

Abstract

Changaa distillation and consumption has been legally banned in Kenya since 1980. However, the industry has continued to thrive in all parts of the country and is particularly vibrant in Nairobi's informal settlement areas. Literature on the main features and characteristics of the industry is scanty. Using Mathare Valley as a pilot study area, this survey sought: to examine the nature, evolution, extent and operations of the industry; establish its linkages with other sectors of the economy and the specific socio-economic importance of the industry; establish why the distillation ban has not been effectively implemented; and suggest the way forward for this informal industry. The study concludes that the industry has important economic value and its current ban is untenable and undesirable because of state complicity in its operations. It recommends that the industry be legalised and appropriate regulatory measures be put in place.