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Evaluation of the Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme Phase 2

Qualitative Impact Evaluation Round
2 – Exploratory study on youth
opportunities and exclusion

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Executive summary

The HSNP, currently in its second phase (2013–2019), is an unconditional cash transfer (CT) programme targeting people living in extreme poverty in four counties in northern Kenya (Marsabit, Mandera, Turkana, and Wajir) with either regular cash payments or periodic emergency payments.

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study on youth opportunities and exclusion in the HSNP counties carried out as part of the qualitative component of the impact evaluation of HSNP Phase 2, which seeks to understand the context within which HSNP is being implemented and how this context mediates programme impacts.

Youth (18 to 34 years), who constitute a large proportion of the population (about 30%), face many challenges in the HSNP counties, including: unemployment; exclusion from decision-making, public services, and national resources; real and perceived marginalisation; an identity crisis; and involvement in crime and violence. The study looked at four main topics in relation to youth: identity and forms of association; economic opportunities and challenges; political opportunities and exclusion; and the impact of HSNP.

Identity and forms of association

In the context of the high un- and underemployment rates that prevail in the HSNP counties, youth are caught between a responsibility to provide for children and parents as they get older and limited economic opportunities, which make it difficult to fulfil this responsibility. This adversely affects their sense of identity. Parents of youth are also negatively affected in this regard by their inability to help their children make a good start in adult life.

Many youth place a greater emphasis on socioeconomic and neighbourhood identities than ethnic identities (though the latter tend to be emphasised in times and places of conflict). Regarding forms of association, a positive finding is that youth form their own livelihoods and savings groups to strengthen their livelihoods and provide assistance in times of need.

Economic opportunities and challenges

Unemployment is a major challenge facing youth. Even those who have education and skills find that the jobs

and careers to which they aspire are largely not available. The employment situation is demoralising and can lead to disaffection, and sometimes to drug or alcohol abuse. It can also render youth vulnerable to manipulation by politicians and those that want to incite violence.

Evidence suggests that the livelihoods and savings groups referred to above act as a mechanism for improving economic opportunity and reward for young people. However, they are in need of strengthening as events such as drought or price fluctuations weaken their ability to provide opportunities and insulate youth from shocks. In addition, and in the context of structural labour market deficiencies, such groups are not sufficient by themselves to improve youths' prospects: multi-pronged action by actors with greater influence is required to create economic opportunities for youth.

Political opportunities and exclusion

Though some youth (in particular male and educated) are now more engaged in local decision-making forums, exclusion is still the norm for young women and for poorer, less-educated male youth. Female exclusion is heavily determined by gendered norms, as well as women's fears of the repercussions of voicing discontent or engaging in politics. Even those youth who are engaged in decision-making have limited influence over the key issues that affect their lives, as structural labour market and economic problems cannot be resolved at the local level.

Youth engagement in national politics is growing, but this remains largely limited to campaigns (and in some cases being paid to incite violence). Youth are aware of the ways that political actors manipulate them and fail to fulfil their promises. However, some unemployed young men aspire to access this 'source of income'. In addition, some male youth resort to violence in response to economic and political exclusion. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity: in some cases, youth uprisings have promoted responsiveness to their grievances.

HSNP and youth

HSNP has not had a notable direct impact on youth, largely because relatively few youth are direct beneficiaries; however, it has indirect impacts. There are some individual cases of HSNP cash helping youth to start, strengthen, or diversify existing livelihood activities. For some, HSNP has enabled stronger integration into social support networks. New friendship groups can be formed when HSNP enables reciprocal exchange. More negatively, however, there are instances of reported jealousies and crowding out of support relationships as a result of HSNP, although these appear to be fairly limited.

Regarding political opportunities and exclusion, the HSNP transfers themselves are not perceived to have propelled young people into decision-making structures and very few young HSNP beneficiaries are involved in community-level decision-making processes. However, in some cases these decision-making structures do include HSNP committees.

Implications of the study findings

By itself, HSNP is unlikely to overcome the key drivers of economic and political exclusion facing youth, and despite some evidence of HSNP's positive impact on poverty and the local economy, for many individual beneficiaries (including youth) distress sales in times of shock continue to take place and many continue to rely on support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government. Nevertheless, HSNP is one policy tool that can contribute to improving the life chances of its youth beneficiaries. It can do so in the following ways:

- Increase engagement with youth groups (e.g. livelihood groups), either through soft means (messaging) or by linking with other interventions and services.
- Consider HSNP's targeting approach to youth in response to feelings of social exclusion and jealousy.
- The proposed HSNP Phase 3 livelihood support programme could target youth – and particularly the youth who are most at risk of falling prey to extremists or criminal gangs, thus providing them with viable alternatives.
- Engage in direct communications with youth and youth groups to inform them of any new services being offered by HSNP or linked to HSNP (the HSNP Management Information System (MIS) data could be helpful in this regard).
- Offer support to youth networks, which have been found to allay feelings of frustration.

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List of abbreviations

AFIDEP	African Institute for Development Policy
CRA	Commission on Revenue Allocation
CT	Cash transfer
CVE	Conflict, Violence, and Extremism
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
IDI	In-depth Interview
KES	Kenyan Shillings
KII	Key Informant Interview
KLMIS	Kenya Labour Market Information System
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MIS	Management Information System
MoH	Ministry of Health
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PILU	Programme Implementation and Learning Unit
PSHP	Private Sector Health Partnership
SID	Society for International Development
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study on youth opportunities and exclusion in HSNP counties. It represents the output from the second round of qualitative research under Workstream 1 (Impact Evaluation) of the independent evaluation of HSNP2.

An independent evaluation of the HSNP2 was commissioned in order to provide evidence on the performance and impact of HSNP2 for implementers, funders, and other stakeholders interested in CTs. The findings from the evaluation will also feed into ongoing programme operations and programmatic decisions.

There are three evaluation research streams under the Phase 2 evaluation: Impact Evaluation,¹ Operational Evaluation, and Policy Analysis. The impact evaluation adopts a mixed-methods approach, consisting of quantitative and qualitative components. Within this, the qualitative research component is designed to comprehend the context within which HSNP is being implemented and how this context mediates programme impacts. It also seeks to capture impacts that are less tangible to quantitative methods, as well as to triangulate findings from other components of the evaluation. Specifically, the qualitative research relates to questions c, d, e, g, k, and s from the evaluation terms of reference (also set out in the evaluation matrix presented in the inception report (OPM, 2015), which relate to wellbeing, livelihoods, and informal institutions.

The qualitative research has been designed to be iterative, responding to issues emerging from different activities and findings from each round of the impact evaluation, as well as responding to further research needs and questions that emerge from the other evaluation components. Following the first round of data collection, the qualitative team proposed a change in the emphasis and scope to the second round of qualitative research. This change in scope was deemed necessary for a number of reasons. First, the first round of data collection yielded ample data that sufficiently answered the key research questions about the impact of HSNP2 that were proposed in the evaluation matrix. However, there remained some areas and findings that needed further grounding in the contextual data. Second, the findings from the first round of data collection also

pointed to the possibility of a wide range of unintended impacts of HSNP, which required further investigation to understand if they were to usefully contribute to ongoing policy and programmatic discussions in Kenya and elsewhere. Thus, it was proposed that the second round of qualitative research would focus on the theme of **youth opportunity and exclusion**, which we believed responded to both issues that emerged from the earlier research process as well as areas of overlapping interest within the social protection sector.

The special theme seeks to answer two main questions: first, to understand the different dimensions and drivers of youth opportunities and exclusion in the four northern counties; and, second, to understand if and how HSNP does or does not mediate these drivers. Our proposal to focus on youth (defined by the constitution of Kenya as people aged between 18 to 34 years) is pertinent given that these young people constitute a large proportion of the population (about 30%) and play a central role in a country's development. It is also widely acknowledged that the youth represent a force of change by acting as engines of growth and evolvers of social norms.

The importance of the youth for national development and future wellbeing is made evident in the constitution of Kenya, which obligates the government to provide and create economic, social, and political opportunities to ensure that the youth achieve their full potential and participate meaningfully in public affairs. However, the recent Youth Survey (Awiti and Scott, 2016) identifies the challenges facing Kenyan youth as including unemployment, lack of access to social services, low representation at key decision-making levels, and involvement in crime, violence and other deviant behaviours. This latter issue has been the focus of many recent studies.² In addition to external factors, the vulnerability of youth to conflict and violent activities is linked to a series of deprivations and exclusions: unemployment, feelings of real and perceived

¹ In turn, the impact evaluation consists of three activities: a quantitative household-level impact evaluation, a quantitative local economy-wide impact evaluation study, three rounds of qualitative research, and a special study on the Arid Lands Support Programme.

² In the case of extremism this includes cross-border conflict spill-overs, religious ideology, technology, media, international terrorism, and criminal networks (see Lind et al., 2015).

marginalisation, identity crisis, exclusion from public services and national resources, and lack of opportunity for political participation.

A focus on youth will shed light on the wider unintended effects of the HSNP, but also on the experiences of a sub-section of the population who, despite their importance to the future development of many countries, have not been the focus of many CT evaluations. Furthermore, findings from this exploratory study will support other key research agendas in Kenya, such as that around conflict, violence, and extremism (CVE).³

1.1 Proposed conceptual framework

To answer the two research questions proposed above, a Social Exclusion Framework (see Babajanian and Hagen-Zanker, 2012) was adopted that focuses on how people may be deprived from full participation in normatively prescribed activities. The framework situates deprivation in a broader context and unpacks the various factors that might further drive particular states of exclusion. The Social Exclusion Framework therefore simultaneously emphasises the multiple dimensions of deprivation (economic, social, and political) and the contextual factors that drive these deprivations. The Framework was applied to this study with an explicit focus on youth.

Figure 1 below shows how we apply the Social Exclusion Framework to this study. The framework has two conceptual components. On the one hand are realms of deprivation referring to three dimensions of deprivations that might be experienced by the youth: economic (e.g. livelihood and income); social (e.g. access to services, identity and social norms, social participation); and political (e.g. participation in governance processes). These realms of deprivation are interrelated. For example, economic deprivation in the form of exclusion from the labour market could lead to forms of social deprivation such as lack of access to social services or participation in vital social bonds and rituals such as marriage.

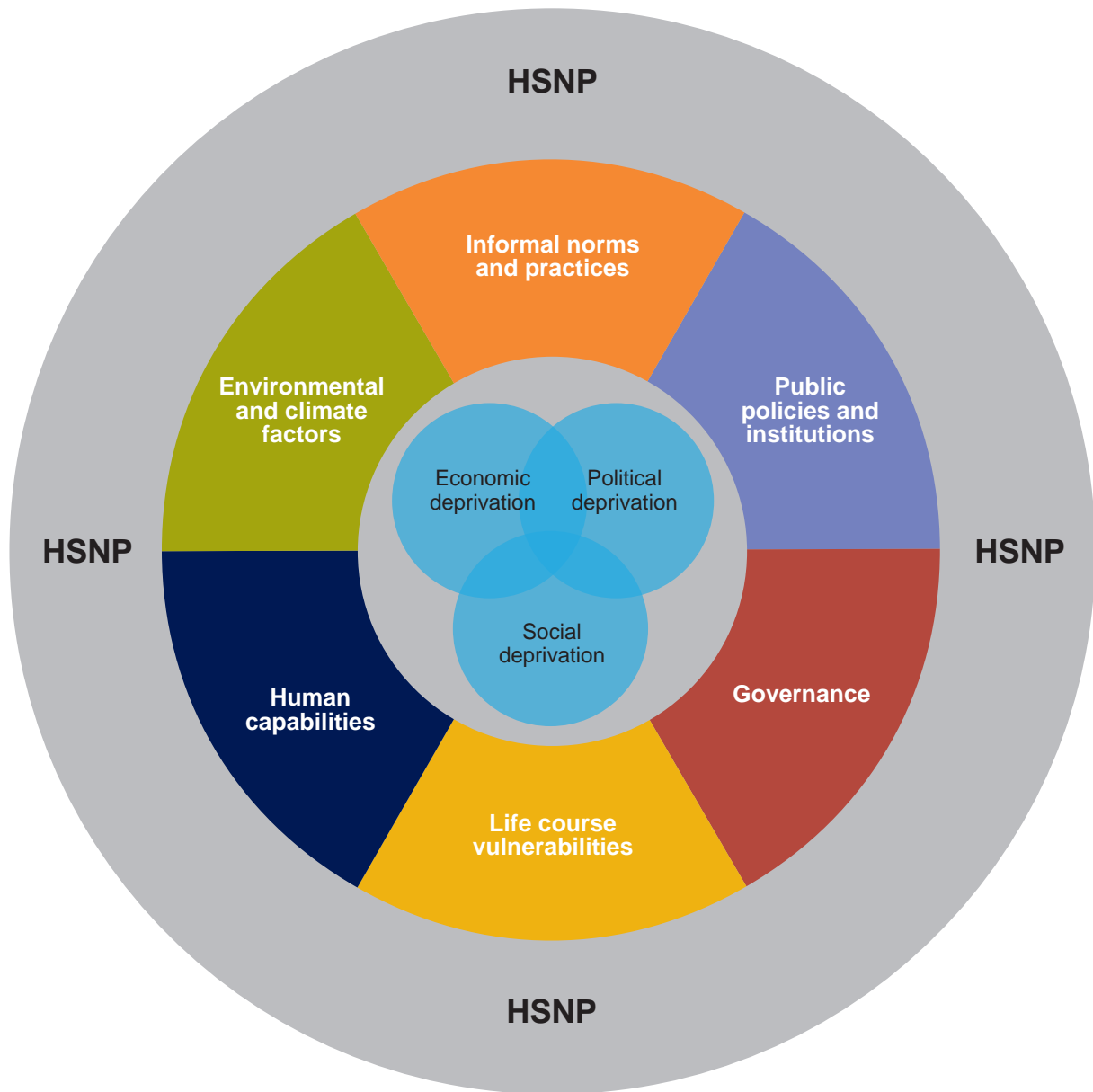
The second component of our framework relates to specific drivers that contribute to different forms of deprivation. These may be at the individual level, such as vulnerabilities related to the life course, or at the societal and group level, such as discriminatory norms and practices or public policies.

In operationalising these two components, we will first seek to understand how young people live, their values, and their shared norms and practices. This provides a nuanced understanding of various forms of deprivation and opportunity and their views on the drivers of these. Taking the resulting narrative a step further, we will discuss youths' attitudes and response to the different forms of deprivation and opportunity that they experience. In relation to the HSNP, we will look at how the CTs affect different forms of deprivation and opportunity through an interplay of factors.

³ Through its Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, DFID's Countering Violent Extremism programme runs from April 2016 to March 2020 and is designed to work across East Africa by contributing to several separate but mutually reinforcing CVE interventions. Its research, government capacity building and support to community grassroots non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is focused on human rights, youth empowerment, and communication. The programme has an additional aim of strengthening ties between and among civil society and local government and law enforcement. In particular, the UK is:

- Carrying out research focused on the main drivers of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa, and the activities working to counter it, which also aims to identify vulnerable regions;
- Providing support to Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in drafting and implementing their national CVE strategies across government departments and in regional states; and
- Helping national governments and civil society improve CVE projects by providing grants, training, and guidance to NGOs and government institutions, such as the police and prisons service, and strengthening government–civil society relations.

Figure 1 Youth exclusion framework



Source: OPM adapted from Babajanian and Hagen-Zanker (2012)

1.2 Overview of the HSNP

The HSNP is an unconditional CT programme that targets people living in extreme poverty in four counties in northern Kenya: Marsabit, Mandera, Turkana, and Wajir. It is currently in its second phase, in which it aims to provide the poorest 100,000 households with regular cash payments, and reach up to an additional 180,000 households with periodic emergency payments to help mitigate the effects of shocks such as drought.

Under HSNP Phase 2, a total of 383,235 households across the four counties have so far been registered into the HSNP MIS. The registration exercise took place between December 2012 and June 2013 and was intended to be a census of the population of the four counties. It was planned that all households be registered for bank accounts, with the HSNP providing regular CTs to 100,000 of these. These regular beneficiaries of HSNP are known as 'Group 1'. In this report we refer to them as 'routine beneficiaries'. The rest of the households in the MIS are known as 'Group 2'. A large number of these are eligible to receive HSNP 'emergency payments' in time of drought. This report focuses on the experiences of the former.

At the time of writing, some 275,978 households had been registered with active accounts, 84,619 of which were Group 1 beneficiary households. An ongoing effort is in place to finalise account registration and activation for the remaining households. Once this is achieved, Group 1 households that have not yet received any payments will be paid their full entitlement from the HSNP, dating back to July 2013.

As at November 2017, the transfer is worth KES 2,700 per month (approximately £19/US\$27). The transfer is made directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts every two months.

The 2016 assessment of the HSNP programme targeting found that the extent and uniformity of poverty in areas targeted by HSNP2 made it very difficult for the programme to accurately identify the poorest households using a combination of Proxy Means Test and Community-Based Targeting mechanisms. Exclusion and inclusion errors in Phase 2 are very high – roughly similar to what would have been achieved if a random targeting rule were used – and targeted beneficiaries are not considerably worse off than non-beneficiaries in terms of monetary poverty (Sliver-Leander and Merttens, 2016). The HSNP transfer is targeted to households rather than individuals, with each household selecting one individual with a national ID to open the bank account and collect the transfer on each payment day.

The HSNP is implemented under the NDMA, which reports to the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. An internationally procured Programme Implementation and Learning Unit (PILU) sits within the NDMA. The PILU manages and monitors the delivery of the HSNP and provides oversight of a rights and grievances mechanism for the programme. The PILU reports to the NDMA and HSNP Steering Committee.

The HSNP is delivered in partnership with implementing partners HelpAge International, which manages the programme rights component, and Financial Sector Deepening Trust and Equity Bank, which manage and deliver the payments component respectively.

HSNP Phase 2 runs from July 2013 to March 2019. It is funded by DFID to the value of £120 million. The Government of Kenya is expected to contribute funding as part of the National Safety Net Programme.

1.3 Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a summary of the methodology, giving an overview of the sampling strategy, methods and tools used, data collection process and associated challenges, and how analysis was conducted. Section 3 provides an introduction to the counties and the sub-locations that were visited as part of this study. It highlights some broad areas of social opportunities and exclusion. The information provided here draws on primary and secondary data and provides the backdrop for interpreting the findings in this study. Section 4 presents some findings on the key facets of youth identity, highlighting social expectations that surround youthhood and the opportunities or exclusions these expectations might present. Section 5 looks at youth experience in the economic domain, particularly at the factors that may enable and constrain them in regard to playing a fulfilling and valuable role in their local economies. Section 6 looks at youth's political exclusion and opportunities. It identifies the sources of opportunities for youth in the four counties in the form of community decision making, leadership, and improved relationships between the youth and political elites. The forms of exclusion on the other hand revolve around traditional hierarchies of age, gender, and levels of poverty. Section 7 looks at how the HSNP mediates the social, economic, and political realms of opportunity and exclusion. Finally, we conclude with Section 8, a review of the key findings, their implications for the programme, and recommendations for further inquiry in subsequent research on youth and CT programmes.



2 Methodology

Here we outline the methodological approach that was adopted for this research to help answer the research questions as described above. This section outlines the sampling protocol for site and respondent selection, research methods, the training and fieldwork process, and the data analysis process.

2.1 Sampling

2.1.1 Geographic sampling

As with the first round of qualitative research, a purposive sampling approach was used to select research sites. To the extent possible we attempted to replicate the approach implemented in the first round of research, taking into consideration the need to include one sub-location per county that was visited during the first round of the qualitative study, and at the same time to include communities that have differing types and degrees of insecurity. This approach aimed to create a diverse rather than representative sample of HSNP communities. In addition, the thematic focus and scope of the special study led to the decision to visit a reduced number of sub-locations, two, compared with the three visited in the last round of research.

To select the study locations, we followed a three-step process. The list of sub-locations was randomised in each county. The first sub-location that was researched in the first round to appear on the list in ascending order was selected. The second sub-location was then chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Different demographics to the first sub-location, looking primarily at livelihood categories and poverty levels.
2. Sufficient number of beneficiaries (which, according to the first round of research, means more than 50 beneficiaries per location). In two instances, the locations that were selected did not have a sufficient number of youth account holders (<29) to meet the research requirements. Those two locations were then replaced by the next location moving down the list that met the same criteria as indicated above.
3. Incorporate, to the extent possible, sub-locations that have dynamics that can adversely affect youth opportunities or exclusion.

The final list of sub-locations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research sites

County	Sub-location	Constituency	Rural or urban	Sampled in Round 1
Wajir	Hugai	Tarbai	Rural	No
	Eldas	Eldas	Rural	Yes
Mandera	Wangai Dahan	Mandera West	Rural	No
	Elwak South	Mandera South	Urban	Yes
Turkana	Todonyang	Turkana North	Rural	No
	Kalemunyang	Loima	Rural	Yes
Marsabit	Turbi	North Horr	Rural	No
	Goromuda	Moyale	Urban	Yes

2.1.2 Respondent sampling

Our sampling approach in this round of research aimed to capture views from a diverse group of youth, differentiated mainly by gender and HSNP status, while at the same time ensuring some consistency across the different research sites. This round of research only focused in Group 1 (routine) beneficiaries. In this study, we distinguished between two types of routine beneficiaries. On the one hand, direct beneficiaries who are youth named as card-holding recipients of the transfer, and indirect beneficiaries who are any youth living in households with a named card-holding recipient of the transfer. Beneficiary youth respondents were selected randomly from the MIS, with priority given to individual's part of the panel households selected in the first round of qualitative research. This was only applicable for sub-locations we were revisiting.

Discussions were also held with some non-beneficiaries, both youth and non-youth. For these, respondents were selected as randomly as possible through a snowballing sampling approach, and sometimes with support from a local guide.

2.2 Research methods

This qualitative research study used three main research methods: in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIs). A multiple method approach such as this allows the capture of a broader and deeper range of perceptions and experiences of young people than reliance on a single method.

2.2.1 IDIs

IDIs were conducted with beneficiary (direct and

indirect) and non-beneficiary youths. IDIs are one-on-one interviews that generate detailed accounts and experiences on specific issues, programmes, or situations. In this study they were used to generate youth's experiences of youthhood and the HSNP CT. IDIs covered issues that individuals might feel they are more able to express in a one-on-one interview compared to a group situation. A *pairwise ranking tool* was administered in all IDIs, and involved the listing of opportunities and challenges respectively, and then ranking in order of importance.

2.2.2 FGDs

The IDIs were complemented by FGDs with youth and non-youth beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. FGDs are held in a group setting within which people with similar backgrounds or experience discuss a topic of interest. The FGD is guided by a moderator who introduces topics and facilitates discussion among the participants. FGDs stimulate debate and explore differences in attitudes and perceptions within and between members of a group. Their purpose is not to gather 'collective' views or experiences but rather to allow participants to agree or disagree and provide insight into the range of opinions, experiences, and perspectives about a particular issue. In this study, FGDs were used to elicit views that are potentially difficult to generate on an individual basis. The FGD questions centred on less personal questions around attitudes and behaviours of young people at the community level, as well as exploring issues from the interviews that needed group validation. Topics that the FGDs generally focused on included what it means to be a young person and the groups they feel attached to. We asked about the opportunities and services available for young people, whether decision makers respond to

the problems and needs of youth, community tensions and disputes, and future aspirations. For HSNP direct and indirect beneficiaries, there were also questions about how the CT is affecting their life.

2.2.3 KIIs

The research also used KIIs. These are semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with key individuals in the community who have an in-depth knowledge of specific issues. In this study, key informants were used to uncover understandings and perceptions of youth opportunities and exclusion. KIIs were held with individuals who were deemed to have important information about the opportunities and challenges that youth face, and who understood the context of

the sub-location. Questions were often tailored to the specific knowledge and role of that particular respondent in the community. Interviews with religious leaders, elders, sub-location chiefs, county officials, and district peace committees were held in all sub-locations. KIIs focused on their work with young people, the roles and responsibilities of youth, the opportunities and challenges faced by young people, young people's involvement in politics and decision making, how young people express themselves, relationships with security actors, and the services that young people use.

Table 2 below shows the number of IDIs, FGDs, and KIIs completed in the eight study locations.

Table 2: Total number of IDIs, FGDs, and KIIs completed in all four counties

Method	Respondent type	Number conducted	
		Male	Female
IDI	Direct youth beneficiary	16	16
	Indirect youth beneficiary	17	16
	Youth non-beneficiary	8	8
FGD	Direct youth beneficiary	5	8
	Indirect youth beneficiary	9	8
	Youth non-beneficiary	8	8
	Non-youth non-beneficiary	8	8
KII	Includes religious leaders, elders, chiefs, county officials, community NGO workers, District Peace Committee members, and teachers	45	

2.3 Fieldwork process

Data collection took place from 18 April to 1 May 2017. A six-day training session was held between 10 and 15 April 2017. All researchers had fluency in the local dialect and had experience in undertaking qualitative research. Some researchers had been involved in the first round of qualitative research for Phase 2, others had been involved in quantitative research for HSNP, and a minority were new to the programme. The training thus used an inductive approach that built on inputs from those with greater knowledge of the programme and experience of qualitative research. The training also followed a participatory approach, incorporating group work and ample role plays.

The researchers were provided with an overview of the HSNP programme, highlighting the history, design, and operational changes since the first round. A summary of the research process was provided and findings from the first round of qualitative research were given.

This preceded an introduction to the special study, wherein some essential concepts that form the basis of the study were explained. The team also discussed research ethics relevant to a study focusing on youth exclusion and social exclusion in some conflict-prone and fragile environments. The teams were then provided with an overview of the research methods to be used in this study, and the research question guides were shared for discussion and subsequent revisions.

Following four days of training, a pilot was held in nearby Kiamby County, which although it is a non-HSNP area provided an opportunity for researchers to practice their interviewing skills, as well as practice of sampling and mobilisation. It was also an opportunity for the teams to field test how they would clearly communicate concepts such as identity and belonging to respondents, validating or changing the words that had been discussed in the previous days of training.

Data collection commenced immediately after the training and pilot activities in all four counties.

Each team was composed of an OPM lead researcher, a lead researcher from our national research firm Research Guide Africa, a team supervisor, and two to three researchers. The team spent a week in each sub-location. The first person that teams spoke with in each sub-location was the chief in order to gain the necessary permissions to conduct research in their sub-location and to understand the local dynamics. If there was an NDMA office in the sub-location, then a courtesy call was also paid to them. Once permissions were gained then research could begin. FGDs were often held in schools or health facilities and IDIs were either held at the school or in people's homes. Schools and health

facilities were deemed comfortable and familiar for participants, not too far from their homes, quiet and free from distractions. At the end of each day of fieldwork, researchers were given time to reflect and discuss the findings from the day's fieldwork as well as begin to draw out the analytical implications from these findings.

2.3.1 Challenges during fieldwork

Across multiple counties there was a particular difficulty in recruiting male respondents, especially male direct beneficiaries. This was generally due to the fact that they were involved in income-generating activities during the time that the evaluation team proposed conducting FGDs and IDIs. This challenge was resolved by working flexibly with community mobilisers to meet in locations and at times more convenient for male respondents, and also by conducting more in-depth discussions with groups comprised of fewer participants.

In Turkana, because of displacement of HSNP beneficiaries following violent conflict in one of the sub-locations visited, a number of communities only had one or two beneficiaries, and these communities were geographically dispersed. As a result, identifying and mobilising respondents was initially time-consuming and challenging – this made convening sufficient numbers of respondents for FGDs difficult. This challenge was resolved by arranging communication through community leaders and mobilisers so that respondents had plenty of advanced notice of the invitation to participate in the research, as well as use of a vehicle to collect respondents and drop them back again after the FGD.

This fieldwork also coincided with national election primaries, and campaign activities were taking place in sub-locations. In some cases this caused delays, as large numbers of respondents were attending rallies and events. Teams in each county worked around this by, where possible, circulating the fieldwork team among different communities simultaneously, and conducting FGDs, IDIs, and KIIs with available respondents, as well as re-convening groups at times when the rallies and political events were finished.

Finally, there were some inconsistencies in the MIS data that were used to sample direct and indirect beneficiaries. For example, in Kalemunyang sub-location in Turkana, the evaluation team found that the majority of potential respondents in the list of direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries did not live in the village listed in the MIS data. This slightly delayed the recruitment of FGD participants, and also led the team to rely on sampling from a smaller number of communities.

2.4 Data analysis

All discussions were voice recorded and subsequently transcribed for coding and analysis. However, researchers also took comprehensive field notes. Analysis of the data started in the field. Researchers were trained to confer with each other on the highlights for each research area and major points and issues raised during the daily team debrief. The research teams undertook several steps of debriefing as part of their routine daily activity. First, at the end of each FGD, any particular issues that affected how the process had gone (e.g. number of participants, dominance by particular individuals, use and adaptation of tools, etc.) were discussed by the team, along with on-the-spot troubleshooting of ways to address these issues.

At the end of each day, the whole team came together to debrief on the day's fieldwork overall. The discussion included a summary of practical/logistical issues as well as an in-depth review of analytical issues. The debriefs enabled the team to discuss any gaps in information that needed to be filled, as well as any new issues requiring further exploration. This helped teams adapt and improve the research process where needed as they went along.

After fieldwork, desk-based analysis began, using the transcriptions of all the discussions. We uploaded the transcripts to NVivo, which is software for the analysis of qualitative data. Each respondent statement was coded to one or more particular thematic issues, with the content, frequency, etc. used to draw out major findings.



3 Research context

The purpose of this section is to provide an introduction to the counties and sub-locations that were visited as part of this study.

In particular, it highlights some areas of social exclusion experienced by youth in the sub-locations that were visited. In general, these result from a combination of poor access to education and health services, poor transport infrastructure, recurrent drought conditions, and periodic conflict.

Each sub-section below starts with a summary of the two sub-locations visited in that county, before an overview of the relevant county context is presented. The information presented here thus provides a backdrop for interpreting findings in later sections. Secondary data has been drawn upon to situate the context found within our specific research sites.

3.1 Mandera

Box 1: Research sites visited in Mandera

Wangai Dahan is a rural sub-location. There is a primary school and, while there is a secondary school 2km away, most children usually drop out of education after primary school. There are a few farms in the area that grow millet and grass. There are few shops, no medical facilities and no market, so residents walk the 9km to Takaba Town for trading, other business ventures, and healthcare. Economic activities are generally limited, although young men are often engaged as boda-boda drivers (ferrying produce or passengers from Takaba) or in casual work breaking stones and selling them for construction purposes. Women tend to grow vegetables, sell food to quarry workers, and fetch water.

Elwak is the second largest sub-county headquarters in the county after Mandera Town. There are vocational training centres, a hospital, a trading centre, and national and county administrative offices. The youth tend to be better educated here than in Wangai Dahan, which is due to their relatively higher standard of living, access to employment and business opportunities, and the accessibility of schools. Youth are engaged in similar economic livelihoods as in Wangai Dahan, but more are in business rather than in rearing livestock and collecting firewood. Because of the current security situation, the area also has a curfew from 7pm to 7am, meaning that no residents are allowed outdoors during these hours.

The population of Mandera is 1.2 million (55% male, 45% female) (MoH, 2015a). The most densely populated constituency in Mandera is Mandera East, which contains the county headquarters of Mandera Town. The most sparsely populated constituency is Mandera North. The county has the highest proportion of 0–14-year olds in Kenya (54% of the total population), which is due to high fertility rates (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and Society for International Development (SID), 2013). The population of youth aged 15–34 is 29% (*ibid.* 2013), which is very close to the national level.

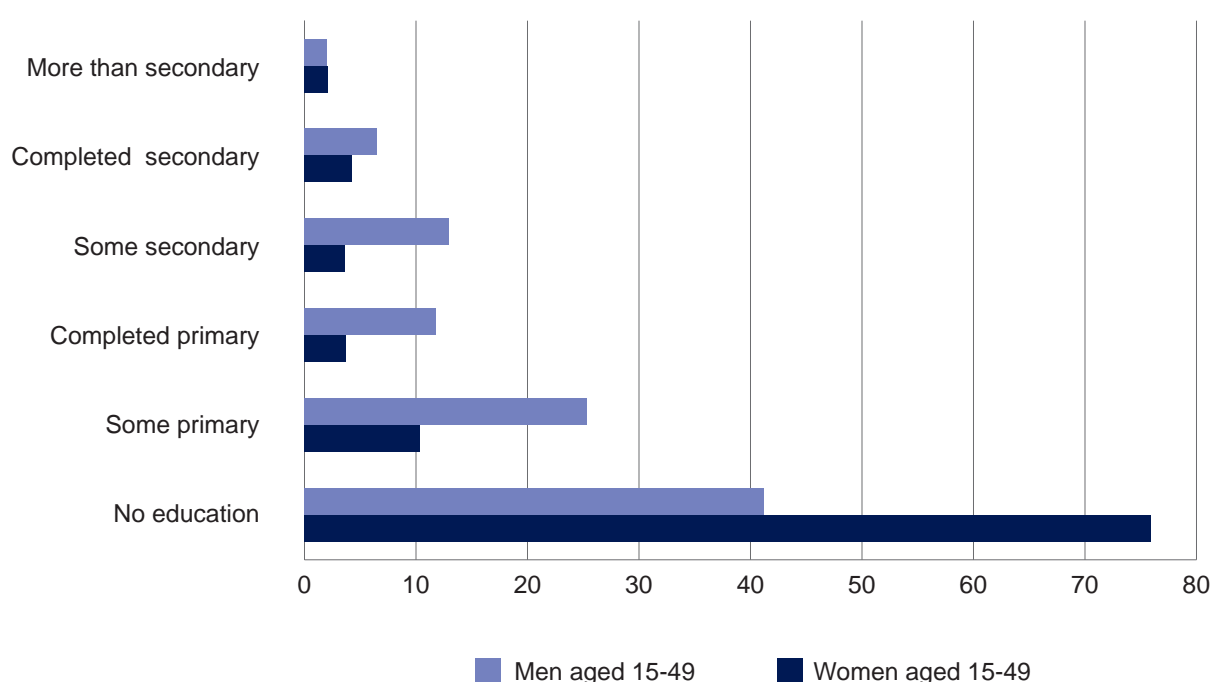
Mandera has a semi-arid or arid climate, with temperatures ranging from 24°C in July to 42°C in February (Mandera County Government, 2012). There are two rainy seasons: the long rains occur from April to May and the short rains occur from October to December. However, the frequency and intensity of droughts appears to have risen over the past 20 years, with insufficient time between droughts to allow rangelands and the pastoralists that depend on them to properly recover. Prolonged droughts and flooding can lead to famine, disease outbreaks, loss of livestock, and human and wildlife conflicts over resources. There is

little land for vegetation and little that holds the potential for agriculture (ACF-USA, 2006).

Opportunities and material resources for quality education in Mandera are limited, especially for girls. The wider literature reports that insecurity has affected the education sector, including an inability to hire teachers due to their fear of violence (Kushkush, 2015). As a result, retirees, officials, and university students are brought in to teach, but these people often lack sufficient qualifications and experience (Stewart, 2016a). During prolonged droughts, pastoralist households move away

from their homes in search of water and this further disrupts children's education (Nyamamu and Njagi, 2017). Children can also drop out of school to take care of livestock during droughts. As a result of these issues, the education statistics are sobering. According to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), just 24% of women and 62% of men aged between 15 and 49 are literate (KNBS *et. al.*, 2015).⁴ Figure 2 shows the highest level of schooling attended or completed for people in Mandera, indicating that the majority of women have never received an education.

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of women and men by highest level of schooling attended or completed



Source: KNBS *et. al.* (2015).

Health-related challenges in Mandera include the lack of qualified healthcare workers, lack of medical equipment, lack of electricity, water and basic healthcare technology, and a lack of reliable data on the population's health (Philips, 2017). Only 43% of children aged between 12 and 23 months have been fully vaccinated and 28% of children have not had any vaccinations at all (DHS, 2014).⁵ The county has a maternal mortality ratio of 3,795 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is nearly eight times the national average (448 deaths per 100,000 live births) (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2015). Complications during birth are more likely for women who have undergone female genital

mutilation, a widely practised procedure in Mandera. Girls who become pregnant at too young an age are also a high risk group for birth complications (Stewart, 2016b). HIV prevalence is lower than the national average, which is 6.1% compared to 1.3% for Mandera (UNICEF, 2013).

Due to the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, international organisations are increasingly finding it hard to operate in Mandera; they prefer to keep a low profile and many times opt to engage small locally based organisations as implementing partners (EUTF, 2016).

⁴ Refers to people who attended secondary school or higher who can read a whole or part of a sentence.

⁵ Refers to children who received specific vaccines at any time before the survey according to a vaccination card or a mother's report.

Security context

Mandera is home to four main clans: the Garre, the Murulle, the Degodia, and the Corner Tribes.⁶ In addition, the Marehan clan are seeking to be recognised as the fifth major clan in the county, following their increasing migration into the area following the collapse of the Somali government in 1991.

The colonial-era allocation of grazing lands remains a contributor to conflict dynamics in the county. Water scarcity and limited pasture for the largely pastoralist community are also enduring flashpoints. Dispute over ownership and control of the Malka Mari National Park, and access to natural resources such as the River Dawa, the only permanent fresh water source in Mandera, are additional sources of disagreement (Hassan, 2017).

Devolution has intensified political competition among the clans as they bid to access resources and protect against exclusion and domination by other clans (Hassan, 2017). Additionally, devolution has led to changes in constituency and county boundaries, which has played a role in the eruption of latent but longstanding disagreements between the Garre and the Degodia.

Other causes of conflict include the related issues of competition over land, economic influence, and lack of livelihoods. An estimated 85% of the population live below the poverty line (KNBS 2013). Of the four HSNP counties, Mandera has been the most affected by the infiltration of Al-Shabaab. Young people join Al-Shabaab ranks as an alternative to unemployment in the county. Historical inter-clan conflicts as well as new contests over the spoils of devolution are said to have led certain groups to align themselves with Al-Shabaab in a bid to 'squeeze out' their competition and bolster influence in the region (Crisis Group, 2015).

Stability in the county is further undermined by claims of corruption among key government agencies such as the Immigration Service and the Kenya Revenue Authority, which has fuelled criminal activity across the porous borders with Ethiopia and Somalia. Vested interests and political agendas within the county's political elites have also undermined opportunities for sustainable security in the county. Despite the many issues, however, the appointment of a Regional Coordinator in 2015 appears to have contributed to reducing the occurrence and intensity of conflict in the county (Crisis Group, 2015).



⁶ Including a number of smaller clans residing in the county.

3.2 Marsabit

Box 2: Research sites visited in Marsabit

Goromuda is a busy and bustling trading town located in Moyale on the Ethiopian border. There is much trade and movement of labour across the border, as well as many services available there that do not exist in rural areas. There are seven different tribes residing in Goromuda, including both Muslim and Christian populations. A serious outbreak of tribal conflict occurred in 2012 and some former residents have still not returned to claim their abandoned properties, although there are no squatters on land that has been left behind. Most people whose houses burned down during the violence are renting houses nearby while they save the money to rebuild their homes. There has been no significant violence since 2012. Water is scarce, although wealthier households are able to own a private borehole and/or have access to piped water once a week.

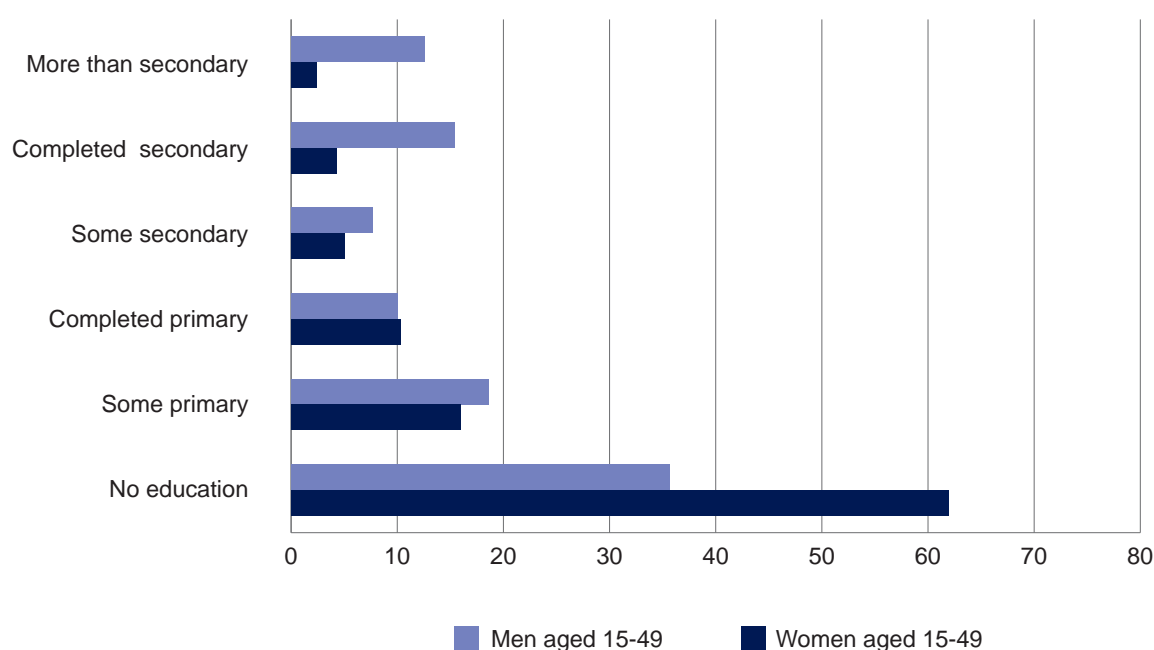
Turbi is a peri-urban community located on the main Marsabit–Moyale road. It is largely comprised of the Gabra tribe although there are a few Bantus engaged in business. This road has recently been tarmacked by a foreign contractor, which has led to improved travel times and reduced prices for people to travel to the nearby cities of Moyale and Marsabit Town. However, not everywhere has benefitted from these changes. While truckers used to stay the night in Turbi when travelling to and from Nairobi, they can now make the journey from Nairobi to Moyale in a single day and so no longer need to stay in Turbi, which has negatively affected some businesses there. The area has seen conflict in the past. Particularly devastating was the July 2005 massacre whereby the Borana community invaded Turbi in the early hours and mainly slaughtered women and children. The cause of the violence was the result of competition over scarce resources as well as political divisions over tribal lines. Since then there has been a few conflicts with neighbouring communities but not at the same levels of mortality seen in 2005 and 2006.

The total population of Marsabit County is 291,075. Two-thirds of the population are younger than 25 years old (African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and Norad, 2015a; KBNS, 2015). The total fertility rate is 5 and the population is growing at an annual rate of 2.73%. The majority of the population is concentrated in the county capital of Marsabit Town, with some 16,000 inhabitants, and Moyale, which has 43,000 inhabitants (World Food Programme (WFP), 2015a).

The climate is characterised by low rainfall in what is essentially an arid or semi-arid environment. Mude *et al.* (2007) report that the county receives between 100mm to 200mm of rainfall per annum, with the foothills and the highland areas of Mt. Marsabit, Mt. Kulai, and Ol Donyo Mara Range receiving higher amounts of rainfall. In general, the long rainy season occurs in the months of March to May and the short rains occur mainly between October and December. However, rainfall patterns in the county show considerable temporal and spatial variations and are becoming increasingly erratic (WFP, 2015a).

There are many education-related challenges affecting educational outcomes. Herd migration has a significantly negative effect on school attendance, with around 26% of children of livestock-migrating households failing to attend school (Mburu, 2017). Challenges in remote pastoralist areas of the county include a lack of schooling facilities, high levels of food insecurity, and sporadic localised conflict. Girls are less likely to be enrolled due to early marriages and other cultural practices (Adeso, 2015). According to the most recent DHS, 36% of women aged between 15 and 49 and 64% of men in the same age bracket are literate (KBNS, 2015). Figure 3 shows that most men and women have never received formal education.

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of women and men by highest level of schooling attended or completed



Source: KNBS *et al.* (2015)

The prevalent diseases in the county are malaria, intestinal worms, diseases of the respiratory tract, and diarrhoea (Pelto and Thuita, 2016). Marsabit has the highest proportion of women dying during pregnancy nationally, and the maternal mortality ratio is also high at 1,127 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNFPA Kenya, 2014). Under-five mortality rates are 70 per 1,000 live births (compared to the national average of 52 per 1,000 live births), which may be due to low vaccination rates: the percentage of children aged 12 to 23 months who have been fully vaccinated is just 67.5% (DHS, 2014; Pelto and Thuita, 2016). There are significant health care worker shortages, although recently the national media has been reporting plans to address this gap (Mwendwa, 2017). The county HIV prevalence rate is low, standing at 1.6% for women and 0.2% for men (NACC, 2014).

Security context

Marsabit is home to a number of ethnic groups, the major ones being the Gabra, Rendille, Borana, Samburu, Turkana, Burji, Dasanetch, Wata, and Somali communities. Conflict in the county has historically revolved around cattle rustling and associated revenge killings, as well as competition over water and pasture, since the majority of inhabitants are pastoralists. The county borders Ethiopia to the north, fuelling a historical competition with the Oromo over water and pasture.

As in other counties in the north-east, cattle rustling has become more deadly with the availability of guns and revenge killings have become more devastating (Pkalya *et al.*, 2003). Profiteers have also turned cattle rustling into a money-making venture as opposed to a mechanism for redistribution. Through a combination of cultural practice and a lack of livelihoods (poverty levels are estimated at 79% (FAO, 2016), youth in the community are key actors in cattle rustling and associated conflict.

Recently, conflict has become inflamed by political differences, especially since the new constitution in 2010 that led to a re-drawing of administrative boundaries. In addition, the Borana, who have historically been dominant in both political and economic spheres, were denied the majority of electoral seats in the 2013 elections. This rebalancing of power has brought with it a surge in violence, particularly between the Gabra and the Borana communities. This conflict has increasingly polarised communities (Hassan *et al.*, 2015), going as far as to affect how communities access public services such as police stations, schools, and health centres.

The discovery of oil and gas in Turkana District, neighbouring Marsabit to the west, has also fuelled conflict, particularly over land, and again especially among the Borana and the Gabra. It remains to be seen whether the Lamu Port Southern Sudan Ethiopia Transport project planned for the region will further escalate competition for power and resources.

3.3 Turkana

Box 3: Research sites visited in Turkana

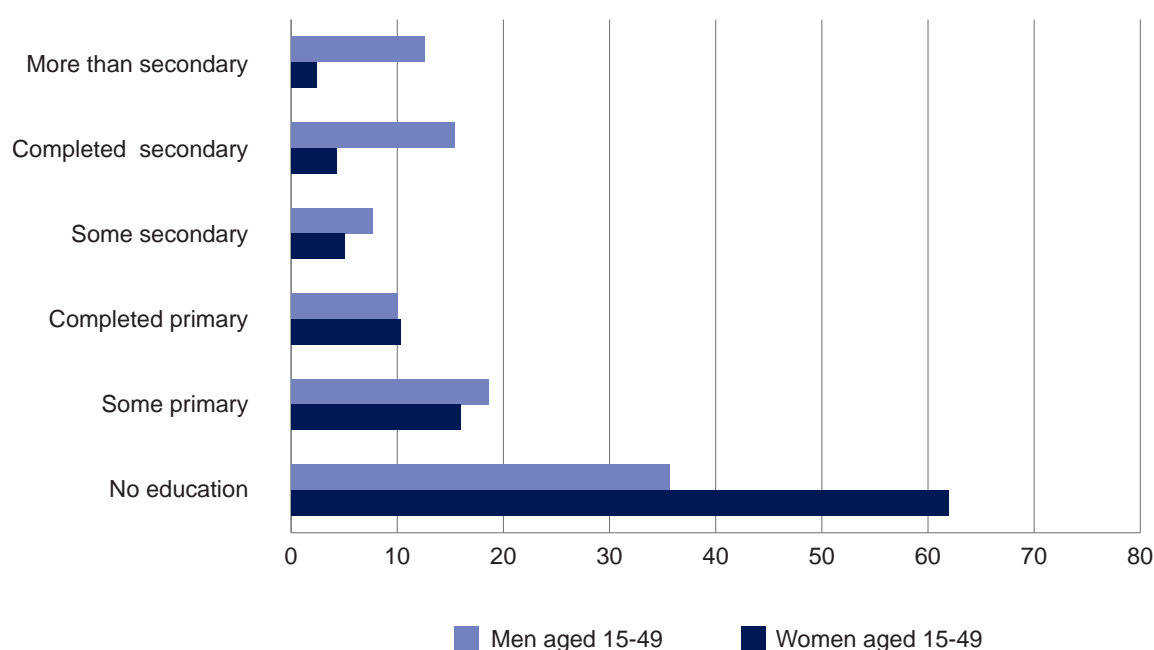
Todonyang is a remote sub-location on the northern part of Lake Turkana near the Ethiopian border. In 2011/12 there was violent conflict with the Merille over grazing land and access to the lake that resulted in forced migration. Pastoralism and fishing are the prominent livelihoods. Shops sell mostly foodstuffs but increasing their stock is perceived as a challenge due to the poor road condition from Lodwar Town. The youth population vastly outnumbers the elderly and the population of widows and orphans is high.

Kalemunyang has benefitted from irrigated agriculture projects since the mid-1980s thanks to water from River Turkwel. This has contributed to the livelihoods of both men and women. With relative proximity to Lodwar Town, the location is rural but well connected. There are two primary schools, a secondary school, and two pharmacies—one that is run and managed by Catholic mission of Lodwar Town and the other by the national government. There was no reference to active conflict in the area.

The total population for Turkana County is 854,991 and the total fertility rate is 6.9 (AFIDEP and Norad, 2015b). There are more males than females for all age cohorts and the county has a young population: children below 15 years constitute 43% of the population while youth aged 15–24 years constitute 24% (National AIDS Control Council, 2016).

Approximately 80% of the total land area of Turkana is arid or very arid (Pelto and Thuita, 2016). The temperatures range between 20°C and 38°C (mean of 30°C) while the rainfall pattern and distribution is erratic and unreliable. Rain is also distributed on an east–west gradient with more rainfall in the western parts and other areas of higher elevation. The rain falls in brief violent storms resulting in flash floods, with high surface runoff and potential evaporation rates. There are two rainfall seasons: long rains usually occur between April and July and the short rains between October and November. A total of between 52mm and 480mm falls annually with a mean of 200mm (RMF 2011). The driest months are January, February, and September.

The literacy rate in Turkana is only 24.5% (DHS, 2014). Barriers to education include the nomadic lifestyle of the Turkana community, high illiteracy levels among adults, chronic poverty, recurrent droughts, and a lack of awareness of the value of education among parents (Save the Children, 2016). Statistics from the Ministry of Education from 2009 indicate that 81% of children in Turkana who should have been undergoing early childhood development education were not enrolled in school (Serem, 2013). Girls are more at risk of dropping out from school; for example, 12% of primary school girls transition to secondary school compared to 18% of boys (AFIDEP and Norad, 2015b). Figure 4 displays data about access to education, which illustrates the gender divide.

Figure 4: Percentage distribution of women and men by highest level of schooling attended or completed

Source: KNBS *et al.* (2015)

Turkana has a high incidence of diseases (malaria, respiratory, and diarrhoea) and insufficient access to health facilities. The long distances to health facilities and a poor public transport system mean that rates of defaulting from treatment are high (Mayi, 2012). Outreach of programmes such as immunisation are low—the DHS reports that a total of 61.8% of children aged between 12 and 23 months have been fully vaccinated, while 3.7% have never been vaccinated (KNBS *et al.*, 2015). Severe malnutrition also affects many young children: it is as high as 37% among children under five in some areas of Turkana (Ledwith, 2011). The maternal mortality ratio is 1,594 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNFPA Kenya, 2014) and the HIV prevalence rate is 4%–5.7% for women compared to 3.4% for men, although cases are on the rise (National AIDS Control Council, 2016; Pelto and Thuita, 2016).

Security context

Conflict in Turkana has historically centred upon two key issues: cattle raids and competition over resources, primarily water and pastureland. Its geography has also contributed to insecurity; Turkana shares international borders with Uganda, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, and internal boundaries with some of the more troubled counties of Kenya's North-Eastern Region, notably Marsabit and Pokot, all of which make the county prone to the spill-over from wider conflicts. These porous borders, for example, facilitate widespread cattle rustling between the Turkana, the Toposa from South Sudan, the Pokot from Kenya and Uganda, and Merille

from Ethiopia. The lethality of such activities is further exacerbated by a proliferation of small arms.

Cultural and economic factors also contribute to causes of violence in Turkana. Wealth and status is often equated with the number of livestock one owns, and household livelihoods are intricately tied to livestock. As such, revenge attacks to replace lost animals are frequent, resulting in a continuous pattern of violence and loss of life (Pkalya *et al.*, 2003). This represents an evolution from previous practices where cattle rustling and livestock raiding were used as a means of acquiring bride wealth and for the redistribution of herds. Since the early 1980s, cattle rustling has become increasingly monetised and associated with the rise of criminal groups, which are controlled by business and political elites. Culturally, youth are encouraged to participate in cattle rustling, gaining status and opportunity to acquire wealth for marriage.

The discovery of oil and gas in the county in 2012 has created a new driver of conflict between the investors and the community, and between communities themselves, especially Turkana and neighbouring Pokot. Violence has been sparked by a host of factors, and is particularly associated with the allocation of land, jobs, and contracts. The find has also exacerbated existing cross-border intercommunal rivalries between the Turkana and the Toposa on the Kenya–South Sudan border. Underlying this rise of violent competition is the reality of limited livelihood opportunities available to the indigenous population of the county, 87% of whom are reported to live in poverty (KNBS, 2013).

3.4 Wajir

Box 4: Research sites visited in Wajir

Eldas was the more urban of the two sub-locations visited. The main livelihoods include pastoralism, small-scale businesses, shops, and hotels. Young men work as motorcycle taxi drivers and as water transporters, while young women look after small livestock near the homestead and do unpaid work. There is piped water and trucks delivering water from Wajir Town, although both are prohibitively expensive for most residents. There is social assistance including food relief from the Office of the President. There has been no recent insecurity.

In **Hungai** the vast majority of people practice pastoralism. Drought is felt to be particularly harsh and livestock is often sold to pay for foodstuffs and school fees. Drought and tension over access to land are often the main driving forces behind conflict. Hungai is near the porous Somali border, and locals are anxious that they will be mistaken for Al-Shabaab militants. Local people are frustrated over the security checks that they receive when travelling elsewhere in Kenya, which has led some to question their Kenyan identity.

The total population of Wajir is 726,697, comprising 399,352 men and 327,345 women (MoH, 2015b). Approximately half of the population is below 15 years old and the total fertility rate is 8. The adolescent birth rate is also high: more than one in every 10 babies is born to an adolescent girl aged 15 to 19 (AFIDEP *et al.*, 2017). The population is expanding and the latest figures suggest that the annual growth rate of the county is 3.7%. The population density is 12 people/km², with the highest concentration of people in Wajir Town (Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA), 2017).

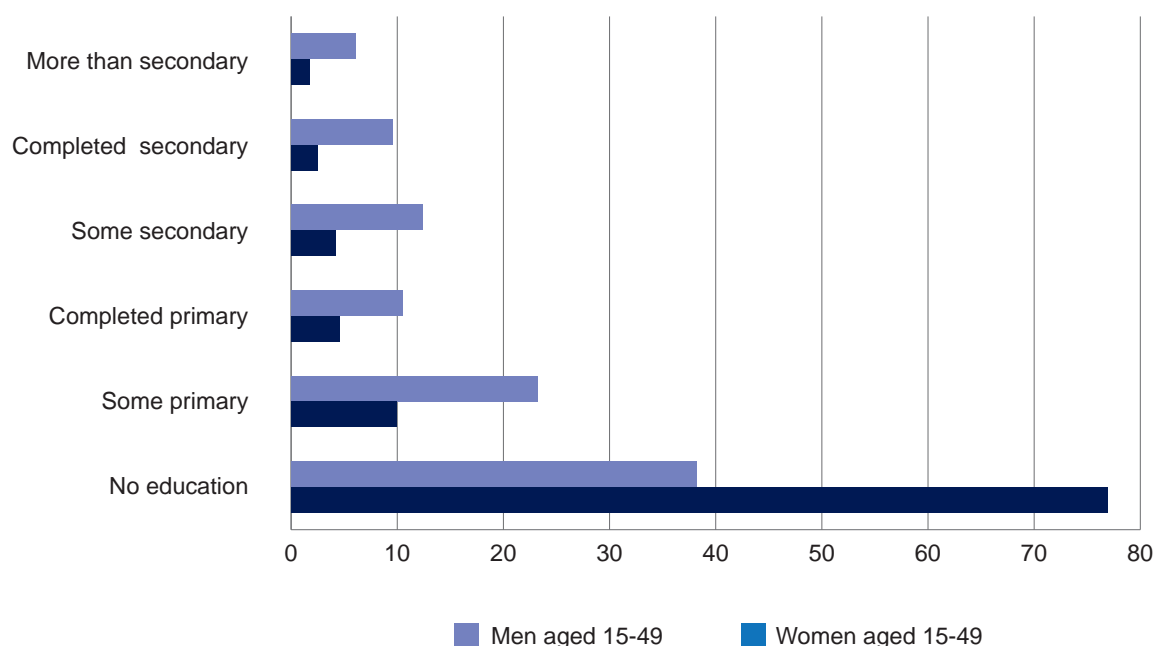
Wajir County is a semi-arid area that receives between 200 and 700mm of rain annually, with an average of 240mm per year. There are two rainy seasons: the short rains are experienced between October to December and the long rains from March to May each year. However, rainfall is erratic making it unfavourable for vegetation growth. The average temperature is 27.9°C, although the warmest months are February and March (with an average of 36°C) and the coolest months are June, July, August, and September (with an average low of 21°C) (Kenya Vision, 2013). The county experiences an annual relative humidity of 61.8%, which ranges from 56% in February to 68% in June (Oxfam, 2016).

The literacy rate is 20.7% for women and 64.7% for men. At the primary level the teacher–pupil ratio is 1:66 and at the secondary level it is 1:22, indicating a shortfall of teachers especially at the primary level (Kenya Vision, 2030). Nomadic communities are particularly hard to

reach; inhibiting factors affecting the participation of nomads in formal education include the location of schools, poor facilities, poor transport, parents not valuing education, and poverty (Abdi, 2010). A lack of girls' secondary schools and school fees are reasons behind the low transition rate to secondary schools for girls (KIRA, 2014). Transition to tertiary education is only open to those who can afford to attend a private university and all four government-run polytechnics are not operating due to low student numbers. Figure 5 illustrates the current situation with regards to educational access.

The maternal mortality ratio is 1,683 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNFPA Kenya, 2014). Child death rates mirror the national trend, although the neonatal death rate is slightly higher and the infant and under-five death rates are slightly lower (AFIDEP *et al.*, 2017). A total of 95.9% of the population has to cover more than 5km to access a health facility and only 4.1% access a health facility within less than 1km (Private Sector Health Partnership (PSHP), 2016). There is also a shortage of health workers; for example, the doctor-to-population ratio is 1:356,340 (CRA, 2017). Some of the main illnesses in Wajir are malaria, urinary tract infections, diarrhoea, and malnutrition (CRA, 2017). The HIV prevalence rate is 0.9%, which is lower than the national rate of 6.7% (Kenya Vision, 2030). A total of 49.5% of children aged between 12 and 23 months are fully vaccinated and 6.6% of children have not received any vaccinations (DHS, 2014).

Figure 5: Percentage distribution of women and men by highest level of schooling attended or completed



Source: KNBS *et. al.* (2015)

Security context

Conflict in Wajir is driven by several factors that serve to reinforce each other. Competition over scarce resources (particularly land, water, and pasture) has been exacerbated by recurrent and prolonged drought in the county, and by disputes between the three resident clans – Degodia, Ajuraan, and Ogaden – that can sometimes turn violent.

Wajir County borders both Somalia and Ethiopia, and weak border controls (particularly with Somalia) mean that the flow of illicit arms into the county is largely unchecked. The availability of weapons is a key contributor to the intensity of conflicts and to the endemic violent banditry affecting the region. The kinship ties of the Degodia and Ogaden clans with Mandera and Garissa counties, and across the borders into Somalia and Ethiopia, have also increased the vulnerability of the county to spill-over conflicts from elsewhere (Chome, 2016).

The lack of livelihood options also remains an underlying factor. It is estimated that as much as 84% of the population lives in absolute poverty (KNBS, 2013), and the historical custom of cattle raiding is increasingly exploited by criminal, business, and political groups. Another fault line remains the deeply entrenched perception of marginalisation felt by resident communities in regard to national politics, as well as exclusionary political practices that do favour the elite. These issues are further inflamed by ongoing competition for political supremacy between the clans, intensified by devolution, as well as related disputes over the county's administrative boundaries.



4 Youth identity and forms of association

This section sets out the key facets of youth identity, starting with the official definition of a youth according to the Kenyan constitution and other key policy documents.

These definitions are then nuanced by a consideration of how the youth define themselves, as well as a discussion of the social expectations that surround youthhood. We then explore the notions of youth identity and belonging, highlighting the different perspectives within specific social groups.

4.1 Who are the youth?

The concept of youth is much debated in the international literature. Some favour biological markers, often defining youth as the period between puberty and parenthood, while others focus more on cultural markers, such as a distinct social status with specific roles and relationships.

In Kenya, as in other areas of Africa, youthhood is conceived as ending relatively late (age 30–35) compared to other parts of the world.⁷ Formal definitions of youth vary in Kenya, however. The National Constitution (2010) and National Youth Council Act (2009) define youths as being between the ages of 18 and 34, while the Kenya National Youth Policy (2006) refers to youths as being aged 15–30.

In the sampled communities, most respondents defined youth as the period between childhood and old age (approximately age 15 to 35), and its features were described in relation to these other life phases. Across the counties a youth was defined as a person in their prime, having greater maturity and independence than a child and more physical strength than the older generation of their parents. Energy was commonly described as the defining feature of youthhood, which confers a responsibility to meet the basic needs of their parents and children by taking on the burden of physical work. In contrast, the elderly were described as being responsible for guiding the youth and for making

decisions. An elder in Turkana explained this common notion of youthhood:

Youths have energy. They are supposed to ensure that their families are getting good care, by providing their basic needs, like bringing food, shelter, and clothing, and for the girls bringing water, cooking, and taking care of the house. The community expect them to work, to tend the cattle, and bring money home to take care of their parents and children. The parents are old. They don't have the energy to go look for work to earn a living, so their role now is to guide the youth. Most decisions are made by the elderly people. (Chief, age 42, Todonyang, Turkana)

4.1.1 The transition from childhood: becoming a youth

In some areas, the transition to adulthood is symbolised by ceremonies or rituals, such as circumcision, piercing girl's ears (Marsabit), or removing teeth (Turkana). Such events, and particularly male circumcision, were described as promoting change and responsibility. Yet some youth indicated that the prevalence of such practices, or their importance as markers of maturity, has started to wane.⁸ Many respondents (both young and old) alternatively explained that adulthood is not marked by a particular age or event but rather by personal behaviour. A person is recognised as an adult / youth when they show responsibility and maturity – such as undertaking tasks without being asked, being trustworthy, having a neat appearance, and the ability to reason and make decisions. For males, maturity is also demonstrated by seeking work and bringing food to the family, while girls are seen to express 'shyness' and to

⁷ In a global analysis of youth and violence, USAID identifies that youth are generally conceived as 'having reached the stage in life where they are physically capable of assuming adult roles (i.e., have passed puberty) but would generally not be expected to make decisions or provide support for others... usually age 15 to 24' (USAID 2015: 3).

⁸ For example, it was widely reported that female circumcision is now uncommon in Marsabit and Turkana (while it remains prevalent in Wajir and Mandera). Males are now circumcised in early adolescence in Wajir and some Marsabit communities. These changes were attributed to NGO sensitisation and government prohibition of female circumcision.



take greater responsibility in the home. As this suggests, youthhood is widely seen as an end to dependency and as the start of contributing to the household rather than solely drawing from it.

Once they have shown their maturity, young people are considered to be ready for marriage and to bear children. These milestones bring greater status to youth. This is particularly the case for men, for whom marriage is widely associated with knowledge. As one young man in Marsabit explained, *‘when you are married, you are respected for your knowledge, so the parents start to involve you in decisions’*. In recent times, however, attaining a level of formal education also enables male youth to participate in decision making, at both family and community levels. Our research revealed a clear sense that education has become a new driver of status that divides male youth. While marriage brings status for females, young women also spoke of marriage as ‘the end to ambition’, particularly when it was associated with dropping out of school.

Across the counties, men are expected to accumulate a certain level of wealth before getting married (excepting cases of unplanned pregnancy). There were some reports of male youth marrying later in recent times, due to drought and other challenges limiting their income-generating opportunities. Some young men expressed frustration with the difficulties of achieving this important milestone. A young male in Wajir explained:

A rich man can accumulate money to get a wife, while a poor man can only pray because he has nothing. We have completed school and feel like surviving on our own and having a family, but we don't have that capability.

4.1.2 Social expectations that define youth

As highlighted above, youthhood was widely defined in terms of energy and associated responsibilities to meet

basic household needs. While this idea was commonly expressed (by all age groups), there was also a strong sense that youth are increasingly unable to live up to the ideal of looking after their parents due to the challenges they face in the economic realm (see Section 5). Generally, the older generation did not reproach youth for this failure to meet expectations but instead empathised, lamented the challenges, and in some cases even turned the responsibility onto themselves. For example, an older woman in Marsabit said:

Parents feel a lot of pressure: their sons can marry and get old without getting jobs and the parents can't help as we are supposed to, like helping them to start a business.

Yet some older people did lay blame on the youth, particularly those who had fallen into drug or alcohol abuse. An older woman in Turkana referred to the pain of *‘seeing our children make themselves useless on drugs. They drop out of school, lose their job, and so we parents have to struggle in old age’*.

There are also strong expectations on youth to contribute to community welfare. Across the counties, male youth are responsible for constructing dams, digging graves, and fencing compounds, while females are expected to cook for ceremonies and to clean community spaces. Many elders expect youth to lead productive lives, avoid vices, embrace education, and seek jobs that bring wealth to the family and community. Non-compliance with such expectations was reported to bring sanctions from elders such as fines of goats or money, or being cursed and called names. However, it was felt that in recent years such sanctions had reduced in prevalence due to the hardship brought by the drought. In some communities, particularly in Turkana, there was therefore a perception that elders had lost some control over the youth in recent years.

4.2 Youth identity and associational life

When we asked youth how they self-identify and what categories of identification are important to them, we found that young males and females associate quite strongly with ‘youth’ itself as an identity. They explained that their daily lives are quite separate to older people, in terms of their work, social lives, and associations. In each of the communities, male youth are also increasingly self-organising both to support each other economically and to engage in the political domain (see Section 6 below). All of the sampled communities had various ‘youth organisations’, some of which are oriented toward debate on youth and community issues, while others are linked to the church, Islamic learning, or sports. These groups are often open to both males and females, although men predominate and tend to provide leadership. Such organisations are a potentially productive form of social integration for youth.

Alongside this, we also found that some people’s identification as youth is shaped by an undercurrent of opposition between young people and elders in some communities. In Turkana, for example, some male youth depicted a growing divide between themselves and elders, which they felt has been fuelled by ‘elders looking down on us for our social lives and rising up about problems’. Elders also pointed to these two dynamics, with some speaking of male youths as a problematic group – referencing those who associate around their sense of disaffection.

As shown in Figure 6, while there were strong similarities in the identities that are significant to males and females, there were differences in their relative importance. As discussed below, these differences are the result of gendered norms and their effect on associational life.

Figure 6: Key identities and forms of association for youth⁹



⁹ Figure 6 was generated through an NVivo word frequency count, on data coded as ‘most important identity for youth’. The size of the text is relative to the frequency of that word in the data.

4.2.1 Male youth identities and associational life

Religion is a key identity for most young men, which is reinforced through perceived difference to other faiths and a unity formed around shared beliefs. Both Muslim and Christian males spoke of their distinct dress, greetings, and beliefs, mentioning how collective worship and learning are key sites for association and friendship. Some elders in Mandera and Wajir expressed their fear that male youth unemployment and frustration would lead to radicalisation (joining Al-Shabaab), which is a source of intense stress for some parents. Yet extremist forms of religious association were rarely mentioned by male youth themselves.

In most of the communities, male youth spoke at length about conflicts with other tribes or clans, which were usually incited by struggles over scarce sources or tensions over political affiliation. In these discussions, other ethnic groups were often referred to as ‘enemies’, and there was a clear lack of trust in ‘the other’ alongside internal unity created through the experience of defending their own group. As one young man in Gorumuda (Marsabit) explained: *‘The clashes have made people fear and distrust each other. The fear creates grudges among people’*.

Many elders reported that peacebuilding interventions have reduced the tensions in recent times, but some youth felt strongly that such processes do not address the underlying causes. Belonging was also expressed in terms of ethnicity, including a common language, clothing, and tribal marks, as well as the importance of knowing one’s clan to ensure that one does not marry within it.

While tribe and clan often came to the fore when talking about relations with other communities, many male youth spoke more about socioeconomic and neighbourhood identities when asked about what brings them together in associational life. Some young men went further to assert that ethnicity and clan do not have large significance in their daily lives, because (for them) they are not a source of economic support. This was particularly common in areas that had not experienced recent conflict, such as Kalemunyang (Turkana) and Eldas (Wajir). As one young man in Todonyang (Turkana) explained:

Clans will never help you in any way of life. You can mingle with others who are not of your clan and get helped, like a group of farmers who really help me due to the income I get from it. It has eased the hunger that has been making our lives miserable.

In this regard, cultural-religious and socioeconomic identifications are quite different forms of association,

which come to the fore at different times. Some referred to their experience of schooling with youth from other ethnicities as a catalyst for ethnic integration: *‘We are classmates, neighbours, we trained together; that is how we identify ourselves. We do not socialise based on clan, but rather other social factors’* (male youth, Eldas, Wajir).

Across the counties, livelihood and business networks were emphasised as a key source of identification among male youth. The importance of such networks was related to their daily experience of support among youth with the same livelihood, who work side-by-side and assist each other (see Figure 6). For some, these networks are formalised into livelihood support groups, which are widely seen as important because they may help to strengthen their businesses. A young man in Kalemunyang (Turkana) explained:

The youth identify themselves through the businesses they do. There is nothing else that can identify them. Farming groups bring belonging because of the meetings they have, the work they do together; they support each other. It does not take long for them to be considered as one.

As this suggests, there was a strong sense that male youth are increasingly self-organising and forging networks to strengthen their livelihoods and to overcome challenges.

For many young men, mutual support forged through common livelihoods had often shaped their closest friendships. Males also forge such everyday social networks through their neighbourhoods, school, membership of football clubs, and socialising in community spaces. Compared to young women, many male youth have an expansive social life. Despite this, young men tend to have just a few close friends whom they really trust and rely on. Across the counties, these close friendships were emphasised in discussion of support networks, much more so than family or other forms of association. Close male friends provide various forms of support to each other, including sharing livelihood resources (boats, nets, boda-boda, etc.) and providing loans, advice, and moral support. We commonly heard about young men clubbing together to assist a close friend in dire need, such as those needing medical care. Many others had assisted their friends with the funds required for marriage or schooling.

Male youth frequently referred to their leisure activities as a result of boredom and a lack of livelihood opportunities. Some young men associate through regular use of drugs or alcohol, and some non-users referred to them as a ‘tribe’ – with similar behaviours, low life prospects, and likely to pressure others to

engage. As this suggests, such vices are also a source of divergence in society, with frequent reference to drugs causing school drop-out, divorce, and tension in families. Some youth leaders, churches, and NGOs organise sports and cinema events to bring youth together

and provide alternative forms of leisure. However, entertainment halls are sometimes the sites in which male youth first encounter drugs and alcohol, and this makes them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians (see Section 6).

4.2.2 Female youth identities and associational life

Female youth have notably less leisure time than their male peers. Particularly in Islamic communities in Wajir and Mandera, most young women explained that they have no time for leisure due to the intensity of their household duties. Some young women also explained

that the drought has reduced their time to socialise, due to their long trek for water. After completing their chores they usually rest. Many young women do attend Islamic school or church, however, and they socialise with their friends and family when they can.

Box 5: Everyday associational life and support networks

'Musa' is an unmarried male of 19 years, who lives in urban Gorumuda, Marsabit. He explained that he has many friends in his neighbourhood, some of whom he met at school and some when playing football, which he does every afternoon. He makes his income through boda-boda taxi work, and explained that: *Some of my friends are also boda-boda riders and most times when they are in an accident I contribute some money so that they can be taken to hospital. There are also times when we contribute some money to our friends who are getting married, so they have successful marriage... When I am in trouble or facing some hard times they help me mostly by contributing money for what is needed*. Some of his friends use drugs and pressure him to join them, while other friends advise him to keep away from such vices. He said his own preference was to not *'get involved with those using drugs. I just go out with my friends and play football'*.

'Fatuma' is an unmarried woman of 20 years living in rural Wangaidahan, Mandera. Her mother is an HSNP beneficiary. She has five friends, who are her age-mates and mostly neighbours. She explained that, *'When am ill they help in washing clothes, taking care of the children by bathing and cooking for them, collecting water. I help them too, and I share with them food and the small amount of money I get from my mum. There is not the time to socialise, but when there are problems we come together and assist each other. And when we are helping each other we talk and share stories'*.

Like male youth, many young women have just a few close friends whom they trust and rely on. For some, these are long-held friendships from childhood or school. Yet many young women explained that since getting married and moving to a new home, they rarely have a chance to see their childhood friends. Many young women have therefore made strong bonds with their female neighbours, with whom they interact daily and who are often an important source of support (see Box 5). This includes assistance with domestic tasks, childcare, and moral support, as well as sharing resources and lending money at times of need. For this reason, neighbours are a key site of social belonging and identity for young women.

Also like young men, female youth placed strong emphasis on their friendships and social networks because of their significance for economic support. A fair number of young women are members of savings or business groups, such as milk or charcoal sellers. As with men, these are important sites of identification with others because of the support they offer.

Female youth connect strongly with their religious and ethnic identities for much the same reasons as males. Yet some young women expressed a more fractured sense of cultural identity. Some had changed religion or ethnicity to get married (sometimes due to unplanned pregnancy), and had subsequently suffered social exclusion from their childhood and family networks. As a young woman in Turbi (Marsabit) explained:

When a woman changes tribe or clan, it is similar to that of religion. The tribe you convert from will hate you. You will lose their support. If you get pregnant to a man from another religion, or outside of marriage, you are at risk of being outcast.

All women also change clan upon marriage since they cannot marry into their father's lineage. Perhaps due to this, many female youth emphasised a sense of 'family belonging' rather than clan. Some also expressed a strong sense of exclusion from their clan of birth:

When you change clan, they won't share secrets with you because you may take it to their enemies. (Female youth, Goromuda, Marsabit)

Like some males, young women in some communities directly downplayed the significance of ethnic and clan identities in preference for identification with their business and economic support networks, with whom they socialise. Again as with males, this trend was particularly notable in Kalemunyang (Turkana) and Eldas (Wajir). As a young woman in Eldas put it:

Clan is about knowing each other, but that one won't help at all if you have a problem. The savings group is the only thing that contributes to your success.

Similarly, in ethnically homogenous Kalemunyang a fair number of female youth expressed the idea that:

We identify ourselves through the business we do. The youth don't ask each other about tribe or clan; they only concentrate on their education and friendship (female youth, Kalemunyang, Turkana).



5 Economic opportunities and exclusion

Having provided an overview of how youth view themselves, this section reviews youth experience of the economic domain and the factors that enable and constrain them in regard to playing a fulfilling and valuable role in their local economies.



Youth in northern Kenya are constrained by structural economic circumstances such as high levels of unemployment and weak markets in the region. Women are particularly vulnerable to economic disadvantage, as patriarchal social norms and division of labour between men and women leave them with limited access to the most profitable economic activities, as well as little control over financial resources within their households and communities. Poorer youth also face additional hurdles in improving their economic circumstances, while youth from wealthier families are better able to create and take advantage of employment and business opportunities.

In the sampled locations, there is a clear gap between youths' economic aspirations and realities. This includes not being able to afford basic needs or potentially fruitful investments. For many young people, there are also gaps between their capabilities and what they would have the potential to do and become with more favourable opportunities. This is especially the case in regard to challenges created for educated and skilled youth seeking employment in a poor labour market. Youth have diverse views and experiences of what can be done to narrow those gaps so as to reduce their experience of economic exclusion. Our research finds that youth are the 'backbone' of most economic activities. Despite this, their experience of economic participation is not always one of being empowered or included, especially for poorer youth and women. These groups face uncertainty about their ability to reach and maintain the markers of adulthood, such as marriage and contributing to meeting their families' needs. Many youth experience inequity in opportunities, and many expressed doubt and concern about whether a more inclusive future is attainable.

5.1 Youth economic opportunities

5.1.1 Summary

Agro-pastoralism and fishing, and related activities, are the most common livelihoods for male and female youth in the sampled areas. These livelihoods predominate in the study counties and are therefore the *de facto* economic opportunities for the majority of young people. Such livelihoods do not appear to enable upward mobility for most young people. However, youth attitudes and actions reflect a desire to combine, diversify, or even change their livelihood options to improve their earnings and ability to participate in their local economies:

There are those who ride the motorbike and there are those who are bus conductors [turn-boys] and they do various types of work inside their homes. They also look after the livestock and take care of their homes, and if there are goats they take them to graze. (Older woman, Eldas, Wajir)

Both men and women described how youth use income from agro-pastoralism and fishing to engage in and augment other income-generating activities. An older man in Wangaidahan, Mandera explained that, in his community,

Mostly the youth are in town, and they don't want to go to the bush to look after animals. They want to own a boda-boda business to ride around.

A fair number of youth engage in casual work or self-employment activities. This includes casual labour on construction projects, domestic and herding work for other households, or earning money campaigning for politicians:¹⁰

We collect some building stones and also go to the forest and collect some fire wood – mostly we use the donkey cart in this process – and we sell and get money to support food and daily upkeep. (Female youth, Eldas, Wajir)
We live here by construction jobs like going and collect stones. On our side as women we go to the river and cut palm leaves, weave mats, and take them to town to sell. That's how we eat. (Female youth, Kalemunyang, Turkana)

While this work is often *ad hoc*, many young men and

women referred to such economic activities as an important source of income that enables them to provide for their households and participate more fully in the economy, sometimes saving funds as capital for small businesses:

They buy the donkey cart to work with and even it helps them to start a business that they wish for. If they save they can even buy motorbikes and work with that. (Older man, Hungai, Wajir)

Self-employment among youth serves as both an approach to improving economic inclusion in the present and, to a lesser extent, as an avenue to achieve aspirations for economic opportunities in the future. This includes a wide range of entrepreneurial activities such as motorcycle taxi services, tailoring services, working as a mechanic, making and selling mats and other crafts, selling charcoal, milk, or meat, and running small shops and kiosks. Young women are most likely to engage in activities with low financial barriers to entry and those that are compatible with their domestic responsibilities.

Some youth are engaged in more formal employment, although many explained that such opportunities are not readily available (they were rarely mentioned in Turkana County). This includes jobs in small private enterprises such as female work in salons and shops in Mandera, or young men across counties working with butchers. Some educated youth have also gained employment as office clerks, teachers, and nurses.

5.1.2 Diverse experiences of economic opportunities

There is a gendered difference in young people's economic activities and opportunities, and therefore economic inclusion. For example, in Kalemunyang, Turkana, more women participate in agriculture, while men dominate livestock-related livelihood activities. The gendered division of labour is largely shaped by cultural norms that are overwhelmingly preferential to men. Across counties, males have greater access to opportunities and assets, which may afford them economic inclusion in the future (e.g. secondary education) and allow them to take advantage of opportunities in the present (e.g. control over livestock). Even within the same sector or industry, women reported that men may work in the more lucrative areas, for example fishermen who are able to get fresh fish to market versus women who clean or dry the fish for sale, or herdsman who own large numbers of livestock versus women who sell milk.

¹⁰ We note that the frequency with which youth reported opportunities to campaign for politicians as a form of casual labour was influenced by the timing of the study, which coincided with a peak time for campaign activities ahead of the 2017 elections.

Young women's economic inclusion is hampered by the significant time they spend on (unpaid) domestic and care work (see Section 4 above). In some instances, particularly in Wajir, this is to the exclusion of work outside the home, while men are expected to provide for the family. Unpaid care work contributes to women's economic exclusion in a number of ways. First, it precludes many of them from the labour market or productive work because they simply do not have time—walking long distances for water and cooking and cleaning for the household are examples of activities that consume a large amount of women's time. Second, because it does not provide financial reward, unpaid care contributes to young women's economic exclusion by limiting the cash and assets that they could use to increase their purchasing capacity or start small businesses. Yet many young women do contribute to household income alongside their domestic work, through activities such as weaving and selling mats and baskets and the preparation of fish for sale:

Women mostly are not involved in hard labour. They do activities such as washing laundry and working as housewives, while other men do livestock business where they buy products from farmers and take them to market. (Village elder, Goromuda, Marsabit)

Normally it's the men who go for fishing. The ladies go and carry the catch. The lady normally is responsible for making sure the family gets fed. If there's any catch, she brings the catch and sells it. Men go early in the morning and during the evening, so they're not at home. The catch comes and the women must sell it, and they must also take care of the children... Here you find we have got a community where the role of the woman is seen negatively. They don't see any role [for women]. Women are given very little role. Their role is to produce children, construct fences, and look after the animals at home. Even when the husband brings this catch he has to instruct her. He might give her KES 200 to take care of the whole family. (Teacher, Todonyang, Turkana)

Wealthier youth are better able to take advantage of opportunities to increase their economic inclusion. This is sometimes because they are better connected, have more social capital, and larger networks to draw opportunities from. They are also more likely to have attended and completed their education, which makes them better placed to take advantage of job opportunities that arise. Wealthy young people are also perceived as more resilient because they have more

cash and assets. In contrast, poorer youth often need to revert to less profitable activities or negative coping strategies during times of hardship, which may make them even less able to take advantage of economic opportunities. Wealthy youth also tend to have better access to opportunities with higher returns, those that are more sustainable, or part of the formal sector (e.g. government jobs). Opportunities available to the poor tend to be informal and less lucrative (e.g. casual labour and domestic work):

I come from a family with a poor background and I have noticed that the rich children, most of them are taken to school and definitely get employed... They get employed due to their family wealth status, while the poor struggle to pay school fees and still face it rough in looking for jobs. [Rich children's] parents pay for their slots in most employment entries, even when they perform poorly in school. (Older woman, Wangaidaha, Mandera)

5.1.3 Youth collaboration in the economic domain

To address the challenges they face and improve their economic situation, youth seem to be pulling together using social networks. They are forming groups based on shared livelihood activities to pool their resources and improve their engagement in the economic domain. Across counties, young people (particularly young men) reported forming groups with others who participate in the same livelihood activities. These groups include, for example, groups of boda-boda drivers, people working in quarries, and those who sell milk. We observed the groups functioning in a number of different ways. In one arrangement, members combine funds from incoming profits on a regular basis. When the pooled funds reach a sufficiently large amount, they are then used to invest in a productive asset for communal use. For example, a young man in Mandera described how he and others working in a quarry had jointly saved for and then purchased a vehicle that they now use to haul stones; they no longer have to pay the cost of hiring a vehicle, which was reducing the profitability of their work. In such arrangements, youth also pool resources to make large, wholesale purchases of materials or goods for sale, such as milk from a central supplier. In a second arrangement, some livelihood groups collect money from members over a period of time and then divide the pool evenly between members at the end of that period. In another arrangement, youth livelihood groups operate in a merry-go-round model. Members pay in on a regular (usually weekly) basis, and the full amount is given to an individual and can be used at that person's discretion. Finally, there is evidence that youth are also able to use these groups as a means of accessing small amounts of credit.

Beyond cash financing, these groups also provide youth with opportunities to discuss livelihood diversification and how to access credit, using shared funds to take on new projects such as poultry keeping in order to give youth alternative income sources. The groups engage in these types of activities particularly in times of drought, and they are an important part of how youth become aware of and engage in new economic opportunities. Importantly, membership in such groups enhances young people's access to government-sponsored funds to support youth entrepreneurship:

Whenever there is drought or water shortages, they [the group that sell water] work on ways to improve their income and maybe shift to other businesses like shops or selling cloth. (Older man, Elwak, Mandera)

Young women are also active in women's savings groups. Many described the savings groups as the most significant group they belong to. Most of these groups operate using a merry-go-round approach, with women contributing approximately KES 50–100 each week. Women reported using funds from this source to invest in their small business, but also to pay school fees and make bulk food purchases.

Formal and informal savings groups and informal reciprocal arrangements based on existing social ties between youths provide financial inclusion and the opportunity for wider economic participation, particularly among young women. Youth are able to combat some of the drivers of economic exclusion (discussed below) and attain greater inclusion by joining their resources with other young people. For example, across counties, young men and women pool their money to hire vehicles to haul goods or transport livestock and invest in productive assets/equipment, which can be used in joint business ventures. By sharing the start-up and running costs of small businesses, individuals are able to maximise their profit and income, circumvent some of the financial and social barriers to inclusion that disproportionately affect poorer youth, and access more economic opportunities:

Youth have formed groups which have different activities. Even though they still require financial assistance, these groups have helped them a lot. They are able to build their own houses, others have been able to get married, and the rest have been able to start their own business like a boda-boda business. (Chief, Goromuda, Marsabit)

A certain group, for example of the same age, comes together to discuss how

to help their age member who has just completed his high school education and is unable to continue with school due to financial crisis. They contribute some cash to facilitate the guy going to school. (Male youth, Kalemunyang, Turkana)

The benefits of such arrangements may not be immediate to those offering support. However, they contribute in the hope that when they have an upcoming significant expense or investment, their network of family and friends will be in a position to pool their resources and help them.

5.1.4 Weak link between education and economic opportunities

Youth widely perceive education as an important enabler for economic inclusion but, even for educated youth, there are limited paid employment opportunities in the study areas. The importance of education for economic inclusion was particularly emphasised by male youth, especially in Wajir and Turkana counties:

I have finished my primary level. Right now I am in high school, form three. I now know the importance of education. Those who are educated in the society, I see them succeeding in their life. If I will also continue with my education, I will also get benefits from it. It has really opened a way for me. (Female youth, Goromuda, Marsabit)

The lack of opportunities facing school leavers in the study counties reflects structural labour market dynamics in Kenya, leaving many 'just idling around' as described by a female beneficiary in Wajir County. The Kenya Labour Market Information System (KLMIS) reports that, nationwide, among youth in the age range of this study, the number of unemployed has increased, rising from 6,265,124 in 2011 (when employed youth outnumbered unemployed youth by nearly 2 million) to 11,356,317 in 2016 (with the unemployed outnumbering the employed). During this same period, the national youth employment absorption rate (the ratio between actual employment growth and the target rate) for both young men and women has decreased from 56.1% to 48%, and underemployment has increased by nearly 9%. As there are relatively fewer opportunities in the northern counties for what KLMIS labels the 'hot occupations' in the Kenyan labour market (numerical clerks, government administrators, and senior officials of special interest organisations), access to education remains an uncertain pathway to employment for youth in the region who lack political connections or the finances to make facilitation payments to key employment gatekeepers:



Most of [the youth here] have finished their education, but they can't find a job so they start to use drugs and become useless. But those whose families have money will buy jobs by bribing. (Male beneficiary, Turbi, Marsabit)

The ones that got qualifications, they are not given priorities in case there is a job opportunity. They fill the space with the ones from good backgrounds and those from other places like Nairobi. (Female youth, Elwak, Mandera)

There are no job opportunities, even for the educated ones. I really do not know whether there are no vacancies or they are being denied employment. Even the educated ones come back here and do casual labour, which really affects them psychologically. That is the main challenge: they do not get access to government offices. (Community health worker, Turbi, Marsabit)

Those who finish school come back to the village because they don't have a job. The government doesn't provide jobs to these people, even though they have completed their studies. (Older male, Kalemunyang, Turkana)

5.1.5 Change in youth economic opportunities

In general, youth livelihoods and sources of income have not significantly changed in recent years. However, there are a few exceptions to this situation, including the notable increase in boda-boda work in Marsabit. Some respondents also reported an increase in formal employment opportunities for educated youth. This was partly related to the process of devolution, which has led to the creation of additional professional jobs in newly constructed schools, hospitals, and administrative offices. As a result, some youth have gained work as office clerks, teachers, and nurses.

5.2 Drivers and youth experience of economic exclusion

Here we discuss the barriers to youth participation in the economic life of their communities and counties more generally, and the ways that these barriers distance them from the economy. We also explore how economic exclusion affects quality of life and social cohesion.

Figure 7: Drivers of economic exclusion in the four study counties



5.2.1 Environmental challenges

Drought and water shortages were the most frequently mentioned factors that drive economic exclusion among youth, as depicted by Figure 7 above. While drought affects the entire community, youth often reported that it affects them disproportionately. Youth express feeling particularly stressed by the consequences of drought because they are expected to be the main providers for their families and to support needs within the community with cash, time, and in-kind contributions. During times of scarcity, then, youth clearly experience extra pressure.

Drought affects the economic opportunities available to both male and female youth. Young men who depend on livestock face depleted herds, while women's domestic work is made more difficult as they spend more time looking for water to cook and clean and less time participating in income-generating work. The poorest and those in remote areas are most affected. Yet even those youth who are relatively better off, or who have diversified their livelihoods, face struggles due to drought; for example, closing shops and businesses as a result of diminished demand from their customers. As an older woman in Marsabit described:

Some youth own animals like goats that die during drought. For the youth who have shops, their customers don't buy many commodities during drought because their animals have died. Those with shops again, their customers borrow some commodities and don't have money to repay the debts.

5.2.2 Lack of paid employment opportunities

Both male and female youth spoke of a lack of paid employment opportunities. This was mentioned across the counties, but especially in Turkana. Many reported that there are either no jobs available in their communities or that those that are available are insecure. As mentioned above, formal education may make a young person more employable but there are often no jobs available to those leaving school. This lack of work disproportionately affects youth, as they are the ones looking for paid employment, especially males:

There is a lack of employment. Both men and women are at home doing nothing. (Female youth, Elwak, Mandera)

The youth here have a lot of problems. One of them is that of unemployment, and that is the biggest challenge here. (Older male, Eldas, Wajir)

5.2.3 Lack of access to capital

A lack of capital and resources to start or strengthen businesses was another widely noted constraint for youth. This challenge was particularly mentioned by young men, in all counties except Wajir, and relates to weak access to both formal and informal support. Older respondents (such as chiefs, elders, county officials, community leaders, and religious leaders) were particularly vocal on this issue, and were more likely than young people to refer to a lack of access to capital as a major driver of youth economic exclusion. While female youth were much less likely to refer to this challenge, the statement below echoes a sentiment heard across the study sites:

To start a business you need capital and there is no one that can give that kind of opportunity, because no one here has that kind of money. (Female youth, Hungai, Wajir)

Poorer youth were perceived to be especially disadvantaged in regard to access to capital, as wealthier people have less need for externally sourced start-up capital. By leveraging their wealth to obtain more valuable lines of credit, they are able to make bulk purchases for more profitable wholesale activities or purchase more productive assets. Some youth made reference to the government Youth Enterprise Development Fund. The Fund is operated by the Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Youth Affairs and aims to support youth entrepreneurship. While some young people have reportedly been able to start businesses, however, many respondents reported that funding has not been widely distributed and has sometimes been difficult to access, especially for youth who lack political connections.

5.2.4 Lack of access to education

Exclusion from education increases youths' sense that they are constrained in their ability to improve their condition and participate more fully in their local economies. As discussed in Section 3, across counties there are various contextual reasons that constrain youths' access to education. Not being able to stay in school because of unaffordable school fees (both in the past and in the present) was mentioned widely. Among youth that reported having left school early, many reported that they might have had better economic opportunities or status now had they stayed in school. At the same time, it was also reported that broader economic conditions meant that even educated youth had few choices and opportunities open to them.

Educational bursaries and scholarships were central to discussion on access to education. Youth and older people are generally aware that bursaries are available, but perceive that they are not widely accessible or sufficient for the growing number of youth seeking to further their education. Some respondents felt that administrative and bureaucratic problems affect the availability of bursaries. As a female indirect beneficiary in Goromuda, Marsabit explained:

The [Constituency Development Fund] at times we get, at other times we don't. That's how it goes. It only caters for one person and it is only one term in a year. There is also a scholarship, though I have never had it. But it is there, and it has helped a few people.

Despite the challenges with accessing educational support, many respondents did report that these funds were helping some youth to attend school and for longer than would otherwise have been possible.

5.5.5 Conflict and insecurity

Conflict and insecurity are part of the contextual backdrop in the study locations but only appeared to significantly affect youth economic inclusion in two counties: Todonyang sub-location in Turkana and, to a much lesser extent, in both the sampled locations in Marsabit. Conflict contributes to economic exclusion in a number of ways and damages both present and future economic opportunities. It was described as 'paralysing' people's way of life. This is most often because it causes communities to be separated from their main source of livelihood and from their productive assets. Both youth and older people frequently described how conflict has separated them from their herds, arable land, and shoreline and boats for fishing. In both affected counties, respondents shared their experience (or risk) of a notable decrease in productive activities when conflicts are ongoing:

[Conflict] affects every aspect of their livelihood... Loss of lives, destruction of property, education due to closure of schools. Mostly those who are affected are women and children. (Chief, Marsabit)

Yes, conflict does affect the way people access their jobs because even in the lake, where fishermen get a chance to get cash, work is prevented by the frequent killings along the shores. The killers even confiscate their fishing nets. (Older female, Todonyang, Turkana)

5.3 Youth response to economic exclusion

In general, young people are coping with economic exclusion by working harder, leaning on their social networks, and looking for new ways to earn money. These are positive, socially beneficial responses to the severe pressure to provide for their families and communities in circumstances that leave them with limited income, side-lined from opportunities, or unable to turn their hard work into improved options. However, in some cases this economic exclusion has led youth to steal from neighbours or to use drugs and abuse alcohol. It has also made youth (especially males) susceptible to mobilisation by political actors (see Section 6). Livelihood diversification is another youth response to economic exclusion. However, as discussed above, these diversification efforts are constrained by limited available options. In response, some youth (particularly males) migrate in search of economic opportunities, such as better pasture or jobs. This was most frequently mentioned in Wajir.

Government and NGO aid (food and trucked water) were widely mentioned as key coping mechanisms, particularly in Turkana and Wajir. A few youth also referred to participation in public works opportunities, such as a 'Food for assets' programme in Turkana. However, many respondents explained that the food aid is not sufficient to meet needs and hunger remains a problem. In such situations, struggles for food security lead many young people to prioritise particular kinds of economic opportunities (e.g. low-risk, low-return, and immediate-reward opportunities such as casual labour). In Wajir and Mandera, some respondents also explained that a reliance on trucked water has reduced young people's economic options. Initially, the local government provides water to the community but when this is depleted, private suppliers sell water (at KES 100 per jerry can in Mandera). Several respondents reported that they then have less money to buy food and milk. Vendors of those goods also begin to suffer, as their customers spend their scarce funds on water instead.



6 Political opportunities and exclusion

This section looks at youth's political exclusion and opportunities in the four counties. It starts with a description of political decision-making structures across the research sites, highlighting youth perceptions of responsiveness and effectiveness.

It also looks at the sources of political opportunities available for youth, through community decision making, leadership, and improved relationships between the youth and political elites. It then turns to the sources of political exclusion, which are related to traditional hierarchies around age, gender, and levels of poverty. Finally, it looks at youth response to political exclusion.

6.1 Community governance structures

Community decision-making structures comprise largely the Council of Elders, Chief and, more informally, youth groups. In general, the chief is tasked with implementing government policies and security, the Council of Elders resolves community disputes, and youth organisations mobilise young people to take up community volunteer projects such as digging burial grounds and represent the interests of youth within structures such as the Council of Elders and the Chief. For young people these structures are generally seen as legitimate because they are longstanding, but they are not always seen as responsive to their needs. Most communities also have a set of committees that vary across the counties but that generally have quite broad representation of the community. Many young people explained that they elect a youth representative for each of these.

The Council of Elders is generally seen as the most important group, although perceptions of their effectiveness varied considerably both within and

between counties and depending on age, gender, and location. There were several complaints at our research site in Mandera that the chief is 'just there by name' and in Marsabit one was only contacted when official documents were needed such as birth certificates, with allegations of corruption during this process. A female indirect beneficiary in Goromuda, Marsabit reported that she is afraid to talk to the chief as it would seem like she is quarrelling and she does not want to incite tribal conflict.

6.2 Sources of youth political opportunities

6.2.1 Young people as an increasingly important political force

Across the four counties, young people seem to be increasingly involved in the political sphere both at the community level and more widely, and are becoming an increasingly important political driving force. Although this engagement is sometimes superficial, and is often more likely to involve young men than young women, there are positive examples of young people of both genders being involved in local political processes and a sense of an increasing expectation that their perspectives should be heard in the political sphere. There was general consensus among all age groups that community decisions cannot be made without involving young people, although in practice this does not always seem to happen. Their involvement seems to be largely related to their level of education and their connectivity to and awareness of broader political debates, through TV and the internet for instance. As an elder in Marsabit asserts: *'the youths are now more exposed than before and enlightened on issues of politics'*. Some older generations pointed to this exposure meaning young people were more politically aware and engaged than their parents.

For elders and traditional leaders in society this is seen as important for a number of reasons. Literacy has changed the processes of community meetings, as one community leader in Turkana pointed out:

Most young people are educated and able to read and write so in every meeting we have to write down what we discuss. In previous years there was nothing like that; elders used to sit under a tree and discuss their stuff and expect everyone to follow but that is no longer done here.

Among the sampled elders and traditional leaders, there was consensus across the districts that young people's knowledge is an important addition to community decision making. Young people in Marsabit also emphasised that their involvement has helped elders to

have a better understanding of emerging issues. Many respondents from different age groups gave examples of young people being the first to ‘speak out’ about particular issues, and often being the most vocal at community meetings. In Turkana, several older beneficiaries explained that it was the young people in their community who were ‘standing up’ and the first to speak out about the perceived injustices associated with Tullow Oil’s exploration practices in the area. For young people, it has meant that they are increasingly aware of their rights as citizens and therefore more inclined to involve themselves in political discussions. As one young beneficiary in Marsabit explained, they provide more challenge to traditional decision makers:

Decisions of elders used to be strictly followed but this has changed. Also, you see women and young people attending meetings and that didn’t used to happen – they are educated and have internet access so they know so much.

Another young man in Turbi, Marsabit argued for the importance of young people being part of the discussion to ensure they are know that resources have been distributed fairly. Some young people in Turkana felt that the elders’ decision-making processes were now more transparent. Older people also feel that young people have realised their involvement in political matters, as some respondents in Turkana explained:

Because they are the ones choosing their Members of Council Assemblies MCAs, MP and even the governor and they weigh who is able to bring change in this community.

In Turkana, while young people generally felt that they were more involved in community decision-making processes, some thought this new inclusion of youth was a more pragmatic move on the part of the elders, reflecting that they have realised that young people make up a larger percentage of the community than any other group. In many cases it also relates to the fact that elders and local politicians perceive young people as being those largely responsible for unrest and violence in their communities. As one elder in Turkana pointed out, they have realised that involving young people in these decision-making structures ensures that ‘things run smoothly in the community’. Another elder from Eldas, Wajir explained that the involvement of young people in decision making in his area has prevented conflicts and brought peace.

6.2.2 Youth leadership roles and community decision making

In all four counties, respondents pointed to young men and women who were either standing for

election or who had been elected to political positions recently, explaining that this was a relatively new phenomenon. Youth groups have recently been formed in Marsabit, and the youth leader is able to advocate for youth concerns with the chief and the elders. A few respondents aspire to be politicians. In Mandera in particular young people and the male youth officer from Elwak spoke about the county youth council, which elects a male and female representative from each of the 30 wards in Mandera, with women ‘fully involved’ and given the opportunity to have their voices heard.

There were several other examples of young women being identified as having leadership roles. For instance, in Todonyang, Turkana, the Beach Management Unit has a female chairperson.

The election of youth leaders to various local committees such as the peace committee has given young people certain leadership roles. The level of responsibility that comes with these roles is minimal in a broader political sense but among their peer group these individuals have very high levels of legitimacy as a result and have galvanised popular support. As such, there is a sense of solidarity among young people involved in the political sphere. In Mandera, young people in Elwak described how elders make decisions on their own but youth leaders are fair and ‘consult widely...without discrimination’. In Todonyang, Turkana one young woman explained that, ‘the youth leaders also teach us on how to interact with each other and how to behave in front of old people’. For another, ‘youth representatives have a greater impact on the community issues, because they are the ones who can face the chiefs in order to bring the burning issue to the spot as solutions are rendered’.

There was also an increasing sense, in Turkana in particular, that youth leaders enable young people to take their own decisions: ‘Youth always solve their problems themselves and advise each other on how to live in this village’, explained one young man in Todonyang. Moreover, a young woman in Kalemunyang said that young people solving their own problems is a relatively new phenomenon: ‘they see an old man seated under a tree but instead of taking their problems to him they solve them among themselves’. Similarly, one young man in Turbi, Marsabit explained:

If the roads are in a bad state, they lead the youth in demonstration so that the roads can be repaired... They also look for contracts or projects from the county government on behalf of the youth.

6.2.3 Relationship between youth and political elites

As alluded to above, there is an increasing sense

of reciprocity between young people and elders. It is generally recognised by young and old alike that young people help to keep elders and chiefs informed about new trends and problems, and as a result elders seem more approachable to many young people than previously. As one young woman in Kalemunyang, Turkana explained:

Nowadays we relate with them very well. People, especially youths, can present their grievances and be heard.

Since better-educated young people have access to technology and are increasingly involved in the national political debate as a result, elected politicians and political candidates recognise the importance of engaging with them. As the study was conducted in the lead up to a presidential election in Kenya, it was common for young people across the four counties to be involved in community mobilisation, campaigning, and voter registration. It seems, however, that in the vast majority of cases this engagement is largely exploitative. Politicians pay young people to perform these tasks, using them to secure votes. Young people are not naïve about this situation, but rather see this process as a source of income where few others exist for them, so are proactive about taking part. In Kalemunyang, Turkana, young people explained it is those *‘who are jobless are especially the ones involved in the political campaigning and trying to influence votes’*. In Goromuda, Marsabit, young boda-boda drivers are paid to mobilise people. Indeed, many young people noted that if the candidate you support is elected then you can expect some kind of continued support; young people in Marsabit gave university scholarships as an example of this.

As alluded to above, there is an awareness of the ways in which political actors exploit the vulnerabilities of youth to mobilise them (e.g. giving money or promising jobs and in-kind gifts in exchange for support/votes) and sometimes instigate violence between groups that support different candidates or parties. As one young woman in Kalemunyang, Turkana explained, politicians *‘use youth to rig elections’* and *‘may hire youths to go round and kill’*. Older respondents from the same region also said they had heard about youth being paid to incite violence or *‘create chaos’* for certain political candidates.

6.3 Drivers of youth political exclusion

6.3.1 The generational divide

Despite a picture of growing youth involvement in political life, their role as critical decision makers remains limited and in most cases traditional hierarchies around age persist. Youth associations are generally founded for economic reasons rather than political ones, and while many young people describe their membership of youth groups that do discuss problems and political preferences, these appear to be largely informal.

Elders remain the ultimate arbiters of community decisions, and in particular are the ones called upon to resolve disputes and conflicts at household, intra- and inter-community levels. Even many young people said that they would seek advice from elders or go to chiefs in the first instance if they had a problem. A young female direct beneficiary in Turbi, Marsabit describes approaching the elders first as *‘like a rule, or law’*. In Todonyang, Turkana, one young man another respondent said, *‘whatever the elders say the youth have to follow’*.

Across our research sites, young people in Marsabit seemed to be the most marginalised from local political processes. They frequently said that only elders were involved in decision making and all the members of the peace committee in Turbi for instance were elders. Across the research sites in the county young people feel their relationship with elders and chiefs is not particularly positive, saying that the leaders are not interested in youth and their perspectives. One young man said: *‘They despise the youths. The elders think themselves to be full of knowledge and they generalise youth’s problems. One person’s mistake is generalised as everyone’s mistake’*.

In our sites in Mandera many young people follow the elders in deciding who to vote for, although not all. Those who vote against elders’ wishes are called *‘firfisa’* (destroyers) and those who vote according to elders’ wishes are termed *‘tokuma’* (uniters). In the other counties there was more individual freedom on who to vote for.

6.3.2 Women in the political sphere

Although there are some exceptions, particularly in Mandera, the political involvement of young people seems to be mostly limited to young men. Women do contribute to community forums but this is less common, and most references to women in the political sphere described them performing only traditional roles such as cooking meals for the attendees.

Some young people, in particular some women, say

they do not feel they can interact with the Council of Elders because it would be disrespectful. Their perception is that this is not necessarily only because of their age but also because of their gender. One young woman from Goromuda sub-county in Marsabit said: *'I am young, there should be some respect between us, so I can't interact with them'*. In Mandera, another young woman said:

Those are the roles of the elders. At first my age won't allow me and second I am a girl; the decision making and politics are jobs for men.

There was a general indication that young women were unhappy with these divisions but resigned to the fact that they were the norm.

In Marsabit, some young women were fearful of the consequences of speaking out about their challenges in decision-making forums and this seemed to be specifically related to their gender: *'there are some who favour others more. You don't go telling everyone of your problem. Not all will like your story'*. *'Speaking will lead to many problems'*, another explains. In some cases young women felt they should have the opportunity to be involved, but experienced exclusion. In Mandera, young women feel that village committees are not well gender balanced: *'there is a lot of gender disparity. The ladies are not really considered.'* Similarly in Marsabit, women feel that it is mostly men who participate in community planning.

When it comes to political campaigning, in Marsabit women generally make a conscious choice not to be involved; they see politics as dangerous and potentially violent. While most will cast their vote on election day, *'women try as much as possible not to attend the rallies because of the frequent fracas and rioting associated with politics and political rallies'*. Some young women in Marsabit expressed fear about aligning themselves with a politician since they felt that they could be attacked by the opposition group. One respondent in Mandera also noted, *'politics breeds hatred in the community and cuts off people's relationships with one another'*. In Turkana, some young people, mostly women, speak of the danger and violence associated with elections and cite this as a reason they do not want to be involved in politics, with some saying they will vote in secret but not share their choice with anyone or campaign.

In Wajir, women take very traditional roles such as cooking the politicians' food or dancing and singing for them. However, they are side-lined from the political processes that young men are involved with and there is no mixing of the sexes. According to the chief in Eldas, Wajir, this is a result of cultural norms around traditional gender roles.

6.3.3 Poverty

Although many young people speak positively of their involvement in community-level politics, there is a clear divide between rich and poor that plays out in a number of ways to exclude certain groups of young people from the political sphere. Across the counties, young people from poorer backgrounds and with lower levels of educational attainment are far less involved in politics and in community decision-making processes. A chief in Kalemunyang, Turkana explained that poorer, less-educated young people have much less access to information, are less aware of their rights, and often get forgotten. Poorer young people agreed that it is only well-educated young people who are involved in decision-making processes.

In Todonyang, Turkana, the exclusion of poorer young people is also seen along a rural–urban divide. Young people felt that only those from towns can stand for youth leadership positions as they are well educated. There is also a feeling that politicians do not visit rural areas to mobilise youth for the same reason. Similarly, in Eldas, Wajir, a young woman explained that traditional leaders and politicians *'believe in those who are wealthy and only accept those who are educated enough and know their rights'*. It is clear that despite the exploitative relationship between political candidates and young people, this is seen as a source of income and poorer less-educated young people feel excluded from their chance to be part of that. Some poorer young people in Elwak, Mandera expressed their frustration at not getting a share of the money that politicians give out during campaigns.

Exclusion from political processes is also exacerbated by numerous challenges associated with not having an ID card. A number of young people explained that, without one, you are not considered an adult. Across the four counties the lack of ID cards is not only a problem for young people but those in all age groups. They are crucial for securing a job, travelling around the country, and are also needed in order to vote. Indeed, several beneficiaries in Mandera explained that the cards are essential for getting HSNP money.

Since there is much bribery associated with securing an ID card, many of those from poorer backgrounds are unable to afford them (bribes were cited as being anything from KES 2,000 to 4,000), which excludes them from registering to vote. A young man from Wajir also described how without an ID card he has to bribe officials to pass checkpoints and move around the country. Those from the majority ethnic Somali regions of the north-east pointed to the fact that an ID will also confirm your identity as a Kenyan, and without one people feel a sense of marginalisation from the national political process. These sentiments were particularly acute in Wajir, where many young people said they felt

discriminated against and that the government is not supporting them. This is also an axis of gender exclusion from political processes, particularly in Turkana, where young women often do not have ID cards.

6.3.4 'Empty promises' by politicians

As previously described, the exploitative relationship between politicians and young people is highly problematic and the source of much frustration. Many respondents across the counties spoke of 'empty promises' by politicians. As one elder in Wajir explained, while young people are more involved in politics now, they are also more upset about the state of politics.

Young people know that they can get financial support from politicians during the election campaign period, but after that 'the help stops'. In Turbi, Marsabit, one young man explained that while some young people can get jobs through interactions with politicians it is only those who are related to the politicians who do. The same sentiments were shared in Mandera and in Marsabit, where people felt that politicians were increasingly corrupt in their appointments.

According to a chief from Tondonyang, Turkana:

Most of the time the promises they give to the youths are never met, maybe because of the wrong priorities, like the issue of jobs. Every politician promises youths that they will be employed but in the real sense they never get those opportunities.

Meanwhile, the chief from Gorumuda, Marsabit asserted that, 'there is a lot of poverty and lack of jobs, so the politicians know that even if they don't fulfil their promises to the youths they can always buy their way back'.

6.4 Youth responses to political exclusion

In situations where young people feel they are being excluded from political processes, the overwhelming response is frustration and anger. Young men especially are expected by the community at large to be involved in public reactions to omissions of youth from the public agenda by creating 'chaos' or 'crisis' in their community until they are heard, sometimes involving demonstrations, road blocking, and rallies where rocks are sometimes thrown that cause indiscriminate injuries. Young men in Turkana said that if the candidates they oppose are elected there will be violence: 'a lot of termination will occur my friend, suffering, bloodshed, curses and many more'. In Wajir, a chief asserted that young people who are educated but unemployed are the

most frustrated and those most likely to be involved in violence. There were also reports of youth reacting to non-recognition in community-level decision making. For example, in Mandera some youth had demonstrated their frustration by not following orders from elders and the chief, or in the extreme form by stealing livestock from elders. One young person in Turkana said:

Conflicts and fights erupt because the youth feel side-lined by the leaders of the community and feel their views and opinions are not put into serious action as their wish.

In other cases, the frustration surrounding exclusion is expressed non-violently, and sometimes even pro-actively. One group in Turkana described getting together as a group (usually those who were at school together) and discussing possible solutions. In Marsabit, several young people said that their solution was to stay quiet and 'go their way', while others said the youth response is to 'stop doing the community responsibilities as a fight back'.

In some cases these disputes are leading to an increasing generational divide in politics. Many older respondents used the term 'disrespect' when talking both about young people putting forward their perspectives in decision-making forums and about their negative responses to exclusion from decision-making processes. A young woman in Turkana said that, 'there is mistrust between [the chiefs] and the youths because they view the youths as a source of violence'. In Marsabit, a young man stated:

The challenge is that they don't understand each other. Everyone with their own ideologies. What the youths want the elders do not want and vice versa.

An older group in Todonyang, Turkana discussed a violent incident and claimed young people

... shot at us for supporting one of the elders... whom we thought will bring change for us, since when the youth are given the chance they will only help youth like them and desert us as elders.

The issue of young people expressing their frustration at exclusion violently becomes particularly problematic in contexts such as Turkana and Marsabit where young people are often seen as responsible for community security. In Turkana, young people are heavily involved in community security on an informal basis, and are often seen as community protectors. They are sent to neighbouring communities to 'find out if the enemy is



coming' and are asked to be '*vigilant in the community*'. One chief in Turkana explained that young people, and especially young men, '*are supposed to ensure that the community is protected*'. In both Turkana and Marsabit many young men are part of the Kenya Police Reservists, also known as the Home Guard. One respondent explained that this provides them with ready access to weapons. It seems there is often a difficult and uncomfortable balance between this role and their simultaneous violent expression of exclusion and frustration.

This may play a part in the fact that protest and violence are increasingly seen as a legitimate way for youth to make their demands. Young people mentioned many

examples where protesting (sometimes violently) led to their desired political outcome. For example, in Turkana a group of young people demonstrated and blocked roads until elders agreed to let them elect a youth leader. For some older members of the community, particularly in Turkana, this culture of violence as a means to achieve a political end, both through youth protest and the violence encouraged by politicians seeking votes, has '*changed the attitude of the youth*'. Some feel that this has made young people increasingly vulnerable to radicalisation and joining groups such as Al-Shabaab. For most, however, the fear and anxiety expressed by parents about the possibility of their children joining Al-Shabaab is more closely linked to unemployment and a lack of economic opportunity.

7 HSNP and youth

Having looked at the youths' perceptions of themselves as well as the different dimensions and drivers of youth opportunities and exclusion in the northern counties, this section considers how HSNP does or does not mediate these drivers.

Across all four counties a quarter of the population are aged between 18 and 34. Of the four counties, Marsabit has the highest proportion of youths, with young people accounting for nearly one-third. Meanwhile less than a third (27.9%) of named HSNP account holders are youth, with the proportion of these 'direct' youth beneficiaries highest in Mandera.

Given this low coverage among the youth, and coupled with the value of payments, we find limited impacts of the transfers across the key aspects of youth identity and dimensions of their economic and political life. Yet HSNP has a number of indirect impacts on the youth in a variety of ways. The findings show that although HSNP has not had a large influence on youth identities or associational life, those who receive the CT perceive greater expectations to succeed and contribute to family and community needs. There was no indication that this is experienced as an unfair burden, however. For some, HSNP has enabled stronger integration into social support networks. For example, some female beneficiaries have been able to contribute more to livelihood and savings groups, which has strengthened their voice in the meetings. Yet there were also some reports of the CT creating jealousy and subsequent exclusion from social support. HSNP has not had a large impact on youth roles, largely because the transfer is small and targeted at households, meaning that only a small number of youths benefit from it individually.

HSNP has had varied effects on friendships. For some, the status of being a beneficiary has enabled new friendships, due to the sharing and reciprocation it enables. Yet a few young men explained that the CT has created jealousy, and one in Todonyang, Turkana mentioned a case of exclusion from social support:

Those who get [HSNP] cannot get any help from others because they know they have that money coming. Sometimes they don't even get employment because of that.

Some female youth explained that HSNP has strengthened their membership of groups offering formal and informal financial reciprocity, since they are

more able to contribute funds. As a young woman in Goromuda (Marsabit) explained:

Nowadays they respect me like an elder. Before I was seen as a poor person and it discouraged me, but since getting the care money [HSNP] my views are heard.

The HSNP CT has not generally addressed the key drivers of economic exclusion facing youth. It has, however, proven effective as a means of smoothing household consumption and meeting basic needs during particularly difficult periods. Despite this, beneficiary households still widely reported shortfalls in meeting needs and covering household expenses; even direct HSNP beneficiaries reported selling animals to buy food (especially in Wajir County) and needing ongoing additional support from government and NGOs. Youth are also constrained in using the transfer to improve their economic participation and circumstances because of the size of the transfer.

If you receive, like, KES 5,000, everybody comes into the family to look for that money. This brings a problem to the person who gets this money because it is now over 20 people who wants to benefit from that money. (Male youth, Todonyang, Turkana)

That money is very little, and can't even support us as we make our proposals for funding. (Male youth, Elwak, Mandera)

The HSNP CT has enabled some youth recipients (and those in beneficiary households) to improve their economic situation, including by starting or strengthening small businesses. HSNP has allowed some diversification and support for such businesses, enabling people to purchase productive assets such as donkey carts that they use to increase their income. However, people are still largely doing agro-pastoralist and casual labour work. Again, the effects are limited by the frequency and size of the transfer, as well as contexts within individual recipient households:



Some people save some of the [HSNP] money they get until they have enough to start their own business... And disabled people who are not able to work can afford to buy basic needs using this money. (Female youth, Turbi, Marsabit)

In the main, there are more dominant, structural issues that deepen and reinforce youth economic exclusion that the HSNP transfer by itself cannot address. HSNP beneficiaries were not more able to access paid employment, and there were no descriptions of the transfer combating unemployment or being used to enter the formal labour market.

The transfer increases young households' sense of wellbeing, but the value is insufficient to enable beneficiary youth to experience the economic inclusion of their wealthier counterparts. Beneficiaries largely lack the political and social networks that those from wealthier backgrounds use to access jobs and other opportunities. However, like the wealthy, HSNP recipients are perceived as being more resilient against climate-related shocks than non-beneficiaries because they frequently used the transfer to increase their livestock ownership.

There remains a clear division of labour between men and women that determines their level of economic inclusion, and the HSNP transfer has had little influence over these norms. While the transfer has provided young women with some economic opportunities in the

form of savings groups and small-scale businesses, it has not influenced the ways in which gender determines roles and responsibilities regarding work outside the home. Similarly, the transfer has not addressed the role of gender in determining individual youth's access to and position within important value chains (e.g. livestock and fish production).

In general, there was little discussion of the impact of HSNP on the involvement of young people in community-level politics. That said, where it was mentioned there was a sense of pride from young people who discussed their increasing involvement in community decision-making processes. In Marsabit, a young beneficiary talked about his involvement in the HSNP committee in his community, resolving problems that may arise from the distribution of HSNP, in particular related to disabled people. He explained that he was appointed by the chief and by Care: *'there is no benefit but it usually feels good when you make sure everyone receives equally and it is shared justly'*.

There was a mixed picture as to whether HSNP has facilitated more interactions between beneficiary households and community decision makers. A young beneficiary in Marsabit felt that their perspectives were being sought more as a result of their involvement in the programme, whereas some in Turkana reflected that while some elders and chiefs were amenable to hearing their concerns, others were not interested despite their receipt of the transfer.

8 Conclusions

8.1 Summary of findings

8.1.1 Youth identity and forms of association

Youthhood is commonly associated with a responsibility to provide for children and one's parents as they get older. However, many youth are unable to live up to this expectation due to limited economic opportunities and environmental challenges, with intercommunal conflicts further exacerbating things. Parents of youth perceive the strain this situation puts on youth, and their inability to help their children start out in adult life is also a stress for them. In terms of how youth self-identify, we found that while ethnic identities tend to be emphasised in times and places of conflict, many youth placed greater emphasis on socioeconomic and neighbourhood identities when explaining what brings them together in their various forms of association.

8.1.2 Economic opportunities and challenges

There are significant structural problems with the labour markets in HSNP counties, which are at the root of many of the challenges youth face. Educated youth face particular frustration, since they have gained skills and aspirations for jobs and careers that are largely not available. Many end up taking on casual work that is sporadic and unreliable. For some, this leads to disaffection and for others even a downward spiral into drug or alcohol abuse. It also renders them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians and those that want to incite violence.

Yet youth are also self-organising in potentially fruitful ways by supporting each other to strengthen their livelihoods and provide assistance at times of need. Youth organisations are also starting to provide a site for dialogue about the challenges that affect them. Thus, despite the economic constraints they face, youth are attempting to create opportunities and increase their financial resilience by coming together in livelihoods and savings groups. While wealthier youth are better able to take advantage of opportunities to increase their economic inclusion and leverage their wealth to access loans and make investments, poorer young people are required to act collectively to improve their access to the same economic opportunities and thus create reciprocal structures to provide for each other. Membership in livelihoods and savings groups enables youth to take financial risks (e.g. starting a small business, purchasing an expensive productive asset such as a vehicle or tool, or taking on a line of credit) that would otherwise be out of reach for many. The collective approach not only spreads risk but also reward; there is widespread evidence of how paying into a 'collection pot' enables youth to increase the

productiveness and profitability of their own activities at the same time as they are supporting their peers. This said, such reward is sometimes delayed and uncertain, as merry-go-round approaches mean waiting for a pay-out and more informal arrangements between groups of friends and family do not come with a guarantee of being reimbursed.

Whether it is for immediate gain or as part of a longer-term reciprocal compensation, the ways in which youth pool their financial resources play a central role in shaping their economic options. Across the study counties, these types of activities feature prominently in how young people view their prospects for taking advantage of economic opportunities, mitigating challenges, and confirming their status as contributing adults in their families and communities. While the importance of these groups is clear, and there is evidence suggesting these activities act as a mechanism for improving economic opportunity and reward, these community-level support structures are themselves sometimes strained and in need of strengthening. Particularly difficult circumstances such as drought or price fluctuations weaken the ability of these groups to insulate young people from shocks or find opportunities to invest and diversify. During such periods, young people struggle to stretch beyond providing for their own families in order to support each other. These structures also represent young people's own efforts to respond to widespread unemployment, a broader, macroeconomic issue that demoralises young people across the study counties and leads to such problems as drug use, theft, and, in rarer cases, susceptibility to radicalisation. As such, these groups provide a limited but significant first riposte to a problem requiring multi-pronged action from actors with greater influence to create economic opportunities for youth.

8.1.3 Political opportunities and exclusion

We found a trend for greater male youth engagement in local decision-making forums. This is embodied in their changing relationship to elders, who traditionally dominate local decision making. Yet this engagement is largely limited to educated male youth, who are respected by elders for their knowledge and awareness of broader political debates. This shapes exclusion for poorer, less-educated male youth, as well as young women. Female exclusion is determined heavily by gendered norms, but also influenced by personal fears of repercussions to voicing discontent as well as the trepidation of female youth toward the violence associated with the political sphere.

Though some youth are now more engaged in local decision-making forums, they still have limited real influence over the key issues that affect their lives. The deep structural challenges in the labour market and local economy cannot be resolved at local level. Youth engagement in national politics is growing, but this remains largely limited to campaigns (and in some cases being paid to incite violence). There is awareness of the ways that political actors manipulate youth and fail to fulfil their promises. At the same time, young men without employment aspire to access this 'source of income'. Thus, while education can increase access to political participation, a more educated youth population is also a political risk when sufficient economic opportunities are not available to satisfy them (see also USAID, 2015).

The study also found that, alongside the positive forms of youth mobilisation in the economic and political spheres, some male youth do resort to violence in response to the various forms of economic and political exclusion they face. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. In some cases, youth uprising has promoted responsiveness to their grievances at the local level.

8.1.4 HSNP and youth

We found that HSNP has not had notable impact on youth, largely because relatively few youth are direct beneficiaries: only 27% of HSNP recipients are between the ages of 15 and 34. HSNP does, however, have an impact on youth in a variety of more peripheral and indirect ways. For example, HSNP places greater expectations on beneficiaries to contribute to family and community life. For some, HSNP has allowed participation in livelihood activities and for others has enabled stronger integration into social support networks. New friendship groups can be formed when HSNP enables reciprocal exchange, and although there are a few instances of reported jealousies and crowding out of support relationships, these appear to be fairly limited.

These findings suggest that HSNP by itself is unlikely to overcome the key drivers of economic and political exclusion facing youth. While other studies conducted under this evaluation have shown HSNP does impact poverty and has significant positive spill-overs on the local economy at the aggregate level, for many individual beneficiaries, including youth, there is still some evidence of distress sales in times of shock or as a result of more powerful structural forces. This occasions many to rely also on other NGO and government support. At the same time, there are also some individual instances where HSNP cash has helped youth to start, strengthen, or diversify existing livelihood activities, although such impacts are constrained by the size and frequency of the transfers. We found very few

young beneficiaries who are involved in community-level decision-making (and as such being so was a source of considerable pride for those who were involved), but in some cases these decision-making structures include HSNP committees. However, the transfers themselves are not perceived in general to have propelled young people into decision-making structures.

8.2 Implications

The four HSNP counties all face major structural challenges to their economies and labour markets. The youth, as a key productive demographic, suffer from these challenges to a significant degree because they negatively affect their ability to fulfil their expected social function, which in turn negatively impacts on their sense of self-identity, raising the potential for conflict and violence. These challenges thus contribute to and exacerbate other causes of CVE such as drought, competition for resources, and radicalisation from Al-Shabaab. HSNP by itself is not able to resolve these broader structural challenges.

However, HSNP is one policy tool that can and does contribute to improving life chances for its beneficiaries, including youth. This study has shown not only that HSNP can benefit young people indirectly in a variety of ways but also that youth are starting to self-organise. Youth groups such as livelihood groups and political engagement groups thus constitute a potential area where HSNP might increase its engagement, either through soft means, such as messaging, or by linking with other complementary interventions and services, such as livelihood support programmes. HSNP Phase 3 is considering piloting a livelihood support programme element and so it could be worth considering whether and how to target youth for this element specifically.

The HSNP MIS contains age data on a large proportion of the population and is in the process of being updated as a rolling re-registration exercise is ongoing. This provides one useful possible mechanism for reaching out to youth, and youth HSNP beneficiaries, directly. An additional means of targeting this population group would be through the youth groups themselves. Communications direct to youth either in individual HSNP households, through local administrative mechanisms such as sub-location chiefs, and/or directly to youth groups, could inform them of any new services or complementary support programmes being offered by HSNP, or that may be linked to HSNP while being offered by other providers.

In relation to the CVE agenda in Kenya, care must be taken to avoid further exacerbating intercommunal tensions that presently exist in the targeted counties. Perceptions of favouritism and nepotism in access to jobs, as well as poor educational outcomes for many

impoverished youth, have contributed to high levels of unemployment and underemployment, strengthening feelings of disillusionment and marginalisation among targeted youth. Many young men therefore turn to alternatives, such as drugs and alcohol, making them more vulnerable to recruiters from extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab or criminal gangs. Persistent intercommunal tensions, largely related to contestation over resources such as water and pasture lands, which are primary productive assets for the main livelihoods in the four northern counties, further jeopardise peace and stability in the region.

As such, consideration of the various structural issues and underlying tensions within these communities is vital in order to avoid aggravating these issues. A livelihood support programme, potentially linked to HSNP, could

provide new opportunities for the most at-risk youth in these areas, providing them with viable alternatives to extremists or criminal gangs. As mentioned above, HSNP should consider its targeting approach to youth in response to feelings of social exclusion and jealousy expressed by some beneficiaries, as well as consider providing engagement platforms with the programme to allow beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to discuss issues around both the beneficiary targeting process and the cash disbursement. It is worth noting that strengthened social networks among the respondents can help to allay some of the feelings of frustration and provide more dialogue platforms for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Offering support to these informal networks and groups of youth could help improve relationships and opportunities for dialogue, should any CVE issues connected to HSNP emerge.



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