

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Kenya: A Case of Ogilgei Women in Nakuru County

Josephine M. Khaemba
Egerton University, Kenya

Abstract

Since the 1970s, the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been a topic of discussion in Kenya. Whether the government has delivered on these or not remains a question to be investigated. Many organizations like Women in development (WID), Women's rights organizations, and FEMNET advocate for the power of women to change their lives, their communities and the world. Yet, many women are prevented from enjoying their full human rights because of poverty, discrimination, violence and inequality. The objectives of the study were; to establish the government's delivery on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Ogilgei division of Nakuru County, and to find out how ordinary women of Ogilgei have benefitted from the women's rights organizations and communication networks' deliberations on the empowerment of women. The study was qualitative, utilizing interviews and recording technologies in data collection and analysis. Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which is both a theory and a method of analysis informed the study. The findings revealed that the government, the women's development and communications networks as well as the women's rights organizations have done little to ensure delivery on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Regrettably, from the findings, the results showed that such organizations are high on rhetoric and low on delivery of results. The study recommends that the government should initiate projects for the empowerment of women in Ogilgei. These projects should benefit the women of Ogilgei. Local women led organizations should provide Ogilgei women with opportunities to learn, earn an income, and bring change into their lives. There is also need for civic education to change the negative perception of women leadership among the Ogilgei women.

Keywords: Communication networks, gender empowerment, gender equality, government support, women's rights organizations.

Introduction

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all spheres of life. Women have constitutional rights to health care, economic security and access to education and political power in many countries. As Mahatma Gandhi stated, the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislation; it must be supported by change in women's social circumstances and situations and change in man's sexist attitude to women (Derbshire, 2002). There is need for women's participation in speaking for themselves as well as need for specialist's help, like the government to create and support opportunities to ensure the empowerment of women. The men should work with female planners, researchers, extension agents, as well as working with representative women's organizations, to enable poor women to express their views in a way that will influence development (Derbshire, 2002).

According to Longjam (2004), empowerment is the process of changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. A large segment of Kenyan women still suffer deprivation and discriminatory attitudes. In the past, women have been considered unfit to hold various leadership positions due to reasons such as culture, religious beliefs and other stereotypes within the society. Women have become an important party to various societal decisions

especially since the introduction of multi-party democracy and the devolution of services to county governments in Kenya. Despite these efforts, women in some areas such as Ogiilgei in Nakuru County have been unable to break free of the society that has for a long time been blinded by the dictates of culture and religion.

Despite high visibility of women rights organizations, their influences towards policies and structures that can alleviate the women's problems remain patchy and unpredictable. Although important increases in women's political participation have been realized in Kenya, for example, in the just concluded 2017 general election, the reality is as follows; there are three women governors out of forty-seven; three women senators out forty-seven; twenty three women members of parliament (MPs) out of two hundred and ninety MPs; ninety six women Members of County Assemblies (MCAs) out of one thousand four hundred and fifty MCAs; and a position of woman Representative in every county. The figures that we are talking about remain low in the context of the one-third constitutional threshold on gender representation. Women still remain a minority at all levels of governance. At this rate, it would be untenable to achieve the constitutional two-thirds threshold. Yet, it is only at one-third gender representation that women or men can form a critical mass capable of influencing decisions that can change their lives. Those in women representative positions still face various challenges: They do not enjoy the same prestige as the members of parliament, they have no benefit of the constituency development fund, and they do not clearly know whom they represent.

Ogiilgei is one of the areas in Njoro a sub-county of Nakuru county. Ogiilgei is occupied by many families with clearly identified roles for men and women. The women's traditional roles consist of reproductive roles, productive roles and social roles. The men on the converse engage in productive work, mostly paid work, as they go out to look for casual work in factories and other organizations. The men also engage in self-employment, producing goods for subsistence. Ogiilgei women are seriously constrained by such factors as heavy work load, illiteracy, traditional cultures, lack of funds and discrimination. These women experience limited access to new technologies, new communication networks and they have access to less start-up capital. Stanley and Wise (1983: 12), while studying the social conditions of women in a sexist, mainstream and patriarchal society, report about the taken for granted sexist practices and gender blindness of government and community practices (including publications) that displace, ignore and silence women, holding them captive for millennia. Their focus was the commitment to changing the status of women in modern societies. The status of Ogiilgei women could improve with government interventions and input from human rights organisations. The civil society and donor organisations could work in collaboration to identify gender needs in areas like Ogiilgei for the promotion of gender equality.

According to the Director of Amnesty International Kenya, Justus Nyang'aya (Daily Nation 20th Dec, 2016), gender discrimination is still rampant in Kenyan society. The absence of information and communication infrastructure and deep seated cultural practices mean that many cases of discrimination against women go untold. The solution is to train young boys and men to have the right perspectives about women. Equally, young girls and women need to be trained to take their rightful place in society as producers, influencers, innovators and leaders. Schultink, the UNICEF representative in Kenya (2014-2016), argues that investing in the deprived communities provide greater value for money. Every one million shillings invested in the poorest saves nearly twice as many lives as the same investments that do not reach the poor. These findings have important implications for this study, especially as the government works to achieve the sustainable development goals and vision 2030.

The Kenyan government has come up with different strategies to assist women in small enterprises such as women enterprise fund, the *Uwezo* fund and the youth enterprise

development fund. The main goal is to champion poverty reduction, gender equality and women empowerment through enterprise development. The poor rural women of Ogilgei do not have access to these government interventions. There have been poor communication networks and strategies to incorporate the rural poor women of Ogilgei. There is need for high interventions to focus on the deprived folks who suffer from lack of basic needs like water and sanitation, proper healthcare and poor lighting systems. There is need to come up with societal structures that can bring about equalities in economic opportunities and political participation of the rural women of Ogilgei.

Research Methodology

Ogilgei community of women formed the population of the study. It is a sub-division of Njoro found in Nakuru County. Ogilgei is home of many families, with few of the women in paid employment. It is also the residential area of the researcher who has basic information about the lifestyles of the people there. Due to the daily interactions of the researcher with these women, who quite often come to look for menial work at the researcher's home, she developed an interest in finding out what their lifestyles were.

Ogilgei is a cosmopolitan area inhabited by people who formerly used to work in settler farms. Majority of the men are casual labourers, while the women do domestic labour, washing clothes, weeding, and other chores to earn a paltry 250 shillings per day. 30 women were randomly sampled and interviewed on issues related to gender equality and empowerment of women. This being a qualitative study, 30 respondents was considered to be a representative sample. Ogilgei was chosen because of ease of access. The researcher resides in the neighbourhood of Ogilgei.

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) as Theory and Method

This study was informed by Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which is an approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This theory was founded by Ruth Wodak. DHA is problem oriented. It is both a theory and a method. It analyses the object of study from various analytical perspectives and takes into account background information (Wodak, 2007). It incorporates fieldwork and ethnography to explore the object under investigation. The study utilised this approach to focus on female voices of Ogilgei forming the discourse of inequalities and suffering. These linguistic actions became the object of study. DHA considers a number of factors that include; utterances, discourses as well as extra linguistic, social, sociological variables, the history and situational frames as well as the socio-political. Gender equality and empowerment of women in Ogilgei was considered as frame of discourse; a segment of social reality which could be analysed.

DHA as a method proceeds by considering what has been studied in order to gain theoretical knowledge, collection of data through observations, interviews and recordings, selection of relevant data, as well as specification of the research question. For example, in this study it is asked what the government has done to alleviate the suffering of women in Ogilgei. It deals with case studies as in the case of Ogilgei women, and then critiques it by way of interpretation of specific utterances which then leads to the application of analytical results to the general population of women who are marginalised. The study sought to establish how resources are allocated among the women of Ogilgei and the type of institutional support there is if any. It also interrogated the wider societal structures that continue to subject women to inequalities in economic opportunities, political participation and social standing.

The question of gender equality and the empowerment of women is a historical issue. To say that women are discriminated against and cannot make decisions for themselves requires that we go back to history. Women's subordination has a historical angle to it.

Historical bases of economies exclude women. Assumptions were made about women that became embedded in the formulation of economics; these maintained that women were different from masculine norms. Women are to be married, have children, depend on men and remain housewives due to their reproductive capacities. There is an assumption that women are unproductive in industrial workforce and cannot make right economic decisions (Haindiger & Knitter, 2014). Of great significance to this study was that of altering inequitable distributions of economic, cultural and political goods in contemporary Ogilgei community.

The differences between men and women are socially constructed. These differences are seen as inborn and hence beyond the scope of social change. This study was both a study of interactive strategies in human life and an analytical description of individuals and groups that recreate their shared feelings, beliefs, practices, folk knowledge, artefacts and actions. It used observations and interviews in the study of gender issue. Gender itself is not visible but is co-constructed and reconstructed in linguistic texts. Qualitative approach is effective in addressing social issues that affect individuals (Dornyei, 2007).

Since DHA is inherently multi-methodological in focus, the use of multiple methods or triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. The study incorporated other analytical frameworks like the Sara Longwe analytical framework (Longwe, 2003). This helped in the understanding of the practical meaning of women's empowerment and equality. Its basic premise is that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels; namely, welfare, access, conscientious, participation and control. Empowerment is essential at each of these levels.

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The study reviewed current knowledge about gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The studies reviewed suggest that the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality is one of the eight internationally agreed development goals (Derbyshire, 2002). Research has shown that education for girls is the single most effective way of reducing poverty and demonstrating progress towards gender equality/empowerment of women. However, progress towards gender equality in education is dependent on success in tackling inequalities in wider aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life (Tefsaye, 2014). These aspects have not been studied among the rural folks of Ogilgei.

There is a growing and compelling body of evidence which shows that women bear the brunt of poverty and that women's empowerment is a central precondition for its elimination. Poverty elimination can only be achieved by addressing the disproportionate burden of poverty, and lack of productive opportunities borne by women. The UN (2015) launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which span seventeen globally inspired commitments to end poverty, fight injustice and inequality, and improve health and education among other inequalities expected to transform the world by 2030. This study assessed the poverty levels of Women of Ogilgei and the government interventions in trying to alleviate the poverty. Rehab Mwikali, the chairperson of Women Development Movement (Maendeleo ya Wanawake [MYWO]) speaking on Citizen TV 28th Oct, 2017 said that their mandate is to empower women socially, economically and politically, and to reach the women at the grassroots level. Their mission is to nurture and empower women through various capacity building interventions that promote women's rights, sustainable livelihoods and political standing. They are expected to engage the government effectively to improve service delivery and formulate policies that bring about improvement. However, MYWO has always had the challenge of being aligned to politics. It has been a political player working for the ruling party in the country and has therefore become partisan. As a result, sponsors such as USAID, UNICEF, UNDP and UN WOMEN have been forced to withdraw their funding of the

projects which would have helped the ordinary rural women due to the MYWO alignment to politics.

Studies reveal that everywhere there are significant ways in which responsibilities of men and women as well as their opportunities and influence are unequal. Whilst there are instances where men are disadvantaged in comparison to women, generally women and girls have fewer opportunities, lower status, less power and influence than men and boys. The women of Ogigei have to work harder, have a subordinate social position, have a smaller share of opportunities for human development and are poorly represented in policy and decision making. As Rosaldo and Lamphere (1985) put it in their study on women, culture and society:

... All contemporary societies... are characterized by some degree of male dominance... none has observed a society in which women have publicly recognized power and authority surpassing that of men... Women are excluded from certain crucial economic or political activities, that their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men' (1985: 3).

Gender equality signifies an aspiration to work towards a society in which neither women nor men suffer from poverty in its many forms, and in which women and men are able to live equally fulfilling lives. It means recognizing that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways (Derbyshire, 2002). Gender equality and women's empowerment are inextricably linked. Women will only win gender equality when they are able to act on their own behalf, with a strong political voice to ensure their views are heard and taken into account. Progress is greatest where there has been strong political will; where changes in laws have been followed through with real action; where resources have been devoted to the explicit goal of reducing gender discrimination (Derbyshire, 2002). The political leaders who visit Ogigei during campaigns for parliamentary and other seats make promises to them which are never followed by real actions. Gender equality needs to be constantly promoted and actively sustained.

In 1995 at the United Nations Fourth International Conference on women held in Beijing (UN, 1995), 'gender mainstreaming' was established as the internationally agreed strategy for governments and development organizations to promote gender equality. Governments were then expected to come up with gender sensitive policies and programmes at all levels, work with the civil society, the women groups, the non-governmental organizations and community based organizations for effective implementation and follow up for action. This required commitment from the government and the international community to take priority action. The Kenya government has failed to embrace the Beijing declaration in terms of intensifying efforts and actions to achieve those goals. The government has not effectively promoted women's economic independence especially the Ogigei women who continue to suffer from the burden of poverty. Ogigei women have no access to economic resources such as land, credit, vocational training, information and technology, communication and markets.

The rise of women's movements and the establishment of national women's organizations such as the African Women Development Fund (AWDP), the African Women in Leadership (AWIL), the Foundation of African Women in Education (FAWE), the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA) as well as the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Public service in Kenya gained prominence in advocating for women's rights. This was especially during the emergence of

multiparty democracy in Kenya. These organizations have not been instrumental in incorporating Ogilgei women's issues in political, economic and social spheres.

In the context of gender studies, researchers examine why women in different cultures are systematically assigned inferior positions. Some studies reveal that women are agents of change, and stress the need for women to organize to bring about change (The Internet Society, 2015). However, this called for structural adjustment policies to make good economic sense. To empower women, there is need to work with women at the community level, building organizational skills and self-esteem through participation in determining needs and managing change. Gender analysts posit that there is some degree of concern in bringing women into the mainstream of development, but at the expense of focusing on what women could do for development, rather than on what development could do for women (Derbyshire, 2002). The women of Ogilgei need to determine their own needs and be assisted to bring about change. The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) should pursue their goal of assisting the non-governmental organizations to contribute to women's development, equality and rights, and to provide infrastructure for information and empowerment.

The present study contributes to the existing knowledge on the empowerment of women and the portrayal of a woman's roles-accepted, despised, prescribed, past or present-and in her daily struggle for survival in a materially, socially and culturally still restrictive world. A lot of researches reveal that development organizations are part of the problem of gender inequality they are supposedly committed to addressing. Gender inequalities in wider society affect those who are qualified and available to work; patterns of staffing; training, promotion and career development opportunities as well as many aspects of organizational culture. Evaluations of achievements reveal that few programmes have addressed gender issues in specific sectors.

Results and Discussions

The study set out to establish the government's delivery on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Ogilgei, a sub-county of Nakuru county and to find out what the women's development and communications Networks and the women's rights organisations have done to ensure delivery on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

From the literature reviewed, there is inequality and vulnerability of women in all spheres of life. A large segment of Kenyan women especially in Ogilgei still suffer deprivation and discrimination. Despite high visibility of women's rights organisations and heavy campaigns, their influences towards policies and structures that can alleviate these women's problems remain highly unpredictable. Ogilgei women do not enjoy their full human rights because of poverty, discrimination, violence and inequality. They lack access to land, have no funding, have no access to credit facilities, limited access to technological advancement and less market opportunities. von Brockhausen (2015), a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) communications specialist, says that anybody given access to technology and literacy can potentially make their voices heard, form online communities that can translate their power to offline action. From the observations and interviews by the researcher with the women of Ogilgei, a lot of insight was got as will be seen in the excerpts that follow.

When asked what their source of income was, a respondent had this to say:

Excerpt 1

We have no regular income. Most of us look for casual labour to earn a living. In a day, one can earn. 250. You may be lucky to get a job but sometimes you may stay for a week without anything to do because these are seasonal jobs.

From excerpt one, majority of the women are not in any form of paid employment; they have no regular income. Many belong to *Chamas* (Women's groups) of about 23 members, each contributing 200 shillings per month. However, this has not had any significant improvement in their lifestyles. They operate largely in informal sector. Those with small businesses face difficulties in accessing finances that can help them to expand (Tefsaye, 2014). They also lack managerial skills and training. Women's enterprise funds that champion poverty reduction strategies, gender equality and women empowerment have not been forthcoming. These are affected by lack of credit access which limits their ability to start, expand and improve their productivity (World Bank, 2015).

On being asked what the government had done to improve their lives as women of Ogilgei, this was the response received:

Excerpt 2

We have not received any help from the government. We only see government officials especially politicians during the time of elections. When they come, they say that we are very few and as such, we cannot contribute significant votes. We only hear of women's rights organisations, uwezo fund, etc.

Their response was that the government strategies have not worked for them. For example, the UWEZO fund that was a flagship for vision 2030 aimed at enabling women to access finances to promote business enterprises at constituent level. This would enhance economic growth by offering capital and mentorship with a goal of achieving gender equality and eradication of poverty. So far Ogilgei women have no business enterprises, no employment and no innovations. This has resulted in no development programmes in this area, no infrastructure, no communication networks, no electricity, no proper access roads and no piped water.

When asked how they managed their lives, the response was as follow:

Excerpt 3

As already explained, we look for cheap labour which is quite seasonal. We experience delay in payments. We can hardly get enough money for the basic needs. We get menial jobs like washing clothes, weeding, and harvesting crops when it is the season.

Using the Sara Longwe analytical framework (Longwe, 2003), Ogilgei women lead very low standards in terms of standards of living. On welfare, they lack the basic needs; on the tenet of participation, they do not engage in decision making processes, which are all determined by men who have the authority. To manage their families, they look for cheap labour; washing clothes, weeding in plantations to earn a paltry KSH 250 per day. However these types of jobs are not even readily available. When they get the job, sometimes there is delay in payment; it can take a whole week for them to get paid. Most of the women have low level education and become seriously exploited. The Mission of Women in Development (WID) to improve the quality of life of the rural communities has not been achieved in Ogilgei.

The following in excerpt four was the response when asked if they had ever benefitted from the women's organisations.

Excerpt 4

We only hear of these organisations. We have never met them. We do not know what these organisations do. We hear there is a ministry concerned with women's issues but it has not addressed our issues.

Most of the women remarked that they had only heard of these organisations. They had also heard about the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Public Service that is concerned with women's issues but they had not received any help from them. They raised the issue of having women representatives in the government but they did not quite understand what their roles were. The women of Ogilgei lack access to productive resources, services and opportunities. This puts them in a disadvantaged position when it comes to contributing to socio-economic growth.

On being asked if there were cultures that prevented them from progress and improving your lives as women, they remarked in excerpt five as follows:

Excerpt 5

No we are not constrained by culture because most of us are Christians.

Most of the women argued that they are Christians and not so much constrained by culture. However, the only benefit they get from their religious organisations is being given hope of a better world. This does not pragmatically address their current practical needs.

Excerpt six was the response when asked when asked what communication networks were available to them for use:

Excerpt 6

We have first generation phones, commonly known as mulika mwizi. Few of us have Televisions with limited channels that use solar power.

The women averred that most of them own the first generation phones, which they basically use for calls and 'please call me' messages. They do not access internet due their illiteracy levels and they also lack sufficient access to capital. None of them owns a smart phone. Majority have little knowledge of the new media. Yet, it is true that the internet is a unique platform for innovation, creativity, economic opportunity and social inclusion (The Internet Society, 2015). A few families own televisions that operate on solar panels but they hardly find time to watch television because of the home chores which start as early as 4am till midnight. These chores are repetitive jobs that sap their energy. Although the government has provided free education, the families still lack basic needs like food and water. They also lack investments and investors. The women who try their luck on small businesses like selling vegetables, lack expert knowledge.

When asked how they would want the government to assist them, they said the following:

Excerpt 7

We would like the government to make the education of our children absolutely free. We have children who passed exams fairly but we cannot afford to take them for parallel degrees or middle level colleges. The higher education loans have not been forthcoming. Most of our children have become

delinquents. We need fertilizers and seeds for our small farms. We need capital to start small projects like keeping poultry, water tanks for harvesting water, seedlings and wire mesh for small cash crops, and the like.

The women of Ogilgei would like the government to provide piped water, electricity, roads and proper communication networks. There is need for bursaries for school children. They need subsidised seeds and fertilizers for farming. Most of them use maize directly from the stores for planting. The govt should start projects that can provide opportunities for these women to be employed. They also need training to acquire skills that can enable them manage their lives. According to FEMNET (2010), many women in rural communities like Ogilgei are faced with the challenge of confinement to the domestic sphere. They occupy low paying seasonal jobs and lack access to credit facilities which supports the findings in this study.

Excerpt eight is the response to the question they were asked on if they belonged to any women's organisation and what the women leadership in the country should do to assist them.

Excerpt 8

The women organisations should work with us. They should incorporate us in their organisations in order for them to understand our needs. They should help us to acquire smart phones so that we can join the social networks. This way our voices can be heard so that other people can come to our help.

The women's organisations need to work closely with the grassroots women in order to incorporate some of the women in their organisations so they can hear their voices through them. There is need for communication networks for women to share information and knowledge. Since information is power, this can get the government and other concerned bodies to act on the issues affecting women. They need to subscribe to new media so they can exchange information and seek help by sharing knowledge that will influence the development agenda. As von Brockhausen (2015) the UNDP communication specialist says, social media represents a shift in power to individual. Anybody, given access to technology and literacy can potentially make their voices heard as well as form online communities that can translate their power to offline action. Sharma (2014) says social media is a formidable force for change. Many women still do not have access to social media due to infrastructure, costs and discriminatory social norms. The women of Ogilgei require technology to improve their enterprises. Social media can be effective in amplifying women's voices and identifying strategies to better facilitate their impact on decision making processes (ICRW, 2010).

Most of the women came up with proposals. They would, for instance, want to start some projects like water tanks, boreholes for irrigation, and greenhouses for tomatoes. They would like the government to provide power and piped water and wire mesh for poultry farming, and many other viable projects. All these ventures would go a long way in helping them to manage their lives. They also need loans to start small businesses like buying seats and tents for renting out during functions. There is need for specialist help to promote gender equality at the Ogilgei community level. These are needed in participatory negotiated process of working with community groups. Using the Sara Longwe Analytical framework (Longwe, 2003), the women of Ogilgei lack basic needs, have no ability to use resources such as credit, land, education. They also do not participate in decision making, have no control over resources because they have no power, and do not also recognise the fact that they are discriminated against in terms of service delivery by the government.

From the DHA, the study focused on gender equality and empowerment of women as the field of action, analysing female voices, producing the discourses of inequalities and suffering. These linguistic actions brought forth the historical injustices that relegated women to the domestic sphere. Historically, during the colonial period, gendered discrimination was influenced by politics and economics. Colonial economy favoured the men who worked as labourers in settler farms to access means of production. In Ogilgei too, formerly a colonial settlement, men still work as labourers, while women stay at home. Politically, men have more political power than the women; men own the means of production while the women are the producers. Socially, women occupy low social positions relative to the men, and psychologically, women are associated with weakness and vulnerability.

From the historical perspective, there is need to employ feminist epistemology to investigate the female self of understanding their social settings (Code, 2014). Feminist epistemology examines social, political and ethical aspects of knowing whereby the researcher is involved in the historical, cultural, social and economic contexts that affect the subject of study. In this study, the researcher focused on the following categories of enquiry: The roles of men and women in Ogilgei area whereby the men were mostly involved in productive roles; paid work, self employment and production for subsistence. Women on the other hand were involved in reproductive roles; domestic work, child care, care of the sick and the homestead. In terms of assets, women have no access to opportunities and assets that can improve their livelihoods. Such include community participation, knowledge, skills, social networks, land, transport, communication, capital, income and credit.

The women of Ogilgei do not make decisions; they have no control over household level expenditure, community level resources and services. This is similar to the findings by Derbyshire (2002) who posits that majority of women do not have control and power on many issues at household, community, local government and at national levels. The women of Ogilgei said that they need practical measures to address their issues. They require improved services and delivery systems such as technology, capital, credit facilities, management skills; the general appropriate and sustainable ways of addressing their needs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Gender discrimination is still rampant in Kenyan society. The absence of information and communication infrastructure and the political will mean that stories of lack of empowerment of women go untold. So far, no organisation takes up the responsibility of tracking, monitoring, disseminating information on cases of gender equality and empowerment.

Poor rural women of Ogilgei do not have access to government interventions such as the women enterprise fund, the *Uwezo* fund and the Youth enterprise fund. They continue to suffer inequalities in economic opportunities, political participation and general social standing. They suffer high levels of poverty and no access to women financing and communication strategies. Given that African women have for centuries been relegated to the domestic sphere in terms of fetching water, looking for firewood, cleaning the homestead, and the like, the same is still rife among the women of Ogilgei. The women's rights' organisations, the ministry of Gender, Youth and Public service, and other international organisations have not been beneficial either. High rhetoric about threats to women and girls are good. Costly international conferences held in high end hotels are only beneficial for the economies of host countries. However, these should also translate into tangible benefits for ordinary rural women of Ogilgei.

There is need to mentor women and girls for gender issues and leadership in Ogilgei. This should come from people who have gender equitable attitudes and who genuinely adopt long term gender sensitive ideals and practices. These would include people and organisations like FEMNET, WID, activists, researchers and scholars. The government

needs to invest in women power in saving families and lives to provide greater value for their money as it works towards achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for Vision 2030. There is need for high interventions focusing on the poor folks of Ogilgei to improve on the communication networks and strategies in order to incorporate the rural poor women of Ogilgei in development activities. The government should reach the deprived people of Ogilgei, and provide them with better access roads, water, electricity and access to skilled doctors. The women's rights organisations under the umbrella of FEMNET should incorporate the rural women to be able to address the real issues affecting them. There is need for donations to fund women's projects in Ogilgei. They need to be given training and tools to help them build better lives for themselves.

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