

**WOMEN AND THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY AMONG THE  
THARAKA OF EASTERN KENYA, 1963-2010**

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## ABSTRACT

The study focused on the impact of poverty on Tharaka women; examined factors affecting women's efforts to alleviate poverty in Tharaka from 1963 to 2010. The study established women's survival strategies in poverty stricken Tharaka. The period covered by the study was between 1963 when Kenya became independent, inheriting the problem of poverty from her former colonial master. 1963 is also the year when Mzee Jomo Kenyatta started campaigning against poverty in Kenya. 2010 is when Kenya's parliament passed legislation aimed at devolving government and power, equalization of resources among the communities. Literature review focused on general views by various writers about poverty, the various activities that women involve themselves in the fight against poverty, the political factors that influence their effort to fight poverty, the social-cultural factors and the impact of the environment on food production. The study was guided by the Historical Materialism theory. The study employed the Ex- post facto research design. A sample of eighty women married and unmarried, working and self employed and those who were active in special fields like pottery, basketry, weaving and trade was sampled. Twenty men were selected and interviewed to check any biases in the information provided by women. The instruments used to collect the data were interview schedules, observation methods, and questionnaires. Archival and secondary sources were also consulted. Data obtained from oral sources was corroborated with data obtained from the archival and secondary sources. Data was analyzed using qualitative method. Qualitative data obtained from the oral interview was transcribed into written text by merging the notes taken during interviews into a single coherent description of the discussions. The findings identified different causes of persistent poverty among Tharaka people. The study concluded that factors which are political, socio-cultural and environmental have contributed to the poverty in Tharaka. The study therefore recommended that the Constitution implementation commission should ensure that the Kenyan constitution is fully implemented in Tharaka to provide facilities and stop practices that hinder the girl child from accessing education. Ministry of land should complete land demarcation in Tharaka. Agricultural Extension officer should educate women farmers on good agricultural practices to help improve food production. The Ministry of water and natural resources to start irrigation project in Tharaka to complement women's effort in the area because rain failure is one of the causes of poverty in Tharaka. Ministry of roads should complete the road linking Tharaka to the Meru-Embu-Nairobi highway to link Tharaka with the rest of the country.