AN ASSESSMENT OF LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE URBAN POOR IN
KHALABA WARD, BUNGOMA TOWN, KENYA

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This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university
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ABSTRACT

The study examined urban poverty and the coping strategies adopted by the urban poor households to urban life in Khalaba Ward, Bungoma Town. The study further examined the characteristics of poverty among the poor households, causes of poverty, and the impacts of poverty to households and the environment. The data was collected through a socio-economic survey that included the use of questionnaires, key informant interviews and focused group discussions as well as observation. The investigation involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data that were analyzed using various methodological approaches which comprised of descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, student t-Test and correlation analysis.

Majority (72.4%) of the household heads interviewed were in age group of 21-30 years and 31-40 years. The household’s average mean was 5 members. There was low level of education, 51.9% comprised of both those who had never gone to school and those who had attained primary education. Poverty was revealed through low level of education among the respondents, lack of clean tap water among 84.5% of the households and poor sanitation, informal types of employment, low level of monthly incomes and expenditure, lack of electricity/ lighting, total lack of security in the area and poor sanitation. Female headed households had low incomes in relation to male headed households though all resided in the same area. The study observed that poverty was caused by illiteracy, marginalization of the poor, mortality and morbidity and regional imbalance that forced 65.5% of people to migrate to urban mainly to look for employment opportunities.

Poverty impacted on the households negatively. It made them fail to achieve their daily basic and secondary needs, led to stress and lowered their dignity, led to sickness and death and environmental pollution. Highly educated household heads had better earnings as they could get permanent jobs than lowly educated household heads that were either working in informal Sectors as wage earners or running petty businesses. A mix of money generating activities was invented by the household as coping strategies to poverty. These ranged from farming, businesses, working as casual laborers, engaging household members in money sourcing i.e. Spouses and school children and sending some household members home to cut on expenses. Social networking was also devised and really helped poor households to cope up with urban life. The study concludes that Khalaba Ward residents experience poverty and they have a mix of money generating ways to cope with the situation. These coping mechanisms do not move them out of poverty circle nor alleviate poverty but only makes them to move on with life. The study recommends free and fair nationwide evaluation and reduction of poverty programmes which already exists in order to improve the quality of life so as to seal the imbalance between rural and urban areas in order to curb rural-urban migration. Again, there should be evaluation of urban free markets and put into place strategic interventions in support of key industries in order to provide intensive employment growth to cater for both educated and none/low educated urban dwellers.