

**THE INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL
WOMEN IN KESSES DIVISION, UASIN-GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

BY:

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the candidate:

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my Heavenly Father up above, whose Grace is sufficient,

My Father, My Mother, Jemutai, Randich, Jelagat, Chiri, Pastor Jeremiah Kipkosgey and
baby Jason.

God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Information is an important tool in development. Rural women in Kesses Division require the right information to carry out their day – to – day activities. Despite the important role that information plays in development, women in Kesses do not appear to benefit from this information. The aim of the study was to investigate the information needs and seeking behavior of rural women in Kesses Division; ascertain the extent to which their information needs are being met by existing information systems, services and channels and make suggestions for improvement. The objectives of the study were to: establish information needs of rural women in Kesses Division; establish the reasons why they seek information; identify whether the existing information systems, services channels are accessible; establish how the women use the acquired information, make appropriate recommendations to improve access to information. The study was informed by the Systems Feminism Theories. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature, using a case study research approach. Combinations of stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were employed to obtain **98** respondents and **19** key informants. Data was collected by use of semi –structured interview schedules complimented by self – administered questionnaires, observations and document review. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the objectives and research questions while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics presented using frequency distribution tables and bar charts. Among the key findings of the study were that rural women have information needs which are not being satisfied by the existing information systems, services and channels of communication. The information available in Kesses Division was not adequate in terms of quality and quantity. The study concludes that lack of adequate access and use of information has impacted negatively on the performance of women’s daily activities. The study recommends that information providers should carry out a thorough analysis of the information needs of rural women in Kesses division with a view to addressing them.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDs	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AWRD	-	Association for Women's Right in Development
CBOs	-	Community Based Organizations
CEOs	-	Chief Executive Officers
CHAMAAs	-	Women's Groups Funds-raising
CTA	-	Commodity Trading Advisor
DIOs	-	District Information Officers
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIDA	-	Federation of Women Lawyers
GOK	-	Government of Kenya
HIV	-	Human Immunization Virus
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IRIN	-	Integrated Regional Information Networks
KDHS	-	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
NACC	-	National Aids Control Council
NGDP	-	National Gender and Development Policy
NGOs	-	Non Governmental Organization
NLP	-	National Land Policy
SACCO	-	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
SGBV	-	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SID	-	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
SMART	-	Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Timely
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TB	-	Tuberculosis
UN	-	United Nations
WHO	-	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the fundamental elements that information access and use can trigger positively for rural women. It includes the background in information needs and seeking behaviour of rural women; the global, regional, national and local cadres of rural women in society and more specifically Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County. Additionally, this chapter presents the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, assumptions, significance, scope and limitations to the study.

1.2 Background Information

Information is a tool which when utilized properly can bring about opportunities that can greatly have a positive impact on the rural woman Ocholla and Mostert (2004). Information when availed would promote interaction and exchange of ideas and if used by rural women, has potential to open up opportunities for the betterment of their well-being. This will eventually pave a way for those who feel helpless, to be encouraged and motivated. Information contributes to acquisition of knowledge which is used in making fundamental changes in many areas. The availability of information to rural women would enable them make decisions which would change the way they do things including managing their resources such as family, land and finances, in their trade or business activities. According to Odini (2008) in the rural setting, people may not have discovered the true value of information as this has potential to boost development especially in relation to their economic activities such as trade, small businesses, agriculture, health and education.

When rural women form ‘*chamaas*’ to present and discuss their challenges, information professionals can participate to provide information that can address the problems discussed. This can be a useful channel that would enable women to articulate their issues in a manner that would not expose them to ridicule or make them embarrassed. Society should facilitate information systems, structures and channels that can direct useful, current, comprehensible and timely information to the grassroots level, in order to offer solutions to the problems faced by the rural women. These information systems should suit the information needs of its users. Society, according to Mchombu (2000), has not fully utilized channels that can deliver information to rural women. Information channels should not be intimidating to its users. They should be easy to understand and affordable. Information in the rural areas should be presented in such a way that it inspires confidence to the rural folk to use it. The information systems put in place should enable rural women to be user-friendly in order to enable them to use information with a view to enhancing production, contributing to improved livelihoods, empowering themselves and promoting social values (Odini, 2008).

1.2.1 Opportunities for Rural Women

Information brings about opportunities that were previously unknown. When people are ignorant, they miss chances because they are not able to access information that would assist them. Today, the Kenya government has created the “UWEZO FUND” which aims at facilitating the availability of funds to both the youth and women to start businesses. This information has been availed country wide, but if the rural woman does not get this information, she would miss an opportunity to empower herself economically.

1.2.2 Empowerment of Rural Women

Women with information are empowered and enabled to handle and control their lives through making decisions that can positively alter their lives as well as enrich themselves by starting businesses that will change their lives and those of their families. This also means that in whatever activities women perform, application of information will enhance performance and productivity. When a woman is empowered, she is able to better provide for her family, enrich her family's economic status and live a better life.

1.2.3 Capabilities for Rural Women

Information should expose women to knowledge and skills which they would use to tackle issues pertaining to their families such as poverty, health, poor diets and inhospitable living conditions. Information would enable women to know how to tackle all these issues in a proper manner.

1.2.4 Vulnerabilities affecting Rural Women

Information can empower those perceived to be weak and helpless. Rural women suffer from this factor as society is patriarchal, hence women are sidelined on issues pertaining to decision-making. Women with information would be able to tackle issues affecting them and make changes to suit specific situations.

1.3 Rural Women

Rural women are classified as those who reside in the rural region of the country with low literacy rates, and are resourceful economic agents who contribute to the income of families and the growth of communities in a multiple of ways Ijiekhuamhen and Omoosejimi (2016).

Inadequate information has placed the rural women at the edge of a fast-paced and developing society. They lack information to broaden their perception of opportunities that can improve their lives. They perform the most grueling tasks that pay a pittance - amounts that are not sufficient to meet basic needs. The rural women who are 'the home care-takers are often not thought of when information is being disseminated. Places such as the shopping centers, the chiefs' offices and the weekly '*barazas*' in the rural areas, are mainly dominated by men. The information garnered is normally geared towards men's needs, as they are the majority who attend these functions. The rural women have limited access to information. Once information is equally distributed to both the rural men and women, then the role of the rural women would be enhanced. The discourse or outcomes of this injustice is basically an anti-thesis of gender justice from both its feminist and human rights postulations thus:

- i. Women justice as the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic and social rights on the basis of gender equality. This perspective necessitates taking a gender perspective on the rights themselves, as well as the assessment of access and obstacles to the enjoyment of these rights for women, men, girls and boys adopting gender sensitive strategies for protecting and promoting them. Rural women lack adequate information on legal protection especially on their rights.
- ii. Discrimination against women in decision-making processes especially at the positions of power at local and national levels; dispossession of women or the violation of their property and land rights among others. This captures the women rights implications within the above mentioned human rights and land concerns. Also mentioned is the discrimination of women in employment opportunities.

- iii. Whilst gender injustices affect both men and women, it is the latter that are the most affected due to their vulnerability and patriarchy in the society. Gender disparities are seen in economic power sharing especially in finance, credit facilities and loans. Women cannot access these opportunities because firstly, they do not have collateral such as land to call their own; secondly, in an incomprehensible manner, women must have their husbands' signatures appended on loan forms to be given money (FAO, 2002).

1.3.1 Information Needs of Rural Women

Rural women have long been subjected to a lot of discrimination by the patriarchal society on issues that affect them greatly. For instance, when men want to control the family funds exclusively especially after sales of harvests and hence ignore the women's needs. This leads women to be so desperate for funds that they subject themselves to dangerous and back-breaking tasks to eke out a living. Information on healthy eating habits and cooking methods that are not time consuming and labour intensive (such as going to the forest daily to look for firewood) should be availed too. Family is very important, therefore, information on how to raise healthy children, the use of various vaccinations, inoculations' and immunizations should be made available to them. Also, how to deal with outbreak of diseases and to recognize their signs and symptoms. Women should have information on how to plan for their families, how to treat themselves well so as not to fall ill, thus be able to take care of their families effectively. In farming, women are the majority of labourers. They toil in their own farms or on other peoples 'shambas' to earn a living and they need information on how to work in a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely manner, so that the produce can reflect on efficient beneficial ways of doing things.

This will expose them to use modern and efficient implements, fertilizers, insecticides and crop varieties so that they can diversify and utilize or sell excess produce to make money and ensure food security.

1.3.2 Information Seeking Behavior of Rural Women

Rural women have time-tested information seeking behavior that is both traditional, old fashioned and has no place in today's modern society. In rural areas, information-seeking habits are similar such that when information is needed it follows a source that has been used year in year out. The rural women naturally follow these procedures, but in the process end up receiving information that is outdated, retrogressive and highly irrelevant, which cannot be applied in today's modern society.

Women normally go to sources that are close to them such as the neighbours, relatives and friends. They are normally in the same circle of constant interaction, hence neither of them is able to advice each other on anything new. Information that is normally passed on from one generation to another, many times has been convoluted and vital aspects of information removed or false information added that the original is most likely different from what is being perpetuated.

Also, social gatherings such as attending church, weddings, funerals, baptisms and market days in which women are known to attend regularly, are other sources from where women seek information. Any function in the rural areas would have a gathering where women from different villages meet and exchange information, with each claiming that the information they have is accurate and with each woman exchanging ideas and plans that they feel are ideal. Women also seek information from schools they take their children to and from the teachers of their children. When

a child becomes sick, or even the mothers themselves, they seek information from the nurses, doctors and clinical officers.

1.3.3 Rural Women Globally

The world is divided into the 'haves' and the 'haves-not'; commonly referred to as the developed and developing nations. The distinction between the rural women in the developed and those in developing countries is so wide that there is absolutely no common factor whatsoever. In fact, it can be said that the modern women in developing countries are at par with the rural women in developed countries and in many cases, those in the developed countries are even much better off. (Townson, 2000).

Globally, rural women in developing countries have similar challenges; the only difference would be in the color of their skin. War, diseases, hunger and poverty that affect the rural women in India or South America is similar to those facing the African women. The same conditions are prevalent in these countries, the same problems are faced, and similar solutions can be applied to them. The only real difference is geographical location. Information not passed to rural women affects them in a similar way irrespective of geographical location. Lack of information to rural women globally creates a vicious cycle of poverty in which rural women cannot empower themselves.

1.3.4 Rural Women Regionally

Africa is a continent that is famous for all the wrong reasons. It has been known internationally as a place that is full of diseases, floods, famine, malnutrition, war - people killing each other over real or imagined reasons and displacement over tribal and sometimes clan conflicts, the list is endless. With all these negative aspects, life

for the rural woman is doubly hard, since she has to strive very hard to achieve even the basics in life. Rural women in Africa face so many challenges, since, if any of the above-mentioned disasters happen, the first person to be affected is always the rural woman and her children.

Africa has almost 89% of its population living below poverty levels; and of these, people living in rural areas are the vast majority. Rural women face challenges that are overwhelming especially if they are financially challenged. The women are hardly recognized as being capable of bringing change to society. Women are normally viewed in the patriarchal society as similar to a child. Any initiatives that rural women undertake are normally undermined and not taken seriously, hence poverty becomes a way of life, and they are left with the hardest task of ensuring that there is food for their children and their extended families. (Odini, 2008).

Not considering the multitude of tasks that await them such as childcare, fetching water, cooking, looking for firewood, looking after animals, the rural women contend with other issues such as having large families and taking care of relatives. They lack a source of income and when they have it, it is inadequate. They use a large portion of their income in purchasing food. They lack access to clean water and safe sanitation and are engaged in environmental degradation. They lack access to household amenities and they engage in subsistence farming. The rural women have low agricultural productivity and poor marketing of harvests and lack information on basic human rights. (Townson, 2000).

1.3.5 Rural Women in Kenya

The rural women in Kenya are a highly marginalized lot, who depend on their husbands and extended family for sustenance. They are very hard working, normally

waking up early in the morning to ensure their children are adequately fed and prepared to go to school. They also ensure that their husbands too are fed before they finally take care of themselves. The majority of rural women fetch water and firewood by travelling long distances, till in family farms and graze cattle, sheep and goats to ensure that their families are well fed when they come back home at the end of the day. Irrespective of being sidelined in many issues affecting their families, the rural women ensure that their families have something to eat every day. Many times the husbands work in urban areas doing petty jobs that do not even pay them enough to be able to send home some of the money to their families.

Most girls drop out of school early to get married and have families. This puts an end to any opportunity to further their education and prosper in their life. These conditions force them to look for menial jobs like farming in other people's *'shambas'* to get some money for their needs. The majority of small-scale farmers in rural Kenya constitute women as men have moved to big towns and cities to look for jobs, which are more often than not menial and not sufficient to support their families back home in the rural areas. (GOK, 2000).

Today, rural women include those who have relocated and resettled away from the city upon retirement, retrenchment or a desire to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life to a more peaceful, simple and laid back environment. These women are educated, well-travelled and aware of the current politics of the country. Rarely do they seek advice but in some instances they can be looked as sources of information to rural poor women in the rural areas.

1.3.6 Rural Women in Kesses Division

Rural women in Kesses division are also marginalized as the cultural aspects of tradition dictate that they are to be 'seen and not heard'. Hence the rural women are not supposed to question any major decisions affecting their families and are expected to do as they are told. The factors that they are exposed to include illiteracy, negative cultural practices, such as early marriage, female genital mutilation and gender bias in cultural and ethnic traditions that affect them profoundly.

Kesses being a rural centre does not have many women who are well educated. Most women in Kesses left school and got married immediately without any option of going back to school. The women are involved full time in farming since their husbands seek for job opportunities in the cities. When harvests are made and sold, the money generated is not equally divided between husband and wife. The wife is normally given just enough to buy food for the family and not for her own use.

1.4 Study Setting

Kesses can be classified as a peri-urban area due to its close proximity to Eldoret town, which is the capital of South Rift Valley and has the following dimensions; economy, society, environment, mobility, and land cover. It is somewhere between the rural and urban set up with a mix of urban and rural characteristics which co-exist and interact in the same territory. It is a constant source of food production close to large populations with a range of well-established land-based services such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry; infrastructure and communication – transport links, and services including fresh water for urban and peri-urban inhabitants. Agriculture represents the main economic activity as farmers use the fertile land for both commercial and subsistence farming. Land has become scarce and production of

goods have fallen drastically that many are leaving rural areas in search of employment in urban cities. Market oriented crops such as maize, beans, vegetables, and fruits have become lucrative business for farmers. (UPEN, 2009). To a lesser extent some farmers have left farming which has reduced the level of agricultural production.

Social problems include high unemployment rates amongst the people, especially the men. There is a high population of children and youth especially those under 25 years of age, hence education and health facilities do not adequately cater for their needs.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Society recognizes women as leaders, achievers and successful persons in their own right. These strengths have been facilitated through the availability of information. Nevertheless, the rural women face major challenges due to the fact that they live in the periphery of urban settings. This factor combined with the attitudes and customs of people, who are not exposed to modern tenets, hinder the rural women's growth. Inadequate, irrelevant, inaccurate and untimely information has barred rural women in Kesses from satisfying their information needs.

Rural women are not exposed to information that may help them have a better livelihood. They do not access information due to ignorance and therefore do not know the impact information can have in their lives and the role it can play to empower them. Kesses is a small town that is largely dependent on agriculture. Most women are small scale farmers or traders or both. The problem is that they have no idea of the added value that is associated with provision of information and are ignorant of how to apply it in their lives. Due to the patriarchal attitude embedded therein, women are not used to being addressed on anything new that happens.

The current information services are limited to the District Officer's office and the Veterinary, Educational and Agricultural offices that are geared to issues affecting specific areas and schools, which are a source of information on education matters. The administrative officials who include the village headmen, chief and police provide information that is geared towards their work. All these offices do not take into account the information needs for rural women, their communication channels and services; their information seeking behavior which should be geared towards providing information for the day to day tasks in agriculture, business and family.

The public information services in Kesses have outdated information that is irrelevant to the rural women's information needs, since rural women rarely have any roles in the public sector and do not participate or are not members of policy making bodies to voice their information needs, they end up being largely ignored. This is due to policy makers who are ignorant of rural women's needs, who use archaic methods of providing information only specific to the society. In view of the above scenario, it was considered proper that the information needs and information seeking behavior of rural women in Kesses Division be investigated.

1.6 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the information needs and information seeking behavior of rural women in Kesses Division, ascertain the extent to which their information needs are being met by the existing information systems and services, and propose strategies for their improvement.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish the information needs of rural women in Kesses Division.

2. Identify how existing information channels, systems and services are accessed by rural women.
3. Investigate how rural women make use of acquired information.
4. Recommend strategies for enhancing availability of information to rural women in Kesses Division.

1.8 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of information do women in the rural areas of Kesses need?
2. To what extent are the information channels, systems and services available to the rural women in Kesses Division for their use?
3. How do rural women in Kesses Division utilize information available to them?
4. What should be done to improve availability of information to rural women in Kesses Division?

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the assumptions that:

- a. Rural women in Kesses Division have information needs that are distinct and have not been met.
- b. Rural women in Kesses Division face many challenges in accessing information which could have impacted negatively on their work.
- c. Despite the serious need for information by rural women in Kesses Division, the authorities have not done enough to improve its availability.
- d. Women in Kesses Division have the ability to make effective use of information to improve their lives.

1.10 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings arising from the study will improve availability of information to the rural women in Kesses Division if adopted by the authorities. This will in turn improve the standards of living of the rural women in Kesses Division. The findings of this study are likely to benefit the rural women in other parts of Kenya that have similar characteristics to Kesses Division in Uasin Gishu County.

1.11 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the information needs and information seeking behavior of rural women in Kesses Division which is the largest of six divisions in Uasin Gishu County and was chosen by the researcher due to its large semi urban and semi mobile population, and its proximity to one of Kenya's leading public institutions – Moi University. This is a leading public institution that can also be utilized as a source of information to rural women due to the fact that it is right in the heart of Kesses Division, and it has an outreach programme geared towards enabling the rural community surrounding it.

1.12 Limitations to the Study

The study was limited by language break down as the researcher had to restructure questions or explain the questionnaire in terms that were easily understood. The researcher had to directly translate some words in vernacular to ensure that the respondents understood what they were being asked. The respondents did not want to expose their weaknesses by showing lack of knowledge on matters of information seeking needs or ignorance of it altogether. Rural women are usually very busy making a livelihood to meet the family's needs hence they were too busy to pay much attention to the researcher.

1.13. Functional definitions of Key Terms

Barazas –They are also known as public meetings and gathering of people in which the members of a particular committee meet the public to participate, interact and exchange ideas on a particular issue like launch of a new service, or a development plan and also engage in government policies and frameworks. Locally, these are village discussions held in rural areas whereby all the rural people are invited to attend and participate.

Chamaas – These are informal group gatherings of women with similar interests who hold discussions on issues affecting them and each one contributes to mobilize money to enable them carry out income generating activities to improve their welfare. They are reliable, unofficial and familiar meetings attended by rural women frequently.

Information - This is data that has been processed into a meaningful form and for rural women the information they receive is always utilized in every activity they engage in to enable them improve in their various engagements.

Information Professional – This is a profile that is related to all kinds of occupations that have intense use of ICTs in knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes especially in the information industry. In the Kenyan context, an information profession or an information specialist is a person who works in information science, institutions such as libraries, museums, or archives, although the field is changing rapidly to include other disciplines, such as District Officer; District Commissioner; Police Officer; Area Chief, Teacher, Doctor, Administrative or Agricultural Officers, Pastors, Counselors, Legal, Media and Public Relations officers. These officers play a big role as consultants to rural women when there is a need they experience and need advice.

Information Needs – This is a common term in literature of information science and is closely related to the concept of relevance. It can mean to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious desire. For rural women, whatever activities they participate in, information is required to meet their needs and for progress to be experienced.

Information Seeking Behaviour – This is the micro-level of behaviour employed by the searcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds especially between the seeker and the system, following up on a search. In this study it is interpreted as an expression of want, demand, need or requirements that entails looking for information and is the process used by rural women to identify and choose among alternative information sources or an action undertaken by rural women at a given time to identify and satisfy information needs.

Information Sources – This is a source of information for somebody or anything that provides insight about something or provides knowledge about it. Different types of questions require different sources of information. Information sources may be observations, people, speeches, documents, pictures, organizations, websites, etc. They may be primary sources, secondary sources, and tertiary sources and so on. For rural women these are experts or an authority that they can approach to access the information they require with confidence.

Information System – Refers to centres such as libraries and archives, which collect and store information. The entire infrastructure, organization, personnel and components that collect, process, store, transmit, display, disseminate and act on information and organized methods of transforming data into information that can be used for decision-making. In the context of this study, information system refers to an

organized staff, materials, things and procedures devised to achieve a certain objective. And for rural women these are those places and areas that they can go to and get information pertaining to their needs without fear, panic or dismay of the system.

Information Users – This is a person who uses or exploits information and in this study it refers to rural women who explore, search and use information on poverty alleviation issues in line with their activities for positive transformation.

Rural Women – This refers to women living and residing in an isolated area in which virtually all economic and social services necessary for life enjoyment are lacking.

Shambas – The word has been localized but it refers to a garden that is used to cultivate crops, vegetables and fruits.

1.14 Summary

The chapter has provided an introduction to the study, background information, the statement of the problem, the aim, objectives and research questions pertinent to the study. It also presented the assumptions, significance, scope and limitations to the study. Additionally, the chapter presented functional definitions of key terms used in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature and presents the theoretical framework that informs the study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. A theory can be defined either broadly or narrowly. Broadly, a theory is a statement or a set of statements about variables that explain the relationships between various values very well and how they interact with each other. Theories in research are used to describe, explain, predict and control the underlying causes or influences of observed phenomena. Theories enable researchers to draw conclusions.

Several theories were reviewed, but three of them were selected after considering the objectives of the study, namely Systems Theory, Feminist Theory and African Feminist Theory. The three theories have components of technological innovation, adoption, diffusion and communication.

2.2.1 The Systems Theory

Systems theory investigates both the principles common to all complex entities, and the (usually mathematical) models which can be used to describe them. A system is a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism. Systems theory was proposed in the 1940s by the biologist, Bertalanffy and furthered by Ashby (1956). Bertalanffy stated that real systems are open to and interact with their environments, that they can acquire qualitatively new properties through emergence, resulting in continual evolution. Rather than reducing an entity (e.g. the human body) to the properties of its

parts or elements (e.g. organs or cells), systems theory focuses on the arrangement of relations between the parts that connect them into a whole (holism). This particular organization determines a system, which is independent of the concrete substance of the elements (e.g. particles, cells, transistors, and people). Thus, the same concepts and principles of organization underlie the different disciplines (Physics, Biology, Technology, Sociology, Chemistry, Mathematics), providing a basis for their unification. Systems concepts include: system-environment boundary, input, output, process, state, hierarchy, goal-directness and information. Heylighen (1992), further defines it as an interdisciplinary theory about the nature of complex systems, and it is a framework by which one can investigate, and/or describe any group or objects that work together to produce a result.

2.2.1.1 Systems Theory and the Study

The Systems theory can inform the role of information in society. The Systems theory expounds on the intricate manner in which information is perceived, interpreted and disseminated amongst family members. The family in this case is not just the exclusive mother, father and children, but includes extensions that entail an entire village. The dynamism of the theory dwells on behavioral patterns that are undertaken through the chain of events with the provision of information. The rural women are a system which needs information that it can process and have an output. Information as an input is accessed by the rural women from a source because they have a need. The rural women process that need into an activity that produces an outcome. Since information is an input, it has to be acquired, processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated then manipulated to suit the information needs of the rural women. The output then becomes a problem which is solved or an activity which depends entirely on the availability of information at the right time and in the right quantity. This

means utilizing information has been provided by the environment. In this case, the environment takes on a whole new perspective; the health provider, administrator, county and educational officers who work in formal environments are those that are seen to be educated and are in a better position to give sound advice. Those who are in informal sectors include business people, farmers and traders of whom the majority are rural women. All these people cater to the environment that provides information to the needs of rural women and they are a platform to address their information seeking behaviour.

2.2.2 The Feminist Theory

The Feminism Theory proposes that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially based on birth rights and justice. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines women's social roles, experience, interests, chores and feminist politics in a variety of fields. Kerr (2004) posits that feminism is a broad term for a variety of conceptions on the relations between men and women in society. There has been confusion on issues of gender equality as most people think it is about women. However, gender refers to both male and female. In rural areas gender (rural women) are perceived to be poor, illiterate, ignorant and in poor health. This perception is reflected both in women and gender issues. The social status of women is expected to change if empowered through provision of information. Lack of access to adequate and relevant information for the gender is to their disadvantage as they are unable to access productive resources. Rural women need to have access to current, accurate, timely, accessible and relevant information that will enable them to make sound decisions and have better options which can lead to “social empowerment in education, health, legal rights, employment, business and improved power relations”, posits Oadini (2008). This will curb a lot of problems that women in the

rural society undergo. This theory, even though it emphasizes more on rural women, realizes that information cannot be lopsided to suit the needs of women only. Men too need to be empowered with information so that they can be cohesive partners in improving their livelihoods. Odini (2008). The Feminist Theory examines women's and men's roles and experiences in different fields, and it focuses on analyzing gender inequality. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those of men.

2.2.2.1 Feminist Theory and the Study

The Feminist Theory envisions a society in which individuals can fulfill their potential regardless of their sex. Since most of the rules in society were designed principally by men, women should have the power to redress this state of affairs and effect changes that improve women's lives today and also improve the prospects of future generations, freeing both women and men from the limitations of traditional gender roles and expectations.

There is a growing concern for the needs and interests of rural women so as to empower them to have a better outlook and perception of life. Feminist Theory confronts social and cultural norms that constrain women's and men's lives confining them to a life of little value and expectations. This is relevant to the present study as it provides a useful framework for the respondents of the study, analyses the provision of information to women in rural society and how information can make them have different approaches and better methods of doing their tasks. It showcases information as a tool that can bring about positive changes in communities. The theory also helps to explain the problem of lack of access to relevant information in rural areas of

Kesses Division due to lack of suitable information resources, systems, channels and services.

2.2.3 African Feminism

African Feminist Theory is intended to provide a better understanding of the nature of gender inequality through discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping and limited rights due to men's flawed perception associating women with the body whilst men are perceived with the intellectual mind. The theory attempts to understand the nature of gender inequality and challenges male dominance. It also resists oppression based on ethnicity, class or tradition. Odini (2008) posits that it is necessary for both genders to be empowered with adequate information so as to be more useful. The issue is to provide them with information so that they can have control over their own lives through providing them with adequate information to make sound decisions on issues affecting them and society.

2.2.3.1 African Feminism and the Study

In relation to African Feminism, the study resonates with how the nature of gender inequality, where problems of access to relevant and timely information for rural women in rural areas of Kenya is compounded. Suffice to mention that rural areas lack suitable information services, have poor and inadequate communication channels that have deepened these problems further. There is need to understand the information needs of women in rural Kenya, enable established and existing information systems sources to be available in the rural areas; so as to be beneficial to them and would adequately be utilized to meet their information needs. Emphasis is on availability of current, useful and applicable information for those who live in the rural areas as there is a high information disparity. Sufficient information resources

should be available on the various activities that rural women participate in such as agriculture, business, self – help groups or '*chamaas*'.

2.3 Review of related Literature

Literature review aids the researcher in putting the problem of study into the context of previous works in the field of study, giving a summary of literature in relation to the topic under study and citing the authorities in the field. This provides a summary of the goals of a literature review as follows:

- i. To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility
- ii. To show the path of prior research and how the current project is linked to it
- iii. To integrate and summarize what is known in an area.

This study reviews the current findings and substantive knowledge on the impact of lack of information for rural women when accessing and utilizing it. It builds on the information seeking behaviour that rural women face in society and addresses the solutions to the problems faced by rural women in their everyday life.

2.4 Activities carried out by Rural Women

Rural women are the economic backbone of any society in developing countries. This is evident through the many activities they participate in (farming, poultry keeping, animal husbandry, small scale business or trying to eke a living through selling a service such as weeding in a neighbour's farm for wages). Call to Action (2007) states that women in Africa make up more than one third of the work force. They account for 90% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 100% of those who process foodstuff and undertake 60 - 90% of the marketing. Rural women are forced to perform these tasks due to the high rate of urban movement by their men to cities in

search of employment; in which they are poorly paid and which is not sufficient for their sustenance, or worse, they are not able to send back any money home to their families. These circumstances have led to most homes in rural areas to be headed by women. FAO (2004) observes that 30% of the households are headed by women in Kenya. Therefore, there is need for developmental issues in rural areas to enlist women as participants.

2.4.1 Agricultural Activities

Rural women in Kenya are involved in various agricultural activities such as preparation of farms for planting by burning weeds and ensuring the fires do not spread, hoeing, planting seeds, weeding and harvesting crops. They do this across the divisions in which they live, moving from one farm to another so that they may be paid a wage to meet their families' needs. There is a disparity between women and development. Women are not involved in policy making as portrayed by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (2004) which points out that although women form an integral part of society at work, they tend to be excluded from major decision making activities in rural areas. FAO (2002) explains that women should continue to be central to the well-being and development of society. This should be reflected at grass root levels, especially in rural areas, since women involved in development can bring about change much faster especially where modern concepts are embraced for economic growth and their well-being including reducing poverty.

2.4.2 Business Activities

Rural women are predominantly involved in the informal sector. The types of businesses they are involved in are usually short lived and are carried out during

particular events such as market days, public holidays, government address through 'barazas' or during national holidays. The commodities on sale are normally hawked from person to person, or the produce and/or service is carried out in shanty, filthy conditions that are temporary. This has been recognized by both Randy (2002) and Waswa (2004) who state that women in rural areas of Kenya operate their businesses with no plan. These businesses are usually run when farm work in the locality is scarce, hence it is meant to support what they receive from their husbands who are in cities, if at all.

2.5 Review of Related Literature

This section reviews studies and literature on the information needs, information seeking behavior, information systems, channels and services available to rural women.

2.5.1 Concept of Information

Information is any message, news, read or told verbally which adds knowledge, awareness, comprehension, and understanding of events, topics or problems encountered in the path of life. Information is usually utilized to give answers and solutions to unexpected difficult situations. It also aids in decision making. Information is raw material for development for both urban and rural dwellers. Prosperity, progress and development of any nation depend upon a nation's ability to acquire, produce, access and use pertinent information. Okiy (2003) explains that rural development is a basis for economic development and information is an important ingredient in the development process. People in rural areas, whether literate or not, should have access to information which would help them be

productive in their agricultural, economic, commercial, educational, cultural/social and political obligations as informed citizens.

Knowledge communication plays a central role in today's society. Although knowledge and its communication are basic phenomena of every human society, it is in the rise in information technology and its global impacts that characterize ours as an information society. There should be all kinds of systems to produce, store, process and exchange information hence information is not a pure observable, but a theoretical construct, reveals Capurro & Hjørland (2003).

2.5.2 Information Needs

An information need is a concept that occurs only in the mind of the person in need. The experience of need can only be discovered by deduction from behavior or through the reports of the person in need. Reitz (2010) defines an information need as a gap in a person's knowledge that, when experienced at the conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer. Every individual learned or otherwise has an information need, because in every activity that is carried out information is required for utilization so as to get the highest productivity in it. Also, information needs involve user's perception of a gap or anomaly in his/her knowledge base that she/he may not be able to express adequately. It involves users' value expectation and perceptions, of situations that cannot be entirely resolved by topical content. Furthermore, a need should be determined so that appropriate information can be collected to provide adequate solutions to a problem. This would enable the individual to choose among the best possibilities to achieve a better outcome from a range of different things. Kabebe (2000) notes, an assessment of information needs of users is essential to the provision of effective and quality information services. It also points

out that a sufficient identification, analysis and coordination of real information needs of users is an essential basis for planning, implementing and operation of information systems networks. Therefore, people will perform successfully and thoroughly without any danger or damage when their information need is identified and appropriate information gaps are met. (Kujala & Rekola, 2004). Mooko (2005), found that most information needs of rural women are health related, such as information regarding certain diseases, how they are contacted and treated, and this is emphasized by Nwaguu and Ajama (2011) that rural women actively sought for health information for themselves and their children, especially against maladies such as malaria and other tropical diseases, due to the climatic conditions that bred mosquitoes. Hossain and Islam (2012) explained that rural women needed information on agriculture, food and nutrition, livestock, health, family planning, child education amongst others, and, unfortunately, were highly dependent on their friends and neighbours to get the information they needed on their daily lives. Also, rural women were concerned with information needs related to food and child education (Ahmad, 2011). Additionally, rural women who were farmers required agricultural information for improving food security at the village level as it was discovered that they required information on backyard gardening, rearing of indigenous chicken, weed problems, insect attacks on their crops that declined their productivity and harvests (Yusuf, 2013). Ifukor (2011) states that rural women's information needs were nutritional, agricultural, economic, literacy, health, religious and social political Ijiekhumhen and Omosekejimi (2016) state that the information needs of rural women included issues on farming. In China though, the rural women information needs were in line with agricultural technology, market information, income generation and policy information were required the most. (Zhang and Yu,

2009) and in India, the information needs of the rural communities included income generation, community leadership, environmental issues such as pollution, climatic changes, disasters, community health, literacy support, educational opportunities, employment, basic loans, government policies, transportation, communication and sanitation according to (Dasgupta, 2000). All the above views reflect on the diverse needs of rural women that portrays that different circumstances prompt different needs.

2.5.3 Information Seeking Behaviour of Rural Women

Wilson (2002) states that information seeking is stimulated by stress that an individual undergoes when finding a solution to a problem. It consists of trying to change the actual circumstances of a situation and attempting to cope with it. Since rural women are very busy with the many activities they participate in, it is obvious that when seeking information they do not venture far, but instead liaise with those who are close to them such as their families, friends and neighbours. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) observed that women in the informal sector in Uganda seek information not far from their surroundings. The sources of information available to rural women include both the formal and informal sources, but most preferred to source for information from informal sources such as friends, relatives, husband, children and fellow market women. (Saleh and Lasisi, 2011). Ijiekhuamhen and Omosekejimi (2016) emphasized that rural women sourced for information from family members, friends and relatives. This means that women neither source for information from formal or external channels but instead rely on the familiar forms of communication. Also, rural women seek information pertaining to the activities they are involved in, many times these activities were common in the rural areas hence they would seek for information from each other excluding other channels that would provide information that is more

reliable and accurate. Rural women were more comfortable this way as they had a common language that they could easily communicate and understand each other regardless of other alternatives as sources of information such as mobile telephony or radio since in rural areas, there is poor distribution of electricity. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) cites the following factors that have paralyzed information seeking by rural women: illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, low social status, the multiple roles of child bearing, ignorance of the existing information sources, unavailability of proper places to access information, cultural constraints and unreliability of information, attitudes and poor infrastructure such as roads, telephones and electricity.

2.5.4 Information Systems, Channels and Services

Rural areas have always been “oral societies” and depended little on printed communication. Channels of information available for the acquisition and dissemination of information for different places amongst different people provide communication whether it is positive or negative. Usman (2007) states that information delivery is not a one way affair. There must be a sender to transmit the message and a receiver to make appropriate decisions on how the rest of the exchange should continue. Fayose (2002) states that many cultures survived without the written word and effective communication can take place without reading or writing. The same author continues to say that information dissemination in the rural society takes place in the home through the extended family members who participate in various ceremonies. Also, there are three main genres that make up oral literature: the spoken, the sung and the dramatized. Each of these conveys information vital to the existence of a community. Nwalo (2002) further explains that knowledge and information now rival natural resources namely, capital, land and labour as key factors of production.

The different diverse channels of communication in rural areas include the ‘public *baraza*’, traditional ceremonies such as churches, weddings, births, circumcisions, or the market place to sell or buy food. Fayose and Dike (2002) include poetry as one of the rural information channels that is able to communicate to the rural women effectively as they contain information on the good and bad happenings in society. It has also been observed that traditional and modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used concurrently to speed up the circulation of information. Tools such as the radio, television, mobile cinema, films, mobile phones and computers amongst others can be a worthwhile channel to disseminate information (Munyua, 2002). Information for rural development should not be disseminated through indigenous channels alone; but government and NGOs should work hand in hand to avail information in formats which can be easily understood by the rural women (Opeke and Ifukor, 2000). The same authors further state that community television viewing, mobile libraries and rural press should be promoted in rural and remote areas which have taken place in far flung areas such as Wajir today.

Rural communities need effective information services in order to serve their information needs. Rural areas present a lot of challenges that can be solved by providing information through various models such as tele-centres. In these resource centres, reliable, accurate and comprehensive information can be set up to cater to the various needs of rural women through multimedia and print documents. The information provided should be relevant to their information needs so that the rural women can be comfortable about being in such resource centres. Mtega and Ronald (2013) explain that the development of information services industry in rural areas can effectively promote rural economic development. In most cases, rural populace suffers from an acute low productivity and social economic retrogression mainly due

to ignorance which also results from either inadequate or poor information services. The same authors further state that people in the rural areas, whether literate or not, should have access to information services which will help them to be more capable and productive in their daily occupations, discharge their social and political obligations efficiently and become better informed citizens. The services in rural areas should include mobile telephony, vernacular radio and television stations, and computer, film, video and print services. Posters should be displayed in prominent locations to convey messages of issues that they should know and be aware about.

2.5.5 Challenges facing Rural Women

The challenges rural women face are varied and include: illiteracy, restrictive culture and traditions, poverty, high birth rates, demographic characteristics, time constraints, financial obstacles, unhygienic settlements and lack of interest in gaining new information due to ignorance. Women need information to play a key role in identifying problems and assisting them to improve their daily activities and decision-making capabilities.

Ocholla (2001) found out that women in rural areas lack access to information. Women's participation in rural development requires that appropriate information be made available to them. Therefore, their information needs have not been identified and given the attention they require so as to enable them to be high performers and achievers in their various activities. Poor distribution of electricity contributes to this apathy as it hinders them from accessing television or radio services; therefore they hardly consider mass media as a source of information.

Since women prefer the oral method of communication, they are then limited in receiving current and up-to-date information as what they receive is stale hence the

information received may be highly irrelevant because of interpersonal communication. Ikoja-Odongo (2001, 2002) and Mooko (2002) revealed that rural women prefer to use friends, neighbours and relatives as a source of information. Bii (2000), argues that the majority of population in rural areas of Kenya have no access to information hence are not in a position to utilize the available information.

There is no information system that can serve rural women effectively since no identification of their information needs has been established hence there are no services geared to serve them. Ngimwa and Ojiambo (1996) note that information systems that can effectively serve rural women can only be established with pre-knowledge of the identified information needs. Mchombu (2000) observes that it is necessary to develop information systems in rural areas which cater for the needs of the rural community and which includes health, agriculture, transport, business, education and human rights amongst others. Jihane and Ocholla (2003) argue that although women got the information they needed, it was either not relevant to their needs or it was not useful or helpful.

2.6 Gender

Zoellick (2012), then President of the World Bank states “gender equality” is smart economics.” Gender based injustices are the human rights violations which are targeted to an individual or group of persons due to their gender. The outcome of gender injustice is basically an anti-thesis of gender justice both from its respective feminist and human rights perspectives. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action (2006) clarifies that:

- a) The International Centre for Research on Women (2007) states that gender justice is the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic and social

rights on the basis of gender equality as well as the assessment of access and obstacles to the enjoyment of these rights for women, men, girls and boys and adopting gender sensitive strategies for protecting and promoting them (IASC, 2006).

- b) Gender discrimination against women is obvious in decision making processes especially at the positions of power at local and national levels; and dispossession of women or the violation of their property and land rights among others (UNFPA, 2011).

Women are victims of both the above mentioned human rights violations and the gender specific injustices which therefore frustrate the realization of their full human potential and development. The following statistics and cases illustrate the specific violations targeted to women, according to the UN Statistics Division (2011).

First, this is on the governance of land-based resources, where women have witnessed more afflictions when it comes to historical land injustices. It states that less than 5% of women have land titles in their names, yet women constitute about 50.5% of the population and carry out 80% of productive activities on land as it is on this basis that the National Gender and Development Policy (2000) was formulated. Indeed, in Kenya, over 80% of women live in rural areas where the majority are engaged in the farming of subsistent food and cash crops, livestock keeping and in agro-based income generating activities. In many areas of the country, male migration to urban areas and large-scale farms in search of paid employment has left women in charge of the management of small-scale farming activities. It is estimated that women constitute over 70% of all employees in the agricultural sector. In its provisions on the “Contemporary Manifestations and Impacts of the Land Question in Kenya”, the

National Land Policy (2009) captures the following gender-based indicators: gross disparities in land ownership, gender and trans-generational discrimination in succession, transfer of land and the exclusion of women in land decision making processes; and lack of capacity to gain access to clearly defined and enforceable transferable property rights. These, according to the policy, have had the following implications to women's land rights: disinheritance of women and vulnerable members of society, and biased decisions by land management and dispute resolution institutions and landlessness and the squatter phenomena.

Second and related to the historical land injustices is the phenomena of internal displacement which has resulted to massive loss of lives, land, property and other means of livelihoods owing to both human and natural factors, as pointed out in the UN Statistics Division (2011).

Third, is on gender and employment opportunities. Reports indicate that while most of the poor have been denied political, economic and social opportunities, it is worse for women who bear the brunt of this denial. The SID (2013), study catalogued the dimensions of women on employment and inequality as follows:

- a) **Employment:** men not only have higher incomes from paid employment, they also have better jobs. Women comprise a smaller proportion in the formal sector.
- b) **Urban Employment:** There is a glaring bias of female unemployment, especially in the age group 15 to 39 years.

Fourth, is the participation of women in elective and appointive positions in the society. Within elective positions, for instance, of the 222 members of the 10th Kenyan parliament, only 22 are women, an increase from 18 in the 9th parliament. Women's participation in the Judiciary is also skewed, with the majority occupying the bottom tiers of the judiciary, even after the judicial purge of 2003.

Fifth, is the subjection of women to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). According to the KDHS (2008-9), 39% of married, divorced or separated women aged 15-49 years reported being physically or sexually violated by their husbands or partners. Rural women are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual violence and forced circumcision.

Sixth, is the subjection of women to repugnant and harmful practices, discriminatory and unequal power relations between men and women, and economic dependence which often put women and girls at a disadvantage. These violations include forced and early marriages, promotion of polygamy to avoid poverty, widow inheritance and ritual cleansing which have continued unabated in parts of Kenya especially the North Eastern, Western and Nyanza Provinces.

And seventh, and related to the above, is the susceptibility and burden to HIV/AIDS. To begin with, an assessment conducted by National AIDS Control Council (NACC) in 2006 reveals that female household heads are more likely to be affected by HIV and AIDS than male-headed households. Women are most vulnerable to the HIV pandemic and constitute the greater number of new infections.

2.6.1 Rural Women and Development

The gender in society should be empowered in any capacity i.e. farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, community and social workers and individuals, whether skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled — both women and men — are needed to succeed in meeting their socio-economic needs. This is done by investing in people's skills and knowledge, and finding ways to expand their access to resources and information so that they can have more choices and opportunities. Also, there is a commitment for rural women on equity in all aspects of identified programs and operations by Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and the Ministry of Social Services under the gender department. Many countries have socially ingrained inequities and disparities to the vulnerable groups, including rural women. The World Bank President, Robert Zoellick (2012) states that “rural women should have established approaches and tools to allow involvement to bring awareness on women issues to program designs, implementations, and monitoring and evaluation activities”.

2.6.2 Women as Key Contributors to Economic Growth

Women are essential to economic growth. Moreover, investments in women often return multiple dividends in terms of helping to improve the well-being of their children, families and communities. Women are central wage earners, their earnings and productive activities provide vital income to many households. WHO (2011) declares that women are vital food producers and preparers. Women in developing countries produce between 60 and 80 percent of food crops. Yet women continue to face social barriers and inequities that prevent them from realizing their full economic potential.

Women bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty. Statistics indicate that women are more likely than men to be poor and at risk of hunger because of the systematic discrimination they face in education, health care, employment and control of assets. Gender Information (2010) explains that one of the biggest growth markets in the world is women. Today, there were more than 200 million women entrepreneurs worldwide. Women earn more than \$10 trillion every year, which is expected to grow by \$5 trillion over the next several years. In many developing countries, women's incomes are growing faster than that of men. Facts such as these should persuade governments and business leaders worldwide to see that investing in women should be used as a strategy for job creation and economic growth. Many are doing so. Yet the pool of talented women is underutilized, underpaid and underrepresented in business and society.

WHO (2011) declares that throughout the world, women do two-thirds of the work, yet they earn just one-third of the income and own less than two percent of the land. Three billion people don't have access to basic financial services that is taken for granted, like bank accounts and lines of credit and the majority of them are women. Women invest up to 90 percent of their incomes on their families and in their communities. When women have equal access to education and health care and the freedom to start businesses, the economic, political and social benefits ripple out far beyond their own home. When women thrive, families, communities and countries thrive and the world becomes more peaceful and prosperous.

2.6.3 Women and Gender Inequalities

In both developed and developing countries, women face gender-based inequities that often impede their ability to earn a living and better their lives and those of their families. The following challenges have been reported by Goetz (2006):

- i. Women worldwide typically earn less than men for the same work, and their jobs are concentrated in lower paying industries and the informal sector and family labour is usually unpaid.
- ii. Women work longer hours under the double burden of domestic and remunerative labour.
- iii. Women constitute the majority of the world's agricultural labourers, but receive only a small fraction of the available extension and support services.
- iv. Women have less access to and control over resources, benefits and opportunities, including land, assets, and credit, training and household income.
- v. Female-headed households are overrepresented among the poor and food insecure, and women and their children are the majority of refugees and displaced populations.
- vi. Women are further disadvantaged economically and socially because they often receive approximately half the years of schooling than men, and have less access to health care services and fewer legal rights.

2.6.3.1 Issues that affect Gender Inequality

IRIN (2004) highlights issues in regard to gender inequality, and they include:

- i. Isolation from the social development process.
- ii. Unemployment or exclusion from the economy.

- iii. Marginalization, discrimination and ruthlessness or exclusion from mainstream political and cultural processes.
- iv. Vulnerability or exclusion from security networks.
- v. Education, illiteracy and early school leavers: The following factors inevitably follow:
 - a. Formal education has progressively lost its place as a mechanism for social mobility and change.
 - b. Limited and biased access to education and training.
 - c. Limited employment opportunities.

2.6.3.2 Issues that Gender Policies should address

The national government should implement legislation to protect human rights as they relate to gender groups GOK (2002). The government should give high priority to marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged rural women. Policies should be geared towards the following issues:

- i. Gender inclusiveness.
- ii. Enabling an empowering environment.
- iii. Cultural and spiritual diversity.
- iv. Sustainable development.
- v. Strengthening provision and accessibility of education.
- vi. Provision of frameworks for the development of curricula and training programmes which reflect the realities of the lives of the rural women groups.
- vii. Specific provision for the education and training of youth who are at risk.

- viii. Working with multiple partnerships through use of municipal services and local authorities and civil societies at the local level. Such partnerships enable a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise to be shared, and can lead to creative solutions to problems.

2.6.3.3 Assessing Policy and Strategy for Tackling Rural Women Groups at Risk

IASC (2006) contemplates assessing the policy and strategy for tackling rural women groups at risk. The partnership can:-

- i. Assess and diagnose the problems and their causes
- ii. Develop a plan of action
- iii. Implement, monitor and evaluate the action plan

Identifying individuals or groups affected by specific problems by use of surveys to assess victimization and needs. The surveys should be carried out by the rural women groups themselves.

The partnership needs to be involved in the development of a plan of action for tackling the problems identified and deciding on the priorities for action. Each priority action may involve a different set of partners through:-

- i. Networking to create alliances of people at local, municipal and national levels
- ii. Systematic research both qualitative and quantitative
- iii. Lobbying to keep rights of rural women groups to participate on political issues

2.7 Summary

The chapter has highlighted the theoretical framework models that can be used to show relationships between the various issues surrounding the role information plays in rural society and especially how rural women are affected due to lack of it thereof. It portrays an intricate web of intertwined factors that highlight the importance and

value of using information in every aspect of society. Irrespective of the gender, whether male or female, youth or aged, all rural citizens are made more self-aware and become cognizant of the relevance of information in everything they do in their lives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodologies, procedures and mechanisms used in data collection and analysis. It describes the research design, study population, study area, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and techniques of data analysis and interpretation.

3.3 Study Population

Neumann (2006) defines a population as a group of individuals, events or objects having common observable characteristics. The target population for this study comprised rural women in Kesses Division involved in various activities that support their livelihoods. According to Uasin Gishu County, Kesses Division office (2013), the total population of women in the division is 10,777.

Population Distribution by Sex, No. of Households, Area, Density and Administrative Units, Wareng District.

Table 3.1: Administrative Units and Area by Division

	Wareng District	Kesses Location	Kesses Sub-Location	Kesses Division
Male	131,910	60,028	34,100	11,393
Female	129,163	59,232	48,455	10,777
TOTAL	261,073	119,260	82,555	22,170
Households	61,866	23,400	4,023	4,023
Area in sq. km	997.4	696.7	60.5	60.5
Density/sq km	262	171	367	367

Source: Kesses Divisional Office (2013)

3. 4. Research Design

A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution of the research. It is the structure that shows how all the major parts of a research project work together to address the central questions, which will be a major influence, and how to answer them. In this study, the researcher used descriptive survey design to describe how variables of the study relate without changing the environment.

According to Kothari (2004), a descriptive research is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or a group. In this case the rural women could be described through the common characteristics such as having minimal education, living in rural areas, struggling to meet the basic needs for their families and lack of information to utilize, and ignorance of existing channels for provision of information.

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative instruments in the study. Qualitative research includes designs, techniques and measures that do not produce discrete numerical data according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The same authors' advice that information is in the form of words rather than numbers, and these words are often grouped into categories. Wilson (2000) observes that a qualitative research method can be used because it is suitable in exploring human behavior, where the philosophical shift from observation of social facts as objective, to the idea of facts being viewed as socially constructed. Whilst using qualitative research, the objective was to get a first-hand view of the rural women in their natural setting so as to understand the challenges they faced whilst seeking for information and expressing their information needs. Flick (2002) notes the subjectivities of the

researcher and those being studied are part of the research process, hence qualitative research is appropriate in studying the information-seeking behaviour of rural women as it observes their activities in line with their information needs whilst performing their activities. This produced data that was grouped into categories that provided accurate interpretations of the variables used in the research.

Snapsurveys.com defines quantitative research as quantifying of data to generalize results from a sample of the population of interest which are rural women. It is also intended to measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample and usually a large number of cases representing the population of interest. It has randomly selected respondents and uses structured techniques such as questionnaires. The questionnaires were given to semi-literate and illiterate women were translated into the local language for easy interpretation so that accurate information could be provided. Numerical data was collected so as to emphasize the number of women who had information needs and information seeking behavior that were not being met. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. This method was able to determine the relationship between an independent variable such as information, and the dependent variable being rural women. This then provided a foundation to get the truth and to understand the challenges the rural women faced when searching for information. The study also sought to find out how information could be utilized, implemented it as well as predict its importance and assess its positive and negative cause and effect to the rural women in Kesses Division. Therefore rural women were surveyed based on the activities they participated in and a true representation of the population was sampled. The resulting data was presented in tables and charts that were easy to understand, analyze and provide exact values. Its findings were conclusive and were used to recommend a final course of action.

3.5 Sample Technique and Sampling Size

According to Durrheim and Painter (2006), a population is the larger pool from which the sampling elements are drawn and to which the findings of research are to be generalized. A researcher draws a sample from the population and the results from the sample are generalized.

The study used random sampling technique where every subject in the population was given an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. Sampling is a way to investigate a small part of the whole population and it informs a representation of what the whole picture is like. It was reported by www.rgs.org that there is simply never enough time, energy, manpower, equipment to measure every single item or site within the parent population or whole sampling frame. Patton (2002) states that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative enquiry.

Sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. According to Durrheim and Painter (2006) the higher the population of study, the less the percentage of the sample size. Therefore an appropriate sampling strategy is adopted to obtain a representative, and statistically valid sample of the whole. A sampling ratio of about 10% is needed for a moderately large population, and in this case, Kesses Division had a female population of 10,777 (Kesses Divisional Office, 2013). Therefore, when dealing with sample size, the smaller the population, the bigger the sampling ratio. In this study, 10% of the target population which initially was **1077** totaled **107**. **98** was the number that participated in the research and answered the full questionnaire. This

number was manageable and it was possible for the researcher to conduct the study at the specified time allocated.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study used the interview schedule with the information officers who were key in providing rural women with information because they interacted constantly with them.

They included County education, agricultural, security, veterinary, medical and social workers, pastors and women leaders whom were the ones that provided answers to the many questions the rural women had and were even consulted on issues that they were not conversant with, though this did not stop the women from persistently asking them questions or seeking their advice on various matters. The information officers provided to the researcher the type of queries that rural women were concerned with, and since they were often consulted by them, they became like a source of information, irrespective of whether they were articulate on the issues raised or not.

The researcher used observation to confirm whether the activities the rural women in Kesses Division participated in were truly a reflection of what was done on the ground. The researcher used a list of activities which had acted as a guideline to a variety of issues expected. In using the observation method, the researcher had to go to the farms, village shops and trading centres to ensure that the activities indicated on the questionnaire were actually being carried out by the women in Kesses Division. Questionnaires were given to the respondents who were rural women and those that were semi-literate had the questions translated to the local dialect so that they would also participate in the research in Kesses Division. Those who could not read at all were verbally asked the questions in the questionnaire and their answers recorded

according to the list present. The three tools complemented each other and were able to provide reliable data.

3.6.1 Interviews

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observe that an interview is a planned meeting during which the researcher (interviewer) obtains information from the respondent (interviewee) relating to the subject of the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with information officers. They were consulted by the researcher since during the study it was discovered that they were an active source of information to rural women who looked up to them for advice on the many issues affecting them. The rural women interrogated them about the challenges they faced and how they could be assisted to overcome them.

The information officers included the Women county representative, county education officers, County agricultural officers, Veterinary officers, Health officers, Social workers, Church leaders, and Administrative and Security officers. The interaction with the informants enhanced the maximum amount of information required by the researcher and clarification was instant.

3.6.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were designed and administered to the rural women in Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County. The questionnaires consisted of both open and closed ended questions, which enabled the researcher to create patterns and frequencies of similar responses given to different situations and therefore noted a trend amongst rural women in their information needs and information seeking habits. Questionnaires were given to each and every respondent who were rural women between the ages of 25-65. Each participant was given a questionnaire independently

so as not to influence each other or discuss amongst themselves, and it had options that they were able to check. The age bracket between 40-60 years were considered the most productive according to Jiyanne and Ochola (2004), since women were mature, realistic and practical the world over, hence are very active and play an important role in socio-economic development. The researcher would then explain questions that were not well understood and even translations were done to those who were semi-literate and illiterate. The questionnaires drew patterns prevalent amongst the rural women and assisted in drawing exhaustive and valid conclusions as required in the research.

3.6.3 Observations

Kawulich (2005) stated that observation increases the validity of the study because it makes it possible to collect different types of data by being on site over a period of time. It also familiarizes the researcher to the community. It reduces the “reactivity” of people reacting when they are aware that they are being observed and helps the researcher to develop questions in real time. Observation method was used in the study to assess the activities rural women participated in and how these activities required information which was able to assist them to solve problems that they encountered. The researcher had an observation checklist which contained questions that the observer would be looking to answer. The data acquired through observation complemented that of the questionnaires as it made the information gathered to be accurate using correlation between all the three variables which are rural women, activities and information needs and information seeking behavior.

3.6.4 Documentation

This is the evidence that was provided for through information and ideas borrowed by others such as theses on the same area of research, books, journals, government publications and the Internet. This provided some useful information on materials that had official information or evidence that served as a record.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which an experiment, test or any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials. Instrument reliability is the ability to generate consistent data after several repeats. The researcher used test – retest methods to test the reliability by giving back the same questionnaire to a few respondents after a period of one week and comparing the consistency of the data collected on the first and second respondents. According to Kothari (2004), reliability is the stability, accuracy and precision of measurements. It is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. It also indicates the extent to which the measure is without bias and hence offers consistent results.

The researcher ensured high reliability through concise, precise and accurate note taking, ensuring that information that was perceived as not clear was redone until clarity was achieved. Hence, questions that were vague and subject to bias and misinterpretation by respondents were replaced with clear ones that were easy to understand.

3.8 Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which a study reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Validity is the extent to which the

instrument measures what it is actually intended to measure. Harper (2002) argues that for a questionnaire to produce useful results, it must have validity and reliability. Questionnaires were given to a few lecturers, colleagues and staff of Moi University. The questionnaire was developed through test-retest method to assess reliability often after a period of two weeks. The researcher administered the amended questionnaire to the same respondents under the same conditions. Simple language was used for clarity and ease of understanding with clear instructions given on how the questionnaires were to be answered. The supervisor's advice and comments were incorporated in the instruments to achieve a good measurable standard before final administration.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a pretest that is carried out to test the data collection method so as to ensure that items in the instrument are stated clearly and have the same meaning to all respondents. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), prior to the implementation of an activity in a community, it is common to collect baseline information using a pre-test. Such a survey brings to the light the weaknesses, if any, of the questionnaire. (Kothari 2008) A pilot study was conducted using questionnaires administered to the respondents who were all rural women from Kesses Division and were 18 in number, who were selected randomly at the market place as long as activities carried out were not similar. This was a smaller sample used as it was a test, not the real thing. Also, the researcher discussed with the information officers that included the County representative, Education, Agricultural, Veterinary and Health officials; and Church leaders. This was to ensure that questions that were not clear or were ambiguous were revised so as to collect the desired information from the respondents. The results of the pre-test were studied by the

researcher thoroughly. Questions that were not easily understood were reframed using simple language. Those questions that had no clear answers were deleted, and those that required more than one answer were coded according to the frequency or constant repetition by the respondents.

3.10 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Patton (2002) posits that data interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world. The data collected was categorized into the different activities the rural women participated in, and the researcher determined how those activities enabled women to realize their information needs. This played a big role in their information seeking behaviour. It was then organized to align itself with the objectives of the study.

Durrheim and Painter (2006) claim that the aim of data analysis is to transform information or data into an answer to the research questions. Data analysis procedures can be divided into both qualitative and quantitative techniques. They further state that quantitative techniques employ a variety of statistical analyses to make sense of data, whereas qualitative techniques begin by identifying themes in the data and relationships between the themes. Therefore, data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data/information collected.

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used. In qualitative analysis, data was categorized in accordance to the objectives that were to be achieved by the study. Neuman (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that data collected through qualitative methods will be analyzed by the use of coding methods.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), coding is deriving and developing concepts from data. It involves interacting with data (analysis) using techniques such as asking questions about data, making comparisons between data, and in so doing, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Cooper and Schindler (2006) state that ethics are norms or standards of behaviours that guide moral choices about ones behaviour and relations with others. Creswell (2004), Cooper and Schindler (2006) and Neumann (2006) state that ethical issues in research revolve around the following aspects which must be demonstrated in any research:

- i. Researcher's accountability:** Identity and behavior; this was provided by letters from the institution of learning to verify that the researcher was a bona fide student and proof was shown through a student card.
- ii. Informed consent from respondents:** The researcher established mutual respect and confidence with the participants so as to ensure rich primary data was collected. Consent was sought from the respondent before conducting the interviews.
- iii. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents:** The respondents were at will to hide their identity without referring to them by name and questionnaires had no place for name placement hence anonymity was maintained. Each respondent's questionnaire was not shown to others and it was up to them to discuss amongst themselves, though this was discouraged by the researcher.

- iv. Avoiding embarrassing questions that cause psychological harm and anguish:** The researcher avoided any statements or questions that would make the respondents feel awkward and shy and therefore would not continue participating in the research.
- v. Fabrication of research findings:** The researcher was diligent during the study, interpreting information in own words, coding data through the use of professionals and systematically going through the research over and over again so as to be thorough and true.
- vi. Plagiarism and fraud:** The researcher acknowledged each and every author of books, theses, journals and research materials; also, quotations from government publications and Internet sites were recognized.
- vii. Competence boundaries:** The researcher had the foundation of knowledge in the subject area and had the skills and resources to carry out this research.
- viii. Private lives:** The researcher clearly drew boundaries on what is permissible to observe through the observation checklist to avoid observing respondents relating to their private lives (Saunders et al. 2003).
- ix. Harm and risk:** The relationship between the respondents and the researcher was that of trust and honesty. This included not putting respondents in risky positions that may have harmed them as a result of their participation.

The researcher observed ethical issues relating to the respondents by giving the respondents right to withdraw at any time and the right to confidentiality. Permission to carry out the study was sought from Moi University, the District Commissioners' office, the area Chief and the participants who participated in the study. This was achieved through letters, which were written to the Ministry of Higher Education and community leaders. The nature and the purpose of the research were explained to the

respondents by the researcher. The researcher respected the individuals' rights to safeguard their personal integrity. The respondents were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the course of the data collection, if they so wished. The respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. No names or personal identification numbers were reflected on the questionnaires except the numbering of questionnaires, which was done for purposes of identification of data during data editing. The results of the study were availed to Moi University, and those participants who were interested in knowing the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected using interview schedules for information providers, and questionnaires that were given to rural women. The characteristics and biological data of rural women, their information needs and information seeking behaviour and the reasons they sought for information, and the ways they achieved this are discussed. Data analysis and presentation are aligned to the research objectives and questions that brought out the core content of the study on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of rural women in Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County. Presentation of data was by use of pie charts and tables which facilitated easy interpretation.

4.2 Characteristics of Informants and Interview Response Rates

The following were the information providers to the rural women. The information providers came from the same areas and were familiar with the rural women as they interacted constantly due to the nature of their work. The number of informants targeted for the interview was **31**. However, only **19** were able to participate and were provided with the interview schedules. Questionnaires were given to participants who were the rural women. It was important to highlight the role the informants played as a source of information to the rural women in Kesses Division.

4.2.1 Table of Informants

Table 2: Respondents distribution by category (n=35)

No.	Category	Respondents targeted	Respondents interviewed
1.	County Women Representative	1	1
2.	County Education Officer	5	3
3.	County Agricultural Officer	3	2
4.	Veterinary Officers	2	1
5.	Health Officer	5	3
6.	Social Workers	7	3
7.	Church Leaders	3	2
8.	Administrative Officers	4	3
9.	Chief	1	1
10.	TOTAL	31	19

61% Response Rate

4.2.1 County Women Representative

The County women representative provided both tacit and explicit information and was available due to the nature of the job. She was a nominated political appointee and had grass root support when seeking to be nominated. Therefore she was familiar and known locally. As the rural people's representative in politics, it was expected for her to know the answers to all the issues that affected the rural woman as they were seen as role models, educated and highly respected in society.

4.2.2 County Education Officers

They were considered to be highly educated and respected as they liaised with schools on issues affecting education and curriculum development. They were also teachers and educationists who taught the children of rural women. They came into contact very frequently with the rural women on issues pertaining to their children's standards

and education needs hence were therefore viewed as very knowledgeable and able to provide answers to many of their needs.

4.2.3 County Agricultural Officers

They interacted closely with rural women whose main economic activity was farming. The rural women were faced with many issues such as varieties of seeds and fertilizers, crops to plant, seasons of planting, which crops to plant, types of farming methods and pesticides to use. These issues made the County agricultural officers develop close acquaintances with the rural women and were sought for information irrespective of whether it related to agriculture or not. The CAO's assisted the rural women on their farms everyday so the aspect of being embarrassed and uncomfortable around them disappeared due to the frequency of contact.

4.2.4 Veterinary Officers

Rural women were keepers of livestock as they were involved in the feeding, watering, milking and rearing of farm animals. Veterinary officers normally walked around farms to check on the health of the animals and to advise them on better methods of looking after animals to ensure higher yields and productivity and prevent diseases. Therefore, they were familiar with the rural women in Kesses Division and were often asked questions beyond their area of specialization.

4.2.5 Health Officers

They worked with governments, jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and counties on health matters. Many times, rural families tackled illness and sickness due to poor sanitation and hygiene levels. This made them to constantly visit clinics and dispensaries. The rural women would acquaint themselves with the nurses and clinical officers to such an extent that they would be asked their opinion or advice on other

matters that they were not familiar with. The women had high expectations of the health officers and sought them for other needs outside health issues.

4.2.6 Social Workers

The field of social work tries to understand human problems, to help improve people's lives, and to improve society as a whole. Many who work in this field specialize in particular areas, such as helping children, assisting those with life-threatening problems, or aiding people in overcoming addictions. Due to the nature of their work, social workers constantly interact with rural women and therefore are expected to know answers to the many challenges that affect rural women.

4.2.7 Church Leaders

They provide spiritual nourishment to the rural women who go to church either on Saturdays or Sundays. They are seen as God's representatives and are held in high esteem. As they were conversant with issues of spirituality, the rural women expected them to be knowledgeable and wise on other matters affecting them. They were expected to provide sound advice on each and every aspect that affected rural women outside spiritual guidance.

4.2.8 Administrative Officers

They include police officers, chiefs and the village headman who provide security to the general public. They work for local or state police departments and perform a variety of duties, including patrolling neighbourhoods, directing traffic and investigating crimes. They are always called when a crisis develops and normally give the public alerts on criminal activities or elements within society. Therefore they were familiar with rural women as they interacted with them constantly with regard to security issues affecting society. The rural women relied on the administration officer

to provide information on many issues including laws and regulations. The rural women therefore expected the latter to have answers on every other challenge they were facing.

4.3 Bio Data of Rural Women

The study categorized the women into different age groups so as to assess their predisposition to challenges when seeking for information to satisfy a need and the type of behaviour prevalent to specific age groups.

4.3.1 Age Groups of Respondents

Table 3: Age groups of respondents (n=98)

Age (years)	Frequency (F)	No. of children %age
25-30	24	5
31-35	18	4
36-40	18	6
41-50	15	6
51-59	16	7
60-65	7	7
TOTAL	98	35

The initial respondents were **98**, among whom women between the ages of **25-30** had a minimum of **5** children. Women in the age-bracket **31-35** had 4 children whilst those in the age-brackets, **36-40** had 6, and **41-50** year olds also had 6 children. Those between the ages of **51-59** and **60-65** had 7 children each. The number of children is significant as it portrays some of the challenges rural women faced in relation to rearing their families, and how they required current information to deal with issues such as health, education and nutrition.

4.3.2 Marital Status of Women in Kesses Division

In the rural areas there was a very high rate of marriage due to the respect attached to this institution. The researcher had to determine how the information needs and information seeking behavior was met and in which areas the information was applied. Some of the respondents had a spouse who had died, divorced or single.

The table below represents the marital status of the participants. The majority 34% of were married, 26.5% widowed, 23% separated or divorced, whilst 16% were single.

Table 4: Respondents Marital status (n=98)

Status	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Married	33	34
Widowed	26	27
Single	23	23
Divorced/separated	16	16
TOTAL	98	100

4.3.3 Levels of Education of Rural Women in Kesses Division

Education and lack of it showed how the information needs and information seeking behaviour of rural women were met. The level of education or lack of it determined the methods used to search for information and how the information was used in their personal and economic activities. The table below shows various levels of education of the rural women in Kesses Division. 6% of the rural women in Kesses Division were literate and were university graduates. The majority 29% of the rural women had secondary education. Those that had primary school education were 20%. 23.4% of the women did not have any level of education and therefore were illiterate.

Table 5: Education levels (n=98)

Education level	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
University	6	6.1
Tertiary	22	22.4
Secondary	28	29
Primary	20	20.4
Illiterate	22	23
TOTAL	98	100

4.4 Information Needs of Rural Women in Kesses Division

The rural women had a need for information since whatever activity they participated in, they needed to know either its usefulness or impact. Their information needs were varied, from the most basic items to more compound matters that affected their families or themselves directly. Rural women had a very high need for information due to their role as caregivers, hence concentrated on family, health, nutrition or food, the community they live in and politics.

Table 6: Information needs of rural women in Kesses Division (n=98)

Information Needs	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Family	91	93
Health	88	90
Nutrition and Food	84	86
Community	49	50
Politics	29	30

* multiple responses

93% stated that information pertinent to their families especially children were very high on their needs. They also mentioned that they sought information on issues such as schools, fees, uniforms and books. On health matters, 90% of women needed information on issues such as vaccinations available, diseases outbreaks, the health of their children and themselves. They needed information on how to recognize symptoms of ailments and the medication to treat diseases. Food was another key area that women sought information about since they were the ones tasked with feeding the family. 86% of the women in Kesses Division needed information on varieties of foods instead of concentrating on staple meals consumed since time immemorial. They sought alternative types of foods that contained fibre, vitamins, proteins and fats that would boost the immunity of the body and prevent illnesses and fruits that immunized the body against diseases. 50% sought information on community issues that were important because they involved security and only 30% sought information on politics because they regarded this area to be a domain for men.

4.5 Information Sources for Rural Women in Kesses Division

Rural women have similar customs that are ingrained in them. Therefore, their information seeking routines are similar from village to village. They predictably sought information from familiar sources and usually about common issues. Those who were unable to understand the questionnaire thought that they did not ask for important information directly from a source but could have done so indirectly by listening to discussions on issues affecting them and heeding the advice provided. The table on the next page shows the sources of information for rural women in Kesses Division.

Table 7: Information sources for rural women (n=98)

INFORMATION SOURCES	YES (%)	NO (%)	NOT SURE (%)
Family members	98%	0	1
Other women	95%	3	2
Women groups (leaders, members)	93%	7	0
Churches (pastors, priests)	90%	10	0
NGOs/ CBOs	85%	10	5
Health Facility	80%	10	10
Schools	77%	20	13

***multiple responses**

Family members were very dear to the rural women and they were the first people to consult when there was an information need. Therefore 98% of rural women indicated that they sought information from family members. 95% of rural women sought for information from their colleagues, neighbours, friends and relatives, since they interacted constantly with them and had similar needs and wants. Women groups, which had been formed in different villages, were used as information sources by 93% where information was shared and spread. Also, pastors were a source of information as they shared religious services every Saturday or Sunday, and these events were conducted on a weekly basis, therefore 90% met and shared information. NGOs and CBOs which had sprouted in the villages and sought to help women change old methods of doing things and embrace modernity were used by 85% of rural women, whilst health facilities were relied on by 80% of the women when there was an illness. Schools were visited by 77% of the women who especially sought information about their children's education.

4.6 Reasons that led Rural Women in Kesses Division to Seek Information

Rural women in Kesses Division faced various challenges that forced them to search for information to solve their problems. The challenges involved adequately meeting their families' needs, reinventing and reviving their economic activities, and seeking alternative methods to approach their challenges in a meaningful way to find solutions to their problems. The rural women had problems that affected their livelihood. They therefore needed information so that they could address these problems and make vital decisions. The well-being of their families was of great concern to them as they wanted their children to grow up strong without suffering from various ailments, and be able to get an education and eventually do well for themselves in their lives and help others in society. The rural women also needed information to improve their lives so as to get out of the perennial poverty in which they were deeply entrenched. This meant that they had to manage and exploit fully available resources for their benefit. There was need to carry out activities that empowered them economically, for instance by adapting new technologies. If this meant that they needed to learn and adapt new technologies, the better for them. Information as a resource equipped rural women with the ability to choose and act in an informed manner that could transform their lives, and have a great impact on society.

The table below highlights the issues raised by the women in Kesses Division on reasons that made them seek for information.

Table 8: Reasons that made rural women in Kesses Division seek information (n=98)

REASONS	YES (%)	NO (%)	NOT SURE (%)
Family	97	0	1
Health	95	0	5
Education	95	0	5
Nutrition/Food	93	1	6
Empowerment Issues	85	1	14
Cattle	80	5	15
Farming Produce	76	4	20
Crops to Plant	73	3	20
Security	70	1	25
Politics	40	17	30

***multiple responses**

Concern for the well-being of their families was the highest reason cited by 97% of the women. Health reasons led 95% of women in Kesses Division to seek information on foods and nutrients. They required information on the types of inoculations' and vaccinations their children needed to avoid disease outbreaks and boost their immunity. The children needed to be treated on diseases or viruses that were common in the area. Education for their children was the second reason for seeking information whereby 95% wanted to ensure that their children would have a firm foundation and enable them to lead better lives in future. This would also ensure that the children would adequately take care of their parents in old age. Alternative foods were introduced and this was highly appreciated especially when seasonal crops failed. 93% of the rural women wanted to raise healthy children hence were concerned about the foods their children ate and if it had any nutrients. 85% of the rural women were also concerned about the activities they carried out when trying to

make a living and wanted options on better ways and methods to make more money to sustain their families. Since most women lived in farms, 80% of them needed information on how they could better feed their dairy cows in order to produce more milk, and also sought information on how to fatten the cows for better prices at the markets. Farm produce was a reason for 76% of the rural women who sought information on the types of crops to plant and 73% of them searched for information, as they were concerned about declining harvests and wanted to know whether there were alternative crops to plant apart from what they were used to 70% of the rural women in Kesses Division sought information on security related matters due to the random attacks in the community targeting both people and animal theft, and 40% of the women stated that they were not interested in politics, it was not very desirable as they could not comprehend political trends and affairs.

4.7 Information Systems, Channels and Services used by Rural Women in Kesses Division

The rural women in Kesses Division faced various challenges especially in relation to the available systems, channels and services. The formality involved in accessing them (officials), terrified and frightened rural women to the extent that they were unable to approach officers involved in disseminating of information for assistance. They then resorted to using archaic and retrogressive methods to seek for information by word of mouth from relatives which was unreliable. The table on the next page presents the information channels rural women in Kesses Division used to receive information.

Table 9: Information channels used by rural women

INFORMATION CHANNELS	FREQUENCY (F)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Family and Relatives	10	100
Friends	9	95
Civil Servants	7	75
Radio	6	74
Newspapers	1	10
Television	0	5

Rural women were very ignorant about the channels available to them and used methods that were archaic and unreliable, hence were not relevant to the current times. All the women (100%) would only source for information from their relatives and family and would not even contemplate an alternative, and 95% of Kesses women used friends, people who were familiar to them and who had similar needs.

The civil servants in this case were those who worked for government such as county and district officers, security personnel like police, and teachers, and clinical officers. There were those that were charged with representing government at different levels and 75% of the women in Kesses were comfortable talking to them. Access to the radio as an information source was mentioned by 74% of the women. Radio was used by the women due to the fact that it was easily available in rural homes, and though mostly used by the men folk, it was normally loud and rural women were able to listen as they performed their activities. Other sources of information such as newspapers were consulted by 10% and television by 5%, the latter was rarely used by the women because they could barely comprehend what was said, and hardly had time.

4.8 How Rural Women in Kesses Division Used the Acquired Information

The use of information by rural women in Kesses Division had been integrated in the many activities they performed, be it family, economic, health or food and nutrition. The rural women had learned and adopted new and modern methods of performing their activities. This had exposed them to progressive changes that had uplifted them from a state of poverty which they frequently faced. The Information used improved the welfare of their families through integrating traditional foods and modern cooking methods, thus it increased the variety of foods and fruits eaten. The women in Kesses Division used information to guard themselves and their children against illnesses and also used other types of information to create awareness on when to take their children for inoculations and vaccinations. Also, the rural women used information acquired to better their skills in farming and better production of crops and animals. The rural women utilized information in carrying out all their activities. They were therefore able to manage their resources better and in a positive manner that empowered them not only financially but also in making better judgments.

Table 10: Use of Acquired Information by rural women (n=98)

USE OF INFORMATION	YES (%)	NO (%)	NOT SURE (%)
Family	95	1	4
Food and Nutrition	90	5	5
Health matters	83	7	10
Farming	75	10	15
Animal Husbandry	70	10	20
Business/Trade	50	20	30
Savings and Loans	35	50	15

***multiple responses**

Health was of paramount importance to rural women as it was discussed in clinics during pre- and post natal counseling by 95% of the women. Hence, their children were immunized, and vaccinated against common ailments. 90% of the women used information about food and nutrition to bring up healthy children. The rural women in Kesses Division used information on foods that made children strong and not prone to illnesses. Different types of foods were introduced in the children's diets, including fruits and alternative sources of protein, minerals and vitamins. Health matters were considered highly by 83% of the women who were affected when their children or spouses became unwell. They were conscious of certain conditions that would endanger the health of their families i.e. cooking with dirty hands or utensils, or even environmental filth.

Farming followed with 75% women saying that they used information on the various types of seeds to plant, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides to use and all matters related to agriculture. 70% of the women used information to learn how to practice best procedures for animal husbandry for their cattle, sheep, goats and chicken. Information on feeding times and vaccinations were of importance to the rural women in Kesses Division.

50% of the women who managed small businesses or traded in food stuffs used information to find out the needs of their customers. The women sought this information so that they could maintain a customer base that would be loyal to them. They needed information on the different items or foods required and how to source them cheaply. 35% of rural women were interested in taking loans to boost their businesses or for buying seeds or paying school fees for their children. They were also interested in learning how to save for their families during emergency situations.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of research findings, conclusions and recommendations for the study. It includes implications arising from the findings in relation to the objectives, research questions and assumptions of the study. The chapter outlines the activities rural women in Kesses Division participated in to economically empower themselves, their information needs and the reasons for their search for information. The chapter further summarizes the types of sources the women used when seeking information, the current information systems that were in place and the channels used to spread or disseminate information to the rural women in Kesses Division. The chapter also summarizes the women's information seeking habits, how they used the information received and what challenges they faced to access information. Finally, the chapter provides the way forward on how information can uplift the rural women's situation in life and proposes recommendations that can enable women to easily access information to empower themselves to ease suffering and poverty, and suggests further research that can be carried out in future.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The study targeted women between the ages of 25-65 years who were the most productive in Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County. The women were the foundation in which their families' livelihoods depended heavily upon. They performed many activities in their homes for the welfare of their families, and were also more resilient and proactive in achieving their goals. Jiyane and Ocholla (2004) state that women in the age bracket of 40-60 years all over the world are very active and play an important

role in socio-economic development. The same authors further emphasize the important role information plays in women's economic development. Since information is power, it can empower the women too.

5.2.1 Marital Status

In rural societies, marriage is highly esteemed and as such, many women in rural areas rush into this institution to gain respect. The study found that 34% of the respondents were married, and once married, most women would adopt the traditional way of doing things. The activities they participated in were a means to eke out a living in support of their families as most men, as found out in the study, left to towns and cities to look for job opportunities, leaving the women in the farms to support themselves and their children. If the women would access adequate information on how to improve their economic activities, they would be able to improve their livelihoods greatly.

Single mothers were also represented in this study, as they consisted of 39% of rural women in Kesses Division. Single mothers included those whose husbands had passed on such as widows since it is commonly known that women outlive men (Scientific America, 2004) and those who had been abandoned by their spouses. These women were sole providers of their families, and in some cases they lived with their parents or married brothers who were not able to adequately support them and their children as they would be in similar situations of poverty. Others lived outside their traditional homes especially widowed women, who were kicked out of their matrimonial homes by the late husbands' relatives and left on their own. This made them desperate to provide for their children and the economic activities they

participated in to earn something to feed their children were of subsistence levels and without adequate information, they could not improve their lives.

5.2.2 Education Level

Education is the foundation of a good life, and this is evident in rural areas. The study found that 78% of rural women had basic education and 23% were illiterate. Their education levels and livelihoods were inter related since illiteracy and poverty co-exist. The rural women's existence was purely on subsistence levels as they did not have information or the know how to source for alternative means of eking a living. The study further found out that most of the women married early whilst still in school, and dropped out, therefore they could barely read and write. This further intimidated them hence they were unable to source for help, as articulating their needs could only be done in informal languages.

The Government of Kenya (2000) observed that less educated women tend to be more engaged in traditional and often less remunerative and low income generating activities. This was confirmed in the study that women who had little or no education lived in poverty since they were unable to make informed decisions on any matter that affected them due to their ignorance. They had no control over family resources and they were prone to domestic violence from their men. It was further confirmed by Overhoff (2006) who states that poverty is highest where education levels are low. Without education, the chances of being in employment are nil, the choices in life are narrowed down and the rural women are bound to face many challenges as they are unable to comprehend many issues.

The UN (2012) states that if you educate a man, you educate one person; if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family. This too has been emphasized by

Taole (1998) who states that “developing a woman is developing a society, hence developing a nation”. Brigham Young, an author and one time president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, once said that you educate a man, you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation rings true. If rural women were educated the socio-economic development in their area would be high and this would improve their livelihoods and that of their families. The educated woman is confident, informed, can make decisions soundly, is able to stand on her own economically and has a higher standard of living. This is evident in Kenyan society today where women hold high positions and are at par with men. There are female cabinet secretaries and directors and chief executive officers of multinational companies. In Africa we even have had two women presidents; former Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Malawian President, Joyce Banda.

5.2.3 Rural Women and Family

The majority of rural women were responsible for the livelihoods of the immediate and extended family members. African families are not limited to the immediate family that includes husband and children, but it extends to grandparents, parents, brothers and their families, sisters and their families, cousins, in-laws, uncles, aunties and other extended relations. Relationships in villages are difficult to understand as people’s claim to relations extend so far that the blood line gets blurred, thus the rural woman caters for the needs of many people. In so far as her immediate family, many respondents had large families with 74.2% having more than six children. The women were ignorant of their ability to support the number of children they can have as they did not have information on family planning methods. They also distrusted medical matters on family planning which were prone to rumours claiming that it (family planning methods) would destroy their bodies and infect them with diseases. Due to

the many children they had, it was difficult to educate them all, and this would lead to a vicious circle of poverty that would be entrenched in families as they did not have access to information that could enable them to make sound choices.

5.2.4 Household Income

The rural women were breadwinners of their families as husbands were away in towns and cities working or looking for jobs. Since there were daily demands to be met, the women had no choice but to involve themselves in menial jobs so as to take care of their families. Due to their lack of education, the women would look for jobs that did not require any certification, and this meant that they were limited in choices and most had to work in people's farms to supplement what they had at home. They were also small scale farmers in their own homes and catered for their immediate needs, or they would do small scale business in hawking of vegetables (cabbages, kales, potatoes, carrots, onions and tomatoes); knitting, craft, tailoring and hair dressing in a bid to make ends meet. This was a life of 'hand to mouth' where whatever was made was immediately consumed, making it difficult to save. This contributed to poverty levels as they had little information on how to perform other activities that would generate better income and earn better livelihoods.

5.2.5 Family Property

The rural women were very ignorant of issues pertaining to land, inheritance and succession when a husband died. Property was the domain of the husband who even considered his wife and children as his property. Traditions, cultures and customs were very discriminatory towards women. It is only recently in the new Kenyan Constitution that women are able to inherit land of their fathers and husbands. Kenya's new constitution was signed into law in 2010 and launched a bold new set of

land rights for women within its broader remit to address land rights, security and gender equality. (Judiciary of Kenya, 2010). As a result of over a decade's work, Kenya is now at the forefront of the movement in sub-Saharan Africa to mainstream gender concerns. Under the new constitution, women are now able to own and inherit land and are guaranteed equal treatment to men under the law. (National Lands Policy, 2009). This reform ends widespread discrimination against unmarried, widowed, and divorced women, which more often than not was upheld by customary law.

The land that the women cultivated belonged to their husbands who inherited it from their fathers. This was clan land hence when the husband died, his wife would be kicked out by parents or brothers as they felt that they owned it. Also, it was impossible for the woman to generate any income from the land when there was a harvest as the man would sell the produce and pocket the money. The acreage for growing crops became smaller and smaller as land kept being subdivided to accommodate other siblings who were male and their families, hence the harvest would serve to supplement the food situation at home, and if there were excesses it was sold to neighbours and village markets where prices were low due to a glut of the produce. These factors were not favourable to the woman since she had limited information. She could not do anything about her status, and was bound to live in poverty due to little or no economic returns. (Townsend, 2000).

5.2.6 Occupation

Most women were housewives who were forced to look for income generating activities through selling of agricultural produce or participating in small business ventures such as hawking of foods, tailoring, hair-dressing, knitting and craft. Due to

their low levels of education or illiteracy, the employment opportunities were limited to low cadre jobs like cleaning offices, making tea, tending to gardening and planting crops which have low earning capacities. The rural women's activities begun at dawn and ended late into the night, as she had many chores to fulfill such as milking cows, cooking breakfast for school going children and husband, tending the farm and its animals, fetching water and looking for firewood, and back to the house to cook for her family in the evenings. These were her main activities. Later she would hawk or engage in her small time business to try and make some money for her family's needs.

The World Bank (2002) and Mooko (2002) agree that women in rural areas in Africa perform dual roles in their day-to-day life in order to support their families. Domestic work took up too much of rural women's time. This made it impossible to have time to look for information pertaining to their needs, and limited time spent with NGOs, CBOs and other women groups in order to interact and learn something positive that can enrich their lives.

In conclusion, women are unable to access information due to the enormous, time-consuming tasks of their everyday lifestyle. They are unable to access adequate and relevant information that could change their development due to the daily demands of their lives.

5.3 Information

Information is essential and is pervasive in all aspects of life. It is ingrained in all activities in society and is important for rural women to realize this, and to embrace it. Information can enable communication between rural women in which they can realize its positive impact especially when making life altering decisions concerning their families and the structures that they have put in place to eradicate poverty.

Without information, options are limited for rural women in society. In order to break the artificial feeling of helplessness, they have to change their attitude on how certain functions are carried out and open up their minds on the many alternatives that information can create for them to alleviate their standards of living and pass on better advice and suggestions to their children and ensure a positive flow in their legacy. Rural women will be able to derive from the ability to assemble and organize information to support the desired position, arguments, or outcomes.

Information as a source of power is the accumulation and presentation of data to change the rural women's point of view or position on an issue. It can be used to create incentives from which they can rise out of the pit of despair and project and recreate strategies to enable them to get out of the vicious circle of poverty, which would leave a great legacy for other generations to follow. According to Bokel (2005), information, and the ability to act on it is perhaps the single most important factor in achieving the desired outcome in a given situation. From tactical to strategic levels, knowledge of events, potential impacts, forces at work, and probable outcomes all operate together to give leverage to the possessor of that knowledge. Leverage translates directly into power. The challenge is then using that power to achieve desired results. As seen through recent years, information has gained prominence as a fundamental instrument of power both as a source and an instrument. Information has the potential for great good or great harm. Those who use or direct the use of information determine the potential for achieving results at either end of the spectrum. Knowledge about these individuals directly affects the legitimacy and effectiveness of the message for the receiver.

5.4 Summary of Major Findings

The summary of major findings is presented using the objectives of the study as follows:

5.4.1 Establish the Information needs of Rural Women in Kesses Division

The information needs of the rural woman are diverse and varied, as they need information on every facet of their lives. Mchombu (2006) agrees that information is an essential tool in assisting people, especially rural women and that there is need to view different options before making decisions.

Rural women housewives need information as they had large families of 6-7 children and they needed information on how to take care of their families. The rural women in Kesses Division got information on how to receive treatment for themselves through early detection of ill health by recognizing symptoms and treating it immediately to avoid a crisis. They can also be taught not to rely on traditional healers who give them herbs and roots that will not be effective in treating illnesses. The rural women need information on where to get sound medication as this will transcend to their children and husbands. This way, they will be more knowledgeable about inoculations for children, detect symptoms early and visit a medical doctor for sound treatment for their families. They will also ensure that they always give modern medicine a priority in case of health related complications.

The various activities that rural women in Kesses Division participate in economically are based on sound information practices that are current and up-to-date. Business women in Kesses Division are able to get information on different options that are feasible in rural areas, and diversify business segments as well as analyze the risks through accessing information for small-scale businesses. (Ndenje-Sichalwe, 2004).

They get information on various goods to purchase and sell, get credit facilities and loans to expand their businesses and exploit other business opportunities that are available to them. This information gives them options to utilize competently as it has been sourced from reliable sources i.e. involve forums that high profile business women can attend. For example, Tabitha Karanja, CEO – Keroche Industries, encourages women to pursue their business dreams and ideas.

Rural women who are farmers in Kesses Division also needed information on how to practice modern farming methods. Today's farming methods are modern and keep changing so as to maximize yields from the farms, thus enhance food security (ACDIVOCA, 2013). Hence, information on how to capitalize farms to reap maximum profit through the use of seeds, fertilizers and other inputs used to yield high produce is required. Farm implements such as machines that carry out work in farms in a fraction of time, changing climatic and weather patterns are issues addressed in the provision of information so as to ensure planting the right crops at the right time to avoid crop failure and poor harvests.

The rural women farmers occasionally have information on various markets where they sell their produce and are not limited to their locality. Also, they need information on how to diversify and plant different varieties of crops so as to ensure that harvests are varied and therefore avoid over-production of one crop that would lead to a glut and low prices.

Rural women farmers in Kesses Division need information on different markets that have potential customers, hence enable them to be empowered and grow economically ACDIVOCA (2013). This makes them realize that they do not

necessarily need to sell their produce in local markets only as people in other areas who need their produce will give them better prices and higher profits.

5.4.2 Investigate how Rural Women Use Acquired Information in Kesses Division

Rural women who double up as house wives utilize the information they receive by making changes in their approach as primary care takers of families. They use the information practically and hygienically when they handle food preparation. For example, rural women boil water before drinking; they preserve food in different and longer lasting methods than previously used. Even food preparation standards have been increased and different and more nutritious diets have been introduced that enable the family to enjoy variety of meals which are helpful to the body. (KRC, 2011).

Children are normally prone to illnesses and diseases but the rural women use information to avoid bad practices and encourage good ones Bii & Otike (2003). Examples include washing children's hands before eating, feeding them with fruits and vegetables to ensure they get all the required vitamins and minerals for stronger and healthier growth; using information to ensure proper sanitation procedures are achieved to avoid outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and safe disposal of rubbish.

Business women in rural areas use information acquired to expand their business by learning not to limit their business premises to only one area but to spread out to other locations where they open branches. Information is used to learn and put in place sound business practices such as accessing credit and loans from financial institutions (Rekha, et al 2012). Locally this would include SMEs – Small and Medium Enterprises or Microfinance organizations such as SACCOs – Savings and

Cooperative Organizations. They are able to produce documents that can ensure they receive financial assistance where it was impossible before and are able to invest and diversify their goods and services, and even start up new business ventures. (Khan, 2000). They look for new markets for their goods and services by using information received. The women in Kesses Division also open up new frontiers for their businesses unlike in the past when they could not even think of taking such risks.

Rural women farmers use the acquired information to boost production. They are able to get information on how to borrow farming implements such as tractors to till land in a short time without incurring huge expenses. They are able to get information on new varieties of seeds and fertilizers that enable them have bountiful harvests. Hybrid seeds have been introduced that can withstand diseases, thus ensuring that they do not suffer from poor harvest, and they are able to enjoy food security. The farmers also use information to test acidity levels of soils so as to know which crops can perform well. They are informed on inter crop methods of farming whereby they can utilize small '*shambas*' to produce different crops instead of concentrating on one crop. This creates diversity for both their consumption and sale in the markets. Information on viable planting methods is used to teach farmers the depth of seeds so that yields can boost their food security. This information is shared amongst themselves and boosts community development and transformation of farming techniques that brings about a positive impact to the rural community. (Mchombu, 2004).

Information on animals is provided and used to reorganize and change animal rearing techniques that have often impoverished the farmers as the animals normally are lean, unhealthy and produce little and poor quality milk. Even if the animals are taken to the market to be sold, they fetch very poor prices. The information used makes the

methods farmers use on the animals change as they learn to inoculate them constantly to resist diseases. Proper feeding methods are introduced to ensure the animals grow fat and big, therefore fetching good prices in the markets. Also milk production is increased when information on supplements for dairy cows is used, thereby making the farmer richer from high milk production. This cuts across all animals that are in the farms such as goats, sheep, chicken and even pigs. The information is used to bring about a positive impact and ensure a better livelihood for farmers as they make more money by adapting to these changes. Information enables farmers to sell their produce instead of depending on middle men. Women farmers are able to source their own markets where they can sell at a profit instead of depending on the middlemen who normally buy their produce at low prices. The middle men buy the produce at a low price especially if there is a glut and sell them exorbitantly to places that the produce is not available therefore making huge profits at the farmer's expense and taking advantage of their lack of information. When this information is availed and used amongst the rural communities, it changes the status of the rural women as they become authoritative and can control their resources for their interest to be met. (Mtega, 2012).

5.4.3 Establish whether Existing Information Systems, Channels and Services are accessed by Rural Women in Kesses Division

The rural women in Kesses Division are not familiar with the existing information systems, channels and services largely due to ignorance. They use various methods to acquire and disseminate information (Ifukor, 2013) without realizing that the government has set up structures such as the County Information office that allows them to receive information. The current information system involves having public '*barazas*' set up by the local chiefs who are a representative of the government at

grass root levels. They normally provide information on government policies and development agenda for the division/county or locality. The rural women do not have access to these forums due to cultural practices and beliefs that do not encourage them to attend '*barazas*' because traditions dictate that such events should be attended by men only. Furthermore, the issues discussed do not reflect on the rural women's needs. Therefore, it beats the purpose for the rural women to attend '*barazas*'.

The services accessible to rural women in Kesses Division are very limited and they include radio and mobile telephony. The majority cannot afford them, and it is regarded as the preserve of the men. These would have enabled the rural women to access information, as today radio offer programmes in vernacular that reflect on societies' changing needs. The information services can be used to identify information needs of rural women in Kesses Division, address them and offer solutions.

Another service is the health care facilities in the rural areas such as dispensaries and clinics, primary care services and community health services. Rural women, when taking their children for medical care in the above mentioned facilities are more comfortable asking questions relating to their information needs, whether the health worker is articulate and knowledgeable on that issue or not. (Bii, 2000). This is because the health workers frequently interact with the rural women and their families and due to constant familiarity, the latter become confident and are able to express their information needs and expect a solution to be provided. Educators also face similar experiences as they are the people rural women interact with almost on a daily basis since their children attend school. They confide and express their information needs to them not realizing that the teacher, whether in nursery, primary and

secondary school are not competent in offering solutions as they cannot comprehend the precise needs of rural women.

Agricultural and veterinary officers fare no better as they normally visit farms in rural areas and offer demonstrations, and they are also familiar with the rural women. Due to regular interactions they develop friendly relationships that have emboldened the rural women to approach and ask questions pertaining to their needs. The rural women assume that because both agricultural and veterinary officers are educated, they can be able to offer advice on issues affecting them.

Church leaders are also held in high esteem by the majority of the rural women. This is because the rural women are faithful church goers, and therefore, they have developed close associations with them especially on spiritual matters. Hence, it is not uncommon if they are sought for advice or to provide solutions to problems that rural women face as they are assumed to know everything even beyond church matters. The church leaders also live amongst the rural women so trust is developed between the two groups.

Administrative officers such as the chiefs and village headmen are also important sources of information. Police men and police women who are security officers normally patrol the villages in search of rogue villagers or those participating in criminal activities such as brewing illicit liquors normally meet the rural women during patrols. When criminal incidences occur, security personnel are among the first to be sought so as to make arrests or investigate criminal activities. These circumstances have created close relations between rural women and other groups to the extent that the latter express their information needs to them comfortably. Politicians interact with villagers very frequently and apart from politics and

development issues they are requested to offer solutions to rural women on their needs that have not been met, for example, paying fees for their children. Politicians are also regarded by the rural women as problem solvers and their advice is deemed to be sound.

5.5 Conclusion

The study set out to establish the information needs and information seeking behaviour of rural women in Kesses Division with a view to highlighting the many challenges rural women face whilst seeking information in relation to their families, their farming and business activities. The study found out that rural women face many challenges and the root cause that compounds high poverty levels includes low education levels, small scale economic activities, lack of role models, early marriages, retrogressive customs, cultures and traditions. It would be meaningful if the rural women realized that they had an information need and would change their information seeking behavior to effect meaningful and positive change. It should be remembered that information is an answer and a foundation that can provide many opportunities to the rural women for their advancement. Information can be applied in every situation of the life of the rural women to enable them to look after their families well as they can feed them with nutritious meals, access medical care through participating in immunization, inoculation and vaccination programs, and ensuring a clean environment. Information can also ensure that the rural women in Kesses Division approach their business, farming and other economic activities with a different *modus operandi* that will enable them apply techniques that will boost yields, have bountiful harvests, enjoy food security and profits and thus enjoy a higher standard of living and eradicate poverty. The government should also put up structures in form of information systems, channels and services that will penetrate all

levels of the rural society to disseminate current, comprehensive and reliable information on issues affecting the community. Information providers can be trained on how to identify the information needs of rural women, and establish networks amongst them to ensure that they are able to receive information pertinent to their needs. Women can form groups or '*chamaas*' that provide the information in a manner that surpasses language barriers and which can be orally narrated and informal. The rural women should eventually incorporate the use of Information and Communication Technologies, especially mobile telephony and radio and television which are familiar to them.

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Improve availability of information to rural women in Kesses Division

1. For rural women who are house wives, it is advisable that they form groups that have similar challenges so as to have a platform in which their issues can be addressed. They can also look for experts to give them guidelines on how to take care of their families effectively such as the medical fraternity for preventive measures, lifestyle approaches and use of modern treatment in case of diseases. The experts can cover areas such as public health, environmental degradation and sound sanitation practices, personal hygiene and health services. This should be a continuous process that brings rural women together to demonstrate how to achieve these goals.
2. Health or food experts can teach about healthy eating habits that will make the body resistant to illnesses and diseases; and the types of foods to eat and how to cook and prepare them to contain the desired nutrients in order to achieve good health. This will go a long way for rural women to access and share

information through such forums. The information should be accurate, applicable and current.

3. Those that are in business are recommended to start partnerships with other rural business women because according to an African proverb “if you want to go fast, go alone – but if you want to go far, go together”. These partnerships can be used to access information of other business women of various categories especially those that are successful in Kesses Division. Workshops and seminars can be organized where the women can meet and share ideas and create savings and cooperative societies and ‘*chamaas*’ where they can get credit and loans on easy and affordable terms unlike banking institutions, which subject them to scrutiny and harassment. These SACCOs can be available to rural women who are business oriented to facilitate a start-up loan. Those who wish to expand their business can get loans for growth without undergoing stress from ‘English speaking male managers’.
4. The rural women who practice farming will be the biggest beneficiaries if an improvement of information access is established. The study revealed that information pertaining to agriculture had increased exponentially over the last decade. Governments the world over are increasingly concerned with how to feed their growing populations hence a lot of research has been carried out on unpredictable weather patterns and climatic changes. Seeds have been developed that are resistant to diseases and they also produce higher yields than before, hence the farmers can access this information to boost their production. The Agricultural Society of Kenya (ASK) shows are agricultural shows that move from one county to another every year showcasing improved fertilizers and seeds that are guaranteed to yield high returns. Farming

implements have been modernized and modified to be able to carry out several functions at once i.e. tilling and harrowing. The use of agricultural extension officers can easily be optimized to assist the farmers to utilize these facilities for greater production using ICTs. (Kiplang'at, 2003).

Animal foods have become more nutritious and healthy, therefore enabling livestock and chicken to be strong and healthy and so they can fetch better prices for their meat, milk or other produce.

5.6.2 Study Recommendations

The study revealed some gaps that have not been addressed that would enable rural women to seek timely, current, comprehensible and adequate information which they need to access and utilize in their everyday chores. The information needs of the rural women in Kesses Division should be discerned and their information seeking behaviour determined so that in future they can be supported. To mitigate these challenges, the study recommends the following:-

- i. Lack of information for rural women has left them to be exploited by men in their homes. The rural women are unaware that they have rights as human beings that have to be respected. Bodies such as Federation of Women Lawyers - FIDA should spread to rural areas and enlighten women on what the constitution states about them. Issues that affect them such as wife inheritance, physical, emotional and financial abuse, disowning and chasing women once their spouses have died and domestic violence are gross violations of their rights. (EASSI, 2014). The rural women are mistreated because they are poor and uninformed. Laws of Kenya should be demystified to women so that they can have a chance to understand and comprehend their constitutional rights. Workshops and seminars

should have legal clinics that can spread to all areas of rural Kenya and disseminate information to women about their rights.(SID, 2013).

- ii. Rural women have been ignorant about political issues that are happening around the country, since they have not been exposed to the various activities and events that are happening. The Kenyan government, together with the Ministry of Gender and Youth, have set up projects, programmes, and policies that will benefit the rural women. Mechanisms should be put in place that will oversee rural women participate in these structures created by the government to improve people's livelihoods and boost development in rural areas. (Mchombu, 2001). The Kenyan government should put in place policies that are meant to create opportunities in rural areas for sustainable growth of the economy to empower rural women which will reflect changes in society and accommodate women as citizens and lessen the great disparity between the rural and urban citizenry. This will accelerate gender mainstreaming in national development for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- iii. It will be very beneficial for rural women to form groups that have their interest placed highly in the agenda. The groups should not exceed 30 members and Kesses Division can have 20 such groups. They will be interactive, exchange ideas and, train themselves about business by allowing successful and prominent business women to have talks with them on the challenges faced in business and how to overcome them. They can interact with organizations such as NGOs and other women self-help groups to have discussions on issues affecting them. For example, family planning which has been so controversial, and which many women prefer to avoid discussing altogether, can be addressed by these organizations to enable women to receive accurate information. (Aina, 2004).

The groups can also carry out activities that they are familiar with, assess how the activities are carried out and map out a strategy that is more effective than what they are used to. Such groups can then teach all the other women groups a more improved version of the activity. An example is using the traditional 3 stones to cook, this method uses firewood and forces the rural women to go out to the forest often to look for the same. An improved version of cooking can be improvised by using a cooking vessel made of clay, which involves creating small openings for cooking and other small openings for inserting wood. This takes less wood and in the long run enables women to use their time more effectively. Other groups can form SACCOs or savings societies which can provide small loans to rural women who repay without undergoing stress.

- iv. Another recommendation is that there should be more veterinary and agricultural officers at the grass root levels to advise the rural women farmers. The experts should not reside in towns or cities but dwell amongst the farmers – where they will have access to agricultural databases that have information pertaining to farmers' needs in Kesses Division. The experts can use ICT's to share information and offer solutions to the myriad of issues affecting the rural women farmers, have meetings amongst themselves to discuss issues affecting them and interact positively to give workable solutions with best practices using information technologies that will propel development. (Kwake, 2004). Information technology would provide up-to-date and new farming techniques to fully exploit the farms for higher production, excess produce for markets and ensure food security. Traditional and archaic methods of farming will be a thing of the past as smart farmers use information technology to communicate the changing weather patterns, suitability of crops to plant, purchase seeds and

fertilizers for bountiful harvests; use mechanical devices to plant and harvest crops thus saving time and being able to utilize every space on the farm.

- v. Rural women who practice business can exploit opportunities to receive funds as loans to enable them to startup businesses and expand or offer a variety of services and products that are marketable in the villages. Information can manifest dreams to reality as they will be able to comprehend the dynamics of business and be self-reliant, confident and prosperous.
- vi. Sound infrastructure encourages development, therefore, county governments should focus on opening up rural areas as this will bring about positive change to the people. Roads and electricity are the two main foundations for development, as they open up new frontiers and enable new territories to be exploited. Poor infrastructure leads to slow development of communication networks, hence cyber-cafes, tele-centres, and mobile telephony is non-existent hence availability of information is not realized and poverty is entrenched. (Kiplang'at (2001).
- vii. ICTs remain a big challenge for rural women who are intimidated by “those gadgets that use electricity”. Chances for training can be offered through development partners to conduct workshops and seminars on how to use mobile telephony, computers and, the Internet to exploit various opportunities available. (Mandy and Jacques, 2001). This will enhance access to information to rural women and empower them. (Okello (2007). ICTs play a big role in rural development as it removes it from seclusion hence expansion and growth is inevitable. (Mutasa and Mashingaide, 2005).

5.6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

- i. There is need for further research on the information needs and information seeking behavior of rural women so as to establish how the various challenges they face can be managed. It is imperative for the rural women to be recognized as beneficiaries of information dissemination because of the various roles they play and activities they are involved in. Rural women must be recognized as stakeholders in society and information must reach grass root levels.
- ii. There is need for further research on the role that information and communication technologies can play in boosting information dissemination to rural women. The study will highlight the importance of ICTs being established as a source of information in rural areas to provide accurate, timely, comprehensible and relevant information.
- iii. There is need for further research on the roles of information officers at grass root level and whether they are effective in providing information to rural women. The study should establish whether they are utilized at the community level.
- iv. There is need for further research on the establishment of effective services, systems and channels of information provision for rural women. This is to establish whether the services, systems and channels are efficient in meeting the information needs of rural women.
- v. More studies should be done to investigate information provision for women that can enable them to fully exploit opportunities available and thus enrich their lives. Systems, channels and services should be established that can penetrate all spheres of the society and lay the foundation for information provision up to the grass root level. The women too should be made to state their information needs

to information officers, government institutions and NGOs. This will enable other services, channels and systems to be created that can function with these factors in mind, as they will have an opportunity to identify more information needs for rural women. This can be duplicated to other parts of the country, since rural women nationally suffer similar problems and common solutions can be derived. Information support on farming, business, family issues, animal husbandry, environment, nutrition and health can be generated and shared so that people can learn new methods of creating wealth and thus lead better lives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE RURAL WOMEN IN KESSES DIVISION

A. Background Information

MATTERS TO NOTE:

- i) The information given on this questionnaire will be held in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of the study
- ii) If any of the questions may not be appropriate to your circumstance, you are under no obligation to answer.

Please tick where appropriate

SECTION A: BIO DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS

1. Indicate your age bracket from the choices provided

18 – 24 years		25 – 31 years	
32 – 38 years		39 – 45 years	
46 – 51 years		Over 52 years	

2. Marital Status

Single		Widowed	
Married		Separated	

3. What is your level of Education?

Primary		Secondary	
Tertiary		University	

4. Number of Children?

None		4-10	
1-3		Over 10	

5. How many are in School?

None		4-10	
1-3		All of them	

6. Who pays the School Fees?

Self		Bursary	
Husband		Relatives	

7. Tick the Occupation of your Husband

Casual Labourer		Business	
Farmer		Employed	

8. Do you live in?

Rented house		Own farm	
Family land		Squatter	

9. What is your occupation?

Housewife		Farmer	
Business woman		Craft worker	
Trader		Midwife	

10. How many years of experience have you in your occupation?

Less than a year		Between 1-3 years	
Between 4-6 years		Over 7 years	

SECTION B: INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

1. How often do you source for information?

Daily		Weekly	
Fortnightly		Monthly	
Yearly		Never	

2. What reasons make you seek for information?

Family		Health	
Food/Nutrition		Activities for Empowerment	
Cattle		Crops to Plant	
Farming Produce		Environment	

3. Tick below the information channels you use to receive information

Word of mouth		Relatives	
Family		Neighbours	
Friends		Church	
Traditional events		Clinic	
Schools		Shows	

4. For what purpose did you need the information?

Family		Occupation	
Self		Husband	

5. Does the information provided offer solutions to your problem?

Yes		No	
Sometimes		Never	

6. How often do you seek for information?

Daily		Two weeks	
Weekly		Never	

7. How successful do you think you are when you need information?

Very successful		Successful	
Fairly successful		Not successful	

8. How do you utilize the information you receive?

Family		Food and Nutrition	
Health		Farming	
Animal Husbandry		Business or Trade	
Savings		Loans	

9. Do you experience difficulty in accessing information?

Yes		No	
Sometimes		Never	

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE INFORMANTS**PLEASE TICK WHERE APPROPRIATE**

1. What is your occupation?

County Representative		Teacher	
County Education Officer		Health Officer	
County Agricultural Officer		Social Worker	
Veterinary Officer		Chief	
Administrative Officer		Church Leader	

2. How long have you worked in Kesses Division?

Less than a year		Between 6-9 years	
Between 1-3 years		Over 10 years	
Between 3-6 years			

3. What is your level of education?

Tertiary		Masters	
Bachelors		PhD	

4. Do women come to you for information? If yes what type of information? and if not state the reason.....

Family		Health	
Business		Agricultural	
Animal Husbandry		Environment	

State other.....

5. Are you able to satisfy their information needs?

Yes		No	
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If no, why.....

6. What are the sources of your information needs?

Workshops		Internet	
Seminars		Government	
Further Training/Education		Bulletins	
Library		Newspapers	

State other.....

7. In what format do you provide information to the women?

Orally		Audio-visual	
Print		Radio	
Charts and Posters		Video	

State other.....

8. What channels of communication do you use to disseminate information to the rural women in Kesses division?

Women groups		Church	
Public barazas		Mobile cinema	
Radio		Television	
Posters		Video shows	
Exhibitions		Health centers	

State any other.....

9. Has the information provided assisted and met the information needs of the women?

if yes, how.....
if no, why.....

10. Have you and your office sensitized rural women on the different information channels available to them?

if yes, how.....
if not, why.....

11. Have you appraised the impact of information provided to rural women?

if yes, how.....
if not, why.....

12. What areas can you suggest to improve on information provision for the rural women in Kesses division?.....

**APPENDIX 3: LIST OF ACTIVITIES RURAL WOMEN IN KESSES
DIVISION PARTICIPATE IN**

1. Subsistence Farming
2. Planting, tilling, weeding, harvesting, transportation, processing and storage of crops on their land and others for minimal pay
3. Working as casual hired labourers on larger farms
4. Marketing and Sales activities of both crops and animals
5. Animal Husbandry
6. Cottage Industry
7. Food Kiosks
8. Hawking of food, crops and animals
9. Hawking of crafts i.e. weaving baskets and mats
10. Hawking of traditional herbs and roots
11. Water and firewood collection
12. Household food production and processing
13. Cooking
14. Cleaning
15. Childcare
16. Covering community needs i.e. health and child care
17. Tailoring
18. Hairdressing
19. Knitting