

**IMPACT OF ACCELERATING ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY FOR RURAL WOMEN
IN KIENI WEST SUB-COUNTY-NYERI COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Energy security is one of the most important future challenges for the international agenda of security, peace, and stability worldwide. In rural parts of Kieni West, women are disproportionately affected by this massive global challenge. The use of open fires and solid fuels for cooking is one of the most pressing socio-economic and health problems, directly impacting their role in household energy management. Despite this, Nyeri County clean energy policies continue to ignore challenges faced by women such as the financial implications of procuring daily domestic energy. The research sought to examine effectiveness of modern alternatives energy investments in clean cooking employed by rural women; socio-economic impacts of accessing clean energy initiatives at household level; perceived health impacts of adopting clean energy vis a vis the traditional sources and the implementation of the county governments' policies on renewable energy in relation to access to clean energy by rural women in Kieni West Sub-county. The study target population were the women in Kieni West Sub-County and relied on a descriptive case study design to describe the nuances and specific experiences which exist in managing domestic energy. The study was conducted in 60 household heads that were systematically selected, purposive sampling techniques was adopted to select these households. The study sample size included 50 females and 10 males living in Kieni West. Data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics and data from interviews was analysed through content analysis. The study findings established that clean energy consumption had been on the increase in many households given its perceived positive socio-economic and environmental impacts. However, it was evident that lack of awareness about clean energy stoves and family reluctance were cited as the major barriers of purchasing and using the clean stoves. Solar energy, bio fuel and waste energy were rated as the most effective modern alternative energy investments in clean cooking employed by women of Kieni West Sub-County. Geothermal energy, hydro power and wind energy were rated the least effective. Implementation of county government policies on renewable energy was done to a small extent with inadequate specialty to support renewable energy and lack of county guideline to support renewable energy being at the centre stage. Key recommendations for the study include: Recognizing the role of women at household level is paramount for effective usage of clean energy initiatives since they are seen as household energy managers thus the need to incorporate a gender lens in implementation of energy policies both at National and County level with a special emphasis on rural women. Households need to be sensitized on the need to use energy saving cookstoves to reduce the amount of wood fuel consumed; households be encouraged to switch to cleaner source of energy, solar, biogas and wind energy; there is need to create awareness through field visits and campaigns on media among the rural households on the benefits of solar and biogas use; and there is need to develop programs that are specific to the low income rural population.