

Women and Community Development: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

The question of women participation in community development has been widely debated since 1975 when the United Nations organized the first women's conference in Mexico. This was aimed at giving women equal opportunities with men to spur community development. UN has further come up with programs promoting women in community development as women fight for their space in male dominated community. This is evidenced in Beijing Action. In Kenya, transformative conference was done in 1992 at a National Women's Convention under the theme: Women's Agenda for a Democratic Kenya, over 2,000 women representatives from across the whole country demanded that the democratization be engendered; an overhaul of legal policy framework, to remove all forms of discrimination against women in access to decision-making positions, in employment and community development. Despite progress UN has achieved towards gender equality, women have continued to suffer discrimination all over the world. My paper therefore will focus on forms of discrimination meted against women with special reference to women in Kenya where the gender equality has remained a mystery. The study was guided by empowerment theory, feminism theory and Revolution Theory by Carl marx. According to Ledwith (2005) "Empowerment is not an alternative solution to the redistribution of unequally divided resources". Empowerment is more than providing the resources for one to help them out of poverty, it is an act of providing the necessary tools to shape the whole person and promote a critical way of thinking and consciousness. This theory can be applied to development work through the action of going to a community rather than waiting on the outside to be invited in. My argument is that to attain gender equality will need goodwill from all actors or else it remains paper work and far from reality. Failure to address this inequality may lead to revolutions similar to the ones witnessed in political spheres to bring change. This paper will shed more light on the little recognized roles women can perform to develop the society hence accelerated community development. Therefore, the role of women in community development is significant.