This study was done in Imenti South District, Meru County. The study sought to analyze the gender responsiveness of the strategies employed in banana production and marketing and then recommend on the way forward. This was achieved through identifying the roles and responsibilities played by men and women in banana production and marketing as well as assessing the gender constraints therein. A random sample of 125, 62 men and 63 women farmers cum traders were drawn from the 3 larger divisions in Imenti South namely Nkuene, Abogeta and Igoji. Purposive sampling was used to select eight key informants while 47 farmers were randomly sampled for FGDs. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires were used for the household surveys. The questionnaires were administered face to face as this provided an opportunity for further probing. Interview schedules for the FGDs and Key Informants were prepared depending on the topics to be covered. The activities in banana farms as well as marketing in various channels were observed, Secondary data on banana production and marketing was collected from the Ministry of Agriculture offices in the region.

The study found that women play a vital role as banana producers and marketers, and as agents of food security and income. Yet relative to men they have less access to productive assets such as land, labour, inputs, credit, transport, trainings and extension services. The study also shows that the strategies that are employed in banana production and marketing are not gender responsive. Women have access to and control of banana income, and they are hiring more land to plant bananas. However, this has caused gender conflict in the intra-household allocation of duties especially in resource poor households. Men have been disempowered while women are more burdened since they solely perform household chores and at the same time, are actively participating in productive activities. Men are leading in banana production and marketing due to various factors that favour them as compared to women. E.g. they are in
organized banana marketing groups where they receive banana production and marketing trainings, own TC nurseries and are adding value to bananas due to membership in organized groups. Resource poor women are unable to join organized banana groups due to reproductive roles as well as lack of capital to pay the group's fee. The study therefore suggests that towards sustainable production and marketing of bananas amongst the small scale farmers for realization of poverty reduction, it is paramount to empower men and women especially after the shift to commercial. This will ensure that the needs and concerns of men and women are considered. The study recommends collaboration of the existing agencies, NALEP and SHEP to initiate gender trainings through gender responsive farmer groups.