



## Chronic Poverty in Kenya

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the 177 countries for which UNDP Human Development Index data exists, Kenya is ranked 152nd. 42% of the population lives below the national poverty line and life expectancy for both men and women is less than 48 years. A significant portion of the population can be termed 'chronically poor' – i.e. they permanently live in conditions of hardship and vulnerability which are recognized both locally and internationally as unacceptable.

This report aims to present information on the form, reasons behind and efforts to deal with chronic poverty in certain parts of Kenya, specifically three areas where Trocaire's development partners in the Catholic Church are working – the Districts of Tharaka, Turkana and Kitui.

Chronically poor households are characterised by large numbers of children, low levels of education of the heads of households and a relatively high incidence of household members being ill or disabled. Asset and livestock ownership is low and the land they farm (if they are involved in cultivation), although not always small in area, is usually of poor quality. Livelihood options are very limited because of low human capability, but also because of isolation from or an inability to capitalize on services, opportunities and natural resources. The almost complete reliance on agriculture and absence of other livelihood options make these households particularly vulnerable to poor weather. The areas visited for this study are regularly affected by drought that has caused crop yields to plummet and livestock to lose condition and die. Socio-cultural factors such as high aversion to risk, adherence to customs which have a negative impact on development and the breakdown of traditional support networks also play a role in driving households into poverty and keeping them there.

The places where chronically poor households live are often marginal – either isolated from other parts of the country or unproductive because of agro-ecological reasons and often both. The chronically poor and the areas in which they live tend to be poorly served by the Government and their elected representatives. The poorest have little 'voice' to change this situation and are often accepting and fatalistic about their circumstances. Title to land is not always available in Kenya (in Turkana the Government owns all land), but even when chronically poor households do own land it is rarely useful as collateral: lending institutions are either uninterested in marginal land or the risk of losing what little they do own discourages the owner from using it to secure a loan.

There is no formal welfare system in Kenya and the chronically poor have often lost or broken ties with members of the family who traditionally play this role. When illness, disability or old age renders the breadwinner incapable of working productively the household often experiences a slide into chronic poverty. There is a perception that smallholder agriculture is becoming increasingly non-viable as a livelihood option because of declining soil fertility, decreasing availability of land and low commodity prices, so the free primary education provided by the Government is highly valued as it represents one of the few ways of attaining off-farm employment.

Being part of the Catholic Church, all of the partners which took part in this study are motivated by Christian teachings, in particular the notion of justice. In the absence of any real alternatives to agriculture in the areas they are working, Trocaire's partners implement a variety of relief and development programmes. Cash and food for work interventions are designed to cater for participating households' immediate food needs while enabling them to make improvements to their land. In most cases beneficiaries are selected through community targeting groups who use locally

relevant notions of poverty and vulnerability to select those who will benefit most from the projects. Aware that the nature of the interventions can preclude the old, disabled and landless, sometimes the partners have issued free food rations to these groups, although resource and staffing constraints appear to have compromised the targeting of these free transfers.

The partner organisations appear to work with the District Government and other local development actors to varying degrees – depending on the relative strength of these institutions. In Turkana, for example, where the Diocese of Lodwar is one of the major service providers in the area, co-operation is apparently less strong. One of the relative strengths of all the partners is their grass-roots network of priests and catechists, who, as well as helping with project implementation, relay information (usually, but not always, anecdotal) on the extent of need and vulnerability trends in their areas. This broad outreach and level of acceptance in the local community does not always translate into involving communities in project design or implementation however; probably because of timing and resource constraints.

Partner's effectiveness is compromised by lack of long-term funding streams that would allow them to engage in multi-annual activities more suited to the learning and adoption patterns of the poorest households. They are also hampered by a lack of evidence of programme impact (as opposed to output).

The household case studies presented exemplify the level of deprivation experienced by chronically poor households in the three areas studied and explore the reasons why these households are now chronically poor.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The UNDP's Human Development Index ranks Kenya 152nd of 177 countries for which data exists. 23% of the population lives on below a dollar a day and 42% live below the national poverty line. Only 47% of the population has access to safe water and average life expectancy for both men and women is less than 48 years<sup>3</sup>. Although these figures are important in enabling comparison with other countries they do little to convey the depth of poverty which afflicts so many households in Kenya.

This report commissioned by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre and Trocaire, aims to present some of the stories associated with poor households in three of Trocaire's partners' working areas – Kitui, Lodwar and Tharaka. These households have for a long time – sometimes as long as they can remember - lived below the poverty line. In the parlance of wealth ranking, they are described as Chronically Poor.

Specifically, the report will detail: -

- The characteristics of the areas visited and Trocaire's partners working there.
- The characteristics of chronic poverty as perceived by staff of the partner organizations
- The causes of chronic poverty in the areas visited
- Strategies in place by partners to address chronic poverty and how these institutions could be more effective

In addition, six household case studies (two households from each area visited) and two case studies of how the partners work with community groups are presented.

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2003

### **3. PARTNER OPERATIONAL AREA BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Tharaka District (Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office)**

Tharaka District is located in the Eastern part of Kenya. It borders Meru National Park to the East, Mwingi and Mbeere to the South, Meru South to the West and Meru North and Central Districts to the North. Tharaka has a total population of 124,000 and covers 1,561 sq km. The total number of households is around 25,000 with an average household size of five persons.

The District, categorized as being 67.5% arid, receives a bimodal rainfall pattern, which is unreliable and unevenly distributed. Rainfall ranges between 300- 500mm per annum. The soils are poor - mainly sandy loams with a few areas covered by the red and black cotton soils.

Millet, sorghum, cowpeas, green grams and pigeon peas are grown as both food and cash crops. Maize and beans are grown in some areas, which border Meru North, Central and South Districts. After a long period of decline, cotton is being slowly revived as a cash crop across the District.

Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office (TNDDO) is the development department of the Diocese of Meru, and has been operational since 1994. The Diocese covers the four administrative Districts of Tharaka, Meru South, Central and North. The main livelihood of the population is subsistence agriculture and agro-pastoralism. Between 30-50% of the population in the Districts covered is estimated to be food insecure and in need of food aid in the case of drought.

Drought led to serious food insecurity for the third consecutive season by the end of the October 2005 rains. This further eroded the livelihood strategies of local agriculturalists. Livestock have died due to lack of pasture and diseases, and the market value of the animals deteriorated dramatically. The most affected areas were Tharaka District, the lower parts of Meru South, Upper parts of Meru Central and the northern grazing land of Meru North District, bordering Isiolo District.

The organization has extensive relief experience, and acted as lead agency for the WFP Food for Work in Tharaka District in 2000 – 2001. TNDDO has 16 staff working amongst others in the fields of livelihood security, emergency relief, literacy and education, peace & justice and human rights. Their annual programme expenditure is about € 223,000.

#### **3.2 Turkana District (Diocese of Lodwar)**

Lodwar is the District capital of Turkana. The Diocese of Lodwar has operated in the entire District since 1961. The area is categorized as arid and semi arid, and is predominantly inhabited by nomadic pastoralists with a total population estimated at around 435,000. Turkana is one of the most underdeveloped parts of Kenya and differs in many ways from the rest of the country, particularly in its agro-climatic characteristics and the way it is governed.

As with Kitui, long-term drought has seriously undermined the livelihoods of people living in the area, particularly pastoralists. Poor rainfall coupled with disease has led to deterioration in the condition and sale price of livestock and, as herds have been led further away from homesteads in search of pasture, those remaining in the household are affected by the non-availability of milk, meat, blood and other livestock products. The drought has impacted on traditional coping mechanisms and social structures and has served as another driver of armed cattle raiding which, in turn, has resulted in overstocking of the more secure areas of the District.

The Diocese has been involved in humanitarian work including water, health, education, justice and peace, irrigation for more than 40 years. It has 22 staff and an established position and expertise in the area. Annual programme expenditure is €386,382.

### **3.3 Kitui District (Diocese of Kitui)**

Kitui District covers an estimated area of 20,402 sq. km and the population of the District is estimated at 575,677 persons. The District's population is divided between agro-pastoral and marginal agricultural zones.

After years of less-than-average rainfall Kitui is a chronic food deficit District, which is dependant on relief food. It was estimated that about 340,000 people in the District (60% of the population) were in need of food aid from January to July 2006.

The Diocese of Kitui has been operational in the area since 1964 as an ecumenical organization, and has taken a developmental/relief role since 1991, focusing on Primary health care, HIV/AIDS home care, water and food security. The Diocese has implemented emergency relief programmes in partnership with Trocaire since 2004 and also partners with other national and international development agencies.

The organisation is staffed with 31 people across eight programme departments including Development, Food Security, Relief, Livestock, Justice and Peace and Medical. The Diocese's annual programme expenditure is around € 823,000.

## 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRONIC POVERTY

Participants in workshops held in Tharaka and Kitui were asked to brainstorm and record the characteristics of chronically poor households in their working areas then record these characteristics by drawing a picture of the household and a map showing where a chronically poor household would typically be located in relation to other households and services. Unfortunately there was not time to perform this exercise at the workshop held in Lodwar (Turkana).

### 4.1 Typical Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile of Chronically Poor Households

Both workshop groups were emphatic that chronically poor households usually host large numbers of children – in other words had high dependency ratios. Polygamy was also a noted characteristic. Neither identified households headed by the elderly or disabled as likely to be chronically poor, although households interviewed for the case studies mentioned age and disability more often than high numbers of children as a reason for poverty, as these factors preclude one from working. Household case studies 3 in Kitui and 5 in Turkana illustrate the way that old age and disability can drive households into chronic poverty.

Household members are often in poor health. This can be both an outcome and/or a cause of chronic poverty. The groups in Tharaka and Kitui flagged up the fact that more children to feed means that there is less food to go round, resulting in stunting and other nutrition-related health issues. In the areas covered for this report, during the 'lean' months the poorest households eat one meal or less per day. Poor health as a cause of poverty is clearly exemplified in the household of Amina Yusuf (case study 4 in Kitui). Amina and her sister both contracted HIV several years ago, and their lives and those of their dependant children have become increasingly difficult ever since as they are unable to fully benefit from the employment and business opportunities available where they live.

In Chronically Poor households literacy and education levels of the head of the household are often, but not always, low (the Yusuf sisters [case study 4], for example were relatively well educated but had been affected by disease). What became clear from the workshops and the case studies was that education is one of the only ways out of livelihood strategy (small holder farming) which is in turn increasingly risky and unable to provide for a household's basic needs (the reasons for this are looked into in more detail in section 5 below). The households of Justa Kagendo and Amina Yusuf in case studies 2 and 4 both appeared to make considerable short term sacrifices in terms of lost labour and disposable income in order to keep their children in school. Where household members responsible for care giving – whether parents or grown up children - had missed or squandered the opportunity of education we found some household members expressing considerable regret and even blaming their current situation on this.

Adults, particularly men, living in Chronically Poor households are perceived as being more likely to be alcoholic. There are social taboos about this, so even if addiction to alcohol or other substances was a factor behind the poverty of the households visited for case studies it was not admitted. Alcohol abuse by males is apparently a particularly important driver and maintainer of poverty in Turkana District – disposable income is wasted on spirits, and the long term effects render the alcoholic incapable of productive work. Ironically, most of the alcohol comes from stills operated by women – one of the few economic activities available which entails low labour input, yields a high value output, and has a high chance of repeat business from customers.

## **4.2 Homestead Features of Chronically Poor Households**

In Kitui and Tharaka a poor family is easily identified by the kind of house they live in. In most cases this will be one or a collection of mud walled, grass roofed single roomed huts. There is no kitchen hut - food is cooked over a fire made between three stones. There is little or no furniture and family members sleep on sacks or animal skins on the floor. In some cases, rather than using the surrounding bush, a latrine may have been built, but this is often in a bad state of repair. Crop storage facilities are usually made of grass and locally available materials which offer very little protection against the weather and pests.

In comparison, wealthier households in these areas have usually rendered the mud walls and floors of their huts with cement, have roofed them with tin and have added security features to the windows and doors. They will own basic items of furniture like tables and chairs and normally a radio. Crops are stored in a more secure way and investments may have been made in tanks and pipes to collect water from the roof.

The homesteads of the chronically poor in Turkana differ from those in Kitui and Tharaka because of the building materials available and local custom. Typically a very poor person or family will live in one or more one-roomed windowless beehive-like huts built entirely of doun palm leaves and scraps of old sacking and cardboard. There will be virtually no assets – probably one or two cooking pots, a few utensils and some jerry cans for collecting water. However, unlike in Kitui and Tharaka a better off household in Turkana is not easily identified by looking at the homestead. There are two reasons for this: First, Turkana prefer to invest spare cash in livestock, not property. Secondly, unlike in Kitui and Tharaka, in Turkana there is no permanent title to land, so there is little incentive to invest in non-moveable assets like housing.

## **4.3 Typical Location of Chronically Poor Households**

There was a general consensus amongst the staff of the organisations involved in this work that chronically poor households are normally located far away from main roads, water sources, and services such as schools, dispensaries, government extension agents and the police and often in areas poorly endowed with soil and natural resources like woods or lakes. Isolation makes marketing produce more difficult, increases the time spent ‘commuting’ to find casual labour or to go to school and cuts people off from new ideas and opportunities. However, while it is probably the norm, the case studies conducted for this work show that isolation from services and public goods is by no means a defining feature of where the chronically poor live.

Both the Turkana households presented in case studies 5 and 6 live in Lodwar town (one of them practically on the airstrip), albeit amongst ‘encampments’ of other families of more or less the same socio-economic status. Amina Yusuf’s house (case study 4) is located on the fringes of Kitui town, and while it is not a wealthy area, it is relatively well served by schools, clinics and other services.

Two features associated with location identified in the course of the workshops appeared to apply to all the case study households: the chronically poor’s neighbours are also poor and they are never that far away from a church. Both characteristics are well exemplified in Lodwar town where, below the offices of the Diocese, sprawls a slum inhabited by several thousand people all of which are sustained to a greater or lesser degree by the Catholic church’s charity.

The first feature – that chronically poor have poor neighbours – demonstrates the importance that spatial issues have on determining livelihood options and outcomes. In agrarian societies, less densely populated and more recently settled marginal land does not attract the same level of investment as more productive areas. People living

in these areas are doubly disadvantaged by living on poor land and also being isolated from services that may assist them to pursue alternative livelihood strategies.

Much could be written about the fact that the chronically poor often live close to churches, and it is beyond the scope of this document to do anything more than to make the observation that this speaks volumes about the institutions most valued as a source of help by the chronically poor, and the way that the church has historically delivered services (of a non-ecumenical kind) in Kenya.

#### **4.4 Land and Livestock Ownership by Chronically Poor Households**

Livestock ownership is practically always correlated with wealth in rural Kenya – the more livestock a household owns, the richer it is perceived to be. Sheep, goats, donkeys, camels and cattle are highly fungible assets which, when necessary, can be consumed, or sold or bartered, although in reality, cultural norms in some areas may discourage livestock sales in all but the direst circumstances. Unsurprisingly, chronically poor households have very little or no livestock and when asked what would make their lives better, nearly all the households interviewed for this study mentioned owning more livestock as a priority.

Landholding size is not a particularly reliable indicator of wealth – particularly in Turkana where all land is owned by the government. Chronically poor households own as much as 20 acres of land in Kitui and Tharaka Districts, but this means little if it is of poor quality, they do not have the labour to cultivate it, the money to buy inputs or it receives insufficient rainfall to cultivate crops or support livestock. Although title deeds to land are being issued in Kitui and Tharaka, security of tenure apparently rarely translates into households taking out loans which enable them to make productivity-enhancing improvements to their land; landowners are usually too risk averse to chance losing everything, or financial institutions are simply not interested in taking what is usually marginal land as collateral.

Whatever land is owned by chronically poor households is more often than not poorly maintained. In most instances the poorest do not have the labour or knowledge to make terraces or other improvements which would increase crop yields.

#### **4.5 Typical Livelihood Strategies of Chronically Poor Households**

The most distinctive feature of the livelihood strategies of households interviewed in Turkana, Kitui and Tharaka was their lack of diversity – a point that was reiterated in all the workshops. The fewer livelihood strategies a household has the more vulnerable it is to shock. The case of Akomwa Edapal (case study 5) in Lodwar clearly illustrates this – when her husband's livestock were wiped out and her husband died in 1955 she basically became destitute – her entire well-being was dependant on the ability of her husband to look after her; once he died she entered the ranks of the chronically poor and has not – will not – graduate from them. Such was the importance of her husband being alive to her own well-being that she ranks his death as a greater factor in her descent into poverty than her contracting the polio which has left her crippled.

In Tharaka and Kitui the chronically poor typically harvest little, sell most of it immediately at a very low price in order to raise cash for non-food needs, and survive for the bulk of the year in a hand-to-mouth manner by doing casual labour on farms in the locality whenever it is available, or engaging in environmentally degrading activities like charcoal burning or firewood collection. Because casual labour is most in demand during the land preparation, planting and weeding periods, the chronically poor end up neglecting their own farms, further diminishing their yields. In the poorest households children are often drafted in to contribute labour during critical periods to the detriment of their education.

Several workshop participants made the observation that the de-facto head of chronically poor households is often a woman. This is sometimes because main breadwinner has died, but also because the male adults have migrated from the home to find employment opportunities elsewhere (eg case study 3 in Kitui).

## **5. DRIVERS AND MAINTAINERS OF CHRONIC POVERTY**

A large number of causes of chronic poverty were identified and grouped into seven sometimes over-lapping categories: environmental/natural; social/cultural; spatial; economic; political; historical and health/lifecycle. These are examined in turn below.

### **5.1 Environmental & Natural Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

By far the greatest factor driving households into poverty and keeping them there identified by the participants of workshops held for this study is inadequate and unpredictable rainfall – a situation that has prevailed for most of the past decade. Crop yields have been poor and livestock have lost condition and died. (It should be noted that the rainfall in the months that preceded this survey were seen as the best in ten years – in Kitui and Tharaka harvests will be correspondingly good).

As households are increasingly unable to live on what they produce or sell on their farms they have to resort to other coping mechanisms. Often this takes the form of charcoal burning and logging of trees in the surrounding area – activities which have a knock on effect on soil erosion and, according to people interviewed for this study, rainfall. Nearly all the households who were interviewed for case studies reported that soil fertility had declined over the years, partly due to increased population resulting in shorter fallow periods. Turkana District presents an extreme case of this where large areas of natural wood land have been felled in order to provide firewood for the enormous refugee camps located there.

While the long-term trend appears to be one of gradual environmental degradation which negatively impacts on households' livelihood strategies there are also cases where natural resources are under-utilised because of lack of labour, know-how and capital. For example Deanery staff in Tharaka noted that few of the more than ten rivers that flow from the Mt. Kenya catchment are exploited for their full irrigation potential. One of the Tharaka workshop participants recounted how buckets donated to enable poor households living near the water courses to irrigate crops were used for other less-productive purposes.

### **5.2 Social and Cultural Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

As mentioned earlier, heads of chronically poor households typically have low levels of education and are likely to have physical and mental capability limitations resulting from poor childhood nutrition if their parents were chronically poor as well. This impacts significantly on their ability to learn new skills and seek out and assimilate information on new technologies, government and development agency programmes the area and other entitlements. It also narrows down/eliminates the off-farm employment opportunities available to them which are seen by many as the only way out of poverty.

Chronically poor households in the areas visited for this study are hampered by adherence to cultural practices which, while they surely served a purpose in years gone by, are now anachronistic and counter development efforts. Some examples cited include: -

- Marriage of young girls to much older men – essentially poor households selling their girl children to get dowry. Inbreeding is also relatively prevalent in chronically poor households because of lack of mobility and the limited pool of partners; this can result in capability-retarded offspring when the couple have children.
- Girl children being neglected, particularly in education, at the expense of boys – an issue which has longer-term impacts on birth control, female

circumcision, child care and general household income earning possibilities when the girl gets older.

- Gender imbalances in the distribution of the workload. Many tasks traditionally seen as women's work such as fetching water and firewood have become more time consuming as a result of overexploitation of the natural environment, but men have not always moved to take up some of the slack.
- Traditional inheritance laws – where widows can be left with no assets after the death of their husband – often result in the creation of a new chronically poor household comprising the widow and her children. An example of this can be seen in case study 6 in Turkana.
- The institution of dowry. Knowledge that dowry must be paid at some point in the future locks up assets which may otherwise be used more productively. Payment of dowry can drive households into poverty.
- A culture of polygamy where wives are taken on in good times with scant thought about how they and their children can be supported during times of scarcity.
- A strong belief in fatalism and witchcraft (especially prevalent in Kitui District where the Kamba tribe is the majority) which is a result of an individual's inability to objectively analyse reasons behind success and failure. For example, the death of livestock can be attributed to bad luck or a curse rather than failure to follow correct animal husbandry procedures.
- A focus on the quantity rather than quality of livestock kept as status is measured in numbers of cattle, resulting in overgrazing. There is also a strong reluctance to sell cattle in order to release funds for more productive purposes, although, in Turkana at least, this is understandable given that animal husbandry is one of the few abilities that adults have – selling animals to start a business would probably end in failure due to lack of business management skills.

Other socio-cultural causes of poverty identified over the course of the study are not particular to traditional agrarian societies in Kenya, but, in the author's experience, are characteristics which can be found in many poor communities everywhere. These include: -

- A lack of co-operative spirit and mutual trust, the upshot of which is unwillingness to pool resources.
- Extreme aversion to risk – unwillingness to try new approaches and/or stake what little they have on new ventures
- The general absence of positive role models in the community, apparently for two reasons. First, anyone who achieves a certain level of success usually leaves the area, and secondly, there exists a pervasive culture of conformity whereby poor households continue with outdated and retrograde customs and practices which are counter to their economic welfare to ensure they are not ostracised by their (poor) neighbours.
- Depletion and collapse of traditional family support structures as a result of disease, death and migration/desertion.
- A general outlook on life which was variously described as a 'dependency mindset' or 'laziness', but which could, on the evidence of the case studies, be also attributed to hopelessness and despair.

### **5.3 Spatial and Historical Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

Spatial issues contributed to chronic poverty to a greater or lesser extent in each of the Districts visited for this study.

Examples of the effects of geography and official neglect are easily found in Turkana – a huge District poorly connected with the rest of the country by roads or railways. The tribes living on its immediate borders are also pastoralists, but they have better access to modern weapons than the Turkana, so have gained the upper hand in cattle raiding in recent times. With raiding and drought seriously impacting on their traditional way of life, many Turkana have migrated to the relative security of the urban areas where they are ill equipped for the few employment opportunities available. The main road connecting the Turkana with the south of the country has become so degraded that traders are now reluctant to come and buy the few things that are produced in the District.

Turkana is still governed by presidential decree, and some laws applicable in the rest of Kenya – for example those pertaining to land ownership – do not apply in this District. Turkana's 'special' status and hostile climate and terrain have fixed it as a kind of no-go area in the minds of many Kenyans (it was noted that the President has never visited the District) and this appears to have an effect on the way decisions that affect its people are sometimes made. Two examples serve to illustrate the disdain with which the 'establishment' has the local population.

As already mentioned, Turkana is very arid – practically desert in parts – so the availability of water places severe constraints on the scope and location of economic activity. In the 1980's the Turkwell Gorge Scheme was established – a major river was dammed in order to create an irrigation scheme. In 1988, however, the dam's primary use was changed to hydro-electric power generation, and the irrigation objectives took on less of a priority – the requirements of the elite took priority over the needs of the poor.

The 1980's provides a second example when the political regime of the day expelled, at very short notice a Scandinavian country with a huge relief and development presence in Turkana. The government was irked that the country in question had granted political asylum to one of their outspoken political opponents. Expulsion of the donor, and the immediate loss of the raft of services that they provided had a huge impact on the Turkana, but little on a government which neither cared much for nor relied on them for votes.

The role that history plays in determining inflows of resources and investment is illustrated in the case of Tharaka. Tharaka was only gazetted as a District in its own right in the 1980's – previously it was an infertile part of the generally fertile Meru South District and, as such, while it was part of Meru South it was neglected because it was less fertile and took second place when it came to allocation of resources and agricultural initiatives.

### **5.4 Economic Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

Economic reasons for chronic poverty identified by staff of partner organisations involved in this work pertained largely to the poor's livelihood strategies but also to meso and macro-level economic forces.

Poor farming techniques such as use of outdated cultivars and intercropping in a haphazard way in the hope that one crop will do well were seen as factors behind poor yields as were lack of terracing and low use of manure and chemical fertilisers (subsidies on chemical fertiliser were removed during Structural Adjustment programmes in the 1980's).

In Turkana cattle raiding and disease – an entire herd representing a household's sole livelihood option can be lost in a very short space of time - contribute significantly to vulnerability.

Inability to produce marketable surpluses because of poor weather; the breakdown of parastatal marketing cooperatives (allegedly due to mismanagement and corruption) and the collapse of commodity prices globally (particularly cotton which used to be grown extensively in Kitui and Tharaka) have meant that farmers are no longer able to make the investments needed such as tools, pumps and inputs.

Farmers who do sell crops have a very weak bargaining position as they are unable to transport the produce themselves and have limited storage facilities. As such they often end up selling to middlemen immediately after harvest for less than the production costs

Hardship caused by the decline of agriculture is compounded by the lack of other investment or employment opportunities. Credit is difficult to access except through the few savings clubs that exist, and often the chronically poor do not belong to these groups as other members see them as a liability (see case study 3 Kitui).

Many of the poor do not have title deeds for the land they own, so it is impossible to use it as collateral and there are strong disincentives for making improvements to the land. Even when title deeds have been issued, as they have in some parts of Kitui and Tharaka, owners are highly reluctant to take out loans against their land as they stand to lose everything if they cannot repay.

It was finally, generally felt that the government does not do a good job (either because of lack of resources or otherwise) in providing agricultural extension services and linking chronically poor communities with initiatives that may provide alternative livelihood sources where they exist. None of the households interviewed as case studies for this work were served by government initiatives specifically designed to reduce chronic poverty, although provision of free primary education is a very valuable service to households with children

### **5.5 Political Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

In all of the three Districts there is a strong sense amongst agency staff that the areas were not as well served by their political leaders as they could be.

Corruption plays a big role. Indeed, there is a perception that political leaders connive to keep their charges poor so that, come election time, they can be bought off cheaply with a bag of grain or such like. Corrupt officials take advantage of weak accountability mechanisms to siphon off money. In all areas the recently introduced Constituency Development Fund (a mechanism whereby MPs are directly allocated large sums of money to spend on development projects in their constituencies), was criticised as non-transparent and targeted in a partisan and non-strategic way. Although the way funds are used is decided by a committee, the committee members are appointed by the MP, and, as one of the partner organisation staff will attest to, can be dismissed if they question the use of the funds too closely.

An executive that is under resourced and sometimes weak and incompetent is also seen as playing a major role in maintaining poverty. Turkana District, for example is seen as a hardship posting, so rarely attracts the civil service's top performers – indeed it is a place where staff are sent to be disciplined. Those that do perform well are rapidly promoted out of the District as a reward. In general, an under-strength executive has resulted in a lack of consistency in development planning, and explains why the church and other non-governmental agencies are perceived as the main providers of services to the poor in the areas visited.

The poor's lack of ability to participate in and/or understand the democratic process, and the way in which the instruments of government and development assistance function renders them vulnerable to manipulation. In Turkana for example, two of the MPs used to occupy senior positions in a very well know British NGO operational in the area, and, to garner votes during their campaigns to initially win the seats, allegedly insinuated that the services they were delivering came from them rather than the NGO.

There is no doubt that the poor area difficult group to work with. Success requires long-term intervention and the chronically poor's circumstances mean entry points are limited. Lack of long-term funding sources (Trocaire's partners in Tharaka and Kitui have been working on a succession of one-year drought recovery grants because of lack of long-term livelihoods funding), and limited impact relative to working with wealthier groups make the chronically poor less attractive to work with. The fact that they usually need grants or 'something for nothing' rather than loans does not always sit easily with local development actors' notions of who is deserving of a share of the limited development resources available.

Finally, global economic trends and policies are recognised as playing their part in maintaining poverty. Subsidies paid to Western farmers enabling them to undercut producers in Kenya and Western Donors' pressure on Kenya to liberalise their economy are seen as very unhelpful in the effort to fight poverty in rural Kenya.

Unfortunately the author did not have time to interview key informants from government institutions on GoK strategy to address chronic poverty, so the facts presented here are based on the discussions with the staff of the partner organisations and the chronically poor people interviewed for the case studies. Basically, it was found that there do not appear to be any government policies aimed specifically at the chronically poor and that, where policies do exist, they remain on paper and are rarely fully implemented. None of the poor households interviewed were served by government in ways other than free primary education and free medical consultations at government clinics.

### **5.6 Health and Lifecycle Drivers and Maintainers of Chronic Poverty**

Four of the household case studies clearly show the impact that age and disease can have on a household's welfare. The households of Amina Yusuf and Paul Etabo in Lodwar have both experienced a significant drop in income since the main bread winners became ill with HIV and TB respectively. Old age plays an important though not critical role in the cases of Kasioka Kisimbo in Kitui and Ekomwa Edapal in Lodwar – neither of these old women cite old age as the primary reason for their poverty, rather they recognise that it is a result of the collapse/disappearance of support mechanisms that they hoped to rely on to support them in old age, either through capability constraints (as in the case of Kasioka's sons) or through death (as in the case of Akomwa's husband).

High prevalence of illness, particularly from water borne diseases in Turkana and malaria, leading to reduced ability to work, health and capability complications caused by poor nutrition and poor capacity and coverage of health centres were all flagged up by workshop attendees as important factors contributing to poverty in all areas.

## **6. PARTNER ORGANISATION CASE STUDIES**

### **6.1 Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office (Operating under Diocese of Meru)**

#### **6.1.1 Motivation for Addressing Chronic Poverty**

The Development Office of the Diocese is clearly guided and motivated by core values of the Catholic Church. The Diocese's mission is *'the salvation of humanity through diversified quality and sound management of pastoral and social development with special emphasis to the poor, marginalised and the oppressed'*<sup>4</sup> and works towards a goal of *'Improved evangelisation and standards of livelihood for the people in the Diocese of Meru'*.

#### **6.1.2 Strategies to Tackle Chronic Poverty**

At present Trocaire funds or has funded three of the Diocese's five programmes being implemented in Tharaka Nithi Deanery, these being: Emergency Preparedness and Response, Food Security, and Micro Finance. It is arguable that, of these three, just the first two are designed to address the needs of the chronically poor.

The emergency preparedness programme uses a food-for-work approach to enable 2,400 beneficiary households to make water-conserving enhancements to their land. The approach is appropriate for the able-bodied chronically poor as unlike some food for work programmes, it enables them to make improvements to their own land, rather than a road or some other public good which may not benefit them.

However, there are a couple of reasons which detract from the effectiveness of the approach in addressing chronic poverty. The first is that the disabled and infirm are precluded from participating, as they are unable to engage in manual labour. The Diocese recognises this shortcoming, and has tried to mitigate it by allocating food rations to eight orphanages and homes for the physically and mentally disabled run by the church. This approach is administratively easy and is understandable given the staffing constraints faced by the Diocese, but a more effective tactic may have been to use community meetings to identify the most vulnerable within their own communities and allocate the 'free' rations based on their selections.

The second potential drawback of the Emergency Programme – one recognised by Diocesan staff - is that as well as being labour constrained, the chronically poor are highly risk averse and need longer exposure to new technologies before they commit themselves. The programme's short duration has means that those households who need time to see the impact of the intervention before they try it out themselves are left out unless more funding is found and the intervention repeated for a second cycle in the same area the following year.

Between 2002 and 2005, the Food Security Programme targeted 4,000 households and after forming them into farmer groups of between 8-25 members, trains the group leaders in a variety of topics including water conservation and harvesting, seed bulking and establishment of tree nurseries and fish ponds. As with the emergency programme, high aversion to risk affects participation by the chronically poor in this programme as well. Lack of tools and resources are another potential barrier and it is also possible that the real or perceived exclusion – as expressed by William Kagembe in Case Study 1 – means that chronically poor individuals are left out of the farmer groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Diocese of Meru, Five Year Strategic Plan, 2006 - 2010

By getting community members working together on tasks, both programmes hope to build community cohesion and use this as a basis for collective marketing of produce etc.

### **6.1.3 Selection and Design of Interventions**

The Deanery's Trocaire-funded interventions are clearly designed to address one of the main drivers and maintainers of chronic poverty – falling agricultural productivity. Terracing and water conservation methods are relatively widely understood and practiced in Kenya so it is not surprising that these approaches were selected to form the basis of the interventions. Although the author did not see a written methodology for targeting, project beneficiaries are apparently selected by the communities using locally relevant notions of vulnerability.

Reviews carried out for Trocaire describe a high level of co-ordination with stakeholders including Ministry of Agriculture, Provincial Administration, Civic leaders, Religious leaders, community representatives, and representatives of charitable institutions. However, it would appear that the programme's overall purpose and duration are supply driven – highly dependant on the resources and funding priorities of the donors giving the money.

Vulnerability analysis reports produced by WFP and the Government of Kenya are used for macro-level planning, while micro-level need appears to be informed to a large extent by regular communication with the network of parish priests and catechists who live and work within the communities.

Representatives of the Diocese sit on the District Steering Group; a multi-sectoral body which meets once a month and is responsible for coordinating emergency interventions in the District.

### **6.1.4 Obstacles to Tackling Chronic Poverty**

A review of the literature available (monitoring reports, plans etc.) shows that the Deanery considers low staffing levels, and lack of long-term funding as particular obstacles to achieving its goals. The funding issue is a major problem as short term funding only allows for short term programming – usually relief-type interventions – which preclude the risk averse chronically poor from participating. Short funding durations also preclude certain interventions; fruit tree growing, for example, needs years for success, not months.

One problem experienced during the implementation of the Food Security Project was that potential beneficiaries were reluctant to work without payment. Whether this was because they saw that participants in the Emergency Drought Recovery intervention were given food for work is unclear, but this has resulted in a growing and somewhat understandable frustration amongst Deanery staff. The 'Dependency Mindset' of the poor was cited on several occasions as a reason behind their persistent poverty.

### **6.1.5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Deanery makes an effort to evaluate impact through its own staff and Trocaire has commissioned a number of evaluations of programmes that it has funded. However, these evaluations appear to focus largely on outputs – the acreage terraced or the tonnage of food distributed for example. Outcomes and impact are claimed, although there is little concrete evidence to back these claims up. That is not to suggest that beneficiaries did not gain from the interventions, but without reliable baseline data and statistically viable quantitative surveys which measure impact (e.g. changes in the frequency of meals eaten, or school enrolment or the extent to which households are resorting to destructive coping strategies) it is not

possible to attribute impact in anything more than the most general terms. Certainly, no attempt is made to identify the impact of programmes on households from different socio-economic backgrounds.

### 6.1.6 Role of Government

The role that the Government of Kenya should play in providing services is recognised by Deanery staff and is summarised in the table below.

<b>Some Ideas on What the Government Should be Doing to Address Poverty in Tharaka District</b>		
<b>Service / Project / Scheme (in order of importance)</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
1. Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance food security</li> <li>Increase household incomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of irrigation</li> <li>Capacity building of users' groups</li> <li>Provide agricultural extension services</li> <li>Introduce high value crops</li> <li>Facilitate farmers marketing associations</li> </ul>
2. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open the District to external investment</li> <li>Expose residents of Tharaka to new opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction of roads</li> <li>Supply electricity</li> <li>Improve telecommunication</li> </ul>
3. Establish Agri-processing industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create employment</li> <li>Add value to crops produced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage industry to the area (investment in infrastructure above)</li> </ul>

There is a clear recognition of the important role that public sector investments like irrigation, electricity and roads can play in encouraging investment and boosting agricultural production by linking farmers with markets. Expecting the Government to play a leading role in establishing farmers groups and marketing associations is probably unrealistic given the history of mismanagement and corruption which has led to the collapse of most of these schemes in the past.

Nevertheless, the Government is attempting to address poverty in Tharaka District through seven initiatives listed in order of priority below.

<b>What the Government is Doing to Address Poverty in Tharaka District</b>		
<b>Service / Project / Scheme (in order of importance)</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
1. Constituency Development Fund (CDF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds a range of projects identified by committee appointed by local MP</li> </ul>
2. Bursaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist children to access education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides funds to pay school fees for brightest children</li> </ul>
3. Njaa Marafuku Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce hunger</li> <li>Empower poor farmers' groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give grants to groups</li> <li>Build groups' capacity</li> </ul>
4. NALEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce food insecurity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building of common interest groups</li> </ul>

What the Government is Doing to Address Poverty in Tharaka District		
Service / Project / Scheme (in order of importance)	Objective	Key Activities
5. Agricultural Extension services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmentally sustainable agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field days</li> <li>• Group and individual extension approach</li> </ul>
6. Cotton Development Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce poverty through growing more cotton</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of growing methods to farmers</li> <li>• Provision of seeds</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> </ul>
7. MKEPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihood enhancement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of farmer field schools</li> </ul>

Unfortunately, the impact of these initiatives is spotty – apparently most of the available resources are spent on planning and little is left over for implementation. A relatively large amount of cash is programmed through the CDF, but this initiative is singled out for particular criticism for the opaque and non-strategic way funds are administered.

## **6.2 Diocese of Lodwar**

### **6.2.1 Motivation for Addressing Chronic Poverty**

As the Development Office is a part of the Catholic Church, Christian teachings and notions of justice strongly shape the ethos and motivation behind their activities. Any additional motivation required is provided by the fact that large numbers of chronically poor households have set up encampments on the areas immediately surrounding the Diocesan buildings – a permanent reminder of the extent of need in this part of Kenya.

### **6.2.2 Strategies to Tackle Chronic Poverty**

The Diocese of Lodwar has been implementing relief and development programmes in Turkana District since the early 1960's and, since then, has found and attempted to meet needs with such vigour that it now by far the most significant service provider in the District.

The range of interventions the Diocese provides or has provided is huge (it runs at least one filling station in Lodwar) and even a partial account of them is beyond the scope of this document. In the recent past Trocaire has provided the Diocese with funds to alleviate the regular humanitarian emergencies. As far as Trocaire's current involvement goes they fund the Diocese's Justice and Peace Programme which is attempting to *'revive the traditional institutions of justice administration and harmonise them with the modern legal procedures so as to come up with a defined systematic way of settling cases'*.

In a District like Turkana, where the nature, extent, drivers and maintainers of poverty appear to exceed and significantly differ from those found in other parts of Kenya the point at which programming that targets chronic poverty starts is debatable. If it were implemented in either of the other two Districts visited for this study, the Diocese's justice programme may not immediately be identified as a project which impacts on the chronically poor. In Turkana, where notions of and access to justice seem to play such a major role in defining a household's welfare (see both Turkana Case Studies), such a programme is highly relevant.

The Diocese directly supports a significant number of chronically poor – some of whom live around their offices – through their Social Ministry Programme. Targeted households (such as that of Akomwa Edapal in Case Study 5) receive a non-conditional weekly food ration and, where possible, are encouraged to get involved in basket weaving as an income generating activity. Training in weaving is given for free and the material used (Doun palm) grows in reasonable abundance around Lodwar. As a very general rule, the Diocese tries to target any interventions which involve an income generating element at women. Although these initiatives often founder, partly because of a very low level of entrepreneurial acumen, success with women has been better than with men because of the latter's tendency to spend any profits non-productively rather than re-invest them.

For many years the Diocese has been the major service provider in the District, but it is now trying to shake off the role of patron which has come with that, by trying to hand over services to the Government.

### **6.2.3 Selection and Design of Interventions**

Despite the reported strength of the DSG, the Diocese appears to design and target its interventions independently of other development actors in the District. This is probably a reflection of the Diocese's position as the biggest player in the area with its own widely spread, if not wholly objective, needs assessment and implementation network of churchmen and women.

A review of the Diocese's most recent Trocaire-funded Emergency Response intervention observed that its '*strong and long-standing ties with the communities in Turkana...do not appear to have been translated into strong modes of ongoing participation*'. The assessment criticised the Diocese for relying too heavily on parish priests and catechists, rather than community-based targeting committees, in the targeting of food rations, despite the '*clear and outspoken demand for the creation of community-based committees to conduct food targeting and distribution*'. There was a concern that this operating modality resulted in exclusion of non-Catholics from the programme.

#### **6.2.4 Obstacles to Tackling Chronic Poverty**

The Diocese realises that, because of a number of factors, interventions over the last five decades have addressed beneficiaries immediate needs, but have done little to address the underlying causes of poverty. Progress is hampered by: -

- Severe and increasingly frequent droughts
- Worsening security situation
- Depletion of natural resources and poor regeneration of pastures
- Poor and inadequate road and other infrastructure
- Vastness of the District
- Limited employment opportunities
- High illiteracy levels
- Lack of Government policy for development of Arid and Semi Arid Lands
- Local/national Government's reluctance/inability to assume responsibility for initiatives which have been started by the Diocese (schools, hospitals, etc.)

#### **6.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Diocese has no doubt done a great deal of good over the many years that it has been operational in Turkana but, on the basis of this very brief visit, there appears to be little objective evidence of the impact of all the hard work. This is not because the impact is not there; it is because the Diocese simply has not invested the time or resources in monitoring or evaluating projects. Where M&E has been done, it has been at the demand of the donor. Staff have been trained in M&E from project not core funds; this in itself gives an indication of the importance placed on the area by the Diocese.

One reason for lack of investment in M&E may lie in the (not wholly mistaken) mindset that the organisation is in perpetual emergency mode and M&E is a luxury which they cannot afford. Another is that, from what the author of this report saw, commonplace project planning tools like log-frames are not always used, so absence of indicators makes measuring impact difficult.

The upshot is that, other than a lot of figures on outputs like numbers of meetings held and tonnages of food distributed, and lots of anecdotes and case studies which illustrate success, the Diocese has very little data with which to persuade potential donors or to quantifiably demonstrate impact.

## **6.3 Diocese of Kitui**

### **6.3.1 Motivation for Addressing Chronic Poverty**

The Diocese of Kitui's development work is motivated and guided by Christian teachings. The Diocese's vision is "*An integrated, empowered and self –sustaining Eucharistic community reaching out to all*", and it exists to "*witness Christ through evangelization to all, and service to people in need in the process of bringing about the Kingdom of God.*"<sup>5</sup>

### **6.3.2 Strategies to Tackle Chronic Poverty**

The Diocese does not specifically target the chronically poor, but given the extent of poverty in the Diocese (most people live on less than \$150 per year according to the Diocese's Strategic Plan) it is likely that many of the households they work with would be classified as chronically poor. On-going or recent Trocaire support to the Diocese takes the form of a Justice and Peace Programme, a Drought Recovery Project and a Food Security Project.

By promoting approaches which enable subsistence farmers to cope with drought and diversify their livelihoods, the Food Security and Drought Recovery Projects appear to be more specifically targeted at addressing the drivers and maintainers of chronic poverty. The Diocese's strategic plan states its development objectives as: -

- Training in improved farming to address basic needs by and to returns in farming to small-scale farmers (sic.).
- Improving access to basic services at the community level, through administration of relief services (food, water, medicine etc) in order to save lives.
- Enhancing access to technology and skills for self- reliance
- Empowerment of women
- Promotion of human rights and good governance
- Creation and sustenance of networks/ partnerships to protect and sustain livelihoods.

At this stage there is no detailed information on how these objectives will be reached. As well as acting as a local partner of Trocaire, the Diocese implements a variety of relief/development programmes on behalf of other agencies such as WFP, Caritas, CRS etc. and is highly dependent on these groups for funding. A major function of the Strategic Plan, therefore, is to more clearly articulate the Diocese's aims to potential donors and partners and attract funding for these objectives.

### **6.3.3 Selection and Design of Interventions**

The Diocese works closely with the various District-level co-ordination bodies such as the District Steering Group and the District Development Committee. As with other Dioceses, Kitui's development office uses the grass roots network of parish priests and lay-workers to stay informed of the situation facing households in various parts of the District.

Another important source of information, particularly when planning emergency food distributions is the Diocese's health outreach projects. These ensure a continual stream of anthropometric data such as height/weight ratios for vulnerable groups, which in turn allows worsening trends to be spotted rapidly. In 2005, this was the

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<sup>5</sup> Catholic Diocese of Kitui Strategic Plan 2007-2011

main reason that the Diocese identified the need for emergency food relief before most other partners or agencies.

Reviews of Kitui's relief interventions have commended the way that community groups were used to select beneficiaries, but recommend that improvements could be made to beneficiary participation in project design which, at the time of the review, was minimal.

#### **6.3.4 Obstacles to Tackling Chronic Poverty**

As with other Districts studied, it was sometimes difficult to separate the obstacles to tackling chronic poverty from the actual issues to be tackled. A review of the Justice and Peace programme carried out for Trocaire in 2005 identified two challenges facing the Diocese: *'the bishop and his clergy are not always convinced about the interventions supported by the development wing of the Diocese. This is sometimes a source of tension between the two'*. And, *'there is an imbalance in terms of capacity between the development co-ordinator and his staff'*. It is unclear to what extent these issues are relevant to other programmes.

#### **6.3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

At present the Diocese's monitoring and evaluation efforts are similar to those of the other Dioceses visited for this study – there is a reasonable amount of information on outputs, but little on outcomes. Again, this is probably a function of a combination of factors including low priority placed on M&E, and insufficient staff. However, the medical programmes apparent ability to collect valid data which is presented in time to inform programming as in the 2005 emergency is encouraging. Kitui Diocese's strategic plan makes a commitment to better monitoring and evaluation over the coming years.

## 7. HOUSEHOLD CASE STUDIES

### 7.1 Household Case Study 1: William Kagembe, Makambani Village, Tharaka

The household of William Kagembe exemplifies the roles that decreasing landholding size, intergenerational lack of education and the pervasive attitude of despair play in maintaining chronic poverty.

William is aged 60 years old. He never finished primary school and is illiterate. He married twice. One wife died and one still lives with him, two sons, a daughter-in-law and her son. The two sons are both in their thirties and literate.

The homestead consists of three one-room grass-roofed huts, all in very bad shape. Food is cooked in a makeshift grass shelter and grain is stored in a granary constructed of timber and grass. One of the huts has a wooden bed in it and the occupants of the others sleep on palm mats on the floor. They own six cooking pots, two 20 litre jerry cans, some plastic plates and some spoons. It sits in about 2.5 acres of land – the farm used to be 10 acres but it has been subdivided and parcelled out to some of William's other sons. They grow millet, cow peas, green grams, pigeon peas and maize. They have four goats, one small heifer and four chickens.

The family collects water from various seasonal rivers of varying proximity to the household depending on the time of year. During the height of the dry season they walk for over 1km collect water from holes dug in a dry river bed.

Household cash income averages about KSh 2,500 (\$36) per month, 80% of which comes from casual labour, the remainder from crop sales. On average they spend KSh 1,000 per month on food and 200 on medical expenses - mainly the treatment of malaria and worms; the remainder covers day to day household expenditure and clothing.

They have no savings but occasionally borrow in kind from grain traders in the village – they currently have about KSh 100 outstanding. Very occasionally they can borrow from friends, but this is rare as most of the people they know are in the same situation as them and the remainder of the village see them selves as 'better' than this family, so will not lend to them. Any assistance received takes the form of a small interest free loan.

During the months December – March and some of June and July, if the long rains have been adequate, the household expects to eat more than once a day as long as their food stocks last, but during the remainder of the year – approximately six months – they eat one meal per day in the evening. This usually comprises maize meal and beans. During the hunger period cash from casual labour is the main source of food, although sometimes work is paid in kind with food.

The household does not receive assistance from any development agencies. When humanitarian food distributions take place they are not normally registered because the families of William's other sons living on other parts of the farm qualify – they are probably perceived as being worse off as they have more children. However, when they receive food a small amount is shared.

The Kagembes are not the poorest in their village – there are some families who have no land at all – but they consider themselves poor because they cannot build good houses for themselves, do not have livestock herds and are not able to meet their basic needs at all times. This feeling is reinforced by the way they are treated by other, richer members of the community who exclude them from social events and bond-forming activities like savings merry-go-rounds.

Murithi (the son who was the informant for this interview) identifies a number of reasons for their chronic poverty. First, he blames his parents' lack of education – they were absent from school a lot when they were young, so farming was the only option for them. Secondly, because the household is totally dependant on farming they are very vulnerable to the drought which has affected their area for the last ten years. Low wages from casual labour because of lack of other employment alternatives are also partly to blame for their hardship.

Nevertheless, Murithi admits that this year things have improved slightly. The short rains were the best in the last ten years and consequently, they will harvest more than normal – if prices are good they may be able to buy another goat.

Murithi has seen other households who are part of the Deanery's development programmes digging terraces, but he has never got involved because he doesn't fully understand what they do – as far as he can tell terracing is a waste of land. He uses traditional water conservation methods like trash lines and spends so much time earning a hand-to-mouth existence through casual labour that he says he doesn't have time to make the investment on his own land. For the same reasons he has never attended mainstream GoK agricultural extension sessions.

According to Murithi, better rainfall over the next few years would have the biggest beneficial impact on the household's situation. Somehow getting the resources that would enable them to hire the labour to cultivate more land and buy agricultural inputs would also be useful great. Conversely, poor rainfall is seen as the main factor that would drive the household into even deeper poverty.

Given the importance of rainfall to the household's livelihood strategy it is interesting to note that the household does not get involved in some the Deanery's water conservation activities. In the author's opinion this is likely to stem from despair and a genuine feeling of hopelessness and rejection from the wider community – they are outsiders in a marginalised area.

## **7.2 Household Case Study 2: Mrs. Justa Kagendo, Murigi Village, Meru South District**

Justa Kagendo's household is an example of one of the many in Kenya who remain chronically poor largely as a result of insufficient rainfall and poor crop prices, which affect their ability to make a living from the land they own. A recognition of this fact is the main driver of Justa's determination that her children finish education and 'graduate' from smallholder farming.

Justa is 40 years old, educated to standard five and literate. She is married and her household comprises six people - her, her husband Salyesu (45), Mercy (18), Faith (15), Anthony (13) and Terry (female) (13) years.

The family owns five acres but they farm three of these because they leave the remaining area for their 11 goats to forage. They also own one cow, two ducks, one hen with four chicks.

The household area comprises two mud-walled one-room structures, both with tin roofs, a covered fireplace for cooking, a pit latrine (in poor condition due to recent rains) and a small kraal. There is no granary – grain is stored in sacks in one of the sleeping quarters for security. Besides the livestock, Justa considers their most valuable assets to be a bicycle, a broken radio, four hoes, one panga, four chairs, two tables, four beds, and two mattresses.

Water is collected from a river about 2.5Km away. Firewood is collected from around the homestead or bought for KSh 1 per stick.

In a good year such as this the farm provides the bulk of the family's food. They grow millet, cow peas, green grams, maize and sorghum. Cotton does not grow so well in this area so is not really an option as a cash crop. There is no cash for chemical fertilisers – so manure is used, but there is not enough of it to have a significant impact. She experimented with micro dosing of chemical fertilisers once under a Deanery programme, but the rains failed so there was no impact.

Justa engages in casual labour (land preparation, weeding, harvesting etc.) about two days a week at KSh 70 per day. Salyesu earns some cash by travelling around to various mobile markets and selling brooms, practically all the income earned in this way is used to pay school fees which total KSh 21,020 a year (nearly all of this is accounted for by Mercy's secondary school fees). Although two of the children were at the time of the interview out of school for non-payment of fees or infringement of the dress code, the fact that all the children are in school is a source of pride to Justa. She ensures that, despite the help they could provide, the children do not get involved in farm work as it would not help their concentration at school – she does not want them to follow their parents into farming.

Justa claims that her husband does not save anything, but she is a member of a savings group and saves KSh 50 per month when she has money. In December she borrowed KSh 5,000 from the savings group to pay for school fees; repayments start in February 2007. The KSh 600 interest must be paid first, followed by the capital amount over the next nine months. Other than the savings group there is no one they can borrow money from.

The family rarely sells food although the week before the interview took place they sold various produce totalling KSh 2,400, all of which was used for school fees.

They see themselves as poor but not the poorest as they are people who are unable to do anything to help themselves. However, the household is poor enough to qualify for food distributions when they happen because members of the community understand her predicament and the way she struggles to send all her children to school.

From January – March the household eats two to three meals per day and their staple is complemented by beans and vegetables. After March food availability becomes more problematic, and they usually have to work in order to buy food as their stocks are exhausted. This year, however, they have enough from their own production to last until May. In the past the June rains used to give them another crop, but they have been unreliable for sometime now, so in reality from April to December the household survives on food bought from the proceeds from casual labour and cuts consumption to one meal per day. Food is the biggest source of household expenditure followed by school fees and medical expenses (about KSh 500 – 1000 per year).

Most people in the village are of the same wealth status as her – the poorer ones are usually labour-constrained being elderly or disabled. Wealthier households have better houses, some of them have salaried jobs so that they can afford to employ casual labour on their, normally bigger, farms.

Justa considers that her situation has got better over the last year or so, largely as a result of participating in the land improvement programmes implemented by the Deanery. Cash for work has meant that she has been able to build terraces on her land and weed properly – before she just planted crops and had no time to weed because she was busy engaged in casual labour. Improved yields on her own farm have meant that she does not need to spend so much time engaged in casual labour.

Irrigation and a reliable and cheap supply of early-maturing seed varieties would make life better. Justa has seen the effect of these on a visit to another of the Deanery's project areas. Proper guidance about the best seeds to use would be useful as the information they get from the traders in the market is misleading and often incorrect.

Poor rainfall is the biggest threat to their livelihood, so any interventions that address water conservation are very important. There are few development agents in the area so it is difficult to get new ideas and to access correct information as everyone is poor and pretty much at the same level. Unemployment is a major problem even for people who have finished school.

There is some discrimination in the area based on religious grounds between the various different church denominations. Justa refused to have her girls circumcised so some elements of the community exclude her for this reason.

The government provides some services in the area. Health consultations are free but drugs are not always available. Primary education is free and some households (but not hers) got some good seeds from the ag. extension services. The nearest police post is 5km away, they are rarely seen around. The place is not yet connected to the mains electricity or the landline phone network, although there is mobile phone coverage, but few people can afford to buy and run one. As such, in terms of practical impact, the Deanery is seen as the main service provider in the area.

### **7.3 Household Case Study 3: Mrs Kasioka Kisimbo, Kyasa Village, Kitui District**

Kasioka Kisimbo's story clearly shows the way that old age and loss of support networks (particularly ones spouse and working-age children) drive chronic poverty.

Kasioka is over 90 years old; she has no formal education, cannot read or write and only speaks Kikamba – the language of the Kamba tribe. She is a widow and lives with her two grandchildren Masioka and Mwazia aged 16 and 17 respectively. Both of these boys are the sons of her daughter who migrated to Mombasa to work some years ago. Both reached standard seven in school before dropping out. They now survive on casual labour and farming their own land in the season. She has three sons; two also work in Mombasa and the third is a cook at the church.

The homestead comprises three small one-room mud brick buildings with tin roofs and no windows. She has about 1.5 acres on which they grow maize, pigeon peas sorghum, beans and cow peas. There is no latrine – they use that belonging to one of their neighbours. The farm used to be bigger but it was subdivided between her four children when her husband died in the 1980s. Land shortage is a problem in this area.

Kasioka's main assets comprise four goats, two cooking pots, two beds, four cups, five plates and two hoes.

Although she lives in her own house with the two grandsons, Kasioka's daughter in law, Rose, (the wife of one of Kasioka's two hawker sons) does many things like cooking and collecting water for her. She has come to rely on Rose even more since she contracted a condition whereby she faints and stays unconscious for about 30 minutes before she comes round again. She was taken to Kitui hospital with the condition; they referred her to Nairobi central hospital but she could not travel there because of lack of funds so returned home.

Kasioka is a member of the parish circle savings group – has contributed about KSh1600 so far which allows her to borrow up to KSh1000 but she hasn't taken any of this yet. The main source of household income is the grandsons' earnings from casual labour (KSh 100 per day per worker). In a good year she sells two bags of pigeon peas for 3600 shillings. Her

At the time of this interview the household was eating twice a day with tea in the morning, but from June until December meal frequency falls to one a day. When the rains are good the food they produce from their farm lasts the household for seven months, in a poor year, such as all of the five years prior to this one, it lasts for about three. When food from their own production runs out they buy from the shops using her grandsons' wages and when there is a humanitarian food distribution in the area she is normally targeted by the community.

Kasioka considers herself much poorer than neighbouring households because of her age and condition which mean she is unable to work on the farm and unable to participate in activities that require work and casual labour.

In the past things were better – she could work well, do terracing and plant early. The death of her husband in 1986 was a major shock – he was good at digging and his loss had a major impact on the household's ability to feed itself. When she got the fainting illness about five years ago things got even worse. Lack of unskilled employment opportunities in the area impact on her children and grandchildren's ability to make a living. The sons in Mombassa remit about KSh 2,000 a month to their wives, some of which reaches her.

In the past she did not sense any discrimination but she now senses that she is excluded from things on the basis of her age and disability. For example she was not invited to join the Cash for Work programme when the locals were choosing people

to join the group, although this resentment is not entirely justified as both of her grandsons were selected to participate.

The main maintainers of poverty are identified as lack of assets – e.g. livestock, which she can call on when capital is required; poor markets and prices for what they produce.

She receives no assistance from the government apart from when there is a food distribution.

#### **7.4 Household Case Study 4: Mrs. Amina Yusuf, Katundu Village, Kitui District**

Ill health and disability play an important role in driving and maintaining chronic poverty. This case study clearly exemplifies the way that illness, in this case HIV/AIDS, can deplete resources and impede an individual's ability to work, thereby pushing them and their dependents below the poverty line.

Amina Yusuf is 36 years old and divorced. For the last seven years – since she divorced from her husband – she has lived in Katundu with her sister Fatuma and their six children aged 4, 9, 12, 14, 16 and 17. Amina reached standard eight and is literate. All the children other than the four-year-old are still in primary school and, although they occasionally temporarily drop out because of lack of fees or uniforms, the sisters are determined that they will finish their primary education whatever their age. None of the children work, first because the sisters know that that would detract from their education and secondly, because there is little work around for adults let alone children. The fathers of the children do not provide any support at all.

The entire family lives in a two-roomed brick building with a tin roof. It is surrounded by half an acre on which they grow maize, cassava, pigeon peas plus some fruit. They have seven ducks, one goat and a dog. Water for washing is fetched from a nearby borehole; drinking water has to be bought at 0.1shilling a litre from a standpipe about 1km distant. Household assets include some cooking pots, four hoes, five stools, and two beds. They used to own more, but after the sisters became too ill to work they had to sell some assets like cooking pots etc. There is little else they can sell.

Both of the sisters are HIV positive. Although both are part of the Deanery's People Living With HIV/AIDS support group and both on free ARVs, Fatima, regularly gets too tired to get out of bed and Fatuma has become blind. The effects of the illness have seriously eroded the household's welfare. Both women had to give up their jobs selling snacks and vegetables as hospital bills ate up their working capital and they became too weak to work.

Household income is now about KSh 3-400 per week, nearly all of which is spent on food. Amina is the only breadwinner – she works a few days per week cooking and washing for people in the area and is paid KSh 100 per day. They also get some income from sales of duck eggs, green maize and chillies. Although she feels she has good contacts who offer her work in the area, Amina fears that the casual labour may soon dry up because her employers are talking about taking on permanent staff who they can pay less; this option is not open to her because there are days she cannot get out of bed due to tiredness.

She still owes a shop keeper KSh 3,000 that she took out as a loan when she was in business, but now she is not working she has no way of repaying that. She hopes that the goat will give birth; also she thinks she could get hold of some community land near a river and, if she got hold of a water pump and her health holds out, she could start growing irrigated crops.

As well as getting free ARVs, both Amina and Fatuma receive 4kg of maize and 2kg of beans per month; this is supplemented by food from their shamba while the harvest lasts (normally December – March). During this period the household eats three times a day but from then on meal frequency decreases to one or two and occasionally zero meals per day, especially if the long rains in March/April fail as they have done in most years recently. There is concern in the household that the rations received through the support group will decrease as more people join the group and resources have to be spread more thinly.

They see themselves as poorer than their neighbours, and much poorer than their parents. When they were children they never went without food or missed school

because of lack of fees. In those days farms were bigger and produced more food. Soils have got weaker and lost fertility and the weather has changed as well.

The road into poverty started for Amina when she was diagnosed with HIV in 2000. Her income went down as she had to use her working capital to pay hospital bills. The same story applies to Fatuma; illness meant she was no longer able to sell snacks and things declined rapidly in April 2006 when she lost her sight.

### **7.5 Household Case Study 5: Mrs Akomwa Edapal, Lodwar Town, Turkana District**

Akomwa Edapal's case exemplifies the multi-dimensional nature of chronic poverty. Old age, disability, loss of support networks, poor education, adverse climatic conditions and low levels of Government service provision all combine to ensure that improving Akomwa's circumstances by any means other than unconditional food or cash transfers is virtually impossible.

Akomwa is in her 60s. She has had no schooling and is illiterate and speaks Turkana only – no Swahili. She was born in Kakuma (120km from Lodwar) but moved to Lodwar in 1971 as a result of her animals dying in a drought. She had been single for some time – her husband died of cholera in 1955 and she was not taken on by her husband's brother, as is traditional when a Turkana woman becomes widowed, because of the hardship and chaos which afflicted the area at the time. The tradition that widows are not allowed to remarry was still observed however, so Akomwa stayed single and moved to Lodwar, working as a house servant being paid in food and collecting and selling firewood for cash until she was crippled by polio in 1975.

She lives in a one-roomed palm hut situated in what appears to be a community of a couple of thousand extremely poor Turkana who occupy on a patch of land between the Diocese offices and the town's airstrip. She owns no land (indeed in Turkana land cannot be owned in the same way that it can be in the rest of Kenya – people can occupy land and apply to the District Government if they want to construct permanent buildings, but there is no secure title to land and hence it cannot be used as collateral). Her assets comprise a plastic jerry can, a cooking pot, a few utensils and a goat. She sleeps on a couple of old sacks on the dirt floor of her hut. Very few of the households – her included – have a latrine (partly because the ground is very hard and stony, making digging difficult); they use the surrounding bush.

Akomwa has four children, two are still alive and two have two died. She has lost contact with the two who are still alive. She took responsibility for the sons of one of her daughters who died. One – 13 years old - still lives with her in her hut, the other has become a street child in Lodwar. Neither of them go to school.

Akomwa earns about KSh 10 per week from weaving baskets; she has no savings and cannot borrow – she survives on the 6kg of maize and 6kg of beans that she is given every week by the Social Ministry Department of the Diocese of Lodwar and this enables her to eat twice a day. Occasionally she receives gifts from people, but she gets no regular support from the Government.

The death of her husband was the point at which the descent into poverty began – she feels that even in her crippled condition she would be OK if he was still alive.

People help her by fetching water and firewood, so she does not feel discriminated against – she is sometimes targeted for relief food when it is distributed in the area. She considers herself to be one of the poorest in her area though because of her disability. Her life would be improved somewhat if she could get better prices for her baskets, but she is unable to do much else so many income options are closed to her. At the moment it seems the social protection offered by the Diocese is the most effective way of supporting Akomwa.

### **7.6 Household Case Study 6: Paul Etabo, Lodwar Town, Turkana District**

Paul Etabo's household is another example of the way multiple factors drive and maintain poverty in Turkana. Paul's household is affected by ill health of the breadwinners, low capability of the household members and breakdown of traditional support networks.

Paul Etabo is the head of a household of five adults and four children; however, he was in hospital when we visited his homestead so his sister, Pauline Ichaan, was interviewed for this case study).

The homestead comprises a collection of four one-room huts made of palm leaves, cardboard and sacks situated amongst around 30 other similar shacks on the outskirts of the town. There is no toilet – they use the surrounding bush. Water is collected from the river about 2.5km away. Household assets are scant, but the main ones are a few jerry cans, two cooking pots, some utensils, a goat, a plastic bowl and some sacks which they sleep on.

The adults comprise Paul and his wife who are both in hospital suffering from TB, his two widowed sisters (one of which - Pauline Ichaan – was interviewed for this case study), and his mother an elderly blind woman who is basically housebound and disabled. Both of the sisters were abandoned (along with the other wives of their husbands) by their in-laws after their husbands died because they were not properly married according to Turkana customs. With nowhere else to go they returned to live with their mother and brother and his wife in Lodwar. All of the children belong to the sisters – Paul has two children but they live with the parents of his wife. They are in school (three in primary, one in secondary) and although uniforms are not required they frequently drop out. None of the adults can read or write.

Paul used to be a matatu tout, but stopped when he got TB. They do have another brother in Nairobi, but they have lost touch with him.

The cash income of the household is practically nil. Since Paul's illness Pauline has become the main breadwinner – she goes to town every morning and helps market stall owners sort through their vegetables. She is paid with a few cabbages or potatoes every day and she takes some of the spoiled ones as well to feed to the goat.

They have no source of income and no savings and cannot borrow from anywhere. The knowledge that they are excluded from the few savings clubs that do exist on the grounds that they have no assets makes Pauline feel discriminated against and this feeling is compounded by the fact that members of her household have never been registered for humanitarian food distributions – not even from the Diocese. However, when the distributions do take place they go to the distribution point and hang around in the hope that there may be some surplus rations.

Normally they eat once a day – an evening meal of what ever vegetables Pauline was given that morning in the market.

Pauline says she was better off when her husband was alive as he had a job, but since she has returned to Lodwar she and her family have become one of the poorest in the community and she sees no way out of the situation. She is in her forties now, illiterate with no skills and no access and no access to a better livelihood; basically a few steps away from destitution.

## **8. WORKING THROUGH COMMUNITY STRUCTURES CASE STUDIES**

### **8.1 Community Structures Case Study 1: Mulutu Parish Group, Kitui District**

The Mulutu Parish Group was formed with the goal of reducing poverty of its 400 members through food security and marketing projects, group empowerment and micro-credit activities.

The group's key activities are the training of members in farming techniques – mainly using a method whereby farmer leaders are trained and expected to pass on what they have learned to other group members. The group also collectively stores and markets produce, and gives group members access to credit.

Although there was no way of verifying this information, the group has been successful in improving farm productivity, strengthening intra and inter-household social bonds and improving the leadership skills of group members.

Problems mainly concern loan default and reduced member contributions as a result of the recent drought.

## 8.2 Community Structures Case Study 3: Youth Groups, Lodwar, Turkana District

The Diocese of Lodwar's Youth Programme started in 1988. In 2003 the title was changed to Diocesan Youth Empowerment Programme. The Programme aims to give 'youths' opportunities to develop skills and gain employment and to impart messages on Christian teaching and health issues.

There does not appear to be a particularly strict definition of what constitutes a 'youth' – the programme targets people in and out of school and married and unmarried, but most are in the 18 – 35 year-old age group. Day to day activities are co-ordinated by a team of four staff who are assisted by a chaplain. A twelve-person committee meets three times a year to give guidance to the programme staff and approve budgets.

The Youth Empowerment Programme comprises seven main areas of activity, these being: -

- *Leadership Training*: This aims to assist youths in schools to organise themselves.
- *Girl Child Advocacy*: The purpose of this initiative is sensitization on the rights of the girl child
- *Peace and Reconciliation*: This activity is designed for and is implemented in the border Parishes where cattle raiding is more prevalent and is conducted in conjunction with the Diocese's main Justice and Peace Programme.
- *Work Experience Training*: Every year three youths from each Parish get work placements in hospitals, offices, schools, etc. By the end of 2006 92 youngsters had gained work experience.
- *Training of Peer to Peer Educators*: Under this theme youths are trained to impart health messages through peer education techniques. In 2005 a total of 46 youth were trained as peer supporters.
- *Music and Sports*: Training of choir members, games and sports competitions.
- *Income Generating Projects*: Three sectors are covered under this element of the programme – fishing on Lake Turkana, agriculture on irrigated sites along the river Turkwell and small business in the towns, particularly Lodwar.

From what can be seen from the information available, the Youth Programme appears to have achieved a positive impact in some areas. A review carried out in September 2006<sup>6</sup> focused largely on the programme's outputs (numbers of meetings held and youths trained) although it did offer some evidence of impact in the form of the views of beneficiaries and Diocese staff. These stakeholders feel that the programmes have: increased recognition of youth issues and increased young people's leadership skills. However, a workshop session organised by the review team aimed at identifying the constraints facing the programme flagged up lack of support by parents and church staff and poor leadership as two major issues!

The fact that some of the groups formed for the purpose of pursuing income generation activities still seem to be working together indicates that beneficiaries are getting a certain level of benefit. Some of the agriculture projects are doing well, but the fishing activities have run into problems because of the decline in fish numbers in

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<sup>6</sup> District Youth Empowerment Programme Final Evaluation Report, Lomunyobok J.L & S.N Mukundi, September 2006

the lake. The small loans scheme, meant to give youth access to start-up capital, has had problems with defaulters and recipients' lack of business skills. Programme staff now consider a better approach would be to give a grant to start up and then offer loans if the recipient needs further investment. In the view of the staff interviewed for this study, the work experience scheme is one of the YEP's most successful initiatives so far.

The programme faces many constraints, as is the nature of all interventions attempting to deal with root causes of poverty in Turkana. One of the most unfortunate (as it indicates competition not co-ordination between development actors) is the fact that the YEP faces difficulty in getting youngsters to attend their workshops and meetings unless sitting allowances are paid. Apparently other NGOs in the area do this when they hold meetings and it has raised beneficiaries' expectations.

## 9. CONCLUSION

On the basis of this study it appears that Trocaire's partners have a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and causes of poverty in the areas in which they operate. This is largely a result of the organisations' long history in the areas and enviable grass-roots presence. However, although the staff involved in this study had no difficulty in understanding or recognising the validity the concepts of 'chronic' and 'acute' poverty or 'Spatial Poverty Traps', these notions are not used when targeting beneficiaries or designing programmes.

There appear to be three main reasons for this. The first is that the organisations, to a greater or lesser extent, appear to be beholden to the strategic aims of 'donors', be they NGOs like Trocaire or single mandate agencies like WFP who are often concerned with addressing a symptom of poverty (like seasonal food insecurity) rather than causes (such as lack of diversity in livelihood strategies). As long as the partners continue to act as local level delivery agents of larger organisations who already have their own agenda, there is little incentive to spend time developing their own special definitions of poverty. The 'donors' themselves face funding constraints that prevent them from engaging in the longer-term programmes that are needed if households are to be moved out of chronic poverty in a sustainable way.

The second reason is that the partner organisations (on the whole and quite rightly, according to the evaluation documents made available to the author for this study) delegate targeting and beneficiary selection to the communities with which they work. If the time were taken or available to explain the concepts behind the nomenclature of poverty to the selection committees they would probably be understood and recognised as relevant, but the partners don't have the time to give anything more than a set of guidelines for beneficiary selection. Community members themselves have strong notions of which households are most deserving of the benefits of the programmes available, and are highly aware of who could take full advantage of what is on offer because of their land or labour circumstances – often these households are not chronically poor.

A final reason is that apart from in Kitui where biometric data coming from nutrition units is sometimes used to target emergency interventions, there is an apparent absence of any reliable statistical data or a commonly accepted unit of measurement that can be used to classify households into various wealth categories. The last GoK census was some years ago and, even if it was accurate in the first place, high population growth rates since have changed whatever was depicted then. Wealth is measured in different ways even within the different areas studied, and even food security measures are difficult as different cultures have inconsistent ideas on the frequency with which people have to eat to stay healthy, so trying to arrive at commonly understood notions of who is poor or chronically poor would mostly be unproductive. The fact that the organisations do not collect detailed data on beneficiary livelihood profile or programme impact does not help this situation, and goes some way to explaining why targeting is delegated to community members.

In other words, although partners have an understanding of the causes and implications of poverty, the construction and/or use of a conceptual framework which can be used for programme design and targeting is a luxury which they cannot afford because of the complications in agreeing on units of measurement and most likely would not be of practical use because of their funding circumstances.

Reasons for poverty are well understood, and drought consistently comes out as a major driver and maintainer of poverty. But it is clear that the staff of partner organisations are sometimes frustrated by what they see as pro-poverty habits and customs of poor households, like having huge numbers of children or adhering to customs like polygamy or witchcraft.

The multi-dimensional nature of poverty is also well recognized and, understandably, there is a strong tendency to focus on what can be achieved in a couple of years – enhancing crop yields for example. I could be argued that given the organisations' long-term presence there should be more of a focus on advocacy, but in the context of the humanitarian need, lack of alternative sources of service provision and the constraints of the funding sources available, this 'service-delivery' approach is pragmatic and understandable, if not altogether sustainable.

Partners are challenged by resource shortages (some of which are human – for example M&E skills which would allow them to ascertain impact rather than output), but they have a number of strengths, including a dedicated and resourceful staff base and a grassroots information (if not data)-gathering network of church staff and lay people.

The case studies demonstrate that, while some of the poor, particularly those who have known nothing other than poverty (intergenerational poverty) are fatalistic about their circumstances, others are determined to make things better – if not for themselves at least for their children. Examples of efforts being made include getting involved in the partner organisations' projects (terracing, basket weaving etc.), or joining together with neighbours to form savings merry-go-rounds. To outsiders the changes emanating from these activities may seem small; to the poor these changes represent hope and are what keeps them from falling into despair.

However, under the present physical and economic climate (i.e. drought, reduced land holding sizes, poor soil fertility and poor crop prices), it seems that the poor do not view smallholder subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy that can lift them out of poverty. Rather it is practiced because there are no other options.

It is education and the prospect that once educated their children can graduate from poverty, which represents the greatest hope to the poor. Poor households will make considerable short-term sacrifices to ensure their children at least complete primary education in the hope that they will be able to break out of subsistence agriculture as a way of life. The GoK, for all its faults in other policy areas, should be commended for the way it has rolled out free primary education. The next task is to ensure that its beneficiaries can actually use the education they have gained.

Therefore, it could be argued that the Government's priority in tackling chronic poverty should be the provision of capability-enhancing services like education and healthcare and providing the basic infrastructure (roads, power, communications) which will encourage investment and job creation. The various Constituency Development Funds have huge resources at their disposal and represent poor districts' best hope of public sector investment. But the piecemeal way in which they are used – a half-built classroom here, a few kilometres of graded road there - detracts from the funds' effectiveness and supports the widely held view that the fund is used principally to garner the maximum support from voters.

It appears that, although the recent rains were good, the long-term rainfall trends are bad, which when combined with other factors, spells increased hardship for the chronically poor in rural Kenya. Given the resources, Trocaire's partners in Kenya can play an important role in ameliorating if not reversing the effects of poverty by directly implementing programmes on one hand and advocating for better and more appropriate service provision by GoK on the other.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: List of Workshop Participants

Name	Organization	Position
Tony Woods	Diocese Of Lodwar (DoL)	Chancellor
John Erus	DoL	Justice and Peace Coordinator
Roselne Longolol	DoL	
Philip Loburi	DoL	Assistant Pastoral Coordinator
Peter Eregae	DoL	Adult Education Officer
John Lorur	DoL	Justice and Peace Officer
Joseph Nganga	DoL	Water Project Manager
Eunice Majuma	DoL	Women Desk, Justice And Peace
Fr. John Gathungu	DoL	Pastoral Coordinator
Rose Muhindi	DoL	Education Assistant
Mark Nakain	DoL	Social Min. Coordinator
Lokuruka Ekal	DoL	Legal Officer
Roseaniela Nakoi	DoL	Women Assistant Coordinator
Stephen Esikuku	Napelet Disabled Group	
Jackson Lokwatom	Ngiyurkoma Network	Coordinator
Margaret Lwaney	DoL	Health Officer
Francis E. O	DoL	
Geoffrey Ekomwa	DoL	Program Officer Justice And Peace
Peter Kituu	DoL	
Kennedy Louilae	DoL	Programme Officer, Justice And Peace
Roseline Aite	DoL	Youth Empowerment PO
Tim Flyno	DoL	Development Coordinator
Justin Makau	GoK	
Marysent Kaimuri	T/Nithi Deanery (TND)	Coordinator Microfinance

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
Pamela Kainda	TND	Secretary
Simon Nthiga	Provincial Administration	Senior Chief
Joseph M'Iruakim	TND	Social Devt Director
Alex Muratha	TND	Ass. Dev Director
Salesio Michemi	TND	Beneficiary
Silas Rwanda	TND	Field Officer
David M'arimi	Ministry Of Agriculture	Divisional Agric Extension Officer
Fr. Joe Kagamba	Kajuki Parish	Priest
Betty Makena	TND	Book Keeper Micro Finance
Simoneter Kangau	TND	Book Keeper Micro Finance
John Njagi	TND	Field Officer
Delevino Kiniu	TND	Beneficiary
Eustace Chabari	Ministry Of Agriculture	Divisional Crops Dev Officer
Japheth Kauya	Provincial Administration	Chief Tharaka
Joel Kihure	TND	Food Security/Emergencies Coordinator.
Marysent Kaimuri	TND	Coordinator Microfinance
Pamela Kainda	TND	Secretary
Simon Nthiga	Provincial Administration	Senior Chief
Joseph M'Iruakim	TND	Social Devt Director
Alex Muratha	TND	Ass. Dev Director
Salesio Michemi	TND	Beneficiary
Emmanuel Kisangau	Diocese Of Kitui	Assistant Development Coordinator
Jonathan Kyambi	Diocese Of Kitui	Emergency Officer
Rose Muia	Diocese Of Kitui	Cash For Work Coordinator
Jennifer Munywoki	Kabati Parish Group	Member/Farmer

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
Ruth Musee	Kabati Parish Group	Group Chair Lady/Farmer
Lena Michael	Mulutu Parish Group	Group Chair Lady
Esther Muema		Group Chairlady
Mutuku Musyoka	Diocese Of Kitui	Emergency Field Assistant
Patricia Muatha		Farmer
Katherine Musyoka	Mulutu Parish Group	Secretary
Richard Mulutu	Mulutu Parish Group	Secretary
Alex Kavili	Diocese Of Kitui	Gasp Manager
Richard Mutulu	Mulutu Group	Secretary
Elizabeth Kivila	Kabati Fra	Chairlady
Florence Mboti		Chairlady
Bonifance Mauli	Diocese Of Kitui	Warehouse Manager
Pamusia Musemi		Farmer
Stephen Musembi	Diocese Of Kitui	Logistics
Emmanuel Kisangau	Diocese Of Kitui	Assistant Development Coordinator
Jonathan Kyambi	Diocese Of Kitui	Emergency Officer

## Appendix 2: Methodology

The consultant was assigned 15 days for this study. These were used as follows:

Activity	Number of Days
Background Reading and Workshop preparation	2
Workshops	3
Household case studies	2
Interviews with staff from partner organisations	1
Travel	2
Write up	5
Total Days	15

Information used in the production of this report was gathered from three main sources: -

- Reports, plans and proposals made available to the consultant by Trocaire and the partner organisations.
- One-day Workshops held with staff and other key informants at the offices of each of the partner organisations. A total of three workshops were held; in Tharaka and Kitui these were all-day affairs, but in Lodwar travel constraints meant that we only had half a day at our disposal.
- Key informant interviews with staff from the partner organisations and representatives of the households profiled in the case studies.

The 'format' and scope of the workshops changed as the work progressed and it became clearer what material could be covered in the time available. Basically, through group work the workshops attempted to collate information on five different themes, these being: -

1. **Participants' perceptions of poverty.** Participants were divided into three groups and asked to draw and place on a map indicating proximity to various services and resources, the households of poor, medium and rich people according to their understanding. This helped to give a typology of poor households, demonstrate that there cannot be poverty without wealth, and focus peoples' minds on the topic in question.
2. **Drivers and maintainers of poverty in the area.** Participants were asked to brainstorm, rank on an impact probability matrix, and present the reasons that households move into and stay in poverty in the area. The concept of Spatial Poverty Traps was elaborated and explained during this exercise.
3. **Obstacles to tackling poverty.** Participants were asked to brainstorm on the obstacles to tackling the issues identified as drivers and maintainers of chronic poverty
4. **The role of government.** Participants were asked to identify what the government was doing to tackle poverty and then vision what the government's key priorities were in this area.

**5. Partner organisation's work through community organisations.**

Participants asked to present the aims, objectives, outputs, impacts, strengths and weaknesses of activities implemented with community partners.

Time constraints meant that some topics were left out in each area, especially in Lodwar, where there was only time to cover two of the exercises.

Key informant interviews with senior staff within the partner organisations were an important source of much additional information, particularly that pertaining to: target group; organisational ethos and motivation; impact of programmes; monitoring and evaluation and history of the areas looked at. Because of the limited time available, interviews were conducted in the evenings after the workshops. Holding detailed discussions requiring reflection and analytical thinking after a full day participating in a workshop is not ideal, but was the only option open to us.

Case-study households were identified by staff of the partner organisations.

Time was a major constraint. The study would have been richer and more comprehensive had we had time to locate and interview relevant government staff on local and national government policy, as it was this was not possible and the result is the report's weakness in this area.