3

The setting and methods

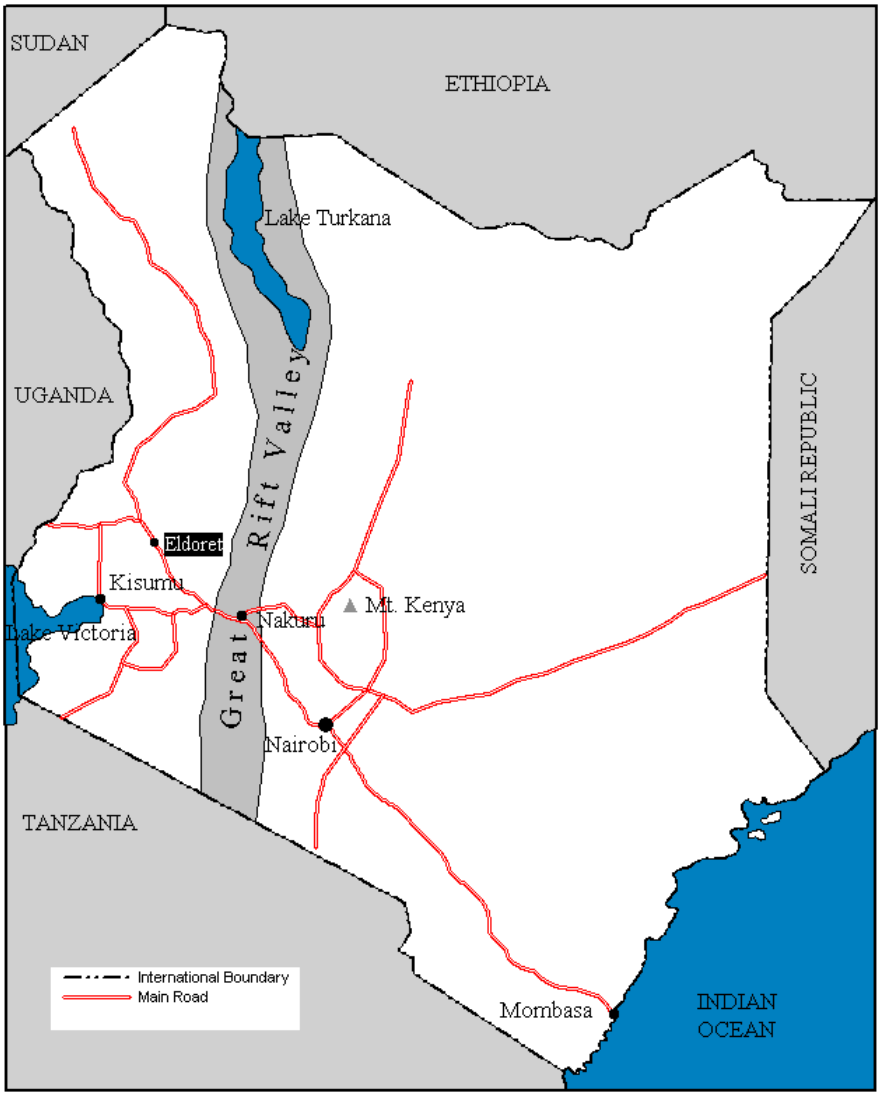
The existing body of knowledge on urban agriculture has largely been generated by research in major cities and urban centres, with perspectives on urban agriculture in medium-sized towns being under-represented (Foeken 2006; Mougeot 2000; Thornton 2008). The present study's focus on Eldoret, a medium-sized Kenyan town of approximately 500,000 inhabitants, is intended as part of a growing attempt at bridging this gap. Eldoret is the administrative headquarters of Uasin Gishu County. This chapter provides a brief overview of Eldoret, focusing on the town's geographical setting, and its historical, demographic and socio-economic development. It then provides a brief description of the actual research location, Langas settlement. The various stages of data collection and methods are then expounded, before describing the study population and socio-economic status of households. [1] The chapter ends with personal reflections on fieldwork experience.

Eldoret town: Geography and historical overview

Eldoret town is located 330 km to the northwest of Kenya's capital, Nairobi (see Map 3.1), at an altitude of 2,085 metres above sea level in the Great Rift Valley (GoK 2001). Eldoret is bisected by River Sosian, which flows through it roughly in an east-west direction. The town receives over 1000 mm of rainfall as annual average (GoK 1993, cited in Ombura 1997). The highest rainfall is received during the months of April and May followed by a dry spell in June. The rains then return in July peaking in the month of August and subsiding in September and October. The months that follow experience a dry spell with some scattered

[1] See chapters 4 and 5 for a detailed discussion of the socio-economic and policy context within which the households are situated.

Map 3.1 Map of Kenya and location of Eldoret



showers until the return of the rains again in March. The town also experiences relatively cool temperatures averaging 24°C during the day and 10°C at night.

The geological formation of the area belongs to the Tertiary Volcanic of the middle and upper tertiary age. The soils are primarily of two types, namely red to strong-brown friable clays with laterite horizon and grey mottled clays (*ibid.*). The soils and climatic conditions experienced by Eldoret town and its hinterland are favourable for arable farming and support a variety of agricultural activities.

Historically, the emergence and growth of Eldoret traces back to the activities of colonial settlers in Uasin Gishu and more so Afrikaner settlers who moved in from South Africa (Ndege 2005). Their settlement in the area necessitated the provision of various services such as security, transport, communication, etc. The emergence of Eldoret as an administrative centre to co-ordinate the provision of

these services started in earnest in 1908 when the then Uasin Gishu District Commissioner (DC) awarded a contract for the construction of the DC's residence, administrative offices and stores on Farm 64, so called because of the site's land survey number (*ibid.*). Taking its name after the site, the centre was called Farm 64. However, upon elevation to a township on 14 November 1912, it was renamed Eldoret with an administrative jurisdiction over an area of approximately 11.2 km^2 (Ombura 1997). The new status immediately spurred its growth manifested in the expansion of social facilities and physical structures as well as the establishment of postal, commercial, banking and recreational services to meet the demands of a growing population, but also in order to link Eldoret to other parts of the country. In 1929, the Municipal Board was established to run the affairs of the town, replacing the Township Committee (Ndege 2005) and boundaries extended to cover 25 km^2. In 1958, Eldoret assumed full municipality status and came under the management of a Municipal Council.

Eldoret's growth since has been helped largely by the agricultural activities of its hinterland, its official designation as a growth centre (Nyakaana 1996) and, as a consequence, the town's rapid industrialisation and population in-migration. Eldoret's hinterland is rich in a broad range of agricultural activities, including grain growing (especially wheat and maize), dairy farming and horticultural production. Eldoret's surrounding areas are also endowed with forestry resources, comprising indigenous forests and exotic plantations. These agricultural and forest resources have formed a basis for the development of the town into a major service, production, storage, processing and distribution centre for its hinterland as well as the whole country (Nyakaana 1996). Besides, the town lies along the Trans-African international trunk road that connects Kenya's capital, Nairobi and Uganda's capital, Kampala as well as South Sudan. It is also connected by railway from the port of Mombasa through Nairobi to Uganda and has an international airport. These make Eldoret an important regional transport and communication conduit. Eldoret also boasts the presence of a national university and several university campuses and numerous tertiary institutions in the town and its environs, making it a major educational centre.

Eldoret has grown to become the fifth largest town in Kenya – after Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru – with an estimated population of 500,000 up from an estimated 300,000 in 1999.[2] The high urban population growth rate has led to the sprawling of the town into the peri-urban areas occasioning further municipal boundary extensions in order to provide services to those areas (see Map 3.2). In 1974 the boundary was extended to cover an area of 59 km^2 from 25

[2] Eldoret Municipal Council website: http://www.eldoretmunicipal.go.ke/

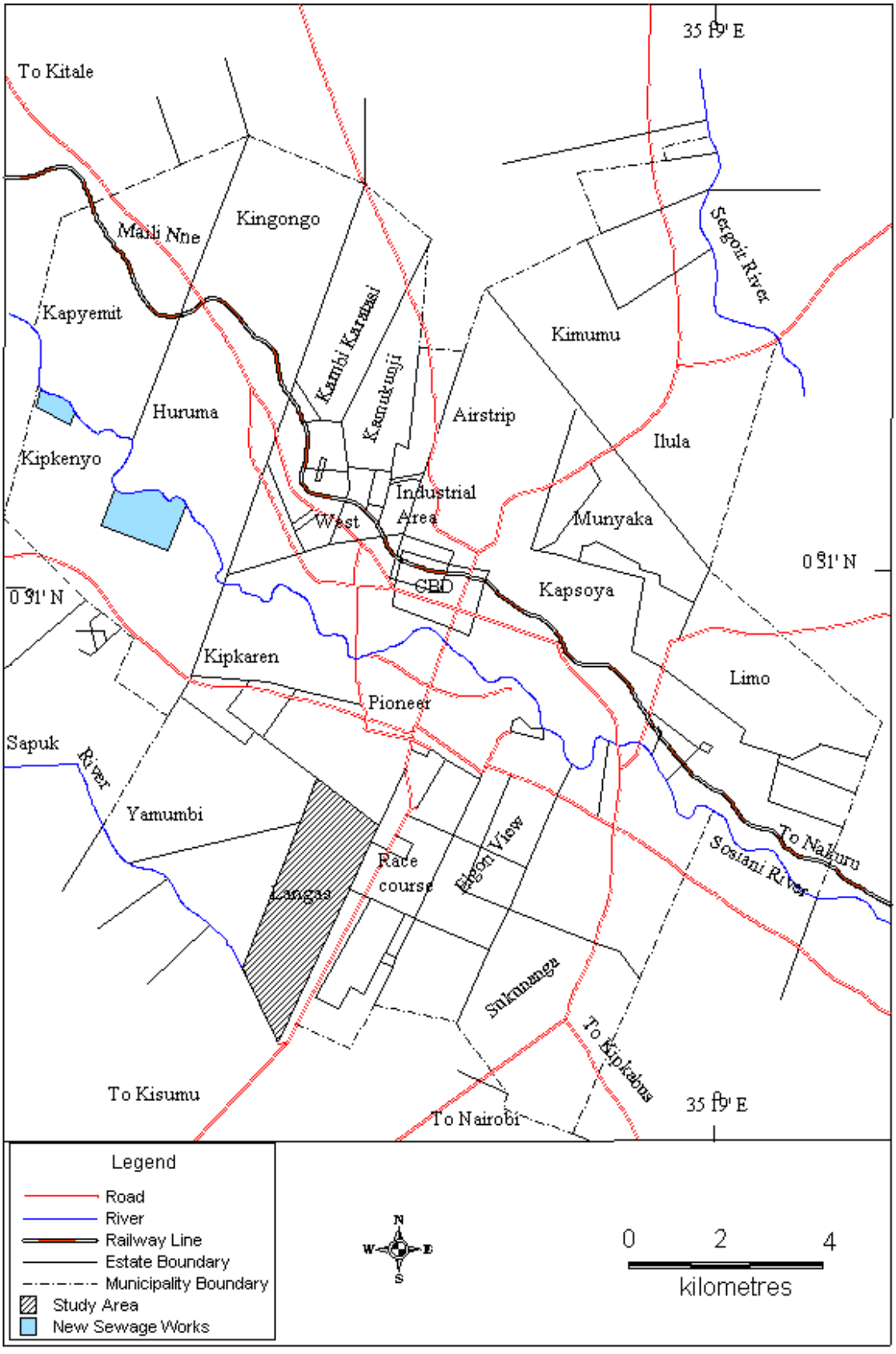
Map 3.2 Eldoret municipal boundary changes

km^2 and, in 1988 this was extended to cover 147.9 km^2. Each time large tracts of agricultural land and 'rural' populations were brought under the jurisdiction of the municipality. Such extensions have also led to spontaneous emergence of unplanned settlements within the newly added municipal space. Langas is one of the settlements that emerged in that version following boundary extensions. Others include Munyaka, Huruma, Kamukunji, Ya Mumbi, King'ong'o, Kimumu and Mwiyenderi (see Map 3.3).

Langas settlement: The study site

Langas settlement is an informal high-density residential area located on the southern outskirts of Eldoret municipality, about 7 km from the town centre

Map 3.3 Residential areas in Eldoret Municipality.



along the Eldoret-Kisumu road (see Map 3.3). In 1999 Langas had an estimated population of 26,000 (Musyoka 2004). The population has grown steadily since and, although official statistics are not available yet, it is currently estimated by various sources at between 35,000 and 40,000 people.[3] Although urban farming is omnipresent within Eldoret municipality, Langas was selected as the study site because it is the largest settlement within the municipality, and because its population mix in terms of ethnicity and income levels is a fair representation of Eldoret's urban population. Many residents are low-income earners making a living mostly from the informal sector as wage employees or from self-employment, and/or providing casual labour to factories in town. However, middle income and high-income earners and formal sector employees are also represented in the settlement, if to a lesser extent.

Levels and units of analysis

While the primary focus of this study is the household at the micro-level, with individual adult men and women as units of analysis, the analysis focuses at the meso- and macro-levels as well. Much has been said about the household in social research but little consensus has yielded as to its precise definition or the nature of its composition or internal functioning. This has however not diminished the importance of the household as a unit of analysis and focus of development interventions (Wilk 1991). The gender focus and the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) adopted in this study warrant a brief overview of the household debate here.

The subject of much contestation has been the conventional unitary model which is predicated on the assumption that the household functions as a single decision-making unit of co-residents who share common interests and well-being goals and pool resources to advance the same under the guidance of a household head who acts in the best interest of all (Schmink 1984; Godfrey 2010; Agarwal 1997; Chant 1998). It has come to be recognized that household members sometimes pursue interests that not only differ from and compete with one another's, but that may also be at variance or even in conflict with household livelihood interests and goals (de Haan & Zoomers 2006; Chant 1998; Bruce 1989). In the circumstances, pooling of labour and incomes for household reproduction is not necessarily assured (de Haan & Zoomers 2003). It is therefore more accurate to conceptualize households as sites of co-operation, conflict and bargaining among its members (Godfrey 2010; Narayan *et al.* 1999; Agarwal 1997), especially between men and women, who however often wield unequal power (Blackden &

[3] Interview with the Assistant District Town Planning officer, Uasin Gishu District; Langas village elders.

Canagarajah 2003; Bradshaw 2002; de Haan & Zoomers 2003; Chambers & Conway 1992). As such, attention has been drawn to the need to 'open up' the household and focus attention on the role of individual members and on intra-household relations (de Haan & Zoomers 2003; Wilk 1991). This is especially in line with the SLA's emphasis on individuals' agency (de Haan & Zoomers 2003).

Moreover, while the archetypal unitary household is one of "a nuclear family (…) comprised of a male breadwinner, his non-working wife, and dependent children" (Schmink 1984: 90), in reality the composition and headship of households are diverse and subject to change in space, across societies and over time (Schmink 1984). And to the extent that men's primacy as household heads derives in part from their "usual positions as major breadwinners and/or principal arbiters of decision-making within households" (Chant 1998: 8), the emergence of women in the vanguard of household sustenance – besides the now widely held view that men's personal gratification is not necessarily subordinated to household interests – challenges the conventional conceptualizations of household headship (Narayan *et al*. 1999; Bruce 1989). Furthermore, an increasing proportion of households are today under effective headship of women either because such households lack an adult male member or because male members are absent for long spells.[4] In any case, many households neither organize their livelihoods only in one place (Kaag *et al*. 2004) nor are sustained only by resident members (Meikle *et al*. 2001). For instance, many urban households maintain close links with rural areas, with some members spending considerable periods of time in both urban households and rural homes (sometimes regularly shuttling between them); while non-resident family members in either case sometimes contribute towards the sustenance of the households in which they are not ordinarily resident e.g. through remittances, food supply, etc. (Owuor 2006; Beall *et al.* 1999; Meikle *et al*. 2001).

In any case, the household cannot be conceived of only in terms of its material functions, but also in terms of non-material aspects such as solidarity, reciprocity, security, negotiation and status (Godfrey 2010), which are underpinned by cultural/social norms as are household responses to material circumstances (Schmink 1984). Indeed, the role of the household as an important locus for the reproduction and perpetuation – through socialization – of social norms and gender ideologies is widely acknowledged (Chant 1998; Narayan 1999; BRIDGE 2001). Consequently, a focus on the household and its mediation of intra-household relations aids an understanding of individuals' diverse responses to general structural conditions as well as extra-household social processes (Schmink 1984).

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[4] The former are generally refered to as *de jure* female-headed households, and the latter as *de facto* female-headed or female-managed households (see Mutoro 1995; van Vuuren 2003).

But as Schmink (1984: 87-88) observes, "the household focus does not replace the need to study patterns at the individual or macrostructural level. Rather, it allows a richer and more complex approach that entails movement from one level to another at different analytical moments."

Thus, on the one hand, embracing the SLA's central premises of individual agency and holistic nature of livelihoods, this study disaggregated the household into the various social actors that constitute it – in this case adult men and women – and illuminates the various livelihood activities that men and women engage in and how intra-household relations influence men's and women's preferences, access to and control over resources, labour contributions, and decision-making power, and distribution of benefits in the context of organizing household livelihoods in general and in urban agriculture in particular.

On the other hand, the SLA's recognition of the role of extra-household multilevel contexts and policy and institutional arrangements in shaping individuals' and households' livelihood choices necessitated the study's focus on meso and macro-levels as well. The macro and meso focus was aimed at illuminating the structural factors, including policies, institutions and processes obtaining at national and municipal levels and how they interlink to not only shape the circumstances within which households make a living but also to shape relations between men and women in the process of making a living (see Chapter 4).

Analytical approach

Gender analysis

This study adapted the gender analysis framework developed by Hovorka (1998) and Hovorka *et al*. (2009), which provides a variety of diagnostic tools for the analysis of the key gender issues in urban agriculture. These tools include: a) *gender activity analysis chart*, which focuses on how different urban agriculture-related tasks are shared out between men and women, where they take place, how the nature and level of involvement in, and time spent on the performance of the tasks differ between men and women; b) *gender resource analysis and mapping* examines gender differences in terms of ownership, control and access to resources that are necessary for urban agriculture; c) *gender analysis matrix* examines how the tasks performed by men and women and the resources available to them are affected/influenced by cultural norms; d) *gender benefits analysis* explores how men and women benefit from the various products of urban agriculture production systems they engage in; e) *gender problems analysis* looks at the problems that men and women urban farmers face, the causes of those problems, how they cope with the problems and existing opportunities for addressing them; and f) *gender decision-making matrix*, which aids in the analysis of differences in

decision-making power between men and women in respect of various aspects of urban agriculture.

Household poverty / welfare analysis

The participating farming households were categorized into various socio-economic groups using asset-based welfare indices. Although income or consumption are the most commonly used measures of household welfare, collection of accurate information on income and consumption is often a difficult undertaking due, for example, to multiplicity and seasonal income fluctuations, non-documentation of incomes and, related to this, problems of recall on the part of respondents (Vyas & Kumaranayake 2006; Booysen *et al*. 2008). And as became apparent in Chapter 1, such measures do not, in any case, reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty and well-being, including the fact that while the poor may be deprived of cash income, they often do have in their possession tradable assets or income in kind (see Vyas & Kumaranayake 2006). For these reasons, alternative measures of household welfare have been explored in poverty and development studies, with asset-based welfare indices particularly gaining increasing traction (Booysen *et al*. 2008).

Asset-based welfare indices are premised on the assumption that a household's socio-economic status can be read off the store of assets in its possession (e.g. television sets, bicycles, car, land, livestock, etc.), its access to certain utilities (e.g. water, electricity, etc.), and housing characteristics (e.g. sanitation, type of dwelling, etc.). The various assets and variables are weighted differently based on their contribution to household welfare and the level of distribution among, and therefore their differentiating effect on socio-economic status of, households (see Vyas & Kumaranayake 2006). The aggregate weights for respective households are then used as a basis of categorizing households into various socio-economic groups (*ibid*.).

This study constructed asset-based household welfare indices using the principal component analysis (PCA) (see *ibid.*). PCA was performed on a range of variables: household assets, access to utilities, tenure of dwelling and dwelling characteristics. Binary indicators were used to signify a household's ownership or non-ownership of each of seven private household assets, namely: urban plot, rural plot, car/tractor, motorbike, television, bicycle, and radio; as well as whether or not a household accessed piped water and electricity; and whether the dwelling was owner-occupied. Among essentially categorical variables, the analysis was based only on those that were both inequitably distributed among the households and were considered to have a positive impact on the household socio-economic status. This was the case with housing characteristics, whereby cemented wall and cemented floor were included in the analysis.

Data gathering phases and methods

The study was carried out in four phases, namely: a) key informant interviews; b) household survey; c) household in-depth interviews; and d) household case studies. Preceding these was a preparatory and reconnaissance phase involving several exploratory and familiarization tours within Eldoret municipality. Conducted in early July 2007, the aim of this exercise was to observe and map urban farming in the town, necessary for providing a basis for selecting study location(s) and sampling design. As part of the preparatory work, the researcher recruited three research assistants – one male and two female – who were acquainted to the issues under study and the scope of the study, and trained in survey methodology and interviewing techniques. Upon selection of the study location, the questionnaire was pre-tested with the help of the research assistants among farming households within the selected sites and revised accordingly. This was meant to ensure that the questionnaire items were understood by respondents as intended. The pre-tests were also important in terms of helping the principal researcher to clarify certain issues to the research assistants, and in terms of preparing the research team for anticipated challenges related to the questionnaire administration process.

Key informant interviews

Qualitative data collection through key informant interviews was conducted between July and September 2007 involving various stakeholders in urban agriculture – and in urban planning and governance more generally – within Eldoret municipality. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insights into the general structure of and key actors in urban agriculture as well as the various aspects – including laws, policies and official attitudes – that define the context within which urban agriculture takes place, and how these have evolved over time. The key informants were drawn from Eldoret Municipal Council (EMC)[5], the town planning department[6], Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock[7], the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret[8], FARMCHEM[9] (a private seed company), and the provincial administration[10].

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5 Among these were: Chief Public Health Officer, Director of Environment, Acting Assistant Town Clerk, and Senior Enforcement Officer. Three councilors were also interviewed.

6 The Deputy District Planning Officer was interviewed.

7 Those interviewed included: District Agribusiness Development Officer, District Beekeeping/Marketing Officer, Divisional Crops Officer (Kapsaret Division), Agricultural Extension Officer (Pioneer Location), District Veterinary Officer and his deputy, District Animal Production Officer,

8 Programme Officers in charge of Agriculture and Food Security, and Gender programmes.

9 In particular, the Customer Service Representative and the demonstration garden attendant.

10 The Chief of Pioneer administrative location, in which Langas settlement is located, and eight Langas village elders who work under the Chief.

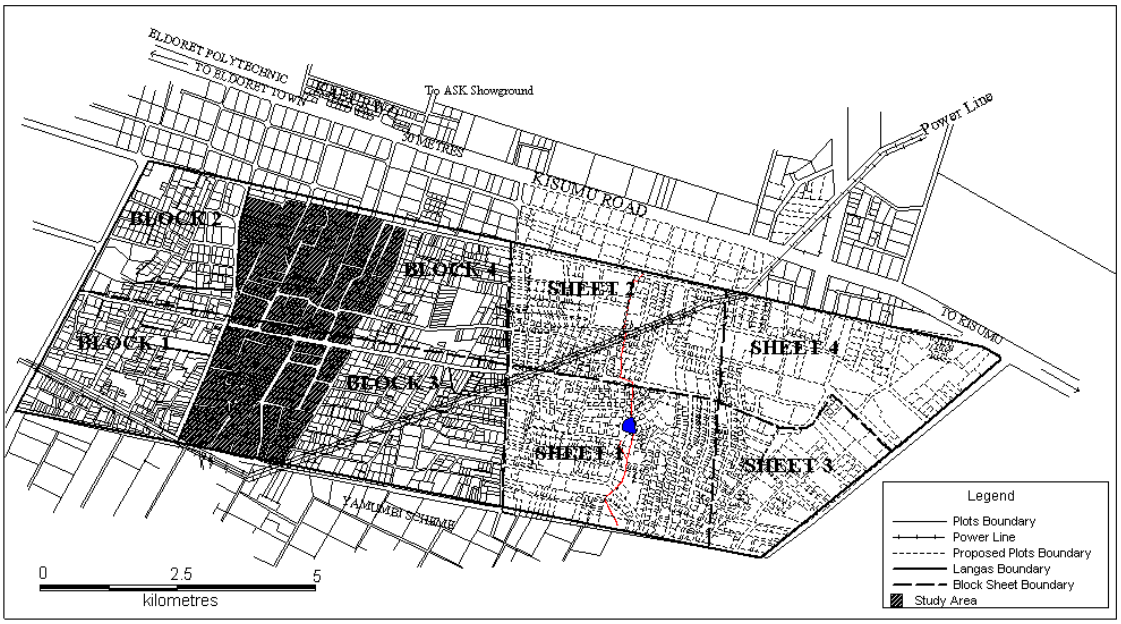
Household survey

The household survey collected quantitative data from 160 urban farming households and a total of 200 respondents. The survey was carried out between October and December 2007 and between August and September 2008.[11] It entailed administration of structured questionnaires and targeted male household heads and their spouses as well as female household heads. The questionnaire was divided into seven parts, with the various diagnostic tools mentioned above embedded within relevant parts of the questionnaire (see Appendix 3.1).

Sampling design and survey fieldwork

Langas is divided into four blocks (see Map 3.4). Compared to other blocks, Block 3 is considered worse-off while Block 4 is characterized as better-off on account of perceived income/poverty levels.[12] In order to achieve a representative sample of the population in the area and to incorporate various income groups in the sample population, the study purposively selected the two contrasting blocks for the survey. However, rather than sample across the entire blocks, the study adopted a geographic perspective whereby only a segment of each block and all farming households within the segment would be earmarked for the study. In

Map 3.4 Map of Langas showing location of study sites



[11] As shall be explained in detail in a latter section of this chapter, the time lapse between the first and second phases of what was supposed to be a continuous survey was occasioned by the violence that attended Kenya's December 2007 national elections.

[12] This is based on informal interviews with Langas village elders and personal observations during exploratory tours of the settlement.

both cases, the segment selected for study constituted about one quarter of the size of its respective block.

Although urban farming households were the basic sampling units, there were no records or listings of households or prior information about farming households in Langas settlement, where not every household engages in urban agriculture. As such, a census of all households in the selected sections of Block 3 and Block 4 was carried out, both to estimate the proportion of urban farming households in the settlement as well as to identify households eligible to participate in the survey. The census established that out of the 1,051 households counted, 232 (22%) engaged in urban farming of one kind or another. A higher proportion of farming households were recorded in Block 4 (32%, N=403) as compared to Block 3 (16%, N=648). Because Block 3 was considered to be worse-off than Block 4, this implies that – partly for the lack of farming space – the poorest among Langas residents were the most likely to miss out on the opportunity to benefit from urban agriculture.

Farming households with both male and female spouses, but also female-headed households were the main targets of data collection. In order to get the respondents, and especially women, to volunteer information more freely, the research team comprised of two male and two female interviewers – i.e. the principal researcher and three research assistants. This was intended to ensure that in the case of conjugal households, a female and a male interviewer visited households in pairs so that they would interview both spouses simultaneously, if separately. The male interviewer would administer the questionnaire to the male spouse in the household as the female research assistant interviewed the woman. Where only one spouse was available at home for interview, as was often the case, and in households without a second spouse (i.e. female-headed households and households headed by single men) the available respondent would be interviewed by the research assistant of the same gender as the respondent.

Household in-depth interviews

As a follow-up to the survey, household in-depth interviews were conducted to further observe and explore in greater detail some of the issues that arose during the survey and those that could not be captured adequately by the survey. Twenty four urban farming households were purposively selected for in-depth interviews, which took place between May and June 2009. While these were essentially identified from among those surveyed, a few others were selected outside this pool but within the same study area for the in-depth interviews on the basis of their potential to provide further insights on important issues. For instance, following the post-election violence (see below), I was interested in understanding how it impacted the livelihoods of urban farming households and how they re-

sponded to the same. Consequently, some households that were adversely affected by the post-election violence but that had not participated in the survey were included in this phase. Two households were also selected because the women were – contrary to the norm – known to be the main decision-makers in their households. As Wilk (1991: 9) has argued, "the workings of the household are often most evident in the exception to the rule".

Household case studies

The fourth research phase involved household case studies, which involved several further follow-up visits to some of the households that had participated in the in-depth interviews. Since urban farming and other household livelihood activities are subject to seasonal fluctuations and primarily evolve as livelihood strategies within changing contexts of stresses and shocks, case studies make it possible to capture the dynamism of household livelihoods over time. In addition, longitudinal case studies particularly make it possible to undertake multi-level analysis involving analysis of dynamic interrelations between men and women within households, and between households and the various (and changing) policy and institutional structures operating at the municipal and national levels. A purposive sample of eight households was drawn from among those involved in the in-depth interviews. The cases were differentiated by, among others, household headship, type of farming system, ethnicity, and type of land tenure. The case studies, as with the in-depth interviews, involved various data gathering methods and techniques including: observations, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and photography.

The respondents

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Appendix 3.2 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The survey covered 160 or 69% of the 232 farming households in the two study localities. Of those surveyed, 33 (or 21%) were female-headed and 127 (79%) male-headed. In all, 200 people granted interviews. Of these, 128 (64%) were female and 72 (36%) were male (see Table 3.1). In 40 male-headed households both spouses were interviewed (a total of 80 respondents). In the remaining male-headed households, one respondent was interviewed in each. Of these 55 were women and 32 were men (including 8 single men). The high proportion of female respondents in the study population relates to the presence of female-headed households, but also to women's home-keeping responsibilities that confined them within their compounds and/or in the vicinity of their dwellings. As such it was easier to find women household members for interviews, while in

most cases men were said to be away on some income-earning activity or searching for some work to do, and that they often left home early and returned late.

In terms of the respondents' position in the household or relation to the household head, 70 (35%) were male household heads, 95 (48%) female spouses, and 31 (16%) female household heads. Other than household heads and spouses, 4 (2%) other household members were also interviewed, 2 males and 2 females.

Table 3.1 Distribution of respondents, by sex and household type

Household type	Respondents		
	Women	Men	Total
Male-headed (N=127)	95	72	167
Female-headed (N=33)	33	-	33
Total	128	72	200

The respondents were also differentiated in terms of age, levels of education, and ethnic background. The majority of the respondents were aged between 30 and 59 years. This age cohort made up 71% of the total sample, with 29% of the sample falling within the 40-49 age bracket, the single largest group. In terms of age relations between the various gender categories, female household heads were older (mean age 50.1 years) compared with male household heads (48.4 years), and more so with female spouses (39.4).

In terms of education, the majority of the respondents who disclosed their education levels (N=193) had received some formal schooling. Thirty-two percent of the respondents had received education up-to upper primary while 56% had received at least a secondary school education. Disaggregating this data by sex, one notices differences in education attainments between men and women. Among those educated up-to upper primary (N=61) were 30% of men respondents and 33% of women respondents. However, the proportion of men went up among those with secondary school education (at least two years) and more (62% versus 53%). Conversely, women were overrepresented among respondents with no formal education (14% to men's 8%).

Since culture has a bearing on livelihood choices including preferences for particular farming activities, and cultural norms play an important role in shaping gender relations, data on the respondents' ethnicity were also collected. One-half of the respondents belonged to the Kikuyu community and 22% to the Luhya community. The Kisii constituted 14% of the sample while the Kalenjin and the Luo made up 8% and 5%, respectively. The Kamba made up 1.5% as did members of the other communities put together.

Socio-economic status (SES) of households

Appendix 3.3 shows a descriptive analysis of the variables and PCA factor scores. Asset indices computed using the scores formed the basis for assigning the households into three categories denoting socio-economic status. That is, the higher the welfare scores, the better-off the household is considered to be and the lower the scores the worse-off. The categories were identified using the 40-40-20 formula (see Filmer & Pritchett 2001). This formula is used to rank households on the basis of their welfare scores by designating the lowest 40% of the households as 'poor', the second 40% as 'medium' and the top 20% as 'rich' (see Table 3.2). In this particular case, 66 households were categorized as 'poor', 62 as 'medium' and 32 as 'rich'.[13]

Table 3.2 Household socio-economic status (SES), by gender of household head (%)

SES	Male-headed (N=127)	Female-headed (N=33)
"Poor"	37	58
"Medium"	43	21
"Rich"	20	21

The distribution of the households into these SES categories by household headship is shown in Table 3.2. The table tends to confirm the widely held view that female-headed households are among the poorest of the poor as more than half of the female-headed households surveyed belonged to the 'poor' category compared to just over one third of the male-headed households. Yet, the statistics in the third row of the table also show comparable representation of male- and female-headed households among the well-off households. This validates the growing criticism of the feminization of poverty thesis that female household headship is not necessarily synonymous with poverty and that it may in fact, under certain circumstances, offer greater opportunities for the advancement of women and thus household welfare (see Chapter 1; see also van Vuuren 2003). Subsequent chapters provide anecdotes that suggest that female heads of households enjoyed greater autonomy in decision-making and control over household resources as well as more economic independence and freedom to participate in the marketplace than the majority of married women. The latter were more dependent on men, their access to household productive resources was more limited, and their participation in the market place more restricted even when, given

[13] The difference in the number of households in the 'poor' and 'medium' categories was occasioned by the occurrence of households with identical scores (at the 'poor'/'medium' border) beyond the 40% mark for the 'poor' category.

the structure of the local economy, they would have had better chances than their husbands to earn an income. On the other hand, some married women who were able to appropriate income-earning opportunities either concealed their incomes from their husbands and were not free to invest in household assets for fear of rousing suspicion, or they avoided to invest in big ventures for fear that their husbands would take over such investments. Female heads of households were not as constrained. In other words, a consideration of the vulnerabilities and the complexity of the lived experiences of individual women (and men) is more useful in understanding their socio-economic circumstances and the general household welfare than generalizations based on household headship.

Rural-urban connections and multi-local livelihoods

Of the 160 urban farming households, 54% had a rural home with which they maintained contacts of varying nature and frequency. About one-third of such multi-spatial households owned land of their own and other property in the rural areas, and 23% said they practiced farming in the rural home, although a smaller proportion (8%) relied on rural food production for use in urban areas. Ownership of property, including livestock, in urban and rural areas is an important aspect of multi-local livelihood diversification as such assets often come in handy during hard economic times (see e.g. Owuor 2006). In this regard, female-headed households were disadvantaged, as only 24% of them compared to 62% of male-headed households identified with a rural home. Urban-rural linkages were also manifested in terms of remittances and other forms of support offered by urban households to their relatives in rural areas. One in every three urban farming households was involved in such exchanges.

Besides economic/material relations, urban-rural linkages were also anchored in cultural relations. The majority of rural homeowners among the urban farming households considered rural homes as their real homes as opposed to their urban houses (see also Owuor 2006) and tended to maintain their homes mainly for future relocation or return migration. This readily cropped up in interviews and informal discussions. Asked simply ‘where is your home’ – without specifying whether rural or urban – the respondents almost invariably stated their rural homes. For many urban Kenyans – especially first generation migrants – ownership of homes among their kith and kin in the rural territory of their ancestors is an important signifier of cultural rootedness and identity. This is underlined by the tendency among many urban residents to bury their urban kin and kith in their rural homes, usually at enormous financial costs. It is partly for this reason that urban residents, and men in particular, participate in social networks.

It is noteworthy that almost one-half of the urban farming households had limited or no contacts with a rural homeland. As such, and for all practical purposes,

Eldoret had over the years become their only home. Besides being more likely to be female-headed, such mono-spatial households were also more likely to be found among Kikuyus compared to members of other ethnic communities. Whereas the former case can be attributed to cultural practices that militate against women's inheritance of property, whether from their parents or from their husbands on death, divorce or separation, the latter relates to historical migratory tendencies among the Kikuyu. Land pressure in their ancestral homeland in Central Kenya has forced Kikuyus over the years to permanently migrate to other areas across the country, and more so into the land-abundant Rift Valley. It is therefore little wonder that Kikuyus are the single largest land-owning community within Langas settlement. Fifty nine percent of Kikuyu-headed households reported that they had no rural home and/or had weak connections with their rural homeland. Besides missing out on livelihood benefits of multi-locality, the events of post-election violence exposed the vulnerability of mono-spatial households, especially among Kikuyus given the fact that they were the main targets of ethnic hate and violence.

Fieldwork experiences and challenges

In the course of the fieldwork, several challenges were encountered, both methodological and practical. To begin with, the geographic logic that informed the sampling procedure was premised on a comparative analysis between two contrasting localities within the study area. As such, it was hoped that the sample would be distributed proportionately between the two blocks. However, it became readily apparent once the research team got to Block 3, which was characterized as a worse-off locality, that not only were few households engaged in urban agriculture there, but that it was difficult to find those who did at home to secure interviews with them. Besides, there was a high number of households whose heads were single and in the case of conjugal households, the prospects of interviewing missing spouses was generally low. This situation contrasted with that in Block 4, which was characterized as better-off. A higher number of households in Block 4 engaged in urban agriculture owing to higher levels of plot ownership and availability of space. It was also relatively easier to find urban farmers, in some instances both spouses, in their homes. As a result, households and respondents from Block 4 were overrepresented in the final sample (67%, see Appendix 3.2). Consequently, a comparative analysis of the two localities was rendered untenable.

The initially intended approach of interviewing both spouses simultaneously was also not easy to achieve. In most of the conjugal households it was rare to find both spouses home at the same time. As such, the spouses who were available at home would be interviewed and a call-back arranged for the second

spouse. In many cases, the first spouse provided contacts of the second spouse or informed the interviewer about the appropriate time to find him/her at home. In other cases, the interviewers were informed that the missing spouses could not easily be caught up with due to their busy schedules – some were said to leave in the wee hours of the morning every day and to return late in the evenings. In a few other cases, however, the interviewers were told outright that it was not possible to secure interviews from the missing spouses. Eventually the research team was able to interview both spouses in 40 households (a total of 80 respondents) out of 119 conjugal households.

Post-election violence of early 2008 particularly diminished prospects of ever meeting the sample target. In mid-December 2007, the research team took what was intended to be a short Christmas break, when the Christmas and electioneering mood for the late December 2007 elections peaked. It was expected that the early part of 2008 would be dedicated to call-backs to those households where only one spouse had been interviewed. However, it was not possible to resume the survey as planned due to a flare-up in violence following the disputed presidential elections (see Chapter 4). Because ethnicity has evolved over the years as the primary tool for political mobilization in Kenya, the post-election violence took on an ethnic dimension. Eldoret was one of the areas in the country that was hardest hit by the violence, and Langas particularly suffered the consequences because of its ethnic mix and especially the heavy presence of Kikuyus there. Kikuyus, who were the majority of survey respondents, were the main targets of arson attacks in the area. Many people were uprooted and displaced from their homes and many of them were unable or unwilling to return to their homes many months after (see Nyaroiro Gatonye's story in Chapter 4 as captured by Habitat for Humanity Kenya), including some household members who were supposed to be interviewed after the elections (having interviewed their spouses earlier).

However, whereas the post-election violence posed practical difficulties for fieldwork, it nonetheless enriched the study conceptually by offering an opportunity to understand the vulnerability of urban household livelihoods to, and their resilience in the face of, such dramatic external shocks. The study highlights how some farming households lost their animals and crops, and other household assets to marauding gangs, and had their dwellings razed down. It also highlights the coping and survival strategies adopted by different households, the positive and negative role of social networks for household survival, and how urban farmers' perception of vulnerability was affected by the post-election events.

Other challenges related to urban farmers' (non)co-operation with the research team. Being the largest informal settlement in Eldoret town, Langas has been the focus of many urban-related studies in the town. Some respondents complained that they had been interviewed several times by different researchers but that they

had not gained anything in return. There was the perception that researchers could be gathering information from people for their own personal gain. In a few cases, respondents refused to grant interviews demanding that they be paid beforehand. Other residents' attitude towards the research manifested latent insecurity of tenure in land. In one case, a young man confronted his widowed mother over the latter's decision to "divulge a lot of information about land to people who may be plotting to grab it". It turned out that there was a dispute over the plot since his father's demise.[14] Previous harassment of urban farmers by EMC also informed individuals' reaction to interview requests. Pig keepers were especially apprehensive about the intentions of the research, suspecting that it was being conducted on behalf of EMC to identify pig farmers for punitive measures to be taken against them. EMC discourages pig-keeping in the town and has previously harassed pig farmers and even poisoned roaming pigs (see Chapter 5). Pig keepers who granted interviews did not usually allow the research team to take any pictures. As one way of allaying respondents' fears, we were guided around by the village elders responsible for the respective blocks we visited. As people who arbitrate the day-to-day disputes within their blocks, village elders were well known to the people and as such enlisting their assistance was an important way of gaining people's confidence. With time, however, people began to appreciate what we were doing.

It was also the case that many urban farmers did not keep records about the income they earn from urban agriculture and from other income-generating activities. This is not helped by the fact that income from most household income sources was irregular and seasonal. Thus, rather than use income as a measure of a household's socio-economic status, asset-based welfare indices were used. Lack of accurate income data also made it difficult to quantitatively assess the relative value of urban agriculture vis-à-vis other income-generating activities.

[14] It helped that the young man was a primary school teacher who was in the process of applying for admission into the university where the principal researcher was a lecturer. Once he learnt of it and the purpose of the study was explained to him, he not only calmed down but also offered to be interviewed.