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## The Decline of Cotton Growing in Karachuonyo, Kenya from the Mid-1970s-1980

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**Abstract:** *Cotton has been one of the major cash crops that the Luo people of Karachuonyo in Kenya grew alongside other economic activities and engagements. Some of these activities developed to certain admirable level whereas others somewhat sharply declined after vibrant development at some stage. One of these activities was cotton growing. This paper has analyzed factors that led to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo from the mid-1970s-1980, which was the objective of the study. The study was guided by Underdevelopment Theory and, Innovation and Adaptation concepts. Purposive Sampling was used to identify cotton farmers and agricultural officers who were interviewed. Primary data were collected through oral interviews and Archival research. A tape recorder was used in the collection of data. Oral interviews were conducted until a point of saturation was attained. This implies that interviewing respondents stopped when majority of them started repeating most of what others had said. Data was analysed qualitatively. Major findings of the study were poor marketing policy, delayed payment and seed issuance, political interference, corruption in the cotton sub-sector, bad weather and cotton pests and the engine problem of Kendu Bay Ginnery of 1974 led to the decline of cotton growing. The decline of cotton growing has reduced income earning power of the people of Karachuonyo. Most of them have since shifted into production of other crops and this as well led to loss of means of livelihoods among the people of Karachuonyo. This eventually led to the closure of Kendu Bay cotton ginnery.*

**Key words:** *cotton growing, seed cotton, decline, impact, cotton seed*

## 1. Introduction

Cotton is among the major cash crops the world has been involved in its production. Cotton was produced in Brazil, Japan and in the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> Cotton prices faced price and marketing problems in India. There were also major strikes in India, a revolt staged by the Indian soldiers serving in the East Indies. Later, the civil war in the US (1861-1865) deprived the market of a major source of supply and this forced cotton prices to go down but ushered in a new era due to the disappearance of the unpaid slave labour. The European powers then turned to their African

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<sup>1</sup> R. Wolff. *Britain and Kenya: Economics of Colonialism, 1970-1930*: (Nairobi: Trans Africa Publishers, 1974), p. 12.

colonies under the pressure of their industrial lobbies to produce cotton.<sup>2</sup>

In Nigeria, cotton farming was characterized by competition from other cash crops, especially among the Hausa. Low price compared to prices of groundnuts made farmers turn to growing of groundnuts at the expense of cotton.<sup>3</sup> Poor financial returns due to low prices failed to make cotton growing attractive to farmers.<sup>4</sup> In Uganda, low prices for cotton were caused by competition from coffee. In regard to this, Kiwanuka points out that, cotton dominated the market for long **until in** the 1950s when it was finally replaced by coffee as the leading export crop of the country.<sup>5</sup>

In Kenya, cotton production started to decline in the late 1970s and in the mid-1980s.<sup>6</sup> It was also established that cotton industries in Kenya collapsed following decrease in cotton production.<sup>7</sup> Cotton growing in Kenya faced decline due to a number of factors. In Busia, cotton pests and diseases, poor prices, excessive rains, late planting, and delayed payment led to the decline in cotton production.<sup>8</sup> In Makueni and Embu respectively, the decline was due to delayed payments.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1940s and 1950s, Karachuonyo was a leading producer of cotton and as a result, private investors established cotton ginnery at Kendu Bay.<sup>10</sup> This can be supported by the records established by Fearn's study in Nyanza Province. Fearn indicates that the tonnage of cotton

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<sup>2</sup> ECOWAS. (2006). *Atlas on Regional Integration in West Africa: Cotton*, pp.7-8. [www.oecd.org/swac/publications/38409410](http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/38409410)

<sup>3</sup> K. Shillington, *History of Africa*: Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2005), 237-238.

<sup>4</sup> C. Waters and J. Odera, *Geography of Kenya and East African Region*. pp.112-113.

<sup>5</sup> M.S. Kiwanuka, 'Uganda under British', in *Zamani, a Survey of East African History*, ed. B.A. Ogot (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), 319.

<sup>6</sup> A. M. Amesa. "Value Addition to Cotton by Small Scale Cotton Farmers and Community Development Groups in Homa Bay and Kisumu Counties" (Master's Thesis, Maseno University, 2012). She cites Cotton Developments Secretariat, 2006; EPZA, 2005; Ikiara and Ndirangu 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.71, 81

<sup>9</sup> G. M. Kimani, "Determinants of Cotton Production among Smallholder Farmers in Kenya: The case of Makueni County," (Master of Arts, Kenyatta University, 2014), p.32; G. Njeru. "The Socio-Political Impact of Commodity Production in a Marginal Subsistence Rural Economy: A Case Study Of Cotton in Evurori Location of Embu District," (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1987), p. 245

<sup>10</sup> L. Odera. *Karachuonyo Constituency is on the move to become a Good Example of Development. Kisumu*. Available at [blog.jaluo.com/%3Fp%3D3456](http://blog.jaluo.com/%3Fp%3D3456), 2009.



marketed between 1943 and 1948 rose to 12,667, and by 1953, the tonnage rose to 25,539.<sup>11</sup> However, cotton growing declined in Karachuonyo and this resulted to the closure of ginneries at Kendu Bay and Homa Bay. Again, many cotton stores that used to be there became non-functional. Therefore, against this background, the study addressed the concerns of the decline in cotton production in Karachuonyo.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study analyzed factors that led to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo from the mid-1970s-1980. In view of the background discussed above, cotton growing which developed at some point eventually declined. This was as well experienced in Karachuonyo. The concern in the decline of cotton production in the global perspective also was a concern of the decline in cotton growing in Kenya, and more particularly, Karachuonyo. The study sought to analyse factors that led to the decline in cotton production in Karachuonyo after vibrant development in production. Cotton production in Kenya currently remains low and this led to the closure of textile industries.<sup>12</sup> This decline, made the people of Karachuonyo to shift to other non-lucrative subsistence farming.

Studies that have been conducted in Nyanza Province and Karachuonyo have scanty information on cotton production, especially from a historical perspective. More particularly they have not adequately addressed reasons for the decline in cotton growing in Karachuonyo. For instance, Butterman, focused on the pre-colonial Karachuonyo economy, Onduru addressed economic change in South Nyanza, while Fearn discussed 'An African Economy' and put much emphasis on the economic development in Nyanza Province.<sup>13</sup> Much appreciation is accorded to these works in directing and furnishing the problem under review with necessary information. However, it is apparent that information on the decline of cotton growing is necessary from a historical point of view. However, majority of the inhabitants still wish that the moribund cotton growing practices be fully revived. This is because cotton growing provided a better means of livelihoods to the people. The attached photographs are clear evidences that cotton growing declined in Karachuonyo.

### 2. Literature Review

This section is a review of literature related to the decline of cotton growing. Cotton production in Kenya started to decrease from the mid-1970s to 1980. This was followed by the collapse of cotton

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<sup>11</sup> H. Fearn, *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953*: (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). p.193

<sup>12</sup> Cotton in Kenya-Cotton Farming in Kenya (n.d.). Available at <http://softkenya.com/farming/cotton-in-kenya/>. Accessed Dec, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> J. Butterman, "The Precolonial Economy of Karachuonyo." *Staff Seminar Paper No. 15, 1976- 77, Department of History, University of Nairobi* ( Syracuse University, 1977); T.A Onduru, "Economic Change in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1880-1945" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2009); H. Fearn. *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953*(London: Oxford University Press, 1961)

industries in the mid 1990 occasioned by the earlier decrease in production of the crop.<sup>14</sup> In assessing factors that led to the decline of cotton growing from this period, a general overview and situational analysis of cotton production prior to the decline is paramount. It is important to note that in the 1970s Kenya was a major East African producer of cotton for local industries as well as for export to the international market. Presently there is high potential of the cotton industry, however a number of factors pose grounded impediments to cotton production. These are poor production methods, lack of technical skills, poor marketing which result in the failure to meet the peasant's expectations of cotton quality and pricing.<sup>15</sup> Here follows the debates on other factors that led to the decline of cotton growing.

Competition from other cash crops also threatened cotton production. Mahofa, Nyambara, Etyang', Fearn and Hopkins<sup>16</sup> similarly assert that diversification into more high price-fetching crops greatly endangered cotton production. In his study in Zimbabwe, Mahofa established that since the 1960's, cotton farmers produced large amount of cotton but production in the sector declined in the 1980's. This was due to the fact that many farmers diversified into more lucrative export crops like sugarcane, maize and sorghum that reduced viability in the cotton sector.

In addition, Nyambara's study also conducted in Zimbabwe confirmed that peasants preferred growing maize and other foodstuffs to cotton. This was due to the high prices that they did not realize in cotton.<sup>17</sup> Etyang' concurs with this in his findings that cotton was not very profitable to farmers compared to other crops like sugar cane, maize and sesame.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, these scholars fail to avail comparative analysis on the price margin that existed between cotton and these crops. In Zimbabwe, Nyambara again established that tobacco competed with cotton crop for labour. In this regard, tobacco farmers discouraged cotton peasants from engaging in the production of cotton.<sup>19</sup> The tobacco growers feared that if cotton growing effectively continued, then they would be faced with a serious labour shortage. The argument was that, tobacco farmers depended upon the same labourers that were expected to provide services in the cotton farms. Hopkins<sup>20</sup> stated that, in Nigeria, many farmers preferred growing groundnuts to cotton because cotton was no more profitable. Therefore this kind of competition also impeded cotton production.

Furthermore, Kimani's study in Makueni and Obara's work in the Lake Victoria Basin of Kenya on cotton similarly established an aspect of competition. Such was experienced from the synthetic fibres like nylon. This was seen as the major cause of the decline of cotton production as it affected world cotton price. In the same vein, Fearn's study in Nyanza also agrees with the findings

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<sup>14</sup> Amesa, "Value Addition to Cotton by Small Scale Cotton Farmers " (Citing Cotton Development Secretariat. (CDS, 2006; EPZA, 2005; Ikiara and Ndirangu, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. *Cotton in Kenya*. Available at <http://softkenya.com/farming/cotton-in-kenya>

<sup>16</sup> G. Mahofa, "Economic Analysis of Factors Affecting Cotton Production in Zimbabwe" (Master's Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2007); Nyambara, "Colonial Policy and Peasant Cotton Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1904-1953,"; Etyang', "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970's"; Fearn. *An African Economy* and A. G. Hopkins. *Economic History of West Africa*. (London: Longman Publishers, 1980).

<sup>17</sup> Nyambara, "Colonial Policy and Peasant Cotton Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1904-1953," p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Etyang', "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970's", p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Nyambara, "Colonial Policy and Peasant Cotton Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> Hopkins. *Economic History of West Africa*, p. 138.

mentioned beforehand.<sup>21</sup> Competition from other well price-fetching crops impeded production in cotton due to dearth of enthusiasm in farmers. Masingi, Andae, Fearn, Zwannenberg and King observe lack of incentives to farmers. Masingi's findings in Bariadi district of Tanzania established that lack of incentives to cotton farmers occasioned the decline in cotton production.<sup>22</sup> The same problem had been perennial in Kenya in respect to prices.<sup>23</sup> Fearn adds that the cotton sector in Nyanza was hit by the fall in prices that made the growers to be paid low prices. This situation of low prices was partly occasioned by the depression of 1929 and cotton growing policies on price. Subsequently, this downward trend in cotton price led to cessation of cotton planting.<sup>24</sup>

Zwanenberg asserts that, as much as cotton growers in Kenya were constantly urged to increase the production, cotton growing did not increase. Etyang' recommended that increased cotton production could only be achieved through adequate economic incentives provided to farmers.<sup>25</sup> By the 1960s, the quantity of cotton export went below that which had been exported in the period of 1937-8.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, low prices for cotton as a disincentive to the farmers accounted for the stagnation of cotton growing. These studies are silent on the steps the colonial and independent governments were taking to address the chronic anomalies. Such step in boosting prices would show a bit seriousness if at all the production of cotton had to expand.

Pests were considered to be the main problem in cotton growing.<sup>27</sup> Cotton pests and diseases led to the decline of cotton production. This is according to the assertions of Obara, Kimani and Etyang'. Obara observes that cotton production drastically reduced in Sudan due to infestation by cotton pests like flea beetle. Kimani established that pests and diseases rated high among other factors that led to the decline in cotton production.<sup>28</sup> Obara again observes that between 1960 and 1970, cotton production was vehemently depressed by heavy rainfall. Cotton does not need much rainfall since it is a drought resistance crop. Heavy rains may easily attract pests that can lead to low quality yields in cotton.<sup>29</sup> Etyang' indicates that about 18% yield reduction in cotton is caused by insect pests and about 5% reduction may be caused by plant diseases.<sup>30</sup>

Despite heavy involvement of women in the agricultural sector, they experience considerable difficulties in accessing the necessary factors of production. Failure to empower women in accessing land and credit posed great impediment to cotton growing. Nyamudeza's study on

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<sup>21</sup> Fearn. *An African Economy*, pp 76, 80.

<sup>22</sup> G. Masingi, "Performance of Cotton Smallholder Farmers under Contract Farming in Bariadi District" (M.Sc. Thesis, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro-Tanzania, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> G. Andae (2017 March, 9). Cotton Prices up in Raft of Incentives for Sector. *Daily Nation*. Available at [www.nation.co.ke](http://www.nation.co.ke)>Home> Business

<sup>24</sup> Fearn, *An African Economy*, pp. 69, 70, 99.

<sup>25</sup> Etyang', "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970s", p.99.

<sup>26</sup> Van Zwanenberg, and Anne King. *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Crop and Livestock Manual, 1971/72, No.271*. Agricultural Information Centre, Ministry of Agriculture.

<sup>28</sup> Obara, "Environmental and Agronomic Factors Influencing Variations in Smallholder Cotton Yields in the Kano Plain, Kisumu District, Western Kenya," p. 70. (Citing Prentice (1972); Kimani, "Determinants of Cotton Production among Smallholder Farmers in Kenya: The Case of Makueni County". (Master of Arts, Kenyatta University, 2014).35; Etyang'. "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970's", p.8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 54-55.

<sup>30</sup> Etyang', "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970's", p.8.

gender dynamics in cotton growing in Zimbabwe and the Kenya Human Rights Commission engage in this discourse. Nyamudeza observes that women are often responsible for applying pesticides in the cotton farms, even when expectant. Again, they are the backbone of small scale agriculture, yet they face increasing difficulties in accessing land and credit. Women have traditionally had little access to income from cotton and other crops. Again, women often lose titles to land when their husbands die or when divorced.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the difficulty in accessing land by women, the Kenya Human Rights Commission of 1998 study of Luo land registration in the 1970s sheds some light. The Commission established that 91% of women were living on and farming on land registered in the name of a male relative. Again, only less than 4% of women have land registered under their names in Kenya.<sup>32</sup> Paradoxically, this was not the case in Mozambique where women were the principal cotton growers when the Portuguese introduced it in the colony.<sup>33</sup> Against this background, it is evident that failure to empower women in the observed key areas is in itself causing decline in cotton production.

Etyang', Kimani, Fearn and Obara,<sup>34</sup> observe that delayed payment to the farmers affected cotton production in Kenya. Etyang' indicates that cotton farmers could wait for payment for as long as between two weeks and twelve months. Kimani further asserts that cotton farmers were mostly affected by delayed payment, which rated highest among the other challenges that cotton farmers face. In the same vein, Fearn's study in Nyanza also agrees with the aforementioned findings. As much as Kimani presents the issue of delayed payment as a major cause for the decline in cotton production, he fails to avail information on the causes of this problem and the relevant responsible institutions during the period of his study. Since the payment for cotton returns could delay to this extent, it is apparently obvious that the preparation of the land for cotton could delay. This would make the farmers miss the correct timing of the cotton season and planting. Even the purchases that farmers wished to make such as buying farm inputs could not be done on time. Therefore, delayed payment to cotton farmers summarily occasioned the conspicuous disincentive to the farmers, hence low production of the crop.

Poor farming methods and static agricultural skills are also viewed as a cause for the decline in cotton production. Ndege asserts that increased crop production was encouraged without improving agricultural techniques. Farms were ploughed downhill, which led to increased soil exhaustion and erosion.<sup>35</sup> Fearn confirmed that poor farming methods and practices presented a threat to cotton growing. The Europeans complained that cotton yield from Nyanza was of low quality due to poor farming methods. This was further worsened by failure by the peasants to

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<sup>31</sup> K. Nyamudeza. "Gender Dynamics in Cotton Production: A Case Study of A1 Farmers in Sessombi Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe" (Master's Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2012).16-19. (Citing FAO, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Kenya Human Rights Commission. *Women and Land Rights in Kenya*. (Nairobi, 1998), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty*, pp. 1, 3, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Etyang', "Cotton Production in Busia District in the 1970's", pp. 78-79; Kimani, "Determinants of Cotton Production Among Smallholder Farmers in Kenya", pp.10, 35; Dunstan Obara, "Cotton Production in the Lake Victoria Basin of Kenya" *IDS Working Paper No.353*, (University of Nairobi, 1979), 9; Fearn, *An African Economy*, pp 76, 80.

<sup>35</sup> Ndege "Economic Change in Kasipul and Kabondo" p. 161.

observe the right timing in planting and harvesting of cotton.<sup>36</sup> Waters and Odero call it primitive methods, which could only be enhanced by use of fertilizers and simple machinery.<sup>37</sup>

Zenere, while comparing agriculture in Kenya and Uganda, found that the former had not expanded land used for agricultural production compared to the latter.<sup>38</sup> This could be due to small-holding of land which impedes land consolidation. The government of Kenya encourages farmers to embrace modern methods of farming in order to spur agricultural production.<sup>39</sup> This practice of small-holding of land caused decline in cotton production. This is because black cotton soil in the study area was heavy. The land therefore, needed modern farm machineries such as tractors, which require large tracts of land to work on. Ndege holds that cotton production declined in Kasipul and Kabondo due to its unpopularity by the 1940's. Such assertion as well wins the support of Kitching.<sup>40</sup> This is because the crop required intensive labour right from farm preparation to picking and the sorting of the lint before being taken to the buying centres.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, Kitching observes that cotton growing eventually failed in Kowe in Seme of Kenya due to the unsustainability of the area. Cotton also fetched low returns to labour and land rather than the price as such.<sup>42</sup>

Some of the reviewed studies argue that cotton farmers needed reasonably large tracts of land to enable them secure credit and loans. But this could not be possible due to existence of small fragments of land. Leys, Obara, Oloya, Bosena and Okoth-Ogendo argue that land fragmentation impedes credit advancement to farmers. This is because small sizes of land could not secure return of loans to the creditors. To this, Obara adds that farm and cotton field sizes were small, ranging from 1/8 to 1/5 of an acre.<sup>43</sup> In Uganda, the rate of recovery of this credit, which was over 95%, was too high,<sup>44</sup> and smallholder farmers could not afford. This presented some difficulty in accessing credit facility.

Moreover, households who took credit for cotton production supplied more cotton to market than those who did not.<sup>45</sup> Okoth-Ogendo states that, in Kisii and South Nyanza districts, which formerly engulfed Karachuonyo, not more than 2% of registered small holders were able to obtain secured

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<sup>36</sup> Fearn, *An African Economy*, p.76.

<sup>37</sup> C. Waters and J. Odero, *Geography of Kenya and East African Region*. (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1986), pp. 112-113.

<sup>38</sup> G. Zenere, "Agriculture in Kenya and Uganda: Relevance, Behavior and Performance". *Global Majority E- Journal*, vol.5, No.2 (December 2014).pp.104-116.

<sup>39</sup> S. Koskei, (2017 March, 12). Ruto Urges Farmers to Use Modern Methods, Assures Fertilizers Available. *The Standard on Sunday*, p.5.

<sup>40</sup> G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> Ndege, "Economic Change in Kasipul and Kabondo" p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> C. Leys. *Underdevelopment in Kenya. Political Economy of Neo-colonialism*. (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1975), 98; Obara, "Environmental and Agronomic Factors Influencing Variations in Smallholder Cotton Yields in the Kano Plain", p. 198.

<sup>44</sup> J.J. Oloya. *Some Aspects of Economic Development with Special Reference to East Africa*: (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978), p. 62.

<sup>45</sup> Bosena, *et.al* "Factors Affecting Cotton Supply in Farm Level in Matema District of Ethiopia"



or unsecured credit in any single year from 1970-1973.<sup>46</sup> Dupre, more specifically points out that land fragmentation among the Luo of South Nyanza greatly impeded agricultural development.<sup>47</sup> Colonial government enforced the law of production which argued in favour of land consolidation.<sup>48</sup> This means that their presence amorously coerced cotton farmers to produce, but in their absence, production would stall.

It can therefore be argued by taking a point of departure that land fragmentation did not disadvantage the cotton farmer from expanding production and securing credit. Ideally, land fragmentation was not really a major impediment to cotton growing in Karachuonyo. Report by the Department of Agriculture of 1942-1945 shows that cotton yield was paradoxically higher against small plots in Karachuonyo.<sup>49</sup> It is also important to note that cotton is mainly grown by smallholders and therefore did not require large tracts of land. This is because land consolidation or communal land ownership was not in line with the Luo culture.

From the above discussed literature, the following concerns are observed: the decline of cotton growing led to massive loss of jobs and deprivation of government revenue. Mahofa, Nyambara, Etyang', Fearn and Hopkins indicate that competition from other more high price-fetching crops endangered cotton production. Kimani and Obara established that competition from synthetic fibres and the influx of second hand clothes reduced production of cotton. Etyang', Kimani, Fearn and Obara found out that delayed payment led to the decline of cotton growing. A few of these findings are consistent with the findings in Karachuonyo. However, delayed payment, low prices, lack of credit facilities, corruption, drought and pests distinctly featured as major factors that led to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo. Earlier studies by Fearn and Butterman found that cotton production in Karachuonyo suffered due to low prices.

For critical analysis, Fearn points out that the fall in prices is what summarily undermined the

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<sup>46</sup> Okoth-Ogendo, H.W.O. *The Perils of Land Tenure Reform: The Case of Kenya*. (Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, (n.d.).

<sup>47</sup> Dupre, *the Luo of Kenya: An Annotated Bibliography*, p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo, *Tenants of the Crown: Evolution of Agrarian Law and Institutions in Kenya*. (Nairobi: Acts Press, African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), 1991), p. 111.

<sup>49</sup> *Cotton Report, South Kavirondo, 1937-1946*. Letter by Department of Agriculture, 12 Jan 1946 addressed to Agricultural Officer in Nyanza Province. KNA, p.8.

attempts by the British administrative officers to persuade the African peasants to grow cotton. Even as production increased, still by 1942, cotton prices were still low. This was because the government had emphasized on food production during the war years that made transportation of cotton difficult.<sup>50</sup> Again, access to credit facility was unrealistic to all smallholder farmers in general and not to women alone as the reviewed studies claim. Certain gaps have been observed as not being addressed in the reviewed studies. For instance, mismanagement of funds by cooperative officers, failure to involve women in decision- making, problem of poor roads between cotton farms and cotton selling posts was an issue, given the backward level development of the infrastructure during the period under review. Also, unethical practices like cheating by use of faulty scales were found to be responsible for the decline in cotton growing in Karachuonyo.

### **3. Research Methodology**

In this section, details of the Research Design the researcher used in the study, the Research Location, Target Population, Sampling Technique, Data Collection Procedure, Validity and Reliability, Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations are presented.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study applied Qualitative Design. The researcher interviewed the respondents who gave responses in their own voices. This design gave the respondents a chance to describe their responses without restrictions. In terms of data collection instruments, this study used an Interview Schedule with questions framed in line with the objective of the study. It also used guiding questions to conduct oral interviews. The guiding questions helped the researcher to remain focused during the interview and at the same time enable the participant to respond with ease and unrestricted.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

This refers to the entire cotton growing population from whom respondents to participate in the study was derived. This study targeted the people in the cotton growing area of Karachuonyo. Farmers who grew cotton, farmers who are still scantily growing cotton, Agricultural officers were interviewed. These population characteristics enabled the researcher to collect various responses that effectively informed this study for beneficial interpretation of the findings.

#### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

This study used Purposive Sampling in selecting cotton farmers and chiefs. The researcher asked farmers to identify others. The chiefs also gave names of some of their counterparts. This helped the researcher to select potential participants without randomization. As a result, the researcher

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<sup>50</sup> Fearn. *An African Economy*, pp 76, 174.

was able to identify the right people with the relevant information for the study. The selected participants were interviewed until a point of saturation was reached.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Since collection of data from respondents is an important stage in this study, certain steps are paramount. The first phase involved obtaining information both from primary and secondary sources. Institutional libraries such as Kisii University, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Catholic University and University of Nairobi, were used. A book by Hugh Fearn entitled, "An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development in Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953" was found useful. The book adequately informed the study promptly on how cotton was introduced and its developments in the study area. Allen Isaacman's book entitled, "Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938-1961", had useful information on colonial cotton regime in Mozambique. This helped the study to understand factors that led to the decline in cotton production. Historical sources such as development plans, official government reports, Annual Reports, journal articles, newspapers, published and unpublished theses were resourceful for the study.

In the second phase, the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi helped in accessing some useful information. During the Archival visit in Nairobi, some files were accessed and found to be useful in the study. For example, file No. PC/NZA/2/12/82 addressed the issue of corruption in the sale of cotton at buying posts by use of faulty scales to defraud cotton farmers. South Kavirondo Agricultural Safari Reports, DC/KSI/7/1 was found reliably useful in giving finer details of the daily activities the Agricultural and administration officers were involved in. These are just but a few among the many files that were found useful at the KNA for this study. A considerable number of files were accessed and used in the study.

The third phase entailed field work data collection. Farmers who participated and those who still participate in cotton growing were interviewed until a point of saturation was reached. Here, there were two categories of farmers; those who grew cotton and might have shifted to growing other crops due to poor returns in cotton growing and those who still struggle to grow the crop. These informants provided important information that enriched the study. Chiefs who were interviewed gave useful information on factors that led to cotton growing in Karachuonyo. Data was collected through oral interviews. The medium of collecting oral interviews was the Luo language (*Dholuo*). English language was also used where necessity beckoned. A tape recorder was used to conduct oral interviews. Collection of Oral and Archival data was necessary in order to corroborate evidence with secondary sources.

### 3.5 Validity

The instruments are expected to cover the stated research questions. Pilot Survey was done after which elements of ambiguity in questions, overlaps and irrelevance were corrected by consulting the experts. Pilot study was conducted in the neighbouring East Kagan location in Kagan Ward of Rangwe Sub-County. This area is adjacent to the study area and share population characteristics but is not part of the study area. Through this, necessary adjustments were done as recommended. The instruments were finally ready and valid for use in the study. Some informations were

conflicting while others were in agreement. For those that were conflicting, the researcher had to consult other authorities that helped in harmonizing the anomalies. For instance such conflicting information had to be corroborated by primary sources such as those from KNA.

### **3.6 Reliability**

In ascertaining the reliability, data collection instrument was applied twice on some respondents at different time interval of three weeks and results compared. The margin error was found to be small after comparison. This, to a greater extent guaranteed reliability of the tools used in the study. Oral data were also compared with Archival sources and were found to be reliable. For instance, what the Archival sources reported on the operations of the Kendu Bay ginnery was consistent with information given by the respondents.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data for this study was sorted in order to trim the overlaps or repeated statements. The sorting also included arranging the responses according to the research question. Then the data was transcribed and analysed qualitatively according to the objective of the study. The data was interpreted, corroborated with other literature for consistency, argued in the light of the existing literature and studies to establish where inconsistency and contradictions prevailed. Lastly, the data was interpreted and brought within historical context.

## **4. Results**

This study analyzed factors that led to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo, Kenya from the mid-1970s-1980. Indication of the decline in cotton production started in the 1970's. It followed that in 1970, the policy that had been existing to allow cotton growers have cotton seed for free was modified. According to the South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1975, the two Cotton Co-operative Unions, Victoria and Rachuonyo were underperforming.<sup>51</sup> The findings of the study are discussed in the subsequent sections. These include poor marketing policy, delayed payment and seed issuance, political interference, corruption in the cotton sub-sector, drought, bad weather and cotton pests, and the engine problem of the cotton ginnery at Kendu Bay.

### **4.1 Poor Marketing Policy**

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<sup>51</sup> South Nyanza District, 1975 Annual Report, KNA, p.186.



It appears that in Kenya, there were policy gaps in marketing development. Heyer<sup>52</sup> observed that there were inadequate control of smallholder cooperative marketing system and marketing board. This occasioned problems of lack of official pricing policy. This is because the government monopolized prices that favour them at the expense of the producers. In regard to this, cotton prices were determined on an arbitrary *ad hoc* basis since there has not been consistency in pricing policy.

There was also a sharp inflation on the marketing of cotton in Kenya. Between 1971 and 1976, the cost of marketing of important cash crops increased.<sup>53</sup> This increase as well affected the marketing of cotton, hence lowering the level of the production of the crop. It can be argued that although farmers would be encouraged to produce more cotton, unstable marketing strategy crippled their efforts. This would in turn discourage them from seriously engaging in the production of the crop.

Lack of direct marketing for cotton occasioned the decline in Karachuonyo as well. On one hand, the middlemen in the cotton sub-sector made farmers really run at a loss. They bought cotton at very low prices, taking advantage on the needy and despondent farmer. On the other hand, that lack of proper marketing strategy was responsible for the delay in cotton payment. This eventually discouraged farmers, occasioning the decline in cotton production.<sup>54</sup> It can therefore rightly be argued that these policy limitations with respect to pricing adversely impeded the production of cotton in Kenya. This, in the long-run initiated the onset of the decline in cotton production in the subsequent years.

In Karachuonyo, Small & Company Limited was licenced to buy and gin seed. Itinerant buyers and middlemen who were not licensed also played key role in buying cotton from the needy farmers. Although the middlemen paid farmers low price for their cotton, their presence in the cotton sub-sector greatly encouraged the farmers to continue growing cotton.<sup>55</sup> The problem of

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<sup>52</sup> J. Heyer. "Marketing System" in Heyer, J. et.al, ed. *Agricultural Development in Kenya: An Economic Assessment*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 315; O.I with: Henry Okombo, Kanam B on 1-2-2018

<sup>53</sup> R. H. Bates. *Markets and states in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> O.I. with: Roseline Mbago, Kanam B on 1-2-2018 and Salmon Obudo, Koyugi on 5-2-2018

<sup>55</sup> O.I. with: Paul Gor, Kanyipir on 5-2-2018 and Perpetua Aomo, Koyugi on 5-2-2018

marketing for cotton in Karachuonyo presented a degree of dissatisfaction to the farmers and eventually discouraged them from growing cotton.

The influx of second hand clothes into the country coupled with synthetic substitutes led to the decline of cotton growing. For instance, rubber, wool and cotton competed unfairly with local textiles, hence threatening cotton production.<sup>56</sup> This means that, market for textile products was highly endangered due low and affordable cost of second hand clothes by the majority of Kenyans. Again, the collapse of Kisumu Cotton Mills (KICOMI) and the closure of Kendu Bay Ginnery also reduced cotton production in Karachuonyo. This occasioned the gradual decline in cotton production.

Although marketing of cotton was very important, it faced myriads of challenges. During the initial stages after its inception, the Cotton Lint & Seed Marketing Board was at the forefront in promoting cotton growing. It was a paradox of concern that it later proved inefficient in promoting cotton marketing in Karachuonyo in later years.<sup>57</sup> Comparing cotton production during the time of Small & Company Ltd. and the time of Cotton Lint & Seed Marketing Board, the former encouraged more people to produce cotton. However, operations of the Cotton Lint & Seed Marketing Board discouraged cotton farmers because of mismanagement and inefficacy.<sup>58</sup>

#### **4.2 Delayed Payment and Seed Issuance**

Prolonged delayed payment heralded the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo, which massively crippled cotton production.<sup>59</sup> Payment for cotton dues could delay as long as one to two months. When the money was finally brought, it had a lot of undue deductions attached to it. For

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<sup>56</sup> B. J. Smales. *Economic History Made Simple*. (London: W.H. Allen & Co. Ltd., 1975), 144; Caroline Theuri. No Soft Landing for Cotton Farming-*Daily Nation*. [www.nation.co.ke>Home>Kenya@50>Agriculture](http://www.nation.co.ke/Home/Kenya/50/Agriculture)

<sup>57</sup> O. I. with: Henry Okombo, Kanam B on 1-2-2018, Jane Odira, Kanjira on 8-2-2018 and Peter Ogondi, Koyugi on 5-2-2018

<sup>58</sup> O.I. with: Paul Gor, Kanyipir on 5-2-2018, Ruth Obel, Kanjira on 8-2-2018 and John Akoko Kwanya, the chairperson, Pala Farmers' Cotton Co-operative Society and Homa Bay County Cotton Co-operative Union, Kokoth Kateng on 11-2-201

<sup>59</sup> O. I. with Jane Auma Okumu, Kakdhimu East on 1-2-2018, Margaret Ongang, Kokoth Kateng on 11-2-2018 and Benard Ogutu, Kanam A on 1-2-2018

this reason the farmer could not get the expected amount. Apart from this delayed payment, cotton dues to the farmers would sometimes get lost.<sup>60</sup> This means that cotton farmers could not budget for the season that followed due to lack of money in good time.

The provision of cotton seed that had in the past promoted cotton growing took a new twist in relation to the decline in production. Seed could reach the farmers late and this would in turn bring about delayed planting. Weeding which was required to be done three times also delayed. Cotton picking, sorting and buying as well delayed. Observing this chain of events analytically, cotton delivery and payment would eventually delay. In this case, farmers who intended to use cotton income for their children's school fees, stood utterly disappointed. This eventually discouraged farmers from continuing with cotton growing, occasioning the drastic decline.<sup>61</sup>

#### **4.3 Political Interference**

Political interference played key role in the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo. It was established that some politicians had a hand in the decline of the crop. They even took Co-operative's money and used it for the purposes of campaign in the electoral politics. Further, politicians were blamed for failing to improve cotton growing on the area.<sup>62</sup> The decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo was also connected to government neglect of the area. Cotton was the only cash crop in the country whose growers were not given any bonus or subsidy. In regard to this, cotton farmers in Karachuonyo were not given any loans to help in developing their farms.<sup>63</sup>

Again, it was established that the laxity of political leaders from Karachuonyo contributed to the decline of cotton growing. Members of Parliament and other political personalities from Luo Nyanza were not advocating for promotion of cotton growing.<sup>64</sup> In many occasions, other politicians pushed for increased prices of other cash crops grown in the area which they represent.

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<sup>60</sup> O. I. with: Caren Achieng, South Kanyaluo on 31-1-2018 and Clement Ochieng, Kanam A on 1-2-2018

<sup>61</sup> O. I. with: Jane Auma Okumu, Kakdhimu East on 1-2-2018, Caren Achieng, Caren Achieng, South Kanyaluo on 31-1-2018, Wilson Oremo, North-East Karachuonyo on 6-2-2018 and John Wando, Koyugi on 5-2-2018

<sup>62</sup> O. I. with: Shem Okello, Wangchieng on 26-7-2018

<sup>63</sup> O. I. with Frank Otieno, Kamser Nyakongo on 31-1-2018

<sup>64</sup> O. I. with: Benard Ogutu, Kanam A on 1-2-2018

No such concern was strongly being heard in favour of cotton. Low prices and delayed payment culminated to the decline of cotton growing. This was majorly due poor advocacy by the political leaders who hail from Karachuonyo in particular, and in general, Luo Nyanza.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.4 Corruption in the Cotton Sub-sector

Corruption and cheating dominated the buying of cotton in Karachuonyo. This was seen in the area of mismanagement of the Co-operative Societies. The study established that many Farmers' Co-operative Societies were ill-managed and their officers corrupt.<sup>66</sup> At times they **took cotton** from the farmers in two consecutive deliveries only to come back and pay for the first delivery. The officers entreated the farmers to be patient but the end, the money was not eventually paid to the farmers. Sometimes they could receive the money and redeposit in the bank to earn interest at the expense of the farmers. This resulted to closure of these Farmers' Unions for fear of security, thus resulting to the decline of cotton growing. This discouraged cotton farmers in Karachuonyo.<sup>67</sup>

Cotton production in Karachuonyo was characterized by other aspects of malpractices such as cheating. This was experienced at the buying posts when cotton farmers could be defrauded through faulty weighing scales. This situation was exacerbated by the mass ignorance of cotton farmers due to illiteracy which was rampant at that time. This necessitated the need to allow farmers to be accompanied by those who knew how to read the scales.<sup>68</sup> Far from the challenge of reading the scale, the initial scales that were used for cotton were replaced by scales that were used in buying sisal. These scales had rusty tough springs and could hardly give the exact weight of cotton. The middlemen preferred using the rusty tough spring-scale which they used to defraud cotton farmers. Through this, the middlemen collected so much cotton that recorded low kilograms.<sup>69</sup> This immensely discouraged the cotton farmers in Karachuonyo.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> O. I. with: Lukas Ouko, Wangchieng on 6-2-2018 and Ododa Ogola, Kanyipir on 21-7-2018

<sup>67</sup> O. I. with: John Wando, Koyugi on 5-2-2018, O. I. with: Lukas Ouko and John Oduar Ogot both from Wangchieng on 6-2-2018

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. and Siprine Anyango, Kokwanyo West on 8-2-2018

<sup>69</sup> O. I. with: Silvant Nyandega, the Chairperson, Wang'chieng Farmers' Co-operative Society, Rambira on 6-2-2018



#### 4.5 Bad Weather and Cotton Pests

**Drought and cotton pests contributed to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo.** The study found that, fierce drought and pests affected cotton growing in the study area.<sup>70</sup> The Economic Survey of 1975 concurs with the assertions that, cotton yields drastically dropped due to drought and pests.<sup>71</sup> Since farmers in Karachuonyo considered spraying to be expensive, pests continued to infest cotton crops.<sup>72</sup> This situation caused havoc in cotton production, which in turn led to its final decline. This also implies that the government was doing little in providing cotton farmers with pesticides.

Far from drought, adverse cold weather conditions also attributed to low production of cotton. Economic Survey of 1978 reports that total annual production of cotton had stagnated since 1973. There was only slight improvement was recorded in 1977. The bad weather also affected cotton picking. Though prices for cotton had increased in two years to stimulate production, still there was low production of the crop. This is confirmed by the assertion that even as the world demand remained high and producer price of 1977 standing at improved price of Kshs.288 per 100 kgs above 1976 Kshs. 209 per 100 kgs., cotton production did not improve much.<sup>73</sup>

In a bid to counteract the above problems, a new section dealing with credit and finance was created. As a result, loans were given to cotton farmers under block system. In the field, farmers received loans amounting to Shs. 103,535.50. Rachuonyo Co-operative Union, Victoria Co-operative Union and Kendu Bay Ginnery each received Kshs. 500,000 from the Co-operative Bank for cotton buying.<sup>74</sup> As much as these credit facilities were put in place, it is not clear why cotton production did not improve. Could this be due to the fear that the cotton farmers had following the malfunctioning of the Kendu Bay Ginnery engine that had started in 1974? A critical look at the

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<sup>70</sup> O. I. with: Roseline Mbago, Kanam B on 1-2-2018, Lukas Ouko, Wangchieng on 6-2-2018, Caren Achieng, South Kanyaluo on 31-1-2018 and Ododa Ogola, Kanyipir on 21-7-2018

<sup>71</sup> Economic Survey of 1975

<sup>72</sup> South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1969. KNA, pp. 4, 20, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Republic of Kenya. *Economic Survey of 1978*. Nairobi: Central Bureau of Statistics. Ministry of Finance and Planning, p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 190

problem that faced the ginnery is therefore necessary.

#### 4.6 The Engine Problem of 1974: Kendu Bay Cotton Ginnery

Cotton ginneries played undisputed role in the development of cotton growing in Karachuonyo. More particularly, the Kendu Bay Ginnery functioned for greater promotion of cotton growing. However, by 1974 its operation remained at stake and inconsistent due to engine malfunctioning. A letter written by Dr. M.M. Miano, then the Project and Processing Manager addressed to the manager of Kendu Bay Ginnery addresses some concern. It had requested for a spare part for the Kendu Bay Ginnery engine. However, the spare part was not stocked by the Cotton Lint & Seed Marketing Board.<sup>75</sup> This might have been the onset of the engine problem as shown in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: The Defunct Kendu Bay Cotton Ginnery Engine: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 27-12-2017**

Some informants pointed out that the ginnery at Kendu Bay kept on breaking down. For this reason, there was a huge backlog of seed cotton that required ginning. This condition delayed continuous buying of more cotton from farmers. When the engine problem persisted, cotton

<sup>75</sup> Kendu Bay Ginnery Operations, 1973-1979, TP/4/16. KNA, p. 4. Letter by Dr. Miano, the CL&SMB Project and Processing Manager addressed to the Manager, Kendu Bay Ginnery dated 1-8-1974

farmers got discouraged in the production of the crop. This in turn led to the decrease in cotton production in Karachuonyo, hence occasioning the eventual decline.<sup>76</sup>

#### **4.7 Impact of the Decline of Cotton Growing in Karachuonyo**

The decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo adversely impacted on the household income. Oral informants revealed that, not all people in Karachuonyo were in formal employment. Engagement in cotton growing activities in the study area obligated the people of Karachuonyo to meaningful self-employment.<sup>77</sup> Therefore its decline was a drawback in household income among the inhabitants of Karachuonyo. A discussion of these impacts follow in the subsequent sub-sections.

##### **4.7.1 Shift into production of other crops**

It was established that, the decline of cotton growing brought about changes in crop production. Many farmers resorted to growing other crops like millet and groundnuts, which they could use for food and cash crops.<sup>78</sup> The decline of cotton growing occasioned reduction in family income. This resulted to poverty and environmental degradation which was caused by over mining of stones and sand. The mining activities even attracted school going children to provide cheap labour in the quarries.<sup>79</sup> The pictures in figures 2-7 in the later sections enhance the evidence of the decline in cotton growing in Karachuonyo.

##### **4.7.2 Loss of means of livelihoods**

Cotton provided the people of Karachuonyo with means of getting cash income during its production. This enhanced sustenance of livelihoods. Following the decline on cotton growing in Karachuonyo, many cotton stores and ginneries were closed. This led to loss of employment for those who worked in cotton firms and ginneries.<sup>80</sup> Again, many farmers lost their means of livelihoods. This in turn lowered the living standards of the people of Karachuonyo.

##### **4.7.3 Closure of cotton stores and ginneries: Evidence**

The following are among the selected pictures to enhance an indication that cotton growing declined in Karachuonyo: These pictures include, Kendu Bay Pier, Oyuma cotton store, Kandiege cotton store, Omboga cotton store, Rakwaro cotton store, Kendu Bay cotton stores and Kendu Bay ginnery.

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<sup>76</sup> O.I with: Nicholas Juma, Kanyipir on 21-8-2017 and John Akoko Kwanya, Kokoth Kateng on 11-2-2018

<sup>77</sup> O. I. with: Benjamin Omollo, South Kanyaluo on 31-1-2018; John Ouso Andele, South Kanyaluo on 31-1-2018

<sup>78</sup> O.I. with John Oduar Ogot, Wangchieng on 6-2-2018; Roseline Mbago, Kanam B on 1-2-2018

<sup>79</sup> O.I. with: Lukas Ouko, Wangchieng on 6-2-2018

<sup>80</sup> O.I. with: Nicholas Juma, Kanyipir on 21-8-2017



**Figure 2: The Kendu Bay Pier: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 27-12-2017**

The Pier shown above has now been totally abandoned and no any kind of transportation activities go on. It functioned as an important point from which cotton was transported to and from Kendu Bay Ginnery. The ginned cotton was shipped by steamer to Kisumu for KICOMI and to the international market. Those who used to operate this pier were mainly Asians. This was a better collaboration during the time Small and Co., owned and operated the Kendu Bay Ginnery. African workers mainly served here as loaders and watchmen.<sup>81</sup> It has now remained an anchor upon which fishermen tie their fishing boats. And for the hook and line fishermen, it is a good place where they can hinge themselves while fishing. There are temporary structures serving as hotel premises; it is a recreational point for the locals of Kendu Bay and its environs. This is a clear indication that cotton growing had drastically declined in Karachuonyo.

<sup>81</sup> O. I. with: Frank Otieno, Kamser Nyakongo on 31-1-2018





**Figure 3: Oyuma Cotton Store: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 31-1-2018**

The above used to be a cotton store. It is located at Oyuma market along Kendu Bay-Pala road. Following the decline of cotton growing, the place now serves as a dispensary.



**Figure 4: Kandiego Cotton Store: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 1-2-2018**

The above used to be a cotton store. It is located at Kandiego market along Kadel-Homa Lime road. It also served as office for Kibiri Cotton Co-operative Society that served Kanyipir, Koyugi and Kawadhgone-Nyongo locations. Following the decline in cotton growing, the structure is currently being used a store for 'boda' (motorcycle) operators. At one time, it also served as chief's office.



**Figure 5: Omboga Cotton Store: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 12-2-2018**

The above used to be a cotton store. It is located at Omboga market along Adiedo-Oyugis road. It also served as office for Kanyaluo Cotton Co-operative Society. Following the decline in cotton growing, the structure is currently abandoned. It is completely dilapidated and almost in ruins.



**Figure 6: Rakwaro Cotton Store: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 15-3-2018**



The above used to be a cotton store. It is located at Rakwaro market along Homa Bay-Kisumu road. Following the decline in cotton growing, the structure is being used as a worship centre for the residents of Rakwaro market and the surrounding.



**Figure 7: Kendu Bay Cotton Ginnery: Photo taken by Shem Oricho on 27-12-2017**

The above used to be cotton ginnery within the ginnery. It is located in Kendu Bay Township on the road heading to Kendu Bay Pier. Following the decline in cotton growing, the structures are desolate and not in any meaningful use. The structure houses a non-functional engine that was in the past used in the ginning of cotton in Karachuonyo. Within the same compound are cotton stores which are currently being used as rental houses for the residents of Kendu Bay Township.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper has analyzed the decline in cotton production from the mid-1970s-1980. Factors that led to the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo have been discussed. These are: poor marketing policy, delayed payment and seed issuance, political interference, corruption in the cotton sub-sector, bad weather and cotton pests, the engine problem of 1974: Kendu Bay Cotton Ginnery and the impact of the decline of cotton growing. The impact of the decline of cotton growing in Karachuonyo has been seen since reduced household income. This is because cotton was the only cash crop in Karachuonyo that made people to get good cash in lumpsome. The decline also caused changes in crop production since people shifted to growing of other crops such

as millet, maize, beans and groundnuts. These crops did not fetch as much as did cotton. It also led to closure of cotton stores and ginneries.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: the government should not neglect certain communities and areas that are able to produce certain cash crops or commodities; the government should study its own needs and the needs of the citizens and respond accordingly rather than continuing with colonial policies. Such resulted into delayed payment, low prices for cotton, interference by politicians and corruption. These colonial policies may not necessarily be suitable to the changing needs of the society; policies by the government were formulated top-down. This means that the policies were formulated by the colonial administration and rolled down to the citizens. It appears that some of these colonial policies were inherited by the independent regimes of Kenya. For the policies to succeed, there should be a lot of interaction between policy makers and the people upon whom the policy is implemented. Loans should be provided to those who grow and intend to grow cotton. For the loans to be effectively utilized, close supervision by the Agricultural Officers should be enhanced. The government should avail credit facilities with lower rates that can be affordable to many cotton farmers. Workable marketing strategy for cotton should be put in place and there should also be policies that guide the marketing of cotton. In the light of the aforementioned findings, this study therefore recommends that a study be conducted on: “Impact of Textile Exports on the Decline of Cotton Production in Kenya.”



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