



Non-Governmental Organisations Empowering Women in Rwanda

Dr. Isaboke Peter Kennedy Nyataya, PhD*

Senior Lecturer Cum Director of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies-Rwanda

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Isaboke Peter Kennedy Nyataya, PhD, Senior Lecturer Cum Director of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies-Rwanda

Abstract: Women's empowerment is viewed as the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength, besides, being the right to determined choices and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over material and non-material resources as well. It involves gaining voice, having mobility and, too, establishing a public presence. Rwanda has performed a bit well on the issue of empowering women and as a result, is, now, regarded as one of the best countries in the world that has managed to meet women's special needs and aspirations. The Government of Rwanda has demonstrated strong determination and political will directed towards empowering women in the country. However, the issues of women empowerment in the country, today, still poses a challenge to the Government of the day due the fact that the community has not fully understand the essence of women's empowerment for the process is not one- man game but that that demands collective action through interested and committed partners to the cause. The present work mainly intended to find out the contribution of Non Governmental Organisation, Women for Women Rwanda has made towards women's empowerment in the country. Besides, seeking to know the nature of challenges, the NGO has been facing and practical approaches used to overcome them. The findings of the study are likely to help the Local Government to have adequate knowledge on the NGO and the impact of its intervention in the field of women's empowerment and, too, facilitate in the designing of the District Women Empowerment Plan. Other NGOs operating in the country along sides with their respective donors/financiers are the other likely beneficiaries of the present study. Researchers and academics may, too, make some gains out of it. Case study research design was adopted for the study and content analysis method, focus group discussion method and interview method were used in collecting the required data from the scientifically selected respondents(100), through the use of stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The collected data were then recorded and presented, and analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS]. It was found that the NGO has made significant in-roads and contributions towards women's empowerment in the area through the impartation of informal and formal training to its chosen beneficiaries in particular and the community in the area in general, which have helped build a strong base for girls and women's socio economic empowerment and development. It was observed that Women for Women Rwanda, was catering for a high number of beneficiaries that are vulnerable and needy and yet the NGO did not have adequate financial resources necessary to cover all the entire area of its operation and fields of intervention with a view to empowering more girls and women and girls in need. There is need for the Governmental Organisations and NGOs to continuously make efforts directed towards sensitising, educating, mobilising communities and advocating for women's empowerment in Gasabo District and its environs with a view to providing girls and women with appropriate and adequate information concerning their basic rights and how to access and acquire basic legal services.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organisations, Governmental organisations, Empowering, Women empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, women's roles and responsibilities were confined to household chores, farming and farming related activities, which, to a large extent engage them for longer hours than their men counterparts. Besides, in rural areas in particular, women have limited access to formal education and employment opportunities. Again, due to the household chores and the society in general, tend to, directly or indirectly discourage and deny women of being part of decision makers. Hence, then, this kind of experience, women are compelled go through, call for the attention of the government of the

day and its relevant organs, besides, partnering with the non-governmental organisations on women empowerment issue, which has now turned to be not only a local, national, regional but also an international one.

It is an undeniable fact that in most of the countries of the world, there is a great deal of discrimination of women from womb to tomb. As a result, empowerment of women is today receiving much attention, for women seem to be discriminated against in many spheres. Experts feel that empowerment must be two-fold; it must be externally induced so that women can exercise a level of autonomy and there should also be self-empowerment so that they can look at their own lives and see the ways in which their acceptance of the status quo has contributed to their disempowerment (Soundram, 2000:13).

Empowerment entails struggle; it entails learning to deal with the forces of oppression; it entails having a vision of a new society; it also entails conscious and deliberate interventions and efforts to enhance the quality of life. Collective strength is necessary for building solidarity and support among workers to achieve empowerment. On one hand, a struggle against existing forces of oppression has to be undertaken while on the other hand, support for women workers has to be generated through collective strength. Empowerment through organising helps to sustain both the struggle and the support base. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the stream that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment.

The socio-economic lives of women in developing countries is quite complex and diverse for it is determined by factors such religious beliefs and practices, biological differences between male and female, and traditional patriarchal practices, to mention a few. Patriarchal system in practice in developing countries has been viewed as the provider to the ideological foundation for gender inequality, which is in favour of men and sanction men's dominance over their men counterparts and hence, leading to inequality between the two sexes. Gender inequality in any given society is often seen and felt in terms of limited education, cultural, religious, economic opportunities and access to healthcare offered either male or female members of society.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In the Sub-Saharan Africa, women have continued being discriminated against and disregarded mainly due outdated social and cultural practices, which now been identified as the greatest challenges to the efforts being made and directed towards empowering women in the region. The discrimination against the womenfolk witnessed has been noted to have continued to exist in the contemporary society especially in the developing societies due to women's low socio-economic and political status. The Government and the people of Rwanda, for a couple of years, now, have put into use the principle of gender equality and empowerment in almost all sectors of development as their main strategy directed towards the attainment of women's empowerment in the country.

It is against the aforementioned backdrop that the Government of Rwanda made a decisive decision to ratify the Maputo Declaration on Gender Main streaming, besides, implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Much has been noted to have been achieved, since then, mainly due to political will from the country's top leadership in particular and people of Rwanda in general. In addition, positive and affirmation action towards gender equality and women empowerment were, too, adopted by the Government of Rwanda. The Republic of Rwanda taken calculated efforts and steps a view to eliminating gender inequality and all other forms of discrimination on women. The country Vision 2020 and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies adopted by the Government, set the issues of gender equality and women empowerment as its priorities.

In order to address the issue of women's empowerment and development in Rwanda, various programmes have been identified, developed and are being implemented by the Government of Rwanda in partnership with the non-governmental organisations, who have, too, put in place different types of activities and programmes directed towards women's empowerment in the country. However, there exist limited database, systematic and empirical studies that have been conducted on women empowerment through the intervention of NGOs for much of the scientific studies already done are case-based. It is observed that a number of NGOs including Women for Women, Rwanda, are implementing women's income generating activities and programmes in the Gasabo District.

However, despite the said intervention, the status of women particular in rural areas is still not satisfactory and the outcomes measured against the objectives of the NGOs' in women empowerment activities and programmes are often questioned. Therefore, it became pertinent concern for the present researcher to undertake the study with a view to understanding the impact of the selected NGO on women's empowerment in the district.

Hence, that the need for a systematic studies and the creation of more database that motivated the present researcher, to undertake the present study , with a view to finding out the contribution that the NGO, Women for Women has made so far in the field of women empowerment in Gasabo District.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with a view to analysing the role NGOs in general and to women for women Rwanda in particular have directed towards women empowerment in Gasabo District and in the country. Specific objectives of the study: to examine the activities and programmes undertaken by Women for Women Rwanda for empowering women in the selected District; to identify challenges faced by the NGO and strategies in overcoming them while it is implementing its planned activities and programmes and to establish whether there is a clear linkage between the NGO's activities and programmes directed towards women empowerment in the area.

1.2.1. Significance of the Study

It is envisaged that the study will benefit a cluster of beneficiaries, the Local Government of Gasabo District, the Government of Rwanda, women-based organisations in the country, the general society, the present researcher and other interested present and future researchers, besides, the Women for Women Rwanda. In a nutshell, the findings of the study might help NGOs on women's empowerment and development in particular and other NGOs in general, the Government and Rwandan society as a whole in understanding how the intervention of the NGO selected for the study has contributed towards the enhancement of rethinking and restructuring of the existing policies and practices for effectiveness of the activities and programmes intended for women's empowerment in the country. Besides, the study is likely to add value to the existing body of knowledge and hence, be useful to the present future scholars, researchers and students interested in the present subject matter. In addition, the study will serve as reference material for future social development scholars, practitioners and the entire scientific institutions as well.

1.2.2. Scope of the Study

The present study was conducted on Women for Women Rwanda, operating in Gasabo District. It was among the first NGOs established in Rwanda long before the Genocide of 1994 with a sole aim of empowering women in the country, through education, conscious-awareness creation, advocacy and mobilisation, provision of legal support and financial support as well to the overwhelming number of poor and vulnerable women, who became victims of the aforementioned genocide. The reference period for the study was three years (2011-2015) in which Women for Women Rwanda was proactively implementing its activities and programmes in the District and hence, enabling the researcher conduct proper assessment on its contribution towards women's empowerment and in general, how it has helped in the fight against poverty in the area.

1.2.3. Limitations of the Study

Due to limited time other resources, the present study was conducted in Gasabo District where Women for Women Rwanda operated at the time. Hence, benefits of the study will go directly to the selected NGO and without ruling out the effects of the spillovers from which other NGOs and users from within and without the area and region, too, can benefit from.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Non-Governmental Organisation Sector has now become a worldwide exploration which is increasingly responding to the social, economical, environmental and even political needs of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged communities. Lekorwe (2007), noted that the term 'NGO' is a broad and ambiguous for it covers organisations ranging from within the civil society, political action groups to sports clubs. The concept of NGO came into existence in 1945 following the establishment of the United Nations Organisation which recognised the need for consultative role from organisations

which were then classified as being neither government nor member states (Willet, 2002). Teegan et al(2004), quoting from the United Nations(2003), describes an NGO as any non-profit, voluntary citizens groups which is organised on a local, national or international level and is task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest. For Holloway (2001), NGOs are groups of organizations distinct from government institutions and business organisations. Further, they formed with a view to complementing, supplementing and offering alternatives to government development efforts. Edward (2009), view NGOs as a subset of civic organisations defined by the fact that they are formally registered with governments, receive a significant proportion of their income through voluntary contribution and are governed by a board of trustees rather than the elected representatives of a constituency. The World Bank (2011) pointed out that NGOs are private organisation that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services and undertake community development.

In Africa NGOs, as Issa (2005) observed, flourished in 1980 and 1990s mainly as a result of structural adjustment programmes initiated by international financial institutions and development agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. NGOs mushroomed and grew during this period to take the work of the retrenching states that had been persuaded to disengage from the provision of social services to their populations. Further, argues that that the bilateral and multilateral institutions set aside significant funds aimed at mitigating social dimensions of adjustments. Besides, decades of worldwide recessions, political instability, increasing national debts, poverty and diseases, natural disasters and environmental degradations, to mention a few, are some of the needed key changes in the world that have created fertile ground enough for NGOs' emergence and proliferation in the contemporary world.

Over the last three decades, world all over, NGOs' intervention and role directed towards the amelioration of living conditions, facilitation in advocating for democracy, promotion and protection of human rights, the provision of humanitarian aid and education attainment, among others, has been given a high degree of prominence it deserves. The evolvement of NGOs in developing countries has been enhanced by unwillingness and inadequate political will among governments of different countries in reducing the existing disparities between the rich and the poor. Van Der Heijden (1986) has pointed out that the performance of NGOs depends on their capability to afford socio-economic development to a great number of people.

International Non Governmental organizations (INGOs) have been taken to be as key development partners of states, worldwide. As result of her good economic development and performance, Rwanda has earned herself a good number of local Local NGOs, National NGOs and International Non Governmental Organisations as well, which, offer activities and programmes ranging from relief to socio- economic development in nature. World Bank Report (2006) noted that since 2006, Rwanda has been recognised as country with high potential economic growth and the country is ranked among the first ten countries with good and high economic growth. It is noted that the country was among the first countries as regards to the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals targeted by 2015. This has led to socioeconomic development, rapid economic growth and reduction of dependence women empowerment, gender equality and welfare for helpless people (IPAR, 2012).

2.1. Gender Inequalities

Gender inequality is empirically and conceptually a multidimensional phenomenon as (Mason, 1987). The said inequality is expressed explicitly in the forms of proportion of women over men, children killings, accessibility to education, access to health care and food security, remuneration based on the job performed and access to resources and asserts (Mehta, 1996). The deep-rooted patriarchal structure existing in many parts of developing countries continues to marginalise women and limit their economic mobility (Cain et al., 1979). Asiyanibola (2005), asserted that in Africa as well as in other developing countries, the cultural practices positioned women in subordinating responsibilities in their families and in the society. Women in the developing world are concentrated in rural areas. In fact, in South-East Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa two-thirds of the population is living in rural areas (FAO, 1994, Ghorayshi and Belanger (1996).

The characteristics of rural societies exert specific influence upon social relations as they relate to poverty, ethnicity and patriarchy as pointed out by Little (1987). The three key factors that impact the denial of education to women in developing countries are: traditional practices; economic difficulties

and policies and governments' absence of inspiration lack of motivation (Kelly, 1987). Besides, the role of civil laws, the ability of women to access the educational opportunities is limited by religious and family influences, including, rigid gender norms and religious practices. The fears that educated girls will be uncontrollable, 'disobedient' and 'unmarriageable' also act as barriers for women access to education in less developed countries (Fiona, 1998). Other factors affecting the denial of education to women include: conserving women and girl's image which prolonged them in dropping out, the prospect of marriage is threatened if education is beyond literacy in some traditional societies and the fact that divorce results in low financial return (King and Hill, 1993; Hadden and, London 1996).

Poverty is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to the illiteracy of women in developing countries (Fiona, 1998; Mitra and Singh, 2008; Nussbaum, 2003). The economic hardships on households forces the allocation of resources in a way that discriminates against women (Logan and Beoku-Betts, 1987). The cost of education and opportunity are also more readily absorbed by the family for a son rather than a daughter (Hadden and London, 1996). The health concerns of women are both biological and gender-based. Unlike men, women are facing with the role of childbearing and childrearing. Kynaston,(1996, UN,1995) have observed that in most developing countries women lack access to job opportunities and even when they get the jobs they are often less paid compared to their men counterparts. Consequently women fall in extreme poverty and there overworked in comparison to men (Klasen, 1999). Studies conducted in the Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia showed that productive females were also household employees who received only maintenance and non monetary payments (Morrisson and Jutting, 2005).further, they have noted that in Arab and in a good number of South Asian countries, the economic activities of women are confined primarily to the agricultural and informal sectors that are unrecognised and unregulated by labor laws. Besides, the role of patriarchal family structures perpetuates gender inequality.

2.2. The Concept of Empowerment

Pillai (1995), defines empowerment as an active, multi-dimensional process, which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as aims. "power has to be acquired and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved."

Zippy (1995), observed that empowerment represents a means for accomplishing community development tasks and can be conceptualized as involving two key elements: giving community members the authority to make decisions and choices; facilitating the development of the knowledge and resources necessary to exercise these choices (Sahay, 1998: 24). Empowerment deals with a redistribution of control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. This process challenges current power structures between states, castes, classes, races the sexes and individuals, as pointed out by Batliwala, (Wijkman and Dahlgren 1994:34). Empowerment consists of change, choice and power. It is a process by which individuals and groups with little or no power, gain the ability to make choices that affect their lives (Mayoux 2001; Cheston et al, 2002).To the World Bank, empowerment is a means of improving efficiency. In order for one to be empowered, one needs access to the material, human and social resources necessary to make strategic choices.

In conceptualizing empowerment, Razavi and Miller (1995), have contended that the emergency of the concept of empowerment took its origins from the need for promoting human rights, liberal democracy and citizen participation.

2.3. Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is today a global issue of concern. Women's movements throughout the world in general and third world feminists in particular, have been to a good measure involved in organising in a systematic and sustained manner the strategies and approaches that would effectively enable women to be equal partners in one's nation's progress and prosperity. Their thinking has gone a step further by questioning the prevalent models of development within which we think and act. They are noted to be advocating for structural and cultural transformation of society, which might lead to the creation of a much more egalitarian relationship between men and women. Hence, for this, the empowerment of women is a must. The results of their endeavours are periodically assessed. Empowerment concerns individuals rights to run their own lives and it also implies that someone must handover power and strengths to someone else, who is a recipient, however, it means more than this.

This source of this phenomenon of women empowerment is regarded as being traceable to the interaction between feminism and the concept of 'popular education' developed in Latin America in the 1970s. Paulo Freire's theory of 'conscientisation' and Gramscian thought, which stressed the need for participatory. Mechanisms to create a more equitable system is noted to have provided the basis for population education (Walters 1991: In Sahay, 1998:17 Wijkman and Dahlgren, 1994:33). It is also pointed out that the feminists formulated the gender perspective and, too, advocated analyses and strategies that could be put into use in order to improve the status of women.

In developing countries women, today, are being empowered through the access to microcredit, involvement in public and political affair and maternal health. Research has demonstrated clearly that women empowerment must be promoted in all spheres of life. For instance, childbearing can be fully achieved when women have to access economic and financial resources.

Karl (1995), is of the view that empowerment is a word widely used, but, seldom defined. Long before the word, became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives, and participating in the decisions that affect them in the home and the community, in government and in international develop government and in international development policies. It then adds that 'the word empowerment' captures this sense of gaining control, of participating of decision making to mention a few. Most recently, the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies, international organisations and United Nations, inclusive.

Kamala Bhasin (1992) highlighted that empowerment of women means recognising women's contribution, women's knowledge; helping women fight their own fears, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority; women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity; women controlling their own bodies; women becoming economically independent and self-reliant; women controlling resources like land and property; reducing women's burden of work, especially with the home; creating and strengthening women's groups and organisations; promoting qualities of nurturing, caring gentleness, not just in women but also in men.

2.4. Need for Women's Empowerment

In almost all the countries of the world, it has observed that there is a great deal of discrimination directed against women from womb to tomb. As a result, empowerment of women is today receiving much attention, for women seem to be discriminated against in many spheres. Experts feel that empowerment must be two-fold; it must be externally induced so that women can exercise a level of autonomy and there should also be self-empowerment. So that they can look at their own lives and see the ways in which their acceptance of the status quo has contributed to their disempowerment as point out by Soundram (2000:13).

Kamala Bhasin (Sahay, 1998:9) has argued that women needs to be empowered because women have and will lead us in our search for a world free of violence and war. Women have led the peace and ecology movements in most parts of the world. She believes that sustainable development has to be women centred. She does not say this because she is a women or a feminist, but, it is a discernible fact that historically and even today, women are responsible of the basic needs of society such as food, fodder, fuel, shelter, nurturing to name a few. They are, too, more in tune with their own nature. She adds further that as child-bearers, they have had to be more in tune with their own nature. Again, they have also been creating and nurturing. She then concludes that this situation is neither due to women's pattern of socialisation for centuries nor is it so because of their preoccupation with sustenance, nurturing and nursing, among others.

Women need to be empowered in order to gain collective strength. The issues of the role of women focus on changing the equilibrium of social forces so as to treat them as equal partners in the society and too, to bring recognition to all of their roles. When we are concerned with poor women, we are seized of changing both social and economic forces in favour of their worker-role in particular and other roles in general. Empowerment entails struggle; it entails learning to deal with the forces of oppression; it entails having a vision of a new society; it also entails conscious and deliberate interventions and efforts to enhance the quality of life. Collective strength is necessary for building solidarity and support among workers to achieve empowerment. On one hand, a struggle against existing forces of oppression has to be undertaken while on the other hand, support for women workers has to be generated through collective strength. Empowerment through organising helps to

sustain both the struggle and the support base. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the stream that requires more strength and such strength comes from the process of empowerment (Manual for Activists as quoted by Sahay, 1998:13). In the UN Report (1995), it has been pointed out that the advancement of women involvement in political affairs through the development of civil society can stimulate empowerment of women. Women must not only participate in politics but also in civil society movement, this is for instance, the case in Rwanda. Unfortunately, there is a poor representation in technical and bureaucratic affairs for women, based on the findings of Karl (1995).

2.5. Empowered Women

Hall (1992) has rightly noted the key characteristics of empowered women: empowered women define their attitudes, values and behavior in relation to their own real interests. They have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing male hierarchies, whether they live in traditional societies or modern industrial societies; empowered women maintain equal-mindedness, rather than act out roles that merely confront and challenge male dominance. Empowered women do not aim at being superior to men. They respond as equals and cooperate in order to work toward the common good; empowered women use their talents to live fulfilling lives. They have not only survived the harshness of their own subjugation but also transcended their subjugation, thus moving themselves through survival to fulfillment. Empowered women maintain their strength in the presence of family, religion, and work, and they contribute toward the empowerment of all women; empowered women may continue to meet their family responsibilities and participate in religion. They choose to do so in ways that strengthen rather than debilitate them, however, which is also advantageous for others. Empowered women do not retreat from these traditional responsibilities but forge their own ways of doing things; empowered women define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves. They do not derive their sense of being from male authorities, and they do not live vicariously through men. Empowered women strengthen themselves through other women's support and sustain their own moral visions. Their actions flow from their own distinctive ideals: empowered women can be found in all social groups and all societies. However, the optimal conditions for empowered women are both individual and social. Hence, there are more empowered women in modern societies because the collective actions of women are more visible and more palpable in those settings.

2.6. Women Empowerment in Rwanda

2.6.1. Women and Poverty

The Government of Rwanda has put in place specific commitments in its effort to fight poverty and tackle its feminine face. They include programmes such as UBUDEHE(Shared labour initiatives),High Intensity Labour (HIMO),Vision Umurenge, One Cow per poor household, hillside irrigation, crop intensification, water harvesting, to name a few. All these cover the majority of the poor households with women being the vast majority among the beneficiaries.

2.6.2. Women and Education

The Government of Rwanda has adopted measures directed towards the advancement of gender equality at all levels of education. Primary school education has been made free and compulsory to all school age-going children, the introduction of Nine Year Basic Education, multiplication of centres of excellence through FAWE project, creation of Gender-Based Violence Clubs in secondary schools as well as in tertiary educational institutions, awarding girls with best performance in science and technology are some of the key programmes that are, presently, boosting girls and women's participation in education in the country. The Ministry of Education of the Government of Rwanda has pointed out that the poor performance noted among girls in secondary schools revealed that it is partially due to late coming to school; low attendance and dropouts as the main factors influence girls low performance. It is in this regards that , now, guidance and career counselors or mentors have been deployed to schools with a view to engaging girls on issues pertaining to their reproductive. The inauguration of nine year basic education facilitated high enrolment for both boys and girls. This was caused by the fact that the program was free and of cause poor children and girls were able to have accessibility to education. In the country the introduction and support by the Government to private universities and other high learning institutions has enabled women and girls to have access to education just as their respective men and boy counterparts. Hence, in a way the accessibility to

education have facilitated empowerment of women in the country. The involvement and participation of women in tertiary education is about 52% for men and 48% for women. The Imbuto Foundation, for example, has introduced programmes aimed at supporting girls in order to raise their level of participation and performance particular in science and technology. Accessibility to education by girls through universal education has facilitated and ensured gender balance between boys and girls at primary school level and secondary school level as well.

2.6.3. Women and Health

All citizens have the rights and duties relating to health, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda. The health insurance scheme which has made compulsory for all citizens of the country, has enabled the poor, women inclusive, who form the majority of the country's total population, to access all healthcare services. Besides, health facilities have been constructed particularly in rural areas and the introduction of health advisers, to a large extent, have contributed to the reduction of maternal mortality rate (Ministry of Health, 2009)

2.6.4. Violence against Women

The promulgation of Gender-Based Violence Law, the Inheritance Law of 1999 and the Land Law of 2005, combined have addressed issues of violence facing men and women in Rwanda, with women being the majority among the survivors of the vice. The establishment of gender based violence and child protection committees ranging from the grassroots to the national level have helped in the control and prevention of the violence, to a great degree.

2.6.5. Women and Fundamental Rights

Besides, adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Rwanda has adopted the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action, in addition, has ratified other instruments related to women's rights.

2.6.6. Women and Decision-Making

Best Practices Report (1995-2010) pointed out that the constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees 30% for women representation in parliament and other administrative entities in order to achieve gender equality equity and empowerment. As a result, presently, Rwanda occupies the first place as regards to women representation both in chamber of deputies and senate with a proportion of 64.4% of all seats. Moreover, in decision making entities women occupy a significant number of prominent positions. Again, Reports elucidated by Rwanda' Gender Monitoring Office (2010), the Vision 2020 of the Republic of Rwanda outlines gender as one of the subjects that is imbedded in the pillars of the Government. The Government of Rwanda adopted the decentralization system transferring decision making processes from national level to the village level in order to ensure effective implementation of gender policies which intend to promote gender equality and to empower women in all sections of activity. With the adoption and implementation of the decentralisation policy, the Government hope to incorporate gender equality and integration with the national development

2.6.7. Women's Economic Power

Rwanda has promulgated the Law on matrimonial regimes, liberalities and successions (1999), the Land Organic Law (2005), the Labour Law (2009) which have been very instrumental as regards to economic empowerment of women in the country, as they sustain their access to and control over resources. Besides, the National gender Policy (2004) has been an additional tool for advocating for women's capacity building and economic empowerment among other approaches, in addressing the feminine face of poverty in the country. Gender issues have been entrenched in the EDPRS as important concerns, which aim at explicating gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the country's economy. Women empowerment has been adopted with a view to attaining gender equality and equity, women involvement and accessibility to services in every division of activity. However, EDPRS is being implemented through empowerment in term of economic development, good governance, justice and welfare. These programmes are yet to impact females and males in the similar ways and hence, integrating gender in all sectors has influenced the outcomes of project that were characterised by gender relations through Rwandan culture. Furthermore, the Rwandan gender policy is an important tool that has been used in improving gender equality (MINECOFIN, 2010).

2.6.8. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

The Government of Rwanda has put in place various mechanisms directed towards the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, which, include the involvement and active participation of public, private and civil society organisations. Further, long term and short term plans have been introduced with a view to promoting gender equality and women empowerment, which, include Vision 2020 and economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, among others. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, coordinates the formulation and implementation of national policies, strategies and programmes designed for the promotion of family, gender and children's rights. Besides, it initiates programmes encouraging and empowering women with a view to enabling them to actively participate in the socio-economic and political development of the country.

2.6.9. Challenges to Women Empowerment

Research studies have demonstrated that the greatest impediment to women empowerment is traditional culture and practices. The subordination and inferior positions are more likely to constrain women from being empowered. Despite the awareness of the benefits of empowering women and encouraging their active participation, most of the women are fearful of troublemaking the status quo and continue to let cultural and traditional practices in the way of development. Don Brown (2013), asserted that accessibility to internet has raised the issue of exploitation of women by men. Available information on internet sites has exposed women safety to be high risk. Some of the types of women exploitation include provocation, pornography, and flickering. In addition to challenges to gender equality include erotic pestering; unfair recruitment practices, career promotion and unequal pay where women are paid less than their men counterparts in the same jobs.

Women Empowerment includes several interrelated factors such as, equal participation in decision making, economic empowerment and, health sustained and proper access to the land heritage for women, self-reliant and self-confident in paid work that will be a continuum process are still a burden for women in Rwanda due to the cultural barriers and lack of understanding the potential women can play in Rwanda society. Despite the efforts that the Rwandan Government has made in her collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organisations, women empowerment in the country is still a burning issue. Lack of employment and school drop out of girls, and other forms of discrimination and the consequences of the aftermath of Genocide that disempowerment women at all levels basis. A study carried out by the Association of Widows of Genocide (AVEGA) revealed that there were different forms of disempowerment and violence perpetuated against women during the genocide. (MIGEPROFE, 2010).

3. APPROACHES FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Moser (1989), has identified five policy approaches that can be used in enhancing women's empowerment in the present society. They are: Welfare approach, which assumes a passive role for women as recipients of benefits through development projects/programmes and in family centered role; Equity approach, which recognises the need to acknowledge women's contribution to economic growth and their role as active participants in the development process. Besides, satisfying practical needs through access to livelihoods, the approach meets an important strategic need by focusing on the inequality between men and women in the market place; Anti-Poverty approach, focuses on reducing the income inequality of third world women through income-generating projects. The projects are aimed at augmenting the family income by providing employment for women to enable them to meet their practical needs. Too, they focus on women's productive role and meet practical gender needs when they aim to provide more employment opportunities for women; Efficiency approach, which assumes that the economic participation increases women' status and is automatically linked with equity; Equity approach, which acknowledges the need to recognize women' special circumstances. It is women-centred for it focuses on how women differ from men on the basis of sex. Equity, is aimed to be achieved only between individuals and not at organizational or institutional levels and Empowerment or Gender and Development approach, which is the bottom-up mobilisation of women to meet their strategic needs of equality and development. The empowerment approach goes a step further than the equity approach in recognizing gender and socially constructed gender roles as a category of differentiation, by directly challenging the traditional gender division of labour (Moser, 1992)

3.1. Research Design and Methods

3.1.1. Research Design

Case study research was adopted for the present study.

3.1.2. Target Population and Representative Sample Size

The representative sample of the present study was 100 respondents. The target population was grouped into four strata, each of them being in homogeneous form and comprised: 72 women beneficiaries, 15 employees of the selected NGO for the study; 9 officials drawn from the Department of Social Affairs of the Local Government of Gasabo District and 4 employees of Women Development at Gender Monitoring Office.

3.1.3. Methods of Data Collection and Data Presentation and Data analysis

Content Analysis Method, Focus Group Discussions and interview method were used in collecting the required and relevant data from the respondents selected for the present study. The collected data was presented by the use of tables, graphs, charts and figures. Data analysis was done through the use of SPSS Software.

4. FINDINGS

The research revealed that 44.8% of the respondents of the study, majority of them, women and girls who have received support in terms of school fees and related materials for their children from the NGO (Women for Women Rwanda) covered by the study. 10.3% of them issues with loans for commerce and trades after being trained in business planning and management, cooperative managements and how to work with other individuals in other groups. With loans, the individual beneficiaries are required to pay back the amount with a minimal interest but not when they are in groups so long as they are undertaking particular development activities. Notable was that the group beneficiaries continue receiving specialised training on the activities/business of their choice and regular follow-up from the NGO. The NGO offer limitless training and support to women with a view to empowering them adequately. Besides, widows, single mothers without or with poor housing facilities/shelters, have been provided with better houses or got the old ones repaired for them. 6.9% of the respondents confirmed that their old houses have been repaired through the support received from the selected NGO.

34.5% of the respondents interviewed confirmed that the NGO under the study has helped them to know the rights of women and girls as stipulated in the constitution of Rwanda. Women have been motivated to take active roles in leadership, too. In the present Rwandan Parliament 66% of the total seats have been taken up female members. Besides, this morale-building, motivation and encouragement to the present NGO to continue sensitizing educating and training women and girls in particular and the communities of Gasabo District in general on human rights and the rights of women. These in turn have helped them to actively participate in household decision making and even, becoming heads of private institutions and public institutions as well. In addition, 27.6% of the respondents claimed that the NGO has empowered their families for they have been able to enroll their female school-going children at various schools such as Gashora Girls' school of Bugesera District, a well known and recognised school in the country. 31% of the female respondents said that they had received financial support to enable them to pursue their studies. They had been provided with school fees and other materials they needed.

In other words, the NGO has helped strengthen girls and women's educational status in the area.

It was also revealed that life and living conditions of the majority (75.9%) of the beneficiaries have now been positively changed than there before the intervention of Women for Women Rwanda through grants and training in vocational skills development imparted by the NGO. Further, through the direct and indirect financial support has contributed towards respective families' incomes which have also changed their standard, besides, the NGO's programme in general have helped improve women's abilities and capacities.

Through the support of the NGO, the respondents of the study mentioned that the level of their economical status has improved and this is due to the businesses female beneficiaries now are undertaking at the doorsteps of their houses or at the nearest markets to their homes. 62.1% of them

stated that their respective revenues have increased and through trainings in vocational skills, some have been employed by other organisations and earn salaries which enabled them provide more and better care to their children and being able to meet their household basic needs easily without necessarily solely depending and awaiting their spouses' intervention at all the time. 10.3% of the respondents pointed out that with training in business planning and managements they had received from the NGO, it has enabled them be recognised as contributors to the country's national development. 79.3% of the respondents for the study said that the present community's mindset towards women empowerment has changed while 6.9% of the female respondents argued community must know and understand that women are able and capable. 51.7% of the respondents stated that the women have suffered of poverty due to unequal treatment they receive from the society in general from men in particular. The NGO's intervention along side with support from the Government of Rwanda has narrowed down the degree of their economic marginalisation and increased economical opportunities for women. Inadequate policies and measures for protecting girls and women and girls has deepened their level of poverty to an extent that some have opted for illegal businesses such as prostitution. Respondents highlighted that by giving women equal chances and opportunities to access to economical and household influences may in the long run bring equity between men women in the area and in the country as a whole.

It was observed that Women for Women Rwanda, was catering for a high number of beneficiaries that are vulnerable and needy and yet the NGO did not have adequate financial resources necessary to cover all the entire area of its operation and fields of intervention with a view to empowering more girls and women and girls in need. 34.5% of the respondents observed that the NGO in picture was not able to cover all social problems in which they needed its support and intervention due to its limited resources, as it claimed. 20.7% of them pointed out that one of the challenges the NGO has faced is the social and cultural barriers reflected in people's mindset towards women empowerment in Gasabo District, while, 20.7% stated that a great number of women are still poor and lives in miserable conditions despite the NGO's intention to women's living conditions.

41.7% have stated that the community in Gasabo District needed to be sensitised and educated on how women can be empowered, positive impact of promoting women social-economically, political and politically as well. 25% of the respondents advised if the working class can take issues of women empowerment even to their respective homes, this can bring to the community in the area and to the country as a whole, for the they understand and know clearly projects/programmes and their respective visions, missions and objectives that related to women's empowerment and how this can be realised. Besides, knowing appropriate and applicable strategies and policies that can be adopted in their implementation with a view to accelerating the speed of women's exposure to cross-cutting issues in the area.

25%) of the respondents (contended that NGO should work hand in hand with other similar or interested NGOs in Rwanda working for the empowerment of women and girls in collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and all other relevant bodies within and without the country can help to accelerate the influence on women and the community's mindset in order to view women as pillars of the nation's development agenda

"I am one the beneficiaries of the NGO, Women for Women Rwanda which has supported me raising my children and offered me better living conditions. I have developed a culture of saving money and managing my household through the NGO's provided resources. I was able to buy livestock and sent my children to school" One respondent, claimed."

5. CONCLUSION

The patriarchal system for long enough now has made girls and women to lag behind men in terms of education, employment opportunities and almost voiceless in their own house hold families. Women's empowerment has raised their level of understanding and participation in decision making. The Rwandan Government and its development partners, including International and Local Non Governmental Organisations have played a central role in empowering women and girls in the country.

Women for Women Rwanda are playing a central role in empowering vulnerable women in the district. In short, the NGO has helped women their basic needs and those of their immediate families.

Through its activities and programmes women have become more integrated and so is the community in the area. Besides, more women have achieved their economic independence. Women are now working outside their homes and hence, have acquired for themselves jobs with regular incomes and control their finances. They are able and capable of catering for their families' basic needs, including be able to educate their children on their own. In addition, the NGO has facilitated women in the area to become national and international figures, a force reckon with and now, command respect not only the present community but also in the country as a whole. The process of empowering women the area has been enhanced. It has promoted equality between men and women, extended educational, vocational skill development financial and legal supports to the vulnerable girls and women in the district.

Programmes and projects directed towards women's empowerment in Rwanda, could work much more perfectly if the communities could have and develop positive their attitudes towards girls and women, recognize and respect their contributions at family level, community level and national and international level as well. However, girls and women in the country to be able to achieve more empowerment and development for themselves and their families, this calls for more calculated, directed energy, resources and interventions from the Government of the day, Governmental Organisations and NGOs with a view to mobilizing the populations and advocating for women's empowerment in the country. For "Empowering girls and women is empowering families, communities and societies". Women for Women Rwanda has played a commendable role in ensuring that women are empowered in the country and hence, it is as good model to be emulated by NGOs within and without the country interested in the similar or related field of intervention.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need the Governmental Organisations and NGOs to continuously make efforts directed towards sensitising, educating, mobilising communities and advocating for women's empowerment in Gasabo District and its environs with a view to providing girls and women with appropriate and adequate information concerning their basic rights and how to access and acquire basic legal services. Besides, the respondents of the study indicated that at present, there is a high number of women and mothers that were abandoned by their working partners and hence, left without a source of their livelihood. Therefore, the Government must come up with a clear policy in favour of such women even it means going to an extent of exempting them from paying taxes for their petty trades/businesses.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research was carried out only in one district, out of the thirty districts that in the country and only one NGO. Hence, there is need for conducting a similar research but covering more districts and more NGOs. Secondly, there is need for a study on the effects of women's empowerment upon accessing household's finances and investments.

REFERENCES

- [1] Attack I. (1999) *Four Criteria of Non-Governmental Organisation Development Legitimacy*, World Development.
- [2] Blan and Scot (1970), *definition of Non-Governmental Organisation Second Edition*, New York, Haper and Brothers publishers.
- [3] Certo C.S. 1992. *Social Science Research Methodology*, Birmingham.
- [4] Conditio Survey [EICV3] Thematic Report Economic Activities, Kigali.
- [5] Government of Rwanda (2012), *Community Development Policy*, Kigali.
- [6] Hunt Alternatives Fund, 2003 Streeten, P (1997), *Non Governmental Organziations and Development*, USA.
- [7] Isaboke P.K.N(2017), *Women's Dvelopment Through Voluntary Action*, Lambet Academic Publishing.
- [8] Isaboke P.K.N(1996), *Women's Groups in Kenya: A Sociological Analysis*, Unpublished Mphil Thesis, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, India
- [9] Kakooza,.(1996), *Social Survey*, Himashal, Press University, London.
- [10] Kaoul L,.(1997). *Methodology of Educational Research*, Himashal, Prodesh University, London
- [11] Ministry of local government (2013), *National Strategy for Community Development and Local Economical*, Kigali.

- [12] Uganda Women's Network (2012). Gender Transformation and Empowerment, Capacity assessment report.
- [13] UN Report,. (2007). *The millennium Development Goals*, New York. USA, 1999, p.7, World Academy of Art and Science.
- [14] Wee and Heyzer,.(1995). *Women advancement and empowerment in decision-making*, Agenda
- [15] Women For women Rwanda,.(2014). Gasabo, Evaluation Report, Kigali.
- [16] World Bank,.(2002). Empowerment and Poverty Reduction, Washington.

Citation: Isaboke Peter Kennedy Nyataya. " Non-Governmental Organisations Empowering Women in Rwanda" *International Journal of Research in Sociology and Anthropology (IJRSA)*, vol 4, no. 4, 2018, pp. 15-27. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-8677.0404002>.

Copyright: © 2018 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.