CHALLENGES AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

BY

TERESIA WANJIKU GATHAGU

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ABSTRACT

The importance of involving women in the management of water resources has been recognized at the global level. In most societies, women have the primary responsibility for management of household water supply, sanitation and health. In these societies, women play the role of family care givers in providing food, proper nutrition, clean water and proper sanitation. Due to the said social roles, women depend directly on water resources. Women have therefore accumulated considerable knowledge about water resources, including location, quality and storage methods.

The Kenya Government together with other development agencies has made commitments to ensure enhanced participation and involvement of women in the management of water resources. Towards this end, policies and legislation have been put in place to enhance the participation of women in water resources management. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these policies and legislation has not been clearly established especially in the traditional rural contexts of the developing countries. In Kenya several challenges hinder women from effectively participating in water resources management. These challenges have not been adequately examined in Kajiado County.

This study examined the challenges women face in the management of water resources in Kajiado County. The study was guided by the main objective which was to assess the role of women in water resources management in Kajiado County. The study design used was descriptive in nature and the study was done in three out of the seven Divisions of the County. The three Divisions were randomly picked. Data was collection by the use of the questionnaires, focused group discussions and the use of the key informants in the study area.

The existing policy, legal and institutional framework was also examined. A total of 196 respondents in nine locations which were randomly selected from three divisions, that is, Central Kajiado, Namanga and Mashuru. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and direct observations while secondary data was collected
through document analysis. Random and purposive sampling methods were used to come up with the required sample. The study was descriptive in nature and qualitative data was obtained to identify the challenges which hindered women from participating in water resources management. Information on the role of women in use and management of water resources, sources of and access to water was also obtained.

The data collected was analyzed and presented in form of figures and tables. Qualitative data was also analyzed according to emerging issues and presented in narratives as well as direct quotes. The findings were presented in excel tables of percentages, pie charts and figures.

The study established that women in Kajiado spend a lot of time and energy per day collecting water for domestic use. As a result, they have no time for self-development such as education and income generation. The findings also revealed that the Maasai culture has created gender inequality where women play a subordinate role in the society and rarely included in decision making structures. However, it emerged that the constitutional provisions for inclusion of at least one third of each gender in elective and appointive positions has helped to put a few women in the management of water resources. Unfortunately these women, according to the study, do not effectively participate due to the identified challenges.

The Maasai exhibit gender inequality in the form of patriarchy. The pattern has influenced customary marriages, inheritance of property and control over resources. Maasai women experience subordinate social status and they are responsible for most of the household chores with no decision making power within the household and the community. The boreholes there is single water point, where water is drawn from a single trough. Since men own the livestock, they control the water point and ensure that the cattle are given priority to drink water and also the gender discrimination in education is still high.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that formal education and capacity building for women in water resources management be addressed. A gender policy in water resources management, and amendment of the Water Act to specifically include the role
of women, are also recommended. Further research should be carried out to obtain actual data on the number of women involved in water resources management in the entire County.