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Innovating in the Fight Against Poverty: Evidence from ‘Big-Push’ Interventions in Samburu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Poverty and food insecurity in Kenya are endemic problems. Official records show that the fight against poverty has been a developmental issue since independence. Yet even at this present moment, more than half of the population especially in rural areas of Kenya is living in poverty. A case example is Samburu, a county ranked sixth poorest with a poverty incidence of 71 %. Besides being poor and food insecure, this county experiences insecurity due to frequent attacks from neighbouring pastoralist communities which occur especially during recurrent drought. This paper uses findings from a study of SAPLIP (Samburu Livelihood Improvement Project), a project funded by EU and implemented by World Vision Kenya in cooperation with the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), to show how a ‘big-push’ can contribute to reduction in poverty and food insecurity. The study employed focus group discussions, intensive key informant interviews and a household survey on 373 households consisting of 203 project participants and 170 non-participants. This study established that SAPLIP made concurrent interventions at different levels to tackle poverty, food insecurity and to enhance drought resilience. Specifically, the project targeted the promotion of peace in the region, the promotion of group socio-economic activities to improve member’s income situation and the promotion of sustainable agriculture at household level to attain food security. Furthermore, SAPLIP introduced methods of natural resource management, e.g., planting of multi-purpose trees. Findings show that respondent’s state of livelihood has greatly improved and are more resilient with regard to drought. They make income from their group activities, including horticultural production in green houses and bull-service offered to other community members. Their households are also food secure due to the additional agricultural production skills they acquired from the project and because of the increasing peace in the locality. The paper concludes that appropriate multi-level and multi-sectoral interventions targeting regional, inter and intra-household determinants of poverty and food insecurity are critical for success in the fight against poverty and food insecurity.

Keywords: Big push, innovating, Kenya, multi-sectoral, poverty and food insecurity, Samburu