An assessment of devolved funds in empowerment of women in the rural areas: a case study of Gatuanyaga Division of Thika East District, in Central province of Kenya

The major aim of this study was to assess the empowerment of rural women through devolved Community funds for development, in Gatuanyaga Division of Thika East District of Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions: 1. what are the changes in the living standards of women, which may have been as a result of the community projects funded by the devolved funds? 2. What is the level of community awareness on the existence of devolved funds and the role of communities in the devolved funds processes? 3. What barriers do women experience in access to devolved funds? The study adopted exploratory research design using both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Random sampling was used to identify 60 respondents for survey questionnaires, while purposive sampling was used to identify FGD participants and key informants for interviews. The theoretical framework used for the study is the empowerment approach. The study findings indicate that women groups have not actively begun to take advantage of the participatory space provided by the community grants and Constituency Development Fund to facilitate their project implementation, low knowledge and awareness about the devolved funds, low participation and little benefits to the women groups from the devolved funds kitty in the community hence little empowerment to women. The study therefore recommends that the community Development grant and CDF management should design and implement an emancipator educational and awareness activities to enable groups and people to understand the nature and operations of community grants and the CDF. Such activities could specifically address the informational needs of the group members and community at large, and the socioeconomically deprived groups that are excluded from the mainstream formal networks. This will enable groups and people at the local level to engage the officials of the funds in project identification and selection, and thereby take charge of their own development.