

Abstract

Over the years, HIV and AIDS pandemic has brought enormous burden upon the lives of many people throughout the world. Since the first cases of AIDS were identified in 1981, millions of people have lost their lives. An estimated 70 million people are living with HIV and AIDS by now and more than 35 million people have died. As the burden of HIV and AIDS increases in different communities of the world, new organizations are being formed to help curb its impact. Kenya has about 1.6 million people living with HIV and AIDS and in 1999 it was declared a national disaster. It is in response to this that many development partners including the religious organizations, the government and NGOs came up with programmes to fight the scourge, yet there seems to be little success as new infections continue to be experienced. Christianity being the religion followed by the majority of the Kenyans and the Church being the most trusted institution has not been left behind as efforts to curb this pandemic is made. This study assessed the effectiveness of Church based initiated programmes in curbing HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Selected programmes in Meru South Sub-County were used for the purpose of this study. These were Redeemed Gospel Church, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Salvation Army Church and Baptist Church. The target population was 1040 subjects comprising 1000 Church members and 40 beneficiaries. The Church ministers/pastors were our key informants. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussions. Systematic random sampling procedure was used to select 100 Church members. Beneficiaries of the HIV and AIDS programmes initiated by the Church were obtained using snowball sampling method. The findings were that the selected programmes provided services such as HIV prevention education, orphan care, support of people living with and personally affected by HIV and AIDS, prevention activities that involved campaigns, and caring for the affected and infected. The programmes were found out to be successful particularly in supporting the people orphaned by HIV and AIDS, reducing stigma, organizing training, seminars and workshops, conducting voluntary counselling and testing among others. They were found to be effective in curbing HIV and AIDS, though they face the challenge of lack of adequate funding. There was also lack of trained personnel which hamper the effective implementation of these programmes. If the government, Church, development partners and other well-wishers support these religious initiated programmes the war against HIV/AIDS pandemic can be easily won as they are effective.