

*NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY*

*THE IMPACT OF FEMALE LITERACY
IN INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES OF KENYA:
A Case Study of BTL Kenya-Sabaot Project*

*BY
HARRIET NYAKECHO OWINO*

*A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Educational Studies*

JULY, 2006

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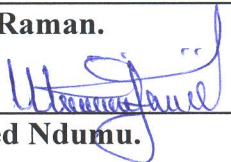
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July, 2006

Student's Declaration

**THE IMPACT OF FEMALE LITERACY IN INDIGENOUS
SOCIETIES OF KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF BTL
KENYA- SABAOT PROJECT**

I declare that this study is my original work and has not been submitted to any other
College or University for academic credit

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical
Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed) _____
Harriet Nyakecho Owino

July, 2006

ABSTRACT

This study explored how the female community in Mt. Elgon District perceived the effect of Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL), literacy and mother tongue translation of the New Testament Bible project upon their lives. Data was collected through face to face semi-structured interviews which were recorded in note books .The researcher also used video-taking and observation to record data for the purpose of triangulation. The data was later transcribed.

The findings revealed that the women have been impacted in several ways including economic, political, religious, social, and psychological aspects in their lives. The impact has been caused by improved literacy levels especially through the mother tongue literacy project of BTL.

Based on the findings, the Sabaot Bible Translation and Literacy (SBTL) needs to further work hand in hand with the Mt. Elgon community to not only provide Bible translation in their mother tongue but to also provide avenues in which the community can get training in their mother tongue and in the process, create job opportunities for those who are involved in the projects.

TO

God, my *Abba*, Father, my El-Shaddai

My sweetheart, David Scott Omutimba, the song in my heart

My mother, Violet Kadenyeka, the wind beneath my wings

My brothers, Angelo and Andrew, my pillars on either side

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I wish to deeply appreciate a number of people who have contributed to the completion of this study in numerous ways.

My initial words of gratitude go to God. He has been my *Abba* Father and with His strength, He has made my feet like a deer that I may be able to go to greater heights than I could ever have imagined. (Habakkuk 3:19)

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I am thankful for the help I received from the Directors and staff at Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) including Mr. John Ommani, Mr. Cyrus Murage, Mr. Sabila Ngania, Miss Phanice Kiyen and Miss Annah Musiya. They facilitated my entry into Kopsiro Division, the location for the research.

I would like to recognize the female community at Kopsiro who allowed me to enter into their lives and listen to their stories in relation to this study. Without them, there would be no research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, literacy is used as a yardstick by which personal and national development is measured. In the past, literacy was the exclusive prerogative of the priests (e.g., Hebrew priests during the Biblical era).¹ Currently, Christian organizations such as Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) are involved in development of literacy among the marginalized societies in Kenya in an effort to improve individual and societal lives in a holistic manner. Literacy opens mental eyes to many treasure islands and sparks development in humankind and in society. In underdeveloped countries, development and adult/children's literacy go hand in hand.

As an organization, BTL is focused on language development and the provision of functional literacy programs within marginalized communities such as the Sabaot community of Mt. Elgon District in Kenya. These groups of people are isolated with harsh climatic conditions and rough terrain. They have remained underdeveloped since the colonial era. BTL was formed in 1980 to reach such groups with the written word of God and literacy training.² In a nutshell, BTL emphasizes

¹ Mulira, Enoch, E.K. *Adult Literacy and Development: A Handbook for Teachers of Adults* (Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1975), 8.

² Katheranya, Albert, Kaibiru. "A Study of the Causes of Low Enrollment in BTL Adult Literacy Classes in Tharaka Central Division, Tharaka district." (MA Thesis. University of Nairobi. 1999/2000),3.

that to be literate is to be empowered holistically in cultural, economical, political, religious, social, and psychological spheres.

Research Problem

The Sabaot people number over 300,000. They live on the slopes of Mount Elgon in Western Kenya. While other areas in Kenya have benefited from mission schools and the development projects of Christian organizations, this area has often gone without, due to its isolation and treacherous roads.

Nevertheless, the children's literacy pilot project began in five schools in Mount Elgon District in February 1998. Teachers from the pilot schools have been given literacy training and have assisted with material development.³ However, it is unclear whether the literacy training is yielding any positive result among the women in the society. I therefore, sought to discover the impact of BTL's literacy project on the female community in Kopsiro Division of Mt. Elgon District.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the (perception of the) impact of BTL's literacy project on the female participants in the region. For BTL to be effective in its literacy program in Mt. Elgon, it needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its curriculum- whether or not its program is changing the lives of women. The womens' perceptions will help shape the development of community-oriented literacy programs.

³BTL. *Background Information for Teachers and Principles*. Yahoo search available from www.wycliffe.ca/doc/lead_general/program_results2003.doc. Internet accessed on 16th June 2005

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following “grand tour” question and three sub-questions.

How do the Sabaot women perceive the effect of BTL’s literacy program upon their lives?

1. Has the program impacted their economic situation through its motivation to the community to set up self-sustaining and self-managing systems that shall enable them to respond to their felt needs in community development?
2. Has the program enhanced their psychological outlook in terms of appreciating their language and cultural heritage?
3. Has the program strengthened their spiritual development through facilitating the translation of scripture with the local churches?

Significance of the Study

A better understanding of the impact of female literacy in the Mt. Elgon District will enable BTL program facilitators to be more effective both in refining and funding the project. The Sabaot people are very proud of their cultural heritage and language. However, the educational opportunities of the female population are still limited. Therefore, the women involved in the literacy program will also be encouraged to continue their participation in the programs and even invite other women from the villages if they knew the impact the programs would have on their lives.

Female literacy development in the indigenous societies of Kenya can be a tool for empowerment especially in the area of poverty, conflicts, wars, diseases and global village, consequently enabling the females to take social responsibilities for their own communities. Therefore, the findings of this study will facilitate the

lobbying of other literacy organizations to pursue literacy programs in marginalized societies in Kenya.

Delimitation of the Study

1. The research was limited to the female population of the Sabaot community of Mt. Elgon District, Western Province of Kenya which may not be a true representation of the impact of literacy among females in other indigenous societies of the world.
2. The researcher solicited respondents who have been influenced by the BTL literacy program in Mt. Elgon District only and the findings may not represent the impact made by other literacy organizations in Kenya.

Limitation of the Study

1. The time given to do the study was not as ample as the researcher would want and therefore the researcher was limited in terms of time.
2. The financial resources for doing the research were not enough and therefore, the researcher was limited in terms of hiring assistants to collect the data.

Definition of Terms

BTL- Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) is a Christian charitable organization, incorporated in Kenya in 1981 and registered as an NGO. Its primary concern is with literacy while incorporating livelihood training among marginalized societies in Kenya.

SBTL- Sabaot Bible Translation and Literacy- BTL's base in Kopsiro Division of Mt. Elgon District, Western Province of Kenya.

Literacy- Literacy consists of developing primers and literacy materials for teaching people to read and write which is part of what BTL is doing in their literacy work. To

be literate is therefore to be able to read and write or to be knowledgeable in a particular subject or field either in mother-tongue, English or Swahili particularly in the Kenyan setting.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review substantive literature relevant to this study.

Development of Adult Literacy in Kenya

The main provider of adult literacy in Kenya is the Department of Adult Education (DAE) in the Ministry of Labor and Human Resource Development. In spite of ambitious policy goals to eradicate illiteracy, the government's literacy program remains severely under-financed. Although the government's allocation is supplemented by international donor agencies, international and local NGOs, and reaches all corners of the country through the government's administrative system, too few participants are actually enrolled to reduce the rates of illiteracy substantially.⁴

The under-financing of adult literacy programs is reflected in numerous other constraints: a lack of incentives for instructors leading to a lack of skilled teachers and unreliability among those who are available, a lack of suitable teaching materials, a lack of adequate learning facilities and high drop- out rates. Attempts have been made to promote functional literacy through the introduction of economic and social projects as components of adult education programs.

⁴ Mwangi, Anne. *Strengthening livelihoods with Literacy: Cases from Kenya*. Yahoo search available from <http://www.iiz-dvv.de/englisch/Publikationen/Weltbank/anhang4.htm>. Internet accessed on 16th June 2005.

Adult learners are expected to improve their skills in areas such as agriculture, livestock rearing, home economics and small scale business as they learn to read and write. Nevertheless, livelihood training has not been prominent in the literacy projects in the Kenyan context. Available vocational or livelihood training programs have required a Primary School Leaving Certificate as an educational prerequisite, so that basic literacy does not feature in curricula.⁵ There has consequently been a great need for adult literacy training.

Background information on the role of BTL in Adult Literacy Projects

As a translation and literacy organization, BTL is focused on developmental projects among the marginalized peoples in Kenya who live in areas isolated by socio-economic and environmental barriers. These groups have lagged behind in the areas of development, education and literacy. BTL's goal is to alleviate poverty by assisting these communities to attain the level of literacy necessary to effectively participate in a fast changing social and economic environment.

BTL is focused on language development and the provision of functional literacy programs within these communities. Topics such as hygiene, nutrition, and prevention of diseases are covered in adult literacy classes, while basic education in the mother tongue is carried out in the public schools.⁶

Importance of Female Literacy

Why is it imperative for the female person to be educated? Isn't it equally important for the men folk to be literate? What differences are there in opportunity

⁵ Mwangi.

⁶ BTL. *Background Information for Teachers and Principals*. Calgary: Backpack for Literacy. Yahoo search available from www.wycliffe.ca/doc/lead_general/program_results2003.doc. Internet accessed on 16th June 2005.

and literary levels between the urban and rural female person in the Kenyan society that have sparked a particular concern, leading to the present research?

Women generally play a vital role in society. They are the pillars of their households and their families depend on them for food and for maintaining a healthy environment.⁷ The family as the basic unit must be preserved and nurtured and, more often than not, the burden to do this falls upon the women, especially in rural areas. Since the women play an important role in bringing up their children, it implies that they have been given the task of developing citizens for the future nation.⁸ Unstable and undisciplined families produce unstable and undisciplined citizens. A famous proverb states that when you educate a mother, you educate a nation and when you educate a man, you educate an individual.⁹

One reason the task of taking care of children has been left to women is the growing rate of rural-urban migration, which has seen many men leave their spouses alone with the children in their rural homes. Consequently, the casual talk of the future of the country being stocked in children unwittingly acknowledges that without women, there is no stable future for the country.¹⁰ The need for educating rural women is thus self-evident.

The Impact of Female Literacy in Indigenous Societies of Kenya

How then does adult literacy impact the life of a rural woman? It is true that women have responded very well to the adult literacy programs organized throughout Kenya. Women have shown themselves to be willing students and have not been

⁷ Barng'etuny, Marylene C. *Women's Education and Career Opportunities in Kenya* (Nairobi: Creative Publishing Company Ltd. 1999), 83.

⁸ Kabaji, Egara. *Women in Development* (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery Research Consultants and Publishers, 1997), 3.

⁹Ibid., 4.

¹⁰Ibid., 5.

daunted by cultural expectations concerning family commitments. Self-sufficiency is the key to empowerment. To empower women means to enable them to realize and utilize their full potential to take part in decision making, to exercise control over their own lives, and the circumstances around them. This empowerment will culminate in their breaking free from outdated derogatory customs, beliefs and practices, and will enable them to take an active part in the process of social, economic and cultural development which contributes towards the societal and national development.¹¹

Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. An empowered woman has a positive self-image, greater access to knowledge and resources, self-confidence and supports the importance of human values, rights and privileges for a more dignified life. Empowerment is also an active, multi-dimensional process. Power is not a commodity to be traded or purchased. Power has to be acquired. Once a woman is empowered, she has to exercise this power, sustain and preserve it. Education with an emphasis on economic independence is an important means for achieving women's empowerment in social, political, cultural and monetary reality. Education not only helps women to gain knowledge but also provides the necessary courage to face the challenges of life.¹²

Cultural Pre-requisite

Any analysis of women's experiences in contemporary Africa would be remiss if it did not dare to tackle the broad issue of the culture that encompasses the main factors of the African reality which influences their lives. Culture is that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, custom and other capabilities and habits

¹¹ Bal, Sudeed, S. and Singh, Rashpaul. *Open Learning System of Adult Education for Women Empowerment*; Yahoo search available from <http://www/cade-aced.ca/icdepapers/sweensudeep.htm>. Internet accessed 12th March 2005.

¹² Ibid.

acquired by humans as members of society.¹³ Culture also includes religious, linguistic, and ethnic dimensions of the African cultural existence. It can be positive or negative. The first step in perceiving the cultural empowerment of women through literacy is to listen to the women in their own setting. In the listening, one should pay attention not only to their voices but also to the women's silences and their half-silences for it is well known that what is not said, or only hinted at, may be as meaningful as what is stated. Women usually talk freely among themselves, and some are accused of talking too much within the domestic scene.¹⁴ Adult literacy educationalists should then encourage these women to find their voices and speak up for themselves so that they can work with other women to change their living conditions.

Economic Impact

As women get voices to talk about their problems intelligently, they also learn innovative ways to deal with their economic difficulties. Generally speaking, the participation of women in businesses in many developing countries is very low. Many women lack education in management skills and consequently most of their business activities become ineffective.¹⁵ Nevertheless, women play an important economic role in society. They are responsible for 60-80% of the food production in the rural areas of Kenya, but interestingly they reap little benefit from their labor.

Women's active participation in development has become a national need and should be a priority. The ability of women to participate effectively in development-oriented programs is constrained by illiteracy and other factors. In the traditional point

¹³ Njoroge, Nyambura J. and Musa, Dube, eds., *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2001), 87.

¹⁴ International Institute for Adult Literacy, *Methods, Women Literacy and Development*, (Teheran, Iran: The International Institute for Adult Literacy, 1975-1976), 24.

¹⁵ Barg'etuny, 84.

of view, a woman can be empowered if she has access to literacy, education, productive skills and capital. This, however, is a limited view, as it is based on the advancement of the individual without any societal perspective to the problem.¹⁶ For example, despite the fact that many people perceive women as weak and consider men to be the true breadwinners in most rural homes, research indicates that women form the bulk of genuine producers in the rural economies.¹⁷ In addition to this, although it has been argued that women are economic dependants and that they are incapable of supporting themselves and their children, investigations on African women's farming and craft activities reveal that they were, and indeed are physically and intellectually capable of economic independence.¹⁸

One of the most remarkable achievements of women has been their ability to come together and work in groups to improve their lives. Women's groups are forming to pursue the improvement of women's economic, cultural and social well-being.¹⁹ One such group in Kenya is *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Development for Women), which is a national women's organization that aims at increasing women's participation in economic development. The organization is registered and falls under the Department of Women's bureau, which the government established specifically to look into women's affairs in jobs or rural development and advise the state accordingly. Based on this advice the government then gives grants that aid women's small-scale business activities, agriculture, pottery or handicraft. Moreover, the mere fact that women struggle against the odds to set up productive enterprises is in itself a major achievement.

¹⁶ Bal and Singh.

¹⁷ Barngetuny, 8.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

Women in the rural areas of developing countries are known to work hard and form what has been classified as the “unpaid family labor.”²⁰ This brings out the crucial factor in relation to women’s participation in the economy. Often times, much of the work that women do is not counted or defined as “economic activity.”²¹ However, women are beginning to recognize that by uniting they are likely to achieve more than they would have when they acted as individuals.²² Religious groups hence develop strategies to empower the women in their congregations and this is where the church comes in. If churches in rural communities would encourage the intellectual development of their members as much as the spiritual growth that they traditionally stress, Christian women would become a significant tool in bringing development to the whole community.

Political Impact

For a long time, it was wrongly assumed that women never participated in national liberation struggles. On the contrary, many women in the past worked hand in hand with men in bringing political freedom to their communities. Cases in the history of Kenya include Wangu-wa Makeri and Mekatilili. Although women do participate in national struggles, their role remains relatively unsung.²³

Education is meant to broaden one’s outlook and sharpen one’s intellect about the world including the awareness of all the social, cultural, economic and political forces of one’s existence. It is almost impossible for women to participate fully in national development if educational opportunities for them are restricted by economic

²⁰ Barngetuny, 83.

²¹ Brubaker, Pamela, K. *Women Don’t Count: The Challenge of Women’s Poverty to Christian Ethics*, (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994), 38.

²² Barngetuny, 88.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

situations and the social and cultural attitudes of individuals.²⁴ Female literacy is therefore an effective instrument for national development because educated women are more politically active and better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them.²⁵

Education involves bringing people together to find out from each other what they want to learn since the literacy programs involve policy making and working towards seeing these policies implemented in the teaching-learning process and even in the establishment of community projects that empower women. People are also given choices about what to learn and how they want to learn it. Hence, people learn not only to read and write, but also to understand the world and what should be changed.

Illiteracy is not the result of personal deficiencies but of basic inequalities in the structure of society that create and feed the conditions for literacy. Fundamentally, illiteracy is a problem of poverty, and the basic community for illiteracy is the “underclass,” the people without a political constituency. The problem of illiteracy demands a political response that enables illiterate people (who after all, are citizens and voters) to move to collective or community action.²⁶ Self-confidence for women can come only through their mastery of a particular area of specialization. Without an education that prepares them for public life, African women will not be competitive in the contemporary political world.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁵ Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh and Valentine, Moghadam, M. 2003. *Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa*; available from <http://www.prb.org/pdf/empoweringwomeninMENA.Internet>; accessed 12th March 2005. , 2.

²⁶ Gayfer, Margaret, ed., *Literacy in the Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice*. (Canada: International Council for Adult Education, 1987), 68.

²⁷ Barngetuny, 30.

Religious Impact

Among the multiple purposes of education within the various sciences, the cultivation of the intellectual and moral facilities of persons and their highest proficiency level are paramount. The enlightenment of the mind, the strengthening of the will and the nurturing of abilities to maturity are possible only through education.²⁸

Education is thus the tool by which the mind of the person is sharpened to form principles, and establish personal and communal morals. Lack of theological education for the spiritually gifted women or others desirous of a deeper knowledge of the faith leaves their potentials unrealized and their talents undeveloped.²⁹ Theological education's aim is to encourage women to mature in Christ and in whatever they do; hence, they become more significant in their homes and in the whole community. As women perceive themselves through the mind of Christ, certain cultural stereotypical views that demean them are shed. They no longer live ignorantly under oppression because they understand that God views both men and women equally and has blessed them similarly.³⁰

Sociological Impact

Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts. Since human behavior is shaped by social factors, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized crime to religious cults;

²⁸ Njoroge and Musa, eds., 86.

²⁹ Ibid., 88.

³⁰ Kemdirim, Otitorichukwu, and Mercy, Amba, Oduyoye, eds., *Women, Culture and Theological Education*. (Enugu: West Africa Association of Theological Institutions, 1998), 59.

from the divisions of race, gender and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture; and from the sociology of work to the sociology of sports. In fact, few fields have such broad scope and relevance for research, theory, and application of knowledge.

Sociology provides many distinctive perspectives on the world, generating new ideas and critiquing the old. The field also offers a range of research techniques that can be applied to virtually any aspect of social life: how people express emotions, welfare or education reform, how families differ and flourish, or problems of peace and war.³¹ Formal education is vital for the development of the Kenyan society and other developing countries.³² The education of girls should be seen as a great investment in the country's future economic growth and welfare. If girls and, consequently, women, are educated, then the whole nation becomes blessed because the women will plough their knowledge back into the country and hence expand the resources of the society.

An ongoing concern of popular literacy is to sensitize the community to the problem of illiteracy and to defend the rights of the illiterate. This implies that strong alliances must be formed so that the needs of the illiterate women are included in broader forums that deal with the socially disadvantaged. To tackle illiteracy in the rural parts of Kenya, the literacy groups must be socially committed, serve as sources of information, and be able to help the women in the community to take action on behalf of literacy.³³ As women become more educated, their perspective of society broadens and they are able to bring more impact in the development of their

³¹ American Sociological Association. *Sociology*. Yahoo search. Available from <http://www.asanet.org/public/what.html>. Internet accessed 23d June 2005.

³² Barngetuny, 85.

³³ Gayfer, 33.

communities. Their knowledge of their surroundings is no longer narrow-minded, but involves issues that are regionally as well as internationally relevant.

Professor Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner for her environmental Green Belt Movement in Kenya, is an example of how education can elevate the society and the nation as a whole. Through an individual's struggle in a particular sphere, the impact of their success is felt throughout the world because of their sheer determination. According to her, although she had been given this great honor, the honor was not just for herself. It was also for the thousands of women who planted 30 million trees throughout Kenya as part of the Green Belt Movement. It was also for those who worked to bring democracy back to Kenya through peaceful means, which they did in 2002.³⁴ Wangari Maathai thought globally but acted locally and that should be the vision for establishing adult literacy schools for women in the indigenous parts of Kenya.

Psychological/ Health Impact

We must all work together to transform the patriarchal model into one of shared power that lifts up and strengthens others, and not the one that depends on keeping others down. If women are encouraged to view themselves as having equal opportunity to be as capable as their male counterparts in economic, cultural and sociological realms, then they will rise beyond their limitations. Through Christian adult education, women would view themselves with transformed lenses, through the eyes of Jesus Christ. Consequently, changed behaviors would result from this radically altered view of themselves. Their outlook would thus be freed from inhibitions that are established by society only to undermine them.

³⁴ Alister, Doyle. *Kenyan Green Activist Wins Nobel Peace Prize.2004*. Yahoo search. Available from <http://www.ogiek.org/indepth/break-wang-nobel-pr-htm>. Internet accessed 14th March 2005.

A survey carried out in Kenya on health and immunization program for infants revealed a relationship between maternal education and the willingness to take advantage of medical facilities. Education contributes to better health, better nutrition and family planning. If women can seize the opportunity to improve the health of their families, how much more will their own psychological and physical well-being be impacted? A mother who is unhealthy both physically and psychologically will not be able to care well for her children and her family as a whole. Physical health is related to psychological health and once a woman is empowered physically, she gets released psychologically.

The conclusive aspect of psychological empowerment is reached when all the above forms of empowerment are attained. The goal is freedom from cultural, economic, religious, political and sociological oppression. The chief end is for the woman to realize her potential in Jesus Christ and achieve it without any inhibition. Knowledge indeed is power and many women perish because of lack of knowledge.

Summary

Literacy is a basic human right for the advancement of all the people around the world. Illiteracy is a major problem, not only in developing nations such as Kenya, but in industrialized nations as well. Illiteracy is also a sign and effect of poverty, unemployment, alienation and oppressive social structures and it affects both individuals and communities.

Literacy is also more than the ability to read, write and compute. The demands created by advancing technology require increased levels of knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve basic literacy. Therefore literacy that requires complex technology will be a feat in the rural areas of the country where expertise has not yet

permeated. Nevertheless, literacy is a way of building community. Literacy also promotes social and individual change, equality of opportunity and global understanding. Furthermore, literacy becomes a means of acquiring the understanding and ability necessary to improve living and working conditions. Justice demands that the problem of illiteracy be attacked in a world that possesses all the means and resources to do so.

In conclusion, none of us can walk fast or far on one leg. Yet in our race for progress, in our clamor for speed, in our breathless yearning to make the glorious headway towards our destination, humans have relied, too much of the time, solely on just one leg, and that is on the men folk. Female literacy is therefore imperative for communal development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This section will describe the procedures that were followed in conducting the study: the research design, data collection and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This study was essentially descriptive and utilizes the qualitative approach. Qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods in data collection and analysis as compared to quantitative inquiry.

Qualitative inquiry relies more on text and image data,³⁵ which means that the designs, techniques and measures used will not produce discrete numerical data.³⁶ Furthermore, it also takes place in the natural setting and uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. I therefore set my study in Kopsiro division of Mt. Elgon District and interacted with the female Sabaot community. Qualitative research is also emergent rather than tightly prefigured because the research questions may change and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and whom to ask.³⁷

I varied my methods of inquiry depending on the cultural norms that I found among the Sabaot community.

³⁵ Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications inc. 2003), 179

³⁶ Mugenda, Olive, M and Abel, G, Mugenda. *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approached*. (Nairobi: Acts Press, 1999), 155.

³⁷ Creswell, (2003), 181.

In using the qualitative approach, I employed the case study method, which basically means to explore in- depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals. The cases are normally bounded by time and activity and the researcher collects detailed information using a number of collection procedures over a particular time span.³⁸ Most case studies are based on the premise that a case can be located that is typical of many other cases. The case under study is viewed as an example of the class of events or a group of individuals.³⁹ Therefore, the impact of female literacy among the Sabaot community will hopefully act as an example of the impact of female literacy in other indigenous societies. The primary purpose of a case study is to determine factors and relationships among the aspects that have resulted in the behavior under study. The investigation, therefore, makes a detailed examination of a single subject, group or phenomenon.

The Researcher's Role

As mentioned above qualitative research is interpretive and the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience. This approach introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the process. Therefore, as an inquirer I have identified explicitly my biases, values, and personal interests about my particular research topic and process.⁴⁰

In the past I have been involved in mission work in the indigenous and marginalized societies in Kenya through mission organizations like Youth with a Mission (YWAM) and my local church, Sirikwa Pentecostal Fellowship, Eldoret. My greatest concern has been the low literacy levels of the women evangelized in spite of the important role they play in the well being of their families. I was encouraged to

³⁸ Ibid., 15.

³⁹ Mugenga and Mugenda, 173.

⁴⁰ Creswell, (2003), 184.

learn about the literacy organizations such as BTL that participate in facilitating literacy development. Currently my concern is on its effectiveness among the participants in their programs.

I chose Mt. Elgon District because it is representative of other marginalized societies in Kenya and because it is accessible from my traditional home area in Webuye Division which borders Mt. Elgon District. I am also in contact with a mission organization called IcfEM that is based in a town called Kimilili which is approximately three kilometers from Kapsoquony, the administrative headquarters of Mt. Elgon District. IcfEM has a proposal for an adult literacy project to be based among the communities in Mt. Elgon, Bungoma and Webuye Districts of the western province of Kenya and were ready to assist in the research work as they waited for funds to implement their own program.

As a step to gain entry to the setting among the Sabaot community and secure permission to study the informants who have come into contact with BTL, I required permission from the director of BTL Kenya from their headquarters in Nairobi to facilitate the research with the BTL contacts in the Sabaot community. A letter of introduction from Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, the institution where the researcher is based, was needed for this purpose. With the permission of BTL literacy coordinator, the researcher visited the Sabaot literacy base in Kopsiro division in Mt. Elgon District.

Data Collection Procedures

I interviewed a purposeful sample of six female members of the Mt. Elgon District community who have come in contact with the BTL literacy program. In an effort to gather data from a variety of stakeholders, I interviewed two female learners currently in the BTL adult literacy school, two female teachers influenced by BTL

literacy teachers' training, and two female villagers influenced by the BTL mother tongue literacy program.

The Instrument Design

I used three types of data collection procedures which included interviews based on an interview schedule, observations, and audio visual material.

The interview method best suits this qualitative study. An interview is an oral administration of a questionnaire or an interview schedule.⁴¹ (See Appendix One.) It is also advantageous since it provides in-depth data which is not possible to get when using a questionnaire. Interviews are also important when the participants cannot be observed directly and they also allow the researcher to have control over the line of questioning. On the other hand, they are limited in that they provide indirect information that is filtered through the views of interviewees. The researcher's presence may also bias responses not to mention that all people are not equally articulate and perceptive.⁴² The interview questions were recorded in an interview schedule. An interview schedule is a set of questions that the interviewer asks when interviewing. It makes it possible to obtain data required to answer the research questions of the study. It is also used to standardize the interview situation so that interviewers can ask the same questions in the same manner.⁴³ The interview schedule was semi-structured, allowing for structured and open-ended questions.

The audio visual data was collected through video recording. The advantage of using audiovisual data collection is that it may be an unobtrusive method of collecting data. It also provides an opportunity for the participants to directly share their reality and at its best, it is creative in that it captures the attention visually. The

⁴¹ Mugenda and Mugenda, 83.

⁴² Creswell, (2003), 187.

⁴³ Ibid., 86.

disadvantages include difficulty in interpreting the data, inaccessibility both privately and publicly and also the presence of the photographer may be disruptive and affect responses.⁴⁴

Finally, I used observations whereby I took field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, I recorded the activities at the research site. The advantages of using observations are that the researcher has a firsthand experience with participants and so can record information as revealed. Unusual aspects can also be noticed during the observations. The limitations of using observation include lack of good attending and observational skills from the researcher, the researcher may be seen as intrusive to private situations. Then again, this private information that may be observed may not be reported due to its privacy. Finally, certain participants like children may present special problems in gaining rapport.⁴⁵

Data Recording Procedures

Before entering the field, qualitative researchers plan their approach to data recording.⁴⁶ I therefore used the following data recording procedures:

- ✓ The use of an interview protocol for recording information during the qualitative interview. The protocol included a heading, instructions for the interviewer, the key research questions, and probes to follow questions, transition messages, and space for recording the interviewer's comments.⁴⁷
- ✓ The use of an observational protocol for recording observational data. The observational form was a single page with a dividing line down the middle to

⁴⁴ Creswell, (2003), 187.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 188.

⁴⁷ Creswell, (2003), 190.

distinguish descriptive notes (portraits of the participants, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting, and accounts of particular events or activities) from reflective notes which include my own personal thoughts, speculations, feelings, ideas and prejudices during the research.⁴⁸

- ✓ In recording information collected from visual material, I took notes reflecting on the information about the document.

Plan for Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of written and visual data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data.⁴⁹ However, data analysis in a qualitative study is sometimes ambiguous and time consuming because the data analysis seeks to make general statements on how categories or themes of data are related. It is eclectic since there is no right way.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the data analysis will be conducted as an activity simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation, and the narrative reporting writing. I asked analytic questions and wrote memos throughout the study.

In my case study approach, the data analysis involved a detailed description of the setting in Mt. Elgon District and the individuals, namely the female community that participated in the study. An analysis of the data for themes or issues then followed.⁵¹ Bearing in mind the specific ways of interpreting data in a case study, I also utilized some generic steps for qualitative research that include the following:

⁴⁸ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 190.

⁵⁰ _____ *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. (London: Sage Publications Inc.1994), 153.

⁵¹ Creswell, (2003), 191.

✓ Data Organization

The organization involved transcribing interviews, optically scanning material, typing field notes, or sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the source of information. I also used note cards to record the data available

✓ Reading through the Data

After organizing the data I read through it to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning.

✓ Create Categories, Themes and Patterns (Coding)

In this stage, I categorized the data I had read into groups as per the themes they display. Generating themes and categories is done using codes which can be assigned manually or by use of computer software such as the SPSS Text Editor, QSR's In Vivo or NUD*IST.⁵² The text data, pictures, and paragraphs were labeled with a term called an *in vivo* term based in the actual language of the participant.⁵³

✓ Analyze and Interpret Information

I then used the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.⁵⁴ In the description, I have given a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting. In this case study, it meant analyzing themes for each individual case and across different cases.

⁵² Mugenda and Mugenda, 203.

⁵³ Creswell, (2003), 192.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 193.

✓ Write the Report

Finally, in the qualitative narrative I represented the descriptions and themes using narrative passages.

Validity

Validity is used to test if the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account. I used a number of tests for validity which included:

- The use of an external auditor who is my academic advisor in the thesis writing, she reviewed the entire project.
- The use of thick description to convey the findings to enable the readers to understand the settings and share the experiences.
- Triangulating the different data sources of information from interviews, observations and audio/visual sources. I did this by examining the evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification.
- Clarifying any bias that I came with to the study to enable me to have an open and honest narrative.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Creswell, (2003), 196.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This section reports the findings from the analysis of the data in chapter three. The researcher has then interpreted the data as pertaining to the research instruments and methods of data analysis.

Several categories emerged from the data that was collected from the interviews and they have been used in the analyzing and reporting of the data that was collected. They include the following:

- Back-ground information on Mt. Elgon District.
- Demographic information on the participants.
- Association of participants with SBTL
- Impact of female literacy on the women's economic opportunities.
- Impact of female literacy in the political areas of the women.
- Impact of female literacy on the religious aspect of the women.
- Impact of female literacy upon the Sabaot community.
- Impact of female literacy upon a woman's psychological outlook.

Background Information on Mt. Elgon District

How to Access Mt. Elgon District

Mt. Elgon District is indeed one of the isolated areas in Kenya because of its rough terrain and very treacherous roads. The district is found in the Western Province of Kenya and it borders Trans-Nzoia and Bungoma Districts. Most of the

divisions are situated within the slopes of the mountain. The area where the research was done is in a division called Kopsiro and is very difficult to access. There are only two main routes with which a person can access Kopsiro division. One of them is by public transport from Kapsokuony which is the administrative centre of Mt. Elgon District. Getting transport from Kapsokuony is an uncertain venture because not many people travel up to the mountain slopes. Also, when the road gets steep, the passengers are forced to alight and walk until the road bends into a valley. Often when it rains, the *matatus* (mini-buses) get stuck and passengers are forced to either walk or push the vehicle out of the mud. The other option is to use private transport (preferably a four-wheel- drive car, a canter, or a motor-cycle) while using the Kapsokuony route.

The second main route to Kopsiro is by taking public transport from Kamukuywa shopping centre to Kimilili which is a small town centre. Then from Kimilili, one takes another vehicle to Koiwo. Koiwo is basically a bus-stop along the road from Kimilili to Bungoma town. The only way up to the foot of the slopes is by taking a bicycle ride called *boda-boda*. These bicycles are normally strategically placed along the road near the bus-stop at Koiwo. The bicycle will take you for about two kilometers up to the foot of the slopes and from there one has to walk up the hills. The walk to Kopsiro division takes about three hours, covering six kilometers and this division is the highest point on the slopes of the mountain. BTL have their headquarters for the Sabaot Bible Translation and Literacy Program (SBTL) in this place near a market called Makutano.

Demographic Information on the Participants

Six women from the Kopsiro region were interviewed for the purpose of this present study. The participants who took part in the research will be identified as participant #1, participant #2, participant #3, participant #4, participant #5 and participant #6 respectively so as to maintain their confidentiality. A summary of the demographic information of the participants is given in table 1. (See appendix v)

The interesting thing about Mt. Elgon District is that it interweaves two different tribes and ethnic groups, one being the Sabaot from the Highland Nilotes and the Bukusu who are a sub-tribe of the Luhya, Bantu community of Kenya. Therefore, two languages are major in Kopsiro, Sabaot and Bukusu. The Bukusu's are predominantly found at the foot of the slopes while the Sabaot's are found high up on the mountain slopes. Nevertheless, there have been many inter-marriages within the two tribal groups leading to most people speaking both Sabaot and Bukusu. Therefore, it is difficult for new-comers to distinguish between Sabaot's and Bukusu's. Nevertheless, Kopsiro division is largely a Sabaot speaking area.

Participant #1 comes from an inter-tribal family whereby her mother is a *Sabaot* and her father a *Bukusu* as summarized in table 1. She is married and has two children, the first- born being four years old and the second- born one and a half years old. She trained at Kigari Teacher's Training College in Embu, Kenya, hence is a teacher at one of the local schools in Kopsiro called Kapkirwa Primary School. Her first posting as a teacher was at Cheptais Division of Mt. Elgon District. She teaches all classes from class one to eight and stays in the school compound where she is able to rent a house which is also near the Makutano shopping centre. She came to the SBTL centre and we interviewed her from there so we did not get a chance to go to her home setting. Participant #1 was very confident in the way she answered the

interview questions and her voice was quite audible. Probably her conciseness emanated from her experience as a teacher. She spoke in both English and Swahili languages.

Participant # 2 is essentially a Sabaot lady. She also came to the SBTL centre and we got to talk about her life and about her interaction with SBTL. She is married and has five children. She was quite talkative and did not hesitate to give as much information as she could in order to be of help in the research process. She spoke mostly in Swahili. Participant # 2 reached form four in her high school education but is currently pursuing a theological course in counseling at a nearby college called “International Christian College” (ICM) which is having its base in Kitale town of Trans- Nzoia District bordering Mt. Elgon District. She said,

I reached form four in Secondary school but now I am studying counseling at ICM. ICM started in Kitale and was later expanded to Mt Elgon to cater for the people living here. I am now in second year.

Participant # 3 is also a Sabaot. She is married and has two children, one who is about two years old and the other four years old. We were able to walk to her homestead and we received a warm welcome from her. Even so, we arrived at a time when one of her children was unwell and therefore it was difficult for her to attend to us while the baby was sick. Nevertheless, she tried her best to make a good rapport during the interview process though her answers reflected her anxiety over her sick child. However, the information she gave was quite insightful. Participant # 3 reached form two at Kapketeny Secondary school, which is in the community. She is currently also studying counseling and theology at ICM as she stated, “I have had one and a half years of theology and one year in counseling.”

Participant # 4 is also married and has six children. We were able to go to her home which is at the main shopping centre at Makutano. Most people live around

this small shopping centre which consisted of one street with kiosks flanking the road at either side. The kiosks included small shops for groceries, small hotels, a posho mill, and a recreation place for the youth. She used both Swahili and the Sabaot language to communicate during the interview session. Participant #4 was able to reach class seven in her formal education.

Participant # 5 is also married and has five children. Most of her children live around the community although she and her husband used to live and work in Eldoret town of Uasin-Gishu District, Rift Valley Province. They only moved to Sabaot to do some cash-crop farming. She sounded very cooperative as she used the Swahili language to communicate. Participant #5 went to primary school in Sabaot land then went outside to Bungoma District where she began her high school education and reached form two and afterwards, she got married.

Lastly, Participant # 6 is an elderly lady who spoke entirely in the Sabaot language, hence, creating the need of an interpreter. She is also married and has nine children, most of whom were around the homestead at the time we went for the interview. She did not go to any formal school and whatever education she got was from her home.

Level of Education

There are several primary schools in Kopsiro division including Kapketeny Primary School which is a good indication of the value of education in such an area like Mt. Elgon District. The increase of primary schools can also be attributed to the free primary school education that was implemented by the NARC government in Kenya in the year 2003. One could observe a number of primary school buildings on the road to Kopsiro division, nevertheless, one had to go beyond Kopsiro division to get a good secondary school education as one of them said,

I went to Primary school within the Sabaot land but I went outside to Bungoma District to join secondary school where I reached form two then got married.

Most of the participants had gone through primary school, three were able to go to secondary school, one completed her college education while two others had just gone back to school for a diploma certificate as shown in figure 1. Of the six participants, only one dropped out of school after primary school and only one never went to school. The dwindling of the number of schools from primary to university in an area like Mt. Elgon district shows that not many women reach tertiary levels of education in their lives owing to reasons such as lack of space in secondary schools, lack of secondary and tertiary schools in the district, lack of finances for education, and cultural biases. In an attempt to improve literacy in Mt. Elgon District, BTL is working hand in hand with the people to promote mother-tongue literacy through its Bible translation. Other districts have the adult literacy project already functioning in giving functional as well as livelihood literacy training which is especially significant to women who never got a chance to go to secondary or tertiary levels of education.

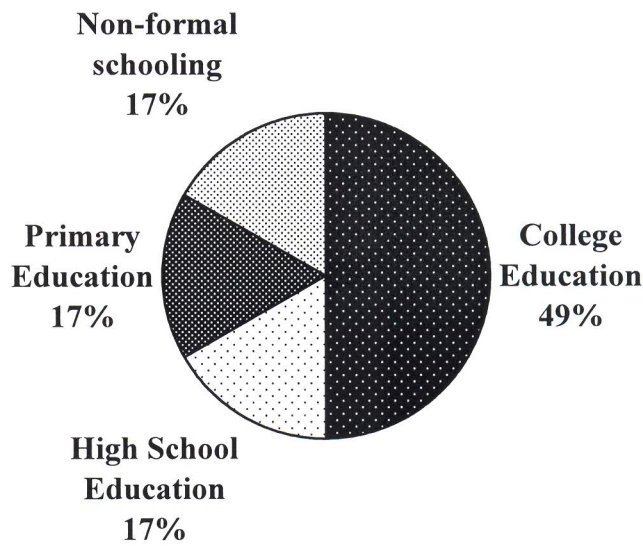


Figure 1. Pie Chart of the level of education of the participants

The participants who were able to communicate in English and Swahili were mostly those who had gone beyond primary school education. Most primary schools in Kopsiro division teach the Sabaot mother-tongue as one of the subjects in school and therefore many children are fluent in this language. Therefore, this shows that further exposure to education can help the female community in Mt. Elgon District to understand the world around them and beyond. Knowing one's language is good, but if one desires to communicate with people from other cultures, tribes and communities, they have to go beyond knowing only their language. Going beyond one's culture further helps in developing a community because they learn to embrace new ideas that can shape and expand them so that they do not remain inward-focused. Nevertheless, a participant who reached form two of high school said, "I like the

Sabaot Language. Other Children talk Sabaot and my children also have to talk Sabaot.” She, therefore, showed that the level of education one attains does not necessarily determine the language that a particular person or family may prefer to speak locally. Literacy does not imply being able to speak in English or Swahili only. One is also considered to be literate if they are able to read and write in their mother tongue.

The Sabaot language is greatly valued by the Sabaot community and SBTL has taken advantage of this by translating the Bible into the Sabaot language, thereby encouraging the use of Sabaot in the churches as well as at home. Many people are persuaded to embrace their culture and learn their language so as to fully utilize the new Sabaot Bible. There are a number of people who are benefiting from the advocacy of the mother tongue literacy and one of them who never went to a formal school said through a translator,

I did not go to school. Any schooling that I have got has been through my grandmother who taught us through songs, example, how to keep yourself from men. These songs taught us. They also used poems and proverbs. One learns how to cook and keep the house as you grow up and mother helps you and teaches you. A girl also learns how to take care of children from their mother. I did not need to go to school to learn this.

Although this particular participant was not literate in the sense of reading and writing in English or Swahili, she was educated in the culture of her community. Therefore, she showed that women in indigenous communities can impact their societies when they understand the culture and traditions of their people, and champion the upholding of the positive values that can hold their society together. Whether or not a woman is formally trained, they can still impact their community since empowerment implies a state of mind and the attitude of a person. If mother tongue can be used to transform the minds and attitudes of the Sabaot women, then by

all means, it should be encouraged. Through education, the women are then able to release the power that they received through the transformation of their minds to other areas of their lives.

Participants' Association with SBTL

BTL is one of the organizations in Mt. Elgon District that emphasizes literacy while encouraging mother-tongue literacy. Therefore, most of the people from Kopsiro division who have come into contact with BTL have been involved with the staff of SBTL in their literacy programs. Through such interactions, good relationships with the SBTL staff has been enhanced as one of the participants commented,

I am friends with the BTL staff. I have also done research with other groups. Whenever the staff needs help in such they call me and I help them. I have been able to know them because they tour schools especially the lower primary in emphasizing training in mother-tongue. I also help in making books for lower primary and in making of story books. The materials have been of help to children and have helped me to refresh my mother tongue. It has helped me in reading books. I have taught mother-tongue from term one but a new teacher came in and I surrendered the subject because I had many other subjects to teach.

Another participant also showed that her relationship with SBTL does not just border on the business of translating the Bible but also in friendship by saying, "Sometimes I go and help to cook food for visitors at SBTL and I also go for any celebration that they have, like the one they had when they dedicated the Sabaot New Testament Bible when it was completed." Therefore, SBTL has impacted the Sabaot community at Kopsiro division by giving them a chance to form new friendships. By getting a chance to interact with other people, the women in Kopsiro are able to learn different ways of expressing themselves and their relationship skills are developed. Also, as they take part in the research projects that SBTL involves itself, either as

research assistants or cooks, they are given a chance to be part of projects that affect the society at large. The women in turn realize that they are important for the welfare of their societies since they can actually contribute to its development. In the long run, the women who have been shrouded in silence are able to voice out their opinions and ideas concerning improving their lives and that of society at large.

Economic Impact

Mt. Elgon District is a place to behold with its many hills and valleys and the scenery is attractive especially from a station like Kopsiro division which is the highest one can get within the slopes of the mountain. The weather is cool up on the mountain and windy during the rainy seasons and surprisingly, even though the slopes are isolated, they are very fertile. The area boasts red, volcanic soil which is ideal for farming and so food was in plenty. The time when the research was done (December 2005), Kenya was experiencing drought, but the area was encouragingly green and fertile. A number of crops that are planted in Kopsiro, as observed, include onions, maize, beans and sorghum. Most of the onions supplied around Western and Rift Valley Province of Kenya come from Mt. Elgon District as was confirmed by the many onion farms that dot the mountain slopes. Women are the ones who mostly do the farming around Kopsiro division. One could observe a number of them in the farms surrounding their homes confirming that they play an important role in agricultural production, not only in Kopsiro division, but also in many other parts of Kenya that rely on these products.

Since Kopsiro is a hilly area, cows are not a pre-dominant phenomenon. The animals that are kept by most of the farmers in this area are goats, chickens and donkeys, as observed during the research. The donkeys aid in transportation of goods

from the foot of the slopes to the higher areas and vice-versa. On the way up the mountain, one can meet several donkeys with huge loads as they struggle to make their way down the steep and tricky rocky paths, confirming that they are indeed beasts of burden. Some of the donkeys were carrying items like soft drinks that are sold in the small shops that are established in the market areas in Kopsiro and are therefore imperative for the success of such businesses.

Other than the donkeys, the people in the community use the canters, which transport agricultural products like onions and beans, down the mountain to the southern part to a town called Chwele which links the mountain areas to the Western province of Kenya and the Eastern Part of Uganda. The drivers of the canters normally allow people to climb on top of the goods when the canter is full and they then charge Ksh 50 for the ride down the slopes. This is a risky form of transportation, but since there aren't many communication options, the community members are forced to oblige. Kopsiro has many areas that require to be developed and one of these areas is the transport sector which greatly needs to be improved for the sake of development in the economic activities. Without communication, it is not easy to achieve ones economic goals because lack of communication can prevent smooth and quick exchange of ideas, capital and resources which are required for economic expansion.

Economic Dependency Ratio

A common phenomenon with the women that were interviewed was that the more literate or educated they are, the more dependents they had to cater for as one of the participants emphatically commented, "I am involved in teaching, but the dependency ration is too high! Any little money is used to support other family members." In other cases, women face many challenges in their roles as mothers,

wives, sisters and daughters. These challenges in turn affect their jobs because many women cannot separate their emotional ties to their families from that of their jobs. One of them remarked, “I was a shopkeeper and I used to sell dresses but I lost my job because of problems in the family. Then I started selling sodas at the hospital but there was sickness in the family through a car accident. I have therefore been in and out of the hospital.” Many of the women need help from their spouses to be able to meet the financial demands of the home. Otherwise the home would be economically fragmented once the wife or the female person in the family who earns an income loses her source of livelihood.

Farming as an Economic Activity

Many women showed that they are using their education to cater for their economic needs by innovating ways in which they can earn money to sustain both themselves and their families, be it through farming or business ventures. Even so, those who did not have the opportunity to go through formal education face some limitation. One limitation is that they cannot fit in white-collar job positions and have to limit themselves to jobs that do not require any technical knowledge or expertise, such as farming. But even farming, especially if it is cash-crop farming requires some knowledge of how to plant, when to weed, and what fertilizer to use, thus, showing that such skills still need to be learned. One of women, who did not go through formal education mentioned, “I do *shamba* (garden) work but I am mostly a housewife. I have just harvested some maize and I also keep some chickens, cows, geese, and donkeys.” Some of these women have learned to farm through educative opportunities from oral traditions and customs and it is serving them well.

All the same, even those who had gone through formal education also take part in farming as a bonus economic activity. One stated, “I till only a small piece of

land and plant maize, *nyanya* (tomatoes), potatoes, *sukuma-wiki* (Kales), selling to get money. I also have a cow for milk and I sell the milk.” Other women who get land to cultivate also involve themselves in business ventures such as establishing hotels, or they open up a shop. One of them said, “I have a *duka* (shop) where I sell things. I also grow onions, beans and maize and I transport them to Chwele for sale.”

Since Mt. Elgon District is a fertile area, farming is a favorable economic venture for most women to pursue because it yields good returns for them and most of them can multi-task their economic responsibilities and it does not require a large amount of capital to begin.

Impact of Literacy on the Economic Atmosphere in the Homes

The literacy levels of the women often gave an indication of the kind of economic atmosphere that the home would have. The homes that had literate women in the household had an air of liberation and hope. One could observe some fertile indication of economic well-being either from domestic animals running around the homestead, well-tilled gardens or even tidy homes. The houses themselves were clean and well arranged with even the cheapest item in the house arranged to look like an artifact that cost millions of shillings. On the other hand, the economic situation of those that were not so educated revealed itself in the atmosphere of the home. The children would look untidy with running noses and tattered clothes, as the atmosphere itself looked bleak and despondent.

Merry-Go-Round (Revolving Loan Fund)

For many of the women, their hope to meet their increasing financial burdens and remove the dreary cloak of poverty rested in what they call “Merry-go-round” other-wise known as “Revolving Loan Fund.” One participant said, “We

thought of forming one Merry-go-round. We aimed at beginning one which is a group of six people. Otherwise I do some sewing or embroidery work and I make cakes for weddings.”

There are two groups of merry-go-round's, discovered during the interviews with the women. The first type is the one established by the government of Kenya, commonly called, *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* (Women's Development). Many of the women belonged to a group called *Jitegemee* (Take Care of Yourself) which is essentially part of *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake*. One of the participants said concerning merry-go-rounds, “*Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* is the one that puts a name. Others, as long as one is willing are just formed to help the members. *Jitegemee* is part of *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* and is given money to help by *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake*.”

Another participant also remarked,

I am involved in a merry-go-round called CBO (Community Based Organization). We are formed of about 10 people who do table banking which means each group contributes Ksh 6,000 which is later banked at Commercial Bank. This money is then used to help women at the interest of Ksh 200 that is received.

When women group themselves to help one another, they are able to go an extra financial mile in helping themselves, their families and community at large. She also said,

The Bungoma Family Development Program gave us a loan of Ksh 300,000 and the interest is given to the office. Registration with the group is Ksh 500 which is non-refundable. Leaders are then taken for a course in management. A group called Western Women Empowerment Network, (WWEN) from Kakamega was funded with a business for two years, including a computer, a video deck to enable them to teach youth about AIDS but they are yet to start and it is at the D.O's place.

In the long run, the pooling of resources helps the women to meet their monthly needs, either as individuals, or as families which, is a wise venture for the women to take. The money they collect is also used to establish projects that benefit

the community at large. The revolving-fund groups also give the women opportunities to be educated in certain areas like management. When the women learn such skills, they are able to use them not only in their own lives but also in their homes and work places and this in turn impacts their society. One of the women excitedly reported,

Jitegemee women's group is a group of 12 women who meet every month with each person contributing Ksh 1,200. Ksh 100 is used for the basket, Ksh 100 is used for the visitors and Ksh 1,000 is used for one's own. With the money I have been able to plaster my house and pull water for my household. If God blesses me, I would like to sell *mitumba* (second-hand clothes) because it is not perishable like the food I sell in the hotel.

In summary, literacy development is a key in the economic development of the women in Mt. Elgon District. As the women are educated on ways in which they can expand themselves, it gives them hope and they try their best to improve their economic activities and initiate new ways of earning income for their families.

Political Impact

The impact of female literacy on the politics is an area that is yet to be filled. Many women do not involve themselves in hard-core political ventures per-se because they are still bound by the cultural belief that the place of a woman is in the home. For a number of the women, the understanding of politics is in bringing change in small-scale areas like in their homes, schools and work places as one of them said,

My husband is a political pastor and he talks a lot about politics at our church, 'Gospel Light Church'. But his office is on counseling. I am also a guidance and counseling teacher at school and we have several meetings with parents and we counsel parents, young people, and staff-mates. In the village, I involve myself in marriage counseling. I counsel girls who drop out of school. I visit them in their houses but for youth they meet in church. I am a student at ICM doing guidance and counseling and I take the course when schools have closed and that is how I juggle teaching and being a student.

For some women, their involvement in politics is through their memberships in certain organizations and government projects which cater for their communities as one of them mentioned,

I teach in the village especially when there is a meeting for women. I am also a CHW (Community Health Worker), where I help in teaching people to dig latrines and draining water so as not to cause malaria. I also contribute money for development and visit the bereaved and contribute food hence involving the villagers. We also formed a group called 'Christian Restoration' and we help people to go to school.

As the women involve themselves in community projects, they are able to understand their world and what needs to be changed. They are able to pin-point areas in which women can be educated and ways in which they can work together to change such a situation. Another participant commented,

I am in the committee of Kaprirwa Primary School and I take care of a clan to see if there is any problem like if the children have no benches in school. Others take care of the food and also look into the progress of teachers. I am also in the committee of the Kopsiro water project which is under the local government. I find out if someone does not have water and if there is any problem in accessing water. I also make sure that people pay for their water from the government. The office is in Makutano and we work with the people of Human Rights.

One of the women also said,

I lead women in the church but I am also in the committee for Action Aid. This is a group for marketing network. We help farmers market their products. We even sponsor schools and help small groups as well as help in building projects. I am also a member of the PTA at Kapkirwok Primary School and I serve as a treasurer. I also help in maintaining relationships between parents and teachers.

Many of these women showed their comprehension of politics as not just about being in the frontline in the government of Kenya or being a parliamentary representative. They brought more political change in their societies by beginning at the grassroots. Needs are identified for the purpose of forming policies for the Sabao community in what may seem as trivial issues, such as preventing malaria, but which have a huge impact in the health of the whole society. They involve themselves with

the children and parents in schools and with people in their day-to-day lives and are able to identify with these people and establish guidelines that would benefit them in the long run, example, how to conserve water and how to drain the dirty water. Isn't that political?

As more and more women become literate, either in their mother tongue or in other languages like English and Swahili, they are more equipped in policy making. They then have a voice and the confidence that is needed in breaking cultural boundaries and stereotypes that would otherwise prevent them from making any political impact in their society. SBTL is in the process of enabling the Sabao community to embrace their cultural heritage through the establishment of mother tongue training in the primary schools. As children learn more about their language, they grow up with the knowledge of their culture and so are the best people to ask in terms of which policies should be formulated. The women also showed that politics involves correlating all the other aspects of an individual's life in order to formulate policies. Therefore, one should not shun from projects that are educative, religious or social because they all have to be integrated in policy making to be useful in a particular community as shown in figure 2.

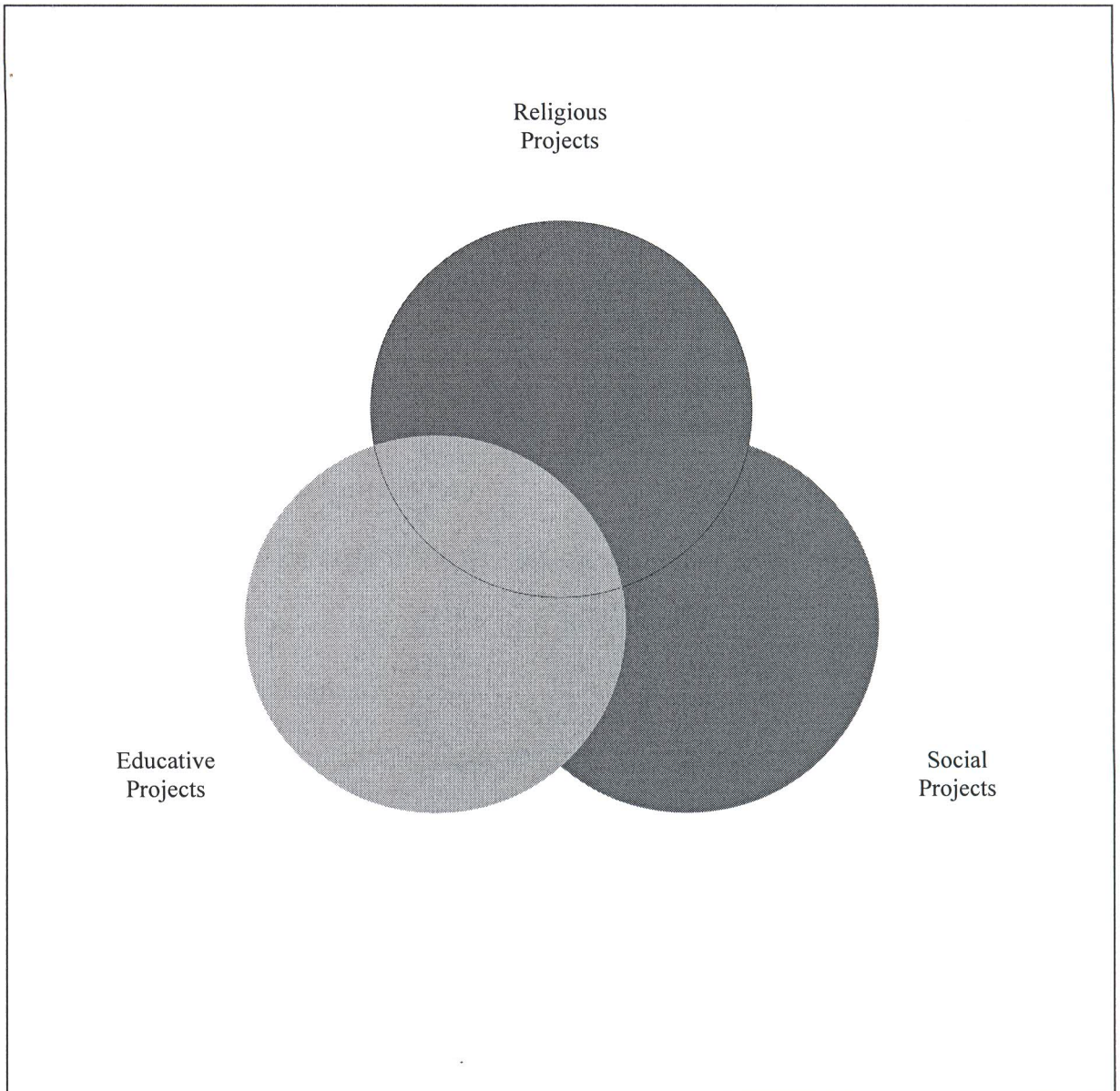


Figure 2. The Overlap of educative, social and religious projects in policy making.

Religious Impact

Impact of Mother Tongue New Testament Bible Translation in the Church

The greatest impact that SBTL has had on the female community of Mt. Elgon District is through their translation of the New Testament into the Sabaot language and also the mother tongue literacy training. One of the participants stated,

The impact of the Bible Translation is felt in the church. There are some women who are not literate or cannot speak in English or Kiswahili. I am a church leader and involved with the women and I try to communicate in mother tongue especially with the women, but in the whole congregation, I communicate in Kiswahili because majority of the people can hear and speak Kiswahili in the church as well as in their mother tongue.

For most of the women, the Bible has come alive to them since they are able to read it in their mother tongue. They understand it better and its truths have brought light into their lives as one participant remarked,

Yes, it is interesting reading the Bible in Sabaot. One has to read slowly unlike in English or Kiswahili. When someone understands something in their language it can change their lives dramatically and this occurs when teaching the word of God and giving examples from the Bible like Anna, Mary Magdalene, helps. A woman can recognize that if they change, God can help them in a certain way.

The impact is not only revealed in the women, but also in their children, which brings joy to them because they are assured that their children will grow up knowing the Bible. One mother commented,

I read the Bible in all languages, English, Kiswahili and Sabaot. In Church we are now able to form drama in Sabaot for the children ages 9-15. We can also change it to Kiswahili. Children can memorize verses in their mother tongue. But the youth don't like Sabaot. People who teach the youth teach in Kiswahili and English. Among the women, some understand English but prefer Sabaot. Almost everyone has a Sabaot Bible, but it is limited since it is only in the New Testament. There are hard words in Kiswahili until one explains but in Sabaot, one can understand very easily. One even gets deeper revelation when reading in Sabaot. Personally I can read and preach in Sabaot and even memorize scripture. It has helped me know my language.

Nevertheless, there are some women who are not so fluent in Sabaot language and so struggle with reading the Bible in this language as one of them informed us, "I would like to read the Bible in Sabaot but I do not know how to read very well." Another participant could not help but comment,

I find it difficult to read Sabaot but if I find someone who can read it fluently, I really enjoy. When teaching, I sometimes use the language but in a Kiswahili accent. I many times need to read in Kiswahili and someone else reads in Sabaot. Many of the women come with Sabaot Bibles. Now people

feel like the Bible is theirs. Now they have a revelation...it is deep. They love their language. But Sabaot is slow compared to English or Kiswahili.

Another enthusiastic Sabaot Bible reader said,

I have been trying to read the Sabaot Bible. It has helped me to understand the Bible better than in Kiswahili. Now I understand why Jesus suffered for my sake and how I am restored to God through Jesus Christ. It shows me how I was a sinner but now I am reconciled back to God. I have learnt that anyone that follows God has no loss and is going to live eternally. In the church, old women can now understand the Bible and they are happy.

Therefore, many Sabaot women are excited about the prospect of reading the New Testament in their own language but many still need to go back to their cultural roots and learn their language so that they can truly be impacted by the new translation. Education will therefore be the tool by which this would be possible in an effort to sharpen the minds of these women and help them to mature in Christ in everything that they do.

Impact of Mother Tongue New Testament Bible Translation in the Family

The mother tongue translation has not only brought change into the church, but also into the family since the teachings that the women receive in the church eventually find their way in to the homes. Most of the teachings reflect on the relationships that women have with their husbands and with other women as one of them commented, "I now understand when the Bible is read in the church because they read it in my mother tongue. Understanding the Bible has helped in changing my family and also helped me personally to respect my husband and relate well with neighbors." Another woman who has benefited from the Sabaot Bible stated, "The women in the Bible can now be an example to us. Those who are bad like Jezebel also teach us how to live with neighbors...how to forgive them...how to talk and resolve conflicts." The ability to read the Bible in the Sabaot language is actually bringing a

spiritual transformation among these women thus helping them to become more like Jesus Christ.

Not only has the Bible translation changed families, it has also helped the women in the Sabaot community to embrace cultures that are positive and get rid of those that degrade women, which is a positive step in livelihood literacy training while using the Bible as a textbook. One remarked,

Some people have changed in their families. Some traditions have changed. Women in the past could not sit and talk to a man. The man eats alone and the woman in the kitchen. Another one is that if a woman is pregnant she cannot be seen by her husband. Other people used to beat their children. Another thing that has changed because of Bible teaching is the naming process of children. One used to name according to the grandfather but people are now beginning to name them according to the Bible. The process that used to be followed was that women gathered and made a traditional mud with a fruit in the middle. If the fruit falls, they don't name the child until it stands.

Another change is in female circumcision which is decreasing and in male circumcision; the boys are taken to the hospital for the ceremony. People have understood that there are spirits that are involved in circumcision.

This participant shows that religious empowerment has enabled the women in the Sabaot community to go beyond cultural barriers to the point of embracing the fact that men and women are equal before God and that he has blessed them similarly. They are able to bring their children in a way that will benefit them in the future in ways including taking them to school whether or not they are female. The future generation now has a hope of getting an education both of the mind and the heart.

Impact in the Participation of Participants in Religious Activities

A number of women who were interviewed also take part in various activities in the church such as Sunday school teaching, as one commented,

I teach Sunday school but because I am involved in other activities in the church, sometimes I only help them but we have a problem of

materials...but we could use the material from BTL. I teach both in Kiswahili and Sabaot especially when I am teaching children.

Other women are women's leaders in their churches as one said, "I am a women's leader at Maranatha Faith Assembly. I teach the women and counsel them through the Bible." Some women are involved in Praise and Worship in their churches as one stated,

I lead Praise and worship at Toiwondet Church of Christ. I also go for the ladies meeting where I teach and many times I get the opportunity to have seminars with the youth. But I make sure that I attend the weekly women's meeting on Wednesday. When we have meetings, we are shown calendars and also Sunday school materials in Sabaot as well as we use the Sabaot Bible.

Other participants take care of the church in maintaining its cleanliness as one remarked, "I take care of the garden in the church and make sure that the flowers look nice for the church." In summary, the main activities that women take part of in their churches include teaching Sunday school, leading praise and worship, maintaining and cleaning the church, women's leadership and the like. Thus, many women are active in their churches and are using whatever they have to give their services to the church. Those who are able to read and write either in their mother tongue or in English and Kiswahili are used as effective instruments in teaching other women in the church. When each woman takes her part as a cog in the wheel of the church, they in the long run manage to complete the wheel that it may revolve smoothly. In a cyclic manner, their individual lives, homes and church at large are impacted as shown by figure 3.

The translation of the Bible into the Sabaot language has had a great impact on the lives of the Sabaot women. Some of them have even enrolled with SBTL so as to learn their mother tongue for effective communication as one stated, "I joined Sabaot Bible Translation for three years to learn the language."

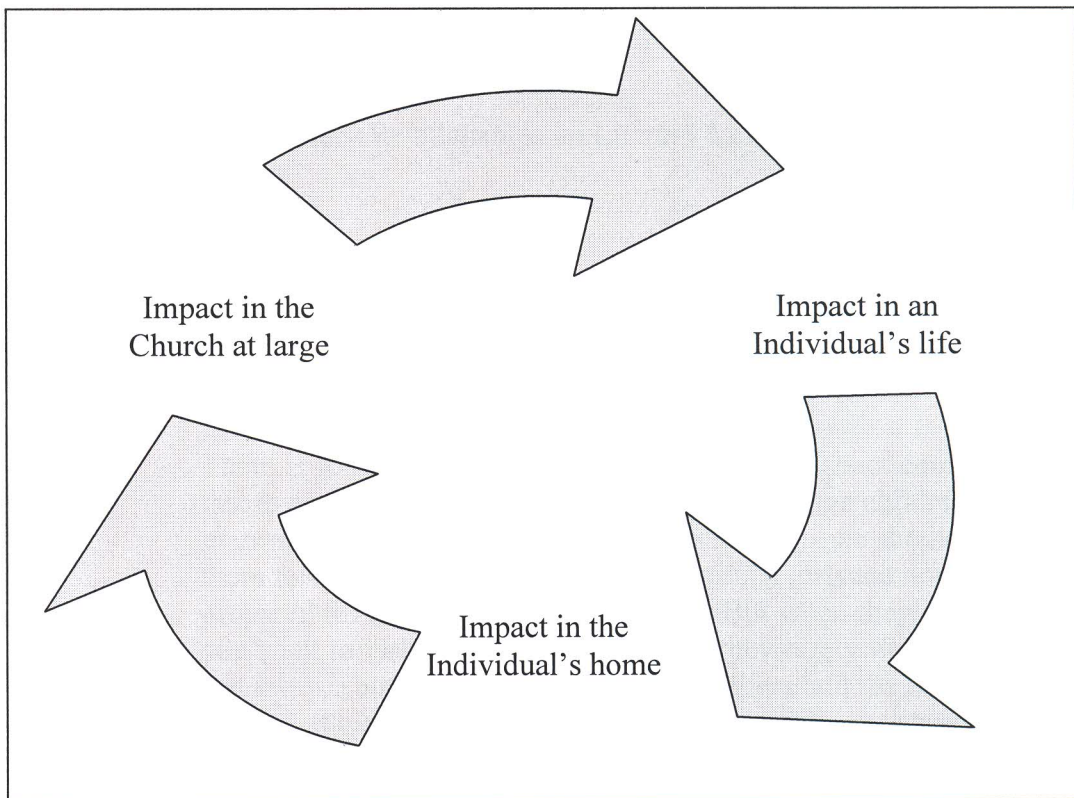


Figure 3. Cyclic Image of the Impact of translation of the Bible into mother tongue.

Sociological Impact

The sociological Impact involves the impact that female literacy has on society in the form of bringing change into the structures of the society as well as social groups like the youth, the men folk and the children. Many women are evidently taking part in self-sustaining and self-managing systems that enable them to respond to their felt needs in community. Otherwise, a number of women showed how being educated has enabled them to impact their societies through the many community development projects as well as religious activities that they take part in. In their day-to-day activities, they discover that many things are lacking in their society that need to be rectified, introduced or improved. There is much more that can

be done in the Sabaot community to bring change. Issues that were voiced that are in their society that need change include

- ✓ Early Marriages.
- ✓ Female Circumcision
- ✓ Influence of Family Relationships on Literacy Levels

Early Marriages

Concerning early marriages, one of the participants commented matter-of-factly,

There is something that can be changed in the Sabaot community and that is early marriages. If we could just discourage children from early marriages and encourage them to go to school...we should encourage them to wait until they are twenty years. The girls are not really prepared for marriages earlier than that. But when they get married and you want to visit them to counsel them, they rarely welcome you. They run away...but the men stay with their fathers and the new wife joins the boy at his father's home...but I have been discouraging this habit in the home.

If girls were informed about the value of education, they would be more willing to finish school without the pressure of getting married at a young age. The education of girls would thus be seen as a great investment for the future of the country as a whole. Other than them being educated, they also need the support of the men-folk in maintaining this goal of pursuing literacy and education to the fullest level. Even though this research may promote female literacy, it is significant to mention that for the female-folk to be empowered and educated, they need not be seen as a threat to the male gender or as insignificant members of a community but as people who are an investment to the whole country. Therefore, their literacy depends on communal efforts and strong alliances formed by the government, individuals, non-governmental organizations and the church so as to bring a holistic change in the impact on society.

Female Circumcision

Female Circumcision is commonly practiced among the girls undergoing puberty in the Sabaot community, but it is slowly fading away. Those who still practice it are the ones who have not gone through formal education. The women who have gone through formal education do not advocate for it as one of them emphatically stated,

Circumcising women should be stopped. It encourages women not to go to school especially during the ages of twelve to sixteen years. Girls are taught that if you are circumcised, you will be happy in marriage and bear children and no curses will follow you. They do not know that curses are also hereditary. A girl is also given gifts of cows which improves her economic standard. The girl gets gifts when circumcised but the boy does not. She is then told to go and stay well and live well in the home. If a girl is not circumcised, she can be expelled from the home with the excuse that she is a prostitute. But many times it is the parents who determine if the girl should be circumcised. If both parents are saved then it may not be an issue. Those who have male children now take them to hospital to be circumcised.

Not only is female circumcision depriving women from being educated, it is also economically depleting. The women who are not able to complete their schooling cannot bring economical returns to the society since they are not able to establish their careers as many of them end up as unwilling housewives who then have to go through the difficulties of taking care of a family without a livelihood.

Influence of Family Relationships on Literacy Levels

Many Sabaot marriages are still steeped in culture some of which are not conducive to the well-being of the husband, wife or children. Certain beliefs are also detrimental to the growth of the family. Many men, for example do not see the importance of educating their daughters. They would rather sell them off to be

married at an early age, a thing which was offensive to many of the women that were interviewed. One remarked,

Children while still young should not be married off-even to old men. Many children don't end up going to school when there is no money, but this is not an excuse to marry them off while they are still young. If the girls are not educated, many of them end up not getting good jobs so parents should emphasize education to their daughters. If we don't educate our children we will keep on getting doctors and teachers from outside the District because we have none of our own who are qualified. We need to stop being gender biased...many times if girls give birth at home; they think it is the end of it. They loose hope of ever going to school.

If female literacy is to have any impact in the Sabaot community, there needs to be a paradigm shift in the cultural views of its people. The men must be ready to embrace change unlike how one of the participants observed, "Sabaot men find it difficult to go to the kitchen. The mother and children are lumped together and are termed as subordinates to the husband. This should not be the case." Overall, there is a lot of good in the Sabaot culture that needs to be sifted through so that the cultural vices no longer have a hold on the Sabaot women. Sabaot cultural practices that should be enhanced included singing Sabaot cultural songs, encouraging the eating of cultural foods, as well as dressing in cultural clothing that does not promote promiscuity.

Psychological Impact

Most of the participants had a positive outlook on who they are and their role in the society. They talked like women who are capable of great things in life. Many of them work hand in hand with their husbands in supporting their families either through business activities or through other employment opportunities. For example, one of the women who is married to a pastor said, "My husband and I are both bread-

winners in the family. The church does not give us any salary but we both take care of the finances in the home. Whatever little we get from outside, we bring home.”

Evidently, that many of the women fully take part in earning the daily bread for the family. Even those who were housewives took the opportunity of not being fully employed to work in the farms and keep animals. Some of the husbands helped their wives in working in the home as one woman commented, “My husband plows the land showing that we have mixed roles in the home. We both take care of the children and even go to the *shamba* (farm) together. We both look for money since my husband also sells chickens and goats.” Women have learned that they must work together to transform their societies from being pre-dominantly patriarchal so that power is shared. They are coming to a point of understanding that they are as capable as their male counterparts especially in education and earning a living. Nevertheless, some participants viewed that there should be clear cut roles of who a wife and a husband are and what they should do in the family so as to prevent tension and conflicts. One of them said, “The husband can help in some household activities but these should be defined, as not all men can do what women do and vice-versa.”

In summary, the goal of education is to improve one’s outlook on life. Once the economic, political, religious and sociological aspects of a woman are catered for, they form a foundation with which they can have a positive psychological well being as shown in figure 4. The crucial thing to remember is that knowledge in whatever medium it is relayed, is power.

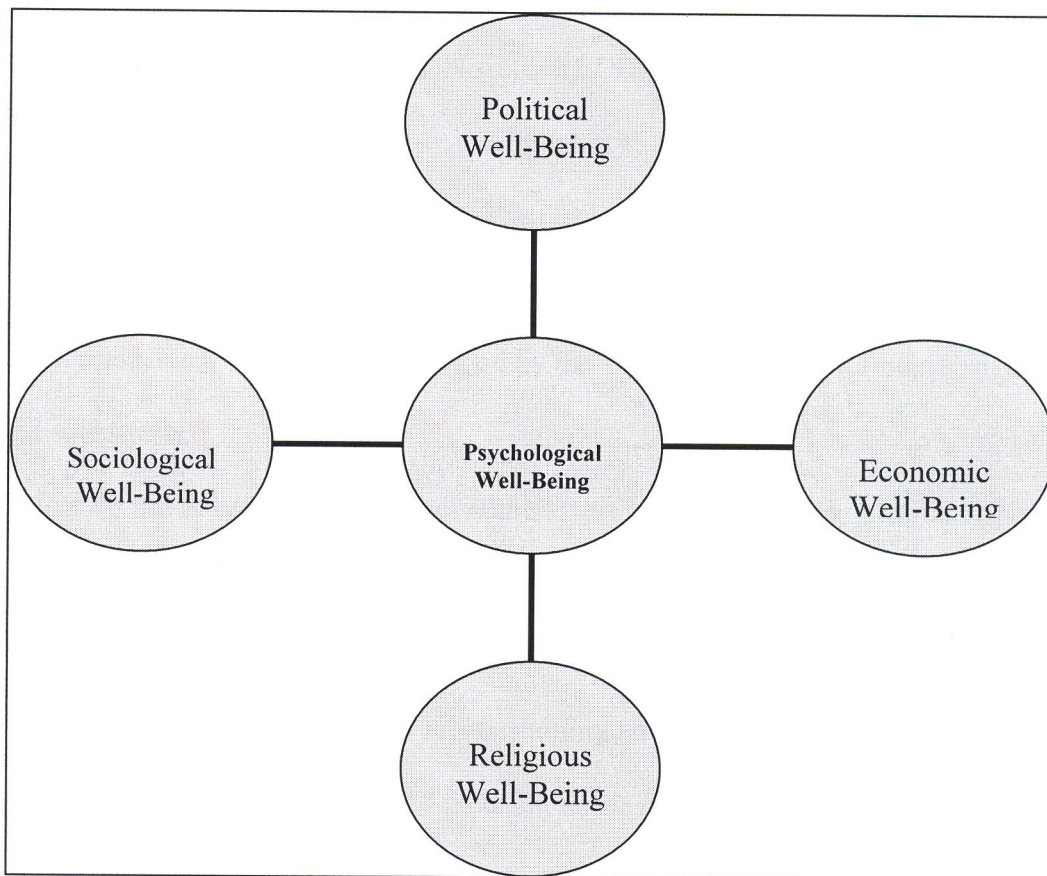


Figure 4. The relationship of psychological well being to other aspects of a person's life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The present study was guided by research questions in an effort to discover the perception of the Sabaot women concerning the Impact of the SBTL literacy program upon their lives. The study was guided by the following grand tour question, and three sub-questions.

How do the Sabaot women perceive the effect of BTL's literacy program upon their lives?

1. Has the program impacted their economic situation through its motivations to the community to set up self-sustaining and self-managing systems that shall enable them to respond to their felt needs in community development?
2. Has the program enhanced their psychological outlook in terms of appreciating their language and cultural heritage?
3. Has the program strengthened their spiritual development through facilitating the translation of scripture with the local churches?

In summary, these research questions are revisited to conclude the study.

The Effect of BTL's Literacy Program upon the Women in Kopsiro Division

The findings showed that the Sabaot women perceive that the BTL literacy program has impacted them in the economic, political, religious, social and psychological areas of their lives. More so, the Sabaot women see that the SBTL literacy program, especially through mother tongue translation of the New Testament,

has impacted them positively. Their minds have been enlightened and their spiritual lives deepened, thus resulting in transformed individuals as well as societies.

Education or literacy seems to work hand in hand with empowerment especially in these areas of a woman's life. A community is deprived if it does not have literate people, and in this case, literate women. There will be development in other sectors of a society if the goal of the community is to educate its individuals and eradicate illiteracy. The people who are educated will in turn contribute to economy, religion, politics and development of the society at large.

1. Has the program impacted their economic situation?

First of all, the literacy program and the mother tongue translation has impacted the women's economic situation by motivating them to set up self-sustaining and self-managing systems that enable them to respond to their felt needs in community development. The presence of a Christian organization in the vicinity has encouraged many of them to enroll in Bible school for further training in areas such as theology and counseling so as to help other people in their community. The involvement of many of the women in development projects and economic ventures such as the revolving loan fund also shows that many of the women have been motivated either directly or indirectly by the program to look for ways in which they can improve their economic situation.

2. Has the program enhanced their psychological outlook?

The program has also impacted the women by challenging their psychological outlook in terms of appreciating their language and cultural heritage. The translation of the Bible into the Sabaot language obviously did this as it gave many of the

community members a thirst for their own language. For those who did not know their mother-tongue, they are now challenged to learn it so that they too can read the New Testament in their indigenous language. A number of them now have the desire to preserve certain cultural beliefs and traditions that build their society, such as: tribal songs, poems, proverbs, riddles, respect for elders, and, decency in dressing. There is also the desire to discourage those cultural behaviors that do not benefit the society such as early marriages and female circumcision.

Literacy abilities not only contribute to peoples' economic opportunities and financial resources, but to their self-esteem and self-assurance to take part in community affairs. Sabaot women are more willing to do a job which is even more crucial than the knowledge and skill with which to do it. A good general education, therefore, lays an essential foundation for training and employment, increased earnings and employee mobility. The effort that SBTL is putting in emphasizing mother tongue education in the primary schools in Mt. Elgon District is an indication that there is another way to educate and encourage literacy in indigenous areas other than using English and Swahili as the medium. Their strategy is geared on acculturation and indigenization. Furthermore, it should also be noted that women's livelihoods are not static, but change according to their circumstances. As one of the women showed she had to find other ways of earning an income when she lost her job due to family issues. The mother-tongue literacy programs of SBTL should, therefore, be embedded in livelihood skills and training so as to be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of the women.

3. Has the program strengthened their spiritual development?

Lastly, the women have been strengthened in their spiritual development through the literacy program and essentially through the mother tongue translation. Many of them now understand the Bible and it has in turn impacted their families, work places and society at large. The impact on the women's spirituality shows that literacy programs must be developed within the community and merged from the needs of the community. There was a need for a Sabaot New Testament and from this need; the literacy project at Kopsiro Division was established. The agencies that fund such organizations should recognize and respect their autonomy and allow them to be leaner or community-centered and help in facilitating them to meet their goals. A summary of the impact of female literacy on the lives of the women is given in figure five.

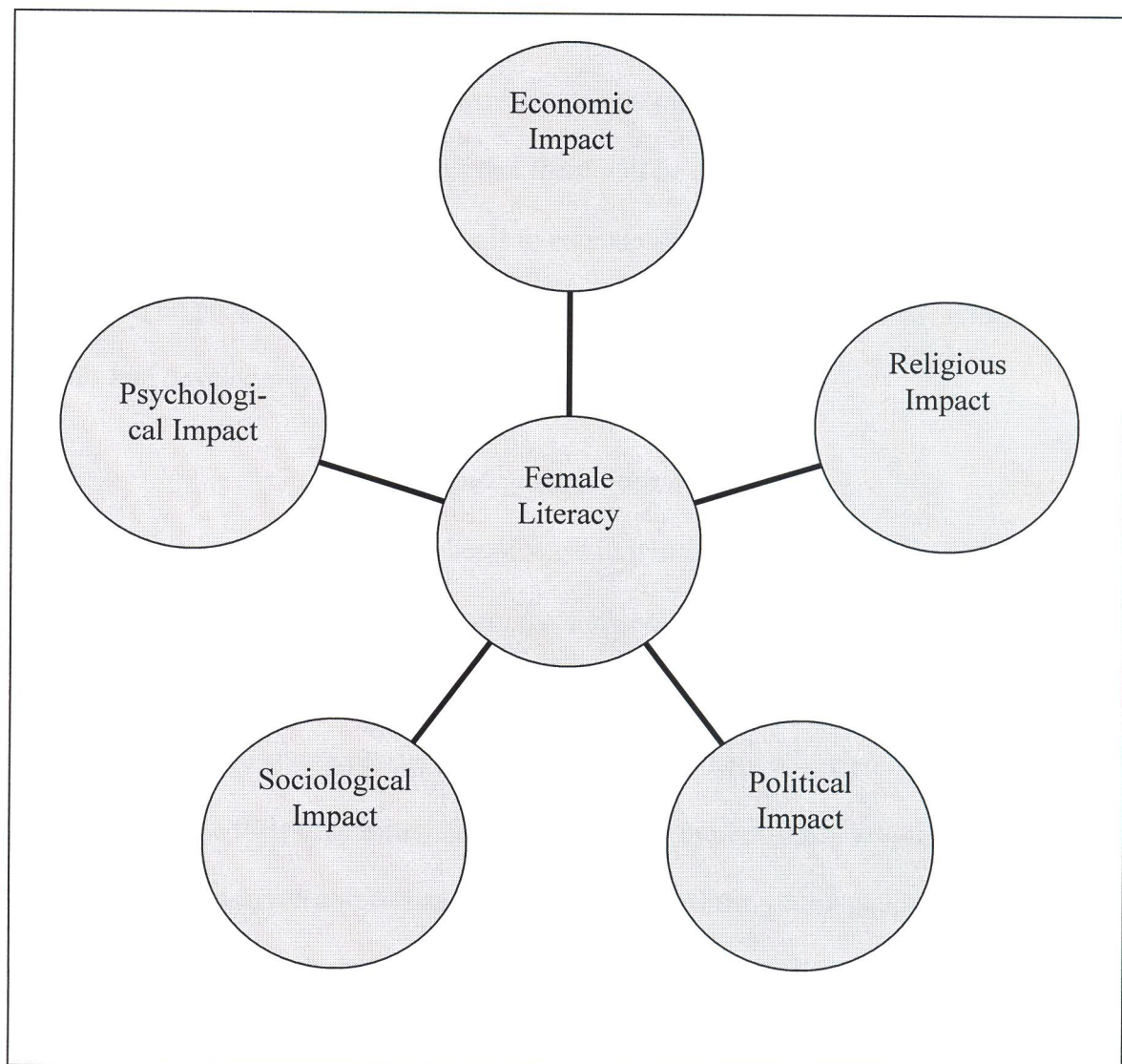


Figure 5. The relationship of economic, political, religious, psychological, and social elements to female literacy.

Figure 5 shows that a community is deprived if it does not have literate people, and in this case, literate women because literacy is tied to the whole life of an individual. The figure also illustrates that there will be development in other sectors of a society if the goal of the community is to educate its individuals and eradicate illiteracy. The people who are educated will in turn contribute to economy, religion, politics and development of the society at large.

Recommendations

As much as there are a number of ways in which the female society has been impacted by the SBTL literacy program, there are some recommendations. First of all, there is a need to have other activities in the SBTL base that can enable them to employ some of the young people in Kopsiro division. Many of the youth do not have jobs and so waste their time loitering at the Makutano market. They are, therefore, wasting their God-given abilities and resources. Some of the young people do not get employment even though they do a lot of job-seeking and thus, there is a great need to create job opportunities to alleviate their frustration.

Also, as SBTL involves the female community in its literacy programs, mother-tongue translation and other research projects, they should be able to appreciate these women in material or financial ways if possible. This would motivate the women to continue to participate in the activities of SBTL.

Lastly, for the Sabaot New Testament Bible to be of greater use to the community, the staff at SBTL should take time to educate the community in their mother-tongue so as to teach those who did not grow up knowing the language. Further training should be done in informing them about the linguistic symbols used in writing Sabaot. The training will enable the community to know how to smoothly read the text and where to put an accent since many of the women commented that

one needs to read the Sabaot Bible very slowly. What is definite is that many women are waiting eagerly for the Old Testament Bible translation.

Reflections on the Study

Female literacy is an area of study that can never be exhausted. The research revealed a great need for the development of literacy among women and girls in the indigenous areas of Kenya. Many literacy organizations have carved a niche for themselves in urban areas of Kenya but seldom do they venture to hardship areas such as Mt. Elgon District. Only until one goes to Kopsiro division in Mt. Elgon district will one truly realize that it is indeed an isolated area in Kenya and needs team-work to permeate it. Unless the Kenyan government works hand in hand with individuals as well as organizations that are centered on female literacy, not much progress will be realized in these areas.

Literacy organizations should also go beyond facilitating functional literacy enveloped in the belief that one can only be literate if they are able to read and write in a foreign language, preferable, English or Swahili. I believe that one can be literate according to ones culture which may not necessarily mean being able to read and write in English or Swahili. Mother- tongue literacy is also a powerful tool of empowerment in indigenous communities as those who never got the opportunity to go to formal training until tertiary levels, can still enjoy the enlightenment of being educated. There are about 42 tribes in Kenya and if organizations such as BTL would support the mother-tongue educational program that the ministry of education in Kenya has for primary schools, then, a great deal of societal change will result. In conclusion, the Kenya government should be the one to spear-head education in rural areas of Kenya while employing different tactics such as that of emphasizing mother- tongue literacy. It would do Kenya a lot of good in enriching its culture as

many people begin to embrace literacy in their own mother- tongue. We also definitely need more teachers who are equipped to serve in indigenous parts of Kenya since many teachers in these areas are overloaded because no one wants to venture to such hardship areas. The church, in addition, needs to take a stand in encouraging holistic mission work in the rural parts of the country. Spiritual evangelism should be soaked with practical evangelism through discipleship that aims to empower the whole person- body, mind, soul and spirit so that women will be prepared to do every good work. As Christian organizations accept the challenge to educate the people they evangelize, the whole face of Christian missions will be changed. Christianity will become more relevant to the poor, the oppressed and the weak in society who are mostly found in the indigenous parts of Kenya.

Areas for Further Research

A number of areas that require further research in lieu of this study include the following:

- ❖ Research needs to be done on the Impact of male literacy in indigenous areas of Kenya. This study focused only on the female gender and probably there could be different findings concerning the men's perception of the Impact of BTL's literacy program upon their lives.
- ❖ Research is also required on the development of livelihood literacy programs in indigenous areas of Kenya and their impact in the overall literacy development in the country. This is because there is an ongoing concern that literacy organizations need to go beyond functional literacy on to livelihood literacy training.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF ENTRY



NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

P.O. Box 24686 - 00602 Karen, NAIROBI, KENYA

Tel: 254 (020) 882104/882038
Fax: 254 (020) 882908
Email: info@negst.edu
Website: www.negst.edu

13th December, 2005

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH WORK

The bearer of this letter, Ms. Mariet Owino is a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) and is doing research towards the completion of the Master of Arts in Christian Education. The research is on "The Impact of Female Literacy in Indigenous Societies of Kenya"

Any assistance that you can give to Ms. Owino will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dwight Jessup, PhD.
Ag. Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PART ONE: LEVEL OF LITERACY

Key Questions

Prompts (If necessary)

1. Have you been formally or informally educated?

Formally
Informally

a) If formally educated, what level have you reached?

Primary School
Secondary School
University
Vocational Training
Adult literacy training
Functional Literacy
Livelihood Literacy

b) If informally educated, what form of learning?

Traditional learning
Rites of passage

PART TWO: IMPACT OF FEMALE LITERACY

Key Questions

Prompts (If necessary)

1. Do you involve yourself in any economic activities?

Farming
Merry-go-round
Revolving- loan fund
Business activities
Handicraft
Other activities

2. What political activities do you involve yourself in?

Leadership in church
Women's leader
Parents- Teachers Association (PTA) leadership
Cultural/ traditional leadership in community
Leadership in community development projects

3. i) What religious activities do you involve yourself in?

Attend church
Attend women's fellowship
Cleaning the church
Choir
Sunday school teaching

ii) Are you able to read the Bible in your mother tongue and how has reading the Bible impacted your life?

4. What community developing activities do you involve yourself in?

- Building schools
- Building Churches
- Building Health facilities
- Initiating women's development schemes
- Preserving positive cultural values and heritage
- Preserving indigenous language through primary socialization

5. What is your role in the family?

- Bread-winner
- Home-maker
- Raise children
- Take care of finances

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEWING: EVALUATION GRID

<p style="text-align: center;">ORGANIZATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Introductory Stage</i></p> <p>The interviewer should look presentable and welcoming and allow the respondent to feel comfortable.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SKILLS PROCESS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-Verbal Behavior</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Opening up/opening out phase</i></p> <p>The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of the female literacy project of BTL in the Sabao community of Mt. Elgon District in Kenya and its implications and recommendations to BTL literacy programs. You have been chosen to help me do this by supplying information that will be used for this purpose.</p> <p>Please be assured of the confidentiality of your information which will only be used for this research. I kindly request you to sincerely respond to the questions as pertaining to the interview.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Listening/ Encouraging</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facial expression should be appropriate. ✓ Maintain eye contact but do not sit directly opposite the interviewee to avoid making them uncomfortable. ✓ Use head-nods very sparingly. ✓ Listen, rather than talk. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Questioning/ Probing</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Summary and closure</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Reflecting</i></p>

APPENDIX IV**OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

<i>DESCRIPTIVE NOTES</i>	<i>REFLECTIVE NOTES</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Portraits of the participants✓ Reconstruction of dialogue✓ Description of the physical setting✓ Accounts of particular events or activities	Personal thoughts, speculations, feelings, ideas and prejudices during the research.

APPENDIX V

Table 1. Demographic information on participants

Participants	Marital Status	Ethnic Group	Number of Children in the Family	Level of Education Reached	Type of Training
Participant # 1	Married	Sabaot/ Bukusu	2	College training	Certificate course in teaching
Participant # 2	Married	Sabaot	5	Reached form four in high school level	Currently studying Counseling at ICM- a Christian college in the neighborhood.
Participant # 3	Married	Sabaot	2	Reached Form two in High school Education	Currently studying Counseling and Theology at ICM
Participant # 4	Married	Sabaot	6	Reached class seven in Primary School Education	—
Participant # 5	Married	Sabaot	5	Reached Form two in High School Education	—
Participant # 6	Married	Sabaot	9	Did not go to any formal school	Culture and Traditions of the Sabaot people

V I T A E

HARRIET NYAKECHO OWINO

Career Objective: Teaching, Writing and Research work.

Mobile: +254720 558458

E-mail: hnyakecho@yahoo.com

Profile

My basic interest is on research work geared to empowering the Kenyan society in a holistic manner especially among the female society in indigenous settings.

Personality

A hardworking lady who thrives in activity which involves individual and corporate facets. Likes to work at ones own pace and taking risks that are worthwhile. Has a deep spiritual sense hence believing in what she can do as well as encouraging others to be the best they can be. Compassionate, kind, dedicated, patient, determined and persevering are words that can also describe me.

Personal Details

Nationality : Kenyan

Date of Birth : 1982

Martial Status: Engaged.

Sex : Female

Career/Professional Prospects

1. University Lecturer

I would like to teach in a University setting in the areas of Education and Religion after I graduate with my master's degree.

2. Pursue a PhD course

After working for a while it is my desire to undertake a PhD in either Child Psychology or Clinical Psychology so that I can work with children in stress related areas such as Trauma and Loss.

3. Involvement in Research Work

I would also like to be involved in research work that borders on female literacy and empowerment.

4. Writing

I would like to write books, papers and journals that aim to bring about female empowerment in my country, Kenya especially those that will benefit the girl child in the indigenous parts of my country.

Research Done

“The Impact of Female Literacy in Indigenous Societies of Kenya: A case Study of BTL Kenya- Sabaot Project.” MA in Educational Studies Thesis.

- Qualitative Study involving collection of data using observations, note taking and video recording from selected women in the Mt. Elgon District, Kopsiro division of Western Kenya.

Future Publications

“Mother Tongue Literacy as a Tool for Female Empowerment.” – Based on research on “The Impact of Female Literacy in Indigenous Societies of Kenya: A Case Study of BTL Kenya- Sabaot Project.”

Activities Involved

1. Mission outreaches to indigenous and hardship areas of Kenya such as Turkana and Kilifi District with emphasis on discipling women and children.
2. Primary school based evangelism in various primary schools in Eldoret town in Kenya with emphasis on discipling children between ages 6- 13.

3. Counselling services at Family Reconciliation Ministries (FREM) in Eldoret town- a non- governmental organization whose aim is to give counselling to families under stress.
4. Production and airing of radio programs on child abuse, problems facing the teenage girl and the persecuted church, on a local radio station called SAYARE in Eldoret town.

Hobbies

Singing, Reading, Writing, Counselling, Gardening, Travelling, Community Work and Interior Décor

Computer Skills

MS Office (Word, Excel & PowerPoint), Internet and E-mail applications

Language

Fluency in English and Swahili languages

References

Furnished promptly upon request with supporting documents