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Role of Communities in Marginalised Girls' Education: A Case of Kilifi County, Kenya

Charity Mukiri Limboro
Department of Educational Management, Policy & Curriculum Studies,
Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Abstract
A huge body of research evidence indicates that community engagement is a critical factor that influences the success of individual students and the school environment itself. Undoubtedly, girls in marginalised areas are systematically denied access to education. This paper explored communities support for marginalised girls to access, remain in school and learn as an empowerment tool in Kilifi County, Kenya. Kilifi is one of the poorest counties in Kenya with very high illiteracy levels especially for girls and women. Phenomenological research design was used. The study was predominantly qualitative with a sample of 33 adults and30 children (24 girls;6 boys). Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, informal discussions and community mapping. Data analysis entailed preliminary analysis during field work and post-field guided by analytical questions. The finding indicated lack of communities' concerted effort towards girls' education; the wealth and resources are still largely controlled by men who rarely used it to educate girls; the Community Conversation (CC) strategy had not been able to marshal the community to mobilise community resources to support girls' education; resources such as selling local liquor and farming, are a deterrent to girls education. The paper recommends among other things that local communities should be sensitised to mobilise local resources such as sand, limestone and bricks to support girls' education; there should be dialogue targeting boys and men so that they support girls' education and the local administration should enforce laws banning funeral discos and use of girls in selling local liquor.

Keywords: Access, Learn, Marginalised, Resources, Empowerment and Community Conversation Strategy

INTRODUCTION
The importance of girls' education cannot be gainsaid. Educating girls has astounding benefits.Globally, investment in girls'education is associated with improved health, economic growth and improved life chances for the girl, the family and overall prosperity in the society. Education is an empowerment tool thatenable girls make informed decisions. An educated girl has a higher self-esteem and is more likely to fight for her rights in patriarchal dominated societies especially in Africa. An educated girl is more likely to marry later and have fewer children who are healthier [1]. Furthermore, an educated mother is twice more likely to send her children to school [2] thus breaking the cycle of illiteracy.UNESCO [2] indicates that an extra one year of schooling has the potential toincrease a girl's future earnings by up to a fifth. Higher income will improvelivelihoods at households, communities, and countries out of poverty in the long run.

Despite the benefits associated with girls' education, several factors have colluded to somehow systematically exclude marginalised girlsfrom schooling. Processes and forces beyond institutions of learning affect girls' education. School communities where girls reside have a major influence on the education and life chances of girls. In the context of this paper, school community includes the parents, families, local residents and organisations that have a stake in the school success. Communities have the potential to support education by ensuring that learners attend school, are safe, remain in school and are mentally prepared to learn.In addition, communities contribute the much needed resources, materials and labour to facilitate running of schools. Parents and guardians are mandated to ensure that learners are in good health, have school requirements such as uniform, booksand have their homework done. On the flipside, there are strong community-based barriers that impede on efforts to acquire education more so for girls from marginalsied areas.

In Africa, cultural norm and practices, povertyand other barriers negatively impact on the participation of girls in education. A number of studieshave highlighted parental preference for educating boys than girls [3;4]. Early marriages are widespread in some parts of Kenya, either as cultural practices whereby girls as young as 12 are forced into marriage or for economic reasons through which slightly older girls are married off for their bride-wealth at the expense of acquiring education. These beliefs are reinforced by a patrilineal inheritance system

whereby men inherit property such as land locking out girls.

Poverty is one of the most significant factors that determine whether a girl can access and complete her education. Research consistently reinforce that girls faced with multiplebarriers such as low family income, residing in Arid and Semi-Arid (ASALs) regions are worst affected in terms of access to and completion of education. In Kenya, despite re-introduction of Free Primary Education some families cannot afford other costs such as: examination fees; school feeding expenses, parent teachers (PTA) fees, stationery, uniform, and other hidden costs. This is particularly true amongst poor families in the ASALs and the informal settlements affecting more girls than boys because if resources are scarce, it is usually the girl that is drawn out of school before the boy [5].

Insecurity and violence also inhibits girls from accessing and completing education. In ASAL areaschildren are often forced to walk long distances to school placing them at an increased risk of violence especially girls[6]. According to World bank estimates, approximately 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to or at school every year[7]. Another key obstacle to access and retention of girls in schools is the high incidence of teenage pregnancies (WERK 3; 8,)

In the past two decades, African countries have made remarkable strides in increasing access to basic education since the Education for all goals were adopted in 2000. UNESCO [9] indicates that primary school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 75% between 1999 and 2012, leading to an estimated 144 million of children joining primary education. However, despite this tremendous achievement, there are still large numbers of children out of school in Africa. Reference [9] shows that an estimated 34 million children are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa and of these number, 18.6 million are girls. Most recently, UNESCO [10] indicate that about 258 million children and youth are out of school with girls facing greater obstacles. According to [10] report, more girls (9 million) of primary school age will never enrol compared to about 3 million boys. The report paints a grim picture forsub-Saharan Africa, where 4 million girls will never see the inside of a classroom compared to 2 million boys. This high percentage of out-of-school girls is not surprising given that girls continue to face numerous barriers to education.In Kenya national enrollment in primary education stands at 51% boys and 49% girls. However, gender disparities still persist in certain marginalised regions especially in the Arid and Semi-Arid regions in favour of boys.

To improve school enrolment, retention and completion rate there is need for concerted effort from all educationstakeholders. The government of Kenya re-introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 triggered a national rise in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from 88% in 2002 to 103% in 2003. There was a 10% increase in primary school enrolment translating to a whopping 1.3 million children who would have otherwise never set a foot into a classroom registering in schools across the country. The enrolment rose tremendously from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003 (11)

According to Ogola[12] and UNESCO [13] more girls joined primary education schools with the introduction of FPE suggesting that they were more affected by the barriers to schooling than boys However, schools were ill prepared to cope with the huge enrolment. There was an acute shortage of qualified teachers and physical facilities such classrooms which lead to overcrowding leading to decline in quality of primary education [14; 15]. The Economic Survey of 2011 [16] indicated that only 59 % of the FPE beneficiaries who enrolled in 2003 completed class eight in the year 2010 due to either repetition or drop outs of which majority were girls. Ultimately Kenya missed to achieve the MDG 2 target of universal primary education by 2015.

On a positive note, the NER gender parity Index (GPI)for primary education in Kenya has been improving overtime. Gender Parity Index (GPI) based on enrolment increased from 0.95 in 2000 to 0.98 in 2013 and that on GER from 0.97 in 2000 to 1.01 in 2013. GPIs on completion rates have exhibited similar trends going up to 0.96 in 2013, from 0.92 in 2000 [9]. However, these national data conceals regional disparities where girls from rural and ASALs still find difficulties in participating in primary education.

Ordinarily, the responsibility of providing formal education is bestowed on the school management. However, this limited perspectiveignores influencesoutside school that have a bearing on education process or learning. This is why community engagement and involvement in schools is such an important aspect of the educational process. Research shows that the level of parental involvement is associated with academic success. Several studies,[17; 18] have identified parent involvement as a critical factor affecting the success of individual students and the school environment in general. It is linked to children's improved self-esteem and academic performance[18]. Ross [19] opines that parental engagement has a bearing on retention and attendance. Nonetheless, the pivotal contribution byteachers, parents, and the community to student success is generally overlooked. Henderson and Mapp[20] in a 2002 research reviewdetermined that there is a significant positive

correlation between school, family, and community involvement and student success.

Further, the roles of community leaders like local chiefs in mobilizing and sensitizing the communities to educate girls cannot be ignored. Certainly, community members collaborating with the schools on the ground can guarantee safety of the children on the way to school, within the community and can provide resources to schools through initiatives such as fund raising and any other support that contributes to student resilience and success in schools.

Community engagement in school activities, such as school management has been noted to influence participation girls in education. Regrettably, in Kenya, there is poor participation of parents in school activities leave alone school management [21]. Nevertheless, when parents, especially mothers, sit on the school management committee they are able to influence decision making relating to enhanced participation of girls in schooling. Given the scarcity of knowledge on this subject the present study presented an opportunity to explore among other things the level of involvement of women in school management committees and the impact this was making in improving the participation of girls in education frommarginalised communities in Kenya.

This paper is based on data from WasichanaWoteWasome (WWW) (LetAll Girls Learn) project funded by DfID, second qualitative study on the girl in the community. The study focused on answering the broad question: "To what extent do communities support and empower marginalised girls to access, stay in school and learn?"According to WWW Theory of Change the activities addressing the Girl in the Community aimed at changing the society within which the girl lives to be more cognisant of and supportive toward girls' education. The activities included community dialogue and awareness, enrolment campaigns and resource mobilisation.This study considers the position of the community as a powerful determinant of girls' schooling chances.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a phenomenologicaldesign which is premised on how people put together the phenomena they experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and develop a worldview.It assumes commonality in human experience and focus on "meaning-making" as the essence ofhuman experience [22]. The essence is the core meaning mutually understood through a phenomenoncommonly experienced. In this Study, *"the girl in the community"* is the phenomenon. The design enabled the researchers to gain access to individuals' life-worlds, which is their world of experience; it iswhere the community's consciousness of girls' *education, empowerment and marginalisation* exists. Questions and observations, therefore, aimed at drawing out individual experiences and perceptions of the community support for girls' education. Researchers immersed themselves in communities for one week conducting in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions and community walkabouts that were considered ideal methods for collecting phenomenological data. Phenomenological studies yield in-depth information about individuals' life-worlds and the invariant structures of individuals' experiences which provide rich description and a "vicarious experience" of being there for the reader of the report. In this study, the data yielded through the use of diverse techniques helped to reconstruct a holistic picture of the context in which the girl child operates, and facilitated understanding of whether the community is indeed empowering or further marginalising girls.

The study was conducted in two locales in Kilifi County that represented rural (Kilifi I) and peri-urban (Kilifi II) communities. The target population for this study comprised of 2 schools and the 2 communities around the school. Further, the study focused on the various categories of informants outlined below:

i. The Community Conversation groups (members and facilitators),
ii. Girls (Out of school Girls, at risk of dropping out, cohort, enrolled, re-enrolled, whose families benefit from cash transfer, benefitting from Back to School Kits (BTSKs),
iii. Boys (Out of school, at risk of dropping out, enrolled, re-enrolled),
iv. Community leaders,
v. Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs),
vi. Implementing partners,
vii. Community elders.
viii. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organisation (FBOs).

Informant Categories, Sampling Criteria and Sample Size

Sampling strategies in qualitative research are largely determined by the purpose of the study. The aim of sampling in qualitative research is to identify specific groups of people who hold characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the phenomena being studied [23] In this way, one identifies informants that are expected to enable enriched exploration of attitudes and aspects of behaviour relevant to the research [24] This study adopted the maximum variation sampling criteria rather than homogenous sampling. Patton [25]) defines maximum variation sampling as a criterion where the researcher attempts to study a phenomenon by seeking out settings or persons that represent the greatest differences in that phenomenon. The participants are sampled based on

particular predetermined criteria in order to cover a range of constituencies [26]. In this study, community conversation (CC) groups, girls, boys, community leaders, community facilitators (CFs), community health workers/ volunteers (CHWs/CHVs), CBos/FBOs are the categories. Table 1 shows the informants categories, sampling criteria and proposed sample.

Table 1: Informant Category, Sampling Criteria and Proposed Sample

	Informant Category	Sampling Criterion	Proposed Sample
1	Community Conversation (CC) groups	Purposive sampling based on: - activity levels of the CCs - mapped out of school girls - prevalence of risk of dropping out/out of school	2 per community
2	Community Facilitators (CFs)	Convenient sampling from the CC	2 per community (1 per CC)
3	Girls and Boys-, girls & boys at risk of dropping out, Cohort girls, enrolled girls & boys, re-enrolled girls & boys, girls whose families received cash transfer, Girls benefiting from BTSK	Convenient sampling within a community (corresponding to a CC) based on the lists provided by implementing partners	2 girl from each category and 2 boys for applicable categories per community (obtained from lists)
4	Community elders	Purpose sampling with the aid of CFs	2 per community (from both gender)
5	Community Leaders (administrative)	Purpose sampling with the aid of CFs	1 per community
6	CBO/FBO	Referral sampling within the community of those that deal with education	1 per community
7	CHV or CHW	Purposively pick the CHV or CHW	1 from each community
9	Implementing partners	Take the geographic lead	1 Geographic lead

After sampling, the actual sample size for this study was 63 informants as shown in Table

Table 2. Summary of Informants Reached per Community

Tool	Informants category	Kilifi I	Kilifi II
KII	GIRLS a). Cohort	1	1
KII	b). Solar Lamp		
	c). BTSK Beneficiary	2	2
	d). CT Beneficiary		
	e). RE-Enrolled	2	2
	f). At risk of dropping out	3	2
	g). Drop Out	2	2
	h). Never Enrolled	1	1
	BOYS a). RE-Enrolled	2	2
	b). Drop Out	1	1
KII	Community Elder	2	1
	Community Leader	1	1
	Community Health Worker	1	1
	(CBO) / (FBO)	1	1
	Community Facilitator (CF)	1	1
	Implementing Partner	1	1
FGD	CC Group	12	11
Total		**33**	**30**

Data Recording, Transcription and Analysis

Before data collection commenced, informants' informed consent was sought. The researcher was considered as the main instrument for data collection in this qualitative study. Consequently, all researchers and their assistants did on-going analysis of data during field work.Upon coming back from the field, electronically recorded interviews and FGDs were transcribed in the active voices that clearly captured the views and perspectives of the informants. Each transcription was carefully analyzed based on analytical questions. Time was taken to read through the transcriptions, make reflections and identify data that could speak to the objectives of this study.Qualitative data obtained through interviews (for the various categories of girls and boys, community facilitators, community leaders, community and faith-based organizations, implementing partners, community healthworkers and volunteers), focus group discussions for community conversation groups and community walk about was analysed manually and triangulated – compared and contrasted across the two communities. This was followed by thematic analysis, to answer the broad research question.

RESULTS AND DICUSSIONS

Communities' understanding of the transformative potential of formal education

Community's perception of the benefits of formal education has a bearing on whether children would be taken to school, retained and supported to complete. Triangulated data from community leaders, girls,

boys and community conversation facilitators indicated the value that Kilifi I and II communities attached to education. Formal education was perceived as a gateway to good life or a weapon to break the vicious cycle of poverty due to perceived monitory and social benefits associated with formal education. In the voices of the leaders interviewed, education transforms lives of the recipient, the family and the community at large. There was a general agreement from all the informants that education benefitted both boys and girls and that a few examples were drawn from the two communities to attest to this. There was a mention of two teachers, a shop keeper and a female nurse who were role models in the communities. However, beyond personal benefits there was a conviction that educated girls supported their families and siblings more than the boys as shown in the conversation with a female community leader:

> **R: What is the importance of educating a girl?**
> **I:** Educating a daughter is like educating the whole family. This is like light. It will illuminate from the house to the kitchen. It is wealth to the family.
> **R**: Why do you say that?
> **I:** You see, educated girls not only help themselves but also their families and the community. And I say that the girls who are educated do much better than men. I am an example. Myself and my daughters too. They not only help their family, but the community at large. That is a benefit to the country.

Similar sentiments were echoed by other community leaders. For instance, another leader argued that boys don't help much after marriage; *I would say that a boy child might not help us a lot. When he gets married, he forsakes his parents and only takes care of his wife and children* (Community leader, Kilifi II).

On their part, interviewed girls were of the opinion that education would enable them to be self- reliant and lead a good life as indicated in their isolated voices; '*I will have good life, my own place to live; my life will be successful;I will get a good job, I will be independent' (Re-enrolled Girls interview, Kilifi I &II).*

Boys were not left out in highlighting the value of education. They too perceived education as a vehicle to better life. One boy explained as such: *I want to study up to the university so that I can have a good life, I will have my own money; so that I can be independent and take care of my needs. I will have my own place to live… I want to have a good life* (Boy interview, Kilifi I).

Both boys and girls looked at 'good life' in terms of sources of livelihood. That is personal income; good job, be self-reliant, financial independence and financial freedom that would accrue as a result of getting good salaried jobs.

It is interesting to note that despite the many acclaimed benefits associated with formal education worldwide such improved health and hygiene; and reduced child mortality what came out from this case study as the benefit of formal education was economic empowerment.

Community's attitude towards girls' education

Contrary to the informants' perception about benefits of education, there were divided opinions in regard to community's attitude towards girls' education. A community conversation facilitator in Kilifi II argued that support for girl child education in the community was still low as the community viewed girls as a commodity. In addition, some informants were of the opinion that some community members were not supportive of girls' education from the family level:

> First at the family level, there is no push. Parents are not pushing hard enough to encourage the girl to learn unlike the boys (Female Community elder, Kilifi II).
> Girls are ever getting pregnant and the mothers do not care much. After delivering, they do not care much to take them back to school. For example, there is this girl who was in Form 4 and after she got a baby the father sent her to the village in Taita without assisting her to prepare for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education(KCSE) (Female Community Elder Kilifi I).

Further, evidence from the researchers' experience indicated that there were many school age children out of school in both communities (community walk abouts). During the one week field work, many school age girls and boys were observed just loitering around in the villages, market place fetching water, or engaged in 'bodaboda' (motor bike) business away from school. This observation was corroborated by one community leader who said:

> There are so many girls who have never been to school. Though I may not spot specific ones; but if you go finding out in the villages they are there; even if right now many people are saying many children are in school… but if you check keenly many of

> them are out of school (Male community leader, Kilifi I).

Interviews with some girls and community leaders indicated instances of gender discrimination in regard to sending boys and girls to school. It was reported that some parents preferred educating boys than girls:

> Girl education has been a challenge in this community. You find that in a family both (boys and girls) are taken to school but, years later if you compare their progress, you will find that the girl has stagnated or dropped out. This is because the boy is always given the first priority or support to remain in school. There is no push for the girl child education (A female leader, Kilif II).
>
> Girl education is not a priority in this community. Some parents say that they will only educate boys so that they will support in future. They say there is no need of educating girls because they will get married and leave the home to support the family where they marry (Female community leader, Kilifi II)

These sentiments by the community leaders were supported by girls who pointed out that there were some parents who withdrew their daughters from school in favour of boys; *my aunt has withdrawn her daughter from school while the boys continue with school. My uncle too does not believe in any benefits of educating a girl* (Girl interview Kilifi II).On her part, a girl from Kilifi I explained, *there are some girls who are removed from school by their parents. They say that there is no need to educate girls. I know of some girls from Mtwapa… some are married off. These girls are not able to come back to school*.

Similar sentiments about girls being withdrawn from school were expressed by a community elder in Kilifi II. She observed, *I would say that there are cases of girls who have been withdrawn from school by their parents. A case in hand is one girl whom we rescued; the parent had withdrawn her and taken her to Mombasa to work as a house help.* (Community elder KilifiII*).*

The study further noted that even when girls and boys were attending school, they were not treated the same at home in regard to division of house hold chores as exemplified by a girl who reported that division of house hold chores was heavy on girls hence robbing them time to do private studies: *When it came to the division of labour at the household, girls are given a lot of chores like cooking, fetching water, washing utensils unlike the boys. This means they have no time to do their homework (*Girl interview, Kilifi I). This point of view was supported by a community leader form Kilifi II who pointed out that girls are given so many responsibilities such that they don't have sufficient time to study.

How communities value education in terms of supporting girls to go to school and remaining in school?

Kilifi I and II communities used various approaches to ensure girls access education. Evidently, re-entry policy for the teenage mothers was being implemented as evidenced by a number of teen mothers in schools. Enrolment and re-enrolment campaigns were also used as a vehicle to map out of school children for possible enrollment or re-enrollment as demonstrated in the excerpts:

> We use monthly meetings to identity those who have not gone to school and follow up with families. We use the 13 CHWs who lead in the villages. They collect data and present it during our meetings. (Male CBO leader, Kilifi I).
>
> I visit the school regularly and we have put measures that have improved enrollment. Like this year, 40 girls enrolled to the school. There have been seven dropouts this year but I am happy that we managed to return 3 back to school (Female CHW, Kilifi II).

Some of the beneficiaries of BTSK girls interviewed talked of being encouraged to learn by leaders in the community; *they tell us to 'read'(learn) so that we have better lives in future because we are poor children.* In addition, the administrative arm of the government (Chief's office) reportedly sensitised and counselled girls who drop out school into re-enrolling. *At times we try to call them in our office to counsel them. The community also tries to rehabilitate them and return them to school, though I will point out that not all of them obey our summon (Female leader, KilifiII).* Further, education and specifically girls education was also said to be regular topic during the chiefs' barazas:

> I was also just recently in a meeting to discuss early pregnancies among school children. We discussed many things amongst them how to care for our female children especially the young ones so

> that return to school (Female Community Elder, Kilifi II).
>
> We also create awareness in barazas. We also use public barazas to educate parents and the girls themselves on the need for education. We mostly target girls who are below 18 years not to drop out ofschool. We inform them that it is a crime to be out school and they can be arrested (Male community leader, Kilifi I).

In Kilifi I community, it was learnt that boys and girls from poor households were supported through fundraising or by linking them up with development partners for support to enable transition to secondary or university education as exemplified in the excerpts below:

> The pupils who come from poor households are given support when they perform well in school to progress to the next level. We connect them with organizations and government institutions that can give bursaries and other support. So far we have supported 3 girls from my village. We do not have specific data but support for education is available (Male CBO leader, Kilifi I).
>
> Sometimes, for example when a child is from a poor household, we invite the community and stakeholders to fundraise for such children. We organize this as stakeholders in the community… especially university cases. We have assisted about six cases so far (Male community Leader, Kilifi II).

Conversely, data from the focus group discussions revealed, that there wasn't any concerted effort by the community 'per se' towards supporting girls' education at the primary school level as depicted in the excerpt below:

> **R: In this community, how does the community support girls' education?**
>
> **MR**: There is communal support available. I think it is only at individual level. Each parent supports education for his/her children (boy or girl).
>
> **B:** Yes!! Everybody struggles on his own to educate his/her children.
>
> **L:** We don't yet have a collective approach, but at individual level or family level, we try. We pay fees. (Community Conversation FGD, Kilifi II).

Notably, there were pockets of individuals especially women who had come together in groups and were reportedly working very hard to ensure that their sons and daughters access education. Many female parents and guardians who included grandmothers were mentioned as key supporters of girls' education in terms of attending school meetings, looking after or taking care of their grandchildren while girls attend school, paying school levies, uniform, books and pens. There was a special case where one teen mother (Kilifi II) who explained that her grandparents had not only re-enrolled her to school but were paying fees for the great grandchild aged 6 years who was in the Kindergarten 'They pay for my child's kindergarten. And the clothing also'.

There was also a special case of a neighbour in Kilifi I who was providing free milk to a teen girl's child (re-enrolled girl interview, Kilifi I). Nevertheless, it was reported that the re-enrolled teen mothers encountered several challenges in their pursuit of formal education. These included: lack of someone to take care of the baby; baby support; food and lack of personal necessities. These coupled with heavy household chores hampered their quest to pursue formal education.

How does the community participate in school management and decision-making?

Interviews with different informants indicated that there was no direct evidence of community participation in school management or decision making. In fact, none of the parents of the interviewed children was a member of the school Board of Management (BOM). However, at the family level, parents were reported to be involved in school activities such as attending school meetings and helping in construction and provision of facilities such as desks. Nevertheless, even then it was reported that this participation was minimal as noted in the excerpts:

> First I would say it is very low. Next I would say that the men are worse. They never attend school activities. I sympathize with the women because with all that they have to do in the home, the husband still expects her to attend the meetings and brief him. You will find that the men in this community know very little about their schools (Female Community elder, Kilifi II).
>
> There are a lot of absent parents. For example, there are

> report forms/cards lying in the school for even up to a year. The parents don't even bother to know their children's performance. The school now gives the reports to children (Male Implementing Partner, Kilifi County).

From the excerpts above, it is notable that school meetings are majorly attended by female. This finding supports School Report Card (SRC) finding that in the Coastal region parental participation in the education of their children (through meetings) was tilted towards women (SRC 2013). Male parents reportedly know very little about education of their children. However, even then male parents were said to contribute meaningfully when they attended meetings as opposed to women:

> It is strange that though they object to the meetings, they are the ones who contribute most and give very practical ideas in the meeting. But I would say that majority of women are still fearful of speaking out. They have not taken the challenge to venture into what they look at as a male turf. I see this fear even in our meetings. Women are more reserved and contribute less. Not that they don't have points to articulate because the few who are outspoken give very positive contribution to the meeting and society. (Facilitator, Kilifi II).

A part from regular school meetings which were seemingly attended mainly by female guardians or mothers; there was no evidence of community participation in school management and decision making. Consequently, when asked to describe the status of education in the community, a community elder, Kilifi II had this to say*: It is very low. Very poor.Not in this village alone, but the whole of the Kilifi county*. In an apparent reference to perennial poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Education performance he exclaimed: *Look, we had just a single A in the whole county last year(Community elder, Kilifi II).* Likewise a male community leader in Kilifi I explained:

> When this position (Chief position) was advertised, it is the community members who approached me to take this position, because I was the only person who had the required qualifications. You see, here, the level of education is very low. Very, very, low! Only people from upcountry have good certificates. Hah I tell you when a job is advertised here the locals come with identification cards. They have no school academic certificates (Male Community leader Kilifi)

To crown it all, another leader observed that transition to secondary education was very poor; *though education here is improving I can say it is not up to par. Most of our children here stop at Standard 8. There is however a slow change in embracing education.*(Female Community elder, Kilifi II).

How safe is the community?

There were mixed reactions in regard to safety of children and especially girls in both Kilifi I and II. Some informants were of the opinion that the communities were relatively safe whereas others felt otherwise. The proponents argued that the communities were safe on the basis that there have been no cases of child abduction, physical assault, violence or any other crime against the children as explained by one leader: *Security in this village is not bad. In saying so, I would then say that the children are quite safe. There has never been any case of child abduction, violence on the child or any other vices that would make me term the situation as bad. (*Male community leader, Kilifi II) However, there were some nuances that contradicted this view as evidenced by -FGD conversation:

> **B:** I could not say that it is safe. These drinking dens are the most dangerous. Especially for a girl child!
> **L:** That is true. A drunken person is out of his senses and can do very stupid things.
> **MR**: It is not the drinking dens alone. We also have drug peddlers who roam around the village. It is very easy for them to give drugs to the children or use them for transportation.
> **B:** Motorbikes also makes it dangerous.
> **K**: Yes, drinking dens and the 'bodaboda'(motorbikes) riders are a security risk to the children. And the night funeral discos.

The above conversation attest that there are situations that can cause harm to girls such as the element of "situation risk" like peddling of drugs and presence of alcohol dens around the community, funeral discos and motorbike riders were a security risk too. For instance, most the people interviewed concurred with the assertion that 'bodaboda' (motor bike) riders were a menace to girls as they gave them free rides to school in exchange for sex favours that led to high cases of dropouts as a result of early pregnancies.

In addition, the numerous local liquor dens were a safety concern for girls. Some parents were accused of using their daughters as waiters to entice male customers; *I would say that some sellers of these local brews use their underagedaughters to attract customers. On the process, some of the customers exploit girls sexually*Funeral discos were also highlighted by many informants as one of the major causes of girls dropping out school as it exposed them to illicit sex that eventually led to pregnancy.

Defilement cases were common in the two communities. Interviews with community elders indicated that many of the sex pests were relatives and more so step fathers and neighbours. During the researchers' first day of visit to the local primary school in Kilifi I, they found two teachers had left for the police station in pursuant of a defilement case. The case involved a step father who had defiled two of his step daughters. It was alleged that the man, being a traditional medicine man, would drug his step daughters any time they complained of any sickness and then defile them. He explained:*It had gone on for too long until one of them became pregnant. That is when the girls opened up to their mother but then the man gave the pregnant girl some concoctions that terminated the pregnancy*. (Male leader Interview Kilifi I).

What resources are available in the community and how are they used to support and empower girls' education?

The main sources of income included: small scale subsistence farming, petty trade, fishing and casual employment in hotel industry. There were isolated cases of men who were reported to earn their living from practicing traditional medicine. They were commonly referred to as 'waganga', the Kiswahili word for herbalist or foreseer. Further, there were reported cases of some young women who had left the country for Qatar to work as domestic works/ house helps. The earning received from these sources were said to have been used to support education through provision of necessities such as uniform, school levies, exercise books, pens and pencils.

However, according to one girl in Kilifi II,resources mentioned above were not necessarily used to support girls' education: *No they don't use their money to pay for school. Very few people in the village use their money to pay for their children's school'* (what do they do with it*?)Like for example my dad is an alcoholic; he spends his money on drinks.*

However, it was revealed that communal resources such as limestone, bricks, land and sand were untapped resources that can benefit the community.

Resources and economic activities that hinder girls' education

Reportedly some of the communities' resources were a deterrent to girls' access and retention as demonstrated in this FGD conversation:

> **K**: First I would say that businesses are a major hindrance. Mostly children are used for transporting these goods. At times it is on school days.
> **O**: Selling of "mnazi" drinks is worse. The sellers use their girls as waiters in order to act as a bait for male customers.
> **MR**: Farming has also affected girl education as some parents use their children to help in the farms instead of going to school.
> **L:** Employment and Employees are also affect girls education. Some employers who live within us are also another menace as they employ school age girls. (CC FGD KilifiII).

Mobilization of Resources in the community to support girls' education

There was no evidence that community conversations strategy had succeeded in sensitising community members to mobilise local resources to support girls' education as shown in the conversation below:

> **L:**To be honest, we are aware that there are resources here that can help in girl education, but we have not come together to mobilize for that purpose. The main reason here is that there is no cooperation. Even on simple matter like agreeing on a uniform prize for coconut or mangoes produce has become impossible. There is a lot of individualism.
>
> **S:** There are a lot of resources in this community. Management might not be so good, but they are available. We have resources like coconut, mangoes, farm produce, poultry, livestock, sand, fish, ocean, quarry etc that can be mobilised to support girls' education.(CC FGD, Kilifi II).

Many of the resources save for lime stones and sand was individually owned and therefore they had not been harnessed communally to support girls' education. At the family level, men were the custodians of the family resources and in many cases it was reported that they channelled the earnings to personal enjoyment such as drinking local liquor at the expense of educating their children especially girls.

CONCLUSIONS

Formal education was seen as a gateway for improved life chances lives and a weapon tobreak the

cycle of poverty. It prepared the youth for future job-relatedpositions that would not only translated to improve personal lives but also that of their families and communities at large.However, if resources were scarce, parents preferred educating boys or sons. Notably, communities supported girls' education through enrolment campaigns, and enforcement of Re-entry Policy which resulted in a number of girls who had dropped out due to pregnancy or any other reason return to school.Nevertheless, re-enrolledgirls, particularly teen mothers, encountered multiple challenges including lack of food, basic needs for the baby, uniform, someone to look after the baby, child support among others. Parental participation in school activities was poor. In addition, communal resources such as sand and limestone remained largely untapped. As a result, there were many out-of-school children because parents could not meet the cost of education. The two communities were not very safe and especially for the girl child due to existence of 'situational risk' such as drug peddlers, funeral discos, and several dens of local liquor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Intensify awareness-raising on importance of girls' education targeting parents, boys and men so that they all pull together to support girls' education. Moreover, there is need to enlighten parents,girls and wider community on the wider value of education beyond the monitory benefits and the white collar jobs.Community conversations should sensitize parent and community on the value for participation in the school activities and more so in school management where key decisions related to education are made.Local communities should be encouraged to be proactive and mobilise local resources such as sand, limestone and bricks to support education. Nonetheless, the local administration should enforce laws banning funeral discos and use of girls in selling local liquor.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

I, Charity Mukiri Limboro declare that I have no conflict of interest with submitting this paper entitled: Role of Communities in Marginalised Girls' Education: A Case of Kilifi County, Kenya to the Africa Collaborative Learning Journal.

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