

## Addressing Youth Livelihoods through Livestock Production in the Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya

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**D**eclining agricultural productivity is threatening the livelihood of the youth households in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) in Kenya. In addition to limited access to land, use of poor livestock production technologies, and age-based social networks, the vagaries of climate change tend to compound the challenges faced by the youth. To ensure that the youth have sustainable rural livelihoods, there is need to enhance access to land and property rights ownership, embrace appropriate production technologies, and strengthen social networks to facilitate knowledge sharing among youth.

### Introduction

The proportion of rural youth in Kenya has increased rapidly since the 1970s from 25 per cent to the current 65 per cent of the youth population and is expected to double by year 2050. The rapid growth is coupled with declining agricultural productivity and, as a result, there is growing rural-urban migration by the youth.

The key factor contributing to declining agricultural productivity in the ASALs is climate change. In addition, increased rural-migration among the youth coupled with fast-aging rural parents is limiting the transfer of knowledge and skills on farming practices. Further, for the arid lands, traditionalism has limited policy interventions on livestock-based livelihood compared to their counterparts in the semi-arid lands.

Since the 1990s, the government has implemented various programmes in the ASALs to address market infrastructure such as boreholes and livestock holding grounds, and programmes to address the risks of livestock diseases and pests. Significant success was realized in the reseeded of denuded arid and semi-arid lands with appropriate pasture species, development of vaccination programmes, increasing hay production and ensuring proper storage, and also ensuring distribution of breeding livestock. However, the above programmes have not systematically assessed the extent to which human, natural, financial, physical and social capital assets of the youth affect livestock-based livelihoods.

This policy brief, based on a KIPPRA study, assesses the effects of natural assets or capital (such as

land), human capital (such as level of education), financial capital (such as credit), physical capital (farm implements or equipment) and social capital (connectedness of youth household head to government, other farmers or NGOs) on livestock-based income for a youth household in the semi-arid lands.

### Factors Influencing Productivity of Livestock for Youth in ASALs

Various factors influence productivity of livestock in the ASALs and these constrain the livelihood of the youth. They include: access to land and land ownership rights; investment capital and credit; lack of markets and opportunities to participate in policy decisions; education and vocational skills and productive technologies; and socio-cultural practices related to gender, age, and education. In addition, livestock productivity is influenced by insecurity due to inter-clan conflicts, competition for pastures and watering points, and inadequate technical capacity for control of diseases by farmers and the Department of Veterinary Services.



On the upside, youth preferences for providing services in the livestock value chains such as in manufacturing of livestock feeds, transportation, livestock fattening (value addition), and livestock marketing, can promote livestock production. Focusing attention on the youth, the KIPPRA study finds several factors that significantly influence livestock productivity which could see improved income for youth households in the ASALs.

1. Ownership and size of agricultural holding (farm size) matters in enhancing livestock income for youth households. Increased holding size of a youth household head means increased availability of pasture or acreage for crop residues used for livestock feeds. The youth household holding size in the ASALs, which averages 1.44 acres, partly reflects the limited availability of land in the ASALs. Land productivity can be enhanced through technological innovations in form of moisture conservation, early maturing and productive seed varieties for livestock feeds, as well as high quality adapted livestock.
2. Investment in production technologies: Results show that spending on chemicals such as ticks spray in livestock production (financial capital) enhances livestock productivity because such chemicals lower the risk of exposing the livestock to disease and pests. This in turn increases livestock value on sale and income.
3. The age of the youth household head (natural capital) determines participation in social networks that are critical sources of knowledge and skills on farming practices. The older the youth the more the capital accumulation, including knowledge and skills for livestock production, market access for capital and livestock products as well as selling off animals. In addition, older youth are likely to have a family life cycle that provides more able-bodied labour for the family. Further, advanced age allows for inheritance of family wealth such as land and livestock as well as access to resources in general compared to youth.

## Sustaining Livelihood of Youth in ASALs

To ensure that the youth have sustainable livelihood in the ASALs, there is need to enhance access to land, embrace appropriate production technologies, and strengthen social networks.

1. Several actions can be taken to enable the youth get more access to land and ownership of property. These include creating awareness on the need for a generational change in attitude towards land inheritance. Land inheritance, access or land purchase is determined by age, having a family and gender. Actions can also be taken to review land lease policy, rules and regulations to allow for simple and less costly transactions that are not based on education, age and gender. This way, youth can be able to purchase, access, use and have rights to land and property ownership.
2. Secondly, extension services should be emphasized for the youth household heads to enable them adopt new production technologies. For example, community radio, schools, churches, and market places could be used for advisory information on the livestock production value chain.
3. Thirdly, there is need to facilitate social networks to enable the youth acquire knowledge and skills needed to practice farming in the ASALs. Youth could be targeted in various age brackets. For example, older youth in the age bracket 26-34 years are likely to have interacted with older adults and may have more social networks and access to knowledge, inputs and information about livestock production. More emphasis should be given to the younger to enable them learn new innovations for livestock farming.

This policy brief is based on a KIPPRA Discussion Paper on “The effects of capital assets on livelihood-based outcomes from livestock production among youth in the Semi- Arid Lands of Kenya”.

### About KIPPRA Policy Briefs

KIPPRA Policy Briefs are aimed at a wide dissemination of the Institute’s policy research findings. The findings are expected to stimulate discussion and also build capacity in the public policy making process in Kenya.

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