



NEXT

GENERATION

KENYA

Qualitative
Research
Findings

March 2018



BRITISH
COUNCIL



Table of contents

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	05
02 INTRODUCTION	12
03 THE BIG PICTURE	18
04 YOUTH'S VIEWS ON KEY ISSUES FACING THEM	22
4.1 EMPLOYMENT.....	24
4.2 EDUCATION.....	33
4.3 VOICE & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.....	39
4.4 VIOLENCE AND PHYSICAL SAFETY.....	46
4.5 RELATIONSHIPS, MARRIAGE, SEX & PREGNANCY.....	49
05 RECOMMENDATIONS	55
06 APPENDIX	61
6.1 REFERENCES.....	62
6.2 SAMPLE TABLES.....	63
6.3 DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	64
6.4 FRIENDS & FAMILY INTERVIEW.....	69
6.5 WHATSAPP FOLLOW UPS.....	71
6.6 OUR APPROACH TO ANALYSIS.....	72

Disclaimer

This report presents the findings from the qualitative portion of the British Council's Next Generation Kenya Research & Advocacy project. It is one of several outputs from a project co-funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) through the Research for Evidence Division (RED) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by DFID, which can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

Authors & Acknowledgements

This research was conducted in partnership by 2CV Research and Havis Research Limited. Our warm thanks to the Havis Research Limited team for their excellent work and support: Havi Murungi, Rachel Mbugua, Jackline Wanjiru, Cleophas Odhiambo, Mary Joshua Randiki and Lionel Inzahuli.

The report was authored by 2CV Research (**Chloe De Schryver, Caitlin Connors and Binal Patel**) with support, analytic input and review from the Havis Research Limited team, the British Council team, members of the Youth Task Force, and external peer review partners. Thank you to Simon McNorton, Evaluation Advisor (DFID Kenya/Somalia and East Africa Research Hub) for his useful formative review.

Most importantly, everyone involved in this research wishes to thank the young research participants and their friends and families for sharing their time, lives, and dreams with us. We have all been honoured by this opportunity to represent your views.

01

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

**“Our voices have
been assumed,
not heard”**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aims and focus of this research

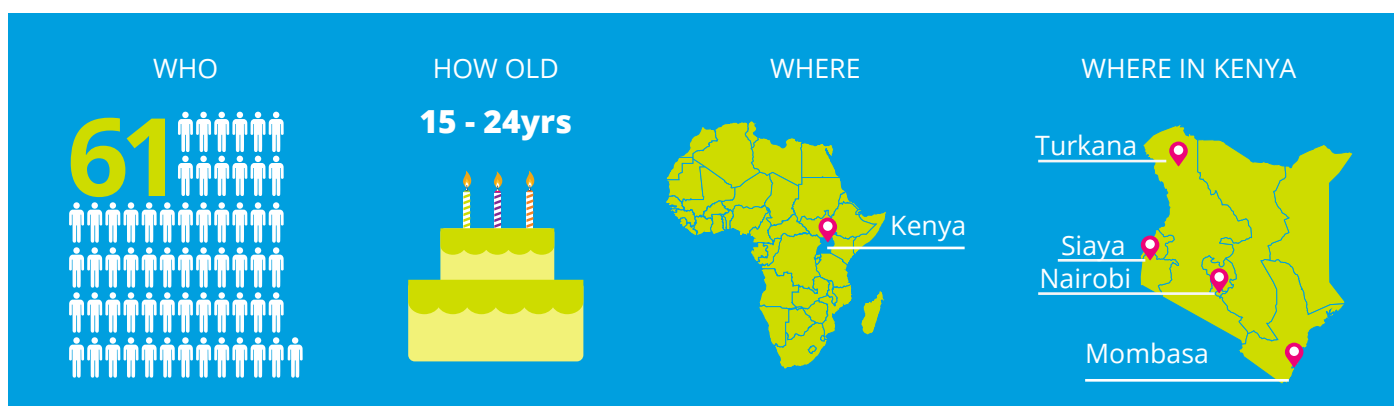
This report presents findings from multi-method qualitative research with young people in Kenya, one of several elements of the Next Generation Kenya research programme. Kenya is one of many 'youth bulge' nations, facing the dual opportunity and threat of a sizable young adult population rising to meet an economy that does not yet have obvious roles for them to fill. This means pathways to economic stability can be unclear – but also that there is opportunity for creative, exciting new pathways to be forged by a new generation.

The primary aim of this research was to understand youth's perspective on what needs to happen next: what is needed to build a future in which youth feel prepared to take a positive, successful place in helping drive Kenya forward. As such, it is intended

to serve as an important first step in ensuring that youth's voices sit at the core of decision making on their behalf.

This research was both a broad and focused effort: holistic in its investigation of young people's contexts, experience and needs, but firmly focused on understanding the issues from youth's perspective. It explores what shapes youth's worlds currently; who they want to be in the future and why; how they hope to contribute to their families, communities and nation; what supports and challenges help and hinder them to fulfil their ambitions and promise; and their initial expectations about what should be done - and by whom - to support youth wellbeing and achievement.

Our research approach



This research includes perspectives from a total of 61 youth ages 15-24 across four locations in Kenya: Nairobi, Mombasa, Turkana and Siaya . Data was gathered via a mix of individual depth interviews, half-day group workshop sessions, community immersions (in which we interviewed young people's friends and family and conducted 'walk-arounds' in their local neighbourhoods and communities), and follow-up WhatsApp sessions with a selection of participants.

At every stage, we sought to build positive, equal power relationships with our participants, who we thought of as our 'advisors' throughout the research process. This meant that research was iterative: we allowed a high degree of flexibility in our research agenda to respond to youth's interests and passions, shifting materials and guides as we learned from them.



Representation and representativeness

The research made no attempt to be statistically generalisable, or to represent all Kenyan youth; the nationally representative survey that forms part of this research programme is better suited to this purpose.

Rather, we instead carefully sampled for diversity of opinion and experience, with the aim of developing findings that were broadly representative of Kenya's varied youth population. As such, this research includes views across a mix of demographic variables including age, gender, urban/rural location, geography, affluence, and social context. Our methods also allowed us to honour the richness of

variety beyond demography; every participant lent a unique and hugely valued voice to the process.

That said, across sessions and locations, many themes emerged repeatedly, with similar pressures, aspirations and hopes experienced across locations and audience groups. Where voices called as one, we have presented findings collectively – though we ask the reader to take for granted that some of these shared views took on their own individual flavour depending on gender, age, geographical context and so on. However, where views and needs clearly diverged, we have provided some indication of this.



Key Findings

The youth we spoke to were passionate, opinionated and full of aspiration.

They dreamed of secure futures for themselves and their loved ones, but also for the opportunity to give back to their local communities and shape the direction of Kenya's continued evolution. Youth often dreamed of professional, white-collar jobs: lawyers, artists, CEOs, doctors, teachers, coaches. They were eager to add their voice and talents to the national stage and make a difference. Others simply hoped for stable income and a 'good life': to be self-sufficient, happy, and have the chance to grow and develop.

However, they do not feel that Kenya values and 'hears' their voices currently.

Not one young person that we spoke to in research felt like young people had a voice in Kenya, or that they did personally. 'Voice' and influence, whether in local social circles or national Government, felt like the rare privilege of the few. Youth were eager to be heard and for their views to be taken into account by decision makers – or even just by their families and local communities. Lower income youth, women, people living with disabilities and people in poor health felt particularly disadvantaged in making their voices heard.

Youth are eager to work and contribute economically, but they worry that job scarcity and a 'rigged' system threaten their ability to gain employment and financial security.

Youth were keenly aware that there are more young people looking for work than there are formal economy jobs to sustain them, and highly critical of what they saw as widespread corruption, favouritism and inequality. This disconnect between their ambitions and the very real challenges of finding work was a big burden for them to bear, causing anxiety for all, and for some making the allure of short-term pleasures much harder to turn away from.

Education feels like both a vital necessity and an insufficient guarantee of success.

Youth often spoke about education as a 'do or die' step on the path to a positive future – and yet often were very cynical about their eventual opportunities regardless of their educational attainment. More affluent youth worried that secondary and even University education would not necessarily equip them for good fortune in the modern economy, and were eager for curriculum adjustments that would open up alternative career paths, to be an entrepreneur or work in the creative industry, for example.

Key Findings

Lack of financial support for school continues to drive school drop out for many, leaving youth at risk.

Lower income youth felt that their educational careers were in constant risk due to lack of fees, with young women being particularly hard hit when financial struggles meant they were often the first to be pulled out of school. The purposelessness that comes with school dropout was a frightening prospect – or reality – for many. Youth worried that without the steady pathway of educational attainment, they were more at risk of drug taking, mental health issues, early marriage and criminal activity.

Young people are keen to see more investment in education, but youth were critical that ‘corruption’ was limiting impact and told us more needed to be done.

The youth we spoke to were eager for continued improvements in school infrastructure, training, and facilities, but uncertain whether educational funds were having their intended effect, sometimes being pocketed or misdirected rather than invested as intended. They hoped for a day when they would not see their president voting in a local school with no floors; a day when all Kenyans would have fair and equal access to good education.


Youth-focused policies and services that attempt to alleviate barriers to education and employment are appreciated – but are not yet widely felt.

Bursaries were a much-needed step up for low-income youth, but limited availability and perceived unequal distribution meant youth felt that they were often a dream, not a likely reality. Awareness of youth-focused employment schemes was low, and where youth did have experience of seeking support (e.g., via skills development programmes or start-up loans) they typically had negative experiences. At present, youth do not feel enough support is available to help them build the skills, knowledge and experience they need to contribute.

Many youth have noted recent improvements in health infrastructure and facilities; however, many continue to battle everyday risks of physical violence or harm.

Particularly around the elections cycle, many young people spoke of youth being unfairly ‘targeted’ by police, which had only further eroded faith in Government and community leaders. Young women had often normalized the risk of sexualised violence in their communities, schools, and workplaces; few could name one place they felt genuinely safe from potential physical harm or psychological harm. And in some communities we heard stories of illnesses, injuries and deaths that youth felt could have been prevented with better investment in local health services.

Key Findings



Young women face additional challenges around marriage, relationships and sex that threaten their ability to achieve success.

Young women expressed real worry that early marriage or pregnancy could end their ambitions, but often had little support to navigate the typical but taboo subjects of relationships and sexual activity. Sexual relationships are widely commoditised, ranging from blurred line 'sponsor' relationships with suitors to transactional sex via prostitution. Young women are also under unequal pressure to take responsibility for birth control and STD prevention: a task many are taking on with inadequate knowledge and guidance.



Youth are calling loudly for more support to achieve their dreams – and for a Kenya that offers equal opportunities for all.

We thought when we began this research that youth may be reluctant to speak out to tell us what changes they wanted to see in their communities and society; that they would not be sure if they had the right and authority to call for change. Instead, we met youth with strong opinions and loud voices who had much to offer in terms of suggestions about 'what's needed' to support youth to become Kenya's future leaders.

02

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The aims of the Next Generation Kenya programme

Kenya is one of many nations experiencing a ‘youth bulge’, with over 20% of its population aged 15-24 – a population of nearly 10 million young people on the cusp of adulthood, eager to take up full social and economic participation. And yet, with a youth employment rate of only around 22%, Kenya faces the danger of a ‘lost generation’: a burgeoning youth population full of drive, yet lacking clear pathways to jobs and social roles that will help them fulfil their promise¹. Yet, this danger is also an opportunity; many nations with ‘youth bulge’ populations, particularly in East Asian economies, have experienced real and lasting ‘demographic dividends.’ Successfully negotiated, Kenya’s youth bulge could translate into real benefits for the Kenyan economy.

In recognition of this key demographic challenge, Kenya has implemented a wide range of youth focused programmes and policies that aim to address the needs of young people between the ages of 15 and 30. However, despite recent efforts to put young people at the centre of Kenya’s development and policy agenda, there remain big gaps in understanding what exactly young people want and need in order to succeed and make positive contributions to their country². Unsurprisingly, perhaps, there has so far been relatively limited engagement of young people in the planning and execution of policies and programmes that are relevant to them. As a result, critics have sometimes challenged these youth-focused programmes as lacking real connection to the problems youth face³.

The British Council have recognised the need to bridge the gap between what youth want and need and what has been previously assumed on their behalf. Its Next Generation programme is a series of global research programmes exploring the needs,

attitudes and aspirations of young people and the policies and conditions that support them in becoming creative, fulfilled and active citizens.

The British Council commissioned youth researchers from international research agency 2CV to travel to four locations in Kenya and engage young people in conversations about their daily lives and hopes for the future. 2CV have conducted a wide range of youth-focused research worldwide, including in other youth-bulge nations, and thus brought to this work a cross-cultural lens through which to explore and interpret the Kenyan context. In order to ensure that all project recruitment, logistics and moderation were sensitive to local cultures, 2CV worked in close partnership with Havis Limited, a research and design firm based in Kenya and working across Sub-Saharan Africa. Though reporting was led by 2CV, the analysis and findings reported here represent the combined expertise of researchers from both agencies.

Overall, research explored youth’s daily lives; their hopes and fears for the future; their thoughts on key challenges and barriers to achieving good lives; and importantly, what support they wanted from government, policy and beyond to help them carve a path to a better future. Discussions explored attitudes and challenges around education and employment in particular. These two areas had been identified as particularly challenging in other Next Generation markets, and were also known ‘hot topic’ areas in Kenya particularly.

This report details the insights we uncovered during participatory research immersions in the lives of Kenyan youth across Nairobi, Turkana, Siaya and Mombasa. As the young people we spoke to articulated very clearly, “youth is not for waiting around”. The young people who participated in this work were full of opinions, ideas, hopes, and dreams for their own and Kenya’s future and all were eager to share their views.

¹ Hall, Samuel, 2017, Youth Employment in Kenya: Literature Review

² Wyn, Johanna and White, Rob, 2008, Youth and Society: Exploring the Social Dynamics of Youth Experience. USA: Oxford University Press

³ Wamuyu, Margaret, 2010, Hitting the Target, Missing the point: Youth Policies and Programmes in Kenya: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC.



CONTEXT NOTE:

The fieldwork for this research took place in November 2017, shortly after the October presidential elections and amid Uhuru Kenyatta's 2017 inauguration. As such, our discussions with youth took place amid a backdrop of significant political controversy and turmoil across Kenya, including concerns around youth-focused politicised violence. Perhaps surprisingly, politics did not dominate research discussions; youth were generally fairly politically aware, but also focused on a wide variety of other issues when considering their ambitions and futures. However, youth frequently did reference the elections in our sessions, and the controversial elections season may have contributed to widespread political cynicism and to discussions around 'not having a voice' in Kenya.



Objectives for this research

1. The current picture

How are young Kenyans experiencing the current state of affairs in relation to education, employment, and social opportunity?

5. Support and solutions

What support do young people feel they need, what should this look like, and where should it come from?



2. Lives in context

What are young people's needs, hopes, challenges, information sources, daily activities and relationships with family, friends, community and their wider environment?

4. Challenges and barriers

What do youth think are the biggest issues facing them and affecting their future? How are those experienced in everyday life?

3. The future

What are young people's hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future? What do they perceive their pathways to be and who influences these? What role do education and employment play in their future ambitions?

Research approach

We wanted to engage young people as partners in the research process. Gaining their trust and making them feel comfortable and safe was essential to getting to the nuance and more 'hidden' facets of their experiences and hopes. To achieve this, it was important to create flat power structures and employ methodologies that were fun and engaging for young people.

Our approach is outlined as follows.

Working collaboratively with youth in Kenya

We were fortunate to have access to the minds of the British Council Youth Task Force, a group of 15 young Kenyans who lend their experiences and voices to youth-focused discussions and decisions at the Council. We worked with the Youth Task Force from the onset, creating a WhatsApp group where we could share early ideas for (and get feedback on) research materials. Members of the group also joined an early findings brainstorm at the close of fieldwork with our full research team.



Half-day group workshops with 6-7 youth

Instead of taking a traditional focus group approach, this research included half-day youth workshop sessions that a) allowed the time and space to build trust and explore issues holistically, and in depth, and b) used a wide range of projective and engaging exercises to 'learn from' rather than simply 'ask of' our participants. For example, sessions included:

Persona Exercises:

Draw and tell us about a 'typical young person' in your community- what is a typical day like? Who influences them? What are their hopes and fears? Who do they turn to for advice? What is their dream job?

Waking up in a few years:

Imagine you woke up one morning and it is five years later. What would have changed? How would you feel? Would life be better or worse? What would you be doing? Who would you live with? What would be your best hopes/worst fears?

Future Pathways:

Draw and imagine one 'good future' and one 'bad future' and explain to us in detail all the things that would/could happen along the way to make each future a reality

Theme Sorting:

We gave respondents a range of cards depicting a range of themes (i.e. health, pregnancy, religion/witchcraft, corruption, government, education, employment, etc) and asked them to sort them into 'not an issue where I live', 'an issue where I live' or 'a big issue where I live' and explain in detail why.

Secret Question/Concern Boxes:

An opportunity for respondents to write secret questions or issues on post-its and drop them into a 'secret box'.

Throughout, our exercises built up from more general discussion and 'easier' topics to those that were more personal or sensitive. We also used a wide range of projective exercises (e.g. what would a 'typical person from Siaya do' rather than 'what are you going to do') so that youth did not feel under

pressure to disclose sometimes-difficult personal circumstances, and to encourage the airing of more controversial views.

WhatsApp follow-ups

Many young people in Kenya are communicating online – and some feel more comfortable discussing their views in digital space than in face-to-face sessions. To ensure that we captured all opinions, we conducted 'WhatsApp follow-ups' with a couple of young people per workshop. Via a structured set of three WhatsApp follow up questions, we continued our conversations and followed up on key themes from the workshops, providing a space for us to hear if views had changed after the sessions; if there was anything they didn't get a chance to say; what their friends thought; and so on.

Community Immersions



Whilst the group sessions allowed us to explore a wide variety of views (relatively) quickly, immersions helped us understand individual youth's contexts, experiences and needs in more depth. Crucially, they also allowed us an ethnography-inspired look into youth's local communities – helping us understand more about what day-to-day life looked like for them, and grounding discussions in local context and realities.

Each community immersion included three different elements:

- A one-on-one depth interview with a youth participant (between 45 and 90 minutes);
- An interview with the youth's friends and/or family (between 30 minutes to an hour); and
- An immersive 'walk-around' session, where youth walked us around their local area and helped us understand how some of the issues we discussed in our interviews play out in practice in their local community.

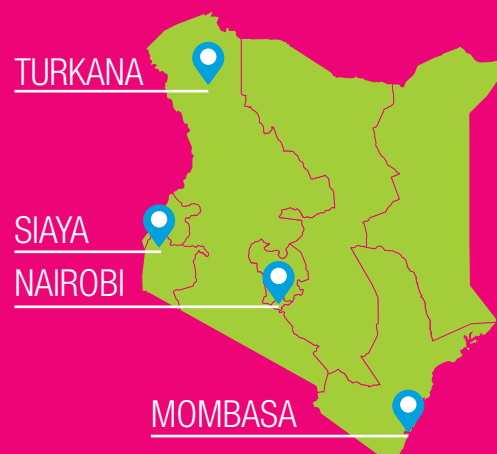
These sessions were conducted flexibly according to participant comfort and interest. In a few cases, a planned family member was not available or seemed to make our youth participant nervous – in which case friend and family immersions were cancelled, and we simply spent more time with our youth participant. In some places, a range of people in our youth participant’s social network wanted to participate, so we heard from multiple friends and family members. In one immersion in Siaya, an entire compound joined in the discussion, and the team held an impromptu group research session of 16 participants – ranging from young cousins to great-grandmothers.

Regardless of exactly how the immersions worked in practice, each helped us gain a richer understanding of youth’s local environment and ambitions, challenges and needs in context.

Research locations

The resources and support available to youth in each of our locations varied widely – life looked very different for youth in Nairobi, Mombasa, Siaya and Turkana. In particular, the economic opportunities available to youth in each area differed substantially according to the richness of local economic activity and each community’s deprivation profile. For example, the more affluent youth we spoke to in Nairobi had far broader global exposure and access to opportunities than youth in other areas; Turkana youth conversely lived much more local existences, shaped and sometimes bound by local social contexts and cultural norms.

A SNAPSHOT OF WHERE TO WENT AND WHO WE SPOKE TO



NAIROBI

Who we spoke to: The young people we met in Nairobi came from a higher social grade than youth we met in other locations. They had all completed secondary education with some having completed (or still in) University.

These young people had broad exposure to varied perspectives from across Kenya and beyond, and were accustomed to living in a diverse city, with a mixing of nationalities, races, ethnicities, cultures, religions and lifestyles.

MOMBASA

Who we spoke to: The youth we spoke to in Mombasa came from relatively low income backgrounds. They were exposed to rich and varied international and national perspectives in their local communities. This exposure includes even religious and cultural sub-communities in the city; for example, even the fairly traditional and conservative Muslim youth we spoke to often dreamed of being part of ‘the high life’ they saw modelled via Mombasa’s tourist and affluent classes.

SIAYA

Who we spoke to: The youth we spoke to in Siaya came from rural and relatively poor backgrounds. Most were members of the Luo tribe, with strong Christian influences. Though many youth desired a life in one of Kenya’s major cities, there was a real Siaya pride evident in the youth we spoke to; youth were proud of Siaya’s history in producing intellectuals, major musicians, and even international leaders like Barack Obama.

LODWAR, TURKANA

Who we spoke to: Turkana is characterised by traditional cultural values and social norms, with relatively strict gender norms in particular compared to other areas included in the research. The young people we met came from relatively marginalised communities, with very little access to resources and little exposure to other cultures or places. Of all youth included in the research, these youth represented the lowest social grade.

03

THE BIG PICTURE

Despite the wide variety of youth experience represented in this research, a few key findings rang loud and clear from youth across locations, ages, genders and contexts. In the section to follow, we outline the key insights that shaped discussion repeatedly throughout the research; core tensions and challenges that reappeared and framed youth's views and needs consistently. We then delve into more detailed discussion of youth's views on five key challenges in Section 4.



Kenyan youth have a strong desire to be listened to; they want their voices heard.

There was an overwhelming belief that the younger generation possessed talent and creativity; one young man in Nairobi described himself as feeling proud to be part of the “prime generation”. However, youth broadly expressed disappointment and frustration, not only with their lack of representation in government, but also with their lack of representation and ‘status’ in society more broadly.

Youth described Kenyan culture as hierarchical, feeling that age and experience often outweigh education and knowledge. Many young people feel they fight a daily battle to be taken seriously by those around them. Whether seeking parental support on a life decision, speaking to teachers, or asking an older colleague for help, youth told us that age is more than just a number in Kenyan society – it holds weight and power. Unsurprisingly young people relished the opportunity to voice their opinions about issues they felt passionate about.



Youth have big dreams and aspirations to be happy and successful, but also to give back.

Youth clearly and confidently shared their dreams with us: to be happy and safe; to have jobs or businesses that gave them financial security but also enjoyment and pride; to ‘make it big’ as artists, sports coaches, CEOs and politicians; to contribute their voices. Often, these dreams stretched beyond the personal to include youth's family, friends and communities. Youth told us that if they ‘made it’ they would become people with the power to shape the world around them.



Kenyan youth are proud to be Kenyan and want to shape a stronger, fairer Kenya.

Their dreams for the future did not stop at personal ambition. Many young people expressed pride in their Kenyan heritage and a desire to work hard to make their country better. They spoke about the challenges they faced but also expressed hope and a clear vision of the changes they want to see: a brighter Kenya with more opportunity, more equality, and more security.



However, youth are keenly aware that they are operating in an environment of scarcity, with strong competition for limited opportunities.

The youth we spoke to did not have the luxury of naivety or unfounded optimism, particularly around their likelihood of employment and economic success. They were aware that the Kenyan job market has not yet been able to keep up with the demands of the growing labour market, resulting in limited job opportunities in the formal sector. Youth felt they are fighting for limited opportunities – and felt cynical about the competition they faced in securing employment.



Youth also feel they have to navigate a rigged, broken system that locks them out of opportunities.

When asked what they think it takes to succeed in Kenya today, we often initially heard words like ‘hard work’, ‘perseverance’ and ‘ambition’ – words that signalled that a good future is there for the taking for young people that are willing to put the graft and hours in to achieve it. However, as discussions evolved, it became clear that youth feel that it takes much more than hard work to succeed in the Kenya of today; that, in fact, hard work was no guarantee of success, or even of basic economic security. And youth feel quite bitter about it.

After staring at the floor and taking a quick skim around the room to see if anyone would be brave enough to say what they really thought, one girl in Nairobi looked up and proclaimed, “Fine, I’ll say it: in Kenya – it’s about survival, it’s about working a corrupt and unequal system”

So what does this ‘rigged’ system look like from a youth perspective?

Corruption: Youth feel that unethical use of money and power (through bribery, fraud and profiteering) is such a part of Kenyan culture that it will never stop. As one young man in Turkana put it, “If you want to be successful in Kenya, you have to give up some morals” – Male, Turkana, 17. Youth felt they were constantly fighting against systems in which it was ‘every man for himself’, and that without money, they didn’t even have a chance at economic success.

“When you have money, you can get away with anything, and it is the same thing with politics, you will not be elected because of the good things that you want to do, but you corrupt your way into politics by giving out bribes.”

Female, Nairobi, 17

Favouritism: Youth are angry at the lack of fairness and inequality that sits at the centre of Kenyan social norms around ethnic and social favouritism. Across locations – and across the range of tribes represented – there was an overwhelming feeling that in Kenya ‘it isn’t about what you know, it’s about who you know’.

“It is not working hard it is working smart.”

Male, Nairobi, 21

Sexism: Young women across Kenya (and some young men!) are aware of and frustrated by sexism in the workplace and beyond. Educated young women in Nairobi reported feeling frustrated by glass ceilings in companies and many young women express outrage that male education is still prioritised in some parts of the country.

Ageism: Youth have complex relationships with the concept of age. On the one hand, they have great respect for their elders and feel they can learn a lot from them – they do, after all, have more life experience. On the other hand, youth feel frustrated at being ‘dismissed’ by the older generation – they possess different and important skills the older generation lack. Some youth even report feeling that the older generation are threatened by the potential of young people and want to ‘keep them in their place’.



The perceived disconnect between ambition and reality can lead to disillusionment and hopelessness.

Youth feel the odds are stacked against them in the current cultural and economic climate, and that the path to achieving their dreams is unclear. Unfortunately, the scale of their concern and worry typically stretched to meet the scale of their ambition and opportunities; more privileged, affluent youth expressed as much if not more fear for the future as youth in more deprived areas. For example, Nairobi participants, so privileged in many ways, expressed acute anxiety and frustration that even a University degree does not pay off unless you know ‘the right people’. Youth in poorer regions like Turkana felt overlooked by the system and expressed disappointment that despite their strong desires to complete education, no one seemed willing to help them.



Youth often operate from a place of optimism, but just below the surface have big fears about what happens when you step off – or are pushed off – the path to success.

Youth were acutely aware that economic vulnerability tends to stack with other risk factors, and as they painted pictures of their potential futures, both good and bad, there was very little evidence of a ‘grey’ area between potential futures of ‘success’ or ‘failure.’ They worried that unless they managed to succeed in securing good, financially secure jobs, they would be at risk of a multitude of other challenges:

Drug use.

Youth across locations told us that drug use was common (and tempting) within their social circles and communities – particularly for those who were out of work. For youth who drop out of school, alcohol and weed are often Band-Aids, especially when money is tight. Higher socio-economic group (SEG) youth mentioned cocaine and other party drugs as a welcome distraction from boredom, frustration and anxiety.

“If you don’t find yourself busy, you will find yourself busy with drugs.”
Male, Mombasa, 20

Mental health problems.

Youth in several locations told us that idleness and lack of purpose can be a breeding ground for depression and anxiety among young people. In some interviews, we saw how seriously youth took the idea of an ‘unsuccessful’ future – with several youth telling us that without good jobs and success they would have nothing to live for.

“If I don’t go to school, I won’t get a job – and then there will be nothing to wait for but death.”
Female, Siaya, 18

Early pregnancy.

Especially in poorer rural areas, youth talked of sex as one of the only forms of entertainment and pleasure. For hormonal teens, early sexual activity is typically a strong temptation regardless; for youth that were unsure whether there was any future worth ‘saving themselves’ for, the unlikely long-term rewards of employment and education were harder to resist against the short-term gains of companionship and sexual pleasure.

“You know you shouldn’t do it (risky sex), but it’s one of the only fun activities we have here in Turkana”
Male, Turkana, 16

04

YOUTH'S VIEWS ON KEY
ISSUES FACING THEM

The below sections explore youth's views, hopes and needs in depth across five key issue areas:



01 Employment



05 Relationships,
marriage, sex and
pregnancy



02 Education



04 Violence and
physical safety



03 Voice and civic
engagement

In practice, youth's views on each of these issue areas often overlapped. For example, though we discuss education separately, for many youth the goal of completing their education (to whatever level they aspired to) was considered critical to securing stable employment later in life.

The key insights outlined in the previous section also influenced contexts and needs across all of the issues explored in the sections to follow. In particular, youth's concerns about favouritism, corruption and inequality infused discussions across each of these areas.



EMPLOYMENT

Across locations, employment and income-generation was something that youth were thinking about, working towards, and worrying about. Whether in school and dreaming of the future, or out on the streets trying to make a living, the need to secure financial stability was a matter of pressing urgency and concern for Kenyan youth.

Youth felt that employment is guaranteed for few, and challenging for all. They outlined a wide range of perceived barriers to achieving the jobs they hoped for, and a range of support they felt was needed to help smooth the way for Kenyan youth to take a positive role in the economy.

“Jobs are so important. If you have no job, no home, your voice will not be heard. If you call the police with a problem, they will ignore you. Without a job you will just be living, nothing more.”

Male, Mombasa, 20



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Mombasa ‘persona exercise’. When we asked young people in Mombasa to imagine a typical young person in their community, they told us the following :

“Abdala has no sense of direction. He is 19 and lives in the streets. He lives alone. His parents are gone, there were misunderstandings and then they divorced. He works in the area doing small jobs, like if you want your fence cut he comes in. He doesn’t go to school. He’s always around – he’s a tout who calls people to matatus. His big thoughts are money and friends. He doesn’t really have any positive influences so he is just in the streets. All he thinks about is money. His main objective is to get it and he’ll do anything for it. His friends are bad influences. He can go for days without bread so his friends just say – let’s get money together, let’s steal. And also

drugs. Their family communication is very difficult because of many injustices. If someone is unjust to you, you no longer think of them as helpful. Most of their communication is critiques, that’s it. He has no one to help him. As long as he has money he will go for leisure and a place to sleep. When he does not have money and entertainment he feels he has nothing in life. He has no other way than to deal with life the way it is. He finds himself worthless in this community – there is no one who values him and no one to turn to. He lacks skills – maybe he has not gone to school, and there are no jobs for people without an education.”

What youth want

Across locations, youth's 'dream jobs' often centred on white-collar, professional work.

Many youth dreamed of having stable, interesting and fulfilling jobs – often white collar employment in the formal professional sector (lawyers, doctors, teachers and so on). More down-to-earth dreams, more attainable without affluence and University education, included regular work in the local office economy (retail, hospitality, banking, and so on). The attraction of a regular pay check was strong because of the promise of stability it offered.

Many youth feel migration to cities is a vital step on the road to achieving the dream of formal sector employment.

With limited opportunities in their local area, the young people we spoke to felt that migrating to bigger cities was a more viable route to the office jobs and professional work they dreamed of. For most, this involved migrating to Nairobi or other big cities nearby. Though some youth did express concern that life in big cities would be more costly, the allure of 'big opportunities' is highly seductive.

However, many acknowledged that white-collar formal employment might be an unrealistic dream due to scarcity, corruption and favouritism.

Youth felt strongly that a good education and relevant skills would be no guarantee of success in the formal sector. Without enough jobs to go around, they worried that their qualifications would not translate into secure formal work, or even the ability to get an interview. Part of the drive towards bigger cities, was a strong perception that local jobs were not available. Or, youth told us, when jobs did become available, they were either (a) given unfairly to family members or fellow tribe members (b) given to skilled workers from other parts of the country, or (c) given to those that could afford to bribe the job givers. Youth also reported that scarcity translated into unfair and difficult employment conditions for many: wages that did not allow for a reasonable standard of living, or unreasonably long hours or hazardous conditions.

"Someone can go to the government to look for a job, and you find that when you go, you are told that you cannot look for a job. You say your name and your name betrays you. Someone else will go for the job and be given it because they are Kikuyu. Even in the cities, you find that most of the people who get the jobs are people who know each other."

Male, Siaya, 23

"There are so many people with good education and degrees. We believe coastal people should at least have a chance to build local things. If there is a building built here, it will not be a local person. Jobs are there – but it's difficult for us to access. Or they offer rates that are lower than they should be – 250 a day for building work, for many hours of work. Can you eat from that? Pay rent? The income is so small. There's no balance. Instead, they bring people from the Western communities in and they get the jobs."

Male, Mombasa, 21

"They have recently discovered oil in Turkana and there was a lot of excitement but it hasn't helped us- workers from Nairobi are mining our oil- why don't they give these jobs to local people?"

Male, Turkana, 18

For many youth, entrepreneurship was thus the favoured route to employment - a way to work around the corrupt structures and hierarchical systems of traditional office jobs.

The conditions of the market place foster 'job creation' and many young people welcome this. They are proud of their creativity and talent, and impatient to use it. Many youth also liked the idea that creating businesses would be a way to create employment in their communities. Some youth we spoke to had already started their 'side hustles' such as selling produce,

meat, soft drinks or 'khat' or offering services like cleaning, sewing or cooking. Though not at the scale of a 'small business yet' these ad-hoc jobs were helping youth pay for school fees, finance fun and leisure, or simply help put food on the table.

"If I start my own business, it's my responsibility and no one can take that away from me- no one can say 'oh you're too young, you don't know what you're doing' because I will be the owner!"

Male, Nairobi, 21

"The idea of having to fight my way to the top of a hierarchical company is exhausting to even think about – I'd rather start something fresh and innovative with like-minded people my own age"

Male, Nairobi, 20

WHAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP LOOKS LIKE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Starting a boutique clothing business



"I'd like to have something high class – like owning a boutique, or a dress shop. I could start by sewing my own clothes but I would eventually like to have my own employees."

Female, Mombasa , 20

Opening a 'female toy' franchise



"I know in Europe there is a real market for it, but in Kenya conservative values from the older generation hold us back – I would start a female sex toy business- I'm sure it would do well!"

Male, Nairobi , 21

Opening a recording studio



"Here in Kenya we have some of the best musical talent in the world, that's why I set up my own small recording studio- I let young, up- and-coming artists use my space"

Male, Nairobi, 23

Opening a grime club



"In the UK grime is really big, but no one really knows what it is in Kenya- I'd open up a club that plays exclusively grime music like Skepta and Stormzy"

Male, Nairobi , 19

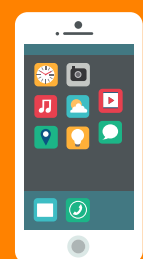
Opening a milk depot



"You have to look for opportunities. Like here in Siaya there is only one milk depot, which means there is little competition. Opening another would mean that customers could choose, maybe you would have better service."

Male, Siaya, 20

Starting an app



"There are so many great start-ups in Kenya but the problem is getting the investment. I'd love to start my own tech related start-up"

Male, Turkana, 16

Despite their importance to the Kenyan economy, jobs in agriculture are not aspirational for youth.

Of all the youth we spoke to, only two outlined dream jobs or more realistic 'likely' jobs to aim for in the agricultural space: one youth wanted to be a farmer, another a broker. The sector suffers from a poor reputation due to uncertainty around ownership of land, harsh manual labour, insecurity around crop yields and being at 'the whim of the elements'. Even in lush Siaya, many youth associated farming with subsistence rather than commercial farming, and equated agricultural work with failure.

"For people in this community, agriculture comes as a last option. When people finish 4th form they look for office jobs. So maybe people who don't work hard in school settle in agriculture. In office work it is an easy job – you sit in an office. Farming is hard work. And when you plant crops you have to wait for it to mature. In white collar jobs, at the end of every month you are assured of some pay."

Male, Siaya, 20

Inequality as a barrier to success

In addition to the favouritism and corruption that youth felt shaped the employment landscape for all, in some of our research sessions youth also outlined challenges related to health, disability, and gender.

Youth reported that poor health could be 'the end' of their employment and success dreams – a particular concern for young men in more physical job roles. Youth in Mombasa, whose immediate employment landscapes were dominated by harsh, often low pay physical labour (for example, ditch digging) placed 'health' at the top of the pile when thinking about challenges that would threaten their dreams of success. They explained that in their local area, because competition for jobs was so high, anything that made them 'weaker' or less physically able would simply knock them out of the game.

Youth with disabilities worried about being overlooked for good roles – and that employers would not be willing to make the basic accommodations they might need. In one of our groups, a young woman with mobility issues told us that she dreamed of becoming a doctor or a CEO, which would allow her to give back by creating jobs and wealth within her community. However, lack of basic provisions in her community like ramps to get up the stairs meant that she knew she had to be very realistic in her job choices – and her 'likely'

job goal was to work in a local hotel which was accessible to someone with mobility issues. She told us that even this 'dream' was uncertain: that she knew she presented 'more work' for employers, who may choose not to hire her at all, or to pass her over for promotions against able-bodied staff.

"People with my condition – there are so many of us in this community who are indoors and have no one to support them. I want to support and grow other kids, to help them grow and help themselves, to help them become independent... But someone with challenges like me – I have to choose where I work carefully. Maybe it's slippery, or the office is upstairs. My dream is to be a doctor or a business owner but I've had to change that dream – hoping to be an office manager, or work in a hotel, or sew. It has its challenges, but at least it's more realistic."

Female, Mombasa, 21

Other youth with disabilities included in research felt functionally excluded from society: unaware that there may be options available to them, and with little social support provided to help keep them in work.

Young women outlined a range of harmful gender norms that left them feeling cynical about their future employment prospects – and expecting to endure a wide range of unfair treatment in the workplace. Many of the young women we spoke to told us that negative gender norms around women’s place in society and in the workplace left them feeling overlooked for jobs, facing an obvious glass ceiling. They spoke of being sexually harassed at work by customers, colleagues and bosses – including, as a few young women told us, being explicitly asked for sexual favours as a condition of employment. Some young women also struggled to imagine a future in which they would successfully balance their job ambitions with their expected roles as mothers and carers; pressure to stay home and raise children left many young women (especially in more rural areas) feeling guilty about their career aspirations.

“You find there’s no equality in business leadership: it’s all one gender, most of them are men. And you can see from government even that there is no balance. Or you find a male boss employing a female because he knows he can take advantage of her. This issue of balance is so important. Girls are asked to sleep with people to get a job; it’s an injustice. Boys are also given more opportunity in education.”

Male, Mombasa, 20

“Yes, like for example Lisa’s concern with security, whenever she is going somewhere the number of men that she comes across and harass her is a threat as this would affect her mental health and physical health, but Tehran is probably not harassed by men.”

Females, Nairobi, aged 15-19



SPOTLIGHT ON:

AKELLO – A YOUNG PERSON WHO HAS BEEN FUNCTIONALLY EXCLUDED FROM EMPLOYMENT AND CIVIC LIFE.

During one of our community immersions, we met Akello. He was infected with cerebral malaria when he was about five years old and this affected his mental health and learning ability. He had a stroke ten years ago (when 14 years old) and is partially paralysed on his left arm and leg. He studied at a nearby school, until Standard 5, when he became ill and dropped out of school.

These days, Akello uses a crutch to move around and is dependent on his parents and brother for care. Although he speaks slowly, he has good receptive and expressive language and has much to contribute: he is thoughtful, measured and intelligent. However, Akello’s only hope is to fully heal through the power of prayer – he reads a Dholuo (local dialect) bible almost every day and says he “will be

able to walk again,” even though he is not receiving any treatment or therapy. He strongly believes that he will only be able to work if he can walk with both legs again and is not aware of any skills he can get with his current physical condition. He is aware of the Association of People with Disabilities in Kenya (APDK), but has not contacted them.

Without support to find a way forward that respects some of the challenges of his physical condition, Akello has very little to look forward to. Akello does not realise that his potential can go beyond his physical abilities and has tied his future to being able to use both his legs and arms. In the meantime, he worries his family is “very tired” of taking care of him, which is a source of deep anxiety for him.

What youth feel about the support available to them

Young people see their peers as competition, not sources of support. Young people fear a future of unemployment above all else. Across the board, youth express a strong desire for themselves and their friends to 'rise up' and become successful together. Upon further probing, we discovered that this was not a selfless desire for peers to succeed; they worried that if they began to succeed within a peer group that was struggling the others would try to 'bring them down'. This competitive context worried and saddened youth; they told us that it fosters unhealthy competition and jealousy amongst their peer group and friends. It is difficult to establish a positive collective identity as 'youth' when success feels like a zero sum game; in a friend's success, youth saw the closing of a potential opportunity for their own future.

"Unfortunately, because competition is so fierce, you never really feel anyone is happy about your successes- there's a lot of jealousy and backstabbing, if you become too successful, your friends will try to drag you down and put you back in your place"

Male, Nairobi, 21

"If you become too successful in Turkana, someone will put a spell on you and try to bring you down!"

Male, Turkana, 16

"I want me and my friends to all rise up together – I want us all to do well- if I'm the only one who does well, our friendship will suffer"

Female, Nairobi, 19

Youth lack the business and financial know-how needed to support their entrepreneurial interests – and have little access to support that would help them get it and achieve their

dreams. Youth do not feel confident they possess the right skills to translate their creative ideas into a sustainable business. Stories of start-ups quickly 'tanking' and an unstable and unpredictable economic environment make many young people reluctant to take chances. None of the youth in the sessions we ran could tell us where they might get mentorship or guidance to start their dream businesses; they were simply expecting to need to get by via risky trial and error.

"I wish we had more role models who could tell us 'don't do this, don't do that', our generation is shooting in the dark..."

Male, Nairobi, 23

"It comes back to education, if I'd been taught how to set up a business when I was at school, I wouldn't be struggling"

Male, Nairobi, 21

Many youth know government support is available in the form of loans, but they feel the current system sets them up to fail.

Many (especially higher SEG youth) are aware of government youth policies, their intended purpose and audience. However, experiences of corruption paired with word-of-mouth accounts of bad experiences leave youth feeling bitter and reluctant to access them. Young people feel that youth funds are purposely set up in a way that makes them impossible to access, and that favouritism and corruption functionally erase many opportunities. Frustrations include: lack of clear information around eligibility criteria; stories of misappropriation of funds and exploitation of youth; loans being unfairly doled out to family members; 'impossible' lending conditions (i.e. youth being required to raise as high as 10% deposit of any loan as collateral); experiences of bribes; and requirements for 'group' lending that are not realistic given low peer trust and high social competition.

“My friend applied for a procurement tender and the officer told him he wanted 80% of what he was going to make. He complied and then the officer said he wanted to take 90%”
Male, Nairobi, 23

“It feels like there are opportunities you can’t access – like getting the youth fund to develop a business, or getting employment. The funds are there but you have to bribe them.”
Female, Turkana, 20

“I heard that to access the YDEF you have to form a group of at least 20 people to go into business with you, but I don’t even know 20 people!”
Male, Siaya, 20

“I go to the county government and need money to buy a tractor. Someone is asking for a bribe, and I don’t have that money. Of course I don’t. I need the money – to have a business to make money – but I have to pay money to get the money.”
Male, Siaya, 21



CONTEXT NOTE:

Youth told us that high profile scandals such as the National Youth Service scandal, in which Ksh 971 million is said to have been stolen by Kenya’s Ministry of Devolution and Planning, leave youth with a bitter taste in their mouth and lack of faith in government support for their employment dreams⁴.

Some youth don’t trust that the Government is there to support them; not only do they not feel adequately supported, they often feel that Government fails to encourage entrepreneurship. For example, in Siaya youth raised that the police do little to counter cartel and gang targeting of up-and-coming entrepreneurs; youth told us that rather than encourage competition and new businesses in the local area, the promise of success left them under physical threat from local businesses and even police who wanted to ‘keep them down.’ They noted that local policies and practices did not support marketplace competition. And despite the lush, fertile environment, those who did dream of agricultural careers worried that even success would not be a guarantee of safety and security: their farms and land could simply be taken away.

Some young people (mostly more affluent youth) expressed interest in the creative industries, but feel pathways for this are limited in Kenya and parents are not always supportive. In Nairobi, many youth felt a big generational gap between themselves and their parents, which could be a considerable source of conflict. The majority of these young people are exposed to and want to participate in a global world and global economy: they can feel change and innovation happening around them but can feel thwarted by their parents’ more traditional views of what success looks like. Many young people expressed interest in creative industries such as advertising or design but felt held back by parents who want them to pursue more traditional careers, like law or medicine.

“If you do well you have to watch your back – the cartels fear competition. They will take your money and hurt you. The police do nothing.”
Male, Siaya, 21

“I want to work in marketing but my parents don’t support that”
Female, Nairobi, 16

⁴<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000205001/nys-scandal-auditor-general-uncovers-eight-ways-to-syphon-sh1-billion>

The changes youth want to see

Youth passionately called for change and a fairer, more promising employment landscape that rewards hard work, talent and ambition. And many also told us that Kenya needs to do more to nurture those that are disadvantaged – people who have much to offer to society and the economy, but are currently held back by inequality.

“Getting people to employ us – it’s like a dream that you will probably die without achieving. Our youths have so much talent – youth need to be given access to employment.”
Male, Mombasa, 20

They want more support for an ‘innovation and entrepreneurship culture’ in Kenya and fair, transparent systems and funding that support this culture. Though Nairobi is already leading the way in this, youth want to see even more of an ‘innovation and start-up culture.’ However, they believe that this culture will be impossible to achieve so long as fair and transparent systems for accessing funds and loans are not in place – and so long as favouritism and corruption shape the de facto delivery of youth-focused policies and funding.

Youth want those in charge of youth-focused policies that purportedly support youth employment and entrepreneurship to be held accountable for results. For example: by being required to publish notices of opportunities available more widely; to show who has applied for bursaries and mentorships and why the winners have been chosen; and to show that funds spent were used well. They want access to funds and start-up grants without bribes, and without the need to pool together with other youth that they don’t trust, on their own initiative. And they want programmes to be designed to meet youth interests and needs.



“Corrupt officials are able to get away with it because we all turn our backs to it. We need to incentivise these people to do their jobs well- make them accountable, track changes in youth employment longitudinally and if there’s no change, fire them!”
Female, Nairobi, 19

They want access to role models and mentors ‘like them’ who can provide guidance – particularly to help them navigate uncertain pathways like entrepreneurship. Young people want support from those who come from similar circumstances as them and have achieved their goals. Across the board, youth we spoke to felt they lacked this. This lack of mentorship contributed to difficulty ‘seeing’ and navigating alternative pathways for those that worried about or had been barred from accessing formal, white-collar employment. Youth spoke of wanting more employment focused peer to peer support (for example, a place where entrepreneurially minded youth can come together to discuss ideas) or online forums – anything that would garner a more collective youth identity.

“I don’t really have anyone I look up to, who I want to be like; the closest thing I have is my aunt”

Female, Nairobi, 17

Youth want a flavour for the working world through apprenticeships or internships. Youth want more opportunities for temporary employment like summer jobs, internships or apprenticeships. They feel this would be a ‘win-win’ as they can offer cheap labour to companies and it saves them ‘sitting idle at home’.

“Doing something, even if it’s temporary, is better than doing nothing”

Female, Mombasa, 24

They want professional standards to be enforced in the workplace – to help stamp out sexism, racism, and ableism – and for workplaces to treat all fairly. For example, female youth participants called for transparency around gender ratios and gender pay; for equality awareness amongst people in hiring positions; and

for the enforcement of anti-sexism policies in the workplace. Youth with disabilities called for basic investment in provisions like ramps and mobility supports that would allow them more access to jobs that fit their skills.

Youth want more avenues to get (and give) genuine support with peers. Young people wish there was less competition and rivalry among peers, and feel that young people should work harder to come together and support each other.

“I think that we should work as a unit other than individuals otherwise we are not going to head anywhere because us Kenyans we still have that tribalism problem, and that is one reason we will not move forward because we want to work as individual groups, even though we are supposed to be addressing the same issues.”

Female, Nairobi, 19

Some (especially more affluent) youth want more support from ‘traditional parents’ who want them to go down career paths that are not exciting to young people. They want to see a cultural shift in attitudes towards creative industries from parents and those in power. They want to see more ‘buzz’ around these career choices in the media so they become more accepted over time.



EDUCATION

The young people we spoke to held complex and sometimes contradictory views on education. On the one hand, education is perceived to be the key to success and plays a pivotal role in the journey to self-development; on the other hand, there are no guarantees that education will lead to gainful employment. Youth feel they lack practical strategies to overcome these challenges and wish they had more support.

This contradiction makes the journey through education particularly challenging for lower SEG youth; hardship and lack of guarantees can make education feel cumbersome and other options more tempting, including risky sexual and romantic relationships. Higher SEG youth have easy access to education, but are riddled with anxiety and highly critical of the system, feeling it fails to adequately prepare them for the working world, and that even great preparation and hard work is no guarantee of success.

At present, youth also do not see other options in educational provision beyond formal academic study. Youth across the board were critical of TVET as an alternative route to education, equating it with a lack of intellectual prowess and ultimately, failure.



CONTEXT NOTE:

At the time of this research, big changes to the education system in Kenya were afoot, with the 2-6-6-3 system replacing the 8-4-4 system, introduced in 1985. The new system is intended to be more flexible in responding to students' strengths and passion areas, and be less examination focused. Most of the youth we spoke to were in the 8-4-4 system of education.

**“In Kenya,
education means
both everything
and nothing”
Male, Nairobi, 20**



What youth feel

Youth's perspectives on education and what they need to help them succeed varied significantly across locations and SEG: the more affluent youth we spoke to in Nairobi experienced wildly different challenges than lower-income youth in Turkana, for example. Below, we have separated findings on youth's views on education according to SEG.

The perspective of lower SEG youth.

Some lower income youth, quite literally, described finishing secondary education as 'do or die'; unless they finished secondary school, they couldn't imagine a positive future for themselves. Youth in lower SEG areas felt education was their only hope for improving their own and their family's lot in life, with one young woman in Siaya sombrely stating:

"If I don't have an education, I won't get a job and then there's nothing for me to do except wait for death".

Female, Siaya, 16

Apart from practical benefits around employment, education is also valued because it provides a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Free Primary school education across Kenya means that most of the youth we spoke to had completed Primary school. These young people value education highly, with many stating it is one of the only things giving them a sense of purpose. They often carry the weight of family and community expectations on their shoulders, and feel an obligation to 'give back' in the future.

"I want to be a lawyer, when I have made a lot of money I will help my family and the community".

Female, Turkana, 16

"For you to achieve employment, education is the key to success. When you apply for a job the first thing they ask you is what your level of education is."

Female, Siaya, 16

However, school fees are a constant struggle and raise the risk of non-completion of education. Many lower income youth told us that their parents struggled to pay for school fees and supplies, leading to long spells away from school or, for many, school drop out. Bursaries were scarce and perceived as unfairly distributed. Lack of employment and adequate funds among parents often means young people have to 'hustle' in any way they can to put themselves through school. This leaves them vulnerable to risky activities such as gambling and prostitution.

"I hear people talking about bursaries for 80,000, 70,000 – but we didn't get them. If you do get one, it's maybe for 13,000. We don't know where all that money goes – or we do. He has given them to his children, his advocates, his family."

Female, Mombasa, 20



SPOTLIGHT ON:

INFORMAL SAVING SYSTEMS OR 'ROSCAS' ARE A WAY TO SAVE MONEY FOR SCHOOL FEES.

Young people talked of informal saving groups among youth in the community, where each member contributes an agreed amount weekly or monthly. The money collected is then distributed on a 'needs' basis, but systems are in place to ensure every member gets the pay-out at least once. For youth, this is something that helps them with money for school fees when times are tough.

Poverty also puts extra pressure on many youth – making educational completion harder. The harsh environment in which youth operate can also make concentrating in school a challenge. In Turkana and Mombasa, youth spoke of hunger as a big barrier to getting through the school day, and ultimately, the school year.

“Education is the key to my success. But you cannot go to class without food in your stomach. If you do, by 10 or 11 your stomach is rumbling so much that you can’t even pay attention to the teacher.”
Female, Mombasa, 19

“Education can be challenging even when you have the fees. Maybe there are challenges at home, in the community, on your way to school. And then nothing sticks in your head. The money goes, the time goes, and still nothing sticks in your head.”

Male, Siaya, 17

Young women’s education is still de-prioritised in some locations.

Tradition and culture in some communities still hold girls back from getting a proper education. In Siaya and Turkana young women expressed feeling like a ‘burden’ on their families- a burden that would only be alleviated through marriage. These young women desperately want to go to school, but when money is tight, they are often the first to lose out.

“Here in Lodwar, you will find that if a girl child wants to go to school, she will be told no, your role is to stay here at home so that she can look after other siblings. The boy will also be told that there are enough sheep and goats that he can take care of. So you will not be able to go to school.”

Male, Turkana, 21

Drop out is common, leaving youth at risk of hopelessness and purposelessness; many youth told us that it is easy to succumb to ‘bad behaviours’. Out-of-school youth report feeling lost, with most hoping for bursaries to get them back on the right track. However, the struggle to get through education can tempt youth to give up on long-term visions of success and accept their situation. For some, this can involve engaging in ‘bad’ and sometimes illegal behaviour to make money and alleviate boredom – examples of bad behaviours included drug use, parties, sex and stirring up fights in the community.

“As youth we are the leaders of tomorrow. We are working so hard in school but you can’t join any further education. I’ve stayed two years waiting for a bursary but there has been no help. It’s 50,000 for secondary education, so you feel you just have to drop out. I’ve just accepted my fate.”

Male, Mombasa, 16

“There are a lot of street kids who have dropped out of school and are selling drugs and engaging in bad behaviour in the community- they are always fighting with the police”

Male, Turkana, 17

Although some had noted improvements in education provision in recent years, others found basic provisions continued to be lacking - and expressed anger that corruption and lack of investment in schooling facilities might lock them out of learning opportunities. Many youth hear frequent promises of school investment coming into communities, but report that this money often ‘disappears’: hoped for improvements in school infrastructure or equipment failed to materialise. Many young people we spoke to had migrated from their remote hometowns to move in with extended family, as a result of inadequate facilities in their home towns. This both left them anxious that

they were missing out on the quality of education required to achieve their ambitions, and reduced their faith in the decision-makers and purse-holders around them.

“One good thing is the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which passed about 2.5% of national government revenue direct to the constituencies – these funds built schools, health facilities and gave bursaries to needy students. However, there is still no equal access to education and health so lots of improvements still need to be made”

Father of depth respondent, Siaya

“If you are in a school with no facilities, there are things you can't learn, especially in the sciences. It can be hard to do it without practical experience of the concept.”

Female, Siaya 16.

“There is no adequate supply of sanitary towels and facilities for the ladies. If you miss school for your period for four days because there are no towels it becomes difficult to catch up with your school colleagues.”

Female, Siaya 15

“I went to watch the election in my auntie's house. I saw the president voting in a school. The school he voted in had no floor. What does that say? He should be focusing on helping those schools.”

Female, Siaya, 15

Young women face sexual harassment from teachers. A few young people spoke quite openly about sexual harassment or ‘inappropriate behaviour’ from teachers. Requests like asking young women to stay after class were felt to be quite common, with girls agreeing: “we all know what happens when they ask that”.

Technical vocational education training (TVET) is not working as an appealing alternative to higher education. TVET education has received quite a bit of bad press due to underfunding, lack of adequately trained teachers and outdated curricula that do not match the skill sets youth want or need⁵. As a result, TVET suffers from a poor reputation, with many youth seeing it as ‘a lesser’ option than standard education, reserved only for those who are not bright enough to complete secondary education. Even youth in rural areas, who could benefit from practical skills, still felt that TVET education was paramount to ‘giving up’.

“In university you get to define yourself – to know who you are, and to interact with many different people. Most people in Siaya believe that polytechnics are schools for failures.”

Female, Siaya, 15



⁵ Hall, Samuel, 2017, Youth Employment in Kenya: Literature Review

The perspective of higher SEG youth

Despite easy access to education, more affluent young people can still feel crippled by anxiety and cynicism regarding their futures. Most young people we spoke to from wealthier backgrounds had all successfully completed their schooling: many were on the brink of starting their University career or had finished University education. Despite these achievements, they felt demoralised and insecure about their futures. When we asked young people why this was, they were quick to express anxiety around the ‘lack of guarantees’ about well... anything really! Many expected they would still have to ‘hustle’ and would probably be unable to enter the formal job sector, despite high qualifications. These young people felt very cynical about future employment options, with one young woman in Nairobi jokingly stating: “the only good thing about going to University is that hopefully I will gain some weight!”

“I have worked really hard to get good grades and I am a well read, smart person. It’s so incredibly demoralising that some guy who is related to some politician and barely finished high school is probably going to steal my dream job!”

Female, Nairobi, 18

“All local youth (especially males), even those with university education, go for boda boda (motorcycle taxi business). It is a very dangerous profession. They find themselves doing the same work as people with low levels of education.”

Father of depth respondent, Siaya

Youth worry the current system is not giving them the ‘right skills to meet the challenges of the modern economy’ – including life and business skills. More affluent youth were very vocal about problems with the current education system. They criticised over reliance on examinations and rigid structures that fail to recognise creativity or

nurture individual talents. Importantly, they worried that they had not learned important ‘life skills’ such as financial literacy, filing taxes, and registering a business that would make them competitive in a job market that increasingly fosters entrepreneurship. Youth would also like to see a wider range of courses available to them; physical education, journalism, marketing, design and ICT were mentioned as desirable courses that should be encouraged across educational levels.

“I still have no idea how exactly taxes work or how to file them...but I want to open a business!”

Female, Nairobi, 18

High news coverage of ‘unprepared’ graduates entering the job market is disheartening. As one high school graduate in Nairobi put it: “I had a big fight with my mom because I told her there was no point in me going to University – I might as well just start hustling now!” Youth also feel intimidated at the idea of having to compete in an increasingly globalised economy, and express disappointment that the education they are getting might not give them a fair chance in this space. A few young people expressed interest in studying abroad, with the USA, UK and Canada offering appeal.

“If I go abroad, I won’t have to worry about teacher’s strikes and I feel like the education there also helps you develop as a person, you don’t just have to memorise text books”

Female, Nairobi, 17

The changes youth want to see

Youth across locations are very vocal about the changes they want to see, both in terms of access to education and quality.

Youth want education to be affordable and to a high standard, for everyone, regardless of affluence, gender or geography. Youth in rural areas want to see more funding go to schools – building more schools, training teachers and ensuring facilities are up to the same standards as other places in the country. Youth also want education to become the priority for parents, and feel parents need to be better educated about the value of educating their girls, not just their boys. And they want equal provision of basic education regardless of geography.

“Education for a boy child is still more important than for the girls, but we want to have jobs too”

Female, Turkana, 21

They want increased transparency and accountability from those in charge. They want concrete deadlines for improvements to infrastructure and for those in power to be held accountable when promises are not fulfilled.

Youth from lower SEG backgrounds want access to basic resources that will help them through school. They want guaranteed access to meals during the day to help them concentrate in school. Young women also want free and easy access to basic female hygiene provision.

They want to learn important entrepreneurial skills that will prepare them for the labour market. Life skills, such as financial literacy, setting up a bank account and filing taxes are the most pressing skill gaps young people want addressed. They wish these skills could become part of core school curricula, preparing students for entrepreneurship and nurturing creativity.

Youth, particularly the more affluent, want a curriculum that nurtures creative talent from an early age. Youth want to see more investment in courses that prepare them for careers in the creative industry, such as marketing and advertising.

They want trained, professional teachers they can trust. Youth want to see high training standards and teachers they can rely on to prepare them for the working world. Moreover, they want to see higher professional standards and background checks so that teachers are properly vetted before being allowed into a classroom – and guarantees that teachers will not harass or assault female students.

They feel TVET needs an overhaul. Youth feel that for TVET to have appeal and credibility, it needs a transformation and a total ‘re-brand’ – they want to see investments allocated to the upgrade of facilities, teacher training and curricula upgrades, ensuring courses are relevant to what the labour market requires.

They want Universities to be held accountable for the graduates they produce. Youth with exposure to University universally agreed that instead of putting emphasis on increasing enrolment figures, Universities should be held accountable for the quality of graduates they produce. Young people want to see more ‘trackers’ that allow the public to see which graduates do well from which Universities. They hope this will incentivise Universities to improve in terms of the quality of teaching and courses they offer prospective students.



VOICE & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

‘Having a voice’ meant different things to youth. For many, it meant being able to have an influence and the freedom to shape a good life: the ability to make your own choices, have agency, and drive your life forward. For these youth, having a voice was often associated with having steady employment and the finances and responsibility that come with that. For others, it meant the ability to shape the choices of others; to influence decision-makers in local or national Government; to help contribute to the evolution of Kenyan culture and society. And for others it meant the ability to ‘give back’ – the ability to exercise social power to positively influence those around you, helping support and raise up people who were disadvantaged or struggling.

“Having a voice means being able to influence and make a difference in your environment”

Male, Nairobi, 22

However, regardless of how youth defined ‘voice’, one thing was clear: they don’t feel they have one. In every exercise, in every session, in every depth, talking about themselves and about people around them; from the gated communities of Loresho to the streets of Kapedo, youth can agree on one thing: they do not feel their voices are heard. They told us that ‘voice’ is an unequally distributed privilege, something given to only the affluent, connected and favoured; a far cry from the realities of their lives and those of the people they knew.

“I don’t think there’s anything you can do to be heard as a youth. There’s no way to air your views and have people listen to you.”

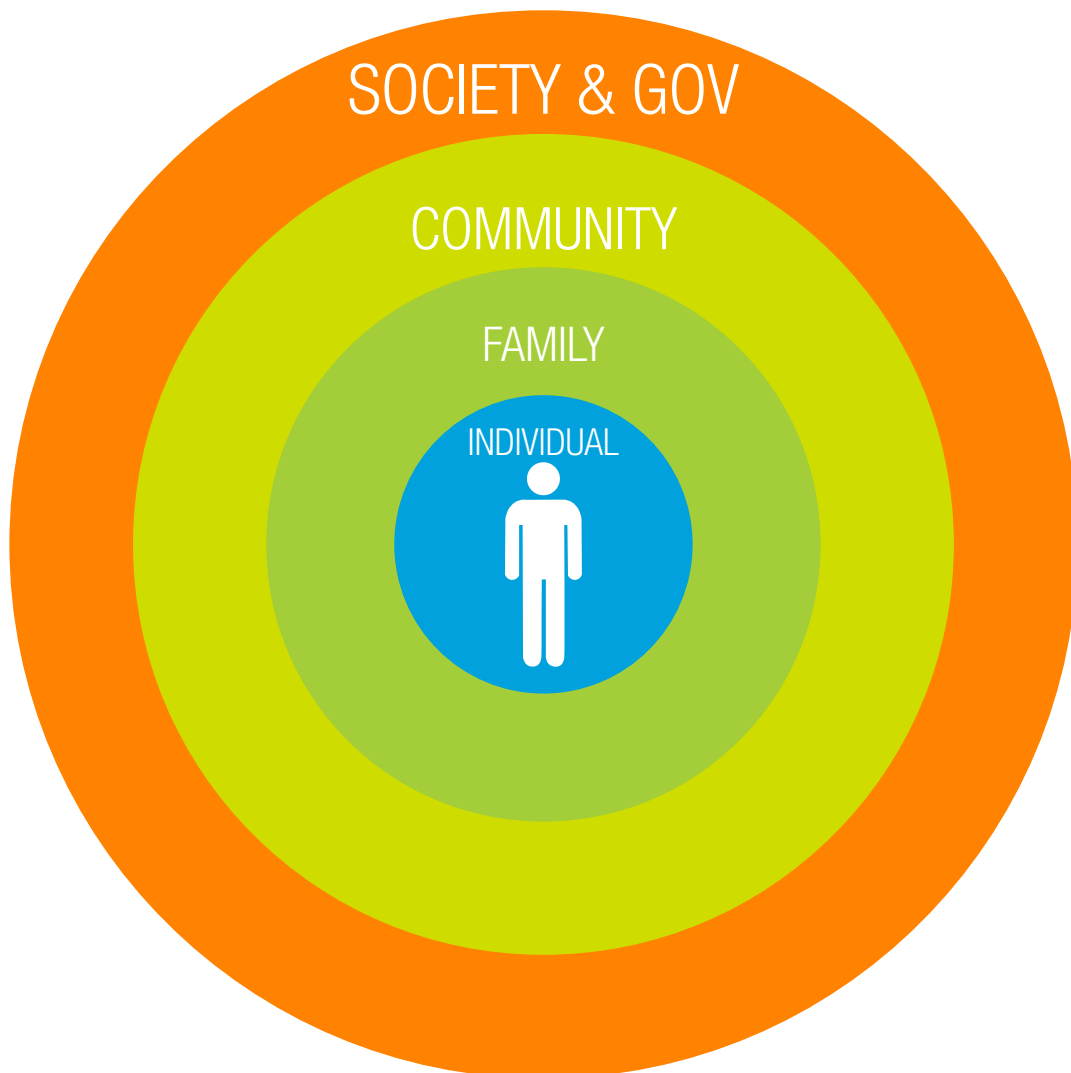
Male, Mombasa, 20

Youth feel this lack of voice in every aspect of their lives. The stories that youth told us about their place in civic society often included reports of feeling ‘blocked’ at every level of their local ecology: within their families; in their local communities; from contribution to local Government; and as Kenyan citizens. As one young person in Nairobi noted, “the problem (referring to a lack of voice) isn’t just with bloated government structures, it exists at every level of our society- our education, jobs and even our families.”



“Typical girls here do not have a voice. Only friends and relatives listen to her. Not the community or the Government. She does participate in tax paying – but she doesn’t get listened to.”

How Martin, one of our respondents from the community immersion in Turkana experiences lack of voice.



INDIVIDUAL:

Martin has big hopes for the future and wants to be a lawyer. He hopes he can gather enough school fees to go to college. However, he lacks confidence and wishes he had more people he could confide in and share his worries.

FAMILY:

His uncle does not listen to him; he wants him to be a driver. He is illiterate and Martin feels he does not understand the value of education. His lives in a house with twelve other siblings and finds it difficult to make his issues heard.

COMMUNITY:

At the local community meetings, people gather to discuss issues and important decisions regarding the community. Martin has tried to speak up in these meetings once or twice, but he is always told that youth issues are not on the agenda, and he will have to wait.

SOCIETY & GOVERNMENT:

Martin does not trust the local government, as there is lots of misappropriation of funds. He does not believe the government will help him get through education, he will have to find his own way.

What youth feel

Few young people expressed feeling comfortable speaking to parents about issues close to their hearts, for fear of judgment or disagreement.

We heard few reports of youth feeling that their parents were a source of guidance and support for the difficult life decisions they were navigating – not least because of the sensitivity of issues youth were grappling with around things like sex, relationships, and ambition. Fears around speaking to family were also a matter of social and familial reputation: many youth worried of being branded a ‘bad kid’ or becoming an outsider in the community if their sensitive questions and concerns were shared. As a result, many young people felt reluctant to talk to family or community members about issues such as sexual health, for fear this would become a source of gossip and dim their voice in the community further.

“People worry that if they tell their parents something they will spread it to aunts and others, and then suddenly it’s all spread around the family. So they just keep it in their heart instead.”

Female, Mombasa, 20

Many youth also struggle to establish voice within their families.

Some youth (mostly in lower SEG, rural areas) also live with extended family and reported sharing a home with as many as twenty people, all with very different personalities and priorities. Young people can struggle to find their voice in this crowded environment, and report not always feeling safe or enabled to share their problems. Later birth order can exacerbate the feeling of ‘voicelessness’. Young people with multiple siblings described power dynamics between siblings that were strongly influenced by age. Older siblings often take on parent roles, and younger siblings describe feeling they have multiple parents, all failing to listen to them.

“Parents are busy and the time you have to talk to your parents is small. The time you have is mostly shared with your friends.”

Male, Mombasa, 18

“Kids lack knowledge and support. Someone hasn’t given them the expectations to pass through stages, to go to school and so on. And their blood is boiling and they do things they regret.”

Male, Mombasa, 18

Many young women feel particularly silenced in their local communities and lacking control over their fate and life.

Many young women (especially in more traditional, lower SEG communities) still don’t feel they have a say in who they marry and when, with community and family often deciding on their behalf. Sexual harassment is common and women do not feel empowered to speak out. Young women do not feel taken seriously when they report instances of harassment or abuse. Some young women (in lower SEG areas) had spoken to parents about it and had been quickly dismissed and silenced. And they do not feel listened to in the workplace in the same way – not given the same level of consideration for roles of leadership or power as men.

All of the above challenges tended to be exacerbated for lower SEG youth.

Less affluent youth tended to carry more adult responsibilities from younger ages – and yet with none of the pay-offs of adulthood like agency and self-expression. Many were caring for younger siblings, or for their own young children, with all of the daily burdens and responsibilities that entailed. Yet, they were still treated as children in their communities, not consulted in decision-making as fully fledged adults. Often, cultural ‘generation gaps’ were also wider between themselves and their parents; their aspirations were more ‘modern’ and ‘bigger’ than parents were able to grasp, and support to help

them achieve those ambitions was lacking. And of course, lower SEG youth also felt that the dream of higher education, high-status professional jobs, and the social status and voice that come with them were much harder dreams for them to achieve. Lower SEG youth were also more likely to tell us that they lacked formal identification, for example as a result of home births or lack of parental engagement with health and civic services. This lack of identification could later reduce their ability to exercise voice via voting – barring them from having a formal say in their country’s future.

Young people with disabilities often struggle with stigma that reduces their social and civic engagement in their communities. We spoke to several young people with disabilities during the course of research whose lives and social worlds had been functionally restricted to their homes or very local communities and compounds. For example, one young woman with a serious childhood burn that had left her with an arm disfigurement had been so bullied at school that she fled home in the middle of the night. She received support from her family and community to follow a new dream – learning to sew and opening a boutique – but had been functionally excluded from education and formal employment due to her disability.

“We don’t have it so bad, kids with disability are usually locked up and not allowed to leave their house because of the shame on the family. They believe they have been cursed and don’t want anyone to see” - Male, Turkana, 16

Some youth felt church and religion gives them a voice, but only about certain issues. A handful of youth spoke of their faith and church with great passion and described it as one of the only places they could congregate as young people, discuss issues, and get support. However, with the strong focus on religion, youth only felt safe discussing ‘some’ of their issues, keeping their feelings and questions about others quiet.

“We have youth groups in church- we come together and discuss our issues”

Male, Turkana, 21

Some youth in lower SEG areas feel that social structures within the community often silence their voice. Community is an important part of life, with youth relying on friends and other family members, not only for support, but also for resources. Youth spoke of community meetings (‘chief barazas’) forming an important part of social life, a way to keep abreast of happenings and decisions that affect community life. Youth express anger at being explicitly told they cannot participate in these meetings. They are excluded from the decision making process, which is left to elders and people with considerable social power in the community.

“When we try to say something, we are told, ‘Not now, we are discussing adult things now’”

Male, Turkana, 21

Some youth told us that they feel their schools perpetuate ‘lack of voice’, by failing to teach youth to think critically. They feel that focus on examination and memorisation thwarts critical thinking skills, and fails to teach young people how to think for themselves and find their unique voice.

“Youth are really good at reciting facts but are unable to tell you how they feel about important issues in our society, like gay rights or abortion”

Female, Nairobi, 17

Youth don’t feel they have a ‘youth’ voice in their communities that can act as one. Many young people report a rise in ‘youth focused initiatives’ and youth empowerment programmes in recent years, but only for elite youth in urban centres, and often poorly implemented. Youth in Nairobi report seeing an increase in youth centred programmes and initiatives and generally feel positively about

this change. However, youth wish they would be consulted in how these initiatives are shaped. That said, youth in Nairobi did mention a few youth empowerment initiatives that were successfully bringing youth together, and giving them exposure to other entrepreneurially minded young people. It is worth noting that we only heard of a rise in youth empowerment programmes from the young people in Nairobi, suggesting this has not filtered out to other parts of the country or has not reached youth from lower SEG backgrounds.

“You can just imagine a bunch of old people sitting in a room going ‘what do the youth of today want?’ and of course getting it wrong, they should just ask us”

Female, Nairobi, 17

Some youth feel they have more voice and representation since the introduction of devolved government in 2010, and to some degree since the establishment of youth and women’s representatives. Many youth feel comforted by the idea that someone ‘more like them’ represents them in government – particularly youth we met in Mombasa, whose local MCA was also a young person. Youth expressed seeing improvements in their communities, with young people in Turkana boasting about the introduction of electricity in their communities, which has enabled late night studying, writing and for some, phone charging.

“When I was growing up, we really struggled. Things are improving now: more children are in school and electricity in the community means my children can study and read after sunset”

Auntie of depth respondent, Turkana

“It is good that we have the woman’s representative; I aspire to be like her when I grow up. She speaks for women in the area.”

Female, Siaya, 18

However, the strength of the youth voice via county Government specifically is highly dependent on how willing the MCA is to listen to youth, and on youth and women representatives’ power. Many youth feel they cannot trust county governments, as corruption and unfair distributions of resources still plague communities. Youth talked of having youth representatives in county governments, but most questioned whether they really represented the interest of the average young person. And some were very cynical about whether representatives would really have the power and courage to make change.

“The MCA only gives money to his family members and people who are willing to pay him bribes”

Female, Turkana, 16

“Even in our county government now there is a youth, but he just does what the others tell him; he doesn’t speak up for us”

Male, Turkana, 21

“The youth representatives don’t have the courage to face the MCAs or the Government.”

Male, Siaya, 20

“MCAs don’t listen to the typical young person in Siaya, although they can sometimes help on issues like employment and job opportunities. The national government is no help at all. But the MCAs just give job opportunities to their families only. It is biased – it is favouritism. The chances are with MCAs that he does not consider the people he is serving. He is thinking 5 years away – he wants to move to a bigger post and have more power. He doesn’t consider the youths. And the people around the MCA – you go to them to see the MCA and they ask for money. You have to bribe them to see the MCA.”

Male, Siaya, 19



SPOTLIGHT ON:

SOME FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN MOMBASA FELT POSITIVELY ABOUT THEIR LOCAL MCA

“The MCA here is a youth – and you know when you speak to him that he will understand you. He is someone we went to school with and he will help us. He comes and listens to groups – women, youth – and tells us what is available. People have applied for loans for example to apply for water taps in the community. People didn’t know that money was available. He helps create bursary forms, helps connect you. The door is always open. Talking to someone who you don’t know is easier. With someone you know, you worry that the word will spread. But it all depends on how he receives you. It could be – Welcome! – and he shows he wants to hear what you have to say, you feel welcome. Some are so old and they do not want to listen, so you do not open up and say what you need to say.”

Although some youth were hopeful that the recent election would bring change, widespread cynicism around favouritism and corruption in politics reduced engagement with national Government.

Youth often expressed tentative optimism and hope about national politics in the beginning of our research sessions that typically quickly evolved into more cynical views. They told us that they felt ‘corruption starts at the top’ and that they found it difficult to believe that things would ever change. And they saw the daily ‘evidence’ of this corruption in their local communities – via normed activities like voting bribery, police brutality and corruption, and so on. Although civic interest and engagement with politics was high for many, the lack of sense of ‘voice’ and the ability to influence national-level politics was clear for most of the youth we spoke to.

“Politicians don’t care about you – they just ask things of you. Maybe they’ll give you 600 to vote, but not a bursary for school. They take advantage of you; the minute you vote for them, you will never see their faces again. Politicians have money to support us but we don’t see it. What they have, they should give. Where are our roads? Our schools? That money has been off, spent in the interior.”

Male, Mombasa, 20

“Politicians don’t care about citizens – all citizens, not just in Siaya. If it was just Siaya we would see a sense of restlessness only in one place. But all over the country people are restless.”

Female, Siaya, 18

“They are all the same people – the police, the MCAs. They just call each other and say to keep collecting money from us. The people are not heard. If you raise an issue nothing will be followed up. The police are being influenced too.”

Male, Mombasa, 21

Social media channels like Twitter give some youth a platform for wide-reaching voice; but they censor how much they share and don’t generally see social media as a civic engagement tool.

For some youth (especially higher SEG), social media, especially Twitter, is a tool for them to make their voices heard about issues that matter to them. However, youth feel they have to censor their voices, so as to not compromise their future career prospects. In the ‘persona exercise’ in Nairobi, young men drew a typical girl from their community named Grace, who came from a wealthy background and was a ‘social media influencer.’ When asked if she would use social media to talk about issues that matter to her they replied: “No, Grace wouldn’t use social media to talk about politics, only lifestyle stuff. Her dad has a very important job and she wouldn’t want to say anything that might compromise his position”.

The changes youth want to see

Young people want (more) flat power structures in society. Youth fear that as long as Kenyan culture remains the same, they will be forever voiceless. They want more transparent intergenerational dialogue and want to be encouraged to speak up about the issues that matter to them, both in their immediate environment and wider society.

Young people want more widespread youth empowerment programmes- and want to be at the forefront of deciding what these look like. They feel that outside of Nairobi, there are very few programmes or initiatives for young people. They want to see more of this and be involved in shaping what this looks like.

They feel schools have a duty to encourage civic engagement among pupils. Many young people feel disillusioned with the system and reluctant to translate their passion into action. Young people feel that schools should play an active role in pointing young people in the direction of youth organisations

and helping them establish a voice and a perspective on issues that matter to them.

They want to see more youth representatives in county governments that represent the interests of young people. Youth feel steps need to be taken to ensure youth representatives are representing the interests and voice of young people; there needs to be more accountability.

Youth with disabilities want basic provisions that will allow them to engage with social and civic society. They want support to get out of the house, out of the compound and into the world.

Youth are tired of the 'youth hype' with no follow through. They feel they are used as political props during elections and dismissed when elections are over. Youth want those in power to be held accountable for the promises they make and want to see follow through on the commitments made.





VIOLENCE & PHYSICAL SAFETY

Violence was a key concern for young people. Across locations, it was seen as a key marker of political and social instability and a potentially big inhibitor to youth achieving their dreams.

Physical health and access to health services was also a concern in some locations, with young people feeling that anything that compromises optimal physical functioning would have long lasting detrimental effects on their future.

What youth feel

The risk of violence and physical harm was an established part of the daily youth discourse and experience in Kenya. Violence was often so normalised that youth didn't spontaneously raise it as a 'problem' for youth in their areas until well into our conversations with them, when it became clear that self-protection and risk of harm was factored into daily decisions, their aspirations and fears, and expectations of success. Many felt that high levels of unemployment are to blame for violence in their communities, noting that 'idleness' and poverty often led to drug use, theft – and that boredom also increased aggression. And in some areas (like Turkana) localised ethnic conflict remains a daily concern and worry for youth.

“Young people are bored out of their minds so they go and look for any form of entertainment possible, even if that's getting into unnecessary fights”

Female, Nairobi, 19

“You find that the youth engage in drugs and then when the youth come together, like in a rally, you also find your phone is missing.”

Male, Siaya, 21



SPOTLIGHT ON: **TURKANA, WHERE VIOLENCE IS PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.**

According to Turkana youth in Lodwar, you learn about the conflict with the Pokot 'the day you are born'. Both the Turkana and the Pokot are pastoralist communities, whose main source of wealth is cattle. For generations, the two communities have been raiding each other's cattle, often killing each other in the process. Young, unemployed men are often the masterminds behind the raids, planning attacks at times when cattle are grazing by the riverbed. For pastoralist communities, cattle are an important symbol of status and wealth, with greater numbers signifying greater status in the community. Youth who drop out of school are often tempted into raids, as a way to achieve status. This conflict gets worse in times of drought, when many cattle die and numbers become scarce. Last year was one such year, and many young people lost cattle and family members as a result. Turkana youth fear losing those close to them, with one boy in Turkana proclaiming: “my worst fear is losing my mother, she's the one who takes care of me, puts food on the table and loves me no matter what. I've already lost my father, without my mother, I would be completely alone”. Youth hope for a future of peace and stability between the two communities and view education as an important route to achieving peace, with one girl asserting: “if more young people get an education, there will be more employment so there won't be as many cattle raids”

Young men across research locations were acutely aware of physical safety risks related to political instability and conflict, especially in the form of police brutality. Elections violence (top of mind for many given the fieldwork timings, concurrent with Uhuru Kenyatta's November 2017 inauguration) was feared, both in terms of sometimes violent retaliation for formal protests in city centres, or more community-level politicised assaults and abuse. Many young people also asserted that the police unfairly target young people; they felt that police 'picking' on youth showed that the police and Government think youth have no power. For example, youth noted that police officers will often pull them over or threaten them, in order to get bribes and when youth refuse, they retaliate. They feel they suffer this abuse of power more severely than their elders do, as police know youth lack the voice and power to do anything about it.

"We really have problems with the police, particularly just after an election period. After the elections when people were demonstrating they were abusing the youth."

Male, Nairobi, 21

"We are in an environment in which there is no stable government, and because this area is an opposition stronghold, we experience a lot of police brutality... In many cases they have arrested people and you have to pay \$100 for them to release you. It's usually about 10,000 shillings to release you, but it depends on the problem."

Male, Siaya, 22

"There is no safety because our leaders are corrupt the whole system is corrupt meaning that even those people who are supposed to be protecting us like the cops are also corrupt. In institutions like the police, money becomes power."

Female, Nairobi, 16

Young women also commonly have to negotiate risks of sexualised violence; for many, even their homes and local communities don't represent 'safe' space. We spoke to many young women who felt they had no real guarantee of physical safety: over the course of research they recounted stories of feared sexual harassment or assault – including rape – in their communities, homes, social spaces, schools and workplaces. One woman told us that she rarely felt safe, telling us that the worst time of the day for her was having to walk down a green path to the road where an adult man often roamed with a machete, being aggressive to the young men and sexually harassing young women. When we asked her to point out where she meant, she pointed to the hedge in front of us – a few feet from where she slept at night. She felt that if the man asked for sexual services, for safety reasons she would have no recourse but to comply.

Many youth noted recent improvements in their health system infrastructure and provision. In multiple locations, during community walk-arounds with our participants, young people pointed out new hospitals, new community health care centres, or new and improved maternity wards. And youth told us how much these improvements mattered to their families and community members.

"Things are getting better in terms of infrastructure. That road you walked on wasn't here before. We have electricity – we have wifi. Even from here. The health facilities and centres – now they have equipment so you don't have to travel so far to town. The maternity ward is 24 hours so even if you have a baby at night you can get care."

Male, Mombasa, 16

Despite these improvements, a sense of lack of protection is pervasive, and many youth feel it trickles down to their physical health. Youth struggle with unfair access to health care services. Those with connections – tribal or familial- to

doctors or nurses often get priority, and youth report waiting for days before being treated. On top of this, youth feel they have low access to high quality health care facilities and that the quality of the care they receive is often poor. They mentioned friends dying of treatable diseases such as malaria or HIV, and expressed great anger at the injustice of this. And, as for most issues, they felt that corruption had exacerbated the problems; one youth told us that since the local ambulance had been stolen, there had been no emergency services for the area, but that locals suspected the appropriate funds had been pocketed by local leaders.

“If you go to the hospital, you are given a prescription that then you have to access elsewhere. The doctors prioritise people they know. Health needs to be able to be accessed in the community. And it’s horrible – babies dying in the wards because of poor health.”

Male, Mombasa, 16

The changes youth want to see

They want accountability from those who claim to protect them. Youth feel there should be harsher punishment for police who take advantage of young people’s relative lack of power and voice. Youth feel the police is able to take advantage of a corrupt system that thrives off bribery and blackmail and that this should not be tolerated.

They want more leisure and sports centres to stave off boredom. Young people spoke at length of wanting more facilities for them to come together and socialise. In Turkana, both young men and women wanted to see more investment in football fields and other sporting facilities to keep them busy.

They want doctors to be incentivised to stay in Kenya, and operate outside of urban hubs. Youth in lower SEG areas want access to good doctors and want to see more investment in health care services in remote areas. They feel doctors should be well paid and given certain perks, to incentivise them to operate in more rural areas.

They want good quality health care, accessible to all. Young people feel health care should not just be for those who are able to pay a lot of money; they feel a lot of unnecessary deaths could be prevented if the government put more effort into making healthcare accessible and affordable for all.

“The Government needs to ensure that everyone has access to good health. They need to help; we have elected them to help us and bring development.”

Male, Mombasa, 19

“There should be good facilities in every county – at least one big hospital so people can access treatment.”

Female, Mombasa, 24

“There should be incentives for good doctors to stay in Kenya, even outside of the cities. Often you find only 1 or 2 have knowledge about specific illnesses; if they aren’t there, there’s no help.”

Male, Mombasa, 16



RELATIONSHIPS, MARRIAGE, SEX & PREGNANCY

In every research location, participants raised wide-ranging issues around sex and relationships as potentially difficult barriers to achieving their dreams. The depth and breadth of concern varied, reflecting wide variation in participants' cultural backgrounds, individual contexts, and local social norms. For example, our rural and lower income participants were typically embedded in more conservative cultural and religious value systems, and were far more likely to express fears around early marriage as potentially pushing them 'off track' to achieve their educational and employment ambitions. Concerns were also highly gendered; young women consistently raised more and deeper anxieties in this space, articulating challenges around sex and relationships that affected every area of their daily lives, employment and education pathways, and hopes and fears for the future.

What youth feel

Marriage and Parenthood

Both male and female young people thought that marriage and children would be part of an eventual 'good life', though the 'pull factors' towards this varied by gender. Youth did like the idea of sharing a life with a loved one, and potentially having children someday – and in some communities (i.e., more traditional Turkana) this was still a strong community social norm.

For many young men, and far less frequently some young women, there was a sense of status in being a married person and heading a family. Many young men painted futures in which their married status was proof that they could successfully maintain a wife and children; a few women (particularly more rural participants) noted that marriage would bring slightly higher status within their communities. For many, marriage was also a way to fulfil social obligations to parents, religion, and/or cultural norms – and for women, to reduce the financial burden on the family.

"It's better to get married and lessen the burden on my family."

Females, Mombasa, 20 -24

However, many modern Kenyan youth are eager to delay marriage until they are financially stable; they worry that partnership and

parenthood will make it difficult to achieve already hard-to-reach ambitions. Youth across locations told us that ideally they would wait until they were financially secure before embarking on marriage and/or children. There was a strongly social normed modern youth 'ideal'; group after group, participants told us that they would consider marriage only in their late 20s or 30s, once they had fulfilled all their dreams and enjoyed their lives. However, this dream of extended self-development before embarking on the responsibilities of family life was far from the reality for many. For example, in one group in Mombasa a young woman proudly listed all of the things she would do before 'settling down' with marriage and children, like her other peers in the group; later in the day during a community immersion, we saw her with a young child that she hadn't mentioned in the research setting.

"We don't think marriage is an achievement, but unfortunately our parents still do."

Females, Nairobi, 15-19

Men worried that marriage and children would make financial stability harder and curtail their freedom. Young men would note that issues like early marriage (for example) might make things harder for them – adding extra mouths to feed, increasing the breadth of financial burden and

pressure to work. This was a real and pressing concern given how hard the goal of financial sufficiency was even for a single man.

“I don’t want to get married until I’m financially settled – women in Nairobi expect you to treat them to expensive things! I can’t afford that yet”
Male, Nairobi, 19

“Marrying opportunities are low for girls because young men are unable to take care of themselves. Sons have nothing so grandparents take up their sons’ responsibilities.”
Father of depth respondent, Siaya

Women worried that early marriage and/or parenthood would not just make the life harder – it would end it, abruptly bringing their ambitions to a halt. Young women expressed fear and anxiety that getting married and/or having children young would mean the end of education, an end to the dream of professional employment, and an end to freedom. They expressed worries that they would be left to raise children on their own; that they would be unable to return to school; that they would lose the support of their families, financially and emotionally; that they would be stuck with ‘bad’ or abusive husbands.

“Boys will just continue with their lives. He might even say ‘that’s not my kid, I don’t know where you got it from, his hair isn’t like mine.’ I know one boy, the father looks SO MUCH like him, but he denies it. He doesn’t even support the kids, and what’s worse he has money now and still doesn’t support them.”
Female, Siaya, 15-19

“Once you leave it’s difficult for girls to return. They still have to take care of their kids, maybe take care of their husbands. Maybe when you left, that love from your parents was 90%. You return home and it’s 30%.”
Females, Mombasa, 20-24

Sex and Sexual Health

Youth have little support to navigate normal teenage desires for fun and pleasure, leading to early and frequent risk taking. Despite fears about early parenthood, participants across locations told us that youth often engaged in sex early in part because there were few other sources of fun and excitement. ‘Disco matangas’ (night parties) were a key source of local entertainment; a chance to dance, drink and hang out. However, young women also worried that disco matangas exposed them to unkind men, harassment, and pressure to engage in sexual activity they may later regret.

“We know we shouldn’t do it, but there is nothing else to do! That’s why girls here can get pregnant very young”
Male, Turkana, 15

“Men trick you – they say that you can come home with them and sleep after to get some rest, so that you aren’t walking home alone – and then you wake up to them wanting sex.”
Female, Siaya, 16

“I hear stories from my friends that they go to parties and sleep with men but then the next day they regret it. And they tell me – I will not go again, I’m not getting drunk anymore. But then a few weeks later they are going again.”
Female, Mombasa, 20

Sex is widely commoditised in Kenya and ‘sponsorship’ or prostitution is a tempting – if risky – solution to daily financial worries for many. Many of the youth we spoke to said that getting paid for sexual favours was common in their communities, either through prostitution or via murky ‘sponsorship’ (partially commercial, partially romantic) from local boys or men. These practices are known and largely accepted in many communities; youth noted that parents often turned a blind eye to daughters’ activities as the extra stream of income helped reduce financial pressure. These commoditised sexual relationships, often with multiple sexual partners, increase risks of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, and poor treatment or abuse from sexual partners, often from a very early age.

“It starts around 12 years old... Most people have around five sponsors: one for your shoes, one for facial products, one for your hair, and one genuine one. You marry the genuine one.”

Females, Siaya, 15-19

“At school people aren’t taught anything. Even if they are, the family is poor, there’s no school or they aren’t going – and if the girl starts coming home with a bit of money, the parents don’t ask where it comes from. You wouldn’t ask where it comes from if your girl comes home with food that you can’t provide yourself. And then one day she comes home pregnant.”

Males, Mombasa, 15-19

not the norm. This was not an issue of access – we were told that condoms were widely available and often free. However, young women, who bore a disproportionate share of responsibility for birth control and sexual protection, told us that if they suggested using condoms or birth control they often faced negative feedback from boys. They lacked the clear sense of physical rights, role modelling and confidence to negotiate safe sex.

Though youth initially expressed approval for birth control, over time, concerns and questions also began to emerge: are they safe? Are they worth it? Do they actually work? Overall, understanding of non-condom birth control and sexual health options seemed low; young people in most locations were unable to tell us very much about other methods available to them. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in many locations sexually transmitted diseases – including infections like HIV – were largely accepted as part of life. In Turkana, some young people even mentioned feeling resentment towards HIV positive youth, as they get more support and resources from NGOs, like mattresses and mosquito nets.

“Condoms aren’t widely used- you would know if someone you were sleeping with had something, and there are lots of testing centres in Nairobi”

Male, Nairobi, 21

“We don’t receive any help. You have to be an orphan or have HIV to get support from NGOs”

Female, Turkana, 21

Across research locations, there was evidence of poor understanding around sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV); peer pressure inhibiting use; and damaging misconceptions about the safety and efficacy of sexual hygiene options. Awareness and understanding of sexual health and family planning support varied across locations, but in all four research locations youth told us that condom and birth control use was



SPOTLIGHT ON:

YOUTH CONVERSATIONS ON HIV AND SEXUAL HEALTH

In Siaya our participants (female, ages 15-19) had an extended conversation about sexual health and STDs that helped us understand the range of complicating factors fighting against regular, common prophylactic and family planning measures.



"I think people only know of condoms. Condoms are available anywhere and you can usually get them free from hospitals or chemists. ... There's not that good awareness of other options and that lack of information means people don't always use them..."



"Some people also say they won't enjoy it with condoms – I've heard that."



"Boys say if you use birth control you don't trust them, you don't love them, that love has no honour."



Moderator question: "so how many people that you know are having sex, and how many of them use condoms or other methods?"



Moderator question: "Do you think they ever worry about diseases?"



"They say that when you start to despair that no one will help you, but you will be ok if you keep positive. It can happen from walking carelessly (sex with multiple partners/unprotected) but also you can be born with it."

"And in most cases it's the ladies that decide and carry that burden themselves."



"And people ignorantly or arrogantly say that the first time you won't get pregnant."



"That's right. And there's questions. Is using a condom healthy for our own body? That needs experts. Some friends say it's safe – but also people say many of them are fake and particles can still get through, so it's not worth it."



"90% of my friends are sexually active, usually starting around 13/14. Not many use condoms – maybe 10%."



"No, HIV is rare, and it is a long term thing – you only die slowly. Some even say HIV is the trend."



"Also people will have particular targets to spread it. They will say 'I was targeted – so now I will target others.'"



Romance, Relationships and Sex

Romantic relationships are a challenging area for young people to navigate – particularly in the context of the challenges outlined above – and young people are often doing so without reliable support and advice. Many young people noted that they did not feel they could talk to parents or other family members about sensitive subjects like dating, whether to trust a new partner, or becoming sexually active. They told us that they typically chose to speak to friends instead – in the same breath telling us that friends were not always good sources of advice. Youth told us friends often lacked the right education or context to give good advice, or might even try to ‘pull you down’ by encouraging ‘immoral behaviour.’ And social pressure to ‘boast’ about romantic conquests (particularly for young men) meant youth weren’t always transparent with each other about the struggles they face.

“Now that [a typical Siaya young person] is 17, she feels afraid to talk to her parents about relationships. Parents are there for talk about conflicts and life choices – but for most places she takes advice from friends.”

Female, Siaya, 15-19

“I think that it is because in the African context, we have been brought up being told not to have sex, don’t date instead of being told on how to prevent HIV/Aids and pregnancy. You know at our age we are told don’t do this, sometimes it is very impractical, you can tell me not to have sex but at the end of the day I can still make that decision, so instead you should be educating me on sex. People of our age are not educated with the family, in fact that is not a topic to be discussed in the family.”

Female, Nairobi, 18

Youth lack modelling and knowledge to establish supportive, equal relationships, and gendered sexual norms can pose extra challenges for Kenyan girls and women. The young men in our workshops tended to talk about relationships in terms of fun, entertainment and conquests; as long as they did not get accidentally ‘trapped’ into parenthood or marriage, relationships and sexual activity were generally a source of fun without responsibility. Young women had much more to worry about, bearing responsibility for pregnancy and STD prevention or for child-rearing – and were far more worried about the potential emotional and physical harms of bad boyfriends, sponsors and/or husbands.

“Mostly around here when we get together we talk about conquests; where to get one, what has happened with the ones you have had, for ones that you have lost what the plan is to get them back.”

Male, Siaya, 16

“In Turkana, if a woman cheats on her husband, all the goats in the family will bleed, but if a husband cheats, this does not happen”

Female, Turkana, 15

The changes youth want to see

Youth want more support navigating the sex and relationship landscape. Across locations, young men and women alike felt they lacked the necessary modelling or building blocks to establish healthy relationships. They feel they have to navigate a cultural landscape riddled with ‘taboos’ and ‘secrecy’ around the topic, and wish they could have more open and honest conversations with those close to them. Ultimately, they desire conversation with people similar to them, who have the right expertise

They want more education around sexual health. Youth, in lower SEG areas in particular, admitted not knowing much about sexual health and preventative STD measures. There are many myths surrounding these topics and young women in particular are unsure what to believe.

They want more sexual health clinics. Young people (Nairobi being the exception here) felt unsure where to go for sexual screening and reported fearing stigma and judgment if anyone caught them there. They expressed that, if sexual health clinics became ‘the norm’, then maybe it would become more acceptable to be seen there.

Young women want to see a social norm shift around ‘responsibility’ for men when it comes to sex and family. Young women feel the burden lies solely with them and that men get an ‘easy ride’. They would like to see more emphasis on educating men on the importance of safe sex and the responsibility that comes with having a child.

Young women want to feel more empowered to ‘say no’ – and to have their wishes be listened to. Many young women spoke openly about uncomfortable sexual situations, where they had felt pressured into sexual acts by men. They report feeling insecure and sometimes afraid to say no, with even their parents turning a blind eye to unwanted sexual advances.

Local NGOs should target young men, as well as women. There was a sense from the young men we spoke to (especially in Turkana) that NGOs favour young women and allocate them more resource (ie free mattresses, mosquito nets, condoms). This can be a source of considerable resentment and can create the perception that girls have more access to resources, and should therefore bear more responsibility.



05

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Youth need investment in entrepreneurial skill-building and mentorship, not just financial investment to set them on their path.**
 - They need to understand how to plan; to budget; to build businesses; to work with others via apprenticeship and internship schemes, or via youth-focused local programming. This includes a need for more exposure to agricultural and creative careers.
- **Youth want fair, effective support for an ‘innovation and entrepreneurship’ culture.**
 - Budgets set towards business support (e.g., youth loans) need to include governance procedures to ensure fair distribution – including broad communication of opportunities, and accountability for distribution without bribery or favouritism.
 - Financial support for business and entrepreneurship needs to be easy to access for individuals, not just groups.
 - Requirements for business loans should focus more on business feasibility (e.g., providing a coherent business plan) than financial provisions (e.g. raising collateral) to reward those with the most chance of success, not those with most access to cash.
 - This should include targeted support for agricultural initiatives that create opportunities beyond subsistence.
- **Youth want to see investments in equality, and for professional standards to be enforced in the workplace.**
 - Government support for businesses should encourage commitments to anti-favouritism measures and equalities governance. For example this could take the form of requirements for transparency in job advertising, hiring and promotion; incentives for business leaders who can show representative employment pools.
 - Young women need ways to safely report mistreatment in the workplace without fear of reprisal.
 - Investment in basic disability support is needed, for example ramps to support people with mobility issues.



- **High-standard, free or affordable education for all – including basic learning facilities is a critical investment priority.**
 - Less affluent students need access to secondary school regardless of ability to pay fees; female hygiene facilities should be required; access to school meals could help dramatically increase both attendance and outcomes.
- **‘Real life skills, including entrepreneurship skills, need to be part of the curriculum.**
 - This includes nurturing creative talent that could help broaden youth’s career pathways and ability to support the economy.
- **Schools need Governance measures to enforce professional standards** (e.g. background checks; rules on treatment of female staff; qualifications and training standards).
- **TVET needs an overhaul and rebrand.** It needs to offer courses and support that the future labour market wants and needs; links with paid apprenticeships or internship schemes may help drive interest.
- **Those distributing school bursaries need to commit to, and prove, equal notification and distribution** – free from nepotism, bribery or favouritism.
- **Publishing University results and student outcomes** will help empower youth decision making and create useful competition in the market to drive up standards.



VIOLENCE AND PHYSICAL SAFETY

- **Continued investment in basic health services** (hospitals, maternity care, ambulances) will continue to pay dividends – helping youth treat avoidable illnesses or complications that might otherwise impact their civic and social participation. Incentivisation or other measures to extend quality care into poorer, rural areas will be welcomed.
- **Youth want to see accountability for police treatment of youth;** they want harsh punishment for police brutality or corruption.
- **Continued investment in leisure and sport,** including in rural areas where there is little opportunity for positive youth social engagement, is critical – to help shape a youth identity, to stave off boredom and unnecessary risk-taking, and give youth a sense of purpose.



- **Investment in sexual health and healthy relationship support is needed to help youth avoid transmittable diseases, early pregnancy, and negative and/or harmful relationships.**
 - Young people need more sexual health education and guidance, including around sexual disease transmission, pregnancy prevention and HIV; myths remain, particularly around contraceptive effectiveness and HIV.
 - Young women need support and modelling around healthy relationships, including guidance on how to 'say no'.
 - Parents need education on how to support youth who are finding it difficult to navigate relationship challenges.
- **Ideally education and support programmes would also include youth voices that they will admire** (sports stars, female politicians) and/or 'people like them' who can speak to everyday challenges around sexual health. There is scope for youth to learn with and from each other – though with guidance to avoid propagation of mistruths and myths.



- **Outreach work is critical to reach young people with disabilities**, whether by advocate groups and charities, or via county/community representatives; services and support exist that many youth are not aware of, unnecessarily restricting lives and opportunities.
- **Youth need mentors and guidance** to help them navigate their daily challenges, make the 'big' decisions, and put their life back on course when their 'dream paths' go awry. Women's and youth representatives may have some role to play; local charity or service initiatives that can provide this guidance and signpost youth to support services, educational and employment resources, and funding opportunities will pay dividends in youth outcomes.
- **There is an opportunity for County Governments to be a useful support in amplifying the youth voice and responding to youth needs**, if they make themselves approachable and are perceived by youth as honest and virtuous (that is, non-corrupt). Where MCAs and other political representatives can hold youth-specific forums, this both helps tap into the youth voice and increases faith in politics and decision-makers.
- **Dedicated youth representatives** could be a particularly powerful way to and uncover and amplify the youth voice – as the women's representatives seem to be for young women in some places.
- **Ultimately, youth want to be the generation that sees the end of the entrenched favouritism culture that defines their civic, social and employment landscape.** They will support measures that further that aim – from inclusion of civic education and engagement in schools, to increased transparency across civic and social society.



06

APPENDIX &
REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Hall, Samuel, 2017, Youth Employment in Kenya: Literature Review.
- Walther, Andreas, Gry, Hejl, Torben, Jensen, 2002. "Youth Transitions, Youth Policy and Participation." State of the Art Report.
- Wamuyu, Margaret, 2010, Hitting the Target, Missing the point: Youth Policies and Programmes in Kenya: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC.
- Wyn, Johanna and White, Rob, 2008, Youth and Society: Exploring the Social Dynamics of Youth Experience. USA: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX

Sample Tables

Mombasa: Urban, Muslim, C1C2

Mombasa:	mini-FGDs		immersions	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Age 15-19	0	8	1	1
Age 20-24	8	0	1	1
Employed	✓	-	-	✓
Unemployed	-	-	✓	-
In school	-	✓	✓	-
Out of school	✓	-	-	✓
PWD	✓	-	-	-
Total	8	8	2	2

Nairobi: Urban, Christian, AB

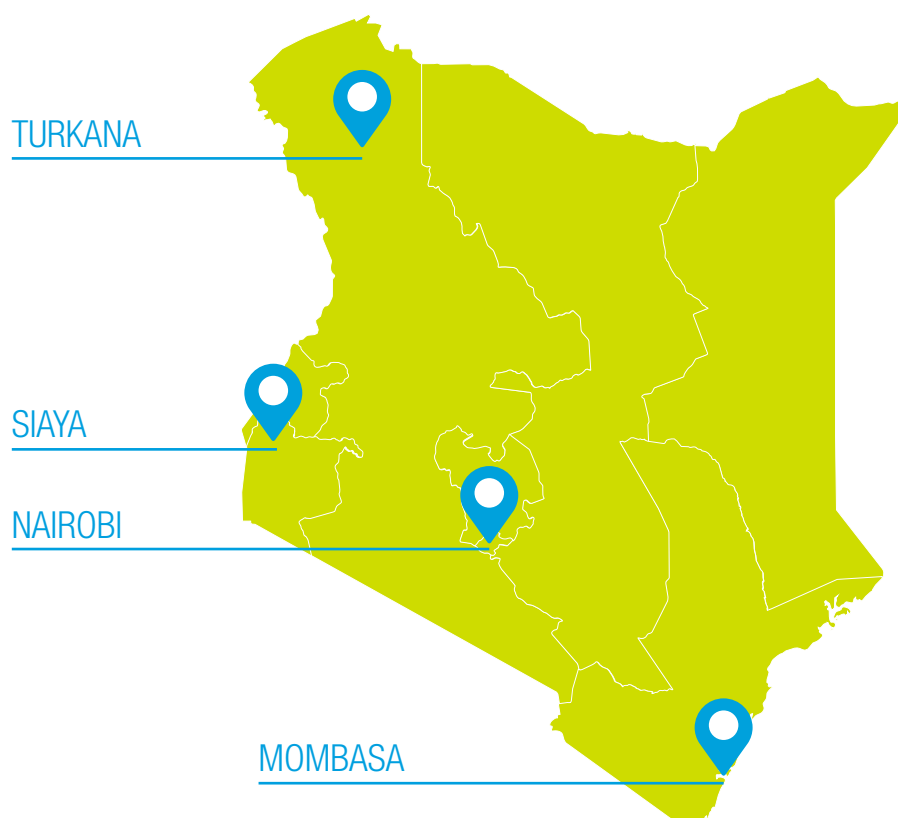
Nairobi:	mini-FGDs		immersions	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Age 15-19	8	0	1	1
Age 20-24	0	8	1	1
Employed	-	✓	✓	-
Unemployed	✓	-	-	✓
In school	-	-	-	-
Out of school	✓	✓	✓	✓
PWD	-	✓	-	-
Total	8	8	2	2

Siaya: Rural, Christian, DE

Mombasa:	mini-FGDs		immersions	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Age 15-19	0	8	1	1
Age 20-24	8	0	1	1
Employed	✓	-	-	✓
Unemployed	-	-	✓	-
In school	-	✓	✓	-
Out of school	✓	-	-	✓
PWD	✓	-	-	-
Total	8	8	2	2

Turkana: Marginalised, Christian, DE

Turkana	mini-FGDs		immersions	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Age 15-19	0	8	1	1
Age 20-24	8	0	1	1
Employed	-	-	-	✓
Unemployed	✓	-	-	-
In school	-	✓	✓	-
Out of school	✓	-	-	✓
PWD	-	-	✓	-
Total	8	8	2	2





Depth Interview Guide

Guidelines for the Moderator:

We want to see the respondents interacting naturally in their home and local environment with friends and families – the researcher role is to make the respondent as comfortable as possible in the sessions

The questions in this document are just a guide and we need to be open to being flexible to make the most of the sessions –if it takes longer to get comfortable and more warm up questions need to be asked, that's fine

Different tactics may be required with different respondents – the key is to be flexible

There will be a facilitator, translator and one researcher at each session, but we'll ensure that this does not become overwhelming for the respondent – giving them space and time alone with facilitator where appropriate.

Topic Overview:

The ethnography sessions for this project will be flexible in structure but broadly cover the following areas

1. Get to know them their lives (20 mins)
2. The future- their hopes, dreams, worries and potential pathways (20 mins)
3. Support & Solutions (20 mins)

Stimulus:

- Lots of paper & pens
- Small gifts/sweets for younger siblings

Introductions (5 mins)

Objective of the section: Making the respondent feel comfortable and ensuring informed consent

Introductions

Introduce the purpose of the research: Explain that we are of the NexGen programme (have done this research in many different markets) and we want to understand what life is like for young people in Kenya, particularly in (insert location)

We're really interested in hearing what they have to say. Anything we discuss will be private and anonymous.

Reassure them that they are able to share things with us. we want them to feel they are in a safe space and can tell us if when they feel uncomfortable talking about something (confidentially; child protection)

Everyone (facilitators, translator, respondent, others) to introduce themselves and answer the following:

- What is your name and where are you from?
- What is your favourite thing to do in your spare time?

Explaining today...

Explain that we want to spend an hour or so with them getting to know them better. We don't know much about Kenya or their local area so it's really important for them to tell us as much as they can so we can learn! Explain that towards the end of the session, we will ask to meet some of their friends and family. We would also love for them to show us around the neighbourhood, if they are comfortable with this.

Getting to know them (10 mins)

Objective of the section: Making the respondent feel comfortable and gaining a rich understanding of their daily lives- their highs, their lows, what matters to them and who/what has an influence

A bit about them

- How long have you lived here? Who do you live with?
- Who else is in your family? Where do they live?
- Who are the most important people in your life?
 - How often do you see them?
 - What kinds of things do you talk about?
- What is most important to you/ what do you value most in life? Can you show us?
- What are the things you are interested in and passionate about? Can you show us an example?

A typical day exercise: Remind them of their pre-task where we asked them to tell us about a typical day and the highs and lows. Ask them to look at this and tell us:

- What do you do with your time on a typical day?
- Probe for domestic chores, work, education, entertainment, family time.
- What are the best/worst parts of your day? Why?

Their Community and Kenya

Tell us a little bit about your community:

- What would you say are the three best things about being young person in your community? Why?
- How about the three most difficult things about being a young person in your community? Why?
- Have you seen any big changes in your community over the past few years?
 - Are things getting better or worse? What is driving this change?
 - How involved are they in what goes on in their community? Why is this?
- Tell us about some of the places in your community
 - Where do you spend time with your friends? What do you do there?
 - Where do you feel most safe? Where are you happiest?
 - Is there anywhere else you'd like to go but aren't able to? Why not?

Explain we'd now like to talk about where they get information from and how they share it

- Who do they go to for information? (probe: friends, family, etc)
- Where do they look for information? (probe: internet, newspapers, radio, phone)
- What kinds of information do they engage with?

- What topics interest them?
- What about these topics is interesting?
- What influence (if any) do these topics have on how they view the world?
- Which information sources do they trust most? Which do they trust least? Why?
- What kinds of things do they wish they knew more about? Why?
- Is there any information they want to access to that is not available to them?
- How can young people in Kenya make their voices heard about issues they care about – to other young people, to people who have power to change things, to Government? (online – in person – etc)
- Have you ever tried to do that? What happened?

The future – hopes, aspirations, fears and pathways (20 mins)

Objective of this section: to understand young people's hopes and aspirations for the future and what they think will help/ hinder them in achieving these

Explain that we will now be doing a creative exercise that will require lots of imagination! We would like them to imagine two different futures for themselves. Both futures are occurring 3-4 years from now, but in one future, things have gone well (ie they have a job they like, they are getting a good education) and in the other future, things have gone less well for them (ie they can't find a job/ they aren't going to school). Give respondents time to imagine each future in turn. Then encourage them to draw both futures on separate pieces of paper.

Give them a couple of minutes to draw each picture and ask them to note down for each:

- What are they doing? Do they have an education/career?
- What is their family situation like?
- Where are they living?
- Who are their friends?
- What (if anything) has changed about Kenya? What has changed about their local area?

For each scenario, list the things that would have happened to make this future a reality:

- What would have helped/hindered them to achieve their goals?
- Who would have been involved in helping/hindering them?
- What support would have been available/missing?
- What would they have done well/wrong to make this happen?

Moderator to listen to spontaneous responses but also probe to make sure we understand key drivers and barriers around education/employment/skills.

Then ask:

- Can they circle some of the things they wrote/drew that they feel are most likely to happen? In a different colour, can they circle some of the things they feel are least likely to happen? What makes them think this?
- Do they have a clear 'plan of action' for how they want to achieve their goals? Why or why not? What does this look like?

Support and Solutions (25 mins)

Objective of this section: what support young people feel they need and what they want this to look like, both now and in the future. Note – some youth will find this section very easy and have ideas already – some may find it very hard. It's ok if they don't feel able to comment heavily about 'what's needed' as this will be covered in project analysis from across interviews.

- Are they aware of any policies, services in their area that support youth aspiration and achievement? If so, what are these?
 - How do they feel about them?
 - Do they work? Why or why not?
 - Moderator to listen to spontaneous responses but also probe to make sure we understand key drivers and barriers around education/employment/skills.

- What needs to change/happen for more young people like them to achieve their 'ideal' futures? Allow them to respond and then probe:
 - Their friends/family
 - How could these better support them to achieve their goals?
 - What are they not currently doing that would be helpful?

 - School (only if relevant)
 - If there school was the perfect school for preparing them for their future – what would it be like? What would be different?
 - E.g. what subjects/skills would it focus on?
 - What would the teachers/pupils be like?
 - Anything else?

 - Their job
 - What skills would they need to do the job they want?
 - Where can they get those currently? If anywhere?
 - What challenges would they need to overcome?
 - What would their employer be like?

 - Their city/community
 - What could be done better at a community level to support them?
 - What kinds of 'things' / programmes would be helpful to them?
 - Who should be in charge of these?

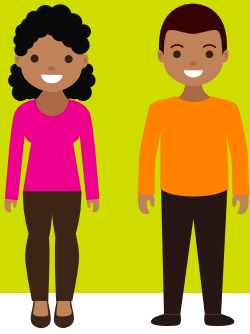
 - Government policies
 - What could the government be doing to better support people like them?
 - What sorts of things (if any) are already in place and are helpful to them?
 - What would they like to see more of?

- Kenyan society
 - What sorts of things in Kenyan society (cultural or policy level) would they change to make life better for people like them?
 - What sorts of things would they implement/take away?
 - How would they want to influence what happens in Kenya?
- Finally, if they could give one piece of advice to the people in charge of making sure young people like you feel supported and listened to, what would it be?
- What key things would they tell them to change? What would they tell them to keep the same?

Community visit

Give respondents thank you pack.

Thank them and their family for their time



Friends & Family Interview

Guidelines for the moderator

This discussion should very much be led by what came out of the discussion with the lead respondent

As you speak to friends & family, think about the most interesting/surprising things you heard and probe on these from their perspective – we want to put what our lead respondent said in context

The probes below are just a guide to help the conversation flowing- this is not a script and should not be used as one

Topic Overview

This session will be very flexible in nature but should broadly cover the following topics:

- Getting to know them: family and community (15 mins)
- Getting to know them: day in the life (15 mins)
- The future (15 mins)

Getting to know them: family & community (15mins)

Objective of this section: to explore their relationship to the lead respondent and their relationship with the community

- Exploring their relationship with the seed respondent
 - How do they know (insert name of seed respondent)?
 - If friends- tell us a little bit about your friendship?
 - When/where did you meet?
 - What do you like to do together?
 - If parents- tell us a little bit about your relationship with your son/daughter?
 - What kinds of things do you talk about?
 - Is there anything you don't talk about?
 - How has your relationship changed over the years? Why do you think this is?
- What is life like for young people in their community?
 - What differing challenges do they feel girls and boys in their community face?
 - Have things changed over the past 5 years? If so, what has changed? Has this been good or bad?

Getting to know them: day in the life (15 mins)

- What does a typical day look like for you from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep?
Probe: what activities do they do, what are the high/low points, why?
- How long have you lived here? Who do you live with?
- Who else is in your family/where do they live?

- What is most important to you/ what do you value most in life?
- What are the things you are interested in and passionate about?
- What would you say are the three best things about being young person in your community? Why?
- How about the three most difficult things about being a young person in your community? Why?
- Have you seen any big changes in your community over the past few years?
 - Are things getting better or worse? What is driving this change?
- Tell us about some of the places in your community
 - Where do you go in your community / where do you spend your time?
 - Where do you spend time with your friends? What do you do there?
 - Where do you feel most safe? Where are you happiest?
 - What people do you interact with in your community?

The Future (15 mins)

Parent specific probes:

- Their worries and hopes for the future:
 - What are their hopes for their daughter's/son's future?
 - What might prevent this from happening? What are they worried about?
 - Where do these worries come from?
- Are their hopes for their children similar to other people in the community? Why or why not?
- What is a 'typical pathway' for young people in the community?
 - Do they go to school?
 - Do they find work?
 - Do they stay/leave?
 - What do they struggle with?
 - What are they good at?
- What about their own hopes for the future?
 - What do they want to be doing in 5 years time?
 - What changes would they like to see?
 - What would they want to stay the same?

Friend specific probes:

- Their worries and hopes for the future:
 - What are their hopes for their future? What do they want to do/be when they are older?
 - What might prevent this from happening? What are they worried about?
 - Where do these worries come from?
- Are their hopes and dreams similar to other people in the community? Why or why not?
- What do they see as their pathway to their future? What kinds of things do they need to do to get there?

Probe around school, migration, finding work, avoiding pregnancy etc

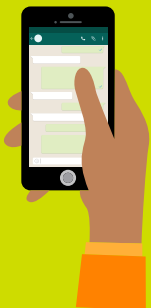
- Do they have a clear plan for how to achieve these things? Why or why not?

Concluding probes:

Finally, if they could give one piece of advice to the people in charge of making sure young people like you feel supported and listened to, what would it be?

What key things would they tell them to change? What would they tell them to keep?

Thank them for their time and close.



Whatsapp Follow Up Questions

Follow-up 1 (approx. 3 days after the focus groups)

Thank you for all your great work in the workshops a few days ago! As discussed, we have a couple more questions for you that we will be sending you over the next few days. We'd like you to think about and answer the following questions some time over the next 48 hours:

Is there anything else you want to tell us that you didn't have a chance to say during the workshop? (For example: about your aspirations for your future? What will help you achieve these – or is challenging? What support do you feel you need – in terms of education, employment, skills or anything else?)

Can you please send us a picture of an object or thing (no people please) that represents your aspirations in life? Then tell us - what does it represent and why?

Thank you- we look forward to hearing your response

Follow-up 2 (approx. 5 days after the focus groups)

Can you take a picture of something that happens during your daily life that makes you feel like you can achieve your dreams? Tell us what we are seeing, and why that is.

Can you take a picture of something that happens during your daily life that you think makes it harder for you to achieve your dreams? Tell us what we are seeing, and why that is.

In the workshops you mentioned x is a big issue for young people in your area. Please speak to friends/family members about this issue and have a chat with them to get their views. Then tell us: do they feel the same way you do? Do they feel differently? Why?

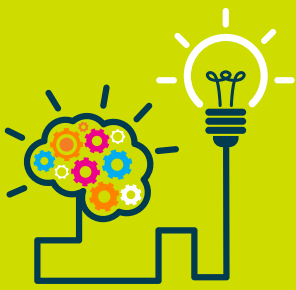
Follow-up 3 (approx. 7 days after the focus groups)

Thank you for answering all our questions so far! We just have one final question for you, after which we will be deleting you from our contacts and won't be in touch again.

Now that it's been a while since the workshop and you've had time to think: what do you think is the biggest challenge facing Kenyan youth in achieving their dreams, and what do you want done in response?

Has anything changed in your views from when you spoke to us in the groups?

Do you have any final thoughts or advice you want to share with us?



Our approach to analysis

Our process is iterative and on-going, combining elements of thematic analysis and content analysis. We combine informal and formal processes at both the individual researcher and group level to ensure that all recommendations are grounded in the evidence; reflect the full range of data gathered; are 'tested' and validated within both the local Kenyan and international research team at multiple stages; and fully triangulated across different research methods and audiences.

In summary we:

Conducted on-going individual-level analysis during every stage of the fieldwork: for example, after each research session, researchers took notes against a structured pro-forma, highlighting youth's key questions, concerns, hopes for the future, audience differences, etc. Individual researchers fed back findings to the team via email and phone over the course of the fieldwork window as work developed so that all were kept up to speed, and that we could iteratively validate findings as we went.

Conducted summative group-level analysis with our Kenyan team. At the end of our fieldwork window in Kenya, we had an 'early findings' brainstorm where we (our Kenyan moderators, our international moderators, and our local recruitment team and support staff) interrogated what we saw and heard against the project objectives.

Once our 2CV researchers had had a chance to compile their individual-level notes and reflect on the full range of fieldwork, we then held a second findings brainstorm. In this brainstorm we reflected on whether some of the early findings documented in the early findings brainstorm have held up under review of the session data; further to compare and contrast findings across audiences and methods; and began to organise data by themes and develop the 'story' of the data we had collected. At this stage, we also cross-referenced all findings with transcripts from workshops and interviews, to ensure we were representing the youth voice accurately, and using their language.

Finally, analysis continued during reporting. Because we illustrate our findings with plentiful participant verbatims, we were constantly checking that we have the data to back up the claims we are making. During reporting itself, drafts were circulated amongst the full research team to ensure that how we are reporting the findings remains fair and accurate.

