

Diversification of livelihood strategies among Isiria maasai of lolgorien ward, Narok County, Kenya, 2013

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Abstract:

This study aimed at identifying, documenting and analysing alternative livelihood strategies adopted by Isiria Maasai due to socio-economic changes that made pastoralism vulnerable and unsustainable. It also sought to identify challenges encountered and suggest possible measures of redress. The study was carried out in Lolgorien and Ang'ata Barrikoi wards of Kilgoris Constituency in Narok County. A sample of 160 households and six key informants were selected and data was collected using household interview schedules, focus group discussion and key informant interviews. This study identified thirteen alternative livelihood strategies undertaken by at least ten per cent of households. Isiria Maasai gathered local wild vegetables, cultivated crops, reared poultry and gave out draught animals. Households also pursued beekeeping and sale of honey, leased out land and sold merchandise at home or in the open air market. They also made and sold traditional crafts and ornaments, secured formal employment, rental housing, sold land as well as wood products. Livelihood strategies pursued were influenced by the age of household head and location of the homestead. However, in diversifying into alternative livelihood strategies, households faced challenges due to nature, human capital, marketing of their produce, infrastructure and law. Isiria Maasai applied various measures to address them. Nevertheless, extra measures need to be undertaken and thus this study recommends a transparent process of privatising existing communal land, posting and funding extension staff to ward levels to offer advice to households adopting alternative livelihood strategies and hastening town planning and allocate plots transparently. Financial institutions should address the negative attitude households have towards loans. A similar study is recommended for other pastoral areas to compare results obtained from this study and in the same area to determine actual incomes from alternative livelihood strategies. There is also need to document activities undertaken by different members of a household.