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ASSESSING TRANSITORY POVERTY AMONG PASTORALISTS OF NORTHERN KENYA USING THE STAGES OF PROGRESS METHOD

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Abstract

There has been a tendency of pastoral households of northern Kenya to fall into and remain permanently trapped in poverty, while a few households have managed to escape poverty under certain circumstances. Three hundred and three hundred and fifty four households in Mandera and Turkana Counties respectively were sampled across three different livelihood zones: pastoral, agro-pastoral and off-farm. Household interviews were conducted to capture information on household assets, sources of income and household expenditure. Using the stages of progress method, the community members developed a poverty ladder that households were assumed to follow as they graduated from poverty to prosperity. Depending on how they had performed over the last twenty years, households were placed in four categories: Those that had remained poor, those that had escaped poverty, those that had become poor and those that had remained non-poor. Seventy one percent and fifty eight percent of the households in Turkana and Mandera respectively could be classified as poor in 2013. Loss of livestock, death of male spouse, poor performance of business and loss of job were the main reasons that led to pastoral destitution. Pastoral households escaped poverty through diversification, receipt of remittances, employment and business. The two pastoral communities used different pathways to escape poverty, meaning that no single blanket poverty reduction approach may be applied across different pastoral communities. Factors that led to pastoral poverty were different from those that helped households escape poverty. Two sets of policies will need to be used concurrently to reduce pastoral poverty; one set of policies to stop households from sliding into poverty and a different set of policies to pull households out of poverty.