

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

THIS IS UNCORRECTED WORK.
IDEAS OR OPINIONS EXPRESSED
BY THE WRITER ARE NOT NECESSARILY
THOSE OF TANGAZA COLLEGE.

TISC

Institute of Social Ministry in Mission

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN KENYA

by SIMON MURIITHI KAMARA, OFM Cap.

Tutor: Mr. MASIGA CASPER

NAIROBI: April 24, 1998

M

9/8

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN KENYA

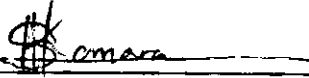


SIMON MURIITHI KAMARA, OFMCap.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used here has not been submitted for academic credit to any other institution. All sources have been cited in full.

Signed



DEDICATION

The Reseacher of this Long Essay has decided to dedicate it to the Directors of the institute of social ministry in mission:

Fr. Fracesco Pierli, MCCJ and Sr. Margaret Aringo, FSJ; who have always tried their level best to see that, the intergral human development approach is applicable as far as Evangelization is concerned. The paper has also been dedicated to all women in the society to whom the Reseacher believes should be treated by the society as human persons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the contributions various friends and critics, who have helped me in carrying out this research. Foremost goes to my Tutor; Mr. Casper Masiga, who has been very patient in guiding me, up to the end.

Mrs.Emma Gichinga; a Lecturer in Tangaza College is another concerned person who has assisted me with very relevant materials. I am also very glad to have received other interesting materials from Bakhita Documentation Centre and Tangaza College Library.

I would also like to thank my Capuchin Con-friars for their encouragement, during this Research Work. I appreciate very much all those who have assisted me, in typing and printing my work. In a special way, I would like to thank Br. James Kimani Wambu, Fr. Eleuter Mrema and Fr. Solomon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER ONE	
1.0. CLARIFICATION OF THE TERMS	3
<i>i) EMPOWERMENT</i>	3
<i>ii) WOMEN</i>	3
1.1. THE WOMEN'S STATUS IN KENYA	4
1.2. STATUS OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND LEGAL SPHERE	5
1.3. ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN	8
1.4. THE ISSUE OF FEMALE-HEAD HOUSE HOLDING	9
1.5. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION	11
1.6. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	11
1.7. HEALTH STATUS OF WOMEN	13
1.8 EDUCATION STATUS OF WOMEN	17
CHAPTER TWO	
2.0. THE MAIN REASONS OF WOMEN'S STATUS	20
2.1. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE	20
2.2. THE CHURCH DOCTORS' VIEW OF WOMEN	22
2.3. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE: MYTH AND IDEOLOGY	23
2.4.0. TRADITIONAL ECONOMY IN KENYA :	25

2.4.1. PRE-COLONIAL ERA.....	25
2.4.2. COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL ERAS.....	26
2.5. TRADITIONAL POLITICAL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS.....	27
2.6. LACK OF EDUCATION TO WOMEN.....	28
2.7. BAD GOVERNMENT POLICY.....	30

CHAPTER THREE

3.0.0. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN KENYA	32
3.0.1. STRATEGIES OF EMPOWERMENT.....	34
3.0.2. SOME OF THE STRATEGIES THAT SHOULD BE ADOPTED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES.....	35
3.1. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC SPHERE.	35
3.1.1. STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ECONOMICAL EMPOWERMENT:.....	35
3.2. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN HEALTH SPHERE.....	36
3.3. EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.....	38
3.4. EDUCATION FOR GENDER RESPONSIBILITY	38
CONCLUSION	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	41

ABBREVIATIONS

AAWORD: Association of African women Research and Development.

AIDS: Acquired immune Deficiency Syndrome

BAT: British American Tobacco company

DP: Democratic Party

FGM: Female genital mutilations.

FIDA-K The International Federation of Lawyers-Kenya

GDP: Gross Domestic product

HIV: Human immunodeficiency Virus

IPPG: Inter-party parliamentary Group

KANU: Kenya African National Union.

KARI: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

KTDA: Kenya Tea Development Authority

MOA: Ministry of Agriculture

MP: Member of Parliament

MYWO: Maendeleo ya wanawake Organisation

NCSW: National commission on the status of women

NCWK: National council of women of Kenya

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

SDP: Social Democratic Party

STDs: Sexually transmitted Diseases.

UNICEF: United nations international children Education fund.

WHO: world health organisation

WID: Women in Development

INTRODUCTION

Women have been discriminated and their rights have been violated since time immemorial. They have been overlooked by the male chauvenism and the traditional cultures. These two aspects have contributed a lot to the humiliation of women to a great extent. Some view woman as second class human beings, who should always be under the 'umbrella of a man'. In this Essay, I will suggest how women in Kenya can be empowered. Though women should be empowered in all spheres of life, I will concentrate on the following spheres: political and legal, economic, health and educational.

In the first chapter I shall try to portray the status of women in connection with the above spheres. The second chapter is intended to elaborate the main reasons as to why women are in those positions they are in the society. In the third chapter, I will suggest how women can be empowered in political and legal, economic, health and educational spheres. Then I will also propose *Gender Responsive Education* as one of the most important aspects which, I feel, can enhance women empowerment in the society, if at all it is put into practice. In this long Essay I will apply the **See-Judge-Act** methodology which I believe is an appropriate and recommendable approach for social ministries in mission. Before embarking on what I am intending to elaborate concerning the empowerment of women in Kenya, I would like to clarify some of the relevant terminologies which I believe they are relevant to the Essay, namely empowerment and women.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. CLARIFICATION OF THE TERMS

i) EMPOWERMENT

The word empowerment is derived from the word “power,” which means authority and thus to empower is to enable or to authorise someone to have a control over something. The word power can have many connotations / meanings, depending on the concepts or ideologies of different peoples. For instance, the “social scientists understand power to be both personal and social. Personal power refers to the capacity to influence another, which is an aspect of human personhood and cannot be alienated. Several societies have different ways of agreeing to specific power arrangements. Hence, the contemporary social analysis and critiques of power arrangements from the perspective of the poor, the marginalised or the oppressed reveal that even these groups are capable of exerting ‘the powers of the weak,’ which in turn can influence social process. When exercised, the powers of the weak result in empowerment and liberation.¹ In other words, empowerment can also be defined as the act of making a certain kind of people like the poor, women and others like the marginalised to know their way of life and how they can be responsible.

ii) WOMEN

According to the Webster Dictionary, woman is the female of the human race, distinguished from man. And thus the noun ‘woman’ can also be used to refer to girls, married, unmarried, single mothers and even the windowed females. Hence, the word ‘women’ is plural form of a woman.

¹ Janet K. Ruffing. “Power” in: Michael Downey. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*. Collegeville: The

1.1. THE WOMEN'S STATUS IN KENYA

Since the time immemorial, women have been regarded to be inferior to men. This gender inequality has been experienced by women globally in almost every sphere in their lives. Presently, it seems that there still exists various cultural practices in African traditional cultures that considers man as the head and controller of family and society as a whole. Kenya is one of those countries found in African continent whereby several cultural practices have persisted through the centuries and they have brought a lot of impact as far as women status in Kenya is concerned. Though culture is dynamic it has been observed that, certain cultural practices have continued to exist without changing inspite of their discriminatory nature regarding the status and the role of women in Kenyan society. The "Kenyan Government policy did not directly address the women's issue until 1979. This was followed by the positive policy pronouncements regarding its realisation that women needed to be integrated into development. The government also did the same in matters pertaining to legislation and general public awareness."²

However, the above has been constrained by the persistent of the culture, which has continued portraying negative altitudes in regards to the feminine gender in the society. Due to that, women issues have not been looked into with sensitivity and gender equality. Hence, some men group women, together with children, which means in "legal parlance, that they are regarded as minors or second class people, without the legal rights, ordinarily taken for granted by males of distinctly mediocre propensities."³ This means that their status compared to men is lower up to now "the Kenyan constitution is still silent on statements that tend to imply a lower status of women in the society."⁴ However, the statutory and customary laws in Kenya still continue demeaning women's position in society. The constitution of Kenya prohibits all forms of

² Mary Omosa, "Persistent cultural practices: A Review of the status of women in Kenya" IN : Association of African Women in Research and Development, Nairobi: AAWORD, 1995, p.61.

³ Andrew Ngwiri, "Seminars Yes, but Women Need More" In: Sunday Nation, March, 8, 1998, p.18.

discriminations according to section 82, but it does not specify areas in which women rights are violated as far as gender discrimination is concerned, meaning that; it is still gender neutral. And thus, genders inequality is not rarely taken into consideration in Kenyan state, while referring to the Gender in the sociological difference existing between men and women in the world. Hence unfortunately, many just look at the gender in the biological perspective only. In section 84 of the very constitution, it confers on the remedies to victims of violation of fundamental rights and freedom. All the same, it does not explain clearly which procedures to follow to enhance " women rights which are also human rights."⁵ Since women are human beings as men; inspite of genital differences. The application of Laws of Kenya is often against the interest of women even when the law is adequate. Out-model practices, beliefs and traditional attitudes are given a higher consideration than the individual person wish."⁶ A good example is the case of Wambui Otieno in burial saga of her husband, whereby she could not be allowed by Mr. Otieno's family to inherit the properties. And thus a good way to eradicate the gender inequality is through empowerment of women in various spheres of their lives, e.g. political and legal, Economic, Health and Education.

1.2. STATUS OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND LEGAL SPHERE

Currently, the status of women in political and legal sphere is not yet appreciated by many males and even by some women. Many people are still not convinced that a woman is capable of leading either in the constituency as an MP or as the Head of state. The majority of men voters are not ready to vote for women candidates in the country, simply because they are females. In connection to that, they believe that, "men are more intelligent than women and thus women have smaller brains than men,"⁷ hence being not able for leadership in the society. On the other hand

⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2.

⁶ League of Kenya Women Voters; Women and Democracy: A Voters Handbook, Nairobi: Views Limited, 1992, p.6

women in the country feel that their status in politics and legal sphere is ignored not only by the ordinary Kenyans but also by the Government itself as matters concerning them are decided without their consultation. A good, example is the foundation of the Ministry of Women and Children affairs this year, 1998, whereby a man was appointed to by the Head of State to whom according to women's opinion it was inappropriate as far as women affairs are concerned. And according to my own feeling and concern, I think a woman could have been appointed since it is the Ministry which pertains to Women matters. The very Ministry was later dissolved without the women being involved on around March, 1998 whereby women were excluded in the decision making. And for some women, they claimed that the Ministry of Women's affairs, was merely a "whitewash meant to make donors believe that women issues are being taken seriously when they are not"⁸

Women issues are often portrayed negatively by the local mass media as militants who are attempting to overthrow male politicians from the political arena. As for the women parliamentary aspirants, their aim is to be elected to the parliament on equal terms with their male counterparts. On the Sunday Nation, August 3, 1997, women complained that, the mass media have passed judgement on literature saying women do not have much impact in constituencies and other electoral areas where they intended to seek votes. Severally, the local media ignores many a time to pass information on positive matters for instance when women are trying to carry out a development venture but it acts very fast to publicise an embarrassing situation on women as if men are never embarrassed.

It has already been observed by the women politicians like Mrs. Tabitha Seii that the local media does not give equal coverage to women candidates either for parliament, or for presidency candidature as she has said, "In some constituencies, the media does not mention that there are women aspirants and when it does, they are given a very brief mention preferably at the bottom of

the articles." Another woman candidate has backed Mrs. Seii by saying that, "the press dilutes their candidature by that, you (women), do not pose a serious threat to the incumbent. Others like the New SDP party, MP like Mrs. Beth Mugo have discovered that "women are also discriminated in the political parties, where men are acting as leaders by being segregated from certain ranks in the political parties they have joined. She has verified the issue by declaring that "My background is in women's leadership. I am a founder of DP; Discrimination starts in the party. Women are not allowed to occupy certain positions"⁹

Up to now, it seems that women politicians are not supported by men voters and to make it worse even by their fellow women. It is out of experience that some women politicians like Dr. Julia Ojiambo have realised that. She testifies by saying, "A Woman leader is alone out there because very few women understand our plight as they still think that politics is for men ". Hence, only the minority of them who are trying to eradicate the 'Male-political system,' prevailing in the country. At the moment, "only the women lawyers through FIDA and the league of Kenya Women Voters, who are challenging male politicians on the issue of gender equality"¹⁰ the majority of women it seems that they; don't participate fully in Kenyan politics. Many political analysts and some female activists have always conjectured over the reason as to why women perform so poorly in elections. Some are still looking into reasons as to why many of them performed so poorly in the last year's elections, 1997. According to their analysis, it demonstrates that: In Kenya, 98.8 % of adult women are mainly sex objects for men, factories for child production, water pumps for domestic supply, fuel tankers, farm tractors and combine harvesters chefs and washing machines for laundry and utensils. Women also double up as efficient sanitary offices for the domestic dwelling, where there is livestock they come in hand as milling machines.

⁹ Female Politicians Sharing Political Experiences" In: Maria Nzomo, The Gender Dimension of Electoral Politics in Kenya: Capacity Building of Women Candidates for 1997 and Beyond, Nairobi: The National Commission on the Status of Women, 1997, p.13.

In the line of business, they are leading traders in farm produce, while in the cash crop arena they are quite useful as tea and coffee plucking machines, who also provide reliable transport means. Women however have very little or no say in the disbursement of domestic finances. "Due to that busy schedule occupying women's lives, it makes them lack time for the participation in the political arena. Their political role as women politicians consists of only 2 percent of the women population in Kenya."¹¹ The majority of them end up turning in huge numbers to vote for men, simply because the polling day is the only period when they are off from the duties they do perform daily. And hence they vote for men politicians while regarding them as their God-given masters. In fact many a time, women are humiliated almost to the state of being not humans like men themselves. Their opinions in political matters are profoundly ridiculed as women gossip. And thus their contributions are often taken lightly as far as political system is concerned.

1.3. ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

The current economic set-up in which women have a heavier burden caring for children favours men while the Kenyan society is hardly, if even admonishing men for neglecting their families. For instance in many homes in the country, men go out drinking beer virtually every evening leaving women to care for the children. This means that the burden of shaping the children in the society is left to the mothers. Hence, women end up playing a significant role in the maintenance of the family units and in the society as a whole compared to men. This in fact is an important input in national development. Unlike the olden days when sex roles were clearly defined, the social-economic changes in our society seem to have loaded, women with other duties, both in rural and urban areas. According to the studies which have been carried out, they show that many women work for about 16 hours daily and that they feel overworked. Following a UNICEF report (1989) in pastoral areas like Marsabit, Narok and Kajiado shows that women's

duties include fencing animals' sheds, cleaning the sheds, milking cattle, goats, grazing them and tending them.

When they are sick; these pastoral women also skin the animals and sell skins. Apart from those duties, and other daily chores which include child rearing, women also fetch firewood and water. The last two tasks are very dangerous because of the hostile environment in which pastoralists live. The very women also contribute to the household economy by building Manyattas (local huts). They do not only look for the suitable trees but also carry building materials to the site and then put up the structure. After that they seal the huts with mud and dung.

1.4. THE ISSUE OF FEMALE-HEAD HOUSE HOLDING

In Kenya, we have a lot of female-headed households prevailing currently. One of the factors which has contributed to this, is the gender insensitivity of some employers who tend to favour male workers to female ones. Another factor is that in the country, many industries are located in the urban centres and this forces these men, who need employment to move away from the rural areas for urban. And as a result of those factors, many males (men) migrate to urban areas to be employed in the industries such as Oil refineries limited, KTDA, BAT limited and other industries found in Kenyan towns. With the course of time, those men employees become absorbed into urban life hence neglecting their families living in rural areas. Due to that migration of men for urban areas, many women dwelling in the rural areas are forced by this situation to become the heads of the families while their husbands end-up living with other women in the style of 'come and we stay-together', which make some to stay for years without going back to rural areas and others never go back to their true families. According to the republic of Kenya Economic survey of 1993; Male-headed households continue to earn about 60% which is higher compared to the female-headed households who, are more susceptible to poverty than those in

Male headed households because of the lack of Adult male labour input. In the process these women tend to work longer hours, perform more tasks and assume added responsibilities such as domestic work. This situation renders such women more vulnerable to high levels of stress and insecurity. Following the results of national survey conducted in 1992 which had excluded Turkana, Marsabit and Samburu districts; reviewed among other conditions that:

- Households are generally worse off on the basis of asset ownership.
- Quality of housing is generally low.
- About 74% of households used mud or wood in the same materials in the construction of floors while 36% used thatched roofs.
- The proportion of households deriving water from protected sources was in excess of 50% during the wet dry season.
- Of the 15% who reported illness about 88% attended a health facility or purchased medicine.

The results relating to water and health have positive implication for families while assets and quality of housing leave a lot to be desired. This situation has a negative impact on women, who have responsibility of maintaining of houses.

A Distribution of Household Heads by Sex

PROVINCE	MALES	FEMALES	NOT STATED	TOTAL
Nairobi	79.3	20.4	0.4	100.0
Central	65.1	34.6	0.3	100.0
Coast	77.1	22.6	0.3	100.0
Eastern	70.4	29.4	0.2	100.0
N/Eastern	64.7	35.3	-	100.0
Nyanza	63.5	36.3	0.2	100.0
R/Valley	78.8	21.1	0.1	100.0
Western	63.3	36.3	0.4	100.0
	71.9	28.0	0.2	100.0

NOTE: Urban Only

SOURCE: Republic of Kenya Economic Survey 1993.

The data collected by the Republic of Kenya Survey 1993 indicates nationally, female-headed-households are 28 % with Nyanza and Western province having the highest compared to other provinces. This implies that female households have increased and the trend seem to continue year after the other. Hence, if those kinds of the households will not be curbed, then females will continue having too much to 'carry on their shoulders'.

1.5. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION

Agriculture sector is very important sector in Kenya's economy. About 35% of the GDP originates from the Agriculture sector, while 60% of the value exports consists of raw or processed agricultural products. The majority of the "country population live in the rural areas and it dependens on Agriculture. About 70% of Kenya's labour force is employed in agriculture, and the majority of them are women" (UNICEF report on children and women in Kenya, 1989). However, "about 75% of the labour of small holdings is provided by women and 96% of the rural women on the family farm, compared with 80% of men. And about 2/3 of Kenya small holding are managed by women have substantial influence over the rest. Hence it is women in the country who produce food and much of the Kenya's exports"¹²

1.6. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Agricultural Education and training is carried out by the Egerton University which until recently occupied middle ground in Kenya system of Agriculture training. The university runs two programmes of training in Agriculture, a three-year diploma program and a three-year degree program. On the other hand, the faculty of agriculture at the University of Nairobi awards the B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in various fields of agriculture. The graduates of the above institutions

are mostly employed by MOA and KARI. At the Egerton University, the percentage of female graduates from diploma programmes grew from 14% in 1971 to 25% in 1986. And from the same year onwards, women comprised between 24% and 26% of the student body. The enrolment of women peaked in 1985 at 28% then dropped to 24% in 1986, women made up of 26% of the students body (Mullei, 1991).

At the faculty of agriculture; Nairobi University; male graduates in B.Sc. in agriculture constituted 95% of the total. Indeed, by 1976 of the 175; graduates only 15 of them were females - who consisted of only 9% total. Even if the promotion of women, trained in Agriculture has shown a remarkable improvement since 1977, the number of men continues to dominate the training within the College. To date out of the 1,243 B.Sc. graduates that the College has trained since it was started, only 280 of them are women - constituting 23% of the total (Bahemuka, 1990). Even when other degree courses are included, the above general trend does not seem to change. In general the proportion of female graduates in all courses for any given year ranges from (19% for 1983 to 27% for 1987). From 1983-1989, out of the 951 graduates that the College had trained in various fields of agriculture, there were 222 women graduates - who constituted only 23% of the total (Bahemuka, 1990). Hence the low promotion of women trained in agriculture at the university levels, it has been observed that, depends by (gender) in the lower levels of our educational system.

KARI is the major institution in Kenya in-charge of Agricultural Research. The "institute has 6200 employees (scientists and support staff out of whom 1,320 (22%) are women of these employees, only 116 are scientists while the rest are support staff. Male scientists number 484 out of the women scientists, 43 have M.Sc. and 5 have PhD, while for men 174 have MSc and 25 PhD. Since 1987, KARI has embarked on a training program to upgrade its staff. Based on the available data, KARI has tried to give equal chances to both sexes. However, through experience, the institute has found out of the traditional roles of women as mothers at times interfere with

their advanced training since, most of the graduate training is done abroad some women are unable to take such offers due to their commitments at home".¹³ That shows, how women are discriminated on the access to Agriculture Education and Training in Kenya at the Public Agricultural universities.

1.7. HEALTH STATUS OF WOMEN

According to the WHO; health is clarified as physical, mental and social well being not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity. Hence, Health care covers a wider perspective than merely curative services. "The health status of women and the disparities in health between the sexes are often critical indicators of inequality in society." (Inter-Sectoral action for health, WHO, 1986)

Economic development in the world cannot be achieved without the involvement of women. Women need to be alive and healthy to play their full part in the development process. All across the world, millions of women and girls go through their entire life without ever having enjoyed a state of good health. This is happening in African continent as a whole despite of the awareness already created on women's health. It is well known that many women suffer and die needlessly each day in Kenya. The majority of these victims who die; have at least an idea on when they are likely to perish; but the exact magnitude of the problem is not defined.

Kenya has a population of about 27 millions, half of this population consists of women. A fraction of that population is more sick, attends health facilities more frequently and consumes more resources in health than the males. The status of women's health is influenced by various factors, some operates even before the baby girl is born. The health of the women mothering the baby determines the birth weight and subsequent survival as a neonatal and an infant nutritional status in childhood influences her growth and development.

¹³ Maria Nzomo, Empowering Kenya Women, Nairobi: NCSW, 1993), p.35.

This girl child is many a time placed at a lower status compared to her male counterpart in most societies in Kenya, although the girl is born with a natural biological survival advantage. Due to the African traditional cultures prevailing among many communities in the country, the girl child is undernourished than her male counterpart. The culture also contributes to the sub-optimal utilisation of available services by the girl child.

Nowadays the health of a girl child is greatly threatened and particularly when she is at her adolescent stage. Some of the Girl's father's in Kenya tend to marry-off their daughters at a very early age. This pre-mature marriage affects the girl's health by putting her at a risk of maternal death and other pregnancy related disabilities. Other girls indulges in early sexual activity while having a poor knowledge as far as mature human sexuality is concerned. This sometimes results to STDs and HIV positive. Thus "today amongst Kenya adolescents with HIV infections; females outnumber males by a ratio of 4:1 respectively"¹⁴

The life expectancy of females in Kenya has risen rapidly since independence and today stands at 60 years. Since women live longer than men the number of women living beyond menopause is high. Presently there is no specialised service that targets the post menopausal women or the geneatric population. The "woes of menopausal women therefore are largely untended or described as 'old age complaints' by most health workers"¹⁵

This is the age when most cancers in women develop. Currently an organised services for screening cancer disease affecting different organs of women like the cervix, Uterine cervix, breast is hardly practised in the country. Nowadays many people are suffering mental and emotional stresses of complex in Kenyan modern societies. For example, 25% of all patients seeking treatment for different ailments have some degree of mental illness. In fact more women than men suffer from mental illness, but far more men are getting treatment.

¹⁴ Kivutha Kibwana (ed), Women and Autonomy in Kenya: Policy and Legal Framework, Nairobi: Claripress Limited, 1997, p.70.

Depression in women is quite common due to the socio-cultural expectations placed on the women from birth. On the other hand to be family and disabled in our society is a double tragedy. This is even worse when the disabilities are combined with being poor, illiterate, malnourished and living in rural areas. Despite that there is no data to show how many people have disabilities and the type of degree of the disabilities, that these victims have; there is a rough estimate, showing that one person in every ten has significant changes by others. Many causes of disabilities such as home and road accidents, nutritional deficiencies, childhood diseases such as poliomyelitis and measles can be prevented. Due to stereotypes; found among many societies in the country you find that disabled females may lead to complete isolation or abandonment. It is many a time assumed that a disabled male should learn some skill or professions that will enable him to earn a living. This assumption is not accorded to "females who are disabled. In addition to that a lot of vocational rehabilitation programmes are generally, male oriented and employment programmes for disabled people often have a male bias" (Maria Nzomo, 1997:47) Some disabled women are frequently victims of rape and violence. Hence many of the victims find the society attitude harder to deal with and more disabling than that of the disability itself. And thus many of the disabled are affected by condition of being in psychological crisis.

Another area where Kenya women suffer following their health status in the country is the curative services rendered. At the moment there is wide gender disparity in-patient health facilities in Kenya. Most of the district hospitals in the country; Only the maternity ward is strictly for women. Most non-maternity female wards are actually female-cum-paediatric wards housing both women and children patients. In contrast the hospitals are clearly designated male wards exclusively for men.

Currently; the world can and does produce enough food to feed its people but "malnutrition still affects more than 500 million people. Between 20 and 45 percent of women of

the child bearing age in developing countries do not eat, the WHO recommended 2250 calories a day during pregnancy."¹⁶

There are many reason which contribute to the prevailing situation but the underlying factor is poverty, i.e. inability to earn enough to secure the adequate and the right kinds of food. Nutritional deficiencies are common in Kenya; particularly to the very young. Anaemia, especially Nutritional anaemia affects a lot of women in Kenya. Besides diet, other factors which affects women's situation of anaemia are growth, menstruation and lactation period. Other related factors which contribute to the undernourished situation of females in the country are food consumption practices prevailing among different societies. A good example is "eggs which are prohibited for women and children in many cultures".¹⁷

Unfortunately that type of food prohibited in the societies, are the very ones which contain the micronutrients needed for the fine tuning of a women's nutritional well-being. Female genital mutilations (FGM) is another factor that, deteriorates the health status of women in Kenya. This traditional practice, which affects women health is practised by the Kenyan societies like Agikuyu, Meru, Somalia, Masai, Turkana, Embu, Mbeere. FGM has persisted irrespective of education offered to those communities concerning its bad effects on women's health. The mention societies enforce this traditional practice with the motive of controlling the female emotions on sexuality. FGM also acts as a criteria for determining the maturity of the girl child. In 1986 the studies carried down by the WHO indicates that 70 millions women have gone FGM. This number might have increased or decreased depending on how it is practised nowadays. Pertaining to this female circumcision, "the Government of Kenya is against the practice. In 1982 the president of the country spoke against it and in 1996, some of the MPs. and some doctors were also against FGM, regarding the practice as one of the ways which encourages the spread of HIV/Aids. A few

¹⁶ Maria Nzomo, O P. cit 1997, p.50

women also opposed the FGM but some of the parliamentarians suggested the issue to be left to each community to decide." ¹⁸

FGM is probably recognised as the most serious initiation rite in terms of serious health risk to women; since it causes infections on the reproductive track, chronic vaginal infections and sometimes it also cause pains to the mother during the childbirth, hence leading to disharmony in marital relationship in the society.

Polygamy is still practised by some communities in Kenya. This kind of marriage affects the health of women in both physical and psychological aspects. Polygamous type of matrimony is occupied by hatred and thus resulting to lack of harmony in the family set-up. Due to the hugeness of the family, there is frequent shortage of food, love and attention. since many wives are often much younger than the husband, the inclination for these young women to seek outside lovers is often overwhelming. Hence, the threat of STDs/HIV infection is very common within polygamous situations.

1.8. EDUCATION STATUS OF WOMEN

Among the main spheres which I have already discussed previously, Education seems to be the major one that develops the status of human person both in time and place. Education also enables individuals to adjust to changes taking place in their environment. A "major goal of Education is to prepare each generation for participation in the world of work and responsibility by transmitting the knowledge, attitudes and culture of the adult world to the young"(Griffith, et, al 1989). Education is like a foundation tool which can be used by the society which is gender sensitive to promote and improve the illiteracy of Kenyan Women. According to the literacy survey which was carried out in 1988, in thirty rural districts found in the country it revealed that there is a gender imbalances in Education in Kenya as the study showed that; there were 38

¹⁸ Emmau Omari & Muthui Mwaj et. al, "Bid to outlaw Female Circumcision defeated," in *Daily Nation*,

percent males and 62% females in the districts studied. Illiterate or poorly educated parents and the cost of Education nowadays, are some of the factors which have influenced the schooling of girls. Since those parents think that a boy child, should be sent to school first and helped to attain higher education than the girl child to enhance him to fulfil his future role as a 'Bread winner'.

This preference of Boys, to Girls in Education sphere, it has been prevailing for a long period in Kenya. In addition to that, most female students (pupils) are given responsibility of performing household chores and farming activities, while their male counterparts are left free, socialising with their friends or doing their studies. Occasionally the girl child is either forced to get married earlier than the normal time. some are engaged into employment in order to raise fees for their brothers or even to work for wages to raise money to feed the family. Among the communities like Mbeere of Eastern Province of Kenya, girls are obliged to walk for long distances to fetch water before they go to school. The matter becomes worse when the girls are fetching water from the Bore-holes, whereby they are forced to make long queues and still to cover long distances. This means that; those "females take a period of about 12 hours to bring home, a 20 litre jerician of water. In fact this violation of females rights from the adequate school attendance has made some girls like Mary Wanjiru to be bitter, since she spends more time fetching water than on her studies . And thus, that act of fetching water before going to school has made the Mbeere girls to regret why they were born females"¹⁹ Another aspect which has caused female pupils / students to be lower in education status than boys is the educational materials used in various institutions. An analysis carried out in 1980 showed that whereas women accounted for 50% of the population their representation in the school text books was only 17.5 percent. Hence, school girls are violated on their female adult role modes, which they are naturally identified with books used to teach in several institutions which are still continuing

¹⁹ "Douglas Wafila. "Watering down girls' Education" in: Daily Nation Wednesday March 4 1998, p.7.

portraying females as mothers, cooks, nurses or teachers. In fact, most of the books fail to identify “females in technical positions; thus neglecting them with physical sciences. On the other hand we find women are the majority of the ‘learners’ but illiteracy among them remains high. At present there are 55% of women illiterate compared to 37% of men”²⁰ This means that women (females) Education status is still lower in comparison to their male counterparts.

²⁰ (Patricia Komeni Mate, “The Legal Status of Women in Kenya”, *Kenya Law Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1970, p. 15)

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. THE MAIN REASONS OF WOMEN'S STATUS

In this chapter I would like to enlighten the reasons as to why women are placed in the lower status compared to men. Some of the impediments, which have contributed to lack of gender equality as far as women's status issue in society is concerned are, Biblical authorship, Traditional Jewish culture, the Doctors of the Church view on women, African traditional cultures, and lack of education to women (females) and bad Government policies.

2.1. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Bible as "Whole is 'androcentric or male - centred, in its subject matter, its authorship and its perspective. The Bible has mentioned a total of 1,426 names of men and women. Out of these nouns, 1315 are men's while the rest 111 names belong to women "hence making 9 percent of the total percentage."²¹

The big gap existing between the number of women and that of men symbolises that the scriptural literature is male-centred oriented. Looking at the Biblical literature in the Jewish world-view, we notice that; the public and communal life of people is dominated by men. These Jewish men are acting as Kings, warriors, priests and sages. On the other hand; the Domestic arena, whereby the daily activities of females are found, it is proportionally given less attention. These domestic activities of the Jewess remain unrecognised severally by the Jewish patriarchal society. The Jewish traditional culture places a woman in second position in comparison with man's. She is a helper fit for him' (Gen. 2:18)

Her duty is to secure man's happiness and serve him: She was dominated (Gen. 3:16.) Hence, by legally the Jewess had less status in Jewish society. She called her husband, 'Master'

²¹ Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary*; London: SPCK, John Knox Press

or 'Lord'(Judges: 19:26) She was counted among the properties belonging to her husband who could acquire her like a slave by money. The Jewish Woman "could not be allowed to inherit either from her husband or her father unless she had no Brother." (Numb. 27:8). The Jewess' "vows and pledge were validated by her father or her husband who could also annul them" (Num. 30:4-17). On matters pertaining to the Israelites cult, the role of women was strictly limited. She may rejoice publicly during the feasts but she could never be allowed to be a priestess (Ex. 15:20) Due to the women's manstruation and childbearing which are considered as a source of uncleanness, they separate her from the sacred realm. Thus, this Jewish woman is considered as one who is unworthy for the pure status necessary to participate fully in Israelite ritual life. The Jewish women's inclusiveness in the Israelite's cult is also connected with the sexual intercourse. This is verified in the Book of Exodus, where the Israelites are instructed to prepare themselves for the coming of God's revelation by staying away from women for three days (Ex. 19:15).

Another area where Jewish women are considered as the creatures of low rank is the Economic sphere. In this particular sphere; the Jewess is given the responsibility of crop production, whereby she grows food stuffs such as olives, wheat, barley, fits, dates, nuts, seeds legumes and vegetables. She also cultivate fruit trees, vines and herbs. She is still responsible for the food preservation of some food stuffs like grains, olives, fruits and herbs which, she could preserve them; using store jars and storage pits. The Jewess was not even, excepted from the livestock task. She fed and milked the domestic animals kept in Jewish society. she was also responsible for the clothing in the family. In this cloth providing responsibility, the woman was supposed to do the spinning of the thread, weave the cloth and the work of sewing the garment also belonged to the very woman. On the other hand, the man did not have many tasks to perform. He sometimes helped in sheep-shearing, leather making and in the preparation of luxurious textiles for marketing purposes. The rest of the "bulk labourer which included child-

caring was left to woman. Although the Jewess performed all these tasks with the little help or without male's help, man controlled most of the Economic assets"²² prevailing in household.

2.2. THE CHURCH DOCTORS' VIEW OF WOMEN

Since the day that Eve (woman) plucked the forbidden fruit from the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and bad, (Gen. 2:17), she has been regarded as the source of all evil in the world. Hence all the sins of the human race are charged against her and she is looked upon as a tempting creature to Males. The patristic period is strongly marked by an emphasis on the ascetic life. The majority of early Christians aimed at mastering themselves for a better union with God. Sexuality was one of those aspects that was considered as an impediment to attaining one's union with God. Hence the woman was identified; with sexuality and thus seen as a temptress as long as she was unmarried. In the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, we find many passages which are against the women. One of the well known of the Church is St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Theologian who in some way, adapted Aristotle's Philosophy to the Biblical view. And by so doing, he ended up developing a very negative teaching towards women. For him, nothing could be more true that the idea that, "woman ought not have been produced in the original creation of things before sin". For Aristotle had asserted that "the female is a male man-que". And by following the logic of his anthropology, "nothing manqué or defective should have been produced in the first establishment of things". Therefore, woman has to be intellectually subjected and ruled by Man: "...woman is by nature subordinate to Man because the power of rational discernment is by nature stronger."²³

Another doctor of Church is St. Bonaventure, who by counselling, has said that, "Men should avoid intimacies, conversations and glances of women, who have been an occasion of ruin

for many”.²⁴ The very Saint verifies to the same counselling by quoting from Psalm 119, which says, “turn away your eyes that they may not behold vanity”(Ps. 119:37).

St. Francis de Sales, Lawyer and Theologian is also another Doctor of the Church, who kept holding women as incomplete and lesser humans in comparison to men. He claimed women defectiveness to be natural and divinely ordained, and he once advised married males in these terms: “The Weakness and infirmity of your wives whether in body or in mind, ought never to provoke you to any kind of disdain, but rather to a mild and affectionate compassion. God had created them such to the end that they receive from them more honour and respect. It is also that you should have them for companions in such manner that you should still be their Heads and Superiors.”²⁵ Thus it is very clearly seen that; apart from the Jewish culture; which contributed to low status of women compared to men; even the Church’s thinkers from the patristic to medieval ages unto 20th Century have done the same.

2.3. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE: MYTH AND IDEOLOGY

It has already been observed that, no level of modernisation, scientific or technological advancement which can elevate the status of women in the society, for as long as cultural attitude, continue to demean women and as long as men and the whole society in general perpetuate and reinforce the existing status quo of the stereotypical inferiority complex on women. Thus women are degraded into the low status in Kenya, due to the negative attitudes of some members in the country, who feels that, the time for females to talk about women’s issues is not yet ripe. And in addition to that, they believe that; women do not like each other. Thus they are jealous of each other and they spend a lot of time gossiping themselves and men inclusive. In fact, this kind of ideology has not started in the twentieth century but has been prevailing, since

²⁴ Sister Emma Therese Healy, Woman according to Saint Bonaventure, New York: Georgian Press INC., 1956, P.47.

time immemorial. Thus it goes back, up to the era of our Forefathers and Mothers to whom, myths, taboos and ideologies were taken as part and parcel of the culture in the traditional society. Like the Jewish traditional culture; African have almost the similar elements such myths, taboos, ideologies, towards women in their traditional culture. The above elements are used in several times to elaborate, the status of a woman in society, whereby; woman has been placed in the second rank in the society. In our African traditional society, there exists many myths and taboos, which explain what a man and woman could do or not to. Myths and taboos have been used, many times in the traditional society to explain the status of men and women in the society. These myths and taboos say that, the kitchen is out of bounds to boys and men. If at all, one of them is seen cooking, he is rebuked and laughed at by the members of the society. And thus the women's natural place is in the kitchen. Through, the myth, women have been believed to be physiologically weak and inferior. Women are also portrayed as "good in Babies' holding, naturally gentle, being not ambitious and kind. Finally women are by nature mothers who love the noise of children."²⁶

In addition to that females are not supposed to speak when a man is doing so and the woman, should never question a male, however unreasonable he appears to be. Myths and ideologies contained in the African traditional culture have already claimed that males are more important than the females in the societal set-up; hence many traditional communities in Kenya prefer sons to daughters. For instance when a baby boy is born among my Agikuyu community, women ululate five times while for the baby girl, they ululate four times. This symbolises that a boy child is more important than the girl child, and the parents together with the community feel more joyous while celebrating the boy's birthday than the girl's. Among the Akamba of Kitui District, when a boy is born, the maternal uncle presents him with a cow but for the girl it is

²⁶ Wanjiku M. Kabira (ed). et. al. Democratic Change in Africa: women's Perspective, Nairobi: Acts Press, African Centre for Technology and Innovation

optional. In the Mbeere traditional community, the baby boy is given a miniature bow and arrow, which signifies that, his life is outside home, not domestic, while his counterpart is taken outside and the mother is ceremoniously given little bundle of twigs, which the baby girl was to appear carrying. This was hung by the baby's bed as a reminder that was going to be her role. This signifies that she is going to be a firewood collector, healer of water, the cook, the dishwasher and thus she will be one among the domestic workers in the society.

2.4.0. TRADITIONAL ECONOMY IN KENYA

2.4.1. PRE-COLONIAL ERA

During this period, many Kenyan communities were almost at the same cultural level, whereby the "Man was the allocator and controller (Decision maker) of resources. On the other hand, the woman was regarded as the provider of subsistence through her role as the food producer."²⁷

This was due to the rules of patrilineality, which favoured men as far as socio-economic situation at the pre-colonial Era was concerned. And thus the minority of women in those communities found the prevailing customs being subordinated to their freedom of choice, hence violating their socio-economic rights.

At this particular Era, women belonging to the farming societies (those who practised crop and livestock production) looked after the small animals (livestock) and food processing while men and boys herded animals. Crop production task was shared by both Men and women respectively but this was a primarily a woman task, especially if there were herds of livestock for which males were responsible. This was not rigid rule as men frequently had their own gardens or worked on the family gardens. In the farming societies, farming was regarded as the women's

²⁷ Diana Lee-Smith , My house is my husband: A Kenyan Study of Women's Access to land and Housing Sweden: Architecture and Development Studies Lund University, 1997, p.121

responsibility and thus women in those particular societies had “gardens”, (shambas) which they produced crops. They also had grain stores in which the produce was kept. In addition to that the women had also a house and associated space for the processing and production of food and tending of small livestock. On the other hand decisions about who farmed a particular piece of land were carried out by the family which were adaptive to the needs of various persons in the society. Among the pastoral societies men and boys herded animals while women did milking of the cows and produced butter.

2.4.2. COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL ERAS

During this eras, women’s accessibility to rural land was diminished (suppressed) by the colonial practices and a legal option providing women with the accessibility of urban land for the housing which, was introduced by the same colonial Government (state). And as a result, a good number of women took advantage of prevalence of colonial laws by moving to urban areas to access urban land as it was easier compared to rural land which continued to be owned and inherited only by men, who could now use it for capital accumulation.

After becoming urbanised, some women became Muslims as this provided a social framework within which women’s property rights were recognised. Due to the British Colonial taxes imposed on the African societies, men had to migrate to towns, settlers’ farms or plantations to earn cash incomes as wage workers. And “Women were left behind on the rural farms to take care of the children and to produce food. And as a result of this pressure, coming from the British colonial taxes, men ceased to perform their traditional tasks (responsibilities) and this created a new gender division of labour, thus increasing the workload on women”.²⁸

The aim of the colonial and post colonial land tenure reform introduced by the British colonial government, was to secure individual title, under state law allowing individuals to use

land as collateral and thus increase productivity. However these Title Deeds were never issued to women, hence denying them their economic rights by not allowing them to control the properties like land. And because of that women could only get accessibility to land only through their relationship to men.

2.5. TRADITIONAL POLITICAL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS

In almost all Kenyan societies, the political systems were 'egalitarian' and the political/legal systems were based on elderhood. The elderhood composed of clan, elders and in some communities like the Luo, the clan elders could also act as rulers. The elders formed a council, which took all decisions concerning the welfare of the clan. Apart from these councils, there were other centres of authority which included spiritual leaders or specialists. In most societies judicial matters were hardly separable from political ones. Among the Luo and the Abakuria traditional communities, the council of elders is also responsible for judiciary matters. In these political/legal systems of the two communities, women are neither seen nor heard. They do not qualify as elders, 'Wise men' or spiritual leaders (Wanjiku Mukabi Kibira, 1993: p.6).

Among the Agikuyu traditional community, there are several councils of Elders, each performing different task in the society. I was told by my grandfather that, our Gikuyu community is led by 'Kiama Kia Athuri'(Council of Elders). The council of elders consisted of grown-up men, who had undergone circumcision and marriage ceremonial rites. There is a council of Elders which is responsible for the maintenance of Peace in the community. We have also another one, which has the task of performing religious functions like offering sacrifice to 'Ngai' (God) on behalf of the community. Even if the Agikuyu community respects and rewards a woman who plays her role well as a good mother and a hard working woman in the Domestic work and farming activities, she is not allowed to have a say in public life. Thus she is excluded from joining any of the 'ciama' (councils) in the community.

Another community which had a centralised political/legal system is the Kamba traditional community, the administration of the village among the Kamba was carried out by a council of Elders. This 'Nzama'(council) consisted of old men who commanded respect, displayed wisdom and maturity and also impartial. Like the leaders in other communities in Kenya, the Kamba community believe that; women are by implication unlikely to display maturity, impartiality or wisdom. This means that, women are regarded as unfit for political affairs. The political makers of the Kamba were the same people who were responsible for legal matters. Pertaining to affairs related to crime, marriage, divorce and property inheritance and land Tenure, the council of elders in the village was responsible.

2.6. LACK OF EDUCATION TO WOMEN

Education is a process by which individuals are prepared to take up their respective positions within a social setting. Despite of the above important objective; the traditional African societies prescribed the status of some members in the society. This was mainly because of the attitude, which traditional societies had as far as gender issue was concerned. Most of the traditional societies used to educate their children through the gender position of a child. Boys were taught matters pertaining to the community while girls were trained on domestic chores. Among the Agikuyu community, the father took care of the Boy's Education, while the mother was responsible for the girls education. The boy was taught about "family, clan, and tribal lands and their boundaries. On the other hand, the girl was taught all things concerning the domestic duties of a wife in managing and harmonising the affairs of a homestead"²⁹

Agricultural activities were trained to both genders. Both the parents made a digging stick called " Moro" for the child to play with while the parent did actual work of weeding or turning the soil.

For the Kamba community, the boy was taught how to hunt and look after the Domestic animals. The girl was trained on domestic chores. Others traditional communities taught their children, according to their occupation but all the same, the girl child was trained much on the domestic work.

Most of the traditional societies trained their children through participation in the cultural events and various performances, verbal transmission, i.e. through stories and proverbs. Other means which were applied in training were, play-performing, observation and imitation. The girl child grew, knowing very little on public issues, prevailing in the community, since she was restricted to domestic chores. Hence that was the kind of informal education offered to children in the indigenous African societies during the advent of European Missionaries in Kenya. When those Missionaries settled down, they started introducing a Western style of Education; with the intention of facilitating the spread of Christianity in the country. These European Missionaries targeted male gender in that new kind of Education. Hence, Missionaries started to teach male on how to read and write. They were also taught some arithmetic. And as a result, men end up becoming the initial beneficiaries of formal schooling. These men were later trained by the very missionaries on literacy teaching and they became teachers in mission established village schools and preachers in the village churches. On the other had their "females converts would be brought together and taught how to be good wives, cook well ad keep the home environment tidy. (KNA: PC Annual Report, 1909-1935) Due to this discrimination of girls in formal education, they continued to lag behind while their male counterparts, proceeded on pursuing higher education through the few government and mission elementary schools, junior secondary schools like Maseno, Alliance, and Kabaa (Mangu).

This pathetic situation is also attributed to the retrogressive cultural practices in which the education for girls was not seen as a priority but a privilege. Commenting on this situation as it affected the girls boarding school-Kaimosi; painter notes: "A major problem was the lack of eligible students. Even in 1933, only 90 girls were enrolled in sixteen aided schools, where they could be trained for entering the boarding school. It is surprising that only twenty five girls were enrolled in the advanced

division of the school. Prejudice, against education for girls was breaking down very slowly (Painter, 1951:P.57)

Hence, we can see, how the lack of fairness in education, affected women by making them narrow-minded both in the informal and formal educations; introduced by European missionaries in Kenya. Thus restricting preventing women from knowing their rights as women.

2.7. BAD GOVERNMENT POLICY

Bad government policy is one of the factors that impedes women from acquiring equal same status with men in the Kenyan society. Kenya's record of women's participation in politics and public decision making is still at the low standard in the country. Between 1963 and 1969; there was not even a single woman member of parliament. It was not until November 1969, that the first woman was elected into the national assembly and one more was nominated to sit on the same legislation body (Wanjiku M. Kabira et. al; 1993, p.9).

Together with her, were eleven men nominees. In fact, since 1974 when the first woman was appointed to the position of assistant minister, the highest position a woman has ever held in the Parliament (Kenya national assembly). There was never been more than one time. Until 1989 when the ruling party KANU secretariat created `other position of Director of women and youth affairs no woman had ever been elected or appointed to any of the national executive position within ruling party. In the run up to the last general elections in Kenya; KANU Government did not live up its manifesto, regarding the role and status of women in the society. This has been seen clearly this year, 1998, during the "last eighth parliament where by, only four women were nominated as legislators; despite of the IPPG reforms provision which had proposed on the increment of women in parliament.(Daily Nation, March 18, 1998:20)

After realising that, there were women's organisations such as,. MYWO, which had been popular at mobilizing women at grass-root levels, the government of KANU co-opted its organisation

leaders while marginalising the more radical ones such as NCWK which has been headed by professor Wangari Maathai. Within the course of time, women's organisations which were acquiescent, they were accorded formal support and made to feel more powerful than those who held different views concerning the Government policies. (Nzomo, 1992). It then followed that, the government of Kenya co-operated and manipulated MYWO and NCWK organisations. The very government even succeeded in hijacking and managing the affairs of those women's organisations. For instance, MYWO became women's wing of the KANU party in 1984 and was referred to as KANU - MYWO from then on. Thus it formed a close alliance with the government and disassociated itself from political matters which are confronting the ruling party. To make it worse the MYWO also backed the government in weakening those organisations which challenged those government's policies which were insensitive to women's issues.

Compartmentalisation of women issues is another factor, which has contributed a lot into suppressing and marginalizing the dignity of women by depicting them as inferior second-class human beings in the society. Here, the Kenyan Government has used a kind of ironical methodology; by trying to form the Women's Bureau Departments and women's wings in various ministries to deal with women issues. In utilising this approach, the KANU government adhered to WID approach which viewed women as a disadvantaged group who needed to be integrated into existing development process. Though the government of Kenya quoted the formation of the women's Bureau as the major attempt to address women's issues, the reality was that the Bureau was located in a Minor Ministry (Ministry of Culture and Social Services), which had little impact on Government policies. Apart from the misplacement of women's Bureau into the less effective ministry on the KANU Government, the very Department was also constrained, by inadequate financial resources and lack of effective personnel to carry out activities of women. For instance, the "Government grants to the Bureau dropped from 3.3. million Kenya shillings in 1986 to 2.6 million shillings in 1989." (Nzomo: 15 and

Economic survey 1990:81). Those are some of Bad policies of the government of Kenya, which have played a very big role into deteriorating the status of women in Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0.0. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN KENYA

The empowerment approach emphasises the capacity of women and men to increase their own self reliance and strength by making choices and gaining the ability to influence change by having access to resources. Having seen the status of Kenyan women; in political and legal, Economic, Health and Education spheres and the main reasons of women status in Kenya, I would like, now to elaborate on how women can be empowered. In connection to those spheres, I will also suggest some strategies which can be applicable as far as women empowerment where concerned. Currently it seems that the Ruling party together with the opposition parties in Kenya, are not willing to empower women in the political sphere. This might be because the political parties' leaders do not feel that, they can be led by women as politicians in their particular parties. Some of the DP of Kenya MPs like Gichugu MP, Martha Karua have already realised this women discrimination in the political parties prevailing in the Kenya. Thus Gichugu DP, member of the parliament has accused, the political parties in the country for undermining women empowerment as they have failed to appoint females to leadership positions. Ms. Karua continued saying that, "registered parties had failed to embark on a deliberate and conscious effort to propel women into influential party positions, from where they could advance critical gender issues" (Daily Nation, Ibid; 1998:20).

It has been discovered that, women are not treated with equality in their political parties as their roles as leaders are not recognised. Women have been mainly appointed to the catering committee. This indicates that, their party leaders do not believe that, a woman can be able to lead. Hence, these stereotypical attitudes of men towards women should be eradicated. This can be done through the empowerment of women in the political arena.

3.0.1. STRATEGIES OF EMPOWERMENT

a) Women should be ready to support each other morally and materially by:

- ◆ - Offering relevant advice to women, political candidates, i.e. concerning campaign techniques for winning a political election.
- ◆ - Engaging into fund-raising activities to women candidates who may be suitable for the legislation but incapable to election campaign expenditure.

b) Women aspirants for parliamentary seat or Kenyan presidency should be advised to choose a political party that, can address gender issues in a positive manner.

c) Women politicians together with the women activists, must lobby for a constitution amendment to re-introduce the provision for dependent candidates to contest political offices without being required to be nominated by a political party.

d) Women should insist that a legal provision be made to discipline any leader, who makes public derogatory statements against the female gender or behaves in any other manner to show disrespect and gender insensitivity such a leader should be removed from leadership and forced to make a public apology.

e) Women should continue to lobby for the separate and different desk of gender issues from those of youth and children. So as to accord full recognition and attention to the need to each social category.

f) Women should be sensitised on the power of vote by being advised to:

- ◆ - Vote for committed women who will represent Gender-based issues in parliament.
- ◆ - Vote for men, known for their personal integrity, gender sensitivity and a good development record.

h) Literacy/Formal Education should be offered to women voters, for just voting in the society.

3.0.2. SOME OF THE STRATEGIES THAT SHOULD BE ADOPTED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES, FOR THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN ARE:

i) Amendment of section 82 of the constitution to ensure that discrimination on account of sex is outlawed.

ii) To ensure that women are in representative position and deployed generally in key public decision making positions.

iii) The Government of Kenya, also should encourage the private sector to promote the participation of women in key positions.

iv) Women issues should be treated separately and differently from those of youth and children. If the issues being, treated are necessarily common, then they can be addressed jointly.

v) The Kenya Government should support the promulgation of an African charter on women's rights.

3.1.0 EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC SPHERE.

House hold has been a major centre of work for most women in Kenya. Women work in farms, do domestic chores including child up-bring. Men do not help in household tasks, hence the big workload on women is left for them to perform.

Secondly, women are also discriminated on agricultural training at the public university in Kenya.

3.1.1. STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ECONOMICAL EMPOWERMENT:

a) On women's workload which consists of both household and farm labour; the Government of Kenya should give domestic and farm labour economic remuneration i.e. there should be a policy on attractive minimum wages for such work.

b) Gender sensitisation campaigns should be organised, for the purpose of encouraging men to share work with women. Encourage mothers to divide chores at home between male and female children equally.

c) There is need for appropriate training and development of appropriate technology for women farmers in animal and crop productions.

d) Women should be involved in formal education instructions and through association of enterprises and through association of enterprises and NGOs.

e) Provide women with the training programmes, extension strategies, services and financial need.

f) Men should be convinced to consider the importance of gender balance in appointments. This will help in the decision levels in agriculture and economic sectors.

e) Activities aimed at public mobilisation, using a multi-media approach like chief 'Baraza', agricultural demonstrations should be carried out to facilitate female economic and agricultural situations in Kenya.

f) Since women provide over 70% of all agricultural production in Kenya, then female students should be encouraged to pursue an agricultural training, particularly at the university level through incentives such as awards and scholarships.

g) Kenya curricula for technical Education should be reviewed with an objective of eradicating stereotype materials and course structure which discourage women participation.

h) A given number of positions should be reserved for females to off-set the present imbalance in Technical institutions recruitment.

3.2. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN HEALTH SPHERE

This should be done by emphasising on the following:

a) Keep women healthy to improve economical development in Kenya.

b) Provide health facilities in hospitals, health centres and dispensaries established in the country. This will help in improving feminine diseases treatment.

- c) Encourage traditional communities in Kenya to give equal nourishment to a girl child with her boy counterpart.
- d) The Kenya Government should eradicate premature marriage of girls which might cause maternal death or uterus operation.
- e) Girls should be educated on the dangerous of premature human sexuality that may result to STDs and HIV positive.
- f) Give equal treatment on both men and women suffering from mental illness which affects more women than men due to the social-cultural expectations placed on the women since birth.
- g) Eradicate gender disparity in patient health facilities by constructing separate wards of women and children.
- h) The community which practises female genital mutilations should be educated on the impact it brings on the genital organs and the disadvantages it has on the girl child. This education can be facilitated by the church leaders and the medical doctors
- i) Polygamous marriage should be avoided. Avoidance can be enhanced by spreading Christian faith in society.
- j) The health needs of women must be addressed in total. In achieving this totality, health women's demands, their full participation in defining developing appropriate policies which are necessary.
- k) Qualitative and sufficient information should be given to women to enable them understand, health issues.
- l) Give required food to a woman when she is in her pregnancy and lactation periods.
- m) Educate both men and women on the importance of family planing which I am convinced that, it is safer compared to usage of contraceptive methodology.

3.3. EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Strategies for Empowerment;

a) Eradicate gender imbalances in the educational institutions of learning.

b) Illiterate parents should be encouraged to attain formal, social education. To enable them understand that a girl child is important as the boy child.

c) Outdated and oppressive cultural practices towards a girl child among the Kenyan communities should be changed.

d) More emphasis should be put on the literacy programmes for both men and women who did not attain formal education.

e) Though there is no discrimination related to curricula, textbooks or teaching methods in a particular area of study, more effort is needed in counselling girls about choices of subjects so that they do not fear science subjects.

f) Teachers attitude towards female education must be changed. As role models, they should be convinced about the capability of the girls to tackling all subjects and to complete all levels of education. Teachers must also encourage girls and help them to aspire for higher education.

3.4. EDUCATION FOR GENDER RESPONSIBILITY

Gender responsive Education is a very important tool, which can be applied to empowering women in various spheres and particularly on political, economic, Health and Education spheres. 'Gender' is often taken as a superfluous in our today's society. Some people use 'gender' interchangeably with 'women' or 'sex'. Yet "sex is a biological (Natural) difference between a man and a woman while gender is socially entrusted and addresses questions and issues of gender equality".³⁰ Gender relations are social relations cultivated and nurtured by human beings in society.

³⁰ Okwach, Abagi, "Gender, Education and Development" In: Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, et al, The Road to Empowerment. Nairobi: African Women's Development Communication Network (FEMNET 1994), p.42.

Many of the communities in Kenya are still traditional oriented. They divide and allocate societal roles according to the gender position which a person is. The work of nursing the babies including all the domestic chores are termed as 'feminine roles' while managing and controlling the household is a masculine role.

Men and women should be convinced that, they should be gender responsible. Both of them should accept that there is problem of gender disparities and gender bias in the Kenyan society. Both males and females should be committed in order to reduce anomalous behaviour, prevailing among them. Men should feel responsible and learn to appreciate women not as sex objects or servants, but partners in the societal development. In fact, Education for gender responsibility is a powerful tool for changing the lives of both masculine and feminine genders in the society, making them participate as active partners in advancement process. Gender education is a development process; it is indeed a humanising act. It should be encouraged to both men and women as it is an intersubjective process that:

- a) Liberates individuals from dominant traditional myths.
- b) Promotes critical and logical thinking.
- c) Provide opportunities to make choices and to take decisions.
- d) Enable both genders to address, needs which are specifically unique to women.

The Gender responsive Education, therefore empowers individuals to wake up to realities on matters pertaining to gender issues. A female who is empowered for instance, she is not rebellions but, an active person in the development process for the society as a whole. An empowered woman is also aware of her capabilities, which she can utilise for the societal development matters. On the other hand, a man who is empowered becomes aware that ,women are also human beings with the same feelings as men's. They get tired also as men do; hence they deserve to be helped by men in performing household chores and other kinds of works. An empowered man will also be able to see that, there is need to give a woman an opportunity to excel in different careers just as men.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment of women is not one person's task but a responsibility of everyone in the society. For me it is an obligation of both males and females to know themselves well and what responsibility they have for the well being of the whole humanity. In the Bible we are told that man and woman were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). This means that man and woman deserve to be treated in fairness. I would like to urge, anybody of good will to respect the dignity of women, since both woman and man have the same origin. I call upon everyone to try to be sensitive to human persons in every circumstance because a human being is called to exercise agape, which is "the greatest of all the commandments" (1Cor. 13:13). And by exercising agape, this will make the Kingdom of God to be felt among all people. So as human persons let us try to create solidarity among ourselves, which helps in making God's presence to be felt among the whole humankind. I call upon the Catholic Church, other Religious sects and the Government of Kenya to enhance the Empowerment of women in Kenya.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abagi, Okwach, "Gender, Education and Development" In: Mukabi Kabira, Wanjiku, et al, The Road to Empowerment, Nairobi: African Women's Development Communication Network (FEMNET 1994).
- Aquinas, St. Thomas, Summa Theologica 1964 la 92.1.
- Behamuka, Women Leaders in Agriculture, Kenya Case Study, August, 1990.
- De Sales, St. Francois, Introduction to the Devout Life, 1950.
- Female Politicians Sharing Political Experiences" In: Nzomo, Maria, The Gender Dimension of Electoral Politics in Kenya: Capacity Building of Women Candidates for 1997 and Beyond, Nairobi: The National Commission on the Status of Women, 1997.
- Healy, Sister Emma Therese, Woman according to Saint Bonaventure, New York: Georgian Press INC., 1956.
- Kenyatta, Jomo; Facing Mount Kenya, Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1988.
- Kibwana, Kivutha(ed), Women and Autonomy in Kenya: Policy and Legal Framework, Nairobi: Claripress Limited, 1997.
- League of Kenya Women Voters; Women and Democracy: A Voters Handbook, Nairobi: Views Limited, 1992.
- Lee-Smith, Diana, My house is my husband:" A Kenyan Study of Women's Assess to land and Housing Sweden: Architecture and Development Studies Lund University, 1997.

Mukabi Kabira, Wanjiku, (ed). et. al., Democratic Change in Africa: women's Perspective, Nairobi: Acts Press, African Centre for Technology Studies, 1993.

Mullei, Maria, The Role of Education and Training Institutions for Encouraging Women's Participation in Development: The Case of Kenya, March, 1991.

Newsom, Carol A., and H. Ringe, Sharon, The Women's Bible Commentary, London: SPCK, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1992.

Ngwiri, Andrew, "Seminars Yes, but Women Need More" In: Sunday Nation, March, 8, 1998.

Nzomo, Maria, Empowering Kenya Women, Nairobi: NCSW, 1993.

Omari, Emmau & Mwai, Muthui, et. al, "Bid to outlaw Female Circumcision defeated," in Daily Nation, Thursday, Nov. 14 1996.

Omosa, Mary, "Persistent cultural practices: A Review of the status of women in Kenya" In : Association of African Women in Research and Development, Nairobi: AAWORD, 1995.

Ruffing, Janet K., "Power" in: Michael Downey, The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989.

Wa Gacheru, Margaretta, Women' Silence Mistaken for Ingratitude' In: Sunday Nation, March 8, 1998.

Wafula, Douglas, "Watering down girls' Education" in: Daily Nation Wednesday March 4 1998.

Woman Head of State? 'No Way' In: Daily Nation, Saturday December, 1997.

"Women: No time for Politics" In: Kenya Confidential: February 20-26, 1998.