Gender and poverty reduction: A Kenyan context

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Poverty is a dehumanising condition for everyone. It erodes human rights of the affected whether women or men. Poverty subjects an individual to a state of powerlessness, hopelessness, and lack of self-esteem, confidence, and integrity, leading to a situation of multidimensional vulnerability. Poverty has a gender dimension since women and men experience and react differently to its impact. It cuts across age, ethnicity and gender. Unless there are realistic and workable interventions to redress the situation, there develops a vicious circle of poverty where it is inherited from one generation to the other in households, communities and the nation. As many people in Kenya are poor with the women bearing the blunt of it, reducing its impact as well as breaking its vicious circle requires a concerted effort and a gender perspective in all the interventive strategies. Commitment of Kenya Government to eradicate poverty is manifest in its current development strategies, as demonstrated with the efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially No. 1, on the eradication of poverty to less than 30% of the Kenyans by 2015 and the Kenya Vision 2030. However, the reality on the ground indicates that despite these intentions, the increase on the number of the poor both in rural and urban Kenya has been worrying. This creates a need to intensify poverty reduction efforts in planning and programming, especially as regards to human resource development, health, employment, physical infrastructures, agriculture, rural development, trade, public safety, law and order, all of which are instrumental in scaling up the development process and poverty eradication. Moreover sustainable poverty reduction strategies must engage both women and men as actors and beneficiaries.