

The introduction of Free Primary Education by the Kenyan Government in January 2003 was a strategy that saw the influx of yet more pupils in crowded classrooms in primary schools. The abolition of all levies rekindled hope for and turned lives around for all the children even those who in the past would not have had the opportunity to access education. It is required that their special needs be addressed. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the participation of orphaned children in primary education in Kikuyu Division, Kiambu District, taking a case of King'eero Primary School. The study was qualitatively oriented. Purposive sampling was used to select the school, teachers and pupils who participated in the study. All the 26 orphaned children (15 males and 11 females) in upper primary in King'eero Primary School participated in the study, the headteacher and four teachers (one female and three males) of Classes Five, Six, Seven and Eight with most numbers of orphans. Snowball sampling was used to select five orphans not attending school. Data were collected from parents or guardians, as well as opinion leaders, including the area chief, assistant chief and six sampled religious leaders, (three females and three males). Two social workers also participated in the study. The study utilised an interview guide and a focus group discussion guide as the main tools for data collection. The data collected were analysed qualitatively, using the thematic analysis approach. The major finding was that the enrolment, attendance and achievement of the orphaned children were low and that the stakeholders were not doing enough for the orphans. The study established that although some orphaned children had enrolled in school, there were more who were still out of school. The study established that factors such as: Lack of basic needs to meet the minimum school requirements, community perception (when the cause of death is known) constrained the enrolment, attendance and achievement of the orphans. It also emerged that after enrolment the school does not show commitment to the ideals in promotion of education of the orphaned children. The school has few initiatives to assist the orphans. However, individual teachers in the school provide assistance to orphaned children in isolated cases. The study revealed that the community of King'eero is not proactive in enhancing participation of orphans. The responsibility of the orphans has been left to the immediate guardians/parent or relative. As per these findings and conclusions, the study recommends that the orphans' basic needs ought to be met by guardians, the school and the community at large. They also need to be provided with psychosocial support. More so, those in school need to be followed up and motivated. The study recommends that the community and teachers should be sensitised to the needs of the orphaned children. The latter should also provide guidance and counselling services to cater for the orphaned children's emotional problems. The study concludes that orphans needs must be met for them to participate effectively in the primary school education and to enable them to become positive contributors to society