

Abstract

Objective: To assess the socioeconomic impact of damming Turkwel River on the livelihoods of the communities living downstream.

Methodology and results: The study employed a combination of rapid diagnostic surveys (RDS) to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The actual data collection involved the three steps. First, ten villages were purposively selected. This was guided by the fact that the riverine ecosystem is not a single uniform entity, but in reality covers a wide range of conditions as already described. Secondly, the households were selected using the transect method. This was because there was no comprehensive listing of the households. Data was collected through personal interview using structured questionnaires. Thereafter, a two-stage method was used to select a sample of 300 households. Earlier on, two diagnostic workshops were held, one in Lodwar representing on-site key informants and the other in Nairobi, representing off-site key informants. Three focus group discussions were held to capture livelihood and environmental-related issues of the lower zone; middle zone; and upper zone, respectively. A household survey was designed to relate interests of on-site stakeholders, elicited in the RDS, to socio-economic attributes. A two-stage method was used to select a sample of 315 households. First, ten villages were purposively selected in close liaison with the Indigenous Vegetation Project (IVP) staff. Next, the households were selected using the transect method. Data collected using questionnaire were coded and analysed using STATA and Microsoft Excel software. Both parametric and non-parametric tests were used as appropriate. A critical probability value of 0.05 was adopted in determining the level of significance. The results of the diagnostic survey recognized that the riverine ecosystem will continue to undergo vast transformation mainly driven by emerging competition for resources, attributed to growing diversification of resource uses, which is mainly driven by a growing sedentarization of the nomadic community. Families were increasingly settling to agricultural and commercial activities in conscious efforts to diversify livelihood sources as well as to minimize risks. While some families undertake diversified activity as a matter of choice, other families are forced into partial sedentarization by loss of animal herds (either wholly or partially) during droughts or to livestock rustlers.

Conclusion and application of findings: The study shows that the opportunity a livelihood activity offers to accumulate assets is important in the development of pastoral areas. This implies that introduction of alternative livelihood activities should not be based on potentials for production and productivity alone, but also on market and investment opportunities.

