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**Provision of Social Protection Services by  
Non-State Actors in Nyanza Region Kenya :  
Assessing Women Empowerment**

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## Glossary

<b>Agency</b>	Power of self-determination, access to meaningful choices, equal decision-making in the household over livelihood planning and productive assets, and shared contribution to expenditure decisions.
<b>Access and control</b>	In general, women and men have different levels of both access (the opportunity to make use of something) to the resources needed for their work and control (the ability to define their use and impose that definition on others) over those resources.
<b>Benefits</b>	Economic, social, political or psychological gains derived from the use of resources, including the satisfaction of both practical needs such as food and housing and strategic interests such as education and political power.
<b>Gender</b>	The relationship of men and women, boys and girls and how this is socially constructed. Gender roles are dynamic and change over time.
<b>Gender discrimination</b>	Societal norms and practices that apply to women by virtue of their gender.
<b>Gender equality</b>	Freedom of both men and women to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices.
<b>Gender equity</b>	Fairness in treatment of women and men according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but that is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.
<b>Gender inequalities</b>	Disparities between household members reflecting norms and customs on the distribution of food and access and ownership of resources such as property and land.
<b>Gender-imposed discrimination</b>	Forms of gender disadvantage that reflect discrimination in the wider public domain such gender-neutral policies.
<b>Gender mainstreaming</b>	Ensuring that women and men have equal access to and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making in all the stages of the development process, projects, programmes or policy.
<b>Gender-sensitive programming</b>	Ability to acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences and inequalities and to incorporate them in policies, strategies and action plans. The principles of gender equality are incorporated in project design from inception through to implementation, and gender outputs and outcomes are monitored.
<b>Practical gender needs</b>	Needs identified by women within their socially defined roles as a response to an immediate perceived necessity. These needs usually relate to inadequacies in living conditions such as lack of water, health care or employment, but they do not challenge gender divisions of labour or women's subordinate position in society.
<b>Social protection</b>	Interventions to reduce social and economic risks and vulnerability and alleviate extreme poverty, such as policies and actions that enhance the capacity of and opportunities for the poor and vulnerable to improve and sustain their lives.
<b>Sex</b>	Biological differences between women and men.
<b>Strategic gender interests</b>	Interests identified by women that tend to challenge gender divisions of labour, power, control and traditionally defined norms and roles. These interests vary according to context and may include such issues

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	as legal rights, domestic violence, wage equality and women's control over their bodies.
<b>Women's economic empowerment</b>	Power to control one's life and to pursue one's goals and freedom to live according to one's values, developing self-reliance and being able to make choices, and to both individually and collectively influence the decisions that affect one's life.

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**Acronyms and abbreviations**

FBOs	faith-based organisations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
Kshs	Kenya shillings
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NSA	non-state actor
PASGR	Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
RoK	Republic of Kenya
PWDs	persons with disabilities
SA	state actor

**Abstract**

In Kenya, women are more likely than men to suffer poverty and its associated vulnerabilities, mainly because they are excluded from decision-making on economic issues, they have limited access to the factors of production, particularly land, and traditional customs allocate them undervalued roles and constrain their voice and mobility. Many of the 300,000 non-state actors (NSAs) providing social protection services in the country are helping women deal with these challenges and improve their livelihood. This study sought to find out whether these social protection services were empowering women, expanding their livelihood skills and enhancing their ability to make strategic life choices, which they were previously denied.

The study mapped NSA social protection providers and services in Bondo, Kisii, Kisumu and Siaya districts in Nyanza region, followed by an in-depth survey of selected NSAs and their beneficiaries. Most of the NSA programmes were transforming the lives of poor women and empowering them, particularly the programmes focusing on income generation, access to credit and savings, skills training, and civic education and leadership skills.

NSAs need to be supported for effective delivery of their services by coordination of their activities and strengthening of their role in gender sensitive social protection programming. Their anti-poverty programmes could be made more empowering and gender sensitive if the targeted groups were involved in their design and implementation. This would require that the beneficiaries be regarded as active agents of change and equal stakeholders in the social protection programmes' development processes. It is vital that linkages be established between policy actors for exchange of knowledge and lesson learning, and that investment be made in building capacity for planning and implementation for programme implementers to develop skills that will ensure gender-sensitive programme designs translate into gender-sensitive implementation. NSAs can support people facing challenges with practical help, but they can also promote public action to challenge the state to transform laws.

**Keywords**

Kenya, vulnerability, empowerment, non-state actor, gender

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and objectives

This study was conducted in Nyanza region of Kenya, assessing how social protection services provided by non-state actors (NSAs) were empowering women and enabling them to make decisions at household or community level and whether the NSA programmes were expanding women's abilities to make strategic life choices in a context where these were previously denied them.

The Kenya constitution commits the government to provide for vulnerable people who are unable to meet their basic needs. Under the Bill of Rights, the constitution recognises the need to preserve the dignity of individuals and communities and to promote social justice and the realisation of the potential of all human beings (RoK, 2010). On economic and social rights, it guarantees every person the right to:

- The highest attainable standard of health;
- Accessible and adequate housing and reasonable standards of sanitation;
- Freedom from hunger and adequate food of acceptable quality;
- Clean and safe water in adequate quantities;
- Social security;
- Education.

The constitution commits the government to provide social security to persons who are unable to support themselves and their dependants (RoK, 2010). This is a basis for citizens to hold the government accountable, ensuring that it meets its obligations.

Kenya has a long history of social protection and is currently advancing legislative measures and investment to enhance the capacity of and opportunities for the poor and vulnerable groups (RoK, 2012). Although the government is the largest source of social protection financing, NSAs and civil society groups such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are present and active in the sector on a large scale – with more than 300,000 groups involved in social protection – and play a pivotal role in providing safety nets (RoK, 2009 a).

Despite these initiatives and a broad range of others to reduce poverty and promote economic growth, poverty and vulnerability are prevalent, affecting an estimated 47 percent of the population. Women and men face different constraints and barriers that limit their opportunities. These sometimes emanate from social norms and practices that most of the time discriminate against women in household resource distribution and in decisions on family assets.

In Kenya, poverty has a female face and largely affects the young and the elderly (RoK, 2011). Vulnerability of female-headed households to poverty is about 14 percent compared with 5 percent for male-headed households (RoK, 2012). Economic disparity contributes largely to poverty among women, since they are the primary producers of food and their reproductive and care giver roles are allocated no economic value. Women are excluded from decision-making on economic issues; they have limited access to the means of production including land, capital and technology; they work on farms as free family labourers; and their work is both undervalued and under-paid.

The UN defines poverty as

denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation." (UN Statement, June 1998).

Poverty is seen as a gendered phenomenon (Sweetman, 2011), and progress in gender equality is recognised as a critical factor in halving the extremely poor population.

Women are the more likely to face systemic and sociocultural barriers in accessing social protection (Kukrety and Mohanty, 2011). This corroborates the argument that social protection



needs to be assessed from a gender perspective, focusing on the ways NSA programmes are empowering women and addressing the constraints that lead to their poverty.

The specific objectives of this research were:

- To assess whether NSA social protection services were empowering women and expanding their livelihood skills;
- To find out whether NSAs were more responsive to women's empowerment and gender equality than were selected state services;
- To gather NSA social protection data for policy actors and implementers.

## **2. Literature review**

The social protection agenda generally categorises the poor, excluded and vulnerable groups based on age, health status and relationship to formal labour markets. This leaves out women as a focus (OECD, 2009). To include the status of women, the definition of poverty takes into account

... social risks such as discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and power in households, and limited citizenship ... limited control over reproductive health, restricted decision-making within marriage and the household, comparative lack of voice and agency within the community, and verbal, physical and psychological abuse (Patel and Hochfeld, 2011:231).

Stresses and shocks women experience are often caused by “crop failure, death of a family member, abandonment by parents or a spouse, chronic ill-health, ongoing sexual violence or threats of it and discrimination or stigma” (Holmes et al., 2011:258). Yet, gender is rarely used as a differentiating lens to understand poor women's exposure to risk and vulnerability or in designing social protection measures. Studies show that social protection programmes can exacerbate or contribute to inequalities (Kabeer, 2001).

Constraints specific to women can be grouped as gender specific (societal norms and practices that apply to women by virtue of their gender), gender intensified (inequalities between household members reflecting norms and customs on the distribution of resources), or gender imposed (forms of gender discrimination in the wider public domain such as gender-neutral policies (Sweetman, 2011:169). The rationale for women's empowerment as a key element in social protection is grounded in human rights, pro-poor development and progress in gender equality, and recognition of women's empowerment as a critical factor in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

### **2.1 Social protection in Kenya**

Social protection programmes in Kenya are grounded in the constitution, which states that the general rules of international law shall form part of the law of the country and any treaty or convention the country ratifies will be part of the laws (RoK, 2010, Article 2:5-6). Kenya has committed to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Sustainable Development Goals. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights regards social protection as a fundamental human right for all citizens and an entitlement, not charity:

Everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of self and family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care, necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond personal control (UN, 1948: Articles 22–26).

The Kenya social protection sector review (RoK, 2012) shows that social insurance schemes and safety-net programmes have low coverage with limited effectiveness, and often they are humanitarian relief efforts mobilised by the government and the international community to respond to crises such as drought or flooding. In many parts of the country, and mostly the arid and semi-arid lands, this response is common, with emergency food relief being provided every year. Until 2010, the National Health Insurance Fund and National Social

Security Fund provided coverage to only formal workers, who constitute just 8 percent of the labour force.

Poverty is widespread in Kenya, and approximately 16.3 million Kenyans are food poor. Poverty rates are markedly higher in rural areas, standing at 50 percent versus 34 percent in urban areas. Most rural people have no access to services or income-generating opportunities to use to obtain food. Poverty levels vary based on circumstances: ranging from 74 percent for North Eastern region to 22 percent for Nairobi, and they are higher for households with orphans and vulnerable children, at 54 percent; for older people, at 53 percent; for children with disabilities, at 63 percent; and for adults with disabilities at 53 percent (RoK, 2012). Other factors include living in the arid and semi-arid lands or in communities with insufficient entrepreneurial activity, household size and composition, human capital, productive assets, and the main activity of the head of household. Poor households have various responses to shocks such as selling assets, which is of long-term detriment to their well-being (RoK, 2012).

The policy context for social protection in Kenya is changing in response to calls from the African Union for governments to expand access to social protection and to the government's commitment in the Bill of Rights. The national social protection policy aims to progressively expand social security coverage (RoK, 2011). It commits to the principles of leadership and integrity, good governance, evidence-based programming, gender mainstreaming, equity, and social justice among others. The overarching goal is to ensure that Kenyans live in dignity and harness their capability for their own social and economic development. The broad policy objectives are to promote synergies and integration among social protection providers as well as interaction among stakeholders, including NSAs, for the optimal functioning of the national social protection policy. Numerous actors provide social protection services in Kenya (Omiti and Nyanamba, 2007), including:

- the government
- regulatory bodies dealing with HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and natural hazards
- uniformed forces
- NGOs dealing with human rights
- international organisations such as World Food Programme, Red Cross, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Oxfam, World Vision, International Fund for Agricultural Development and Action Aid
- media organisations
- insurance companies
- community-based organisations
- faith-based organisations (FBOs)
- microfinance institutions

Many social protection providers focus on hunger and extreme poverty, child education, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, shelter and human settlement. The following lessons have emerged from their interventions (RoK, 2011):

- A social programme framework is lacking to guide decision-making on the nature of beneficiaries, targeting mechanisms, delivery systems and geographic distribution;
- The programmes' scale is limited and most are implemented as small and fragmented pilots without a clear path for transformation into full-scale interventions;
- Coordination of programmes is lacking and most are implemented independently with limited cross-learning or synergy, leading to overlap/duplication and lack of clarity over mandates and responsibilities;
- The monitoring and evaluation framework to guide decisions on the geographic spread and beneficiaries to be reached is inadequate;
- There is necessity for sustainability and scaling up of social programmes, especially in the absence of external support;
- There is need to link up NSAs to know what and how much is being done and their coordination, extent and capacity.

The Kenya social protection sector review (RoK, 2012) is the first step in a long-term journey towards an integrated social protection system. The review provides benchmarks for the social protection sector, helping in developing strategies for implementing the national social protection policy that are in line with the government's second medium-term plan and the constitution. Despite advances in integrating the sector, the programmes are uneven among types and among operational areas. This is because monitoring and evaluation are still weak, meaning that information for policy-makers on performance and impact is lacking, collected information is not published, and basic data on implementation necessary for comprehensive assessment are scarce.

The key challenges include the fragmentation of programming, leading to duplication and inconsistencies. The national social protection policy aims to streamline, coordinate and bring together stakeholders in an effective partnership. National, county and sub-county level frameworks will be developed within which all social protection interventions will be implemented. To this effect, a National Social Protection Council is to be established by an act of parliament bringing together social protection stakeholders and government ministries, businesses, workers, social security organisations and NSAs. The council will be mandated to develop social protection strategies and service standards for joint programmes, improve research analysis targeting poor and vulnerable groups, and identify gaps and priority areas for increased impact.

This study aims to contribute to the fuller understanding of social protection programmes from a women's empowerment perspective and to fill the information gap, which will help policy actors to develop legislation, policies and strategies that are in line with the constitution. This study also wishes to find out how far official policy commitments to women's rights and gender equality have been adopted by NSAs in the conception and implementation of their programmes.

## **2.2 Systems of social protection interventions**

According to Kabeer (2007) a comprehensive social protective system comprises four broad sets of interventions:

- **Protective** measures are narrowly targeted income (cash) and consumption (food) safety nets used during crises or stress, for example social assistance for the chronically poor. They provide relief from deprivation. Such programmes include targeted resource transfers such as disability benefits, single-parent allowances and social pensions for the elderly poor, using public or donor finances, and/or NGO projects (Sabates and Roelen, 2004). Other protective measures are social services for the poor and groups needing special care, such as orphanages and reception centres for abandoned children and internally displaced persons; and elimination of health and education fees to extend basic services to the very poor. A typical protective measure in Kenya is the cash transfer for older persons and households caring for persons with severe disability.
- **Preventive** programmes, for example unemployment or social insurance, non-contributory pension schemes and health insurance, seek to avert deprivation. They deal directly with poverty alleviation and include social insurance for people who have fallen or might fall into poverty and may need support to manage livelihood shocks. Preventive measures in agriculture include strategies such as crop or income diversification.
- **Promotive** programmes enhance real incomes and capabilities and provide springboards and ladders out of poverty, for example skills training and active labour market programmes. These interventions, for example micro-financing, cover a range of livelihood-enhancing programmes targeted at households and individuals.
- **Transformative** measures seek to address power imbalances that create or sustain economic inequality and social exclusion. They include judicial reform; budgetary analysis; legislative processes; policy review and monitoring; and interventions for behaviour/attitude change and building of voice and authority in decision-making for subordinated, marginalised or victimised/oppressed people (RoK, 2011). Transformative measures address concerns of social equity and exclusion, for example by promoting collective action for workers' rights or upholding of human rights. The interventions aim for changes to the regulatory framework to protect socially vulnerable groups from discrimination and abuse, and for sensitization to transform public attitudes and behaviour, for example the HIV/AIDS anti-stigma campaigns.

Transformative approaches have much in common with gender and development as a field of research and activism, because fundamentally they are a political way of thinking about poverty, its causes and potential solutions (Kabeer, 1999). The transformative view of social protection starts from the analysis of poverty causes. This acknowledges the political and social factors that shape poverty and deprivation. Policies and programmes informed by this analysis should understand the relationship among resources, choice and empowerment. In addition to delivering services to individual women, social protection programmes should ensure an end to women's poverty now and in the future and support women to work together to further their shared interests in challenging the structural factors that foster their discrimination.

To assess women's empowerment by NSA services, this study adopts the promotive and transformative frameworks, which explicitly articulate the role of social protection in addressing women's economic empowerment, social and cultural rights, discrimination, and exclusion. The frameworks move from specific to the most general interventions, i.e. from targeted interventions addressing specific vulnerability and deprivation of rights to broad policy, legislative and regulatory reforms to reduce the probability of shocks, including the incidence of chronic poverty and the gender relations and power imbalances that create or sustain vulnerability. "Promotive and transformative approaches are potentially the most powerful social protection strategies, since they can be protective and preventive as well" (Kabeer, 1997:29).

Gender-sensitive programming is key to empowering women, since it incorporates the principles of gender equality in project design from inception through to implementation, monitoring of gender output and outcomes” (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011:199). It has the potential to reduce gendered poverty and vulnerability and increase programme effectiveness by allocating adequate resources, time and training to strengthen women’s capabilities. A gender-sensitive programme empowering women ensures that women are aware of their rights and that they are provided with information, skills and knowledge to ensure they attain social and economic empowerment. In addition, social protection programmes are designed with the recognition that women are not homogenous and their different needs, cultures, abilities and ages require different tools and skills. These initiatives target men as well in a bid to challenge existing sociocultural norms at the national, community and family levels (Haque et al., 2011).

### **2.3 Assessing women’s empowerment**

There is consensus in the literature on women’s options, control and power that empowerment is axiomatically the process of removing the factors that cause powerlessness (Haque et al., 2011). Most of the definitions refer to women’s ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to them and their families. Control over their life and resources is often stressed. A definition that effectively captures what is common in these perspectives and others and that is applied in this study is concerned with whether NSA social protection services expand women’s ability to make strategic life choices where this ability was previously denied them (Kabeer, 2001).

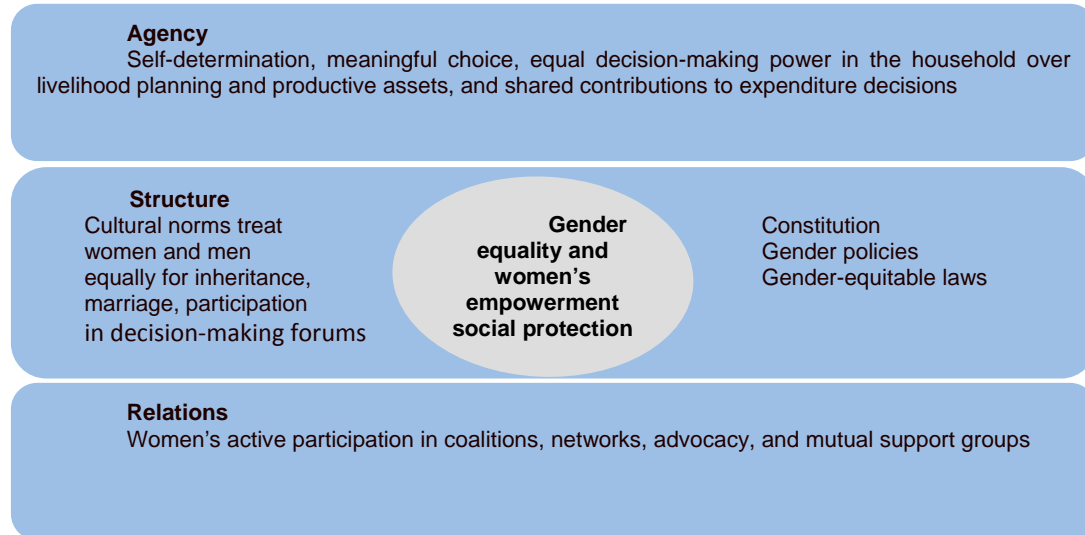
Figure 1 depicts a view of empowerment of women in the process of identifying, understanding and overcoming the structural and underlying causes of poverty, based on equality of welfare and access to and control over resources. Women’s empowerment is “a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources, which will assist them in challenging and eliminating their subordination” (Keller and Shuler, 1991:113). To succeed and advance economically, women need skills and resources to sustain their lives, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency and self-determination to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions, to control resources and profits, to advance economically and to act on economic decisions (International Center for Research and Women, 2011). This means that when a woman can make and act on economic decisions and advance economically she is economically empowered. To do that, she has to be personally determined to make meaningful choices and she must have equal decision-making power as her male partner in the household over livelihood planning and productive assets and a share in the contribution to household expenditure decisions.

The three dimensions of empowerment shown in Figure 1 need to be interlinked to ensure gains in one dimension are strengthened and reinforced by activities and gains in the others. Realisation of Kenya’s constitutional commitment on gender equality and equity (structure), for example, demands improvements in women’s ability to participate in networks (relations), which in itself demands an increase in women’s influence (agency). Social protection programmes that enable women to acquire land (structure) or become active members of community self-help groups (structure and relations) lead to effective decision-making at the household level (agency) or enable women to effectively participate in networks and mutual support groups (relations). Therefore, agency should be treated as the essence of empowerment, and resources as enablers.

Although the notion of empowerment seems clear at the conceptual level, it is not always easy to separate empowerment indicators. A variable may function as an indicator of women’s access to resources in one context, of agency in another, and of achievement in yet another context. For example, microcredit programmes are often seen as resources for women’s empowerment, but if a woman seeks to join a credit programme, that is a manifestation of her agency. Similarly, women’s economic contribution to or ownership of an

asset demonstrates agency, but could function as a source of empowerment or evidence of empowerment.

**Figure 1: The three dimensions of empowerment**

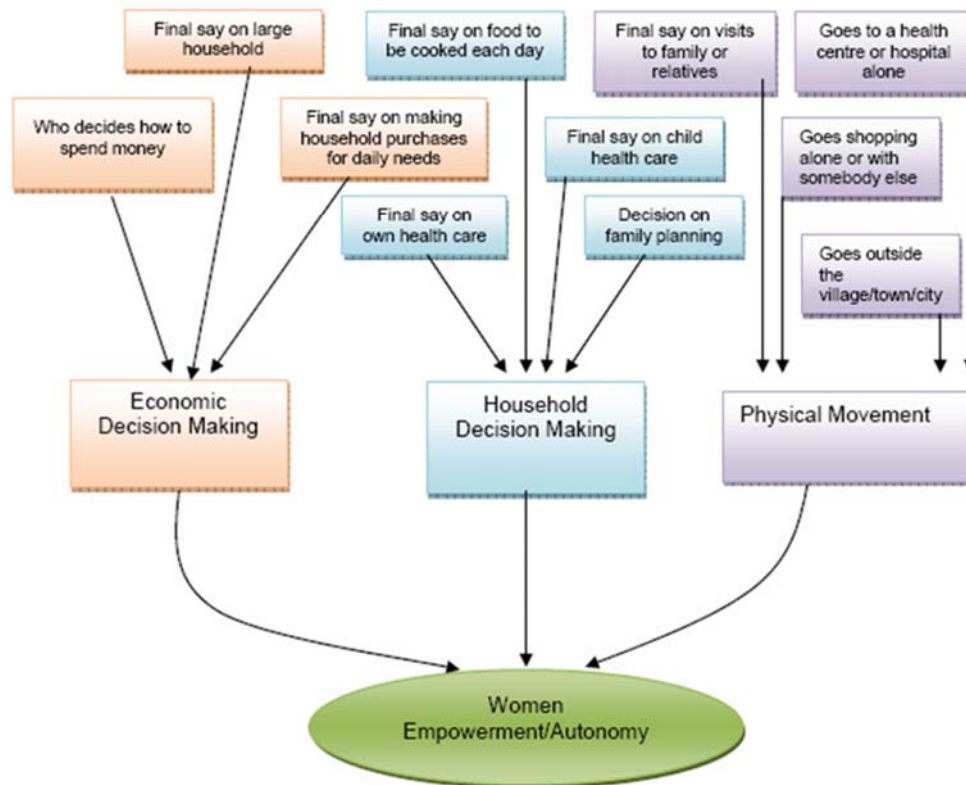


Separating empowerment into agency, structure and relations is useful in identifying policy interventions and to assess the impact of social protection interventions. This can be effective only when the principles of gender equality (the freedom of both men and women to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices) and gender equity (fair treatment of women and men) in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities are applied (ILO, 2000).

#### **2.4 Conceptual framework for measuring women's empowerment**

To contextualise the conceptual framework (see Figure 2) for NSA services, this study intended to capture the main dimensions of women's empowerment, which are economic decision-making, household decision-making and physical movement (Harque et al., 2011). Women's ability to share or control decision processes on financial matters with the husband or other male family members would lead to improvement of their self-determination, control over resources, self-esteem, status, and power relations within the household.

**Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the construction of women's empowerment**



Source: Parveen and Leohauser (2004).

Women's empowerment in economic decision-making is seen through the three indicators relating to their participation in the family's major economic decisions, in the say in household purchases, and in the decision on how to spend household money. Freedom of movement in the African context is necessary for women to make their own choices, adopt new attitudes, improve their social networks and reduce their level of poverty. Lack of physical mobility deprives women of livelihood opportunities (Parveen and Leohauser, 2004).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

This research sought to assess whether NSA services were empowering women compared with selected state services by asking four questions:

- In what ways have the social protection programmes enabled women to participate in their interventions, community development programmes, women's groups, microfinance institutions or political processes?
- Have the programmes enhanced women's mobility and networks?
- Have the programmes enhanced women's decision-making in the household?
- Have the programmes enabled women to own assets?

The following assumptions guided and tested this study:

- Hypothesis 1: NSA services address women's empowerment and assist in the cause of gender equality;
- Hypothesis 2: NSA services are more responsive to gender and women's empowerment than are similar state services;
- Hypothesis 3: Gender-focused and participatory programme design and implementation empower women.

Table 1 presents the variables and indicators assessed. They weighed upon whether the services enabled women to make decisions at the household or community level, own assets, effectively participate in the social protection programmes, and have power and agency.

**Table 1: Variables and indicators of women empowerment**

Variable measured	Indicators of the variable
Women's ability to make decisions	<p><b>Economic decision-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has the final say on allocation, use and distribution of household money?</li> <li>• Do you have control over your own money?</li> <li>• What is your economic contribution to support the family and how do you benefit?</li> <li>• Does your work (farm or trade) contribute to support your family and do you have access to and control of family resources?</li> </ul> <p><b>Heightened self-esteem, self-worth and confidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you make independent choices and put them into action, such as making large purchases of land?</li> <li>• Have your skills, knowledge or information improved because of social protection initiatives?</li> <li>• How has the social protection programme helped you to perceive yourself positively or subordinately?(Patel and Hotchfeld, 2011)</li> </ul>
Women's ownership of assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you own land in your name?</li> <li>• What other assets do you own? Do you have the choice to dispose of (e.g. lease, sell, gift) your assets without consulting anybody?</li> <li>• Do you have credit facilities?</li> <li>• How has this social protection programme enabled you to own assets?</li> <li>• Are you a member of local associations? Why did you join them and how has that helped you?</li> </ul>
Women's participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In which community programme(s) do you participate (water, women's group, church/mosque)?</li> <li>• Do you hold any leadership position in these programmes?</li> <li>• Are you aware of the provisions in the Kenya constitution and other legislations and provisions for gender equality? How did you get this information?</li> <li>• Have you participated in any political processes such as voting or campaigns?</li> </ul>
Women's freedom of mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have freedom of movement or final say on visits to family or relatives?</li> <li>• Can you travel outside the town or village?</li> <li>• Can you travel independently to attend meetings and collect income or transfers in cash and/or kind from banks or from social protection organisations?</li> </ul>

This study aimed to bridge the gap in the understanding of the link between asset ownership and the ability to make decisions, advance economically and benefit from economic



activities. If a woman cannot meet her basic living requirements she has no power to do anything else, so material resources are essential elements in empowering women (Kabeer, 1999). Social protection programmes aiming to end women's poverty need to support them to work together to further their shared interest in challenging the structural factors that foster their discrimination in the household, community, market and state. This can be achieved only through the combined effort of non-state and state actors and integration of both men and women in programmes, so that they work towards eradicating the inequalities created by cultural and statutory systems.

### 3.2 Study area

This study was conducted in Nyanza region, home to 15 percent of Kenya's population, the second highest rural population density and the lowest life expectancy of 43.7 years, compared with the national average of 54.1 years. Nyanza's incidence of absolute poverty of 63.1 percent is the highest nationwide. The national average is 46 percent. Mapping of NSA activities and in-depth analysis were carried out in four sub-counties: Kisii Central, Bondo, Siaya and Kisumu West (see Appendix 1).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The study uses mixed methods (both quantitative and qualitative analyses) to draw policy implications of the study.

#### 3.3.1 Secondary data

Secondary data such as census, organisational records, Kenya social protection sector review and other policy documents were collected from the national NGO registry, the NGO programmes, FBOs and government ministries at the district level, especially the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Services, which is responsible for coordinating social protection services.

#### 3.3.2 Mapping

The mapping exercise identified 376 NSAs and 45 state actors providing social protection services in the four districts (Table 2). Also mapped and categorised were formal organisations such as NGOs, FBOs and international agencies, and registered community-based organisations working on the basis of collective action, family, neighbourhood and traditional solidarity networks.

**Table 2: NSAs and state actors mapped**

District	NSAs	State actors
Bondo	114	14
Siaya	108	11
Kisumu West	85	10
Kisii Central	69	10
Total	376	45

In each district mapping was conducted in the major town and in a rural environment, totalling eight areas, to provide comparison. The aim was to establish:

- Who the NSAs were and their funding sources and features of accountability and governance;
- NSA social protection services;
- NSA intended and actual beneficiaries and their characteristics;
- Scale of NSA services in terms of number of people assisted directly or indirectly;
- Extent of NSA programmes' gender responsiveness and empowerment of women.

### 3.3.3 Sampling

A small sample was selected for in-depth exploration of the opportunities NSAs offered women beyond handling their basic needs, whether the gender-responsive services NSAs provided were transformative and empowering women, and the possibility of wider adoption of best practices. The procedure involved selecting a sample of 30% of the NSAs and obtaining beneficiaries from each of the clusters of the mixed self-help groups, NGOs, FBOs, and women's and youth groups (see Table 3) with approximately 15 beneficiaries per cluster for a total of 544 (Table 4). Care was taken to ensure a mix of women, men and special groups.

**Table 3: Types of NSAs**

District	Mixed self-help groups	NGOs	FBOs	Women groups	Youth groups
Bondo	56	10	1	40	7
Siaya	72	7	1	24	4
Kisumu West	48	3	2	27	5
Kisii Central	32	13	3	11	10
Total	208	33	7	102	26

Ten state actors were selected for the interview to assess their gender responsiveness and to test the study hypotheses. The state actors were categorised according to the 28 types of social protection services from the mapping exercise, and 15 beneficiaries were selected per each actor for a total of 150 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Beneficiaries in the in-depth study**

District	NSAs		State actors	
	No.	Beneficiaries	No.	Beneficiaries
Siaya	9	136	2	30
Bondo	10	165	2	31
Kisumu West	8	122	3	46
Kisii Central	8	121	3	45
Total	35	544	10	152

#### 4. Social protection providers and their services

##### 4.1 Types of NSAs

The registered community-based organisations were categorised as self-help mixed groups, i.e. groups with men, women and youth members and mostly clan based; women groups; youth groups; local NGOs and FBOs.

The mapping also determined NSA affiliation to national or international agencies. Affiliated NSAs rely on national or international agencies for funds or staff for their organisations, while independent NSAs mainly rely on their own resources (Table 5). The independent NSAs mostly bring together clan or community members, friends or neighbours to address their immediate needs. Some social protection activities of the independent NSAs were supported by government agencies on a one-off basis.

**Table 5: NSA affiliation**

District	Affiliated	Independent
Bondo	15	99
Siaya	4	104
Kisumu West	24	61
Kisii Central	7	62
Total	50	326

That Kisumu city is the centre of business with urban infrastructure serving the whole of western Kenya could partly explain the high presence of affiliated NSAs operating from there.

There were more independent self-help, women's and youth groups than affiliated ones. Of the 33 NGOs mapped, 60% were affiliated, and 3 of the 7 FBOs mapped were affiliated to national and international churches while 4 were independent and locally based. Table 6 shows the affiliating organisations and the number of NSAs involved.

**Table 6: Organisations to which the NSAs were affiliated**

Organisation	NSAs affiliated
Action Aid International	1
AMREF (IMANISHA Programme)	1
Association of People with Disabilities in Kenya	1
Care International	2
Community Development Trust Fund	1
Constituency AIDS Control Council	1
Department of Children, Gender and Social Development	5
Equity Bank	1
Family Bank	1
Forum for African Women Educationalists	1
Federation of Women Lawyers-Kenya	1
Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya	1
Korea Women's Associations United	1
Ministry of Agriculture	1
Ministry of Education	1
Ministry of Fisheries	1
Ministry of Youth Affairs	1
National Council for People with Disabilities	1
New Partnership for Africa's Development	2
NORAD/ARCAID	1
PLAN International	4

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>NSAs affiliated</b>
Safaricom Foundation	1
Small and Microenterprise Programmes	1
Terres des Hommes	1
United Nations Development Programme/Amkeni	1
United States Agency for International Development	2
Women Enterprise Fund	2
World Vision	1
Young Women's Christian Association	2

#### **4.1.1 Self-help groups**

The self-help, women's and youth groups were all formally registered with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development at the district level. Occasionally, the Ministry gives them grants from the social protection fund. These are not guaranteed to every group or regular, and few of the groups reported benefiting. The irregularity in government support prevented NSAs from claiming affiliation with the ministry.

#### **4.1.2 NGOs**

NGOs were classified as local, national or international. Of the 33 NGOs, 16 were local, 9 national and 8 international.

#### **4.1.3 FBOs**

FBOs were few, with three in Kisii Central district, two in Kisumu West and one each in Siaya and Bondo.

### **4.2 NSA and state social protection services**

#### **4.2.1 NSA services**

The most common NSA service was the school programme providing lunch to children in selected schools or cash/cereals to care givers responsible for orphaned children (see Table 7). The beneficiaries were selected from communities with the neediest pupils, especially orphans and vulnerable children. The eligibility criteria for care givers for cash or cereals depended on guidelines NSAs set on a case-by-case basis. It was common for one household to receive assistance from more than one NSA.

Income generating services usually targeted women's and youth groups, which received low interest loan or grant seed money as start-up capital if established and registered. For some groups the undertaking was collective and the profit was shared among members, while other groups divided the start-up capital money among members to set up individual ventures, with each paying into a collective pot to repay the loan. In either case, the beneficiaries, not the financier, decided on the income-generating activity to undertake. The most common income-generating activities for women were farming of vegetables, potatoes, maize, sorghum and beans; buying and selling of food crops; food catering at public functions; poultry, goat and cattle rearing and selling; basket weaving and selling; and pottery making and selling.

The youth engaged mostly in horticulture; tree planting; bee keeping; M-Pesa, computer, document and Internet services; and transportation services using motorbike or bicycle taxis. They tended to keep shops in commercial centres, where they spend most of their time, while the women preferred stalls in open-air markets. This may have been because the markets were close to home, allowing them to carry out their commercial and household roles at the same time.

Savings/credit groups' members collectively saved and took turns to receive the accumulated money. In "merry-go-rounds" each member contributed an agreed amount of money monthly, which was then given to one member on a rotation basis. In some instances the group determined what the money would be used for but in others the recipient did this.

Merry-go-rounds were common among women and were supported by many of the NSAs. They also served as savings and loans groups.

Education services dealt with payment of school fees for orphans and other needy children and high-performing poor children. The criteria for eligibility for assistance varied among the NSAs. Some NSAs donated books and materials to schools. The prevalence of this service was a reflection of the high number of orphans whose parents had died from HIV/AIDS or malaria, and an indication of the many agencies offering care and support to households affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Table 7: NSA social protection services**

Types of social protection services	NSAs offering the service
Feeding programmes	149
Income-generating activities	146
Merry-go-rounds	138
Education services (paying school fees)	136
Capacity building	106
Clothing including school uniform and blankets	123
HIV/AIDS training and awareness	66
Microfinance	49
Shelter	45
Care, support and protection	41
Health services including medication	38
Advocacy	17
Benevolent fund	16
Cash transfers	13
Home-based care for the aged and bed-ridden HIV/AIDS patients	8
Farm inputs including seeds and machinery	5
Assistive devices for the physically disabled	4
Counselling	4
Household goods	4
Adult education	2
Campaigns	2
Cereal banking	2
Educational tours for school going children	2
Sports for the youth	2
Exchange programmes for the youth	1
Paying teachers' salaries	1
Rehabilitation of children with special needs	1
Water harvesting	1

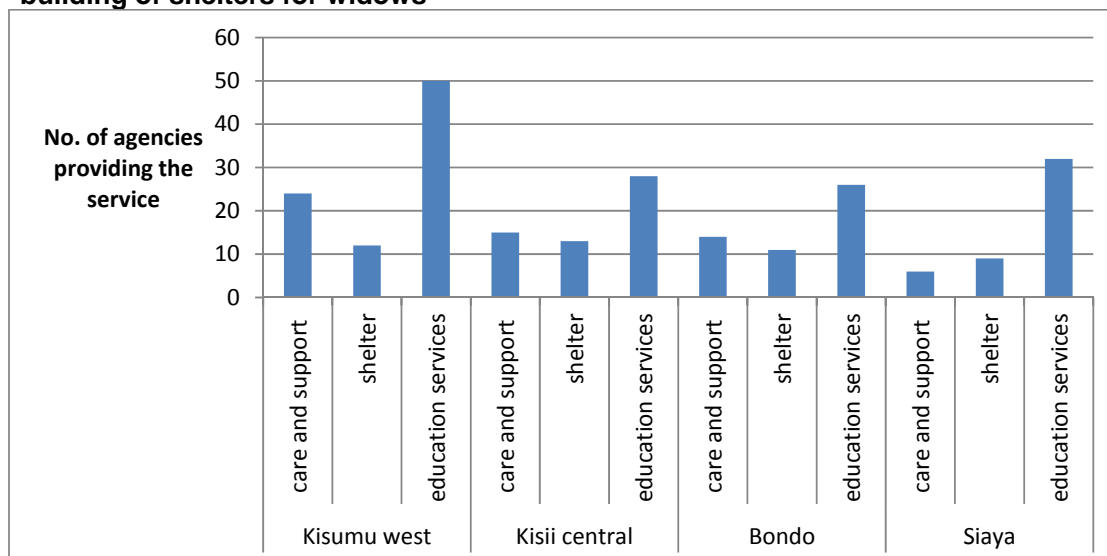
Fourteen NSAs were involved in tree planting with 13 based in Bondo and 1 in Siaya. Generally tree planting is done through schools and other formal institutions that were not captured in this study. Compared to central Kenya tree planting in Nyanza is generally not as popular as an entrepreneurial activity.

Farming support was mostly provided in Bondo with 86 NSAs, followed by Kisumu West with 27 NSAs, then Siaya with 23 NSAs and finally Kisii Central with 16 NSAs. These activities included provision of dairy goats, seeds and farm inputs; fish farming and poultry keeping.

The in-depth study found that payment of school fees was the most popular service for the beneficiaries followed by table banking. These were closely followed by income-generating activities and capacity building/training.

Kisumu West had the most NSAs providing education services with 50, followed by Siaya with 32, Kisii Central with 28 and Bondo with 26. Across the study districts, most social protection support went to education services (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Correlation of education, care and support to HIV/AIDS clients, and building of shelters for widows**



#### 4.2.2 State actors' services

The social protection service offered by the most (12) state actors in the four districts was cash transfer to older persons and PWDs, followed by grants with 4 state actors and capacity building with 1 state actor. The state actors involved in social protection services were the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Education, Ministry of State for Special Programmes, the Department of Gender and Social Development, and the Children's Department.

The Women Enterprise Fund is a semi-autonomous government agency established in August 2007 to provide accessible and affordable credit to support women to start or expand businesses. The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was established in year 2006 to reduce unemployment among the youth, who account for over 61 percent of the unemployed in the country. The target of the fund are the 13 million people aged 18 to 35 years. The women's and the youth's funds work through registered groups to provide individual loans with low interest and lenient repayment conditions.

The persons with disabilities interviewed said that they were capable of carrying out income-generating activities but the surrounding conditions, especially regarding transportation and facilities, were constraints. Older people requested for more dispensaries in their neighbourhoods, as district hospitals were generally far and difficult to reach and expensive.

#### 4.3 NSA beneficiaries

Most of the social protection services from NSAs and state actors targeted women as among the most vulnerable and also as care givers for children, orphans, the elderly and the sick in their families and the wider community (Table 8). Next in importance were children, followed by men, the youth and people with disabilities.

**Table 8: Categories of NSA beneficiaries**

District	Beneficiaries	No. of NSAs offering service
<b>Bondo</b>	Women	96
	Men	50
	Children	54
	Youth	48
	People with disabilities	38
<b>Siaya</b>	Women	72
	Men	43
	Children	81
	Youth	15
	People with disabilities	18
<b>Kisumu West</b>	Women	71
	Men	51
	Children	72
	Youth	39
	People with disabilities	15
<b>Kisii Central</b>	Women	57
	Men	41
	Children	42
	Youth	48
	People with disabilities	21

NSAs supported many more women than did state actors (Table 9). NSA education services reached more boys than girls across the four districts.

**Table 9: Social protection beneficiaries by provider**

Category	NSAs	State actors
Women	385	100
Men	102	37
Youth	56	15

Most NSAs and state actors specifically targeted women, followed by children for NSAs and by men for state actors (Table 10).

**Table 10: Target populations of NSA and state agency services**

NSAs	Women	Men	PWDs	Children	Older persons	Youth
Siaya	6	1	1	6	-	1
Bondo	6	3	-	1	-	1
Kisumu West	7	4	-	6	-	1
Kisii Central	7	1	-	3	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>State actors</b>						
Siaya	-	-	1	-	1	-
Bondo	2	2	1	-	-	-
Kisumu West	2	2	1	-	1	2
Kisii Central	3	2	1	-	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 11 shows the numbers of beneficiaries of the key services in the study area.

**Table 11: Beneficiaries of key NSA Services**

Service	Siaya	Bondo	Kisumu West	Kisii Central	Total
School fees	390	52	160	350	952
Table banking/merry-go-round	60	731	102	59	952
Capacity building/training	24	48,000	135	360	48,519
Income generation	95	1076	66	300	1,537

The cash transfers (see Table 12) helped people buy what they were in need of, especially household supplies. The recipients were also trained on how best to use the funds, to save and to invest them.

**Table 12: Beneficiaries of state cash transfers**

	Siaya	Bondo	Kisumu West	Kisii Central
Cash transfers to PWDs	70	490	70	140
Cash transfers to older persons	269	70	750	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>640</b>

In addition to loans, the Women Enterprise Fund provided grants to 7,650 people, 4,650 of them from Kisumu West and 3,000 from Kisii Central. The Youth Enterprise Development Fund had benefitted 500 youths through groups with more than 15 members, giving priority to those with special needs.

Social protection services from the Ministry of Agriculture in Kisumu West and Kisii Central provided farm inputs, giving priority to women farmers. These included provision of:

- Drought-resistant rice crop seeds known as 'nerica';
- Grants from Njaa Marufuku Kenyato farmers in the form of cash and crops during drought;
- Farm inputs from the National Accelerated Input Access Programme
- Traditional high value crops or orphan crops;
- Help with integrated striga management to destroy a pest prominent in the province;
- Support to build and maintain post-rain water pans for crops and animals.

Some 2,000 farmers in Kisii Central were receiving grants and 4,004 farmers in Kisumu West and another 4,272 in Kisii Central were receiving inputs such as seeds, new technologies, fertilisers and pesticides to boost their farm production.

#### **4.4 Governance of NSAs**

The NSAs were formal with legal identity and registered through district NGO registries, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Services, or the NGO Council. To look at their governance aspects, the study categorised them as self-help groups, women's groups and youth groups, and FBOs and NGOs.

Mixed self-help groups, women's groups and youth groups were registered by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services. Their management committees included a chairman and a deputy, a secretary and a treasurer, who were democratically elected or selected by consensus following scrutiny of their conduct at the personal, family and community levels. All the groups mapped elected their officials by voting. For eligibility for election one had to be a longstanding and active group member. Group membership ranged from 15 to 40 members. Membership criteria were determined by the members and regulated by officials.



NGOs were registered through the NGO Council, which scrutinises them before granting them registration. Registration conditions included regular elections and making returns on funds. Defaulting these regulations resulted in deregistration. FBOs were registered by the government and ran by elected or appointed officials.

#### 4.4.1 NSA accountability

The transparent and accountable financial systems of self-help, women's and youth groups dictated that money be collected, allocated and disbursed at plenary sessions, where the treasurer could be questioned and consensuses reached. In women's groups pressure was commonly used to ensure members contributed and repaid debts (see Table 13). All understood that the borrowed money belonged to the group and defaulting in payment would generate the wrath of other members, who were mostly relatives and neighbours. The groups rarely sought legal redress over defaulting, relying on arbitration by the members themselves.

Most groups had income activities to supplement membership fees, such as rearing poultry for sale. The Toa Ujinga Disabled Group in Bondo had a nursery school, income from which went to their savings. All the groups in this category had simple but functional written constitutions defining their governance structures. This was a requirement for registration.

NGOs were mainly ran by chief executive officers with programme staff, and the general assembly of paid-up members was their highest governance body. The NGOs accounted to sponsors of their programmes on a regular basis. Often external auditors were used.

**Table 13: NSA accountability mechanisms**

Reporting method	NSAs using method
Group pressure	18
Yearly reports to the community	17
Monthly, quarterly or yearly reports	16
Auditing	5

Mixed self-help groups and NGOs both operated at the community level, but NGOs had more external influence. The mixed self-help groups might have had external financing but this was usually a minimal subsidy not full funding. NGO leadership was selected by a board of directors.

#### 4.4.2 Sources of NSA funding

The mixed self-help groups relied on members' contributions. Members not attending meetings or arriving late were fined and the revenue added to the group's account. Most mixed self-help groups had savings and credit facilities or table banking services. The amount to be borrowed was agreed on by the group collectively. Interest from loans was used for social protection services for the members.

NGOs and FBOs had more varied sources of funding, the most common being donors such as AMREF, Plan International, FAO, charitable organisations and the government through various programmes including the Women Enterprise Fund, Njaa Marufuku, and Poverty Eradication (Table 14).

**Table 14: Sources of NSA funding**

Source of funding	Siaya	Bondo	Kisumu West	Kisii Central
Government of Kenya – Women Enterprise Fund, Poverty Eradication, Njaa Marufuku	3	1	4	3
Donors – Plan International, AMREF, CDC, World Vision, USAID, Barclays-UK, Action Aid International, FAO	4	4	2	3
National AIDS Council	-	-	1	2
Rotary International	-	-	1	-
Church	1	-	1	-
Contributions of members	7	5	3	4
Income-generating activities	2	2	1	2
Well-wishers	2	-	-	-
Harambee (pooling of resources)	1	-	-	-
United States Department of State	-	1	-	-

#### 4.5 Women’s empowerment

The indicators chosen to assess the programmes’ impact on women’s empowerment and gender equality were women’s participation in social protection programme planning, mobility, decision-making at the household level, and ownership of assets.

##### 4.5.1 Women’s participation in social protection programme planning

A critical requirement in transforming gender relations is to ensure that the women beneficiaries are involved in the planning of programmes. This will not only be more likely to result in programme features that support transformation of gender relations, but will also generate participation experience that is empowering. Women in self-help groups took leading roles in whatever they wanted to implement. Many mixed self-help groups, especially in rural areas, planned and executed their own activities. Members identified and prioritised their needs through group meetings and regular consultations (Table 15).

For a few NGOs, women’s participation in programme planning was limited. NGOs wrote the proposals for funding and in many cases at the activity design stage they assumed what the women’s needs and priorities were. In programmes supported by NGOs women were receivers, not owners.

**Table 15: NSA methods of designing programmes**

	Design approach to programmes			
	Community members’ consultation	Rights approach	based Church leaders	Donor agencies and programme staff
Siaya	6	-	1	2
Bondo	4	-	-	4
Kisumu West	7	1	-	-
Kisii Central	5	-	1	2
Total	22	1	2	8

The NGOs were mostly using rights-based approaches, which gave women a chance to address their concerns. Better funded NGOs had opportunities for training on the use of cash transfers and on income generation. This empowered women in their households and

communities. However, the top-down relationships of NGOs with their donors affected programme ownership. The beneficiaries did not necessarily determine the types of service NGOs offered.

The state actors used top-down approaches in the design of programmes, with the central government taking charge until recently when the county governments took over. In Kisii Central, state actors had started designing social protection programmes through stakeholders' forums, although fewer women than men attended those forums. Social protection programmes planned without the participation of those whose priorities and needs they aim to address continue to lock marginalised groups into poverty and therefore they cannot be transformative. Top-down processes have this inherent weakness. The need for women's participation in identifying their needs and priorities themselves at the planning stage in social protection interventions is clear (Table 16).

**Table 16: Programme design approach of state actors**

	Design approach to programmes			
	Central government	Top-down approach	Government policy	District stakeholders forum
Siaya	2	0	0	0
Bondo	2	2	2	0
Kisumu West	3	3	0	0
Kisii Central	1	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

The activities with important roles in the empowerment of women were those for income generation; table banking/merry-go-rounds; savings and loans; cereal banking; and training in business management, value addition, information and communication technology, weaving and beading, paralegal services, community health and midwifery; and governance and leadership skills.

#### ***Role of state social protection programmes in women empowerment***

The most common social protection service from the state actors was cash transfers to older persons, households with dependants with severe disabilities, and care givers of orphans and vulnerable children. Transferring cash directly to the poorest households not only supports income, consumption and human capital development but also has wider benefits, since the recipients can choose and prioritise their own expenditure. This money was mainly received by women, who bore the burden of care for households and children.

The premise on which the transfer of the economic resources is based is that the possession of the money will automatically translate into power and control for the recipients. That is, by determining how the money will be used the beneficiary will convert that choice into empowerment. But there are questions as to who in the household makes the key decisions and the degree to which women control spending and use of resources, including the cash transfers.

Cash transfer schemes stereotype women as family care givers and unpaid workers and are not designed to change gender relations or empower women. As women's roles in the economy change and diversify, and as household survival comes to increasingly depend on incomes of women, the consequences of strengthening women's roles in the care economy may have a negative impact on their ability to escape from poverty. Cash transfers alone are not innately transformative and should not be seen as capable of automatically resulting in women's empowerment in the household, even if they may be linked to other benefits such as household nutrition and increased use of social services like health and education. Although cash transfer programmes give scant attention to women's empowerment, they have impact. But when there is no conscious consideration of how best to make them transformative, there is a risk that they will harm women's interest and that "the consequences of

strengthening women's role in the care economy may be to restrict their ability to escape from poverty" (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011:2009).

The Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund were found to be promotive since they increased real incomes and capabilities of targeted groups by providing loans and farm inputs and building capacity through training in livelihood skills. Some of the beneficiaries started income-generating activities that transformed their economic status. State social protection programmes need to aspire for approaches that affect gender household relations and empower women, if they are to progress beyond welfare provision and be truly preventive and potentially transformative in moving the vulnerable groups out of poverty.

### ***Programmes enabling women's participation in decision-making***

The study sought to know whether the NSA programmes were creating an enabling environment for women's participation in decision-making by their impact on women's involvement in the constitution-making political processes and voting, in group networks, and in community leadership. The study found that NSAs were doing more than state actors to create an enabling environment for women (Table 17).

**Table 17: Programmes' facilitation of women's empowerment**

Programme area	Siaya		Bondo		Kisumu West		Kisii Central	
	NSAs	SAs	NSAs	SAs	NSAs	SAs	NSAs	SAs
Participated in the political processes through voting	64	20	49	3	10	15	112	24
Participated in the constitutional process by attending training on governance, devolution and civic education and voting in the referendum	107	3	140	9	85	21	106	36
Become members of a group (women, youth, PWDs)	-	16	123	13	80	43	118	41
Taken a leadership position in the group (women, youth, PWDs)	-	-	-	-	14	16	-	2
Taken leadership position in the community	-	-	5	4	8	1	-	-
Was actively involved in campaigns for the general elections	-	-	6	5	1	-	95	2
Trains people on governance and rights issues	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Attend barazas	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	2

With devolution of government structures to counties and sub-counties, bringing administration of services nearer to people, there is greater opportunity for NSA beneficiaries to participate effectively in development programmes and services, with positive implications for NSAs. Participation and empowerment will depend on definition of clear social protection programme objectives and incentives to involve women in community decision-making processes. This study found participation of women in community meetings to be low, owing to sociocultural attitudes and women's domestic responsibilities and time constraints. There is need to organise such meetings at the time when women can attend, to tackle language barriers and provide incentives such as setting minimum quotas for women in a meeting. Ensuring that women speak and raise their issues in the meetings will require special support and capacity building. Establishing linkages with NGOs can play an important role by creating women's confidence and self-esteem and addressing traditional barriers such as the perceived women's lack of skills and fear of speaking in public (Holmes and Jones, 2010).

#### 4.5.2 Women's mobility

Freedom of movement is an essential component of choice, attitude change, social networking and poverty reduction. In the past, family roles and patriarchal systems constrained women's mobility. To assess their mobility the survey asked the women if in the previous year out of their free will they had attended meetings or gatherings in the village, visited their natal home, visited relatives or friends outside the village, gone to the market or shopping for clothes or other necessary items or visited a hospital facility. The social protection programmes mainly supported by NSAs had enhanced women's mobility, and most of the women had regularly been involved in the five activities the survey asked about (Table 18). Also, most of the women said that their families were already aware of their engagement with the social protection activities so they did not need permission to participate in them, other than reporting on their whereabouts.

The women believed that their mobility and networking had improved with participation in the programmes that required regular attendance of group meetings and participation in training. Awareness had been created among men on the benefits to the households from women's participation in the programmes. Visiting the natal home or relatives for a woman had become a matter of choice and the family were now used to her mobility. Also some programmes required women to attend meetings and travel to market or town centres to collect their benefits themselves, which was an opportunity to gain new information and knowledge by talking and networking with others. Mobility even by itself is empowering.

Married younger women had relatively lower mobility options than their older counterparts. They rarely participated in women's group networks, and their movement was mostly restricted to visiting health clinics and going to the market for food, for which they needed permission from the mother-in-law or the husband.

**Table 18: Women's mobility improvement by social protection programmes**

	Yes		No		Somewhat	
	NSAs	SAs	NSAs	SAs	NSAs	SAs
Freedom of movement	374	89	5	6	7	5
Able to attend meetings and collect funds from social protection programmes	379	94	3	6	4	0

#### 4.5.3 Women's ability to make decisions at the household level

Control over decision-making is a fundamental component of empowerment. The study explored whether the social protection programmes enabled women to make decisions over family incomes and use of family resources and to make independent choices and execute them independently, and whether their skills had improved and helped to transform the welfare of their household. Both NSAs and state actors enhanced women's decision-making at the household level (see Table 19).

**Table 19: Social protection programmes' influence on women's decision-making**

Attribute	Yes		No		Somewhat	
	NSAs (n = 385)	SAs (n = 100)	NSAs (n = 385)	SAs (n = 100)	NSAs (n = 385)	SAs (n = 100)
Ability to contribute in decision-making over family income	368	66	10)	34	7	0
Ability to contribute to decisions over the use of family resources	368	66	10	34	7	0
Ability to make independent choices and put them into action	290	55	83)	40	12	5
Improvement of skills from participation in social protection programmes	380	79	3	21	2	0

Traditionally, women did not bring money to the household or own assets and therefore had no say on how money was spent or assets used. Now, from the programmes and from membership in self-help women's groups, most of them were contributing to the family income and could and did make decisions over some family assets. The women in the study reported that they had gained 'voice' and sometimes had the final say on daily purchases and how to spend money. Also, domestic violence had reduced and men were more respectful and acting as equal partners in their marriages.

This study found that the female care giver who received the cash transfers was usually the person with the most control over their use and distribution in the family. But the in-depth analysis found that in some cases older children took or demanded more than their share of the grant money.

#### 4.5.4 Asset ownership

Ownership of assets was assessed by establishing whether the programmes had created employment or alternative incomes, enabled women's ownership of land and access to credit, or helped women join a group. Most NSA programmes had a promotional objective to create productive assets and were increasing women asset ownership by creating employment in the informal sector, facilitating access to credit and enabling poor women to join associations. Some NSAs enabled 380 out of 385 women to have access to credit, while for state actors that was 52 out of 100 women. Women bought household assets such as utensils, furniture and livestock with the money from the savings and credit services. Others used this money to renovate their houses and to build tanks and gutters to collect rain water. The programmes enabled most women and youth to start and manage income-generating activities.

None of the women beneficiaries of either the state or NSA programmes had acquired land, which in Kenya's agricultural economy is a very important asset as a primary factor of production. Traditionally land is passed from one male generation to another, with women entitled to only usufruct rights. Despite the progressive land laws entrenched in the constitution, normative inheritance practices continue to favour males. From RoK/National Bureau of Statistics (2008) records, 81.4% of men in Kenya own land compared with 18.5% women. Without land titles, women are denied livelihood options or ability to manage shocks in the face of illness, widowhood or destitution.

Grants from the Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and NSA programmes are helping many women and the youth to get employed or engage in other income activities (see Table 20).

**Table 20: Beneficiaries of income-generating activities**

	NSAs		SAs	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Women</b>	363	22	84	12
<b>Men</b>	84	18	24	12
<b>Youth</b>	54	2	15	0

Decision-making on asset ownership is crucial to women's empowerment and gender equality, as well as household poverty alleviation, since assets and especially land can provide options for livelihood and resilience to shocks if one has the choice and power to decide on their usage. For most women interviewed, land and asset ownership empowered them economically, giving them greater control over household income and expenditure and the ability to decide on the use of savings. Woman's ownership of land was associated with greater respect in the household, mobility, decreased incidence of physical violence, increased voice in financial decision-making and greater autonomy in management of land, crops and agricultural produce. It also resulted in greater self-esteem for the women.

## 5. Best practice and lesson learning

The best practice found in social protection activities of NSAs were the initiatives being implemented by women's self-help groups and the NGOs that supported them. Women in poor communities in the four districts were creating innovative social protection mechanisms, and often moving beyond this to foster economic growth and prosperity. Women were taking leadership roles to improve their lives and livelihoods by building social safety nets. They were leading and organising activities to benefit their members and communities in a context of widespread poverty; weak infrastructure; deficient basic services including for health, education and food security; frequent drought; and high HIV/AIDS prevalence. Most of the women's groups' activities were aimed at immediate relief from poverty and vulnerability, as the women worked to strength their livelihood support to increase resilience to shocks.

Many women who pooled savings in merry-go-rounds for loans to better their family life achieved this. In some villages, the savings and credit initiatives were also a social network. For example, they served as a point where a new wife in a village could seek companionship and mentorship, and as sources of emergency funds for hospital or school fees. Some of the groups moved on to use their funds for income-generating activities.

The women's groups' initiatives had key success and sustainability characteristics: the members planned, implemented and managed the activities in their communities based on the principles of collective responsibility, accountability of all members, and principled partnership among the group and with the community:

- **Collective organising:** The vital first step was to create a platform bringing together members to identify and respond to issues affecting them. They chose leaders democratically but mainly by consensus. Regular meetings were held one to four times a month to network, share information and respond to challenges and opportunities.
- **Livelihood was central in the activities:** The groups mainly aimed to enhance members' livelihood. Most of them first sought to secure livelihoods through income generation. Savings and credit services aimed to respond to livelihood and daily economic needs. Once livelihoods were secure they moved to issues such as provision of domestic water, household food security, gender-based violence and health.
- **Transparent governance and accountability:** Money was collected, allocated and disbursed in plenary meetings, and the treasurer was subjected to questions if there was need. Group pressure was commonly used to ensure members contributed regularly and repaid loans. Legal redress beyond arbitration among group members was rare.
- **Leadership in social protection partnership:** The groups led the mobilisation of their communities for NSA or state social protection services. They identified their challenges and determined how they could be addressed by the social protection schemes. They built partnerships with NSAs and state actors to achieve their goals.

The women's groups' initiatives demonstrate that benefits of informal social protection programmes can go beyond offering immediate, practical benefits for individual households to be a tool for sustainable resilience to poverty by forming a part of a wider process of economic and social development and promoting women's empowerment and community ownership over the development processes. NSA and government social protection programmes should build on women's group initiatives and enhance their effectiveness.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1 Women's participation in planning of social protection programmes

Many of the NGOs offering social protection services worked mainly through of women's groups. Their interventions were usually small and generally implemented at the community level, allowing for participation of those involved and their monitoring from the skills and knowledge the community acquires. The Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise

Development Fund also worked through groups. The women's groups implemented their activities according to the needs and priorities of their members, and their structures enabled members to engage with the social protection programmes, take responsibility for conducting their activities, and facilitate their targeting by other development interventions and information, all of which enhanced their capacity in development processes.

Most NGOs and state actors often initiate social protection programmes to further their own institutional aims, such as demonstrating commitment to the constitution or as a social contract between the state and the citizenry, with limited consultation of the beneficiaries. Attention to the needs of funders prevent NGOs from involving their targeted beneficiaries in programme design. Right-based methods in programmes might facilitate beneficiary participation, but there is absence of proactive approaches in many NGOs and state actors to support transformation of the status quo to empower women. The cash transfers were still viewed by recipients as hand-outs or acts of political good will and not as a right.

Promoting participation in programme design is increasingly seen as important to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the programmes for the vulnerable and socially excluded groups. Without explicit attention to the key economic and social barriers women face, interventions will not overcome their inequitable outcomes. Investment is needed to build women's capacity for their effective participation and leadership in social protection programmes, and to overcome traditional barriers to their self-expression.

## **6.2 From welfare to transformation**

Most of the NSA social protection programmes were found to be generally promotive and transformative and therefore providing a chance for the beneficiaries to get out of poverty. Such interventions included income-generating activities; membership in groups, which enhanced women's agency; access to credit through microcredit, table-banking and merry-go-round initiatives; and livelihood training in business management, value addition, weaving, beading and paralegal skills. In addition, the programmes created an enabling environment for their beneficiaries to participate in political processes, governance, civic education and leadership.

State social protection services, primarily cash transfers, are not transformative. The motivation behind the cash transfer programme is based on reducing the number of poor people in the population and illustrating the constitutional commitment to the values of human dignity and economic rights for vulnerable groups. Cash transfers reflect the much criticised notion that poverty is merely a lack of income, ignoring a more holistic understanding of poverty, as "not only about income, but also social risk such as discrimination, unequal distribution of resources and power in the household and limited citizenship" (Holmes and Jones, 2010:1). Cash transfer alone therefore is not the best way out of vulnerability. A better route is to remove constraints on the access to opportunities for the poor and to strengthen their rights and resources. The needs of vulnerable people are only partly met by material resources, because they are still left with strategic needs that challenge social, cultural and political causes of poverty.

## **6.3 Empowering women**

Most NSA social protection services, especially those supported by NGOs, had significant elements of empowerment – such as fostering women's participation in community development programmes and leadership positions; mobility and decision-making; creation of employment and asset ownership –built into the programme design. Programmes without these four pillars of women's empowerment do not do much good but also may do harm.

Cash transfer schemes stereotype women as family care givers and unpaid workers within the household and do not change gender relations or empower women. They will become transformative only when they contribute to social justice by addressing social risks and vulnerabilities using rights-based approaches and regard empowering women as a legitimate goal. The need to pursue objectives that integrate individuals in the society equally, allowing everyone to take advantage of the benefits of growth and enabling excluded or marginalised groups to claim their rights is critical. Since in Kenya poverty bears a woman's



face social protection will need to be relevant to women's lives, particularly due to their growing responsibilities and obligations in coping with the burden of poverty.

Social protection actors must make extra effort to understand the implications of addressing women's land rights as a key area of women's empowerment, especially in the rural context. To this end programmes intending to address women's land rights issues should first identify those who are marginalised in access to, use of, and control over land and then develop specific protection measures for them. This is one area that has not been addressed in social protection programmes, so focusing on land as a key factor in women's empowerment will fill a gap and also change the norms and social rules that uphold the rights of men as the sole owners of land. This requires a multipronged approach linking women's empowerment to poverty reduction and strategies for improved household income, food security and resilience to risks and vulnerabilities.

#### **6.4 Best practice and lesson learning from women's groups**

The members of women's groups planned, implemented and managed their activities in their communities based on the principles of collective organising, members' accountability, and principled partnership. The success of women's groups has seen their number in the country increase over the years, from 138,753 in 2007 to 143,792 in 2011, their membership rise from 5,417,850 to 5,618,064 in the same period and their contributions grow from Kshs 544,600,000 million to Kshs 553,800,000 million.

#### **6.5 Governance and public policy implications**

This study focused only on registered NSAs providing services in social protection. Their sources of financing varied. Most NGOs and FBOs raised funds locally, from development partners or from their affiliated national and international agencies. The groups mainly depended on members' contributions or savings and credit initiatives. Individual members of the women and youth groups sometimes received funds from the Women Enterprise Fund or the Youth Enterprise Development Fund. NGOs were accountable to their donors through audits and reports, while the women's groups were accountable to their membership. Since the women's groups were organised, both the NSAs and state actors were beginning to engage with them in delivering social protection services.

The government is the largest financier of social protection, with support from a range of stakeholders and development partners. Financing for the sector has increased steadily over the years. Sustainable financing for social protection remains a challenge, particularly in the context of high poverty incidence and fiscal constraints. The policy context for social protection is changing, and through the constitutional provision under the Bill of Rights these trends have culminated in the national social protection policy, which aims to progressively expand coverage of social assistance in line with the constitutional commitment.

The state's social protection programmes in this study, that is the Women Enterprise Fund, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and cash transfers to vulnerable groups, were using a range of instruments for accountability, although this was largely upward accountability to programme implementers, managers, policy-makers and members of parliament. The government needs to require downward accountability, which involves providing information to communities and beneficiaries through local meetings where women must be presented; making public audit reports, evaluation and programme reviews; establishing inclusive committees to represent beneficiaries; involving local people especially women and vulnerable groups in programme processes and decision-making in targeting; and creating compliance and appeals procedure for beneficiaries' feedback. From a governance perspective, involving communities especially in the cash transfer programme, while looking out for the most vulnerable women in the targeting process, can significantly increase the likelihood that the right people will be selected.

NSAs have a critical role in holding the government and other implementers of social protection initiatives accountable to the people of Kenya. Using the constitutional mandate to provide for vulnerable and poor people and other citizens eligible for social protection, NSAs should work to educate the public about the need for social protection and encourage dialogue

on the need for increased coverage, better management and more transparency in the design and implementation of gender-sensitive social protection programmes.

## **7. Recommendations**

### **7.1 Policy actors**

Although social protection has gained substantial attention in the development agenda in Kenya, this study has shown that there seems to be a gap between the academic and policy understanding of the whys of social protection and the hows of its implementation. No principles exist to guide programme implementation and plans for immediate and long-term transformative actions for vulnerable or marginalised people and poor communities. Deliberate attention is not given to the gendered dimensions of poverty, risks and vulnerability. Because of their gender neutrality, most social protection programmes fail to address or only partially address the risks and needs of women. Yet with the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals concerning poverty and hunger reduction, women's empowerment and gender equality, social protection policy actors need to improve the design of anti-poverty programmes to make them more empowering and gender sensitive. Gender-sensitive policy and programme design and implementation have the potential to reduce gendered poverty and vulnerability and to increase effectiveness of social protection interventions.

To achieve real change, programme designers need an aspirational, forward-looking agenda that acknowledges the need for coordination of policy actors to strengthen their role in transformative change at all levels in both the design and implementation of gender-sensitive social protection programming. Forging coordination between implementing agencies and service providers in addressing women's concern is critical. This agrees with the national social protection policy, which aims to enhance coordination among social assistance programmes to reduce fragmentation and duplication and harmonise programmes including by adoption of a single registry, a common monitoring and evaluation framework and sector-wide minimum standards for accountability.

It is important to recast the perception of women's groups from beneficiaries to active agents of change. It is also vital that emerging social protection programmes analyse, build on and add value to the grassroots women's initiatives, first by recognising them as equal stakeholders in the social protection process and then by bringing them into the agenda-setting and policy-making processes.

### **7.2 Strengthening women's agency and advocacy**

To promote attention to the gender-related dimension of social protection, it is important to support formal mechanisms of consultation and collaboration with women's NGOs and civil society organisations for broader county and national programme provision, holding government and their funding partners accountable for integrating a gender perspective and women's empowerment into social protection programming.

NGOs potentially can support people facing challenges with practical help, but can also promote public action to challenge the state to transform laws, policies and practices that limit opportunities for the poorest people or discriminate against women. Social protection programmes have a political role to fulfil as well as a practical one, by enabling people living in extreme poverty to challenge the status quo, since poverty and economic insecurity are a reflection of inequality of income, wealth, power and status. It is important to institute gender-related monitoring, evaluation and learning. The collection, analysis and dissemination of gender disaggregated data are essential to ensure that gender considerations inform programmes. Institutionally, linkages and lesson learning among policy actors, that is NSAs, state actors and funding agencies, should be promoted through frequent knowledge sharing and lesson learning to identify opportunities to strengthen the social protection agenda.

### **7.3 Social protection programme**

This study found that simple programme design features combined with investment in more strategic implementation practices can contribute not only to the reduction of poverty and

vulnerability but also to transformation of gender relations. Programme design plays a pivotal role in ensuring that a maximum number of participants graduate from poverty and not just a favoured few. Needs assessment prior to programme implementation is key and will result in a programme founded on recognition of what needs to be addressed for programmes to be effective in supporting women, and the priorities of vulnerable groups for them to exit poverty. To have impact, it is critical that the programmes support women to meet their practical needs and also support the broader transformation of gender relations among women, men, girls and boys. Meeting practical and strategic needs of women and the vulnerable categories requires access, which could be achieved through social protection services such as rights awareness training, credit access and employment training.

The social protection policy environment in Kenya provides a unique opportunity for NSAs and state actors to address the gendered dimensions of poverty risks and vulnerability. Gender needs to be mainstreamed into all aspects of programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Social protection programmes need to be informed by clear analysis of economic and social vulnerabilities challenging women across the lifecycle. Following a lifecycle approach can help in understanding the needs of women at different stages of their lives and in this manner contribute to dismantle structural barriers that particularly restrict women's ability to exercise their agency and choice.

Investing in capacity building in planning and implementation for programme implementers and programme beneficiaries needs support as well, to develop skills that ensure gender-sensitive programme design translates into gender-sensitive implementation. Regular interaction between implementers and communities to initiate dialogue on ways to address gender inequalities such as gender-based violence and gendered forms of social stigmatisation can enhance understanding of and community demand for gender-related social protection programmes.

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## **Appendix: Study area**

### **Kisii Central**

Kisii Central district is the most densely populated area in Nyanza with 758 people per square kilometre. Almost all the land is under intensive agriculture with the average farm holding only 1.5 hectares. The annual growth rate in paid employment is 3.5%, but this is barely keeping up with population growth. The many societies such as savings and credit cooperatives are concentrated in Kisii town with membership linked to occupation or primary cash crop.

The choice of the district was influenced by the disproportionate distribution of income, where 57.22 percent of population lives below the absolute poverty level of less than one dollar a day (RoK, 2001) and nearly half of the people experience food poverty. Health facilities are inadequate, unevenly distributed and lacking in essential medicines. Many children are stunted due to poor nutrition. Female genital mutilation still affects more than 80 percent of girls, causing them to leave school, marry early and suffer poverty (RoK, 2009c).

### **Bondo**

Bondo district has a total area of 1,328 square kilometre of which 577 square kilometre is land surface while rest is under Lake Victoria. About 25% of the population, or 36,158 people by 2008 records, is absolutely poor and dealing with an overwhelming shortage of food and other basic needs. Bondo is the district most affected by HIV/AIDS in Nyanza, with a prevalence of 23%. An estimated 10,738 children are orphans and there are many child-headed households. HIV/AIDS orphans face numerous hardships including insufficient food, low nutritional standards, poor housing and lack of access to basic services such as water and sanitation. Often, orphaned children are left with grandparents or uncles, increasing pressure on those households. Grabbing of land from widows and orphans is common. The social protection resources required are enormous.

### **Siaya**

Siaya has a population of 519,961 with males forming 44% of the people and are more concentrated in the towns. In rural settlements, the proportion of women is 70%. The overall poverty level is 40% and the incidence of HIV/AIDS is estimated at 24%. Siaya is one of the nine Millennium districts in Kenya, and one of the two that have the Millennium Village Project initiatives.

### **Kisumu West district**

Kisumu West has a population of 131,246 (RoK, 2009d). Kisumu city hosts the regional and district headquarters and three main informal settlements called Manyatta, Nyalenda and Obunga embracing about 40% of the district's total population. This has exerted pressure on social amenities such as housing, public health services, and water and sewage systems. The numbers of unemployed persons and street children are rising owing to inadequate job opportunities, limited skills, inaccessibility to credit, high dependency ratio, low investment in housing and infrastructure development, high rates of rural to urban migration, poor urban and physical planning and high cost of living (RoK, 2009d). The high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS of 15 percent continues to contribute to the number of orphans and vulnerable children in the area.



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