

The study focused on factors affecting performance of women enterprises in ASAL areas and was carried out in Kitui town and its environs. The areas have adverse weather conditions and retrogressive social economic factors. Women of these areas have lived with these constraints for centuries. They have existed on the productivity provided locally and have used their knowledge to devise coping and adaptive strategies. There is stunted business growth and also failure with no information available to explain these trends. Research is needed to demonstrate how these conditions in the ASAL areas account for the registered entrepreneurial activities. The study targeted women groups which are comprised of women entrepreneurs owning and operating businesses in Kitui Township and its environs. As at July 2011 there were 45 women groups in Kitui Township and its environs with a total population of 553 business women. This research used 4 women from each of these women groups to make a sample size of 180 women. The primary data was collected by use of a questionnaire while secondary data was collected from secondary sources which include records from the Ministry of gender and sports, municipal council of Kitui, women group offices, books, journals and any other brochure on women entrepreneurs. The findings were presented using bar graphs, pie charts and frequency tables. The study found that women enterprises are affected by natural conditions such as erratic rainfall, very high temperatures, and scanty vegetations. Social economic factors such as family responsibilities, lack of time and finance and others affects the performances. The study also identified negative perception as the major hindrance to women in identification and exploitation of viable business opportunities in the areas. The study concluded that women enterprises in ASAL areas need to be provided with proper incentives such as supportive environment, finance, performance recognition, infrastructure development and security for a better performance in terms of expansion and employment creation. The study also recommended several measures in assisting women entrepreneurs. First the government should provide affordable funds to the business women and consider extending the grace period to a period of six month. This will allow the women time to use the fund to generate wealth before paying off the loan. The government should also provide infrastructures such as water supplies, electricity, operating sheds and roads that are necessary for growth of businesses. Government should facilitate training and seminar in ASAL areas to equip women with the necessary entrepreneurial skills of business management, book keeping and financial accounting.