

**Abstract for the Conference:**

The 'Future of Pastoralism in Africa' March 21st – 23rd, 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Conference theme:**

Alternative livelihoods and exits from Pastoralism, including education and small towns

**Working title:**

**Structural and procedural properties important in promoting bio-enterprises as alternative livelihoods to pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods**

Chinwe Ifejika Speranza<sup>a,b,c</sup> and Susie Wren<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Training and Integrated Research for Aid and Semi-arid Lands Development, (CETRAD), Nanyuki, Kenya.

<sup>b</sup> University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland.

<sup>c</sup> German Development Institute, Bonn, Germany.

<sup>d</sup> Laikipia Wildlife Forum, Bio-enterprise Development Programme, Nanyuki.

Alternative livelihoods to pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods are increasingly gaining attention in rural development but few empirical evidence exist on how to go about supporting such initiatives. As pastoral and agro-pastoral production conditions change due to various factors including market conditions, climate variability and change, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are increasingly faced with the challenge of finding alternative livelihoods. Bio-enterprises offer such alternatives or complementary activities for rural actors to adapt to changing socio-ecological conditions. This study examines the roles of bio-enterprise initiatives from a livelihood perspective and identifies the features important for such initiatives to reduce poverty and improve the adaptive capacities of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. It draws on four different bio-enterprise initiatives on agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihoods and on improved natural resources management (NRM) in the drylands of Kenya. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, informal discussions and the study of reports. Results shows among other factors that diversification into enterprises requires cooperation among the stakeholders with their varying experiences in development, NRM and business development. Other factors such as sustained financial support, capacity development to survive the market introduction phase, as well as quantity and quality of the product, are critical. Mentoring proved to be a driver of success in some initiatives.