

The Influence of Socio-Economic Factors in the Transformation of Rural Economies in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas: Lessons from Turkana County in Northern Kenya

Jasai Silale¹, Stephen Morangi Nyambegera²

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies socio-economic factors that influence transformation in Turkana County. The study adopted a descriptive survey that targeted a population of 1000 households and 8 key informants. Simple random sampling was used to select 100 respondents at household level. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants. Questionnaires and an interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics like correlation and multivariate regression were used to check for relationships. Results indicate that majority of people in the region are pastoralists and that there has been no feasible change in their living standards despite the presence of community development projects. The findings further show that there is a high relationship between economic investment, living standards, anti-poverty projects, governance and transformation of rural economies both at the zero order level and at the multiple regression stage.

1.0 Introduction

The consequences of weather variation on the dry-lands of the Horn of Africa present complicated strategy challenges. The inhabitants of the area face an arid climate combined with high poverty conditions. Those conditions combined with intensifying rains and increasingly frequent weather extremes only worsen the problems of development for the region. On the other hand, the regions have not exploited growth opportunities found within their borders. These aspects together with the right permitting strategies show that these regions can become accustomed to climate change and attain economic growth (Nassef, Anderson and Hesse, 2011). Economic investment opportunities in dry-land areas are mainly limited to herding and small-scale retail trade because of the unfavorable climatic conditions (Barrow and Mogaka, 2007). The Northern Kenya region on average experiences rainfall ranging from 500 – 600mm annually. This region has in the past been rated as a hostile province. Northern Kenya regardless of being two-thirds of the whole the Kenya nation is also cut off from the rest of the countryside due to lack of infrastructure in terms of road and rail network.

Roads have no tarmac making travelling by road a problem. As an alternative people living here use trucks transporting goods and livestock as a means of travel. Prospects for receiving basic services like health and education are also limited or unavailable in the region (Darkoh, 2012). Between 1980 and 2007, the government introduced the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Reclamation and Development and Arid, Semi-Arid and Wastelands, and more recently the Ministry of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands to help deliver on the problems. The creation of these institutions demonstrated growing awareness of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) issues, but their focus was limited with a bias toward cattle and conventional range management approaches in the easier-to-reach, semi-arid Counties (Darkoh, 2012). The cancellation of the 2009 population census results for two Counties such as Turkana and Madera exhibit an open political marginalization by the government (Government of Kenya, 2009). The counties in Northern Kenya are ranked among the poorest counties in the Country. During periods of drought more than 80 percent of the residents depend entirely on relief foodstuff distributed by non-governmental organizations. Even in areas where teaching and healthcare services are accessible, they are too expensive and unreasonable for the majority of the households in this region (Farah, 1996). The introduction of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to steer development in the country as expected by its objectives has had little effect on poverty levels in the larger County. The lifestyle in the north is changing as more of the pastoralists opt for environmental activities such as burning of charcoal, deforestation, and

¹ Administrative/ Finance Associate, UNHCR SUB OFFICE KAKUMA

² Associate Professor of Organizational Development, School Of Business, United States International University

unpredictable weather conditions causing ecological dilapidation and severe disturbing of the environment. Ongoing community differences and livestock rustling play a role in increasing poverty in these isolated places of Northern Kenya (Chepkwony, 2007). Conflicts concerning pastoralists related to resource competition, cattle rustling, and wide availability of small arms are widespread and of increasing concern both to the government and donors. Although it is real that there is a clear amount of help the poor shall continue being deprived except they put the future in their own hands (Nassef, Anderson, and Hesse, 2011).

Northern Kenya has one of the least primary school enrolments which in these regions fall far below the national schools average and has one of the highest dropout rates in Kenya. Many illiterate people are from Northern Kenya and attach little value to education (Ministry of Education, 2008). The pastoralists in the North Rift and North Eastern regions of Kenya are largely nomads (Darkoh, 2012). They live primarily in arid and semi-arid areas and entirely depend on livestock like cattle, sheep, goats, and camels for their livelihood and source of revenue. They rely on access to scarce grazing land and drinking water for themselves and their domestic animals a common phenomenon among pastoralists' communities. The variety and mixture of customs is one of the advantages and attractiveness of Northern Kenya, but some traditions have a negative effect on the lives of family and children. For instance children who abandon school before completing primary education is a result of circumcision rites, early marriages and pregnancies, parents' preference to the boy child, animal herders, and household chores as the role of children are some issues of concern (Ministry of Education, 2012).

1.1 Economic development and transformation

Socio-economic transformation and microfinance intervention is one of the major areas of impact assessment studies. Any rural intervention program not transforming livelihood can be marked as a failure (Khandelwal, 2007). Poverty reduction is possibly the biggest test facing Northern Kenya. Those concerned with poverty reduction should learn from each other's experiences, achievements, successes, and failures in order to know what works to avoid mistakes and introduce more effective approaches (ESCAP/UNDP, 2003). Methodologies and practices that have shown to work and yield excellent results that can be relevant and tailored to a distinct situation can be termed best systems like transformation (ESCAP, 2003). According to Nafula, Onsomu, Mwabu, and Muiruri (2005), poverty refers to lack of simple and essential supplies of life and lack of openings for human growth and advancement. It is multi-dimensional and manifests itself in different varieties making its description using a single principle not viable. Low-income poverty reveals itself in the type of underfeeding, high death rates, ignorance, and little vital teaching, clean drinking water, key health services and coverage. The World Bank (2004) estimated that around 800 million people in the region still live on less than US\$1 per day and they form two-thirds of the world's poor. Economic growth is necessary for poverty reduction as evidence from the region shows an encouraging connection between economic growth and poverty reduction (ESCAP/UNDP 2003). Economic development presents the funds to finance the involvement that help the poor get out of poverty. Economic growth by itself cannot guarantee that the circumstances that cause and disseminate deficiency are detached.

According to Patti and Lyngdoh (2010) transformation is a process spread over a period of time referring to tangible and verifiable change in the wellbeing and standard of living for people. Socio-economic change, among others is a major indicator of transformation (Mayoux and Hartl, 2009). In recent years transformation of lives and livelihood of the underprivileged has gained highest prominence all over the world particularly in developing economies. Socio-economic transformation defines a measurable, sustainable, and significant growth in the economic, and social spheres depicted through a change in economic capacity (income, expenditure, and savings) and social development (education, health, capacity building, and so forth). It is a gauge of the appreciation of an individual, family, and, society as a whole.

1.2 The Context of Northern Kenya

The Ministry of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands uses the term Northern Kenya and other arid lands to refer to a portion of arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) that covers 80% of Kenya. Northern Kenya is a region in Kenya bordering four countries – Sudan in the North-West, Ethiopia from the North, Uganda in the South-West, and Somali in the North-East. The arid climatic conditions are created by higher temperatures, and scarce, and unreliable rainfall between 500mm – 600mm annually, making it an arid and semi-arid region. Population growth has made grazing land increasingly scarce, thus increasing demand for diminishing resources. Increased grazing demands have exacerbated desertification along the borders with the conflict-struck states of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somali (Darkoh, 2012). According to Northern Kenya University (2005), the Northern Kenya region comprises seven Counties namely Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, and Samburu. Turkana, Isiolo, Marsabit, and Moyale Districts compose 50% of Kenya's

land mass and is termed as Northern Kenya. It is the poorest portion of Kenya with least inhabitants per square kilometer than the rest of the country and only some towns. Many Kenyans envision this region as a backward place packed with camels and rural communities.

2.0 Statement of the Research Problem

Insufficient and scarce physical infrastructure; communications, transportation, road and rail network in the northern part of Kenya and most of the other arid areas is a key challenge that must be addressed. For instance the road set-up is elementary, basic, and in certain areas imaginary, the few roads built several years ago are in pitiable state and without further delay need repair and upgrading. Telecommunications are even now restricted to most important towns and along highways. All these coupled with limited access to electricity restricts the possibility for investment. The livestock marketing infrastructure has fallen into confusion preventing the region from maximizing returns and draw less asset compared to other areas of Kenya. The road maintenance is very expensive owing to the type of soil in the area that is comprised of massive sand cover. There have been various development initiatives for Northern Kenya including infrastructure development, poverty and drought alleviation programs. However, none of these initiatives has yielded any significant results so far. In the arid districts of Kenya the basic enablers of development like infrastructure, security, land tenure, education, employment, and drought management are either inadequate or lacking.

The impact on human development is demonstrated by the fact that a human development index for seven districts from the Northern Kenya region is poorer than that of Sierra Leone, the least-ranked nation on earth (UNDP, 2006). If this region is not changed the country as its transitions to millennium goals may not achieve vision 2030 as envisioned by the Kenyan government. This study therefore seeks to determine and assess the influence of socio-economic factors in the transformation of livelihoods in rural arid and semi-arid areas of Northern Kenya with specific reference to Turkana County.

The four research questions to be addressed in this study then are:

- i. What is the effect of economic investments on transformation of rural economies Turkana County?
- ii. To what extent do living standards affect transformation of rural economies of Turkana County?
- iii. Have anti-poverty projects initiated had any effect on transformation of rural economies in Turkana County?
- iv. What is the effect of governance on transformation of rural economies of Turkana County?

3.0 Research Methods

3.1 Design and Sample

This study adopted a descriptive survey research. The study used simple random sampling to select respondents at household level. Purposive sampling was used to select elements from local leaders, government officials, and CBOs/FBOs who were knowledgeable enough to enhance the information required. The target population of the study was 1000 households from where a sample size of 100 was chosen and 8 informants from the select elements. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Further, interviews were carried out with select respondents to counter check information collected using questionnaires. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analysis was done and results presented in frequencies, percentages, and summary statistics. Further, multiple regression analysis conducted to establish relationships between study variables. The qualitative data was analyzed based on themes emanating from the research questions guiding the study.

4.0 Results

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to 100 households in Turkana County out of which 94 were returned representing a response rate 94 per cent. Hair et al., (1998) argue that a response rate of more than 50 percent is considered acceptable, while that of more than 80 percent is deemed desirable and therefore more acceptable as was the case in this study.

4.1 Respondents' Demographics

Table 1 reports the findings of the demographics of the respondents. Results revealed that majority 56 percent of the respondents were aged between 41-60 years, and shows that 32 percent have no formal education with some having primary education respectively and 17 percent possess college education with 13 percent are university degree holders. The results also indicate that 52.1 percent were married and monogamous, while 44 percent were polygamous and 4.3 percent widowed. Since the study's focus was on socio-economic transformation it was important that the study find out the levels of household incomes in the County. The results report that in terms of total monthly income 57.4 percent earned between Kshs 1,000 to 5,000; while 27 percent earned between Kshs 5,000 and 10,000. A small percentage of 5.3 earned over Kshs 30,000 per month.

Table 1: Sample demographic characteristics

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Age | | |
| Below 20 | 7 | 7.4 |
| 21 – 30 | 12 | 12.8 |
| 31 – 40 | 10 | 10.6 |
| 41 – 50 | 34 | 36.2 |
| 51 – 60 | 21 | 22.3 |
| Over 60 | 9 | 9.6 |
| No response | 1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 94 | 100.0 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 60 | 63.8 |
| Female | 34 | 36.2 |
| Highest level of education | | |
| Not attended school | 30 | 31.9 |
| Primary | 30 | 31.9 |
| Secondary | 16 | 17.0 |
| College | 12 | 12.8 |
| University | 4 | 4.3 |
| No response | 2 | 2.1 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married (monogamous) | 49 | 52.1 |
| Married (polygamous) | 41 | 43.6 |
| Widowed | 4 | 4.3 |
| Household income | | |
| Below 1 000 KSh | 2 | 2.1 |
| 1 001 – 5 000 KSh | 54 | 57.4 |
| 5 001 – 10 000 KSh | 25 | 26.6 |
| 10 001 – 20 000 KSh | 2 | 2.1 |
| 20 001 – 30 000 KSh | 6 | 6.4 |
| 30 001 – 50 000 KSh | 5 | 5.3 |

4.2 Factors causing poverty

From the results (see Table 2) it is revealed that all respondents were strongly in agreement that the following factors are responsible in causing poverty in the county; unemployment, access to public services, availability of safe drinking water, gender inequality, poor roads network, lack of security and poor leadership. Other factors that account for poverty levels include cost of health services, corruption and cost of education. However, some believe that cost of housing is not a serious factor that causes poverty.

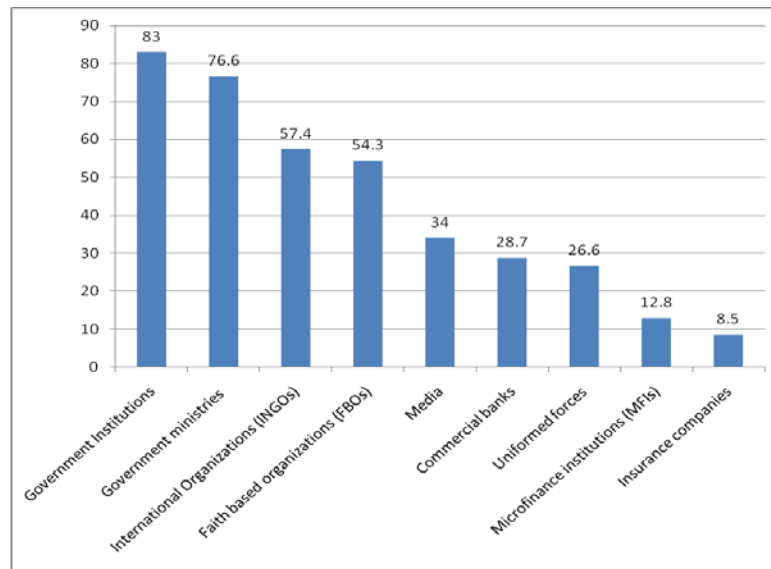
Table 2: Factors Causing Poverty

| Factors | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Unemployment | 1.3404 | .47639 |
| Access to Public services | 1.3936 | .49117 |
| Availability of safe drinking water | 1.1170 | .32317 |
| Gender Inequality | 1.1170 | .32317 |
| Poor roads | 1.1915 | .39558 |
| Security | 1.3298 | .55626 |
| poor leadership | 1.3085 | .46436 |
| Cost of health services | 2.2360 | .64000 |
| Corruption | 2.8043 | .57873 |
| Cost of education | 2.5213 | .50223 |
| Cost of housing | 4.2660 | .60776 |

4.3 Sponsors and types of poverty alleviation schemes in the region

The researchers wanted to know the composition of major poverty alleviation schemes are and the type of programs they are involved in this region. Results revealed that the main sponsors of poverty alleviation schemes were; government institutions, government ministries, international organizations, faith-based organizations, media, commercial banks, uniformed forces, microfinance institutions and insurance companies. Further, results show that the main poverty alleviation schemes these sponsors are involved in are food relief; security and disaster management; water, hygiene, and sanitation, health, child labor, housing, gender equality, alternative energy sources, informal skills training and employment creation. Majority agreed that food relief was the main scheme that these sponsors are involved in as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Sponsors of poverty alleviation schemes



4.4 Participants' perception on effects of anti-poverty schemes

The study also aimed at finding out the perception of residents in Turkana on the effect of poverty alleviation schemes that these many sponsors have been involved in for many years. The idea was to find out whether they see any improvement economy given the efforts of sponsors. Results indicate that majority of the respondents agreed that to some extent the following areas have improved due to the various efforts by these organizations: levels of income, standards of living, access to safe drinking water. The other areas that these poverty alleviation schemes have influenced to a little extent are in terms of importance: life expectancy, general health, nutrition level, illiteracy, child labor, inequality in income distribution, and security. Means and standard deviations of the different areas of residents in this region that have been influenced are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Impact of poverty alleviation projects on transformation of rural economies

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Level of income | 3.6915 | .46436 |
| Standard of living | 3.7553 | .43220 |
| Access to safe drinking water | 3.3596 | 1.17015 |
| Life expectancy | 4.4787 | .69914 |
| General health | 4.2021 | .83704 |
| Nutrition level | 4.6702 | .67821 |
| Illiteracy | 4.0426 | .81538 |
| Gender discrimination | 4.2447 | .83841 |
| Child labor | 4.1489 | .78914 |
| Inequality in income distribution | 4.4787 | .69914 |
| Security | 4.2447 | .52232 |

In spite of the fact that most of these poverty alleviation schemes have positively influenced the livelihoods of Turkana people, many respondents felt that poverty alleviation projects being implemented are not compatible with their needs; the planning and implementation does not involve the beneficiaries; they lack sustainability and are short-lived; programs only benefit the rich and the elite members of the community. Further, majority of the respondents agreed that most poverty alleviation program services are inaccessible to most of the people; most local people do not understand the objectives and activities of these programs and that most are ridden with corruption and they lack accountability as reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Perception of the effect of poverty alleviation schemes

| Statement | Std. | |
|---|--------|-----------|
| | Mean | Deviation |
| Poverty alleviation projects being implemented are not compatible with our needs | 1.8571 | .82424 |
| The planning and implementation of most poverty alleviation programs does not involve the beneficiaries | 1.6383 | .48307 |
| Poverty alleviation programs lack sustainability and are short-lived. | 1.1720 | .37946 |
| Poverty alleviation programs only benefit the rich and the elite members of the community. | 1.5745 | .49707 |
| Most poverty alleviation program services are inaccessible to most of the people. | 2.7667 | 3.01327 |
| Most local people do not understand the objectives and activities of the poverty alleviation programs being implemented | 2.1064 | .78244 |
| Most poverty alleviation programs are corrupt and lack accountability | 2.3085 | 1.12667 |

4.5 Correlation of socio-economic factors with transformation of rural economies

In order to test the relationship between the variables, a comparison was made on the four socio-economic factors from the transformations’ perspective on the extent to which each establishes factors affecting transformation of rural economies. Inferential statistics namely Pearson’s product moment correlation analysis was employed for the study variables. Pearson’s product moment correlation tests were chosen in order to assess whether there was a relationship between the study variables.

The correlation results in Table 6 are taken against a more conservative significance level of $p < 0.05$ to minimize the possibility of type 1 error (Hays, 1988). Economic investment stands out as having the strongest relationship with transformation of rural economies. Overall transformation of rural economies is associated with all the other three independent variables as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation between socio-economic factors and transformation of rural economies

| | | Economic Investment | Living Standards | Anti-poverty project | Governance | Transformation |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| Economic Investment | Pearson Correlation | - | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | | |
| Living Standard | Pearson Correlation | .376(*) | - | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .003 | | | | |
| Anti-Poverty project | Pearson Correlation | .436(***) | .714(***) | - | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | | |
| | N | | | | | |
| Governance | Pearson Correlation | .001 | .328(**) | .361(*) | - | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .993 | .010 | .005 | | |
| Transformation rural economies | Pearson Correlation | .629 (**) | .601(***) | .561(***) | .532(**) | - |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .000 | .000 | .001 | |

Note: Significant correlation at $p < .05$, are shown, * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .00$, $n = 94$

4.6 Multiple regression analysis

Table 6 shows and the overall effect of the four socio-economic on transformation of rural economies. Ranking the predictors variables in terms of their individual influence on the transformation of rural economies, the results shows the relative importance of each the predictions i.e. economic investment had the highest influence with a *B* effect of 0.320, living standards 0.211, governance 0.207, and anti- poverty projects 0.178 implying that these factors are very significant and therefore need to be considered in any effort to transform rural economies.

Table 6: Multiple Regression results of socio-economic factors with transformation of rural economies

| Model | Un-standardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------|---------|
| | B | Std Error | Beta | T | p-value |
| (Constant) | 0.417 | 0.325 | | 1.285 | 0.023 |
| Economic Investment | 0.320 | 0.056 | 0.329 | 2.563 | 0.006 |
| Living Standards | 0.211 | 0.015 | 0.201 | 2.671 | 0.001 |
| Anti-poverty projects | 0.178 | 0.058 | 0.175 | 2.063 | 0.003 |
| Governance | 0.207 | 0.039 | 0.472 | 2.328 | 0.001 |

5.0 Discussion

The overall objective was to find out whether socio-economic factors impact of transformation of rural economies of Turkana County. The hypothesis that socio-economic factors influence levels of transformation of rural economies was supported. However, we would argue that the policies and politics in Kenya up to the 1990s largely perpetrated regional inequalities hence hindering transformation of semi-arid economies. The extent of alienation is such that populations in the North distance themselves from the

rest of "down Kenya." Prospects for receiving basic services like health and education are also limited or unavailable in the region (Darkoh, 2012). It has been analyzed that the North was easy to ignore due to political expediency. This has been because pastoralist populations lack in numbers for significant political capital. They cannot exert influence to swing votes in any election. As such, arid districts have been pitted on the losing end in terms of political power relations. A combination of both positive as well as self-serving reasons can be attributed to the warming up to the North. On the one hand increasing understanding and appreciation of the pastoral production system has resulted in efforts to meaningfully integrate the North in national development. There is genuine concern to redress socio-economic inequalities that are still prevalent. These efforts have seen whereby the government and other agencies are sponsoring poverty eradication schemes in this region and other semi-arid areas of Kenya. Turning around the years of underdevelopment in the north and parts of other arid lands will require a mix of approaches, including legal, policy, and institutional change as well as shifts in the knowledge and attitudes of all involved (Farah, 1996).

Economic investment opportunities had a significant relationship to transformation of rural economies both at the zero-order level and in the multiple regression analysis. However, the study revealed that in dry-land areas people are mainly limited to herding and small-scale retail trade because of the unfavorable climate conditions. However, Lind, (2003) observes that assessment of the problem in northern Kenya as 'drought' is disputed. Some diagnose the problem in this region as one of deep poverty caused by social processes and inadequate investment. They argue that the situation of constant food uncertainty in northern parts of Kenya is as a result of the government and some operational agencies' failure to make development investments in this politically and economically marginal part of the country's region. Food emergencies in this area are a demonstration of a livelihood system under pressure, and the lack of options for 'pastoralists in transition'. Pastoralists keep domestic animals like cattle, goats, donkeys, camels, and sheep as different types of livestock in Northern Kenya regions. Nevertheless, the supply differs from one cultural population to the other, depending on the cultural morals and climatic conditions attached to specific types of livestock. For instance, camels and cattle are the main leading domestic animals between the Turkana, Rendile, as well as the Maasai, Samburu, and the Kalenjin pastoralists (Farah, 1996). Rodriguez (2008) points out that perceptions are slowly changing as pastoralists take more of an active role on the national stage and as the economics of pastoralism become better understood. The findings from the study opine that if the current constitution of 2010 is implemented properly, through devolved governments it can be useful in facilitating development of the county. Quick economic development would do well in attracting the poor in extending the other economic investment opportunities like manufacturing and the provision of productive services to hitherto underemployed or unemployed workforce.

The study supported the link between anti-poverty projects and transformation of rural economies. The findings from the study concur with Karing'i (2001) who pointed out that poverty is converged between small growers, famers, pastoralists, inexperienced people and uneducated workers, and is predominantly high in female headed pastoral households. We can also argue that rapid development would allow the recruitment of human resources by the administration out of additional income for further savings expansion and for community spending on teaching and healthcare. As a result, most developing states approved strategies that guaranteed rapid development of gross domestic product (GDP) for capitalizing on nationalized products. For national economic planning, development maximization was broadly implemented. Poverty in Africa remains a sad story whose cure is yet to be discovered. While poverty has been decreasing in the rest of the developing world, in Africa, a majority of people still live in horrible conditions. It is on this basis that Kassongo (2001) argues that, while Africa accounts for 10% of the world's population, its economies account for only 1.1% of world gross domestic production. Based on these findings we can argue that poverty experience in Africa calls for a unique intervention to other parts of the world. Whereas alternative elements of the planet are growing, the economies in most of the African countries are declining. In an effort to liberate Africa's alarming economic scenario, Africa has been to a good extent looking forward to economic aid as a rescue choice. Nafula, Onsomu, Mwabu, and Muiruri (2005) in a review of past studies on poverty, found numerous studies on poverty but slight development has been realized in decreasing poverty. The perceptions of the effect of anti-poverty projects on the rural economies looks deem as majority do not see that effect. Muki (2005) observed that some of the grounds growth had not taken place in reducing poverty are inadequate prioritization, inflexibility in the administration of budgetary measures, lack of legal structures for stakeholders' involvement in preparation and execution, unfinished devolution that does not give power to receiving areas, and community not identifying with the developmental projects because the preparation procedure is not contributory.

In relation to the living standards the research results show that the living standards in the county are not good and needs a lot of transformation strategies to overcome the current state that appears to be remorseful in keeping with the respondents. The study indicated that majority of the people in the county earn less than Kshs 10,000 per month which implies that most of the people are poor. Most of them are pastoralists which is the main source of income for people in Turkana County. The alternative sources of income for the people in the county are small scale farming, fishing, farming, and commercial farming. This implies that small scale-trading helps people supplement their income but the region is not good for farming since a few people engage in farming and although they conduct small scale-trading a few of them own private companies.

It was further revealed that there has been no any transformation on the economies of scale in the county because the people feel that their economies have been stagnant. This shows that there are myriad of challenges facing transformation of the economy. On causes of poverty; unemployment, access to public services, availability of safe drinking water, gender inequality, poor roads network, lack of security and poor leadership are the main serious factors undermining people's living standards in Turkana County. Further it was revealed that cost of health services, corruption and high cost of education are also serious factors causing poverty in the region. Kassongo (2001) noted that it is an accepted argument that developing countries are dealing with numerous socio-economic challenges together with poorness, illiteracy, lack of human capital, financial deficit, lack of trade, and environmental degradation. These issues are principally attributable to the shortage of profitable incomes. The state of standards of living in this region has led to dependency on food assistance which forms a big chunk of anti-poverty projects as revealed in this study. It follows that food assistance may not be the best suitable reaction to the food insecurity troubles in northern Kenya. Food support simply maintains people alive in a situation of hardship. A long history of receiving relief assistance is superimposed over the situation of deteriorating livelihoods. A strong undercurrent in discussions on dependency in this region is a moral dilemma facing aid and donor agencies involved in providing relief assistance to northern Kenya pastoralists. The results concurs with Omiti and Obunde (2002) who assessed strategies put in place in the fight against poverty ever-since 1952, the responsibility, and institutions ability engaged in programs of poverty mitigation, existing institutional actions, and gave suggestions on community and societal measures toward hardship cutback among them improvement of socio-economic status.

The other research was dealing with the influence of governance especially among the sponsors of poverty alleviation schemes in transformation of rural economies. Governance here seen as the system by which such sponsors are directed and controlled" hence it refers to "the manner in, and the system by, which power over, and the power of, a sponsor is exercised in the stewardship of its assets and resources earmarked for poverty alleviation schemes in the county. Governance embraces issues of public policy, the overriding national values and ethics and the national priorities and consensus under which the "license to operate" is granted to such sponsors. The study establishes a significant relationship between governance and rural economies transformation. We can argue that when sponsors of poverty alleviation schemes are held accountable and are transparent in the implementation of projects and their operations resources will be used well to the benefit of the rural people. Sustainable growth demands gathering the basic wants of all and expanding to all the opportunity to suit their aspirations for an improved life. The analysis indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that their level of income, standard of living, and access to safe drinking water have to some extent influenced their living economy standards. It also showed that the poverty alleviation projects have influenced to very little extent the life expectancy; general health; nutrition level; literacy; child labor, disparities in financial gain, delivery and safety. This is mainly because of projects being implemented are not compatible with their needs, the planning and implementation of most poverty alleviation programs do not involve the beneficiaries, poverty alleviation programs lack sustainability and are short-lived, the poverty alleviation programs only benefit the rich and the elite members of the community. Other factors are; most poverty alleviation program services are inaccessible to most of the people, most local people do not understand the objectives and activities of the poverty alleviation programs being implemented and most poverty alleviation programs are corrupt and lack accountability in Turkana County.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

The study employed to a large extent self-report measures and yet it is argued that such measures face a problem of 'shared method variance' due to the reliance on a single method of data collection leading to 'contamination' across the measures. However, these measures were deemed usable given the nature of our

study. In order to address this problem the main parts of the questionnaire were differentiated. By using different formats in the sections of the questionnaire 'cross-contamination was minimized (Schmitt, 1994). Further, since individual responses to the questionnaires were anonymous, method bias due to social desirability is minimized (Oppenheim, 1992).

6.0 Conclusion

Transformation of rural economies more especially those that cover arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya has been a major challenge for many years. Northern Kenya and other arid lands cover a portion of arid and semi-arid lands that covers 80% of the country. Increased grazing demands have exacerbated desertification along the borders with the conflict-struck states of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somali (Darkoh, 2012). It is observed that no transformation on the economies that cover this region because of the many challenges such as unemployment, access to public services, availability of safe drinking water, gender inequality, poor roads network, lack of security and poor leadership. The consequences of such poverty may lead to feelings of marginalization and exclusion that might threaten the unity of any country as the feelings of "us" and "them" widen (Bird, Hulme, Moore, and Shepherd, 2002). Minimization of such marginalization through transformation of these areas could lead to high levels of productivity and development that brings harmony between inhabitants of any country (Nassef, Anderson, and Hesse, 2011). This study shows one way in which such transformation could be achieved by understanding the role played by socio-economic factors. This influence can be linked to the development of rural economies in Turkana County and other semi-arid rural economies.

It emerged from this study that in spite of the increase in sponsoring anti-poverty schemes and programs not much has been achieved in transforming this region due to several factors. The living standards of most households have not improved for the last five years and yet government and other agencies have increased efforts to transform the livelihoods of the inhabitants of this area. This study showed that focusing on the right type of economic investment opportunities can influence transformation of rural economies. Economic investment opportunities in dry-land areas are mainly limited to herding and small-scale retail trade because of the unfavorable climate conditions (Barrow and Mogaka, 2007). It is important for sponsors to know which investment opportunities can work in this region and to what extent such investment activities can influence transformation of rural economies in semi-arid areas. The poverty alleviation projects have influenced to some extent the levels of development but more can be done if projects being implemented are compatible with people's needs and they are involved in the planning and implementation. Governance came out as another important socio-economic factor that needs to be improved to increase accountability and transparency. Lack of proper governance of the resources allocated for projects and other schemes could lead to wastage and one sided benefit to the rich and elite in these areas.

This empirical examination of the socio-economic factors' influence on the economic transformation of rural economies raises a number of issues for future research. First, a better understanding can be gained by understanding the relationship between government policies and economic development in the region. Second, this study focused on all other sponsors other than financial institutions hence examination of the influence of such institution in arid-semi and arid areas' economics development will provide more inside since they are presumed to be more transparent.

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