

**THE ROLE OF LOCAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SOCIO-
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF THE RURAL WOMEN SELF HELP GROUPS: A
CASE OF ISINYA AREA- KAJIADO COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Local non-governmental organizations in Kenya have a special relationship with local communities. This is true of the communities in which these organizations render their services. This relationship covers a wide range of aspects including socio-economic empowerment. Often this relationship is established under a condition on the part of the community members forming groups to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in the working relationship aimed at benefiting communities. Most of these organizations target women and the youth.

The main objective of this study was to assess the role of local non-governmental organizations in socio-economic empowerment of the rural women self help groups in Isinya division of Kajiado County. Particularly, the study sought to identify the functions of local non-governmental organizations in Isinya, and to find out how the collaboration between local non-governmental organizations and rural self help groups has influenced the socio-economic dynamics of rural women. Literature reviewed points to a positive relationship between rural women self help groups and local non-governmental organizations in areas of social and economic development. Three Theories were used to inform the study and these are; structural functionalist theories to illustrate collaborative effect of the LNGOs and the rural self help groups in a function aimed at the good of individual women and the society at large, social network theory to explain connections between the two that help in communication of information across the two and formation of strategies aimed at achieving a collective goal, and the social exchange theory to indicate the mutual character of the relationship between rural women self help groups and LNGOs.

The study took a mixed approach which included qualitative and quantitative methods. The study sampled 80 women from eight rural self-help groups in Isinya complemented by 8 key informants. The study findings pointed to a helpful relationship which resulted in varied benefits on individual members of the sampled self-help groups. Benefits included increase in family income levels which is a consequence of their engagement in income generating activities and access to education for their children especially the girls among other benefits. The study further indicated that those women who had joined the self-help groups were by far socially and economically developed than their counterparts who had not joined the groups. Owing to the fact that socio-economic development of citizens is part of the government's role, the study recommends a collaborative approach between the government, the LNGOs and communities for a greater positive impact on the communities' social economic status and also target women who do not belong to any self help groups.