

Sponsored Vocational Training: Dream of Escape or  
Reality of Escape? Can Training Empower Young Women  
who are at risk of becoming Sex Workers?

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## ABSTRACT

Globally, there is a longstanding and widespread belief that education and training are magic bullets for a 'better' life. Governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worldwide have been active in providing educational training. SOLWODI is a Kenyan NGO that sponsors Vocational Training for young women who currently or formerly have worked as Sex Workers, and who are otherwise at risk. SOLWODI aims at helping women to find alternative ways of supporting themselves and ultimately, liberating these women from the sex industry. SOLWODI itself labels the Vocational Training initiative amongst its most successful empowerment activities, yet, since its inception in 1985 no empirical evaluation on the impact of sponsored Vocational Training on its trainees' lives has been completed. Thus, this paper aims to answer the question: How effective is SOLWODI's initiative for providing a brighter future as well as an escape route from the sex business? In order to answer these questions, the paper attempts to evaluate the SOLWODI training programme's efficacy, drawing primarily on fieldwork and research conducted in Kenya. Overall, a total of 389 women have undergone Vocational Training sponsored by SOLWODI. The question remains: What impact has the SOLWODI training had on them?

*Not to know is bad.  
Not to wish to know is worse.  
African Proverb*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

SOLWODI, a regional NGO in Mombasa, Kenya, sponsors Vocational Training (VT) for its clientele. Young women who either work or used to work as Sex Workers, and who are otherwise at risk are taken on VT. 'There is nothing that can be done about Sex Workers (SWs). Prostitution has existed in every society at any point of time.' This claim is so well-documented that it has surpassed the limits of tediousness. Yet, the global landscape of charities, agencies and NGOs reflects this. Only a few organisations worldwide have dedicated their efforts towards SW. SOLWODI, as one of those, is providing and assisting with economic aid to empower them.

Hymns of praise are sung: SOLWODI labels VT as its most successful endeavour. Expectations, to effectively liberate women from the sex industry through VT, could be exorbitant. A documentation of SOLWODI's VT history is considered absolutely vital for the construction of knowledge. The imminent action needed to be completed was to facilitate the recording of SOLWODI's VT scheme and to start evaluating its efficacy. This paper aims to provide an analysis that is strongly rooted in fieldwork data. The result is a collection presenting a variety of voices that might have gone unheard otherwise. This sociological micro-study also gives a glimpse of priorities, hardships and the lives of women who are marginalized and outcast in Kenya's society today.

With this research stimuli in mind, the dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter II will set the scene by presenting the background: A brief contextualisation of SOLWODI, Kenya and its education system, NGOs and Sex Work form the backdrop of this research. Chapter III will outline the methodology and the methodological challenges. Chapter IV will try demonstrating the complexity of the existing discourse by presenting, analysing and interpreting the research findings of one NGO's activity, namely SOLWODI's VT and linking these findings to the literature on various problems pertaining to the issue at hand. Chapter IV attempts to review existing literature on the imagination of education and NGO as panacea in general and in the specific context of Sex Workers. Can success, in this context, be measured? Although in practice it is virtually impossible to quantify which changes are due to the effects of endogenous factors, such as sponsored VT programmes, and which changes are due to exogenous factors

outside those programmes, such as societal causes. What if the research findings are not able to point to a visible decline in Sex Work? Would the sponsored VT programme then have been a failure? Not necessarily. Therefore, an eclectic phenomenological analysis, including linking literature to my findings is more important than counting. Recommendations for SOLWODI will be offered as well, before presenting concluding comments in Chapter V.

However, I would like to assert that this dissertation, as a VT evaluation, should be viewed only as a starting point, and by no means, aims at providing answers to two related sets of issues that are beyond the scope of the dissertation to address: an in-depth look into the lives of active Sex Workers; an evaluation of SOLWODI in its totality. Specifically, this research generates a valuable input for SOLWODI and provides the organisation a position to reflect upon the efficacy of its initiative.

## II. BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

### A. SOLWODI

SOLWODI (an acronym for SOLidarity with WOmen in DIstress) was founded in 1985 in Mombasa, Kenya by a German nun, Dr. Lea Ackermann. In 1997 it became registered as an international NGO in Kenya. As of 2009, all paid employees are Kenyan and the only non-Kenyan board member is Dr. Ackermann, its founder. SOLWODI's 2009 donor are exclusively Western agencies from U.S.A., Germany, France, and Netherlands,... namely FHI (Family Health International), ILO/ IPEC (International Labour Organization), SOLWODI e.V. Germany, DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency), Groupé Developpment France. Most clients come from the poorest communities of Mombasa. SOLWODI's main office is located in Ganjoni, Mombasa with some branches along Kenyan's coast. SOLWODI is sometimes referred to '*nyumba ya malaya*', the house of prostitutes.

Amongst others, SOLWODI has developed a technical cooperation programme that progressively allows women to attend VT in order to pursue their dream careers. VT is given to those aged 25 years and younger. The courses last between six months to one year, and cost up to Ksh 30,000 /= (~280£). The spectrum of subsidized training courses range from Hairdressing, Dressmaking, Nursery Teaching, Catering to Car Mechanic. SOLWODI's aim for its SW clientele is 'from welfare to empowerment'. Major activities of SOLWODI include rehabilitation, guiding and counselling. SOLWODI endeavours to give Sex Workers a chance to identify alternative means of earning a living and support themselves successfully in exiting the sex trade.

In 2006, when I first heard about SOLWODI, its vision and mission, I was both excited and puzzled. I had never been to Sub-Saharan Africa nor had I devoted myself to the topic of Sex Work before. I wanted to know more about SOLWODI. As Frankfort-Nachmias (1996: 71) points out, research problems are 'intellectual stimuli calling for an answer in the form of a scientific inquiry'. I spent four months voluntarily working with SOLWODI in Kenya. I was fascinated by and interested in its VT programme, its sustainability and efficacy. Escaping the sex business through the means of VT is assumed to be not a dream, but reality. Are women

serious about staying in the sex industry or anxious to leave? Questions outweighed any answer I could find. I decided to travel back to Kenya to find out more.

## B. Kenya

In order to understand SOLWODI, its VT programme and its clientele, it is necessary to understand its context: Kenya. Kenya has a population of 34 to 39 million people (BMZ, 2009; CIA, 2009; GoK, 2009), of whom 51 percent are female. There has been a remarkable decline in fertility rates from 7.9 in 1979 to about 4.4 today. Blacker explains this decline with reference to urbanisation, greater contraceptive use and women's education (Blacker, 2007). In Kenya, around 2.2 million are living with HIV, 700 people die every day of AIDS, and by 2002 there were around 1.2 million AIDS orphans. Life expectancy at birth for the total population has fallen from 57 in 1990 to 48 in 2004, currently the most optimistic figures signify a life expectancy of 57 years again (BMZ, 2009; CIA, 2009; DfID, 2004).

Most unemployed people are the youth. Owigar (2003: 8) attributes this to lack of training, in particular in technical skills needed in the formal sector. The current economic growth rate is estimated to be between 2.2 percent and 6 percent per year (GoK, 2009; CIA, 2009). Per capita incomes declined during the 1990s resulting in an increase in poverty from 48.8 percent in 1990 to 55.4 percent in 2001 (World Bank, 2003). Poverty appears to be associated with large and female-headed households. Exogenous shocks relating to weather, international trade and regional security periodically exposes the economy to extreme vulnerability. An estimated ten million Kenyan are facing a food crisis as a result of crop failure, high food-prices, and the effects of election-related violence in early 2008 that disrupted farming activities. More women are turning to Sex Work for survival (PlusNews, 2009b).

Kenya continues to rely heavily on a few primary commodity exports, in particular tea, coffee and horticulture. Although tourism is still an important export earner, the sector has suffered a steep decline over the past decade (DfID, 2004). Sex Work is widespread in Mombasa, second largest city in Kenya, which has high levels of poverty, illiteracy and large numbers of international tourists, truckers and sailors. According to the 2004 United Kingdom's Department for International Development's (DfID) analysis of drivers of change report, Kenya will probably fail to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (DfID, 2004).

Net inflows of ODA (Official Development Assistance) fell sharply from over \$1 billion per year in the late 1980s to \$311million in 1999, but have since begun to increase slowly (DfID, 2004). Kenya is much less dependent on foreign aid than neighbouring countries. The ratio of net ODA to GDP was just 4.4 percent in Kenya in 2001, compared to 13.6 percent in Tanzania, 13.7 percent in Ethiopia and 17.1 percent in Uganda. Kenya's dependence on donors is limited because it has a relatively high revenue ratio, with government able to raise revenues of around 22 percent of GDP from domestic sources excluding aid. Reported by DfID, the main explanation for Kenya's disappointing development performance is its deep rooted governance problem. Corruption has flourished. Kenya is by no means the only country to suffer from the governance failures. What is striking is how far the abuse of power over public institutions has undermined economic growth and poverty reduction (DfID, 2004).

### C. Education and Training in Kenya

Kenyan government has from January 2003 implemented a free universal primary education programme in public schools. This policy improved access to primary education enabling more children formal education, which is a pre-requisite to any form of skills training. The gross primary education ratio peaked at 86 percent in 2007 (UNESCO, 2007). Kenya's formal education system is known as 8-4-4, i.e. eight years compulsory primary education, four years complimentary secondary education, followed if wished by four years of University. In 2000, secondary school gross enrolment rate was 22.2 percent, whereas transition rate from secondary to University was merely 7 percent (Owigar, 2003: 55).

At post-primary level, there are tuition fees and other high levies hindering the entry of poor into higher education. Training centres offer an alternative to primary school graduates and dropouts but, they too demand fees. Options for a primary school graduate lacking monetary resources are limited. For both, secondary education and training centres, start-up capital is needed. Evidence shows that the lack of funding is by far the biggest constraint, amongst other barriers, keeping youth out of further education. Girls are still seen as undeserving when compared to boys resulting in a significant gender inequality at secondary and tertiary levels. Although the numbers of boys and girls at primary school is roughly equal, boys substantially outnumber girls in higher education (DfID, 2004). In both formal and informal vocational



education and training gender disparities exist with participation of girls below 30 percent (Ngware, 2002: 27). A large proportion (52 percent) of trainees drops out due to financial problems (Manda, 2006: 52). Donor agencies and NGOs such as SOLWODI are involved in the provision of VT in the post-compulsory education years. According to an ILO/IPEC study in 2006, 40 percent of trainees were funded by international agencies, organisations, church and guardians, unlike 2 percent who were able to finance their VT themselves and the remaining 58 percent who were sponsored by their parents (Mutie, 2006: 28).

International agencies such as UNESCO and ILO refer to VT as Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TIVET): training that immediately relates to work. Kenya's TIVET exists of five training levels: artisan, craftsman, technician, technologist and master of technology. It is accessible from primary as well as from secondary school. Due to the fact that SOLWODI offers training solely at the artisan level, in the prevailing paper the moniker VT instead of TIVET will be exclusively applied. SOLWODI's trainees are not only enrolled in public training institutions, Youth Polytechnics (YP) and Christian Industrial Training Centres (CITC), but also directly in apprenticeship training within the *Jua Kali*, i.e. informal sector where the profound focus is on practical skills. None of SOLWODI's trainees have been instructed and graduated beyond the artisan level. YP trainees are by large primary education graduates, although some trainees are drawn from secondary school. There is a wide spectrum of different training institutions available in Kenya: Some institutes place emphasis heavily on vocational skills training and less on business skills, some are more intertwined with practical work; others focus by large on theory (King, 1996: 174). The Government of Kenya stipulated that technical and vocational training 'play[s] a crucial role in developing artisans, managers and entrepreneurs for the informal sector in both rural and urban areas' (GoK, 1986: 57).

#### D. NGOs in general and in Kenya, in particular

Traditionally, NGOs are described as voluntary, non-profit organisations that operate independently from the commercial and governmental sector. NGOs primarily focus on two goals: service providing and development promoting. NGOs attempt to effectively service human needs, to consult members of society, to protect and to represent the interest of poor and voiceless. The World Bank defines NGOs as 'groups and institutions that are entirely

independent of governments and characterized by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial, objectives' (World Bank, 1989: 21). Mallaby (2004: 52) comments that 'NGOs claim to campaign on behalf of the poor'. According to the NGOs Co-ordination Board, in Kenya NGOs are categorised into two groups, that is national NGOs operating within Kenya only and international NGOs operating within Kenya and in other countries.

In the twentieth century the world witnessed rapid growth of NGOs, in particular in the 'third world'. Throughout Africa more and more NGOs sprung up like mushrooms. Current figures from South Africa indicate over 100,000 registered NGOs in the country alone, compared to about 9,000 in the whole of Africa ten years ago (Igoe and Kelsall, 2005: 7). In Kenya, the number of registered NGOs in 1996 was just 511, with a fivefold rise to 2,511 by 2003 and an increase to 5,815 by 2009 (World Resources Institute, 2005; Kenya's NGOs Co-ordination Board, 2009). The sector is growing at the rate of 400 organisations per year (Kenya's NGOs Co-ordination Board, 2009).

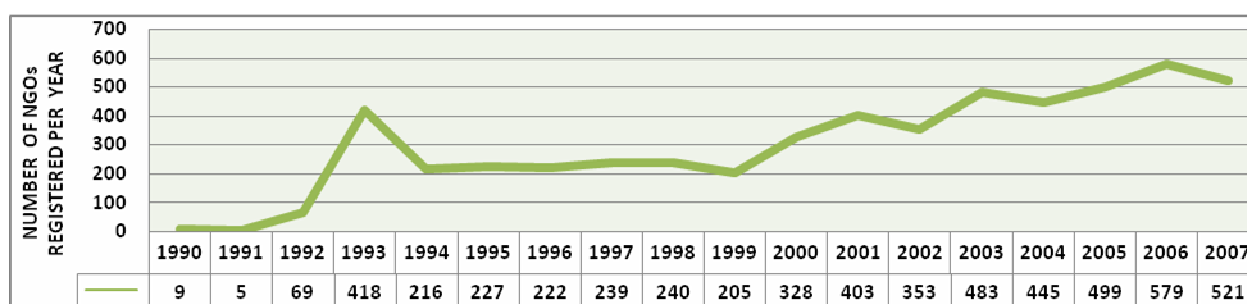


Figure 1: Number of NGOs registered per year in Kenya (Source: NGOs Co-ordination Board, Kenya, 2009)

Whereas roughly until the late 1980s, the number of international NGOs grew at double the rate of national NGOs, now, contrarily, the national NGOs triple the number of international NGOs (Osodo and Matsvai, 1998: 8 cited in Hearn, 2007). Currently 70 percent of the registered NGOs are international NGOs (Kenya's NGO Co-ordination Board, 2009). Aside from the numerical explosion, the range of NGOs operative is astonishing. NGOs in Kenya operate in the following sectors: Welfare, Water, Youth, Gender, Environment, HIV/AIDS, Agriculture, Disability, Refugees, Health, Population, Relief, Governance, Children, Micro-Finance, Informal Sector, Information and Education. Roughly two third of the NGOs are focusing their services on Education, Health, HIV/AIDS and Environment (Kenya's NGOs Co-ordination Board, March 2009).

## E. Sex Work

Prostitution is taken from Latin *pro-stituere*, which refers to 'exhibit oneself' and as cited in the Oxford English Dictionary is 'the offering of the body to indiscriminate lewdness for hire.' Historically, in colonial Kenya Sex Work was not a profession of first choice for the women. They became Sex Workers to survive in the city and they wanted to survive in order to pursue their dreams of independence and freedom (Akyeampong, 2000; White, 1990).

At colonial time there were almost exclusively only female SWs. In recent years male prostitution, namely beach boys, represent one-third of Kenya's sex business. This research is focused on female SWs; I do however not deny or belittle the existence of beach boys. It is merely the reality that SOLWODI targets only female SWs. In Kenya in 1999, an estimated 6.9 percent of women nationally said they had exchanged sex for money, gifts or favours in the previous year (Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 50). SWs in Africa have been doubly disadvantaged. First, they earn their living through a negatively perceived profession and secondly, even if one is not infected with HIV, they have been stigmatised as carrying the main responsibility for spreading HIV. They are referred to as "a major reservoir of sexually transmitted disease" and seen as the main vector of HIV (D'Costa in Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 52).

For this dissertation, given the existing choice of concepts, 'Sex Work' is found more neutral than 'prostitution'. The very term prostitution is surrounded by a sense of immorality. Additionally, prostitution should not be viewed as an identity but as a form of labour to make ends meet. Sex Work is a supplied commodity which follows demand. Therefore, more recently it is treated as an understandable response. The 'Sex Work Manifesto' of 1997 states 'like many other occupation, Sex Work is also an occupation.... Charity organisations are prone to rescue us and put us in 'safe' homes, developmental organisations are likely to 'rehabilitate' us' (Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, 1997: 2-3). The theoretical debate over whether Sex Work is oppression or profession has become somewhat fruitless, and there have been attempts to diversify the discourses on Sex Work.

SOLWODI's clientele are survival Sex Workers, women also classified as low-class Sex Workers. Considerable economic, social and personal pressure leads low-class Sex Workers to engage in prostitution. Muga (1980: 12) refers to two studies that reveal comparable results.

Rutasitara's study shows that 'about 60 percent of the women came from families leading subsistence lives'. Another study of Carlebach on juvenile SWs in Nairobi similarly shows very poor background of the SWs, as indicated by their parents' occupation. Most parents were either unemployed or dead. Of course, along Kenya's coast there is also a so-called high-class type present, mainly targeting western tourists as customers. The prospect of an easier and more luxurious life attracts women to Sex Work. Wilson's study, almost three decades ago in Mombasa shows that 174 CSWs who were interviewed did not choose this profession because of poverty or any other lack. They simply viewed it as 'an easier and more comfortable existence' (Muga, 1980: 11). High-class SWs are not attracted to the services SOLWODI offers, and consequently, not considered in this paper. Mombasa's coast provides a fertile ground for commercial sex to thrive. It is the dream of young, mostly unemployed women in towns and villages to flee to the coast to find a rich, western man who will fall in love with her, marry her, and 'rescue' her from Kenya.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Methodology and Methods

No evaluation on SOLWODI's Vocational Training scheme has ever been completed. Already in 2006, I was interested in how many young women have received sponsored VT and if this programme empowered them to escape the Sex Work. No one was able to gauge either the accurate number or the potential impact. To achieve the objective, the study would rely upon SOLWODI. In 2008 I contacted SOLWODI again, explaining the research question and asking for authorisation. SOLWODI granted a 'go ahead' for the project.

As stated in the Ethical Guidelines, 'poor design and trivial or foolish studies can waste people's time and can contaminate the field for future research' (SRA Ethical Guidelines: 25). I aimed at making a powerful design that did not waste other people's time and did not contaminate the field. Methodologically, a multi-method case study approach was adopted. Gerring (2004: 342) defines a case study as an 'intensive study of a single unit'. The opportunity to study a single unit in great depth, in this research SOLWODI, constitutes the beauty of my approach. The inductive methodology mix consisted of reviewing available data and documents, as well as conducting questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups with stakeholders.

##### 1. Pre-fieldwork phase: Edinburgh

Research is all about the actual process. It is the journey that counts more than the destination. This research journey started off in Edinburgh. King's advice 'about the field away from the field' is that the researcher ought to utilise the field at the university more broadly (King, 2005). Thus, the methodology tools at the ivory tower consisted of

- Literature review,
- Interview with stakeholders: SOLWODI, University staff, and research students.

Reviewing as much literature as possible about the different themes of the research interest was the starting point: Theme A: Education and Training, Theme B: NGOs and

SOLWODI, and Theme C: Sex Work. I overestimated access to SOLWODI's progress and status reports from afar. SOLWODI and I agreed upfront that I would gain access as soon as I was in Kenya. Believed by Bryman (2004: 109), Riesman and Benney (1955), an interview is a common occurrence; a conversation with purpose in which both parties gain in esteem and understanding. In addition to the above mentioned literature review I met and conducted such interviews with Robert Palmer, Emilie Venables, Salla Sariola, all former PhD students at the University whose research focus included education and training and SWs in Africa and Asia.

## 2. Fieldwork phase: Kenya

In December 2008, I travelled back to Kenya for ten weeks. Triangulation was attempted by focusing on the following methods:

- SOLWODI's Project field reports review,
- Questionnaires with SOLWODI's past, present and future trainees,
- Interviews with key stakeholders in the field: trainees and SOLWODI staff,
- Focus Groups.

Being able to access documents at SOLWODI, a database was drafted which tried to record and index as much information about SOLWODI's training clients as possible: Name, Institution (i.e. Training College), Vocational Training Course, Training Duration, Start and End Date (of training), Education Level (by the time she started training), Personal Situation (marriage, children), Work Situation and if she had dropped out of college, the reasons for the same. This task was not as simple as anticipated. Most information was only available in hard copy form; that meant papers in folders, and barely information accessible via computer. Partly information was gathered by discussing with SOLWODI's social workers, and also through personal encounters with trainees. According to SOLWODI, 'folders got lost, stolen and information stored on the hardware of computers was lost when computer crashed'. Taking this into consideration, the majority of the fieldwork time was making sure that all trainees are 'found'.

Questionnaires (see appendix) were extensively used throughout the research. In 2006 thirty-four questionnaires were collected in which all thirty-four respondents indicated their interest in obtaining a sponsored VT. In the questionnaire they were asked which course they

would wish to complete and about their personal background. For the 2009 fieldwork a similar questionnaire was applied in order to guarantee a comparison of research findings now versus the findings three years ago. In 2006 some respondents did not understand certain questions, in particular the wording. Hence, during the fieldwork in 2009 some questions were reworded, piloted with one key informant in the field and a final revision was made to the survey. In 2009, three types of questionnaires depending on the respondent were utilized:

- Questionnaire A – for young women who wished to enrol in a Vocational Training,
- Questionnaire B – for trainees who are currently enrolled in a course,
- Questionnaire C – for women who have completed their Vocational Training.

Subsequently, semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews with a few of these women were conducted. Typically, a semi-structured interview 'serves as a catalyst to a comprehensive expression of the interviewee's feelings and beliefs' (Oakley, 1981: 37). All the interviews were conducted face-to-face with a set of questions, in the form of my questionnaires at hand, but still allowed for a certain degree of freedom. In some interviews notes were taken, in others, where I specifically set up an appointment with a woman, I was familiar with and where there was mutual respect, a voice recorder was employed. The voice recorder symbolised an 'official interview'. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to about one hour and were mainly conducted on SOLWODI's premises in private rooms, or alternatively in cafés or restaurants.

Aspects that might have had a 'biasing' effect, but not always did, include: whether the interview was held on the first meeting. I tried to mitigate this effect by conducting 'official interviews' only with those women with whom I had built a relationship. Sometimes the women did not need any questions; sometimes they were very resentful in their responses. In the latter case, I tried to reintroduce the topics indirectly. My aim of bringing out the voices of a marginal group turned out not to be in the interest of the participants. Some interviews tended to be predominantly run by myself and not by the participants.

One pilot focus group (FG) was arranged only to realise that this is not the way forward. FGs are group interaction interviews and are considered to be relatively low in cost due to their speediness (Bryman, 2004: 345; Krueger, 1988: 44). But, there are limitations: the obtained data is often very difficult to analyse. This was realised when I read a transcript of my voice

recording from the FG. Secondly, Krueger (1988: 26) suggests that for selecting participants the rule of commonality not diversity should be applied. My experience was that women did not feel comfortable to openly talk in front of co-clients. My utmost intention was and is to respect their wishes. The only FG was one amongst three sisters; two of them were SOLWODI trainees. In consequence, FG was a time consuming process that did not fit into the time and methodology framework of this research. Time and efforts was prioritised to build up relationships of trust with the interviewees, to distribute questionnaires, and to conduct one-to-one interviews.

## B. Methodological Challenges

Despite great opportunities, research *per se* inherently presents a wide range of problems and it was my task to minimise and to manage these issues. Hereafter, the four main methodological challenges, followed by minor problems, will be illustrated.

### 1. Ethics

Clearly the research project had ethical challenges from the outset. Ethics was by far the most dominant risk which had to be managed. Commercial Sex is a value-laden and sensitive topic. During the overall research process there was an 'absolute-transparency-no-deceiving-policy'. Central to ethics is the informed consent. A few days after my arrival in Kenya SOLWODI introduced me to its clientele as a research student conducting a participatory survey on SOLWODI's VT initiative.

The BSA's Professional Standards enjoins researchers to 'anticipate, and to guard against, consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful'. Great care has to be taken to select methodology that would allow participants with minimal intrusion and distress on their part (Grinyer, 2005). As a feminist researcher my primary concern was the emotional well-being of the women involved. I did not want to trigger my interviewee, but it could happen. Denzin reminds that words 'have a material presence in the world. Words have effects on people. Words matter' (Denzin, 2001). Wedgwood and Hammett recall that

*the subjects may feel threatened by the research and unwilling to be interviewed.  
...informant may be intrusive or invasive.... for instance, when conducting oral history*



*research an informant may reveal traumatic events from their past which can dramatically alter and disrupt the research dynamic (Wedgwood and Hammett, 2005: 10).*

An unexpectedly emotional interview with Quincy, a 25-year-old left us both dazed and teary eyed. She recently experienced a traumatic situation that she told me in the interview. It caught us both unexpectedly. I still cannot be sure if it was my question that activated her emotional release. I had asked those questions before. After sharing my thoughts with a SOLWODI social worker, causes were assumed to be multidimensional. However, thereafter, I approached the interview partners with even more care.

Ethics is about taking care not to violate the rights to privacy. Respondents were informed that their participation was anonymous and voluntary. Women were eligible to participate in the 2009 interviews if they were aged over eighteen and had received VT from SOLWODI. All the names of my interview partners have been changed at their request to remain anonymous. The informants were able to fill the questionnaire wherever and whenever they wanted and most importantly if they wanted to. The young women came to SOLWODI to take part in the choir, drama or football activity or stopped by on their way to colleges. Some came for counselling or to ask for micro-credit assistance. In any case, I approached the women, and if they wanted to participate, the form was handed out. Even if they gladly received the questionnaire, sometimes the questionnaire was not returned. Young women who intended to go for training eagerly looked forward to taking part in the survey, hoping to secure in this way a VT enrolment. It was made clear to them that participating, did not deliver admission into the VT programme. Sometimes when the young woman returned the completed questionnaire and she had time and interest, the interview followed forthwith. Few preferred to only come for the interview. While they would be telling their biographical narrative I filled in the questionnaire for them. I was aware that my presence could have implications on the questionnaire data, e.g. I guided my interviewee through the questionnaire, asking questions which I felt were important, but also had the chance to ask question of understanding. Thus, when the woman preferred that I should fill in the questionnaire, I did so and tried to mitigate implications.

The majority of SOLWODI's ex-clients did not want to be seen as former or current SW. Consequently, a very cautious and respectful way of contacting those who were not with SOLWODI any longer had to be found. Importantly, I did not wish to incriminate these women.

For instance, I visited one former trainee, Nana, at her employer's salon in downtown Mombasa. Obviously, she did not aspire to be linked to '*nyumba ya malaya*', the house of prostitutes, which could lead into forms of harassment. Before my visit we agreed upfront that I am merely a friend from 2006. There was no mention of SOLWODI when I visited her in the salon.

Being a woman was a helpful blessing. Finch (1993: 167) confirms my impression that women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher. Notwithstanding, there should be neither exploitation nor power imbalance. The issue of power became visible when the matter of payment was mentioned by some of the participants. A few women expected some form of reimbursement for their words (Thompson: 1996). Paying people for their time has been done in research. I felt, nevertheless, that the use of incentives raises questions of ethics and validity. However, just to collect information would be equally unethical. With the backdrop that SOLWODI pays incentives to SWs for coming to activities, I was not surprised that the women asked for money. It was settled on an incentive of soft drinks and snacks during the interview or paying lunch if the interview was at a restaurant. Despite the problems of working through SOLWODI, it was good that SOLWODI was in place; as I was able to refer women to them when there was financial or psychological help needed.

The transaction process ought to be balanced. By listening to the women, communicating and discussing with them, I could feel that some felt that they were cared for. I wanted to hear their voices and they wanted to be heard. After the first interaction I gave my personal business card upon my interview partners. I never expected this minor give-away would have such an impact on my survey, but I do remember the women were grateful in receiving my contact information. Also; I came to realise the women did appreciate the fact that SOLWODI now needed help from them and not vice versa. They grasped the idea that they are powerful and important; and a sense of self-confidence was aroused.

I realised, to successfully interview SWs is not an impossible feat, but truly ethically challenging. Initially the research focus was also intended to be on Sex Work, on why it was done. However, the participants were informed that they do not have to mention anything that they feel uncomfortable with. From some, I still do not know whether they are or were SWs, or merely at risk. It was only when they felt at ease that they started to talk openly, yet some appeared to be purposefully vague with their words.

## 2. Engagement with SOLWODI

Assessing the women through SOLWODI and the issues in relation to this has also been one of the central challenges. Because of my personal history with SOLWODI, I used this NGO as my gatekeeper. Shaver (2005: 297, 306) argues that, when using NGOs for access, there is a danger of drawing conclusions that actually represent only part of the population, those that use the NGO. I bridged the threat of a SOLWODI driven research by avoiding payment from SOLWODI. Through this, I felt I had decreased my level of dependence. Contrarily, SOLWODI did offer advantages. As King articulates the attraction to researchers of studying projects is that they can 'shelter under the project's umbrella'. This may help with securing research permission; it also helps with contacting clients (King, 2005: 51). Several co-researchers mentioned the common problem of access, whereas I did not. In fact, I had my first encounter with some only a few days after I arrived in Kenya. However, negotiating further access and respectively, access to all was an issue. Access does not end with the first contact; 'rather it needs to be viewed as a process and not as an activity' (Gokah, 2006: 67).

## 3. Sampling Context

It is likely that by choosing to research only clients from this one NGO, this filter could present a biased sample. As a result, the sample is not representative outside of the context, but it provides some very valuable quantitative insights into the data-deficient world of SOLWODI. Undoubtedly, there are clients who were difficult to access in the time I had, and who might have had a huge impact upon my findings. Women who wanted to be heard came along. This self-identification approach resulted in a biased sampling of the more confident, the more successful, and still in contact with SOLWODI clients. By using peer networks to identify co-trainees, I aimed to increase representativeness. This resulted in a semi-randomly selected sample. Random sampling of its clientele would have been the preferred method. However, in this setting with the time and money resources available, selecting an entire sample through randomization was not feasible.

Only ten percent of young women who received VT completed a questionnaire. It was not only due to the biased sample limitation, but also to the problem of relocating ex-clients. In the first fieldwork weeks, I struggled to produce a list of its clients; hitherto I had to struggle to

find those clients I had identified in my list. Women moved away and broke off ties with SOLWODI, they disappeared. It became clear that 'disappearing' is a common phenomenon. SOLWODI aims for empowered clients, who will no longer need their services after successfully being rehabilitated. With the benefit of hindsight, it is suggested that either more time in the fieldwork should be allowed or SOLWODI could have tried to locate and contact trainees prior.

#### 4. Reliability and Validity

Shaver argues that the problem of reliability and validity derives from the stigma of Sex Work: manufactured, i.e. standardised answers might be given due to concerns about anonymity, out of the need to protect the identity of the respondent, to reflect a politically correct version of reality, or the participants might say what they think that the researcher wants to hear (Shaver, 2005: 297). Some clients tried to balloon their stories by telling negative fairy tales about their lives. A way of ensuring maximisation is by using triangulation, i.e. combining multiple methods within one study. Additionally, with the assistance of a social worker and by always cross checking with existing documents, I attempted to enhance the reliability of the information received. Case studies usually face a generalisation problem. (McQueen, 2002: 13). Generalisation is also known as external validity. The purpose of the case study on hand is not about NGOs and VT programmes in general, but about SOLWODI and its initiative in particular. Generalising runs the risk of reinforcing the existing stereotypes and victimising or demonising the whole group (Shaver, 2005). This was kept foremost in mind. I take the stance that women's experiences are individual and personal. This, of course, does not mean that general themes are not found in the women's accounts and experiences. With hindsight, for quality control, a second interviewer could have repeated the interviews. Elmore-Meegan and his colleagues did so and found that none of the repeat interviews revealed any important discrepancies (Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 51). Unfortunately some questionnaires were filled with the help of a SOLWODI social worker, producing synchronized and standardised comments. It is recommendable that questionnaires were written by the young women solitary.

#### 5. Miscellaneous Minor Challenges

Wedgwood and Hammett's (2005: 10) advice to use 'both belt and braces' was followed

to tackle the lingual complications. I studied sufficient Swahili, the national language in Kenya to at least conduct 'small talk' and, additionally asked for support of native speakers when needed. One key informant and friend, Maria, acted as my local director of research, i.e. assistant, overseer and translator (Kaufmann, 2002: 251). Nevertheless, it is suspected that much can be lost in translation – culturally, linguistically, socially and intellectually (Jansen, 2005: 22). Secondly, I was not considered to be an insider. Insiderism claims that you must be a true member of the specific group in order to understand the context. However, the opposite can be argued quoting Max Weber's memorable phrase 'one need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar'. According to Blaikie (2000: 242), qualitative methods allow the researcher to become an insider and to discover the social actors' culture and worldviews. Many ethnographers, also e.g. Barley talk about the pivotal moment in which they feel as if they had been accepted in the society being studied (Barley: 1983). About halfway through the fieldwork time, two SOLWODI social workers and a young client mutually agreed that I am 'an African'. I felt that this was my pivotal moment. Thirdly, there is the belief of being objective as a researcher. But also Agar and Mies advocate that the issue is not whether someone is biased, rather which types of biases are present. Researchers bring their own cultural baggage to the setting and value free research has to be replaced by conscious partiality (Agar, 1996: 91; Mies, 1993: 68). The most immediate need is to be explicit about personal values, professional assumptions and to be reflexive, linking the idea of self to the process (Agar, 1996: 91).

## **IV. CASE STUDY**

### **A. Research Findings**

This work is informed by and grounded in evidence-based research. Henceforth, research findings are presented through socio-demographic characteristics providing an overall picture of the trainees as well as in-depth accounts depicting individual voices of SOLWODI's clientele.

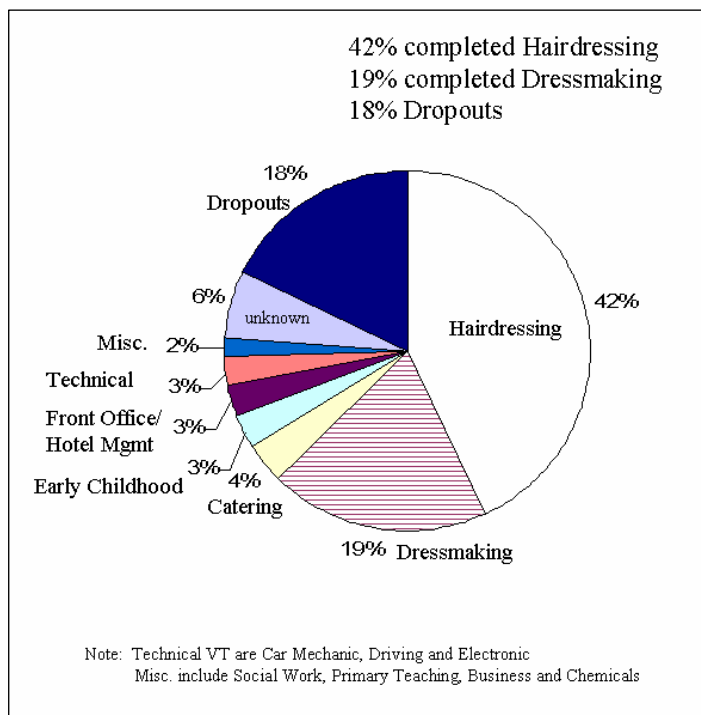
#### **1. Database 1998-2009**

On the whole 389 girls and women have been sponsored by SOLWODI since 1998. In the first years of SOLWODI's existence, from 1985 until 1997, SOLWODI did not have a sponsored VT programme in place. The focus at this time was on consultation, women support groups, group loans and in some instances individual micro-credits. In the first two years, until mid 2000, the programme slowly but steadily started by sending 53 trainees (14 percent of 389 trainees in total) to institutions. SOLWODI managed in the subsequent years until 2005 to maintain roughly twenty trainees on average per year by taking another 104 women from 2000 until 2005 to VT. From 2005 onwards 232 (60 percent out of 389) young women, i.e. on average 77 trainees per year were financed. This threefold increase is largely attributed to an ILO project in 2005, which allowed 87 SOLWODI clients to start VT.

##### **a) Type of Vocational Training**

What is overly noticeable is how many Hairdresser trainees SOLWODI has been sponsoring in the last ten years: 167 young women, which is equivalent to 42 percent of all trainees, are now certified Hairdressers/ Cosmetologists. A further 31 women were sent to Hairdresser institutes, but dropped out. Thus, originally, if all Hairdresser trainees had completed their courses, it would have been a total share of 51 percent hairdresser graduates.

Dressmaking follows suit in second place: 19 percent (76 women out of 389) finished their sponsored tailoring course. Since 1998 there have been trainees in Hairdressing, Dressmaking and Catering. Until 2005, 90 percent of SOLWODI's trainees were sponsored in those three courses. Since 2006 SOLWODI expanded courses and additionally, offers Early Childhood/ Nursery Teaching, Front Office/ Hotel Management, Technical Training, Business Management, Social Work, Primary Teaching.



**Figure 2: Type of VT (Database Extract)**

Only a few women completed VT in Catering (fourteen trainees), Front Office/ Hotel Management (twelve trainees) and Early Childhood/ Nursery Teaching (eleven trainees). Technical certificates, such as Car Mechanic, Driver and Electrician, are held by ten young women. Merely two trainees each are currently enrolled in Business Management and Social Work course. Primary Teaching VT and Chemicals/ Cleaning were uncommon with only one trainee in 2006 in the former and one trainee in 2000 in the latter course. Regrettably, there is an information gap for 6 percent of SOLWODI's trainees, for whom available data was limited, in particular about their type of VT.

b) Educational level

There is data on education level for only 39 percent (153 women) of all trainees.

**Education Information of 153 trainees**

Primary Education ≤ Std. 7	23 (15%)
Primary Education Std. 8 (completed)	75 (49%)
Secondary Education F1 to F4	55 (36%)

Data shows that 15 percent of known respondent had no degree in primary education, but attended most of the classes; 49 percent had completed primary education, while 36 percent had secondary schooling. All women enrolled in Business Management, Social Work and Primary Teaching are F4 graduates. The large majority of Early Childhood/ Nursery Teaching (82 percent) had their F4, unlike 18 percent who merely held a Std. 8 degree. In the Front Office/ Hotel Management courses only one trainee had not finished her secondary school, but had her Std. 8.

#### c) Children and Marriage Situation

Of the 36 percent for whom data is available, the overwhelming majority (73 percent) do not have any own children or dependants in the form of siblings to take care of. About 17 percent of the sub-sample had one child, whereas the residual ten percent had two or three children they were looking after while being on training. Out of the total with children, 67 percent received some primary education, although not all graduated. The remaining 33 percent went to secondary school with the majority completing F4. Marriage was unusual amongst SOLWODI's young clients: only 4 trainees were married.

#### d) Dropout and Push-out Factors

Of the overall 389 trainees 69 women (18 percent) dropped out of their VT. The great majority of dropouts, 88 percent, were enrolled in Hairdressing and Dressmaking. 31 Hairdressing trainees (16 percent of all Hairdressing trainees) and 30 Dressmaking trainees (28 percent of all Dressmaking trainees) failed to complete their courses. The rest of failing trainees went for Catering (five trainees) and Electronic (one trainee). Push-out factors are known for 34 women, of whom thirteen women (38 percent) abandoned the training due to pregnancy. None of them returned to SOLWODI's VT programme. According to SOLWODI, another 18 percent started to co-habit with men, which lead to their withdrawal. A third major reason was a so-called 'do not care attitude', resulting in poor attendance at college with a further 18 percent forsaking their training. Other factors leading to dropping out include health-related and domestic problems. Out of the five trainees who stopped their Catering course, four went to the Jocilymes Institute, which became insolvent and closed. SOLWODI tried to relocate these four to other colleges, but this process failed: They became undisciplined with their studies, began relationships with men and conceived pregnancy. The one Electronic trainee received an offer



from the Kenyan Army while being on training. She decided to start working for the Army instead of being enrolled in VT. Two other trainees were offered jobs whilst on training, also dropped out.

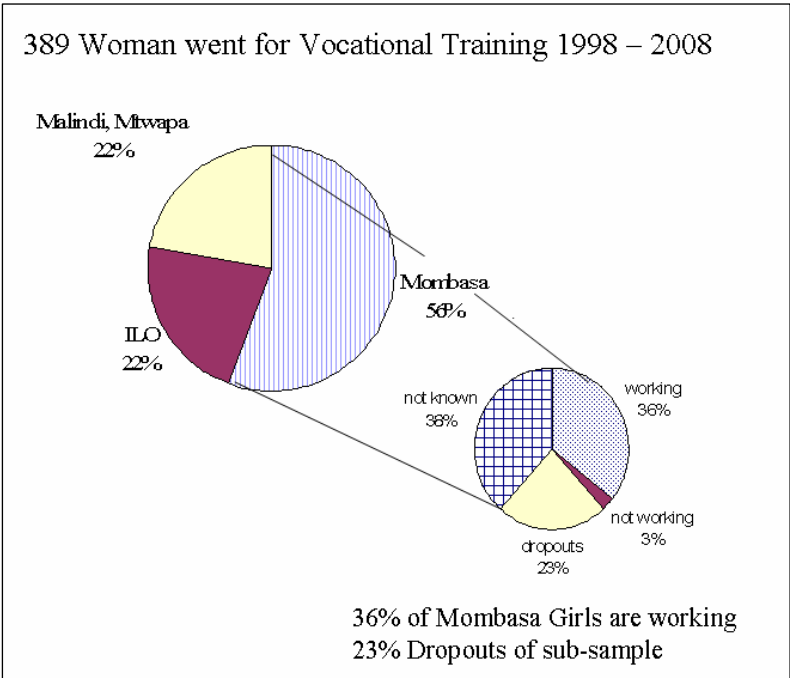
e) Current Working Situation

For 33 percent (129 women) of all trainees information on their contemporary working situation is available. In 70 percent of the 129 cases, trainees are working, either in their trained field (49 percent) or in another working area (21 percent). It would have been interesting whether some women had to go back to CSW in order to make ends meet or not. However, it was not possible to retrieve this information.

**Working information of 129 trainees**

YES, working in their VT field	63 (49%)
YES, working but in another area (not SW)	27 (21%)
N/A, still in VT	26 (20%)
NO, not working	9 (7%)
NO, deceased	4 (3%)

Mombasa clients consist of 56 percent (216 trainees) of the total sample population. More work-related data was available on this sub-population, compared to women who lived in the coastal towns Malindi, Mtwapa and women who had been sponsored by the 2005 ILO project. The number of dropouts in the sub-sample was higher (23 percent) in contrast to 18 percent dropout ratio in the overall sample. From the Mombasa clients, 77 women (36 percent) are currently employed, six (3 percent) are not working, whereas data on post-VT circumstances was not known for 38 percent.



**Figure 3: Overall clients, incl. Mombasa sub-sample (Database Extract)**

In a nutshell, from the women for whom information was available and known, 70 percent are working. In the more specific sub-sample of Mombasa clients, where information exists on 62 percent women, it was found that 36 percent from the total 216 women are working. However, of all 389 trainees barely 90 women (23 percent) are known to be working.

Information on monthly wages is scarce, as well. For less than a dozen working graduates information on their wages was available. Nursery Teaching graduates earned between Ksh 3,000 to 4,000 (~28£ to 37£) per month, Dressmaker on average Ksh 3,500 (~33£), compared to similar monthly wages for Hairdresser with one exception of Nana earning Ksh 5,000 (~47£) in a salon downtown Mombasa.

## 2. Questionnaires, Interviews and Focus Group

In 2009, 50 questionnaires were collected, nine interviews conducted and one focus group moderated. Questionnaires findings from 2009 were compared to those from 2006. In total, 13 percent of all 389 trainees were reached through questionnaires, interviews and FG.

<b>Data Collecting Methods</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Questionnaires</b>		
<i>Wished Training</i>	34	12
<i>Currently in Training</i>		24
<i>Completed Training</i>		14
<b>Interviews</b>		
<i>Note taking</i>		7
<i>Voice recorded</i>		2
<b>Focus Groups</b>		1

### a) Questionnaire 2006 wished Training

In 2006, 34 wanted to go for sponsored VT with SOLWODI. In 2009 when I returned to SOLWODI the research found that seventeen of them (50 percent) went for training. In 2006, the respondents were between sixteen and 23 years young, on average nineteen years.

**∑ 34 Young Women wanting to go for VT in 2006**

<b>Started Training</b>	<b>17</b>			
	<i>Completed</i>	<b>11</b> (out of 7 are working)		
	<i>Dropouts</i>	<b>6</b>		
		<i>Why Dropout?</i>		
		<i>College Transfer</i>		4
		<i>Deceased</i>		1
		<i>Got a job (in the Army)</i>		1
<b>No Training</b>	<b>13</b>	<i>Why?</i>		
		<i>Stopped coming (pregnancy)</i>	10 (1)	
		<i>Got another job</i>	2	
		<i>Went back to School</i>	1	
<b>Misc.</b>	<b>4</b>	<i>Why?</i>		
		<i>Went independently for VT</i>	2	
		<i>Got skills training</i>	2	

Analogue to the overall 389 trainees, the majority of sponsored trainees went for Hairdressing. All the four trainees sent for Catering dropped out since the transfer from Jocilymes Institute to another college failed, as discussed earlier.

<b>∑ 17 sponsored VT</b>	<b>Started</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Dropout</b>
Hairdressing	6	5	1
Catering	4	-	4
Childhood Studies	1	1	-
Primary Teaching	1	1	-
Hotel Management	2	2	-
Dressmaking	1	1	-
Social Work	1	1	-
Electrician	1	-	1

## b) Questionnaire 2006 wished Training vs. 2009

By putting some characteristics of 2006 respondent's side by side 2009 reveals that the average age increased from nineteen to 21 years. Compared to 2006, more SOLWODI clients (42 percent) are orphaned.

Wished Vocational Training	2006	2009
Sample Size	34	12
Average Age	19 years	21 years
Family Situation in percent		
<i>Orphan</i>	15%	42%
<i>Both Parents alive</i>	41%	25%

In 2006, fifteen women (44 percent) wanted to go for courses in Hairdressing and Dressmaking. Including respondents who wished to go for Early Childhood and Catering reveals that the lion's share (74 percent) was hoping for a trainee place in highly gendered occupations. Only, 12 percent were interested in technical courses. Similar results are found in 2009: 50 percent are interested in Hairdressing and Dressmaking; however, there is more variety to the remaining half, since only 8 percent are hoping for VT in Early Childhood and Catering.

The most important rationale for SOLWODI clients to go for VT was to become self-reliant in order to help themselves as well as family members. Motivations of the trainees to undertake training are in harmony with research findings from an ILO/ IPEC study. Among other factors, trainees of this ILO study indicated that they were motivated by keen interest in the career (34 percent), to be employed or to be self-employed (18 percent), because the course is very marketable (9 percent), poverty (4 percent), just to stay busy (5 percent) (Mutie, 2006: 27).

Reasoning for Vocational Training	
2006	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ because I want to be self-reliant</li> <li>▪ to get away from bad company and to help myself and family too in future</li> <li>▪ because I want to be a busy woman in business</li> <li>▪ because of my future life, and also to help my sisters and brother whom are relying on me to help them as their first born</li> <li>▪ to get skills and get self-employment</li> <li>▪ to support my poor family</li> <li>▪ it will help me in my life and it will help me with my family to take my brothers to school</li> <li>▪ so that I can help me in my coming future</li> <li>▪ uplift our family</li> <li>▪ to get a job to help my family members and other needy people, so that I can brighten my future life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• because I know it will change my life</li> <li>• first to be able to rely on myself without disturbing other</li> <li>• because it is what I have been dreaming of ever since I was young</li> <li>• to help my family</li> <li>• that I can help my young sisters</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Reasoning for VT (Questionnaire Extract)

When asked about what is good in their lives, the young women essentially replied by wishing and hoping for a 'better life'. They enjoy being at SOLWODI, because they are busy and meeting friends.

Dreams, Aspirations, Good things in life	
2006	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to get a job and support myself</li> <li>• I like to be self-employed and self-reliant</li> <li>• I would like to start my course and finish so as to have the skill to work as a Hairdresser to earn my living</li> <li>• I like to be a good person</li> <li>• I like to live a happy life</li> <li>• I would like to have my own career that will give me a better job in my tomorrows future</li> <li>• what currently I like in my life is to keep busy doing something which can help me</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to have a better life</li> <li>• to depend on myself and help others</li> <li>• I like the fact that I have joined SOLWODI and met new people and I has given me hopes of better life in future</li> </ul>

**Figure 5: Dreams, Aspirations, Good things in life (Questionnaire Extract)**

In 2009 as well as three years before, the young clients struggled with idleness, lack of money and lack of education. For some respondents it was important to mention that it is hard to be without parents, as summarized below.

Hardships, Worries, Difficult things in life	
2006	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staying idle without getting a job</li> <li>• the difficult thing in my life is to achieve my goals</li> <li>• we don't have money for VT, my own uses, sometimes no food, it is difficult to get money in our family</li> <li>• a daily bread and house rent</li> <li>• to stay without both parents</li> <li>• to involve in idleness and involve in bad company that may lead to be a prostitute</li> <li>• being without parents, being with no peace</li> <li>• staying with no job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be idle is too difficult in my life</li> <li>• job, education and money. How to have them?</li> <li>• struggling with life</li> <li>• being the laughing stick in the community</li> </ul>

**Figure 6: Hardships, Worries, Difficult things in life (Questionnaire Extract)**

c) Questionnaire 2009 currently undergoing Vocational Training

24 questionnaires of young women currently enrolled at institutes were obtained. The average age is 21 years and all women who filled in this feedback form advocated their colleges as suitable and recommendable. All the respondents but three scored the usefulness of SOLWODI's VT at top high, giving ten out of ten. One rated the usefulness with a nine; two participants withheld their opinion. Typically, trainees did appreciate VT very much. 'With all my heart' and a 'dream come true' were two very standard responses.

Value of Vocational Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I value it with all my heart</li> <li>• very much because my future depends on it</li> <li>• it is very important to me because I will be able to have a better life and career</li> <li>• it is giving me hope in life and I am now able to do something on my own and will do even better. It's good and I am gaining a lot</li> <li>• it is going to help me</li> <li>• I value so much because every time I am committed and minds busy instead of being idle which there before was not</li> <li>• because I feel it is my dream come true</li> <li>• the course has been my dream</li> <li>• the course will not at all let me down</li> <li>• am happy as my dream is fulfilled</li> </ul>

Figure 7: Value of VT, currently enrolled (Questionnaire Extract)

Before joining SOLWODI the trainees replied in unison that there life was miserable, they wanted to escape from frustrating circumstances. One trainee who is the oldest of four sisters stated, 'I am the head of the train, once I burn they will also burn. I have to live by good examples'. Unlike now, VT provides the young women with hope, self-confidence and happiness. One respondent, who is presently at a Business Management College declared self-assured, 'Birgit, you will find me driving a Mercedes when you are back'.

Life and Career Aspirations	
before SOLWODI	now after/ with VT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I came [to Mombasa] because I wanted to escape the poverty that was home</li> <li>• I had a small business I used to run but it failed</li> <li>• I was thinking a lot of bad things to do so that I can make my life successful</li> <li>• before my life was miserable I couldn't help myself</li> <li>• every now and then I would meet men and guys who would promise me of different things like opening a beauty shop for me since I am talented in plaiting but they will dump me after they have had their way. It was so frustrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greater life and hope</li> <li>• now, I am more than confident as I go on with life</li> <li>• it is no burden to live anymore</li> <li>• but the little I have been getting and I got has really pushed my life somewhere hoping that when I complete I will have achieved more and make/ run my life smoothly</li> <li>• I will find a job</li> <li>• I am a changed person and I am aware that nothing comes once or easily</li> </ul>

Figure 8: Life and Career Aspirations, currently enrolled (Questionnaire Extract)

One trainee commented and recommended that

*'it takes too long for the girls to be taken for VT hence making other girls to go for marriage which is not good. And SOLWODI should at least monitor for the girls that have been taken for VT. This is for them to ensure that they girls are working hard in their courses'* (Extract of Questionnaire, 2009).

#### d) Questionnaire 2009 completed Vocational Training

Fourteen questionnaires from women who completed VT with SOLWODI, some as early as 2000, others recently graduated in 2008 were gathered. The significance of VT was perceived as very positive. VT changed their lives; it is valued by heart and 'it cannot be taken' away. One respondent marked that 'without SOLWODI I could be nobody by now', correspondingly with the comment by a fellow client who recalls 'to be sincere, up to now I would have done nothing if not for SOLWODI'.

Value of Vocational Training	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it really changed my life for now I can be an independent person</li> <li>• it cannot be taken from me</li> <li>• I valued it with all my heart because people need such opportunity but could not have a chance to have</li> <li>• I was very happy</li> <li>• The Vocational Training kept me away from the bad influence as a youth</li> <li>• I know that I will be able to earn living</li> </ul>

**Figure 9: Value of VT, completed (Questionnaire Extract)**

'Before joining SOLWODI, my life was so stressing i.e. at times I couldn't even provide for my siblings food due to lack of money.' This was the reply of a 22 year old orphaned woman when asked what her living situation used to be. Other narratives fell into a similar category, i.e. 'before my living situation was confusing' and 'before VT I depended on my parents on everything, but now I must work hard in a job so that I can help my parents'. One women who was taken on a Catering course many years back and now sells cooked food in the street said, that VT was central for her because 'I wanted to be the best cook'. Besides VT, SOLWODI's clientele appreciated counselling and in the words of one respondent, SOLWODI's best service is to 'recruit distressed women'.

One young woman, Alice who was interviewed as well, is very grateful that SOLWODI 'helped me to build my future'. She wrote that before [SOLWODI] she only thought 'about

death', but today, she is 'full of life'. In the words of another former trainee, Anna:

*'At first I had a hectic life because I used to take alcohol, which was very dangerous because I could drink a lot to the point of not knowing myself and because what I ever dreamt never seemed to come true. I wanted to meet a man who would love me and take care of me, but the one I had was not good to me. He was abusive. I found that I have become a better person because I did stop drinking and all what I am looking forward is to get a better job and a good salary'* (Extract of Questionnaire, 2009).

Life and Career Aspirations	
before SOLWODI	now after/ with VT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I wanted to be a lawyer before but due to lack of school fees I dropped out in Form two and therefore my dreams were shattered</li> <li>• all I could think of is death</li> <li>• I was a Commercial Sex Worker</li> <li>• had mental problems so I had no clear path of thinking</li> <li>• I was never proud of myself I depended on other people like a stick which was very very bad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would love to replace Ann Tibaijuka in her Gigiri office of UN</li> <li>• full of life</li> <li>• now I can look forward</li> <li>• my life has changed</li> <li>• I know God will see me through so that I get a good job that earns me good money so that I can fulfil my dreams</li> <li>• life is moving ooh I really love it and I am proud to be [name of the informant]</li> </ul>

**Figure 10: Life and Career Aspirations, completed (Questionnaire Extract)**

The recommendations and comments for the VT programme included: 'The window period is long and a lot of girls give up before their vocational training' and

*'SOLWODI should also do a follow-up on girls who have done VT course to keep them on the toes and show them they still care for them but not to baby-sit them. It will also help SOLWODI knowing that they are effective. With the follow-up the girls that have done VT may assist in attachment to make other girls feel at home when they are through their training'* (Extract of Questionnaire, 2009).

#### e) Interviews

Six out of nine interview partners were women who I was already acquainted from my stay in 2006. In the case of the other three, I asked them for interviews after reading their completed questionnaires. The interviewees were between 22 and 32 years old. Two received



VT in 2000/ 2001; one respondent is currently enrolled in college, while the residual six women were trainees anytime between 2004 and 2008. The courses varied, three young women received a course in Front Office/ Hotel Management, and the others went all one by one to Early Childhood/ Nursery Teaching, Catering, Electronics, Dressmaking, Hairdressing, Social Work. Except of the two trainees in 2000/ 2001, all other clients were and are involved in SOLWODI's activities such as football, drama and choir. In 2000 there were no extra curriculum activities available at SOLWODI. Apart from one trainee who lives with both parents, four women are orphans and the remaining four stay with a single-parent.

Of the interview partners, six graduated successfully, one is still trainee, whereas two women quit their VT. The push-out factors for the two dropouts were the high transport costs to the college, inefficiency at the college ('sewing machines did not work') and insufficient willpower to finish. Paula, 22 years, dropped out not merely due to the transport costs, but also she was offered a job in the Kenyan Army. Already in 2006 Paula told me that she wanted to get a job and support herself: now, she confirms, she is doing well and enjoys being independent. The second dropout, Matilda, aged 27 years, who went for a Tailoring Course but did not finish, mentioned her lack of willpower but also the lack of appropriate equipment at the college as the major reasons to quit. Despite this, Matilda comments 'I really liked it and enjoyed it here. If it wasn't for SOLWODI, I would be on the street'. She started her own dressmaking business in 2001, which she continues to run successfully. Now, her dream is to start a joint-venture business with Hanna, another ex-client of SOLWODI. For Matilda, SOLWODI is perfect because she had met Hanna here.

Of the six women who graduated, three are working in their trained field. The rest just finished their colleges in 2008, and at present are looking for job vacancies while still participating in SOLWODI's football and choir activities. Anna, 23 years, who is one of those currently job hunting, says 'I could be in a bad place now; I became a better person because of SOLWODI'. Her dream is 'to get a job, and be independent'. Bridgit, 22, recently completed her Front Office course. However, she is inspired by her friend and co-client Paula living a 'better' life working for the Kenyan Army. Bridgit is now looking for a job in Front Office and concurrently applying in the Army.

Many women, many voices. This notwithstanding, one theme seems to be common to all. Before joining SOLWODI, life was hard. Emma, 32 years old, used to be a Sex Worker

before completing her Catering course in 2001. According to her own words, she 'ended up in this business because of poverty'. Despite dreading her previous life as CSW, Emma talked freely about her experiences: 'Most of the clients were violent. I had to change my life'. She became a mother of two children and she says her children were growing up and asking: 'Mum, where are you going? I had to change.' Before SOLWODI, Alice, 22 years, completed Front Office/ Hotel Management in 2008, she had 'lost hope, no career, no ambitions' and was 'at risk of doing SW', but now she is 'full of ambitions'. Alice was married. She married at age 17, her husband cheated on her and 'beat me badly'. She dropped out of Form 3 at that time.

Two of the interview partners mentioned that their colleges are not marketable. One trainee at Sairene said that this college is not active in helping you getting an attachment. And also, if you study Hotel Management, courses with catering would be advisable in addition. Sairene is not offering this. Another interview partner went to the Coast Montessori Nursery Teaching School. Graduates from this institute find it hard to get a job in the market. This opinion is confirmed by one trainee currently enrolled in Early Childhood/ Nursery Teaching. She started in the Coast Montessori but was transferred because she as a student herself realised the ineffectiveness of the course. Therefore SOLWODI sent her to another college, where she is a top student.

Maria, my local informant, and also a former trainee with SOLWODI, shared her narrative in the pilot interview:

*'I had a dream of becoming something...of becoming a teacher. I knew that maybe one day one time. SOLWODI was my only hope.....I was idle. I could not find the money for a college. I wanted to go.....I can say that I was about to [become a Sex Worker] because it was a difficult time at SOLWODI as there were so many girls who were idle. I remember there was a time when we talked to each other and then some girls told me [that they are working as CSWs]...Like you see, it is the poverty.'*

About push-out factors Maria answered:

*'The reason, first, I think is the transport. Maybe the college is very far from home. Second, it is devotion. Some girls maybe expect immediately to be taken for college and then get a job....If they girls are not devoted to college, it will be very hard. And the situation at home, when the girls go to college, the parents don't value education. And also, peer pressure.'*

According to Maria, SOLWODI could improve its VT service, by first sending women to trainings which are levelled with their former education and secondly, recruit them in the best marketable colleges:

*'But also some of the girls left maybe at Standard six and when they start college and this is only in English language, they don't speak English. It is too much for them. SOLWODI should send girls who are early school dropouts to more manual colleges...SOLWODI should give the girls the colleges that are very in the market so that it could be easy for them to secure a job.....You can walk around with your papers and you don't get a job because there are better colleges in your area.'*

Sarah, 22 years is 'happy' that she received VT. Sarah recommends SOLWODI should implement a career advice open day, where former, present and future trainees intermingle with each other and share experiences. She says:

*'Really, most girls like just only one course: hairdressing, hairdressing, hairdressing. There are already lots of hairdressers. It's already out of market. SOLWODI should train, advice them on what to choose, not only hairdressing. We can assume that some have their Form 4, so they might be directed to another career, such as Languages or Teaching....Tourism.'*

To her, the lack of self-esteem hinders the young women:

*'Self-esteem is what blocks most of them.... They come, they look, they do the football stuff, but they don't talk much. They don't even like that somebody talks. Mostly I tried to talk to everybody, but some really don't like to talk... [Their situation at home] is stressful for them.... They are so young and so needy. There are girls still younger than me who get married, have already children. So like, if education could delay marriage, help girls to get self-dependant, self-employed, that is what we need. This is the only thing that can support us.'*

If SOLWODI had not sponsored her training, Sarah believes that she 'would be at home, doing nothing. Be at risk. Maybe I still would be in my cocoon, not talking to anyone.'

#### f) Focus Group

In the FG I interviewed three sisters, Emma, Patricia and Elizabeth. Emma and Patricia have both received VT, Elizabeth has not, and she is not interested in it. Emma declares that her Catering course

*'was the best vocational training for me....I got an experience there of skills, so that I can work for myself....For now, I do a small business. I am cooking potatoes in a village..... I am happy now for my own business.'*

Emma considers the women and youth support groups as SOLWODI's most effective service. Unlike her sister Patricia who believes in 'VT because here in Kenya if you finish Form 4 you don't have money. You don't have money to go to college. So, I think VT is the best.' Both agree that it is challenging on the women when they have to wait for their colleges. As rationale for dropouts, Emma proposes

*'some of them are not serious. Maybe they are having peer pressure or they don't want to go to that college.....some of them because of the transport money which they can't manage'.*

Emma and Patricia concur that SOLWODI should decide upon which VT course depending on the educational background.

*'If a girl has Form 4, the marketable course is Community Development. If [her education is] below then Hairdressing, Tailoring and even Catering is good.....Nursing... Languages.... Primary Teaching are other courses which are marketable.'*

### B. Efficacy and Efficiency of SOLWODI's VT Programme

Efficacy or effectiveness is centred on doing the right thing, whereas efficiency refers to doing things right. Uniting both philosophies, being effective and efficient is widely understood as doing the right thing right. The literature of NGOs efficacy as a whole is based more on faith than fact, according to Fisher (1997). Scholarly colleagues, such as Nugent (2004) and Fowler (1997) agree that NGOs struggle to show the results of their development programmes. To them, there are relatively few in-depth analyses of what is happening in specific places within

specific organisations. Since NGOs differ radically from one another in nature and composition, the contribution of NGOs therefore can vary significantly. Studies demonstrating the specific impact of a specific NGO initiative in relations of power among individuals, communities are largely missing. Some studies, as pointed out by Fisher (1997: 455) do show a stimulating empowerment effect of marginalized groups. Yet, those happen to be a minority. It is beyond this dissertation to analyse the effectiveness of NGOs in general. Yet, a more detailed understanding of what happens in specific place, at specific times, with specific individuals within one specific organisations' activity, i.e. SOLWODI's VT is my research purpose. However, to pertain the research findings with existing literature is important and will be presented hereafter.

## 1. Vocational Training Discourse

The basic debate is that people in favour of sponsored VT argue that it is a good idea because a lot of social problems, like poverty, stem from women's lack of education, and that VT is a key missing ingredient that prevents women from becoming independent. Ndegwa (1991) attributes the high unemployment rate among Kenyan females to lack of training especially in technical and vocational skills. VT offers the society an opportunity to reduce absolute poverty and develop human resources (Ndegwa cited in Ngware, 2002: 24). Ngware (2002: 32) argues that VT will continue to play a major role in the growth. Studies, such as Psacharopoulos (1995) confirm that in developing countries the rate of return to expenditures on education and training are very high (Psacharopoulos cited in Ngware, 2002: 21). There are ample studies further elaborated in Kahyarar and Teal's research on the returns to VT and academic education in Tanzania (Kahyarar and Teal, 2008).

Investment in education and training, in particular investment guided towards women seems to contribute to human capital accumulation, which is essential for development. Quoted in the DfID drivers of change report in 2004, education is vital for 'improving women's living standards, enabling them to exercise greater voice in decision making in the family, the community, the workplace, and the political arena' (DfID, 2004). Within the framework of human capital theory it is acknowledged that development in human resource is a significant aspect of successful industrialisation. King presents that for many NGO donors vocational training is one step towards industrialisation which is according to them, needed for an economy

to grow and prosper. Vocationalism is less efficient when it aims to train simply for stock. There should be a match between supply and demand. VT institutes should strengthen the link from training to economy, bringing both together (King, 1990: 60, 62, 85).

A more critical literature claims that while education and training schemes are necessary, they are insufficient for development. Scholars retort that lack of vocational skills is just one of the many problems young people, in particular women face, such as self-esteem, discrimination, lack of money to start, lack of market access, etc.: all of which need to be addressed as well. Hence, in short, the critics dispute the idea of VT as a magic wand that solves all kinds of problems. Senanu even disclaims the existence of a direct relationship between education, occupation and productivity (Senanu, 1996). Research findings have been oversimplified and generalised. If no jobs are available, education and training do not create them. Development economists emphasise the centrality of stable institutions as a major factor of growth (Birdsall, 2007: 579). Strong developmental states are needed. Leftwich attributes the lack of savings and investment within a country to the absence of such a state (Leftwich, 2006). A developmental state can be seen as a non-market mechanism that provides incentives for savings and investment and coordinate development policies to promote growth and thereby reduce poverty. Governments should have the political will to reform and to improve national performance (Cammack, 2007). The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality report in 2005 underlines this by stating that 'the education system cannot do it alone' (UN, 2005: 23). Scholars concur that 'education needs to be understood within its enabling environment and context' (King, Palmer, Hayman, 2005: 814).

There is no denial in any way of the importance of good in-depth education and training. What this paper does query are the conclusions so many people have drawn about what education can be: an engine for economic growth, a sure-fire route for wealth and prosperity. Education serves as a fundamental condition for growth, personal and societal, but just one link within a chain of conditions that ought to be addressed and met. First and foremost, as cited in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, 'education shall be free. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available'. Education in general, and VT in particular, if being at disposal for someone, it shall be not a financial burden to them. By contrast to Kenya, in Germany trainees earn wages while enrolled in an apprenticeship.

## 2. Vocational Training in the Context of Sex Workers

Vital to this paper is an HIV needs assessment, which was conducted in Botswana in 2007 by Sharma and O'Malley. This study reveals that encouraging women to access education and VT could reduce women's entry into CSW (Sharma and O'Malley, 2007). The recommendations of the findings to prevent entry into Sex Work ranged from building of self-esteem, providing relationship counselling, teaching about sex and sexuality and increasing the daily wage (Chwaane, 2007). Albeit, there are many sponsored VT programmes in Kenya, not many of those are tackling directly the issue of CSWs and of women at risk becoming CSWs. According to Ngware (2002: 21), in Africa, labour markets have become so competitive that specifically women should be assisted in entering such markets. He recommends training programmes aimed at encouraging and sensitising women. More particular on the CSW sphere, Joyce Kathambi, a Kenyan counsellor with the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), stated in a newspaper editorial in 2003 that women come for counselling because they want to find an escape route out of the sex industry and change their habits. In the same newspaper coverage, Pastor Kato suggests 'that the only way the trade can be reduced is to give the CSWs an alternative for what they do' (Njeri, 2003). In another newspaper article a young female CSW wishes to leave [the sex trade], 'but I have no alternative. If I had the means, I would like to become a tailor' (Njoki, 1999). One can literally stumble upon those uniform stories of CSWs wanting to escape, but not finding the means to it. Education to them is a privilege.

It is scarcely possible to reach a satisfactory conclusion about the economic significance of VT based on the sparse research findings of ex-trainees current working situations. For SOLWODI graduates the average monthly wage amounted to Ksh 4,000 (~37£) working as Hairdressers, Dressmakers, etc. Most of these women were at risk entering the sex business, some never did. Therefore, hardly any information on their income as CSWs is available. Elmore-Meegan and his colleagues conducted an exploratory survey among 475 Sex Workers in Nairobi. This study reveals that a CSW in a rural town would earn up to Ksh 4,800 (~45£) in a month, while a CSW in a town could earn four times as much (Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 54). Similar findings are presented by Njoki (1999), where a Kenyan CSW could earn anywhere between Ksh 4,000 and 6,000. It is less comprehensible from a financial point of view that women forego Sex Work looking at the near-time monthly income as CSW compared to

SOLWODI-targeted professions. However, autonomy, physically and mental well-being urges them on finding alternative work. It is obviously of interest to examine and compare the monetary situation, but money should not and is by far not the only key piece of information for evaluating Sex Work and its alternatives.

### 3. NGOs Discourse

When NGOs emerged nothing short of miracles have been expected. NGOs were exclusively viewed as crucial intermediary agents in the development process, the arms and legs of humanitarian need and as a means to address issues where state institutions 'failed'. In the eyes of the World Bank (1991: 135), NGOs 'have become an important force in the development process [mitigating] the costs of development countries' institutional weaknesses'. NGOs were and are seen as less bureaucratic; less burdened and corrupt than governments. Scholars such as Wagona Makoba who portray a very optimistic view of NGOs say that since African states have failed to strengthen their markets and deliver basic needs for the society, NGOs have become the vital alternative for fulfilling the 'development vacuum'. NGOs are seen as the vehicles of generating 'self-help solutions to problems of poverty and powerlessness of society' (Wagona Makoba, 2002). For proponents, as cited in Fisher (1997: 444)

*'NGOs have the capacity to efficiently transfer training and skills that assist individuals and communities to compete in markets, to provide welfare services to those who are marginalized by the market, to provide welfare services to those who are marginalized by the market, and to contribute democratization and the growth of a robust civil society.'*

Then, by the mid-1990s, a substantial body of critical literature began to develop. It alleges that NGOs undermine the role of the state, drain human resources away from the government, misinterpret the root causes, take development away from the local people and create dependency. Easterly, a strong critic of the negative elements of Northern funded aid and NGOs, referred to the Western world's past and permanent attempt to 'support' developing nations as the White Man's Burden and stated that 'the White Man's Burden emerged from the West's self-pleasing fantasy that we were the chosen ones to save the rest' (Easterly, 2006: 23). Alex de Waal suggests that 'the agency most determined to get the highest media profile obtains the most funds from donor', thus, 'prioritising its efforts to fund-raising, simultaneously



abandons scruples' (de Waal cited in Nugent, 2004: 353).

There is an increasing, observable ideological divide between neo-liberalism in favour of humanitarian internationalism versus the neo-comprador theory of its critics. 'The comprador acts as an agent, operating in the interests of international capitalism against the interests of the indigenous popular classes' (Hearn, 2007: 1098). In the words of Commins (2000), NGOs have become 'ladles in the global soup kitchen'. Donors, especially international donors, must accept that they can make matters worse.

*'It means moving beyond the idea that NGOs are to be strengthened solely to deliver services. The key is to support change in a way that both empowers the poor, and concomitantly promotes institutional reforms that enable the state to respond to increased public demand, so that people do not have to take to the streets to achieve their aims'* (Cammack: 2007: 610).

Fisher (1997: 446) remarks that 'NGOs are in danger of becoming the anti-politics machine of development treating local conditions as problems that require technical and not structural or political solutions'. Nevertheless, he admits, there is no simple or steady narrative of good NGOs facing bad governments (Fisher, 1997: 452). Obviously to Nugent (2004: 351) amongst others, 'one does not have to be entirely cynical to suppose that NGO, like all human organisations, had an interest in perpetuating their existence'.

Lately, the enthusiasm towards Africa's NGOs has begun to decline as the expectations of Western donors have failed to materialise. Africa's NGOs have not lived up to their expectations, development, it seems, has been unsuccessful (Fowler, 2000; Igoe and Kelsall, 2005; Manji and O'Coill: 2002: 568). Scholars worldwide agree that recipient governments should be driven by the needs of their people, and not by the desires of their donors.

#### 4. NGOs in the Context of Sex Workers and Vocational Training

The dominant context in which Sex Work has been discussed in social scientific literature and in the field of Africa is HIV prevention and human right issues. This is reflected by the landscape of NGOs on the subject. Most of the NGOs targeting SW focus on the health aspects, defend human rights, and challenge the stigmatisation. Sex Work, rather than being a

social concept, has become a health-oriented term. Accounts that address social concerns around Sex Workers and their lives are rare. Elmore-Meegan study indicates that women's self-help and income generation groups in Kenya often tend to exclude Sex Workers. However, the study specifically advocates that issues of alternative sources of income are important to address (Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 51, 50).

*'The economic and social conditions which create the necessity for Sex Work have been neglected, but are vital to address if women are to have other viable options to support themselves and their children'* (Elmore-Meegan, 2004: 56).

According to PlusNews, there is no organisation so far that has serviced the needs of Sex Workers, largely because of fear of aftermath from the wider community. Yahye, chairperson of the Somaliland National Youth Organisation says, 'it would be good if we could find a way to help them, but it is hard'. Hodan, a CSW, wants to learn new skills that would enable her to stop selling sex (PlusNews, 2009b). In Botswana, according to the study by Sharma and O'Malley, all CSWs interviewed not a single one was aware of any services targeting CSWs (Sharma and O'Malley, 2007: 51). Sharma and O'Malley only found two organisations in Botswana that specifically target female Sex Workers. Nkaikela, a Setswana word roughly translated as 'I can go myself', is a group of young women involved in HIV/AIDS education in order to ensure that women do not become vulnerable to the infection. The project besides aiming at providing an alternative livelihood for the group also provides opportunities for young women to receive training and acquire skills to support themselves. Matshelo Community Development Association (MCDA), a NGO that works with CSWs in Francistown, Botswana, is the second organisation identified in Sharma and O'Malley's investigation. However, MCDA targets merely the health aspects of CSW, for instance offering counselling and treatment for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and advice on how to reduce client numbers and negotiate consistent condom use. They do not provide vocational training and start-up capital, but make their clients aware of various government departments they could approach for funds.

Globally, there are many organisations that offer sponsored education and training. Some do support a comparable vulnerable clientele, but only very few focus on CSWs. For example, Medica mondiale ([www.medicamondiale.org](http://www.medicamondiale.org)) sponsors VT as well, but to traumatised women in war and crisis zones around the globe. Terre des femmes ([www.terre-des-femmes.de](http://www.terre-des-femmes.de)) cooperates with African women and girls who have experienced female genital cutting and offers them training. In Kenya there are projects funded by international agencies, such as the

International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH), CEPED ([www.ceped.org](http://www.ceped.org)) or by local organisations such as the Kenyan Salvation army church which assist CSWs. In addition, NGOs tend to prefer group-based rather than an individualistic approach, micro-loans for groups instead of sponsoring VT for one. King articulates in 1996 that 'many NGOs have an almost inbuilt hesitation to help individual entrepreneurs' (King, 1996: 179). According to the NGOs Co-ordination Board in Kenya, there are currently fifteen registered NGOs operating with CSWs (see appendix). There is no organisation directly targeting SWs but SOLWODI. The majority is centred on health facets. It can be speculated with a high probability that SOLWODI is amongst the minority worldwide which are engaging in the social aspects of CSWs, working directly in a developmental approach to SWs and are offering *inter alia* sponsored VT to them.

## 5. Evaluation of SOLWODI's Vocational Training

SOLWODI's VT initiative offers sponsored VT to a very vulnerable group where lack of money prevents them from gaining a vocational education. Reviewing the literature demonstrates that there are few programmes directly targeting CSWs in a developmental approach. Indubitably, SOLWODI's attempts a high goal, trying to lift their clientele out of poverty and out of the sex industry. For this, SOLWODI looks also at the individual client, not only offering group loans, but in particular seeking to individualise success by sponsoring training to a single person. My research shows that SOLWODI sponsored VT to 389 young women in the last ten years, of whom 23 percent are currently working in their trained crafts. More than half of SOLWODI's trainees received training as Hairdressers/ Cosmetologist. Gender-stereotyped crafts such as Hairdressing, Dressmaking, and Childhood Studies are the courses where most of the women train in. There are some who have ventured into male dominated trades such as Car Mechanics, Electrical Wiring, but those only represent 3 percent. Master craftsmen interviewed in an ILO/ IPEC Kenyan study on VT in 2006 indicated that several factors hinder girls from joining the traditional male dominated sectors. These are: cultural practices (45 percent), societal attitudes (36 percent), lack of information and awareness (3 percent), lack of fees for training (2 percent) and others, e.g. lack of opportunities (13 percent) (Mutie, 2006: 43). The major push-out factor for the small number of cases where it is known was pregnancy. The interviewees in this research signalled that also poverty, trying to make ends meet, peer pressure, lack of motivation and devotion play a crucial role why trainees quit. Ngware (2002) confirmed that the majority abandoned VT because of financial problems.

Indiscipline was ranked as second reason for dropping out. Other notable causes were alternative form of training, pregnancy and failing examinations. Not only these endogenous factors are forcing trainees to drop out, but there are also inefficient institutions (Ngware, 2002: 21, 31). Graduation rates among Kenyan VT institutes have ranged between 39 percent and 77 percent, unlike SOLWODI's much higher completion rate of 82 percent (Ngware, 2002: 29). Moreover, the research shows that the more schooling background trainees have, the higher the probability for them passing their VT as well. Every single schooling year seems to count. Dropout ratio of SOLWODI's trainees is inversely proportional to attended schooling years.

SOLWODI aims to promote development. Fowler agrees (1996: 58) that development, 'in the sense of sustained improvement in the lives of poor or marginalised people, does not take place 'in a linear way under the influence of one single intervention'. DfID refers to development to:

*'efforts, by developed and developing countries, to bring people out of poverty and so reduce how much their country relies on overseas aid. Many different things can contribute to development which reduces poverty, such as settling conflicts, increasing trade and improving health and education.'*

Obviously, one could be sceptical of assertions that the pattern found in this study is enough to demonstrate that training pays. Indeed, human development results from a complex mix of processes. This means that the actual change in people's lives is contingent: it is an open system, influenced by many things. Hence, NGO projects are only one part of larger processes of change. Projects are not the cause of development and the measures of development are very complex: various forces are in play. Amongst others, Owigar and Guest suggest that development does not come by providing aid. 'There are no short-cuts, the only way that large numbers people can be employed and large scale eradication is through industrialization' (Owigar, 2003: 21). And Guest clarifies (2005: 162) 'trade has far more potential'.

It seems just plausible to argue that the programme failed because merely 23 percent of the 389 trainees found an alternative source of income. Surely, first and foremost the definition of success and failure lies in the eyes of the beholder. As Mrs. Akinyi, the CEO of SOLWODI says, 'and if I just helped one out of 100, I will be very grateful'. SOLWODI's VT programme is one effective tool, although more of an initial step within a spectrum of activities needed to be addressed simultaneously. Yes, SOLWODI's VT is worth continuing; however, it does not

always live up to expectations. Wastage in terms of inefficiency does jeopardize the overall achievements. SOLWODI's dilemma is not only that it keeps no records on dropouts, but it does not follow-up on the overall clientele base. Although, SOLWODI has paid almost 400 VTs, the NGO did not follow-up on their clientele concerns. It is argued that with the unfortunately small amount of input data available on former clients there is no guarantee that VT is necessarily used 'productively', in the sense of an escape route out of sex industry. However, the answer could be 'yes, in theory', but not imminently. Some women received VT, have not returned to CSW and are working in their training area; but for others this did not happen. Extrapolation is always risky, and this paper does not try to extrapolate. No significant pattern was found which indicates that VT does have a huge impact on the majority of SOLWODI's clientele. What the result do show, however, is that all trainees of whom questionnaires were received valued sponsored education very highly. There is groundless optimism shown by women who are still in training or just recently graduated. Nevertheless, the return on investment ought to be higher. However, beyond profitability, there is more value in VT especially to the individual recipient, such as empowerment.

Empowerment is an expression that was popularised within the women's movement in the mid 1970s. Empowerment should boost the physical, mental and emotional strength of individuals and enabling them an increased sense of control over one's life. SOLWODI's motto is 'changing lives through empowerment'. Not only does SOLWODI offer sponsored VT but also facilitates extra curriculum activities such as choir, drama and football as a means to raise self-esteem, self-reliance and self-determination. For individuals this sponsored VT is of ever-growing importance. When analysing the qualitative data at hand, I could sense above all the hope that sponsored training grants to its trainees. All the hurdles in their lives could not dim a woman's hope for a better tomorrow. Vocational Training for all my respondents was a myriad of positive feelings: hope and happiness, aim and ardour. SOLWODI empowered those women by ensuring access to training, by trying to make them get out of submissiveness and by instilling confidence and respect in them. Before joining SOLWODI, the young clientele had a life of no future, no possibility, and no money, referred to as 'zero life' (Vigh, 2006). It was a life without recognition: Many are in need of significant emotional healing. They want to forget the past, are constantly negotiating about their past, and are keen to start a new life and new identity forever. They are looking for a turning point in their lives. These young women simply need education and a supportive environment in order to become active agents in their lives.

### C. Recommendations for SOLWODI

Above all, in order to determine success, challenges and possible changes, one first has to evaluate the current situation and afterwards, continuously assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the programme under study. SOLWODI should allow for evaluation as part of the overall monitoring exercise that will help stimulate self-reflection. According to Fowler (1996: 61), 'unlike commercial companies, developmental NGOs do not have 'bottom lines' of market feedback, profitability, and return on financial investment'. SOLWODI's service should be assessed by those affected. Stakeholders of an NGO, such as clients, donors, and training institutions should have an opportunity to share their words. 'Enabling stakeholders to come together can be a healthy experience for all concerned' (Fowler, 1996: 63). Despite SOLWODI's ten years experience in VT, trace studies of SOLWODI's clients are very weak to non-existent. Owigar (2003: 80) and Ngware (2002) describe a similar situation for most training institutions in Kenya, where it seems that colleges are not concerned about what happens to their trainees. The success of SOLWODI's VT programme has been rather haphazard due to lack of information about the former clientele. SOLWODI should start implementing a process of periodical evaluation, including follow-ups on clients, and meetings with stakeholders. SOLWODI should communicate to its donors that sufficient resources have to be allocated to the overall process.

Concomitantly, in order to minimise duplication and wastage of resources, the system needs horizontal co-ordination amongst NGOs. SOLWODI should opt for a unified policy with other NGOs operating in a similar field, e.g. information on training institutes and on marketable courses could be managed jointly. Among others, SOLWODI could share experiences with CSWs, identify lessons learned, and form horizontal alliances to create a greater influence in the public sphere and to maximise resources. SOLWODI is required to take a leading role in co-ordinating matters, internally and externally. It is also vital to reduce wastage by constantly filing client information, e.g. in a database and a back-up system should be continuously in place to avoid loss of data.

In tandem, SOLWODI should focus more on quality instead of quantity. The tyranny of numbers has brought forth the perception that the more you spend the better you must have done. The more women you sponsored the better. However, it may be more effective to have

sponsored VT to 50 women, creaming off the most devoted and most in need of assistance of a pool of candidates, addressing their needs efficiently, providing career guidance to and knowing the whereabouts of them, instead of paying 100 women the initial education, but after that losing 'interest'. According to Fowler (2000: 600) NGOs recognize

*'that the fear of probably being smaller, while being more effective, with greater impact through altering the behaviour of others, creates anxiety. Bigger must mean more impact and hence equals actual achievements. In such thinking, concern for size inexorably feeds on itself'.*

Such initiatives would give SOLWODI and the women more time, energy and money to pursue this properly. It is acknowledged that the first priority is to address the basic needs of the trainees. For instance, money given for transport fare to the colleges is, in some cases, used to satisfy other basic needs before being utilized for the purpose given. The research of Gysels et al. (2002) shows how much financial struggles explain why young women engage in Sex Work. This research discussed economic realities experienced by the trainees, where in most cases, the individual struggles not only for herself but for family well-being and survival; to clothe, feed and educate her dependant, either her own children or which is typical for orphaned trainees her siblings. If a trainee is the sole breadwinner in her family, SOLWODI should look into sponsoring projects especially for her siblings and consider the interplay of personal development, previous life experiences and situational factors. One initiative could be that an orphaned trainee comes to SOLWODI with her siblings after each training day and is offered a free meal. This simple idea, which is implemented worldwide by Scottish International Relief and is known as Mary's Meal ([www.marysmeals.org](http://www.marysmeals.org)) could encourage trainees to attend vocational training and in chorus get her siblings fed.

This may however promote a culture of dependency that is truly unwanted by SOLWODI but evident with its clients. The clientele has been coming with the idea that they were receiving and not offering anything in return. Actual, trainee signs an agreement to repay the sponsored VT amount accordingly to mutually agreed terms. Nonetheless, given the job market in Kenya, there is no penalty if the trainee cannot repay the fees and allowances are made. This policy has spread words and as of now it is 'written in stone' that VT is free and you get, but do not have to give. Of course, the mere fact that the one party is giving the money and is a 'donor' while the other party receives the money and is a 'recipient' is a disempowering and asymmetrical relationship. In spite of this, there is sufficient room for manoeuvre to tackle this

undesirable culture. Former trainees e.g. should be encouraged to share their experiences with women who want to undergo training in form of a career open day, for example. Caterer trainees could cook for SOLWODI staff, for the football team, and simultaneously gain experience. Dressmakers should be provided with opportunities to prove their skills. Similarly the Business Management trainees can help in writing business plans or tutoring to SOLWODI's support groups. There are many creative possibilities in which SOLWODI's trainees can give back without being exploited or burdened. However, first and foremost, they have to be aware again that they should give back. The culture between SOLWODI and its trainees should represent a relationship more symbiotic than dependant with a focus on personal disciplines and responsibility.

Along these lines, the paper advocates that SOLWODI should make more use of its ex-trainees. SOLWODI's clients have high expectations, yet they should recognize that SOLWODI has high hopes and expectations from them as well. SOLWODI should start harvesting what it has sown, simply by providing a platform for the women to prosper. There is a need to explore the possibilities of joint entrepreneurship with former trainees at SOLWODI. If there is a successful, qualified tailoring artisan who received VT from SOLWODI some years back, why not send some trainees to her to practise and gain on-the-job experience in a real environment; or assign mentors, trainees with SOLWODI's to new women at SOLWODI for providing career and life guidance? There is enough potential in the young women who benefited from SOLWODI's programme to supply inspiration for others to emulate. SOLWODI should plunge into this untapped field and develop people-to-people projects. For example, there has been discussion of a SOLWODI-owned shop. A shop in downtown Mombasa where SOLWODI's clientele could offer its services and products, e.g. tailoring clothes, providing food and bakery items, supplying services such as hairdressing, cleaning. SOLWODI should not only keep this idea in view but start developing it in detail and bring it to life.



## V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The value of this paper is its premier feature to empirically assess and evaluate for the first time SOLWODI's VT initiative. The research shows that SOLWODI has sponsored 389 young women within the last ten years. The implications of this paper need to be read within the discursive context of SOLWODI and SOLWODI only. With the Kenyan government and economy not providing free VT to its citizens, SOLWODI's empowering approach towards its vulnerable and sensitive clientele is the need of the hour. SOLWODI's clients are highly disadvantaged: they are poor, and stigmatised because of their exposure to CSW and discriminated against for being potentially HIV positive. These young women have not been given a chance to prove their abilities. There is a need to foster and nurture their capabilities and talents in order to offer them choice and freedom from a life of compulsion and despair. This is where the importance of what SOLWODI is offering to them lies. On surface, the quantitative figures seem to indicate that VT is a failure. However, this paper tried to illustrate an eclectic phenomenological analysis enriching quantitative data with qualitative. Looking at single cases in detail I have to almost unanimously conclude that SOLWODI's effort is exceptionally effective for the psychological well-being of its clientele.

It is a healthy sign that SOLWODI agreed to this survey. Unfortunately, the limited data set on SOLWODI's clients does not allow the drawing of irrefutable conclusions. SOLWODI did not follow-up on its sponsored clientele. Thus, does VT really help young SWs to escape the sex industry? There is no robust data available as discussed in Chapter IV. It was cumbersome to collect information to at least gain limited insight to the world of these women. Information on the working situation after VT was retrievable for merely 33 percent of SOLWODI's trainees, out of whom barely 90 trainees (23 percent) are working now. However, this does not automatically imply that those 90 women left the sex industry. The point of emphasis here is that SOLWODI should have information on their trainees available to prove its effectiveness and sustainability. The developmental approach of SOLWODI is effective; however, it should be addressed in a more efficient way.

SOLWODI's VT evaluation also attempted to bring out the voices of young Kenyan women in such a way as to create understanding of their lives, aspirations and opportunities.

Evidently, I do not claim to represent all the young women working as CSWs or are at risk to do so, the sample was constrained by temporal and practical factors and solely focused on the clientele of SOLWODI, but I do claim to represent the voices heard in the way they had presented themselves. Their fragmented experiences have been pieced together from questionnaires, interviews and informal conversations. Through this mixed methodology the research findings show that although there was hardly any information on the overall working situation of trainees, there were signs of empowerment. The qualitative narratives revealed their search for a 'better life', their hopes and their dreams. I was very grateful that so many women trusted me with their life-stories and gave their full cooperation.

The impetus to conduct this survey came from me; and I found my truth. This research enabled me to look into an area, namely Commercial Sex Work, into which I would have not dared to otherwise look. It is easy to dismiss SOLWODI's clients as downtrodden, marginal and immoral, when in fact they were simply 'normal' women responding to poverty. None of the women set out to be a social outcast. Poverty propelled most of SOLWODI's clients into their unhappy lives. But there is more than only material poverty; there is also emotional poverty, intellectual poverty, and spiritual poverty. Life before was a bitter means to a better end. I specifically wanted to do in-depth fieldwork to answer the question of how effective SOLWODI's VT programme is. All clients of SOLWODI experienced lack of education, and many of them lack of hope and lack of love. SOLWODI offered education to all of them and filled them with high spirits by giving them hope. A few even made friends at SOLWODI – how much more effective does an NGO has to be? SOLWODI's VT programme has changed the lives of its 389 trainees. In this respect, the evaluation paints a successful story as shown and interpreted.

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## APPENDICES

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## 2. Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BSA	British Sociology Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPED	Centre Population and Development
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CITC	Christian Industrial Technical Centre
COVAW	Coalition on Violence Against Women
CSW	Commercial Sex Work/ Commercial Sex Worker
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DfID	Department for International Development
F4	Form4
FG	Focus Group
FHI	Family Health International
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoK	Government of Kenya
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICRH	International Centre for Reproductive Health
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
Ksh	Kenyan Shilling
MCDA	Matshelo Community Development Association
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
Phd	Doctor of Philosophy
SOLWODI	Solidarity with Women in Distress
SRA	Social Research Association
Std.	Standard
SW	Sex Work/ Sex Worker
TIVET	Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VT	Vocational Training
YP	Youth Polytechnic

### 3. Methodology: Questionnaire

To solicit information on the trainees' background and their opinion of VT questionnaire, with closed and open-ended items was developed. Below the questionnaire for women, who completed their sponsored training with SOLWODI.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING - completed

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

D.O.B: \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_years)

Vocational Training:            Institution: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Course: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Start/End Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Attachment: \_\_\_\_\_  
    Completed when: \_\_\_\_\_

---

How much did/do you **value** your VT received?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider it **useful**?      1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very much)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why did you decide this course/ this institution?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do your **work** now? What, where, how much do you earn?

\_\_\_\_\_

Now, looking back, would you **have done anything else**? Could have helped SOLWODI in another way more effective? Would have other VT courses/ institutions fit better?

Which services received by SOLWODI were/ are beneficial?

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**Living Situation** then/ now? Dependants?

<b>Life/ Career Aspirations</b>	
before SOLWODI (when _____?)	now after VT

<b>Life/ Career Destinations</b>	
before SOLWODI	now after VT

Any **recommendation**? Is your college recommendable?

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Miscellaneous

## 4. NGOs registered in Kenya working with Commercial Sex Workers

Source: NGO Co-ordination Board, Nairobi, Kenya, 2009

OrgName	PostalAddress	Telephone	Email	Objectives
UNITE TO FIGHT AIDS ORGANIZATION	P.O. Box 87 LITEIN	+254-361-54009		To prevent by all means the HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases(STDs)
NETWORK FOR ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH OF AFRICA (NAYA) KENYA CHAPTER	P.O. Box 46042 - 00100 GPO Nairobi	+254 - 020 - 2715002 / 2710705	fpa@nbi.iskenya.com	To contribute towards the creation of an enabling environment that fosters the empowerment of adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights in Kenya.
AIDS CARE AND CONTROL ORGANIZATION	P.O.BOX 9567-00300 RONALD NGALA	+254-20 312881		Create Aids and HIV Awareness, Caring for people with HIV/AIDS and other sexual Health problems, Control the spread of HIV/AIDS
RAYS OF HOPE	P.O.Box 6584-00100 Nairobi	+254 - 720 - 914372.	raysofhope@fasternail.com, raysofhope123@yahoo.com	To offer the youth positive entertainment hence encouraging positive thinking thus curbing social evils like drug abuse,sex abuse,School dropout rate and teenage pregnancy.
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH ACTION NETWORK	P.O.BOX 52865, NAIROBI, 00200	254 20 786757721 268304	ehankenya@yahoo.com	To promote and support sustainable livelihoods through environmental management & sustainable agriculture,nutrition, awareness of HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES PAYSANS	P.o box 46282-00100 Nbi	+254 733 746680, 722		To promote the benefit of people living in rural areas and also to sensitive others affected by the HIV/Aids epidemic without distinction of sexual,religious or other persuasions by working with local authorities.
POSITIVE WOMEN GROUP	P.O. Box 67123 - 00200 Nairobi	+254 - 735 - 804978	pw.gayanza@yahoo.com	To reduce the spread of HIV amongst the sexually active young women and to mitigate the impacts of AIDS.
SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN IN DISTRESS	P O Box 17038, Mombasa	254-11-222327	solwodi@ikenya.com	To empower women and help improve thje socio-economic, health and legal situation of women and girls who are at risk or who have already resorted to commercial sex work.
YOUTH INTERNATIONAL	P O BOX 53542, NAIROBI	254-20-332383 /		To promote health and socio-economic development among the Youth and sensitize them on alcoholism, drug abuse, sexuality, environment
NUTRITIONISTS WITHOUT BORDERS	P.O. Box 30924 GPO Nairobi	254 023752727	nutritionistswithoutborders@yahoo.uk	To provide nutritional support to all needy individuals without regard to race, religion, sex, ethnicity or country of origin.
NATIONALCHRISTIAN YOUTH NETWORK	P.O.BOX 5770-00200 NAIROBI	020-557025	ncynetwork@excite.com	to bring together and unite youth without regard to nationality race,color,tribe, sex,political affiliation or determination and encourage them to participate in national building.
ORGANIZATION MONDIALE DES PAYSANS	P.O.Box 21894-00400 Nairobi P.O.Box 50095-00200 Nairobi	+254-020-318946/0724-356810	administration-omp@mail.com	To promote the benefit of people living in rural areas and also to sensitive others affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic without distinction of sexual, religious or other persuasions by working with local authorities
SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMMES ON POVERTY REDUCTION FOR THE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY	P.O. Box 35 kahuro Murang'a	254 722 590863		To promote and up lift the living standard financially and economically to the marginalised community e.g. pastoralists, commercial sex workers, the orphans, youth.
ENGENDER SPORTS ORGANIZATION	P.O. Box 75960 Nairobi 00200	254 20 213979	muin@wananchi.com	Create awareness to young girls and women on issues related to sex abuse and HIV/AIDS
HEALTHY TEENS ORGANIZATION	P.O.Box 3410 - 00200 Nairobi	+254 - 0722 - 614929		To discourage sexual activities especially among the teenage population in schools. This will be done by holding activities encouraging parent teen communication, provide knowledge to teens, concerning sexuality and encourage teens to have responsible

## DECLARATION

The dissertation is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature