the equal rights enshrined in the constitution for both spouses when they own property together and granted new rights to women landowners. The study revealed through key informants that there had been many other obstacles including cultural tradition and lack of awareness that hindered women from accessing their fair share of land and property. The AAIK have worked through building capacities of communities to demand their rights through empowerment, campaigns and solidarity building. It worked with partners such as KAKAKI in the campaign to demand corporate accountability. It also linked them with other organizations like Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), Kituo cha Sheria and Kenya National Land Commission (KNLC) for technical support. This was also attested by chi square tests that revealed that educational level had a significance value ($p=0.003$) on the INGOs contribution to access to and control over resources. This indicates that majority of women respondents had attained primary education and had little power to access to and control over resources. These results concur with Munuve in her 2011 findings that though most women have access to factors of production, they do not have control over the same. A study by GOK (2010) revealed that access to productive land is an impediment for both youth and women in agriculture. The reason for this is that traditional systems bestow land ownership to family heads, who happen to be the senior men in the households. As a result, women surrender control over resources to their spouses

The study found out that in some parts of Makueni County, such as Kithuki and Yekanga, poor gender relations in households favoured men, and that the women seemingly accepted this as the norm. According the Longwe framework, women need to be empowered in five levels, the highest being the level of control (Clark & Taplin, 2012). At this level there should be equitable control for men and women in decision-making processes over the factors of production without one being in a dominant position (Longwe, 2001). These findings imply that the INGOs have not adequately addressed all levels of empowerment, since women lack control over most of the factors of production.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions.

The study sought to assess the contribution of INGOs' development programs to socio-economic empowerment of women in Makueni County, Kenya. The findings revealed that the contribution of INGOs had improved the status of women in Makueni County though not as expected by the women. The socio-economic empowerment of women depended on the specific development programs such as education, water and sanitation. Women felt that there was great contribution of INGOs on provision of water and sanitation, awareness of women rights, livelihood and resilience through the CFA/FFA program.

Furthermore, the findings indicated low contribution on access to and control over resources. This was attributed to limited opportunities from women to control the productive resources and the income gained. Men seemed to have control when it came to decision-making on what the women earned in INGOs development projects. The study established that there was need for the INGOs to involve local women in participation of governance issues for more representation in leadership. This will enhance the involvement of women in distribution and utilisation of family and public resources and fight against GBV, a challenge that has persisted for many decades.

All these notwithstanding, the rate of poverty in Makueni County has continued to persist despite the many INGOs in the County and one wonders whether the contribution of the INGOs' development projects has resulted in women socio-economic empowerment or in overdependence. Overall socio-economic empowerment of women would translate to actualization of the SDGs.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations towards enhancing the contribution of INGOs' development programs to the socio-economic empowerment of women in Makueni County.

There is need for the INGOs operating in Makueni County to address issues of access and control of productive resources, cultural practices, and participation of women through more awareness of their rights. The INGOs should focus on more capacity building to enhance participation of women in leadership and governance as well as proper public resource allocation and utilization. This will reduce the issue of dependence of women on their husbands and INGOs funding.

The county government should partner well with INGOs within the county and support their projects by allocating enough budget especially on food and security, education and women rights. This will enhance access to and control of resources by women and lead to more IGA hence increased income and reduced poverty levels.

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