



SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MUKAA-KITAINGO WARD, KENYA

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Abstract: *Women are considered to be the drivers of economies in many societies especially in the rural areas and are supposed to be key stakeholders in community development projects. However, gender inequality pushes them to the periphery of economic development, thus denying them the opportunities that emanate from community development projects. This study aimed at examining the socio-economic and cultural barriers to women participation in community development projects in, Mukaa-Kitaingo Ward, guided by three key objectives i.e. cultural, educational, and economic factors. The study was grounded on Participatory Development Model and adopted descriptive survey design, where systematic random sampling was used to determine the sampling size enlisting 189 participants from the Ward. Data was collected through administration of questionnaires. The study established that cultural practices, lack of equal opportunities, economic challenges and inadequate skills were derailing women participation in community development projects. The study recommended that women continue fighting for their rights by seeking leadership positions in community development projects, as well as acquiring skills and involving themselves in income generating activities as a way of increasing their capacity to fully participate in community development projects. Gender parity should also be observed in the hierarchy and membership of community development projects.*

Key words: *community development, participation, Women, gender inequality*

1.1 Background to the Study

Women form an important cog in the economy of any society or country. Undoubtedly, women are the engine that drives rural economies. Their participation in the economy especially in the economic sector is evident. According to World Bank (2007) women across the globe, supply 70 percent of labour in the development sector. Women are therefore major stakeholders in community development projects that involve their lives. Consequently, Chikati (2009) recommends that for a community development project to succeed, participation by all stakeholders in that community is of

utmost necessity. However, women participation in community development projects is hampered by a number of obstacles that are mostly placed by the society.

Myers (2015) observes that, worldwide, women perform two-thirds of the world's work, earn one-tenth of the world's income, are two thirds of the world's illiterate, and owns less than one-hundredth of the world's property. This shows that women stand from a disadvantaged position where traditional perception about their roles restricts their contributions and participation in such development projects. This perception tends to hold women back from contributing to important economic activities in the society (USAID, 2016). In many African countries e.g. women in South Africa's rural areas manage their families while their husbands work in the cities, industries or mines. Traditionally, women have been regarded as a lot who belong at home where they are expected to minister to the needs of their husband and children, but decisions on economic and political issues are solely undertaken by men (Zondo, 1995). Addressing the negative effects of gender discrimination and inequality is an integral part of the socio-economic project of transformation (Kruppenbach, 1987), observes that despite the equality provisions in many African constitutions and land restitution process established since 1994, it has become highly unlikely that women will be in a position to make claims as individuals (Friedman, 1999). The restructuring of the African agricultural economy requires affirmative measures to give effect to the principal of equal opportunities (Van Rooyen et al, 1993). Women in Africa have a long tradition of participating in savings, production, marketing and mutual-aid organizations (UNIFEM, 2000).

Few women in Africa hold decision-making positions. None-representation of women in any organization implies that policies facing them are not adequately addressed. Rural women's involvement in development has been the focus of intensive debates at most international forums in the past years. The impact of development on rural women differs from that of women in urban areas. Substantial evidence suggests that rural women have been consistently neglected in this process (Meer, 1998). There is also overwhelming evidence that development policies and projects were formulated without the involvement of rural women in most African countries (Hunger Project, 2000). The majority of population in developing countries lives in rural areas, where they play the role of food producers. Development is not an isolated activity and it implies progress from a lower state to a preferred higher one (Olopoenia, 1983; Pradip, 1984).

In Kenya women's position does not differ from the above situation. It is not uncommon to find women supporting very large families although the majority of them are still very poor. Therefore community development projects which are usually formed with the aim of improving the living conditions of the poor cannot be effective unless women participate in their projects' formulation, design and implementation and evaluation as contributors as well as beneficiaries. In this area women are the main providers of basic services such as housing, education for their children, clothing and food. Although women do all these, their role remains largely unrecognized

Sevig (2015) suggests that, women's situation can be improved by strengthening their participation in developmental decision-making processes at all levels, encouraging their participation in elections and government, favoring their active participation in local communities and civil society organizations as well as in national political life, adopting targeted policies and instruments, providing them with the necessary tools, notably in the form of guidance and protection models, and addressing their problems and concerns in the political process through the creation of the parliamentary groups on the status of women.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women are considered to be the drivers of economies in many societies especially in the rural areas. They are supposed to be key stakeholders in community development projects. However, gender inequality pushes them to the periphery of economic development, thus denying them the opportunities that emanate from community development projects. According to Ogbuji (2015), in many African communities, women are not allowed to participate in decision making and are rarely consulted because they are seen as inferior in the society. For instance, Kenya is rated among the top ten most unequal countries in the world and fifth most unequal countries in Africa (Mulwa, 2010).

Educational Levels constitute a major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable structure to human interaction, the education system in Kenya has not favoured women especially in the rural areas. The way it was established has a lot to say about the current discrimination practices in the system. At first women or girls were educated on how to take care of their families, as for example in home science courses and they were always socialized to be of secondary importance to men. Men were educated for jobs away from home and were mainly seen as the family breadwinners of the family. This kind of system then played a key role in eliminating women from the economic activities of the community, even though they play a dominant role in subsistence economies and create a structure where women were made to be solely responsible for reproductive roles.

In many areas majority hold up to secondary education and few rations attain up to college levels. This leaves them with a challenge to fully participate for the achievement of social or economic ends, to specify how resources are allocated. Tasks, responsibilities and value are assigned as well as determining who gets what, who does what, and who decides. Therefore men having a better hand in education dominate most of the social institutions and women in most cases become passive recipients of male chauvinism.

Although women may be interested in participating in community development projects, the outcome of such projects does not seem to benefit them economically as they are rarely involved in decision making (Vixathep, 2011). Their participation is sometimes hampered by the obstacles placed on their way by the society (Ogbuji, 2015). These barriers may include inadequate education, cultural, economic factors. This implies that their participation in such development entities can be described as disjointed and unsatisfactory. It is in the light of this observation that the researcher sought to carry out a study to establish the underlying factors influencing their participation in community development projects.

1.3 Study Objective

The general objective of the study was to investigate the socio-economic and cultural barriers to women participation in community development projects in Mukaa -Kitaingo ward, Makueni County.

1.4 Justification of the Study

This study is justified by the fact that although several researches have been carried on community development, few have addressed the role of women in those projects. However, the few that exist differ with in terms of factors, locations and contexts since not all factors may concur or be the similar. There has been little or no empirical studies done to examine women participation in Mukaa ward. It is hoped that the findings of this study would sensitize stakeholders on how best to involve women participation in community projects not just in Kilome Sub-County, but also in the entire County and beyond.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will be significant to the following categories of people. First, to the women, the findings of this study may help to create awareness among women about the specific hindrances and how to minimize them and hence enable them to participate fully in community development projects. Secondly, community development projects coordinators will benefit from this study by making them understand the role and importance of involving both genders in such projects. This study stands to inform the County policy makers on the necessity of gender mainstreaming as a tool to achieving productive rural development. Thirdly, the researchers might also benefit from this study. Any research that is conducted is geared towards generating new knowledge. It is in the light of this fact that, this research is going to add new knowledge in the field of community development projects and gender issues. Hence, this research may be helpful to other researchers who would want to research more and build on it.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

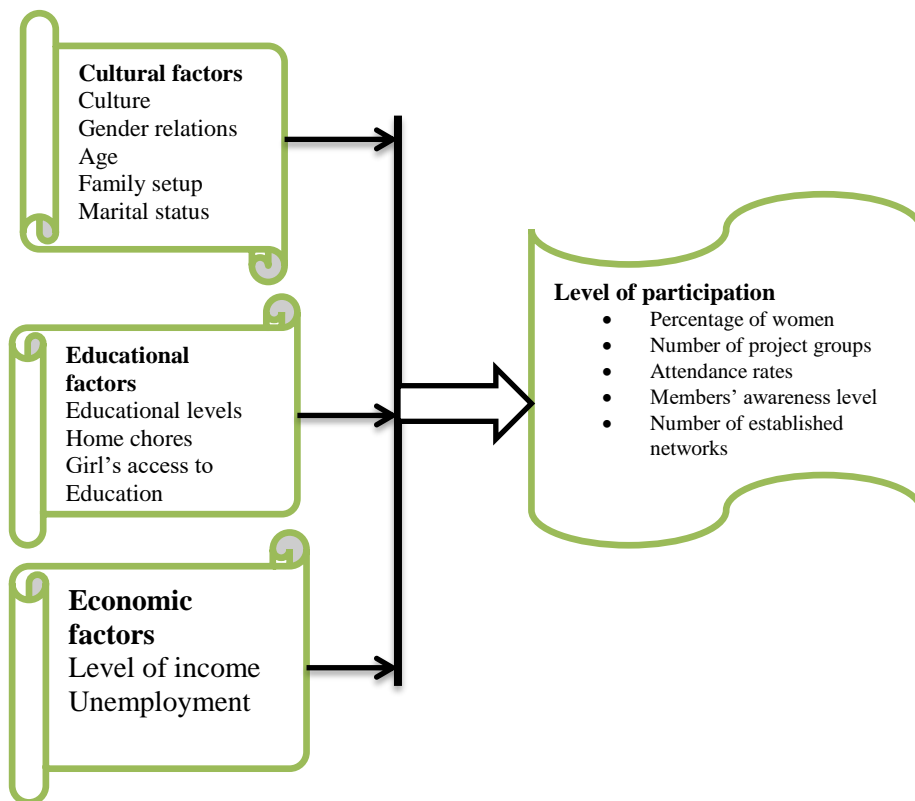


Fig 1. Conceptual framework (Source: Author 2019)

1.7 Literature Review

Theoretical review

Participatory Development Model

The theory of Community Participation was developed by Arnstein in 1969 (Mulwa, 2010). The particular importance of Eisenstein's work stems from the explicit recognition that there are

different levels of participation, from manipulation or therapy of citizens, through to consultation, and to what might be considered as genuine participation which is the levels of partnership and citizen control.

The central motivation of Participatory Development Model is people and their aspirations. The model advocates that people's needs are the primary purpose for any development planning and intervention. Other development concerns are secondary and should also be at the service of the people (Mulwa, 2010).

The participation development model proposes five key areas that the organization promoting participation may take. The first one involves informing people what is planned. It is followed by consultation stage where options are offered, listening to feedback without allowing new ideas. Then both parties move to the next stage which is referred to as deciding together. At this level, additional options and ideas are allowed and an opportunity for joint decision making. Then the stage of supporting independent community interests where local groups are offered funds, advise or supported to develop their own agendas but within the guidelines.

Empirical review

Without sufficient social capital, women find it difficult to build an independent economic status and hence have limited development projects. Although ownership and access to community project is complex, women are generally not able to benefit from the principal output from the projects economy, despite playing varied and often unacknowledged roles economy, the commercialization of the products has also occurred at the expense of women, who have been marginalized from the domains of power they were previously associated with. Male inheritance remains the norm despite national legislation enforcing equitable inheritance of property.

In addition, conflict and environmental degradation has eroded the pastoralist economy and because of the existing marginal status of women, they have also increased the vulnerability of women disproportionately to that of men. Female-headed households have become entirely dependent on activities such as firewood and grass collection in order to out subsistence living standards. With few assets or savings and with little or no access to financial services, these households succumb more quickly to crises and take longer to recover economically. For those who have lost their entire livestock herd, abandoning the pastoralist economy is often the only option and they are forced to settle on the outskirts of urban areas (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2007).

When it comes to describing gender relations, many assert that women are unable to own and dispose of belongings, which represents not only the principal economic output of the subsistence economic but also serves as a sign of prestige and social status. But a man often needs his wife or mother to access particular aspects and the ownership of and access rights to her households' are complex and poorly understood in many cases. A great deal of women's time is spent tending animals such as goats and sheep around the homestead and also at the same time collecting water and fodder for sick animals and have extensive knowledge concerning animal health. In some cases, girls accompany boys and men when tracking livestock in order to cook and clean for them (Hodgson, 2000)

The fundamental reason for the existence of an educational system is that it plays a significant role in the economy of any society. In view of this, it is essential that the education provided meets the economic needs of a society, thus enhancing efficiency in the use of social and economic resources, leading ultimately to improved economic growth and social well-being (Mugisha et al, 1991; Mwamwenda, 1994). Education contributes to economic development, equalizes opportunities between social classes, reduces disparities in the distribution of income and prepares the labour force for a modern economy (Kriefer, 1985).

Educating the women in Sub-Saharan Africa has been noted to have a powerful developmental effect in the light of the women's cardinal role of nurturing, rearing, socializing and educating children. Women are considered as economically active for they function as both producers and consumers of goods. Their capacity to actively serve in these areas can be enhanced if they are provided with adequate levels of education (Browne and Barrett 1991). A lack of education deprives women from being productive in the rural areas. This can be attributed to the fact that they will remain ignorant of ways and means of increasing production on the farm (Kelly, 1987a).

Economic gains can be made in a more appropriate way only when women are included in development planning. More inclusive development will serve to protect lifestyles and livelihoods that are tailored to the environment while at the same time not denying them of the benefits of national development to increase productivity. Customary, rangelands, forests and water resources were held as communal property, with access and use rights determined by group affiliation. Women, for instance Boran women from Southern Ethiopia, were excluded from customary management regimes and relied on men to access natural resources (Watson, 2003).

According to Oguonu (2000) women participation in community development is an important element and a sure way to speedy development of the rural communities in Kenya. According to Eudora (1997) in the wake of the global conference on women in Beijing, China, the world community has witnessed several conferences where efforts have continued to encourage women participation in their societal development. Similar conference was held in Africa in November, 1994 in Dakar Senegal where the African Platform for action was prepared for ratification in Beijing. The platform states the need to accelerate the societal, economic and political empowerment of all women at all levels and stages of their lives using the universal principles of equal partnership between men and women; a fuller and more active participation of women in policy formulation and decision making processes of government; the participation of women in economic, social and political empowerment at all levels on an equal footing with men, women becoming active contributors in and benefiting from all aspects of national development; and priority action being taken for protecting the human rights of girls and ensuring that they receive adequate nurturing, care and education and opportunity for achieving their full potential equally with their brother.

1.8 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey which entails facts finding inquiries adding that the major purpose of descriptive research is description of affairs as it exists at present (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Due to the nature of the study, the researcher used this design in order to determine and report the way things are and attempt to describe such things as possible behavior, attitudes, values and characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. The method of data collection was tested for validity and reliability, conditions which according to Kothari, (2005) must be present in descriptive studies

Table 1: Breakdown of the targeted population

Category	Population Frequency			% of the total population
	Men	Women	Total	
Officials	60	24	84	24
Members	110	221	331	76
Totals	170	245	415	100

Researcher, 2019

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample is a smaller group obtained from the accessible population. Where allows it should be big enough to minimize error because there is high positive correlation between findings from two samples selected from the same population. The researcher used systematic random sampling. In systematic random sampling; the researcher randomly picked the first person from the population group register. Then, the researcher selected prime numbers from the list. This method was considered because of its simplicity and assurance that the sample was evenly distributed. It allows the researcher to add a degree of system or process into the random selection of subjects. A sample of 10% was considered representative. Therefore as the table 3.2 43% of population was considered representative. This approach was considered appropriate since the use of judgment ensured a survey of a representative sample of socio-economic and cultural factors influencing the participation of women in community development projects in Mukaa Ward. In addition, considering the time and budget constraints, it was considered an appropriate sampling strategy that would yield representative results.

Table 2: Breakdown of the sampled population

Category	Population Frequency	Proportion sample	Sample proportion in %
Officials	84	59	60
Members	331	130	38
Totals	415	189	43

Source: Researcher, 2019

Sampling procedure may be defined as a systematic process of identifying individuals for a study to represent the larger group from which they are selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample is a small group obtained from accessible population thus; Systematic random sampling was applied in carrying out the study. As per the three groups of officials and members a sample of 43% of the total population was used therefore 189 respondents constituted the sample population for the study.

Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

Questionnaires were designed as per the objectives of the study. With the assistance of a research assistant, the study used primary data; this was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on respondent's perception on socio-economic and cultural barriers to participation of women in community development projects in Mukaa ward. A questionnaire was a useful tool for collecting data from respondents because of the need to provide a means of expressing their views more openly and clearly. These questionnaires were administered through "drop and pick later" method.

1.9 Findings and Discussions

Distribution of Questionnaires and the Return Rate

The Table 3 below presents the number of respondents who participated in the study.

Table 3: Questionnaire Distribution

Respondent Type	Targeted Questionnaires		Returned Questionnaires	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Respondents	189	100	180	95
Total	189	100	180	95

Source: Primary data, 2019

Table 3 shows that a total of 189 questionnaires were distributed but only 180 were filled and returned back. This is 95% return rate. Hence, 5% of the targeted respondents were not able to participate as anticipated before. However, this number that was not able to participate did not jeopardize the outcome of the study in any significant way. Therefore, the number that participated was adequate to give a feel of the situation on the ground, which contributed positively to the success of this study.

Demographic Information of the Participants

Respondents were asked to provide their demographic details in terms of marital status, gender, family set up, age, educational level and level of income and types of projects they participate in.

Marital Status Distribution of the Respondents

Table 4: Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	78	43
Single	64	36
Divorced	38	21
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

From the Table 4 above, there were 43% of married respondents, 36% were single and 21% were divorced. This is an indication that majority of the participants were married. Most of the participants were therefore people with family responsibilities.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Table 5: Gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	83	46
Female	97	54
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

The study sought to establish the gender of the respondents, to which 54% were female while 46% were male. This implies that female respondents outnumbered their male counterparts. This augured well for the study as it actually targeted women more than male.

Age distribution

The study embarked on establishing the age distribution of the participants. Their responses are presented on Table 6.

Table 6: Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-25 years	48	27
26-30 years	42	23
31 -35 years	45	25
50 and above	45	25
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

Participants aged between 20 to 25 years were 27%, those aged 31 to 35 years were 25% and those aged 50 and above were 25% while those aged 26 to 30 years were 23%. Therefore, majority of the participants were aged from 20 to 25 years followed by those aged over 50 years. Hence, all age categories ranging from youth to middle aged and the aged were represented in the study.

Level of Education

Table 7: Level of Education

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
None	24	10
Primary	37	21
Secondary	40	23
College	41	24
University	39	22
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

From Table 7, majority of the respondents (24%) had college education, followed by those with secondary education (23%). Those with university education were 22% while those with primary education were 21%. This is an indication that majority of the participants had at least secondary school education which enabled them to read, understand the items of the questionnaire and respond to them appropriately.

Nature of community project**Table 8: Kind of community projects**

Kind of community projects	Frequency	Percent
Dairy	37	21
Water projects	39	22
Tailoring	32	18
Schools	48	26
Others	24	13
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

Regarding what kind of community projects were found in the area, school projects emerged the most populous at 26%, water projects followed at 22%, then dairy projects at 21%. Tailoring projects accounted for 18% while other projects accounted for 13%. Hence, most of the participants were involved in school related projects.

Those running the community projects

The study sought on establishing those running the projects.

Table 9: Those managing the community projects

Who runs these community projects	Frequency	Percent
Men	28	15
Women	30	17
Both parties	52	29
Government	47	26
Others	24	13
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

When the respondents were asked who managed the community development projects, 44% of the respondents indicated that it was both parties, 26% said it was the government, 17% said it was women and those who indicated that it was men were 15% while those who indicated that it was others were 13%. This implies that most projects were run by both men and women. This is an indication that gender parity was probably observed.

Influence of Culture on Women Participation in Community Development Projects**Table 10: Practicing Traditional Culture**

Do you practice your traditional culture	Frequency	Percent
Yes	83	46
No	97	54
Total	180	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

The respondents were asked whether they practice traditional culture, to which 54% disagreed while 46% agreed. This implies that majority of the respondents do not practice traditional culture. This also means that few of them are influenced by the traditional culture.

Type of culture

Table 11: Type of culture

Type of culture	Frequency	Percent
Polygamy	25	14
Female Genital Mutilation	29	16
Early marriage	26	14
Cattle herding for younger boys	43	24
Others	57	32
Total	180	100

Source: Primary data, 2019

Table 12: Cultural impediments to Women Participation in Community Development Projects

<i>Women participation in community development projects</i>	SA	%	A	%	M	%	D	%	SD	%
Women fully participates in community development projects	45	25	53	29	29	16	32	18	14	3
Women are given equal opportunities to participate in leadership positions	29	16	45	25	27	15	100	56	30	17
Women are recognized by men in community development projects	28	16	52	29	29	16	43	24	29	16
Family set up prohibits women leading men	36	20	47	26	27	15	38	21	33	18
Culture discourages women from taking leadership positions	27	15	41	23	26	14	42	23	45	25

Source: Primary data, 2019

Economic factors affecting women's participation in Community Development Projects

Business ownership

Table 13: Business ownership

Do you run any business?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	95	53
No	85	47
Total	66	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2019

The respondents were asked whether they run any business, to which 53% said yes and 47% said no. Therefore, majority of the participants are running businesses.

Table 14: Economic factors affecting women participation in community development projects

Economic factors affecting women participation in community development projects	SA	%	A	%	M	%	D	%	SD	%
Economic challenges keep women away from community development projects	41	23	61	34	25	14	28	16	26	14
Most women have no access to loans due to lack of security	41	23	58	32	28	16	27	15	27	15
Economic status does not deter women from participating in community development projects	30	17	41	23	29	16	49	27	32	18
Many community development projects require some financial contributions which keeps many women away	44	24	55	31	28	16	28	16	26	14

Source: Primary data, 2019

1.10 Conclusion

The study concludes that some cultural practices play a role in hindering women from participating fully in community development projects. For instance, women leading men is looked at as inappropriate. Although women are able to competitively vie for positions in community development projects most of them are not given equal opportunities to participate in leadership positions. The study also concludes that economic challenges keep women away from community development. Specifically, most women have no access to loans due to lack of security which keeps them off community development projects as many projects require some financial contributions of some sorts. Most of the participants had not been trained on how to manage community development projects and to manage finances as well which is hampering their ability to manage community development projects. Most of the participants had transport challenges which are limiting the movement of goods and people. Most of them walk for long distances to get public service vehicles, access health care services and to access sources of water as well as business premises. All these are challenges that are impacting negatively to women's participation in community development projects.

1.12 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:-

Cultural factors

The community should be taught the importance of having the culture and at the same time giving everyone equal opportunity to participate in community development without affecting the men supremacy as the head of the family. Women should be encouraged to vie for community development leadership to provide their input and not being fence sitters and blame men for wrong decision making. The community development leadership should be conducted through competitive election so that they can be accountable to those who elected them and not serving the masters if other methods were used. The men perception towards women that they are inferior should be changed since the world has allowed for equal opportunities and they should not be left behind

Economic factors

There should be another source of income to the community so that they can diversify their sources thus improving on the living standards. The community projects should be increased in the area so that they can enable the community to pull their resources together and also involve women in the running of these projects so that all voices can be heard and blame game will not arise. It is also recommended that the community be taught on the benefits of management and financial skills.

Infrastructural factors

The community infrastructure needs a major facelift since the world has changed and old means of transport should be replaced with the fast and modern. The water points should also be constructed within the reach of many residents to avoid scenarios of women walking for almost a day in search of water thus impacting negatively on their participation in community development. From the study, it has been indicated that there is no health Centre in the village, schools are not equipped and poor enrolment of girls in schools, it is therefore very crucial that the County government should petition the relevant ministries and area member of parliament to consider building a health center to serve a village and also quipping the school to enable the children to compete with those who have access to the facilities. The community should then play its role in enrolling their girls to school to have an equal chance like their counterparts.

Educational factors

The government should partner with other organizations to organize more workshops to sensitize the community on the importance of allowing women to participate on development of the community as this will give the participants the chance to ask questions they feel they are not comfortable with. It is recommended that the workshops should be organized and paid for to encourage many members of the community to attend as those who have attended have gained a lot and their perception may have been changed.

Government Agencies

Government agencies should put up policies that require gender parity in organizations including community development projects. This should include projects' membership and in leadership positions.

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