

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MANAGEMENT OF WOMEN INCOME GENERATING PROJECTS IN KIKUYU DIVISION OF KIAMBU DISTRICT.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out the factors affecting the management of women income generating projects. Literacy in general was reviewed in relationship to the success or failure of women income generating projects. The study was carried out using the ex-post facto design of study. The study targeted 100 women groups in the division. A sample of 86 women leaders were selected out of whom 50 answered the questionnaire correctly. The study established that women group leaders have very limited training in management skills, accounting and bookkeeping techniques. This limited the women's access to credit facilities from banks and other financial institutions. The level of education was also a major factor because most of the women had upto Ordinary level of education. Majority of the members had either attained primary level of education or had no education at all. Poor planning, interference from the politicians and other interested parties affected the success of the projects. The groups are also not independent because they are funded by different organizations and individuals who have vested interests. The study recommended that women should be encouraged to join adult literacy programs so that they can acquire knowledge to help them run their projects properly.

INTRODUCTION

The origin of women organizations in Kenya has a long and varied history. The organizations are formed by women groups to promote social welfare, improve economic and social welfare, and physical circumstances of the individual in the group Osongo (2000). The organizations include *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (1952), Islamic Women Association (1926), and young women Christian association (1912) among others. These groups aimed at improving the welfare of women and their families. According to the National Development Plan 1974-1978 there were about 200,005 registered women groups in 1973 with an estimated membership of 126,150 mainly in the rural areas. The government views them as a potentially effective medium of dissemination of knowledge for improving the quality of life in rural areas.

According Dewey J (1916) literacy among women has steadily been increasing. Illiteracy according to Nyerere (1970) as cited by Haigwo P. Walakisa, (1998) is related to poverty and disease. The illiterate person is ignorant and does not know what is happening around her and therefore denied the chance of improving herself. This makes illiteracy an obstacle to development. The formation of many women groups among women in rural and urban areas of the country has been seen as a way of empowering women economically (Javis, 1995)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following was the research objective:

- To investigate the extent to which illiteracy has impacted negatively on the management of women group projects; and

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of women in development

Women need to be actively involved in the development process of the country. The National Census of women in Kenya (1993) states that:- the failure in promoting income generation activities is in many instances attributed to women group themselves and has been blamed on the age and illiteracy of group members and leaders. Inefficient leadership due to illiteracy is a major problem; illiteracy of both the leaders and the members leads to bad organization and management capacities in the group. Due to illiteracy the leaders and members of the group are easily misguided, deceived and exploited by the literate people up to date good records are not prepared. The failure to keep records can be closely be related to illiteracy. Most women groups do not keep records due to illiteracy.

The illiterate is looked down upon by the society especially when it comes to expressing themselves in social places or taking active role in social gathering. This makes them to shy away as they are usually not confident enough to do their own things. They always live in fear of exposing their weaknesses. Paul (1972) says that the illiterate suffers the crippling disadvantage of being illiterate in literate society of being educational failures in a culture which uses education to measure success. Almost every person with a literacy problem feels a deep sense of shame and keeps it as a closely guided secret.

The illiterate people feels rejected and left out by the society. They view the society with negative attitudes thinking that the society is against him. Therefore they sometimes experience the bitterness and this may make them have a feeling of being left out from their very society and rejection.

Education for empowerment

Coady (1971) emphasized the importance of education and the role it played in changing the people's behavior and attitudes. To him there is a great connection between education and progress. People cannot see far ahead. They must acquire the necessary attitude in the spirit of self-criticism. Self-criticism is the beginning of progress. The illiterate feels that they are being oppressed by the society or by external forces. They should understand that they are being oppressed by their own ignorance, which leads them to be subjugated and to have low self-esteem.

Unless the illiterate realizes that they are the ones oppressing themselves and accept the challenge that they are able to take action, then they shall never be able to free themselves from the many hurdles they face in their lives. A survey conducted by Kenya Adult Education Association KAEA (1992) established that 'practically almost all members of the income generating projects are illiterate and that they generally have very low income and capital input. In 1992, Kenya was reported to have a high literate rate of about 40% KAEA, (1992). In 1998 literacy survey found out that women who were literate were 35%, in comparison to that of men that stood at 82.2%. According to Dondo (1980) says that this is a clear indication that women were never given equal opportunities to education like the males.

The role of adult education in management of Income generating activities

In Kenya, the department of Adult Education was established in 1979. It had the objectives of providing skills and attitudes for work, sustain literacy through continuing education, creating confidence positive attitudes and behavior towards life and society and promote nationalism, patriotism and awareness of the role of the individual in national development. All these objectives had the purpose of getting rid of illiteracy, poverty and diseases. The three are interrelated in that you cannot have one without having the other. This is where Ayot R. Minyafu (1999) suggested that

there is no way an adult will be able to fight against poverty and diseases until they are first made literate.

According to Kabirawanjiku and Muthoni (1994) literacy is not just the process of learning skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but a contribution to the liberation of man and his full development. It has to be accepted that illiteracy is a major obstacle to development and that literacy is an instrument for development. The government cannot improve the people's living standards unless it first works on eradicating illiteracy. The women groups fail to develop because the women need to improve themselves first. They are mostly illiterate, poor and ignorant.

Research methodology

The study was conducted using the ex-post facto research design, which had been stated by Kerlinger (1973) as systematic empirical inequality in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulated. The study included all the women groups in Kikuyu sub-location of Kiambu District. There were 112 women group according to the Kiambu District officer. The study targeted all the 112 women groups in the Kikuyu Division. The research was collected using questionnaires and an interview schedule. All the women leaders filled the questionnaire while two women participants in every group filled the interview schedule.

Discussions of the major findings

The major findings of the study were that the women group leaders have very limited training in management skills, accounting and book keeping techniques. The study also found that a large number of women (47%) did not have skills in community development. The study also found out that most of the women groups were involved in various projects at the same time. The large number of the women groups (42%) did not run an account for their projects. This means that the

women groups cannot access credit facilities from banks and other financial institution. Most of the women joined the women group projects in order to improve on their lives in general. This implies that most of these projects were not run professionally due inadequate training.

Another finding of the study was that most of the women group leaders had up to 'O' level of education. It was also found that only a few of the women group leaders had attained degree level of education. Most of the other women of the group had either attained primary level of education or had no education at all.

Poor planning also affects the success of women group projects and that inference from politicians and other interested groups affected the success of the women groups. The findings also saw that the groups are not independent because they are funded by different organizations and individuals who have vested interests.

Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings, the study therefore concludes that, the women group leaders are not well versed with management skills which are necessary to propel the women projects to success. The areas of management which the women group leaders require training in, include accounting, book keeping and budgeting.

The study further concludes that the women group leaders lack necessary communication and public relations skills necessary to enhance the success of women group projects. Most of these groups do not have bank accounts and therefore the women group may not access the required financial assistance from banking institutions which may require collateral in order to advance them with loans.

The women group projects fail due to members involving themselves in too many and diverse projects which divide their attention. The ministry of gender, sports and culture has not been fully involved in women groups to provide the necessary guidance and planning in order to make women group projects a success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made. The study recommends that:

- The women projects group leaders need to be trained in management. Such areas of management in which the women group leaders need to be trained in, include; basic accounting, budgeting and book keeping.
- Women group leaders should be trained in communication skills and public relations.
- Women group leaders should encourage women members to pass resolutions on operating bank accounts so that they can get loans to enhance their activities.
- Women group leaders should involve themselves in only one project so that their concentration in it may lead to its success.
- The Ministry of Gender, Sports and Culture should send experts to help women groups to plan their projects properly so that the projects can succeed.
- The women should be encouraged to join adult literacy programs so that they can acquire knowledge to help them run their projects properly.

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