



Different performances in Karabo ea Bophelo Adolescent Girls and Young Women Start-up Kit Projects in improving Livelihoods in selected constituencies in Mafeteng, Lesotho

By

Tlalane Sephelane

200604665

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Development Studies in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies**

Supervisor: Dr Mokone Musi

Submission Date: September 2025

Declaration

I, Tlalane Sephelane, 200604665 declare that this dissertation that I submit for the Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies at the National University of Lesotho is my work. I have not submitted it before for a qualification at another university or any other institution of higher education. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation, as well as all substantive contributions by others, have been duly credited.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Almighty God for His unfailing grace, strength and guidance throughout this journey. Without His blessing, this achievement would have not been possible.

Special thanks to my beloved supervisor, Dr. ‘Musi for his constant support, I would not have done this without his support. I would like to thank him for always being available when I needed him. His inspiration, guidance, excellent supervision and contribution towards the successful completion of this dissertation.

My heartfelt thanks go to my husband Poso Qoo. His support has been endless in many ways. He is the one who encouraged me to go back to further my studies. The financial support that he provided has significantly relieved the pressures and challenges encountered during this journey, enabling me to focus on my research study and to complete this dissertation with his great help. His belief in me has been vital in making this success possible. I am deeply grateful to my children, Reitumetse and Leseli Qoo for their constant support and encouragement and understanding when I was busy not spending time with them. To my mom Mabasia Sephelane, thank you so much for your words of encouragement and prayers.

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Abstract.....	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Chapter One	1
1.0 Introduction and Background	1
1.1 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.2 Purpose of the study.....	4
1.3 Research questions.....	4
1.4 Significance of the study.....	4
1.5 Organization/Structure of the study	5
1.6 Delimitation of the study	5
1.7 Limitations of the study	5
1.8 Definition of key terms	6
1.9 Chapter Summary	6
Chapter two.....	7
Literature Review.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	7
2.3 Women empowerment through projects: perspectives from developed countries	8
2.4 Perspectives from developing countries on women’s empowerment in Projects.....	11
2.5 Experience from Lesotho.....	16
2.6 Chapter Summary	19
Chapter three.....	20
Methodology.....	20
3.0 Introduction.....	20
3.1 Research approach	20
3.2 Research design	20

3.3 The Case Study: Adolescent Girls and Young Women Start-up Kit Projects	21
3.4 Population	22
3.4.1 Sample and Sampling Technique.....	22
3.4.2 Sample size	22
3.4.3 Interviews.....	23
3.5 Data collection methods.....	23
3.6 Data presentation and analysis	24
3.7 Validity and Reliability.....	24
3.8 Ethical Considerations	25
3.9 Chapter summary	26
Chapter Four	27
Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis.....	27
4.0 Introduction.....	27
4.1 Participants.....	27
4.2 Themes and Categories of the study	29
4.3 Adolescent Girls and Young Women access to resources.....	29
4.4 Contribution of Monitoring and Evaluation to project’s performance	34
4.5 Impact of stakeholder involvement on youth project’s performance	37
4.6 Contribution of group dynamics to divergent projects’ performance.....	39
4.7 Chapter summary	43
Chapter Five.....	44
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	44
5.0 Introduction.....	44
5.1 Summary of the key findings.....	44
5.1.1 Impact of access to resources.....	44
5.1.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Start-up Kit Projects	45
5.1.3 Stakeholder involvement	45
5.1.4 Group dynamics	46
5.2 Conclusions.....	46
5.3 Recommendations.....	47
References.....	49

Appendices.....	80
Appendix A: Beneficiaries during training sessions at Mafube Guest House.....	80
Appendix B: A beneficiary provided with horse pipe and a greenhouse for the Makoabating project at Thabana Morena.	81

Abstract

Globally, development projects play a pivotal role in improving livelihoods, alleviating poverty and addressing social and economic inequalities especially among marginalized groups. Nonetheless, these projects produce varying levels of success among beneficiaries. This study investigated factors contributing to the different performances observed in Start-up Projects in selected constituencies in Mafeteng, focusing on Adolescent Girls and Young Women. This study used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to select and interview the participants. Findings revealed that disparities in performance were influenced by a range of factors including individual capacity, market relevance, access to mentorship and logistical challenges especially in remote areas. While some beneficiaries succeeded and became self-sufficient, others struggled due to inadequate support and mismatched resources. The study concludes that a top down approach is ineffective and recommends a more flexible, needs-based approach that incorporates support, ongoing mentorship and local market demand to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Start-up Projects.

Abbreviations

AGWY	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
APN	Asia and Pacific Network
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
DREAMS	Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-Free Mentored Safe
EU	European Union
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KB	Karabo ea Bophelo
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NFWP	Nigeria for Women Projects
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEWA	Self Employed Women Association
SSP	Swayam Shikshan Prayog
SHEP	Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project

UN

United Nations

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction and Background

Across the globe, development projects play a pivotal role in improving livelihoods, alleviating poverty and addressing social and economic inequalities (Birkmann et al., 2022). These projects mostly focus on marginalized groups including women and youth who face barriers to participation in economic and social spheres. In alignment with this perspective, Chimbindi et al. (2020) and Ferguson et al. (2021) underscore that among these groups, Adolescents and Young Women (AGYW) are a particularly vulnerable population.

Globally, targeted interventions have sought to address the unique challenges faced by AGYW, equipping them with skills, resources and opportunities to break the cycles of poverty and inequality that unfairly affect them UN, (2020). However, despite significant investments and ambitious goals, many projects fail to achieve their intended goals. This failure is not only a waste of valuable resources but also a setback for the communities and stakeholders relying heavily on these initiatives (Anderson, 2006).

Yadav et al. (2019) explain that in Asia, India's Green Revolution aimed at boosting agricultural productivity but its long-term effects have been mixed. While it increased food production, it led to environmental degradation and did not improve the livelihoods of many small farmers, particularly marginalized groups such as AGYW who were often left out of economic opportunities. Similarly, Altieri (1992) clarifies that in Latin America, a large-scale development initiative in the Amazon aimed to modernize and expand agricultural opportunities but overlooked the traditional practices of local communities and led to widespread deforestation, loss of biodiversity and limited economic benefits for local populations. Ferguson (1990) also critiques the failure to include vulnerable groups in decision-making processes. These examples highlight that without sustainable approaches and genuine community engagement, development projects can create more harm than good, reinforcing patterns of poverty rather than alleviating them (Yadav et al., 2019).

Moreover, Africa, a continent rich in natural resources and cultural diversity, has been the focus of numerous development projects aimed at improving livelihoods and fostering economic growth (March & Failler, 2022). However, many of these initiatives have failed to achieve their intended goals. These failures are frequently attributed to poor planning, corruption, lack of community involvement and an insufficient understanding of local contexts (Ferguson, 1990; Mashinini, 2010; Mosabala & Fombo, 2021). Kenya's Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Scheme, for example, was launched in 2014 to boost food security but failed due to poor planning, water shortages and mismanagement, which particularly affected AGYW who were not included in the decision-making or implementation processes (Mburu et al. 2024).

Scholars have shown that many projects in Lesotho continuously failed since independence though they kept receiving funding (Ferguson 1990, Mashinini 2010 and Rant'so 2015). Ferguson (1990) argued that Lesotho implemented a major rural development project meant to reduce poverty and boost economic growth. However, that project, like many others, did not significantly improve the community's well-being leading to a waste of resources that resulted in ugly housing, failed pastures and no significant agricultural development. Moreover, Toeba (2018) and Mosabala and Fombo (2021) express similar views, noting that the failure of various projects in Lesotho is primarily influenced by corruption, which appears to be a major issue in public procurement. The large amounts of goods and money involved create numerous opportunities for officials to engage in corrupt practices, as these high-value transactions are highly profitable.

On the other hand, while development projects often face challenges, there are international and local success stories that have significantly improved livelihoods. Both Festa Secanella (2017) and Lamichhane (2020) express similar sentiments regarding the effectiveness of well-structured, community-oriented initiatives in fostering sustainable poverty alleviation. Lamichhane (2020) highlights the success of the Grameen Bank's microfinance initiative in Bangladesh, which empowers low-income individuals, particularly Women through accessible loans that facilitate small business development and financial independence. Likewise, Festa Secanella (2017) describes the "Juntos" program in Peru, which reduces poverty by providing conditional cash transfers that encourage investment in children's healthcare and education, breaking poverty

cycles, enhancing community welfare and particularly benefiting AGYW by promoting their access to education and healthcare.

Despite many challenges, Africa has witnessed numerous successful development projects that have significantly improved livelihoods, driven economic growth and fostered social development (March & Failler, 2022). These projects demonstrate the potential of well-planned, community-driven initiatives to create lasting positive impacts. For instance, Kenya's Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP), in partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), empowered smallholder farmers by enhancing technical skills, market access and business orientation. This approach significantly boosted incomes through high-value crop production and access to lucrative markets, highlighting the value of combining technical training with market integration (Mbeche et al., 2022).

Lesotho has also seen success stories in development projects that have positively impacted livelihoods (Liphoto, 2020; Turner et al. 2001). One notable example is the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), a large-scale initiative that provides water to South Africa while generating revenue for Lesotho. This project not only created jobs during its construction but continues to contribute to Lesotho's economy through royalties and infrastructure development. However, Darroch et al. (2020) highlight that LHDA failed to restore the livelihoods of project-affected communities, including AGYW who were excluded from the economic benefits. Moreover, Devereux et al. (2018) indicate that programs like the World Food Program's "School Feeding Program" have improved food security and encouraged school attendance by providing nutritious meals to students in rural areas of Lesotho.

Studies have been conducted in Lesotho on women and their participation in development projects (Rants'o, 2022 & O'Neill Berry et al., 2013; Qoo, 2024; Keketsi, 2024; Lesaane & Akintunde, 2020). Although these studies investigated challenges young women face such as limited access to resources, markets and essential infrastructure and insufficient government support (Rants'o, 2022) and support provided by local and international organization (Qoo, 2024; Keketsi, 2024), these studies have not investigated the reasons for divergent performance in these projects regardless of whether they were sponsored or supported by the same organization. Hence this study tries to fill the gap in literature and practice.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) in Lesotho have received Start-up Kits to support their livelihoods and promote economic empowerment. However, the performance of these projects varies widely with some succeeding while others fail. There are clear differences in performance among the groups and this study aims to find out what causes these differences. The project to be studied is located in four constituencies, namely Phoqane #53, Thabana-Morena #56, Mafeteng #58 and Qalabane #57.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate why there were different performances in AGYW projects supported by Karabo ea Bophelo (KB) in improving the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

1.3 Research questions

1. How did access to resources influence the differing performance of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects?
2. What was the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation on Start-up Kit Projects?
3. How did stakeholder's involvement influence success/failure of the projects?
4. What was the contribution of group dynamics among the beneficiaries on differing performances of the projects?

1.4 Significance of the study

First of all, from a theoretical perspective, understanding the different performances of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects contributes to academic frameworks concerning AGYW empowerment, gender inclusivity and sustainable development. This study offered empirical evidence that not only validates theoretical assumptions but also enriches scholarly discussions on effective strategies for fostering AGYW-led projects.

Secondly, from a policy point of view, the lesson from this study is vital for policymakers who would want to make policies that use evidence to involve young people in entrepreneurial projects. By explaining the different performances in AGYW projects to improve livelihoods, policymakers can derive practical guidance on designing and implementing policies and programs that strengthen successful initiatives. This study may fill a critical gap in policy discourse by providing concrete examples of successful AGYW led projects, thus enabling policymakers to formulate more targeted, context-specific strategies aimed at empowering AGYW in the entrepreneurial sector. In the end, the findings of this study holds the potential to inform policy decisions that advance sustainable development goals, foster gender equality and catalyze transformative change in youth projects worldwide.

1.5 Organization/Structure of the study

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one begins with an introduction and background followed by a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the existing literature on the effectiveness of women projects, focusing on key factors such as access to resources, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder involvement and impacts of group dynamics. The methodology which is chapter three, detailed how the research was conducted using qualitative methods to explore the outcomes of AGYW projects. Chapter four covers the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the findings. Lastly, chapter five, summarizes the main findings and provides conclusions and recommendations.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study intends to reveal underlying factors on different performances of Karabo ea Bophelo AGYW Start-up Kit Projects in improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries in Phoqoane #53, Thabana-Morena #56, Mafeteng #58 and Qalabane #57.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study was limited to selected constituencies in Mafeteng District, which may not fully represent all areas where the Karabo ea Bophelo Adolescent Girls and Young Women Start-up Kit

Projects are implemented. The research also relied on self-reported data from participants, which may have introduced response bias.

1.8 Definition of key terms

- **Differences in performance** - refer to the variations in outcomes, achievements or results observed among individuals, groups or projects operating under similar programs or conditions.
- **Adolescent girls** - are defined as young females aged 10-19.
- **Young woman** - a female person who is in her late teenage years to early thirties.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the background of the study, focusing on the development projects that play a pivotal role in improving livelihoods, alleviating poverty and addressing social and economic inequalities. These projects most focus on marginalized groups including girls and young women who face barriers to participation in economic and social spheres. Despite this, a critical gap remains in examining challenges like limited access to resources and markets that became a barrier in developmental projects. The chapter also explored the research problem of the study. The study's background, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, significance and structure were all covered.

Chapter two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature review to this study. It examines the empowerment theory as the theory used to empower people to make their decisions and take responsibility for their actions, leading to greater independence. The study further reviews the relevant literature on different performances in AGYW Start-up Kit Projects to improve livelihoods, providing an overview of the livelihoods of AGYW internationally, Africa and Lesotho. The chapter ends with a chapter summary.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as a roadmap for researchers, guiding them through the research process from formulating research questions to drawing conclusions based on empirical evidence (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Theoretical frameworks also serve as conceptual scaffolds that guide researchers in understanding, interpreting and contextualising complex social realities (Oyewobi et al., 2024).

This study used empowerment theory which Julian Rappaport, a community psychologist, formally introduced in the 1980s. It focuses on enhancing individual and group well-being through active participation and decision-making. It also encourages providing people with the skills, resources and opportunities they need to reach their potential by improving transparency, accountability and fairness in marginalized communities (Tanekenov et al., 2018; Bell & Reed, 2022; Habimana, 2025).

At its core, empowerment begins with self-awareness, understanding one's strengths, limitations and potential for growth (Morin, 2011; Lee & Harrison, 1996). Techniques such as self-reflection, goal-setting and confidence-building are key to helping people trust in their abilities and take proactive steps toward development (Crasta & Demello, 2024). According to Ani et al. (2018),

effective empowerment strategies must address the specific needs and contexts of target groups ensuring that people have a voice and ownership in interventions and respect cultural norms that influence gender roles (Mburu et al., 2024). Excluding communities from decisions often leads to project failure.

This theory supports bottom-up, participatory approaches where communities identify their own challenges, mobilize resources and take collective action (Panda, 2007; Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2009). It is widely used in psychology, social work, education, public health and community development particularly to support vulnerable groups facing barriers like gender inequality and limited economic opportunities. Interventions such as mentorship, skills training and group savings schemes help them make informed life choices, gain financial independence and reduce risks related to HIV and economic hardship (Nwaozuru et al., 2021; Duby et al., 2021; Reed et al., 2024; Bindeeba et al., 2025).

Empowerment theory is relevant to this study as it centers on the process through which individuals or groups gain control over decisions and actions that affect their lives. By focusing much on how AGYW acquire the skills, resources and confidence to make meaningful choices and sustain productive activities, empowerment theory enables a deeper analysis of the varied performance outcomes observed in these projects.

2.3 Women empowerment through projects: perspectives from developed countries

Empowerment has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes. The term has been used more often to advocate for certain types of policies and intervention strategies than to analyze them (Tandon, 2016). Developed countries view women's empowerment as a fundamental factor of inclusive economic growth, human rights and sustainable development (Pathania, 2017). Their perspectives are shaped by decades of feminist movements, legal reforms, and evolving social norms (Connelly et al., 2000; Chunn, 2011).

The issue of women's empowerment, particularly in terms of access to resources, is currently one of the hot topics worldwide (Yar & Sail, 2025; Hira et al., 2025). Women on Slovenian farms receive resources in the form of subsidies, despite the presence of a gender gap in various factors

that typically favour men and this improves their livelihoods (Fertő & Bojnec, 2024; Fertő & Bojnec, 2025). According to Atkinson and Penrod (2022), in the USA, governments have a history of intervention to aid small, minority and women-owned businesses. This has promoted greater involvement and empowerment of women in entrepreneurship, helping individuals achieve financial stability, support their business ventures and contribute to overall economic growth (Abu, 2024). According to Leproni and Azara (2025) women must be granted equal access to technology education, where they must be able to compete with men for future professions, through policies, strategies and programs aiming to reduce/delete digital divide adopted by national governments.

Access to resources has a major influence on the success of young women projects in the European Union (EU). According to Fiedle (2020) the realization of future generations' combat against unemployment and distress migration all depend upon the successful implementation of strategies that make the agri-food sector and entrepreneurial sectors more attractive for the young women. In France, as noted by both Fougere et al. (2000) and Bussi and Graziano (2019), training and financial aid programs have benefited thousands of young women at risk of long-term unemployment. However, Rizki and Andini (2023) highlight that in Canada, young women face barriers to land access and competition from industries offering higher wages. Therefore, for those without access to resources, there is a risk of losing interest or dropping out of the projects and this negatively affects group dynamics by weakening cohesion and continuity of a project (Mausch et al., 2025). As a result, it exacerbates poverty among women and limits their independence and participation in the entrepreneurial field and decision making in the household, community and society as a whole.

Scholars indicate that financial support through mechanisms like the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provides grants and subsidies to young women farmers in the EU (Hill, 2023). Initially aimed at increasing agricultural output through market price support, the CAP developed towards providing direct income support for farmers since the 1980s (Heyl et al., 2021; Hill, 2023; Giuliani & Baron, 2025). Access to funding enables young women to invest in equipment and innovations, which are necessary for improving productivity and maintaining competitiveness in different sectors such as beauty salons, mini shops, bakeries etc. In contrast, Ressia et al. (2022) explains that in Australia, Queensland, there is limited support for women in agriculture and recognition

from others, lack of representation on industry boards and the lack of education and resources available to support them.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are crucial to the success of women projects across the EU, ensuring that initiatives are effective and aligned with policy objectives (Hill, 2023). That is, the EU's Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) provides a structured approach to assess the performance of women projects interventions and enhancing transparency (Heyl et al., 2021). M&E promotes strong group dynamics and encourages commitment and collaboration, leading to better performance and accountability. In Turkey, Landig (2011) indicates that women's empowerment projects which focus on increasing the percentage of women in the workforce and training women as entrepreneurs, are mostly successful when they are evaluated and monitored.

In Australia, according to Rice et al. (2024), strategic and financial planning, especially budget M&E are key capabilities that help women project track progress, adapt to change and achieve better growth outcomes. M&E enhanced women's learning and strengthened group dynamics by promoting trust, collaboration and effective information sharing within their networks (Luján Soto et al., 2021). By involving them directly in the M&E process, women become more engaged and invested in the outcomes (Marijn et al., 2024). This hands-on involvement often leads to deeper discussions, where women not only compare results but also suggest solutions together, creating a shared sense of ownership and knowledge (Luján Soto et al., 2021).

The M&E of the Asia and Pacific Network (APN) highlights efforts to promote harmonized regional standards for machinery to support safe, efficient, and eco-friendly practices among women (ESCAP, 2024). According to Mack (2022) in 2017, Canada announced its first ever Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) intended to guide all of Canada's international development efforts. The primary focus of the FIAP is the empowerment of women and girls as a way to eradicate poverty around the world, while supporting Canada's response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Stakeholder involvement has played a significant role in influencing the success of women-led projects in the developed countries (Farrell et al., 2024). Inclusive engagement of stakeholders such as government bodies, local authorities, civil society organizations, women's associations, cooperatives and the private sector have provided critical support structures that empower (Kalaivani et al., 2025). Pundhir et al. (2025) indicate that these stakeholders help enable environments through policy support, funding access, training opportunities and market linkages, all of which contribute directly to women's project success. However, In Canada, according to Som Castellano & Mook (2022), there is a lack of attention paid to reporting of demographics in empirical research utilizing stakeholder engagement and that women and racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented.

In France and Spain, stakeholder collaboration through women's entrepreneurial networks has provided females with access to shared resources, technical support and business development services (Iliopoulos et al., 2025). Additionally, Watabe and Takano (2025) women businesses contribute to poverty reduction, food security and community revitalization by creating income and employment. The presence of stakeholder boost group members' sense of purpose and accountability, enhancing commitment and group performance.

The success and failure of projects especially women and young girls' projects depend on group dynamics. According to Wang et al. (2021), there is, however, limited attention to more active stances of power, such as one's attitude, control and capacity, in shifting power dynamics. Balabantaray (2023) and Chikwe et al. (2022) note that innovations and collective problem-solving, supported by positive group dynamics, help women navigate challenges such as land ownership, access to finance and gender bias by fostering trust, collaboration and shared decision-making within their groups.

2.4 Perspectives from developing countries on women's empowerment in Projects

In many developing countries, women's empowerment is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor for achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty and promoting gender equality (Leal Filho et al., 2023). Recognizing the vital role played by women, NGOs and international

donors have increasingly integrated women-focused initiatives into broader developmental projects. (Okunade et al., 2024).

Land is one of the most fundamental resources in developing countries. It serves as the foundation for food production, economic stability and rural development (Ibrogimovna, 2022). However, women still lack land ownership and do not own buildings and are expected to rent for their different projects to be closer to their target market. However, groups of women relying on borrowed land for their projects face uncertainty, which causes anxiety and weakens group cohesion. Licart (2024) highlights that women's land ownership rates in India remain low, with only 11% of landowners being women. Even though legal provisions do exist to ensure equality in inheritance, gender bias is still in favor of men. Porada (2008) also implies that rural women in Latin America have less access than men to the most productive resources such as land, credit and training. In addition, Deere & Leon (2001) share the same sentiments with (Licart, 2024) in that distribution of land between men and women is highly unequal even though women's ability to own and control land is essential for their empowerment.

Developing countries have less access to resources and this hinders their projects' progress. Bidorho (2022) states that women in Aru have less access to improved agricultural inputs because they are expensive and they rely on manual labor as they fail to access mechanized farming equipment therefore, women do not achieve their production targets. Santpoort et al. (2021) on the other hand differs from Bidorho (2022) noting that in many African regions, young women do not have equal access to or control and ownership over land and natural resources as men.

Water scarcity is a pressing issue in most developing countries where water resources are scarce with little support from the government (Mpatlise, 2024). For example, the South African government strategies to combat water scarcity include giving free basic water to poor households but the process is slow in rural areas like Ndonga. Women in Ndonga do not have proper access to water and therefore, they depend on natural resources and their economic status (mostly unemployed) makes it difficult for them to deal with stock and crop loss (Sigenu, 2006). Additionally, Parker et al. (2022) indicate that policies and programs focused on water for rural livelihoods are gender blind and fail to consider women's needs and experiences. However, to

overcome this problem, Sigenu (2006) notes that women in Ndonga use drought resistant plants that grow naturally in the area to deal with water scarcity.

In some of the developing countries, women projects face obstacles in resource allocation and projects that are intended to alleviate poverty fail due to corruption (Harnois & Gagnon, 2022). Moreover, Toeba (2018) and Mosabala and Fombo (2021) express similar views, noting that the failure of various projects in developing countries is primarily influenced by corruption, which appears to be a major issue in public procurement. The large amounts of goods and money involved create numerous opportunities for officials to engage in corrupt practices, as these high-value transactions are highly profitable. According to Njuki et al. (2019), women face restrictions in access to resources such as credit. However, Vetrivel et al. (2024) does not align with Njuki et al. (2019), noting that women's participation in resource allocation have demonstrated positive impacts on productivity, resource efficiency and overall profitability.

M&E in many projects is designed without the meaningful input of the women they intend to serve in developing countries. M&E then only measures whether the project went according to plan, not whether it truly met women's needs. This leads to irrelevant interventions and wasted resources. For example, Riga (2020) noted that while conducting a fieldwork for an Italian NGO engaged in the development dedicated to empower women in Palestine, the concept of empowerment used was abstract and problematic. It was difficult to relate to the actual life stories of Palestinian women in East Jerusalem. In addition, Johnson et al. (2017) confirm that simply including women does not necessarily benefit them and even activities that benefit do not necessarily empower.

M&E in women projects primary purpose is to allow project teams to run projects effectively, ensuring they have the desired results for beneficiaries (Kimweli, 2013). For example, food security is a critical concern in Kenya hence the need to develop projects that enhance food security in the country. Consequently, according to Munuve (2023) the project performance was most strongly linked to monitoring and evaluation. Otundo Richard, (2024) agrees with Munuve (2023) acknowledging that M&E effectiveness is a significant predictor of women project success, with a strong positive correlation between effective M&E practices and improved project outcomes. However, Kwao & Amoak (2022) note that the success of donor funded projects on food security

intervention continues to face serious challenges in Northern Ghana while Otundo Richard (2024) does not support the same perspective noting that the effectiveness of donor-funded development projects hinges significantly on the implementation of robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) systems.

M&E is crucial for the success of women-led projects. For example, Uduji & Okolo-Obasi (2025) indicate that through M&E, the Nigeria for Women Projects (NFWP) intervention targeted specifically for the empowerment of women, using the women's affinity group model has recorded significant set up in improving women's formation of social capital through advocacy, awareness creation, provision of credit, training of women on skill acquisition, among other activities. However, most projects failed due to lack of poor M&E. According to Shuna & Kithandi (2024), these challenges often stem from inadequate M&E practices, difficulties in defining clear performance indicators and insufficient time dedicated to M&E activities. Like all other projects, women projects rely on effective M&E to ensure their sustainability (Gathege & Yusuf, 2019). However, Coleman (1992) highlights that project M&E systems are a requirement of most major funding agencies and result from a concern that many projects fail because they are badly managed.

Gathege & Yusuf (2019) highlight that like any other projects, women projects rely on effective M&E to ensure their sustainability. Yet sustainability of projects is still a major challenge in many developing countries. Madisa (2025) highlights that in most projects, M&E is not effective because there is no early preparation made for M&E. Sometimes this stems from the fact that M&E operations are not integrated into the planning phase of the community program or project. For example, in most organizations provision is not made for dedicated personnel, finance and materials for continuous M&E of community programs or projects (Dipela & Mohapi, 2021).

Involvement of stakeholders is imperative in the success of women projects in developing countries. In Baringo, Kenya stakeholder involvement played a vital contributor to project sustainability, fostering transparency, bringing a sense of ownership and trust (Koech & Muchelule, 2024). That is, from the planning to the implementation stages, the projects need local leaders, government institutions, NGOs and community members and when working closely together, projects tend to be more relevant and responsive to the actual needs (Gaudence & de

Dieu Dushimimana, 2025). This inclusive approach results in stronger community ownership and greater support for the projects. Also, the NGOs provide essential resources such as funding, training, and mentorship, while also advocating for gender equality and policy reforms. Their community-based approach ensures that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and realities of women and girls (Chikwe et al., 2022).

The absence of stakeholder engagement mechanisms leads to various project challenges in women's projects (Onusi, 2024). This includes delays, increased costs and reduced effectiveness due to misaligned stakeholder expectations and inadequate community support. Despite progress in project execution, many initiatives lack stakeholder engagement frameworks in their early stages. However, in some cases, limited or poorly coordinated stakeholder involvement has hindered project outcomes. According to Ali and Haapasal, (2023) stakeholders must have a high degree of shared understanding in terms of cooperation, control and coordination to achieve the mutually desired outcomes. Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), a non-governmental organization in India, demonstrates how strategic stakeholder involvement can effectively support female entrepreneurs.

In Latin America, stakeholder involvement has helped shape women's projects for the better. Many initiatives have been developed to empower young women and enhance their participation in the entrepreneurial sector. Gómez Mendoza & Sanabria Torres (2020), highlights that the Colombian government designed the Mujeres Rurales Program to empower rural women, by providing them with financial aid, agricultural training and access to markets. This program mainly supports female-led businesses, livestock rearing and crop production.

Furthermore, Adebayo and Worth (2024) indicate that developmental projects remain a critical sector, employing a significant portion of the population, particularly women and play a key role in poverty alleviation. Meinzen-Dick and Suseela (2019) argues that women farmers in Africa often have little harvest to show for their efforts because of gender discrimination, regional laws, policies, programs and customs that put them at a significant disadvantage. Despite their input, Adebayo & Worth (2024) further clarifies that young women are operating under great constraint

in terms of less access to land, technology, credit, poor agricultural output, limited access to resources and information provided by extension practitioners.

Group dynamics play a pivotal role in determining the success or failure of women's projects, directly shaping both participation and overall outcomes. According to Cantora et al. (2016) an overwhelming feeling of tension and lack of trust among residents, resulting in most women withdrawing from social interactions. Group dynamics also played a role in women's participation during on-site group treatment and desiring off-site treatment. Women play a crucial, even though often hidden, role in group dynamics and criminal activities, which frequently go unrecorded by the police (Jaraba, 2024).

Innovations and collective problem-solving, when supported by positive group dynamics, enable women to navigate challenges more effectively (Balabantaray 2023 & Chikwe et al. 2022). These dynamics foster trust, collaboration and shared decision-making, ultimately strengthening the cohesion and resilience of women's groups.

2.5 Experience from Lesotho

In Lesotho there are many factors that affect the performance of development projects in general and women projects in particular (Maliehe 2022; Kokome, 2025; Mokati, 2024; Ferguson, 1990). Traditionally, land was controlled by the king and local chiefs. Later, colonial laws introduced a new legal system, creating a divide between rural (traditional) and urban (legal) land management (Kokome, 2025). This caused conflicts between chiefs and the government, especially when chiefs resisted changes that reduced their power. Although reforms have been implemented to grant women legal rights to land, many challenges exist that affect the performance of women-led projects.

Lack of access to resources especially in the rural areas limits women's ability to alleviate poverty (Motsoari, 2012). Both Mokati et al. (2024) and Semoko (2024) support the view that even though women are the majority of farmers, they still lack farming implements and use poor and archaic farming methods. As a result, this brings less production that does not sustain women in the long

run. In addition, adequate access to resources is needed to promote sustainable projects for women (Daemane & Muroyiwa, 2016).

Capacity-building for women projects is essential for enhancing their skills, boosting productivity and promoting their active participation in sustainability. According to Felix (2022) capacity building program has a positive influence and involves equipping women with practical knowledge in areas such as financial literacy, business planning and marketing while also offering mentorship and access to networks. In Lesotho, these initiatives are critical in helping women overcome systemic barriers such as limited education, restricted access to credit and gender norms that hinder economic participation. Failure to do so leads to a project struggling or failing dismally. Kolisang (2023) concur that community development programs should be led by women who have the appropriate abilities, in case they lack, training should be provided.

Scholars have shown that many projects in Lesotho continuously failed since independence due to lack of M&E (Ferguson 1990, Mashinini 2010 and Rant'so 2015). Kolisang (2023) highlights that it was found that in the Ngope-Khubelu poultry development project, there was no thorough M&E as the project failed because the manager was ineffective. This was due to lack of a defined plan and feasibility analysis before a project could be completed to assure the project's viability. Despite significant investments and ambitious goals, many projects fail to achieve their intended goals. This failure is not only a waste of valuable resources but also a setback for the communities and stakeholders relying heavily on these initiatives (Anderson, 2006).

Mafeteng has received significant resources from donor support, yet it still struggles with unsustainable living conditions. Mafeteng has experienced and is susceptible to drought, late rainfalls, degraded environmental conditions and high poverty rate (Mojaki et al., 2025). Through M&E in projects, major objectives of the donors were met but their impact did not last longer after donors withdrew support hence the projects cannot be said to be sustainable, alternatively they collapsed (Nthabiseng, 2016). It is the goal of donors that their aid may have an impact in the lives of the beneficiaries as well as an overall change in their communities by bringing change socially, economically and environmentally to the projects for sustainability. However, Majoro (2023) highlights that some projects have limited positive impacts on the livelihood of the affected communities including women leaving them further impoverished.

Scholars generally agree that M&E enhances accountability and transparency among stakeholders, including donors, government agencies and local communities (Akoon, 2023; Ochen-Ochen, 2025). For example, projects such as the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP) have used M&E systems to monitor the delivery of support services, input distribution, and beneficiary participation. This process not only helps in identifying what is working or not working but also builds trust among all parties involved. When communities including women see clear results and know that their feedback matters, their engagement and ownership of projects tend to increase, which improves the chances of long-term impact (Johnson et al., 2018).

Few community-based development projects have given much attention to the empowerment of rural women's livelihoods. For instance, Chabeli (2023) notes that The Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) in Koti- Sephola is a community-based organization that sustains rural women's livelihoods at household level. However, these women still face challenges of lack of credit, climate variability, lack of roads and extensive training on crop farming. Additionally, Rantšo (2022) highlights that these initiatives are faced with many challenges such as lack of capital, access to markets and many others. This is often linked with failure of government support towards assisting women-owned enterprises with capital and some infrastructural services.

Again, Moeketsi (2024) note that the GoL launched the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Tier II project, which provided greenhouse technology to farmers in the districts of Maseru, Mafeteng, Berea, and Leribe, generating 100 jobs, including positions for 21 women. Additionally, in order to achieve gender equality and empower women across various sectors including women-led agricultural projects, the Government of Lesotho (GoL) adopted its first Gender and Development Policy (GAD Policy) in 2003. Moeketsi (2024) underscore that this was to ensure equal opportunities for all, including marginalized groups. This policy mainly focuses on gender, climate change, sustainable development, disaster risk management, and gender governance.

Furthermore, major achievements include the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act (2006) and Land Act (2010), which granted women equal legal rights and land ownership. However, there is still slow progress in promoting gender equality. Moeketsi (2024) highlights that Lesotho adheres

to frameworks such as the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women. Additionally, Lesotho became a signatory and ratify of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008 and reaffirmed this commitment in 2016 (Rate, GDPAG, 2018).

2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed Empowerment Theory as a theoretical framework adopted in this study. The chapter provided a more detailed review of the literature on development projects to improve livelihoods discussing experiences of women projects in the developed and developing countries. The last section of the literature review focused on experiences from Lesotho. Based on the review, it is clear that young girls and women's projects in the developed and developing countries have many potentials and challenges that affect their sustainability and empowerment drive to women livelihoods. Hence, these factors lead to variegated performance of these projects making some to be successful while others become less successful or fail completely. These issues, especially as they relate to young girls and women have not been fully investigated in Lesotho, making this study relevant.

Chapter three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. It includes the research approach, research design, study area, population and sample and population, sample size and research instruments. Additionally, it discusses the data collection techniques, analysis procedures and ethical considerations implemented throughout the study.

3.1 Research approach

This research used a qualitative approach. A research approach refers to the overall strategy and plan for conducting a research study. It encompasses the methods, techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data as well as the theoretical framework that guides the research (Clark et al., 2021). It focuses on understanding people's experiences, behaviors and social contexts through non-numerical data. A qualitative approach was used in this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perspectives and motivations. This approach was suitable for exploring complex social issues that cannot be captured through numerical data alone.

3.2 Research design

The study employed a case study design. According to Gerring (2004), a "case study," is best defined as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units. It relies on the same sort of covariation evidence utilized in non-case study research. Thus, the case study method is correctly understood as a particular way of defining cases, not a way of analyzing cases or a way of modeling causal relations. Moreover, Thamae (2024) points out that this research design is particularly adept at addressing complex social situations or interventions characterized by multiple variables. It offers flexibility by accommodating various research techniques, allowing the researchers to select the most suitable methods for addressing their research questions. This approach supports evidence-based decision-making by highlighting real-

life experiences and the contextual realities. AGYW from four constituencies, are used as case study out of other Start-up Kits funded by Karabo ea Bophelo in districts such as in Maseru, Mohale's Hoek and Berea. They have been preferred to represent all because by examining differences within the same district, the research offered deeper insights into what works, what doesn't and why.

3.3 The Case Study: Adolescent Girls and Young Women Start-up Kit Projects

DREAMS Project is a multi-sectoral approach aimed to reduce Adolescent Girls and Young Women's (AGYW) vulnerability through a core package of interventions targeting multiple sources of HIV risk to promote Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) lives. Safe Spaces are a component of the DREAMS Projects. Under the DREAMS initiative, Karabo ea Bophelo (KB) had the Safe Spaces where facilitators engage adolescents fostering open discussion and supportive environments for young people's well-being.

In Phoqane #53, Thabana-Morena #56, Mafeteng #58 and Qalabane #57,

KB provided essential resources, such as sexual and reproductive health education, HIV prevention strategies and economic empowerment initiatives. Through these interventions, the program equipped young women with the knowledge and tools to protect their health, reduce vulnerability to GBV and build sustainable livelihoods, fostering both resilience and independence (Tjemolane, 2023).

The program further introduced skills development opportunities, helping young women gain practical skills in small businesses, which contributed to their financial security and overall well-being. This support enabled AGYW not only to take control of their health but also to actively participate in their communities as empowered individuals. Furthermore, KB included monitoring and evaluation personnel contributing to guarantee that the project follows its objectives and provide necessary information for project life span. It also comprised community and village leaders that have been involved in this initiative since its implementation.

The study was carried out at Mafeteng District. It is located about 76 kilometers south of the country's capital, Maseru and has a population of approximately 61,000. The project to be studied

is located in the 4 constituencies namely; Phokoane #53, Thabana -Morena #56, Mafeteng #58 and Qalabane #57.

3.4 Population

Population is explained as a group of people of interest for a specific study that research wishes to study (Casteel, 2021). The population for this study consisted of village chief, the AGYW Start-up Kit beneficiaries, Youth Mentors, DREAMS Ambassador, Youth Specialist, and DREAMS Manager. This encompassed the individuals who participated in the implementation of this initiative aimed to improve livelihoods and empower AGYW in Mafeteng District.

3.4.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

This study used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to ensure the selection of participants who provided rich, relevant and diverse insights on the varying performance of AGYW Start-up Kit projects. Purposive sampling was used to identify AGYW beneficiaries, DREAMS Manager, Youth Specialist, Technical Officer, Youth Mentors, DREAMS Ambassador and community stakeholders who were involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the projects. These participants were chosen because they own direct knowledge and experience critical for understanding factors influencing the project. On the other hand, Dosek (2021) indicates that the snowball sampling method (SSM) is one of the most widely used methods to collect information about hard-to-reach populations and in low-information contexts. Snowball sampling was employed to reach additional relevant participants who were not identified initially.

3.4.2 Sample size

Casteel (2021) explains sample size as an operationalized representation of the target population and is the group of units from which the sample is recruited. The sample size included AGYW project implementers and community members. This depended on their availability and accessibility of participants and assisted in getting in depth data. The total number of the sample was determined when the researcher reaches the point of saturation when collecting data.

3.4.3 Interviews

In qualitative research, according to Mathosi (2022) interviews are one of the most commonly used data collection methods. The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the participant (Fox, 2009). In this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview. Adams (2015) concludes that the semi-structured interview (SSI) employs a blend of closed and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions.

Interviews were conducted to collect the data from DREAMS Project Manager, Technical Officer, DREAMS Ambassador, Youth Mentors and Selected AGYW beneficiaries. From these people, the researcher had an opportunity to get a clear picture of the respondent's experiences. The researcher collected comprehensive and high-quality data from freely interactive respondents. It was observed that interviewers strongly prefer to ask one-sided positive yes/no-questions in the subsequences and secondly that respondents usually give agreeing answers to these yes/no-questions. It is argued that this "normal" conversation strategy may seriously affect the validity of the information obtained and more generally, that the practical demands from the conversation rules on the interviewer's behaviour set limits on the researcher's abstract demands on that behaviour Molenaar & Smit (1996).

3.5 Data collection methods

Taherdoost (2021) defines data collection methods as techniques used to gather information for research purposes. This study used interviews as data collection methods. Research interviews represent a cornerstone qualitative research method used across various methodological approaches (Gassy et al., 2013). According to Thamae (2024), research interviews offer the researchers a profound opportunity to delve into the perspectives, experiences, beliefs and motivations of participants. Employing semi-structured interviews was commonplace in empowerment research, allowing the researcher to pose predetermined questions while still affording the participants the freedom to discuss the topics that they deem significant.

3.6 Data presentation and analysis

Data analysis is a valuable research approach that can be used to advance knowledge across many disciplines through the use of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods data to answer new research questions (Kelly et al., 2024). This study followed the pattern used by Musi & Mathosi (2022) in that, the data collected through interviews were transcribed into a word document and analyzed using thematic analysis with the assistance of the Atlas.ti programme. The programme helped the researcher to organize the data and develop themes in a process consisting of developing descriptive codes, conceptual categories and themes. Four major themes informed by the literature review emerged consisting of impacts of access to resources, monitoring and evaluation of Start-up Kit Projects, stakeholder involvement and group dynamics. According to Braun & Clarke (2024), thematic analysis is a set of methods for developing and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data. The researchers created initial labels that indicate the important parts of the information after the collection of data. Then the researcher wrote a report that explained the findings to support the conclusions and give a clear understanding of the topic.

Thematic analysis aided researchers to break down difficult data into clear, meaningful themes by providing useful understandings into the topic being studied. According to Braun & Clarke (2024) although thematic analysis is often used merely to describe or summarize key patterns in data, a good thematic analysis involves more than simply reporting what is in the data; it involves telling an interpretative story about the data in relation to a research question. In this study, it helped understanding the different performances in AGYW Start-up Kit Projects in selected constituencies in Mafeteng.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The researcher conducted a pilot study to assess the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The purpose was to identify any uncertainties, discrepancies or shortcomings in the interview before proceeding to the main study. Feedback from participants in the pilot study was used to revise to make sure that they were accurately captured. To make sure the results were

reliable, the researcher checked if the responses were consistent and made sure the same steps were followed during data collection in the main study.

All interviews were conducted in Sesotho for effective communication. A recorder was used to capture the interviews, ensuring precise documentation of participant's responses and minimizing the risk of losing valuable information. The interviews and discussion were transcribed and translated to the English language before data analysis. As Tlali and Musi (2022) and Korstjens & Moser (2018) indicate, this study also adhered to issues of rigour to ensure reliability and validity as they apply to qualitative studies. The credibility of the study was maintained through triangulation that led to a collection of data from multiple sources, at different times and on many sites.

The researcher combined multiple data sources and methods to validate the findings in order to ensure study's honesty and reliability. In order to avoid biases, the study ensured a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by combining data from various perspectives. This study also ensured that voices of people who are studied are accurately represented.

Moreover, the researcher ensured that the research findings and interpretations are relevant and applicable to other contexts or settings beyond the research context. Moeketsi (2024), and Forero et al. (2018) & Zohrabi (2013) conclude that it involves the ability to generalize or transfer the knowledge gained from a study to similar situations, populations, or settings, thus enhancing the potential for broader understanding and practical utility.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study prioritized ethical principles throughout the research process to ensure the dignity, rights and welfare of all people who participated are protected. Moreover, before participation, informed consent was obtained and everything was clear for everyone to fully comprehend. Also, explanations were provided about the study's purpose, methods, potential risks and benefits. Involvement of participants was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw, they would have done so at any point without being under duress. According to Thamae (2024) in Aliverti (2020)

upholding principles of beneficence and respect for the participants' autonomy, the researchers must strive to ensure that the potential benefits of the research outweigh any potential risks and that participants have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Anonymization of data and securing the storage of sensitive information helped minimize the risk of harm or discomfort that the participants might experience because of their involvement in this research. Throughout the research, sensitivity to cultural norms, respect for community values and fairness in the treatment of participants was observed to uphold both professional and community ethical standards.

3.9 Chapter summary

The chapter focused on the research methodology that was used in this study. The area of study was Mafeteng district and the study population as well as. The study further described the research approach used as a qualitative approach with a case study design. The sample consisted of AGYW beneficiaries, DREAMS Manager, Youth Specialist, Technical Officer, Youth Mentors, DREAMS Ambassador and community stakeholders. Data was collected through predetermined interviews. In addition, the chapter has outlined the key ethical principles that guided this study and explained the steps the researcher took to follow and respect those principles. Data analysis was discussed and the use of thematic analysis approach as well as the relevance of all research methods used.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation, Interpretation and Analysis

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the findings of the study conducted from three selected constituencies in the Mafeteng district, from Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) participated in a Start-up Kit Projects. Following the presentation of the participants of the study, the chapter presents a table that summarizes themes and categories generated during data analysis. The subsequent section presents, analyzes and interprets the findings according to the predetermined themes generated from the research questions.

4.1 Participants

To maintain participant's confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned a unique identifier such as PT1, PT2, etc to PT13. PT1 represents the first participant while PT13 represents the last participant. The participants comprised a group of AGYW from the safe spaces of Start-up Kit Projects, KB team and the chief.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

PARTICIPANTS	CARDER	AGE	SEX	HIGHEST QUALIFICATION
PT1	AGYW	18	F	High School
PT2	AGYW	17	F	Primary school
PT3	AGYW	23	F	Tertiary

PT4	DREAMS Ambassador	24	F	Tertiary
PT5	AGYW	21	F	Primary School
PT6	AGYW	23	F	Primary School
PT7	AGYW	20	F	Primary School
PT8	DREAMS Ambassador	24	F	Tertiary
PT9	Youth Mentor	23	F	Tertiary
PT10	Technical Officer	40	M	Tertiary
PT11	DREAMS Manager	41	F	Tertiary
PT12	Youth Specialist	35	M	Tertiary
PT 13	Chief	47	M	High School

Source: Field Data (2025)

According to Table 1, there were more participants with tertiary education than secondary and primary education. The majority of participants were young females, mostly aged between 18 and 24. Participants included the chief and beneficiaries (AGYW) and program staff (DREAMS

Ambassadors, Youth Mentor, Technical Officer), offering a mix of perspectives on the implementation, impact and lived experiences within the DREAMS program.

4.2 Themes and Categories of the study

Table 2 presents a summary of the themes and categories under each theme followed by a detailed analysis on each category.

Table 2: Themes and Categories of the study

Access to training and resources	Monitoring & Evaluation of the Projects	Stakeholder involvement	Group dynamics
Access to training	Records status	Moral and Social support	Commitment and dedication
Access to essential resources	Accountability	Marketing and market access	Theft
Economic empowerment aspect	Decision making		Drop in and out
	Solutions to challenges		Partnership structures

Source: Own data analysis, June 2025

4.3 Adolescent Girls and Young Women access to resources

The findings revealed that access to resources played a decisive role in shaping the contrasting performance of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects, highlighting why some projects succeeded while others failed to achieve their goals. Training emerged as one of the important categories, highlighting how the performance of the projects were different. It helped beneficiaries to know many things they did not know previously. The beneficiaries learned essential skills such as bookkeeping and general business management as summarized by PT8:

From the training, we were equipped with skills to manage our finances effectively as we were taught how to draw up a budget, with an emphasis on ensuring that expenses do not exceed income and we were also provided with entrepreneurial skills.

Data further revealed that training played a critical role in empowering beneficiaries in customer care and marketing. Based on the narratives, the beneficiaries highlighted that training in these areas not only improved their business performance but also enhanced confidence, communication skills and decision-making abilities. Appendix A shows beneficiaries during training sessions at Mafube guest house.

The beneficiaries added that training helped them so much that they ran their own business, even though the DREAMS project was currently shut down due to USAID executive orders. The beneficiaries noted that they were provided with long-term equipment, which allowed them to continue operating without any assistance. They added that their business was still doing well and their customers continue to support them.

The management highlighted that refresher training sessions were offered every six months to equip beneficiaries with additional knowledge and address the challenges they encountered. This brought significant improvements to the projects and enhanced the beneficiaries well-being, enabling their businesses to become successful and financially independent. The beneficiaries reported that they were able to support themselves and operate independently. Some demonstrated resilience and were not easily swayed by challenges that came their way.

Nonetheless, some of the projects failed and finally collapsed because of training related issues among many factors. The finding revealed that some of the beneficiaries from the Mafeteng district did not receive initial training due to limited time of the project. PT10 explained;

We did not train them in design thinking, creative ideation and effective conflict resolution within group settings. The beneficiaries received basic training though some were illiterate and could not be easily trained to understand some basic business concepts.

The findings highlighted that it was extremely difficult for illiterate beneficiaries to understand some of the jargon used in business. This was because KB took all beneficiaries based on their vulnerabilities, not on educational level.

According to beneficiaries, training sessions were not very effective, due to time constraints. They highlighted that it was not easy for them to grasp so much information within such a short time of training. The beneficiaries highlighted that the training lasted only one week, which was insufficient, especially considering that some of them received stock valued at M50,000.00 and they were expected to manage those projects efficiently.

Access to essential resources emerged as a second category, testifying the differing performance of the projects. The beneficiaries were provided with stock, equipment and agricultural inputs tailored to the specific needs of their respective projects. These resources played a crucial role in laying a strong foundation for the implementation and sustainability of their initiatives. The beneficiaries reported that having access to such materials reduced the initial burden of capital investment, allowing them to focus on production, service delivery and business growth. They highlighted that their projects became more organized and efficient, leading to smoother day-to-day management and improved output.

Many participants noted a visible increase in productivity, which they attributed directly to the timely provision of inputs and equipment. It became evident that resource support not only boosted confidence and motivation but also enhanced their capacity to meet market demands and improve income generation. This support proved to be a critical factor in the early success and expansion of their projects. One participant added;

Providing the Start-up Stock boosted the beneficiaries' confidence and encouraged them to work harder and set higher goals. We observed a shift in their mindset as they began to believe in themselves and the potential of their projects, moving from basic survival to planning for long-term growth (PT11).

However, despite success stories members of other projects narrated that some projects failed and were totally shut down. The beneficiaries narrated that the start-up stock they received was

imposed on them. Some beneficiaries indicated that they wanted a tuck shop and were surprised when they were informed of the scheduled stock delivery date. The participants added that instead, KB bought what they thought was suitable, which left them stuck with items that did not meet the community's needs. One participant noted that she remembered vividly that among the many imposed was Protex soap, while in their village people normally used regular bar soap. Another participant added; *We were left with large amounts of unsold stock for quite some time.* (PT5). The KB management noted that they observed that the stock was not moving and decided to offer it to other groups. The chief added that they were disappointed about that matter and his community also felt excluded from that decision. This was how some of the projects failed and faced out. The beneficiaries highlighted that they were left without another chance to prove themselves though that was not their mistake.

The beneficiaries were supported with KB's vehicle. According to the participants, the vehicles were used to deliver a wide range of essential materials directly to their project's sites. These included items such as equipment, farming inputs and even finished products for distribution. The study noted that some beneficiaries were independent to a point whereby they did not rely much on KB vehicles to deliver their stock; instead, they hired a van to buy and deliver their stock and those projects continued without any problems. They highlighted that their projects existed to this date as they were able to organize things for themselves.

However, some projects, especially the ones in the remote areas depended heavily on KB vehicles which had to aid the district of Mafeteng as a whole. Beneficiaries highlighted that it was not easy for those vehicles to move around when needed urgently to some areas due to their tight schedule. That led to some projects failing because the delivery of their stock took a long time. It was not easy for beneficiaries to hire a van as it was too expensive. One participant noted; *“by the time the KB vehicle finally arrived with the ordered stock, the items that had not been ordered were already finished”* (PT7). These discouraged buyers to continue getting goods and services to those projects and they ended up failing and shutting down.

The category of marketing and market access emerged where the main focus was to support beneficiaries in reaching wider opportunities for selling their products and services. The

beneficiaries underscored that they were strict about keeping their records clear in order to build trust with both buyers and potential market partners. As one participant (PT2) explained, *“if there was a shortage, those who were on duty had to pay for it in order to keep their records clean.”* One member from the KB management further noted that they had taught beneficiaries that strict adherence to accountability measures not only served as a form of internal regulation but also enhanced their credibility in the marketplace, encouraging transparency and honesty in daily operations. Consequently, beneficiaries reported that they remained alert and attentive to the management of both financial and material resources, which reduced misuse or misplacement. This discipline ensured smooth operations, strengthened their reputation and positioned them more favorably for market access and sustained progress in their respective projects.

However, the findings highlighted that some of the projects failed due to ineffective promotion of marketing and market access. Some beneficiaries were able to produce goods and services, however, limited exposure to markets and weak linkages to buyers restricted their ability to generate sufficient income. In some cases, the beneficiaries lacked the necessary skills in pricing and market promotion, which made it difficult to compete with more established producers. The finding highlighted that without proper market access, demand stayed low and profits went down which led to some of the projects ending up failing. The beneficiaries stated that they were able to produce their goods but because they did not have enough connections to markets or buyers, they could not sell much. One beneficiary added, *“The prices we set were not always right and without proper promotion, people preferred to buy from bigger producers. This made it hard for us to keep the project going”* (PT3).

These findings suggest that education is important when youth projects are used to deal with poverty and empowerment. Projects that consisted of literate beneficiaries performed far better than those that consisted mostly of less educated beneficiaries. This is consistent with the literature indicating that individuals with higher levels of education are better able to access, understand and effectively utilize available resources, thereby improving project outcomes (Lubis et al., 2023). Furthermore, the findings align with Panday et al. (2023) who shows that the failure of projects is linked to the lack of effective beneficiary participation in decision-making, resulting in top-down interventions that failed to match community needs. This exclusion reduces ownership and

commitment, undermining sustainability. Also, Start-up stock was provided without assessing suitability, leading to wasted resources.

4.4 Contribution of Monitoring and Evaluation to project's performance

There were mixed responses regarding the contribution of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) to the success and failure of Start-up Kit Projects. Data collected revealed that in the successful projects, the implementation of M&E practices significantly improved the clarity and well organized records. As a result, financial books of the beneficiaries were consistently well-maintained, transparent and easy for others such as stakeholders or new team members to review and understand. The beneficiaries noted that although they were sometimes nervous during M&E visits, the process was very important because it encouraged them and supportive supervision contributed greatly to the success of their project.

The findings highlighted that KB management through M&E instilled a strong sense of discipline and responsibility among beneficiaries. The consistent monitoring encouraged participants to approach their tasks with professionalism and seriousness. Knowing that their progress was being tracked, motivated them to improve clarity and commitment, reinforcing positive habits. The well-organized records not only improved performance but also reinforced positive habits such as discipline, transparency and goal-setting. Management noted that during M&E visits, they identified gaps in beneficiary's record-keeping and addressed them by using well-organized books as examples in refresher training, encouraging peer mentorship for improvement.

However, several projects were unsuccessful and fell apart despite monitoring and evaluation processes. The KB management revealed that beneficiaries' activity records were poorly maintained. In some cases, the beneficiaries would avoid interaction altogether, fleeing whenever the KB monitoring team approached. As a result, the M&E team faced challenges in supporting AGYW in maintaining and organizing their record books.

In other instances, the beneficiaries were absent from the projects and sites making it impossible for the project staff to engage with them directly to check how they recorded the book on a daily basis. The findings highlighted that their absence hindered the delivery of key interventions and limited participation in scheduled activities. That left no other choice for the KB team but to report

the matter to the local chief. The chief tried several times to intervene, but there was no change among the AGYW. One participant from KB management added;

It was a very disappointing incident because we represented KB, which aimed at improving beneficiaries' livelihoods. So, seeing them playing with such a life changing opportunity was heartbreaking to witness (PT 10).

The finding highlighted that the management's resolution was to dissolve the group and take stock left to well organized groups. This was how some of the projects ended up falling apart.

The second category revealed that M&E motivated some beneficiaries to improve accountability. The Beneficiaries highlighted that they became aware of their goals and the steps needed to achieve them, leading to greater consistency in meeting deadlines, fulfilling responsibilities and maintaining focus. KB's unannounced visits encouraged them to be committed and consistent in managing their business. The beneficiaries highlighted that they understood that they were not allowed to record false information because KB would verify whether the money matched the records or not.

The management noted that spot checks and supportive supervision contributed greatly to the success of some projects because beneficiaries were working extremely hard and were always on top of our game. PT12;

In some projects, we arrived unannounced and we were pleased to find beneficiaries actively working, as if they had anticipated our visit. It was encouraging to see that the programme had brought a positive change in their lives

Nonetheless, in some projects, accountability was not maintained as M&E was not very effective. Although the KB team did conduct M&E visits, these were infrequent. One participant noted that they were assigned M&E tasks in addition to the already demanding responsibilities, which included meeting targets, mobilizing participants, visiting assigned groups and preparing reports. Therefore, they were unable to fully engage in M&E activities and that was one of the reasons for negative consequences as they were sometimes unable to resolve problems that came about.

The third category that emerged was decision-making within projects. During the KB visits, beneficiaries would sit down together to evaluate the situation and make plans to address challenges. Participants noted that they were faced with a challenge of attracting new customers. To resolve this matter, through M&E, the management encouraged some of them to go out and engage passersby by informing them about the services being offered, while others continued providing services.

Participants shared that decision-making supported by M&E also led to the installation of billboards to raise public awareness about the AGYW projects. This strategy proved effective, resulting in increased visibility, higher customer turnout and improved production. Similar decisions helped to solve other practical problems as well. They found ways to prevent cattle from destroying their vegetables and making water more accessible, since it had to be fetched from a location quite far from the field. When KB recognized the devolution and ability of some groups to make decisions, it supported those projects. Hence farming groups were provided with a greenhouse to protect crops and a horse pipe to ease irrigation, improving the sustainability of their work. See appendix B.

Nonetheless, poor decision-making hindered the success of other AGYW projects. The finding highlighted that project leaders made top-down decisions. There were also delays in responding to slow delivery of supplies meant that participants lost valuable time and income, causing frustration. These decision-making challenges weakened the effectiveness of the AGYW projects.

The findings suggest that decision-making played a critical role in determining the success or failure of projects. Projects where beneficiaries demonstrated active decision-making were viewed as more organized and accountable. This earned them support from management, which in turn enhanced their sustainability and growth. On the other hand, projects that lacked clear decision-making structures struggled with coordination and accountability, making them less attractive for additional support. Therefore, this indicates that strong leadership and participatory decision-making are not just operational strengths but key determinants of whether a project thrives or fails. The findings align with Mungall-Baldwin (2022), who highlights that while women can play highly effective roles in projects and demonstrate strong capabilities, they continue to encounter

barriers in accessing equitable opportunities. These challenges are particularly evident in participation, leadership and decision-making where systemic biases and structural inequalities often limit their full involvement and recognition.

4.5 Impact of stakeholder involvement on youth project's performance

Moral and social support emerged as the first category which indicates that stakeholder involvement had a significant impact on the success of projects targeting AGYW. There were various responses from participants with some noting that there were no cases of theft in their projects because they had protection of the village chief and the councilor, who were both aware of their projects existence in their respective villages. One chief added; *“KB brought something truly meaningful to our children, I had a strong sense of responsibility to protect it so that it could continue benefiting them and the entire village”* (PT13).

The beneficiaries highlighted that the village chiefs and local councilors provided strong support by informing community members and the nearby chiefs through the public gatherings about their project. Additionally, they also provided their houses for projects such as saloons and tuck shops for free and some were given pieces of land temporarily for their agricultural activities. The finding revealed that villagers came in numbers and received goods and services. The local councilors regularly reported the project's positive impact towards villagers during council meetings.

The beneficiaries added that people used to get goods and services in town, but ever since being aware of their existence, communities became regular customers because the services were then nearby and they no longer had to spend money on transport to access the same services they could get locally. This led to their projects being successful.

The failure of the AGYW project could not be attributed to any wrongdoing or negligence on the part of the chiefs or local councilors. There was no evidence suggesting that these local leaders acted in a manner that hindered the success of the initiative. On the contrary, their roles appeared to be supportive, and no harm was observed from their side concerning the project's shortcomings.

However, some of the projects failed as they noted that they were not given enough moral and social support. The beneficiaries noted that they tried their best to keep the project moving, but

without support from stakeholders, they were left on their own. One participant added; *“When challenges such as lack of materials or market connections came, we could not manage. That is why the project did not continue”* PT3

Economic support emerged as the second category where community involvement helped a lot in improving market access in that they told other people about the products. One participant noted; *“Our project was well known to an extent that it was able to cater for local shops”* (PT8).

The community played a crucial role in supporting beneficiary projects by serving as the primary market for their goods and services and as a promoter through referrals and word-of-mouth. This dual support ensured income and stability for the projects, making the community an essential partner in their growth and sustainability.

Nonetheless, some projects failed to achieve their intended goals due to limited or ineffective community involvement. The community did not fully support those projects in some projects. Some members spoke disrespectfully, claiming that the AGYW did not work hard enough to earn the capital for those projects since it was a donation when they were denied access to buy on credit. One participant noted; *“We were told by the management from the onset that we were not allowed to let the community members buy on credit”* (PT 2). That led to frustration and resentment, as the community believed the project was no longer serving the needs of the local people, but instead prioritizing strict rules over empathy and support. In some projects, that breakdown in trust resulted in decreased participation and support for the project. Consequently, the marketing of goods and services suffered, as the community’s involvement shifted from supportive promotion to vocal critique, increasing the challenges faced by some of the projects.

These findings suggest tangible forms of support from local leaders, such as donating homes, providing land and actively promoting projects, which go beyond the general legitimacy noted in previous research. Contrary to common assumptions, project failures were not due to corruption or negligence by leaders but rather to gaps in stakeholder coordination and insufficient community buy-in. These findings also align with those of Mohammed Abba et al. (2025), who emphasize that effective stakeholder engagement enhances project completion rates, mitigates risks, improves cost efficiency and fosters meaningful collaboration.

4.6 Contribution of group dynamics to divergent projects' performance

Group dynamics contributed to the varying performance levels of projects. The findings revealed that some group members were committed to a shared commitment and dedication to their roles. The mutual commitment helped create a teamwork environment where members supported each other, worked towards the same goals, and stayed involved throughout the project.

Out of all the startup projects, the projects that succeeded had been those managed by two people or a single individual. One beneficiary added; *Since we were only two in our group, we had a clear vision and purpose of what we were doing, and we focused on achieving our goal (PT 7).*

The management emphasized that the small group size allowed individuals to engage more deeply, communicate openly and build mutual trust. This strong sense of responsibility and teamwork enabled members to stay focused, work collaboratively and remain dedicated. Management added;

From a managerial standpoint, we observe that smaller group sizes tend to strengthen individual dedication and collective commitment. With fewer members, each person's contributions become more visible, encouraging a stronger sense of responsibility, deeper engagement and a shared drive to achieve the team's goals (PT 11).

The findings also indicated that dedication and commitment were sustained over time, even as challenges arose. Group members went beyond their assigned roles, showing initiative and a willingness to support the group's overall progress.

Nonetheless, some beneficiaries reported that their projects failed due to internal conflicts among group members. It was revealed that some individuals never formed meaningful relationships from the beginning, and the group failed to establish clear roles and expectations. This lack of structure and connection contributed to an environment lacking openness and trust. As a result, commitment and dedication were weak or absent.

One participant from KB management added that while the groups appeared functional during supervisory visits, members concealed underlying issues and conflict. Eventually, some members

had stopped participating in the work altogether. The lack of genuine commitment and dedication was a major factor contributing to the failure of many projects. One beneficiary stated;

We struggled to stay committed because there was no trust or unity in the group. Without clear roles or honest communication, our dedication faded and the project fell apart before it could succeed (PT4).

Nonetheless, the finding revealed that projects that failed had larger group members. The more beneficiaries involved in a group, coordination became more difficult, responsibilities were less clearly defined and some team members became disconnected. The diffusion of responsibility led to delays and miscommunication. In several cases, the larger groups struggled to stay aligned on goals and timelines, which ultimately compromised the quality and timely completion of the work.

The findings revealed that the projects consisted of groups of individuals with different characteristics, with some having inherent habits of stealing. Therefore, the beneficiaries took deliberate steps to strengthen internal controls and promote transparency. Some groups introduced regular financial reporting and made it mandatory to oversee cash handling and approvals. Through consistent communication and collective accountability, some groups were able to move forward. Management added that they knew building trust was essential. As a result, they introduced financial controls and regular reporting and created a culture of transparency and accountability that keeps everyone informed and involved.

However, theft within some groups stems from weak internal controls and lack of transparency. Theft brought conflicts among beneficiaries, making it difficult to work together productively. The findings revealed that theft occurred in several projects, prompting intervention from the KB team. In one notable case, a significant financial shortage was reported within a constituency, leading management to organize a meeting with the group involved. Beneficiaries were interviewed individually, but none admitted responsibility. The situation escalated to the point where the KB team was prepared to involve law enforcement. Eventually, two members confessed to taking the money, which was later recovered from their homes. As a result, the group lost the trust of both management and fellow members, creating a lasting negative impact on team morale and project progress. PT 10 added;

From that incident, those two beneficiaries who stole the money never came to work to embarrassment and that shop continued with only one person as some had previously disappeared.

One of the beneficiaries noted that when the money went missing, trust in their group was broken. She indicated that even those who were innocent felt the consequences. She stated that it was hard to stay motivated after that because the unity they had was gone.

The beneficiaries indicated that youth mentors were taking advantage of them by using their resources without their permission. They explained that Youth Mentors would take some of their stock, receive hair washing services without paying and even harvested vegetables from the fields without compensation. They added that they considered that as a theft because they did not agree to give services to those. One participant added;

We were afraid to report these incidents because the Youth Mentors held senior positions and were manipulative. We feared that reporting them would negatively affect our ability to continue working on the project and unfortunately this has negatively affected us (PT7).

While some group members came and went, the projects that succeeded were those supported by a dedicated few who stayed committed throughout the process. The members were driven by a deeper sense of purpose and a shared vision. The beneficiaries stated that their smaller, more consistent group sizes made communication easier and fostered stronger collaboration. PT7 noted, “*we realized this project could actually change our lives, so we stayed and made it work*”. The stability within the successful groups allowed for trust-building and continuity to carry the project through to completion.

However, in some projects, some group members only joined the project for perceived benefits like school bursaries, internships or income-generating opportunities. PT 12 noted; “*when the benefits did not materialize, they lost interest and dropped out*”. This created a gap that needed to be filled. The findings revealed that the minimum group was six while the maximum was twenty-two AGYW. It was so difficult to deal with different personalities to reach an agreement on how

to make the project successful. In many projects, some members decided to withdraw from the group along the way, while others saw the opportunity to change their livelihood for good. One participant added;

I saw an opportunity and used it profitably and my project continued to thrive to this day. There were no conflicts and my decision-making process is straightforward since I made them independently (PT3).

The fourth category revealed that successful partnership structures were built on a strong foundation of unity and shared purpose. In the projects that thrived, group members demonstrated a high level of oneness and mutual commitment. The management noted that the beneficiaries had prior experience in forming and sustaining effective partnerships. As a result, they were able to navigate challenges collaboratively and maintain their structures over time. One beneficiary added, *“We were able to foster trust, define clear roles and maintain joint accountability to make our project a success” (PT7).*

Nonetheless, most of the projects did not survive due to lack of oneness among the group members. The management indicates that beneficiaries lack a solid background in forming and sustaining effective partnerships. One participant from the management added, *“The beneficiaries had large memberships and struggled to manage internal challenges, and this led to the project’s failure” (PT30).*

The findings revealed that proposals were written individually or as a group. Therefore, a lack of collective effort discouraged others from performing well. Tasks that were supposed to be shared amongst themselves failed, and the burden fell on those who wanted the group to be a success, leading to members’ discouragement, and the project ended up failing.

The findings suggest that commitment coupled with small numbers in a group were responsible for the success or failure of the projects. Projects that were successful had fewer members and a higher level of commitment. Further, the findings mean that while groups are stable, there is no movement in and out, such projects become successful because groups that had higher movement of the members were less successful and they eventually collapsed.

The findings revealed that smaller groups tend to perform better as their size improves inclusivity and productivity. With fewer members, decision-making was more equitable and easier to achieve solutions. This suggests that group size is a key structural factor strengthening the very dynamics that allow women's groups to succeed. The findings also align with Jaraba (2024), who emphasizes that women play a crucial role in projects though a frequently overlooked role in group dynamics, including in contexts involving criminal activities, which are typically underreported by law enforcement. Similarly, Balabantaray (2023) and Chikwe et al. (2022) highlight that innovations and collective problem-solving, when supported by positive group dynamics, enable women to navigate challenges more effectively. These foster trust and shared decision-making, strengthening the cohesion and resilience of women's groups.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented, interpreted and analyzed the main themes that emerged from the findings related to the varying performance of Karabo ea Bophelo Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Start-up Kit Projects in selected constituencies in Mafeteng, Lesotho. It highlighted factors influencing project outcomes, including access to resources, monitoring and evaluation practices, stakeholder involvement, and group dynamics, and demonstrated how these factors collectively contributed to the success or failure of the projects.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the main findings, conclusions and the recommendations of the study.

5.1 Summary of the key findings

5.1.1 Impact of access to resources

The first research question wanted to investigate how access to resources influence the differing performance of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects. The findings clearly showed that resources contribute to the differing performances of the KB projects. The beneficiaries learnt business, financial and customer service skills, which improved their confidence and ability to run sustainable businesses. Through regular refresher training, beneficiaries deepened their knowledge and developed practical strategies to address the challenges they faced. However, projects suffered a lot due to short training sessions and a lack of tailored support for illiterate participants. This resulted in a poor understanding of business fundamentals and a limited impact from follow-up training.

The findings show that the provision of stock and equipment helped many beneficiaries reduce financial barriers and improve productivity. Nonetheless, many projects failed because of poor alignment between the stock provided and community needs. KB's top-down approach to resource allocation left some beneficiaries with unsellable items. Some beneficiaries became empowered to a point whereby they did not depend much on KB vehicles. However, projects in the remote areas depended heavily on KB vehicles and faced frequent delays, leading to customer dissatisfaction and business collapse. These challenges underscore the importance of inclusive planning, ongoing support and flexible approaches to truly empower beneficiaries and ensure project sustainability.

5.1.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Start-up Kit Projects

The second research question investigated the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation on Start-up Kit Projects. The findings show that M&E encouraged beneficiaries to be more accountable and consistent, which strengthened their commitment to project activities. Regular spot checks and unannounced visits encouraged honest record-keeping and active participation. These projects showed improved outcomes, with participants demonstrating increased focus and responsibility. The findings also revealed that challenges still existed in underperforming projects where M&E efforts were infrequent due to overloaded staff, leading to unresolved issues and negative outcomes.

Furthermore, the findings highlighted that in the successful projects, M&E facilitated collaborative decision-making, which improved visibility, customer engagement and agricultural productivity. However, in less effective projects, top-down decisions and delays in supply delivery caused frustration and hindered progress.

5.1.3 Stakeholder involvement

The third research question investigated how stakeholder's involvement influenced success/failure of the projects. The findings indicate that active stakeholder engagement contributed positively to project success. The findings confirmed that chiefs and local councilors played a vital role in promoting the projects. Their active involvement included offering protection, spreading awareness at public gatherings and even providing homes and land for project activities like salons and agriculture. Their support fostered trust and drew community interest, which boosted project success. The failure of projects was not due to any negligence by local leaders as they demonstrated support.

The findings also showed that the community involvement improved market access and helped the projects to be well known. Local villagers became loyal customers due to convenience and affordability. However, challenges arose when community members wanted to buy on credit of which was not permitted. Projects that enforced rules against credit sales faced criticism and loss

of community trust. Then, projects that allowed credit struggled financially when debts were not repaid, leading to stock shortages and eventual failure.

5.1.4 Group dynamics

The findings revealed that group dynamics influenced project performance, leading to the success and failure of youth projects. This was revealed from the research question four which investigated the contribution of group dynamics among the beneficiaries on differing performances of the project. Successful groups consisted of one or two passionate individuals with a shared vision, strong collaboration and mutual respect. In contrast, larger groups often failed due to unresolved conflicts and poor communication.

The findings also highlighted that theft and misuse of resources also undermined group cohesion, especially when internal controls were weak and trust was broken, as seen in cases involving dishonest members and exploitative youth mentors. Frequent dropout of members, especially those seeking short-term benefits like bursaries or internships, further disrupted project continuity. Managing diverse personalities in larger groups proved difficult, leading to dysfunction. Additionally, many AGYW groups struggled with forming and maintaining effective partnerships, despite support from the KB team. Weak structures, unequal participation and an absence of shared responsibility led to discouragement and project collapse. These findings align with research emphasizing that strong group cohesion, trust and collective problem-solving are essential for sustaining women's group projects.

5.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that a combination of access to resources, effective monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder involvement and group dynamics shaped the performance of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects. Access to resources is essential for project commencement and sustainability. However, without consistent monitoring and evaluation, many projects face challenges in tracking progress, identifying gaps and making informed decisions. Stakeholder involvement plays a major role in supporting, motivating and ensuring accountability within the projects. However, group dynamics influence how resources were utilized, how decisions were made and how challenges

were addressed. Successful projects had strong internal communication, defined roles, mutual respect and a shared vision among members. Weak group cohesion, limited engagement from stakeholders, lack of follow-up and unequal access to or misuse of resources led to project failure.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings revealed that limited and short training sessions, particularly for illiterate beneficiaries resulted in poor understanding of business fundamentals and reduced the long-term impact of refresher training. It is recommended that training should be extended in duration and designed with differentiated approaches to meet the needs of participants with varying literacy levels. This can include more practical demonstrations and mentorship programs to reinforce learning and support continuous skills development.

The findings revealed that poor engagement of the youth in decision making about the kind of goods and services to produce led to the failure of some projects. It is recommended that youth should be engaged and participate in all stages of the projects, including making decisions about the products to sell or produce.

Many Start-up Kits Projects failed to achieve their intended goals because their contents were not aligned with real market demand. This misalignment led to low profitability, underutilization of resources and missed opportunities for growth. In addition, entrepreneurs in remote areas face logistical barriers, such as limited access to transportation and supply chains, which further hinder their ability to benefit like others. It is recommended that to improve business capability, Start-up Kit contents should be informed by up-to-date market research and beneficiary feedback to ensure relevance and profitability. Special consideration must be given to those in remote or underserved areas by addressing logistical barriers through tailored solutions such as transport support or mobile outreach.

Generally, an inclusive implementation strategy can improve the program's impact, promote sustainability and ensure more equitable outcomes for all participants, regardless of their starting point. Therefore, strengthening these four pillars, accessibility of resources, M&E, stakeholder

engagement and group cohesion is key to improving the effectiveness and long-term impact of AGYW Start-up Kit Projects.

References

- Abu, J. (2024). Empowering Vulnerable Populations and Fostering Entrepreneurship through Financial Literacy: A Case Study of Economic Benefits in the US. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 24(12), 218-231.
- Acosta, M., Osorio, M., Valverde, I., Vilimelis, S., Polli, M., Stloukal, L., & Phillips, L. (2025). Gender-responsiveness of agricultural policy: An analysis in low-and middle-income countries. *Global Food Security*, 44.
- Adams, W. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 492-505.
- Adebayo, J., & Worth, S. (2024). *Profile of women in African agriculture and access to extension services* [Social Sciences & Humanities Open]. 100790
- Adefare, T., Adeola, O., Mogaji, E., Nguyen, N., & Mogaji, S. (2014). Empowering women agriculture entrepreneurs: banks' role in achieving sustainable development goals. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 42(4), 692-724. [org/10.1108/IJBM-03-2023-0128](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-03-2023-0128)
- Agarwal, B. (2018). Gender equality, food security and the sustainable development goals. *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 34(26), 32.
- Ahmad, I., & Islam, M. (2024). *Empowerment and participation: Key strategies for inclusive development* [In Building Strong Communities: Ethical Approaches to Inclusive Development]. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Ahmed, J., Ahmed, S., & Mitra, S. (2024). *Climate-Smart Agriculture—A Potential Way to Reduce Risks in Agricultural Ecosystems*.

Akoon, D. (2023). *Monitoring and evaluation processes and accountability mechanisms in the NGO sector* [Doctoral dissertation, ANU].

Akter, S., Rutsaert, P., Luis, J., Htwe, N., San, S., Raharjo, B., & Pustika, A. (2017, May). Women's empowerment and gender equity in agriculture: A different perspective from Southeast Asia. *Food policy*, 69, 270-279.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2017.05.003>

Ali, F., & Haapasalo, H. (2023). Development levels of stakeholder relationships in collaborative projects: challenges and preconditions. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 16(8), 58-76.

Aliverti, A. (2020). *Ethical considerations in research: Principles and practices*. Routledge. London.

Aloun, D. (2024). Women in Trade. *International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH)*, 11(2), 97-106.

Altieri, M.A. (1992). Sustainable agricultural development in Latin America: exploring the possibilities. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 39(1-2), 1-21.

Anderson, C., Reynolds, T., Biscaye, P., Patwardhan, V., & Schmidt, C. (2021). Economic benefits of empowering women in agriculture: Assumptions and evidence. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 57(2), 193-208.

Anderson, M. (2006). The experience of international development projects in the context of global change. *Journal of Development Studies*, 42(1), 1-26.

Ani, F., Ramlan, N., Suhaimy, K., Jaes, L., Damin, Z., Halim, H., & Ahmad, S. (2018, January). Applying empowerment approach in community development. *In Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Sciences (ICSS)*, 1(1).

Annes, A., & Wright, W. (2016). Value-added agriculture: a context for the empowerment of French women farmers? *Review of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Studies*, 97(3), 185-201.

Asadullah, M., & Kambhampati, U. (2021). Feminization of farming, food security and female empowerment. *Global Food Security*, 29. 100532

Assembly, U. (1979). *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*.

Atkinson, C., & Penrod, C. (2022). Empowerment or limitation? A critical exploration of American state women-owned business programs. *Public Organization Review*, 22(2), 367-386.

Ayoo, C. (2022). Poverty reduction strategies in developing countries. *Rural Development-Education, Sustainability, Multifunctionality*, 17-57.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/interchopen.91068>

Bachman, G., Allen, S., Toiv, N., Cooney, C., & Beamon, T. (2018). *The DREAMS core package of interventions: a comprehensive approach to preventing HIV among adolescent girls and young women*. (Vol. 13) [PloS one]. e0208167.

Balabantaray, S. (2023). Women's Leadership and Sustainable Environmental Initiatives: A macroscopic investigation from the Ecofeminism framework. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 4(4).

Banda, J. (2025). A comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness and influence of participatory models in advancing sustainable community development: a rigorous assessment of theoretical foundations and real-world applications. *Social Science and Management*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.61784/ssm3027>

Banks, N. (2015, January 14). *What works for young people's development?* [A Case Study of BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescent Girls programme in Uganda and Tanzania]. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2561234>

Bansal, V., Lyer, M., Leasure, E., Roth, C., Pal, P., & Hinson, L. (2024). A scoping review of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in low-and middle-income countries across Asia. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(1), 463-475.

Bell, K., & Reed, M. (2022, October 04). The tree of participation: a new model for inclusive decision-making. *Community Development Journal*, 57(4), 595-614. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsab018>

Belova, G., & Ivanova, A. (2023). EU Institutions: Revisiting Gender Balance and Women's Empowerment, *Laws*. 12(1), 3. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.3390/laws12010003>.

Bidorho, A. (2022). *Agricultural Value Chain Development and Women Economic Empowerment in Democratic Republic of Congo* [Doctoral dissertation]. Kampala International University.

Bindeeba, D., Nakawesi, J., Mukama, S., Mugasa, A., Senyimba, C., Mulebeke, R., & Mukasa, B. (2025). Evaluating socio-economic resilience interventions among out-of-school adolescent girls and young women in rural Central Uganda: A quasi-experimental approach. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 34(2), e70003.

Birkmann, J., Liwenga, E., Pandey, R., Boyd, E., Djalante, R., Gemenne, F., & Wrathall, D. (2022). *Poverty, livelihoods and sustainable development*.

Boahemaa, P. (2022). *Women Participation in Political Leadership and Decision Making; The Role of National Gender Policies in Ghana and Rwanda* [Master's thesis, NTNU].

Boye, M., Ghafoor, A., Wudil, A., Usman, M., Prus, P., Fehér, A., & Sass, R. (2024, 1096). Youth Engagement in Agribusiness: Perception, Constraints, and Skill Training Interventions in Africa: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability*.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su16031096>

BRAC International. (2022). *ELA Curricular-DREAMS Lesotho* [Facilitator Guide].

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). *Thematic analysis* [In Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research]. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Brooks, K., Zorya, S., Gautam, A., & Goyal, A. (2013). Agriculture as a sector of opportunity for young people in Africa. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, 6473.

Burnet, J. (2011). Women have found respect: Gender quotas, symbolic representation, and female empowerment in Rwanda. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 303-334.

Bussi, M., & Graziano, P. (2019). Europeanisation and the youth guarantee: the case of France. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 28(4), 394-403.

Cantora, A., Mellow, J., & Schlager, M. (2016). Social relationships and group dynamics inside a community correction facility for women. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 60(9), 1016-1035.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X15591805>

Casteel, A., & Bridier, N.L. (2021). DESCRIBING POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES IN DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 16(3), 339-362. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4766>

Chabeli, T. (2023). *The rural women's assembly of crop farming and rural women livelihoods in Lesotho* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].

Chikwe, C., Kuteesa, C., & Ediae, A. (2022). Gender equality advocacy and socio-economic inclusion: A comparative study of community-based approaches in promoting women's empowerment and economic resilience. *International Journal of Scientific Research Updates*, 8(2), 110-121.

Chimbindi, N., Birdthistle, I., Floyd, S., Harling, G., Mthiyane, N., Zuma, T., & Shahmanesh, M. (2020). Directed and targeted multi-sectoral adolescent HIV prevention: insights from implementation of the 'DREAMS Partnership' in rural South Africa. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 23.

Cho, Y., & Feda, K. (2015). *Skills and employability in Mozambique: Implications for education and training policies*. The World Bank.

Choruma, D., Tinashe, L., Munyaradzi, M., Maysoun, M., Vimbayi, G., Inga, J., & Mabhaudhi, T. (2024). Digitalization in agriculture: A scoping review of technologies in practice, challenges, and opportunities for smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of agriculture and food research*. 101286.

Chunn, E. D. (2011). *Feminism, Law, and Social Change: An Overview* Dorothy E. Chunn, Susan B. Boyd, and Hester Lessard. *Reaction and resistance: Feminism, law, and social change, 1*.

Clark, T., Bryman, L., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Connelly, M., Li, T., MacDonald, M., & Parpar, L. (2000). Feminism and development: Theoretical perspectives. *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development*, 51-159.

Cornwall, A. (2008, June 05). Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices. *Community development journal*, 43(3), 269-283.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn010>

Crasta, A., & Dmello, L. (2024). Empowering Women: An Analysis of Needs and Preferences for Self-Discovery, Self-Esteem, and Positive Attitude Development Training. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Teaching & Research Case Studies (PIJTRCS)*, 1(2), 183-200.

Czyżewski, B., Prędko, A., & Brelik, A. (2024). Importance of women empowerment for eco-efficiency of small farms in the context of other social factors: Building sustainable agriculture in Central and Eastern European countries. *Sustainable Development*, 32(5), 5550-5566.

Dabkiene, V., Siksnylyte-Butkiene, I., Streimikiene, D., Sapolaite, V., & Balezentis, T. (2025). From glass to grass ceiling: Addressing gender barriers in agricultural innovation. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 212. 123957.

Daemane, T., & Muroyiwa, B. (2016). Measuring gender, development and land: Data-driven analysis and land reform in Lesotho. *World Development Perspectives*, 1, 36-42.

Darroch, F., Ridl, J., Hitchcock, R., Thamae, J.L., Lim, G., & Shrestha, S. (2020). Dams, Displacement, And Communal Compensation: A Lesotho Highlands Legal Case. U. *Botswana LJ*, 28(122).

Deere, C., & Leon, M. (2001). *Empowering Women: Land and Property Rights in Latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Press. 9780822972327, 0822972328.

Der Boghossian, A. (2019). *Trade policies supporting women's economic empowerment: Trends in WTO members (No. ERSD-2019-07)* [WTO Staff Working Paper].

Devereux, S., Hochfeld, T., Karriem, A., Mensah, C., Morahanye, M., Msimango, T., & Sanousi, M. (2018). School Feeding in South Africa: *What we know, what we don't know*.

de Vries, S. (2021). Australian local government's contribution to good governance on major projects: Increasing information, participation and deliberation. *Commonwealth journal of local governance*, 24(60), 78.

Dipela, M., & Mohapi, B. (2021). Barriers affecting effective monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation projects within Waterberg District. *Social Work*, 57(3287-301).

Dosek, T. (2021). Snowball sampling and Facebook: How social media can help access hard-to-reach populations. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(4), 651-665.

Duby, Z., Jonas, K., McClinton Appollis, T., Maruping, K., Vanleeuw, L., Kuo, C., & Matthews, C. (2021). From survival to glamour: motivations for engaging in transactional sex and relationships among adolescent girls and young women in South Africa. *AIDS and Behavior*, 25(10), 3238-3254.

Erim, C., Asor, L., Acha, J., Olabisi, B., Asiya, A., Ojong, R., & Lawrence, E. (2025). Community education correlates with illiteracy reduction among women organisations in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for community development. *Local Development & Society*, 1-15.

ESCAP, U. (2024). *Evaluation of the project on the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery (ANTAM) Cooperation Project with Japan (Phase II)*. Evaluation of the project on the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery (ANTAM) Cooperation Project with Japan (Phase II)

Escudero, V., & Mourelo, E. (2015). *The Youth Guarantee programme in Europe: Features, implementation and challenges*. Geneva: ILO.

Esenjor, A. F. (2004). A community-based conservation programme for the management and conservation of land resources in Lesotho. (*Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State*).

Farrell, M., Sarkki, S., Fransala, J., Murtagh, A., Weir, L., Ahl, H., & Heikkinen, H. (2024). *Empowering Women-Led Innovations: Key Players in Realising. The Long-Term Vision For Rural Areas*.

Felix, K. (2022). *The role of capacity-building programs on the Economic Development of Women Smallholder Farmers* [Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Accountancy Arusha (IAA)].

Ferguson, J. (1990). *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization. and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*.

Ferguson, J., Mathur, S., & Armstrong, A. (2021). Assessing the vulnerability and risks of adolescent girls and young women in East and Southern Africa: a preliminary review of the tools in use. *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*, 6(3133).

Fernandez, R. (2020). SDG3 good health and well-being: integration and connection with other SDGs. *Good health and well-being*, 629-636.

Ferreira, S.M., & Muthengi, K. (2023). *Empowering women and girls in Lesotho: Leveraging Family Ties for Effective Advocacy and Skill Development*.

Fertő, I., & Bojnec, S. (2024). Empowering women in sustainable agriculture. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 7110.

Fertő, I., & Bojnec, Š. (2025). Gender Equality and Green Entrepreneurship in Farms. *Sustainable Development*.

Festa Secanella, P. (2017). Conditional Cash Transfer Programs and Inequality of Opportunity. *A case study: Juntos in Peru*.

Fiedler, Y. (2020). *Empowering young agri-entrepreneurs to invest in agriculture and food systems* [Doctoral dissertation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations].

Follmer, K., Sabat, I., Jones, K., & King, E. (2024). Under attack: Why and how IO psychologists should counteract threats to DEI in education and organizations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 17(4), 452-475.

Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., & Mohsin, M. (2018). Application of Four-dimension Criteria to Assess Rigour of Qualitative Research in Emergency Medicine. *BMC Health Services Research*.

Forester, J. (1999). *The deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*. MIT Press.

Fougere, D., Kramarz, F., & Magnac, T. (2000). Youth employment policies in France. *European economic review*, 44(4-6), 928-942.

Fox, N. (2009). Using interviews in a research project. *The NIHR RDS for the East Midlands/Yorkshire & the Humber*, 26, 113-134.

Fraser, A. (2019). *The UN decade for women: Documents and dialogue*. Routledge.

Gassy, J., Kline, M., & Smith, D. (2013). *Qualitative research methods in healthcare*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Gathege, N., & Yusuf, M. (2019). Influence of monitoring and evaluation on sustainability of women based agricultural projects. A case of Joywo Uasin Gishu County. *International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations*, 7(1), 250-259.

Gaudence, U., & de Dieu Dushimimana, J. (2025). Effect of Project Planning on Project Performance, A Case of Partnership for Resilient and Inclusive Small Livestock Markets Project in Rulindo District, Rwanda. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 6(1), 736-750.

Gawali, R.B. (2023). *Research Methodology And Statistical Methods*. Academic Guru Publishing House.

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American political science review*, 98(2), 341-354.

Geza, W., Ngidi, M., Ojo, T., Adetoro, A. A., Slotow, R., & Mabhaudhi, T. (2021). Youth participation in agriculture: A scoping review. *Sustainability*, 13(16), 9120.

Ghosh, A., & Ghosh, A. (2024). Empowering Rural Women in India: Self-help groups as catalysts for development. *Futuristic trends in social sciences*, 3(1), 16.

Giuliani, A., & Baron, H. (2025). The CAP (Common Agricultural Policy): a short history of crises and major transformations of European agriculture. *In Forum for Social Economics*, 54(1), 68-94.

Gómez Mendoza, M., & Sanabria Torres, L. (2020). Las mujeres rurales y su derecho a la tierra: retos de la política pública en Colombia. *Trabajo social*, 22(1), 85-104.

Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your "house". *Administrative issues journal*, 4(2), 4.

Habimana, S. (2025). *The impact of gender quotas on women's socio-economic empowerment in rural Rwanda* [Doctoral dissertation]. Dublin City University.

Haider, H. (2024). Adolescent girls in LMICs: evidence on development outcomes, approaches, opportunities and challenges [The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organisations]. In *Report*. <https://doi.org/10.19088/K4DD.2024.032>

Hanmer, L., & Klugman, J. (2016). Exploring women's agency and empowerment in developing countries: Where do we stand? *Feminist economics*, 22(1), 237-263.

Hapazari, I., & Hapazari, J. (2019). A look at Lesotho government and NGOs' economic empowerment programs with respect to rural poverty reduction. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 10(1).

Hapazari, J., & Loubser, N.D. (2021). Rural people's perceptions regarding causes and solutions of poverty: The Lesotho milieu. *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*, 37((1)), 103-121.

Harake, M. (2025). Managing the Unseen: The Interplay of Vigilance, Resilience, and Resistance in Project Management.

Harnois, Y., & Gagnon, S. (2022). Corruption and international development: a review of project management challenges. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 29(3), 864-877.

Heise, L. (1998). Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework. *Violence against women*, 4(3), 262-290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004003002>

Heyl, K., Döring, T., Garske, B., Stubenrauch, J., & Ekardt, F. (2021). The Common Agricultural Policy beyond 2020: A critical review in light of global environmental goals. *Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law*, 30(1), 95-106.

Hill, B. (2023). *The common agricultural policy: past, present and future*. Routledge.

Hillenbrand, E., & Miruka, M. (2019). Gender and social norms in Agriculture: A review. https://doi.org/10.2499/9780896293649_02.

Hira, F., Alam, M., & Begum, I. (2025). Women's empowerment in the livestock sector as a tool to enhance child nutrition: a review. *Discover Sustainability*, 6(1), 1-13.

Ibrogimovna, N. (2022). Theoretical and methodological aspects of resources of land resources in agriculture. *Academicia: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 12(11).

IFAD, E. (2021). IFAD advantage series: The small livestock advantage. *SSRN 3788779*.

Iliopoulos, C., Giotis, T., & Brunori, G. (2025). Perceptions of costs and benefits of farm digitalization in Europe (I. Theodorakopoulou, Ed.). *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 1, 1-22.

Itoje-Akpokiniovo, L., & Edo, G. (2025). Women Criminality and Education for Sustainable Development: A Study of Abraka Kingdom. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development Studies*, 2(1), 18-24.

Jadhav, R., Mukopadhyay, P., Chadha, D., Shaikh, N., Goe, K., Patil, U., & Puskur, R. (2024). *Socio-technical innovation bundles for enhancing women's resilience and empowerment: A case study of Swayam Shikshan Prayog's women-led climate resilient farming.*

Jana, S., Ray, P., Bose, K., & Jana, S. (2018). *Positioning Health Interventions from the Perspective of Well-Being-as Conceived by the Community* [J Nurs Womens Health: JNWH-147]. 10, 2577-1450.

Jangra, R. (2024). *Empowering Rural Women Entrepreneurs: The Intricate Tapestry of Family and Social Support Networks in India.*

Jaraba, M. (2024). The nexus of women and 'Clan Crime': unravelling the dynamics and constraints. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 1-22.

Johnson, N., Balagamwala, M., Pinkstaff, C., Theis, S., Meinsen-Dick, R., & Quisumbing, A. (2018). How do agricultural development projects empower women? Linking strategies with expected outcomes. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security (Agri-Gender)*, 3(2), 1-19. 10.22004/ag.econ.293596

Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements. *Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. Development and change*, 30(3), 435-465.

Kalaivani, N., Vijayarangan, R., Chandra, S., & Karthikeyan, P. (2025). Women Entrepreneurs in Emerging Markets for Driving Economic Growth. *In Real-World Tools and Scenarios for Entrepreneurship Exploration*, 257-290.

Katende-Kyenda, L., & Ani, J. (2025). Experiences of gender-based violence among women in sub-Saharan Africa: identifying evidence for intervention and public health priorities. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13(1492755).

Kayaga, N. (2015). *The role of Monitoring and Evaluation in improving Sustainability of water projects: A case study of Water Projects in Bagomoyo district, Pwani Region*. The Open University of Tanzania.

Keketsi, L. (2024). *DREAMS- A Life Changing initiative* [Success Stories].

Kelly, M., Martin-Peters, T., & Farber, J. (2024). Secondary Data Analysis: Using existing data to answer new questions. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 38(4), 615-618.

Kimweli, J. (2013). The role of monitoring and evaluation practices to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects: A case study of Kibwezi District. *International journal of academic research in business and social sciences*, 3(6), 9.

Koech, H., & Muchelule, Y. (2024). MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN BARINGO COUNTRY. *International Journal of Social Sciences Management and Entrepreneurship (IJSSME)*, 8(4).

Kokome, L. (2025). Land Governance and the Search for an Appropriate Model in Postcolonial Lesotho (1965–1979). *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies-Multi-, Inter-and Transdisciplinarity*, 1-15.

Kolisang, L. (2023). *Women empowerment through community development projects in Lesotho* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: practical guide to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness in publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.

Kotschy, K., de Villiers, A., Hiestermann, M., Mvulane, P., Raven, G., & Soal, S. (2025). Using monitoring and evaluation to build equity and resilience: lessons from practice. *Ecology and Society*, 30(2).

Kumari, U. (2023). Exploring the Role of NGOs in Addressing Gender-Based Violence Against Women. *Journal of Advanced Research in Women's Studies*, 1(1), 38-52.

Kwao, B., & Amoak, D. (2022). Does size really matter? The prevalence of NGOs and challenges to development in Northern Ghana. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 76(3), 149-163.

Lahusen, C., Schulz, N., & Graziano, P. (2013). Promoting social Europe? The development of European youth unemployment policies. *International journal of social welfare*, 22(3), 300-309.

Lamichhane, B.D. (2020). Microfinance for women empowerment: A review of best practices. *Interdisciplinary journal of management and social sciences*, 1(1), 13-25.

Landig, J. (2011). Bringing women to the table: European Union funding for women's empowerment projects in Turkey. *In Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(3), 206-219.

Langen, A., & Dekkers, H. (2005). Cross-national differences in participating in tertiary science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. *Comparative Education*, 41(3), 329-350.

Larson, P., & Larson, N. (2019). The Hunger of Nations: An empirical study of inter-relationships among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *Journal of Sustainable Development, 12*(6), 39-47.

Leal Filho, W., Kovaleva, M., Tsani, S., Țîrcă,, D., Shiel, C., Dinis, M., & Tripathi, S. (2023). Promoting gender equality across the sustainable development goals. *Environment, Development and Sustainability, 25*(12), 14177-14198.

Lee, J., & Harrison, S. (1996). The empowerment approach. *Social Work Treatment 4th Edition, 218*.

Leproni, R., & Azara, L. (2025). *Women Must Not Be Left Behind”: The UNESCO Path Towards Women's Empowerment [In Scars of War: Migration, Security and Sustainable Future]*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Lesane, T.C., & Akintunde, M.A.O. (2020). Students' opinions regarding self-employment opportunities in agriculture, at the National University of Lesotho. *South African Journal of Agricultural Extension, 48*(2), 1-8.

Liamputtong, P. (2011). "Focus group methodology: Principle and practice." 1-224.

Licart, T. (2024). Women's Land Ownership and Patrilocality in India. *In Atlas of Gender and Health Inequalities in India, 75-87*.

Liphoto, M.J. (2020). *Exploring the impacts of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project on the sustainable livelihoods of resettled communities* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University].

Lu, Y. (2025). The Potential of Bottom-up Social Innovation: A Case Study of the Shiga 100 Agri-Girls Project. *Journal of Rural Problems*, 61(1), 63-74.

Luján Soto, R., Cuéllar-Padilla, M., Rivera Méndez, M., Pinto-Correia, T., Boix-Fayos, C., & de Vente, J. (2021). *Participatory monitoring and evaluation to enable social learning, adoption, and out-scaling of regenerative agriculture*.

Mack, A. (2022). *An Early Exploration of Evaluation Practices under Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy* [Doctoral dissertation].

Madisa, M. (2025). *PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN BOTSWANA*. University of Botswana.

Majoro, M. (2023). *Dam's restoration program on the socio-economic lives of project-affected persons at Metolong, Lesotho* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].

Maliehe, S. (2022). Self-Organisation in the Struggle for Economic Democracy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Lesotho, 1870s–2010s. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 48(3), 437-452.

Mallavarapu, A., Lyons, L., & Uzzo, S. (2022). Exploring the utility of social-network-derived collaborative opportunity temperature readings for informing design and research of large-group immersive learning environments. *Journal of learning analytics*, 9(1).

Mandal, K. (2013). Concept and Types of Women Empowerment. *In the International Forum of Teaching & Studies*, 9(2).

Mango, N., Makate, C., Mapemba, L., & Sopo, M. (2018). The role of crop diversification in improving household food security in central Malawi. *Agriculture & Food Security*, 7(1), 1-10.

March, A., & Failler, P. (2022). Small-scale fisheries development in Africa: Lessons learned and best practices for enhancing food security and livelihoods. *Marine Policy*, 1326(104925).

Marijn, F., Schouten, G., & Vellema, S. (2024). Navigating competing demands in monitoring and evaluation: Five key paradoxes. *Evaluation* 30, (2211-231).

Mashinini, V. (2010). The Lesotho Highlands Water Project and Sustainable Livelihoods. *Policy Implications for SADC. AISA Policy Brief Number*.

Mathosi, M. (2022). *Contribution of the Matekane Group of Companies' corporate social responsibility to community development at Mantsonyane, Lesotho* [Doctoral dissertation, National University of Lesotho].

Mausch, K., Nijeboer, T., Arouna Amadou, W., Vroeg, P., Harris, D., & Hauser, M. (2025). What motivates young people in fragile contexts to participate in agriculture and food security programs? [Insights from aspirations in Northern Benin]. In *Outlook on Agriculture*, 00307270251339194.

Mbeche, R. M., Mose, G.N., & Ateka, J.M. (2022). The influence of privatized agricultural extension on downward accountability to smallholder tea farmers. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 28(3), 341-362.

Mburu., N. B., Kirui, L., Karugia., J.T., & Adam, R. (2024). Policy and institutional landscape analysis in Kenya's food, land, and water systems:. *Flagship report*.

McGahon, L., & Duffy, G. (2024). THRIVE4WOMEN: EMPOWERING WOMEN TO SUCCEED IN STEM AND DEEP TECH SECTORS. *Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Deep Tech: A good practice guide*, 60.

- McMartin, D., & Ribeiro, L. (2019). A methodological framework for sustainable development with vulnerable communities. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 11(2), 133-139.
- Mehra, R., & Rojas, M. (2008). *Women, food security and agriculture in a global marketplace*.
- Meinzen-Dick, R., & Suseela, R. (2019, October 2). *Empowering Africa's women farmers*. [Project Syndicate]. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/146860>.
- Mekbib, S., Olaleye, A., Mokhothu, M., Johane, M., Tlali, S., & Godeto, T. (2011). Assessment on the adaptive capacity of the Machobane Farming System to climate change in Lesotho [African Technology Policy Studies Network]. In *Nairobi*. Kenya.
- Mensah, H., Ahadzie, D., Takyi, S., & Amponsah, O. (2021). Climate change resilience: lessons from local climate-smart agricultural practices in Ghana. *Energy, Ecology and Environment*, 6, 271-284.
- Moeketsi, T. (2024). *Promoting gender participation in the wool and mohair industry in Lesotho* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].
- Mohammed Abba, T., Gambo, N., & Ogedengbe, F. (2025). Effect of Stakeholder Engagement Strategies on the Timely Completion of Construction Projects in North-Central Nigeria: A Conceptual and Theoretical Perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 23(1), 7595-7607. <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2025-23.1.00590>.
- Mojaki, R., Marake, M., Easton-Calabria, E., Marunye, J., & Coughlan de Perez, E. (2025). Socio-economic assessment of drought impacts in Lesotho: implications for early action. *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, 17(1), 333-352.

- Mokati, J., Ncube, A., & Bahta, Y. (2024). Is it really the feminization of agriculture? The issue of household food security in Lesotho's Southern Lowland District. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 59(2), 411-424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221111359>.
- Molenaar, N., & Smit, J. (1996). Asking and answering yes/no-questions in survey interviews: A conversational approach. *Quality and Quantity*, 30(2), 115-136.
- Morrin, A. (2011). Self-awareness part 1: Definition, measures, effects, functions, and antecedents. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 5(10), 807-823.
- Mosabala, T.D., & Fombo, G.F. (2021). Elite Conflict and the Negation of Economic Development in Lesotho. *European Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 4(1), 12-28.
- Motsoari, C. (2012). *Access to credit and agricultural production in Lesotho*. University of the Free State.
- Mpatlise, R. (2024). *Feminine impact of water scarcity on rural livelihoods* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].
- Munuve, F. (2023). *Project Management Practices and Performance of Food Security Projects in Kenya: A Case of Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) in Makueni County, Kenya* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi].
- Musi, M., & Mathosi, M. (2022). Prospects and challenges of Matekane Group of Companies in transforming rural livelihoods at Mantšonyane, Lesotho. *African Journal of Rural Development*, 7(3), 382-398.
- Mutua, M., Wado, Y., Malata, M., Kabiri, C., Akwara, E., Melesse, D., & Barros, A. (2021). Wealth-related inequalities in demand for family planning are satisfied among married and unmarried adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa. *Reproductive health*, 18(1), 1-13.

Nath, R., Mallick, B., Panda, S., & Das, A. (2024). A Critical Review on Start-Ups in the Agriculture Sector. *Innovative Agriculture Strategies and Concepts in Extension*. 1st ed. *New Delhi, India: AkiNik Publication*, 21-33.

Newman, M., & Gough, D. (2020). Systematic reviews in educational research: Methodology, perspectives and application. *Systematic reviews in educational research: Methodology, perspectives and application*, 3(22).

Ngubane, M. (2024). Immigrant farm workers, self-exploitation and social reproduction: the Lesotho–South African land-labour questions. *Review of African Political Economy*. 20240041

Nikkhah, H., & Redzuan, M. (2009). Participation as a medium of empowerment in community development. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 170-176.

Njuki, J., Krugger, E., & Starr, L. (2019). Increasing the productivity and empowerment of women smallholder farmers. *Gates Open Res*, 3(519).

Noble, E., Ward, L., French, S., & Falb, K. (2019). State of the evidence: a systematic review of approaches to reduce gender-based violence and support the empowerment of adolescent girls in humanitarian settings. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 20(3), 428-434.

Noor, R., Hamzani, A., Widyastuti, T., & Kristanto, K. (2024). Gender equality in indigenous peoples in Indonesia (challenges and efforts towards the 2030 sustainable development goals). *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 12(1).

Nthabiseng, M. (2016). *Assessment of the sustainability of donor funded Agricultural Projects: a case study of Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Development Programme in Mafeteng, Lesotho* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of the Free State.

Nwaozuru, U., Tijani, W., Gbajabiamila, T., Obiezu-Umeh, C., Uzoaru, F., Ezechi, O., & Iwelunmor, J. (2021). Perceived facilitators and barriers to participating in a combination income-generating HIV risk-reduction intervention among adolescent girls and young women in Nigeria: a qualitative study. [Frontiers in Reproductive Health]. In 3, 560908.

Obeagu, E. (2025). Mentorship for Adolescent Women: A Pathway to HIV Awareness and Prevention. 2(4). <https://msipublishers.com/msijmmr/>

Ochen-Ochen, I. (2025). The politics of monitoring and evaluation: Implications for evidence generation and use. *African Evaluation Journal*, 13(1), 792.

Okunade, B., Adediran, F., Bukola, A., Adewusi, O., & Daraojimba, R. (2024). Women's empowerment in African societies: Strategies and lessons for US social policy. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 21(1), 1851-1867.

O'Neill Berry, M., Kuriansky, J., & Lytle, M.C. (2013). Entrepreneurial training for girls empowerment in Lesotho: A process evaluation of a model programme. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 43(4), 554-258. 10.1177/0081246313504685.

Onono, M. A. (2021). The role of food security in increasing adolescent girls' agency towards sexual risk taking: qualitative findings from an income generating agricultural intervention in southwestern Kenya. *BMC Public Health*, 21, 1-11.

Onusi, A. (2024). Enhancing agricultural development project implementation in Nigeria: The case for early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement strategies. *The Abuja Communicator*, 4(2).

Otundo Richard, M. (2024). *Strategic Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Emerging Practice and the Performance of Donor Funded Development Projects in Kwale County, Kenya* [Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

Emerging Practice and the Performance of Donor Funded Development Projects in Kwale County, Kenya].

Oyewobi, L.O., Okanlawon, T.T., Medayese, S.O., Ogunbode, E.B., & Jimoh, R.A. (2024). Is pursuing a PhD without theoretical and conceptual framework a journey without a roadmap?. *Environmental Technology and Science Journal*, 15(2), 138-149.

Panda, B. (2007). Top down or bottom up? A study of grassroots NGOs' approach. *ournal of Health Management*, 9(2), 257-273.

Pandey, P., & Pandey, M.M. (2021). *Research methodology tools and techniques*. Bridge Center.

Parker, H., Oates, N., Mason, N., Calow, R., Chadza, W., & Ludi, E. (2022). *Gender, agriculture and water insecurity* [ODI].

Pathania, S. (2017). Sustainable development goal: Gender equality for women's empowerment and human rights. *International Journal of research*, 5(4), 1-15.

Pereznieto, P., & Taylor, G. (2014). A review of approaches and methods to measure economic empowerment of women and girls. *Gender & Development*, 22(2), 233-251.

Picard, M. (2022). *HIV/SRHR with a focus on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) 10* [UNICEF]. New York, NY, USA.

Pigg, K. (2002). Three faces of empowerment: Expanding the theory of empowerment in community development. *Community Development*, 33(1), 107-123.

Polasi, S., Mohapi, M., & Majara, M. (2015). Socioeconomic status of women in Lesotho. *Int J Recent Res Interdisciplinary Sci*, 2(3), 55-61.

Porada, S. (2008). *Rural women in Latin America and their access to economic access to economic resources*.

Pundhir, S., Marwah, T., & Gupta, V. (2025). *Strengthening Rural Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development: The Impact of Digital Tools, Government Policies, and NGO Support* [In Empowering Women Through Rural Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship]. IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

Qoo, P. (2023). Primary Health Care Partners Meeting [Progress on Orphans and Vulnerable Children and DREAMS]. *The Quarterly Meeting*.

Qoo, P. (2024). *The unstoppable new life of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the communities initiated by Karabo ea Bophelo through economic strengthening*. [Success Stories].

Rachmad, Y.E. (2022). *Empowerment Theory*.

Ramsey, M., & Palmore, J. (2006). *Community-Based Life Skills for Girls: A Training Manual* [Go Girls].

Rant'so, T. (2015). Rural development policies and programmes under colonialism and during the five year development plans in Lesotho. *African Journal of Agricultural Research*, 10(27), 2651-2661. 10.5897/AJAR2014.9158

Rantšo, T. (2022). Women entrepreneurs in Lesotho. *In Women Entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa: Historical Framework, Ecosystem, and Future Perspectives for the Region* (pp. 107-126). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American journal of community psychology*, 9(1), 1-25.

10.1007/BF00896357

Reed, D., Radin, E., Kim, E., Wadonda-Kabondo, N., Payne, D., Gillot, M., & Justman, J. (2024). Age-disparate and intergenerational sex partnerships and HIV: The role of gender norms among adolescent girls and young women in Malawi. *BMC Public Health*, 24(1), 575.

Rehof, L. (2021). *Rehof, L. A. (2021). Guide to the Travaux Préparatoires of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.* Brill.

Ressia, S., Strachan, G., Rogers, M., Ball, K., & McPhail, R. (2022). Farm Businesswomen's aspirations for leadership: a case study of the agricultural sector in Queensland, Australia. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 6, 838073.

Rice, J., Martin, N., Raziq, M., Memon, M., & Fieger, P. (2024). Strategic planning, budget monitoring and growth optimism: Evidence from Australian SMEs. *European Business Review*, 36(6962-980).

Riddell, R. C. (2013). Evaluating NGO development interventions. *International Perspectives on Voluntary Action*, 222-241.

Riga, C. (2020). Women's Empowerment and Agency: Bottom-up and Top-down. *Antrocom: online Journal of Anthropology*, 16(1).

Rizki, M., & Andini, D. (2023). *Becoming a young farmer: young people's pathways into farming: Canada, China, India, and Indonesia: by Sharada Srinivasan, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, [hardcover book]. eBook ISBN: 978-3-031-15233-7*

- Rutten, L., & Fanou, S. L. (2015). Innovative and inclusive finance for youth in agriculture. *Africa Agriculture Status Report: Youth in Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.*
- Salawu, R., Shamsuddin, A., Bolatitio, S., & Masibo, S. (2023). Theoretical and conceptual frameworks in research: Conceptual clarification. *European Chemical Bulletin, 12*(12), 2103-2117.
- Santpoort, R., Steel, G., Mkandawire, A., Ntauazi, A., Faye, E., & Githuku, F. (2021). The Land Is Ours: Bottom-Up Strategies to Secure Rural Women's Access, Control and Rights to Land in Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and Malawi. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems, 5*.
- Schrijvershof, J. (2015). Biology and ecology of fishes of the Senqu River, Lesotho. (*Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa), Potchefstroom Campus*).
- Semoko, M. (2024). *Determinants of climate-smart agricultural technologies adoption by smallholder crop farmers in Quthing District, Lesotho* [Determinants of climate-smart agricultural technologies adoption by smallholder crop farmers in Quthing District, Lesotho].
- Sen, G. (2019). Gender equality and women's empowerment: Feminist mobilization for the SDG's. *Global Policy, 10*, 28-38.
- Shuna, S., & Kithandi, C. (2024). *Monitoring and Evaluation Practices and Performance of Health Development Projects in Kenya.*
- Sigenu, K. (2006). *The role of rural women in mitigating water scarcity.* University of the Free State.

Singh, M. (2024). Gender Sensitive Public Policy for Sustainable Development. *An Exploration of Strategies for Sustainability, Innovation & Development*, 161.

Singh, S. (2024). Women in Politics: Barriers to Participation and Strategies for Inclusion. *International Journal of Social Science Research (IJSSR)*, 1(2).

Som, S., Burman, R. R., Sharma, J. P., Padaria, R. N., Paul, S., & Singh, A. K. (2018). Attracting and retaining youth in agriculture: challenges and prospects. *Journal of Community Mobilization and Sustainable Development*, 13(3), 385-395.

Som Castellano, R., & Mook, A. (2022). A critical assessment of participation in stakeholder engagement in agrifood system research. *Socio-Ecological Practice Research*, 4(3), 221-234.

Soulé, M., Nergiz, E., & Abdoul-Azize, H. (2024). *Achieving Sustainable Development Goals Through NGO-Led Women and Young Girls' Empowerment Programs and Activities in Rural Communities: A Pilot Study from the Niger Republic*. In *Nature-based Solutions for Circular Management of Urban Water*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Taherdoost, H. (2021). Data collection methods and tools for research; a step-by-step guide to choose data collection techniques for academic and business research projects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 10(1), 10-38.

Tandon, T. (2016). Women empowerment: perspectives and views. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(3), 6-12.

Tanekenov, A., Fitzpatrick, S., & Johnsen, S. (2018). Empowerment, capabilities and homelessness: The limitations of employment-focused social enterprises in addressing complex needs. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 35(1), 137-155.

Thamae, M. (2024). *The role of Baylor and partner healthcare providers in Qacha's Nek, Lesotho* [Master's thesis, National University of Lesotho].

Tjemolane, M. (2023). Primary Health Care Partners Meeting [Progress on Orphans and Vulnerable Children and DREAMS]. In the Quarterly Meeting.

Tlali, L., & Musi, M. (2022). Effects of COVID-19 on ecotourism in Lesotho: A thematic analysis of challenges, coping strategies and lessons learned. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 11(1), 190-207.

Toeba, T. (2018). Corruption in public procurement in Lesotho. *Law and Development Review*, 11(2), 397-431.

Turkey, F., Indonesia, S., de Escoto Honduras, M., France, F., & Cuba, M. (2000). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

Turner, S.D., Calder, R., Gay, J., Hall, D., Iredale, J., Mbizule, C., & Mohatla, M. (2001). Livelihoods in Lesotho. *Maseru: Care Lesotho.*, 5.

Uduji, J., & Okolo-Obasi, E. (2025). Nigeria for Women Project (NFWP) and social cohesion in rural livelihoods. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 19(2), 294-326.

Umoh, E. (2024). *Youth and Women Empowerment through Agricultural Cooperative Societies for Sustainable Development: Insights from a Developing Country Perspective* [Available at SSRN 5079367]

UN. (2020). *Adolescent girls and young women: A priority for global development*. [Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do>]

UNDP, A. (2016). *Africa human development report 2016 accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa (No. 267638)* [United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)].

van Langen, A. (2015). Girls and STEM choice in Dutch education: The strong gender segregation and the good practice of the stimulation policy. *Gender Studies & Research*, 13.

Verma, R., Verma, S., & Abhishek, K. (2024). *Research Methodology*. Books Clinic Publishing.

Vetrivel, S., Sowmiya, K., Sabareeshwari, V., & Arun, V. (2024). Women's Role in Farm Management. *In Impact of Women in Food and Agricultural Development*, 35-57.

Wambiya, E., Gourlay, A., Mulwa, S., Magut, F., Mthiyane, N., Orindi, B., & Ziraba, A. (2023, May 10). Impact of DREAMS interventions on experiences of violence among adolescent girls and young women: findings from population-based cohort studies in Kenya and South Africa. *PLOS global public health*, 3(5).

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0001818>

Wang, C., Mussi, E., & Sunindijo, R. (2021). Analysing gender issues in the Australian construction industry through the lens of empowerment. *Buildings*, 11(11), 553.

Watabe, A., & Takano, M. (2025). Cultivating Collaborative Food Futures: Analyzing How Local Actions Address Interconnected Food Challenges. *Sustainability*, 17(9), 3807.

Wei, M., Tzempelikos, N., & Minsuk Shin, M. (2024). Women empowerment: challenges and opportunities for sustainable development goals. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 27, 4.

Wheeler, W. (2016). Sea changes: environment and political economy on the North Aral Sea, Kazakhstan. *Doctoral dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London.*

Yadav, Shikha, & Anand, S. (2019). Green revolution and food security in India: a review. *Nat Geogr J India*, 65(3), 312-323.

Yami, M., Abdoulaye, S., Alene, T., Bamba, A. D., & Manyang, V. (2019). African rural youth engagement in agribusiness: Achievements, limitations, and lessons. *Sustainability*, 11(1), 185.

Yar, F., & Sail, E. (2025). Women's Economic Empowerment Through Agriculture: Analyzing Barriers and Solutions. *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies*, 5(1), 284-296.

Yila, J., & Sylla, A. (2020). *Women empowerment in addressing food security and nutrition* [In Zero Hunger]. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Youssef, F. (2023). Leveraging Entrepreneurship in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as an Approach to Improving the Quality of Life of Rural Women in Egypt. *Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space)*, 23(3), 484-504.

Zargar, R., Mukhtar, Y., Muzamil, M., & Kumar, A. (2024). Empowering female farmers through innovations in gender-sensitive agricultural engineering. *Agricultural Engineering Today*, 48(1), 63-66.

Zohrabi, M. (2013). Mixed method research: Instruments, validity, reliability and reporting findings. *Theory and practice in language studies*, 3(2), 254-262.

DOI:10.4304/tpls.3.2.254 262

Appendices

Appendix A: Beneficiaries during training sessions at Mafube Guest House.



Source: Technical Officer

Appendix B: A beneficiary provided with horse pipe and a greenhouse for the Makoabating project at Thabana Morena.



Source: Technical Officer