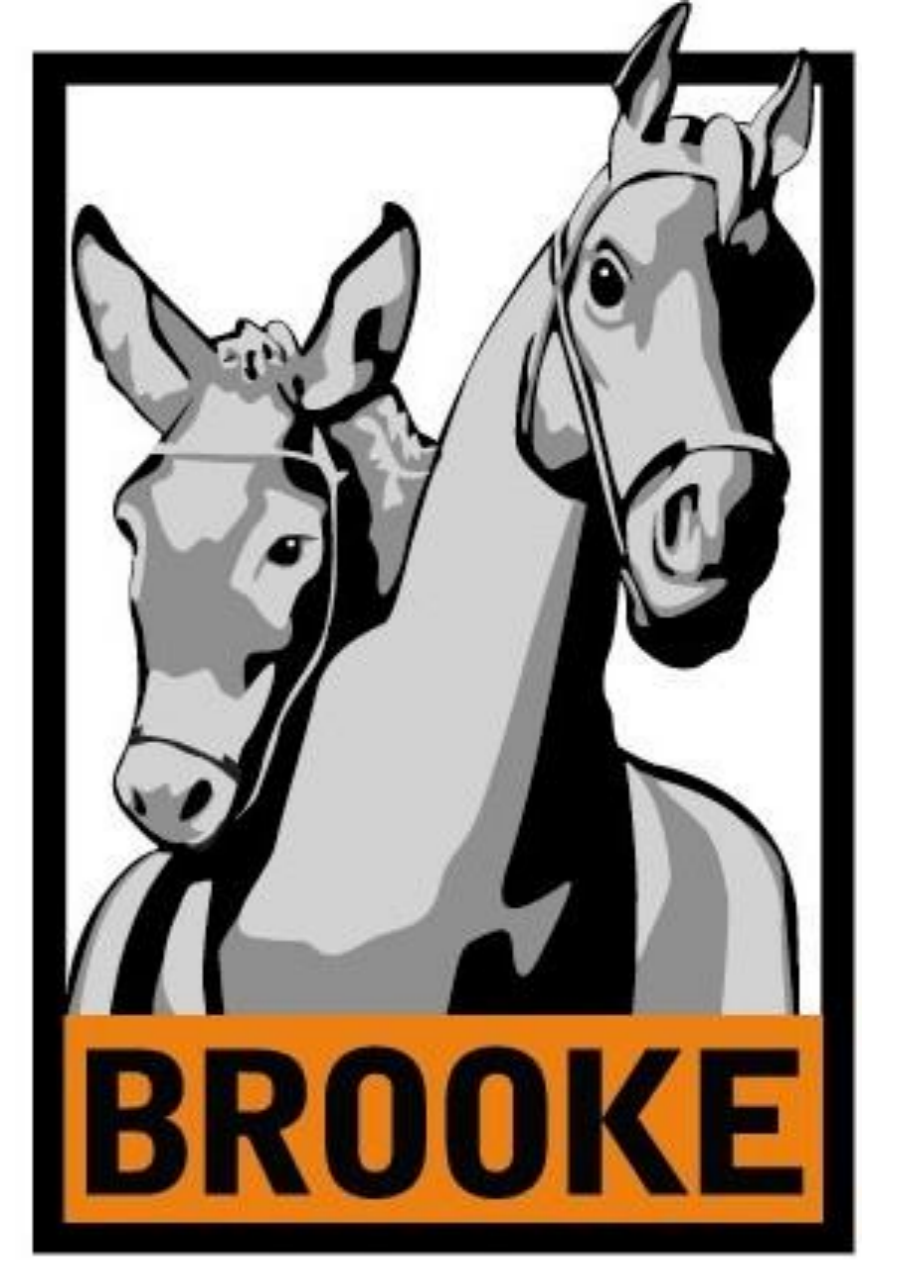


The role of donkeys in the contribution to the livelihoods of the marginalised populations in Kenya



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Summary

- Hard economic times in Kenya have negatively affected the livelihoods of the urban and peri-urban poor, leading to fewer formal jobs, poor-paying casual jobs and increasing cost of living^{1, 2, 3}. The donkey has enabled households to generate income as a less intensive management option with high returns.
- Marginalised groups in Molo, within the Rift Valley region of Kenya including single women, female victims of tribal clashes victims and women living with HIV/AIDS, who have minimal alternative sources of income and who do not own land, have found using donkeys for transport as the only means of obtaining their livelihoods.

Introduction

- Kenya's urban and peri-urban areas have been hard hit by the declining economy and resulting structural adjustment policies, the costs of which are disproportionately felt by the poor and marginalised^{1, 2, 3}.
- For those who are marginalised e.g. single women, women victims of tribal clashes, people living with HIV/AIDS, the only opportunity for income generation is poorly paid, rarely available casual labour.
- They are stigmatised and often landless (especially women).
- Studies have shown that promotion of donkey ownership amongst the landless has positive impact on their income and diversity of economic activities^{4, 5}.



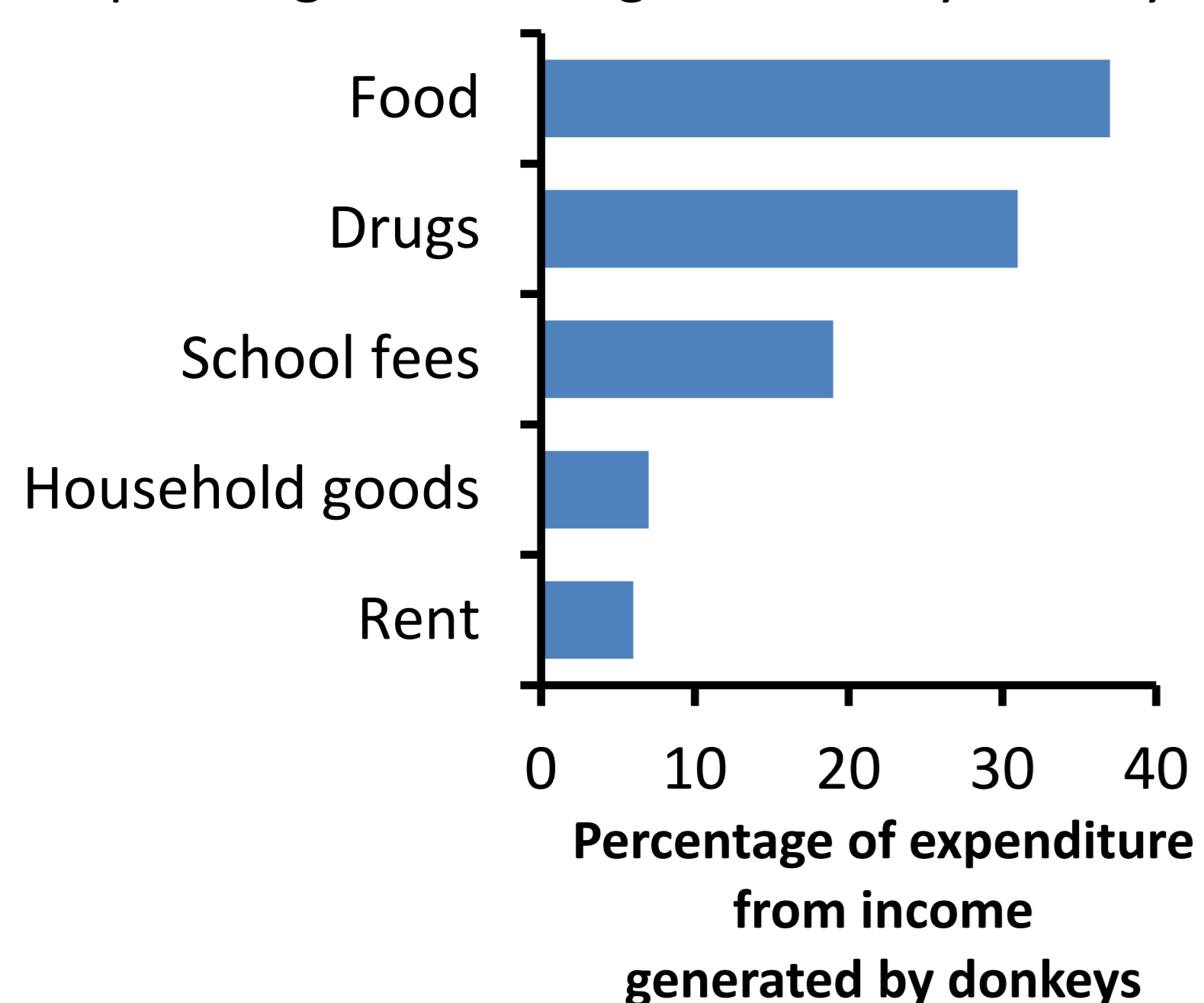
Figure 1: Women participating in a focus group discussion

Methods

1. A rapid assessment was undertaken in Molo that drew participation from marginalised groups of women. Focus group discussions were held with 15 members of Salama Women's Group using a semi-structured focus group discussion guide to determine the role of donkeys in their lives (Figure 1)
2. A literature review was performed using secondary data obtained from government departments in Molo sub-county as well as a baseline survey carried out by FSK in partnership with Brooke East Africa in Nakuru County in August 2013.

Results

Figure 2: Graph showing the distribution of spending of income generated by donkeys



- The donkeys are the only means of income generation for marginalised women in Molo as they own little or no land.
- The income is used to buy food (36.9%), pay rent (6.1%), pay school fees (19%), purchase household goods and buy small plots through monthly savings (Figure 2).
- Those living with HIV/AIDS utilise the income to purchase anti-retroviral drugs (30.9%) (Figure 2).
- Diseases and injuries can seriously affect these people's donkeys and eventually lead to loss of their income and livelihoods.



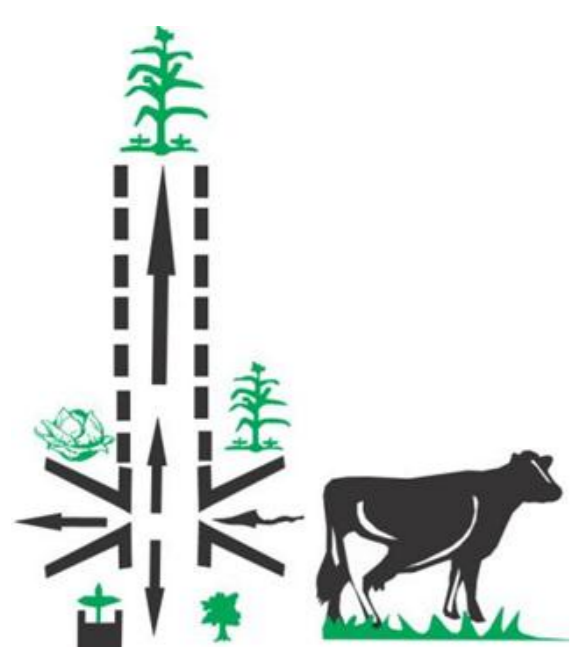
Figure 3: Women in Molo use donkeys to transport firewood to market for sale

Conclusions

- The marginalised population in Molo relies significantly on donkeys for carrying large amounts of water, food and firewood across vast distances for income-generating activities (Figure 3).
- They have used the donkey to help them recover from loss of livelihood, become self-sufficient, care for their children and themselves, restore dignity and regain hope.
- Despite many challenges, they recognise the crucial role that donkeys play in their day-to-day lives.
- Building their capacity in animal welfare is crucial to equip the marginalised population with the necessary skills to care for their animals and allow for sustained improvement of their livelihoods.

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