

# **Effects of Miraa Production on Socio-Economic Livelihoods of Households and School Attendance Among Boys in Nthawa Ward Mbeere North, Embu County**

**Japheth Mugendi Njuguna A101/100004/2013**

## **Abstract**

Khat (*Catha edulis*) also known as miraa in Kenya, belong to the family Celastraceae. It is an evergreen shrub native to the tropical East Africa having a dark green opposite leaves that are chewed fresh for their stimulating effects. Prior to the expansion of the khat trade; maize, beans, green grams, sorghum and millet were the biggest crops grown in Nthawa Ward, but begun to decline as a result of miraa production in the area. In Embu County, Nthawa Ward Mbeere North, miraa is the largest source of income for small scale miraa farmers using primary and secondary learners as the workforce on plucking and trade of miraa this has effect on their psychology due to consuming and others peddling it leading to irregular attendance in school among boys. The aim of this the study was to investigate the effect of Miraa production on socio-economic livelihoods of households and school attendance among boys in Nthawa Ward Mbeere north, Embu County. The study targeted 6755 households, 8 public secondary schools and 16 public primary schools. The study adopted cluster sampling technique to select a sample of 30 households from each location and a sample of 2 and 4 secondary and primary respectively from each location. Well-developed questionnaires were used to collect primary data from miraa farmers, students, pupils and teachers. The study used descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and regression was used to interpret data and data was presented using frequency tables. Based on the findings of the study the researcher concluded that the production of other crops like maize and beans was declining in the study area. This was due to most small scale miraa farmers in the area valued the khat production because of its high yielding. The researcher also concluded that most students engaged in khat harvesting at night and they earned a lot of money of above 500 kshs making it difficult for them to attend classes due to some sleeping less hours and making it difficult to wake at the time they are required to be in school which led to a below average attendance rate in class. The research recommended that the government to intervene by regulating the production, consumption and the supply chain of miraa because a decrease in maize and beans production can have a food security implication. And local leaders should set a policy that prohibits boys from providing labor in farms and trading in khat business before they complete school.