

CONTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION GROUPS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELLBEING OF AGRO-PASTORALISTS IN MAKINDU SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the contributions made by Collective Action Groups (CAGs) operating in Makindu sub-county in improving the socio-economic wellbeing of the community. Stratified random sampling was used to select 204 households that were members of CAGs. A structured interview schedule with 28 items on a seven point Likert scale was used to interview household heads. An index of socio-economic wellbeing (SEWB) with an internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha .854 was created from the perceptions of the respondents. The data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that: there were 159 CAGs involved in nine different activities (financial, work sharing, training, marketing of produce, farm implements, burial activities, building materials health care and peace initiatives) with an average of 25 members who were mainly females (81 %) and married (69.6 %). A high contribution of the CAGs to the SEWB was found to exist (mean 5.41 on a scale of 1-7) and the results were statistically ($p=.01$) significant. The study concluded that CAGs were useful in enhancing the SEWB of the agro-pastoral communities in Makindu sub-county and recommended that they be used in development of the communities.

Keywords: collective action groups, socioeconomic wellbeing, agro-pastoralist, semi-arid lands, Makindu sub-county.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background information

Development projects in the grass root marginalized communities are undergoing major transformation, to reverse the failing top-down approach to development. Community participation is increasingly being considered as a vital element in development culture, where the needs of the community are the focus and results are tailored to the problems of the community members. Sira and Craig (1991) showed that in an attempt to meet this realization community members have taken to forming action based groups, which are designed to address their specific problems; such as, water shortage, food production, livestock production and even conflict resolution.

Collective action groups are grassroots associations, formed by the community, managed by the community, and with a specific objective (Edward and Hulme 1992). They often apply only one means to meet the objective and once the objective is fulfilled they disintegrate. Coppock (1994) found that in Kenya, majority of the CAGs are concentrated in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. He indicated that the idea was born in eastern province of Kenya and took root in Makindu Sub-county where they are concentrated. The sub county boasts at least 120 registered CAGS with at least 10 more being registered daily according to Shiferaw et al., (2006). In time these action groups have become institutionalized, and the trusted development partner for both the community, government and external agents. They address the problems and needs within the community and also play a vital role in the improvement of livelihoods within the community and hence the reduction of poverty especially in the marginalized communities. According to Udombana (2000), the activities promoted by the CAGs are intended to promote and improve the wellbeing of the local population by giving members more power to negotiate the course of their own development, providing opportunities for economic and social empowerment and skills for the proper management of local and household resources.

A growing number of development reformers, policy makers and researchers have argued that many of the much publicized shortcomings in the top-down development approach are to a large extent due to inadequacies in participation by the community and support afforded to the community. Proponents of this view hold that communities have too little to say in the

operation of their own development policies, suffer from a lack of support or assistance and are not adequately recognized for their own effort (Hirschmann, 1999).

Makindu's economic growth has been greatly influenced by the presence and activities of CAG's which include agendas such as food security, improved livestock production, employment creation and income generation. This study therefore seeks to understand how such effects and the contributions from the CAGs have had on the development of Makindu and similarly how they have trickled down to the individual households within the community. The Kenyan Parliament in sessional paper 2 on industrialization by year 2030 emphasizes the need to successfully integrate small community groups so as to stimulate support and redirect resources towards rural development. The development of an efficient participatory system stimulates both the national and rural economy by improving incomes, food security and living

The parliamentary session paper 10 highlights the government objective to provide linkages to the community's local development groups by 2015. This is perhaps in response to the need for funding locally generated development projects. This study therefore seeks to investigate whether the external funding adequately meets the challenges of CAGs in their attempt to meet the needs of the members and also improve livelihoods of the agro-pastoralist community (Government of Kenya and National Council for Population and Development, 2000).

The importance of examining the contributions by the CAGs is in light of changes in development policies and especially with regard to marginalized communities. On the one hand, the global economy has been liberalized resulting in growing international trade, marketing and technical assistance (Alila, 2011); while on the other hand, the local development systems are undergoing a paradigm shift from the traditional top-down approach to the emergence of demand driven development, adoption of participatory and facilitative approaches such as collective action groups (Reynolds, 2004)

1.2 Statement of the problem

Collective action groups have played a major role in resolving a myriad of problems facing the agro-pastoral community in Makindu Sub-county. The World Food Program and other

renowned organizations credit collective action groups for promoting a participatory approach to problem solving as well as facilitating increased community development. The groups have proved efficient in addressing the emerging needs of the agro-pastoralist. Despite this, Agro-pastoralist households are still faced with increased food insecurity, low income levels, inaccessibility to education, poor housing and sanitation. Current research on collective action groups has addressed their nature, the challenges faced by the groups and their structure; with few of these focusing on the relevance and importance of these groups to individual households. This study, sought to bring to light the various contributions brought by the groups to the agro-pastoralist households in Makindu.

1.3 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

- (i) To identify collective action group activities that are directed at development in Makindu Sub-county
- (ii) To assess the contribution of collective action group activities towards the socioeconomic wellbeing of agro-pastoralist households in Makindu Sub-county.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Location of the Study Area

This study was carried out in 7 divisions within Makindu Sub-county. Makindu is located in Makueni County, in Kenya. Makindu sub-county covers over an area of 1,034.7 sq km with a projected population of more than 178,989 people. It is habited by agro-pastoralist households totalling 22,153 (DAEO 2012). The sub-county lies in the arid and semi-arid zones of the Eastern region of the Country (Kenya, 2009). The area forms the driest part of Makueni County as it lies on the lower altitude. The sub-county borders Kibwezi and Mtito Andei sub-counties, Kajiado and Kitui Counties, and the Kyulu conservation area.

In the past the sub-county served as home to a large number of pastoralists. Continued spells of famine and drought coupled with a stringent supply of grazing lands has forced the former pastoralists to reduce the number of animals in their herds and resort to crop farming. The new problems facing the agro-pastoralists including lack of proper health care, poor education systems, crop failure and water shortage have led to a record increase of active CAGs in the area, which was the main reason of choosing the area for this study.

2.2 Study Population

The target population of this study consisted of agro-pastoralist households residing in Makindu Sub-county. Makindu Sub-county has a total population of 884,527 individuals. At least 52% of the households in the county are engaged in agro-pastoralism (Makueni District, 2010). Individual households were the focus of this study. The researcher interviewed household heads or delegated heads of households who are members of Collective action groups in the sub-county. This study dealt with individual households because, the focus of the study was on the contribution of CAG's to the wellbeing of individual households rather than on the community as a whole.

2.3 Sampling and Sample Size

The target population was 22,152 households in the sub-county, while the sampling frame was 11,519 the number of households that are members of collective action groups. In selecting household heads for face to face interview care was be taken to select only the household heads who are registered members of collective action groups within the study area. This acted as the guiding criterion as recommended by Kalenga and Elsa (2011). Stratified random sampling was used to select a sample size of 204 households proportionally distributed in the 7 divisions located in the study area (Green, 2000; SMART, 2012).

2.4 Data Collection

A structured interview schedule was used to collect information from the respondents on their perceptions of the contributions of CAGs on their socioeconomic wellbeing. The interview schedule included information on the nature of the CAGs, activities which they undertake and an assessment of 28 indicator items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (Heferon & Boniwell, 2011) was used to assess the contribution of CAGs to the wellbeing of the community. The internal consistency of the resulting index was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1982; Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). Three Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to triangulate the already collected data.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data was analysed by the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The qualitative and quantitative data obtained using interview schedule was analysed using

descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and Chi-square test for *goodness of fit* was used to test the significance level of the relationships

3. Results and Findings

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the CAG members interviewed. The respondent's age, gender marital status, education level and professional training.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Age of the respondents		
18-29	31	15.2
30-39	66	32.4
40-49	57	27.9
50-59	37	18.1
Above 60	13	6.4
Gender		
Female	165	81
Male	39	19
Marital status		
Married	142	69.6
Single	31	15.2
Divorced	7	3.4
Widowed	24	11.8
Educational level		
Not attended any formal school	16	7.8
Lower Primary	35	17.2
Upper primary	56	27.5
Secondary	57	27.9
College Diploma	29	14.2
University	11	5.4
Professional training		
No professional training	138	67.6
Certificate	30	14.7
Diploma	25	12.3
Degree	11	5.4

n=204

The majority (75.5 %) of the CAG members were in the active age bracket between 18 and 49 years, while the older less active above 60 years accounted for only 6.4 %. This a clear indication that the CAGs were dominated by young active members of the community.

Women formed the largest (81 %) proportion of the members and majority (69.6 %) of them were married. The majority of the CAGs members (52.5 %) level of academic qualification was below the primary level, and 67.6 % of them were not professionally trained.

3.2. Characteristics of Collective Action Groups in Makindu Sub-county

Objective number one was to identify the activities of the collective action groups that were directed at development in Makindu Sub-county. This was done by looking at the type of groups, membership of the groups, and age of the groups.

3.2.1. Type of collective action groups found in Makindu

A total of one hundred and fifty nine (159) Collective action groups. The results in Table 2 show that nine different types of CAG were operating within the study area, this included: financial, work sharing, training, health care, provision of farm implements, provision of building materials, peace, burial activities and marketing of farm produce. The financial and work sharing CAGs were found to be popular with the community. The respondents were found to be members of more than one CAG, where most of them had membership to an average of 3 CAGs.

Table 2 Type of group (Multiple response Table)

Type of group	Frequency	Percent
Financial	204	100.0
Work sharing	204	100.0
Training groups (farmer groups)	181	88.7
Marketing of produce	131	64.2
Farm implements	128	62.7
Burial activities	56	27.4
Building materials	54	26.4
Health care	12	5.8
Peace Initiative	10	0.49

n = 204

4.4.2. Group Membership

The average number of members within a CAG was found to be 25 members. Majority of the groups (61.3 %) had between 10 and 20 members. The smallest group within Makindu Sub

County was found to have five members only, while the largest group was found to have 150 members (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of members in CAG

Number	Frequency	Percent
1-20	125	61.3
21-40	59	28.9
41-60	8	3.9
61-80	3	1.5
above 81	9	4.4
Total	204	100.0

Mean 25, median 20, mode 20, std. dev 20.53, minimum 10 and maximum 150

4.4.3 Age of the CAGs

The number of years the CAGs had been in operation was determined by asking the members to state the year their group was started and the age of the CAG was determined by calculating the difference of the year it was started and this year 2016. The majority of the CAGs in Makindu sub-county (63.2 %) were less than 6 years old, while 12.8 % of them were above 10 years old. 24% were 7-9 years old.

**Table 4
Age of the CAGs in Makindu Sub-County**

Years	Frequency	Percent
1-3	58	28.4
4-6	71	34.8
7-9	49	24.0
10-13	14	6.9
above 14	12	5.9
Total	204	100.0

4.7 Contribution of CAGs to social economic wellbeing of agro-pastoralists

The section covers objective number two, which was stated as: “to assess the contribution of collective action group activities towards the wellbeing of agro-pastoral households in Makindu sub-county”.

The socioeconomic wellbeing of the agro-pastoral households within Makindu sub-county was assessed using 28 indicator items grouped into 7 categories, as follows: (i) **standard of living** which had 6 indicators (provision of food, shelter, clothing, capital, assets and work), (ii) **access to health care**, (iii) **feeling of safety** which had 3 indicators (peace of mind, absence of fear and worry), (iv) **improved social relations** with 3 indicators (community connections, good family and community relations), (v) **spiritual fulfilment** with 2 indicators (belief in God and attendance), (vi) **control of the state of environment** with 8 indicators (control of political situations, material situations, acquisition of services, skills, resources, knowledge loans and information), (vii) **emotions and affiliations** with 5 indicators (social respect, part of community, fulfil social obligations, listened to, help to others).

The CAG members were asked to rate (or gauge) the contribution the CAG to their household wellbeing based on 28 items which were chosen as the indicators of socioeconomic wellbeing using a 7 point semantic differential scale, which ranged between 1 and 7 (1 being Very Low contribution and 7 Very High contribution). The scores for each indicator were added together and a mean calculated. Then all the scores for all the indicators were added together to form an index of socioeconomic wellbeing of the households in Makindu sub-county. The internal reliability of the created socioeconomic wellbeing index using Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .854, which was found to be acceptable.

The total scores and mean ranks for the contribution of CAGS to the wellbeing were calculated for the different aspects of wellbeing they provided to the community. The means of the resulting ranks were grouped into three categories in order to indicate the level of contribution as follows: 1 – 2.3 Low contribution; 2.4 – 4.7 Medium contribution; and 4.8 – 7 High contribution, as described by Heferon and Boniwell (2011). The descriptive statistics of the mean ranks are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 Community Perception on the Contribution of CAGs

CAG contribution to	Score	Mean rank	Description	Alpha
Food provision	1071	5.25	High	
Shelter	1045	5.12	High	
Clothing	1025	5.02	High	
Capital generation	1138	5.57	High	
Provision / assets	1107	5.42	High	
Work	1104	5.41	High	
Living standard	1081	5.30	High	.854
Health		5.49	High	.862
Peace of mind	1122	5.50	High	
Absence of constant fear	1068	5.23	High	
Absence of constant worry	1101	5.39	High	
Safety	1097	5.37	High	.868
Connection with community	1340	6.56	High	
Good family relations	1363	6.68	High	
Good community relations	1334	6.53	High	
Improved social relations	1346	6.59	High	.869
Belief in God	1226	6.00	High	
Attendance	1059	5.19	High	
Spiritual fulfilment	1142	6.00	High	.879
Control of Political situations	1006	4.93	High	
Control material situations	1103	5.40	High	
Ability to acquire services	1011	4.95	High	
Ability to acquire resources	1050	5.14	High	
Ability to acquire skills	1103	5.40	High	
Ability to acquire knowledge	1056	5.17	High	
Ability to acquire loans	1085	5.31	High	
Ability to acquire information	1065	5.22	High	
State of environment	1060	5.19	High	.867
Social respect	1076	5.27	High	
Being part of community	1042	5.10	High	
Fulfil social obligations	1077	5.27	High	
Being listened to	1138	5.57	High	
Help others	1035	5.07	High	
Emotions and affiliations	1047	5.13	High	.868
Index of socioeconomic wellbeing	1105	5.41	High	.869

n = 204

The CAGs contribution to individual items of member’s wellbeing (Table 5) show that they contributed highly to the improved social relations (6.59), spiritual fulfilment (6.00), health (5.49) living standards (5.30) and safety (5.30) on a scale of 1 to 7.

It was noted that the CAGs contribution to capital generation was 5.57, this is an important aspect in that the majority of the households were found to have zero (no formal source of income), therefore the CAGs played a big role in providing them with finances for the creation of capital to do business and acquire other aspects related to wellbeing.

The overall contribution of CAG to the socioeconomic wellbeing of the agro-pastoral communities in Makindu sub-county was found to be 5.41 on a scale of 1 to 7, which was described as high. The number of respondents who ranked the contribution to be high was found to be more than the ones who ranked it as low, these results were statistically significant ($p < .05$) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Chi-square test results showing

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Statistics
Medium	30	102.0	-72.0	Chi-square
High	174	102.0	72.0	101.64, df1,
Total	204			p=.001.

4.8. Discussion

4.8.1 Socio economic characteristics

The majority of the CAG members (40%) are from ages 30-39, as shown in Table 1. This is concurrent with the data presented by Mwangere (1997) while studying the prevalence of self-help groups in Makueni. The study showed that at this age people are more willing to explore independence in terms of income earning and finding solutions to their problems. As such they are more likely to join groups unlike their counterparts aged 50-59 (16.7%) and above 60 (6.7%), who have accomplished much and are resigned to their socio-economic status as it is. Further the age group, 18-29 (23.3%) maybe willing to join groups to establish their own independence. Wambua (2013) indicates that Makindu has a high dropout rate from schools. This translates to a large number of youth in this age bracket remaining uneducated and unemployed. The desire to seek out independence and opportunities for improving their own livelihood leads to an increased membership in CAGs

Women represented a significant 81% of the total respondents as members of CAGs as shown in Table 1. This is because women are more willing to ask for help and to seek creative solutions to their problems than men. Johnson (2004) in his study found that African culture plays a significant role in the acceptance of collective action groups by men. Traditionally, men are trained to independently bear the burden of their socio-economic wellbeing and therefore asking for help or seeking assistance is often frowned upon in the community. Davis and Negash (2007) concurs with this view indicating that in many cases, the women join the groups with the support of their husbands who understand the role of the CAGs and their importance but are unwilling to become involved themselves for fear of being shunned by their peers and the community at large.

The respondents that were married formed the highest number in the CAG as shown in Table 1. The married members of the CAG formed 69.6% of the population, this may mean that married couples are often more willing to cooperate on matters of socio-economics in order to bring success to their families. Sawicki and Craig (1996) in their study found that married women often feel more obligated to find alternatives with which they can improve the wellbeing of their families. They concluded that in fact Community groups serve as a meeting point and identification mark for married women.

The study realized that as community members become more educated, they were less inclined to be members of CAG. It is clear that University educated individuals had the lowest membership, totalling 4.9 % and 0.5 % respectively. This is in concurrence with data gathered by the World Bank (2014) in a study on the impact of free education within Makueni County, the research found that although registration in primary schools had increased significantly, with at least 51 % of the population having access to primary school, applications and registration to further education through professional training was still low. Once individuals had acquired basic education in primary school and sometimes secondary school, few if any attempted to continue with further professional training, opting instead to seek other alternatives for income earning (Onwonga et al., 2012).

A majority of the agro-pastoralists in Makindu had no professional training whatsoever Table 1. Evetts (2006) suggests that professional training almost always leads to some form of

employment. This new status discourages individuals from pursuing group membership. Furthermore, she adds that members who undergo professional training are more likely to become inactive and dormant members of the group.

4.8.2 Types of CAGs

The groups involved in finances or financial groups (which included cash assistance, table banking, and credit / loan provision) were mentioned by all the respondents as can be seen in Table 2. The financial groups differ from their counterpart the community building organisation.

A second important kind of CAG is that which is concerned with training in addition to financial assistance. Such groups are often linked to NGOs which provide training especially on new methods of farming, water harvesting and disease prevention for livestock. Work sharing groups are often defined as labour groups, members come together to assist each other in weeding, planting and harvesting of crops. The groups operate with a schedule which determines when and where they shall be providing labour. Such groups are also renowned for assisting members to pay casual labourers for the same activities where group members are unavailable.

Credit groups made up an average of 14.2 %. CAGs that are active in credit are mostly for start-up entrepreneurs looking to take advantage of seasonal loans at lower interest rates. Such groups encourage members to save for purposes of accessing good capital loans. Once members have succeeded in paying off the loans, the group disbands. They mostly exist for a period of one year that is twelve months or less. Sometimes however, they continue with the credit cycle transforming from a CAG to a self-help group (Chant, 2007). Marketing groups are also common in Makindu Sub County, making up at least 12.5 % of the CAGs in the area. From the data gathered in the FGD, marketing groups are usually segregated on the line of products such as tomatoes, grains and fruits. These groups seek out potential markets for members, advice members on market prices and costs of sale and in some unique cases such as for the “*Josema*” group transport for products to the market place.

Peace initiative groups are a new phenomenon in Makindu. They make up the least percentage that is, 0.5%. These groups are mainly focused on fostering peace initiatives between the different clans within the community.

The sizes of the groups were affected by two factors: the success of the group and the activities the group performs. The group size has been shown to influence the success of the group. The smaller groups have been found to be more successful than larger groups (Roberts, 1996). This is because smaller groups are easier to manage and therefore have a higher success rate, communication is ideal, members share a common bond beyond the activities of the groups and are therefore more committed to success of the group (Roberts, 1996). This can explain the high percentage of groups with less than 20 members.

Larger groups (with more than 80 members) were also found to exist in the study area, though their percentage was low (4.4 %), as shown in Table 3. These CAGs which are very large by common CAG standards are found in Kiboko location. Their activities are centered on farming, where members rent large pieces of land for farming purposes. The largest group of 150 members, is a CAG located in Kiboko area. The CAG has support of Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KARLO) who manage the group. The activities of the group include training and farming of horticulture products. This group has existed for the past two years and is expected to disband once members have acquired the necessary skills from the NGO with regard to horticulture farming.

The majority of the CAGs were started less than 6 years ago, as seen in Table 4; this coincides greatly with the changes that were made in the constitution. The changes allowed for funding of youth and women groups, focusing on marginalised communities. The enactment of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 marked an important milestone for women's empowerment, Gender equality and Human rights in Kenya. Gender equality is one of the key principles upon which the Constitution is based on. Particular advances are noted in poverty reduction, education and women in decision making. These achievements are attributed to the strong commitment demonstrated by the highest level of leadership in the country (Swallow, 2012).

4.8.3 Community Perceptions on the contribution of CAGs to household Wellbeing

Contribution to living standards

The results in Table 5 shows a high mean in each indicator for improved standards of living, with provision of food mean of 5.25 and access to capital mean of 5.57 ranking the highest.

CAGs can provide access to food by encouraging farming of drought resistant crops, as well as providing training on proper storage of products. Once together, the group member's band together giving strength to the little that they have and allowing individuals who would otherwise be among the victims of drought and famine are assisted. CAGs assist members by also lobbying with research institutions and NGOs for food and seed during the dry season. . In the same way, CAGs grant access to capital by allowing members to save their money and also to access credit from NGOs and financial institutions. With capital, it is possible for the members to substitute their income. For the agro-pastoralist improvement of living standards has been difficult. They have to face several challenges including droughts, famines, death of livestock and even theft. CAGs have provided a second avenue through which they can seek economic stability and other alternatives towards improving their own economic status. Viswanath et al., (2006) concur indicating that improvement of living standards within the groups is often determined by the group size and the desire for members to self-actualise. In addition he finds that groups geared towards living standards improvement often have more members who remain active for a long time. They also receive greater support from government institutions, non-government institutions and financial institutions as well.

Contribution to health

With a mean of 5.49, as shown in Table 4.20, the ranking for access to healthcare can be considered quite high. Macharia et al., (2004) in their research found that communities in the eastern and north eastern region of Kenya suffered from high mortality rates due to poor access to basic healthcare. People have to walk for miles to the nearest clinics and once there, they are not guaranteed that the personnel and equipment available will be adequate towards their treatments. CAGs often provide transport for the sick, contributions towards the care of the sick and also a network where healthcare NGOs can be accessed and they can help in ensuring access to healthcare. The FGD also revealed that some group contributions are kept in saving to assist members who need to seek better and more skilled forms of healthcare.

Contribution to safety

Perhaps one of the greatest concern for marginalized agro-pastoralist communities within the eastern region is safety. This includes personal safety and safety that is with regard to protection of their own property and livestock. (Mwangangi et al., 2012). Cattle raids and thefts are a constant concern for the community and its leaders. Whereas many efforts have

been put in place by NGOs and government institutions towards solidifying the safety of citizens within this region, there still remains much to be done by the community itself (Ndeto, 2014). Safety ranked very highly in the contributions of CAGs. 85% of the respondents stated that CAGs score highest rank that is, 5/5 in alleviating fear and constant worry for one's safety. CAGs have been quite active in promotion of safety that the support offered to the police and other government institutions has increased. Table 4.21 shows that respondents ranked the CAG contribution to lack of constant worry highest at 5.50. According to Alilla (2011) CAGs can contribute in a variety of ways to the safety of members: Emergency planning, where the agro-pastoralists are equipped with skills and resources that can help during emergency times. In this case, CAGs often engage in ensuring families save food for the constant famines, maintain a good number of stock which can help during emergency and also provide partnerships with NGOs such as Red Cross. Secondly through Contribution to the curbing of anti-social behaviour: the recent initiative by the government of "Nyumba Kumi" shows that the safety of the community lies within the community. CAGs can be active in curbing anti-social behaviour and reporting suspicions to the local police. Finally by coming together, CAGs can invest in assets such as proper fencing and gates for homesteads which contributes highly towards the lowering of worry and fear of attack.

Contribution to spiritual wellbeing

The CAG members believed that the CAGs greatly contributed to their spiritual wellbeing. The average score was 6 on a scale of 1 to 7 (Table 5). These results correspond well with Gichuki et al., (2000) who stated that the number of churches in Makueni County had increased significantly in the past five years. Spiritual fulfilment has been touted by psychologists as a measure of wellbeing which focuses on comfort and internal security. According to Fisher et al. (2000) individuals who believe in a spiritual being of whatever nature and attend regular services for the purposes of nourishing their faith are very often more secure and in fact more willing to take risks in terms of improving their own wellbeing.

Contribution to control of state of environment

The highest score given by respondents with regard to the control of environment was 5.40, as per Table 5. The control of political situations ranked lowest, with a mean of 5.19 slightly above half the ranking score. Elwood and Leitner (1998) indicate that majority of the

marginalised communities' feel they have no control over elected as well as appointed officials. During election years, they are only granted a chosen few to select from, with minimal information and excessive advertising combined with propaganda, they are likely to make the wrong choice. Because they cannot control political situations, they are less likely to access services that they require. FGD discussions revealed that offices held by appointed officials such as land registration and registration of identification cards rank lowest in service provision. On the other hand, elected officials such as the office of the women representative and the MCA office ranked high in networking with CAGs to provide better services to the citizens of Makindu sub-county.

Contribution to emotions and affiliations

Coppock (1994) states that everyone wants to be heard; it is the foundation upon which human beings base their value. Many groups are sustained for years simply because members feel they are heard within the small groups. Furthermore, by providing ways in which individuals can meet social obligations such as school fees for children and food for the family, CAGs have allowed members to regain their social respect (ranking 5.27 as can be seen in Table 5).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

On the basis of the results presented in the previous chapter, the following conclusions were made:

CAGs in Makindu Sub County undertake a variety of activities all aimed at improving the wellbeing of members. CAGs focused on financial activities are the most popular in Makindu Sub County. All respondents that is, 100% indicated that they were involved in at least one form of financial CAG (Table 5). This was attributed to decreased earnings in the previous years within the sub county due to continued droughts and famines. Community members have therefore been forced to seek alternative sources of income. In addition, the study found that work sharing CAGs are also as popular as financial groups. Again 100% of the respondents were members of a work sharing group. This stems from pastoralist traditions where members of the community work together to till land, graze livestock and build homes.

CAGs have contributed immensely to the growth and improvement of socio-economic wellbeing among agro-pastoralists in Makindu sub-county. Through capital generation, food provision and providing access to assets CAG members feel have been able to improve their standards of living. CAG contribution to improved standards of living was ranked high at 5.30 (Table 5). CAGs have decreased significantly the insecurity in Makindu Sub County, with a high ranking of 5.37 (Table 5). Through implementation of policies such as the “*Nyumba Kumi*” and lobbying for the assignment of security officers, CAGs have managed to improve the security in the region. This coupled with assisting members to fence and protect their own property has made a significant impact on the security in the region.

CAGs are also important in helping members to control their state of environment. This means that they provide easy access to knowledge (high ranking of 5.17, Table 5) and information that is vital towards accessing material goods, controlling political situations and easy access to service especially those from government and NGO offices. Through trainings, they provide members with necessary information on goods and services; through lobbying they make access easier to members. Such groups are most active during the voting season when government and NGO services are quite active.

5.2. Recommendations

The following suggestions can be used to enhance the effectiveness of CAGs in Makindu Sub County. This will greatly improve the wellbeing of the residents and development of the community:

Harmonisation of CAG activities is vital. There are activities which are directly geared towards socio-economic wellbeing such as marketing of produce, financial support and access to education. Such activities can be given pre-eminence in order to hasten the process of improvement of socio-economic wellbeing.

There is need for increased awareness on the existence and importance of CAGs in improving socio-economic wellbeing. These groups have played a major role in improving the socio-economic wellbeing of members, others therefore need to understand the role they play and how they can be of assistance to them. Policies that support the formation of CAGs are important in the eastern region of Kenya. Considering that agro-pastoralists have been previously side-lined in national development policies and the study has clearly highlighted

the contribution of CAGs to socio-economic wellbeing, CAGs clearly offer the fastest and easiest way to achieve development in this region.

There is need to raise awareness among the community on the importance and benefits that can be accrued by forming and participating in CAGs. CAGs focus on particular goals making them easier to achieve and increasing chances of success. With the help of CAGs agro-pastoralists can take vital steps towards improving their own wellbeing

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