



# Interrogating Gender Dynamics in the Context of Indigenous and Innovative Social Work Practice in Kenya

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This paper explores the discourse on indigenous and innovative Social Work with particular reference to how men and women respond to social problems from a gendered perspective. Humankind has been faced with survival challenges, oftentimes with catastrophic results such as gross loss of life due to high mortality, lack of food, shelter, security, all leading to unpredictable social and economic social dysfunctions. Existing evidence portrays women as being very instrumental in bringing about innovative social and economic solutions, thus countering their vulnerabilities and those of their children (Kinyanjui M, 2012, Machera 1992). Such eventualities would require indigenous and innovative social work interventions to counter the negative consequences of adverse phenomena on the lives of men and women in the social setting.



## **Introduction**

This paper explores the discourse on indigenous and innovative Social Work with particular reference to how men and women respond to social problems from a gendered perspective. Humankind has been faced with survival challenges, oftentimes with catastrophic results such as gross loss of life due to high mortality, lack of food, shelter, security, all leading to unpredictable social and economic social dysfunctions. Existing evidence portrays women as being very instrumental in bringing about innovative social and economic solutions, thus countering their vulnerabilities and those of their children (Kinyanjui M, 2012, Machera 1992). Such eventualities would require indigenous and innovative social work interventions to counter the negative consequences of adverse phenomena on the lives of men and women in the social setting.

This paper explores the extent to which historical gender constructions tend to shift when social problems appear. Considering the spectrum of social work practice, the paper envisaged a refreshing perspective away from the westernized perception of social work interventions with empirical evidence derived from PROSOWO II research study in Kenya.

## **INDIGENOUS AND INNOVATIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

Indigenous social work is essentially about the development of culturally relevant social work for, with and by indigenous people (Coates, 2016). Culture is central to social work. Not only is social work itself a cultural construction but wherever we are attempting to make social work responsive to local contexts we are fashioning it in a cloth that is culturally embedded. Closely related to culture is the relevance of spirituality and religion. Spirituality is important in the lives of all cultures that are at odds with the secular nature of professional social work. Ceremonies, rituals and shamanistic practices are an essential part of many people lives and are moulded and vary within particular cultures (Coates, 2016).

The recognition of indigenous social work practice came as result of criticism over the use of western social models to deal with the issues of the developing world especially the African countries. Current global standards for social work education threaten to continue the displacement of local ways of knowing and helping (Gray and Fook 2004; Yip 2004 cited in Coates, 2016). Thus in the midst of privileging of western social work, criticisms about the inadequacy of exclusively western methodologies are emerging. For example, the emphasis on rationality, dualism, individualization, individual self-determination and self-reliance and therapy are



frequently out of place in communal and traditional societies in which deference to the family and community is the priority. This negativity reflects the priority that has been assigned to globalizing and standardizing forces over the need and desire to work with people in the context of their local culture and place (Coates, 2016). Further, such concepts as individualism, objectivity and professional distance that are inherent in western conceptualization of social work practice are not as effective and may even be alienating in non-western cultures (Coates, 2016).

Hence, these criticisms of the transferability of primarily western models and interventions, together with challenges to universalism from post-modernists, have rekindled interest in local and indigenous social work rooted in local contexts and traditions which are consistent with the larger purposes of professional values and ethics. The discovery or rediscovery of the diversity and uniqueness of local cultures has led some academics and practitioners to question the relevance of applying western models of social work practice to non-western contexts (Haug, 2001, Nagpaul 1972 cited in Coates, 2016). Hence, various authors have called for efforts to promote the 'indigenization' of social work practice. Where indigenization or localization of social work was seen to refer to the processes through which traditional, indigenous and local helping interventions were integrated into mainstream social work practices, and elements of mainstream approaches were adjusted to fit local contexts (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2003; Barise, 2005 cited in Coates, 2016). According to Shawky's (1972) cited in Coates (2016) early definition, 'indigenization' was essentially about 'adapting imported ideas to fit local needs'.

Innovative social work practice involves the various approaches that are being used by the members of the society to fight the social problems in their environments in the era of the many advances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the numerous attendant socio economic pitfalls that many people find themselves in.

## **THE RELEVANCE OF INDIGENOUS AND INNOVATIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN AFRICA**

Indigenization of social work practice has its roots in Latin America where social workers were disillusioned with the use of western theories and practices (Fergusson, 2005). Indigenization essentially connotes a process of trying to fit imported knowledge and models into the local context. The indigenization of social work discourse challenges the discriminate importation of



western social work to other different contexts and calls for appropriation of education and practice (Twikirize, JM; H Spitzer, G.G Wairire, 2014).

There is consensus in Africa that indigenization has much to do with adopting a developmental approach to social work as well as generation and respect for indigenous helping processes through culturally relevant practice (Twikirize et al, 2014). Fergusson (2005) proposes a cyclical multi-directional model of indigenization and authentication where ideas can be received and implemented, received, modified and implemented; or newly generated within a country or culture as a product of the local political, social and economic contexts.

In the pursuit of indigenization, social work scholars, practitioners and policy makers in Africa do not necessarily have to get rid of everything foreign, nor do they have to keep lamenting about the inappropriateness of social work theory as handed down from the west but they together with those they work with need to identify what is positive from either side and come up with a locally appropriate practice. This appropriateness is in itself dynamic and must be checked against the changing cultural values, norms and practices in order for social work to remain relevant in addressing current and emerging challenges in Africa. That should be the essence of the indigenization of social work and social development.

### **Conceptualization of indigenous social work practice in Kenya**

Indigenous approaches are key to the implementation of professional social work practice in Kenya. Kenya is a multi-cultural nation and thus the indigenous approaches need to be documented in order to reduce over-reliance on the western models of social work practice. These indigenous approaches are significant in addressing the social problems being experienced by different societies with diverse cultures.

The study thus sought to find out the conceptualization of indigenous social work practice in the three study sites namely; Kiandutu slum in Thika sub county, Ndeiya in Kiambu sub-county and Ithanga in Gatanga sub-county. The findings reveal that the role of the indigenous approaches included: sharing common goals; raising the level of social consciousness amongst the women; improving the social, economic and cultural status of women in the areas; reducing the socio-

economic disparities between women and men in the study areas. A detailed examination of each of the indigenous approaches reported by the respondents is as follows;

**Self-help group method is one of the key indigenous approaches that has its foundation in the African way of dealing with social problems.** The respondents reported that they come together and form groups where they contribute money on a daily, weekly or a monthly basis. The money is given to the members of the group on a merry go round basis. Hence, this money from these merry go round activities is then used to pay school fees and hospital bills among others. This has empowered the women economically and psychologically by providing a sense of identity and belongingness. In addition, they conduct rotational home visits to all the members of the group. This fosters harmony that is embedded in the African culture of togetherness. One of the FGD participant summarized the many benefits of belonging to self-help groups; *“Membership in these groups give you a good feeling of belonging with others, you do not feel isolated and alone. You can cry and laugh with others.”*

**Traditional mechanisms of intervention is another indigenous approach.** The respondents reported that in the matter of barrenness there was the ritual of *“kenoborwougo”* after a woman was in a state of *“utano”* or the lack of children. After the implementation of the process of *“kenoborwougo”* then the childless woman would get children of her own. The ritual of *“ugo”* or witchcraft was used to help reduce cases of infidelity in marriages. This is because this process created fear and acted as a deterrent against the possibility of infidelity especially in childless marriages. This indigenous approach was majorly reported in Ithanga, Gatanga Sub County.

**Witchcraft is an indigenous practice of resolving social problems.** The findings reveal that witchcraft is an indigenous approach that is still being used to resolve various disputes. Communities still consult witchdoctors in case of loss of property, loss of lives within their households among other issues. The people believe so much in witchcraft that some fear that if their children perform well in school or if their businesses thrive or if they manage to build a good modern house, fellow villagers who have the evil eye will perform some witchcraft that will occasion calamities to befall the successful families. Amongst the Akamba people of the Ithanga study site even boys have the power to curse and this is enshrined in the traditional beliefs and practices that are passed on from generation to generation.

**Polygamy is a common practice in patriarchal societies.** The respondents also reported that polygamy which is entrenched in the African culture is still in practice. The respondents in the Ndeiya study site for example reported marrying many wives as a method of family planning in the community thus it was socially accepted.

**Community mobilizing groups is another indigenous approach to social problems.** Community mobilizing groups are those groups consisting of the members of the society where they deal with the people's needs and support each other in times of joy and sorrow such as funerals, weddings etc. these groups help to promote a sense of togetherness in a community.

**Use of council of elders is another common indigenous approach especially in resolving household and community conflicts.** The respondents reported that the council of elders were the central point of reference for community life and are highly respected. The findings reveal that they are well respected and they are custodians of the indigenous approaches in every community. For instance, when a person was suspected of wrong doing they perform a ceremony called "*kuringithiagithitu*" or they invoke a curse using a brand new pot or "*nyungu*" which would be crushed to the ground and this action would affect the entire family and property of the suspect. In addition to resolving disputes in the community, the elders are still very pivotal in socializing the youth by offering advice and counselling them on various issues. The '*AthuriaItura*' or elders of a village thus play a critical role in maintaining stability and equilibrium in the community life.

**Traditional methods of treatment is another indigenous approach to deal with ailments and diseases.** The findings indicate that in the area of traditional medicine indigenous methods of healing included "*mitinidawa*" or trees have medicinal value. This knowledge was only the preserve of only a few medicine men and women. Another indigenous way of dealing with diseases and general illnesses included the sacrifice of a lamb at the "*Mugumo*" tree. The lamb had to be without blemish (*mvirumwe*) and if the sick person did not get well after the sacrifice they would be thrown away in the forest. According to the findings, this practice of the use of a lamb was reported in the Ndeiyastudy site majorly occupied by Kikuyu ethnic community.

**Traditional methods of discipline to promote good behaviour among the community members.** The findings reveal that the communities in the target study sites had some indigenous

approaches of disciplining the deviant members of their society. In cases where the community members became indisciplined, the indigenous method of addressing this behavior was “*kubetwo*” or being set apart so that one could not participate in the elder’s meetings. This was reported in the Ndeiya study site. Thus such members of the community were considered as social outcasts. This helped to deter other community members from engaging in similar deviant behavior in future.

**The “tuunganetupigenjaamarafuku” initiative is another indigenous approach to social work practice.** The findings have established that this was an indigenous approach that ensured that food based contributions of maize flour, rice and wheat flour are available in every household instead of being given money. This indigenous approach was majorly reported by respondents from Kiandutu slums and it had helped fight hunger in the area.

Further, the study sought to establish the various custodians of indigenous approaches to social work in the community. The indigenous approaches in each of the communities in the three study sites were well preserved and passed one from one generation to the next. Some specific categories of community members acts as custodians of indigenous approaches including: council of elders and clan heads; household heads who are majorly men; young initiated men who receive advice and counselling from the elders during the initiation ceremonies; boys especially in the Kamba community have been give power to curse and mentors at the local levels who acts as role models in the community and should be emulated.

### **INDIGENEOUS SCENARIOS IN EACH STUDY SITE**

The current study further sought to establish the specific case scenarios found in each of the study sites targeted. The indigenous case scenarios found in Kiandutu slums include the following; women’s self-help groups and merry go round groups; children aged 5-10 years are encouraged to play ‘*bano*’ which is a game to have richer childhood experiences and they also undertake construction of houses for the elderly so that they lead dignified lives.

The following indigenous case scenarios were found in Ithanga-Gatanga region: using traditional mechanisms to ensure community stability and equilibrium e.g. ‘*uraguri*’ or divination, ‘*utano*’ lack of children, ‘*kwoborwo*’, ‘*ugo*’ – being delivered from witchcraft after which one would get children.

*'kuringithiagitbitu'* or breaking a pot to get answers for wrongs done by members of the community; using medicinal plants to treat various diseases; use of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms by e.g. the *'muhiriga'* or clan; use of traditional ceremonies to deal with diseases e.g. sacrificing a lamb without blemish under a mugumo tree and use of witchcraft to resolve various issues in the society including stealing, childlessness.

The following indigenous case scenarios were found in the Ndeiyastudy site: adoption of a servant or a *'ngobo'* by the host family after serving the family for a long time and qualifying to access all the benefits of a son including inheritance; community organization is still patriarchal where men are involved in performing traditional rituals and ceremonies; the qualities of an elder include being *'gitonga'* rich man, *'muthamaki'* or being a king or being *'njamba'* which means being a courageous person; council of elders or the *'kiama'* is still used to resolve conflicts in the community and male chauvinism was perpetuated in the community to the extent that a male child was prohibited from overstaying with the mother lest he becomes like a woman. They were supposed to stay with the father in the *'Thingira'* or hut where they would get counsel on various issues.

### **Challenges being faced in the implementation of indigenous approaches**

The implementation of indigenous approaches to social work practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not without challenges. A number of challenges were brought out by the current study namely; non-documentation of the indigenous approaches which could contribute to the loss of knowledge and wisdom enshrined in these indigenous practices; non-dissemination of the indigenous approaches could contribute to their being extinct and forgotten; improper conceptualization of the indigenous approaches could lead to misconceptions about their roles and the initially intended purposes which could be costly e.g. Wrong use of traditional medicines; misunderstanding could also lead to violence against certain groups e.g. violence against women, children, disabled or the elderly; misconceptualization could also lead to community disequilibrium and instability and this could consequently affect the growth and development of the communal fabric; misconceptualization could lead to the loss of time, money, copyright of the community artifacts and would lead to a level of retardation of the communities' growth trajectory as the wrongs are corrected. There's the emergence of a cultural divide which is being seen in the lack of acceptance of some of the indigenous approaches due to the influence of modernization. This was evident in the communities where there was rejection of the indigenous approaches as the only singular way





of the peoples lived reality. Some members had completely abandoned the indigenous ways of rationalizing life for the modern/ Christian and western way of understanding life. Other community members had a combination of both the old and the new.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the indigenous approaches to social work practice**

Bearing in mind, the aforementioned challenges being faced in the implementation of the indigenous approaches, there is a need of evaluation of these approaches in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. The findings of this study have established that these approaches had made significant contributions in the society where they are being implemented. In general, the social work students targeted by this study reported that the main strengths of the indigenous approaches lies in their ease of understanding by the community members, their wide acceptance by the people and their relevance to the people lived realities. Other strengths outlined by the FGD participants are as follows: They have contributed to the promotion of social cohesion when the community members experience a sense of belonging, acceptance in the group; observance of social cultural values and principles that are passed from generation to generation; prevention of community and social problems; enhancement of individual, family and community capabilities and wellbeing by promoting a sense of belonging and identity within the community. They also have conflict resolution mechanisms in the community.

Therefore, indigenous approaches have played major roles in addressing social problems in the community. Additionally, community members have embraced other mechanisms of dealing with their social problems. There is a shift to Christian based values with some of the community members questioning the potency of the traditional ways and opting to live their lives away from the confines of the traditional dictates. Other community members subscribe to both the indigenous and innovative approaches of dealing with the problems facing them. The local administrative structures governed by law are also aimed at ensuring community stability and cohesion.

### **WEAKNESSES OF THE INDIGENEOUS APPROACHES**

The study further sought to establish the weaknesses of the indigenous approaches to social work practice. A number of weaknesses of these approaches were identified including; they are lacking in their ability to offer diversified livelihoods whereby they have left the community to eke out a



living at the subsistence level only; illiteracy levels are high and lack of exposure to other regions have left communities with a narrow and inward looking approach to life which does not enhance comprehensive growth and development; civic education is lacking in the communities; the community has no start-up capital to start income generating activities and so they remain at the subsistence levels; cultural, ethnic, religious differences and different socialization modalities are a hindrance in addressing emerging issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic; disability has traditionally been viewed as a curse thereby alienating and isolating people living with disabilities which amounts to discrimination; indigenous approaches are seen as perpetuating discrimination against women because these approaches derive power from the patriarchal nature of the African society and an analysis of indigenous approaches has exposed the gaps in community life including the lack of support for adoption of modern farming methods at the local levels.

Indigenous approaches to social work being implemented in the communities have gone a long way in addressing the social problems. Hence the indigenous approaches remain relevant in addressing the social problems facing the society even in this modernization era. Most of the African culture remain patriarchal in nature and is less individualistic. Thus the western models of promoting individualism might not be adequate to address the social problem facing the African society. The findings of this study brought a number of issues that have been addressed by the indigenous approaches namely: poverty alleviation; conflict resolution; maintenance of social order; promotion of family planning through the practice of polygamy; socialization of the younger generation by elders; promoting social inclusion by reducing discrimination of vulnerable groups in the community, crime prevention by imposing deterrents to ensure and promote good behavior within the community and improvement of health by the use of women as traditional birth attendants (TBAS) which has reduced cases of infant and maternal deaths.

### **Conceptualization of innovative social work practice in Kenya**

The social work profession faces multiple challenges especially in the twenty-first century. Perennial challenges such as poverty, joblessness, homelessness, drug abuse, child abuse, divorce, juvenile delinquency and many others continues to face humanity. Meanwhile, new challenges including human trafficking, HIV and AIDS, empowerment of marginalized populations, economic decline and technological change are emerging (Rangirirai&Muranda, 2016).



Consequently, the adoption of innovative and creative approaches has become imperative, given the complex social challenges that require the intervention of social work (Rangirirai & Muranda, 2016). Contemporary societal problems call for the ability to link global challenges and opportunities to local demands and opportunities while taking cognizance of the interdependence between the global and the local contexts. Awareness between people and their social and physical environment is also critical (Dominelli, 2012). Modern challenges require the transformation of the social work theoretical frameworks and formulation of ground breaking and forward-looking forms of practice. Moreover, research as well as enhanced capacity to influence social policy at local, national and international levels (Rangirirai & Muranda, 2016). Hence, the study sought to understand the innovative approaches to social work practice that are being implemented in the targeted study sites.

It is interesting to note that most of the innovative approaches that are explained under this section are built upon the indigenous approaches that have been discussed in the earlier section. Thus the indigenous approaches still play a pivotal role in the implementation of the innovative approaches. The findings of the current study brought out a number of innovative approaches to social work practice which are briefly discussed as follows;

**One of the innovative approaches brought out by this study is the table banking initiative.** Respondents who belonged to the self-help group reported that they had adopted the table banking module. This initiative basically entails making weekly/monthly contributions during their meetings and the money that has been contributed is loaned out to the members of the group for them to engage in economic activities and pay back the loan with interest. This has ensured the economic growth and continuity of the self-help group as well as its members.

**The “*bodaboda*” transport initiative is another innovative approach to social work practice.** This is another major innovative approach where the use of bicycles evolved into the use of the “BodaBoda” transport system. This innovation has transformed the transport sector, created employment, ensured increased security, reduced incidents of mugging and enhanced the standard of living for families. On the other hand a few respondents stated that the *bodaboda* business has contributed to high school dropout rates since the school children are lured



into the business. In addition, these motorcycles have contributed to a number of fatal road accidents and life threatening injuries.

**Another innovative approach being implemented is the adoption of modern agricultural methods.** The FGD participants reported group trainings implemented in the Ndeiyaarea which have been beneficial. This is because they have led to the adoption of modern farming methods including; improved agri-business methods of horticultural farming, poultry farming, pig rearing, dairy farming not forgetting sheep rearing, rabbit farming and green house farming. These group trainings are done by trainers who also train trainers of trainers and so these new innovations get to be adopted by many. However, there is still a lack of support from government for agricultural based activities at the local level as well as the lack of awareness and exposure to modern farming methods.

**The *M-pesa* money transfer initiative is a key innovative approach to social work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.** Most of the FGD participants from the three study sites also reported the use of the “*M-pesa*” money transfer initiative as another innovative way of transacting business. They itemized the key benefits of this money transfer initiative to include: - the safety and security of money, making payments more convenient, serving the unbanked and the under-banked and shortening of distances in money transfers.

**Technological advancements was listed by respondents as another innovative approaches to social work practice.** The use of the mobile phone application in provision of health services. The community health workers use this health application in assessing health issues among their clientele. For instance, offering first aid services and referral for further diagnosis and treatment. They have successfully used a technological device which has been useful in disease diagnosis and offering treatment for various ailments. In addition, the internet services have been used to pay and register for the fourth form examination. The use of generators by those who can afford them has been handy in addressing the lack of electricity in the area especially in the Ndeiya sub-county.

**Environmental conservation was identified as another innovative approach to social work practice.** Environmental conservation and cleanliness has been ensured through the construction

of toilets through initiatives by the Ministry of Health (MOH). Additionally, the planting of trees has helped in environmental aesthetics.

**Another innovative approach is community mobilization.** In the Kiandutu slums, Community mobilization is implemented through initiatives called ‘action’ days. Volunteerism has played a big part in helping and supporting residents through environmental conservation initiatives.

**The “nyumbakumi” initiative or every ten houses initiative is an innovative approach that was identified.** It is pegged on the recognition of the significant role that the elders play in the community in safeguarding the stability and equilibrium of their communities. The ‘nyumbakumi initiative’ is an approach that is spearheaded by the local administrative where every unit consists of ten households and purposes to be aware of every happening in each of the ten households in every unit. This ensures that whenever there is a problem in any household it can be solved within the unit.

**Counselling is another innovative approach that is built on the indigenous approach of socialization of the younger generation by the elders.** The respondents also hailed the local administrators including the chiefs for their provision of counselling to individuals, families and groups that were experiencing social problems such as disputes and poverty especially in the Ndeiya sub-county.

**Bride price payment by women is another innovative approach practiced within the groups** found in the Kiandutu slum area. The findings reveal that the community members from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the study sites come together and mobilized their resources to enable them conduct “*Ruracio*” or traditional bride price ceremonies for themselves. This is a new trend because in the olden days women used to wait until their husbands pay the *ruracio* for them. Today they organize themselves in a rotational manner and pay the “*Ruracio*” for each other. This was reported to be the dominant trend because most of the women were single and in other instances the men had completely ignored this cultural practice. Further probing on the genesis of this practice of paying dowry for oneself through the self-help module elicited the following response from one of the FGD participants;

*“Our daughters are now of age. You cannot receive her dowry from her prospective husband unless you have given dowry to your own parents. Through this act everyone gets blessed”.*

**Negligence of traditional male roles;** the respondents reported that men are increasingly neglecting their roles of provision for their families as a result of their over-indulgence in substances. This has further contributed to the sale of land by the male household heads and channeling of this money to alcoholism. Mothers have tried to address the negligence, violence and male/ husband addiction to alcohol by getting work in the adjacent big plantation and addressing their families basic needs especially in the Ithanga study site. **Women use the money they get from plantations to engage in self-help initiatives.** These initiatives then help in improving their household’s standards of living by addressing basic needs, medical needs and psychosocial members needs which help them have a sense of community wellbeing.

**The emergence of day care centres is another innovative approach resulting from the negligence of roles of provision for the households by men.** As a result of this negligence of roles of provision by men, women have taken over the role of providing for their families. Hence, day care centres have been established where women leave their children to be taken care of at a fee while they go out to look for casual jobs to fend for their families.

**Empowerment of women and girls mainly through education is another significant innovative approach that has transformed social work practice.** This innovative approach entails rallying around the slogan ‘When you educate a woman you empower the whole community.’ This slogan enhances women’s self-esteem and unleashes their full hidden potential. This normally has a spiral effect where these women act as role models for others.

**Income generating activities by women is another innovative approach.** The findings reveal that women in self-help groups have come up with activities that can generate income to improve the standards of living for their families. These income generating activities include; registration of a pig rearing project through the table banking module, candle making, soap making and basket weaving.

**Social protection of the vulnerable groups in the community is another innovative approach to social work practice.** The elderly and the people living with disabilities are registered



with the government. They are given monthly financial support by the government under the cash transfer programme to enable them live dignified lives. This initiative is also pegged on the indigenous approaches to social work practice where in the olden days the elderly were taken care of by the community members. Hence, the findings brought out quite a number of innovative approaches to social work practice that have helped address the social problems facing the society.

### **CUSTODIANS OF THE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES**

The current study also sought to establish the custodians of the innovative approaches within the community. The findings revealed that the custodians of the innovative approaches are the partakers of the innovations. In other words, the innovation space is free for all and is a democratic space. For instance, every community member is free to start a business provided they follow the laid down procedures of licensing such a business.

A detailed examination of each of the study site was also done to bring out the specific case scenarios of the innovative approaches in every study site. The specific case scenarios found in the Kibandutu slum include the following; table banking initiatives; addressing the challenges of stigmatization and discrimination of vulnerable groups; use of a mobile phone application in provision of health services e.g. offering first aid services and referral for further diagnosis and treatment; community mobilization through initiatives termed as ‘action’ days and volunteerism have played a big part in helping the community through environmental conservation initiatives; community members organize themselves to be able to address social cultural wants like *‘kupelekanauthoni’* or *‘ruracio’* helping each other pay dowry by rotational contributions for each other and visiting members’ homes; social protection of the vulnerable groups through the contribution of food items that are divided amongst themselves. The *‘bodaboda’* or motorcycle businesses have improved standards of living for family members and helped them address basic needs and improved overall security in the area. The *M-pesa* money transfer initiative is another case scenario which has improved people’s lives.

The specific case scenarios found in Gatanga region were as follows; use of the religious leaders such as pastors and priests to resolve conflicts; women taking up the roles of provision for the family due to negligence of roles by men; women undertaking self-help initiatives in order to support their families; small scale commercial farming ventures have helped address families’ basic



needs; women leave their small children in day care centres to be able to go to work; school feeding programmes by NGO's have helped keep children in school; the M-pesa money transfer initiative has boosted the local economy and technological advancements such as internet services continue to promote development in the community.

The specific case scenarios found in Ndeiya study site include the following; M-pesa money transfer service has eased business transactions through making money transfers easier, saving time and ensuring safety of the money because there's little chance of losing money; there is a shift from the older traditional ways to the modern Christian based interpretation of life but the old and new rationalizations of life co-exist together to the extent that even the local priest is a member of the *Kiama*; or council of elders. Married women are elevated in the community through their husbands by being cooks for the *Mubiriga* or clan and *Bodaboda* businesses have improved peoples living standards and also helped reduce crime.

### **Challenges faced in the implementation of innovative approaches**

The findings revealed the challenges being faced in the implementation of innovative approaches which are as follows: the fact that mobile usage is not available to all due to the cost of the infrastructure; illiteracy in general and digital illiteracy in particular which acts as a deterrent in the broad based uptake of these innovations; connectivity to service providers is a challenge in some of the areas; lack of electricity in some of the areas for charging these gadgets is also another challenge; general illiteracy is a deterrent in the use of the *M-pesa* money transfer method. The slow uptake of modern agricultural methods is also a challenge because of the huge start-up capital that is required.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the innovative approaches to social work practice**

The current study also sought to evaluate the innovative approaches by bringing out the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches. The findings of the study indicate a number of strengths of these innovative approaches including; the fact that some of the innovations are democratic and have no restrictions in terms of gender, age, level of education; they have helped transform the standards of living for families because the money generated therein has been useful in helping members address basic needs; it has created hope and purpose, enhanced feelings of self-esteem



and improved general mental health in the people; the opening of the innovative space has also given birth to the creativity potential in the people and innovations like the *bodaboda* transport mode has improved security and there are fewer cases of muggings.

### **WEAKNESSES OF THE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES**

Further, the study set out to establish the weaknesses of these innovative approaches to social work practice including; some innovations require lots of start-up capital which the people do not have; some of the innovations have contributed to young people dropping out of school to be part of the quick money to be made in the *bodaboda* business; easy availability of money in the *bodaboda* business has led to addictions, impaired judgment when *bodaboda* drivers are under the influence of substances contributing to injuries and death. The increase in crime through the use of the *bodaboda* transport mode has also been used to commit crime e.g. after theft of household items they are transported away easily and speedily. Handbag snatching by *bodaboda* riders has also contributed to insecurity in the communities under study.

### **GENDER DYNAMICS INVOLVED IN INDIGENOUS AND INNOVATIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

Gender refers to the social construction of separate roles for men and women in different societies (Fox, 1997). Gender dynamics refers to the interaction of gender with other factors depending on the context. For this study, gender dynamics is thus the interaction of gender (social role construction) with the indigenous and innovative social work practices.

In order to further understand gender dynamics, it is important to understand the gender roles which are socially constructed. Moser, et. al., (1999) defines gender roles as what a society expects to be appropriate for a man or a woman, reflecting a division of labour. Both men and women play multiple roles in the society; while men play their multiple roles sequentially, women play their roles simultaneously and must balance competing claims on limited time for fulfillment of each. There are three types of gender roles as outlined by Moser, et. al., (1999) namely;

- i. **Productive role:** this is work done by both women and men for pay in cash or kind. It includes both market production with an exchange value and subsistence/home production with actual use value, but also potential exchange value. Both men and women

contribute to family income with various forms of productive work, although men usually dominate in productive work;

- ii. **Reproductive role:** child bearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of people living in the household such as child care, food preparation, care for the sick and old as well as the socialization of the young. The reproductive role is the basis of productive work. Women of all ages are mainly responsible for this work, which is usually unpaid;
- iii. **Community role;** this includes the voluntary activities contributing to the welfare, development or political organization of the community. This work involves activities such as organizing festivals or ceremonies, receiving visitors as well as maintaining a village resource such as a well. Under this role, there are two categorizations namely; the community managing and community politics role. Community managing role involves the activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their productive role, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption such as water, health care and education. This is voluntary unpaid work undertaken in “free” time. On the other hand, community politics role refers to the activities primarily undertaken by men at the community level, organizing at the formal political level, often within the framework of national politics. This work is usually undertaken by men and may be paid directly or result in increased power and status.

An understanding of these roles indicates the gender work load in households and communities. This is because women are involved in all the three roles simultaneously while men are mostly involved in productive and community roles which are done sequentially. Thus, women tend to have a greater workload in the household and at the community level as compared to their counterparts; the men. Owing to their simultaneous undertaking of the gender roles, women have less time to participate in community leadership roles where men are mostly in charge.

### **Gender dynamics and indigenous social work practice**

A detailed examination of the indigenous approaches shows a clear distinction of gender roles between men and women. These gender roles generally indicate the interaction between the two

genders at the household and the community levels. A number of observations concerning gender dynamics and the indigenous approaches can be made from the findings including;

**The custodians of the indigenous approaches are majorly men.** This includes the council of elders, the witch doctors, young men and boys in some communities. This can be explained by the fact that Kenya is largely a patriarchal society where much of the authority is vested on men. Thus, the adoption of these indigenous approaches may seem to perpetuate discrimination against women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unless, there is social de-construction of such gender roles then it is still difficult for the women and girls to be the custodians of these approaches.

**Women are socialized at an early age to adapt to these indigenous approaches.** For instance, polygamy as an indigenous approach is accepted by both men and women. It is used as a family planning method and the two genders derive benefits from this approach. The women get fewer children which mean that they have less reproductive roles and thus can participate in the productive and community roles. The men have a large household translating to more labour to generate income and improve standards of living for them and their households.

**There were reduced cases of negligence of roles of provision by men through the use of indigenous approaches.** The council of elders in every community was highly respected and they were used to resolve conflicts at the household and community level. It was also difficult to sell land since the elders had to be involved unlike nowadays where men are selling land and channeling the money to over-indulgence in substances while leaving their families destitute. Thus the clear cut roles of men and women were observed in every household and at the community level.

The findings thus reveal that the interaction of genders in the implementation of the indigenous approaches is male dominated. This is expected considering that Kenya is largely a patriarchal society where authority and decision making is majorly a male preserve. The women were majorly involved in the reproductive roles of child bearing and rearing while for the productive roles they were majorly involved in the provision of cheap labour while the economic benefits accrued were channeled to the men as the main decision makers in the households that were coupled.

### **Gender dynamics and innovative social work practice**

The adoption of the innovative social work practice in the three study sites targeted by this study has been majorly driven by the emergence of complex social problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The innovative social work practice has its foundation in the indigenous social work practice hence the two approaches cannot be implemented in isolation. Regarding the innovative approaches, there has been a change in the interaction between the two genders. Hence, the findings of this study brought up a number of issues that captures these changes namely;

**Increase in negligence of family roles by men;** the findings of this study show an increase in the negligence of roles of provision for their families on account of over-indulgence in substances and also the high unemployment rates especially in the slums. This has led the women to get involved in income generating activities in order to provide for their families including their husbands and children. Statistics show that majority of the people involved in self-help groups are women. In addition, the government of Kenya has come up with initiatives to support women and empower them economically such as the women enterprise fund. This thus captures the greater involvement of women in the productive roles unlike the case of indigenous approaches where women are less involved in the productive roles; they only come in to provide cheap labour.

**Emergence of day care centres;** the findings also captured the emergence of day care centres where women leave their children to be taken care of at a fee while they go out to look for casual jobs to provide for their families. This shows that there has been a change of roles where women are less involved in the reproductive roles stemming from the complex social problems of poverty, unemployment and substance abuse in the households.

**Increase in female headed households;** there has been a notable increase in female headed households in Kenya. This has been occasioned by some women who chose to stay single and raise their children on their own, others are separated/divorced from their husbands due to marital problems and others have been widowed due to HIV/AIDS. Hence, the women in these households are entirely in charge of the reproductive and productive roles in their households.

**Bride price payment by women;** the findings reveal that nowadays women are being involved in the payment of their own bride price since they cannot receive bride price payment of their

daughters before completing their. Some men have not been keen to pay bride price for their wives hence the women from different ethnic backgrounds pool resources and pay bride price for each other in turns. This is a new emerging practice unlike for the indigenous approaches where men alone were involved in the negotiations and payment of bride price for their wives.

**Empowerment of women and girls;** the empowerment of women and girls through education has enabled them to be independent. Thus they can now provide for their families. In addition, the women are involved in self-help groups where they have been empowered economically to take care of the socio economic needs of their families.

**Custodians of innovative approaches;**

The findings reveal that anyone has an opportunity to be a custodian of the innovative approaches unlike the case of indigenous approaches where men are mainly the custodians. This indicates that every member of the society is free to practice the innovative approaches to better their lives by improving the living standards of their households.

**Inclusion of women in the nyumbakumi initiative;** the findings also reveal that women have been included in the NyumbaKumi initiative which consists of elders of ten homesteads within each unit. This indicates a change in the gender dynamics where the women were not included in the council of elders for the indigenous approaches.

**Reduced stigmatization of vulnerable groups;** there's now reduced stigmatization of vulnerable groups such as the disabled as a result of continuous sensitization of community members. Community sensitization is one of the innovative approaches that have been used to help people appreciate diversity of people found in their communities. In the olden days witchcraft was used as an indigenous approach to help deal with the problem of disability and the disabled people were kept away from the rest of the community members since they considered them cursed. Nowadays they are empowered economically and they can belong to self-help groups which has boosted their self-esteem and promoted a sense of belonging and inclusivity among them. The government on its part has enacted the Disability Act 2003 and instituted disability funds and tax exemptions for people living with disabilities.

Hence, the participation of women and other vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities and the youth has been recognized through the use of innovative approaches. Today women participate more in productive roles due to the complex social problems that have arisen in families due to growing unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and negligence by men all of which characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **EMERGENCE OF MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMIC SPHERE IN RESPONSE TO SOCIAL WORK NEEDS (CONTRIBUTORS).**

Multiple institutions have emerged in the social economic sphere to take care of the emerging social work needs. These institutions have been key in alleviating the social ills that community members find themselves in. The findings captured a number of institutions namely;

- i. **The government;** The Kenyan government has been pivotal in supporting its citizenry alleviate the social problems that are facing them. For instance, they have implemented the devolution strategy in all the counties. Devolution is a political response to the ills plaguing fragile and plural societies such as, conflicts, inequalities, economic stagnation, corruption and inefficient use of public resources. In order for devolution to work there is need to design the rules and systems in such a manner that political elites do not use the resources to consolidate their hold on political power through patronage thereby alienating the very poor people they were meant to address in the first place. The Government has also instituted the cash transfer program for the elderly, people living with disabilities, orphaned and vulnerable children to enable these categories of vulnerable people live dignified lives. In addition, the government has set aside funds for women and youth under the women and youth enterprise funds to empower them economically in accordance with the Kenya's vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ii. **Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organizations (CBOs);** The findings revealed that the CBOs and FBOs have played a pivotal role in responding to social work needs. They support the vulnerable groups within their areas of operation through social protection and economic empowerment amongst other approaches. They do this through implementation of both the indigenous and innovative approaches to social work.

- iii. **Research institutions;** research is key for the advancement of any development agenda in any community or nation. Research institutions have played a key role in the identification, documentation and dissemination of findings regarding the social problems that people across different cultures in Kenya experience. These research institutions include universities both public and private, governmental and nongovernmental organizations such as the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) among others.
- iv. **Educational institutions;** Educational institutions have also played a significant role in preparing social work students to deal with the emerging social work needs within different cultures in Kenya. In addition, these institutions are involved in research which is key in addressing the social problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **WOMEN'S ORGANIZING AND CHANGE: ORDINARY WOMEN'S WAYS OUT OF THE DILEMMAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY CAPITALISM**

Ordinary citizens in Kenya have exhibited strong values and goal-oriented strategies that capture markets and organize society at their level. These values and strategies are enshrined in social relations and associations known as *vyama*. The *vyama* serve as the basis of community economies and are an alternative to expansionary capitalism. Drawing on traditional/ indigenous for their survival, they drive economic action by identifying the market needs as well as managing surplus and consumption.

Ordinary people are heavily interconnected and independent. The proponents of relations in development describe relations in developing economies such as those in Africa as disjointed, disorderly and violent. They argue that ordinary people (especially in the informal sector) have to be helped to organize themselves. This kind of analysis emerges from the tendency by scholars and researchers to oversimplify the relations that exist among ordinary people. (Kinyanjui 2012)

To cope with the vagaries strategies of the market and the liberalized economies, the common *mwananchior* citizen revived African traditional social groups (*chama, gikundi or mwethiya in Kamba*). These social groups offered mutual support during farming seasons, illness, death, childbirth, marriage, initiation, and rites of passage (Maina-Ahlberg, 1991). They were based on *Ubuntu (Zulu), Utu (Swahili)* and *Umundu (Gikuyu)* considerations of others' humanity, which is best expressed as 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' (Mbiti 1972: 108).

The spaces where the common *mwananchi* engages in socio-economic actions are not just sites of compliance; they are also sites of resistance and contestations against imperialism and economic injustices. Much as ordinary people accommodate some degree of modernity, they also contest attributes that are a threat to cohesion and solidarity. This case documents the compliance of vyama in coordinating markets, organizing society and resisting socio-economic and political injustices. (Kinyanjui 2012)

### **EVIDENCE FROM A CASE STUDY FROM THE KIANDUTU SLUMS**

In this section a case study is presented to compliment other data sources. The case study focused on documenting the voices of merry go round members who gave their rationales for joining the group. Data for the case study was collected through unstructured, informal face-to face interviews between the interviewer and the interviewees. The main aim was to capture the salient stories to compliment other findings. The names used in the case studies are fictitious in order to conceal the identity of the respondents.

The main objectives /reasons for joining this women's merry go round group were to: share common goals; which included; improve the social, economic, and cultural status of women in the area, fulfil their basic needs through the table banking initiative which is inbuilt in the merry go round group, thereby improving the socio-economic status of the women; develop skills among the women e.g. in soap making initiatives. The socio-economic profile of the group reveals that the majority of the members (90%) are in the age-group of 25-50. It was also found that the leaders and members of the group under study are mostly single, largely illiterate and did not have a written constitution. However they all adhered to their own unwritten rules and regulations. To a large extent, the groups' structure was not hierarchical and was informal. It was found that the women's group was engaged in various activities such as merry-go-round, members' contributions and savings, farming, welfare programs, besides, cultural programs which was noted to be the most popular programme may be due to its immediate dividends to the members. It was noted that the programs serve as an opportunities to the members to come together and strengthen the ties of sisterhood. It was clearly observed that women's groups were not financially sound. The group has not received any outside assistance. It is noteworthy to mention that the group has faced various problems including- no visits from the Kenya Government officials, lack of diversity in ideas, poor attendance by members, some



members' inability to pay back the money loaned to them through the table banking initiative sometimes and leadership squabbles. This has greatly limited their growth. The majority (60%) of the respondents felt that the women's movement in contemporary Kenya is very strong. The movement is understood to be committed to the sensitization and conscientisation of women on their rights as citizens of Kenya. The respondents pointed out that women still suffer from subordinate status in the Kenyan society mainly due to patriarchal cultural practices and their low economic status. On measures to help strengthen and grow their group the respondents felt that, the relevant government officials should organize seminars to educate them on the best ways to grow and manage their group. Further they added that access to credit would also help them grow. One respondent summarized this wish by saying: ...*We need 'dwanotithamaki' or 'give us fishing rods not fish'*. This means that facilitation will empower them to be self-governing and not be perennial recipients of handouts.

Social work as a profession as well as a practice should focus its poverty alleviation efforts on supporting progress towards the achievement of the universal blueprints such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Violence Against Women, (CEDAW), SDGS and national development plans such as Kenya's Vision (2030) and making sure that devolution works in all the counties. This will hopefully ensure growth and development, dignity and wellbeing for all Kenyans

## **MALE INVOLVEMENT IN INDIGENEOUS AND INNOVATIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

A number of observations can be made from the findings regarding male involvement in indigenous and innovative social work practice namely;

- i. **Men are in support of women empowerment;** it would be difficult to implement the development agenda of women empowerment without the participation of men. Observations show that any developmental initiatives meant to promote women's empowerment that have isolated men usually faces failure. The use of innovative approaches has seen men get sensitized to support women's empowerment in their communities.

ii. **Participation in self-help groups;** the findings show that men are also participating in self-help groups to promote economic empowerment of their households. This promotes the spirit of togetherness that is deeply entrenched in our African culture.

iii.

In line with the SDG that underlines gender mainstreaming this study noted that this SDG provides that countries' base their policies on a comprehensive interpretation of women's empowerment. This includes support for programs aimed at helping women and men uncover, challenge and change traditions, policies, norms and attitudes that limit the lives of women and men during childhood, adolescence, child bearing and the rest of their lives and make long term commitments to empower women and girls. Addressing deep-rooted issues of inequality, marginalization and discrimination is a long process that involves social and structural change using the devolved bottom-up approach. Promoting gender equality also means engaging men and boys. Women's empowerment is not solely about them, nor can it be achieved by only engaging them. The engagement of men and boys is critical to achieving positive changes in the relationships and structures that shape the lives of women and girls as well as those of men and boys .Incorporating gender analysis and women's empowerment objectives into programming is critical. This would include gender disaggregated data and integrating women's needs and perspectives into program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Supporting social networks and safe spaces for women and girls is also a concern for social workers. Providing women and girls with a space to build legitimacy and support is an important step in reducing their isolation, collective action and empowerment. These spaces may include savings and loan groups for women and social networks and clubs for girls. The study did not find evidence of these transformative structures.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the current study have important implications on the advancement of social work practice in Kenya, Africa and beyond. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are suggested that could ensure professional practice using both the indigenous and innovative approaches to social work in Kenya. They include the following;



**There is need for incorporation of both the indigenous and innovative approaches.** This is because these approaches are intertwined and thus cannot work in isolation. This will help solve the silent struggle between the Christian teachings and values and the indigenous way of interpreting life as was clearly brought out by this study.

**There is need for continuous research in order to enable documentation of culture-specific indigenous approaches in Kenya.** This will help the social work practitioners and other stakeholders working with different cultural groups to understand the indigenous ways of interpreting life in individual contexts.

**Creating awareness is key especially in the practice of indigenous approaches.** This is because some of the approaches such as use of traditional medicines and polygamy as a method of family planning may be mis-understood. The costs of these mis-conceptions might be high including loss of lives due to over doses of traditional medicines and the practice of polygamy which can spread the HIV/AIDs pandemic within a household. Further communities need to understand the relationships between large families, diminishing land sizes, possibilities of conflict, lack of education, unemployment and poverty.

**There is need for promoting economic empowerment of households which will lead to diversification of livelihoods.** This diversification of livelihoods will help reduce over-reliance on subsistence ways of earning a living. The findings reveal that there was a cry from the community for facilitation by the government to be able to address poverty situations and improve their standards of living. We need '*dwanotithamaki*' or 'give us fishing rods not fish'.

**The government needs to work on improving infrastructure in the rural areas.** Improved infrastructure such as installation of electricity in the rural areas will enable creation of jobs e.g. setting up cyber cafes. In addition, the construction of good access roads will allow for faster transport of produce to the markets in the rural areas thus boosting the local economy and consequently improving the living standards of the local people.

**There is need to improve literacy levels especially in the rural areas to enable people to benefit from the innovative approaches to social work practice.** This will help fight ignorance among the locals in the study sites especially in regard to the use of the *m-pesa* initiative to transact



business. The locals are at risk of being defrauded money as they transact business due to the lack of basic education and digital literacy.

**Stakeholders need to come in and initiate programmes to support the empowerment of the boy child.** The boy child is increasingly lacking role models as the majority of men become substance abusers with the attendant consequences. In addition, these boys are lured into *bodaboda* business due to their desire for quick money contributing to high school dropout rates. This has in turn perpetuated illiteracy and poverty in the study sites.

**Though the *bodaboda* transport initiative has transformed the transport sector and local economy in the study sites, there is need for them to be regulated.** According to the findings, some *bodaboda* riders have contributed to increase in crime and causing accidents. The government could regulate them by issuing licenses to the riders. Other stakeholders could organize trainings for them regularly on key issues facing them such as HIV/AIDS, crime prevention, health and safety measures, gender mainstreaming and child protection among others and emphasize on how all these ills relate to local and national development.

**There is need for the promotion of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of indigenous and innovative approaches to social work.** This will ensure that these gender concerns are incorporated in these approaches where the needs of all genders are taken into account. In addition, measures need to be put in place to ensure greater involvement of men in the empowerment of women and girls.

**There is need to create supportive laws and policies in the implementation of indigenous and innovative social work practice.** In addition, creating supportive laws and policies, and ensuring their effective implementation is a requisite in the practice of indigenous and innovative social work. Implementation requires mechanisms for accountability, including support for civil society engagement and advocacy to hold governments accountable, mobilize communities, and build coalitions to champion women's and girls' rights.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the indigenous and the innovative social work approaches play major roles in alleviating social problems at the individual, household and community levels. However, these approaches cannot work in isolation since they are intertwined; the indigenous approaches form the foundation for the implementation of the innovative approaches. At some point these approaches conflict with each other, for instance, on the issue of witchcraft versus the Christian world view. Hence, there's a need for the harmonization of these approaches so that they can be more effective in dealing with the social problems facing the communities. The use of these approaches is irrelevant in solving some of the social economic problems in Africa as depicted by the findings of this study. The application of western models to social work problems alone has been faced with challenges due to the differences in culture and contexts in the African societies. Needless to say ordinary people desire good things to happen in life. They desire good houses, good food, good education for their children, good and affordable healthcare, safe childbearing and entertainment. Some of the indigenous and innovative approaches are indeed institutions of hope that enable them realize these aspirations. These approaches help ordinary people make steps in accessing these goods in the markets and society where they are a preserve of the elite. Ordinary households desirous of eating good food or having a constant supply of cooking oil will have an arrangement in the self-help group for example to buy such products in bulk for their members. This desire gave rise to their expressed felt needs ... *'give us fishing rods not fish'*

In regard to interrogation of gender dynamics in the implementation of indigenous and innovative approaches to social work, the findings of this study have given rise to a number of observations including: the application of some of the indigenous approaches such as polygamy as a family planning method appears to perpetuate gender discrimination especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further, the custodians of the indigenous approaches were majorly men including boys in the *Kamba* community which poses challenges to the empowerment of women and girls. This brings out the weaknesses of some of the indigenous approaches. On the other hand, some of the innovative approaches that have emerged such as the day care centers are as a result of negligence of the roles of provision by men due to substance abuse. This has brought about a lot of role conflicts for the women. Thus, the women have had to find a way of reducing the household workload by sending their children to day care centers while they look for employment opportunities to provide for their families. In addition, the boy child lacks male role models in the



community as the men have slowly sunk into substance abuse with the attendant negative impacts. This in turn has also contributed to the increase in female headed households as women increasingly opt to raise their children single handedly instead of struggling with their addicted husbands. In regard to the innovative approaches, the partakers of these approaches are the custodians. Hence, most of the innovative approaches captured by this study are aimed at empowering women in the community for instance, the table banking initiative, the *m-pesa* money transfer initiative and the *bodaboda* initiative among others.

Hence, these approaches cannot be implemented in isolation since the weaknesses of one approach are complemented by the strengths of the other. Consequently, harmonization of these approaches will make them more effective in dealing with the social problems of individual communities. Perhaps they could also benefit from learning about the best practices of other communities. Continuous research on these approaches should be done to ensure that social work practitioners and other stakeholders are familiar with the existing indigenous and innovative approaches in their areas of operation for optimum benefits for all.

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