

Abstract

Globally, poverty is a social misery spread in every socio-economic zone. Since independence, the government of Kenya, local and international organizations have implemented many policies and plans in the fight against poverty. However, these efforts have had limited success as many Kenyans particularly in the rural areas still live below poverty line. The purpose of this study was to examine the contribution of self-help group approach towards poverty reduction in Machakos County, focusing on unique Caritas supported self-help groups. Descriptive survey design using both qualitative and quantitative methods was applied. The study targeted a population of 6462 Self-Help Group members drawn from 359 groups from three sub counties (Machakos, Yatta and Athi River). Using Krejcie and Morgan table, the study arrived at 364 members who were sampled through stratified sampling technique. Household questionnaires and key informant interview guides were used to collect data in a face-to-face interview between 9th of May and 18th of June 2016. The results of the study indicate that selfhelp groups encourage members to engage in income generating activities and that these activities have economic gain for the members and therefore, poverty reduction. In addition, the study established that self-help groups enhance saving culture among the members which in turn promotes investments. Several challenges affecting these groups such as insufficient capital, poor leadership and management were also noted. The report concluded that Caritas supported self-help groups have positive impact on poverty reduction in Machakos County. The study recommended that sponsors of these groups need to work closely with them and address the challenges they face to make them effective in the fight against poverty. The study further recommended that this new model of self-help groups should be spread to other communities in Kenya.