

**WOMEN TECHNOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE: ISSUES,
CHALLENGES AND POLICY OPTION: A CASE OF RURAL WOMEN FARMERS
GROUPS IN NJORO SUB-COUNTY KENYA.**

BY

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Abstract

In Kenya women in rural areas are key agents for achieving the transformational economic, social, political and environmental changes required for achieving sustainable development. Women lack empowerment on economic, political, social, educational and psychological affecting most for development such as Sustainable Development Goals, Kenya Vision 2030 among others. Empowering is women key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities but also to the overall economic productivity, given that women form the largest workforce in agriculture worldwide. The study adopted cross-sectional study survey with concurrent mixed methods approach entailing equal preference to quantitative and qualitative methodologies to generate rich information that helped fully to explore each of the survey objectives. The respondents were sampled using different approaches for quantitative and qualitative aspects of the survey. For quantitative segment, simple random sampling was done to identify beneficiaries' households (HHs) for the household survey. The survey target 240 farmers who were organized into 2 clusters of 12 farmer groups (Each cluster 6 groups) comprising of 20 farmers each working as a production group in Mauche and Mau-Narok divisions in Njoro sub-county, Nakuru County, Kenya. The sample size representative of the farmers in this study was 148. Primary data collected using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods including group discussion, structured interview, semi-structured interview, Key informant Interviews (KII) and some PRA tools such as Venn diagram, Gender Analysis Matrix, and Time Trends. Secondary sources comprised of relevant project documents and State and Non-state partner reports. The data collected was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). From the data results the respondents reported that they lacked power over, power within and power to control major decisions such as marketing, major crops to produce, type of technology to use, and type of information. They reported that they were economically, technologically, socially and politically empowered. The women reported that after introduction of the mobile phone services they were able to open an account, save, access credit, make payments, access extension information, network with other women, men and other organization on modern farming methods.

Key Words: *Women, Technological Empowerment, Agriculture, Issues, Challenges And Policy Option*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Agriculture is the prime mover of the Kenyan economy. Rapid agricultural growth is a key to achieving the country's developmental and social goals but the Kenya agricultural sector has been growing erratically since the country gained independence. According to Action Aid International (2011), its growth is below potential and required rates in Kenya. Agricultural sector performance is of great importance in the country's food sector and also important in country's food security and poverty alleviation efforts since majority of the poor are situated in the rural areas and depend directly on agriculture related economic activities for their major source of livelihood. According to World Bank (2007) report over 70% of country's population is rural and two thirds of these depend on farming for their live hood.

Kenya is characterized by a mixture of small, medium and large farms of which the majority is family smallholdings. This mixture comprises of cash crop farming, food crops and livestock rearing. Kenya has a diverse climate where different crops and livestock are concentrated in different areas but production tends to be limited more by lack of access of farmers to credit, market and agricultural information than climatic factors (Doss, 2011). According to Handley, Higgins and Sharma (2009) the debate on academic and development circles regarding the viability of utilizing microcredit programs in alleviating poverty and empowering women in Africa will never end unless policies and programs are enhanced to improve women position in accessing information, credit and market for the agricultural produce since they form the bulk of agricultural work force in Kenya. World Bank (2007) observed that increased access to credit which is the focus of many women in development programs in Africa often does not transform the social and structural dynamics in which women live and work.

According to Adi (2013) Cultural norms and family responsibilities portray that men as main breadwinners and as good farmers that women whereas women form the bulk of the labour force and lack control, access and ownership of factors of production. According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2011) women's ability to offer family assets as collateral and their incentives to invest in productive activities are influenced by family dynamics that are likely

to prioritize men's investments. Socially accepted norms of behavior and roles women play in their families can have profound effects on the type of economic activities in which women can engage, technologies available to them the people and agencies with whom they can interact the places they can visit, the time they have available and control they can visit, they can exert over their own capital. According to Maertens and Swinnen (2009) using data from Paraguay comparing husbands and wives knowledge of financial markets found that rural women are 15 to 12 percent likely than men to have basic information about financial institutions in their communities. And even when they have access to information on financial services and market opportunities available to them women may be less equipped to process it because of their lack of exposure to other languages especially relative to male family members and lower levels of literacy.

Empowerment is the capacity of men and women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth and respect their dignity (Kabeer, 2005). Women's economic empowerment and participation 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 (Meagher & Miller, 2010). Women participation in economic growth and empowerment can enhance equality, and vice versa though women do not reap the benefits of a growing economy in proportionally the same ways as men nor benefit equally from economic participation and empowerment. Nevertheless, women empowerment can strengthen their rights and address strategic gender interests as well as women's practical needs (Beyan, 2014). Growth and development can support gender equality in that wealthier people are more likely to educate both sons and daughters and less likely to have their daughters marry early or dropout of school as a result of lack of financial resources.

Manufacturing and service sectors tend to expand in a growing economy, attracting women into the formal labour force. Improvement of service delivery in public sector can lead to better health, high agricultural productivity and education outcomes which are areas where women's investments of time and finances are heavy and where poor service provision means increase in women levels of poverty (Diao, 2010). However, the relationship between growth and gender equality is neither direct nor automatic. Women's economic participation and empowerment

therefore means working to address constraints that women face to participating in and benefiting from growth and development, and working to secure their rights (FAO, 2012). Achieving sustainable economic growth and women empowerment requires the ideas, work, and entrepreneurial inputs of both women and men. Women make up nearly half of the global work force, a third of business owners, and influence as much as 80 percent of consumer spending (Central Statistical Agency, 2013). Economies pay a development and economic cost when women are held back from full participation (McGuigan, 2009). According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2011) if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent, raising the total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4 percent and lifting 150 million people out of hunger. Food and Agriculture Organization, estimates that productivity per worker would increase by some 25–40 percent with the elimination of discrimination against women workers and managers (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2011).

Women empowerment is particularly desirable because development effects are multiplied; on average, women spend a larger portion of their incomes on their families, leading to improvements in child nutrition, health, and education, and work to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty (World Bank, 2007 Higher levels of gender equality are correlated with lower rates of poverty, a higher standing in the Human Development Index, and less environmental degradation (FAO, 2012). However, although the proportion of women in the workforce has increased steadily in the past decades, there are significant differences in workforce participation rates between men and women, with women receiving less for their participation (Butler & Mazur, 2007). Women are concentrated in informal sectors and in low-productivity, low-paying employment and businesses, limiting the benefits they can receive.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were to;

- a) Determine how women in the study area understand the term empowerment
- b) Examine the forms of women empowerment in the study area
- c) Find out the effects of women empowerment on their rural livelihoods

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Understandings of Women's Empowerment in Africa

There has not been so much literature on women's and men's perceptions of women's empowerment in Africa. Two studies that have been reviewed in this respect revealed the following: A study about understanding the impact of Microfinance-Based Interventions on Women's Empowerment and the reduction of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa revealed that there was no equivalent word for empowerment in the local language. Rather, women used phrases such as 'the power to be enlightened' or 'the ability to claim personal power and use it to change for the better' to express the concept of empowerment (Maertens&Swinnen, 2009). The study also indicates that although some women alluded to challenging gender norms and the broader social and political status of women, most of them defined women's empowerment within the more intimate spheres of the household and community life. According to FAO (2012), despite the enthusiasm and the capabilities women in Ghana exhibit when in power, society normally does not appreciate their being in power. Men, and even some women themselves, usually detest women who assume key and influential positions, especially in politics and governance. She argues that the society sees women as very conceited and disrespectful when in power. Some men find explanations in the biblical and African traditional setting which prescribes that women, no matter their level of education, should be submissive to their husbands and other men. She argues that some men believe that some empowered women become disrespectful to their husbands, and even try to assume the position of the man, especially when they earn more than the men. The women also believed that a woman in a powerful position tends to mistreat her fellow women (FAO, 2012).

2.2 Forms of Empowerment

The term empowerment is a multi- dimensional social process and it helps people gain control over their own lives. Further, it can be called as a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they think as important. "Empowerment refers to increasing the economic, spiritual, political and social strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment of women is not only imperative but also crucial for all-round development of society and the nation as a whole. Empowerment of women now can be categorized into five main parts – social, educational, economic, political and psychological.

2.2.1 Social Empowerment

Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Empowerment as a methodology is usually associated with feminism. Broadly put, the term empowerment is defined as "a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It fosters the power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important" (Leung, 2011).

2.2.2 Educational Empowerment

Traditional concepts recognize higher education as an instrument of personal development. It helps in growing an individual's intellectual horizons, wellbeing and potential for empowerment (Lyon, 2008). It is considered as the single most important instrument of socio-political and economic transformation. But the picture of women's educational empowerment is not rosy in Kenya. "The recently released United Nations Development Report 2011 ranked Kenya 134 out of 187 countries"(World Bank.(2014). Without proper education to all children including girls, gender empowerment is not possible. This maxim - if one male child is literate personally he alone becomes educated but if one girl child is educated the whole family becomes benefited - has been realized by the national political leaders, policy makers, administrators and bureaucrats. When literacy percentage is increased, the women could be able to understand their actual rights which have been already given to them by the constitution of Kenya and accordingly the provisions contained in (Manda & Mwakubo, 2014). Information Technology and media (both print and electronic) are assuming vital roles in dissemination of knowledge to the people and bringing the world nearer to one's reach. In the present day situation it is not possible for any society to think about empowerment without the incorporation and utilization of IT (FAO, 2012). Poverty and illiteracy are intertwined with one another. Poor people are mostly uneducated or lowly educated. This mass of uneducated people feels one kind of powerlessness where some invisible forces from outside are controlling their lives. This powerless and inferior attitude creates a sense of intimidation. They began to depend on fortune, luck, destiny and above all God or supernatural elements. With attainment of education and knowledge women can overcome these problems. In this regard Meagher and Miller (2010) feels that, "Empowerment is the process by which the disempowered or powerless people can take up the control over their lives and livelihood and

change their circumstances.” In short, empowerment entails the ability of the disempowered to change the equation of power, their living conditions and their existing unequal conditions.

2.2.3 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment can be described as a means by which the poor, landless, deprived and oppressed people of all societies can be freed from all kinds of deprivation and oppression; can directly enjoy the benefits from markets as well as household; can easily manage a square nutritious food and fulfill basic requirements such as house, cloth, medicine and pure water etc. SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association) has emphasized on the economic empowerment of women. It holds that raising voice and visibility is not possible unless there is an access “to the ownership of economic resources by the poor women.” according Oseni, et, al.,(2015) women’s empowerment refers to the power of women to gain greater share of control over resources – human, material and intellectual like information, financial, ideas, knowledge and resources like money and access to it – and control over decision making in the nation, society, community, home, and to gain power. Economic empowerment reap through equal organizational benefits, equal treatments, equal working environment and equal work opportunities. Self Employed Women’s Association (SWEA) argues for women’s empowerment through the attainment of full employment and self-reliance of poor and rural exploited women (FAO, 2012).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted cross-sectional study survey with concurrent mixed methods approach entailing equal preference to quantitative and qualitative methodologies to generate rich information that helped fully to explore each of the survey objectives. This design was appropriate as it provided a better opportunity for participation of the beneficiaries as well as key partners and stakeholders in potato production project in Mauche and Mau-Narok division Njoro sub-county. It also ensured dependence on more than one source of information so that data was carefully triangulated through integrated analysis approach. Qualitative data was collected to triangulate individual quantitative household survey data for the purpose of validating the results. This, together with secondary data enhanced the process by assuring internal and external validity of the results.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling procedure

The study population was farmers who were registered in groups to produce potatoes in Mauche and Mau-Narok divisions in Njoro sub-county. The respondents were sampled using different approaches for quantitative and qualitative aspects of the survey. For quantitative segment, simple random sampling was done to identify beneficiaries' households (HHs) for the household survey. The survey target 240 farmers who were organized into 2 clusters of 12 farmer groups (Each cluster 6 groups) comprising of 20 farmers each working as a production group in Mauche and Mau-Narok divisions in Njoro sub-county Nakuru County, Kenya. Therefore, the population of this study was assumed to have approximately 240 individual farmer's household beneficiaries. The sample size representative of the farmers in this study was 148. It was determine based on the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size calculation which is the same as using the Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table. The sample size determination Table 1.0 is derivative from the sample size calculation which is expressed as below in equation (1) (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The Krejcie and Morgan's sample size calculation was based on $p = 0.05$ where the probability of committing type I error is less than 5 % or $p < 0.05$.

$$s = \frac{\chi^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + \chi^2 P(1-P)} \quad (1)$$

Where,

s= required sample size.

χ^2 =The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (0.05 = 3.841).

N =the population size.(240)

P =the population proportion (assumed to be 0.50 since this would provide the maximum sample size.

d =the degree of accuracy expressed as proportion (0.05).

$$148 = \frac{\chi^2 240 * 0.50 (1-0.50)}{0.05^2 (240-1) + \chi^2 * 0.50 (1-0.50)}$$

Table 1: Table for Determining Sample Size

N(POPULATION SIZE)	S (SAMPLE SIZE)
200	132
210	136
220	140
230	144
240	148
250	152
260	155
270	159
280	162
290	165
300	169

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Tools

Various data collection methods, tools and processes were employed during the study exercise to gather rich and high quality primary data and information. These tools endeavored to capture all the core survey indicators and objectives in accordance with the TOR and project logical framework. Primary data collected integrated a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods including group discussion, structured interview, semi-structured interview, Key informant Interviews (KII) and some PRA tools such as Venn diagram, Gender Analysis Matrix, and Time Trends. The study was based on data and information gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources comprised of relevant project documents and State and Non-state partner reports. Primary data was collected from sampled beneficiaries in the project focal areas.

3.4 Training enumerators and FGD facilitators

All the data collectors were trained in a central place for a period of 1 day including understanding, translation, review of tools that were used and use of digital phones/mobile phones in data collection. The purpose of the training was to equip the enumerators and FGD facilitators with basic principles of the survey as well as requisite skills for data collection including interviewing skills, communication skills, and ethics of research involving human subjects, data quality

management and Standard Operation Procedures during field work. Once the training was completed, a pretest was done in another 1 day to ensure that the data collection tools were appropriate and the data collectors were competent to carry out the assignment.

3.5 Data Collection Process

The data collection processes will be undertaken by a group of trained and competent enumerators and FGD facilitators. The exercise will involve seeking verbal informed consent before administration of questionnaires as well as explaining the purpose of the survey beforehand. FGD facilitators on the other hand will conduct sessions with selected community representatives in the selected project sites. The sessions will be voice recorded using digital recorders after seeking informed oral consent of the participants. Key informants will be interviewed and responses recorded using digital recorders upon receipt of consent. The information generated from the qualitative survey will be used to triangulate quantitative data. Moreover, secondary information will be gathered through document reviews to augment and strengthen primary data collected using the aforementioned tools.

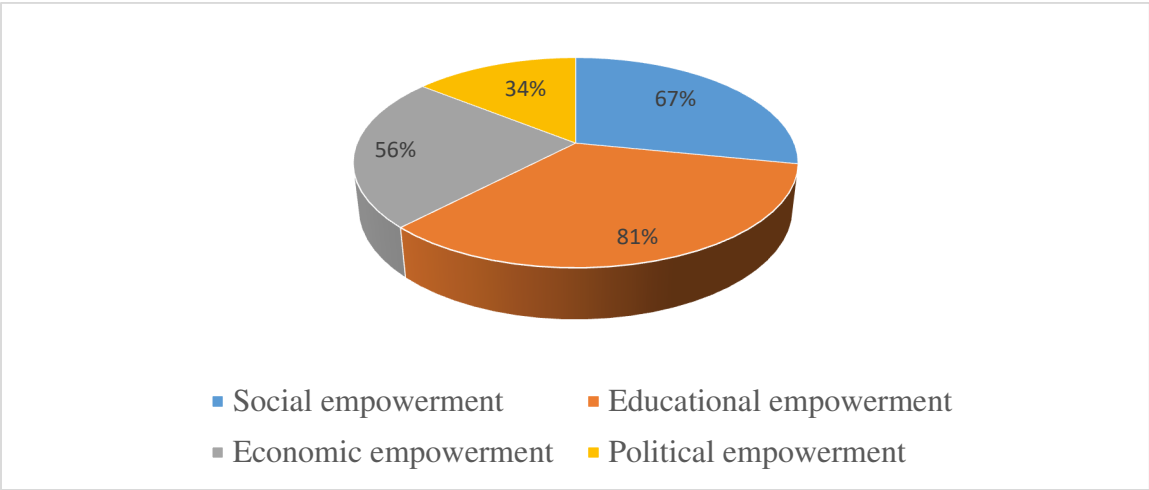
4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Understanding of the Term Empowerment

According to the report from focus group discussion the women in the study area explained the term empowerment as a social process where an individual gains control over their own lives and make independent informed decisions concerning their livelihoods. Other respondents reported that empowerment as a *process of promoting leadership and participation of rural women in decision making concerning factors of production which include land, labour and capital in order to improve economic status, food production, control of their reproductive lives and decision making at household level and public level.*

4.2 Types of Women Empowerment

From the focus group discussion and interview schedules the respondents reported that there were four main types of empowerment in the study area which include; economic, educational, social and political empowerment.



Majority of the respondents reported that they were empowered in terms of education since they were trained on various areas of agricultural production by government extension, Kenya agricultural livestock organization, Non-governmental organizations they reported that the training revolved around the topics of access to credit, crop and livestock production, marketing among other areas. They also reported that the gained educational training from radio and television programmes that train farmers on good farming practices. The respondents reported that the role of the radio in empowering women provision of answers to areas they felt are a challenge in agricultural production and had a chance to interact with experts and other audience on their local vernacular language which everyone could understand the topic under debate concerning various agricultural topics. Even though each of the respondents' descriptions on the importance of using a radio as the main source of information were unique, the responses showed that the usage of radio brought many opportunities for these women, in the context of rural Njoro Sub-county. The radio was certainly the far most used ICT when it came to obtaining agricultural information for all of the women who were interviewed. The explained benefits with the radio were: *that access to radio was everywhere and used various dialects to communicate, it could be listened to everywhere and at the same time as the women carried out their other tasks, and that listening was neither being affected by ownership nor control of the radio. Besides only being a provider of agricultural information, radio programs were extremely important for the women,*

because this was how they would find out about what was new and about what was going on in the sector, in the country, and even in the world. For those women being illiterate, learning by listening were sometimes their only means of obtaining information. Having access to a radio was explained as both being the most powerful and affordable way of obtaining valuable information coming from the ICT sources available, and it also responded to the women's needs. There existed a number of different programs, which often were broadcasted in their own local languages. Listening to programs in local languages gave the women increased agency by developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, which they had not possessed before. They explained that this had really helped them in enabling and increasing their capacity to obtain and act upon the information being broadcasted, that previous were often difficult to obtain. The skills they learned from the radio furthermore provided opportunities for the women to "self-educate" themselves and increase their resources in terms of human capital, meaning more farming skills and increased knowledge and try out ideas for solving problems related to their agricultural production, which in the end could lead to positive economic opportunities. It also allowed them to in some extent think beyond their immediate day-to-day survival and exercise greater choices that could entail income benefits. However, based on experiences from the extension officer being interviewed it is more common that the married women always asked their husbands first, before implementing and trying out new ideas. This was also something that was confirmed during the FGD. The testimony of the extension officer and the responses from the interviews and FGDs, gave the impression that women do not perceive themselves as being the ones undertaking final decisions, or even being able to making choices at all, in the presence of a male head. This is also in line with the research findings of Smith et al. (2003), who showed that women are often not left to make their own agricultural decisions, such as which input to use. But when they got the confidence to make their own decisions, the productivity increased as compared to when the man took all the decisions. This could also give the impression that women in single headed households are more empowered of this device than married ones.

The respondents reported that they were economically empowered when they were able to save, access credit from various sources, pull resources together and access and control land and labour. In the study area the respondents reported that they were able to access from their mobile phone helped which helped them to accumulated assets, such as social and financial assets, for both

individual and for group members, but to different degrees. First of all, the women perceived the phone to be beneficial because of its flexibility and mobility (Adi, 2013), and this made them save a lot of time. They could use the phone without having to forsake their workplaces in the home and in the farm. The phone then helped to alleviate some of the barriers women face in their physical mobility and accessing information on job opportunities. The extension officer mentioned that since most of the women do the manual work, it is also up to them to facilitate the tasks around the work. For example when it came to accessing casual jobs women had to wake up early and walk to the trading centres to wait for potential employers and when they do not get the job opportunities they walk back home having wasted their economic time. After the introduction of mobile phones and when women also accessed them, things changed and women could simply call a person or SMS to inform them about a job opportunity. Before the introduction of M-pesa, no women or very few women owned their own bank accounts and this also applied for many men. If households had a bank account (before M-pesa) it belonged to the head of the household, which usually was a man. But now, by owning a phone, the women could open their own accounts, buy products by using their phone and also both save and send money, leading to greater economic autonomy for the women. According to FAO (2011) this has of course also affected the men farmers' positively in similar way, increasing their economic autonomy (ownership of assets). Kabeer (2005) reported that this not sufficient in explaining if women have become economically empowered or not, since it mainly refers to control or command over financial and material resources. The term only reflects the aspects of, if financial assets are obtained in one's own name and how they choose to use or dispose them, and are therefore strongly connected with the individual persons' ability and decision power on how they should be used (ibid). Kabeers (2005) conceptualization of empowerment refers to something broader, since it deals with the process of change. How women exercise and increase their agency is thus the central aspect of the path to women's economic empowerment and strengthening women's ownership of assets (economic autonomy), is a critical and important factor of the process(ibid). Thus, through the mobile phone, most of the women have enhanced their agency and capacity to financial assets, which helped them to facilitate and resolve some of the barriers in their daily mobility. The use of the phone has increased their autonomy, access to opportunities and resources, but also strengthened their power to take control over their life both when it came to inside and outside their home. Through the phone they now could make strategic life choices that reflected their preferences and gain the

ability to effect a change, as compared to before the mobile phone existed, when this option was denied to them. Since M-pesa is based on private accounts, it has enabled women to access, control and own more financial assets, which they could transform to other resources or help them to strengthen their capability to act and make their own decisions for improved livelihoods (McGuigan, 2014).

Socially, the respondents reported that they were empowered when they used their mobile phone as they were beneficial in terms of mobility and flexibility, since it could provide the women with capabilities to keep contact and reach out to persons regardless of the distance between them. As a result, of this their social networks were strengthened. The extension officer mentioned that women like to share a lot in groups who consist of women, but that they only had time to meet on Sundays when attending the church service in the nearest community area. But using the phone has now enabled them to communicate more often and as a result reinforced their social networks. For the group of women connected to “M-farm, Whatsapp, Telegram and facebook”, in their mobile phones they were able to share agricultural information, hold meetings over the phone and deliberate on pressing issues without physically meeting enabling the group to come together, share information and enable future collective action opportunities as a marketing and access to land and capital without moving from one area to another.

The role of the TV in empowering women, from the focus group discussion and interview schedule the respondents in this study, reported that the TV did not play any major role in providing beneficial opportunities for the women. The main reason TV should not be considered an ICT tool that has increased women’s agency is due to the fact that women did not have the time to watch the TV to any greater extent, and in that they lacked any real influence or control when choosing which program to watch. This privilege was mainly the men’s, for those women with husbands. The women without husbands mentioned that even though not having a man present in the home, little time was left to watch the TV due to their double burden of being the breadwinner and taking care of domestic work entirely alone. All of the women had the alternative to watch TV since it existed in their home, but none seemed to have the ability to choose to watch the TV for agricultural education purposes

The role of the Internet in empowering women, from the focus group discussion and interview schedule the respondents in this study, reported that usage of internet could be said not to play any major role in providing opportunities in similar ways as the example with the TV. The Internet was not even used amongst the women. Firstly, most of them could not access it due to not having a smartphone or a computer, but also because of associated with high costs. Secondly, those that could access the Internet, mainly women employed in other sectors of the economy and practiced farming as an alternative source of income or a hobby women and owned a smartphone, gave many reasons for not using the internet, including one woman saying *“they are not for old people like us, they are for the young generation”* (Woman in the FGD Mau-Narok). It seemed that there existed a common perception that they did not see the relevance of using the internet for their agricultural production and the potential benefits it could provide them with, in terms of accessing agricultural information and learning new skills. This could mainly be deduced back to the fact that they had simply not been taught nor shown examples of any practical advantages of how the Internet could be used to benefit them. Once again, as with the TV, those that had access to Internet in some way (and not taking those who did not afford it in considerations due to high cost), had an alternative whereas they could have chosen to use the Internet, but did not. Strategic life choices always came before, what Kabeer calls “second-order” or “less consequential choices”, which of course “may be important for the quality of one’s life but do not constitute its defining parameters” (Kabeer, 2005). Since they did not see the relevance of Internet, they could not think what difference it could make in their everyday life, which in turn also affects their scope of action. Based on the women’s experience from life, the given structures may inhibit them to shape interest in learning new skills. The context then that they are embedded in may therefore shape the women’s individual interests, which in the end condition women’s choices (Kabeer, 2005).

4.3 Effects of Women Empowerment

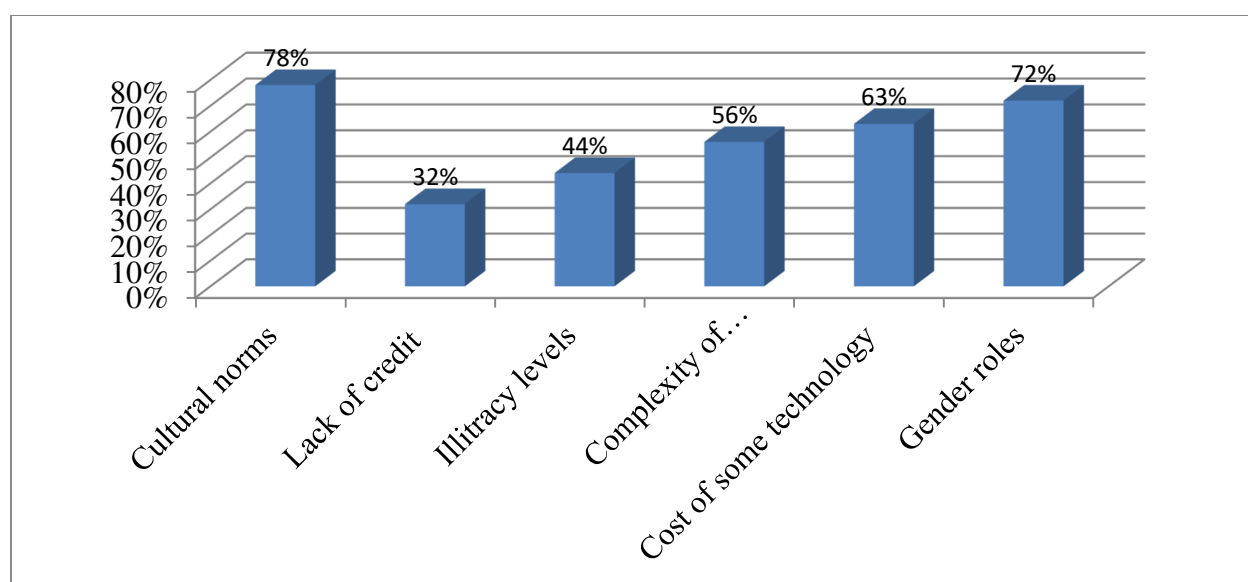
From the focus group discussion and interviews with the women in Njoro Sub-county the following conditions were seen to be of great importance in empowering women. There were different conditions that influence women empowerment this conditions include: Creating a safe space through joining women groups where they were able to discuss their issues freely without involvement of men especially on issues of savings through table banking, M-pesa , reproductive

health issues and how to solve domestic conflicts that arise from management of agricultural production factors (land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship) among other issues. The women groups provided a safe and a trusted space for women to gather and learn. Support independence and mobility this was achieved through listening to the radio, use of mobile phones, joining farmers groups, cooperatives and attending extension education training meetings which facilitated their independence in sourcing information which in turn helped them make informed decisions about access to labour market, production skills, value addition and agricultural marketing enabling them to share with each other their experiences without consulting their husbands. Through attending farmers field schools the women respondents reported that they were able to do simple things observing disease symptoms, perform small veterinary skills such as docking, dehorning, nursery management, pruning, grading breeding and selection among others through possession of mobile phones and joining cooperative movements the women respondents reported that they were able to open and operate their own accounts increasing their savings or income after joining savings cooperatives. Savings cooperatives, mobile banking and table banking groups allowed the women to invest money and then take turns receiving micro-loans to start micro-businesses or invest in education for their children. Through Farmers Field Schools, Kenya Agricultural Research, and Livestock Organization the respondents reported that they were able to get skills on beekeeping, mushroom farming, dairy farming, and other income-generating skills through training programs and were able to start her own income-generating business after joining farmers groups and savings cooperative. Through joining of farmers groups and listening to the radio conversation they were able to get information which they used to build their self-esteem and confidence. Majority of women reported that their self-esteem or confidence had increased since joining farmers groups and cooperatives as they were helped to become more comfortable in speaking in front of groups and sharing opinions.

The respondents reported that through joining of women groups, and cooperatives they were able to boost decision-making power, say that they have greater decision-making power in their homes and communities. They also reported increase in influence in their families and communities after receiving training or information from their local health care workers, on family planning, domestic violence and reproductive rights. The respondents reported that through joining of women groups, and cooperatives they were able building social networks, which enabled them to

have more support and greater opportunities to effect change in their communities. The respondents said that once this network were in place, they are emboldened by the knowledge that they are not alone in facing issues like domestic violence, reproductive health or family planning, and that they are inspired to help other women in their community by sharing the knowledge they have learned about these topics. The respondents reported that through joining of women groups, and cooperatives they were able to hold public leadership roles. Women groups and cooperatives provide leadership training for women to increase their presence in the public sphere. Majority of the respondents reported that they able to express their opinions in public or in their home. Women report joining committees, facilitating meetings, participating in protests, raising their voices against violence, and organizing community programs

4.4 Challenges in Women Empowerment



The process of empowerment was affected by limited access to credit, health care and education among other challenges they faced. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide. Women lack credit to expand their farming activities for they cannot get access to credit for failure to provide the necessary collateral. For instance Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) which gives credit to farmers requires that before they consent to give credit one must provide a title deed of the land, which in

most cases women do not have, as land is usually registered in their husbands or male children's name.

Another problem facing women in development is the fact that the vast majority are uneducated. This has resulted from some cultural practices, that the boy child is valued more than the girl child. Hence most rural families especially among the poor will give priority to the education of the boy, while the girl is seen as a source of wealth to the family. Therefore, the girl may be married off at a tender age and hence terminating her education. Adult literacy classes are well attended by women, and although these courses are geared towards basic education and practical skills, they usually are not coordinated with other projects. For example when reading about hybrid-maize women could be supplied with maize seeds and other inputs.

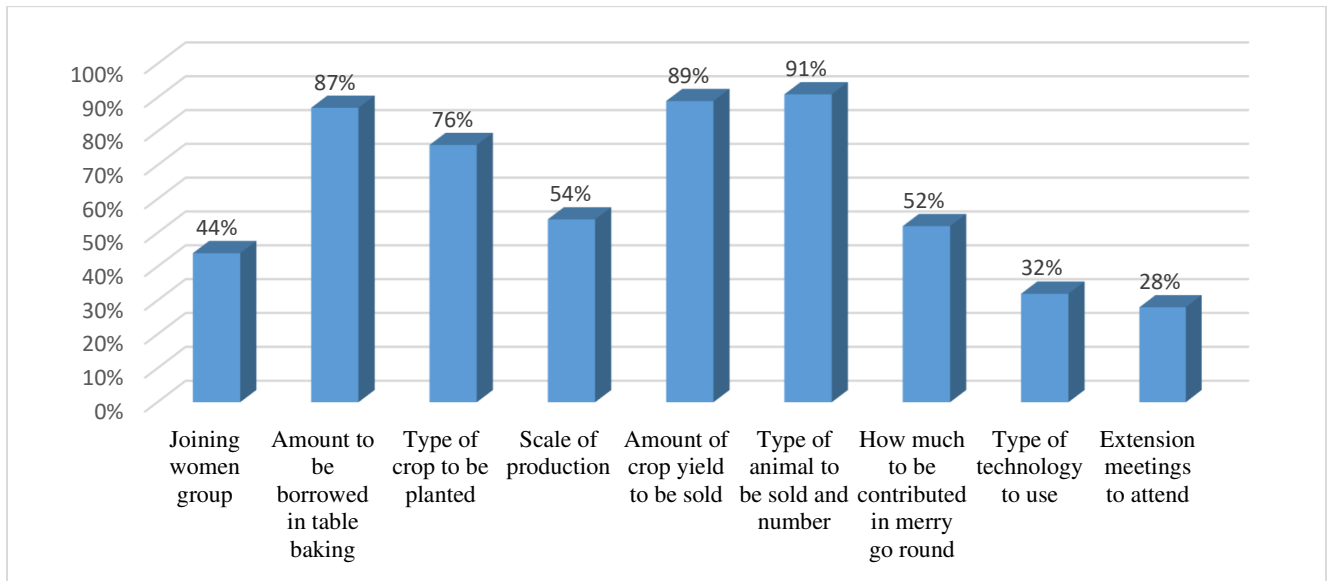
Women also lack agricultural training and extension advice even when improved food crops such as hybrid maize are promoted, training and inputs are usually received by male household head and not by women. The development of low-cost agricultural implements has been neglected: women continue to use short-handled hoes for breaking land and weeding. The extension services are constrained by social sanctions, which prevent visits from the male-dominated extension staff for among many ethnic groups, culture prohibits a male 'stranger' from visiting a married woman. Responsibilities of women tend to increase with introduction of labour intensive crops, education of children and off-farm employment for men. Further, shortages of house hold labour increases the womens' responsibilities for others chores like fetching water, firewood and milking livestock (Adi, 2013).

In marketing cooperatives, the position of women is at the peripheral. Most cooperative societies in the past accepted only male members. Membership tends to be in the name of the husband, this creates problems. There is evidence to indicate that when a cash crop under male control competes for labour with food under female control, the cash crop tends to be neglected until work on the food crop is completed. Moreover, women may refuse to work on a crop or do so inefficiently when the income will go to the male household head as illustrated by a cooperative society that was set up for the marketing potatoes in Njoro. This was formally a plantation crop whose labour was supplied by women and children, whose small fingers were hotter, suited than men's to the delicate operation of plucking the wool. Independent Kenya adopted the policy of substituting

cooperative marketing from individual holdings for wage labour. The plot-holders were men and so were the cooperative members, so though the women were still expected to do most of the work, when the crop was sold the proceeds went to the men and the women no longer got what they earned before from their employers

4.5 Tasks That Women Seek Permission in Agricultural Production

From the study the following activities were reported to seek permission before undertaking them



From the study results the respondents report that issues revolving money they consulted their husbands as they were the leading cause of conflicts in the society. Issues that were less concerned about money they did not consult much as there was less conflicts involved. The respondents reported that *“men wish to be consulted on issues revolving around finances as they felt superior and were the head of the household which was seen as a sign of respect.”* The respondents reported that they were empowered when they joined women groups which was a form of social empowerment and they were able to share the challenges they face both at household level and community level and they were able to seek solution through consultation among themselves. Through table banking the women reported that they were able to be economically empowered as they could be able to borrow credit at low interest rates and invest in small business enterprises such as poultry rearing and groceries business as off-farm activities. Through attending extension meetings and group meetings they were able to get new information on farming and

entrepreneurship which was a learning process. As women elected their leaders through democratic process they felt they were politically empowered and had freedom to make independent choices on leadership and management of group affairs. According UN() to Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.