EXPERIENCES OF RURAL FEMALE HOUSEHOLD HEADS: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL WOMEN IN UKWALA DIVISION OF SIAYA DISTRICT, KENYA.

By: CONCELLIA AOKO OJODIEK
REG: C/50/P/92/46/01

A project paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a degree in Masters of Arts, Sociology (Rural Sociology and Community Development) at the University of Nairobi.

DECLARATION

I CONCELLIA AOKO ONDIEK do declare that this paper is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in University.

SIGNED................. Date 21-6-04
CONCELLIA A. ONDIEK

REG. NO. C/50/P/9246/01

This paper was submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisors.

SIGNED.................. Date 22-06-04
PROF. CASPER ODEGI AWUONDO

SIGNED.................. Date 22-6-2004
BENEAH MUTSOTSO

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION
DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to my husband Hon. Archbishop Stephen Ondiek for the support he gave me during my studies and to my two lovely children: daughter Pauline Ondiek and son Stephen Ondiek Junior who gave me hope throughout my studies.
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I would also like to thank the University of Nairobi department of Sociology for their support and co-operation. My special thanks goes to Prof. Casper Odegi Awuondo and Beneah Mutsotso for their constant guidance, support and supervision.

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2. Mr. Samuel Ochanda - Assistant Chief Simur Sublocation
3. Mrs. Celine Owino - Social Worker

Last but not least, my thanks are also extended to the Ugenya community especially the women of Ukwala and West Ugenya locations for their co-operation during my research. Staying among them during the period was not only enjoyable but also an eye opener as I learnt a lot about their experiences. I hope that this study will be useful in this area and especially the support for these women as they go through their daily experiences and struggles.
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The Kenyan family has undergone a lot of changes as a result of social and economic changes in the wider society. The change is better understood in the historical perspective starting with the migration.

In the Kenyan rural areas women now find themselves playing the role of sole providers for their families. In a setting where poverty thrives, the women experience is varied.

The study here attempted to understand and analyse these experiences.

In chapter 1, the background to the study is given, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, justification and scope of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature material that relates to the topic, theoretical framework and hypotheses while chapter three gives the research design and methodology used in the work. In chapter 4, research findings, data analysis and presentation is brought out while the summary and recommendations are in chapter 5. The bibliography and the relevant appendices are available at the end of this paper.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In most traditional African societies, men were the heads of households. The man had the sole duty of providing for the welfare of the family in all matters concerning:

- all household matters and welfare of children of all ages, he also made decision on access and control of all productive resources in any given household.

Among the Luo for examples: The simplest unit of a family is *Dala* or *Pacho*. A pacho consist of a man, his wife or wives and his children. The head of family is the man and he is always referred to as the owner of *Pacho*. (Otieno – Ochieng 1968)

In his absence, the husband’s brother or kinsmen stepped in and kept an eye on the wife’s activities concerning the family’s farm, livestock and children. Moock 1975). Among the Luo this was extended even after the man’s death, as the inheritor would play the role of the man in the home.

Social economic and technological changes in the wider society led to the phenomenon of female headed households in Kenya. Previously female headed households were only an urban phenomenon, but recently have emerged and continue to increase in number in the rural areas as well.

This study therefore sought to establish the experiences of female heads of households in rural areas as they play this new role traditionally assigned to and performed by men.

The research focused on the female headed households in Ukwala Division – Siaya District of Nyanza Province.
1.1 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

The purpose of this study was to establish the experiences of rural women as they play their changed roles as household heads. The Kenyan rural family has undergone several changes as a result of certain social and economic changes in the wider society. The changes in the family have affected all members and the roles they perform. The rural woman finds herself performing a new role not traditionally assigned to her as head of household. The focus of the study was the experiences these women face as they play these new roles in rural areas.

Studies by Hay and Stitchter (1984), have revealed that by the mid 1900's, women in Kisii had emerged as the sole supporters of the needs of the household. These women were faced with tremendous burdens in the transition towards an increasingly commercialized agriculture.

In the recent past, there has been a concern in increasing number of two groups of female heads of households in the rural areas of Kenya. These are:

1. Those with absentee husbands
2. Widowed/divorced or separated

These two groups of women find themselves playing a new role of sole provider for their families.
Against this background, this study aimed at establishing the experiences these women face as they play this new role as far as the following matters are concerned.

(a) all household matters
(b) welfare of children of all ages
(c) farm production vis a vis all income accruing to the family.

1.2 **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As these women play this new role, they are bound to have varied experiences. This research project aimed at answering the following key research questions.

1. What are some of the different experiences of these women as household heads?
2. Do the experiences vary depending on the demographic attributes?
3. What are the community’s perception and attitude towards this group of women?
4. What strategies and mechanism do these women use to survive as they play this new role?
5. How do the relevant organizations, government and the society at large, respond, interact and relate with these rural women and what is the impact of their interaction?
6. What are some of the possible need gaps that policy makers, relevant stakeholder and any other relevant organization need to be aware of as they plan for the rural areas with this group of women in mind?
1.3 **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

**General objective**

The general objective of the study was to establish the experiences of female heads of households in rural areas.

**Specific Objectives**

1. To identify experiences of this group of women.

2. To establish whether demographic variables (age, number of years a woman has been married, formal education, level of income and occupation) have any impacts differently on the experiences.

3. To establish the survival mechanisms and strategies of these groups of women.

4. To find out if there are any interventions by relevant agents towards this group of women.

5. To provide suggestions for policy makers and any relevant stakeholders on the way forward in assisting these women adjust to this new role.
There is enormous literature on female-headed households in urban areas. Going through literature, the researcher noted that not much has been researched on female-headed households in the rural areas and their experiences especially in Luo Nyanza. This research hoped to shed light on this subject.

For several years, there has been a lot of talk on the plight of women as a weaker sex in general and the problems they face in society. It was important to assess their experiences in order to establish the way forward for their existence in society.

Policy makers will gain a wealth of knowledge as a result of this study in how to plan for the rural areas with this group of women in mind. It will also help them know how to assist the rural women in adjusting to the changing roles and the experiences that go with it. It is also important to examine and explore the best ways the women themselves can develop strategies for adjusting to this new but inevitable role as:

Women are considered key members of the rural society. This is because they are responsible for production of cash and food crop. They are regarded as reproducers of cheap labour for the urban areas. Women are also responsible citizens. With all the roles she performs, the rural woman is overburdened and is likely to fail in some roles. She is also constrained by the non-changing social norms and demands.
Data on the rural woman’s ability and freedom to meet these challenges is therefore very useful not only for rural development programmes but, also for national development. This study had to elicit some useful data on this.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out in Ukwala Division of Siaya District, Nyanza Province of Kenya.

The unit of analysis was the households while the units of enquiry was the rural women's experiences.

The study limited itself to two groups of women: -

- Married and whose husbands are migrant but frequently visit the home. (Absentee husbands)
- Divorced/Separated or widowed so they are the heads of households.

Women who have children and are heads of households but have never been married were not considered. This is because there is no new experience for her since she has always performed all the roles, as she has never had a husband to perform this role. In as much as the scope of this study was only limited to Ukwala Division the results of this study have a social implication in other communities in rural areas, especially in the poverty hit areas of Kenya. The study was limited to Ukwala due to financial and time constrain.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We analysed some of the literature that has been written concerning the changing role of women as household heads. This chapter tried to trace this changing role through 3 stages:- Pre-colonial, colonial to present day.

The approach taken was a historical one. It attempted to trace the changing roles of women in the rural areas, and attempted to explain the emergence of female-headed house-holds in the rural areas.

The agents of change are colonization, the emergency period and urbanization, these led to the absence of men from the rural areas. Modernization has had a role in weakening the extended family system.

It is important to point out here that the literature on colonization, the emergency period and urbanization is enormous, organizing it presents a formidable task.

Due to this, the researcher concentrated rather strictly on those factors that have close or direct relevance to the problem studied. However, the change agents have been briefly touched on, in other sections of this study.
2.2 The African family in the pre-colonial period:

Kayongo - Male and Onyango – The sociology of the African family 1984
dwells on the origin of the African Tradition family. The traditional African
family was highly organized. It was the unit of production and consumption.

Roles were clearly defined and synchronized for each age group and sex.
‘Roles were accepted largely without question since such roles were seen as
‘natural’, supported by ethnic myths or origin.

He further clearly states that it was believed that any adult who performed
the roles of the other sex would be struck by misfortune’.

Henn, 1978, states that division of labour varied from country to country and
from tribe to tribe but the variations were slight. Generally, in Africa
women were responsible for the care of children, food crop production,
procuring of water and firewood, nursing the sick. The entire house-hold
work, naturally fell within the sphere of the woman.

Levine 1966 states clearly that the men were generally responsible for
herding cattle, protecting the homestead, building houses and fencing. The
role of socialization of children was a shared responsibility. A few
deviations occurred among communities.

Kenyatta J. 1978 writes that in some communities women, socialized
children of all ages while in others, initiated boys were socialized and
disciplined by fathers.
Therefore roles were clearly defined.

The above studies show clearly how roles were defined and assigned in society. They were also accepted and performed without question. My study was concerned with the change in these roles.

**Decision making in the house-hold and on farm production:**

Studies by several scholars show that it is obvious that the main decision maker in the household and family organization is the woman.


According to Hanger (1973), the woman in Embu had total control of household decisions unless they involved the use of money. Pala (1975) found out that among the Luo, a woman could sell chicken or a small amount of the extra food crop and make decisions on the use of the returns.

Pala 1974 and Abbot 1974 observe that men made all the decisions concerning land transactions, livestock purchase or sale. This clearly shows that there were male type/domain and female type/domain decisions.

According to Kenyatta 1978, Pala 1975 and Fischer 1950, women had no rights to owning land. They acquired rights to use of land through attachment to men. Decision making concerning land use among the Kikuyu was decided by the husband. It was he who decided which plots to allocate to his wives.
Among the Kikuyu, decision making concerning the welfare of children was more or less shared, although, fathers stood aloof and never became really close with their children. However, fathers decided on what to teach the boys and the initiation time.

Kenyatta 1978 further asserts that women made decisions on all young children and decided the initiation time for girls. Decision making as far as payment of bride wealth was concerned was generally a man’s domain.

In this study, all these roles irrespective of type are played by the women. Having total control and charge of the household.

2.3 The African family during the colonial period: -

Kayongo male and Onyango 1984 states thus:-

“The imposition of colonial rule led to a variety of changes in the family
division

of labour. Although the impact was not uniform for all ethnic groups, even in one country. Changes were quite similar for many ethnic groups on the continent”.

With the advent of colonial rule, there was forced labour. Men were withdrawn from the villages for long periods of time to work in the colonial farms. The introduction of taxation and cash economy led to migration of men from rural to urban areas in search of wage employment. The children
and women attempted to fulfill the man’s role. This is further emphasized by Hay and Sticheter 1984.

Kenyatta 1978, Gachiri 1985 and mock 1975 states that during this period, the African families lived in homesteads and extended family was functioning. In the absence of the husband, a relative (male) would step in to make important decisions on his behalf as well as perform his roles. Gender constrains have over the years prevented women from participating on equal basis in the family, in their community, in the market place, and in decision making structures. These gender based constrains experienced by women are deeply rooted in all societies – Hellen O. Connel 1993.

Kayongo –Male and Onyango 1984 clearly put it that :-) “In the absence of the men, women being the heads of households made decisions concerning households and welfare of children independently as well as farm production”.

Silberschmidt (1991) and Abbot (1974) further argue that as a result of this, both men and women seemed confused in terms of roles. This also goes for the role of decision making as the women’s domain had increased.

2.4 **The African family in Present day:**

As a result of rapid urbanization a distinctive way of life, which arises out of the movement of people, mostly men, from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of employment has developed. Due to economic and social hardships in the city like inadequate housing, most men leave their families
behind. According to Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984), the women are left to protect the family property especially in areas where land pressure is high.

As a result of this way of life, the incidence of female headed household has increased. According to Koussoudji and Mueller (1971), “in the rural areas is found a substantial proportion of women between twenty and thirty years of age who are single, others temporarily separated. Those widowed or divorced early may not find another mate because of the absence of men. Therefore the existence heads of households.

To validate this phenomenon, according to the Kenya population census (1979), 1.7 million rural households were enumerated. Out of these, 525,000 were headed by women.

According to demographic and population profiles 2002/2008, Siaya District with a population size 493,326 has a total of 57,680 female headed household i.e. 47.6%.

The absence of men has increased the female domain in decision making because presently studies show that women are involved in making day-to-day decisions concerning cash crops, subsistence, livestock and welfare of children.

Previously, there were “pseudo” female headed households. This is shown by studies carried out among the Maragoli by Moock (1975). The migrant
male left one of his close male friends or kin to watch over the wife’s activities.

Gachiri (1984), Kenyatta (1978) also found that among the Kikuyu, the extended family stepped in and made decisions on behalf of the migrant.

In present day “real” female headed house holds have emerged and roles of rural women have changed. As we have seen earlier, the woman’s domain in decision making has increased as the man’s has decreased. (Abbot 1974).

The extended family system has weakened in function as a result of land tenure and social change. (Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984, moock 1975, Gachiri 1984).

As the head of the house hold and decision maker, the rural woman has had to get involved in off-farm income generating activities, for example petty trade of her surplus food crops and cash crop so as to continue supplying her family’s financial needs like clothes, school fees and books, cooking oil and paraffin for lamps. (Hay 1976, Gachiri 1984). “In spite of her expanding roles the woman in Kikuyu society, her income from the heavy toil remains low”. Gachiri (1984). According to Abbot (1974), female headed households have lower incomes.

The same view is supported by Kossoudji and Mueller (1971) who go on to explain, that, the low incomes in female headed households are not due to lack of education, a higher preference for leisure than men display, or inefficiency or incompetence in productive activities. Rather they are due to economic institutional arrangements for example ownership of assets is for men, traditional dominance of men over women
and domestic obligations for women for example, care of children and preparing ground for farming which traditionally was a man’s job.

Female heads of households continue to experience changing role allocation, which traditionally was highly segregated according to sex. (Fisher 1950, O’Keefe 1977). For example decision making in farm production and welfare of children so as to maintain and salvage the community.

Studies on decision making of women have given differing results. For example in Basotho according to Williams (1971), in Nelson (1981), the woman is regarded as having little decision making power in regard to livestock and farm production even in the absence of the husband.

Colson (1970), in Nelson (1981), has a different view. To him, the absence of the man has in many instances given the woman the opportunity to develop as undisputed heads of the house hold and make day to day decisions as well as long term decisions of farm production, welfare of children and livestock, which the man must accept on return.

According to Abbot (1974), the newly wedded wives even in the absence of the man were expected to consult him in everything. They had very little decision making power. However with increasing years in marriage, the decision making power increased hence female headed households.

Bookman (1973), found out that neither income earned by woman nor level of formal education increase their decision making within the household. Hanger (1973), found out that among the Embu, education of children is
decided on by men. Among the Ganda, education of children is decided on by women. Pala (1974), found out that in decisions for educating either boy or girl, fathers play a leading role. Men also play a leading role in decisions of marriage arrangements.

Studies by Abbot (1974), reveal that women who are heads of households in nuclear homesteads, tend to make more decisions compared to those in extended families. Female headed households i.e. those headed by widows or divorced women tend to control far less cash income than other households though they make more decisions concerning farm production and welfare of children. The study shows that the single most important determinant of high decision making of women on farm production and welfare of children is the absence of men either by migration or death.

From the literature that has been reviewed, there seems to be variations in roles and experiences by female heads of households. The knowledge about the existence of female heads of households is clear but the different experiences faced when performing these roles are uncertain. For example how far do they go as far as role play is concerned? What are the obstacles as they perform these roles?

2.5 LITERATURE ON ROLES:

Banton (1965:2) defines roles as, “consisting of rights and obligations that are to be met by every member of a social unit.”
Broom and Selznic (1955) define a role as “a basic unit of social structure, a pattern of behaviour associated with a distinctive social position”.

Smelser (1963:74) further notes that these organized clusters are structured and regulated by expectations. “Roles are therefore dynamic aspects of status or the behaviour expected of the occupants of given social positions”. Such positions are father, mother, son or daughter.

Banton (1966:93) notes that the person’s changing roles, (in this study the rural woman from subordinate to head of household hence decision maker), is required to know the rights and obligations of the roles to which they are moving. She is also expected to change behaviour accordingly.

According to Douglas (1964), socialization is an important aspect in role taking as it entails the learning of cultural standardized roles. Ineffective socialization of people taking up new roles as Zander (1953), assets, experience role conflicts.

In the case of the study, the rural woman takes up new roles, which she has not been socialized to. The rural woman’s roles change but her rights do not change to suit the new role hence the different experiences that this study sought to establish.

2.6 **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:**

The purpose of this section was to attempt to make a link between theory and the proposed study. The role theory was used.
The basic idea behind the role theory is that, individuals in society occupy positions and their role performance is determined by:

- Social norms, demands and roles by;
- The role performance of others in the respective positions by;
- Those who observe and react to the performance; and
- By the individuals particular capabilities and personality (Biddle and Thomas (1966:4).

There are norms that guide roles. In a family, there are roles for men and women. Failure of men to play their roles has led to the changing role of women. The women therefore took over decision making not by choice but by necessity. When the rural woman's role changes and she acquires the new role onto her traditional ones, she becomes overburdened and this can lead to role strain and at times role conflict. She may be required to make decisions on certain issues yet traditionally, she is not expected to make such decisions.

The role theory clearly depicts the research problem because the rural woman's role changes yet the social norms and demands remain constant. This is to say that as the rural woman become the head of the household and decision maker, the traditional role expectation do not change.

According to Yorburg (1983:27), the role theory provides a link through which we can relate the rural woman, traditional expectations and the changing role marked by rapid urbanization. Changes in the rural woman's
roles shall thus be linked to changes in the social, economic and technological conditions or changes in the wider society.

2.7 STUDY HYPOTHESES

The study had the following hypothesis which were put forward:

H1: Demographic socio-economic attributes has an impact on the experiences of the heads of households.
   (a) Age of the woman
   (b) Number of years a woman has been married
   (c) Number of years one has had of formal education
   (d) Level of income
   (e) Type of occupation

H2: The individual survival techniques has some impacts on the experiences.

H3: Level of intervention by relevant agents directly affects the experiences.

2.7.1 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1. Head of Household

This referred to the person whose duty is to provide for the welfare of the family. The person in this case was the woman. The husband may either be absent due to migration or death. She may also be divorced or separated.
2. **Household**

This referred to a person or group of people who are bound by kinship ties and who stay together in the same homestead, under one roof or several roofs in a compound and have the same source of food.

2.8 **OPERATIONALISATION OF VARIABLES:**

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

These referred to the factors influencing/affecting experiences.

i. **Age** – This was attained by calculating from the year of respondents birth to present day.

ii. **Number of years one has been married** – This was attained by calculating from when the respondent either legally, traditionally or otherwise got married to present day.

iii. **Number of years a woman has had of formal education** – this was measured by the number of years one has spent in formal education. Only classes in which all three school terms were completed was considered.

iv. **Level of income** – this was calculated from the amount of money the rural woman earns either from off-farm or on farm activities.

v. **Occupation** – nature of farm or off-farm or any other form of employment for a wage or salary.

vi. **Intervention** – Any form of help or assistance from any relevant stakeholders or interested groups. etc to the female heads of households.
vii. Size of the household – This referred to the number, sex and ages of the people sharing one source of food/staying in one homestead.

viii. Period of ‘absense’ – This was the actual span of time man has been ‘away’ either due to death, migration or separation.

**DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Experiences facing rural women in performance of household roles. This was depended on whether one was permanently providing for the welfare of the family in all matters concerning:

(a) all household matters
(b) welfare of children of all ages
(c) farm production vis a vis all income accruing to the family
CHAPTER 3

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This chapter deals specifically with methodological aspects of survey. It outlines the area where research was conducted, how data was collected, analysed and presented.

3.1 AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY:

The study was carried out in Ukwala Division of Siaya District of Nyanza Province. The Administrative boundaries of Siaya District can be seen on map I.

Siaya District is one of the 12 Districts, which make up the Nyanza Province of Kenya. It is approximately 1520 square kilometers with a population of 480,184 – 220,997 males and 259,187 females and a total of 117,955 households.

Siaya has seven administrative divisions namely; Yala, Wagai, Karemo, Ugunja, Boro, Uranga & Ukwala. These divisions are further divided into 30 locations and 128 sub-locations.
The Districts administrative structure is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>HEAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>District Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Divisional Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-location</td>
<td>Assistant Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Headman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I concentrated on Ukwala Division. Ukwala Division is made up of six locations namely; West Ugenya, Ukwala, North Ugenya, North West Ugenya, East Ugenya and North East Ugenya. This area was chosen because it is well known to the researcher, and the language spoken there is well understood by the researcher. Problems of language barrier in data collection were not anticipated.

Ukwala division is the largest covering an area of 319.5 square Kilometers and also has the most locations and sub-locations - a total of six location and 29 sub-locations.

**PHYSIOGRAPHIC AND NATURAL CONDITIONS**

**Topography:** The district has 3 major geomorphological areas namely: Dissected Uplands, Moderate Lowlands and Yala Swamp. These have different relief, soils and land use. The altitude of the district rises from 1,140m in the eastern parts to 1,400m above sea level in the west.
There are few hills found in the district namely; Mbaga, Odiado, Akala, Regea and Nyambare. Rivers Nzoia and Yala traverse the district and enter Lake Victoria through the Yala Swamp. These physical features have a bearing on the overall development potential of the district.

High altitude areas forming Yala, Ukwala and Ugunja Divisions have higher rainfall, and are hence suitable for agriculture and livestock keeping. Rivers Nzoia and Yala and Lake Kanyaboli have great potential for irrigation.

The low altitude areas of boro, uranga and Wagai receive less rainfall and thus are suitable for the growing of cotton.

The geology of the area is composed of the Old Nyanzian system forming exposed rocks in the district. These rocks include basalts, desites and rylites. They are the bearers of course and fine aggregates used in the construction industry.

The main soil type is ferrasols and its fertility ranges from moderate to low with most soils being unable to produce without the use of either organic, inorganic or in most cases both type of fertilizers. Most of the areas have underlying murram with poor moisture retention.

Ecologically, the district spreads across agro ecological zones LM1 to LM3 with a small area under UM which is in Yala Division, while LM1 zone covers lower parts of Yala, Ugunja, upper parts of Boro and Ukwala Divisions.
The main food crops grown are maize, sorghum, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes and vegetables; while the main cash crops grown are sugar cane, cotton, Robusta and Arabica coffee respectively.

**Climate:** The district experiences a bimodal type of rainfall. The relief and the altitude influence its distribution and amount. The district is drier in the western part towards Bondo district and is wetter towards the higher altitudes in the eastern part. On the highlands the rainfall ranges between 800mm – 2000mm. The lower areas receive rainfall ranging from 800 – 1600mm. The long rains fall between March and June while the peak is realized in April and May. The short rains occur between August and November.

Temperatures vary with altitude too. The mean minimum temperature is 15°C while the mean maximum temperature is 30°C. The humidity is relatively high with mean evaporation being between 1800mm to 2000mm per annum.

**Settlement Patterns**

Settlement patterns in the district follow the agro-ecological zones with the high potential areas having the highest population density in the district. Such high potential areas comprise Ukwala, Yala and Ugunja Divisions. The low potential zones of Wagai, Uranga and Boro Divisions have low population densities.

Table below shows the district’s population distributions by Division.
### Estimated Population distribution by Division and Density (2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>AREA (KM2)</th>
<th>DENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BORO</td>
<td>180.1</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAREMO</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGUNJA</td>
<td>198.8</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKWALA</td>
<td>319.5</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URANGA</td>
<td>183.4</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAGAI</td>
<td>193.3</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YALA</td>
<td>209.8</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1020</strong></td>
<td><strong>325</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** District Statistics Office, Siaya, 2001

Ukwala Division has the highest population pattern while Uranga Division is least settled.

The most densely populated division is Yala with 410 persons per square kilometer and the least densely populated division is Uranga with 233 persons per square kilometre.

Poverty levels have generally been increasing over the years, from 41 per cent in 1994 to reach 58.02 per cent. The main pockets of poverty can be found in the lower parts of Boro, lower Ukwala, Uranga and Karemo Divisions, which are characterized by low rainfall levels and poor soils.
SIAYA DISTRICT (Administrative Boundaries)
3.2 **STUDY DESIGN**

The study was exploratory in nature therefore attempted to gain familiarity with the phenomenon under study through the discovery of new ideas. It therefore emphasises on qualitative data collection techniques so as to capture practical experiences of the women. Quantitative data was also captured.

3.3 **SAMPLING PROCEDURE/DESIGN**

In a scientific study, there is always a need to come up with an acceptable sample design.

Accordingly to Singleton 1988:137 sampling design refers to the part of the research plan that indicate how cases are to be selected for observation or interview.

To obtain a representative sample, the target population was first defined. This included all female household heads where:

- Husbands have migrated hence women are the heads of households.
- Women are divorced/separated or widowed hence are the heads of households.

**SIZE OF SAMPLE:**

From about 24,725 households (Republic of Kenya: 1999 Vol. 1) that are found in the 29 sub-locations. 64 were selected. This is representative of the population. The 29 sub-locations fall within different ecological zones i.e. high and low potential zones.
The 2 ecological zones therefore were treated as a "strata" and stratified random sampling method used to select samples within each stratum.

From the 2 ecological zones in Ukwala division lie 6 locations. These are West Ugenya, Ukwala, North Ugenya, North West Ugenya and North East Ugenya. To elicit data from these three agro-ecological zones, the researcher used stratified sampling. The division was divided into 2 strata; low and high potential zones. One location was picked randomly from each strata. The selected locations were one representing high potential zone and another representing low potential zone. These were Ukwala location and West Ugenya location.

The table below shows the population distribution per location (Ukwala Division).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Ugenya</td>
<td>6,014</td>
<td>7,236</td>
<td>13,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East Ugenya</td>
<td>12,454</td>
<td>15,100</td>
<td>27,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Ugenya</td>
<td>8,136</td>
<td>10,030</td>
<td>18,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Ugenya</td>
<td>5,463</td>
<td>6,536</td>
<td>11,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukwala</td>
<td>8,860</td>
<td>10,930</td>
<td>19,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ugenya</td>
<td>3,579</td>
<td>4,574</td>
<td>8,153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: - Republic of Kenya (1999: Vol. 1)

The following is a list of names of the six locations and twenty nine
sublocations found in Ukwala division:

**EAST UGENYA**
Kathieno ‘A’
Kathieno ‘B’
Kathieno ‘C’

**N.E. UGENYA**
Anyiko
Jera
Ligala
Ligega
Nyamsenda
Ramunde
Sihay

**NORTH UGENYA**
Kagonya
Nyalenya
Sega
Uyundo

**N. WEST UGENYA**
Karadolo
Karadolo E
Ndenga
UKWALA
Doho-East
Doho-West
Simur-Kondiek
Siranga
Yenga

WEST UGENYA
Masat
Masat West
Sifuyo
Sifuyo West

The locations are large in size, so due to time, transport and money constrain; after selecting the 2 locations the lottery method was used whereby names of all the sublocations within each given location were represented by a disc then placed in a box and well mixed and names of any 2 sublocations drawn from each of the locations. This meant a sample of 4 sublocations picked.

In order to sample the households within each sublocation the snowball method was then used to select the 64 households where:-

- **Husbands have migrated hence women are the heads of households.**
- Women are divorced/separated or widowed hence are the heads of households

Great care was taken in compiling the sampling frame because from it a simple random sample was drawn.

It was complete, updated and devoid of duplications. This was so that all units had equal probability of being selected and so that the sample drawn was representative. (Moser 1971:155).

From each sub-location, there were two sampling frames; one for each category of households:

- Where husbands have migrated

- Women are divorced, separated or widowed
  Therefore in each sub-location, 16 units were sampled. For the whole division 64 samples were drawn using the snow-ball method as stated above. In addition 1 chief, 1 assistant chief and the area social development worker were interviewed. Observation was also used.

**UNIT OF ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATION: -**

The units of analysis are the social entities whose social were the forms of the study. Baker (1994). The broad unit of analysis of the research therefore was the experiences of the female heads of house holds. The specific units of analysis include the nature of experiences and the influencing factors.
3.3 **SOURCES OF DATA**

The problem under investigation required collection of a combination of both primary and secondary data in order to give a general view and intrinsic opinion on the experiences of the female heads of households.

3.4 **Secondary**

These included recorded information from existing literature. Secondary data also obtained from publication official documents from district/divisional levels including development plans.

3.4.2 **Primary**

Primary data was obtained directly from field research. The sources of primary data included the following: - The female heads of households, the key informants.

3.5 **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The method of data collection were the interview schedule, key informant interview and observation method. Most of the rural people are illiterate therefore the interview schedule which is a superior method of data collection was used as the researcher asked and filled in the answers. The researcher was also to be sure that when using the interview schedule, she was interviewing the intended respondent. Key informants interview was used on selected individuals for important information. Observation was used to supplement the two other methods, as the observer
participated in the daily lives of the household heads and went beyond appearances and probed the perception, motives and values and attitudes of the people involved and therefore witnessed first hand and initiated the details of events of interest.

**Key Informant interviews**

These were face to face interviews used to obtain information from the key informants. The key informants were purposively selected. The questions asked were tailored to the interviewee.

3.5.1 **Direct Observation**

This was used to measure non-verbal or overt behaviour and internal states such as feelings and attitudes (Bailey, 1976, 185, Singletone at (1988, 104) areas directly observed included the homestead environment, living conditions, relationships, working environment.

A checklist was compiled to guide the observation and field notes written for further analysis.

3.5.3 **Interview Schedule**

Interview schedule was used to obtain information from the women through face to face interview. The respondents were conveniently selected. The questions were fixed with answer categories while others were open ended. They were discussed with the help of a standardized questionnare. The method was important because it capitalized on the experiences of the female heads of households.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. RESEARCH FINDINGS, PRESENTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction
The collected information needed some systematic organization, interpretation and presentation. The researcher had to make sense of the raw data. It was first manually arranged and organized then further called for the use of statistics therefore needed mathematical calculations for summarizing and organizing the data as well as the high order statistics for making inferences or generalizations.

Both aspects of statistics were used in this research. This was a sure way of discussing the respondents experiences and making decisions related to the hypothesis.

The data was normally coded then entered into the computer and analyzed using the M-S access package.

These procedures were used for organizing, summarizing and presenting data. Useful statistics of this category included the range, percentage, tables, line graphs and bar-graphs. The mean and the mode showed the location of the cases while the percentage was used to standardize the scores so that it could be known what each case would score if the total score were a hundred.
The range helped to show the difference between the maximum and the minimum scores. Tables, line graphs and bar graphs were pictorial representations of the data. This helps one to get a quick glance of the findings.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the research findings are presented by use of descriptive statistics. Among the statistical tools employed are the arithmetic mean, range, percentage, tables, line graphs and bar-graphs. The reader is therefore able to have a quick grasp of the data before encountering the analysis at the later section.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The researcher interviewed a total of 64 female respondents. All of them were present at the study site at the time of the field work. Sex was constant but they all had varying characteristics.

4.3.1 Distribution of respondents by sublocations

An attempt was made to have an equal spread of the sample among the four (4) sublocations. However, certain aspects made this impossible e.g. the heavy rains, the flooded areas and timing (weeding season). Nonetheless, the respondents were more or less evenly distributed as per the sub-locations.

Below is a table of the distribution of the respondents by the two locations and the selected four sublocations.
Table I: Distribution of the women respondents by sublocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sublocation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doho</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simur</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifuyo</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Womens Ages

The respondents were of different ages. The youngest and the oldest women respondents were 25 and 89 years respectively. This reflects a range of 64 years. Out of the 64 respondents 20 (31%) could not tell their ages even when prompted to do so. Most of them were those falling under the bracket of 61 and above. Most of them talked of agemates or certain famines or historical periods. The researcher used these to estimate their ages.
Table 2: Distribution by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGES (YEARS)</th>
<th>NUMBER OF WOMEN</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and above</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Distribution by Age
4.3.3 **Level of Education**

In this study, level of education was used as a variable to donate the number of years one has spent in formal education. This was either, Nil, Primary (1-4), Primary (5-8), Secondary (1-2), (3-4), (5-6), Post Primary training (Certificate), Diploma University.

27 had not acquired any formal education (Nil). 31 had attained primary education, only 6 had secondary education. None had either certificate, diploma or university training. This low level of education for women has also been noted in by the GOK & UNICEF (1992) and ROK (1998) who estimate female literacy at 40% as opposed to 79 % for men. This is further confirmed by the Siaya District Development Plan 2002 – 2008 which states literacy levels by sex as follows:-

**Table 3: Level of Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate, Diploma,</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, most of the women in the two locations have little or no formal education. It was found out that both groups, the old and the young had this problem although the old belonged to a generation whose parents did not believe in the education of the girl child. In the words of two respondents:

"Who would dare take a girl to school? we only looked after animals, then joined Agulu school." ‘Agulu’ here means a pot.

However this view is slowly changing although most respondents revealed that they could not go beyond primary school due to lack of school fees as the parents were too poor to afford. The inability of some women to even tell their ages is closely related to the low level of
literacy. One woman even had her identity card but could not read it and held it upside down.

4.3.4 **MARITAL STATUS**

Most of the women 61 (95%) were widowed. Only 3 (5%) were married but had absentee husbands. None was separated or divorced.

**Figure 3: Frequency Distribution Marital Status**

![Graph showing marital status distribution](image)

Most of the women had children with only - % of the women having had no children. Most of the respondents 99% had 1-8 children.

Most of the children had reached school going age. Most of the children were in primary school, a few in secondary and almost none in
secondary. Most of the women were staying with all their living children. (90%).

The rest had grown up children who had either married and moved out or were elsewhere in search of wage labour.

4.3.5 Household size

In general most households are very large with a composition of the female header and a number of children. The Siaya District Development Plan 2002 – 2008 puts the average household size at 4.07. The research established that 58% of the households respondents had sizes of 2-5. This agrees with the above.

Table 4: Household Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Household</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 and above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the respondents said that they were not likely to increase their families. The reasons given were as follows:—

(a) Menopause

(b) Husbands death/absenteeism

(c) Economic hardship.
4.3.6 **HOUSEHOLD INCOMES**

Monthly income was used in this research to measure the respondent's financial status. Most relied on the farm for their monthly income others laboured on others farm for payment so as to meet their basic needs. When first asked about their income per month, most of them laughed as they thought they had no income. When questioned further, it came out clearly that most of them could not tell as they lived from hand to mouth. However, they estimated it
according to their daily ‘earnings’ which according to many was either Nil or unreliable. This was also reflected in the fact that most of them cannot afford even their basic needs.

Most families could hardly afford meals. It was evident that most fed either once or twice with carbohydrates (Ugali, potatoes, cassava being the main diet. Other households supplemented with green vegetables which grow widely and are free or Omena (small type of fish) which goes for Ksh.10 per tin. Most could not even remember when they last ate meat. As one of the respondents put it.

...."I last saw meat at my daughter’s funeral”. Other ingredients such as sugar, milk, bread are a luxury and can only be bought if they bump into money. Breakfast is a luxury and unknown to many. All these is attributed to the low incomes.
Also affected is healthcare. Most families spend between Ksh.0-10 and at most Ksh.11-50. Most purchase generic painkillers (they call panadol) which is used for treatment of all diseases unaware of the dangers.

**Table 5: HOUSEHOLD INCOMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income in Kshs.</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 300</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 – 600</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 – 900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Range</td>
<td>No. of Households</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>901 - 1,200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,201 - 1,800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,801 - 2,500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,501 - 3,500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,501 and above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: Distribution of Income per Household**
The household incomes in Ukwala and West Ugenya locations range between 0 – 300. There is no permanent or fixed income as most women rely on their gardens which are harvested twice a year. It all depends on the season and weather. As at the time of the research, they were weeding and therefore their only income would be from labouring in other people’s gardens where they are paid Ksh.50 per day. This is also very unreliable.

The only irony is that as they labour for the money, their own gardens go unattended hence poor harvest and low or no income and hence the poverty cycle continues.

The average income per woman is very low and therefore fails short of the amount which can support an average family.

This therefore means that the annual income per family in also very low and unpredictable. Given the average size of the household as 5 persons per family as we have seen earlier. It is not surprising that such basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, education and health can be hardly fulfilled. The overall poverty level in the location is alarming. During the research this was confirmed by:-

1. Type of housing/living conditions

2. Clothing as depicted in the photographs below.
Photograph 3: A widow sweeping her small compound. In the background is her small grass thatched hut (most common type of hut in the area)
Photograph 4: A widow preparing one tin full of cassava flour. In the background are two old huts which shelters her.

4.3.7 SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES
Due to the low incomes per household and the fact that most families cannot meet their basic needs, the women have resorted to a number of unreliable survival techniques. During the interview, it was glaringly evident that majority were either borrowing, farming for others on begging. Some just waited for fate to take care as shown in the table below.
### Table 6: Survival Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES</th>
<th>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/Farm for Others</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beg</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 6: Survival Techniques

![Graph showing survival techniques with labels: Borrowing, Carry out retail activities, Carry out farming/farm for others, Beg, Total.](graph)
The survival techniques adopted by the women are not only unreliable but do not also contribute or complement their life styles. They are therefore not able to survive even with these techniques.

Out of the 64 respondents, 18 relied on borrowing either friends, self help groups or relatives. 7 carried out retail activities while 31 relied on farming and 8 simply begged.

**IMPACT OF THE ‘ABSENCE’ OF THE MAN**

Most of these women had been widowed or abandoned for many years. The period ranged between 1 to over 21 years.

From the respondents, it was clear that the man’s absence had a negative impact on their lifestyle. Most respondents (98%) agreed that before the man died or abandoned her they were leading a happy life, a few (2%) said that life was the same as they were still just struggling. None said that life with the husband had been horrible. This meant that the man’s departure either through migration or death, created a gap which had to be filled by the woman who had to adopt a new and more challenging role not easy to play. They all clearly stated that the husbands played a major role in either providing for food, housing, clothing, school fees or medical.

**4.3.9 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

The respondents were asked if they owned any property in terms of land, house, toilet/bathroom, livestock or others. It became evident that most did not own any property apart from the house (huts’ in which they live in).
Most of them said they owned land but when further questioned, it became evident that apart from 1 respondent out of 64, who had the land registered in her name, all other 63 were either inherited or communal and all were either in late husbands name, absentee husbands name, father-in-law or family name.

According to these women, this is not a problem because traditionally women do not own land. When the researcher further inquired to find out if there were any problems related to owning these property, most respondents answered in the negative. According to them, as long as one has a place to build a hut and a small piece to dig, there is no problem. Most did not seem to understand the logic behind title deeds and did not even think it was useful. As one old respondent said .....”This shamba was given to me by my mother-in-law, I have dug it for thirty (30) years, there is no problem.”

On further questioning 10 out of 64 respondents came up and said they had problems with the land. These included problems such as; land being in a block under one title deed, harassment by in-laws and step sons over the piece of land hence being threatened with eviction after the husbands death.

From the interview with the Assistant Chief of Simur sublocation and the Chief West Ugenya location, it came out clearly that the land issue was the major problem as women do not hold title deeds therefore after the husband’s death in case of a polygamous family, wrangles over
ownership erupt. In other cases, women without children are thrown out by in-laws or disinherited.

Other cases are where the man sells the only piece of land when he is sick without the wife and the children’s knowledge, hence an example in Masat sublocation where a family is now rendered homeless. The widow and her seven children have no place to go.

The Chief West Ugenya location also cited four examples of where the in-laws harass the widow so that she leaves and they grab the land. He said that this is the reason why most young widows take off to towns or nearby beaches such as Osieko, Uhanya and Port Victoria to earn a living or re-marry. This was given as a justification for more old widows in the village than younger ones.

The research confirmed this as most of these widows were combining two or more groups of children mostly from the runaway widows.

4.4.0 DECISION MAKING AND CONSULTATIONS

Most of these household heads found activities/decisions concerning children most difficult to make. The most cited was concerning marriage of grown up children.

All those interviewed who had married children said that they had to consult their in-laws and relatives and can never make such a decision alone. According to them, marriage is still a communal affair and cannot be handled by an individual and more so a woman.
In cases of difficulty most of the respondents said that they consulted either their in-laws or the local/administration or the local priest. A few said they consult friends. It was clear from the above that most were not even sure whom to consult depending on the nature of the problem.

Yet some even said they did not have problems therefore no need for consultation. One even put it that she consults herself as she does not trust anybody and has no child or parents.

4.4.1 GROUP MEMBERSHIP

From both the respondents interviewed and the area social development officer, it was evident that there were many women groups both registered and unregistered (58 in number). There were also many other non-formal groups like the St. Monica group (Catholic Church). The main objective that came out from most of these groups is to improve the members living standards, spiritual nourishment and comfort. Accordingly, women came together to pool resources like money or support to assist one another. Most of them were related to petty household goods such as utensils, furniture and burial expenses especially the coffin.

Expenses towards education and health are not catered for by these groups. Other groups come together to work for people e.g. –digging or weeding and then share the money.

Others simply contribute monthly subscription of Ksh.10 and at the end of the year they throw a party or share the money. There was even a very strange one that only took care when one was dead by buying a coffin.
Some just waited for fate to take care as shown in the table below.

known as 'Masira gi Sanduk group' – meaning calamity and coffin group. They only assist you in times of death.

Out of 64 respondents 39 (61%) were group members and 25 (39 %) were non-members. This enabled the researcher to compare the perception for the two categories.

Photograph 5: Members of a Women Group
4.4.2 GROUP BENEFITS/ASSISTANCE

Asked what benefits they had realized since they became members of the above group for those who are members (39). A number of reasons were as stated below:

From the above responses it was clear that the majority joined these groups for economic empowerment. On further investigation, it became evident that the empowerment was so small almost negligible. Most groups paid subscription fee, had no activities but at the end of the year either came together to celebrate or divide the money. The highest amount one can get ranges between Ksh.200 – 1000 per year.

Other groups such as ‘Cham Luchi Women group’ – meaning survival for the fittest women’s group, had a different economic activity in that, they pulled together, worked for people i.e. digging, weeding, harvesting then they would get the money and divide it among the members.

When looked at critically most of these groups have social rather than economic objectives. Others said they had joined groups due to influence from friends, loneliness on a source of comfort. Some of the members are merely passive members.

4.4.3 Reasons for some women not joining Groups

When the researcher inquired from those who were not group members why they had chosen to join none, the following reasons were advanced:-

Some said that they had no money, hence lack of membership fee. Most of those in this category were old women.
Others simply lacked interest while others were totally ignorant of the existence and importance of the groups.

Two respondents stated clearly that they were non-members because of the disorganization they had witnessed in other groups in the past.

To some respondents groups were a waste of time and they simply had no time while others had been discouraged by wrangles and mismanagement coupled with conflicts which was very common with certain groups.

There was a general feeling that the elite were not fair to the illiterate hence mistrust.

4.4.4 INTERVENTION

The respondents were asked if they have benefited from any organization of which they are not members. From the 64 respondents, none had benefited.

Even when asked about organizations such as Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (MYWO), they all seemed to be at a loss. Most of them seemed to be aware of the existence of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake due to the elections which were due and hence some officials had been going round soliciting for support and votes.

According to one of them,”it’s a new organization which had come to the area recently persuading them to elect new members”. They knew nothing beyond that.
This ignorance and lack of awareness was further confirmed when the researcher visited the divisional FIDA office and confirmed that the officer there simply records issues then refers the clients to Siaya Town, over 40 Kms away.

It was established that most clients had been discouraged and no longer sought their services. For the two hours the researcher was in the office, no client appeared.

As for the rest, the offices exist but are either inactive or not being used to reach the women. The area Chief also confirmed that these organizations had not penetrated the area. He could not direct me to these offices either and had to enquire their location from another person. (Ignorance of the first order).

From the respondents therefore, it was very clear that there was no impact of these organizations either, financial, legal, guidance, medical, education or even simple knowledge.

The women therefore displayed total ignorance on who to turn to in case of difficulties. They also had a feeling that the last time they heard of the government was during the general elections and since then had been abandoned.

Other areas that they felt were not being addressed were the AIDS issues. It was established that the Constituency Aids Control Council (CACC) had not penetrated the area well. Most women were not aware of its existence and activities. It was also evident that most women were not aware of the Government Bursary Scheme and hence either struggled
paying fees or left children of secondary school going ages at home due to lack of fees.

The Ministry of Health has also not assisted these women. There are only 2 dispensaries – Sifuyo and Ukwala health centres. They cited lack of medicine in these dispensaries. Most of them resort to prescribing and buying their own medication.

They all cited ‘panadol’ as the most commonly purchased medication thought to cure malaria.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Data Conclusion

This study concludes that there are very many female headed households in Ukwala division. The majority of the female headed households are due to deaths of the husbands as out of the 64 respondents, 61 were widowed and only 3 had absentee husbands. None was separated or divorced. This means that the major cause is widowhood. The researcher sought to find out what relationship exists between levels of education and the experiences.

5.1.1 LITERACY LEVEL

The illiteracy level is very high among the women, this leads to lack of economic empowerment and awareness in general. Out of the 64 respondents, only 6 had reached Secondary School level of education. None had attended neither college nor university. As a result, only one was permanently employed.

5.1.2 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic empowerment is therefore lacking leading to the low quality of lives for these women and hence perpetual struggle and poverty.

From the income per month – most falling between Ksh.0-300 bracket, the household are too large, ranging between 1 and 11 and above.
The major problems these women face include; lack of food – some eat once a day or occasionally, lack of school fees. Housing is also a major problem as most of them live in small old huts. Most of them are leaking but the women cannot even afford grass which costs averagely Kshs.2000 to thatch their houses. After the husbands death, the widow moves to a new house traditionally which are poorly constructed.

5.1.3 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

From the 64 respondents interviewed only 1 owned land and had her name on the title deed. The rest owned either inherited or communal land. All the 63 had the property in either the husbands names or their father – in – laws. They did not see this as a problem. There were also reported cases of a few landless widows who had been thrown out of their marital homes and pieces of land by either in-laws or step sons. In the above cases, they did not know who to consult or what action to take as they are not aware of their legal rights.

5.1.4 GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Another finding that came out of the research was the reluctance of some women to join women groups. This is because of the kind of group formation impact in the area. Most groups are social rather than economically based and therefore not appealing or assisting these women improve their lives. They have not been enlightened on the importance of group formation.
5.1.5 FARMING METHODS

It was evidently clear from the research that farming is the major source of livelihood for these women.

However, the farms are small, poor methods of farming are used and hence poor yields every year. The yields are between 0-2 sacks which cannot support their families.

Photograph 6: A widow at work in her Shamba. An example of traditional farming methods common in the area.
5.1.6 HEALTH CARE

Another major research finding is in the area of health care. Lack of medical facilities and income drives these women to self prescriptions of pain killers – panadol for all sorts of diseases. This is not only against health regulations but also a health risk. There were a number who complained of various illnesses and some looked sick and weak and yet could not afford health services.

5.1.7 INTERVENTION

From the interviews with both the women and the key informants, it was clear that there is very little contact between the women and the provincial/local administration, NGOs and other relevant bodies. Most women were not even aware of their existence.

These women do not even know about credit facilities or any revolving fund. From the research, it was found out that such facilities are not available for them.

5.2 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to keep these women improve their lives and those of their households the following should be done.

1. Better and modern farming methods should be introduced in the area since farming is the major income earning activity.
2. This is hoped to improve yields hence increase household incomes. This can be done through agricultural extension services.

3. In order to help these women diversify their income generating activities, access to credit facilities should be introduced so that they are able to start small scale businesses to supplement farming as finance is a critical lubricant to any economic activity.

4. There is need for both the government and the relevant NGOs to intervene and to create awareness in the area concerning the following aspects.

(a) Legal

(b) Health

(c) Education

(d) Group formation and mobilization

This calls for improved contact with the women.

5. Last but not least, the poverty eradication Commission should extend its activities to this needy area and lay strategies on how to reduce the chronic poverty in Ukwala Division of Siaya District.
5.2 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The study gives the following suggestions as areas of study for future research in Ukwala Division.

(a) A similar study on the experiences of widows as a vulnerable groups.

(b) A comparative study between female headed and male headed households in the area.

(c) Study on ‘male headed’ households who are mere figure heads’.

(d) A study on the impact of women group activities in the area.

(e) A comparison on literacy level of men and women in the area.

Aulen Unurin 1970


Fischer S. 1950, The anatomy of Kikuyu domesticity and husbandry,
London, Department of Technical Co-operation 1950.


# HOUSE HOLD QUESTIONNARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Location</th>
<th>Sub Location</th>
<th>Village</th>
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**2 Age**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Below 25 years</td>
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<td>b) 26-40 Years</td>
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<td>c) 41-60 Years</td>
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<td>d) 61 Years and above</td>
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**3 Marital Status**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Married</td>
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<td>b) Divorced</td>
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<td>c) Widowed</td>
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<td>d) Separated</td>
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**4 If married do you physically live together with your husband?**

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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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**5 If no in (4) above, is it because he is working?**

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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

**6 If no in (5) above, why is he not at home?**
a) Another marriage
b) Living with relatives
c) Not known
d) Any other (specify)

7 If yes in (5) above, where is he working?
a) Below 50 Kms
b) 51-100 Kms
c) 101-200 Kms
d) Over 200 Kms in Kenya
e) Outside Kenya

8 If your husband does not physically stay with you, how often does he come home?
a) Weekly
b) Monthly
c) Yearly

d) Others (specify)

9 What is your education Level?
a) Nil
b) Primary [1-4]
c) Primary [5-8]
d) Secondary [1-2]
[3-4]
e) Post Primary Training (certificate training)  

f) Diploma  

g) University  

10 How many persons reside in this household?  
a) 1  
b) 2 to 5  
c) 6 to 10  
d) 11 and above  

11 What is the composition of your household?  
a) Number of Male children [0-18]  
b) Number of Female children [0-18]  
c) Number of Male adults above 18]  
d) Number of Female adult above 18]  

12 Number of children born?  
a) None  
b) [1-2]  
c) [3-5]  
d) [6-8]  
e) 9 and above
13 Are you likely to increase the number of your children?

Yes

No

14 Number of children in school, specify.

a) None

b) Nursery

c) Primary

d) Secondary

e) College

f) University

15 Who pays for their education?

a) Self

b) Husband

c) Relatives

d) NGO

e) Government bursary

f) Other (specify)

16 Are you staying with all your living children?

Yes

No
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME.

17 Are you employed?

Yes

No

18 If yes, specify type of employment

a) Self

b) Casual

c) Contract

d) P&P

e) Other, specify

19 What is your income per month (Kshs)

a) 0-300

b) 301-600

c) 601-900

d) 901-1,200

e) 1,201-1,800

f) 1,801-2,500

g) 2,501-3,500
20. Are you able to meet basic needs with remuneration (income that you obtain?)
   a) Yes
   b) No

21. If no what other sources of income or survival techniques do you have? (Specify)
   a) Borrowing friends/ self help groups/ relatives
   b) Carry out some retail activities
   c) Carry out farming
   d) Beg

22. How reliable are these identified sources?
   a) Reliable
   b) Unreliable

23. If you are not in marriage, how long have you been widowed, divorced, separated?
   a) Below 5 yrs
   b) 6-10 yrs
   c) 11-20 yrs
   d) 21 yrs and above

24. Before you became widowed, divorced, separated, what kind of life were you leading in marriage?
   a) Happy
b) Struggling

c) Horrible

d) Others, specify

25A269. What kind of property (if any) do you have?

a) Land (specify acreage)

b) House (specify type)

c) Toilet/Bath room

d) Livestock (Cows, Sheep, Goats, Chicken, etc)

e) Others (specify)

26. How did you acquire the identified property?

a) Inherited

b) Bought

c) Communal (specify)

d) Others (specify)

27. If the above property was inherited, in whose name is it?

a) Self

b) Son(s)

c) Daughter(s)
d) Relative

e) Late/former husband

d) Others, specify

28 Do you have any problems related to owning the above property?

   Yes

   No

29 If yes in (28) above, which problems?

   a) Land/House use

   b) Title deed

   c) Live stock transaction

   d) Others

30 Before becoming the head of your household, what was your occupation?

   a) House wife

   b) Casual worker

   c) Retail business

   d) P&P employment

   e) Others, specify

31 How much (appropriately) was your income per month from the occupation in (30) above?

   a) Nil
b) 0-300

c) 301-600

d) 601-900

e) 901-1,200

f) 1,201-1,800

g) 1,801-2,500

h) 2,501-3,500

f) Above (specify)

32. What are your major sources of livelihood?

a) Farm

b) Relatives

c) Employment

d) Others

33. How much in (Kshs) do you spend on food per day?

a) 0 to 10

b) 11 to 50

c) 51 to 100

d) 101 to 200

e) 201 to 500

f) 500 above
34. How much in (Kshs) do you spend on medical care per month?

a) 0 to 10
b) 11 to 50
c) 51 to 100
d) 101 to 200
e) 201 to 500
f) 500 above

35. How often does your family feed?

a) 3 times a day
b) 2 times a day
c) Once a day
d) Others (specify)

36. What is the main diet of this household?

a) Rule of 3
b) Carbohydrates
c) Proteins
d) Vitamins

37. Before your husband divorced, migrated, separated or died, which areas did he assist you in?
38 As a household heeder, which activities/decisions do you find difficult to make?

a) Land issues
b) Sell of property
c) Marriage
d) Issues concerning children

Why?

39 Whom do you consult in case of difficult?

a) Sons
b) Daughter?
c) In-laws
d) Parents
e) Local/Provincial administration
40. Are you a member of any women organization/group?

a) Yes

b) No

41. If yes, what kind of assistance/benefits have you realized since you became a member?

a) Knowledge

b) Education of children

c) Fellowship/ empathy/ comfort

d) Economic empowerment

e) Others, specify

42. Have you ever benefited from any organization of which you are not a member.

a) Yes

b) No

43. If yes in (42) above which assistance?

a) Financial

b) Legal

c) Guidance/ counselling

d) Education
44 If yes in (42) above, from which organisation?

a) Self help group

b) CBOs

c) NGOs

d) Political pressure groups

e) Government based organisation

f) Any other
1. Are there any/many female heads of households in this area?

2. Can you identify those who are heads of households due to
   (a) Death of husbands/separation/divorce?
   (b) Absence of husbands due to migration?

3. What is the impact of this phenomena?

4. What are some of the most common reported problems facing these women as household heads?

5. Are there any interventions by either the government or other NGOs geared towards assisting this group?

6. What is the impact of these interventions?