

# **A Gender Community Outreach for Girls Living in Vulnerable Contexts: Experiences from School Literacy Clubs in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

The Kenya Constitution (2010) has deliberately attempted to remedy the traditional exclusion of women and has promoted their full involvement in every aspect of growth and development. It is indeed true that when women have the freedom to reach their full potential, families and by extension communities experience exponential growth. Despite such efforts by the Kenyan government, young girls in rural Kenya continue to suffer and endure, gender exploitation and child labour due to poverty and lack of alternative means of livelihoods. Girls in some parts of Tharaka Nithi County suffer from poor access to education and health services caused by high poverty levels. Such levels of poverty and the patriarchal systems are responsible for the marginalization of girls on matters health and education in favour of the boy child. This paper presents the efforts made to empower girls in this context to voice their story through literacy clubs. Specifically, the paper discusses the girls' use of literacy clubs to voice the challenges they face in their educational pursuit, the use of literacy clubs to voice the nature of discrimination they face and to empower and build their resilience. Data was collected from a sample of form one and two girls from five Sub-county schools in Tharaka Nithi County. The data collected was analysed qualitatively and the key themes in relation to the plight of girls in this context identified. The paper presents the research process, discusses the findings and key implications of the findings on the emancipation of the girl child at the local as well as the global scene.

**Key Words: Gender, Literacy clubs, Access to education and health, Tharaka North, Kenya.**

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<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this paper with the title, “**Amplifying the Plight of Girls in Vulnerable Contexts: Experiences from School Literacy Clubs**” was presented in the 11<sup>th</sup> PALFA conference in Kampala, Uganda in August 2019 and later submitted for publication. The current paper has been revised following the completion of the project.