

**EMPOWERING WOMEN TO ALEVIATE POVERTY THROUGH
ACCESSIBILITY TO INFORMATION: A CASE OF NAROK TOWN**

BY

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DECLARATION

This research proposal is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lecturer and friends whose love, support and understanding made it possible for me to complete it.

To my mother Margaret and sisters. You have always been a source of inspiration.

ABSTRACT

Information and knowledge play an important role in enabling rural women to achieve economic empowerment through poverty alleviation. The general aim of this study was to determine the contribution of information in the empowerment of rural women. In a bid to achieve this objective, the study sought to assess the roles of information in increasing women access and control of economic resources, in assisting women contribute towards economic decisions at the household and community level, and in enabling women access accurate and timely information on credit and business services. The study also looked at the challenge women and marginalized social group face when accessing information.

The study will be conducted in Narok town focusing the attention on business women around Total and the verity environment. In its design, the study will adopt a survey research design, use of random sampling and purposive sampling of cases. Data will be collected using interview and questionnaires. Qualitative data will be analysed through content analysis whereas quantitative data will be analysed using figures and tables.

The study seek to reveal accessibility and contribution of information towards the economic empowerment of rural women in the region. To find out the availability and ue of information among women in advancing the economic growth as a measure to eradicate poverty in the society. The study also intend establish how information enables women make decision at the family and community level as well as in helping them access credit facilities. However, the study will reveal the constraints that limit women from acces information such as social practices, beliefs, masculinity, and cultural practices.

The study will recommend the need for more entrepreneurship training for women as this will enable them raise their incomes. There is also need for capacity building on women so that they

can grow their businesses into profitable enterprises. The study will further recommended diversification of income generating activities by women groups and need for government, private organizations and community members to inculcate a cultural orientation that recognizes women and position in society

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I also wish to express my profound gratitude to Edinah, my colleagues whose constructive criticisms inspired me to do better. Finally, to everyone who assisted me in diverse ways. I say God bless you.

Above all I owe it to my Creator, The Most Loving Father and My Lord Jesus Christ, for the wisdom that comes from above, without which I would be nothing

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women
DFID	Department for International Development
EAWiBP	East African Women in Business Platform
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organization

KWFT	Kenya Women Finance Trust
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OCED	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
TV	Television
UN	United Nation
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WEF	Women Enterprise Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The women's movement which began in America in the 1950's served as a foundational approach towards a collective struggle in delivering women from patriarchal culture which was termed as exploitative and discriminative in all aspects (Boserup, 1970). The movement later found its way to Europe and the rest of the world (Boserup, 1970). An important step towards women empowerment began in 1975 during the first World Conference of the International Women's Year which was held in Mexico. In this conference, it was noted that the problems of women, who constitute half of the world's population, are the problems of society as a whole, and that changes in the present economic, political and social situation of women served as benchmarks in transforming structures in society that hinder women empowerment (United Nations, 1976).

The social, economic, political and cultural empowerment of women has received great attention on global arena. Numerous conventions have been drawn up to advance the development of women. These efforts are informed by the multiple challenges women and girls face and realization that women are the key to pulling society out of poverty. As observed by the 1975 conference on women in Mexico, the challenges faced by women are the same challenges faced by society and the political, economic and social conditions are an important benchmark in women empowerment (United Nations, 1976).

During the 1980 conference in Copenhagen it was noted that significant progress had been made in women development, but more efforts were still required to fully address the plight of women. Due to recognition of importance of gender equality the UN in 1984 established UNIFEM as a separate fund of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to address issues of

gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2005). In 1985, at third women conference held in Nairobi, it was noted that the number and scope of activities in women empowerment had grown (United Nations, 1986). The 1995 conference on women in Beijing further identified important issues in women empowerment and they were: equal access to economic resources including land, credit, science and technology; vocational training; access to information; communication and markets (United Nations, 2012).

Resulting from meetings held by UN and state nations, international instruments and treaties aimed at the improvement of women have been developed. Most importantly is the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 which is regarded as the bill of rights for women (UN Women, 2006). Other conventions and treaties address elimination of violence, equal remuneration, discrimination, education, marriage and exploitation. The international platform has therefore laid proper foundation for continents and countries to effectively empower their female population. These treaties have not merely helped governments and other actors to come up with and implement policies, but have also enabled local women to proactively adopt initiatives like women groups to enhance efforts towards empowerment. These groups have since taken a global role because of their key importance in unifying women to achieving empowerment.

The empowerment agenda in Africa is more rooted in the African Charter on Human and Peoples rights that was adopted in June 27th 1981 by the OAU (AU, 2009). The declaration that was signed by member states is however, in line with the international conventions and other global commitments which many African states are signatories. But the adopted 'Banju' declaration perhaps creates a strong base and commitment towards gender and women empowerment in Africa. In 2009, the AU further developed a gender policy to assist policy

making in Africa. This provided an opportunity to African member states to contextualize gender issues, and most importantly provide a clear vision and make commitments to guide the process of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment to influence policies, procedures and practices which will accelerate achievement of gender equality, gender justice, non-discrimination and fundamental human rights in Africa(AU, 2009).

The global and regional instruments, conventions, resolutions and declarations have therefore, encouraged Kenyan government be in the forefront, in promoting women empowerment. Some of the international and regional instruments, conventions, resolutions and declarations that Kenya is a signatory to include: CEDAW – 1981; the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action – 1995; MDGs; Protocol to the African Charter on

Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa – 2003; and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa – 2004, The African Women’s Decade launched in 2010 in Kenya, with its focus on promotion of economic empowerment of women through fighting poverty, promoting agriculture and food security, improving health, education among others. In addition to these agreements, ratifications and conventions, Kenya has also created policies and laws to help the nation fully address gender issues, these include: Vision 2030 and Medium term Plan (2008-2012), national policy on Gender and Development – 2000, Establishment of a Gender Commission, Presidential Directive on 30 percent of women representation in public service, as well as the world’s most progressive Bill of rights, with the most liberal provisions for women’s rights in its constitution (Kabira and Kimani, 2012).

The government has also instituted programmes to enhance the empowerment initiative in the country. For example, Government kitty’s such as Constituency Development Fund, Women

Enterprise Fund, as well as Uwezo Fund are expected to play a major role in helping women access to resources and relevant information which enables them run their projects consequently, attain empowerment. Apart from government intervention, other actors including financial institutions like Faulu Kenya, K-Rep bank, Equity bank, Kenya Women, Table Banking programme and other non-governmental organization have also played a key role in helping women achieve empowerment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women have been side-lined from fully participating in economic, social and political activities, despite them playing important roles such as being mothers, teachers, nurses, farmers and other professional undertakings pivotal in society. This has usually been manifested by low political representation, retrogressive cultural practices, unequal labour rights, lack of participation in decision making, lack of property ownership rights and lack of access to education. The net effect of this has been to confine women to poverty and socio-economic insecurity.

The rise of information needs and growth of new technology has been recognized as one of the most effective means of transforming society through women by the international community. Information and knowledge are very important in reducing poverty levels amongst women by enabling them to have control over economic resources, make economic decisions at household and community level as well as enabling them have access to credit and business facilities. They also act as unifying factors, bringing women together with an aim of empowering them.

With the explosion of technology in Kenya, smartphones that are able to connect to internet is expected to contribute significantly to the empowerment of women. About 20,000 women

groups had been registered by July 2013, Ministry of Labour (2013), a significant rise compared to 135,294 groups registered in 2005 as indicated by Nokia Research Centre (2009). This raises concern regarding the progress of achieving economic empowerment of women and through provision of information as an avenue to realize Kenya`s vision 2030.

Objectives of the study

General Objective

The aim and purpose of the study was to assess the contribution of information in the economic empowerment of women in Narok town and,

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives were to:

1. assess the extent to which women are able to access information for control of economic resources.
2. evaluate the contribution of information in enabling women to participate in decisions making at the household and community level.
- 3 investigate the level of education and constraints women face as they try to reach for information.
4. Suggest and recommend ways in which women can access, accurate information in timely manner

Research question

- ❖ to what extent is the information available to women utilized towards poverty alleviation?
- ❖ Are women able to make decision substantive decision using the available information?
- ❖ What are the challenges faced by women when seeking information?
- ❖ What ways should women use to access timely and accurate information?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The proposed study was focused on analyzing the contribution of information in the economic empowerment of women. The study was limited to Narok town in Narok County and sought to analyze only women with businesses. To allow for quality collection and analysis of data, the study focus was narrowed down to access to information among 60 women. This was arrived at after consultation with Narok town Social Services officer who indicated that 95% of women in the county were geared towards economic empowerment. The study was also narrowed down to the economic aspect of empowerment of women in the county.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as ethnicity.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of literature and research related to women empowerment. The issue of women empowerment is complex and wide. Empowerment of women and girl child is enshrined in the third goal of UN Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2012). There are various dimensions of empowerment including; psychological, cultural, social, political, and economic empowerment. Psychological empowerment means establishing individual identity, self-image, increasing self-esteem and developing capabilities. Cultural empowerment entails redefining gender rules and norms and recreating cultural practices. Social empowerment includes literacy, social leadership, community action and social inclusion. Political aspects include participation in political affairs of the nation and having representation in all political organs. Economic empowerment occurs when income security is attained, productive assets are owned and entrepreneurial skills are possessed (Sahay, 2006).

Varghese (2011) notes that the suggested framework by authors of women empowerment that includes; economic, socio-cultural, familial, legal, political and psychological dimensions is inadequate. This is because these dimensions contain further sub-dimensions. To ensure a coherent presentation of existing knowledge on women empowerment the reviewed literature will be organized into several thematic areas. These thematic areas include; education and training; equal opportunity, inclusion and non-discrimination; health, safety and freedom from violence and enterprise development. The contribution of women groups in each of these thematic areas will be explored.

2.2 Historical Overview of Women Empowerment and information need

The women's movement which began in America in the 1950's served as a foundational approach towards a collective struggle in delivering women from patriarchal culture which was termed as exploitative and discriminative in all aspects (Boserup, 1970). The movement later found its way to Europe and the rest of the world (Boserup, 1970). An important step towards women empowerment began in 1975 during the first World Conference of the International Women's Year which was held in Mexico. In this conference, it was noted that the problems of women, who constitute half of the world's population, are the problems of society as a whole, and that changes in the present economic, political and social situation of women served as benchmarks in transforming structures in society that hinder women empowerment (United Nations, 1976).

Subsequent meetings held after the first conference indicates that tremendous progress has been made towards realizing the empowerment of women. During the second world conference on women held in Copenhagen in 1980, members agreed that significant progress had been made on women development. The Nairobi conference held in 1985 further indicated that women movements fighting for equality, peace and development had increased in number and grown in scope (United Nations, 1986). In 1995 at a women conference in Beijing, efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people were reaffirmed (United Nations, 2012). It was further noted in the conference that, women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit,

science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, was paramount in the advancement and empowerment of women and girls (United Nations, 2012)

To address further the issue of women empowerment, several avenues arose, including the use of women groups or self-help groups. Women groups arose to address problems that traditional and government institutions failed to solve decisively, the problems of social dislocation, economic recession, and bad governance. Their emergence coincided with major violent conflicts such as world wars, and social dislocation such as during rapid urbanization and industrial revolution (Khan, 1985). Second World War and industrial revolution resulted in humanitarian crises that overwhelmed traditional and state agencies. Levy (1979) observes that most women groups organizations are formed with the objective of survival and helping members enhance their self-esteem through support.

2.3 Empirical studies

The World Bank (1998) Development Report subtitled Knowledge for Development increased awareness of the role of knowledge for development in the world. The vital role of information and knowledge in human development has been hailed by many agencies in the world. The World Bank (1998) and PANOS (online), Asia Development Bank (2007) have all noted that all human development is based on the acquisition, dissemination and use of knowledge. Poverty eradication, therefore, would also be one area which would benefit tremendously benefit from access to relevant and appropriate information (FAO, 2006).

The study by Werner and Kruger (2007) was aimed at establishing the level of knowledge and skills of resettled farmers (who practice communal farming) which would enable them to transform their farming to commercial farming which is more profitable. It is quite apparent that

the level of knowledge deficit is high in most areas which are core to commercial farming. Table (1) provides a summary of the findings. Nearly half of the farmers interviewed had poor to very poor knowledge in technical areas of livestock farming, while more than a third rated their own knowledge in financial management as very poor or poor. Practical skills areas of knowledge were rated as poor or very poor by nearly three quarters of respondents. Kruger et al (2007:29) conclude that these finding clearly indicates there is a great need for information support and skills capacity building.

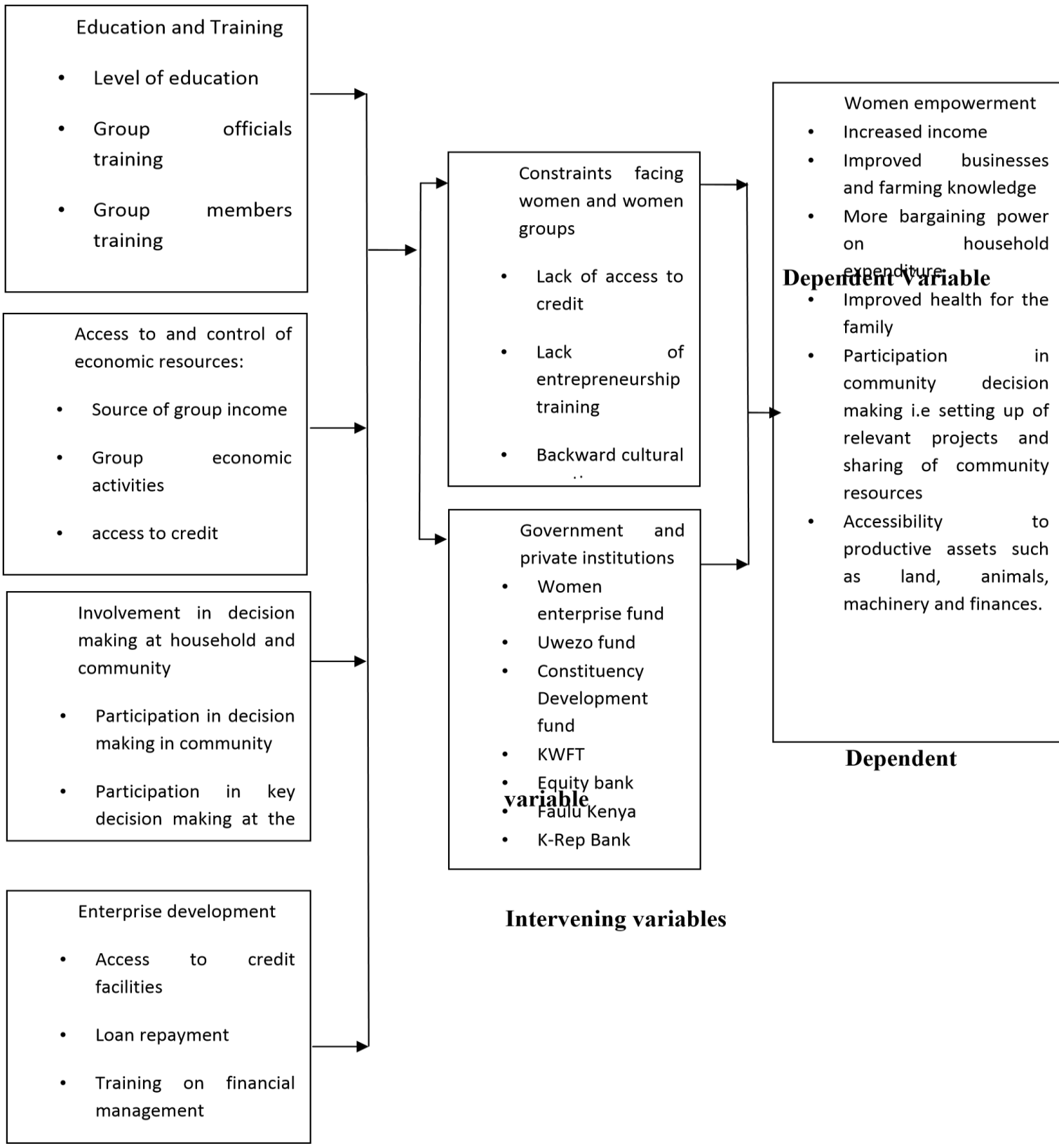
Mchombu (2012:83) study conducted in Katutura, one of the poorest parts of the City of Windhoek, found that the information needs of poor people to address poverty eradication differed slightly between adults and young people. Whereas adults indicated b information needs as follow i) small business and income generating opportunities ii) practical information on how to eradicate poverty iii) self-employment opportunities iv) agricultural knowledge to start agricultural projects. For young people, their greatest need for information was i) employment opportunities ii) financial information ‘to know where to get loans’ iii) skills and know how to manage finances iv) hygiene information. It was evident that while the adults wanted information to enable them to set up their own small business, young people preferred information to enable them to join the employment sector. Agriculture information needs were not prominent in this study, partly because it was done in an urban context. Indeed other studies done in rural areas had found there was a high level of information needs on all agricultural related matters (Chambers 1983; Mchombu 1992)

A study conducted in Kenya by Odini, Otike, and Kiplang’at (2012) found that women in Vihiga District constantly encountered or experienced varied information needs provoked by work activities in the area of agriculture, business, health, transport, and job / career information,

among others. Unfortunately, women information needs could not be satisfied by existing information systems and services. Women relied on oral channels or sources of information, for example neighbours, relatives, and friends. These preferred sources of information could not provide timely, accurate, relevant, and adequate information needed for socio- economic development. Available sources did not contain information on socio – economic development - therefore had no impact on poverty alleviation. Women, therefore, remained powerless in their daily endeavours to work effectively and alleviate the poverty that afflicted them.

2.4 Conceptual framework on women empowerment

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework Independent Variables



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter described the study population, the sample and the study units. Furthermore the chapter described the data to be used, the data sources and the instruments that were used to gather the data. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods and also used primary and secondary data sources. Finally the chapter explained the approaches that were used in data management, data analysis and presentation of the findings.

3.1 Site Description

The study will be conducted in Narok town, Narok County and focused on employed and women with businesses. Agriculture and business are the main economic activities in the subcounty. The agricultural activities such as wheat, maize, dairy and poultry farming among others.

3.2 Research Design

The study proposed to use descriptive-survey design. Survey analysis is primarily concerned with relationships between variables. Being a quantitative method, survey research is used purposely to get facts by directly collecting data from the population under study. Through this type of design, researchers are able to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours and characteristics of the population based on data collected from the study sample. However, the information collected from the study population using the survey design must reflect the total population. In other words, the findings obtained from the sample population ought to be findings that can be generalized to the whole population (Kothari, 2003). Therefore, the researcher selected a representative sample from the total population of women of Narok town in order to carry out the study.

3.3 Target Population

A population is defined as the universe of all study objects while a sample is a sub section that is selected to be included in the study. For purposes of the study, the population was defined as all

employed and self employed women in Narok town. The total population is 400 women according to joywo(joyful women enterprise group) A sample of 60 women will be selected from these women, which is 15% of the total population.

3.4 Sample Size

A scientifically selected sample enables a researcher to make observations from the sample that can be generalized to the population. A sample therefore is a small proportion of a targeted population selected using systematic procedures to enable one acquire generalization towards the entire population (Wiersma, 1985). A sample size of 60 women was used to collect data.

3.5 Data Collection

The study will use primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. Questions in the interview schedule acted as a guide for the researcher to prompt for information about a range of women empowerment issues. effectiveness of information towards enabling women access government funds and business services; constraints women face in their efforts to effectively empower women and contribution of government and other actors in the development of women. The data collected was at an individual level.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collection exercises yield quantitative data and will be analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. The data will be presented in form of bar graphs, tables and charts. The data was then interpreted and a report was written from the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the extent to which women access information, level of education and training effectiveness information in enabling women to access and control economic resources, make decisions at household and community level. The chapter also presents information on the contribution of

information and knowledge in the development of women. The research proposed to sample 60 business women operating within Narok town.

The findings are presented below.

4.2 extent to which women access information

The study targeted respondents from all women age groups to identify the extent to which they access information. The age groups, were studied in order to establish the age group that was most involved in businesses and how they acquired and utilized information to support their business. From the study findings, majority at 60% were aged between 31 and 40 years. 40 to 50 years were 20%, while respondents below 30 years formed 15% of all respondents. Respondents aged 51 – 60 years formed 5%. This distribution shows that most women were aged between 31 and 50 years. Their access to information varied significantly from group to group. This resulted to difference in the utilization of technology.

Age group	Use smartphones	Computers	Newspapers	Library	Radio/TV	None
Below 30	3	None	None	1	4	1
30-40	14	2	5	3	10	2
40-50	5	1	2	None	3	1
51+	1	none	1	None	none	1

4.3 FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Level of education	Illiterate	Primary education	Secondary	Post-secondary	Adult education
Distribution	2	4	45	5	4
percentage	3.3%	6.7%	70%	8.3%	6.7%

The study indicated that majority of the respondents had secondary education; 80% of women had secondary education. The business women who had post-secondary were 10%. 4% of respondents had received adult education while another 4% had received primary education. The women who indicated that they had not received any education were 2%. The findings above show that most women had been exposed to formal education mainly at the secondary level.

In this study, establishing the educational level of the respondents was essence because education and training is a vital component that has been linked to improving the economic status of women. Improved education enhances the use of new technology to access information which enables women to have a greater voice in household decisions, more autonomy in shaping their lives, and better opportunities for participating in the community and labor markets. Education also enables women within a community to acquire new skills thus improving service delivery.

4.4 TRAINING ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

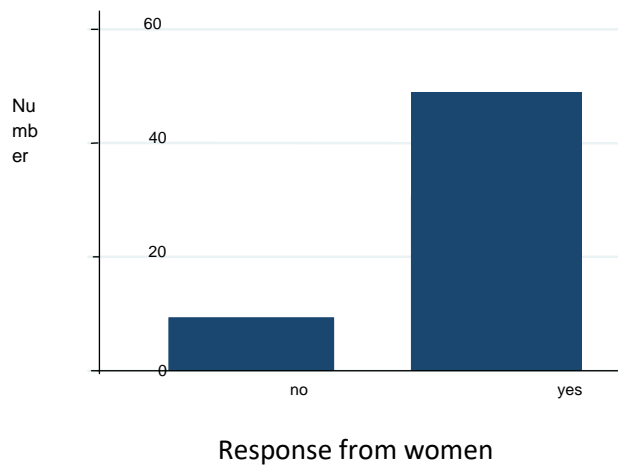
When asked whether they had received training as business owners, 54 respondents indicated they had received training while six indicated they had not received any training. These respondents represented 90% and 10% respectively. Training according to the respondents was provided by Faulu official, Equity Bank official, Kenya Women Finance Trust Fund official, and Joywo Sacco. However, the 54 respondents said that the training received was basic and that they needed more specialized business start-up courses and technical assistance. According to the respondents, this will enable them improve their entrepreneurship skills and as Kibas (2006) puts it, lack of opportunities for management training,

financial management and people management have hampered women and their organizations from effectively engaging on enterprise development.

Key informant who participated in this study were in agreement that most women lacked the entrepreneurship skills and had no idea how to successfully run a business, a claim that she said had affected the effectiveness

On her part, Key informant from micro finance institutio and government noted that women receive basic business management training from their institutions. They said that most women go through seminars on how to manage their finances through their financial institutions before they are given any finance. However, they agreed that their trainings were basic and limited to the contractual period of loans.

Figure 4.11: Training on Entrepreneurship Skills



4.5 DECISION MAKING BY WOMEN

The study revealed that decision making by women was determined by marital status, number of children the women has as well as how much these women are exposed to information.

4.5.1 MARITAL STATUS

The study found that 75% of the respondents were married, while those who indicated that they were not married comprised 15% of the respondents. It was also noted that 5% of the respondents had separated with their spouses and 5% were widowed. This meant that were married. However, the single, separated and the widowed members hailed the effectiveness of information in addressing economic challenges encountered in their day to day lives.

Table 4.5: Marital Status of Respondents.

Marital status	Distribution	Percentage
Single	9	15
Married	45	75
Separated	3	5
Widowed	3	5
Total	n=60	100

4.5.2 NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Most respondents as shown in figure 4.3 below indicated that they had children under their care. Only 3 respondents said that they did not have any children, whilst 18 noted that they had less than three children. 27 respondents indicated that they had 4 -7 children while 12 respondents said they had 8 – 11 children. This means that most of the respondents had between 4 – 7 children. The above findings could explain the increased involvement of women in women groups as an effective means of

addressing their needs since they carry the added burden of family and domestic responsibilities, especially providing for their children, arguments advanced also by (Richardson, 2004).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

5.1.1 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The study established that information and use of new technology had enabled women access to income generating activities. Women between the age group of 31-50 which represented 80% were able to access information through the use of smartphones or computers which means they were able to access the internet which is the main source of information about businesses in today's society. According most respondents, due to the ease of access to information especially on women empowerment indicated that they were engaged in income generating activities. The Income generating activities identified were maize farming, wheat farming, poultry keeping, posho mill business, and grocery. However, a good number of respondents noted that due to lack of timely information as well as the means to access this information like smartphones hindered them from improving their businesses where they managed their businesses the traditional way. Also lack of information about credit facilities where they can access loans to expand businesses hindered many of them as well as lack of training on

management skills. Access to information about women empowerment for sustainable development enabled most women claim their rights for gender equality in the society.

5.1.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The study revealed that most women who owned businesses in narok town had attained an education level of up to secondary school. This meant that they dint have the skills needed to manage a business well. Those who had gone for post-secondary level secured formal jobs either by the government or private sector. However, 80% of those with secondary level represented a large number and there was need to encourage women to continue with their studies after secondary school.

Education and training are a vital component that has been linked to improving the economic status of women in rural communities. Improved education enhances the effectiveness of information by enabling its women to have a greater voice in household decisions, more autonomy in shaping their lives, and better opportunities for participating in the community and labor markets, UN (2012).

Education also enables women within a community to acquire new skills thus improving service delivery.

5.1.3 TRAINING ON ENTREPRENEURAL SKILLS

The study further revealed that most women had received training on entrepreneurship skills, while a few had not. Training according to the respondents was provided by, Faulu official, Equity Bank official, Kenya Women Finance Trust Fund official, and joywo women sacco. However, the 50 respondents said that the training received was basic and that they needed more specialized business start-up courses and technical assistance. According to the respondents, this will enable them improve their entrepreneurship skills. According to Kibas (2006), lack of opportunities for management training, financial management and people management have hampered women and their organizations from effectively engaging on enterprise development.

5.1.4 DECISION MAKING

The study findings revealed that decision making was attributed to marital status of women as well as the level of education. However, information had improved the level of economic decisions of women at the household and community level. At the individual level, the respondents interviewed said that through access to information and new technology had increased their income as well as knowledge on

how to improve their businesses and farming. The study findings established that out of the 60 respondents, 45 of them affirmed that their decision making at the family level had improved due to ability to access information. The respondents said that some of the decisions made included: increased involvement in budget making in the family; improved education for their children because they were able to pay school fees, expansion of existing family business, improved health for their family members, and adequate provision of basic needs such as food and clothing. Some women interviewed demonstrated that through access to information about their rights as women in the society they have been able to acquire land of their own. The respondents cited patriarchal culture and low level of education as the major hindrances affecting the successful use of information in improving the women's decisions making. Other hindrances to the effective use of information level included; lack of adequate education, the culture of patriarchy whereby men were still the major decision makers at the community level and unwillingness by women to take the lead role when it comes to community issues.

5.2 Conclusion

The study findings revealed that information had averagely enabled most women to access economic resources. Information according to the findings in the study had averagely enabled women to access both resources at the household and community level. Ways in which had enabled them access household economic resources varied. Some reported that information on credit facilities had enabled them acquire plots for poultry and dairy farming, while others noted that their husbands had allowed them to use land at home for agriculture. The income activities carried out included; maize farming, poultry keeping, bee keeping, dairy keeping, posho mill business, grocery shops and wheat farming.

From the findings of the study, it is also clear that through access to information and new technology women were now engaged in economic activities at the community level. Women were participating in identifying and prioritizing development projects, participation in disbursement of CDF funds. However, the respondents noted that they were not in control of these economic activities per say. For example, respondents indicated that accessibility to important assets such as land did not mean they controlled them. They said cultural beliefs were still rooted, giving men custodian roles of major resources. This was the case to the widowed, separated and single women . The study also found that income from many respondents was largely controlled by their husbands. The respondents said that in most cases when they get money, their spouses demand to be given part of it. This they said was a major challenge since they are left with a burden of repaying back to the credit facilities. This study therefore, concludes that access to information have not fully achieved women empowerment.

In decision making, study findings revealed that access to timely and accurate information enabled women make economic decisions at the household as well as community level. Decisions at the household level included budget making within the family, buying machinery for family use, paying of school fees, farming activities within the family, expansion of existing business and providing for family basic needs. At the community level, women were included in community development committees. However, the respondents unanimously said that men were still the main decision makers in families and also community level. This was attributed to cultural beliefs that men were always the heads and major decision makers.

The study findings also revealed that most women had received training on economic empowerment. These trainings were offered by financial institutions as well as the Government. This enabled them manage their businesses better.

Information and new technology according to the study findings were contributing towards the economic empowerment of women. A higher percentage of women affirmed that indeed access to information played a key role in empowering women. The respondents also cited major constraints hindering women from accessing and utilizing information for their empowerment, these constraints included; lack of means on how to access information, lack of proper entrepreneurial skills, interference of business activities by family members, poor leadership skills, stringent conditions imposed by the government and microfinance institution on loan applications, education level, lack of information and cultural beliefs and taboos among others. These constraints according to the study findings limited women from access information to enable them access and control economic resources, making decision at the household as well as community level and access to enterprise development.

5.3 Recommendations

- i) There is need for more entrepreneurship training for women. This will enable them raise their incomes. Also, training on the use of new technology to access information will enable them access information on economic trends. Government and micro finance institutions should play a lead role in this,

because through capacity building, women will be able to grow their businesses into profitable enterprises.

- ii) Women to be encouraged to diversify and not look at farming as the only major source of their business and income. They should explore other options such as mitumba business, transport business, retail business, saloon business and tailoring among others.
- iii) Cultural beliefs perpetuated by patriarchal culture remains to be a major barrier to the effectiveness of information. This is because the society as noted before in the study still holds certain values that are gender discriminatory. Therefore, there is need for government and private organizations and community members to inculcate a cultural orientation that recognizes women and their efforts to alleviate poverty.
- iv) Education and training of women are the key influence towards their success. With necessary training, information will emerge as the major driving force towards women empowerment. Women should also thrive to acquire more formal education, because this will enable them acquire the necessary skills to run their businesses and economic activities efficiently.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study was done on the contribution of information in the economic empowerment of women in narok town, it is suggested that:

- i) A similar study should be replicated in other regions in order to determine the contribution of information and to see whether constraints faced by women are similar in nature.
- ii) Further research is recommended on the role of government and microfinance institution on women empowerment; with a focus on whether information and financial policies are effectively empowering women in Kenya or not.

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APPENDIX.

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Edita Wairimu Muchiri, a Fourth year student Maasai Mara University taking a bachelor degree in Information Science. I am examining how empowering women to alleviate poverty through accessibility of information. You have been selected by chance to assist in providing information that would help in answering the research questions as your views are considered important to the study. You are not required to fill in your names. All information given will be treated with confidentiality and will only be used for this study.

Instructions

Please answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Some questions have more than one answer. Indicate the appropriate answer(s) by use of a tick in the box (es) provided. Where possible fill the spaces provided with your response(s).

PART A

Demographics

Please tick your chosen respond where appropriate

1. Age (Years)

- a) 15 – 20
- b) 21-25
- c) 26 – 30
- d) 31-35
- e) 36- 44

2. Level of education

- a) Primary
- b) Secondary
- c) College
- d) University

3. Marital status

- a) Single
- b) Married
- c) Divorced /Separated

4.Occupation

1)Farming

2)Employed

3)Others(specify).....

5.Indicate your monthly income

1) below Ksh.5000

2)Ksh.5000-10000

3)Ksh. 10000-15000

4) Ksh 15000-20000

5) Above Ksh 20000

PART B

ALLEVIATING POVERTY THROUGH ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION.

1. Are you aware/ have you heard about women economic empowerment?

Yes

No

2. If yes in 1 above, are you a member of any women empowerment group

Yes

No

3. In your opinion does being a member of women empowerment group enables you to access economic information

Yes

No

4. Do information acquired help you in decision making?

Yes

No

5. In what way do you obtain economic information?

1) Education and trainings

2) Equal opportunities

3) Enterprise development

6. What are the constraints you face in accessing information?

- 1) Low political representation
- 2) Retrogressive cultural practices
- 3) Lack of participation in decision making
- 4) Lack of access to education
- 5) Others(specify).....