



Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Study of Women's Economic Empowerment

Summary of Findings

Kenya



 Njambi excited about her good vegetable harvest.

Acknowledgements

The results and lessons presented in this learning document would not have been possible without the diligent work and participation of the SNV programme team in Kenya (Leah Njeri, Charles Muthoki, Mugure Githuku, Raymond Brandes) in addition to those in a global role (Leonie Hoijtink, Sanne van Laar, Resy Vermeltfoort).

We also gratefully acknowledge the important contributions made by the programme partners, community leaders, interviewees and consultants, especially to Elizabeth Waithanji who conducted the research for this Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Study.

February, 2017

Founded in The Netherlands in 1965, SNV has built a long-term, local presence in many of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our global team of local and international advisors work with local partners to equip communities, businesses and organisations with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services – empowering them to break the cycle of poverty and guide their own development.

This report is based on research for the 'Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises' programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands (DGIS) under the 'Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women' (FLOW) framework. Any part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form and by any means with proper referencing © 2017, SNV, Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises Programme.

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Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DGIS	Directoraat-Generaal Internationale Samenwerking (Directorate-General for International Cooperation under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
EOWE	Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLOW	Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

I Introduction

Throughout Kenya's history, women have been subjected to consistent rights abuses while shouldering an overwhelming burden of responsibilities. While women in Kenya carry out most of the agricultural work, as well as produce and market most of the food in the country, they earn only a fraction of the income generated and own a nominal percentage of assets. Nearly 40% of households are run solely by women – and because of a lack of assured income, nearly all these homes suffer from poverty or extreme poverty. Regardless of social status, religion, or ethnic group, women continue to have higher illiteracy levels compared to men and are also highly disadvantaged when it comes to owning, acquiring, and controlling property.

The household is the basic unit of society where individuals confront and actualise societal norms, form relations, values, power and privileges. It is the central place where children first learn their gender roles through socialisation, and where power relations built around gender are founded. The gender norms learnt in the households are reinforced in the community and institutions within society. While gender norms and relations are not confined to households alone, the household constitutes an important institutional site in which relations are played out. Access to and control over financial assets are often the cornerstone of power in the household. In a country where most women are in the informal sector, men hold the financial advantage in relationships. Financial resources are important for women's economic self-reliance and development. This is one of the indicators of women's development, empowerment and improved gender equality in households. However, access to resources for women may not be the answer to women's empowerment. Access to finance does not always translate to autonomy in decision-making. A deeper understanding of gender relations in households is critical to inform interventions for women's empowerment, improvement in bargaining power and poverty reduction and food security at household and national level.

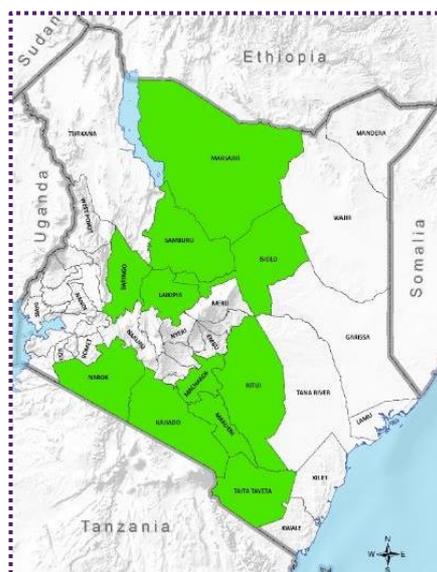
Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises (EOWE) is a 5-year women's economic empowerment programme funded by the Department of Social Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands under the 'Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women' (FLOW) framework. The programme aims to increase women's economic participation and self-reliance in Kenya by catalysing a conducive national and local environment for female entrepreneurship.

A **Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study** was carried out in six representative EOWE programme counties (Baringo, Laikipia, Kitui, Marsabit, Samburu, and Taita Taveta). The objectives of the KAP study were to:

- ❖ Understand the extent to which attitudes and social norms practiced in every-day life affect women's empowerment
- ❖ Identify where there was potential for changing social norms
- ❖ Unpack the understanding that economic development alone can address gender inequality
- ❖ Discover whether it is necessary to dismantle the structures that cause subordination of women
- ❖ Reveal the underlying gender norms in decision-making, control over income, and leadership.



Programme Geographic Areas



2 Methodology

The study focused on female and male entrepreneurs in the six counties selected. The study results aim to provide direction for addressing gender social and cultural norms that stand in the way of women's economic empowerment. The KAP study participants were identified women's, men's, and mixed groups selected by SNV.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were utilised to get information from women and men. A total of 18 FGDs with 128 participants were carried out: (i) Marsabit – Six FGDs (3 for men and 3 for women), (ii) Samburu and Laikipia - Four FGDs each (2 for men and 2 for women), and (iii) Kitui, Baringo, and Taita Taveta – Two FGDs each (1 for men and 1 for women). The FGDs tools were based on the Harvard gender analytical framework and queried gender divisions of labour and decision-making on utilisation of incomes. The Longwe Gender Empowerment Framework was also used to answer the questions on economic empowerment, participation in decision-making, leadership, and how to achieve a balance in decision-making. The FGDs tools were piloted in Machakos County to ensure they captured the correct data. They were subsequently refined before the commencement of actual data collection in the field.



📷 Woman preparing her goods at the market.

3 Key Findings

Women are household providers In Turbi (Marsabit) only 30% of the men provide for household needs.

“Occasionally they will provide money but it is not enough and the wife has to get other sources of income to cover for the shortfall”

- Female FGD participant, Marsabit -

Women in Kitui believe that the role of women providing for their families started over 50 years ago when most men were away fighting for Kenya's independence.

“Men do not contribute much to the family expenses but this is a hidden secret. Traditionally the man got a second wife and she helped in reducing the workload on the first wife, to provide for the family. She was an extra hand and everyone benefited from this arrangement. The second wife got advice from the first wife. But since now you can only marry one wife, the burden is left to the wife to work on the farm and care for the family.”

- Female FGD participant, Kitui -

Changes in gender roles, social norms, and attitudes

There is less support from men in providing for the household which leads to women taking on the traditionally masculine role of family provider. At the same time, there are no changes in reproductive roles meaning that women shoulder the burden of both reproductive and productive responsibility. Most men are not comfortable with this change in roles. Interestingly, men perceive the rise of women's groups (*chamas*) – not their lack of monetary and other household support – as the reason for women's empowered role. Men do not like the fact that some women hide the income received from *chamas* from them and refuse to share it.

In Baringo, Samburu and, Taita Taveta women take care of almost 90% of household's needs. In Doldol (Laikipia) only 5% of men provide for their families. In Kitui men demand that women surrender their income and use it for leisure activities. Refusal to hand over income can and does result in domestic violence.

Men complain that many families have broken up because of women becoming 'big-headed' when they earn money. Women indicated that they have various ways of dealing with changing roles and coping with the added workload. All female participants indicate that the



📷 Sarah Wanjiku packing her vegetables for sale.

formation of women's groups which engage in business such as selling milk, charcoal, beekeeping, beadwork, and horticulture help to support their families.

Men admit to the key provider role that women play in the household

"To be honest, 90% of women are the ones taking care of the families as breadwinners. Where there is no woman in a household then it is no longer seen as a home."

- Male FGD participant, Baringo -

Men in Taita Taveta are unhappy with the empowerment provided by women's self-help groups.

"Empowerment of women by the government has created kiburi [pride]. They are able to rent houses, and this makes them separate from their husbands. They leave their families and rent houses far away from their marital homes. Women enjoy seeing men without any means to support themselves; 'nikiwa na uwezo, si mwanaume nitampata tuu [If I am independent, I can get any man I want]."

- Male FGD participant, Taita Taveta -

All female participants stated that they would like to see men sharing household and family responsibilities. Male participants argued that women should be sensitized so that they do not take advantage of men who are unable to provide for their families. They also recommend that young people are sensitised on shared roles to ensure that they grow up knowing about gender equality. Men highlighted the importance of a united couple working together to support their family and sharing productive and reproductive roles in the household. Men also want to maintain their traditional role as head of the household and feel that taking advice on this abdicates that role. This reveals that while men do see the positive role that women play in providing for the family, they prefer to retain traditions that maintain male superiority in the household.

Control over household and business income

Women are unhappy on how the income is shared in households. They report that they want both men and women to combine their income and make joint decisions on its utilization. Many women reveal that they surrender some of their income from business to men for harmony at home. They report that many men do not use this money for economic activities that benefit the household but for leisure activities. Male participants state that as the head of the household they are expected to control all money but that women hide some incomes from them. They also believe that as the head of the household they should decide on all income utilisation.

Women are unhappy about the control over business and household income.

They stay in abusive marriages due to cultural expectations and for the welfare of their children.

"Some men control the income totally. The wife is completely dependent on the man and feels like a beggar in her own home"

- FGD participants, Laikipia -

"Women are staying in prisons at their homes as they cannot control much of what they have worked for. Like me, I have to live with 'Ngoma iria yakwa' (that devil of mine) because I have no other alternative."

- FGD participant, Laikipia -

Most men stated that they allow women to keep the income from their small businesses. Women revealed that they dislike men asking for a share of the income generated from their businesses. In Nyahururu (Laikipia) women reported that the decision of sharing household income depends on the amount available. Men normally control the larger amounts of cash from the main harvest (maize, cash crop farming) and allocate it to different budgets, sometimes without consulting their wives. The smaller amounts of cash from the sale of eggs, poultry, and horticultural crops like tomatoes and other vegetables, were in the control of women. In Doldol (Laikipia), Marsabit, Samburu, and Baringo women control income generated from the sale of milk, charcoal, poultry, honey, and – in some cases – goats.

Female participants stated that there are some men who discuss family priorities with their wives and agree on the amount of money to be allocated to different family needs. However, men usually control the joint family bank account. Men allow their wives to operate personal bank accounts because these accounts are required to access money and loans from women's groups. But women also admit that their spouses do not like women having their own money so women secretly keep some money aside for reinvesting in the businesses or for use in emergencies.

Women as leaders

The majority of male participants holds the belief that good leaders were men, although a few admit that women are also good leaders. Interestingly, most men in Baringo were categorical that leadership starts in the household and state that although men are perceived as leaders, women do much more than men in providing leadership.

Women from pastoralist communities that are highly patriarchal in nature do not think women make good leaders. Both male and female participants agree on the qualities of a good leader (a peacemaker, an advisor, one who treats people equally, one who unites people, is competent in their work, fulfils promises, is generous, is a role model, is committed, and transparent). Women from pastoralist communities do not see themselves taking up leadership roles. This contrasts with women from largely agricultural areas who see themselves as leaders. In all communities, it is believed that female leaders do not safeguard and maximize on their space. With time, this space is taken up by men and female leaders are edged out and ultimately succumb to men to guide them.

Men indicated that women are jealous of one another and do support their own sex in leadership. Views that women leaders treat men better than women (perhaps due to cultural socialisation) were shared along with the perception that women are hasty and make emotional decisions.

In Turbi and Saku (Marsabit) most men (70%) state that they would support women to take up community, county, and national leadership positions. They believe that women are more approachable than men, but because men look down on women it is difficult for women to approach them. The male participants state that women have equal rights as men to be leaders and that men had always been national leaders and now they would like to 'feel and test' the leadership of a woman. This reveals a paradigm shift in this county which is made up of highly patriarchal communities.

All male participants reveal that culture is a barrier to women becoming leaders as traditions promote the idea that men are born leaders. They suggest that organisations and the government can ensure female participation in leadership by advocating for attitudes about women in leadership. Other

Women cannot be leaders unless led by men

"Esther in the Bible did not know what she had until Modeccai showed her."

- Male FGD participants, Nyahururu (Laikipia) -

In Voi (Taita Taveta) male participants believe that women can restore sanity at all levels of leadership (from the household to national levels) and can improve the economy since they would be able to fix the problems starting from the family unit.

suggested changes to be made for women to participate in leadership include; women supporting other women during elections, finding ways to change attitudes about women leadership (ensure women are viewed as leaders and not just followers of men), women believing in their own abilities to be leaders, and husbands supporting their spouses and encouraging them to pursue leadership positions.

4 EOWE Recommendations

While the status of women in the household has changed, there is still a way to go before there is true gender equality in households and communities. The status of women was investigated in relation to gender division of labour, control over income, and leadership. All these areas are heavily influenced and reinforced by culture and traditions and are key areas for social behaviour change interventions. When designing the approaches to influence social behaviour change it will be important to enhance family and household cohesion. Men will be key players in the dialogue which should happen both at community and household level.

Sensitise both men and women on shared division of labour and changing gender roles in society

To ease the load on women, men should be sensitized to share the roles of providing for the family as well as some of the reproductive roles with their spouse. Sensitisation for men is important to shed the taboo that "*women should not talk to men and expect them to change*". Men need to view women as equal partners in providing for and taking care of the Household and family. As men are being sensitised, so should women – especially on being able to give space to their spouses to support them with reproductive activities. The EOWE programme needs to promote household dialogue on these changing norms and support households to explore methods for improving efficiency of reproductive activities. Women spend a large part of their day looking for firewood for cooking. EOWE could promote the use of energy efficient cooking stoves and encourage men to buy these types of products for their households.



Women livestock traders, Laikipia.

Work to change the attitudes that men who cannot provide for their family are not men

SNV can work with respected community and religious leaders to sensitise men on respect for women by using religious doctrines. Opinion leaders, working in close collaboration with religious leaders, government, and CSOs should also engage with men on changing the cultural narrative around men being the main provider and accept joint decision making with women at the household level.

Introduce strategies to share the role of household provider

EOWE should develop strategies to engage men not only to address negative gender norms but also to support economic empowerment of the women. Engagement with men should emphasise on the shift in gender roles, how women's incomes support their families, and the importance of women's economic empowerment in society. Men need to be sensitised and trained on what it means for women to take a loan for business. The government needs to come up with strategies to empower men as they have done for women so family cohesion can be enhanced. Men should be encouraged to join *chamas* for development like women.

Develop programmes for women that address the cultural bias against women in leadership

While both male and female respondents believed that women could be good leaders, there was consensus that women rarely use the space that they have fought for to progress their agendas. EOWE needs to develop female role models in leadership positions who the women in these counties can identify with. Some of these women can act as mentors for the women in the community. Information on the 2/3 gender principle and how to properly implement it needs to be made available to all in the community. Interventions to change gender norms around supporting women vying for economic leadership positions need to be developed.