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## **Agricultural Capacity Development Opportunities for Women and Youth in Kenya: The Role of Open Distance and e-learning**

Sammy M. Mutisya

Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Management; Maasai Mara University

P.O Box 861-20500, Narok, Kenya

[muteti@mmarau.ac.ke](mailto:muteti@mmarau.ac.ke)

### **Abstract**

The agricultural sector has the capacity to create jobs for the many unemployed Kenyan women and youths by promoting entrepreneurial innovativeness along the agricultural value chain. This can be achieved if women and youth actively involved in agriculture have access to training opportunities for agricultural skill development. One of the ways of increasing access to agricultural training is through Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL). This study assessed Kenya's women and youths' preparedness to embrace ODEL for agricultural skill development. The descriptive research design was used. Qualitative and Quantitative data were collected from 325 women and 240 youths sampled from women and youth groups supported by three Non-Governmental organizations. Descriptive data analysis procedures were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were adult learners actively involved in agriculture and other agricultural commercial activities. The agricultural training needs of the respondents were in agribusiness, entrepreneur skills and marketing. Women and youths indicated that getting training support in agriculture was difficult but were willing to meet their training needs in agriculture. A few respondents invested income acquired from farming activities in building their capacity in agriculture. The amount of money they were willing to pay for capacity building in agriculture ranged between 1,001 and 10,000 shillings, which is way below the institutional fee for a certificate course in agriculture. The mode of training preferred by most respondents was face-to-face, followed by mobile learning, online learning, blended learning, telecourse and correspondence. Respondents had access to smartphones, Internet connectivity and electrical power and were willing to spend between 1-50 shillings daily on Internet bundles. The study concludes that the majority of women and youth actively involved in agriculture lacked opportunities and financial resources to develop their agricultural skills. The study also concludes that women and youth actively involved in agriculture have access to online learning infrastructure and can use ODEL for skill development in agriculture. The study recommends that organizations supporting women and youths in agriculture provide them with scholarships to upgrade their agricultural skills. Agricultural training institutions should also provide short courses in agriculture for women and youth in agriculture delivered through ODEL.

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**Keywords:** agriculture, open learning, women and youth

