ABSTRACT

Globally, the role of resident associations (RAs) as a social organization to uplift community services, community empowerment and cooperation are recognized. In Kenya, contributions of RAs in provision of services such as garbage collection, security and advocacy roles within informal settlements have been documented, yet little is known regarding their use as a livelihood strategy in informal settlements. Residents of Obunga informal settlement in Kisumu County are worst hit not only in terms of access to services but also livelihood. It is not known how they use their RA, Obunga Resident Association (ORA), as a livelihood strategy. Thus, this study specifically sought to describe the nature of Obunga Residents Association, examine the contribution of Obunga Residents Association to the livelihood of its members and lastly explored the challenges faced by the association. The study was guided by Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital theory employing a descriptive design. Israel’s formula was used to calculate the sample size of 98 respondents out of the study population of 4,473 households for semi-structured interviews. Further, the study purposively sampled 9 members of ORA for key informant interview. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and presented in frequencies, tables and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis and presented in textual descriptions and illustrations using verbatim quotations. The study established that 97% of respondents agreed that ORA is a resident association whose membership is defined by being a resident of Obunga informal settlement. The association depends on volunteer members for discharge of responsibilities and implementation of essential activities and has a constitution that guides its operations. The study further established that 75.8% of respondents agreed that ORA has not only been influencing service provision to the informal settlement but also helping members on livelihood issues, namely resource mobilization, capacity building of its members, creating job opportunities through necessary service provision like water services, and public participation in governance and housing planning. The study established that the association was facing a number of challenges including accountability, human resource and organizational capacity, weak institutional framework. The study concluded that RA such as ORA is an important platform that can build the requisite capacity of members and mobilize community level resources to increase ways through members earn a living, hence reduction on poverty levels within the informal settlement.