NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PROGRAMME

Project R8211

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT[1]

Annex A- Scientific Report

An investigation into the formative livelihoods of rural youth in East Africa

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Preface

This Annex, presents a concise and integrated discussion of the significance of key project findings. In so doing, it aims to complement that provided in the "front-end" FTR, which reports in a more structured manner achievements against the Logframe. This annex is, in turn, supported by Annexes B1 and B2 which present more detailed data arising from policy analysis and field level investigations that were undertaken.

Authorship of this annex rests solely with myself, the Principal Investigator. Consequently, and inevitably, it reflects the extent of my understanding and the slants of my interpretation of project process, outputs and outcomes. However, the project was originally conceived and implemented as a series of partnerships across a range of interested organisations. In Uganda these included The Department of Agricultural Extension/Education, Makerere University, Matilong Youth Mixed Farming Organisation (MYMFO), Save The Children UK, The District Agricultural Training and Information Centres Programme (DATIC) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). Julius Okwadi, from the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) also provided valuable field support. In Kenya, the project primarily collaborated with World Neighbours and their partners, as well as The Kenya Youth Foundation.

Whilst the effectiveness of these agreements to deliver anticipated project outputs was very uneven it is, nonetheless, important to recognise that progress and any achievements attained were based upon the willingness of a very large number of people to provide the creative space for the investigation to take place.

There are so many people in Kenya and Uganda, both young and old, who offered direct assistance to the project that it is not possible to acknowledge them all by name. However, one person who deserves special recognition is Professor John Gowland Mwangi, of Egerton University, for his steadfast support throughout the project period. Professor Mwangi, whose commitment in sharing his considerable knowledge and experience, unfailing willingness to take on additional responsibilities at times of crisis, and his genuine pleasure in connecting with young people, marked him out as a very special friend to the project.

At Reading University, I wish to acknowledge the kindly support of Professor Rolls, who took time out of his retirement and his allotment to assist me with the design of the RYL questionnaire. Carlos Barahona and Abhay Nath provided needed support in data analysis, and Derek Shepherd provided needed support on just about everything else.

I would also like to acknowledge the considerable assistance over a number of years that that I have received from members of the NRSP team. I offer a special thanks to the "ever young at heart" Margaret Quin who offered me

encouragement right from the days when the prospect of undertaking research on rural youth was merely a forlorn expression on my face. Without her belief these first unsteady steps could have never been taken. The positive support of Buzz Harrison, from the time of the MTR onwards, has been especially valuable in assisting me to move the project towards attainable goals. The project gained a great deal from her acute and critical insights, and willingness to engage with my concerns in an open-minded and creative manner. And finally, Chris Floyd has been more helpful than he can imagine through his consistent reminders that it is important not to dwell too much on the failures, but seek to build on the successes.

When all is said and done, I genuinely believe R8211 has been a worthwhile enterprise, and that considerable benefits from the research project are likely to be felt in the months and years ahead. However, it is still obvious to me that, as things now stand, the project outputs do not fully reflect the value of the support I have received. So thank you all… and not least for your patience.

Abbreviations and acronyms

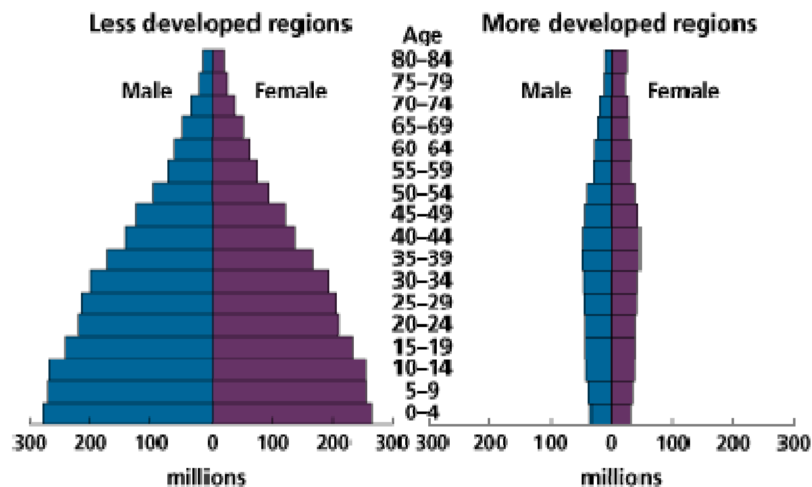
ASAL	Arid and Semi-arid Lands
DATIC	District Agricultural Training and Information Centres Programme
EMCA	Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act
ERSWEC	Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth Employment Creation
FTR	Final Technical Report
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IPERSWEC	Investment Programme for the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation
IRDD	International and Rural Development Department (University of Reading, UK)
KNYP	Kenya National Youth Policy
KRDS	Kenya Rural Development Strategy
LSSP	Land Sector Strategic Plan
MYMFO	Matilong Youth Mixed Farming Organisation
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NAPY	National Action Plan on Youth
NARWS	National Assessment Report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NYP	National Youth Policy
NRSP	Natural Resources Systems Programme
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PI	Principle Investigator
PMA	Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture
PO	Partner Organisation
SDS PEAP	Social Development Sector PEAP Revision Paper
TI	Target Institutions
UFP	Uganda Forestry Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

Whatever one feels about young people, an appreciation of their numbers alone might appear to provide sufficient basis to ensure that policy makers and practitioners around the world would seek to take account of the lives of young people. At the turn of the 21st century, 1.7 billion people — more than one-fourth of the world's six billion people — were between the ages of 10 and 24. (see figure 1.1) And when considering population distribution of less developed countries, one might imagine that the centrality of young people in issues of development and poverty eradication would be self-evident. In Kenya, for example, it is estimated that 34.4% of the population is between the ages of 10 and 24. In Uganda, the same age range makes up around 34.8% of the total population. (US Census Bureau International Data Base) The majority of these young people live in rural areas wherein the majority of the poor reside.

Figure 1.1 Population by Age and Sex: Less and More Developed Regions, 2000



Source: United Nations Population Division, 1998.

However, arguments that draw attention to the importance of youth in society are based on various ideas and lines of reasoning. Common among them are the truistic “youth are our future” viewpoints. Well meaning, though they may be, in reality such notions often serve as vehicles to express “grown up” concerns over the vulnerability of youth and, hence, the importance of the adult world in providing the necessary support and direction. (e.g. Agwanda et al.2004, Collier 1996, Erulkar 2004, Manda et al 2003, Mondo 1996, Naker 2005, Topouzis and Hemrich 1994)

In recent years, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has brought about an increased interest in the study of youth. (McGaw and Wameyo 2005, Meintjes, H. and Bray, R. 2005) However, whilst such studies have made a positive contribution by drawing attention to the capacity of orphans (mostly) to cope with great hardship and respond in innovative and creative ways, the backdrop of HIV/AIDS inevitably reinforces the enduring image of young people as vulnerable, beset with problems and in need of instruction (and not surprisingly a moralistic concern with the sexual behaviour of young people.)

This is part of a broader pattern and there is a clear tendency is for development-oriented research to focus overly on areas of public policy concern. As a result, it is now generally the case that one can learn more about the lives of street children, juvenile delinquents and school-drop outs than one can about the vast majority of 1.7 billion young people whose lives will never make the headlines. And of these, many will be living in rural areas, having been born into families who are dependent on farming of reliant on other forms of natural resources management. To what extent are their interests considered in the shaping of rural development policy? To what extent are their needs met in programmes and projects? How easy is it to hear their voices above the babble of competing demands for attention? Just a few minutes reflection is sufficient to recognise how rarely we, in the international development community, focus on ordinary youth. Reflect on past conferences and workshops, look across the bookshelves, or search the ELDIS web-site. If youth are our future, why has there not a greater investment in trying to understand the role that they may have in bringing our aspirations into reality?

Set against this broad backdrop of concern, R8211 has its immediate origins in a preliminary NRSP scoping study, “Enhancing capacity for enterprise and innovation: an investigation of the livelihood assets and strategies of rural youth in East Africa” (PD111), which was completed in October 2002. (Waldie and Mulhall 2002)Those preliminary investigations revealed that whist youth were widely accepted by development professionals as a significant stakeholder of rural development processes, this was often framed by an underlying concern regarding disruptive “rural-urban migration”. At the field level, development practitioners also acknowledged that, in contrast to the wide availability of gender analysis tools that could be used to account for the particular interests of women and men, suitable frameworks and guidelines to assist in working with young people were largely absent.

At the policy level, the scoping study identified that there was a strong rhetorical commitment from the highest levels of government to ensure the participation of youth in Uganda’s development programmes, though the status of youth policy in ministries other than the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development admittedly received less priority. In Kenya, by contrast, the recognition of youth interests in rural and natural resources policy appeared more implicit than explicit and generally remained subsumed within the more embracing strategies of rural development. The contrast between the two countries, therefore, seemed to provide a valuable context

for a comparative analysis to investigate the impact that variable recognition of youth issues at higher policy levels may have in shaping field-level service provision, youth agency and, hence, livelihood options. On the other hand, in both countries, government officials freely acknowledged that "youth" was a subject about which little was actually known and that the evidence base for future policy development was extremely poor. Indeed initial literature reviews indicated that very few academic studies of youth in "normal" situations have been carried out in rural East Africa. Of these a fair proportion are retrospective evaluations of the rise and inevitable fall of state run schemes such as the Young Farmers Programme (in Uganda) and the Youth Polytechnic Programme (in Kenya), and mark the seeping away of the naïve optimism of the newly independent state. (e.g. Coe 1973, Dey 1990, Kazungu 1978, Oira 1982)

In consequence, the Scoping Study mooted the basic and fairly uncontroversial view that a better understanding of youth livelihoods could strengthen future rural development and natural resources management policy and practice. The study further suggested that poor understanding of the interests and needs of mainstream youth was presently impairing the effectiveness service delivery, and that this in turn indicated a broader problem within the polices and institutions context. R8211 sought to make a start in responding to these issues.

1.2 Research Objectives

The starting premise of R8211 was to regard youth as major stakeholders of improvement in NRM. However, we reasoned that, to be proactive in investing in sustainable NRM, youth must have adequate opportunities to build their livelihoods on their own terms. We believed that such opportunities are presently being limited by a lack of information and understanding of how young people living in rural areas of Uganda and Kenya access and make use of local natural resource endowments to shape their livelihood strategies. The Project aimed to make a positive contribution by gathering evidence on the particular livelihood strategies and interests of rural youth, and in seeking ways whereby these could be incorporated into policy and supported by practice.

Initially, due largely to its identification of a particular social category the focus of the research, appeared unproblematic. However, it quickly became apparent that the kind of questions we sought to explore amounted to a complex challenge, and one that required the adoption of a broad perspective that encompassed an understanding of the livelihood strategies of young people, the policies that shape NR-management and the institutions that serve rural areas. As a consequence, three interrelated research objectives (represented in the log frame as Outputs) and activity clusters were pursued to achieve the broader aim.

The project aspired to

- Provide policy-makers, development practitioners and academics with a clearer understanding of the present and potential role of NRM in the lives and livelihoods strategies of rural youth. This was to be achieved through the presentation of evidence gathered from a programme of field level research into the livelihood strategies of rural youth.

- Enable policy shapers and makers to become more sensitive to and supportive of the aspirations of those rural youth who sought to utilise natural resources as a key component of their livelihood strategies. This was to be achieved through gaining a critical understanding of the limitations of current policy and practice based on the review of current policies, institutions and processes that influence the lives of young people in rural areas.

- Support the efforts of those rural youth seeking to build their livelihoods upon the management of natural resources by enhancing service provision through the dissemination of "models of good practice" arising from the research.

2. 0 Research approaches and activities

2.1 Introduction

A wide range of research activities, informed by different methodologies, was carried out during the course of the project. However, by and large, these clustered around two distinct elements of the investigation: firstly the investigation of rural youth livelihoods and, secondly, the analysis of policy and practice. This section is, accordingly, structured to reflect these output-related points of focus. In addition to describing, in summary form, the research activities undertaken, this section also provides a critical discussion of the relative successes and failures of various approaches. In particular it reflects upon the particular challenge in sustaining "the partnership approach" that had originally underpinned the rationale of the entire research programme. Whilst certain elements of this discussion may, therefore, be considered as "findings", it was felt appropriate that learning points related to the process of project management and implementation should be presented here, rather than in the later sections which focus on findings relating to the stated objectives.

2.2 The investigation of rural youth livelihoods

Two distinct approaches to field-level primary data collection were undertaken. The first approach was to facilitate the establishment of a joint programme of collaborative fieldwork by working with "partner organisations" in Uganda, and it is these that are explained in the following sub-section.

2.2.1 Phase 1: Partnerships and participatory approaches

Livelihoods of rural youth investigated, and relevance of this new knowledge for NR policy and practice better understood (output 1)

Activities under Output One concerned the investigation of form and character of youth livelihoods in rural areas of Uganda and Kenya. As such they concerned the development of "new knowledge" that might not, due to its unusual or challenging nature, be easily absorbed into the local institutional context. Therefore, in an effort to ensure timely uptake of project findings by local TIs through encouraging local ownership, it was felt appropriate that wherever possible the field investigations should be achieved through a collaborative effort between project and local "partners".

Initial ideas for implementing the fieldwork programme were first explored with a wide range of in-country organisations during a Collaborator Assessment

Mission to Uganda (January 2003). A couple of months later these ideas were shaped and repackaged through discussion into a tentative schedule of activities during a participatory Partners Workshop, which was attended by a range of government and non-government organisations that had shown an interest during the initial round of talks[2] (April 2003). The tentative schedule was, in turn, moderated and agreed during a subsequent series of meetings and communications and the respective partner roles and responsibilities agreed. At the same workshop, discussions were also held to explore the institutional context within which the project would be operating. (Walker, M. 2003a) To this end, participants assisted by identifying the range of stakeholders, their importance and influence to project objectives. This preliminary analysis served to underpin the initial project communication strategy. (See Table 1.1 below)

As indicated above, the strategy for the implementation of the programme was premised on the principle of partner ownership: namely that partner institutions would take a major responsibility for data collection activities (that had agreed by them to be valuable to their own self-development) and would do so using existing field level resources. The rationale being that through such means, lessons learnt could more quickly be absorbed into local organisations and thus be effectively used to bring about needed changes in policy and practice (as required by Output 3).

It was originally planned that data collection exercises in Uganda would take place across four of the districts in which the POs were operating. These were Tororo (DATIC), Soroti (NAADS) Kasese (Save The Children) and Katakwi (MYMFO). A series of qualitative research tools were selected on the basis of their flexibility and suitability for use by PO field staff. The project was minded to cause minimal disruption to busy PO schedules and looked to develop an extensive rather than intensive programme of work. The basic tools chosen were focus group discussions with youth groups and semi-structured interviews with key informants. (In addition, the programme involved the use of reflective journals and an embedded photographic survey, which are discussed below.)

The field investigation was organised in distinct stages to address five main themes that had emerged from the Partner's Workshop. It sought to explore:

- the livelihood opportunities available to rural youth,
- the factors constraining or enhancing youth participation in the development process,
- the influence of poverty,
- issues of diversification and change.

[2] In Uganda formal partner organisations were The department of Agricultural Extension/Education, Makerere University, Matilong Youth Mixed Farming Organisation (MYMFO), Save The Children UK, The District Agricultural training and Information Centres Programme (DATIC) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) Julius Okwadi, a research assistant on the project, worked for the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO). In Kenya, in addition to Professor Mwangi of Egerton University, the project primarily collaborated with World Neighbours and their partners as well as The Kenya Youth Foundation.

- and awareness of rights.

For further details of the Uganda fieldwork programme see Walker, M. 2003b, 2003c, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c

Table 1.1: A preliminary stakeholder analysis developed by participants at the partners' workshop (April 2003)

Stakeholder Analysis	High importance	Low Importance
High Influence	Min. of Gender, Labour and Social Development, National Youth Council, Min. of Education & Sports, Min. of Land, Water & NR, National Forest Secretariat, National Agricultural Advisory Services, District Agricultural Training and Advisory Centres, World Vision, National Environment Management Agency,	National Youth council, Department for International Development, International and Rural Development Department, DANIDA, National Agricultural Research Organisation, LC5 Chairperson, DENIVA, Local politicians, Village elders.
Low Influence	FAO (youth section), Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya Youth Foundation, National Youth Forum, YES, Matilong Youth Mixed Farming Organisation, Rural Youth, DATIC, PCY, Associations for youth (for youth), Rural Service Providers, Youth Ending Hunger, AT Uganda, Youth associations (by youth), Mixed farmer groups, Mukono Multi-purpose Youth Organisation, Faith based rural organisations e.g. Youth for the Mission.	Armed forces, Prison Services, World Neighbours (Kenya), CDRN/UPDNET, Farmers of the Future Programme, Intermediate Technology Group Kenya.

Initially, the agreed implementation strategy was that each new stage would be initiated by a visit from project staff to introduce and test the methodology with field staff of the local PO, with the expectation that the work would then "cascade" to the other field sites. However, as it transpired, despite reaching the formal agreement of partners to operate on this basis, their capacity to deliver reliable data on a timely basis did not, in the end, match their genuine enthusiasm for participating. As a consequence, the investments that the project had originally made available to support data collection (for example in

testing of methods, training and monitoring) were increasingly being relied upon as the mechanism for data collection itself. Inevitably, the resources available were insufficient to do this properly. In due course, through lack of progress and the increasing logistical challenges arising, activities in Kasese were halted. Further, the deteriorating security situation in northern Uganda led to the subsequent withdrawal of MYMFO in Katakwi. In the end, activities were only sustained in two of the four original districts.

The commitment to a “partnership approach” inevitably entailed a degree of loss of direct management control. The obvious difficulty of retracting from the spirit of the partnership agreements meant that, until the MTR at least (February 2004), the fieldwork programme stumbled uncertainly forwards. One of the significant revelations of the MTR was the paradox that the continued interest exhibited by partner organisations and other policy level TIs in engaging with the project without a concomitant commitment to strengthening the evidence base. The rapid “progress” that had been made with respect the willingness of a wide range of influential TIs to enter the debate demonstrated that the project was unwittingly in danger of becoming a vehicle for advocating the interests and needs for youth, rather than investigating and explaining them. The Project and NRSP was therefore faced with the unexpected dilemma of organisations showing a desire to change their ways prior to any evidence that this was needed!

The use of reflective journals and a self-administered photographic survey that were brought together in an innovative effort to establish longitudinal case studies of livelihood development is also worthy of note. (Walker, M. 2005) In Soroti and Tororo Districts, a total of 22 youth were asked to keep a weekly journal that recorded their main livelihood activities and reflections upon these over a 12-month period. Once a month these the journals were collated into summary monthly reports, which were collected by local partner organisations (POs). The POs were expected to assist the process by providing encouragement to the diarists, but also to support them by discussing issues arising and offering support where possible. After the first three months, each writer was provided with a disposable camera and given 2-3 days to conduct a photographic survey of what they regarded as their key assets and resources. Once the films were processed, the informants were brought together to explain what they had photographed and why. The informants retained one copy of the photographs, with another made for use by the project. At the end of the reporting period, semi-structured interviews were held with the journal writers to further explore particular areas of interest and to clarify key elements of their livelihood strategies.

The journals did provide useful data on “normal life”, the local resources, and the daily challenges in accessing and managing these to meet livelihood strategies. The photographic survey was particularly useful in revealing the manner in which individual personal interests shape individual livelihood strategies and hence the management of local livelihood resources. Overall, however, the longitudinal case study approach met with mixed success. Whilst the demands of journal writing inevitably restricted the sample to people with sufficient literacy skills, it was also clear that some respondents

were more interested in writing than others- so at the end there was considerable variability in the quality of the journal data from the points of view of clarity in detail and also regularity of diary entry. However, a more critical problem affecting the journal writing concerned the inability of local partners consistently to provide the agreed level of monitoring and support upon which the implementation of the study had been premised. In one district, for example, it was later discovered that the local facilitator had told the journal writers that they would have to deliver their reports since he did not have the time to collect them. The lack of sustained engagement between local partners and the journal writers was unexpected given the interest that had been expressed in these innovative techniques. The mutual learning across the service user- provider interface that had been anticipated to take place through this activity did not occur, and thus the opportunity to improve service delivery through this means was not realised.

These issues notwithstanding, project experience suggests that there is considerable potential in these techniques. Firstly, the approach provided considerable opportunity for young people to express and demonstrate their agency, as both critical informants but also as individuals making critical choices over the use of resources in pursuance of livelihood objectives. The opportunity for informants to reflect upon their own livelihoods, and to rationalise their normal day-to day experiences through self-constructed narratives, provides a valuable, critical and challenging counterpoint to "received wisdom". Reflecting on their photographs, many of which revealed intimate aspects of their lives, young informants often commented with considerable pride of their efforts and achievements. (Some examples of these photographs are included below.) So as a means of providing excluded and disadvantaged a voice, these particular techniques tested by R8211 are worthy of further consideration. Both the journals and the photographs also provided highly intimate responses, and through these came the powerful reminder that it is often personal interest (and not simply need) that shapes emerging livelihood strategies. With the benefits of a more effective implementation strategy to better support the respondents, and a clearer analytical framework to shape the analysis of the data generated, these techniques may prove very useful in future research that seeks to build a longitudinal perspective of rural livelihoods.

Photo 1: Matoke plantation

My matoke plantation. It provides me with food and income. The crop is easy to manage and the bananas have a good taste. (AJ – female informant)

Photo 2: Irrigating Tomatoes

Me drip irrigating my tomatoes using bottles. They are easy to plant, will grow quickly and will provide me with food and income. (AJ- female informant)

Photo 3: Brick Site

Two men at the brick site where I work. It is one way for the youths to earn a living (E C male informant)

Photo 4: Bicycle repair

A bicycle repairer fixing my bike. The bike has cost me a lot of money. (E C male informant)

Photo 5: Pigs

These two pigs belong to our group. They are a cross between the land race and white large varieties. They are a source of meat, fat and manure and they generate income. The group allowed me to photograph their pigs to raise publicity for the group and I also like the pigs because they are humble with people. (NS – female informant)

Photo 6: Drama Group

Group members performing drama, dance and music. It was an exciting day for me. It was interesting and people were happy. (OM- male informant)

2.2.2 Phase 2: The formal survey

In response to the problems of establishing a firm evidence base, following the MTR, and with support and guidance from NRSP management, the project developed a second approach to field-level data collection. This time, the PI took direct responsibility for the planning of a formal questionnaire survey that would gather data across the key themes. The Survey was designed and pre-tested between April and July 2004 (Mwangi, J.G. 2004a) and then administered to 420 respondents across three districts of Kenya and two in Uganda. (See the Annex B2 and B3)

The sites in Uganda (Tororo and Soroti) were chosen on the basis of these being the districts where Project Partners were operating. In Kenya, choice of the three districts (Kakamega, Kitui and Narok) was also partially influenced by these being districts where World Neighbours and their partners were operating. However, they additionally met the criteria of offering a range of agro–ecological and cultural contexts [3] and hence, we assumed, a range of contrasting livelihood possibilities for rural youth that would become apparent in the data. It was this sense of contrast, rather than a desire to seek a representative sample of Kenya as a whole, that shaped this decision.

Table 2.1 The sample structure and number of respondents interviewed In Kakamega, Kitui And Narok Districts

CATEGORY	GENDER	NUMBER			TOTAL
		KK	K	N	
Primary school pupils	Boys	10	9	10	**29**
	Girls	11	11	10	**32**
	Total	**21**	**20**	**20**	**61**
Secondary School students	Boys	12	11	10	**33**
	Girls	11	10	10	**31**
	Total	**23**	**21**	**20**	**64**
Out of school youth	Males	10	10	10	**30**
	Females	10	10	10	**30**
	Total	**20**	**20**	**20**	**60**
	Total	**64**	**61**	**60**	**185**
				Grand Total	**185**

[3] Generally Kakamega has a high rainfall and good soils, in contrast with the semi-arid and more pastoral areas of Kitui and Narok. In addition, we were interested to explore the possible influence of ethnicity. The Kakamega sample was predominantly Luhya, the Kitui sample Kamba, and the Narok sample Maasai. Cultural differences with respect to the expectations of youth roles and responsibilities, we reasoned, were likely to shape early livelihoods opportunities.

The survey in Kenya, which was administered by a team led by Professor Mwangi of Egerton University, proved extremely successful in generating valid and reliable data. The Uganda survey, for reasons of having to work within the context of existing partnerships, was facilitated through field staff of partner organisations. The data gathered here proved less reliable and showed clear signs of "enumerator fatigue". Whilst subsequent review has shown that there is still much workable data here, these were not open to straightforward preliminary analysis, unlike the Kenya data that are presented and discussed in Annex B2.

A range of disparate issues and factors shaped the thinking on the purpose and scope of the questionnaire. Firstly, as indicated above, the "need" for the survey arose from the "failure" of other, more qualitative research approaches that had partly been chosen by the project on the basis of their suitability for use by field level partner. The choice of a more formal survey approach was, in effect, a means by which the PI could take a more directive role in shaping the data gathering process.

Secondly, whilst the use of a formal questionnaire was not envisaged at the start of the project, its unexpected emergence mid-way through did enable the PI to draw upon accumulated data and experience in its design. Unlike in the case with many surveys, therefore, there was no need to start with a "blank sheet", This provided the possibility of designing an instrument that was, at one and the same time, highly-focussed yet extensive in its coverage of themes. Information was sought that would be new to the project, whereas other lines of enquiry sought to validate, through this "triangulation" of methodology, ideas and understandings that has already emerged from project activities.

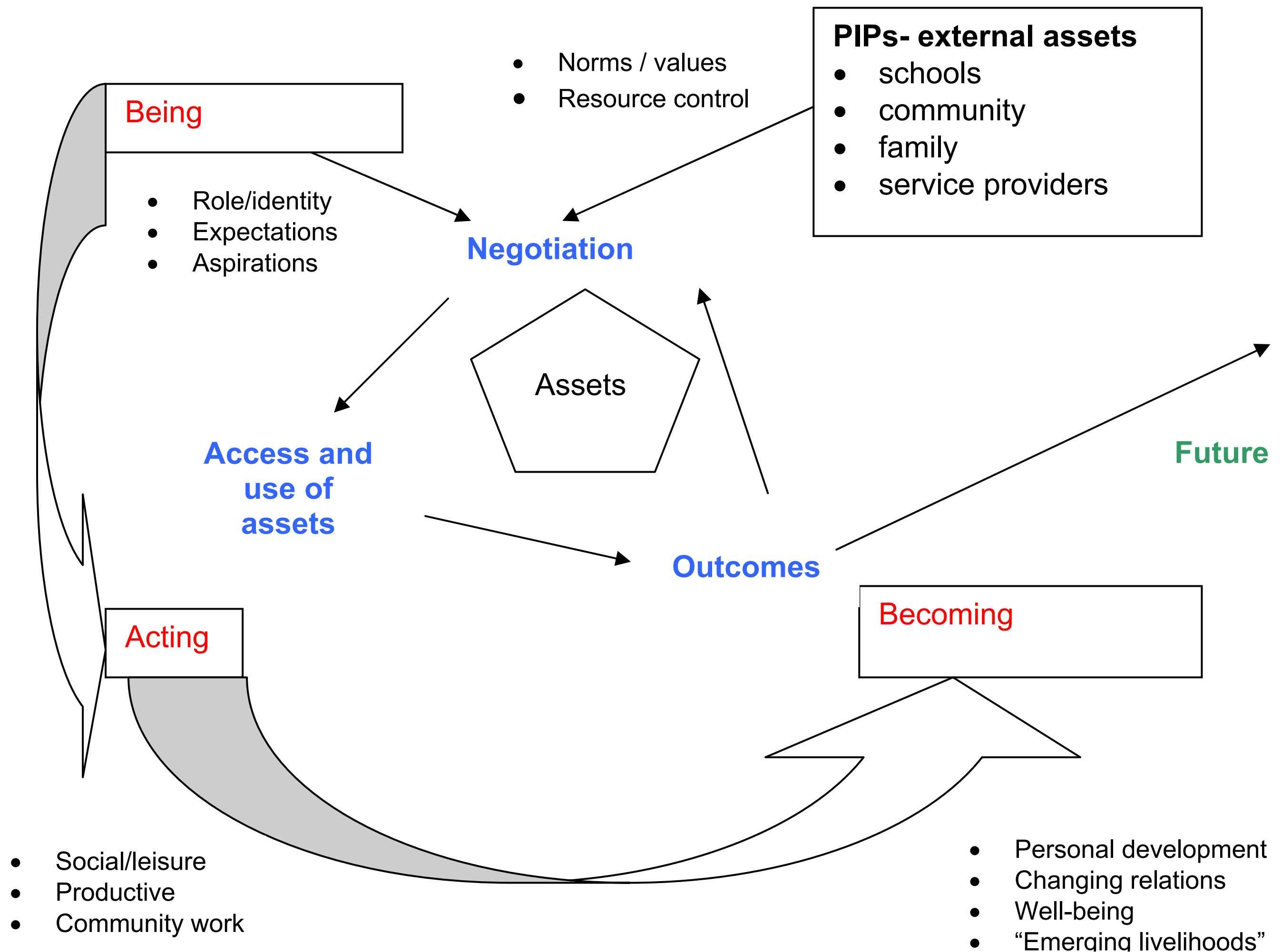
Thirdly, a conscious decision was made to develop a "weighty" instrument that would yield a considerable amount of data across a range of issues. It would have been simpler to design a questionnaire that looked specifically at one aspect of the lives of rural youth, say group membership. However, upon reflection of the wider paucity of data available on rural youth livelihoods, it was felt appropriate to try to shape the survey in such a manner that it could assist in responding to this wider "need" rather than simply limit its scope to meeting the more narrow objectives of the project.

Finally, the instrument was designed to reflect the conceptual understandings of "youth". For unlike many surveys, in this instance the category of respondent is in itself problematic. "Youth" was regarded as subject of enquiry and not simply regarded as the source of "information". In framing the research instrument, a concerted attempt was made to avoid essentialising "youth" as yet another disadvantaged category at which service providers should target their limited resources. Instead, it was designed in an effort to explore more dynamic aspects of "youth-hood" as a socially constructed process of transition, and an aspect of the longer life-course. From this

perspective, it was hoped that “youth” could be viewed as a prism through which the process by which livelihoods are established, and key aspects of social change and innovation in rural societies may be better understood.

The conceptual framework, indicated below as figure 2.1, was largely constructed on the basis of earlier project learning experiences. This image provided a helpful reference point for the identification of possible avenues of enquiry and key questions, early formulations of which are indicated in the text box. It helped capture, something of the important challenge in regarding youth at one and the same time as about “being” as well as “becoming”. It indicates that the underlying process of change, in relation to livelihoods at least, is inevitably related to negotiation and use of key assets. And finally it drew attention to the fact that this process was influenced and mediated through institutions and policies.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework: The shaping of youth livelihoods



2.3 Reviewing Policy and Practice

A series of visits to field-based organisations in Kenya (January 2003) and Uganda (September 2003 and again in January 2004) were undertaken to identify the ways and means by which the interests and needs of young people were being incorporated into rural development project and programmes. A particular objective of these visits was to identify possible "models of good practice" of working with young rural people that could usefully be more widely disseminated. However, whilst these visits were always informative, visit after visit reaffirmed a general failure to engage with young people in a strategic manner. In some cases, it was argued that that there was no need to take a specific interest in youth since they would inevitably benefit, as youth were part of the community and the organisation ran "community-development programmes". In other instances, where brochures had clearly indicated the existence of specific activities focused on youth (and hence the purpose of the visit), the rhetoric of commitment was seldom matched by real investment. In general, most organisations visited were unable to provide data that showed whether or how young people had benefited from their programmes, could seldom articulate which if any of their activities and services provided to "the community" had a particular relevance for the interests and needs of youth, or even whether working with youth required a special approach, new skills or understandings. The prevalence of service-driven interventions being mounted without any consideration of, or commitment to understand, the particular interests and needs of young people reflected a commonplace paternalistic attitude of "we know best". In other words, with but few exceptions, the visits served to inform the project on persistence of indifferent rather than good practice. (Mwangi 2003, 2004b)

Faced with this situation, it was decided that a detailed review and analysis of existing policy frameworks and strategies might be helpful in explaining what appeared to be a lack of strategic commitment to youth at the level of implementation. In both Uganda and Kenya, throughout the duration of the project, visits were made to a range of government organisations to assess the extent to which interests of youth were being represented in policy and strategy. In the course of these investigations in addition to the discussions held with key office holders, relevant documentation relating to the rural development as well as cross-sectoral social development strategies identified and whenever possible gathered. These documents were later to form the basis of the policy review and analysis. (Annex B1: Waldie 2005b)

In an effort to cover many of the areas of policy that inevitably touch the lives and livelihoods of young rural people, the review was fairly wide ranging in terms of the policy documents consulted. (See text box 2.1) However, given the ever-changing policy context, it was approached as illustrative review rather than a comprehensive discussion that covered each and every relevant policy area. For example, neither the Health nor Education Sectors were explored; though with respect the latter, further investigation into support for formative livelihoods through non-formal education may well prove instructive.

Text Box 2.1: Policy and strategy documents reviewed

Uganda

Poverty Eradication Action Plan
National Environment Action plan
Land Sector Strategic Plan
Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture
NAADS Core Document and Programme Implementation
Uganda Forestry Policy
National Youth Policy and National Action Plan on Youth

Kenya

Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation
Investment Programme for the ERSWEC
Kenya Rural Development Strategy
National Assessment Report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development
Environment Management and Coordination Act
Kenya National Youth Policy

Source: Waldie 2005b

There are a number of recognised approaches to policy analysis, some of which are fairly sophisticated in their frameworks. Initially, it was anticipated that the material gathered would support a complex analysis of policy arguments. For example, exploration of the objectification of "youth" as a social category, and the relationship of this to ideas of change, process and other social issues through the use of narratives, rhetoric and "persuasive discourse". Further, it was originally anticipated that the analysis could assess the extent to which such "persuasive discourse" related to the evidence base, and was supported by "knowledge". However, from an initial investigation, it quickly became apparent that the fundamental issues were less concerned with how youth were "represented" than whether they were being represented at all.

In the review, therefore, it was deemed appropriate to follow a basic approach, reminiscent on early gender analyses, and to focus on Identifying the extent to which expression of the particular needs of young people are visible in current rural and related cross-cutting development policies and strategies. Conversely, the review also sought to identify the extent to which rural issues in general and NRM issues in particular are considered within national youth policies and strategies

3.0 Results

3.1 Introduction

This section presents key findings from review and analysis of policy documents (Waldie 2005b, Annex B1) and the questionnaire survey (Waldie 2005a, Annex B2). Findings from the policy review are presented first, since this introductory discussion helps to frame the context through which the relevance and meaning of the field data can be understood. In section four we shall return once again to explore further conceptual issues arising.

3.2 Representation of youth lives and livelihoods in policy and practice

> *"The problems of young people as well as their visions and aspirations are an essential element of the challenges Uganda and future generations are facing today. The capacity of society is based on, upon other elements, its ability to effectively incorporate the contributions of youth in building the country" (NAPY p.1)*

The extensive policy review found that, for the most part, youth are only occasionally visible in NR-related policy documents from Uganda and Kenya. (For further information see Annex B1.) When youth are mentioned within policy and strategy documents, this is often in the form of unexpected and "in passing" comments, with little supporting discussion to provide a meaningful sense of context. Further, reflection on key policy arguments has shown that in definition of the problems and discussions of scope, extent and causation, little recognition is made of the lives or livelihoods of rural youth. Clearly, without explicit recognition of youth in mainstream statements of policy intent, it is unsurprising that there is an absence of focus on youth in implementation strategies or assessments of impact.

Whilst the influence of "outside" donor thinking was apparent in The Kenyan and Ugandan National Youth Policies, the occasional references to youth that appear in NR-related documents do seem to reflect genuine local concerns that often lie at the heart of rural development policy and practice. So whilst the infrequent mentions of youth do not relate to inconsequential matters, their ad hoc and piecemeal treatment falls far short from providing any considered basis for the development of more substantive policies and strategies to deal with these issues. Therefore any concern over the lack of visibility of youth, emerges primarily from this contradiction between their stated importance and a failure to explain this in a clear and coherent fashion.

The review also found that there is considerable uncertainty and ambiguity as to the meaning of youth. In most of the policy documents reviewed it is commonplace for “youth” to be mentioned without any definition at all, suggesting it is regarded as an unproblematic category whose meaning is either self-evident or unimportant. On the latter point, it is worth noting the frequency with which youth is simply treated as a residual “bolt-on” term to the phrase “women and…” On other occasions the review observed that “children” and “youth” are used interchangeably without any suggestion of a change of meaning. For example

> *The protection of vulnerable groups - women, children, the disabled, and others - features prominently as a desired outcome of the LSSP, in concurrence with a broader positive effect on poverty. (LSSP p.20)*
>
> *“Disadvantaged groups, particularly women, children and disabled” (NEAP p.86)*
>
> *“Groups such as women, the youth and people living in ASAL areas have often been left out of the decision-making process despite the key role they play in agriculture and rural development.” (KRDS p.23)*

In many respects, therefore youth are treated as yet another example of a “disadvantaged or vulnerable group” to add to the list of those with special needs or interests.

There is, inevitably, an implicit suggestion of their dependency and this, in turn, is reflected in the very infrequent recognition that young people have independent agency. Or rather, and more specifically, agency of a positive nature, for when the agency of youth is realised, it is invariably portrayed in a negative manner.

And here we get to the heart of one of the critical issues regarding the contextualisation of youth within development discourse; namely that the use of the term appears to reflect a fundamental ambivalence in attitudes towards young people. On the one hand, youth are gloriously identified as “our future”, an attribution that is perhaps most clearly reflected in discussions of sustainable development within the broader context of environment policy and practice. On the other hand, youth are recognised as a feature of the present, and the “here and now” challenges of policy and practice. However, the manner in which they are portrayed within policy, and hence their role in linking us to the future, varies considerably. They are at one and the same time victims and villains, but only rarely cast in the mould of heroes.

As victims they are variously regarded as among the chronically poor (rural youth), the economically at risk (rural-urban migrants) and socially vulnerable (street children, young people with HIV/AIDS). As villains they are variously regarded as causes of environmental damage (rural youth), urban crime (rural-urban migrants and street children) and sexual promiscuity (young

people with HIV/Aids). But either way, such images invariably associate young people with problems and crises.

For example,

> *The majority of the unemployed are the youth aged 16-39 yrs. The Government appreciates that the problems of increased youth unemployment have been accentuated amidst depressed economy. Lack of skills, assets and access to credit facilities has rendered self-employment difficult for the youth hence leading to high crimes, street begging and drugs. (IPERSWEC p.55)*

Even the National Youth Policies, where one might expect a more positive portrayal of he positive agency of youth, tends to wards these more populist negative characterisations. For example,

> *"Youth involvement in environmental degradation as a result of trying to earn an income through uncontrollable charcoal burning, brick making, swamp destruction etc. has had a negative effect on sustainable environmental management". (NAPY p.30)*
>
> *"Most of the youth fail to get jobs and end up in urban slums and streets. They engage in unproductive and anti social activities like prostitution, thuggery and drug and substance abuse. They increase pressure on the few urban facilities and amenities." (NAPY p.6)*
>
> *"The urban youth are also experiencing a lot of influence from Western culture through the media and are continuously and inappropriately exposed to pornographic materials, This coupled with changing family structures, disruptions etc. challenge traditional control on behaviour of youth". (NAPY p.10)*

Not surprisingly, therefore, discussions of youth in policy seem often to reassert the importance of "stewardship by adults". This, as discussed above, is reflected in a denial of the positive agency of young people, the reliance on moralistic rhetoric (rather than evidence) in discussions where youth are identified as exerting a negative agency, and their over-simplistic as a "vulnerable group". By such means, the interests and concerns of the lives of young people, are inevitably marginalized further from the mainstream development concerns, rather than brought more clearly into critical focus.

3.3 The livelihoods of rural youth

3.3.1 Introduction

The findings, presented below, are based on the Kenya Survey data, which is the data set that has proven most valuable in efforts to characterise key features of formative livelihoods. (For further information see Annex B2.) The survey sample, of 180 respondents, was framed on the basis of stage of schooling rather than age per se. This was done in an effort to avoid the dangers of defining youth simply with reference to static chronological notions of age.

Whilst the survey sample was not stratified on the basis of either household or respondent wealth, a range of proxy indicators of family wealth and assets were gathered as part of the interview to enable future differentiation of the sample on this basis. The indicators included information on the type of family residence, the ownership of luxury items (e.g. fridge, television set, car etc), source of lighting, parent's occupations and size of farm. (See Annex B3) These indicators are not used the preliminary presentation of data shown here, but will be incorporated in future more detailed cluster analysis by the range of situations that the indicators identify.[4]

In the preliminary analysis that follows, therefore, some degree of caution needs to be taken with respect to interpretation. It is quite probable that considerable differences within the sample, reflecting the varied social and economic circumstances of the respondents, are presently being masked by the simple sums and percentages that form the basis of the current discussion. On the other hand, a number of basic characteristics of youth livelihoods do emerge from this rudimentary working of the data (for example with respect to the range and number of income earning activities pursued over time) and these usefully set the context for the more sophisticated analysis that will follow in due course.

The survey was carried out in three districts of Kenya; Kitui, Narok and Kakamega. (See table 3.1.) The findings presented below are, unless stated, based on data drawn from the total sample of respondents from across the three districts. However, where appropriate, and particularly in seeking to describe key characteristics of formative livelihoods, more detailed supplementary data is drawn from Kitui District.

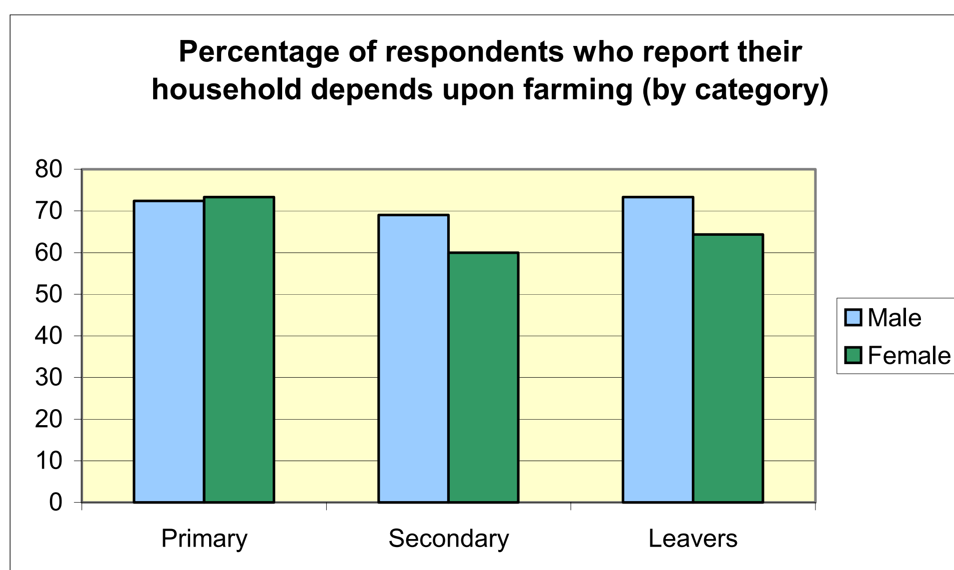
[4] The data was initially entered into an excel spreadsheet. For the purpose of this preliminary analysis some data was exported into SPSS. In due course the entire data set will be exported into SPSS and subject to further and more complex analysis.

Table 3.1 Average ages of the respondents by gender and school category for total sample (in bold) and by district.

		Average Age	Kitui	Narok	Kakamega
Primary	**Female**	**15.6**	16.1	15.0	15.6
	Male	**15.9**	17.5	14.5	15.7
Secondary	**Female**	**17.1**	17.5	16.3	17.5
	Male	**18.4**	18.3	18.1	18.8
School Leaver	**Female**	**20.5**	21.3	19.9	20.3
	Male	**23.9**	23.9	26.1	21.8

Across the total sample, around 70% of all respondents reported that their households depended upon farming, with a much higher percentage reporting some farming activity. (Figure 3.1) It is clear that, on the basis of their natal household attachment, the vast majority of survey respondents would have had direct experience of farming practice.

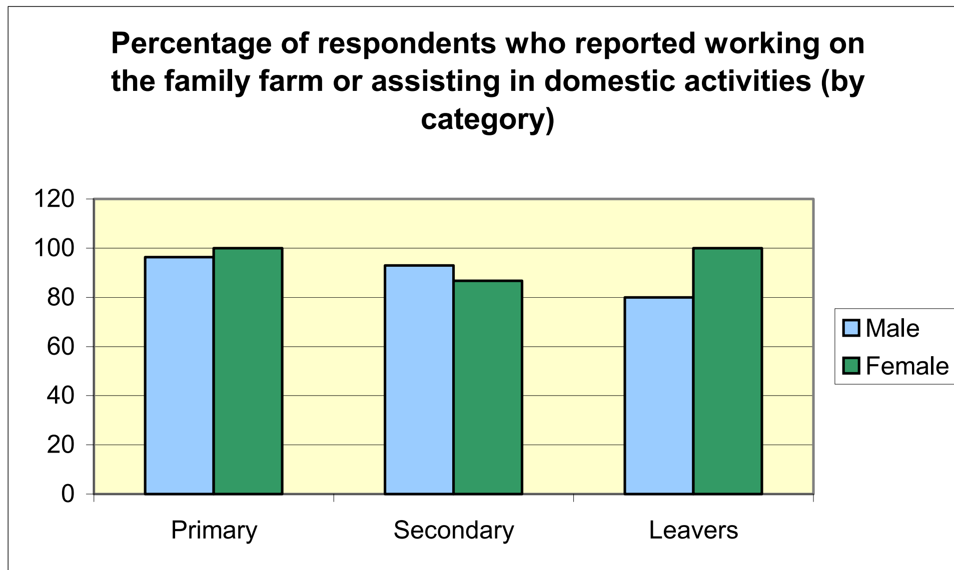
Figure 3.1



3.3.2 Young people, their families and community

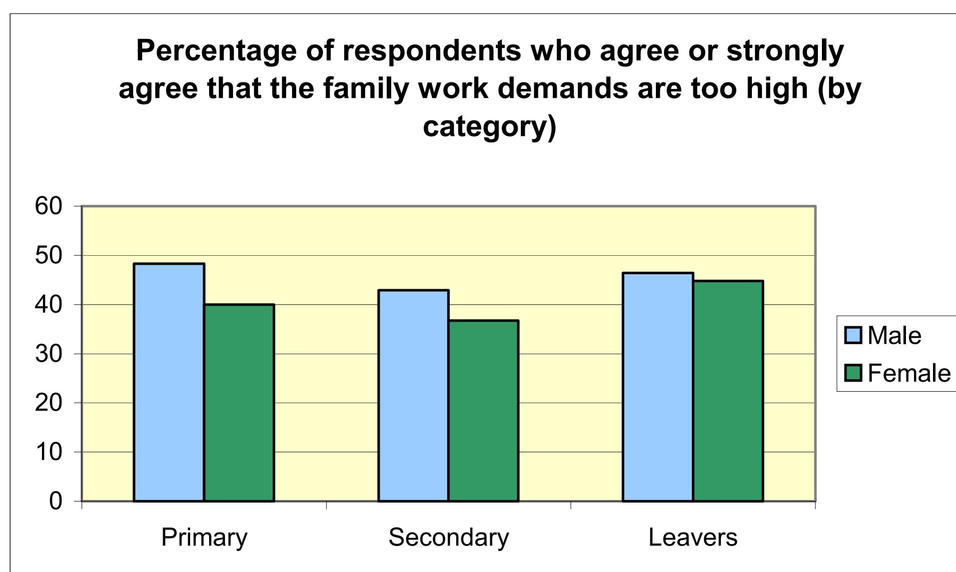
The findings confirmed the fact that the family is a critical context wherein many key processes relating to the lives and livelihoods of young people are played out. The vast majority of respondents, across all categories, reported that they worked on the family farm and/or assisted with other household activities. (See Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.2



Further, the vast majority of respondents also reported that it was their duty to help their family, although nearly a half of all respondents indicated that they felt that demands made upon them were too high. (Figure 3.3) Whilst the research does not seek to promote the “storm and stress” model of adolescence favoured by many psychologists, the data suggests that the process of establishing new livelihoods is likely to be accompanied by some degree of tension and conflict within the natal family household. Clearly the process by which these conflicts of interest are negotiated has a direct and far reaching impact in shaping the livelihood opportunities and choices of young people. The data indicates the importance of avoiding naïve assumptions of the consensual unitary household and the importance of investigating how new and divergent livelihoods may emerge from the reproductive cycle of domestic groups and the focus on transitional processes.

Figure 3.3



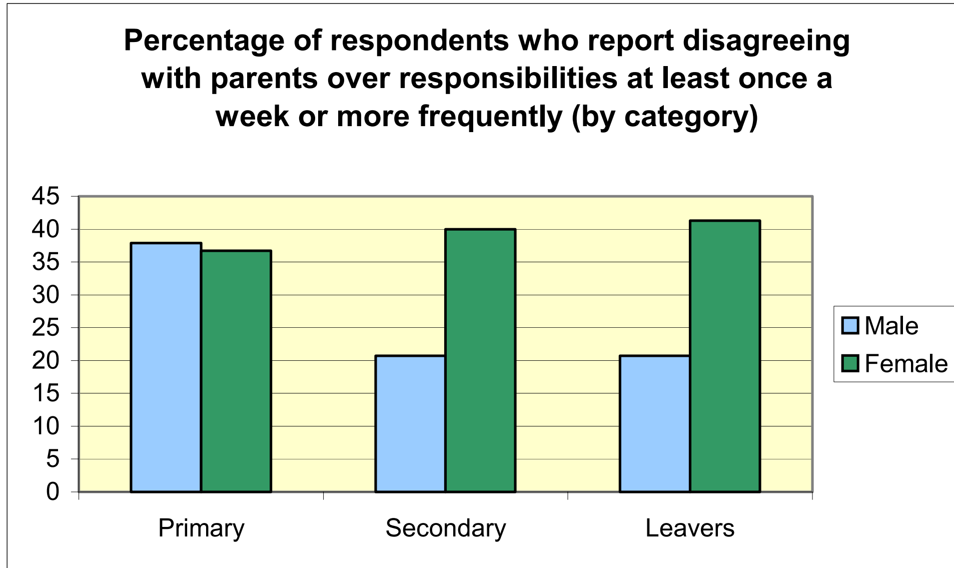
The data also reveals the importance of undertaking further gendered investigation into the roles and responsibilities of young people and how these are negotiated within the family. Preliminary analysis indicates that males are more quickly able to achieve some degree of financial and decision-making independence, even whilst remaining within the natal family unit, whereas females appear more tied to domestic duties directed by their parents (table 3.2) which, in turn, appears to be a source of additional tension (figure 3.4)

Table 3.2 Family household tasks reported as having been undertaken by respondents during the previous seven days by frequency of mention and category (Kitui District)

Activity	PSF[5]	PSM	SSF	SFM	SLF	SLM
Cooking/serving food	9	2	10	7	7	6
Shopping for the household	5	0	5	6	5	5
Cleaning utensils/house	9	3	10	5	7	6
Washing clothes	9	6	10	9	7	8
Minor household repairs	1	2	2	2	1	3
Fetching water/firewood	8	6	9	7	6	7
Caring for children	2	0	3	1	2	3
Caring for the elderly/sick relatives	2	1	2	2	3	2
Family farm work	8	6	8	9	5	9

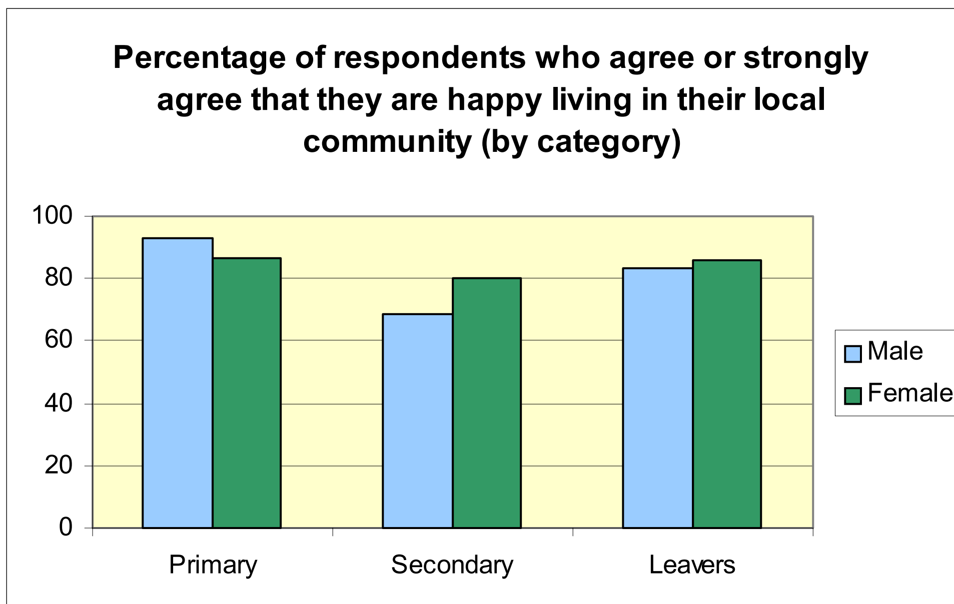
[5] Legend: PS refers to primary school, SS to secondary school and SL to school leaver, F refers to female and M to male.

Figure 3.4



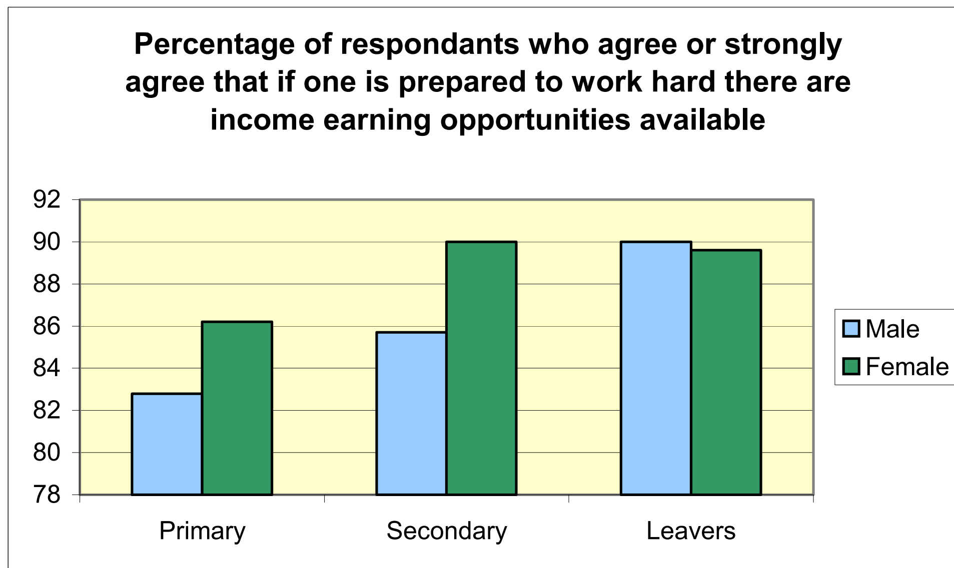
With respect to relationships of young people within the wider rural community, data reflects a generally positive picture (figure 3.5), which challenges a commonplace expectation that most rural youth aspire to move to urban settings.

Figure 3.5



And, taking the sample as a whole, the vast majority of respondents had a positive view of the income earning opportunities available in their local area, providing they are willing to work hard. (see figure 3.6)

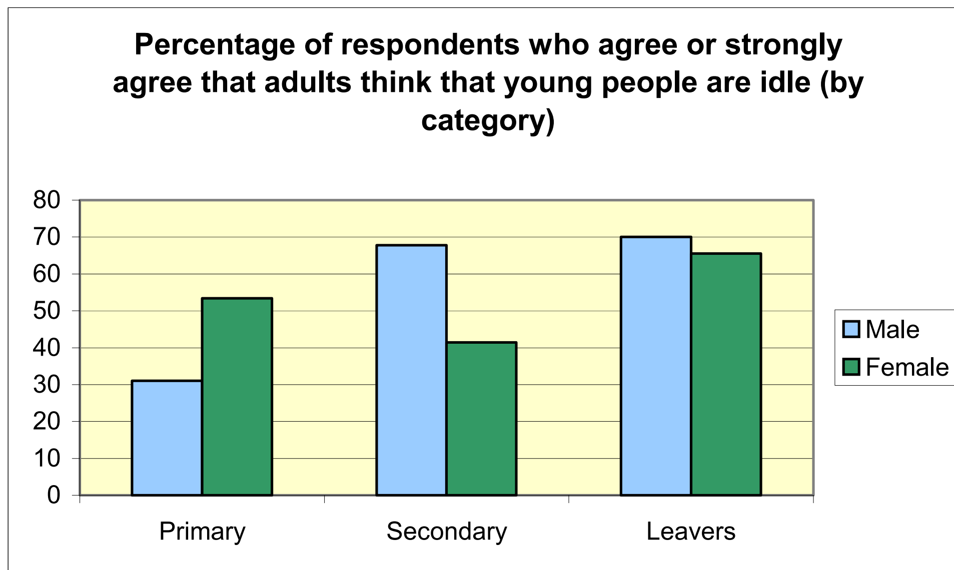
Figure 3.6



However, further data indicate a rather more complex picture. For example, although around two thirds of the respondents agreed that young people were encouraged by their community to participate in local development initiatives, across all context categories lesser numbers of female respondents reported feeling encouraged. This possibly reflects the fact that whereas male participation in the public arena is nurtured at early age, social expectations of females are still appear to tie them to a more domestic role.

Further, around 50% of all respondents reported that adults tended to think of young people as “idle” (figure 3.7). And, questions concerning the respect that adults have for young people and vice versa revealed the existence of tension between the worlds of youth and adult, that may well reflect and, indeed, be part and parcel of the transitional processes.

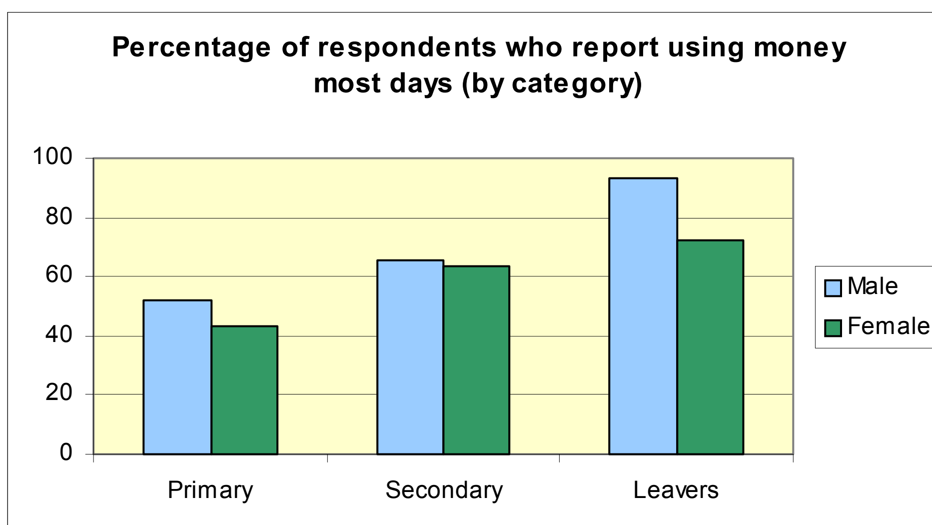
Figure 3.7



3.3.3 Youth, money and other assets

The survey explored the form and extent to which young people are engaged in the market economy as users of money. Unsurprisingly the data revealed an increasing use of money from primary school "upwards" (figure 3.8)

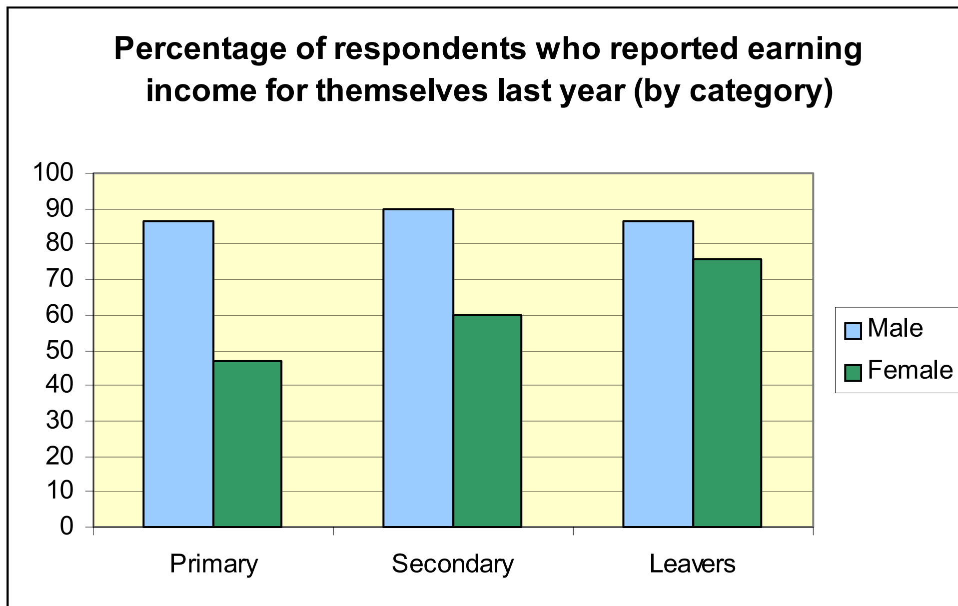
Table 3.10



What is more notable is the indication that much of the money spent by young people derives from their own income earning activities (figure 3.9). This suggests that, unlike in much of the developed world where young people

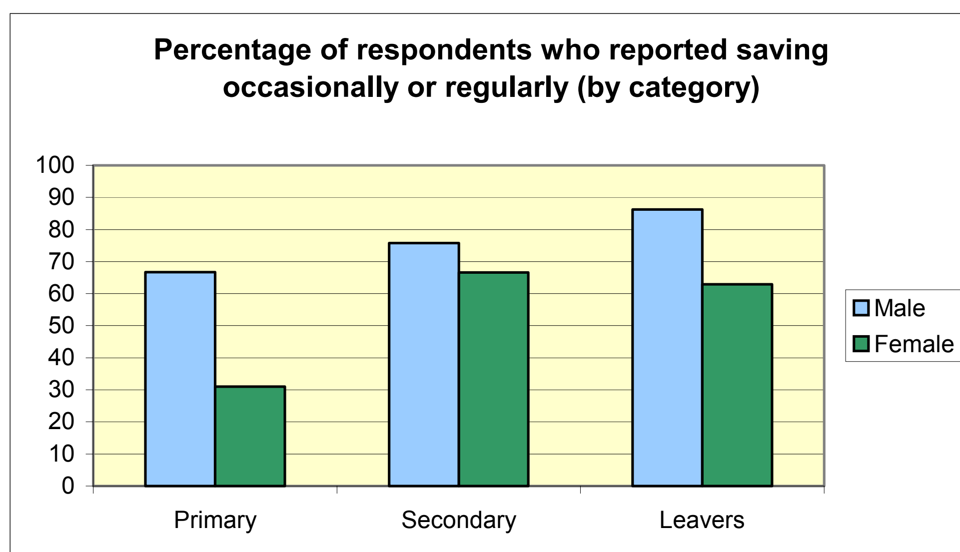
tend to engage in the market economy as new consumers on the basis of financial support in the form of “pocket money” from parents, in Kenya young people are more proactively involved both as service providers and producers of goods.

Figure 3.9



As well as seeking to ascertain whether respondents used money, the survey also investigated how and for what purposes money was used. Despite the relatively small sums involved, one notable feature was the willingness or ability of young people to save money and to use it in an instrumental manner Here, the data indicates a possibly significant difference in behaviour between male and female respondents with the former more likely to be committed savers and thus more reliant on their own efforts to purchase “special items”. By contrast the survey data indicated that females are more likely to have had these bought for them by family members (see figure 3.10)

Figure 3.10



In most instances, the "special items bought recently" noted by respondents were consumer products; often clothes and shoes, and sometimes radios or bicycles. However, the desire the save goes beyond simple consumer interests, and even among Primary School respondents, reasons for saving included funding of self-managed income generating "projects" and in some cases, the meeting of school fees and expenses, as shown in table 3.3.

Table 3.3
What respondents identify that their money is mostly spent upon, by frequency of mention and category (Kitui District)

Activity	PSF	PSM	SSF	SSM	SLF	SLM
Recreation/ social activities	4	2	5	3	4	5
Foodstuffs	7	9	2	7	8	7
Clothes	7	7	9	9	9	6
School and Education	1	3	1	3	1	2
Housing (rent)	5	0	1	0	0	1
Transport	2	2	2	3	1	2
Inputs for own garden/farm activities	1	2	2	3	3	4
Investment in other income enterprises	3	0	3	1	0	3

The survey data clearly illustrates the active involvement of young people in the money economy both as providers of goods and services as well as consumers. The data also points significantly to the need to reflect critically on the complex relationship that exists between the worlds of school and work. For whilst it is possible to discern progressive trends across the three school-related categories, it is also clear that the school-to-work transition does not begin, temporally at least, when school ends. The category of "school child" might accurately indicate a certain dependence on the state (in this instance)

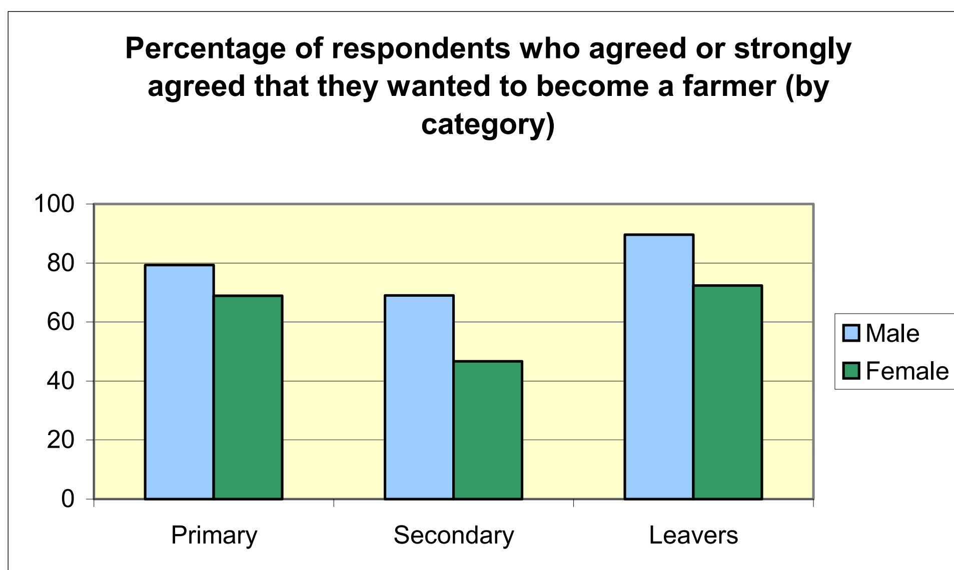
for educational support. However, it is clearly important not to over-extend this "assumption of dependency" to other aspects of young people's lives at the cost of failing to recognise their active agency in shaping their lives and livelihoods.

3.3.4 The interest in farming

As noted above, there is a popular belief that among policy makers that young rural people are not interested in seeking to base their livelihoods within the rural sector. Our research findings directly challenge this view and, contrary to the held belief, demonstrate that many young people have a strong interest in pursuing farming as a core element of their livelihood strategy.

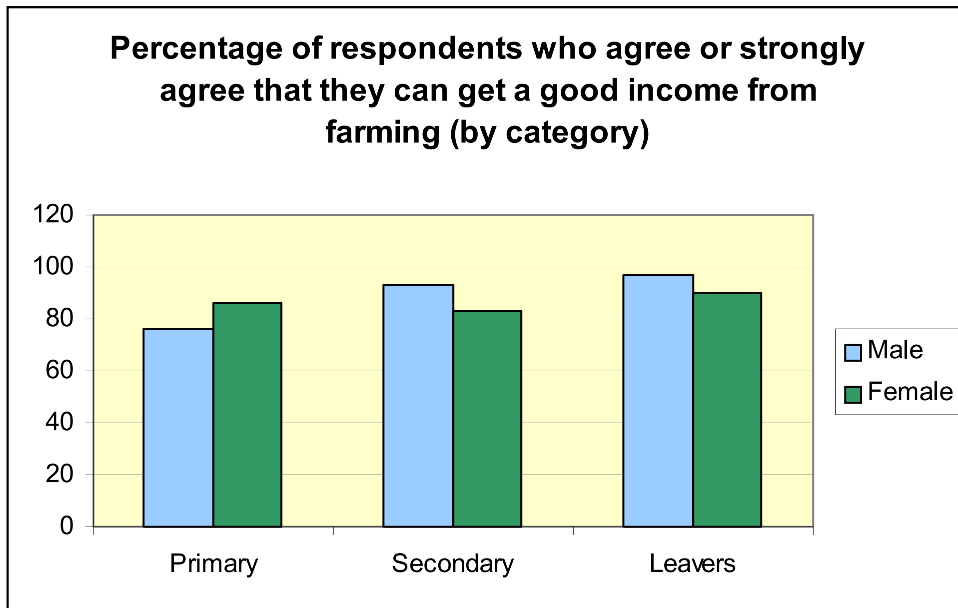
A high number of respondents, both male and female across the three context categories, expressed a desire to "become a farmer" (figure 3.11). Admittedly, female scores were consistently lower than males across all three context-categories, which seems to relate to the widely held view that it is more difficult for females than males to begin farming. (Further analysis of this important point is required before a full explanation of this gendered difference can be offered, but a working hypothesis is that the subjugation of young female labour within the natal household is one critical factor.)

Figure 3.11



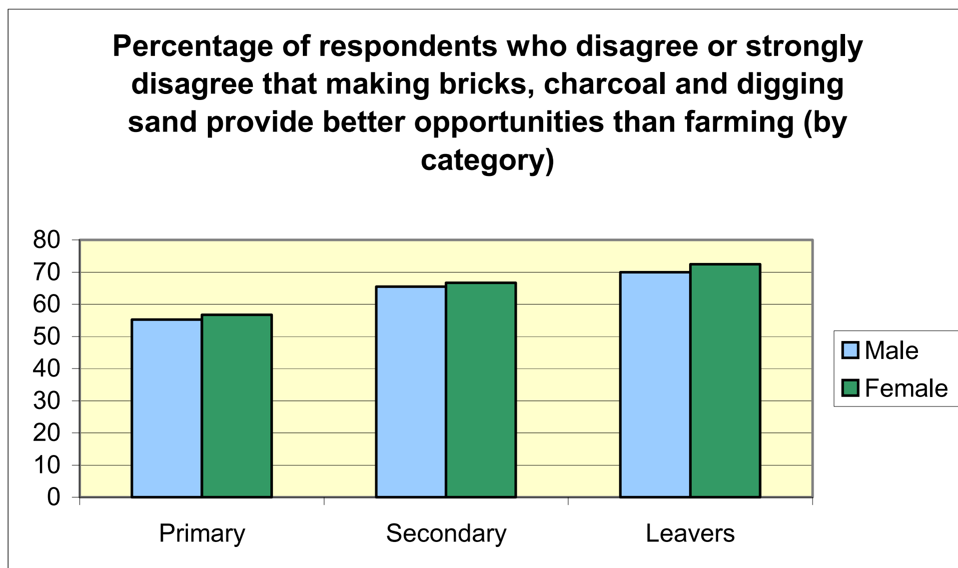
The overwhelming sense of a positive attitude towards farming is enhanced by the farming was regarded by in excess of 80% of all respondents as a source of "good income". (Figure 3.12)

Figure 3.12



Whilst alternative income sources criticised for their negative impacts on the local environment (such as charcoal production and brick making) do have a key part to play, especially in the livelihoods of younger men and women, data the findings show that, over time, these diminish in importance when compared to farming. (Figure 3.13)

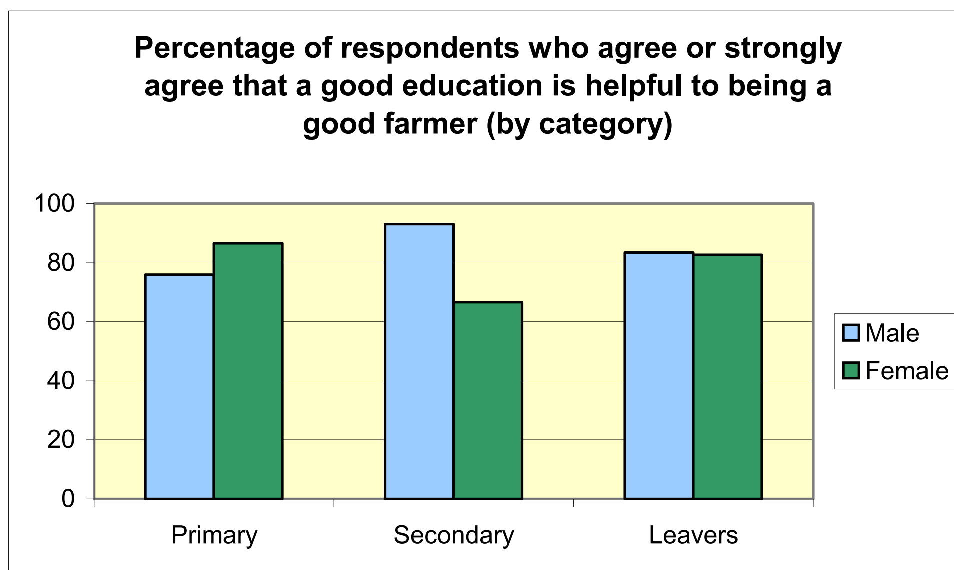
Figure 3.13



Overall, then, it appears that, in the minds of these young respondents at least, farming is no longer regarded as an unattractive career option, assuming it ever was thus. Further, the data shows that the majority of young people believe that the community respects good farmers. (Figure 3.14)

The relationship between schooling and farming has, for many years, been the subject of considerable debate. In addition to more general criticisms of the “certification of education”, and the emphasis of academic rather than practical skills development, has been a more specific fear that formal education serves to disassociate young people from the farming community, often stereotyped as backward, and illiterate. However, the survey data indicates that, whilst these issues might still persist in some form or another, the majority of respondents expressed the view that having a good education helped one to become a good farmer, and the majority of respondents across all categories report that farming is a suitable career for people with a secondary education.

Figure 3.14



Whilst the majority of respondents have not reported teachers as actively discouraging them to move into farming, around a third of respondents clearly do not feel that they have been encouraged to do so. Overall, however, the broad picture emerging at this stage is a positive one, in that respondents not only see a future in farming, but also see additional benefits in becoming an educated farmer.

3.3.5 The recognition of local livelihood opportunities

In response to the question "Is there work or income-earning activities that young people can do better or more easily than adults?" almost all respondents across the three districts responded affirmatively. As an illustration, table 3.4 lists the types of activities listed by respondents from Kitui where respondents felt young people had a "comparative advantage".

Many of the tasks identified by respondents indicate that "strength" (or a similar attribute) is perceived to be a key asset of young people. However, many additional comments also pointed to "knowledge" as being regarded as an important source of advantage. For example, a number of respondents believed that youth could be better farmers on the basis of their "modern" understandings.

Table 3.4
Income-earning opportunities that young people can do more easily or better than adults, shown by total frequency of mention across all respondent categories (Kitui District)

	Frequency of mention
Farming and farm labouring	29
Specific farming tasks clearing land, weeding	12
Horticulture	18
Bodaboda (bicycle taxis)	22
Charcoal	10
Bricks	15
Transporting produce	12
Planting seedlings/tree nursery	12
Petty trading/trading	7
Water	5
Building	5
Others included breaking stones and digging sand, business, HIV education and drama, herding	

Table 3.5 provides additional and detailed information concerning the views of respondents on the range and possibilities for income activities in their local area. The table shows the range of common and not-so common income earning activities within the local area that span across natural resource management activities, as well as service and exploitation of other resources. The table also illustrates how gender roles may shape involvement in each activity. Whereas it might not be particularly surprising to find that certain "physical" activities such as brick making and sand digging are associated with males, the fact that horticulture appears to follow a similar pattern is more intriguing.

Table 3.5
The range and possibilities for local income earning activities for young men and women as scored by all categories of respondents in Kitui District (no.= 59)

Activity	Young Men			Young Women		
	Not common	Common	Very common	Not common	Common	Very common
Arable Agriculture						
Growing vegetables (horticulture)	5	29	25	45	9	3
Growing food crops	9	26	24	10	29	18
Growing tree seedlings	15	31	13	35	20	12
Other arable (specify)						
Keeping Livestock						
Chickens	20	30	8	12	34	13
Goats/sheep	16	26	17	38	19	**2**
Other (specify)						
Renewable natural resources						
Firewood	48	6	5	13	16	30
Timber	25	19	14	54	2	1
Charcoal	12	28	18	46	10	2
Other RNR (specify)						
Other resources						
Collecting water	36	17	18	15	22	21
Making bricks	3	19	37	53	4	1
Digging sand	16	20	22	53	3	1
Breaking stones	23	22	13	51	5	1
Other (specify)						
Services						
Transporting produce	13	30	16	44	10	4
Transporting people	12	27	20	55	2	1
Working as a labourer	9	28	22	13	36	8
Working in town	11	32	15	11	34	13
Buying and selling farm produce	19	28	12	25	23	10
Doing petty trading	19	28	13	19	24	15
Others (specify)						

3.3.6 Characteristics of Livelihood Strategies

Tables 3.6 and 3.7, drawing on the on the Kitui sample, provide data that illustrate critical characteristics of the formative livelihood strategies of young people. The data not only clearly illustrates the breadth of enterprises undertaken, but also demonstrates that most young people pursue more than one income earning activity at any period of time. The gender-disaggregated data also indicates that males tend to undertake more activities than their female counterparts across all three context-categories.

Table 3.6
Average number of activities carried out last year per person and by category (Kitui District)

PSF	PSM	SSF	SSM	SLF	SLM
3.3	5.4	4.3	6.5	4.3	6.6

Table 3.7
Income activities reported as having been carried out during the last year by frequency of mention and category (Kitui District)

Activity	PSF	PSM	SSF	SSM	SLF	SLM
Arable Agriculture						
Grew vegetables (horticulture)	4	8	4	8	7	6
Grew food crops	7	6	7	6	8	6
Grew tree seedlings	2	4	3	9	2	7
Other arable (specify)						
Livestock						
Kept chickens	8	5	6	3	7	2
Kept goats/sheep	0	4	4	5	2	4
Harvesting/using renewable natural resources						
Collecting firewood	2	3	5	3	3	2
Cut timber	0	1	1	1	0	1
Made charcoal	0	2	0	2	2	5
Other resources						
Collected water	4	4	6	6	4	5
Made bricks	0	4	0	5	2	4
Dug sand	0	1	0	0	0	3
Broke stones	0	0	0	2	0	3
Services						
Transported produce	0	1	0	4	0	2
Transported people	0	0	0	1	0	2
Worked as a farm labourer	5	4	4	6	2	5
Was employed in town	1	0	0	1	2	2
Bought and sold farm produce	0	0	1	1	1	3
Did petty trading	0	2	2	2	1	4
Total	33	49	43	65	43	66

Figure 3.15 and table 3.8 below provide further detailed data concerning the range of income earning activities reported as having been tried by respondents and note whether these activities are continuing or not. In this manner the data illustrates something of the complex as well as dynamic and processional nature of formative livelihoods.

There are a couple of critical points to take from these data. Firstly, the range of activities carried out by the respondents extends across “farming”, associated NRM activities, the exploitation of non-natural resources, as well as a wide range of services. Whilst these livelihoods may be characteristic of the rural economy, they are not solely NRM based.

The second important observation to be made concerns the high percentage of activities that had been tried by young people but which, at the time of the survey, have been discontinued. The meaning and implication of this data is admittedly open to interpretation, and this is a key aspect of the data set that will be analysed further. However, for now, rather than regard all the activities that have been discontinued as an indication of “failure”, we can also seek to interpret this in more pragmatic and positive terms.

The lives of young people are often full of change, not only in their interests but also in the circumstances in which they live their lives. The survey has not gathered much data on this, but reflection on the issue of schooling is sufficient to illustrate this point. For many young people move from primary to secondary school will involve a change in daily routines. The distribution of secondary schools will often mean that students have to travel long distances to attend and, in some cases actually move from the natal home to stay with more conveniently located family members. The changing demands of schooling will clearly impact upon the ability of young people to devote time to income generation activities. For those at school, income generation will often be pursued in an opportunistic manner, with opportunities increasing during the school holidays and extra demands arising at the start of the term time.

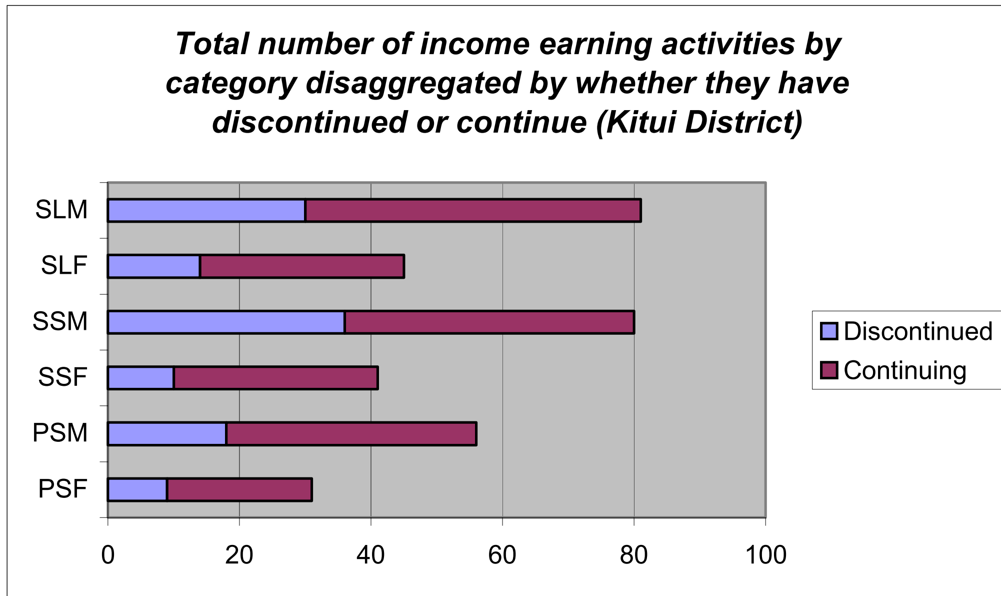
It is also important to acknowledge that a considerable degree of experiential learning takes place every time a new activity is undertaken, whether or not this was intentional. Thus, even activities that are not continued and cannot, on the basis of financial returns, be considered successful, are likely to be of some benefit even if this is limited to “this is not the kind of work that I am any good at!”

Further, it is important to remember that the survey data only tells part of the story. We cannot tell, for example, whether discontinued activities might be taken up again in the future, or whether activities that are reported as continuing had, in fact, been stopped during and earlier period of time. However, as it stands, the data is sufficiently clear in recognising this discontinuity as a characteristic of formative livelihoods, and therefore provides a valuable counterpoint to the common tendency to focus solely on the “sustained” and established elements livelihood strategies.

Table 3.8
Income-earning activities reported as having been tried by respondents and those that are continuing, showing frequency of mention by category (Kitui District)

Activity	PSF		PSM		SSF		SSM		SLF		SSM	
	Tried	Con	Tried	Con	Tried	Con	Tried	Con	Tried	Con	Tried	Con
Arable Agriculture												
Grew vegetables (horticulture)	5	1	9	5	6	4	9	4	7	1	9	6
Grew food crops	4	3	8	8	5	5	7	7	7	7	6	6
Grew tree seedlings	3	2	2	2	3	2	8	7	3	2	6	5
Other arable (specify)												
Livestock												
Kept chickens	7	6	6	6	6	4	6	4	7	6	4	4
Kept goats/sheep	0	0	2	2	3	3	5	3	4	4	3	2
Other livestock (specify)												
Harvesting/using renewable natural resources												
Collecting firewood	1	1	5	2	5	4	5	3	3	3	4	2
Cut timber	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Made charcoal	1	1	4	3	0	0	4	0	2	0	5	1
Other RNR (specify)												
Other resources												
Collected water	3	3	4	3	6	6	7	4	3	3	6	6
Made bricks	1	0	5	3	0	0	6	2	2	2	8	4
Dug sand	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	1
Broke stones	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	2
Others (specify)												
Services												
Transported produce	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	3	2
Transported people	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
Worked as a farm labourer	4	3	2	2	3	2	7	7	1	1	7	4
Was employed in town	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	0
Bought and sold farm produce	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	3	2
Did petty trading	1	1	2	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	5	3
Others (specify)												
Totals	31	22	56	38	41	31	80	44	45	31	81	51

Figure 3.15



4.0 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

An important contribution of this project is that it has provided critical examinations of how “practice wisdom” is institutionalised within policy and practice, and is currently shaping rural development policies and strategies to the inevitable detriment to the lives and livelihoods of young rural people. It is anticipated that the critical evidence provided by the project can lead to greater recognition among policy makers of the particular interests and needs of rural youth.

An obvious way forward, from what might be considered as the present state of confusion, is to enhance the evidence base upon which policies and strategies are being developed. The review demonstrated that the ability to incorporate the particular needs and interests of rural youth into development policy is currently severely undermined by a lack of understanding of what young people do; especially the role they play in processes of natural resource management, and more generally in the rural economy. Not surprisingly, therefore, key elements of the project’s “new thinking” are centred on data relating to the key characteristics of youth livelihoods (based upon field level observations).

Clearly, the field data directly challenges the “dominant narrative”, embedded within local policies and institutions, that portrays youth as disinterested in natural resources management and assumes that youth see little future in rural-based livelihoods. The findings also illustrate that the formative livelihoods of young people are complex and varied. They change quickly, and they ebb and flow. Many income-earning activities are tried once or twice, and far fewer continued. However, this is not the “typical” sign of failure. Activities are often short term, since they are designed to meet specific and targeted income needs. Enterprises may start and stop, in order to accommodate the school year. Income earned may, to an adult, seem of little consequence, but if it is enough to buy those schoolbooks, that new dress or this bicycle then it is significant from the perspective of the young person

To some extent, the success of establishing this counter-point lies simply on the fact that the survey was designed to throw more light on the normal condition of young men and women; in other words, on those who are not “at risk”, a risk to others or, in other ways, associated with crisis. However, mounting a successful challenge to these entrenched policy positions is more difficult than simply presenting a series of survey data. In itself the collection of new data is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to bring about change.

However, the policy review also revealed that the problem of the "invisibility of youth" was not simply founded upon the lack of data to inform policy, but that the lack of evidence in turn pointed towards "deeper" conceptual issues. Current framing of terms such as "poverty", "sustainable livelihoods" and even "youth" frequently obscure important factors shaping formative rural livelihood strategies. Consequently, it is argued that a "deeper" understanding is essential to enable a strong engagement with policy makers, service providers to bring about changes in policy and practice. And this will require the introduction of new frameworks through which innovative thinking can take place. In essence, "rethinking youth" is therefore central to the challenge of developing policies and practices that are truly effective in responding to the needs and interests of new entrants into natural resource management.

4.2 Rethinking Youth

In the review of policy documents, as well as observing the form and manner in which youth were represented, the way in which women, their needs and interests were included was also noted. Not surprisingly, the review found that there was a considerable contrast in the treatment of both social categories, with much more attention given to women than that of youth. However, more significant than frequency of citation, or column inches, was the fact that discussions of women were usually shaped and framed with reference to the concept of gender. Admittedly, in certain documents, "women" and "gender" at times appeared to be in danger of being conflated. However, elsewhere, it was apparent that gender analysis had helped clarify critical development issues in such a manner as to assist in the formulation of meaningful policies and strategies that took account of women's needs. Clearly, the notion of "gender, by drawing attention to the manner in which roles are socially constructed was, in itself, a major conceptual advance. But to this has been added portfolio of additional concepts and ideas, such as the differentiation between practical and strategic needs, disaggregation of the household etc. that has generally enhanced the ability of policy makers and practitioners to reflect critically upon the respective developmental needs of women and men, and shape their ideas accordingly

By contrast, no such conceptual sophistication is found supporting discussions of "youth", and these remain bounded by definitions based on chronological age, and often "essentialised" though normative and naturalistic expectations. Additionally, the frequent misrepresentation of youth as a "group" rather than a category only serves to confuse matters further. However, is it possible to achieve a similar conceptual restructuring and repositioning of youth related issues as that which benefited "women" with the "discovery" of gender?

Here the answer is not straightforward. Certainly, there is no obvious "off the peg" theory or concept that can simply be inserted into current development discourse. On the other hand there are potentially valuable ideas that, with further refinement, can be used to place discussions of youth in rural development policy and practice on an intellectually more robust footing.

4.3 Being and becoming- transitions

At the heart of the challenge in "defining" youth lies a paradox. Youth is at one and the same time about being and becoming.

> "The sense of being a youth is shaped by a complex process of social and self-definition, influenced in no small part by the accepted formulations in policies and practices. The process of becoming, likewise, emerges from a complex interplay between individual choice and available opportunity. And it is here that simplistic notions of youth, defined by chronological age, are so unhelpful. Access to and control of assets and resources is a major factor in shaping any process of becoming. Differential distribution of these assets invariably results in the same process taking longer for some rather than others. The poor youth may, in the eyes of the eyes of the community, remain a youth longer than his rich friend of the same birth age since the latter has the resources to marry at an earlier age.
>
> The idea of youth as both being and becoming is very challenging, but has the benefit of bringing us closer to the people and processes about which policy makers and practitioners are concerned. Young people do not spend all their time and effort into trying to become adults, but wish to have fulfilled lives as youth. At the same time, young people also strive to take their place in the world as fully responsible human beings." (Waldie 2005, p.54-5)

The "beingness" of youth is important in social policy and practice, leading us as it does to questions of collective identify, youth culture, peer group behaviour and so forth. However, it is on the notion of becoming that I wish to focus here, since this leads more directly towards questions regarding the process of livelihood development, concerns about which lie at the very heart of this research project.

The notion of youth as "becoming" emphasises process and change. In its most fundamental sense, this process of becoming can be referred to as the transition to adulthood. However, further reflection suggests the need for caution in an uncritical adoption of this simple formula. Firstly, we need to understand that there is no single transition process and rather should consider that the reference points for transition may be many and varied. Secondly, we need to understand that processes of transition cannot always be assumed to be unilinear; a step by step move from point a to b.

The transition from youth to adulthood can be envisaged to have many facets, but among them the following are regarded as particularly significant from sociological and social policy points of view.

- The domestic transition
- The school-work transition
- The transition from dependence to economic independence.

Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive constructs, and one's choice of what is most relevant will inevitably depend upon the issues at hand. This research, for reasons explained earlier, avoided getting too drawn into considering domestic transitions. But at the same time, it is only too obvious that family background is likely to be a critical factor in shaping the livelihood pathways of young people. As well as unit through which social identity is inherited, the family will be a source of encouragement and advice, financial support and, of course, access to resources. On the other hand, as the data have shown, families also make considerable demands upon its members. As yet, we do not have sufficient data to explain the extent to which family resources are crucial for a successful transition to independent living. However, what we can be sure that, however important the family might be as a factor shaping livelihood outcomes of its young members, both in the labour market and later family life, its impact is moderated by a wide range of other factors; the personality of the individual, peer culture, and the state through the provision of education to provide but a few examples.

There is considerable debate as to whether formal educational institutions simply serve to reproduce social inequalities. However, in the eyes of many, state investments in public education services is one means by which the fundamental disadvantages inherited from the family, that would otherwise limit opportunity and choice of young people, can be overcome. As discussed earlier in the report, in developed countries, notion of a "school to work" transition is often used to refer to the process by which young people enter the labour market after leaving school. Our data has shown that the school to work interface is far more complicated than this. Not only are most young people earning their own income whilst at school, but also many are using this income to assist them to further their education.

The relationship between educational attainment and rural livelihood development is clearly one area worth further exploration. Whilst there exists a generally positive education ethos and assumption of its public good in Kenya, it is also clear from the data that the manner in which young people engage or disengage from formal education varies considerably. Whilst education can help ameliorate some of poverty's effects, for the poor educational attainment is also stunted or delayed through "inherited" disadvantage.

One effect of rising educational participation, through the implementation of policy of Universal Primary Education, is to delay full labour market entry of an increasing number of young people. Interestingly, however, the survey data indicates a fairly strong sense that respondents feel that a good education is

helpful in becoming a good farmer. This leads us to reconsider the extent to which the benefits of school attainment are (or should be) considered solely in terms of qualifications. For in the absence of an established labour market, self-employment is the usual livelihood option and one does not need a qualification for that. Clearly, therefore, young people do perceive benefits from attending school beyond their leaving certificates. On the other hand, it might well be the case that livelihood skills being gained through working experience whilst at school have also become more important as a sign of “growing up” to offset the possible delays to attaining adult status caused by continued participation as “school children” in formal education. Further research on post-school careers is also required to assess whether there is any correlation between the stage of disengagement and the range of livelihood opportunities that are pursued by young people.

Our data has shown that in reality, transitional processes are extraordinarily complex, at one and the same time full of twists and turns as well as ebbs and flows. The data on income earning activities alone demonstrates the existence of considerable flux and fluidity in transitions, and that they are not easily fixed in space or time. It also illustrates that whereas some transitions may be protracted through disadvantage in other cases crises, for example the death of a parent, may “fast track” the pace of change, as young people are focused to take on adult responsibilities. Whilst it is common to talk of a move from dependence to independence, such views are often misleading. It is helpful to remember that transitions to adulthood invariably entail taking on new responsibilities and obligations to others and not simply gaining the freedom do what one wishes. Indeed, in many ways a more appropriate way to characterise the transition to adulthood might be from dependence to interdependence.

The findings also leads us to face a further complexity, namely that young people can often achieve specific areas of autonomy in certain aspects of their life, whilst remaining dependent in others. So, for example, whilst the label of being a “school child” might infer dependency on the adult world, it is important not to over extend this “characteristic” as a means of essentialising everything about all young people who fall into this category. As the data shows, many young people are also “doing things for themselves” outside of the support for the state and even family. This research has demonstrated the limitations of using “age” as a main indicator of dependence, vulnerability or need. In practice, the transitions that young people make towards adulthood are not based wholly on age and are influenced by many factors. The trajectory of maturity and competence cannot be predicted through the counting of birthdays.

4.4 Life Course And Livelihoods

A further conceptual notion worth considering is that of “life-course”. The life course perspective builds upon the basic premise that human development and ageing are life long processes. Analysis of these life-long processes can be based upon the following core propositions.

- Individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take
- Human lives are embedded in and shaped by historical context: individual choices and actions are informed by the constraints and opportunities of "the time of their lives"
- The impact and value of a life transition, or major personal experience, is contingent on when it occurs in a person's life.
- The timing of life transitions is shaped by social expectations concerning age, a fundamental principle of social organisation that interlinks the lives of individuals, and individuals with family and wider social institutions.

The notion of the life course does not relate to any particular age category. Rather, it provides a broad framework through which age can be considered as socially constructed rather than biologically determined. From this perspective, therefore, "youth" can be approached as a socially constructed notion, the meanings of which are shaped by the particular context.

A central aspect of the life-course perspective being offered here is the emphasis on process. It is ironic that discussions of development are so often bogged down in staid and static categorisations, (for example "the poor") where a more dynamic idea, suggestive of process would appear to be more helpful. Recent and increasing academic interest in distinguishing chronic and transient poverty would therefore appear to provide a helpful move in this direction. However, other concepts as firmly embedded at the heart of development discourse appear thus far to have gone unchallenged. Take for example the notion of a livelihood as it commonly appears in much of the literature. Whilst a livelihood is invariably associated with dynamic processes of capital accumulation, the notion of livelihood itself is usually treated as something with no clear beginning or end. It is something that can be "enhanced" or "strengthened", but there is little consideration as to how they come into being, or for that matter stop! To an extent, such issues are made more obscure through the commonplace use of "sustainable livelihoods", which suggests a process that extends beyond a single human life span.

Whilst there is a place for notions that provide the basis for longer term modelling and analysis of development processes, it is essential that these do not obscure the importance of understanding shorter-term processes. Yet this is what appears to have happened with respect to livelihoods. We are not born with a livelihood. Rather, they emerge from our interaction with the world into which we are born, and shaped by the opportunities we find, decisions we make and the actions we take.

By "applying" the notion of life course to livelihood has the benefit of immediately framing the discussion in human terms. A livelihood can now be considered in career-type terms. We can, for example, look to understand how changes in livelihood strategies relate to other life-course transitions. From this perspective, investigation of livelihoods of young people becomes of particular significance since it enables us to explore the processes by which

new livelihoods are conceived and realised. Livelihoods of older people take on a new significance, since they will help explain the manner by which assets are passed on from one livelihood to another.

Reflections on the life course, and its emphasis on age as a social construction, can also assist in ensuring that attempts to gain new understanding of livelihoods do not get bogged down in the normative views of age-based categories. For example, it would help us to see beyond categories such as “school children” and “school drop outs” and focus instead on “school to work transitions”.

Further, research carried out by the project, and reported elsewhere, shows that the early livelihood strategies of young people are often based upon short-term and small-scale activities. The widely established opinion of rural development policy makers and practitioners is that long-term investment in natural resources management is a necessary condition to the achievement of “sustainable rural livelihoods”. When contrasted against this benchmark, development professionals often dismiss the activities of rural youth as either unimportant or self-evidently un-sustainable. The use of non-natural resources such as sand capture and brick making is quickly labelled as examples of environmentally damaging behaviour. Such evidence is invariably taken as an indication of a lack of seriousness of youth, lack of competence or both.

However, by taking a closer look at the social relationships that define youth-hood locally it is possible to challenge such criticisms. The reality is that in most settings young people do not have the same access and control over resources as adults, and are unlikely to have the opportunity to undertake, except as dependents, the same long-term enterprises as their parents. The livelihood opportunities initially available to young people are often temporary, marginal and inexpensive. It should come as no surprise that their livelihood strategies reflect this. In other words, it is usually adults who define the “space” available to livelihoods for youth.

Maybe it is correct that the various activities that may constitute the totality of a formative livelihood are seldom sustained, and might not even be sustainable in the long run. However, this does not mean that these activities are without value, either financial or as a learning experience. In approaching such livelihoods we need to bear in mind the fact that we are looking at a process and that it is inappropriate to rely on “snapshot” judgements of what is good or bad. Analysis of change over time brings with it methodological challenges that cannot be discussed here. But a first step is to recognise the need to learn more, and not simply to use naïve notions of sustainability to dismiss out of hand the critical, if tentative, steps that young people make in establishing their livelihoods. The agency of young people should be recognised as being of central, rather than of marginal importance to rural development policy and practice.

4.5 Sustainable and formative livelihoods

> *"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the long and short term." (Chambers and Conway 1992, p.7-8)*

A common viewpoint is that sustainability is linked to a process of inter-generational exchange. Whilst there is some difference in emphasis, most agencies closely follow the early formulation of Chambers and Conway or echo the earlier definition offered in the Brundtland Report that: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987 p.43)

From this perspective, one would assume that understanding of the ways by which assets and opportunities are passed from generation to generation would be critical to sustaining the idea of "sustainable livelihoods". However, to all intents and purposes, to date very little effort has been made to explore the processes whereby this occurs. Again, this is a context where lack of theoretical or conceptual clarity may be holding us back from more useful insights and understandings. For example, the emphasis on "generation" is in itself problematic. Whilst the term is not without analytical value, following Mannheim, the more particular meaning of 'generation' is a group of people brought together not just by their sharing the same age range but also by sharing similar, important, experiences. It is hard to see how "generation" in this sense assists the formulation of renewable natural resource policy or practice.

However, through an alternative approach, based on a life-course perspective that draws attention to the centrality of social relations, it is possible to consider how assets are passed from adults to children and from elders to adults, and the nature of the negotiations that take place around these transfers. Instead of being stuck with the relatively meaningless category "generation", we can move the focus of policy makers and practitioners to the meaningful processes of intergenerational exchange, for it is through exploring the latter that the issues of sustainability, as they relate to real lives and livelihoods, can best be understood.

For example, young peoples' transitions into adult life are likely to be challenging for those born into impoverished or otherwise disadvantaged family units. Clearly, it is important to acknowledge that inequality exists among young people and, shaped by social inheritance, structured disadvantages no doubt manifest themselves in the lives and livelihoods. Many of the issues facing certain young people do need to be examined through the longer lens that acknowledges the existence of persistent chronic poverty can be transmitted across generations.

However, the current predisposition to focus solely on the socially excluded, marginalized and at risk youth, threatens to continuously distort policy formulation. Through taking a broader perspective of the varying circumstances and needs, and including in our concerns the lives of "ordinary" youth, we can immediately enhance the possibility of recognising the positive contribution that young people can and do make. It also enables us to reconsider, or at least add to an understanding of more dynamic aspects of vulnerable livelihoods, especially their ebbs and flows, usually considered under the label of "transient" poverty.

The data shows that there is a considerable variation in income earning activities from one year to another and thus, one may assume considerable variation in income itself. Further, even where there is a sense of progress or accumulation, the income-earning activities for many young people are mostly small scale and unlikely to impact a great deal on the overall wealth of the household. However, at the individual level, the impact may be rather greater. In some cases, where these enterprises go well, they may provide the basis for social mobility- the rungs of a ladder out of poverty.

Even where income benefits remain limited, it is also important to consider the importance of the accumulated experience for the individual. It is commonplace to regard livelihood diversification as means to reduce vulnerability at a community and even household level. It is usual, in such discussions, to consider diversification using "snapshots" taken across two points in time – to provide a "then and now" assessment of the change in the range of activities being undertaken. So, for example, if in 1990 the village/ household/ farmer (etc.) grew maize and beans, but ten years later was now growing maize, beans, tomatoes and kept sheep, livelihood diversification is shown to have taken place.

However, there is another way to consider diversification that may be even more relevant to our understudying of "coping mechanisms" and this is to consider the accumulated experience of an individual over time. From a snapshot survey we might identify two 25-year-old farmers, growing broadly the same range of crops. However, what if one of these individuals moved straight into farming and had never grown anything but maize and beans whereas the other had also previously grown tomatoes and kept sheep, thus had gained a considerably wider experience across a range of different income earning activities? One could argue that the latter individual may well be better placed to adapt and change their livelihood strategy in the face of challenging circumstances since there would be a greater pool of experience upon which to turn. It we multiply this up to the community level, one can start to imagine how learning experiences across any cohort of youth might impact in later life. Thus the situation where the pathways of youthful new entrants into natural resource management are more protracted and less direct than in the past might not, therefore, be a "bad thing" and in fact may, by providing a broader understanding across a wide range of livelihood opportunities, provide a firmer basis for the establishment of a sustainable rural livelihood.

4.6 The role of natural resources management in the formative livelihoods of young rural people

The data clearly illustrates that despite the very different contexts from which the respondents were drawn, the vast majority are engaged in income generating activities of one sort or another. Many of the income earning activities undertaken by young people are highly dependent upon strength and stamina, regarded by most respondents as a basis of their comparative advantage. Whereas labouring for others is one source of income (land preparation, carrying goods to market etc the existence of common property provides significant additional opportunities, especially for young men, to work for themselves and to attain a sense of independence. Activities, such as sand digging, brick making and charcoal burning, often require little or no capital outlay and are frequently undertaken as cooperative activities between peers. Even where capital costs occur, these can be shared within the group. Farming, inevitably, raises more challenges in terms of gaining access to land, and where family land is unavailable it is clear that costs of hiring land are often prohibitive. On the other hand, it is clear that many young people have managed to incorporate both arable and horticultural production into their broader income gearing portfolios, with keeping chickens also being especially common among female respondents.

Within this extensive range of income earning activities, the data shows that natural resource management has a critical and often central role in the lives and livelihoods of the respondents. However, across the board, natural resource management is seldom found to be the sole platform upon which formative livelihoods are being based.

Another significant point is that role of NRM, varies considerably between respondents. For some, it amounts to little more than the keeping of a few chickens or growing of a few vegetables as a means to meet social expenses or targeted consumer interests. In other cases it is clear that NRM is being put to more strategic use and long-term use, with some respondents using their income to meet school expenses, in others to gain income for inward investment in further NRM, or to accumulate capital for other income earning activities.

Indeed, this should not be so surprising when one considers that under the natural resources there exists a multitude of different livelihood opportunities, many of which can be managed in very different ways. For example, the range of arable and horticultural crops offers different opportunities to meet the demands of the school year, and to manage the interface between seasonality and term times. Opportunities to harvest of process natural resources available as “common property” can meet the needs of those with little or no capital, whereas chickens and small stock serve as self-reproducing capital for those who are in a position to accumulate assets. When added to the other income earning enterprises available, the data shows that the three rural settings included in this survey do offer a rich portfolio of opportunities.

The centrality of NRM in most young people's formative livelihoods is of considerable significance. For not only does it represent an important means by which the varied financial current needs of young people are met, it also provides the means by which life-course transitions are achieved and accommodated. It is important to grasp that season by season considerable variations take place within activity portfolio, as young people seek manipulate their activities to meet their rapidly changing needs. The data suggest that formative livelihoods are not necessarily marked by either consistent or constant attempts to accumulate financial capital or other assets. Rather, there is considerable accommodation to changing circumstances, events and interests- a new school, Christmas, a bicycle. The exploitation of natural resources, within these wider opportunities, are highly significant, not only because they provide the opportunities for launching of a more sustained career but also because of the considerable opportunities that lie within the sector to meet income needs in an opportunistic and targeted manner.

The fact that young people often do exploit natural resources in an opportunistic manner should not in itself be a cause for concern for the future of natural resource management, nor for the labelling of young people as being "not serious". Rather, it is important to recognise that young people not only have needs by virtue of not yet being adult, but also by virtue of their being young. The survey data suggests that over time, livelihood strategies become more focused, and the number of overall activities undertaken accordingly reduces. As formative livelihoods take shape, it is also the case that certain income earning activities that have particular appeal to young people due to their high labour-low capital demands (such as charcoal burning, and brick-making) are decreasingly relied upon. In their place, in the livelihoods of many young people, we appear to witness a drift towards activities that are based upon more sustained use of natural resources and management of land.

4.7 Do "Youth" Have Strategic Interests And Needs?

The move towards a life course perspective and an understanding of age as a socially constructed does not mean that age based categories are no longer relevant in policy or practice. They are still relevant because such categorisations reflect the local principles of social organisation and construction of social identify. It is these principles that shape any "comparative advantage" that youth may hold over adults when it comes to undertaking various activities and enterprises. And it is these that will lead young people to evaluate opportunity and risk differently from their parents and other adults. What implications does this have for the way in which we should approach the framing of discussions of the interests and needs of young people?

It is possible that policy makers and practitioners are actually seeking to respond to two sets of "needs", but that the significances differences between them are currently unclear in view of the lack of conceptual clarity. On the

one hand, are the interests and needs that young people have by virtue of being young people; adapting Moser's gender terminology we may for present purposes refer to these as "practical", (e.g. access to improved land management practices) On the other hand, age, like gender, is a universal principle of social differentiation, even though values and meanings vary greatly from place to place and change over time. Does not a similar sense of universal hierarchy exist between "adulthood" and "youth-hood" as between "male " and "female"? (See table 4.1)

Table 4.1 The subordination of youth

Adult	Youth
Nurture	Nature
Dominant	Subservient
Knowing	Unknowing
Providing	Depending

If so, the interests needs that emerge from young people's unequal relationship with adults might be considered as "strategic needs", but possibly expressed as the needs that young people will need to meet in order to become "adult". (e.g. the right to own property) This is a tentative proposal, made simply to stimulate further discussion. Clearly, it will require further consideration.

Finally, however, intellectually appealing though such challenges may appear, it should be remembered that it was a feminist constituency, prepared to operate on a political as well as intellectual basis, that achieved transformation of focus from "women" to "gender and development". Even if academics may now recognise the need for a similar conceptual progression through further social analysis of the structure, roles and relationships in and around the "the life course", where is the constituency to drive this agenda? Feminists could come together around a common cause, and accordingly they were able to shape a common identify for themselves by so doing. The situation with respect the life-course is far more complex in that, in many respects, elders are similarly marginalized from the mainstream on the basis of "their age". Whilst youth and elders may share a common enemy in "adulthood", they would make unlikely and uneasy bedfellows in any social movement.

5.0 Conclusions- Lessons for policy and practice

> *"Agricultural education should first effect change of attitude towards agriculture by demonstrating that agriculture is an enterprise that can generate profits and enable one to eradicate poverty on a sustainable basis. (PMA p.61-62, emphasis added)*

For many years, young people, especially those in rural areas (when considered), have been the subject of public concerns and treated as problematic in development policy and practice. In this study, field research focused on ordinary young people and, not surprisingly, the findings contrast with the problem-centred concerns of much previous work. The survey data directly challenges many misconceptions popularly held among policy shapers and makers that rural youth are lazy, disinterested in farming and that education has only served to sever their links with the local community. The data from the survey paints a rather different picture of this being an enterprising, hardworking and rather positive section of society.

A major challenge for policy makers and practitioners that arises from such findings is the need to start from where young people are actually at, and to begin taking policy initiatives on the basis of evidence. If policy makers and practitioners insist on intervening on the uniformed basis of a supposed need "to break the cycle of non-participation and underachievement" it is likely that their efforts will continue to miss the meaning of many aspects of young peoples' livelihoods. The challenge, therefore, is to start to see with new eyes the richness and significance of young people's early experiences of establishing their livelihoods, and the very positive contribution that many young people make through their own efforts to building their own future. Formative livelihoods are a significant stage of a person's life course, where essential learning takes place and strategic decisions are made. It is a critical time during which young people require positive support and encouragement, not denial and disapproval.

When embarking on this research project, there was no intention or expectation that the resulting discussion would move so firmly towards a critique of the conceptual basis through which "rural youth" are presently conceived. Rather, it was anticipated that attention would mostly consist of a comparative evaluation of recognisable differences in strategies and possibly outcomes. However, the uncertain invisibility of youth within the policy and practice has led the project into another direction altogether.

This report has attempted to provide some indication as to how further theoretical and conceptual developments may assist in moving beyond the present impasse. The project has studiously avoided the promotion of "youth" as yet another "vulnerable group" which would simply have taken us further

down the confusing pathway of staid categorisation. Rather, through reference to “life-course analysis”, emphasis has been placed on age as a social construction, in order to draw attention to the dynamics of the social relationships that bring meaning to age-based identities. Through the application of life course approaches to understanding the choices and decisions of a young person, we can gain a clearer conception of what constitutes a “livelihood” and on what basis it could be judged “sustainable”. Just as gender has assisted in bringing issues of women into the “mainstream” of policy and practice, life-course analysis approaches may do likewise for discussion of youth.

Reference to ”formative livelihoods”, for example, draws attention to the fact that it is important to examine how new livelihoods comes into being. In rural areas, this, in turn, enables us to understand more clearly the pathways by which people may seek to utilise natural resources as a central aspect of their livelihood strategy. By putting to one side normative views of youth that currently serve to misinform and marginalize and replacing these with more rigorous and revealing frameworks of analysis, more positive stories of the lives and livelihoods of young people will come to be known, and accordingly shape future rural policy and practice.

6.0 References

(Notes: **1.** unpublished project reports referred to in this report are indicated in *italics* ***2***. All web-based references were accessed on December 10th 2005 to ascertain their current availability.)

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