AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF SELF-HELP GROUPS TOWARDS POVERTY REDUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF CARITAS SUPPORTED GROUPS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Globally, poverty is a social misery contaminated in every socio-economic zone. Poverty spreads itself among all over the deprived section of the population. Since independence, the government, local and international organizations have implemented many policies and plans to fight poverty. However, these efforts have had limited success as many Kenyans particularly in the rural areas still live below poverty line. The aim of this study was to examine the contribution of self-help group approach in poverty reduction in Machakos County, focusing on Caritas supported self-help groups. The specific objectives of the study were: to identify the nature of income generating activities undertaken by self-help groups towards poverty reduction, to determine the effects of income generating activities for self-help groups on poverty reduction, to establish the influence of Self-help groups on the access to microcredit by group members as a poverty reduction strategy, and to establish the challenges faced by self-help groups in the implementation of their strategies towards poverty reduction. Empowerment theory was used in the study to explain how self-help groups have transformed the lives of their members both socially and economically. The study was guided by a descriptive survey design using both qualitative and quantitative methods. 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. The key informants were selected purposively. 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 study employed expert opinion techniques to ascertain reliability and validity of data. Descriptive statistics such percentages, and frequencies were used to analyze quantitative data with the help of Microsoft Excel while content analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data. Summary results were presented in tables, percentages, and figures. The study found that self-help groups encourage members to engage in income generating activities and that these activities have economic gain for the members. The study also found that the groups enhance savings 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 towards poverty reduction in Machakos County. The study recommended that sponsors of these groups need to work closely with the groups 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.