Selected Factors Affecting the Performance of Women’s Self-Help Groups in Western Kenya

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Abstract
Women frequently encounter greater limitations and fewer opportunities than men, especially in regards to income-generating activities. They may face social and economic constraints that perpetuates poverty and spans generations. However, significant opportunities exist in the informal, small-scale enterprise sector for which women may be advantaged. Community groups are popular institutions in Kenya’s rural areas; groups help provide services that the government may have failed to deliver. So, it is important to examine such affiliations as they may promote sustainable, local development. The purpose of this study was to describe selected factors affecting the performance of women who belonged to self-help groups in the Shaviringa Location, Vihiga District of Western Kenya. Semi-structured, focus group interviews were used to collect data from 11 groups, including 64 women. Factors that the groups’ perceived affected their performance included issues related to marketing, transport of goods produced, lack of motivations (intrinsic and extrinsic), general group governance, management, and leadership. Most women’s self-help groups were involved in entrepreneurial activities including some form of business ventures. However, it is recommended that the women’s self-help groups be provided training in the development of business plans and guidance about how best to avoid redundancy or undue duplication of income-generating projects and activities.

Keywords: Education, Kenya, Poverty, Women’s Groups
Introduction

Globally, women face more restrictions on their choices and opportunities than men do; for instance, unequal opportunity in school restricts opportunities for employment and also a creative life. Such gender bias has led to lower survival for women despite their biological advantage (Fukuda-Parr, 1999). Sub-Saharan Africa is among the areas where poverty is geographically concentrated, and it is so pervasive that many of the policies concerned with poverty alleviation encompass practically most of the development plans (Bardhan, 1996; Collier & Gunning, 1999). Ziderman (2003) asserted that “small-scale[,] informal sector enterprises” (p. 1) presented enormous opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa for the employment of women. The development of skills through targeted programs is essential to improving the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups, including women; training could better enable women to function well in the informal sector (Ziderman).

Rural communities are challenged by the task of organizing themselves for effective participation in economic and social development while ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits (Thomas, 1987). Policy initiatives need to focus on investing in human capital through education or health programs with an emphasis on women and children who make up the majority of the poor (Kempe, 2004). Because globalization is a common theme in developing national development alternatives, it is important to broadly examine the economic well-being of women in terms of the global agenda. For instance, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank’s policies were predicated on economic reconstruction, although their structural adjustment programs (SAPs) have contributed to the destabilization of national economies in many developing countries. Local communities continue to be impoverished by these macroeconomic reforms that have contributed to the elimination of social programs and the diminution of the state’s role in fighting poverty (Chossudovsky, 1998). These SAPs have shifted additional financial burdens to many individual households in the developing world (Mbugua-Murithi, 1997).

Concurrently, an exodus of males to cities depleted rural labor forces in many developing countries, thus leaving women as de facto leaders and sole providers for their households (Kiteme, 1992). But the position of household head for many women is disadvantageous culturally, economically, legally, and socially (Mbugua-Murithi). To that end, a poverty study by Buvinic (1997) in 41 developing countries revealed that more women in rural areas were made poorer and their economic challenges exacerbated by being widowed or abandoned by their husbands for long periods. They faced special social and economic constraints that perpetuated a cycle of low-education and low-paying jobs from one generation of women to another. Interventions at the household level seem to be inadequate, and thus the need to expand their socio-economic opportunities exists (Bardhan, 1996).

The Case of Kenya

Some women in Kenya already demonstrate competence through the use of “informal networks” frequently known as “women’s self-help groups.” Their actions also complement efforts of various agencies to reduce poverty (Snow & Buss, 2001) and improve the lives of rural people. Community groups are popular institutions in Kenya’s rural areas; groups help provide services that the government may have failed to deliver. They take the forms of burial groups, church mission groups, women’s groups, or youth groups (Freeman, Ellis, & Allison, 2004). Kenya’s local self-help development efforts are predicated on the spirit of Harambee - a Swahili word that connotes community efforts for a common goal (Thomas, 1988). Modern women’s
groups’ objectives now focus more on income-generating projects rather than solely welfare activities. They are multi-purpose and combine mutual financial assistance in the form of rotating credit associations to provide the means to pursue social, educational, and economic activities (Feldman, 1983; Mbugua-Murithi, 1997).

These groups open new opportunities to generate, save, and invest income and assist women in effectively responding to dynamic socio-economic changes as individuals, family heads, or as a community (Kitem 1992). Conversely, many international development aid agencies are now embracing such informal institutions because of their role in economic development, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. They help complement bottom-up community development and correct government failures where national policies may have stymied growth (Snow & Buss, 2001). So, it is important to examine the roles, functions, and pertinent issues arising from such affiliations, especially as it may promote sustainable, local development (Thomas, 1987, 1988).

Obstacles Facing Women’s Self-Help Groups in Kenya

Frequently, women’s projects are not integrated into the local agricultural development plans; instead, they are considered as ancillary enterprises for raising income. This makes it difficult for women’s groups to access government assistance, bank loans, or grants (Feldman, 1983). The lack of capital and the designation of women’s projects or initiatives as short term solutions to their problems and thus peripheral to the nation’s mainstream economic development affects attempts to change the economic status of women (Kane, Walsh, & Nelson, 1991; Mwaniki, 1986; Srujana, 1996). Organization is also a constraint that manifests itself as a lack of records or poor bookkeeping as well as inadequate organizational and management skills (Mbugua-Murithi, 1997; Srujana, 1996).

The capacity for expansion of local industries in rural areas exists, although women’s groups have to contend with “the harsh competition to corner a small section of a limited market” (Feldman, p. 82). However, a dire need exists to train more women in group dynamics and team building strategies, record keeping, leadership skills, monitoring and evaluation of projects, as well as proposal writing, including grants and business plans (Kane, Walsh, & Nelson, 1991). According to Kane et al. (1991), the immediate social and economic environment experienced at the household level can be linked to a trend that makes most women’s groups struggle to operate their businesses efficiently. So, efforts must be made to strengthen women’s groups’ management and logistical capacity (Herz, 1989).

“Entrepreneurial, management, and technical training is very important to enterprise development” (Stevenson & St-Onge, 2005, p. 42). There are many governmental, private, and non-governmental agencies professing to offer training in areas such as starting a business, continuing its existence, and expanding it, yet very few female entrepreneurs have access to such training. Additionally, many women who own micro-enterprises still cannot access this type of training, which they need for the expansion of their livelihoods (Stevenson & St-Onge).

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The conceptual base for this study was drawn from the theory of self-efficacy postulated by Bandura (1995). It “refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). Self-efficacy affects people’s thoughts, feelings, actions, motivations, efforts, and determinations to confront the obstacles faced in life. Culture affects the type of information people select and incorporate into their
judgments, which may, in turn, reflect their self-efficacy (Oettingen, 1995). In this study, it was assumed that women held strong beliefs about the need to change their destinies and enhance their livelihoods in an environment with poor incomes. Due to strong beliefs in their personal abilities and chances of success, Mbugua-Murithi (1997) contended that women devise strategies to help them meet their demands, including the formation of self-help groups.

Moreover, Oettingen (1995) used the theory of self-efficacy to explain how change can take place in social systems, especially in societies that are collectivist. This is true of Kenya’s traditional rural societies where women help each other in times of need such as death, sickness, or with the provision of farm labor (Karani, 1987; Srujana, 1996; Thomas 1988). High self-efficacy means that people are more likely to participate in activities in which they believe they can succeed. It promotes the premise that individuals have the potential to mitigate and improve their situations. For instance, a high sense of self-efficacy correlates with higher resilience to problems found in life, but, conversely, low self-efficacy reciprocates with failure. Finally, the theory identifies factors that affect the success or failure of individuals, including their collective or group actions.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify and describe selected factors affecting the performance of women who belonged to self-help groups in the Shaviringa Location, Vihiga District of Western Kenya. The women’s perceived needs related to improving their livelihoods and economic status were of special interest, especially for the purpose of developing recommendations for training and education programs to improve the conditions of women in rural Kenya. Gathering information about women’s perceptions of their needs, including views about the acquisition of business and agricultural skills, should increase the likelihood of providing future programs that meet those needs (Waters & Haskell, 1989). Three research questions guided the collection of data: (1) What were the perceptions of women concerning the governance, management, and leadership of their self-help groups? (2) What were the perceptions of women regarding the financial operations of their self-help groups? (3) What were the perceptions of women regarding other factors that affected the performance of their self-help groups?

**Methods and Data Sources**

The study’s design was a “phenomenological inquiry” approach (Patton, p. 69), i.e., one that focused on the “structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people” (p. 69). Patton argued that a phenomenon being experienced could be an emotion, a relationship, a marriage, a program, an organization, or even a culture. To that end, this was a qualitative case study that used semi-structured, focus group interviews to collect data from its participants. Focus groups use the interaction found in groups to collect rich data and insights about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005; Morgan, 1997; Patton, 1990). Krueger (2000) argued that focus groups enable a researcher to generate more information about opinions or attitudes across several groups of people and are also ideal for conducting needs assessments.

The selection of the research site and women’s groups involved in this study was based on what Creswell (2005), Dudwick, Gomart, Marc, and Kuehnast (2003), and Merriam (1998) described as purposeful sampling, i.e., the intentional selection of people or sites to understand them deeply (Merriam). To gather information from the women’s groups, a questionnaire was used to collect information from the participants (Merriam). A total of 43 questions were asked:
four closed, 34 semi-closed, and five open-ended. In all, 11 interview meetings were held that included 64 women who were members of 11 different women’s groups (Jivetti, 2007). Data addressing 16 of those questions are reported on in this paper.

The study employed the services of two research assistants. In March 2007, a pilot semi-structured, interview questionnaire developed by the researcher was sent to a research assistant at the study site via electronic mail. It was administered to one women’s group and the results were returned to the researcher. Comments from the pilot group and research assistant were then used to refine and improve the questionnaire.

The participating women’s groups that provided data for the study were solicited with the recommendation of local community leaders, i.e., Location Chief and Sublocation Deputy Chief in their respective area of jurisdiction in Western Kenya. No overt recruitment techniques or incentives were used. Participants volunteered to participate in the study based on their choice to attend designated group meetings or activities. In a few cases, interviews were conducted at a workplace or group leader’s home.

In June 2007, data were collected using the semi-structured, interview questionnaire procedure (Creswell, 2005). For nine groups, the range of interview participants was five to seven women. Krueger (1999) stated that focus groups are normally in the range of “6 to 9 participants,” although “4 to 6 participants are becoming increasingly popular because the smaller groups are easier to recruit and host and more comfortable for participants” (p. 79). The members’ responses were combined and summarized to create a “consensus” that described the group’s overall expressed opinions and perceptions. Two other groups had designated spokespersons who responded to the questions on behalf of their groups’ members. English, Swahili (Kenya’s national language), vernacular (Tiriki dialect of the Luhyia ethnic tribe widely spoken in Western Kenya), and a mixture of all three languages were used to collect information from members of eight groups. However, in the case of three groups, the questionnaire was translated into the Tiriki dialect and interpreted for the participants.

The results of the 11 interviews were reviewed and summarized by the researcher, i.e., hand tabulation with the aid of a calculator. Frequency counts of the groups’ responses to the questions were calculated as well as corresponding percentages. In the case of the semi-closed questions, i.e., where “other” and similar opportunities for elaboration were offered, those responses were also summarized. The groups’ responses to the questionnaire’s open-ended items were reviewed by the researcher and presented intact as direct quotes where said statements supported answering the study’s research questions. An overall portrait of participant’s responses was constructed and used to describe findings, draw conclusions, and develop recommendations for future practice and research.

Findings/Results

Selected characteristics of the women’s self-help groups and their members who participated in this study were reported previously by Jivetti and Edwards (2008). Various factors affecting the general governance, management, and leadership of the women’s self-help groups were identified in this study: registration status of the group; selection of group leaders; and, sources of conflicts. Ten (90.9%) groups were registered with the Government of Kenya’s Ministry of Culture and Social Services (Table 1). This was due to a requirement by the government or banking institutions; to open a bank account and acquire a loan, a group must be registered. Also, most of the groups believed that they needed to be registered to operate freely.
and attract external assistance. Only one (9.1%) group was not registered; its members disagreed on the need for such status (Table 1).

Rationale and procedures for selecting leaders varied between groups. When choosing leaders, eight (72.7%) groups relied on their perceptions of trust, education, and participation (Table 1). Three (27.3%) groups focused on integrity, influence, and experience to select their leaders. Nine (81.8%) groups elected their leaders by the majority of votes cast. However, two (18.2%) groups “nominated” their leaders, i.e., a member would be nominated to serve, no other individual’s name was offered, and, thus, that single nominee “elected.” For seven (63.6%) groups, tardiness, using domestic issues as a rationale for tardiness, absenteeism, or slow repayment of loans were responsible for conflicts among group members. In four (36.4%) groups, the sources of conflicts were mainly about leadership, accountability, and transparency.

Only three (27.3%) groups had opened bank accounts (Table 2). Eight (72.7%) groups did not have bank accounts due to lack of sufficient capital, and because the fees required by banks to open and maintain accounts were viewed as prohibitive. In most cases, the groups’ incomes had been loaned to their members, so little cash remained to be “saved.” Many of the groups kept some form of records of meetings, contributions, and projects, or for accountability purposes and future reference.

All of the groups admitted to having minimal business experience. Many of the women interviewed stated that they joined their groups without any experience in business but acquired some limited business skills after raising capital to start businesses supported by their respective associations (Table 2). All the groups expressed a desire to receive external assistance (e.g., seed capital). If provided, their priorities would be the purchase of materials or equipment for operation and expansion of income-generating activities. And, some of the groups indicated they would construct better houses or start some form of training program(s).

Table 1

Factors Affecting Governance, Management, and Leadership of Women’s Self-Help Groups in Shaviringa Location, Vihiga District of Western Kenya (N = 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registration Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally registered</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale and Procedures for Selecting Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust, education, and/or participation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity, influence, and/or experience</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods of Selecting Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election by majority vote</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection without a vote (“nomination”)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Sources of Conflicts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tardiness, using domestic issues as an excuse, absenteeism, or slow loan repayment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership, accountability, transparency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Factors Influencing Financial Operations of Women’s Self-Help Groups in the Shaviringa Location, Vihiga District of Western Kenya (N = 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Held Bank Account</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept Records of Any Kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Receive External Financial Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The groups were also asked about other factors that affected their performance. The factors expressed included issues related to marketing, transport of goods produced, potential limitations, motivations (intrinsic and extrinsic), as well as suggestions related to improving their operating environments. Ten (90.9%) groups reported that their marketing abilities were hampered by poor prices, limited local demand, competition with experienced groups and other general traders, and their inability to access large urban markets (Table 3). Only one (9.1%) group perceived that marketing was not an issue. However, that group was not involved in any business ventures.

All the groups in the study depended on local means of transport such as bicycles, taxi services, and, in most cases, walking to get their products to the local markets. Groups’ members stated that walking long distances to the market or to attend group functions was an impediment to their productivity given their advancing age and household duties. Whenever the weather was rainy, many group members faced additional hardships because of even more lost time. One group that sold firewood decried the lack of means to transport their bulky products to the market. So, they fell prey to exploitation by transporters, who, in most cases, were expensive; this, in turn, impacted the group’s profitability. Another group that engaged in the provision of entertainment activities, such as song, drama, and dance, did not have the means to travel long distances and perform despite a demand for its services. A different group noted the following:

We live far in the interior where we are isolated from the market center. Whenever we purchase foodstuff for our feeding program at our early childhood facility we are also forced to pay for bicycle transport for ourselves and our purchases too. At our age, bicycle transport is not so good so walking becomes the only alternative. Some members abstain from such responsibilities and this becomes a recipe for conflicts in our group. (Jivetti, 2007, p. 78)

Eight (72.7%) groups indicated that culturally-rooted gender bias was another setback to their operations (Table 3). The women reported that local cultural tenets continue to stereotype the abilities of women in regard to certain vocations. For example, one group reported that, “In our culture, women cannot plant trees or lead a prayer during public functions like burial ceremonies. Women are best suited as mothers or casual labors” (Jivetti, p. 78).

Some of the groups observed that their main limitations were lack of education and new ideas to improve existing activities rather than duplicating projects carried out by other groups in
their areas. Seven (63.6%) groups suggested that education and training through seminars and workshops by external actors, group-provided demonstrations and local shows, as well as support from the Kenyan government and NGOs would improve the performance of women’s self-help groups (Table 3). The women’s groups studied also expressed that they deserved to be recognized and appreciated for their roles in community development. All the groups expressed interest in receiving “appropriate rewards” such as certificates for their contribution to the community. To that end, one group expressed the following position:

We need a community center and a local women’s group day to reward different groups and learn from others. Rewards would easily encourage more women to join these initiatives. *Sindikiza* [i.e., a Swahili word used by the women to describe their groups’ efforts to mitigate socio-economic challenges] has improved women’s lives significantly; so, the demand has increased and many more would like to join to improve their lives too. (Jivetti, p. 79)

### Table 3

**Other Factors Affecting Women’s Self-Help Groups Regarding Their General Performance in the Shaviringa Location, Vihiga District of Western Kenya (N = 11)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markets &amp; Marketing of Products</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor prices, poor local demand, competition with experienced groups or traders, inadequate capital, and/or the inability to access large urban markets</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No business involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture and Gender Bias</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not indicated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Improving Group Performance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminars and workshops by external actors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-provided demonstrations and local shows</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More support from the Kenyan government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More support from NGOs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other factors identified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

General governance, management, and leadership of the groups were influenced by registration status of the group, selection of group leaders, and perceived sources of conflicts. Most of the groups were registered with the government. In most groups, trust, education, and participation in group activities were members’ rationales for selecting their leaders; other factors included integrity, influence, and experience. Nine groups elected their leaders by a majority of votes cast; the other two groups “nominated” their leaders. Sources of conflicts within the groups were attributed to tardiness, using domestic issues as a rationale for tardiness, absenteeism, slow repayment of loans, leadership, and accountability issues.
Only three groups had opened bank accounts; the other eight groups lacked bank accounts due to insufficient capital as well as prohibitive bank fees. Most groups kept some form of records. All groups admitted to having minimal business experience but depended on group-raised capital to engage in business. Due to lack of capital, all the groups favored external assistance (e.g., seed capital) for expansion of their income-generating activities.

Other factors that affected the efficiency of the women’s groups were marketing, transport of goods produced, and lack of motivation from or appreciation by their local communities. Poor prices or local demand, competition, and the inability to access large urban markets hindered the groups’ marketing efforts. In addition, the popular local means of transport included bicycles and taxi services or generally walking to markets and functions. However, long distance walking was an impediment to the groups’ productivity due to advancing age and household duties of their members. It was perceived that transport agents capitalized on such difficulties to exploit women’s groups thus affecting their profitability.

Eight groups perceived that culturally-rooted gender bias was a major hindrance to their operations. The groups revealed that they lacked new ideas or skills to improve their existing activities because most members had minimal education. As a result, all the groups tended to duplicate projects carried out by others. As a remedy, most groups suggested that education and training through seminars and workshops be offered by government agencies and NGOs. Additionally, the women perceived that group-provided demonstrations and local shows stood a high chance of contributing to the education and training of their groups’ members. The women’s self-help groups also expressed that their roles in community development needed to be appreciated through “appropriate rewards.”

**Educational Importance, Recommendations, and Implications**

Most women’s self-help groups were involved in entrepreneurial or income-generating activities that involved some form of business ventures. However, many of the groups were duplicating the projects of others. Feldman (1983) attributed the duplication of projects to the existing competition for a small limited market. Herz (1989) argued that it is a deficiency of skills in management and the general lack of viable markets for their income-generating activities that characterize many women’s groups. Therefore, it is recommended that the women’s self-help groups be provided training in the development of business plans and guidance about how best to avoid redundancy or undue duplication of projects and activities.

The financial operations of women’s self-help groups are critical in their quest to mitigate poverty and overcome other social and welfare challenges. Even though most groups in this study were multipurpose, an underlying factor was that they were all involved in some form of income-generating activity. When examining the impact of these groups, one pertinent question is whether the associations present viable solutions or alternatives to the problems of poverty and unemployment that women face (Srujana, 1996). As Stevenson and St-Onge (2005) pointed out, entrepreneurial, management, and technical training are crucial to enterprise development. The results of this study support that contention.

Herz (1989) and Kane et al. (1991) described the need to strengthen the management and logistical capabilities of women’s groups. On the other hand, the study by Stevenson and St-Onge (2005) on women involved in entrepreneurship revealed that most training did not account for rural areas, was devoid of follow-up programs, and placed little emphasis on aspects such as business and marketing. Those and related issues must be addressed if successful sustainable development involving women is the objective.
Finally, most of the women’s self-help groups were founded to help Kenyan orphans access early childhood education opportunities (Jivetti & Edwards, 2008). This is an extremely high need and important goal, and it is one that is congruent with the Kenyan Government’s objective to provide universal education for all children (GOK, 2003), and is also envisioned by the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2001). However, both local and foreign institutions of higher education are needed to partner with rural communities in Kenya to help develop early childhood programs in rural areas. More structured, targeted, and sustained assistance should be sought from appropriate Ministry(ies) of the Kenyan Government as well as select NGOs with the necessary expertise to meet the need of providing early childhood education for orphaned children of the Shaviringa Location. Collaborating with women’s self-help groups toward that end, such as the women interviewed in this study, could improve the likelihood of those needs being met.

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