DOES ACCESS TO LAND HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE FOOD SITUATION OF THE URBAN POOR? A CASE STUDY IN NAIROBI

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Abstract: Due to the fast growing urban population and the economic problems, the number of urban poor in sub-Saharan Africa has been rapidly increasing. In order to make ends meet, many poor urban households fall back on farming activities, either within the city boundaries or in the rural areas they come from. The central question raised in this paper is whether access to farmland influences the households' food situation. The results of this exploratory paper indicate that as far as the Nairobi poor are concerned, the question can at least partly be answered in the affirmative.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world's urban population is growing at an unprecedented rate. This applies in particular to the developing countries: between 1950 and 1990, the urban population increased from 300 million to about 1.3 billion and is estimated to be over 2 billion by the year 2000 (Burgess, *et al.*, 1996). Of the six major developing regions in the world, Africa shows, since the mid-1970s, the highest urban population growth, the rate being 5.0 per cent, for instance; during the 1985-90 period. Between the late 1970s and the year 2000 the urban population in Africa is expected to grow four fold. UN projections suggest that by 2025 about half of the African population will be living in cities of more than one million people (Ogbu and Ikiara, 1995).

Besides natural growth, a major cause of the rapidly increasing urban population is the influx of migrants from the rural areas, displaced largely due to shortage of and increasing pressure on agricultural land. In Kenya, rapid population growth in the rural areas led to a decline of the average land holding from 4.9 to 4 0 acres and an increase of the per centage of households with less than 2 acres from 17 7 to 25 1 per cent between 1982 and 1992 (Mukui, 1994). In the absence of growth of agricultural productivity, it is especially the rural poor who become increasingly dependent on non-agricultural activities and wage employment in order to make a living However, non-agricultural income-generating opportunities in the rural areas are limited, and hence many of these people decide to try their luck in the cities.

All migrants come to the city in the hope of finding some kind of employment However, due to the measures that have been taken by the government in the context of 'structural adjustment', employment in the urban formal sector grew only at a very modest average of 0.7 per cent between 1988 and 1993 This was partly caused by an absolute decrease of employment in the government sector (Republic of Kenya, 1992, 1995). Data indicate that the overall urban unemployment rate rose from 11 per cent in 1977 to 22 per cent in 1992 (World Bank, 1994) This expansion is not sufficient to

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absorb the bulk of migrants and the urban poor at large; their main opportunity of employment remained causal labour in the informal sector.

Most migrants have only one way to go as soon as they have reached the city, notably to one of the slums or shantytowns where the urban poor live, since they cannot afford to live in the developed areas of the city. Although no precise figures are available, there is no doubt that since the beginning of the 1980s the population in these low-income areas has grown substantially. For instance, it was estimated that in 1993 about 55 per cent of the Nairobi population of about 1.5 million lived in these 'unplanned' and 'unserviced' areas (Gathuru, 1988). Other sources state that about a third of the Kenyan urban population can be considered poor (World Bank, 1994), while the number of people living in 'absolute poverty' in Nairobi is estimated at about 30 per cent. Moreover, the 'depth' of poverty increased, i.e. the poor have become poorer (Mukui, 1994).

2. LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF THE URBAN POOR

In order to make a living – or perhaps it is better to say to survive – the urban poor can deploy several 'strategies'. Broadly, these can be categorised into urban strategies and rural strategies, while both broad categories can be split into either non-farming or farming strategies. Urban non-farming strategies refer to all income-generating activities in an urban context outside income derived from agricultural activities in town. Generally speaking, these comprise incomes from employment or self-employment. Regular employment is what all rural-urban migrants look for when coming to the city. Since finding a tenured job has become increasingly difficult, many urban dwellers can find no better than some irregular, causal work, or try to make a living from some kind of (often very marginal type of) self-employment, including prostitution, begging and criminal activities. Urban farming strategies are deployed by those who manage to get access to a piece of land within the city boundaries. Urban farming includes all types of agriculture within the urban environment and has grown enormously in importance since the 1980s. Rural non-farming strategies concern the socio-economic relationships of urban households with relatives in the 'home area'. Especially in the African context, the urban and rural areas have very strong links. Many rural households depend at least partly for their livelihood on urban sources of income, mainly through remittances. Very little is known about the opposite flows, i.e. flows of goods and money from relatives in the rural areas to poor households in the city. Rural farming strategies, finally, concern farming activities carried out by one or more members of the urban household, usually in the home area. Urban households may still have access to a plot of land in the rural areas, either bought or inherited, which they use for themselves and which serves as a source of food and/or income.

This present paper focuses on two of these four livelihood strategies, namely the urban farming and rural farming strategies. For practical reasons, these two strategies have been operationalised in simple terms as access to urban and to rural land, respectively. In doing so, the objectives of the paper are the following: (1) to assess the extent to which poor urban households have access to urban land and how far this access implies a source of food and/or income; (2) to assess the extent to which poor

urban households have access to rural land and how far this access implies a source of food and/or income; and (3) to assess how far poor urban households with access to urban and/or rural land are better off in terms of their food situation than those who do not have access to land. The underlying idea is Baker's conclusion – derived from a study carried out in north-west Tanzania – that access to agricultural land, in addition to urban employment, is an important element in urban households' diversification strategies and that those households who had a foot in both urban and rural activities were the least vulnerable to income shortfalls (Baker, 1994:17).

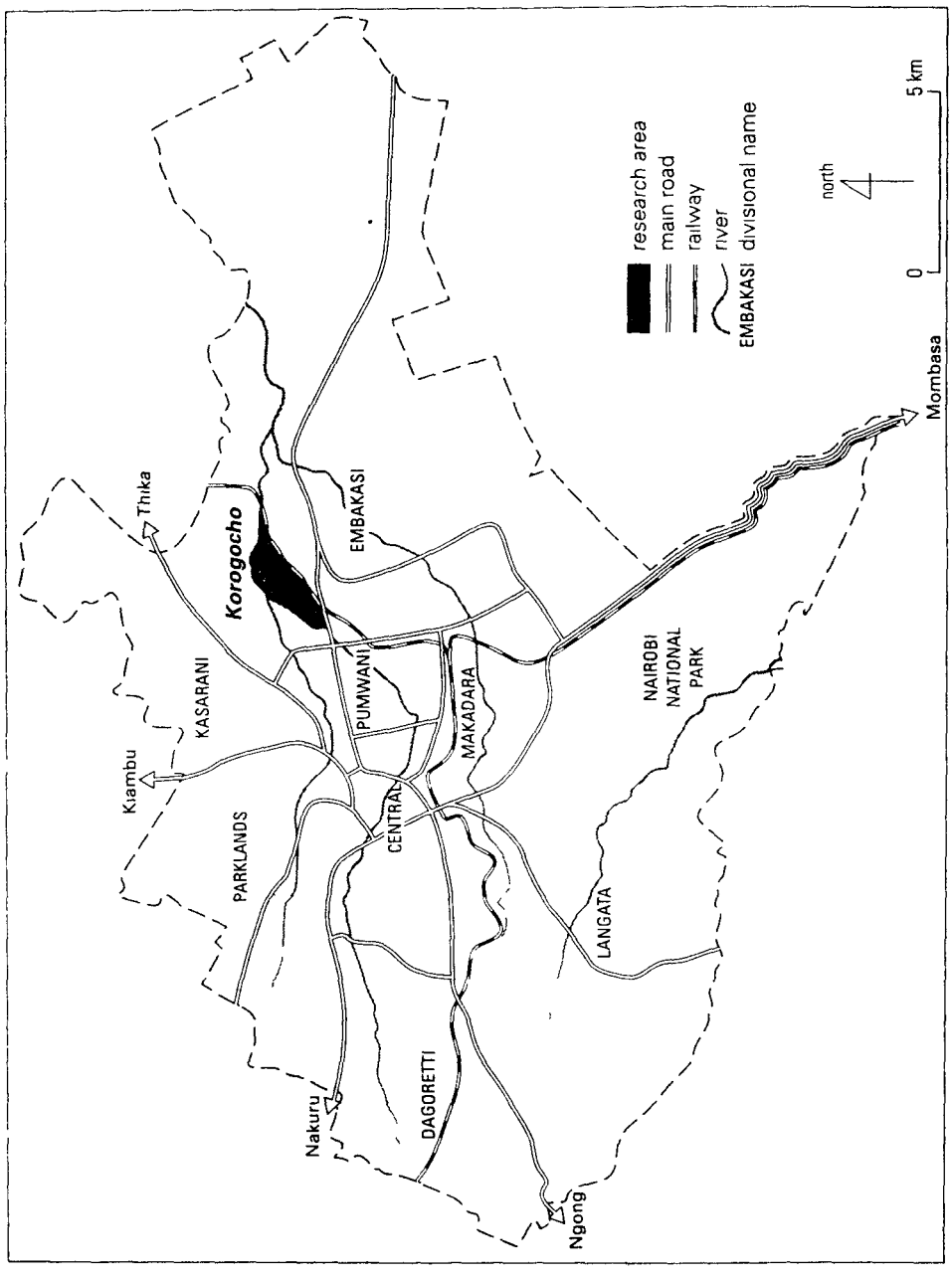

Figure 1: Location of study area in Nairobi

The findings presented below come from a study on urban agriculture which was carried out in 1994 in two slum areas of Nairobi (Mboganie, 1995; Mboganie and Foeken, forthcoming). For the present article, data of only one of these slums, Korogocho, are used. The area is located about 8 kilometres from the city centre, towards the northeast (Figure 1). Its population was estimated at 75,000 in 1990 (World Vision International, 1990). Among the poor districts of Nairobi, Korogocho has been shown to have the lowest monthly income per household head (Kenya/UNICEF, 1990). The area consists of seven 'villages', three of which were randomly selected for the survey. Although the study focused on urban farming, some questions regarding access to land in the rural areas were asked, too.

3. ACCESS TO URBAN LAND

Memon and Lee-Smith (1993) distinguish three types of urban farming. Firstly, households with some unused land space on their compounds can and often do grow crops (garden farming). Secondly, due to the extension of city boundaries former rural areas have become part of the urban area, turning 'traditional' farmers into city dwellers. Thirdly, food is produced on idle, i.e. usually public land, by low-income people. In the present paper we deal with the latter.

In East and Central Africa, urban farming has been practised since the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sawio, 1993). For the urban poor, it is a livelihood strategy to supplement their inadequate incomes by producing food on any available land (Sanyal, 1987; Rakodi, 1988; Drakakis-Smith, 1992; Maxwell and Zziwa, 1992a). A study carried out in 1993 by Maxwell (1995) in Kampala revealed that for the large majority of the respondents, increasing the level of food security was the main motive for practising urban farming. Freeman (1991) found evidence that the incidence of urban farming is related to previous failure to find a reasonable job. Crops produced include mainly vegetables and fruit plus some legumes and root crops (Mlozi *et al.*, 1992; Maxwell and Zziwa, 1992b). In Tanzania, milk and poultry have been reported to be produced in urban areas (Mlozi *et al.*, 1992), while goats, rabbits and poultry have also been reported in Kampala (Maxwell and Zziwa, 1992b) and Harare (Drakakis-Smith, 1992).

Farming within Nairobi City is not a new phenomenon except that its intensity increased in the late 1980s. Food prices partly explained the rapid increase in the cultivation of open sites, backyards, river valleys, and road and rail reserves in Nairobi and other urban areas in Kenya (Lee-Smith *et al.*, 1987). Freeman (1991) observed in 1987 that farmers growing crops had carved out irregular boudaries for their plots depending on who came first. Some operated on public land leased to them by 'land lords' at a rent as high as 1,000 Kenya shillings per annum (Gathuru, 1988). Another study revealed that the majority of such farmers are women, very poor, landless and subsistence dwellers, while farming at the backyard of residential houses is a characteristic of a few middle and upper socio-economic groups as these can afford housing with unused land space (Lado, 1990).

Most studies point at problems of land tenure for the poor urban farmers. They 'illegally' farm on land that does not belong to them, hence they are faced with

problems of crop and/or livestock insecurity. In the general survey on urban agriculture in Kenya carried out in 1985 by Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987), 6 per cent of the urban farmers mentioned that they had experienced eviction from their plots by the landowner or municipality. In Nairobi, this applied to only 3 per cent of the respondents.

In the slum area of Korogocho it was found that 30 per cent of the 1,300 households in the three selected villages had access to a piece of urban land. This is exactly the same figure as Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987) found almost ten years earlier for the very low income group in six Kenyan towns, including Nairobi. Since the population of the city – and particularly the poorest part of it – has grown considerably in these ten years, it means that almost any piece of 'unused' land is now used for agricultural purposes, as any visitor can observe.

Since there was no farming land available in the Korogocho residential area, most households had their plot(s) at some distance, between half an hour and one hour's walking. Almost half of the plots were located at a riverside, another third at a roadside. This differs form what Lee-Smith and her colleagues found in the mid-1980s among the very low-income households, where only one-third of the plots were located along either road or riversides and where 41 per cent of them appeared to farm in the backyard. As a result, the average plot size they found was only 99 square metres, which is very small compared with the average of 3,200 square metres (0.8 acres) among the Korogocho urban farmers in 1994. Almost 40 per cent of the households had more than 2,500 or one-quarter of a hectare (0.625 acres) at their disposal.

Half of the Nairobi households of the 1985 survey farmed on land belonging to the municipality or the government while 10 per cent belonged to private owners who had not put the plot into use. Other households farmed on land owned by relatives or the church, and some of the farmers reported that they did not know who the owners of the land they cultivated were. None of the farmers paid any monthly rent for the land except that three Korogocho plots had been 'bought' from previous cultivators at prices ranging from Ksh. 200 to Ksh. 1,000.

All urban farmers except one said that they practised urban farming because they were in need of food. About one-third of the farmers indicated that they also needed income. This indicates that urban poor households produced mainly for home consumption. This, again, is in line with the finding of Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987) that 90 per cent of the Nairobi urban farmers consumed the crops they produced, while only 21 per cent sold any part of their produce. Hence, crops grown were predominantly the basic foodstuffs like maize and beans, a finding comparable with that of Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987) ten years earlier.

Livestock rearing did not appear to be important. Only a few individuals had some cattle, sheep and goats, poultry and rabbits, mainly for home consumption. The major hindrance was the lack of space for keeping animals. Housing units were so squeezed together that there was no space even for children to play, leave alone to keep livestock. Ten years ago, the same pattern was found: seven per cent of the

Nairobi households reared some livestock and the major constraint was also lack of access to land space (Lee-Smith *et al.*, 1987).

The major problem faced by urban farmers was theft (besides such problems as pests and diseases, lack of capital, and "plots used as toilets"). General discussions revealed that a substantial proportion of the maize and beans were harvested and consumed or sold before they were fully mature to avoid loss through theft. Thus, theft is very important in that if forces the cultivators to harvest crops with low calorific value. This finding contrasted with that of Lee-Smith and her colleagues who carried out their study not only in Nairobi but also in four smaller urban centres. Another reason may be that in the mid-1980s the economic situation in Kenya was more stable and better. The recent declining economic situation in Kenya may have escalated the problem of poverty and hunger in the urban areas such that the problem of theft has outgrown the problem of animals destroying the crops. Eviction, as in the study by Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987) did not appear to be a major problem.

4. ACCESS TO RURAL LAND

As far as rural-urban linkages in sub-Saharan Africa are concerned, the focus has so far predominantly been on 'the urban' dwellers contributing to the livelihood of the rural ones, usually through remittances from family members living in the city. Hardly anything is known about the reverse flows, i.e. how far urban households realise part of their livelihood from rural sources. In this section, we deal with access to rural land by urban inhabitants.

Nicolaï (1989) mentions the cases of two towns in the Lower Zaire area – Boma and Mbanza Ngungu – where during the 1970s urban dwellers kept on cultivating their plots in the villages they came from. Dozens of women in the two towns went daily in lorries to their villages in order to cultivate their fields. Among textile workers in the Nigerian cites of Kano and Kaduna, more than three-quarters stated that they owned land in their home areas, in most cases of a size that was enough to live on (Andræ, 1992). However, only 11 per cent of the Kano urbanites and 20 per cent of those in Kaduna used the land themselves, usually by hiring labour. The large majority of the plots were farmed by relatives. For many of the workers, farming in their home villages was still an option in case of loss of jobs.

In a survey in Harare in three residential areas of different socio-economic status, Drakakis-Smith (1992) found that just over one-third of the respondents claimed that they held land outside the city from which they could receive food crops. There were interesting differences between the areas, however, the per centage of households in the 'middle' income areas with access to rural land and food being more than twice the per centage in the 'higher' and 'lower' income areas. Two other surveys held in Harare in 1985 and 1988 revealed that 40 and 53 per cent of the households, respectively, claimed to have access to rural land (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990). However, only about half of the 1985 population said they had used the land productively the previous year, despite the fact that the rains had been good. Surprisingly, the proportion of households in the 1988 survey who had farmed the land themselves in

1986 and 1987 was much higher: about 75 per cent The authors have no ready explanation for this. For those who actively farmed the rural land, the produce – either self-consumed or sold – represented a fairly significant addition to the households' income. Those households not always using the rural land themselves, mentioned labour shortage as the main reason Such land was either not used at all or farmed by a non-relative, while in some cases the respondents did not even know whether the land was used or not

In their general survey of 1985 Lee-Smith *et al.* (1987) found that 53 per cent of the Kenyan urban population – consisting of a sample or almost 1,500 households in Nairobi, Mombassa, Kakamega, Kitui and Isiolo – stated that they had access to rural land. In Nairobi, this per centage was somewhat higher (61 per cent) For the very low income group (i.e. with a monthly income of less than KSh 800) in the six urban centres the proportion was about the same as for the combined income categories (55 per cent). Unfortunately, the authors did not define what was meant with 'access': did it mean that the rural plot(s) were actually used by the urban respondents or were they used by others and the urban households perhaps benefited indirectly from them?

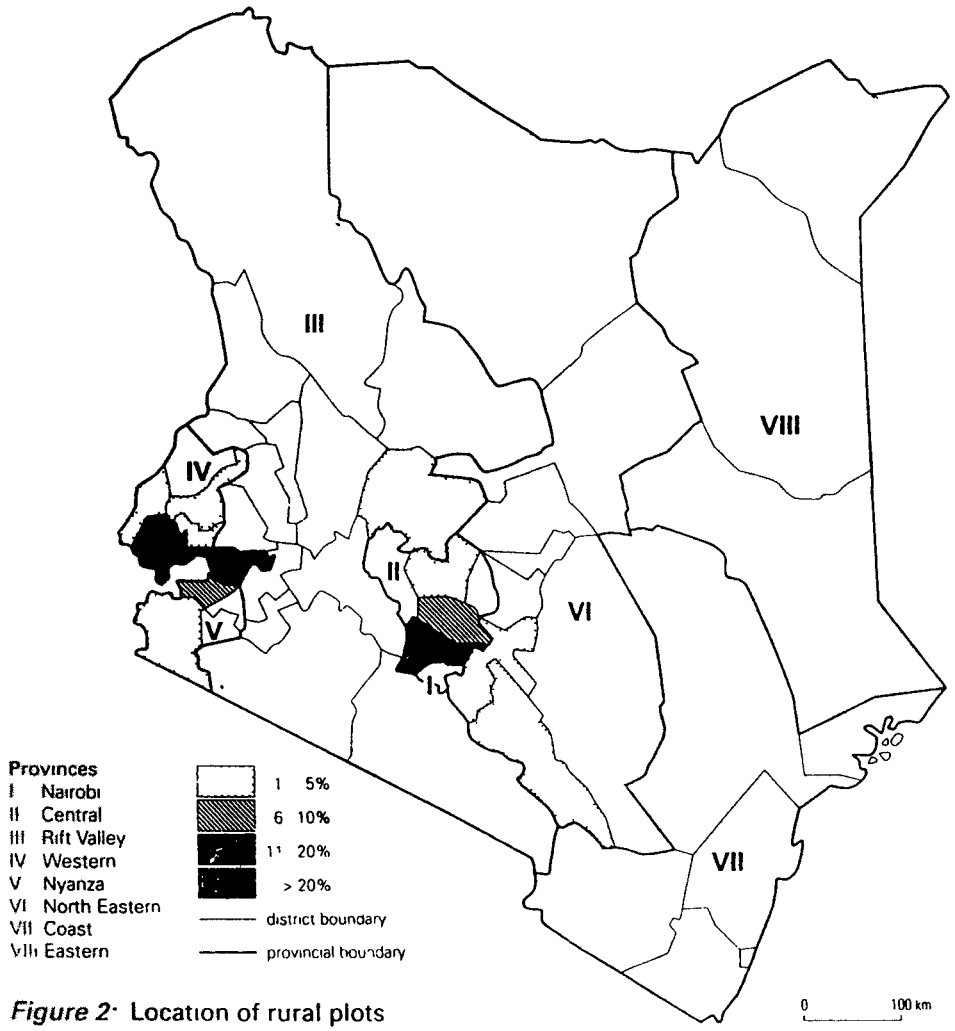

Figure 2: Location of rural plots

Among the low-income households surveyed in Nairobi's slum area of Korogocho in 1994, 56 per cent reported that they had access to rural land, a per centage to comparable that of the 1985 survey by Lee-Smith *et al.* Of these, 44 per cent said that they were owners. Rather surprisingly, ownership by the urban households did not automatically mean that they also used the plot themselves: exactly half of the rural plots owned by the urban households were either let, to be used freely by others, mostly relatives or were left idle.

The average size of the rural plots was 2.6 acres. Half of the households had access to only a small plot: less than one acre. On the other hand, 13 households (21 per cent) reported that they had to have access to at least three acres, although only three of them appeared to be owners of these plots Rural plots owned by urban households were smaller (on average 1.5 acres) than plots owned by parents and/or relatives (3.4 acres). Compared with these plot sizes, the urban plots were considerably smaller.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the rural plots among the Kenyan districts. The majority of the household heads appeared to be Luo, a tribe living near Lake Victoria; hence, 61 per cent of the rural plots were located in Nyanza Province. It is conspicuous that a concentration of plots (42 per cent) was found in just one district: Siaya. It points to the tendency of migrants of the same ethnic group and from the same area of origin to 'huddle together' on arrival in the city. The second largest group were Kikuyu: 22 per cent of the plots could be found in Central Province (including one in Laikipia district). Another 14 per cent were located in Western Province and only four per cent in Eastern Province. It appeared that the plots far away from Nairobi, i.e. in Nyanza and Western Provinces, were more often used by 'others' or left idle than plots closer to the city (Central and Eastern Provinces), but the correlation was less than one might expect. For instance, of the eight urban households with access to plots in Western Province only one actually used his plot. The situation among the Luo households was rather different, since despite the big distance – and hence high travelling costs – 41 per cent of them used the plots themselves. This may be explained by the fact that compared with the Luhya, polygamy is more common among the Luo, so it is one of the wives who stays behind in the home area to take care of the *shamba*.

Asked whether the rural plots were a source of food and/or income for the urban households, only 35 per cent responded positively, while another 7 per cent said that the plots were 'sometimes' a source of food. Not surprisingly, the households for whom the plots were a source of food and/or income were also the households who stated that they owned the plots.

5. DOES ACCESS TO LAND IMPROVE THE FOOD SITUATION OF POOR URBAN HOUSEHOLDS?

In this section a comparison is made between four groups: those with access to both urban and rural land, those with access to rural land only, those with access to urban land only and those with no access to any land. As far as access to rural land is

concerned, a more precise categorization would be to select only those who actually use the rural plots themselves, but since the group with access to both urban and rural land becomes too small than, we will use the more general criterium of 'access'. Table 1 shows the number of households in each category. For a comparison, the figures of the general survey of 1985 (Lee-Smith *et al.*, 1987) are also included. Both columns refer to very poor urban households only, and the table shows that nothing has changed between the two surveys.

Table 1. Access to Land of Poor Urban Households (%)

Access to land	Nairobi/Korogocho 1994 (N=115)	Kenya* 1985 (N=796)
Both urban and rural	13	11
Rural only	43	44
Urban only	18	19
None	27	26
Total	100	100

*'Kenya' refers to Nairobi, Mombassa, Kisumu, Kakamega, Kituti and Isiolo.

Sources: Urban Agriculture Survey, 1994 (Nairobi/Korogocho 1994) and Lee-Smith *et al.*, 1987:83 (Kenya 1985).

Some demographic characteristics of the four groups are presented in Table 2. Households with access to urban land are somewhat bigger than households with access to only rural land or to no land at all. This may be related to a difference in 'life cycle': households with access to urban land are 'older', which is, for instance, indicated by the higher average age of the household heads. This is also in line with the finding that these households have been living in Nairobi for a longer period. Apparently, being more settled in the urban setting gives easier access to urban land.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristcs of Sample by Type of Access to Land

	Rural + Urban (20)*	Rural (41)	Urban (28)	None (26)
Household size (members)	6.3	5.5	7.3	5.8
Age household head (years)	39.0	32.0	39.0	32.0
% household heads who lived more than 15 years in Nariobi**	55.0	27.0	67.0	41.0
Female-headed households (%)	15.0	5.0	50.0	46.0
% Household heads with at least upper-primary school education	90.0	90.0	54.0	77.0

*Number of households

** Only those born outside Nariobi (= 83% of all household heads).

Source: Urban Agriculture Survey, 1994 (Nairobi/Korogocho).

There are few female-headed households among the two groups with access to rural land (Table 2). This is not surprising since land rights in Kenya go from father to son. The lower proportion of female-headed households may also be one of the factors explaining the relatively high educational level of the heads in these two groups: men usually have a higher educational level than women, certainly among migrants from the rural areas.

Table 3 provides the answers to some general questions regarding the food situation of the households. Based on the responses to "Always or most of the time enough to eat", the general picture that emerges is that the households with access to both rural and urban land were in a more favourable food situation than the other groups, while those without access to any land had the worst position. As far as the food situation in 1993 – the year prior to the survey – was concerned, this picture is roughly confirmed, although the group with no access to land was not worse off than the group with only access to urban land.

Table 3. General Food Security Situation by Type of Access to Land

	Rural + Urban (20)	Rural (41)	Urban (28)	None (26)
"Always or most of the time enough to eat"	45	29	29	19
"More than 6 months with food shortage during 1993"	26	24	56	42
"Food shortage during the whole of 1993"	-	16	28	25
Poverty-related strategies* (%)	45	75	41	50
"Purchased food most important food source during past 3 years"	65	76	68	92

*Hawking, begging, gifts/donations and/or staying hungry.

Source: Urban Agriculture Survey, 1994 (Nairobi/Korogocho).

Asked in what ways households had been coping with food shortages in 1993, it is clear that in all categories many households had to rely on such poverty related strategies as hawking, begging, depending on gifts and donations, or simply staying hungry (Table 3). It must be added, however, that hawking and gifts and donations were the most frequently mentioned strategies. In general, purchased food was the most important food source in all four categories. Not surprisingly, this applied in particular to the households lacking access to land, but among the other three groups, despite their access to land, the dependency on purchased food was also quite high. This is undoubtedly related to the earlier findings that urban plots are usually very small, while access to rural land, despite the bigger sizes, did not always mean that the urban households actually used the land themselves.

It is evident that the seemingly more favourable food situation of the households with access to both urban and rural land and to a lesser extent of those with access to

only rural land cannot be simply related to the fact that they have access to those plots. Other variables may be more important in explaining the food situation of the four groups.

Table 4 shows that the income situation (measured as the estimated average monthly cash income during 1993) is indeed more favourable for those who have access to both urban and rural land. However, since these income levels can at best be considered as a very crude measure of the households' actual welfare level, an alternative welfare indicator is also presented, notably the so-called welfare index (see Note 1 under Table 4). To some extent the group with access to urban land with the exception of this indicator confirms the income picture.

Table 4. General Welfare Indicators by Type of Access to Land

Access to land: (N=):	Rural + Urban (20)	Rural (41)	Urban (28)	None (26)
Estimated monthly cash income (KSh)	2297.00	2044.0	1890.0	2018.0
% households with medium or high welfare index[1]	25.00	9.8	25.0	11.5
Energy intake (kcal/cu/day)[2]	2431.00	1846.0	1720.0	1736.0
Protein intake (gr/cu/day)[2]	84.00	65.0	55.0	55.0
% stunted children of 6-60 months[3]	26.70	46.4	35.0	21.4
% wasted children of 6-60 months[4]		10.7	5.0	3.6

Notes:1. The welfare index is based on ownership of three items which proved to be of high discriminative value; radio, sofa set and bicycle. A medium or high welfare index refers to possession of two or three of these items, respectively (for details, see Mboganie, 1995:72)

2. Energy intake is expressed in kilocalories per consumer unit per day, protein intake in grams per consumer unit per day. A consumer unit is an adult equivalent based on energy requirements. The 'day' refers to the day previous to the day of interviewing. For the calculations used here, see e.g. Foeken and Tellegen, 1994:105.

3. Wasted children are children with a weight-height ratio of less than 85% of that of the reference group. Wasting is considered a sign of acute malnutrition.

4. Stunted children are children with a height-age ratio of less than 90% of that of the reference group. Stunting is considered a sign of chronic malnutrition.

Source: Urban Agriculture Survey, 1994 (Nairobi/Korogocho)

Other indicators of the welfare level of households concern food intake and the nutritional condition of young children. Although some studies in Kenya have revealed that the correlation between income on the one hand, and food consumption levels and nutritional condition of the household members on the other, are not always

as straightforward as one might expect (see e g. Foeken and Tellegen, 1994; Hoorweg, *et al.*, 1995), in the present case there seems to be a positive relationship between at least income and food intake (here measured as energy intake and protein intake). The food consumption level in the group of households with access to both rural and urban land, although still below the recommended level of about 2900 kcal, is clearly higher than in the other three groups. The absence of wasted children (wasting is the result of recent food shortages) among the former group is also conspicuous. On the other hand, the very high level of stunted children among the households with access to only rural land is less easy to explain.

6. CONCLUSION

Looking at the findings presented in the previous section, we can once again ask the question: does access to land have a positive impact on the food situation of the urban poor in Nairobi? This question may be answered partly in the negative and partly in the affirmative. It is obvious that in an urban environment cash income is the prime determinant of the household's welfare level, which includes its food situation. Knowing that the produce of urban plots is used mainly for self-consumption and that rural plots are not always used in a productive way, the food situation of these poor urban dwellers is primarily determined by sufficient cash to buy food. Nevertheless, the food produced by these households is of importance as 'fungible income' (UNDP, 1996): less money has to be spent on food so that other necessary items can be bought. Seen in this way, access to land can at least have a positive impact on the welfare situation of urban households, although not necessarily on the food situation as well.

Nevertheless, there is an indication that access to land does have a positive impact on the food situation as such. If we compare the households without access to any land and the households with access to a rural plot, two groups with a comparable income estimation and welfare index, the latter seem to be better off than the former, at least in terms of the overall food situation as perceived by the respondents themselves. Moreover, the households with access to a rural plot only also seem to be better off than those with access to only an urban plot. This would imply that access to rural land is more favourable for the households' food situation than access to urban land. This would confirm Baker's notion that households with a diversified livelihood strategy, i.e. consisting of both urban and rural activities, are better off (Baker, 1994:17). Our finding that half of the very poor households in Korogocho claiming to have access to rural land did not use that land themselves, (for only 35 per cent of them was this land a source of food and/or income) indicates that the situation is more complex than suggested here.

This leads to another conclusion, notably that more should be known about ownership of rural land, by urban dwellers: the use of that land, the costs and benefits to them, etc. Access to rural as well as urban land by African urban dwellers is a very widespread phenomenon throughout the continent. The body of knowledge regarding urban farming is increasing rapidly, but regarding access to rural land very little is known. The few studies done so far indicate that although for the urban poor access to rural land may be extremely important as a way to realize a livelihood, many

apparently are not able to utilize this source. Therefore, we hope that the present paper, which is only of an exploratory nature, is a stimulus for researchers to open up this new field of research in the context of urban poverty.

Note

1. The 'absolute poverty line' is defined as "the cost of food expenditure necessary to attain a recommended food intake [taking into account] a modest allowance for non-food items" (Mukui 1994: v)

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