

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: VOICES OF KENYAN YOUTH FROM NYERI AND NAIROBI

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Paper presented at the Youth Citizenship and the Politics of Belonging Symposium, at the UKFIET Conference, September 14th to 17th, New College Oxford. © The paper cannot be quoted without permission.

Abstract

Education plays a major role in equipping individuals with skills that enable them to participate fully as citizens in society. This paper interrogates this in the context of the nature of political engagement for schooled young persons living in impoverished rural and urban settings in Kenya. Using qualitative methods that include focused group discussions and interviews, young people are given a chance to express their views on how education has enabled them to enact their citizenship. They discuss their political identifications, their rights as citizens, and the failure to achieve these, the effects of schooling on their feelings of belonging and inclusion and the perceived potential of second chance education in helping them move forward. The findings indicate that while the Kenyan education system is designed to shape young people's civic consciousness, varying schooling experiences based on socio-cultural and geographical divides determine the level to which they are able to enjoy their citizenship rights and see possibilities of achieving full citizenship. Young people voice concerns to government which centre on unemployment, security and the importance of listening to young people, which if addressed would improve the civic education outcomes of young people living in impoverished communities. The expressed faith in a perceived necessary link between education and the attainment of full citizenship creates a running theme in the discourse shaping discussions with the youth.

To be young in Africa [has come] to mean being disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginal in the political and economic sense' (Abbink, 2005:7).

Introduction

The tension between national, ethnic, and economic demands is considerable for African countries which have strong local traditions and generationally organised cultures. The success of a modern *laissez faire* economy which is dependent upon mobile, flexible, and skilled workforce can jar with the traditions of collective responsibility, identity, and cooperation as opposed to individual economic activity. Whilst educational policies highlight inclusion, human rights, and citizenship, the gap between the richer communities and the poorest gets greater as education itself gets more unequally distributed. In particular, formal education of the citizen therefore, is often a privilege of the rich, leaving the poor without access to the knowledge which could help them form appropriate relationships with social institutions and navigate their way in society. Policy makers need to understand how young people living in poverty perceived their positions as citizens, how they relate to government and the demands they make upon the state to reduce their marginalisation and exclusion.

For many of those of who are poor, the only means of survival is to sustain dependencies within their local communities; for others, the attraction is to move to cities and towns and try find their own means of survival, and if successful, send monies home to help their communities constitutes their social dynamic. The tensions between promotion of the market and national cohesiveness within the shades of liberal democracy adopted in African nations such as Kenya are complex and have major significance for the alleviation of poverty in developing countries. An analysis of citizenship agendas offers an opportunity to reflect how this interface between political and economic plan affects the education system and in the long run, and the implications for poverty alleviation. The more the formal education system (particularly the secondary school) is the vehicle for national unity, the greater the marginalisation of those who do not attend or reach secondary education.

There are different ways to develop the capabilities of young people's citizenship and their active levels of engagement and participation in a country (WDR, 1997). Because formal schooling is the main way in which the majority of young people are prepared for adulthood – young people as future citizens are entitled to this kind of education. For those who attend school, the possibility in a modern economy of 'becoming somebody', a person with the potential to make their way in the world, even if in the event they are not successful. Not surprisingly, strong distinctions are made between the 'educated' and the so-called 'uneducated' in Kenya –generally meaning those who have and have not had a school education respectively. The experience of those young people who, for whatever reason, are not able to take up their entitlement to an education, is one of marginalisation and social exclusion from citizenship. Those who attend schools learn about the civic culture of a country by experiencing the structure, culture, and organisation of the institution. However, the experience may also be contradictory. In some cases, this experience directly transmits the democratic and inclusive values intended by politicians and officials, in other cases, the experience contradicts those values, encouraging a discriminatory, negative and even violent view of the social order. Schools unless closely monitored are not unambiguously democratic institutions, hence the re-engagement continuously of Kenyan policy-makers with the core values and objectives of the education of young citizens remains a core concern.

A second way in which governments can assist in the inclusion of its 'soon to be' citizens is through the introduction of specialised curriculum subject on citizenship (variously named ethics, social studies or social science, civics/ citizenship education). This subject inevitably is associated with ambitious outcomes such as knowledge of the constitution, law, human rights, models of civic participation and the duties of a patriotic law abiding citizen etc. The aim here is to shape citizenship identities- alongside and sometimes counter to existing youth cultural and sub-cultural identities. National identity is critical to the integration of all young people in ethnically diverse and on occasion violent societies, but it has to compete with young people's ethnic, gender, regional and local identities and responsibilities in generational, and community relations. The outcomes of such curricular initiatives are rarely assessed and there is no research-based proof that they are successful in reducing social inequality and ensuring social integration that is pro-poor. Nevertheless as the expression of national goals and cultures, these curricular initiatives have quite a political story to tell.

Youth, Gender, and Citizenship project

One of the first tasks in the *Youth, Gender, and Citizenship* project was to establish the parameters of thinking about what constitutes the national goals of the schooling system, how citizenship is constructed, and what attempts have already been made to bring young people into active participatory forms of citizenship. By definition therefore we begin, not with a narrow view of locating education as preparation only for the market place, but rather, from a broad view that looks at education as a means of reducing poverty by motivating youth towards actions that demonstrate their role in national, community and personal development. Poverty alleviation, as the World Bank Report -WDR- (2007) recently recognised cannot be achieved solely upon improving the transitions from schooling to work. The social-cultural, familial, and political transitions in citizenship are equally important. Individuals will only find ways out of poverty if they feel that they belong, are valued and that they can and will make a contribution to society (Arnot, Chege, Casely Hayford, Dovie, and Wainaina 2008)

The second task was to ask youth who had themselves experienced poverty about their understanding of their rights as Kenyan citizens, about the role which they perceive government should take to help them move out of poverty, about the ways in which education had helped them in their lives, both as citizens and in terms of providing the skills and knowledge necessary for them to be able to escape poverty. In this paper, we report how young Kenyan citizens living in the urban settlement of Kibera and those living in the rural villages of Nyeri, understood the impact of education on their status as citizens and describe their insights into what this had taught them about the possibilities of the government in intervening on their behalf. In the reporting of the data we identify not only gender differences in outlook but also the differences between those young people who had managed to complete basic schooling (8 years) and those who were fortunate enough to be able to attend secondary school or go even further by attending a vocational training for specific occupations.

We begin this paper with a brief description of the civic goals which the Kenyan government hoped to achieve through its school system. These goals were expressed on the one hand through the provision, since the year 2003, of free primary schooling for all, and through the provision of a specialised curriculum on civic education aimed at creating feelings of ‘being Kenyan’. Later, however the decision was taken to remove civic education and integrate the themes and knowledge of Kenya citizenship into other mainstream subjects. The youth we interviewed had been taught civic education, although one cannot assume that the whole syllabus was provided nor taught effectively, not least because of the lack of training on citizenship on the part of the teachers.

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP: CREATING THE MODERN KENYAN CITIZEN.

Post-independent Kenya as a sovereign state is a country whose political and social life claims to be founded on democratic principles. Kenya has put in a spirited effort to portray its preparation of the youth as founded on a type of citizenship that allows its men and women to live comfortably and serve in some kind of a democratic society. In a democracy, there is often the tension between individual-oriented values and the social-oriented values on one hand and between material and non-material oriented values on the other- values which are assumed to be appropriate for an ideal citizen.

Kenya, like many other countries, uses education as a means of inculcating the democratic attributes of a democratic life in its youth¹.

The challenge for the first Kenyan government was to guide a country composed of various ethnic groups with different cultures into a new nation –whose people demonstrated nationhood as the core guiding principle. One and a half years after independence, Kenya made a bold attempt to articulate its national philosophy in the form of the *Sessional Paper No.10: African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya* (GoK, 1965) Outlined here was a range of general national goals (general enough to be adaptable to any society): political equality, social justice, human dignity including freedom of conscience, freedom from want, disease and exploitation, equal opportunities and high and growing *per capita* incomes, equitably distributed.

As an emerging new nation, Kenya was at pains to avoid aligning herself directly with, on one hand, Western liberal ideologies, or socialist ideologies on the other, preferring to adopt what was referred to as *democratic African socialism* (GoK, 1965: 2).. The two principles underlying democratic African socialism were *political democracy* and *mutual social responsibility* –the latter being identified with the practised traditional African cultures that characterised most of the Kenyan communities. These two principles were expected to become the pillars of the Kenya national educational system, with only a few modifications from time to time that would accommodate emerging or new realities. However, over the last forty years, what should constitute young Kenyan's civic identities and their specific roles have been subject to much debate and government interventions. Educational policies, curricula and practices have been redesigned in an attempt to bring young people within the framework of changing Kenyan civic and social values and reform of the economy as well as through the introduction of specific school curricula that are meant to establish these new values.

After gaining independence in early 1960s, the Kenyan government immediately started work on establishing an educational system for its youth that reflected the aspirations of the new nation. A commission was set up to survey and evaluate the then existing British colonial education system (which still had many of the racial and religious features associated with colonialism) and to advise the government on appropriate educational reforms. What became known as the Ominde Commission's Report on Education (GoK, 1964) recommended that a re-structured system of education should focus on several broad objectives such as the fostering of a sense of nationhood through the promotion of national unity, social equality, social obligation and responsibility, and at the same time the removal of divisions based on race, tribe and/or religion. To inculcate these egalitarian social values, the Ominde Commission suggested a number of strategies that included encouraging primary school teachers to be creative and progressive by motivating their pupils to think and act like Kenyans –that is, construct Kenyan identities. Other unifying recommendations involved teaching all young Kenyans in a common language (such as English) and the suggestion that students from different geographical and cultural backgrounds would be brought together in national boarding schools so as to learn under one roof (GoK, 1964: 28-29). By accepting and implementing these recommendations, the formal education system was charged with the responsibility of developing the entitlement of all Kenyan youth to schooling and citizenship identities that overrode the existing ethnic and social divisions.

¹ Reading, both the Kenyan Constitution (GOK, 1969: Chapter VI) and Draft Constitution (GOK, 2005: Chapter IV), citizenship is defined in the formal and legalistic sense where basically a person qualifies to become a Kenyan citizen by birth, registration or naturalization

The challenges of providing young people with a suitable education guided many reforms in ensuing decades. In the 1970s, for example, only a decade after the Ominde Report on Education, the government again reviewed the education system through the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (NCEOP). NCEOP was established under the chairmanship of Peter Gachathi, then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education (GoK, 1976). The Committee's terms of reference were to focus on two key issues. The first related to the realization that educational provision was becoming very expensive for the government yet young people transiting from the education system were not obtaining gainful employment - even though education was generally perceived as the best guarantee for both personal as well as social advancement. Secondly, there was a perceived societal need to redefine Kenyan social and ethical value not least because public condemnation of social problems such as 'corruption, nepotism, tribalism and idleness...' was seen to be ineffective. These were maladies usually associated with lack of the necessary supporting moral and civics education (GoK, 1976: 7-8).

Faith in the importance of educating youth, as a means of economic and social development remained strong despite the continued relatively high levels of poverty (GoK, 2003) and perceived moral decadence. One of the basic assumptions was that the government was obliged to continue using education for the promotion of national unity, and to eradicate social, economic and regional inequalities in order to develop those being educated into useful citizens, capable of, and motivated towards the improvement of the nation as a whole as well as contribute to economic growth as well as individual development. One way of dealing with anti-social behaviour that had gradually become part of youth culture was to introduce into formal education a new separate school subject *Social Education and Ethics*² The justification for the teaching of ethics is captured well in the following statement:

...lack of ethical foundations will constitute a basis for social disintegration and in the long run, degeneration of quality of life of society and eventual social death (GoK, 1976: 7).

Social Education and Ethics (SEE) was established as a secondary school subject within the new 8-4-4 system of education, introduced in 1986³. Unfortunately the new subject was optional. Further, it never became part of the curriculum at the higher education level. This is perhaps one of the indications that, the institutions of higher learning had never been serious champions for the inculcation of non-economic values likely to promote citizenship in the youth.

A shift in emphasis by the late 1980s placed this social education alongside new economic emphases on self reliance and self-employment (a shift that again reflected an apparently well-intentioned response to the growing unemployment of youth). In 1988, a new general review of Kenyan educational philosophy, policies and objectives was set up to consider whether these were in line with the changing socio-cultural, economic and political demands of the country. A Presidential Working Party under the Chairmanship of James M. Kamunge⁴ was established to look into *Education and Manpower [sic] Training for the Next Decade and Beyond* (GoK, 1988). This review recommended among other things that *Social Education and Ethics*, which was already being offered in secondary

² The recommendation to introduce *Social Education and Ethics* in the education system was not implemented until 1986 when it became part of Secondary Education.

³ Five years after the Gachathi report, the Mackay Report (GOK 1981) argued for the contribution that education could make to economic development, but at the same time it should contribute to the promotion of social justice and inculcate social ethics in youth

⁴ The then Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

schools, the concepts and practices of co-operative efforts, and mutual social responsibility be taught and developed in all levels of education and training (GoK, 1988).

The inculcation of values of citizenship and the development of young Kenyans' capabilities as citizens reflected the tension between collective social responsibility and individual achievement and responsibilities – themes that were to be reworked in the late 1990s. In preparation for the 21st Century and the 3rd Millennium, the Government appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya that was chaired by David Koech (GoK, 1999). The task was to review Kenya's educational system and recommend ways and means of enabling the government to facilitate the link between national unity, mutual social responsibility, accelerated industrial and technological development, and consolidation and enhancement of life-long learning (GoK, 1999: xix).

The Koech Commission underscored the need for Kenya to produce, through the education system, a new type of citizenry that would portray: a sense of patriotism and nationalism that transcends ethnic and traditional ties, and demonstrate integrity of character, and a vision to uphold the rule of law (GoK, 1999: 17). It emphasised communal *civic virtues* which individuals shared, such as moral virtues of honesty, confidence, work ethics and concern for others' welfare. It also identified a number of specific school subjects such as Social Education and Ethics, Religious Education, Literature, and History and Government all of which were perceived to have the potential to inculcate these values in youth, and all of which were already established in the school curriculum.⁵

The development of Social Education and Ethics had a strong egalitarian thrust even though it was placed in secondary schools to which 77.7% of youth gained access. The 1981 Mackay Report on education was to argue later that in order to enhance national unity, that a national education system should always aim to remove social injustice and disparities between sexes, geographical regions and social and economic groups in a community (GoK, 1988:10). The Kenyan government therefore took heed and re-designed its education in ways that attached importance to preparing youth for the responsibilities of becoming adults (GoK, 1988). However, in practice; evidence abound to demonstrate the tendency to stress what was expected of the youth in terms of academic performance and patriotism over their entitlement to relevant education commensurate to behavioural change that reflected nationhood and belonging. It would be rare therefore for a student living in poverty to have access to formal citizenship education.⁶

⁶ While most of the subjects offered in Secondary School Education could be assumed to contribute to developing youth citizenship in one way or other, depending on how they are presented, the SSE had great potential in assisting individuals to develop the norms and values that would guide them to become members of the collective (Prewitt, 1971: vii). Notably, however, while Religious Education and SSE were compulsory in the first two years of secondary education, they were offered as options in Form 3 and 4⁶. Of significance here is the devaluation of SSE which was no longer compulsory in Form 1 and 2 and making Religious Education and Social Education and Ethics optional among 10 secondary school subjects in which only one Subject was to be taken in Forms 3 and 4. The reason given for making Social Education and Ethics optional was that a Needs Assessment Survey Report on the Secondary Education Curriculum of 1999 recommended that the subject was dropped and instead be taught through other 'carrier subjects'. This recommendation drew upon the survey findings showing that the subject was rated by stakeholders as the least useful subject (KIE, 1999: 40); as a result in 2003, it was dropped from the formal school curriculum.

Besides the use of formal classroom teaching of social values, there are other activities, which are expected to assist youth with social bonding while at school. The activities include sports meetings, District, Provincial, and National Music Drama festivals. Further, the observance and recognition of national Days such as *Jamhuri* (Independence) Day and *Kenyatta* Day, the national Anthem and the National Flag aim to inject national cohesiveness in the youth as members of a Kenyan community⁷. Finally, the use of English (as medium of school instruction) and Kiswahili as common languages as opposed to the vernacular languages is supposed to enhance social integration among students from various cultural groups.

What is noticeable is that while over the years the Kenyan government seems to have made policy efforts in linking education outcomes with both economic and social advancement, the Kenyan education system, in practice, has tended to over-emphasize the economic development-oriented aspects at the expense of the social development-oriented aspects especially the humanities and particularly education for social values. The government realizes that the youth stage is an important milestone for an individual or group to develop a sense of identity as citizens of a particular country. There seems to be considerable anxiety and a sense of feeling excluded from full citizenship amongst Kenyan youth. The lack of education and jobs which compromises their citizenship status, also explains why they engage in violent and criminal activities. This is attested to by the recent gruesome anti-social activities perpetrated by youth gangs in and around Nairobi (Daily Nation, May 7, 2007). Even more disturbing is the recent post-2007 election violence that portrayed many youth partaking in the destruction of lives and property of fellow Kenyans. This behaviour is a challenge, not only to politicians but also to educators and educationalists

Despite the commitment by the Kenyan government and the CSOs to promote a Kenyan citizenship through mutual social responsibility, the voices of the young people in this study suggest that although they are politically aware, (in fact they identified high costs for political involvement), although they can articulate quite clearly what education has given them in terms of engagement with the project of citizenship, their powerlessness is clear. They have the ideas, the motivation to help themselves, the aspiration to make a difference to their communities, but they have no power. They wish to be consulted

RESEARCH LOCALE AND SAMPLE

The study involved young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years living in two comparatively different poor communities, Kibera an urban multi-ethnic slum community in Nairobi and an agricultural rural site in the Nyeri area, Nyaribo sub location of Kiganjo location where poverty is occasioned mainly by poor and unreliable rain patterns that often result in continued crop failure. Interviews were conducted with twenty four (24) youth I total from the two sites, ten (10) female and nine (9) male in Kinchinjio village in Kibera. In Nyaribo, Interviews were conducted in five (villages) with a total of fifteen (15) young people, eight (8) young men and seven (7) young women.

⁷ In this regard, Flag hoisting and the singing of the National Anthem has been religiously carried out every Mondays and Fridays in all the schools (GoK, 1999).

The sample of participants in each site represented a range of different school levels; fourteen (14) young people had primary education and twenty (20) with secondary schooling formed the sample⁸. The study was designed within the Qualitative paradigm and research methods were implemented within a participatory framework. The methods employed which comprised mainly one to one interview sessions with young men and women living in poor communities provide the space, allowing young people to talk about how the knowledge they had obtained in school (even if only minimal) contributed to their lives and to their political and citizenship identity and sense of belonging to Kenyan society.

This paper however, focuses on the urban site, Kibera whose data was analysed against the background of the 2007/08 political conflict that the country faced after disputed general election (31st December 2007) results that drove the country into protests and riots resulting into unprecedented ethnic-based violence. The conflict was a result of contention on who was the winner between the two popular but rival political parties, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Party of National Unity (PNU) both of which had encouraged ethnically oriented support. Areas that had mixed ethnic inhabitants faced tension that culminated into violent reactions in the months of December, 2007, January and February, 2008 –prior and after the elections. Given that young people were deeply involved in these events and that some of the interviews in both sites were conducted in March, in the immediate aftermath of this conflict, the data obtained reflects the layers of political knowledge about violence which they gathered during this episode as well as the knowledge acquired from schooling. The two sites were particularly affected by these events. The Majority of Kibera residence, the urban site which is the focus of this paper, was in favour of ODM because the party leader was the sitting area member of parliament.⁹

POLITICS, PATRIOTISM, AND BEING A YOUNG CITIZEN

Constructing national identity and citizenship

There were notable similarities in the manner in which both the young women and young in both the rural and urban settings portrayed awareness of the notion of rights and citizenship, specifically their rights as Kenyan citizens. ‘Being born’ in Kenya emerged as major defining characteristic of the Kenyan identity which entitled the youth to the rights of Kenyan citizenship. In defining their national identity, these young people clearly foregrounded the importance of their country of birth more than the places where their parents or fore-parents may have been born or originated. The youth argued that being born Kenyan accorded them all citizenship rights which included the right to own property, be accorded a national identity card, right to education, movement, and speech, be able to

⁸ The sample from the urban site constituted one (1) male and five (5) females with primary schooling. For this level of schooling, the rural site involved three (3) males and five (5) females. At the secondary school level, more males from both sites were sampled. Eight (8) in the urban and Five (5) in the rural. Females with secondary schooling from Nyeri were two (2) while those from Nairobi were five (5).

⁹ Nyeri was the stronghold of PNU popular in the central part of the country and mainly inhabited by the Kikuyu community whose members were being ejected from the rift valley and western parts of the country that were inhabited by the Kalenjin and Luhya among other communities.

live freely in any place in the country and be cared for by parents. The right to association and to security by the Kenya government was mentioned often. Mumbi, a 19 year-old young woman from Kibera demonstrated the essence of this perspective in her interview:

To be a Kenyan means that you are born here in Kenya, your birth was here, also national government recognizes you are a Kenyan. Also when you have got the Identity Card you will consider yourself as a Kenyan (Mumbi, Secondary education).

However, the youth were quick to point out that citizenship rights were not always available to them and that they needed to claim them as a way of ascertaining their citizenship. Instructively, there were no notable gender variations on the notion of citizenship (being Kenyan) and citizenship rights as the views of both the young women in the urban and rural settings and those of young men in the rural and urban settings generated similar notions of citizenship identity.

The above notwithstanding, more than gender and socio-cultural settings, there seemed to be a link between the level of formal education (schooling) and the manner in which the young persons constructed citizenship and expressed the rights as Kenyans. This link was explicitly notable not only in the level of expressive eloquence but also in the readiness to respond to various pertinent issues and the depth of content in their discussions. As the girls and boys of primary level education portrayed comparatively less eloquence and confidence in discussing the notion of citizenship and citizenship rights, their counterparts who had secondary education from both the urban and rural settings discussed in relative depth their understanding of being a Kenyan citizen. For example, out of the seventeen (17) young people (eight female and nine male) who responded to the questions on citizenship, eleven (11) had completed secondary school (five female and 6 male), compared to only 6 (4 girls and 2 boys) who had primary education. The 3 who had only primary school education displayed notable difficulties in responding to the question of citizenship and even after substantial amount of probing, their responses did not go beyond naming a person's rights to basic needs such as shelter and food which they claimed to have been taught in school. In this sense, primary schooling seems to have played a role in sensitizing young people on their rights but not on their responsibilities as citizens. For this group of youth, in particular the girls, explaining the responsibilities that go with the citizen's rights was a difficult task as demonstrated in a typical interview excerpt below.

My rights? just to get a job, like now my mum has no income and I would like to help her.....my responsibility here is to do the cooking for my family (Wambui, 19 year old young woman, primary education, Kibera).

Yasim, a 20 year old young man from Kibera who completed secondary school and married, moved a step further to describe citizenship as the enablement of youth by their government to secure a means of livelihood (jobs) as a right. He argued that because his government could not help in finding employment, it was his duty to demand that right. He suggested that jobs for the youth may not have been lacking altogether but that according to him, any available jobs appeared to be allocated to 'foreigners' possibly based on corruption. The concept of 'foreigners' was presented in the interview to connote people who did not belong to a particular region. Yasim described his observation in this context:

Available jobs are given to foreigners and (not) the local people. This is something that has been observedso we have been denied our rights as citizens, you have to demand your rights before you get them (Young man, secondary education, Kibera)

Beyond basic rights: Being patriotic, politics and defending the country

In order to experience citizenship, the young men from Kibera in particular underscored the need to be patriotic, defining patriotism as the love for one's country to the level of being ready to *die* for it. Accordingly, patriotism would empower youth to be able to demand their rights as Kenyans. It is in this view that Musa, a 20 year old young man from Kibera and who had completed secondary education, constructed citizenship to include issues such as protection by government and enacting of political rights by the youth themselves, for example in exercising the right to vote during national and civic elections. Musa claimed to have participated in voting in the previous national elections as he had just attained the legal age of 18 years.

Yeah as a Kenyan citizen ...I have a right to... maybe to own property..... yeah, the government, the Kenyan constitution has a right to protect me and my properties (Young male, secondary F4, Kibera).

In both the urban and the rural sites, the young men, more than the young women, expressed concern about their rights as Kenyans having been violated not least by the failure of government to ensure their security and to maintain peace amongst the citizens. For example, Daniel elaborated his disappointment on the perceived failure of Government to ensure that all Kenyans were safe in the wake of the recent post election violence. The denial of rights to co-exist peacefully, he argued ran counter to the notion of being a Kenyan citizen –which was presumably characterised –in the minds of the youth – as a unification of citizens through enhancement of joint belongingness and stability of a nation. Listening to a young man like Daniel, there was an apparent sense of betrayal in his expression of patriotism in the same breath as lack of faith in his country (read 'government') to embrace youth participation in nation development. Daniel demonstrated this feeling of as he explained saying:

To be a Kenyan means to be patriotic, ready to die for your country at whatever cost. That you feel that you are a true Kenyan, Yet there comes a time when you lose faith in your country because you are condemned by your own government, yes you are Kenyan, but you have been denied your rights. You understand (Daniel, secondary education, Kibera).

Like Musa, Daniel further argued that in order to experience citizenship, young people needed to embrace their political rights, specifically in voting for both their civic and national leaders who they believed would champion their rights. Thus, actualising citizenship rights was considered as one of the duties expected of a 'good' citizen. This was underscored further by Tony, a secondary school graduate living in Kibera who argued that citizens had a duty, an obligation to not only get birth certificates as proof of their citizenship but also to go out to vote. The interview excerpt below demonstrates these sentiments:

Tony: My responsibility as a Kenyan citizen, later I have to make those rights (happen). I have to make those rights work.

Int: So if you have a right to vote you have a responsibility to vote?

Tony: I have a responsibility to vote, yeah.... if somebody tells me 'No, don't vote', I will ask him why? Because I am a Kenyan citizen.

The fact that citizens should be patriotic featured in most of the discussions with the young people we interviewed, particularly the young men. One of the signs of patriotism given by those with secondary education from the urban site indicated that citizens should be willing to pick up major political goals, or even represent their country in international competitions like sports. Stanley, from Kibera and who expressed his passion for rugby hoped to one day represents Kenya in the Olympic Games. Like his peers who had completed secondary education, Stanley referred to the role of youth in participating in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Even though on the spur of the moment Stanley did not appear to have any particular goal in mind, apart from the general commitment of developing his country, he was clear that by using his talent in sports to represent his country, he would be contributing to national development as a young person.

Int : Okay... that is being a Kenyan citizen. What do you feel, are your responsibilities as a Kenyan, or your obligations?

Stanley: Ee, I think my responsibility is, to help, in attaining the Millennium Goals.

Int: (Chuckles) Which one in particular?

Stanley Any, to develop Kenya.

Int: You want to develop Kenya, what else?

A: To develop Kenya

Int: Kenya, aha, what else can you think about? In terms of those goals? There is on - eradicate poverty,)

Stanley: Yea. Eradication of poverty, Security,

Int: Mm mm, okay. So that would, makes you feel, that you have a responsibility as a Kenyan, to do that. What else?

Stanley: I will be ready to fight for my country....Like me, I dream of playing, 2009 World Cup of Rugby World Cup . then I will be a patriot.

According to Mumbi, being patriotic and enacting citizenship required some discipline in terms of obeying the laws of the land. She was of the view that good citizenship required a sense of discipline and respect for the law, regardless of whether or not they have attained the legal age of adulthood that entitles them to acquire a Kenyan identity card.

.....As a youth, one of the youth, I have to do what others do and also obey the rules as a Kenyan, the rules that I must not go ahead and break the rules of our country because I am young and don't have like the identity card, that cannot make me to break the rules, I have to follow them and respect them (young women, secondary education, Kibera).

Community citizenship: We belong where we live

Some of the young people in our study talked about their community as the location of their citizenship identity in ways which revealed ethnic affiliation. For example some young people from the Nyeri site were concerned about having a leader from another ethnic group because they were of the view that if this happened their community could be sidelined in terms of development. Ethnicity is good in the sense it is about Kenyan culture, but it is dangerous if it leads to political instability and

violence Such as that seen in Kenya in 2007 ...where young people were used in staging riots particularly in Kibera where this practice was common during the post election violence. Young people in our study seem to have complex ethnic identities and are thinking carefully about which party to support, and work for. They also worry about violence. There is a heavy emphasis on private, confidential nature of voting in order that no one in the community knows where they stand. This is strategic behaviour in an overcrowded environment with strong local loyalties.

In Kibera, citizenship was also expressed in terms of being a Kibera resident. The young people pointed out that honouring their rights of citizenship in a responsible way required taking pride in their community and responsibility in ensuring that their community was a habitable for everybody. One such way is to engage in activities that protect and sustain their community by keeping its environments clean and productive. Hence, activities like garbage collection, engaging in income generation activities and taking part in community activities like funerals especially for those who have relatives in the rural area. Further, they expressed their responsibility in ensuring that they protect the rights of vulnerable groups like children by reporting rights violations to the police.

Being a Kenyan however also involved something to do with the cultural dynamics of the Kenyan community its languages (the use of Kiswahili as a national language), a particular mode of behaviour (like how people greet one another) amongst other things. For example, when Hana from Kibera asked what made a person feel that there were a Kenyan, she used the indicator that Kenyans can show an immunization injection mark on their left arms instead of the right one that young people observed was the case for Ugandans citizens:

Kenyans, we have, there is this injection we getit tells you which country you are from, I am from Kenya. What proves... every Kenyan has this injection ... So, I'll know. Because Uganda it is given down there and in Kenya Kenyans over here....So at least this injection identify me as a Kenyan. There is something that we identify with., let's say, to compare Kenya and Uganda. If you come here you will know a Ugandan. Why, because of the way they kneel down, and the respect they have, Us we just greet sasa(Hi) , we don't care in which way.Yea, there is a certain code of conduct that would define you as a Kenyan

However, it was not enough for the Government to outline the various formal requirements of Kenyan citizenship. As we saw earlier, the young people we interviewed in both Kibera and the rural area revealed their theoretical and practical understandings of the idea of citizenship when they argued that citizenship should relate policy and practice to the protecting of citizenship rights especially those that related to providing education and job opportunities for its people. The discussion of these issues brought up both passionate and negative feelings about what it meant to 'be Kenyan' with three young people. Their sense of exclusion was palpable. Daniel from Kibera displays his frustration at being denied rights:

Being Kenyan one is supposed to be a patriot, you should die for your country at whatever cost. So that you see yourself as a true Kenyan, but there comes a time when you loose faith in your country, you understand, to be condemned by your own government? Yes you are a Kenyan but you have been denied your rights, to be Kenyan, the Government needs to make people enjoy and defend their rights. This

makes some people give up and say it is better to go to another country that will put my needs first in comparison to my own country that mistreats me. You understand.

Others, such as 19 year old Mumbi - secondary school graduate- despite living in poverty nevertheless talked about being proud to be Kenyan citizens because of the security the country enjoys in comparison to other neighboring countries. When asked what she felt like 'inside' (in terms of being a Kenyan), she replied:

I appreciate it and I am proud to be a Kenyan just like the others because we have got good security in our country comparing with the one for outside, like the country for Djibouti, Burundi, we don't have this proud opportunity like the one we have to going to school with this freedom, but us Kenyans we have this freedom because we don't have these so many wars anywhere.

Catherine from Kibera who had completed Form 4 expressed a similar view. The basis on which she could say 'I am proud' was because 'Some countries are, have a high capacity of dictatorship....[in] Iran, Iraq, it is common to see bombs and people dying. You do not understand why but you find you are dying'.

This knowledge and sense of pride in being Kenya came it seems from both formal and informal education. Some talked about learning their citizenship rights from the school curriculum, particularly from studying history at the primary level and from history and civic education in secondary. Informally, they also received information about citizenship by attending seminars organised by NGOs like Hakii Jammii (Community Rights) which visit Kibera or by listening to talks given by their teachers or elders in the community during informal sessions. Here is an example:

Int : Now ... you have told us about your rights as a Kenyan, as a young woman, as a young adult, where did you learn about these rights?

Hana: Actually I had once gone to- NGO called Haki Jamii. You see these people of human rights.... So there is a time, like in Kibera.... They normally launch seminars here. They come and teach you about up-grading. By teaching you about that up grading, they integrate these rights. Your right, they try and teach you about your rights, so that you cannot violate them.

A number of new political initiatives have emerged in the last decade which have affected and may continue to affect the lives of young people and their participation in the national and global citizenry. For example, both the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Kenya is signatory have influenced – and shall continue to influence- the articulation of government policy on youth matters. The African Charter expresses clearly what children and young people ought to expect of their governments and what responsibilities children have in partnering with their duty bearers – for example, teachers, parents as well as leaders (religious and political) as they explore their psychological and psychical space as Kenyans. This development provides a basis for strengthening

legislation and developing structures that foreground matters affecting young people and children. This way, issues relating to education, health and health services, disability and special needs, leisure and culture, care and protection from sexual and labour exploitation, discrimination by gender, creed, socio-economic status, regional origin, among others are identified and defined in the context of rights and responsibilities that form the tenets upon which citizenship may be nurtured amongst young people as they transit to adulthood

In response to global, regional and national concerns regarding the youth, the CEDMAC et al. 2001) has produced an educational handbook on democratic issues and human rights, which young people access freely through the civil society organisations (CSOs) that currently engage young people in a more vibrant form of civic and political education. There appears to be more visibly active youth work which raises pertinent social and political issues. Many of the CSOs address not just the principles of democracy that should govern institutions and life in general, but also the different types of rights to which a Kenyan is entitled. They sensitise youth to local forms of power relations and freedoms and teach them to interrogate concepts of *equality and equity*.

BRINGING ABOUT CHANGE: YOUNG MEN, POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

Although the youth we interviewed appeared to talk about fighting for their rights, they related the concept of political involvement narrowly, restricting it to contesting for political seats in parliament. In relation to this, they argued that politics was a reserve for people who are bold, who can withstand challenges. Instructively, this discourse of political engagement was explicitly pronounced among young the young men of Kibera more than their rural counterparts and even more than the young women from the two study sites¹⁰. Some of the young men saw a link between schooling and development of interest and skills politics arguing that politicians were likely to have begun to nurture their political ambitions way back in school as Tony describes:

You have to be funny. You know when we were in school there were students who liked debate, you would see some one stand up and speak like a politician ,and one would think, if this one goes on this way, he is likely to be a politician in future (Young man, secondary education, Kibera).

The combative nature of politics and its potential in generating violence was taken up by other young men with Yasin, for example, pointing out that politics can be either beneficial or bring about violence within and across communities. Politics he argues ‘can help’ but it can also ‘destroy’:

: Politically, there is a way that it helps ...you can talk in a political way for someone to understand you, you see? And you can talk in a political way and cause interference and result to violence. You can talk in a political way and understand each other and everything runs smooth, you see? So politically there is a way it helps, you can’t say it doesn’t help politically.

The young men expressed faith in the role of politics and they claimed to specifically engage in decision making in the promotion of community development. Of importance to them was the choice

¹⁰ Kibera appeared to have relatively more NGO activities, including those that sensitized communities on civic education. Also, the politics of Kibera have traditionally involved the young men more actively and directly compared to the rural site of this study.

of an appropriate political representative either at the parliamentary or civic level that would bring about the change they very much needed in their socio-economic status. Sixteen year old Athman from Kibera who was in 3rd year of secondary school for example stressed the importance of the right to vote for the person who would make the future of the community better.

The fact that interest in engaging in active politics was only evident among young men from the urban site may be due to the level of civic awareness they acquired by working with civil society organisations and NGOs. . It is also clear that gender and educational level played a role in this kind of political foresight because all the young men who actively discussed political engagement, leadership, and change in the community had completed secondary school. They all indicated their desire to make a difference to their community by entering politics with three of them in particular expressing an ambition to engage in active politics as an actualisation of what they described as their civil right. At the time of the interview, one of them revealed that he was already contesting a civic seat in the general election that was in progress at the time of the study. These young men, notably those with secondary education were quick to identify both local and international influential politicians as their role models and were quick to notice the role that education had played in the political careers of their role models. The ensuing interview excerpt shows how Athman described his view of political leadership and the possibilities of making a difference personally to other people's lives, pointing out that as a Nubian he would play the ethnic card in explaining how he would use his political position to improve the living conditions of his community specifically the Nubians whom he felt had been deprived of land that belonged to his forefathers.

Athman: Some days I want to be like Ababu

Int: Ababu Namwamba¹¹?)

Athman: yes

Int: why Ababu Namwamba?

Athman: that man is so brave yes

Int: and being a young man, he is attractive for young men?

Athman: yes

Int: You think he is so brave, what has he done.

Athman: because the way he speaks like a person who has attended school in a diplomatic way.

Int: OK so that makes you want to be ...interested in politics in like what would you like to be in future in term of politics?

Athman: In politics, to create Kibera in ...like if you see in South Africa, the biggest slum Soweto, you can't say it's a slum because the houses are built in flats so I can do same thing for Kibera.

Int: But you people Nubians own the land, isn't it?

Athman: Yeah but if I speak to themyou know I am a Nubian so they will accept me.

The poverty discourse and youth in leadership

The relationship between poverty and education and the role of young people in politics remained in the foreground in most of the interviews with the young men. In this context, Tony, described the power of voting as a personal avenue that would help in releasing him

¹¹ Ababu was a young politician whom some of the young men admired apparently because of his aggressive style of politics

‘ I want that change to be there in terms of poverty. Like for me now, my parents cannot pay my school fees, but if I have that voting card, I will vote for that person that will make me schooled, give it me free’.

Twenty five year old Obura, from Kibera who had completed secondary education claimed that he himself was playing that role of politician – a result of his own schooling. He talked about his own ambitions to become a leader and to make a difference to the Kibera community. When asked what he had learnt at school, Obura pointed to the negative experiences he had had and his desire to do something about it. He also underscored the responsibilities of government to making a positive difference to its people and the need to remain in his community and initiate change from within:

First thing is my experience, the negative experience I have had while schooling. it has made me to believe in change. it has really made me believe I am a fighter. It made me to be also ,very (Pause)..to be influential socially, like ..to also participate in politics, coz], all along, I realized after- As I was growing, I realized ...there are also people who are to be responsible in all this. Ee? The government need to be responsible....because people pay tax, and Irealized that, ..people in Kibera are also paying, equal tax. Yet, they are not being served equally. So I realized, all that, it made me, to really wish to involve myself to a, leadership aa, whatever. To make a difference. Cos... I realized, it made me not to dream, to come out of Kibera. To move and live in a different place. But, to change, the life, of people. Because, if I move here, somebody will just get in. I’ll never find this room empty. You will always find somebody (Pause) And, might be, my cousin, or my friends. So, I’ll have made no difference. You see? Because if he or she is affected there,mentally, am still affected. Yea.

Obura describes the sort of role that he wanted to have as a leader in the community and, in considerable detail, explained the actions he had taken and was continuing to take to ensure that he succeeded in his political ambitions to deliver his community:

Okayat the moment, ... I am acting as an option, for a civic position because I’ve registered. I have been given a direct nomination. Am waiting forthe ODM¹² people to finish (counting) the votes tomorrow, then I’ll be on the ground. It will determine ...that will determine whether I am on the ground,. So I’m also ... looking at, being influential. I’m also, fighting hard in order to, influence some people (...). Politically, or any way, like, tribally. Like right now we are, with a political party.... to me, like if a political party doesn’tgive transparency. And then it makes.. and it elects, wrong people. We now say, we don’t vote for that political party. At that level, they deal that at a civic level, we gather all these people, all the aspirants, who are done in - who injustice was done to them. Then they support a different person, at that level. So (Pause) It’s tricky- I mean, the whole [thing] is to make sure that we vote for the right people. Because if we vote the wrong person, maybe in the name of political party in a way, it will also - it will make no difference. Yea like it- yea, that’s what I can say.

¹² ODM (Orange Democratic Movement) was one of the major political parties with a strong following in the country during the time of the study.

Eric, a secondary school graduate, has observed politicians and how they ‘carry themselves around’. He intended himself to begin at the local councillor level so that I could assist Kibera people to build roads and bridges, thus improving infrastructure and uplifting the face of his residential environment.

However, some of the young people living in urban and rural slum areas that participated in our study were highly sceptical and critical about politics or were pessimistic about whether their own political involvement would have any effect. They felt that involvement in politics especially their vote had very limited significance in Kenya because in their view politicians went into politics to enrich themselves. Also the fact that voters were often bribed to vote for specific leaders meant that those elected have no obligation to address the needs of the community. Once elected the leaders could not be reached by their members – and hence were not accountable to them. The young people noted this anomaly which allowed their electorate to avoid serving their constituents and returning in the next time when they needed people’s votes again. The fact that votes could be bought to influence the voters was considered a regular practice as experienced by 16-year-old Athman, the youth were ready to take money promising as an inducement to vote for a particular candidate, even when they knew they could vote through secret ballot for candidates of their choice. He explained as captured below:

Int: (...) You told me you voted, were you involved in any other way, let’s say campaigning, things like that?

Athman:: No. campaigning, we campaigned for Livondo ...just because he used to give us money.... to people

Int: Ok. So as an individual you campaigned for him?

Athman: All of the youths here campaigned for Livondo, but voting time, that is your secret, when you go there.

Further, some of the young people had identified with political parties that they perceived to be bold enough to want to bring change in a society that was described as undemocratic. Of the four youth who admitted to reveal the party they had voted for, three of them supported the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) which was the major opposition party that was advocating for change. The presidential candidate for this party was the member of parliament of Langata Constituency where Kibera is located. Hence, the youth of Kibera had an unequivocal stake in this particular general election that had potential of delivering their member of parliament to the State House as the country’s next president. Interestingly, the youth, both in rural and urban sites, expressed optimism that their choice of president was important in flagging out the youth agenda for change.

Notably, the young women in Kibira seemed shy to convey their interest in politics, perhaps because politics is still portrayed as a male occupation in many communities in Kenya. However, after considerable probing, –Hana- a 21-year-old young woman with a secondary school education, revealed her party orientation saying she would only vote for politician who told the truth, regardless of how unpalatable it was to some people:

Int: So, you don’t have any interest [in politics]?

Hana: Mm. I don’t have any

Int: Do you have any interest in any political party, even if you do not want to do the politics?

Hana: Actually I am influenced in one political party.

Int: In which one?

Hana: Okay, the ODMbecause it has crazy people. Yea

Int: What do you mean by crazy people?

Hana: Okay, these people, they don't care what they say. As long as they know that they are right, they will say it.Even if they know you will feel bad they still go ahead and tell you. I like some one like that people who talk the truth (young woman, Kibera, secondary education)

For 19-year-old Mumbi who was also a secondary school graduate seemed disillusioned about political parties because of the political stalemate, and post election violence that was experienced after the most recent general elections. Accordingly, she made the following observation:

Me I don't support any, because if like the one we had PNU and ODM also ODM Kenya, I have seen them opposing each other that's why we have started the coalition government because of these differences that we have been having between the two parties, that is PNU and ODM.

Both the two young women cited above (Hana and Mumbi) described some the negative aspect they noted in the politics of their times, that entailed not only corruption but also violence, including the raping of women. For example, Hana 21-year-old Hana when asked if she was interested in political life herself commented: 'Ai, no, I am not interested in politics.)(Laughs)....Ai, I fear politics.' She explains:

You know politics is a dirty gameLike the other day women went up there at Livondo's, They were given money, After that being given that money, they were raped. So why should I wake up early in the morning, clean my house and cup to take tea, to go for only one hundred shillings only to come back with injuries.

One young man, Daniel, was the only one who depicted the right to vote in the context of other rights such as the right to non-violence. He as categorical that violence was unnecessary because it contravened other people's rights to peace –apparently. Commenting on his interested in any particular political party, Daniel replied:

My interest in politics? for example when a young man votes, he is not allowed to engage in violence, something like that....you don't have to engage in violence,...coz you don't have the right to fight other people, you don't have any right like that. For you need just to vote, you just sit you wait for the results

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, EDUCATION, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR WORK

We want jobs safe and clean environment

The main emphases of youth, which is not surprising given their poverty, were the various expectations they had that the Government could and should help them earn a livelihood and at the same time utilize what educational skills they had acquired - factors that they saw as their rights as Kenyan citizens. The need to find work in terms of employment or business emerged as a major ingredient for improving livelihoods for the young people living in impoverished urban settings such as Kibera regardless of their educational levels. Twenty out of twenty three youth who spoke on this subject prioritized work as an area of need. Twenty two year old Mukhebi who was primary school graduate from Kibera illustrates this further:

First thing I would like the Government to provide jobs for youth.....the ministry of youths should provide loans to the youth for them to start projects to depend on themselves.

Youth from this urban site talked about finding jobs in the industries and other firms that existed in the city. The lack of job opportunities left most youth idle with no source of livelihood - an issue that young people relate to high crime rates in the community.

The ambition of government action to create more jobs, however, was not without problems. Young people we interviewed expressed concern about the fact that poor governance manifested in corruption mainly along tribal lines could mean that they would not see the fulfilment of their rights to employment. Those responsible for giving jobs are seen to do so in favour of people from their ethnic groups. These young people living in poverty wanted to tell the Government to curb the corruption that plays a major role in determining job allocation, in effect negating the role of education in employment placement. Athman for example, argued that the government should 'stop tribalism': he noted that 'most of the people who are in big offices are kikuyus'. Corruption of this sort was

one of the things that degrade this country. Even you can see in the, Tanzania is one of the poorest country but is one of the respected country than Kenya even Uganda.
....you know here in Kenya, jobs are being given according to your name. yesfor example if you are called Njoroge, Njuguna things like that, you get a job.

The young people we interviewed in the urban and rural slum areas also directed attention to the one opportunity that the Government had provided for them to encourage in business ventures by providing loans through a programme known as the **Youth Fund**. In 2003 the Kenyan government established for the first time a Ministry for Youth Affairs whose mandate is to address issues affecting young Kenyan especially that of poverty and disillusionment among Kenyan youth who constitute two thirds of the population and who form the majority of the people who are unemployed. The government allocated one billion Kenya Shillings to the Ministry of Youth Affairs to be offered to youth organisations for self-employment activities under the youth fund, in order to ease the pressure to provide scarce so-called 'white collar jobs'.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this scheme was understood to have been damaged by corrupt practices with youth reporting that none of them either individually or as youth groups had been successful in getting the funds.¹⁹ year old Zacharia from Kibera who had secondary schooling expressed this view forcefully:

The present Government promised jobs to youth but when you move around you see idle youth, people say they are thieves, they lied to us about jobs, no young person has been employed in the industries.Now this youth money, you go fill forms, they ask you how much money you want, but eventually they don't give you any money. I have applied several times with no success.

The link between levels of education and acquiring jobs was not lost to some of the young women in Kibera. They narrated their perceptions regarding the role of education in development and the observation that the limited education resulted in limited outcomes in terms of finding formal employment. Instructively, the young women analysed the recent reforms in the Kenyan education system where free primary education has not been matched with increased job opportunities for young people making education seem irrelevant to the people that have it especially in the eyes of the poor Kibera community where they live. Without a job, those who were educated are lumped together with those who are not educated. When asked about what the government could do to help, one of the young women, a secondary school graduate from Kibera commented:

I would expect...they give us jobs if they have them. There are those of us who are educated but we are just there and maybe we could work and help ourselves in life. Now we are just counted with those who are not educated. Some say “so and so is educated and am not but does she no work.” If we could also be getting jobs, they could take us as examples and work hard. “So and so went to work, we should also get education so that we also get jobs” but the way we have no jobs, they do not see the reason for getting education.

Int:so you would expect your country give you...

Naema: give us jobs, open businesses, and give us money to improve our business (Naema, secondary school graduate, Kibera).

The role played by education in improving livelihoods for people in poverty is indicated by the weight placed on discussing these issues by the young people. All the young people interviewed prioritised education (by highlighting it first or second when the related question is asked) as an area that needs support if the lives of young people are to be improved. Young people identified various issues that relate to improvement of education in their communities. These included the poor quality of education in terms of lack of learning material and equipment, and a poor learning environment where children are caned. They also talked about the fact that some children from their community do not get food at home and this affects their learning.

The issue of poor access to education (in light of the fact that there were few schools in the Kibera community) explains why the many ‘out of school’ children could be seen roaming in the village during school hours, as well as the overcrowded classrooms where over 150 pupils are taught by one teacher. In addition to improving these conditions, they suggest the provision of education bursaries and scholarships as a way of improving access.

An opportunity for further training and post secondary education was clearly something that young people wanted. Those we interviewed talked about how they needed to acquire skills through training

that would enable them get employment or start their own businesses. These opportunities are lacking and need to be provided by the government.

Okay, actually like this thing of primary education, I would like the government, to sustain it. Like now, government schools around, it is said that education is free. But it's not free. Because, you pay for fees, 500 Shillings, every term. Others are told it is tuition money, they charge 20 shillings everyday. Ten shillings in the morning and another ten in the afternoon. So if you add all this money,

Int: And that is in the government schools?

Hana: Yea, there is nothing like free. There is no free education.

Even as the youth noted the government's effort to provide free basic education, they were also critical of the quality due to the increased numbers that did not match the growth in infrastructure.

Yea, we don't have enough schools.... Because like you get like in Olympic primary Schools.. They have 3 streams. And in these 3 streams, every stream has almost one hundred and twenty pupils. What do you expect? The teacher gets tired.There should be more schools so that children can have more room (Hana, secondary education, kibera)

We value having education certification as proof...

Since the Kenyan Education system is geared towards getting employment, young people said getting education to competing for jobs in the labour market was key to their identity as Kenyan citizens. Consequently, it was important for them to complete school and get certificates which symbolize educational acquisition at different levels. Therefore those who had achieved higher levels of education were more confident and positive about their status as Kenyan citizens. When asked how schooling had made her feel like a Kenyan, Hanna replied:

Hana: Actually like, I have a certificate.....That each and every Kenyan, that has attained form has. So that makes me feel that I am a Kenyan. I'm pleased when I have a certificate and you also do - there is something that relates us. Apart from that,

Int: So the kind of education that you got?

Hana: Yea

Int: And the certificate that you got, proves that you have a Kenyan education?

Hana: Schooling. Like when I was in school.... There's - We went for a cooking competition. And we were being given, these certificates by the Ministry. So at least, you see, those schools that were there, those who were there and had certificates. So at least in school, at least I got a certificate of a competition. So, I can present mine. Yet there are those that do not have..

Int: From the Ministry?

Hana: Yea, from the Ministry of [Cultural and Social Services] Yea, they [The people, who never went to school] didn't have a chance to go there.

Youth concerns on economic situation and infrastructure

The young people from both sites seemed considerably aware of the deteriorating economy of the country which they said impacted negatively on youth employment and installation of a basic infrastructure in their communities. Youth from rural site not only mentioned the contraction of roads, installation of electricity and water as well as the revival of an old airstrip that has the potential of creating jobs for young people but also took photographs of the changes they wished to see in their community.

Now, the Government should bring water here this should be able to assist. This would help us till the land that currently lies idle. One would now be able to make money out of this. They should also bring electricity (Muriuki, secondary education, Nyeri).

Additional areas of support which the government was expected to deliver included a responsive free primary education which young people from both research sites perceived as being compromised by poverty by high food prices. Hence, the recommendation to reduce the cost of food commodities to make them affordable for poor people in view of the increased inflation rates linked to the post election crisis in the country was a common feature in the interviews as noted in discussions with 20 year old Maina from Nyeri

Okay, likeThe economy, fine, economy of Kenya is high. Coz you know, like for us who live in Nyaribo. Buying a loaf of bread at 30 shillings. Then, in a house of, let's say like in a house of five members. It – does not help? Let this loaf of bread be, at least affordable. Let's say, if it was at least 15 shillings, it would be enough..... the prices of things like tea leaves have doubled, So you tend to ask yourself, this packet of tea leaves will only be used now....which means you will need another three shillings again. So the price of things should go down prices .At least things let them be affordable [Maina, secondary education, Nyeri).

Youth want to feel safe in their communities

From the two research sites, both female and male youth raised concern about the lack of proper security as a major area of support that the Government should address. Some of the young people narrated their fears about the insecurity within the local communities where the young men talked about getting mugged and the young women seemed to indicate the fear of being raped on as they went about their businesses. One young woman, 17 year old Cathrine, from Kibera talked of the dangers which girls encountered attending school late in the day that exposed her to possibilities of getting sexually abused.

I would tell them (government) to try and find a solution to these problems that are going on, and to try and make me safe, like when I leave this house to go to school at five in the evening I can feel safe to pass and go. They should only look into the my safety issue (Catharine, Secondary education, Kibera).

On the same subject, Stanley a secondary school graduate from Kibera, like most of the young people interviewed reiterates the need to provide security for all family members as one of the main citizenship entitlements.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. Now Alistair, you've been describing some of the things that make you feel that you are a good Kenyan citizen. What do you expect from your country, in terms of support? Or for that matter, your government, in terms of support?

Stanley: I think, first, it should, provide, eee..., security. For me, the family and, every, every Kenyan. Security!

The perceived link between education and work and by implication, the material poverty was apparent in the interviews with the youth both in urban and rural settings. The summary in the matrix below captures their priorities in terms of needs that needed government interventions with specific focus job creation in the context of opportunities for further education and training for enhancement of job opportunities.

Table 1: Youth Prioritization of Needs for Government Assistance by type of research site (Rural and Urban) and education levels

Educational level	Rural	Urban
Primary	1. Employment	1. Employment
	2. Start a Business/Comp schooling	2. Start a Business
		3. Complete Schooling
		4. Further education
Secondary		
	1. Employment	1. Employment
	2. Further Training	2. Security
	3. Start a Business	3. Further Training
	4. Further education	4. Corruption/ Tribalism
		5. Start a Business
		6. Good Governance

From the table, while gaining employment which may be in form of a business is viewed by youth across rural/urban divide as well as differentiated educational levels, as key to improved livelihoods. Security is also a concern especially urban youth are understood to live in contexts with higher levels of insecurity in the capital compared to the rural area. Higher levels of schooling broadened their horizons of thinking, enabling them to diversify ways of enacting their citizenship rights to enable them get out of poverty. Specifically, while those with primary schooling prioritize completing schooling as an avenue to employment, starting a business or further education, those with secondary education, want to gain further training. In addition however, they take the argument further to include eliminating obstacles to good quality citizenship like corruption tribalism, insecurity, and poor governance. Again, urban youth given their exposure to civic education from the community provide diversified answers.

Quest for democracy and call for Equal Rights and Equal Treatment

The issue for youth was not just of economic development but also of upholding tenets of democracy through the provision of equal rights. Notably, as a young nation in the early 1960s, Kenya declared that, it was to be guided by a shade of democracy referred to as Democratic African Socialism. Democratic African Socialism is based on African traditions where in terms of governance, political democracy, and social mutual responsibility are the two underlying principles (GoK, 1965: 3). In the Kenyan context, political democracy is understood as a situation where all members of a society have equal political rights and that no individual or group could be allowed to have undue influence on affairs of the state. The principle of mutual social responsibility can be understood as an extension of the African extended family to a wider community in the sense that each member of the wider community has an obligation to do the best for his/her neighbour. It is within such a Democratic African Socialism framework that Kenyans are supposed to negotiate their individual lifestyles and lives.

For instance in the life of a community, there may arise a situation where the rights of an individual conflicts with the rights of the larger community. According to the authors of Sessional Paper No. 10, Democratic African Socialism put premium on the rights and importance of the community at the expense of the individual (GoK, 1965: 4). As Mbiti has said, “I am because we are” (Mbiti, 1969). This definition of democracy is rather different from Western liberal democracy where the rights of the individual tend to be emphasised at the expense of the community (Gould, 1988: 31; McPherson, 1973: 4). Democratic African Socialism as articulated here is identifiable with *Ubuntu* (a shade) of democracy which many scholars in African affairs have argued is an appropriate framework that should inform governance in Africa (Kubow, 2007). However, it has also been argued that, while the education system in Kenya is supposed to champion Democratic African Socialism in students, in practice it encourages some sort of liberal democracy where individualism tend to be over-emphasised. This seems to happen because schools tend to emphasise competition in students rather than co-operation especially during examinations. Thus while the Kenya Government claimed to uphold Democratic African Socialism, little attention is paid in the implementation of other educational practices within Kenyan contexts. However, there are also conceptual issues related to the process of inculcating youth citizenship through the school system. For example, while the educators urge schools to encourage socio-cultural values, other advice suggests these youths who hail from different cultural and racial backgrounds should preserve their cultural heritage. The Kamunge Committee, for example, points out the double-edged nature of culture and states:

(...) in the process of change and adaptation, care should be taken to ensure that only positive aspects of cultural practices are retained or adapted with a view to enriching and developing the national culture (GOK, 1988: 6).

It is within the framework of this communal construction of African socialism and notion of a democratic nation that the youth in this study need to be located and their arguments understood. Notably, the young women used this framework to locate issues of gender equality which forms part of the common discourse in contemporary Kenya. One young woman (Hana, secondary education) used the interview to advocate equal treatment for men and women. She argued that women can do what men do better if given equal opportunity. According to her, since women are always in the process of striving to prove their capabilities they eventually are likely to outdo the men's performance. According to this young woman from Kibera one way in which the government could

support the women would be through according them equal representation with men in Parliament as starting point. Here again the language of citizenship rights comes to the fore:

I actually believe in gender equality.....Because you know, us women we can identify with suffering, we know the benefit of doing things to our level best..... So all I think, it is important for us to have equal rights.....The way it is said that women should enter parliament in a given percentage. 30%, maybe for the next time... next we will be pushing for 50%. Men 50, us, 50. You know, you start from a scratch....Then you build up (Hana, secondary education, Kibera).

While most requests of support from youth appeared to be gender neutral, one young person also saw a gender difference in the training needs of young men and women and recommended that women should be provided with traditionally feminine courses like tailoring. When Tony, an 18 year old with eleven years of schooling, was asked about what the government could do to help young men in the community, he argued ‘Work, to provide work. They should open up factories so that young people can get employed’. Girls should receive ‘tailoring related jobs’.

Some however talk of the need for more discipline, more authoritarian rather than democratic principles E.g return of caning. However as Sifuna (2000) points out while the Kenyan education system is well-placed to inculcate democratic practices, the authoritarian structures of Kenyan schools tend to encourage non-tolerance and blind unquestioning in young people which is inconsistent with the principles upon which democracy flourishes. He asserts that increased schooling *per se* is not sufficient in bringing about the required democratic inclination in society. This observation resonates with that of Wamahiu (1999) who witnessed the lack of participation by pupils in school and classroom cultures in the majority of schools in Kenya. Authoritarian pedagogies routinely use threats, verbal abuse and physical punishments, which impact negatively on young people’s relationship to democratic citizenship. Research findings from 92 schools suggest that there is a close relationship between democratic school administrative and pedagogical practices and the students’ social capabilities (see Wakhulia, 2004). It is recognised that school cultures play a central role in shaping the democratic outlooks that young people eventually acquire or do not acquire (Wakhulia, 2004)

Decision making

The right to make decisions is something which young women in our study also thought to be important, especially the right to make decisions that did not necessarily conform to social customs. Two young women in Kibera, 19 year old Mumbi with secondary schooling and Wanjiru of the same age from Nyeri for example talked about being particularly concerned about the right to make their own decisions despite strong community values and community expectations of young women. They argue that young women should be able to shape their destiny by balancing personal and community values. They illustrate their views by referring to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) that affects young women in certain communities in Kenya. Mumbi here talks about the rights that she felt she did not have as a Kenyan:

: as a Kenyan, as a girl.... I have a right to go to school, right to be married, and also right to love the person i want to I have got that right.....and also, I have got

right to choose whatever I want to do. I can not be forced to follow some cultures because my parents want me to. As a girl I must not go to be circumcised because my parents follow the culture, me I am not supposed to do that because as a Kenyan we have got some communities which follow their culture but me I can't follow them. You can follow them if they are good. Yeah, if they are good I can follow them but if they are bad they are going against my rights, I cannot follow them.

Gender specific discussions of the obligations of good citizens indicate that young women want in practice to make responsible decisions that do not put at risk their future lives as mothers or wives. Of great importance to them is hard work, having children that are planned for and therefore able to be looked after, and getting an education so that they had a source of livelihood limiting their dependence on their husbands. Here the gender assumption of government social policy was important. Catherine, who had completed secondary schooling and was living in Kibera, said,

I expect them to give them education...Let them not expect that when you get married you will depend on your husband. Let them be able to support themselves in terms of earning a livelihood.

However, increased attention is now also focused on the gendering of citizenship in Kenya. The aim of this strategy is to conscientize the young people on the added value accrued when women and men are accorded space to participate equally as allies in both the private space of the home and the public worlds of work and politics. The role of gender in acquiring citizenship status has, therefore, become a major concern mainly among women's organisations that included the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA, 1990), the Law Society of Kenya¹³ and the League of Kenya Women Voters (1992 and 1997), popularly referred to as, the League.¹⁴ That included the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA, 1990), the Law Society of Kenya¹⁵ The FIDA booklets offer basic education on voting rights and procedures as well as how to encourage and support women's inclusion in mainstream politics. These kinds of 'easy-to-read' civic education documents play a key role in persuading men and women to work together and hence model a gender cohesive citizenship for the youth. By the mid 1990s, the League had pushed the women's political agenda forward to include agitation for constitutional reforms that would embrace women's agendas, and the education of female citizens. Our evidence suggests that more work needs to be done in terms of addressing concerns of young women.

SCHOOLING, BELONGING AND CITIZENSHIP

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¹⁴ that included the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA, 1990), the Law Society of Kenya¹⁴ and the League of Kenya Women Voters (1992 and 1997), popularly referred to as, the League.

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The role of schooling in enhancing a sense of belonging both within localized and relatively less localized contexts was a major theme in the context of youth political awareness and action. The young people we interviewed living in slum areas revisited the discussion on the subject of citizenship by putting it in the Kenyan context. They outline the various characteristics of Kenyan citizens in comparison to those of nationals of neighbouring countries like Uganda, Tanzania and Ruanda. Their comments drew attention to what it meant for them to be born and bred in Kenya, having their birth registered by obtaining a birth certificate and what it meant to identify with the Kenyan national flag. Some of the young men in the urban setting pointed out that being a Kenyan citizen meant having a mother and father or at least one of them, born a Kenyan, and getting a Kenyan birth certificate. Further, the youth were aware that a person could apply to become a Kenyan citizen after seven years of residence in the country.

Young people's schooling experience clearly had a way of making them have a sense of belonging and being respected as individuals. In total, sixteen young people gave answers on this issue (six with primary schooling and the rest with secondary education). However, differences emerged based on their levels of schooling. While all those (except one) with primary schooling felt that schooling had no effect on their sense of belonging, those who had completed secondary school had contrary views on the matter. The following quotes from seventeen year old Linnet with primary schooling and twenty year old Musa illustrate this contrast;

Int: Is there anything you were taught or anything you did in school that makes you feel like you belonged, that you were or are a Kenyan?

Linnet: Nothing

Musa: Loyalty pledge, national anthem, all those things were being done so that you grow up as a Kenyan..... if you hear the national anthem of Egypt you will not even notice it you know, but even if you are in china or wherever and you hear "on God of all creation"(The Kenyan national anthem) you will know that is mine, it is my country.....so there are certain things you did in school that make you feel like a Kenyan.

They highlighted subjects like history, geography and social education and ethics as avenues through which their feelings as Kenyan citizens were aroused. The moving stories of the Kenyan historical struggle for independence from colonial bondage, recurrent school activities like singing the national anthem and raising the National flag were the examples of schooling experiences that played a major role in creating a sense of citizenship in them. Catherine felt that schooling had helped her feel like a Kenyan because she 'learnt, the way we got our independence. It has influenced me a lot - the way they shed their blood for us so as to gain our freedom, independence'.

Another way through which the schooling process facilitated citizenship identity was the school culture that tried to equalize all students by treating them in a similar manner. The young people living in slum areas that we interviewed reported that the school process which subjected all students to the same rules, learning and social environment made feel that they are all Kenyans, because according to Athman:

because there in school most of us are refugees here, in our school.....Not all of us are Kenyans. You can see someone from Japan, someone from here in Rwanda, Somali, Somalis are the most people there..... Because the teachers treat us the same. They can't say aah you are a Ugandan, you are not supposed to be here. the students were more friendly to me even if I told them I'm a Ugandan am not a Kenyan.

When the interviewer pointed out that Athman was a Kenyan, Athman argued:

Yes but...you know you...people say in Shago(rural home). Ushago, where is shago, and you say Uganda. So they say you are not a in history we say, you have to stay in a country for more than five years, Kenyan. I told them in order to be a citizen of than country. So me I have stayed here for more than five years, so I'm a Kenyan.

Education values and self worth

The young women and men in this study articulated other benefits of schooling which included self worth, enhancement of social relations and behaviour, elicitation of respect in the community among others. In the discourse of self worth, we again witness Naema from Kibera, identifying schooling as a major contributor to the acquisition of values of self respect she linked her ability to distinguish jobs she could or could not take. For example, she was categorical she would not take any jobs that degraded her. Further, she claimed that because she had been to school, she would never behave in a manner that violated other people's rights. When asked to expound on these claims regarding the role of education in her life, she commented:

Education helped me. If I did not study, I could be maybe a street kid, I could be maybe doing things am not meant to do in this country and it's not good.

Int: like what things?

Naema: prostitution, maybe to kidnap people (pause) so education helped me.

Int: did it help you in voting?

Naema: yes it helped me in voting because I would not know how to vote, talking with people,.... I would not have known how to talk to small children , old people,.... I would not be able. We were taught how to talk to adults to read, to maybe read to people who don't know anything.

Wanjiru, another young woman from Nyeri who had completed secondary schooling highlighted the fact that schooling instilled in people discipline as a value that was instrumental in ensuring that a person achieved something in life.

Int: This idea of you going to school, would you point to such particular things and say, see at least I have gained from going to school?

Wanjiru: I have gained something...because as I compared myself with others who didn't go to secondary school, we are a bit different.

Int: In what aspects? What are the things that differentiate you from those who did not go to school....those who have gone to school as you put it.

Wanjiru: Maybe behaviours

Int: How do the others behave different from you?
Wanjiru: Some they lack discipline, they are in-disciplined

Table 2 provides a summary of the benefits accrued from schooling in relation to citizenship consciousness and rights as provided by the youth we interviews.

Table 2: Citizenship outcomes of schooling for rural and urban youth by educational Level

Schooling Outcome	Rural		Urban	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Self esteem/self respect		+		+
Sense of belonging		+		+
Discipline		+		
Exposed to civic education		+	+	+
Get job and pay taxes				+
Equalizing effect			+	+
Qualifications for job/ respect	+			+
Service to others				+

The table indicates differences in the perceptions of citizenship outcomes of schooling between youth of rural/urban settings and of differing educational levels. It is noteworthy that higher levels of schooling were associated with value related outcomes (not just economic) that were accrued by youth who had higher educational levels in both rural and urban sites.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S VOICES OF CONCERN: *Can government listen to us?*

Out of the 40 young people (female and male) we interviewed, twenty-two of them - mainly those with secondary schooling emphasized the need for government to listen to voices of youth because, they argued, the future of their communities depended on them. Further, recognition of young people’s needs by the Government was considered important to motivate young people to work hard in improving the quality their lives because they would then feel a sense of belonging as Kenyan citizens. The changes, brought about by being listened to, would manifest themselves in positive outcomes such as reduced youth violence and conflict with Government as well as reduced crime rates. Here is Yasin:

Yeah it [if the government listened to youths] will make a difference..... cos they will listen to our complaints.. and if they will listen to our complaints, there will not be cases of theft, because theft comes from these young youths..... because if youths were assisted, and succeed in their plans, there is nothing we will have to harden.,,,, if it is voting when the day comes, you go to vote to your preferred candidate.after that you will go back to your work. If it’s so, the government has listened to our complaints, it has opened free institutions, you go to choose which course you want to learn, from there you go straight away to employment. You have got no time to collaborate with those people who doesn’t want to do what you have to do, you see? So you go there, and if you leave there with a positive mind, you leave there straight away to your

room,.you've got no time to stand you and wait for somebody who passes there.you squeeze another persons head! and steal from him what he has earned from his sweat? If the government will listen to the youths, they will be building the nation. But without listening to their complaints, they will be worsening everything.and I'm telling you, those elders cannot control youth to do what they want, you see? Once they have made their decisions, we want this to happen, it is going to happen not unless they use the government to shoot and kill. ...but if youth decides that's the way it will be. They don't know care whether to die or they are alive, they have to strike their deal, they will do it. If it's to bring a town down, within one day it will be, no matter what...not unless the government hear from them, and make their duties to them, anything gonna be alright. And if the government warns, and they be given from the government, anything is going to happen in a normal way without whatever what has been happening which has been in a violent way.it will be in a good way, but if they want things to happen in quarrels, when it comes to time of voting it happen the way it happened, it will be (Yasin, secondary education, Kibera).

According to 21 year old Hana the government was already using other young people (for example, local media personalities involved in drama) as well as her own brother (who had decided to vie for civic and parliamentary seats in order to address the needs of young people. She argued that this would be one effective way young people could have their voices heard. This approach served two purposes: First, the government would use people who understood the needs of young people by virtue of them being young themselves to voice their needs and second, to motivate and encourage young people to be politically involved as a result of seeing one of their own participating in decision making at a national level. Hana here replies to a question about whether young Kenyans around her have shown any interest in taking control of things such as participating in politics or being united in what they wanted to say:

Hana: They want their voices to be heard. Also there are these organizations of political parties that are supporting young people to join politics, they are young people, you see they want to express themselves. They want their voices to be heard. So me I think, with young people, actually, have an impact, because they know how we feel.

POLITICS AND POVERTY: THE LESSONS LEARNT

Looking at the evidence presented here, it is legitimate to ask whether there is any evidence that the Kenya government has achieved her social goals regarding youth citizenship. In a word, have these educational initiatives and strategies helped Kenyan youth to develop their potential and to identify themselves as Kenyan citizens? Is there any evidence that the educational system, designed to be inclusive, over-ridden social and ethnic divisions, and succeeded in binding young people living in poverty into society? Has education help integrate those who by definition live at the margins of society, who have little to their name in terms of material possessions or income, who have only dipped into the educational system, rather than had a sustained career in it? To what extent have young people learnt about their rights and entitlements as members of a modern Kenyan society, and are able to think about even if they cannot also perform civic duties and responsibilities?

The Kenya government has strived to design a common curriculum since independence, with only a few minor changes, made occasionally to the structure of the schooling system. In general curriculum planning has emphasised the development of two types of abilities and values which were to be promoted. Firstly, schooling should develop young people's skills that would allow them to satisfy their basic needs as they graduate into adulthood, especially the ability to provide food, health, and shelter for themselves. The spill-over benefits from such individual activities were expected to bring about national economic development.. What is not clear is whether the education encouraged the sort of learning that could help youth develop skills and vocational and entrepreneurial that would enable them to become economically independent, consequently reduce their own poverty making them feel they have a reasonably equal share in the resources of their country. The evidence from young people suggests the youth yearned for:

- (i) State intervention in terms of free vocational skill training that will guarantee jobs and move them away from crime as a major source of income generation.
- (ii) Enhanced security that would guarantee the communities' freedom from fear and violence
- iii) Learning of Social Education and Ethics which had been withdrawn from secondary education.

Although policy makers trusted the formal school curriculum to inculcate appropriate values to young people, some doubts have appeared in the thinking of the youth as to their efficacy. Our research seems to suggest that civic education has a weak effect on school age children –perhaps because it is not examined nationally¹⁶

Our study suggests that some young people living in slum areas have knowledge of their rights as citizens if their community and take up responsibility as residents who care for their environment. Others try and practice leadership, community involvement, and want to get involved in local politics. However, the fear of violence that characterised recent political activities in the country was not lost to many of the young peoples.

There was also a perceived fear that youth from a particularly ethnic-religious group will find themselves and their cultures marginalised in formal education, a sense of exclusion that carries forward into the economic sphere and leads to social and economic disadvantage. It is important to encourage youth to identify themselves not just with their ethnic communities but with national and global citizenship. This calls for educators to try and find out how an education system could be used effectively to help young people to develop positive multiple identities simultaneously (Ross, 2007).

Our data also suggest that the young people we interviewed were less trapped in ethnic communities than those they describe in politics, but that they were not convinced that the government was helping them. As Kenyan citizens, they had views about what needed to be done and how it would help.

¹⁶ In Zambia out of school civic education project reportedly changed the knowledge dimension of the participants rather than their behaviour (World Development Report 2007, 174). Arguably, this type of knowledge that is devoid of the 'how' and 'why' seems to have had little impact on young people's active citizenship and the same may be said of Kenyan civic education among the youth. It is one thing to 'talk about' citizenship or urge people to act as true citizens and quite another thing to role model for young people how exactly they can practise true citizenship.

There was a clear concern for the improvement of education within their communities for young people like themselves:

(vi) The government should improve the education of people living in impoverished environments by providing bursaries, more schools, and teachers, in order to enable them complete their education and increase their chances of getting employment which is the yard stick for a better life.

(vii) Free training in vocational subjects was another area of focus that would enable young people start their own businesses or get formal employment. This strategy was particularly appropriate for young people who have completed school but could not be gainfully engaged because they lacked relevant skills.

As part of recommendation to their government, the young people in our study living often in acute poverty urged the Kenyan government to listen to them. They suggest that they can provide advice and insights into what is needed and what will keep them out of trouble, particularly crime. These recommendations by the young people need to be viewed in the context of the young population that continues to grow in Kenya, with education appearing to make little observable or tangible impact on the development of citizenship among their age group (15-29 year olds). This group seems to be increasingly running out of survival options as demonstrated empirically by a recent survey by Centre for the Study of Adolescence on the state of the youth in Kenya which found that more than half of all the convicted criminals in the country's jails were young people between 16 and 25 years (Daily Nation Aug. 18, 2007). Another survey carried out by the BBC on ten cities worldwide, and involving more than 3,000 youth in the 15-17 age group found that 81% of the youth living in Nairobi would readily emigrate to other countries if opportunities arose for them to make a better future (ibid). It is not clear that youth are functional citizens who are prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of their country. Instead, the lack of recognition of young people's political agency and opportunities to exercise that agency is forcing them to take up negative social roles, which may include joining gangs that participate in criminal activities such as robbery and political violence. Some people have argued that job or hooliganism behaviour among some of the Kenyan youth maybe a justifiable expression of feeling let down and left out of social and political participation. Notably, youth tend to:

spend half their lives being lectured on the importance of education. They are urged to break their necks to get good grades. They do so. Then they step out into the world anticipating the employment windfall and finding nothing" (*Daily Nation*, Aug. 20, 2007).

The findings regarding youth citizenship emerging in this study reflects the focus of the various government reports, commissions and strategies that suggest that the direction of young Kenyan's lives in terms of their dreams, aspirations, expectations, hopes, anxieties, fears and concerns is somewhat confused. This is because the existing and official avenue through which bright futures are guaranteed has proved to be unreliable for most young people. Education and its outcomes like school certificates have been unable to be helpful for most young people who have some basic schooling but no specialised employable skills or minimal schooling due to poverty related barriers.

Despite the commitment by the Kenyan government and the CSOs to promote a Kenyan citizenship through mutual social responsibility, the voices of the young people in this study suggest that although they are politically aware, (in fact they identified high costs for political involvement), although they can articulate quite clearly what education has given them in terms of engagement with the project of citizenship, their powerlessness is clear. They have the ideas, the motivation to help

themselves, the aspiration to make a difference to their communities, but they have no power. They wish to be consulted and only see gain in that process for both themselves and the Kenyan government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper reports on the data collected for the project *Youth Gender and Citizenship: An inter-generational study of educational outcomes and poverty*, which is part of the RECOUP programme of research (2005-10) funded by the Department for International Development in the UK. Neither DFID nor any of the partner institutions are responsible for any of the views expressed here.

We would like to thank members of the RECOUP team Sara Ruto, John Mugo, John Nderitu, Francis Likoye, Purity Mumbi based in the Kenyatta University, Kenya and for those young people living in the specific villages we visited in Kibera and Nyeri and their village elders and NGOs who were prepared to give us interviews. The views expressed here are those of the authors alone.

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