

Diversification as a Socio- economic Strategy among the Keiyo in Kenya

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Abstract - *This paper discusses the efforts and actions by the Kenyan government to address challenges of agrarian change and rural transformation in Keiyo. The paper demonstrates that state employs the mechanisms of co-opting the forces of rural commercialization through the strategies of land consolidation. The paper explains that these strategies widen the scope of engagement in the Keiyo households in Kenya today. Keiyo households have demonstrated their capacity to respond positively and spontaneously to agrarian changes and innovations which proves vital to the enhancement of their economic well-being. The paper employs data collected from the three ecological zones, in order to examine the characteristics of households in Keiyo. It is demonstrated that the characteristics of these households reflect the different economic opportunity structures of the three areas. It is suggested that while the distribution of resources within any of the three ecological zones is to varying degrees unequal, there is nevertheless a pronounced pattern of inequality across eco-zones: most households in the highland are better endowed with resources than most households either on the escarpment or in the valley.*

Keywords: *Keiyo, socio-economic, diversification, differentiation, eco-zones, household, inequality*

INTRODUCTION

The three ecological zones in Keiyo are the highland; escarpment and Kerio valley floor. The strategies that individuals and households use in the pursuit of their livelihoods and the activities in which they are engaged are affected by economic differentiation. In this paper, it is suggested that, although diversification of economic activities is a strategy shared by people of all three ecological zones, there are vast differences between these three areas in the ability of people to diversify their enterprises. The paper seeks to demonstrate that, while most people seek to diversify, their ability to do so is limited, to varying degrees, by the opportunity structure of their area.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The participants who were interviewed for this study were purposively selected from the three ecological zones in Keiyo. The analysis of qualitative data is undertaken as an activity simultaneously with data collection. Information obtained through qualitative method is processed and analyzed

following three steps. In the first step, the data is organized following key thematic areas. In the process, the data is summarized into briefs after each interview session. The second step involves description of responses to produce interim reports. The third step involves the systematic analysis and interpretation of interim reports which are integrated with the quantitative data in the main report. Much of the qualitative findings are used to complement descriptions and explanations of specific area. Discussions are made in the light of the main objective of the study.

Housing

The relative distribution of resource between households and the economic differentiation of the three ecological zones is also reflected in housing patterns. Although a great deal of variation can and does exist internally within all the three zones, generally modern house styles and construction materials tend to be more common in the highland while the traditional styles and materials are more

prevalent in the valley and on the escarpment. The traditional housing materials for constructing walls, bent saplings anchored to larger posts and covered with a mixture of mud and cow dung, are much more common on the escarpment than in the highlands and in the valley than in the highlands. In the highlands, the house itself will often have timber walls while the nearby kitchen will have wattle and daub walls.[1]

Traditional grass thatch roofs are more prevalent in the valley than on the escarpment and in the highlands. Roofs of some combination of materials are almost as common on the escarpment as they are in the highlands. The roofs of the main houses are mostly iron sheets and the kitchen is thatch. Detached kitchens are an indication of economic affluence. Constructing a separate kitchen, even of traditional materials, cost money.

Finally, in addition to the materials used in constructing roofs and walls, there are other housing-related indicators of economic affluence for example concrete floors, glass windows and pit latrines. Concrete floors and glass windows are relatively rare, as to be expected, both are most common in the highlands. There are many pit latrines in the highlands in comparison to the escarpment and the valley. The pit latrines found in the escarpment tend to be in more affluent households. In the valley, pit latrines are very few [2]. This is due to the impracticability of digging such a deep hole in the rocky soils on the lower escarpment and partly because of the potential expense of such an undertaking. Thus, the finding that pit latrines are common in the highlands, less common on the escarpment and the valley is due to both economic and ecological factors. Altogether, however, the housing resources unequivocally demonstrate that households in the highlands are more favourably endowed than households in either of the other two areas.

Households in Keiyo

In considering opportunity structures across eco-zones in Keiyo, there is need to examine the nature of households in these different areas to determine whether there is any important differences between eco-zones in the size and composition of households and distribution of resources among households.

The average size of households in the three ecological zones of Keiyo varies directly with elevation: the largest households are in the highlands, the smallest in the valley, and households of

intermediate size are the norm on the escarpment. Households are larger in the highlands because of the greater number of children there than the escarpment or valley. William Murgor [3], the Chief of Kabiemit location suggested that because of the more favourable climate for agriculture and better infrastructural development in the highlands, this area was able to support a larger and younger population than either the escarpment or the valley. On average, the households of the highlands are larger by virtue of the more favourable opportunity structure there vis-à-vis those on the escarpment and in the valley.

Nuclear families are by far the most frequent type of household arrangement found across ecological zones. There are no differences between eco-zones in the households that are comprised of nuclear families. The households made up of extended families in the highland are higher than both the escarpment and the valley.

The higher number of extended families in the highlands can be explained as a reflection of the greater concentration of productive resources there. Because of the more favourable opportunity structure there, households are larger and include more children in the highlands than in the other two eco-zones. It is logical that they can also contain a large number of other persons, relatives or otherwise, who have become attached. In the highlands it is a fairly common pattern among elderly couples that, when the husband or wife dies, the surviving member would go to live with one of the children, usually the youngest adult male [4]. This stemmed from the fact that Keiyo inheritance patterns leans towards ultimo geniture.

Traditional Keiyo social relations are patriarchal, descent is traced patrilineally, and residence is patrilocal. To a large extent these statements are still true; nonetheless changes in social and economic processes are making inroads into Keiyo. This is revealed in, among other things, the gender of household heads.

Invariably, even in cases of men who are absent for most of the year, adult males would claim to be the head of the household. Often, however, this is superficial in the daily running of the household. Male headed units comprise the vast majority of households found in all three areas. According to Sally Kosgey, there are more female-headed households in the valley than both the highlands and the escarpment [5]. She suggests that it is due at least partially to the relatively large number of widows living in the upper reaches of

the valley, on the lower part of the escarpment. By living in the upper sections of the valley, it is possible to escape scourges like malaria and sleeping sickness and, therefore, less of a serious threat to life. In addition, there is some water flowing down this lower section of the escarpment in the form of very small streams; this allows some of them to divert the flow of water to their gardens. The older women are less involved in the livestock dominated lifestyles of the valley floor and are known for their continued cultivation of the traditional grain staples of millet and sorghum, in contrast to their virtual replacement by maize on the escarpment shelf and in the highlands. These crops (millet and sorghum) are drought-resistant and grow well on the rocky, thin soils on the slopes of the lower escarpment. William Kipchoge says, there is a niche that these elderly widows occupy between the traditionally male-dominated, pastoralist mode of production of the valley and the mixed farming, larger enterprises of younger families on the upper escarpment [6].

It is suggested that males in Keiyo are much more likely than females to be engaged in salaried employment away from home. This means that husbands are more likely than wives to be non-resident for part or most of the year. In some cases, especially those of school teachers, men are employed locally. Even if these individuals do not work in the same village where they live, they are still relatively close to home. Several of the male wage earners of the highland and the escarpment are employed in local primary schools in neighbouring villages. These men go to work in the morning, often come home for lunch, and certainly come home in the evening.

It is clear from this study that the differences between the three eco-zones in the female-headed households largely disappeared when male absenteeism is factored in. Female-headed households are more in the highlands than in both the escarpment and valley. It is suggested that this reflect the greater degree of participation in the market economy by the people of the highlands than those people in the valley or escarpment eco-zones.

The study has provided evidence to suggest that the differing nature of economic differentiation in these three areas was manifested in characteristics such as the overall size of households and their composition; households are larger and more likely to include extended families in the highlands. This emerging pattern of economic differentiation is also a

function of spatial distribution of resources among the three eco-zones.

Landholdings

Land is an extremely valuable resource in Keiyo as it is throughout Kenya and rural Africa in general; it forms the basis for agricultural production, including growing crops for food and for sale, as well as keeping livestock for food and market. Therefore, land becomes one of the most critical elements to consider when examining the relative distribution of resources between households and eco-zones. Generally speaking, while well-to-do households possess more land, the quality of land is as important as its quantity.

It is noted that although there are often great differences in the soil types to be found within any one of the three ecological zones, on the whole, the most productive lands are to be found at the foot of the upper escarpment and in the highlands. The soils at the foot of the Elgeyo- escarpment are being constantly enriched through erosion of the escarpment. The soils in the highland have been and still are being worked more intensively. Thus, they often require the application of more fertilizer than those on the escarpment near the face of this landform. Nonetheless, the land in the highlands has the dual advantages of being flatter and much less rocky, and it benefited from greater and more predictable precipitation [7].

The average size of landholdings are largest not in the highlands but rather in the valley. According to Mathew Kiplagat, this was due to the relatively poor agricultural quality of the land in the valley vis-à-vis the highland [8]. The intermediate size of landholdings on the escarpment are explicable by the sheer lesser amount of land that is available for cultivation there.

It has been suggested that the Keiyo are cultivating on steep slopes. Nonetheless, if given a choice today, Isaac Birgen argues, most people would choose flat land, especially that in the highlands [9]. Indigenous grains like millet and sorghum, with their shallow root structures, grow relatively well on the thin, rocky soils that characterize much of the escarpment.

The vast majority of households in each of the three villages own less than ten acres of land and therefore the households practice smallholder agriculture. Many households utilize multiple plots for

farming, traditionally a common strategy employed by the Keiyo along with many other small farmers in Africa and elsewhere. The landholdings in the highlands are consolidated while those in the valley remain fragmented. The households on the escarpment have other plots within the escarpment. In the valley, households have multiple plots. For most of these households in the valley this means the escarpment plots are used to grow maize.

Livestock Wealth

Livestock have always occupied a very important place in East African societies. They are not only a means of subsistence, they are also repositories of wealth, sources of prestige, and they help create social ties between individuals. The possession of livestock may have had a strong influence on social and political organization [10].

Traditionally, individuals would accumulate wealth in the form of livestock and redistribute this same wealth through the payment of bride-wealth. Property rights in livestock, especially cattle, were often multiplex and complicated. Today, the function of livestock are many: they are valuable not only as walking bank accounts and for fulfilling social functions, their liquidity also makes them a ready means of acquiring cash, especially by entrepreneurs who seek to exploit the interface between traditional and market systems [11].

The importance of livestock and their role in the three ecological zones under consideration was varied. In the lower sections of the hot and dry Kerio valley, livestock husbandry, especially of indigenous breeds of cattle and goats was the only feasible pattern of land use in the absence of large amount of capital [12]. Lack of precipitation and its erratic distribution in time and space made attempts to practice rain-fed agriculture precarious at best. In addition, unlike the northern part of the district, the southern part was not well endowed with sources of surface water that would enable farmers to practice irrigation through gravity fed furrows that drew on the few streams tumbling down the escarpment. In the valley, therefore, keeping goats and indigenous cattle was the most viable option for acquiring wealth among poor households [13]. The indigenous animals were more disease and drought resistant than exotic breeds: important considerations in the hot, dry Kerio valley that was infested with disease vectors such as mosquitoes and tsetse flies [14].

However, in the highlands it was possible to keep grade cattle (exotic breeds such as Ayrshire or Friesian) or crossbreeds, the offspring of an indigenous cow fertilized by the semen of an exotic bull. Edward Kipsang argues that “the advantage of crossbreeds to the small farmer was the improved milk yields while still retaining some of the hardiness of indigenous animals” [15].

As with so many phenomena, on the escarpment, livestock occupied an intermediate place between their role as a subsistence base for people in the valley and their income generation potential for people in the highlands. Livestock supplemented a lifestyle that was based on farming. Animals were kept on the escarpment but not in the same numbers as in those two areas and not with the same earning potential as in the highlands[16].

The distribution of cattle between households was more equitable in the highlands than in the other two areas. However, just as with land, when examining the livestock holdings of households, it was important to consider not just the quantity but also the quality of the animals. The number of crossbreed cattle a household owned was a reflection of both economic and ecological factors. Mary Cheptoo says, that grade and crossbreed cattle generally did not fare well in the Kerio valley because of the heat, lack of water, and presence of disease vectors [17]. While indigenous cattle were by no means perfect, they were rather well adapted to the environment of the valley. On the other hand, keeping crossbreed cattle required more expensive husbandry practices in terms of feeding, preferably a fodder crop such as napier grass and health care, including more frequent dipping or spraying to protect against tick borne diseases such as East Coast Fever. The number of improved cattle was greater in the highlands than either on the escarpment or in the valley. It was also apparent that there was a marked tendency for households in the highlands to either possess cross-breed or indigenous animals. In the valley, households with crossbred cattle were those, in which these animals were not kept in the valley, instead they were kept with friends or relatives elsewhere. In the escarpment, like the highlands, people tended to either own all crossbred cattle or none at all [18].

Although not as valuable as cattle, goats were nonetheless still another important resource. The goats are most important in the valley and that the number of goats per household is greater in the valley than on

the escarpment or in the highlands. East African goats, like other tropical varieties of this species, can be milked but they are kept primarily for meat. They are small but hardy animals that can either graze or browse, thereby making the best use of the sparse natural vegetation in the valley. In large numbers goats can be difficult to confine to one area. On the escarpment and in the highlands, therefore, where crops are more important to livelihood strategies than in the valley, goats become a threat in damaging crops. Thus, with elevation, as the amount of land devoted to crop production increase, goats become less frequent. Like goats, sheep are kept mainly for meat. In absolute terms, sheep are found in greatest numbers in the valley; however their distribution is less equitable in the valley than it is in the highlands.

Donkeys, along with other small animals such as chicken and rabbits, are also reared. Chicken are ubiquitous on the escarpment and in the highlands; almost every household in these areas have some. Donkeys are relatively rare and although used as a beast of burden they are not regarded in the same way as other stock. Rabbit husbandry is being encouraged in schools but at present, they are kept mainly by children and their popularity is not yet widespread.

It is suggested that the distribution of total livestock units, like the distribution of sheep and cattle, is more equitable in the highlands than it is in either the valley or the escarpment. According to Dennis Kipkoge, animals were most important for survival in the valley and although they were often found in greater absolute numbers there, the distribution of livestock in the valley was less equitable than it was in the highlands, where they were less important as a source of subsistence and more important as a means of generating income [19].

Economic Activities

Since majority of Kenyans are poor, there is need to achieve economic growth through the use of their productivity. Failure to tap the poor's potential contribution to employment creation and growth will severely handicap the national economic effort. When low income groups are so numerous it is no longer desirable or even feasible, to exclude their productivity potential, create surpluses in highly productive sectors and then use those surpluses to alleviate their poverty by means of welfare and relief payments [20]. What is required is a broad-based economic growth which starts from the need to protect

and enhance the assets and income streams of those who are poor. The assets they work with include their human capital and labour skills and the social capital found within social networks and community institutions. It is these personal skills and social networks which provide employment, safety nets in times of distress and routes to savings and remittances used for investment purposes when the formal employment sectors cannot help. There is need therefore, to find ways of assisting the households to increase the range and quality of their productive opportunities and livelihood choices.

The creation of productive employment opportunities was one of the most serious challenges facing households in Keiyo. A central component of the larger efforts towards economic growth, poverty reduction and increased employment should be the strategy for the balanced development of rural areas. Improved productivity and output in agriculture which is essential for overall economic growth should be closely linked to services and inputs provided from accessible urban areas.

The ability of people to meet their expectations in life is also a concern of this study. The equal resource distribution across ecological zones also affected people's attitudes about what they felt they can and cannot achieve in life. The persons who lived in the area with most favourable economic opportunity structure will also be those who are able to meet more of their economic expectations than persons who were less favourably endowed with resources. The rule of thumb is; try to avoid placing all your eggs in one basket [21] or less metaphorically, diversify to reduce risk and uncertainty. Moreover, these same activities could also enable some households to earn substantial amounts of money and to "get ahead," to varying degrees.

In an effort to assess what kinds of things people did to reduce risk and uncertainty, participants were asked the following questions: "What kinds of things did you do to reduce uncertainty in your livelihood?" Based on the patterns that emerged in the responses, activities were divided into four categories: First, small-scale economic activities (casual labour, charcoal burning, making and selling beer, craftwork such as making calabashes or ropes, and financial remuneration from relatives. Second, salaried employment (with the government or a private company) or wage labour (working locally in a business such as a butchery or bar. Third, business

endeavours/entrepreneurial activities (ownership of a bar, duka (small retail shop), or a matatu (public transportation vehicle). Fourth, both salaried employment/wage labour and business endeavour/entrepreneurial activity. All these activities were normally carried out in conjunction with, rather than as alternatives to, agriculture [22].

It is suggested that category four (combining salaried employment with a business enterprise) would be the most desirable option for people in terms of both reducing feelings of risk and uncertainty and also due to the potential for getting ahead. Category two and three were the next best options respectively. While category one (small-scale activities) was the least desirable, since it was the least diversified.

Nonetheless, there were vast differences in economic ability separating category one from category four; going from one end of these categories to the other, the likelihood of the average household being able to engage in these activities diminished greatly. Nearly every able bodied adult, regardless of age and gender, was able to engage in casual labour; such as working for their neighbors during critical periods in the agriculture cycle, such as land preparation, planting, weeding or harvest. In terms of more gender specific small-scale activities, for men there was the burning of charcoal while for women, the making and selling of beer could bring in a cash income. In the three eco-zones, craftwork was a relatively insignificant source of income; even for those few who engaged in these activities they were still only performed on a part-time basis.

Some older persons were no longer physically able to engage in such casual labour as the burning of charcoal or the brewing and selling of beer. Moreover, their ability to work on their own plots had also diminished with advanced age. These people tended to rely on their relatives for food, clothing, or money. This source of support was especially important for those older people with children or grandchildren who may be employed in urban centers like Eldoret and other major towns. Indeed, kinship continues to act as a support system in contemporary Keiyo [23].

The possibility of someone securing salaried employment with the government or with major private firms in Eldoret depended on several factors. David Biwott, a local secondary school teacher said that "the most important was educational qualifications and personal social networks [24]. Local jobs also, at least ostensibly, depended on both

educational qualifications and personal connections. In and around Flourspar mining company, the possibility of securing employment was high.

Business endeavors and entrepreneurial activities such as ownership of a bar or small retail shop (duka) provided one of the best means of insuring an individual and his or her family against uncertainty stemming from dependence on the vagaries of climate (rainfall and temperature) or labour shortages in the production of crops or animals.

Nevertheless, a few people are able to do so because the ability to invest in a business is heavily dependent on relatively large amounts of capital [25]. Thus, entrepreneurial activities were restricted to a very small number of individuals and households. Mercy Jeruto argues that to be able to combine business activities with salaried employment, along with farming, provided the best insurance against risk and uncertainty [26].

Farming Activities

Farming is by far the largest source of gainful employment in Kenya and will continue to be so until into the next century. A dynamic agricultural sector is central to the economic development of the country and requires a long-term strategy for employment creation and transformation of the economy. Agricultural performance is crucial for the households because it provides vital ingredients for economic transformation such as demand, foreign exchange, raw materials, food and labour. These are the five traditional economic roles of agriculture in the process of development.

As part of their diversified livelihood strategies nearly all households in Keiyo are engaged in some crop production. Farming is the basis of life for most people, although the degree to which they depend upon agriculture varies across and within the three ecological zones. Furthermore, the types of crops that can be grown, the amounts that can be produced, and the uses to which they are put vary in the three eco-zones [27]. In this section, similarities and differences in the ways that agricultural activities fit into the livelihood strategies of people in the three eco-zones is considered. Although there are staples, such as maize, which are grown across three ecological zones, the numbers and types of crops that can be grown in the highlands, escarpment and valley differed. Cornelius Kemboi, an agricultural extension officer had this to say; while the number of crops that can be

grown in the valley is great, due to the scarcity of water, the number of crops that can be grown there is relatively limited [28].

The average number of crops grown by households is greatest in the highlands, lowest in the valley, and intermediate on the escarpment. In the lower elevations of Keiyo the number of different crops that can be successfully grown declined, due mainly to inadequate rainfall. The valley can be very productive but it cannot be under the prevailing circumstances without irrigation.

There were differences between these areas not only in the number of crops that could be grown but also in the types of crops that could be grown. Today, maize tends to be the staple crop of people in all three ecological zones. Just as in much of Africa, maize has displaced the traditional cereals, such as finger millet and sorghum, for several reasons. One advantage of maize is that it is less susceptible to damage from crop pests, such as weaverbirds, than is millet and sorghum. Another reason for the popularity of maize is that it requires less labour during weeding, harvest and processing than those other grains; it is a labour saving crop compared to the indigenous grains. People continue to grow sorghum or millet especially for use in brewing beer. However, older participants routinely stated that they grew much less of these grains than they did in the past. The reasons they give for this change in the amount of millet or sorghum planted centered on the greater amount of work they require and its tedious nature. Maize has acquired a higher monetary value than millet and sorghum and the Keiyo farmer responded to widening market opportunities. Moreover, maize serves the dual purpose of being a commercial crop as well as being a subsistence crop. In other words; a farmer did not plant maize with the sole aim of trading it off, but consuming it at home. Finally, and not least of all, gastronomically speaking, people have acquired a definite taste preference for posho (maize meal) over millet and sorghum. Though maize is considered as a food crop, it is a cash crop as well for it is an important money earner for both small-scale and large-scale farmers [29].

Although maize is the number one food crop in all three ecological zones, including the valley, it is not necessarily the one that is best suited to the ecological conditions prevailing in those areas. Indigenous grains, such as millet and sorghum, are more drought resistant and would be safer alternatives yet most

people today plant maize as their primary food crop. Likewise, the number two food crop for all three ecological zones is beans, despite the fact that crops, like cowpeas, would be better suited to the drier conditions of the valley.

In the highlands, apart from the substitution of maize for millet and sorghum, Irish potatoes are widely grown in large quantities at Chepkorio, Lelboinet, Kapkenda, Metkei, Kipsaos, Kipkabus and Nyaru, where the climate and soils were suitable for the growing of the same. According to Grace Kiplagat, the Irish potatoes are popular in these areas not only because of its commercial value but also due to the fact that it matures in a shorter period than other available crops. It needs very little labour and the yields are very high. Finally, potatoes like maize serve the dual purpose of being a commercial as well as subsistence crop [30].

The distribution between “cash” and “food” crops is often an artificial one imposed by the observer. Many people in Keiyo, like people in other parts of the country, grow crops such as maize for sale and consumption. Although some amount may be grown for consumption, Ruth Kolil said, this amount would be altered by reality; people often face emergency needs for cash such as medical expenses, school fees, and funerals. If an emergency arose around the time for harvest or thereafter, some of the maize that is intended for consumption will end up being sold, often for low prices to local entrepreneurs. Furthermore, and unfortunately for the households involved, they later have to buy this maize back at inflated prices [31].

For the people of the escarpment and the valley, this crops which are grown for food also tend to be those crops which are grown for sale. Households in the highlands are located in much closer proximity to the daily market in Eldoret than are people on the escarpment and in the valley; this strongly influences the crops that they choose to grow. Kales, cabbages, and tomatoes do well in the better growing climate of the highlands. Moreover, their greater perishability makes growing and transporting them from lower elevations less viable. On the other hand, maize and beans, once dried, could be stored for relatively long periods of time. Finally, it should be noted that the bananas which are noted as the second most important cash crop on the escarpment are sold locally and on a very small-scale. By and large, bananas brought a small but steady source of income. Other notable

crops in the valley include pawpaw, finger millet, groundnuts and cotton while in the highland there are wheat, pyrethrum and wattle trees.

Agricultural Labour

Labour often represents a major constraint on small-scale agriculture in Africa, and, in this respect, Keiyo is not different. Labour bottlenecks occur at critical periods in the agricultural cycle and like other Africans, the Keiyo have devised social arrangements that help them to overcome these restrictions. In the three ecological zones covered by this study, the number of households that need outside help at some period during the year is high.

Co-operative labour parties are well documented in the literature on African production systems. Neighbours co-operate in tasks such as breaking the land, planting, weeding or harvesting in return for reciprocal assistance at a later date or a beer party. While these kinds of arrangements continue today in Keiyo, some people have taken to performing this labour in return for cash. This practice is known as casual labour, or *kibarua* [32]. Nearly all these options involve some expenditure of money, and most households are forced to expend cash to secure the extra agricultural labour they need. Although, farming is still important for subsistence in the valley, it is a less critical part of households' livelihood strategies there than it is in the highlands.

Earnings from Agricultural Activities

Households in the highlands invest more money (inputs and labour) in crop production than their counterparts in the valley or on the escarpment. However, it is true that people in the highlands also earn more money from crop sales than do households in the valley or on the escarpment. This is because people in the highlands can grow a greater variety of crops than is possible on the escarpment and in the valley. Furthermore, in the lower elevations, these crops which are grown for food tend to be those which are sold for cash; such as maize and beans. In the highlands, on the other hand, although people still sell maize and beans, their major cash crops (kale, cabbages, Irish potatoes and tomatoes) are different from their staple food crops.

Before concluding this discussion of agricultural activities, it is necessary to consider for a moment the various outlets that people use for selling their crops. Generally, befitting the strategy of diversification,

most households use a variety of outlets for crop sales rather than relying on a single channel. Furthermore, this generalization holds true across ecological zones. For example, although the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) is the official buyer for maize, people from all three eco-zones do not only sell maize through this channel; instead, they tend to market their crops through a combination of sources. This includes local individuals, local shops, local schools, middlemen, and a combination of some of them. All the households in the three ecological zones market their crops utilizing a number of different outlets because this allows households to take advantage of unexpected situations that arise during the course of the year than if they were locked into a rigid predetermined pattern.

Employment

Employment, in the broad sense of income earning activities, is central to national economic development and household welfare. Labour is the human factor in production. Employment of more and more labour-equipped with appropriate skills and technology and combined with other resources like land and capital is the principal instrument for increasing the production of goods and services and thereby promoting economic growth and development. At the same time, it is through such participation of its members in production and development that a household earns its income and the opportunity to consume, save and invest. These are the essential determinants of the economic welfare enjoyed by a household. The level of welfare depends not only on the extent of the household's participation in productive work, but also on the quality of that participation, that is, on the level of skills of the workers, the technologies at their disposal, the infrastructural facilities available to them and the quantity and quality of complementary resources of land and capital.

Unemployment on the other hand occurs when a person of working age, who is able and willing to work, finds none. It follows from the above that this has two implications; one, that the household loses the goods and services which this person, if employed, would be able to produce and two, that the household concerned is denied the economic and social wellbeing which this person's earnings would enable it to enjoy. Underemployment occurs when the person may be working full time but has poor levels of

education, skill, infrastructural facilities and other complementary resources so that a meager output is produced. This phenomenon results in loss of potential output of goods and services to the welfare of the household.

These and other considerations indicate that creating adequate opportunities for fully productive employment of all members of society who are willing and able to work must be central to the process of economic development. Employment is also the principal means of creating a society in which all individuals and households have rightful share in the benefits accruing from social and economic progress.

Access to employment opportunities tend to be greater in the higher elevations of Keiyo. However, the Fluorspar Mining Company in the valley provides employment opportunities both directly and indirectly to people from the three eco-zones. Otherwise, wage earning positions are extremely scarce anywhere except in the highlands, and even there they are not plentiful since lack of jobs is a chronic problem of the Kenyan economy today.

Furthermore, getting a job is not simply a matter of accessibility but also educational qualifications. Households in the highlands generally tend to be better educated than households on the escarpment and in the valley; hence, they are usually better qualified for the few jobs that exist. Consequently, the amount of income that households expect to earn from wage labour and salaried employment is greater in the highlands than in the other two ecological zones. Thus, Felix Rotich opines that on average income gained from these sources for households in the highlands was higher than from the escarpment or the valley [33].

The focus therefore, should be to protect and enhance the assets and income streams making up rural livelihoods, searching for poverty reducing technical change, building and enhancing social capital through group co-operation, support for marketing initiatives for lower income groups and removal of local and national government regulations which obstruct petty trade. These will improve livelihoods and contribute to broad-based economic growth.

Entrepreneurial Activities

Entrepreneurship consists of the ability to organize production and the willingness to assume risks. The entrepreneur is the owner of a business;

he/she takes decisions on what to produce, how to produce (technology employed) and for whom to produce (markets). If there is a profit after meeting all costs, he/she takes it, if there is a loss, he/she bears it.

One of the most fundamental assertions in this study is that people of Keiyo, like people in rural communities elsewhere in the developing world, do many different things in order to survive; they diversify rather than specialize their economic enterprises. Although agriculture is the most important means of making a living for most of the households of these three eco-zones, by no means do these activities exhaust the range of possibilities. Households in all the three ecological zones try to do other things in addition to growing crops and keeping animals; however, their ability to do so vary.

The “small-scale income generating activities” subsumes a variety of possibilities including; casual labour (kibarua). Kibarua which, refer to day labour or piece of work paid either in cash or in goods such as maize [34]. However, it should be noted that the degree to which households depend upon casual labour for income generation is inversely correlated with elevation. Thus, the average amount of money that people earn and the degree to which they depend upon casual labour for economic survival is greater in the valley than on the escarpment or in the highlands.

Casual labour is not gender specific; it is regularly performed by both males and females alike. Other small-scale income generating activities tend to be more gender specific. For example, the burning and sale of charcoal is something which was undertaken primarily by males, and more in the valley (due to the greater availability of trees) than elsewhere.

Craftwork is limited in Keiyo. Making ropes from sisal fibres and calabashes from guards is about the only craft activities that are carried out in the three eco-zones and are minor supplementary sources of income. These activities are mostly done by women [35].

The information gathered in this paper supports the assertion that life is fundamentally different in the highlands. Additionally, it is maintained that this divergence is rooted in the much more favourable economic opportunity structure in the highlands than on the escarpment or in the valley. The causes of the superior opportunity structure in the highlands are lodged equally in ecological and historical factors.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of households in Keiyo, considered their size and composition, as well as the distribution of household resources across the three ecological zones under consideration. To review this discussion, it is suggested that, as a reflection of the more favourable economic opportunity structure there, the distribution of resources was more equitable among households in the highlands than either of the other two areas.

The different economic opportunity structures of these three areas were reflected in the make-up of households. On average, households were largest in the highlands, smallest in the valley and intermediate on the escarpment. This was due to the fact that the population of the highlands was younger and that there were more children there than in the other two areas.

This paper has also examined the economic strategies that people from the three ecological zones in southern Keiyo used and the activities in which they engaged to make a living. The study has endeavoured to show that people felt most secure in the highlands and that they were better able to meet their own economic expectations there than elsewhere. It has also been suggested that the economic strategies of people in these three ecological zones led them to deliberately seek to diversify their economic activities both in order to reduce risk/uncertainty and also in the attempt to turn a profit. In this regard, those households that were able to combine on-farm activities with off-farm sources of income were generally the most successful and secure. However, the ability to diversify was not equally distributed. It was dependent upon access to capital and as such it tends to be greatest in the highlands. Nevertheless, the economic opportunity structure of the highlands was so benevolent that people there could succeed without extensively diversifying, whereas for households on the escarpment and the valley, diversification was a prerequisite for economic success.

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