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Level of Awareness and Existing Policies on Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Bridge Water Project in Kakamega County Kenya

Brian Mwambu
Student, Department of Gender and Development Studies, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
Elishiba Kimani
Associate Dean & Professor, Department of Gender and Development Studies, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
Dr. Lucy Maina
Director, Department of Sociology, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract:
Water is an important resource in the lives of all human being. In many of its utilization, especially at the household level, women interact with water more than men. is thus important that men and women be equally involved in its management. This study sought to establish the level of awareness and existing policies on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project, a community based project in Kakamega County whose mandate is to drill boreholes for domestic and institutional use. The project is funded by donors and the local community. It is managed by Borehole Management Committees (BMC) and the Management Board (MB).The Project had drilled 123 boreholes for use in households, learning and religious institutions in Kakamega County. The study was a case study guided by the Gender Planning Framework developed by Caroline Moser 1n 1980. A 10% sample which was 13 of the 123 committees that manage the boreholes were randomly selected as respondents to the study. They include 5 household committees, 6 learning and 2 committees from religious institutions. Key informants were heads of selected institutions and the chief of the location where the study was undertaken. The methods used to collect data were Questionnaires, Focused Group Discussion, Interview Schedule and Observation. Data collected was cross-tabulated for qualitative analysis. The study established that the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming was found to be low. Moreover, the project had only one gender mainstreaming policy which was an affirmative action. On the basis of findings, the study recommended training and awareness creation on the need for gender equity, dissemination of the affirmative action policy, empowerment and mobilization of women to seek management positions and engagement of a gender expert to guide gender mainstreaming in the management of the project.

Keywords: *Awareness, Committees, Gender Mainstreaming, Kakamega, Kenya, Management, Policies*

1. Introduction

Natural resources are useful naturally occurring materials and components found within the environment. They include air, sunlight and water amongst others. Some natural resources such as sunlight and air can be found everywhere. However, most resources are localized and only occur in small areas. There is a lot of debate worldwide over natural resource allocations and its management. This is partly due to their increasing scarcity and depletion. Some of the resources considered to be inexhaustible are air, solar and geothermal energy. The vast of resources are exhaustible in that they have a finite quantity, and can be depleted if managed inappropriately. Among these is water.

Like air, water is an essential resource to human life. The human body cannot survive several days without water. Among the sources of water are oceans, lakes, rivers, dams and boreholes. The resource is utilized for washing, cooking and also as a medium of transport among others. Women and men take up definite responsibilities in using and managing water and water systems. Since women are the main users and managers of water resources, their involvement is imperative in ensuring effective integrated water resources management (Manase, 2003). Manase further emphasizes on the need for gender mainstreaming in water programmes. Various instruments have been put in place from as early as 1970's to ensure women are integrated in water resource management.

When the United Nations declared the period 1975–1985 the Decade for Women, one of the concerns of the declaration was women's equality in all sectors including that of managing water resources. The plan of Action adopted at the UN Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 specifically stated that improved water management should be provided for in water resource management. Therefore, the role of women in water resource management is unquestionable given the fact that women are mainly responsible for fetching water and utilizing it. According to Manase (2003), The Women in Development Approach (WAD), which was an attempt to

mainstream gender in development at that time, emphasized the need to target women in water resource management since they are primary beneficiaries in water projects. It especially highlighted the fact that there would be improved water supply if women are involved in water resource management and thereby use time saved through improved water supply to engage in income generating activities.

After 1985, subsequent international and regional conferences and the resultant declarations reinforced the need for mainstreaming gender in the water sector. The UN Conference on women held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 and in Beijing in 1995 continued advocating for women's participation in water programmes through gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming was established as a global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). In particular, Section (K) of the Platform for Action on women and environment declared the crucial role that women play in the growth of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and approaches to water resource management.

Further, the Rio Agenda 21 conference held in Brazil (1992) emphasized the need to address gender and manage water as an economic good. The Agenda put together more than 145 references to the precise roles and positions of women in protecting the quality and delivery of fresh water resources over and above protecting rational use and sustainable development. Five years later at the Millennium Summit in New York, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also emphasized on a significant reduction in the rate loss of proportion of total water resource used when women are empowered. As such MDG (7) stresses on gender mainstreaming in water resource management as an effective way to fight poverty, hunger, disease and to accelerate growth that is truly sustainable.

In Kenya as early as 1965, the government produced sessional paper number 10 which instigated an era of development in the water sector through providing water to its citizen founded on the principle that water is a social good to be either provided free of charge or at a subsidized price. However, in 1983, a study done by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) substantiated that the concept was unsustainable. The study emphasized the need for decent water resource management in order to ensure its sustainable use. Since then, various legislations have been developed to address the problem of water resource depletion through effective water resource management.

Article 43 1(d) of the Kenya Constitution (2010) on economic and social rights stipulates that, "*Every person has the right to clean and safe water in adequate quantities.*" The current legal framework for water management in Kenya is based on the Water Act (2002).The Act establishes the Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA) as the lead agency in the management of water resources in the country. The authority operates with other government institutions, the general public and private partners in managing water resources through water management boards and committees. Rule 2 of the First Schedule of the Act deals with appointment of individuals to water management boards and committees. The issue of gender mainstreaming in these committees is not provided for in the Act. WRMA focuses on ensuring all citizens have access to water for domestic use, preparation of water development plans and determine priorities in issuance of water permits, with no reference to gender mainstreaming in management of water resources (Manase, 2003).

The role of communal water projects in both the management of water resource and provision of water services is clearly recognized in the Water Act (Ngetich, 2013). However, according to a study by Dirasse (1991), Kenya has a poor record of women in decision making positions in community projects especially in rural areas. She noted that women only attend meetings and provide labour. In addition, according to a study by Kuria (2012) social, political and institutional resistance to gender mainstreaming (GM) has been witnessed in Kenyan institutions. Given the role women play in the utilization of water and its management at the household level, there is need to investigate on the challenges encountered on mainstreaming gender in the management of water resources, taking cognizance of the differential participation of women and men in this essential commodity. The study focused on the Bridge Water Supply Project in Kakamega County. This is a community project established in 2009 to drill and rehabilitate boreholes for use by schools, churches and households in Kakamega County.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Women and men have different roles and experiences which affect their perception and use of natural resources, including water. This creates a need to uphold the principle of gender mainstreaming in the management of water resources in order to effectively and equitably address their needs and concerns. The principle of gender mainstreaming ensures effective management and utilization of resources. It is this appreciation that underscores the problem of this study, which focuses on the level of awareness and policies on gender mainstreaming in the management of water resources. The study focuses specifically on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project, a lone project located in Kakamega County, Kenya. Though studies exist on how gender factors shape use and control of resources, for example, "Navigating gender and population linkages for integrated coastal management" by Nancy (2003), few if any have dwelt on the level of awareness and policies on gender mainstreaming in the management of water resources and specifically within a community driven project. This study aims at unravelling these within a defined milieu.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

I. To establish the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of water supplied by the Bridge Water Project.
II. To identify the existing policies on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Project.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Gender Planning Framework (GPF), developed by Caroline Moser in 1980. The Moser Gender Planning Framework is a tool for gender analysis in development planning. The goal is to free women from subordination and allow them to achieve high levels of equity and empowerment.

The framework is on Moser's concepts of gender roles and gender needs, and her views on the ways policies should approach gender in development planning. The framework emphasizes the importance of gender relations comprising gender division of labour, gender needs assessment, access/control of resources and decision making within the household. The focus is on balancing the triple role of women productive, reproductive and community roles in the context of both practical and strategic gender needs.

The reason why the framework was found appropriate to guide the study was because of its emphasizes on the importance of awareness and gender mainstreaming policies as factors in needs assessment on issues related to access/control of resources and decision making at all levels of project management. It is also anticipated that achievement of gender mainstreaming in the management of the project would transform the balance of power between men and women and therefore improve on the existing gender relations between men and women. In the context of Mosers Gender Planning Framework, this to some extent addresses women's insubordinate position.

1.4. Conceptual Framework

This study was interested in investigating the level of awareness and gender mainstreaming policies in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project. The Bridge Project water resources were managed by the beneficiaries who were community members. However as shown in fig 1, there were various factors that influenced how men and women participated in management of the project. It includes the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming which impacted on the individuals' capability to ascend into positions of decision making and management. As a result, there was need for gender responsive strategies to address this concern in the management of community water projects. As such, gender responsive policies and structures need to be put in place to ensure that the water resources were managed and utilized in a way that ensured the principle of gender equity thrives as outlined in Figure 1.0 which demonstrates the possible course of action based on not only how water supplied by the Bridge Water Project in Kakamega County is utilized for domestic and institutional use but also the achievement of gender equity in its management, through the availability of gender mainstreaming policies.

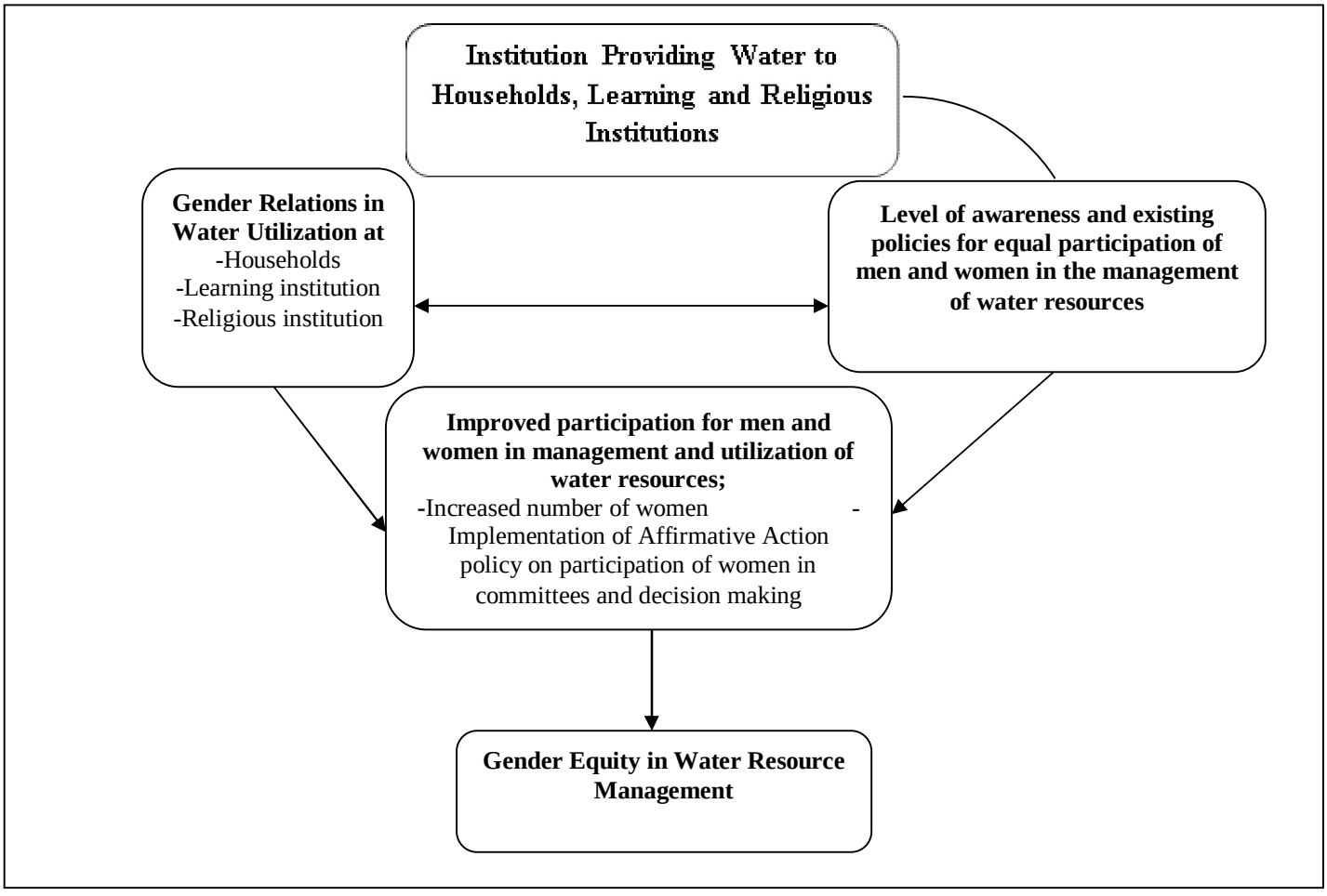

Figure 1: Actualizing gender equity in water resource management

2. Methodology

This research was a case study focusing on the Bridge Water Supply Project. The research relied on both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to show the level of awareness and existing gender mainstreaming policies in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project. The case study approach enabled investigations to be in-depth and thereby collect a lot more information on the level of awareness and policies on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project.

The study population was based on the 123 boreholes drilled and rehabilitated by the Bridge Water Supply Project in Kakamega County. The water supplied was utilized by institutions and households in the categories of learning institutions (57 boreholes), religious institutions (19 boreholes) and households (47 boreholes). Each borehole drilled had a Borehole Management Committee (BMC) that managed it hence resulting to 57 BMC in learning institutions, 19 BMC in religious institutions and 47 BMC in households. Further analysis of the committees' membership lists revealed the total population of BMC members under study as being learning institution (399), religious institution (162) and household (376). In addition to the BMC's, there was a Management Board (MB) whose role was to oversee the effective management of all the 123 boreholes, comprising 5 members based in Kakamega town.

10% as a sample was randomly taken from each of the three BMC categories which according to Orodho and Kombo (2002) are adequate as a representative in research. The 10% study sample therefore was (10% of 57) to include 6 committees in the learning institutions, (10% of 19) to include 2 religious committees and (10% of 47) to include 5 household committees hence the BMC members from the sampled learning institutions, religious institutions and households were 35, 20 and 39 respectively to give a grand total of 94 members.

All the 5 members of the MB were included in the study as respondents.

One category of water users were purposively selected as respondents from each of the randomly sampled BMC's of learning institutions, religious institutions and households. The total population of the water users sampled was 105 members. Also included were key informants comprising of 5 chiefs in the sampled area where the project supplies water to households, 6 heads of learning institutions and 2 heads of religious institutions. Table 2.1 illustrates the sample size of the study.

The study utilized four methods for data collection, namely a likert scale questionnaires used to measure the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge water Project, Interview schedule for key informants, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide for men and women utilizing the Bridge Water and the Observation checklist. Data collected was cross-tabulated for qualitative analysis.

3. Study Findings

The presentation of the findings is on the basis of the study objectives which were to establish the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Project and to identify the existing gender mainstreaming policies in management of the project.

3.1. Level of Awareness on Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Bridge Water Project

Objective one of the study focused on establishing the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project. Data analysis revealed varied level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Project as illustrated in table.1.

Management Committee	Very Aware	Aware	Somehow Aware	Not Aware	Total
Household	4	7	7	10	28
Learning	3	6	7	14	30
Religious	2	4	5	6	17
Management Board	1	1	1	2	5
Total	**10**	**18**	**20**	**32**	**80**
Percentage	**12**	**23**	**25**	**40**	**100**

Table 1: Level of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Supply Project

On the whole the study established lack of awareness of the need for gender mainstreaming in that while 25% indicated being only somehow aware about gender mainstreaming, 40% were not aware. This being the committees and board members is thus an indication of a challenge in implementation of gender mainstreaming as a process. Further, the water users also confessed a lack of gender awareness during the Focused Group Discussions as illustrated in table 2 below.

No	Reason for lack of awareness on gender mainstreaming	Frequency of Response
1	Lack of awareness on the affirmative action policy	74%
2	Associating women to the gender assigned roles	70%
3	Low level of awareness on gender mainstreaming by the project managers	63%
4	Low level of Education	51%
5	Low turnout and inconsistency of participation by women during the project meetings	45%
6	Financial requirement of the Bridge Water Project hindered the participation of women into the management of the project.	30%

Table 2: Reasons for low level of awareness on gender mainstreaming

Furthermore, the study during the focused group discussions revealed a lack of awareness on gender mainstreaming among the beneficiaries of the project in the categories of household, learning and religious institutions. This situation concurs with the findings of (Kuria, 2012) whose study established that majority of men and women in Non-governmental organizations (NGO) based in Nairobi Kenya had no knowledge of Gender Mainstreaming. According to Kuria, 70% of NGO workers didn't know what the concept of gender mainstreaming at all levels of the organization implied. The supposition by Kuria was echoed by one of the water users in the category of learning institution who was of the opinion that,

"The number of men should be equal to that of women in the project regardless of the number and positions held by men and women in the management committees."

Thus such sentiments coming from members with formal education of the society was a clear indication of the lack of awareness on gender mainstreaming in the management of the Bridge Water Project.

The low level of awareness therefore seemed to be an influencing factor in the inclusion of men and women in the management of the Bridge Water Project in the households, learning and religious management committees in addition to the Overall Management Board. The study findings indicate that most of the members had no knowledge of what gender mainstreaming in the management of water resources entailed. As a result, women were under represented in the borehole management committees and the overall management board as revealed in table 3.1.

3.2. Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Project

Data analysis revealed that there was only one gender mainstreaming policy in the Bridge Water Project which was an Affirmative Action meant to ensure that not any one gender had more than two thirds in either the committees or management board. Specifically, the policy stated that,

"The Bridge Water Project shall put in place measures to ensure that persons of either gender are elected or appointed in the management of the project; the Overall Management Board and the Borehole Management Committee shall ensure that 30% of its members are of either gender. In a situation where the 30% threshold is not met during elections of members to the Borehole Management Committees, members of the minority gender should be given preference during the election process of members to the Borehole Management Committees."

The policy was developed in the year 2011 by Global Management Networks Limited, a consultancy firm hired by the Bridge Water Project. The study established that development of the policy on affirmative action by the project was prompted by the promulgation of the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 whose prerequisite in article 27 (8), 81(b) and 175(c) stated that,

"The state shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender; not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender; no more than two-thirds of the members of representative bodies in each county government shall be of the same gender."

The project thus developed the policy on affirmative action in order to be consistent with the principle of gender mainstreaming that was enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution. However, the Kenyan Constitution two-thirds policy is yet to be operationalized. The Supreme Court of Kenya in 2015 gave an advisory that the Kenyan Parliament should come up with a law on how to operationalize the article 27(8), 81(b) and 175(c) by August 27th 2015. The challenge has since been on the choice of formula that would ensure the two thirds gender rule operationalized.

In order to ensure that the policy on affirmative action was operational when electing members into the committees, 30% of the management committee and board positions were to be reserved for the minority gender during elections and appointments respectively. The study established that the policy was not fully operational as the 30% principle had not been attained as illustrated in table 3.

Management Committee	**No of Members**	**Men**	**Women**	**Percentage**	
				Men	**Women**
Household	28	21	7	75	25
Learning	30	23	7	77	23
Religious	17	13	4	76	24
Management Board	5	4	1	80	20
Total	**80**	**61**	**19**	**76**	**24**

Table 3: Representation of men and women in the water management committees

The focus group discussions revealed that water users were not aware of the policy. The findings of this study concurred with (Patricia, 2012) in her review of the effect of affirmative action in advancing the rights of women to occupy management position in some non-governmental organizations in South America. Her findings established a very slow implementation of the policy from 1990 – 2000 and a total failure thereafter as a result of which the women were less represented in the management.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that the level of awareness on gender mainstreaming by the project members was low. Worse still, the only existing policy to ensure gender equity in the management of the project namely the affirmative action policy that would ensure adequate representation of women in the water management committees and the board was not fully operational.

5. Recommendations

a. Global Management Networks Limited should:
   i. Create awareness through training on the need for the AAP.
   ii. Engage a gender expert to guide the MB on its implementation.
   iii. Should engage the existing CBOs and FBOs in the community to enhance activities on gender training and women empowerment to encourage women to participate more in community decision making structures

b. The BMC should;
   i. Lobby and advocate for inclusion of women as much as men in the management of the project.

c. The overall Management Board should then;
   i. Implement the principle of affirmative action policy.
   ii. Mobilize women to seek management positions
   iii. Engage a gender expert.

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