

# **Solutions to Poverty According to Those Who Live It: Case Study in Manyatta B Informal Settlement, Kisumu, Kenya**

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# Abstract

How do residents of informal settlements perceive potential pathways to reduce poverty in their area? Until now, few studies have looked at the views of people living in informal settlements on strategies to reduce poverty. While informal settlements are often targeted for poverty reduction, most examinations of poverty solutions follow a top-down approach, which can create a disconnect with the local realities of people experiencing poverty. This study tries to address these gaps by examining poverty solutions from a bottom-up perspective in the Manyatta B informal settlement in Kisumu, Kenya. The purpose of this case study was (1) to understand how people living in Manyatta B perceive poverty and current development efforts in their area, (2) to document the ideas that residents have on ways to improve the poverty situation in their area, and (3) to investigate the reasons behind the ideas proposed. A total of 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents of the informal settlement between May and July 2022. Findings suggest that respondents mostly define poverty as an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and education. Every respondent perceives poverty as a problem in Manyatta B and considers the current poverty reduction efforts as insufficient. Participants believe more efforts should be made, and nearly all stress the responsibility of the government, exposing a disconnect between top-down government policies for poverty reduction and the residents' own priorities for poverty reduction. In addition, many also attribute a responsibility to the community in the fight against poverty. In terms of solutions, employment is seen as the key solution to reduce poverty in Manyatta B. Many residents also perceive business and sensitization on poverty reduction as other avenues, while several respondents identify youth education, empowerment and better governance as potential pathways to improve the poverty situation in their area. Four main issues were raised by the participants to justify the solutions proposed: unemployment, idleness, poor governance and lack of knowledge on pathways out of poverty. All in all, the results show that the residents of Manyatta B interviewed have a multidimensional view of poverty, a broad understanding of solutions, and a clear sense of the problems affecting their community. There is an apparent disconnect between the priorities of the residents of Manyatta B and current poverty reduction efforts, and development actors would do well to address this gap before any meaningful poverty reduction initiatives can be undertaken.

# Résumé

Comment les résidents des quartiers informels perçoivent-ils les solutions potentielles de réduction de la pauvreté ? Jusqu'à présent, peu d'études se sont penchées sur l'opinion des habitants des quartiers informels sur les stratégies de réduction de la pauvreté. Alors que les quartiers informels sont souvent ciblés pour réduire la pauvreté, la plupart des initiatives de réduction de la pauvreté suivent une approche descendante, ce qui peut créer un décalage avec les réalités locales des personnes en situation de pauvreté. Cette étude tente de combler ces lacunes en examinant les solutions contre la pauvreté avec une approche participative dans le quartier informel de Manyatta B à Kisumu, au Kenya. L'objectif de cette étude de cas était (1) de comprendre comment les habitants de Manyatta B perçoivent la pauvreté et les efforts de développement actuels dans leur quartier, (2) de documenter les idées des résidents sur les moyens d'améliorer la situation de pauvreté dans leur quartier, et (3) d'examiner les raisons derrière les idées proposées. Au total, 32 entrevues semi-structurées ont été menées avec les résidents du quartier informel entre mai et juillet 2022. Les résultats suggèrent que la majorité des répondants définissent la pauvreté comme une incapacité à répondre aux besoins de base, tels que la nourriture, le logement, les vêtements et l'éducation. Chaque personne interrogée perçoit la pauvreté comme un problème à Manyatta B et considère que les efforts actuels de réduction de la pauvreté sont insuffisants. Les participants pensent que davantage d'efforts devraient être faits, et presque tous soulignent la responsabilité du gouvernement, ce qui révèle une rupture entre les politiques gouvernementales pour lutter contre la pauvreté et les priorités des résidents en matière de réduction de la pauvreté. Également, beaucoup attribuent une responsabilité à la communauté dans la lutte contre la pauvreté. Sur le plan des solutions, l'emploi est considéré comme la solution clé pour réduire la pauvreté dans Manyatta B. De nombreux résidents perçoivent également les affaires et la sensibilisation à la réduction de la pauvreté comme d'autres avenues, tandis que plusieurs répondants identifient l'éducation des jeunes, l'autonomisation et une meilleure gouvernance comme des voies potentielles pour améliorer la situation de la pauvreté dans leur quartier. Quatre problèmes principaux ont été soulevés par les participants pour justifier les solutions proposées : le chômage, l'inactivité, la mauvaise gouvernance et le manque de connaissances sur les façons de sortir de la pauvreté. Dans l'ensemble, les résultats montrent que les résidents de Manyatta B interrogés ont une vision multidimensionnelle de la pauvreté, une large compréhension des solutions et une idée

claire des problèmes affectant leur communauté. Il existe une rupture apparente entre les priorités des résidents de Manyatta B et les efforts actuels de réduction de la pauvreté. Les acteurs de développement feraient bien de combler ce fossé avant d'entreprendre toute initiative sérieuse de réduction de la pauvreté.

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>IPL</b>	International Poverty Line
<b>KENSUP</b>	Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme
<b>KISIP</b>	Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project
<b>KNBS</b>	Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics
<b>KES</b>	Kenyan Shilling
<b>LPI</b>	Lived Poverty Index
<b>MCA</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NACADA</b>	National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse
<b>NACOSTI</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>NCPD</b>	National Council for Population and Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OPHI</b>	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
<b>PPA</b>	Participatory Poverty Assessment
<b>PPP</b>	Purchasing Power Parity
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>UN-HABITAT</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>US\$</b>	United States Dollard

# Chapter 1—Introduction

## 1.1) Purpose and Objectives

In the 1970s, development focus shifted from solely economic growth to include the concepts of basic needs and human welfare (Cobbinah et al., 2013; Ravallion, 2015). There has been over 50 years of efforts to reduce poverty globally since then, but the strategies adopted by the international development community have produced mixed results. Progress has been made, but not all indicators tell the same story. The World Bank's data shows a substantial decrease in the number of extreme poor (below the international poverty line of US\$2.15/day). In 1990, 2 billion people (37.8% of the world population) were living in extreme poverty, and in 2019, that number had decreased to 648 million (8.4%) (World Bank Group, 2022b). These numbers tell a story of remarkable success, but the World Bank's international poverty line represents a low threshold since it is based on the poverty lines of the 15 poorest countries in the world (Ferreira et al., 2016). Hence, this metric is not keeping track of evolving living standards.

A way to look at the evolution of poverty globally using a higher threshold would be to consider poverty as a state of relative deprivation. Economies have grown since 1990, and standards of living have changed. This reality is usually reflected in a country's national poverty line, which evolves as the income level in a society rises. Jolliffe & Beer Prydz (2019) created a poverty measure that combines the World Bank's international poverty line with a relative measure of poverty. In 2018, the World Bank officially adopted this measure, and named it the "Societal Poverty Line." The Societal Poverty Line combines the US\$2.15/day absolute poverty line with a relative component that increases as median income or consumption in an economy rise. By this standard, a person counts as poor if s/he is either below the World Bank's international poverty line or below a relative line that is set at US\$1 plus 50 percent of the median income or consumption level in the country of residence. This hybrid measure shows lesser success in reducing poverty. Between 1990 and 2019, the number of people living in poverty globally has only slightly decreased from 2.4 billion people (46.3% of the world population) to 2.1 billion (27.2%) (World Bank Group, 2022b). This broader metric shows some progress on the poverty front as the global poverty rate has come down. Yet, this progress was only able to offset population growth, resulting in a minor decrease in the number of people living in poverty globally.

Hence, there is a need for more effective poverty reduction policies if the number of people living in poverty is to decrease substantially in the future.

Of all the world's regions, extreme poverty remains highly concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2019, 60 percent of the people living below the international poverty line were found in the region (World Bank Group, 2022b). There has been progress in this region as well, since the poverty rate has come down, but it hasn't been enough to keep up with population growth. In 1990, 272 million people (53.3% of the region's population) were living in extreme poverty, and in 2019, that number increased to 389 million (35.1% of the region's population). These numbers become worse if we consider the Societal Poverty Line. In 1990, 292 million people (57.4% of the region's population) were living in poverty, and in 2019, that number increased to 511 million (46.2% of the region's population). These numbers hide considerable variations in poverty reduction across countries in the region, as some countries have seen poverty rise while others have seen it fall. Yet, these numbers also show that poverty reduction policies in Sub-Saharan Africa have generally not been successful enough to reduce, or even stabilize, the number of people living in poverty. There is a need for more effective poverty reduction policies in the region, but how might this be achieved? A good place to start is to evaluate how current measures relate to the lived experiences of the poor. Could there be a disconnect between existing policies and the local realities of the intended beneficiaries? Despite knowing most about living in poverty, the poor's ideas and lived experiences rarely dictate poverty interventions. This is made evident by the common disconnect that exists between the bottom-up perspective coming from the voices of the poor and the top-down official poverty reduction interventions. In the scientific literature, most studies have investigated local perceptions of poverty and local understandings of reasons behind escape and descent into poverty (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010; Muyanga et al., 2013; Watete et al., 2016). However, few studies have looked at the opinions of the poor regarding strategies to reduce poverty. What are solutions, according to them, to improve their own situation? What is the rationale behind the solutions that they propose? The answers have the potential not only to evaluate if current policies are compatible with the lived experiences of the poor but also to better inform future poverty reduction interventions.

This research project explores local understandings of poverty reduction strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa. To narrow the scope of the research to a master's thesis, the research project was limited

to a single case study in the city of Kisumu, Kenya. The study site was located in the Manyatta B informal settlement situated within Kisumu's "slum belt," a group of informal settlements on the outskirts of the city. The aim of this research is to gain a detailed understanding of people's perception of poverty and its solutions by documenting not only the ideas that people have but also the reasoning behind those ideas. There is currently a lack of studies looking at local ideas to reduce poverty in the Manyatta B informal settlement. This thesis aims to help fill this research gap and inform development initiatives in the area by pursuing the following three objectives:

1. To understand how people living in Manyatta B perceive poverty and current development efforts in their area.
2. To assess the ideas that people living in Manyatta B have on ways to improve the poverty situation in their area.
3. To understand the reasons behind the ideas that are proposed to improve the poverty situation in Manyatta B.

The thesis is written in manuscript format according to McGill University guidelines. This means that the findings of the research are presented in a single chapter as a publishable scholarly paper, with a substantive introduction and discussion chapter to begin and end the thesis. The manuscript chapter needs to stand on its own and include the manuscript in its entirety (including the reference list and appendices). Hence, some texts from the introduction and discussion chapter is repeated in the manuscript chapter. The full thesis is thus divided into three chapters. The remainder of the introduction chapter is comprised of two sections. [Section 1.2](#) presents a comprehensive literature review on poverty definitions, the poverty situation in Kenya as well as poverty dynamics in the country. [Section 1.3](#) introduces the methodology chosen for this research project, namely semi-structured interviews. It also covers ethical dimensions of the method, and it addresses my own positionality as well as that of my research assistant. [Chapter 2](#) is the body of the thesis. It contains the manuscript that addresses the three objectives of this thesis. It presents the results of the research on local perceptions of poverty, local solutions to reduce poverty and local reasoning behind the solutions proposed. Finally, [Chapter 3](#) summarizes the findings and discusses their implications for future development efforts in the area of study.

## **1.2) Literature Review**

The following section presents the conceptual framework in which this research project is set. It is divided into three parts. The first part explores the concept of poverty and the different approaches that are used to define it. The second part looks at poverty in Kenya using some of the approaches presented in the first section. Finally, the third part focuses on poverty dynamics across Kenya looking both at rural and urban poverty.

### **1.2.1) Definitions of Poverty**

Everyone has an intuition about the meaning of poverty. Yet, defining the concept is not as simple as one might think. There are many different approaches used to define the concept of poverty, and reviewing some of the most common approaches is essential before beginning a discussion about solutions to the issue. The next four sections provide an overview of the most common approaches being used to define the concept of poverty as presented in Wagle (2002) and Laderchi et al. (2003).

#### ***1.2.1.1) Monetary Approach***

The monetary approach is the most commonly used in practice. It defines poverty as a shortfall in consumption or income relative to some poverty line. With this approach, the well-being of an individual is generally measured by her/his income or consumption level. Income is most frequently used in countries with strong centralized income tax systems, while consumption is best suited to countries with large informal sectors. In all cases, a poverty line is drawn in order to separate the poor from the non-poor. Three main methods have emerged to generate this line: absolute, relative and hybrid poverty lines.

First, an absolute poverty line sets fixed cut-offs that are applied universally (Foster, 1998). This threshold is adjusted for changes in price levels, but it does not change when income levels rise as a result of economic growth. An example of an absolute poverty line is the World Bank's International Poverty Line of US\$2.15 (PPP 2017) per day, which is based on the poverty lines of the 15 poorest countries in the world (Ferreira et al., 2016). Countries who use an absolute threshold typically apply either a food-energy intake or a cost-of-basic-needs method to set their national poverty line (Ravallion, 1998). A food-energy intake method implies setting the poverty line at the income level needed to meet food energy requirements, while a cost-of-basic-needs

method sets the line at the level of income needed to meet basic consumption needs as defined by the national government.

Second, relative poverty lines adopt the view that a poverty line should evolve as standards of living rise or fall in a society. Poverty is defined in relation to the living standards in a population, and the poverty line is normally set as a percentage of the mean or median income (Foster, 1998). Hence, the poverty threshold varies proportionally to any increase or decrease in income or consumption level, and whether one counts as poor depends not only on her/his income but also on the income of others in society. Fuchs (1967) was one of the first to propose a relative poverty line, which he suggested should be 50 percent of the median income. This is an approach that inspired member states of the European Union, who set their poverty line at 60 percent of the median income (European Parliament et al., 2016). An issue with this approach is that it does not work well in countries with high levels of poverty, since there is a risk of setting the poverty line below the minimum needed to achieve food security.

Third, to get around the issues with relative and absolute poverty lines, some hybrid measures have emerged (Chen & Ravallion, 2013; Jolliffe & Prydz, 2019; Ravallion & Chen, 2011, 2017). These measures use a relative poverty line (set as a percentage of the median income or consumption level), but an absolute poverty line is also used as a lower bound, solving the issue of low poverty lines in countries with high levels of poverty. The result is a poverty measure that evolves with economic growth, while also staying relevant in lower income countries. The World Bank's Societal Poverty Line is an example of a hybrid measure (Jolliffe & Prydz, 2019).

In sum, the monetary approach assumes that the well-being of an individual can be approximated by her/his income or consumption level. While trying to be objective, it does not escape subjectivity since a value judgment has to be made to decide not only which method (absolute, relative or hybrid) will be used to compute the poverty line but also at which level the poverty line will be set. The approach gives only one dimension to poverty, which is something that the next approach disagrees with.

### ***1.2.1.2) Capability Approach***

The capability approach is based on the influential work of Amartya Sen (1987, 1992, 1999). It rejects the sole use of income as a measure of well-being, and it instead urges people to see poverty

as a multidimensional phenomenon. According to this approach, development is about expanding the capabilities of people so that they can live the kind of life that they have reason to value. Hence, poverty must be seen “as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes” (A. Sen, 1999, p. 87). To define poverty with this approach, a set of basic capabilities must be agreed upon. Poverty is then characterized as deprivation in one or more of these basic capabilities.

In practice, data from quantitative surveys is used to create indicators correlated with the basic capabilities chosen. These indicators are then aggregated to create a multidimensional poverty index. This approach is becoming increasingly popular as policymakers start to recognize the limitations of the monetary approach. Some of the main development institutions now have a multidimensional poverty index. For example, since 2010, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has a global multidimensional poverty index based on the methodology of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (Alkire & Foster, 2011a, 2011b). This index uses ten indicators grouped under three poverty dimensions: health, education and standards of living. This method requires more data than the monetary approach, and this data is not available in every country. For this reason, it is not possible at the moment to compute global numbers. Yet, for the 111 countries where data is available, UNDP’s multidimensional poverty index finds that 1.2 billion people (19%) are multidimensionally poor (UNDP & OPHI, 2022).

Overall, the capability approach emphasizes a multidimensional definition of poverty, which includes other dimensions than income such as education, health and sanitation. Generally, this approach identifies significantly more people as poor, which is why it is increasingly considered as complementary to the traditional monetary approach. Yet, like the monetary approach, it is only a factual measure of poverty, and it does not give any insight into the processes that lead a person into a situation of poverty. The next approach tries to address this limitation.

### ***1.2.1.3) Social Exclusion Approach***

The third approach used in the literature defines poverty through the concept of social exclusion, which was developed in industrialized societies to describe the “process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (European Foundation, 1995). The concept of social exclusion finds its roots in the work of the British sociologist Peter Townsend, who defined poverty as a lack of resources that prevents



participation in society, making people “in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (Townsend, 1979, p. 31). In other words, an able, healthy and educated person may still live in poverty if s/he is unable to take part in regular economic, social and political activities. Social exclusion generally occurs through discrimination (racial, gender, spatial, etc.), which explicitly or implicitly denies people access to regular activities. In countries with large informal sectors, social exclusion also occurs in the form of barriers to enter the formal economy, which often limit the socially excluded to informal or illegal economic activities (Wagle, 2002). This approach differs from the others since poverty is defined socially in relation to other groups in society. It therefore focuses on the societal dynamics that create poverty.

The concept has made its way into poverty discourse in the European Union, who formally recognizes social exclusion as being part of the fight against poverty (European Parliament, 2019). However, the social exclusion approach is not as clearly defined as the other approaches presented, since it lacks a single recognized definition (Madanipour et al., 2015; Peace, 2001). For this reason, there exists no accepted social exclusion poverty measure. Nonetheless, it brings a new perspective to the concept of poverty that puts emphasis on some of the social processes that create poverty. Yet, this approach, like the others presented thus far, is externally defined. These definitions were not created using the inputs of the poor, which can create a problem of legitimacy that the next approach tries to rectify.

#### ***1.2.1.4) Participatory Approach***

Traditional approaches do not take into account the views of the poor on their own situation. The participatory approach tries to address this concern by having people who are identified as poor (using traditional approaches) define themselves poverty. This approach emphasizes that the people living in poverty know most about their situation, and since a value judgment necessarily has to be made to define poverty, the poor themselves should be making that judgment. Outsiders should be helping the poor in that process by acting as facilitators.

Participatory approaches emerged during the 1970s as one of the essential components of the basic needs approach to development (Cornwall, 2000). They spread slowly in the global south and ultimately evolved into Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA is defined as “a family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (Chambers, 1994, p. 953). Participatory approaches

eventually made their way into policy in the 1990s. PRAs were adapted to policymaking in the form of Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs). A PPA is “a method to include poor people in the analysis of poverty with the objective of influencing policy” (Robb et al., 2002, p. 4). PPAs were gradually adopted by the World Bank during the 1990s, and by 1998, about half of the World Bank poverty assessments had a participatory component (Laderchi et al., 2003). However, most of the PPAs conducted by the World Bank were done only with the aim of increasing the cooperation of the poor with their programs. The emphasis was not on mutual learning as the original proponent of the participatory approach called for. A better example of the use of a participatory approach to define poverty is the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) from Afrobarometer, a pan-African survey research network with the objective of giving a voice to ordinary Africans in policy-making (Afrobarometer, 2023). The LPI is “an experiential measure that is based on a series of survey questions about how frequently people actually go without basic necessities during the course of a year” (Mattes & Patel, 2022). It supports the principle that people are the best judge of their own situation, and surveys offer respondents an opportunity to evaluate themselves their quality of life.

While participatory approaches shine in the space that they give to local knowledge, they are not without shortcomings. Only a subsample of the community usually takes part in the participatory process, which can create issues of representation. Finding a representative sample is difficult since communities are rarely homogenous. Instead, they are most often comprised of a diversity of interests (Cleaver, 1999; White, 1996), and in the worst scenario, the participatory process can be appropriated by a local elite or a specific group with already established interests (Botes & Rensburg, 2000; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Additionally, self-exclusion can be an issue as not everyone necessarily wants to take part in the participatory process (Cornwall, 2008). This reality can be further exacerbated by the cost of participation since the participatory process usually requires a significant time commitment. Finally, existing power dynamics in the community or the broader society will shape the interests of people in the participatory process as well as what they say or do not say (White, 1996).

In sum, participatory approaches try to address power asymmetries and create a poverty definition relevant to the local context. For this reason, they can only give context-specific definitions of

poverty. While a participatory process has the potential for empowerment, careful planning is needed to avoid its common pitfalls.

#### ***1.2.1.5) Why Is It Important to Define Poverty?***

There are several reasons why it is important to define poverty before considering solutions to the issue. First, there are significant differences between the four approaches presented. Depending on the definition being considered, who is classified as poor changes, which has important implications when it comes to targeting for poverty alleviation programs. In fact, several studies have shown that there is a modest overlap between monetary, multidimensional and social exclusion approaches (Baulch & Masset, 2003; Kwadzo, 2015; Laderchi, 1997; Laderchi et al., 2003), or even between different indicators that fall under the same approach (Hagenaars & Vos, 1988). Hence, a monetary indicator cannot be used to identify all of the multidimensionally poor or socially excluded, and vice versa. The approach used to define poverty thus has important practical implications regarding who will be considered as poor.

Second, each approach brings a different perspective on the course to take to tackle the issue. The monetary approach suggests solutions that can raise the poor's income. The capability approach invites policies that can raise living standards in dimensions such as education, health and access to electricity. The social exclusion approach calls for policies that can bring about social inclusion and help marginalized groups. Finally, the participatory approach recommends giving the poor decision-making power when designing poverty alleviation measures, while also encouraging outsiders to be facilitators in that process.

In sum, the way we define poverty has implications for the type of solutions that are needed. Because of the uniqueness of each approach, some scholars promote a more integrative attitude that combines different approaches (Kwadzo, 2015; Laderchi et al., 2003; Wagle, 2002). They find the use of a single approach to be too reductionist, and they argue that putting more effort into integrating the different approaches would create a more complete picture of the poverty context in the places studied, as well as increase the chances of understanding the factors that are at the root of poverty problems. As Wagle (2002, p. 155) puts it, "Only an integrative approach can meaningfully contribute to understanding social problems because they are essentially the constructs of societies and thus have multifaceted social dimensions." Each approach presented highlights a different dimension of poverty, it is thus evident that using multiple approaches would

result in a deeper understanding of the issue. The next section tries to adopt this integrative attitude by using three different approaches to look at poverty in Kenya.

## **1.2.2) Poverty in Kenya**

Kenya is the largest economy in East Africa with a GDP of 110.6 billion US\$ (World Bank Group, 2022c). The country is home to about 48 million people (KNBS, 2019). It has a land area of 580,000 km<sup>2</sup>, of which roughly 80 percent is classified as arid and semi-arid land. This region is home to about a third of the population, with the rest residing in the Kenyan highlands, one of the most successful agricultural regions in Africa. About 54 percent of Kenyans work in the agricultural sector, while 39 percent work in the service sector and 7 percent in industry (World Bank, 2022). This section gives an overview of the poverty context in Kenya using monetary, multidimensional and participatory approaches.

### ***1.2.2.1) Monetary Poverty***

The Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) released a comprehensive poverty report assessing the poverty situation in the country (KNBS, 2020). The report includes a monetary and a multidimensional poverty analysis. Monetary poverty is measured using a poverty line calculated using a cost-of-basic-needs method. KNBS computes a poverty line for rural areas (3,252 KES per month  $\approx$  US\$74 per month [2020 PPP]) and urban areas [5,995 KES per month  $\approx$  US\$136 per month [2020 PPP]]. Their analysis shows that 15.9 million Kenyans (36%) are living below the poverty line, with a higher number in rural areas (40%) than in urban areas (29%). These numbers are higher than the monetary poverty rate calculated using the lower threshold of the World Bank International Poverty Line of US\$2.15 per day (2017 PPP), which yields a national poverty rate of 29.4% (World Bank Group, 2022b). The World Bank's numbers have been available for longer and show a decline in the country's poverty rate since 2005, when it stood at 36.7% (World Bank Group, 2022a). However, similar to the trend in Sub-Saharan Africa, the progress in Kenya has not been enough to keep up with population growth. The number of Kenyans living under the poverty line has increased from 13.4 million to 14.1 million over the same period. It is also essential to remember that these poverty lines represent low thresholds that are more representative of people living in extreme poverty. The poverty rate rises quickly when we consider higher poverty lines compiled by the World Bank, such as the US\$3.65 per day (59.6% or 28.5 million Kenyans) and the US\$6.85 per day (85.7% or 41.0 million Kenyans).

### ***1.2.2.2) Multidimensional Poverty***

The multidimensional measure used by KNBS consists of roughly seven dimensions: nutrition, education, economic activity, information, water, sanitation and housing (KNBS, 2020, pp. 7–8). Some dimensions are removed or added for children under 5 years old (physical development and health added, economic activity and information removed), children 5–17 years old (child protection added, economic activity removed) and elderly people over 60 years old (economic activity removed). An individual is counted as poor if s/he is deprived in three or more dimensions. According to the analysis, 23 million Kenyans (53%) are multidimensionally poor. The number is significantly higher in rural areas (67%), more than twice the number in urban areas (27%). These numbers are similar to the ones from the World Bank Multidimensional Poverty Measure, which is comprised of three dimensions (monetary, education and access to basic infrastructure) and yields a national poverty rate of 45.4% (World Bank Group, 2022b). There is some overlap between monetary and multidimensional poverty measures, as KNBS (2020) reports that 27 percent of the population is multidimensionally and monetary poor. However, the two measures also differ significantly since 26 percent of the population is solely multidimensionally poor and 9 percent is monetary poor only.

### ***1.2.2.3) Participatory Assessment***

Some studies have looked at participatory assessment of poverty in Kenya (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010; Radeny, 2011; Watete et al., 2016). These studies used the “Stages-of-Progress” methodology (Krishna, 2010), which combines focus group discussions and interviews to establish a community definition of the stages of progress between extreme poverty and prosperity. The community then places the poverty line after the stage at which they judge a household to be no longer considered poor. Using present households as the unit of analysis, the focus group is asked about households’ current and past (using a recall method) poverty status. Households are then classified into four categories: remained poor, escaped poverty, became poor and remained not poor. For a random sample of the households in each category, the focus group is asked about reasons for escape and descent into poverty. This information is then cross-checked with data from individual interviews with the households concerned. Table 1 gives an example of the stages of progress that can be obtained by this method.

**Table 1. Stages of Progress Before Poverty Cut-Off Across Kenya**

STAGE	RURAL DISTRICTS	URBAN DISTRICTS
1	Food	Food
2	Clothing	Clothing
3	Repairs house	Rent a small house
4	Primary education	Primary education
5	Invest in small business	Invest in small business
6	Purchase small livestock	

*Source: Adapted from Kristjanson et al. (2010)*

Because the definitions obtained by this method are context specific, it is not possible to aggregate data to obtain national poverty rates. Moreover, there are no national programs that use this technique to monitor poverty levels in Kenya. Thus, the few studies that have been conducted only give a snapshot of the poverty situation at a particular time and in a particular place. Kristjanson et al. (2010) conducted the most extensive study, examining 4773 households across Kenya in five different livelihood zones. They found an overall poverty rate of 50 percent in 2005. The study of Watete et al. (2016) looked specifically at Turkana and Mandera counties in northern Kenya. The authors found a poverty rate of 71 percent in Turkana County and 58 percent in Mandera County, both are below the monetary (79% and 77%) and multidimensional (86% and 92%) poverty rate from the national bureau of statistics (KNBS, 2020).

In sum, as expected, there seems to be modest overlap between the different approaches when looking at poverty rates in Kenya. However, the different measures all indicate high rates of poverty in the country, as the national poverty rates suggested range from 36 to 53 percent. Still, national numbers can be deceiving, since the poverty situation varies greatly across Kenya's 47 counties. For example, monetary poverty ranges from 16.5% (Nairobi County) to 78.5% (Turkana County), while multidimensional poverty ranges from 12.6% (Nairobi County) to 91.5% (Mandera County) (KNBS, 2020). In addition to large differences between counties, there are also large differences between villages within the same region (Krishna et al., 2004; Narayan & Nyamwaya, 1996). In urban areas, large differences in poverty levels between and within cities have also been noted (Shifa & Leibbrandt, 2017). It is thus important to keep in mind the strong geographical disparities within Kenya when considering the poverty context within the country.

### **1.2.3) Poverty Dynamics Across Kenya**

The third section looks at poverty dynamics in Kenya. The literature focuses mostly on rural Kenya, since only 31% of the Kenyan population lives in urban centres, where the poverty rates tend to be much lower (KNBS, 2019, 2020). Poverty is often mistakenly conceived as a static phenomenon, but research has shown the opposite. People fall into poverty and escape out of it. Some do stay poor, but there are movements in and out. The composition of the poor is thus always in flux, and the literature on poverty dynamics investigates the processes that cause these movements.

#### ***1.2.3.1) Why study poverty dynamics?***

While static monetary or multidimensional poverty measures are easier to compile, their main shortcoming is that “no attention is focused on the events which lead people into and out of poverty” (Bane & Ellwood, 1986, p. 4). The explanatory power of these poverty measures is thus low. They can measure macro trends regarding poverty but they do not give any insight into the processes that can explain the trends observed. The study of poverty dynamics tries to fill this gap by focusing on individual households and studying “how wellbeing evolves over time, what determines this evolution, and how different patterns of evolution are to be evaluated for policy” (Addison et al., 2008, p. 2). National averages can hide important details about household mobility, as Krishna et al. (2010, p. 362) put it, “Even though the total numbers of the poor may change very slowly, the composition of the poor is constantly in flux.” Many studies documenting this movement in and out of poverty have been conducted in various countries, such as Bangladesh (B. Sen, 2003), Colombia (Johnson et al., 2009), Egypt (Haddad & Ahmed, 2003), Ethiopia (Bigsten & Shimeles, 2008), India (Krishna, 2004, 2006; Krishna et al., 2005), Peru (Kristjanson et al., 2007), South Africa (M. R. Carter & May, 2001) and Uganda (Krishna et al., 2006; Lawson et al., 2006). There is also widespread evidence of such dynamics in Kenya. Examining 20 Western Kenyan villages (1706 households), Krishna et al. (2004) find that 19 percent of households escaped poverty, while 19 percent fell into poverty between 1978 and 2003. With a sample of 1,324 rural Kenyan households, Burke et al. (2007) find that 22 percent of households escaped poverty and 21 percent fell into poverty between 1997 and 2004. Studying 71 villages across Kenya’s different livelihood zones, Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that 12 percent of households escaped poverty and 20 percent fell into poverty between 1990 and 2005. Finally, looking at 664 households in two counties in northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) find that 16 percent of households escaped poverty and 25

percent fell into poverty between 1993 and 2013. These studies provide evidence that the composition of the poor is constantly changing. Understanding the processes behind these movements is thus key not only to promote escape from poverty but also to prevent descent into poverty.

### ***1.2.3.2) How People Fall into Poverty***

There is rarely a single reason that can explain a household's descent into poverty. A combination of several shocks usually explains such a movement. Additionally, reasons vary between Kenya's different regions (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010), something that has also been observed in Uganda (Krishna et al., 2006). The main reasons for descent can be grouped into five categories: health shocks, social factors, environmental shocks, land issues and loss of employment.

*Health Shocks.* They are the most common reason for households' descent into poverty (Barrett et al., 2006; Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010). The poor health of a household member can cause a permanent or temporary inability to work, which can decrease significantly household income. Moreover, the high cost of treatment, hospital visits and medication can quickly drain a household's limited resources. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that ill health and healthcare expenses were responsible for 40 percent of households descent into poverty across Kenya's different regions. In their study of rural villages in western Kenya, Krishna et al. (2004) find that 73 percent of households that fell into poverty mentioned poor health and health-related expenses as a reason to explain their situation. Studying households in rural Kenya, Barrett et al. (2006) also find that health shocks, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria or tuberculosis are the most common reason given to explain why households become or stay poor. In the worst cases, health shocks can result in the death of a major income earner and heavy funeral expenses (Barrett et al., 2006; Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010; Watete et al., 2016).

*Social Factors.* They include shocks related to family or community. Having too many dependents is an important reason for descent into poverty. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that too many dependents needing care was responsible for 41 percent of households descent into poverty across Kenya's different livelihood zones. When relatives die due to illness, surviving family members will usually take in children or elderly people that are left behind. For households with limited resources, having more dependents can quickly deteriorate their situation. This is also echoed by Krishna et al. (2004)'s study in western Kenya, where the dependence of survivors was found to



be a contributor to 32 percent of households' fall into poverty. At the community level, unexpected loss of property due to insecurity or theft was found to be a contributor to descent into poverty by 24 percent of households across Kenya (Kristjanson et al., 2010). This number was highest in pastoral zones (57%), where cattle rustling and tribal clashes are common.

*Environmental Shocks.* Agriculture is an important source of livelihood in rural Kenya. For this reason, environmental shocks affecting agricultural yields impact directly the livelihood of many Kenyans and are frequently cited as reasons for falling into poverty. Environmental shocks causing crop-related losses include drought, diseases, and pests. Crop-related losses were identified as a reason for descent into poverty by 12 percent of households in high potential agricultural zones and 21 percent of households in pastoral zones (Kristjanson et al., 2010). Environmental shocks can also provoke irreversible loss of assets, which can cause a household's situation to quickly worsen. Livestock losses are particularly important for pastoralists. Drought is common in agropastoral and pastoral regions of Kenya, and it can be a driver of poverty when it causes significant losses of livestock. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that 21 percent of households in agropastoral zones and 67 percent of households in pastoral zones give drought as a reason to explain their descent into poverty. In their study of pastoral poverty in northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016, p. 134) find drought to be "the single most important driver of pastoral poverty" as the region has seen ten major droughts between 1965 and 2011. Although not as common as drought, other environmental shocks causing livestock losses include disease (e.g. foot rot, anthrax, East Coast fever and pneumonia) and predators (Watete et al., 2016). This finding is echoed by Kristjanson et al. (2010), who find livestock-related losses to be a reason given by 19 percent of agropastoral households and 40 percent of pastoral households to explain their descent into poverty.

*Land Issues.* Factors affecting land, such as land subdivision, are another reason explaining households' descent into poverty, especially in high potential agricultural and agropastoral zones. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that 37 percent of households in high potential agricultural zones and 29 percent of households in agropastoral zones cite land subdivision as a reason to explain their welfare decline. The small and uneconomic division of land leads to an inability to leave land fallow, which reduces soil fertility as nutrients in the soil get exhausted. In their study of western Kenya, Krishna et al. (2004) find that small landholdings paired with uneconomic subdivision of land are given as a reason for falling into poverty by 62 percent of households.

*Loss of Employment.* Regular employment is an important source of income in urban centres. Hence, loss of employment in the private or public sector is another reason for descent into poverty mentioned by 16 percent of households across Kenya (Kristjanson et al., 2010). This number was lowest in pastoral zones (0%), where regular employment opportunities are rare, and highest in urban zones (34%), where regular employment opportunities are most concentrated. In their study of Mandera and Turkana counties in northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) also find loss of employment to be a reason given for falling into poverty by about 10 percent of households.

### ***1.2.3.3) How People Escape Poverty***

Similarly, there is rarely a single reason explaining a household's escape from poverty. A combination of several reasons usually explains such a movement, which varies across Kenya's different regions (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010). The main reasons for escape can be grouped into three broad categories: diversification of income sources, changes in assets use and social factors.

*Diversification of Income Sources.* Households diversify their income in two main ways: business progress and employment. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find business progress in small community-based enterprises to be, by far, the most common reason mentioned by households to explain their escape from poverty across Kenya's different regions (51%). Examples of small community-based enterprises include small roadside stands, minor trading of agricultural produce, livestock trade, running hotels or bars, and operating *matatus* (taxis) or *boda boda* (motorbike taxis). In addition, urban households may also engage in owning rental houses or operating shops. These findings are corroborated by Krishna et al. (2004), who find diversification of income to be responsible for the majority of poverty escapes in western Kenya. In 42 percent of cases, household members escaped poverty by diversifying their income through setting up a trade or craft in the city. In another 36 percent of cases, households escaped poverty through setting up a small business in their area. In northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) find that 22 percent of households attribute their escape from poverty to income diversification.

Additionally, finding employment in the private or public sector is an important reason behind households' escape from poverty (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010; Watete et al., 2016). Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that regular employment in the private/public sector was responsible for 28 percent of households ascent out of poverty across Kenya's different livelihood

zones. This number was highest in urban livelihood zones (62%). It is also an important reason mentioned by households in pastoral zones (47%), where a household member often migrates to the city to find employment. In their study of rural villages in western Kenya, Krishna et al. (2004) find that 73 percent of households that escaped poverty mentioned obtaining a job as a reason to explain their situation. Studying households in northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) also find that 13 percent of households escaped poverty through getting employment in government or private institutions.

*Changes in Assets Use.* Households can also change the use of their existing assets to raise their level of income. This includes the use of the land or livestock that they own. When it comes to land, households use different strategies to increase yields or increase revenue from land under cultivation. Kristjanson et al. (2010) identify four different strategies that have been successful in raising households' living standards: crop diversification, crop commercialization, increasing land under cultivation and crop intensification. Household that escaped poverty through crop diversification moved away from maize monoculture and instead used part of their plot to cultivate other crops such as beans, potatoes, vegetables, bananas, tomatoes, coffee, sugarcane, and tea. This factor was mentioned by households in all livelihood zones, ranging from 12 percent in pastoral zones to 50 percent in marginal zones. Second, households that improved their situation through crop commercialization shifted from subsistence agriculture to producing commercial crops. This was a reason for escape cited by 23 percent of households across Kenya. Crop commercialization and crop diversification were also found to be the most common reason for escape from poverty in Krishna et al. (2006) study of 36 villages in Central and Western Uganda. Third, in high potential agricultural zones and agropastoral zones, increasing land under cultivation (owned or rented) was an important factor behind households' escape from poverty. It was reported by 29 percent of households in high potential zones and 36 percent of households in agropastoral zones. This factor was also found to be significant by Burke et al. (2007) in their study of rural Kenyan households. Finally, households that climbed out of poverty through crop intensification increased their use of fertilizers or started using new crop varieties. This factor was less significant than the others, being only mentioned by 11 percent of households in high potential agricultural zones.

In terms of cattle, livestock diversification and livestock commercialization are two other reasons given by households to explain their escape (Kristjanson et al., 2010). Livestock diversification

consists in investing in different animals or diversifying the animal products under cultivation. This reason was given by 15 percent of households across Kenya, and it was most important in pastoral (29%) zones. Second, households who escaped through livestock commercialization started selling a share of their animals or animal products. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find it to be a factor mentioned by households in agropastoral (20%), pastoral (20%) and urban (21%) livelihood zones. Burke et al. (2007) also find livestock commercialization to be a significant factor in households' movement out of poverty.

*Social Factors.* Social factors explaining escape from poverty include friends and family-related reasons. First, households frequently mention getting help from friends and relatives as a reason for their escape from poverty (Kristjanson et al., 2010; Watete et al., 2016). Help can come in different forms such as assistance with getting a job, paying school fees, finding housing, raising capital for a business or receiving remittances. Kristjanson et al. (2010) find help from friends and relatives to be a reason for escape mentioned by 25 percent of households across Kenya, with little variations between the different livelihood zones. In northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) find that 16 percent of households got out of poverty through the reception of remittances. Moreover, two other factors identified by Kristjanson et al. (2010) are the inheritance of property and smaller family size. Inheritance of property (e.g. land, house or business) from parents or relatives caused 20 percent of households across Kenya to escape poverty. Having fewer dependents was also cited by 19 percent of households across Kenya as a reason for escape. When children leave the house, there are fewer mouths to feed and lower education expenses, which reduces significantly household expenses.

To conclude, the review of poverty dynamics in Kenya identified that the most common reasons for falling into poverty are households having too many dependents and health shocks, while the most common reason for escape from poverty is diversification of income through business progress or employment. Kenya has different livelihoods, and the review also highlighted the strong variation in reasons for ascent and descent into poverty across Kenya's different regions. While these reasons are not based on poor people's views, they are based on poor people's lived experiences. They thus provide additional background information on the poverty situation in Kenya.

### **1.2.4) Link with Research Project**

The overall relevance of the literature presented is to put into context the responses given by the participants within the existing literature on poverty definitions and poverty in Kenya. Each section of the literature review informs a different part of the research project.

The first section of the literature review described the different approaches used to define the concept of poverty. Having presented the different poverty definitions, it is now possible to situate this research project within these definitions. Since the objectives of this research project explore local views, poverty will be considered through the lens of the participatory approach. The validity of the participatory approach often rests on the argument that the poor have a right to have a say in the definition of their situation and the policies that should be adopted. While this argument certainly has weight, there is also another argument that can be made in favour of the participatory approach: a person who has not lived in poverty cannot relate to the lived experiences of the poor. In other words, the poor's lived experiences puts them in the best position to understand what poverty is, and as a result, their lived experiences might also put them in the best position to propose workable solutions. Being the principal investigator on this research project and not having lived in poverty in the past, it is important that I be a listener and learner during my first field research experience on this topic. Nonetheless, the other approaches presented (monetary, multidimensional, and social exclusion) will still inform the analysis of the results, as they will be used to classify the participants' definitions of poverty. Since Kenya already uses monetary and multidimensional measures of poverty, a participatory approach will make it possible to evaluate if the participants' definitions overlap with existing measures or if a disconnect exists.

Next, the second section presented the current poverty context in Kenya, which provided an overview of the situation in the country in which the case study was conducted. The current poverty context will situate the participants' responses regarding their perception of the poverty situation in their area, as well as the current poverty reduction efforts in the country.

Finally, the third section looked at poverty dynamics in Kenya, this section provided background information on some of the processes behind movement in and out of poverty. This information is important to be able to put into context the participants' answers during the interviews. The reasons for escape and descent into poverty that were covered will also inform the analysis of the

participants' solutions by making it possible to evaluate if the proposed solutions focus on escape or address certain drivers of poverty. Additionally, the reasons for escape covered will allow a comparison between the participants' solutions and poverty escape strategies that have been documented in the literature, making it possible to evaluate if the participants' solutions overlap with existing studies or provide new insight.

### **1.3) Methodology**

The next section presents a description of the methodology chosen for the research project. The ethical dimensions of the research as well as the researcher's and research assistant's positionalities are also covered.

#### **1.3.1) Semi-structured Interviews**

The methodology chosen to investigate local ideas for poverty reduction is one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a traditional method with a long history in geography. One of its strengths is the compromise it finds between (1) having a structure relevant to the research topic and (2) giving the interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to go beyond the interview guide. This method has the flexibility needed to produce a participatory definition of poverty and its solutions by offering participants a space to voice their understanding.

##### ***1.3.1.1) Description of the technique***

Interviews can be described as “a face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons” (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954, p. 499). Interviewing techniques may take different forms that can be placed along a continuum with structured interviews at one end and unstructured interviews at the other (Dunn, 2021; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are found in the middle of this continuum. The researcher prepares a predefined list of questions, but the interview is conducted in a conversational manner with some flexibility that allows informants to explore topics important to them (Longhurst, 2016). This form of interviewing allows more flexibility than the structured type, while at the same time following an interview guide to make sure that key themes or questions of interest are covered. An interview guide can be a list of themes or concepts that should be covered during the interview (less structured) or a list of carefully prepared questions (more structured) (Dunn, 2021). In both cases,

the list can be used as a checklist of discussion topics, but the researcher remains free to go beyond the list of questions or themes that s/he prepared. A less structured interview guide allows the formulation of questions on the spot, giving more flexibility to the interviewer. However, the interviewer needs to be comfortable improvising questions during the interview. With a more structured interview guide, having a list of predefined questions can provide the interviewer with greater confidence during the interview, while also offering a better comparison between interviews. Yet, there is a risk of sounding too formal while reading the questions, which can affect the rapport with the informant. This research project used an interview guide with a list of predefined questions to have greater comparability between interviews.

The relationship between the interviewer and the participant is critical during the interview as it will determine the level of comfort of the informant, which directly affects her/his self-disclosure. For this reason, it is key to build a sense of proximity in order to create comfortable interactions (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012; McGrath et al., 2019; Prior, 2018). When conducting in-person interviews, the choice of location for the interview also has an impact on the rapport (Elwood & Martin, 2000; Herzog, 2005). A place that suits both the researcher and the participant should be chosen. Ideally, the location should be easily accessible, neutral and informal (Longhurst, 2016).

#### ***1.3.1.2) Sampling and Recruitment***

The selected site for the case study was located within the Manyatta B informal settlement in Kisumu, Kenya. The targeted study sample was the community living around a local primary school. The study site was selected because of the availability of a local community partner and its location within an area locally known to be experiencing high rates of poverty. There exist many different types of sampling techniques in qualitative research (Robinson, 2014). For this project, a purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling can be defined as choosing informants “purposefully on the basis of the issue and themes that have emerged from a review of previous literature or from other background work” (Dunn, 2021, p. 160). Hence, participants are not selected randomly but are rather selected for their potential to provide answers to the research questions. Still, the researcher tries to have a diversity of views and respondents within the profile that fits with the topic. For this project, a maximum variation sampling technique was used to maximize the diversity of answers to the research questions and achieve a greater understanding (Etikan et al., 2016; Sandelowski, 1995; Suri, 2011). The key dimension of variation was

demographics. To have participants that varied from each other as much as possible, minimum quotas were set for different age groups, for the number of years people resided in Manyatta, and for both sexes.

### ***1.3.1.3) Analysis of data***

The process of data analysis begins during the first interview. Two main actions are generally taken to collect data. First, note taking consists of writing down the essence of the conversation and non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions (Dunn, 2021). Second, if the informant gives consent, the interview can be audio-recorded to produce a full transcript of the discussion. In an ideal scenario, both strategies are used. However, recording may not be appropriate in every context, and sometimes note taking is the only possibility.

Once the interview is over, the researcher should also take general notes on the discussion. These logs represent her/his initial impressions. They can be of two types: personal or analytical. Personal logs are “comments that relate to the practice of the interview, such as the wording of questions and missed opportunities to prompt” (Dunn, 2021, p. 172), while analytical logs are “an exploration and speculation about what the interview has found in relation to the research question” (Dunn, 2021, p. 173). These logs combined with the notes taken during the interview and, if available, the transcribed audio recording are then used to create a transcript of the whole interview. This digital text document is used for further analysis.

Once the transcript is complete, it can be analyzed using a qualitative content analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hay & Cope, 2021). More specifically, a latent content analysis was used for this project (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). This technique involves looking through the text document for underlying meaning in passages, such as themes or more abstract concepts. This was done by coding the interview transcript (Elliott, 2018; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). A code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2021, p. 5). The practice of coding serves several purposes such as data reduction, finding aid and data analysis (Cope, 2021). For this project, emphasis was put on coding the proposed solutions to reduce poverty and the themes behind the solutions proposed.



#### ***1.3.1.4) Representation of data***

Interview data can be presented in mainly two forms. First, the researcher can compile summary statistics on the frequency that certain themes or ideas appear in the transcripts (Hannah & Lautsch, 2011; Maxwell, 2010; Neale et al., 2014). These statistics can then be presented in a table format to show the breadth and frequency of themes (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021; Sandelowski, 2001; Wise et al., 1992). Second, a description of themes based on the interpretation of the researcher can be presented. This qualitative assessment generally takes the form of a discussion on the main themes that emerged in the interviews. Transcript files are cited to back up observations and the findings are typically compared to existing research (Anderson, 2010; Burnard et al., 2008).

### **1.3.2) Ethical Considerations**

There are important ethical considerations to take into account when doing qualitative research. This section discusses some of the main ones linked with the research project.

#### ***1.3.2.1) Confidentiality***

Confidentiality implies that the data collected from informants needs to be accessible by the researcher only. Participants need to be assured that the data will be protected by a lock and key if in print, or by a password if it is kept in a computer database (Longhurst, 2016). All interview recordings and transcripts were stored on my password-protected laptop in an encrypted folder. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the original files were deleted after the transfer to my computer. Moreover, the identity of the informants must be kept confidential at all times. Pseudonyms or interview numbers can be used instead of real names (Dunn, 2021). When communicating results, it is important to mask any characteristics within the data that could allow the identification of a research participant, such as location or occupation (Catungal & Dowling, 2021). The interviews were conducted in a private room at a local school outside operating hours, so that the confidentiality of participants was assured. Moreover, participant numbers were used in my field notes and audio recordings to refer to informants. Hence, no names were ever collected. Additionally, no identifying information (address, birthdate, work location, etc.) was collected. If identifying information was recorded during interviews, it was removed in the transcript.

### ***1.3.2.2) Informed Consent***

Consent is the notion that “researchers have to acquire people’s permission before they can involve them,” and informed consent stresses that it needs to be “a decision that a participant must arrive at with sufficient knowledge of what participation entails” (Catungal & Dowling, 2021, p. 34). To be sufficiently informed, participants should at least know what the research project is, what the objectives are, how the results will be disseminated, what they will be asked to do, how confidentiality will be maintained and what the potential benefits and risks are (*Application Guidelines for Ethics Review*, 2021). Even if participants give their consent, it is important to stress that they are free to withdraw it at any time (Longhurst, 2016). Oral consent was used for this project (see [Appendix A](#) for oral consent scripts). There are two main reasons why oral consent was more appropriate than written consent in the context of my research. First, in Kenya, presenting a formal document which needs to be signed will create the impression that the researcher is working for the government. It will most likely scare the potential participant and destroy any rapport that existed. Second, participants may sometimes have low levels of education. In those cases, illiteracy or semi-literacy would prevent participants from clearly understanding a written consent form.

### ***1.3.2.3) Different Cultural Contexts***

Doing cross-cultural research brings a multitude of additional ethical considerations. Writing about interviews, Valentine (2005, p. 124) explains that “interviewing in different cultural contexts, particularly in less developed countries, requires a heightened sensitivity to the complex power relations which exist between researchers and interviewees, and to local codes of behaviour.” This statement can be extended to any qualitative method, since the simple act of carrying research in another country is not neutral, but rather a privilege that is the result of historical processes of inequality (Madge, 1997). The researcher must therefore carefully consider her/his positionality and the power dynamics that will be at play in the particular context of the study. Moreover, the researcher must also try to anticipate ethical dilemmas that might arise in the field due to local codes of behaviour or social norms. As Madge (1997, p. 115) writes, “Ethical research does not have a universally understood meaning.” The meaning of ethical changes with time and place. Therefore, it is not enough for the researcher to consider ethics from his home country’s perspective. Ethical norms in the place of study will more than likely be different. For this project,

efforts were made to comply with Kenyan laws and local customs at the study site. These included going through the formal process of obtaining a research permit from the Government of Kenya (License No. NACOSTI/P/22/16559) and hiring a local research assistant that reviewed the methodology and interview guide before fieldwork began. This local contact was also present for the entirety of the fieldwork, and daily debriefs were conducted to refine the methodology.

#### ***1.3.2.4) Risk of Harm***

The researcher has to consider potential harms for the participants as well as herself/himself. Potential harms can be defined as “potential physical, psychological, cultural, social, financial, legal and environmentally harmful effects of the study or its results” (Hay, 2016, p. 35). In the context of this research, two types of potential harm have been identified. First, there was a potential for economic stress since the time that participants spend on an interview is taken away from their daily livelihood activities. To minimize this risk, participants were allowed to choose the time of their interview. They were also offered a compensation for their time. Second, there was a potential for psychological and emotional harm, as some questions can offend or trigger past trauma. I believe that the risk was low, except for the question about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the participant’s quality of life. If the person was heavily impacted by the pandemic, this question had a higher probability of triggering past trauma. For this reason, the particular question about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was framed in a way that allowed the informant to refuse to answer. Moreover, the interview guide was reviewed with my local research assistant to make sure that the topics and wording of the questions were appropriate. A protocol was put in place in the case that an informant would show signs of discomfort during an interview. This protocol never had to be used.

#### ***1.3.2.5) Rigour***

Rigour in qualitative research can be understood as the “trustworthiness of data collection and analysis” (Hay & Cope, 2021, p. 432). I would argue that it is an ethical responsibility that the researcher upholds rigour during every stage of the research process (design, data collection, data analysis and write up). Several approaches to ensure rigour in qualitative work have been proposed (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Shenton, 2004). Whether the technique being used is triangulation (N. Carter et al., 2014; Hussein, 2009), member checking (Birt et al., 2016; Turner & Coen, 2008), co-coding (Campbell et al., 2013; MacPhail et al., 2016) or reflexivity (Finlay, 2002; Jootun et al.,

2009), it is important to remain critical when thinking about rigour and not blindly follow a checklist (Barbour, 2001). Since the goal of research is to make a contribution to knowledge, I think that it is a moral responsibility for the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of her/his work before publishing the results. Triangulation through multiple interviewers, co-coding and reflexivity was used for this research project.

In sum, ethics are a critical part of qualitative research. The considerations presented in this section represent some of the main ethical dimensions of the research project. However, they are not exhaustive as ethics need to be considered throughout the entirety of the research process. Thus, the researcher should always be prepared to face new ethical dilemmas throughout the course of her/his research.

### **1.3.3) Positionality**

#### ***1.3.3.1) Concept***

Any knowledge that is produced during a research process is created from the researcher's perspective. Commonly referred to as "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988), this reality of the research process highlights the fact that the researcher's positionality affects the data being collected and the interpretation of the results. The concept of positionality can be understood as "a researcher's social, locational, and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in it" (Watson, 2021, p. 127). The social nature of qualitative research puts emphasis on the subjectivity of the knowledge being created. It is therefore important to be aware that every human being has a positionality and that it will impact the research. Since it is not possible to alter our positionality, it is important to be reflexive throughout the research process to uncover potential biases or power dynamics that our positionality creates. Reflexivity can be defined as a "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994, p. 82). Two common tools used to improve reflexivity during a research project are maintaining a research diary and adding reflexive memos in notes and transcripts.

#### ***1.3.3.2) Positioning Myself***

I will now discuss my own positionality in the context of my research project in the Manyatta B informal settlement in Kisumu, Kenya. I am a M.A. student in geography in his late 20s conducting

qualitative field research for the first time. I am young and able-bodied, and therefore, do not face limitations in the type of activities that I can engage in when I am in the field. I speak four languages: French (mother tongue), English (fluent), German (intermediate) and Swahili (intermediate). I am a Canadian citizen by birth, and I was raised in the province of Quebec. I do not anticipate my nationality impacting my rapport with people, since Kenya is a country that sees many tourists and Kenyans are normally used to seeing foreigners from different nationalities in the Western world. A more important part of my positionality is that I am a white man, locally referred to as *mzungu*. Being a *mzungu* comes with asymmetrical power relationship in Kenyan society, since white foreigners are usually perceived as being wealthy and having a lot of influence. In the context of the Manyatta B informal settlement, this can also take the form of being perceived as being associated with governmental organizations or NGOs. Even though I always specified that I was a student and unaffiliated with any organization, this was a label that came back regularly during my interviews. Hence, being a *mzungu* in Kenya means being perceived as coming from a higher class. Because I grew up in a middle-class family, I do not perceive myself as coming from a higher class. Hence, when I am in the field, this positionality is not something that I relate to, and it sometimes makes me uncomfortable. However, I do consider myself as privileged when in the field, as I have the opportunity to travel to and from my study site freely, which is a privilege that few people have in Kenya. I have travelled extensively in the past, and I was visiting Kenya for the third time. I have spent about three months in the country before, and about six months in East Africa. I am acquainted with the culture and know some of the local language. The concept of “betweenness” (Katz, 1994; Nast, 1994) thus describes well how I position myself in between an outsider and insider. I identified as an outsider when I visited Kenya for the first time, but my multiple engagement with the local people throughout the years has made my “shifting-self” (McDowell, 1992) move into the space between outsider and insider.

Another key element that can influence rapport with informants in the field is personality (Moser, 2008). My previous experience in Kenya has taught me that I am a social person who can normally easily establish a rapport with the locals. I regularly use my sense of humour to put people at ease, and I have found my sense of humour to be compatible with the local culture. During my fieldwork, I took the role of “researcher-as-suppliant,” which consists in openly acknowledging my “reliance on the research subject to provide insight into the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and

shape everyday lives” (England, 1994, p. 82). By shifting the power to the informant, this role can help deal with the asymmetrical power relationship that being a *mzungu* in Kenya creates.

### **1.3.3.3) Positioning My Research Assistant/Interpreter**

Finally, I was working in a cross-cultural context at a site where English was not as widely spoken as in the rest of the country. Most interviews were conducted in English, but some had to be conducted in Swahili (the dominant *lingua franca* in Kenya) and *Kijaluo* (the native language of the Luo tribe that makes up most of the population in Kisumu). I took intensive classes to improve my Swahili for several months before my fieldwork, but my language level was not sufficient to conduct full interviews when I got to the field. Hence, I worked with an assistant who also acted as my interpreter for the non-English interviews. My research assistant also took part in the data analysis. It is thus important to also elaborate on the positionality of my assistant since he was an integral part of knowledge production (Caretta, 2015; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Turner, 2010). My research assistant described his positionality as follows:

It's my pleasure to state my own positionality concerning the research that I fully participated as a research assistant to Mr. Julien Greschner in the Manyatta informal settlement in Kisumu, Kenya. I am a man aged 36 years old, a school director within Manyatta informal settlement, I have been in school sector for the last 10 years particularly informal settlements as school principal/head and finally school director. I am also a spiritual leader in one of the local churches. I am as well a family man, a father of three kids. I am a healthy, very energetic and flexible, which does not limit me in the kinds of activities I can engage in. I speak three languages: Luo is my mother tongue, Swahili is my second language and English is my third language, I am fluent in both languages therefore I do not face difficulties expressing myself. I am a Kenyan citizen, born and raised in Nyanza Province, Migori County, I have been living in Kisumu within Manyatta informal settlement for the last 11 years. I believe my position makes our approach to the community concerning the research more acceptable since I am a leader that is well known in the community, especially by the parents whose children are learning in my school. My position makes it easier for them to give the information to *Mzungu* (white man), since some of the local people can neither speak nor understand English or Swahili. My position makes it easier for them to understand the purpose of this research by making expectations clear to them, since it's like a norm in this kind of environment that a white person might be coming with some help (donations or support). My position of being an insider also makes it easier for them to talk freely without doubt, and it makes our movement in the community very easy since I am well acquainted with the community. My personality is also very key towards the research since I am a very social person, down to earth and mingles freely with all types of people. This has made me to build a good rapport with the entire community. My role therefore helps a lot to expel any doubt or fear and gives the community members interviewed confidence to express themselves fully and freely.

The position of my research assistant facilitated my integration into the community during my fieldwork and was key in fostering community trust in the research project. His positionality also brought a perspective from the community into the research process.

#### **1.3.4) Reflection on the Chosen Methodology**

The greatest strength of semi-structured interviews is that they allow “to collect a diversity of meanings, opinion, and experiences” with a relatively small sample (Dunn, 2021, p. 149). While it has a structure, a semi-structured interview gives flexibility to respondents to answer open-ended questions as they wish, and the interviewer is free to follow up with new questions based on the respondent’s answers (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). One of the drawbacks of using any interview technique is that results are not generalizable. As Valentine (2005, p. 111) puts it, “the fluid and individual nature of conversational-style interviews means that they can never be replicated, only corroborated by similar studies or complementary techniques.” Another drawback is that the act of interviewing is not neutral, and power asymmetries between interviewer and interviewee can influence results through the rapport with the informant (Kvale, 2006). Finally, an additional shortcoming is that the quality of the research is dependent on the researcher’s skills and it can easily be influenced by her/his biases (Anderson, 2010).

Despite these drawbacks, I believe semi-structured interviews to be an excellent methodology to explore the diversity of opinions on local solutions to poverty. The fact that the results obtained by this method are not generalizable should not be seen as a drawback, since the aim of the method is not to be generalizable but rather to “understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives” (Valentine, 2005, p. 111). Moreover, semi-structured interviews are a good compromise between structure and flexibility. The risk with more structured forms of interviewing is that important discussion points may be left out. While this risk is not totally eliminated with semi-structured forms of interviewing, it is greatly reduced since participants are given the flexibility to give open answers and explore what feels important to them. It is up to the researcher to establish a good rapport with her/his informant to make sure that s/he is motivated to give detailed answers and that the influence of power asymmetries is limited. For example, my positionality statement elaborated on the unequal power dynamic that being a *mzungu* in Kenya creates, and how I tried to limit the influence of this power asymmetry by taking on the role of “researcher-as-suppliant.” Any research done with human subjects comes with many ethical

considerations, and my ethics section carefully presented the main ethical dimensions of my research and the steps that I have taken to guarantee confidentiality, informed consent, cultural appropriateness, safety and rigour.

In sum, semi-structured interviews are a suitable methodology to answer the three research questions because of their efficiency at uncovering a diversity of opinions with a small sample. They offer enough structure to cover all the themes related to the research questions, while also giving the interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to go beyond the interview guide. Moreover, the use of an interview guide with a list of predefined questions allows greater comparability between interviews. Still, the open-ended nature of the questions and the flexibility to ask follow-up questions make it possible to explore the themes that are most important to the participants.



# **Chapter 2—Voices From a Slum: Poverty Solutions According to Residents of Manyatta B Informal Settlement, Kisumu, Kenya**

## **2.1) Introduction**

Since the 2000s, Kenya has been able to achieve continuous progress in reducing poverty. Between 2005 and 2015, the poverty rate, using the World Bank’s International Poverty Line of US\$2.15 per day (2017 PPP), decreased from 36.7% to 29.4% (World Bank Group, 2022b, 2022a). However, similar to the trend in Sub-Saharan Africa, the progress in Kenya hasn’t been enough to keep up with population growth. Over the same period, the number of Kenyans living under the poverty line has increased from 13.4 million to 14.1 million (World Bank Group, 2022a). Moreover, the International Poverty Line represents a low threshold since Kenya’s own national poverty line is higher, yielding a national poverty rate of 36 percent (15.9 million Kenyans) (KNBS, 2020). Hence, the national poverty rate rises quickly when we consider higher poverty lines, such as US\$3.65 per day (59.6% or 28.5 million Kenyans) and US\$6.85 per day (85.7% or 41.0 million Kenyans) (World Bank Group, 2022b, 2022a).

Poverty reduction efforts, while successful at reducing the poverty rate, have not been able to reduce, or even stabilize, the number of people living in poverty in the country. Of the many potential reasons that could explain this reality, there is the question of whether policies are aligned with the lived experiences of the poor. Could there be a disconnect between current policies and the local realities of the intended beneficiaries? In order to explore this avenue, a better understanding of local views is needed. There is a need for more effective poverty reduction policies in the country, and different stakeholders have different solutions. But what about the people living in poverty themselves? How do they perceive their situation and how do they think they should be helped? The poor’s ideas and lived experiences rarely dictate poverty interventions. This is made evident by the common disconnect that exists between the bottom-up perspective coming from the voices of the poor and the top-down official poverty reduction interventions. A

clear understanding of local views and priorities would allow development actors to make sure that their policies and programs are compatible with the local reality.

In the scientific literature, there is currently a lack of studies exploring the views of people living in low-income areas on strategies to reduce poverty. Studies have investigated local views on poverty but not specifically on solutions. Within the Kenyan context, although some studies address local perceptions of poverty and local understandings of reasons behind escape and descent into poverty (Krishna et al., 2004; Kristjanson et al., 2010; Muyanga et al., 2013; Watete et al., 2016), much less is known about the ideas that local people have on ways to reduce poverty in their area. Furthermore, within an urban context, studies that look at informal settlements in Kenya tend to focus on Nairobi, and few studies around these topics have been conducted in intermediary cities, such as Kisumu. This paper attempts to address these gaps of knowledge by studying the views of people living in the Manyatta B informal settlement located within Kisumu's "slum belt" in Kenya. The study tries to answer the following research questions:

- How do residents of Manyatta B perceive poverty and development efforts in their area?
- What are their ideas on how to improve the poverty situation in their area?
- What is the reasoning behind the solutions that they propose?

The answers to these questions have the potential not only to better inform development initiatives in the area but also to evaluate if current policies are compatible with the lived experiences of the residents of Manyatta B. This knowledge is crucial to identify any disconnect that could exist between decision-makers and beneficiaries on the ground.

The case study examines people's understanding of poverty, perception of development efforts, solutions to reduce poverty and the rationale behind the solutions proposed. The paper is divided into three main sections. The next section describes the research context and the methodology used for data collection and data analysis. The section thereafter presents the findings of the research on local perspectives of poverty and development efforts, local solutions to poverty and local reasoning behind the solutions proposed. Finally, the last section discusses the key insights, practical implications, use of bottom-up approaches, and limitations of the study.

## **2.2) Methods**

### **2.2.1) Study Site**

The selected site for the case study was located within the Manyatta B informal settlement in Kisumu, Kenya. The city is Kenya's sixth largest urban centre with a population of 400,000 (KNBS, 2019). In Kenya, about 15 percent of the urban population lives in informal settlements, and Kisumu has the highest proportion of any city with 46.9% of its residents living in the "slum belt" (NCPD, 2013). Kisumu's slum belt encompasses the Bandani, Obunga, Kibos, Manyatta A, Manyatta B, Nyamasaria, Nyalenda A and Nyalenda B settlements (Karanja, 2010). Despite several government programs, such as the Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) launched in 2000 and the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project (KISIP) launched in 2011, these areas continue to experience high levels of deprivation, such as lack of proper roads, lack of good hospitals, low quality of housing, lack of proper sanitation facilities and lack of security of tenure (Edith et al., 2019; Simiyu et al., 2019; UN-HABITAT, 2005). Manyatta is the most populous settlement with respectively 47,000 people living in Manyatta A and 33,000 living in Manyatta B (KNBS, 2019). Poverty is widespread in these areas, and this was corroborated by the participants in the study who all mentioned that the poverty situation in Manyatta was problematic.

My research assistant and I conducted fieldwork in the Manyatta B informal settlement between May and July 2022. Most of the population in Kisumu is from the Luo tribe, Luo is thus often used as a lingua franca in Manyatta, in addition to Swahili and English. The three languages were being used frequently in the area where fieldwork was conducted. The precise study area in Manyatta B was at a local primary school. I selected the study site because of the availability of a local community partner and its location within an area locally known to be experiencing high rates of poverty. I used the school as a gateway into the community. I spent three weeks at the beginning of the fieldwork to integrate within the community around the school. This integration phase consisted in being present at the school every day to observe and learn the daily life of people in the area, as well as socialize with children, parents and school staff. No deception was used, I openly disclosed my status as a master's student and researcher from McGill University in Canada. My local research assistant was affiliated with the school and a trusted figure within the community, which facilitated my integration. By the time data collection started, people in the area had become accustomed to my presence and were well aware of who I was and why I was there.

The chosen study area was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I was concerned that this might impact the results, so I included questions about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the interview guide. The situation in the community was judged to be worse than usual by participants, as most people had not recovered from the economic shock of the pandemic and were struggling to cope with the rampant inflation that started in 2022. Between January and July, the 12-Month inflation rate in Kenya rose from 5.39% to 8.32% (Central Bank of Kenya, 2022). These numbers were still on a rising trend when the fieldwork ended. Still, while the poverty situation had worsened, I have no reason to believe that people's perception of poverty and its solutions have been significantly changed by the pandemic.

### **2.2.2) Data Collection**

My research assistant and I conducted semi-structured interviews in a private room at the local school or in a participant's home with 32 residents of Manyatta B. I selected this method because of its efficiency at uncovering a diversity of opinions with a relatively small sample. In addition, it offered enough structure to cover all the themes related to the research topic, while also giving the interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to go beyond the interview guide. I used an interview guide with a list of predefined questions, which produced greater comparability between interviews since the same discussion topics were raised. Yet, the open-ended nature of the questions and the flexibility to ask follow-up questions made it possible to explore the themes that were most important to the participants.

I used a purposive sampling technique to recruit residents of Manyatta B into the study. Purposive sampling can be defined as choosing participants purposefully based on their potential to provide answers to the research questions. My local research assistant helped to recruit parents, grandparents or relatives of children frequenting the primary school. A few school employees were also interviewed. Having built a relationship with the families over the years, the school management is well aware of the situation of the households with children at the school. This context made it possible to identify and target struggling households with lower levels of income than average. My research assistant contacted potential participants by phone. They were given a short summary of the nature of the project and implications of participation before being asked if they would be interested to come to the school for an interview. The school's location was easily accessible and familiar to participants. We conducted the interviews outside of the school's

operating hours to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. For participants who could not get to the site because of mobility limitations, we carried out the interview at the participant's home. We used maximum variation sampling (Etikan et al., 2016; Sandelowski, 1995; Suri, 2011) to select 32 residents, including six school employees. I picked this sampling technique to gain a greater understanding of the diversity of answers to the research questions. Residents represented a broad range of demographic characteristics (age, sex and years of residency in Manyatta) and geographic variation (people living in different estates in Manyatta). The sample was gender-balanced with a minimum number of participants for each age group (youth, adult and the elderly). Participants in the study were at least 18 years old, residents of Manyatta B for at least one year, able to provide consent, and fluent in Swahili, English or Luo. All participants provided oral consent to participate. Few people who were invited to participate chose not to be interviewed. For those that did, they cited other commitments and inability to make time to come to the school as the reasons for their refusal. A few individuals missed their interview appointment, citing a time conflict.

We conducted interviews as a team of two: one researcher (foreign-born, White male, new to Manyatta, fluent in English, intermediate level in Swahili) and one research assistant (Kenyan-born, Black male, resident of Manyatta for over ten years, fluent in English, Swahili and Luo). We both stayed in Kisumu throughout the data collection and early analysis period. Interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. A list of the interview questions is provided in Appendix A. The interview guide contained three parts. The first section contained three questions exploring the participant's perception of poverty. The participant was asked about her/his definition of poverty, assessment of the local poverty situation, and evaluation of current poverty reduction efforts. The second section contained two questions about the participant's solutions to poverty. The informant was first asked about her/his ideas, and then, about the reasoning behind the proposed ideas. The third section contained two questions about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant was questioned about the impacts of the pandemic on the quality of life of the people in the area, before being asked about their personal experience. The goal of this last section was to contextualize the current situation in the community given the still ongoing pandemic.

Ethical approval for the research project was obtained through the McGill University Research Ethics Board Office (file #22-01-069). A research permit was also obtained from the Government of Kenya (License No. NACOSTI/P/22/16559). To minimize the risk of economic stress, participants were allowed to choose the time of their interview, and they were compensated for their time. The compensation was half-a-semester tuition for one child (about US\$20 in value). The amount was directly applied towards the balance at the local school. For the school employees that were interviewed, they were offered a cash amount of 1000 KES (about US\$10).

### **2.2.3) Data Analysis**

We analyzed the transcripts using a latent content analysis (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). This technique involves looking through the text document for underlying meaning in passages, such as themes or more abstract concepts. Coding (Elliott, 2018; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019) was done on all 32 interview transcripts using NVivo qualitative analysis software version 12 (Azeem & Salfi, 2012). Because no previous studies on the research topic had been identified, we used an inductive (data-driven) approach to identify codes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). During the analysis, we put emphasis on coding the proposed solutions and the themes behind the solutions proposed. My research assistant and I co-coded all transcripts to improve rigour. For the transcripts in other languages than English, my Kenyan research assistant coded the original Swahili or Luo transcripts, while I coded the English translation of those transcripts. We conducted analysis iteratively after every set of 3–8 interviews, so that insights from the previous interviews could be used to refine data collection for subsequent interviews. We conducted a total of 32 interviews, and while signs of data saturation started emerging during the last few interviews, the end of data collection was motivated by reaching the end of the research project's budget.

The first round of coding consisted in both my research assistant and myself coding all interviews individually with an inductive approach. At the end of each set of interviews, we reviewed each other's codes and discussed differences for each transcript until a consensus was reached. Our codes mostly overlapped. When differences emerged, we would explain to each other the ideas behind the codes that we used. Two scenarios were then possible. First, when different codes expressed the same idea, we would simply agree on a common code name for the idea. Second, when different codes expressed different ideas, we would keep both codes, so that the final version would be the aggregate of our two perspectives. At the end of this first round of coding, our

inductively produced codebook was complete. I then carried out a second round of coding to apply uniformly the codebook to all transcripts. Since the codebook was being created during the first round, a second round was necessary to make sure that no codes or passages were missed. I identified a few new passages during this second round, but coding remained mostly the same. Thus, I decided that a third round of coding was not necessary.

After the two rounds of coding, about 200 codes had been identified in all the transcripts. I then grouped them by interview topics (definitions of poverty, poverty situation, current reduction efforts, responsibility to reduce poverty, solutions to poverty and impacts of COVID-19). For each group of codes, I put codes on pieces of paper and put them up on a wall to create a word cloud. I then looked through the cloud for abstract themes and moved the codes around iteratively to create clusters around more abstract ideas. This resulted in four clusters emerging for definitions of poverty, one for poverty situation, one for current reduction efforts, three for responsibility to reduce poverty, eight for solutions to poverty and eight for impacts of COVID-19. My research assistant validated the categorizations. The findings about local perceptions of poverty, local solutions to poverty and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were derived from the categories that emerged during that analysis. To answer the last research question about the reasoning behind the solutions proposed, I used NVivo to collect all passages of reference for each solution. My research assistant and I then conducted another round of coding on each text document containing all the relevant passages for a given solution. We used co-coding again. My research assistant and myself coded individually each text document, and then produced an interpretative summary of the reasoning behind each solution that was proposed. We then compared both of our summaries and discussed until a consensus was reached. We were pleasantly surprised by the amount of overlap between our summaries. No disagreement emerged during this step, and a consensus was easily reached for each solution to produce the final summary. This final step produced the findings of our final research question about the reasons behind the solution proposed.

## **2.3) Results**

This section presents the findings to the three research questions. When discussing the frequency of ideas and themes mentioned by respondents, the following words are used: nearly all (mentioned by 80–100% of respondents), many (60–80%), several (40–60%), some (20–40%), a few (0–20%). When using quotations, respondents are identified by their participant number. The numbers are

between 0 and 100. They were picked by the respondents and do not have any meaning beyond acting as identifiers. Data grids (Wise et al., 1992) were used to compare answers between sexes, age groups and time of residency in Manyatta. There were no discernable patterns that emerged. However, to give more context about the quoted respondents, information about the sex, approximate age and number of years that the respondent has been living in Manyatta are added in parentheses at the end of each quote. Translated quotations are also labelled.

### **2.3.1) Participant Characteristics**

Just over half of the participants (17 out of 32) in this study were women. About 70% of the participants in this study were between 18 and 34 years old (youth), with about 20% between 35 and 59 (adult) and just 10% above the age of 60 (the elderly). Most of the sample were young adults, which is representative of the wider demographic trend in Kisumu, where 74% of the population is aged 35 or younger (Opiyo et al., 2018). Participants had resided in Manyatta B between 1 and 41 years. Half of the participants had resided in Manyatta B for over eight years. About 60% of the participants were married, while about 80% were engaged in an economic activity (employment or small business). About 90% had children, with over half having 1–2 children. Three quarters of participants lived in a household of 3–5 individuals, while a fifth lived in a household of 1–2. Twenty-three interviews were carried out in English, seven in Swahili and two in Luo.

### **2.3.2) COVID-19 Pandemic**

The chosen study area was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic was still ongoing when fieldwork was conducted, participants were asked if the situation in the community had changed as a result of the pandemic. All respondents agreed and qualified the situation in the community as worse than usual. From the perspective of the people interviewed, the COVID-19 pandemic had created a significant economic shock that impacted the livelihoods of most people in the community, making them unable to earn enough to cover their basic needs. Table 2 presents the main impacts of the pandemic as mentioned by the people interviewed.



**Table 2. Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic as Perceived by Residents of Manyatta B**

Impacts of COVID-19	Number of respondents (n=32)
<b>Economic</b>	<b>32</b>
Job loss	28
Business loss	21
Inflation	14
Unable to pay rent	8
Cutting expenses	5
Death of a breadwinner	4
Reduced salaries	4
Cost of face masks	1
Costly local remedy	1
More working hours	1
New business opportunities	1
<b>Regulations</b>	<b>22</b>
School closure	15
Curfew	6
Lockdown	5
Masks	5
Border closure	3
Police harassment	3
Quarantine	3
Church closure	2
Sanitization	2
Market closure	1
Social distancing	1
<b>Health</b>	<b>26</b>
Mortality	20
More hunger	12
Sickness	9
Health expenses	3
Vaccine hesitancy	3
More HIV	2
Lack of care	1
Overloaded hospitals	1
<b>Psychological</b>	<b>16</b>
Fear	5
Stress	3
Depression	2
Frustration	2
Stigma	2
Suicide	1
<b>School</b>	<b>15</b>

School dropouts	12
Delayed graduation	3
Move to public schools	2
Home life	13
Domestic disputes	7
Staying indoors	5
More dependents	4
Divorce	2
Migration	8
Migration to rural	6
Moved to a cheaper place	4
More Idleness	8
More early pregnancies	6
More insecurity	4
More drug use	3
More prostitution	2
More early marriages	1
Others	7
Learned survival skills	6
Church backsliding	1

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First, all the participants cited the economic impact that the pandemic had on the community. Restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic included lockdowns, curfews, border closures and market closures. These measures created a huge shock to the local economy and slowed down the economic activity in the area. This resulted in many people losing their jobs and many businesses suffering important losses or collapsing. Many residents lost their livelihood during that period and saw their income significantly reduced. Moreover, the cost of living increased as the pandemic pushed prices up and brought inflation to higher levels than normal. More people than usual started to struggle to pay rent and afford three meals a day. For example, Participant #53 shares:

It affected me, we [me and my husband] had a job but both of us, we lost our job. Life became very difficult because we were paying [school] fees, putting food on the table. Like we are five but putting food on the table for all those five people it was difficult, you survive with only one meal, you only take tea in the morning until evening. And then... you find most of the time you quarrel because there was lack of finances, you find the child cannot go to school like earlier it use to happen. (woman, late 20s, 10 years in Manyatta, *translated*)

People were forced to cut expenses, and for many of them, it meant having to forego some necessities. The loss of income forced many households to cut down on meals, going down to one or two meals a day and restricting their diet to cheaper foods. Hence, many participants claimed that people had been hungrier than usual during the pandemic. Some people also had to move to cheaper areas in the city, and for those who could not afford to stay anywhere in the city, many migrated to the rural areas. The physical and mental health of people was also affected according to respondents. Most people mentioned that the COVID-19 virus caused a lot of mortality in the

community during the first months of the pandemic. Participant #05 shares, “Yeah, many people died. I even lost an uncle due to COVID. I lost a cousin. These were other effects.” (man, early 40s, whole life in Manyatta) Households who lost their breadwinners were hit the hardest by this reality. Some people cited having more dependents now because of relatives who passed away during the pandemic or lost their source of income. Many people also mentioned falling sick from the disease but recovering. Psychologically, a few respondents stated that people were afraid to catch the disease and that many had high levels of financial stress, sometimes causing frustration and/or depression. This led to a rise in domestic disputes, sometimes resulting in families breaking apart. For example, Participant #64 explains:

The families could no longer hold, because you see, in Manyatta, most men are breadwinners with the wives being just housewives. So when the COVID-19 struck, and the job places had to be closed down. See, now the breadwinner is also at home with you. [...] it’s a fact we can’t run away from, money is the foundation for most of the families. If we don’t have the money in the family, actually love just holds a very small bit of it. Actually, it’s the money that runs the family, truth be told. So if that money is not there, you see the family could just break. Now the woman felt the man is becoming irresponsible, “I can’t hold this anymore,” “let me just leave here,” “go be with somebody else,” or “let me go be somewhere else.” So families were breaking. Frustration, I would put it that way. Families were frustrated. (man, early 30s, whole life in Manyatta)

Schools in Kenya were also closed for about a year during the pandemic, and many participants mentioned the negative consequences that this closure had on the youth. They highlighted that many children dropped out of school and never returned once the schools reopened. According to them, many youths did not have anything to do during that year and became idle. The idleness led them into bad behaviours, and participants noticed an increase in early pregnancies, insecurity (mainly theft), drug use, prostitution and early marriages. For example, Participant #52 shares:

You see during the pandemic, the schools closed almost for one year. And that one year, brought a lot of things. Many children dropped out from the school because they left. After one year, they felt like there’s no need of going back to school because of the life they had developed outside there. Even many girls went to the street doing prostitution. In the name of looking for money. (woman, early 50s, 20 years in Manyatta)

While most of the effects mentioned by the participants were negative, a few declared that one positive thing that they experienced during the crisis was to learn survival skills. People had to find novel ideas to earn income and a few participants highlighted that it had been a turning point for them, teaching them not to depend on one source of income. Their income was now more diversified because of the experience that they had been through during the crisis.

These impacts are not meant to be an exhaustive list of how the community was affected. They are meant to give the reader an understanding of the most important consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by the people interviewed, giving additional information about the context in which the research project was conducted.

### 2.3.3) Perspectives on Poverty

The first research question was “How do residents of Manyatta B perceive poverty and development efforts in their area?” The interview guide contained three probes to answer the first research question.

#### 2.3.3.1) *Definition of Poverty*

First, participants were asked, “How would you define poverty?” Nearly all participants gave definitions centred around basic needs, while several mentioned feelings associated with living in poverty. Some respondents also proposed monetary and relative definitions of poverty. The results of the coding done on the answers given by participants are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Meaning of Poverty According to Residents of Manyatta B**

Definition of Poverty	Number of respondents (n=32)
Basic needs	29
Food	26
Clothing	21
Shelter	21
Access to education	12
Access to healthcare	5
Functional roads	1
Rights	1
Safe community	1
Feelings	15
Struggling	12
Hopeless	5
Stressful life	2
Undesirable life	2
Monetary	11
Lack of money	11
Need outside financial help	2
Unable to help others financially	1
Relative	7
Below living standards	6
Unable to live comfortably	1

*Basic Needs.* Nearly all participants defined poverty in terms of basic needs. According to their understanding, poverty is a “lacking” of basic needs. For example, Participant #22 states, “Poverty is just a state of not having enough money to meet your basic needs” (woman, late 20s, 2 years in Manyatta). Interviewees who mentioned basic needs were then asked as a follow-up question to define these basic needs. Food, clothing and shelter were the most common basic needs named by participants. For example, Participant #09 claims, “things like food, proper clothing, and good shelter” (man, late 30s, 10 years in Manyatta), while Participant #53 added, “Poverty it’s lack of basic needs. You can’t afford housing, you can’t afford school fee, you can’t afford good food, you can’t afford good clothing” (woman, late 20s, 10 years in Manyatta, *translated*). Like participants #09 and #53, nearly all people mentioned food, while many also added clothing and shelter in their definition of basic needs. Several also mentioned access to formal education, while a few talked about access to healthcare, functional roads (to be able to move around freely), rights (to have access to the means to enforce their rights and to express themselves freely) and a safe community (to be free from the fear of being a victim of crime).

*Feelings.* Several people also mentioned feelings associated with living in a situation of poverty, adding an emotional component to their definition. Many talked about feelings of struggle. For example, Participant #11 claims that poverty “is a life that people struggle to earn a living” (woman, late 30s, 12 years in Manyatta), while Participant #21 further explains:

Poverty has made Kisumu to become hopeless, like here in Manyatta finding help is very difficult, how you can get food, life in Manyatta here is a life of struggles...that’s one of the things that happens here in Manyatta. (man, early 70s, 32 years in Manyatta, *translated*)

The hopelessness that Participant #21 is referring to was also mentioned by others who felt hopeless towards their situation. For example, Participant #33 shares, “You have so many issues fighting with the limited resources, so you end up like losing hope” (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta). A few respondents also mentioned feelings related to living a stressful or undesirable life.

*Monetary.* The financial aspect of poverty, while not the most common, was also mentioned by some. Participants who highlighted the monetary aspect mostly defined poverty as a “lack of money” (Participant #04;#10;#31), “lack of finances” (Participant #52;#71) or “not having enough money” (Participant #22). A few also stressed that this lack of money forced them to ask for outside financial help or made them unable to financially help relatives who were also struggling. For

example, Participant #27 explains, “Poverty is lack, where a person cannot even afford it, when he wakes up in the morning, he does not know what to say, he does not know what to use, you can either ask or go and borrow” (woman, late 60s, 37 years in Manyatta, *translated*), while Participant #10 shares:

Poverty is lack of money. Poverty is not being able to take care of your needs in any way or not being able to help any person. [...] Someone like me it has really hurt since I cannot even help my parents, even paying school I am not able, though I am trying in all corners.  
(man, mid 20s, 9 years in Manyatta, *translated*)

People who mentioned these consequences drew a distinction between being dependent on help and being a provider of help. In their eyes, someone who is dependent on help is poor, while someone who can provide help is not.

*Relative.* Some people also added a relative component to their definition of poverty. These respondents defined poverty as living below the living standards in the country. For example, Participant #07 states, “The way I understand it [poverty], it is living a very low standard of life” (woman, early 30s, 1 year in Manyatta, *translated*), while Participant #52 suggests, “Poverty, like the way I’m living... we are not living to the standard of life that we should be living” (woman, early 50s, 20 years in Manyatta). These testimonies show that some respondents perceived poverty as a state of deprivation relative to others in their society.

#### **2.3.3.2) Poverty Situation in Manyatta**

After giving their definition of poverty, interviewees were asked, “Is poverty a problem in this area?” Every respondent indicated that the poverty situation in Manyatta is problematic. Most respondents gave short answers, such as “Yes” or “True.” Some elaborated more, for example Participant #01 claims, “In this area, poverty it is a problem, it is there. It is there in Manyatta, not even only in Manyatta alone.” (woman, late 20s, 9 years in Manyatta) Several respondents highlighted that poverty was a big problem, affecting many people in the area. For example, Participant #12 shares, “Yeah, it’s very common. It’s very big. Yes. It is a very big problem here in Manyatta” (woman, early 20s, 8 years in Manyatta), while Participant #64 adds, “Yes, poverty is very, very, very big. In fact, it’s the biggest problem in Manyatta.” (man, early 30s, whole life in Manyatta) The purpose of asking this question was to confirm that the community also sees poverty as an issue that was affecting them. Some people were surprised to be asked this question, because they thought it was so evident.

### 2.3.3.3) Poverty Reduction Efforts

After confirming that respondents see poverty as a problem in Manyatta, interviewees were then asked, “Should there be efforts to reduce poverty in the area?” Once again every respondent said “yes.” They were then asked as a follow-up question, “Should there be more, less or the same amount of efforts to reduce it?” Again, every respondent said that there should be more efforts. Many respondents gave short answers along the lines of “more should be done” (Participant #83). Some gave more detailed answers, such as Participant #02 who explains, “The current efforts, they are there yes, but they’re not that enough. [...] We should see more.” (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta) Participant #09 states a similar opinion, “The efforts being made to reduce poverty in Manyatta are quite limited. More needs to be done.” (man, late 30s, 10 years in Manyatta) These answers confirm that in the eyes of the residents interviewed, what is being done at the moment is not enough to address the poverty issue in Manyatta B. They feel neglected, and they expect more. But more from whom? In order to get an understanding of where the respondents place the responsibility of reducing poverty in Manyatta, they were asked, “Who should be working on reducing poverty in this area?” The question would sometimes be misunderstood and reframed as “Whose responsibility is it to reduce poverty in Manyatta?” Participants talked about the responsibility of their government, the locals, and the humanitarian sector. The coding of their answers is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Responsibility of Reducing Poverty According to Residents of Manyatta B**

Actor	Number of respondents (n=32)
Government	30
Local	25
Community	19
Individual	11
Parents	3
Rich people	2
Relatives	1
Humanitarian	18
NGOs	13
Churches	4
Well-wishers	4
CBOs	3
Government & Community	4

Three main actors emerged from the answers given by the participants. First, the government was mentioned by nearly all. Respondents think that the government has the power to do much more in reducing poverty. For example, Participant #14 explains:

According to me, and with my knowledge, I think our government is capable of doing much more than it's doing at the moment. I think they are capable of doing better than what they're doing now. Because as I can see, they're not making much effort. (woman, mid 20s, 15 years in Manyatta)

They expect their local officials to care about the people that they represent and be leaders in the fight against poverty. Participant #17 shares, "You know we have people like MCA [Member of County Assembly], MP [Member of Parliament], the people we vote should stand firm for the people who are poor and help in their problem" (man, early 30s, 6 years in Manyatta). Respondents perceived the government as the main actor on the poverty front and the one that should lead the poverty reduction efforts in Manyatta, as Participant #30 explains, "The government should do everything, like that should be the biggest agenda, to reduce poverty" (woman, late 20s, 22 years in Manyatta). All respondents who mentioned the responsibility of the government also highlighted how the government was falling short at the moment.

Second, many people also stressed the responsibility of the locals. Many people mentioned a collective responsibility at the community level. As Participant #10 explains, "I think all of us as a community we should work together and hold our hands and put our minds together, so that we can tackle the poverty crisis" (man, mid 20s, 9 years in Manyatta, *translated*). Several other respondents also talked about an individual responsibility. According to them, every person should be responsible for themselves, making every effort possible to improve their situation. For example, Participant #83 claims, "Everybody should be responsible for his or her situation" (woman, late 20s, 5 years in Manyatta), while Participant #60 shares:

According to me, it is an individual responsibility, that is first. And secondly, the authority, the government should also come in to help reduce it. But individuals should also put effort towards reducing poverty. (woman, late 20s, 2 years in Manyatta)

Other respondents also mentioned an individual responsibility to help others in the community when possible. For example, Participant #05 explains how he tries to give employment to youth from the community when opportunities arise.

Okay, on my side, I think collectively everybody should be responsible. Okay, on my side, I also try to reduce poverty in Manyatta. If I can give an example, when I get a job for the blocks [small construction business], I normally look for some youth who are not working, who are not engaged in any business, and I involve them. So that at the end of the work they



get something to put food on the table for themselves. So I also try to help in reducing poverty. (man, early 40s, whole life in Manyatta)

In the eyes of the respondents, every resident of Manyatta should be making efforts towards reducing poverty in the area. This includes not only giving job opportunities to other people when possible but also looking after yourself. If everybody looked after themselves and made every effort possible to get themselves out of poverty, the community would be better off.

Third, several people also talked about humanitarian actors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were the most mentioned. However, most people highlighted that NGOs should not be the main actors. The government should lead, and NGOs should be seen as an alternative or secondary source of help in addition to the government efforts. For example, Participant #22 states, “NGOs can help. Though, it depends with the area. You know, the people living around here, they are cooperative, see? If they can cooperate with the NGOs, then the rate of poverty can reduce. It can help, the NGOs can also do it.” (woman, late 20s, 2 years in Manyatta) Participant #52 adds, “I think so far the government is trying, but it is not... doing it better. Maybe if we could have some NGO to empower these young men, it could be better.” (woman, early 50s, 20 years in Manyatta) Aside from NGOs, some people also mentioned that well-wishers (or good Samaritans) and Churches could help reduce poverty, while a few mentioned that community-based organizations (CBOs) could help reduce poverty in the area.

Finally, a few people also highlighted the shared responsibility between the government and the community to reduce poverty, as Participant #12 explains:

“I think, for us to reduce poverty in the area we live, I think we should be working as a team, the government and the community. Yes, I think we should be working as a team, because the government cannot do it alone. It has to be a teamwork. Like, you find they make roads for us, we have to make sure we take good care of the things they make for us, because if we don’t use them wisely, they are going to get damaged, and it’s the community which is going to suffer. So I think it’s supposed to be a teamwork.” (woman, early 20s, 8 years in Manyatta)

Participant #50 shares a similar idea:

“I think it is a collective, a collective responsibility, whereby first we have the residents or the citizens to work together with the government. So the blame is both on the residents and the blame is also on the government. So the solution is they come up together and they come up with a solution.” (Man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

In the eyes of those respondents, both actors are part of the solution, and their cooperation is essential to produce long-lasting results.

### 2.3.4) Solutions to Poverty

After giving participants a chance to share their perception of poverty and development efforts in their area, their ideas on ways to improve the poverty situation were investigated. Participants were asked, “When you look at yourself and the people around you, what are some measures that you think could reduce poverty?” The ideas and themes that were mentioned by the interviewees (ranked in order of frequency) are presented in Table 5. After proposing their solution(s), respondents would be asked the follow-up question, “Why do you think this/these solution(s) would work?” to gain an understanding of the reasoning behind the idea(s).

**Table 5. Solutions to Poverty as Perceived by Residents of Manyatta B**

Solutions	Number of respondents (n=32)
Employment	27
Job creation	27
Develop local industry	6
Look for jobs	2
Increase salaries	1
Sensitization	25
Poverty eradication	19
Character development/Work hard	12
Agriculture	4
Rights	3
Health	2
Recycling	2
Gender-based violence	1
Business	23
Encourage entrepreneurship	17
Loans	12
Agribusiness	8
Diversify business activities	1
More markets	1
Youth Education	16
Easier access to education	10
Free learning material	2
Encourage schooling	1
More school resources	1
Reform education system	1

Empowerment	15
Initiatives for youth	12
Initiatives for women	8
Initiatives for the elderly	1
Better Governance	13
Better infrastructure	8
More participation	4
Fight corruption	3
Legal reforms	1
Reduce cost of living	4
Affordable housing	3
Subsidize basic commodities	2
Lift sales tax	1
Diversify income	3
Donations	3
Pray	2
Form banking groups	1
Regulate churches	1

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#### ***2.3.4.1) Employment***

The most common solution given by respondents was employment. Nearly all interviewees claimed that the solution to reducing poverty in the area was to create more job opportunities.

Participant #01 explains:

If there will be more jobs, at least they [the poor] would be getting some capital. Are you seeing that? Capital for in that they have their breakfast, they have lunch, they have supper. Another thing, if we create jobs, at least they will be having clothes to wear. You find that even some Manyatta children here, they walk bare foot. (woman, late 20s, 9 years in Manyatta)

Many other participants said similar things. For example, Participant #30 suggests:

One thing is employment, more job opportunities should be created, so at least people get employed, earn a living. [...] More employment opportunities means people will be getting money. And if you have money, you can pay for most of this basic stuff. (woman, late 20s, 22 years in Manyatta)

This was echoed by Participant #52, who explains, “if there’s more opportunities of jobs, at least, everybody has something to put on the table. And everybody is busy. So at least that stressful life can be reduced.” (woman, early 50s, 20 years in Manyatta) Many more said similar things. Some

respondents also proposed to develop a local industry, with the same aim of creating more jobs in their area. For example, Participant #02 proposes:

But if they [the government] can also come up with another enabling environment, like the infrastructure becomes better, like the laws allows them to maybe plant an industry here, that will also accommodate the jobless. It will accommodate so many people and so many people will get jobs, and many will be involved and it will reduce the people living under the poverty line. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

Residents find that there is an “extreme shortage of job opportunities” (Participant #50) in their area, and they perceive the establishment of a local industry as a potential pathway to develop the local economy. A few people also suggested to “just look for a job” (Participant #31, *translated*) as a solution to reduce poverty in the area. By that, they meant to look harder for job opportunities. One person also suggested increasing salaries, since many people in Manyatta get paid below the minimum wage, which is often not enough to cover their basic needs.

Why did nearly all respondents suggest employment as a solution to reduce poverty? Based on the analysis of the answers to the follow-up question, my research assistant and I believe that employment is seen as a solution because it allows people to earn enough income to afford basic needs (food, shelter, clothes, etc.) and provide for their family. As Participant #04 explains:

So by creating jobs, at least the people will have, after getting the job, they will have the payment, and they will start getting those things that they couldn't afford like good food, good clothes, good houses. You see when they don't have jobs, where will they get? They will end up stealing. And again, lack of jobs, I mean when they have better jobs, they can have good health too. You see when they don't have jobs, things like malaria can crop in, and they don't have money to take their kids to the hospital or themselves to the hospital. (woman, early 30s, 6 years in Manyatta)

When people have income, they can afford education for their children and healthcare for their family. Healthy and educated individuals are a positive force in the community, and having more of them would help the community grow. Without income, people can become desperate and get into undesirable behaviours, such as theft. Second, participants see a lot of idleness within the community and the respondents perceive it as being mainly a consequence of the high unemployment rate in the area. As Participant #70 states, “More jobs means less idleness” (man, mid 30s, whole life in Manyatta). The problem is especially dire among the youth who experiences very high unemployment rates according to the respondents. The idleness often leads them into bad behaviours, such as stealing and drug abuse. Participant #14 explains:

creating job opportunities, that is the major thing. You know, like we have a lot of youths in the community that many of them are done with school. But because there are no jobs, no employment, they just... I could say maybe idle or stay at home without anything, and then they get engaged in bad behaviours. [...] Yeah, for me, I think the major thing that could solve all the idleness within the youth communities is job opportunities. First creating the job opportunity for them. (woman, mid 20s, 15 years in Manyatta)

In sum, according to respondents, unemployment is a key issue in the community, which is the source of many other problems, such as crime, idleness and drug abuse. Creating more job opportunities would thus address one of the root causes of poverty according to the interviewees.

#### **2.3.4.2) Sensitization**

Many respondents also proposed to sensitize people living in poverty on certain topics in order to help them improve their situation. Many people suggested creating awareness about poverty and poverty eradication in order to make the poor more aware of the situation that they find themselves in and the pathways out of poverty. For example, Participant #09 suggests, “Creating awareness on poverty [...] Once people know that they’re living in poverty and they need to do something, individually they will want to start making efforts to get out of the situation. They won’t be content with poverty.” (man, late 30s, 10 years in Manyatta) Participant #71 explains a similar idea in more details.

One, to start with, is enlightenment about poverty to the locality. Teaching them what is poverty and what measures can we take to reduce this poverty, so they are being taught about poverty first. [...] Why I’m talking about these, you see, when you approach somebody and teach him or her about poverty, maybe this person did not even know that what I’m undergoing is poverty. So when you want to enlighten them, or bring this thing into a clear picture in their mind that, this, this is poverty, and you can do ABCD, this person will have a clearer picture of what is happening in the community. And he or she might have an idea of how to approach it and to fight it back. (man, early 30s, 2 years in Manyatta)

Several people also proposed to sensitize people about character development. These respondents were advocating for a change of attitude and work ethic. According to them, people should be proactive and hard working to maximize their chances of getting out of poverty. They see working hard as the first building block out of poverty. For example, Participant #17 claims, “Poverty is something that can be reduced by hard work if you are doing a hard job then put more effort in it” (man, early 30s, 6 years in Manyatta, *translated*). Participant #18 explains in more details the change of attitude that is needed.

The people, we ourselves, should have the perception of improving on our own, not depending on the government or any other donors. So, we ourselves, we should change our perception on poverty. We ourselves we should work hard to remove the poverty or change our ideas. In other words, we can say like, changing the tradition and our cultures. There

are some traditions and cultures that promote poverty in our community. (man, late 20s, 1 year in Manyatta)

According to the respondents, many residents of Manyatta are used to handouts and have developed a culture of laxity. They believe that these residents have given up hope to escape poverty by themselves and developed a mentality of waiting for something to happen. The opinion of the participants is that these individuals need to stop being content with poverty and change their attitude. They would like them to develop a strong work ethic, which in a context of few opportunities would mean aggressively pursuing the few opportunities available or creating one's own opportunities to earn income. A few respondents also suggested sensitizing people about how to do agriculture. As Participant #53 explains, "You see around where I live, most people... they want to do farming, but they don't know how to do it, so they need education on how to do it, and I think they can do it very well" (woman, late 20s, 10 years in Manyatta). Teaching people about urban farming would allow households to be more food secure, and potentially diversify their income by selling the excess produce in the market. A few other interviewees mentioned sensitizing residents of Manyatta about their rights, claiming that most of the poor in Manyatta are unaware of their rights as Kenyan citizens, such as labour laws or services that they should have access to. Making them aware of their rights and giving them the tools to enforce their rights would improve the situation of the poor according to the respondents who suggested this solution. A few others talked about sensitizing residents about health topics, such as HIV/AIDS, clean food and clean environment. A couple of respondents further mentioned sensitizing people about recycling waste as a way of making income or starting a business. For example, using bottle caps or glass bottles. Lastly, one person mentioned sensitizing people about gender-based violence.

Why is sensitization seen as a solution to reduce poverty? We think that the respondents see it as a way to address a general lack of knowledge about poverty and the pathways available to improve one's own situation. Teaching the poor about poverty and poverty eradication could give them tools to earn a living. Initiatives to sensitize people could help people who are deemed idle to get involved in some activities. It could give them ideas or inspire them to try new things. For example, it could help people learn how to use their existing assets to generate some income. People could also be informed about opportunities that they may not be aware of at the moment. The local understanding is that, if these sensitization initiatives could help motivate the poor to put more effort in getting out of poverty, it could be another way of reducing idleness in the community.

Many people talked about changing people's attitude, especially for the youth and women. Laxity was seen as an issue by many, and the local reasoning is that sensitization may help change the "waiting for help" mentality and instill a strong work ethic instead. These sensitization initiatives could, for example, make people more aware of the skills or talents that they may have. People would then see other avenues than crime or begging to earn a living. As Participant #64 expresses, "the idle mind is the devil's workshop," and programs are needed to help people believe in themselves and instill a discipline that can help them escape poverty. He further adds:

Another thing, let us create an awareness. Creating an awareness or creating an informal atmosphere, where we are instilling self-discipline in somebody. A disciplined someone, a disciplined person is somebody who will take care of him or herself, yes. How do you take care of yourself? You will take care of yourself holistically. It will also be useless for you to sit down and wait for the government to do something. So when we create awareness, we try to educate, civic education. Tell them this and this can be done without the government coming in handy for you. Yeah, I think those ones can help. (man, early 30s, whole life in Manyatta)

In sum, sensitization is seen as a solution by the respondents because it would address a lack of knowledge on poverty and pathways out of it. They believe that this knowledge has the capacity to help people to get out of poverty. Moreover, sensitization could also be a tool to bring about a change of attitude in the community and fight the laxity that comes with idleness, helping people become more self-reliant.

#### **2.3.4.3) Business**

Many respondents also suggested business as a way of reducing poverty in the area. If people cannot find employment opportunities, then they should be encouraged to create their own source of income. As Participant #30 explains, "People should be more like enlightened to start their own business, I mean, if you cannot get employed, then you might as well just find a way to employ yourself" (woman, late 20s, 22 years in Manyatta), while Participant #78 further adds:

those who have nothing to do should be assisted to start a business. [...] They should be given support if possible to start a business. [...] Business can reduce poverty in a way that you can be able to sell and at least get something little and if possible another person can also get something little. (man, late 30s, 4 years in Manyatta, *translated*)

Several people were more specific and claimed that this encouragement to do business should take the form of loans to help people start or boost a business. Participant #100 highlights that this is something that is already done by some organization and works well:

Yeah, there are these organizations, like ours, we are working on reducing the same poverty we are talking of. So, we are giving some people. If the organization like NGOs can start

giving people some money, the willing people some money, to start small small businesses.  
(woman, mid 20s, 2 years in Manyatta)

These loans are needed because lack of capital to start a business is a major problem in the community. Participant #17 claims, “When you have money, you can start a business, lack of capital is a problem to start my business” (man, early 30s, 6 years in Manyatta), while Participant #70 adds, “I realized that you need support when you think outside the box [about business ideas], because you have the idea, but you don’t have support to start, so you are locked in a way” (man, mid-30s, whole life in Manyatta). Some interviewees also highlighted the potential of agribusiness to help people be more food secure and allow them to diversify their income. Participant #02 is an example of that, he shares, “Okay, what I found is... right now, I’m doing like horticultural farming, and it is at least bringing in some small income apart from teaching” (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta). Participant #10 also sees this potential:

Okay, right now life is very difficult, if they [my family] can plant maize or keep cattle that can help them to get milk, maize they can be able to get some to eat and the rest can be sold. I think that’s how I see we can reduce that disaster [poverty] (man, mid 20s, 9 years in Manyatta, *translated*).

Some other ideas that were mentioned only once included subsidizing seeds so that more people can afford them and engage in agriculture, diversifying business activities since many sectors (such as selling second-hand clothing or driving motorbike taxi) are overcrowded, and establishing more markets in Manyatta B so that people have more places to do business and less distance to travel to access a market.

Why is business seen by so many as having the potential to reduce poverty? Our interpretation is that participants see it as a pathway for people to employ themselves and generate their own income to pay for their basic needs (food, shelter, clothes, etc.). Instead of waiting for employment, people can create their own business to generate income. This solution indicates a persistent lack of formal employment opportunities, which is confirmed by the high unemployment rate in the community. Business can create the employment opportunities that are missing at the moment and give a livelihood to people who are otherwise idle. Business could thus help reduce the idleness problem in Manyatta. Especially for the youth, it is seen as an alternative to bad behaviours, such as stealing and drug abuse. Participant #83 explains:

For example, if an idle youth who has nothing to do, when he or she is empowered, when they are empowered it will even reduce the level of crime. When the youths are idle, you find most of them engage in things like drug abuse... so automatically when a youth is



empowered and is given the opportunity to do something, maybe like business, that will keep them busy so they will not have any other time in involving in the unnecessary issues. (woman, late 20s, 5 years in Manyatta)

Business is also seen as having the potential to mobilize and empower women who are otherwise housewives, bringing more income into the household. Moreover, respondents specifically mentioned loans, since they would address the issue of lack of capital to start or boost a business. This is seen as an obstacle that is preventing many people from realizing their business ideas. Participant #27's testimony illustrates this issue.

For example, in Kisumu so many factories are not working, there is no way someone can do business because of lack of capital to start business, there is no capital to start the business, all are not working, that's what has brought a lot of problems and poverty. The youths could get jobs there. (woman, late 60s, 37 years in Manyatta, *translated*)

In sum, business is seen as a solution to reduce poverty because it has the potential to reduce unemployment. Through business, people can employ themselves and others, creating the employment opportunities that are lacking at the moment. If the business can be successful enough, it can help people earn enough income to afford the basics. Lack of capital to start or boost a business is also a major issue, so loans are a concrete example of a measure that could help reduce poverty by encouraging business activity in Manyatta B.

#### **2.3.4.4) Youth Education**

“Knowledge is power” (Participant #64). Several informants also mentioned formal education as a way to reduce poverty. Many people who suggested that idea advocated for easier access to the formal education system. For example, Participant #27 states, “The government should make education free, so that even a child from a poor background where there is no money can access education” (woman, late 60s, 37 years in Manyatta, *translated*). For them, a child that does not go to school is condemned to live in poverty. As Participant #21 explains:

When a child is educated they must become good people, because they have better understanding and can work hard to reduce poverty, but when a child is not educated poverty will enter that house (man, early 70s, 32 years in Manyatta, *translated*).

Basic education (primary and secondary school) is thus seen as the minimum needed to have a chance to escape poverty. To make education more accessible, a few respondents also suggested that learning materials in school should be free to allow parents to save money for other things. For example, Participant #31 suggests, “Let them [government] help us buy books [...] Because the money I would use to buy books I can use it to do something else” (woman, early 30s, 10 years

in Manyatta, *translated*). Some solutions were mentioned only once. One person suggested encouraging parents to take school seriously and have their child do well in school. Another person proposed to have more resources for schools, since schools often do not have enough staff, books and facilities. Lastly, another participant mentioned that the education system should be reformed. He advised moving away from theoretical knowledge and replace it with practical knowledge on how to find a livelihood. According to him, if students learned skills, competences and creativity in school, they would be better equipped to employ themselves after their schooling.

What is the reasoning behind youth education as a solution to reduce poverty? Respondents perceive lack of schooling as a key driver of poverty in Manyatta. People perceive formal education as expanding a child's mind, which gives her/him knowledge and tools that can help reduce poverty. Most people believe that you cannot succeed in life without education, and that education can give you opportunities in life. Respondents believe that every child should have access to education. Thus, they perceive as a problem that some children in the community do not go to school because of poverty. Participant #14 is a good example.

I think the government can make an easy accessible education for the kids. Like you see, we can find out here in the community, many children, they stay at home because of school fees. Like you get that a lot of them, a lot of parents cannot afford the school fees. Maybe because some, like I say don't have the jobs, and some their jobs, they get like low income, and they have to feed the family. They have to provide for clothing, and then maybe every other thing in the house. So like when you also include the school fees in it. So many parents tend to give up on this, the school section part, but because they'll be asking themselves, will I feed the child or will I pay the fee? Which is more important? Like you cannot take a child to school and then the child is hungry. So they'll opt for feeding the child and then the child remains at home without education. So I think providing education, maybe like waving the school fees for the parents, or for the ones who are not totally able to pay, maybe like providing like free education within the community. Or if that is too difficult then maybe waiving the school fees for the ones who are unable to pay. (woman, mid 20s, 15 years in Manyatta)

Formal education is also seen as something that can reduce unemployment. Some respondents explained that someone has a higher chance of getting employed if s/he has diplomas. Participant #12 explains, "When you educate your child, you are very much sure that when she gets to the next level of education, that she will have papers, and when she goes to the office, she'll get a job somewhere" (woman, early 20s, 8 years in Manyatta). Formal education can also give students the knowledge needed to start their own business. Whether it is through formal employment or business, once someone has income, s/he can support her/himself and potentially others. Moreover, when a child is out of school, s/he will often have nothing to do and become idle. The respondents

thus see schooling as another way of reducing idleness among the youth. As Participant #21 explains, “When a child is educated that will reduce poverty because he will not be found in bhang smoking, alcohol and bad behaviours” (man, early 70s, 32 years in Manyatta, *translated*).

In sum, education should be more accessible so that children are kept in school as long as possible. Keeping a child in school will maximize her/his chances of escaping poverty someday. Schooling expands a child’s mind, makes her/him more likely to find employment, and gives her/him knowledge that will help find a livelihood. Without schooling, a child risks becoming idle and getting into undesirable behaviours, such as stealing, drug abuse, early pregnancies or early marriages.

#### **2.3.4.5) Empowerment**

Several respondents also proposed initiatives to empower more vulnerable groups within the community, such as youth and women. By empowerment, participants meant initiatives that can help people who are perceived as idle in the community become more independent and confident individuals. Such an initiative would help these individuals to take control of their lives and improve the likelihood that they become economically engaged members of the community. For example, Participant #22 explains:

Okay, for me, I’ve been living here for two years, but I’ve not heard about there’s a program for youth, or there’s a program for women that is going around teaching women how to do something like that. So if these programs can be brought up, it can be a very helpful to youths because if you see what’s around, some don’t go to school, some don’t have jobs. So, if this program can be within this community, I think the first thing they will focus is let me not go and take like alcohol. Let me go and see what people are doing there. You see, they will engage more, like if it’s for sports, let’s be sport, if it’s for about talking about health, let it be that, so people can engage more on this program. (woman, late 20s, 2 years in Manyatta)

According to respondents, the high rate of unemployment among the youth creates a lot of idleness and a sense of low self-esteem. Thus, there should be programs to help empower the struggling youth. Participant #33 suggests, “Well, I should expect that more youth are encouraged to do their talents, they are encouraged to start up their business, they are encouraged to be self-independent” (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta). For girls, the idleness sometimes leads them into early pregnancies or early marriages. Thus, there should be programs to prevent them from falling into these common pitfalls. Participant #52 advocates, “If we could have a plan to protect these young girls from narrow-minded, we need to counsel them, we need to talk to them. At least we put them

on the right track.” (woman, early 50s, 20 years in Manyatta) The responsibility of empowering vulnerable groups was often put on the government. For example, Participant #53 states, “the county government can come up with different projects that can empower the youths, women, the elderly, and other people... they can create projects” (woman, late 20s, 10 years in Manyatta, *translated*). Some also attributed the responsibility to NGOs or foundations. For example, Participant #64 suggests:

Let’s have foundations and organizations to come in Manyatta. Because Manyatta is a slum, very, very big slum. And they should come for... they should have engagement activities that are aimed at improving people’s living standards and have initiatives that would instill hardworking people, and just have our women, mostly it’s for the women, just have our women being engaged and having more work. Because you find that a greater number, like almost 70% of women in Manyatta are unemployed. Almost 70 to 80 [%] are housewives. [...] So if we can have foundations, that can bring in the girl child empowerment, the women empowerment, youth empowerment (man, early 30s, whole life in Manyatta).

Women form the majority of the community according to the residents interviewed. Hence, mobilizing them could help reduce poverty in the area by bringing more income into every household.

We believe that the reasoning behind empowerment as a solution to reduce poverty is that it can help vulnerable people gain self-esteem and become more confident in their ability to generate their own income. Initiatives with the aim of empowerment can help people believe in themselves. Empowerment is perceived as having the potential to be a catalyst that could change people’s mindset, helping them to become more responsible for themselves. This could then have a series of cascading effects. For example, if women are mobilized to work, it can increase household income, helping to reduce poverty in Manyatta. The local view on the poverty reduction potential of women’s empowerment is well captured by the discourse of Participant #50.

Here in Manyatta, [...] you find mostly the husbands, [...] they’re the people who work. [...] So if the women can be empowered, in such a way that through seminars, they can be taught to... those who can do the fish, fry the fish for selling, those who can do pottery, those who can do the basic things that can earn them money, it can really help. Another way is also to fund something like groups, women groups, where they can get finance, they begin a project even like poultry, and from there they get something like that. Yeah. And you find, a number of women, the majority have not gone to school. So through those seminars, they can be, their eyes can be opened. So instead of just depending on the husband, they can also learn to also bring something into the family. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

If empowerment can mobilize vulnerable groups and engage them in economic activities, people who are perceived as idle by the community could become income earners. The idleness issue would thus be reduced. Especially for youth and women, empowerment would help them build on

their talent and be more independent. For youth, this would lead them away from undesirable behaviours. This reasoning also applies to young girls. Empowering them would make it less likely that they would fall into early marriages or pregnancies. Empowering youth can also be seen as an investment for the future, since it can have ripple effects for generations, as Participant #18 highlights:

You know, the community or any community, the youth these are the pillars, these are the developers and these are the foundation of the community. So, in as much as we tend to improve it or we tend to put measures, we must consider youth and incorporate them in these activities. Because at one point, they will be leaders, they will be economy builders. So, we need to educate them more, and more efforts should be involved in them. Through education, through empowerment, through loans and grants, through any other positive thing. (man, late 20s, 1 year in Manyatta)

In sum, empowerment of vulnerable groups such as women or youth is seen as a solution by several respondents because it would help people with low self-esteem to become more confident in their abilities. This could help curb unemployment since people who are more confident in themselves have a higher chance of starting their own business or finding employment. If empowering people can make them more engaged, idleness in the community would be reduced, and the likelihood of youth falling into bad behaviours would be reduced as well.

#### **2.3.4.6) Better Governance**

Several informants also suggested ideas related to governance to reduce poverty in their area. Many people talked about improving the infrastructure that should be provided by the government. They judge the current public infrastructure as inadequate, which contributes to poverty. Of all suggestions, two stood out, namely better roads and better health facilities. Talking about roads, Participant #09 suggests, “the roads should be tarmacked so that Manyatta becomes accessible in terms of security, and also business” (man, late 30s, 10 years in Manyatta), while Participant #14 explains in more details:

Another thing that the government can do is improve on the roads. They should improve on the roads, because when the roads are bad, it affects the health of everyone around the community. Because bad roads and bad environment bring a lot of like, I guess sick, you get sickness or something like that. (woman, mid 20s, 15 years in Manyatta)

Bad roads combined with a lack of accessible health facilities in the area create a situation in which residents have difficulty accessing health services. In addition to affecting the health of the community, the lack of good health facilities also means additional expenses when household members need hospital care. For example, Participant #33 explains:

So, you see government should also like establish more facilities, more accessible. Because, when somebody takes that scenario of going to some lesser facilities and is not willing for queuing, you may also go borrowing some funds so that he may access that early facility where we issue attention. Then by borrowing, drains you more back now again. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

This issue was also mentioned by Participant #64, who states, “in Manyatta, the health facilities are not up to date. You’ll find that the local hospitals don’t really have enough, so they keep referring you to other hospitals, which are maybe in one way or the other inaccessible.” (man, early 30s, whole life in Manyatta) Other solutions that were mentioned once included having more police posts and more street lights to improve the security situation, as well as having a waste management system to do away with the open-air dump sites which affect the health of the community, especially children who play in and around those areas.

Some people also called for more accountability from their politicians. They would like their elected officials to pay more attention to the needs of the people and seek the participation of the residents when it comes to policy. As Participant #33 claims, “Some policies... need ground policy, but not that top management please” (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta). Some people also suggested mobilizing the community, thinking that more participation from residents will create a stronger voice that is more likely to be heard. Participant #21 explains:

The best way is to have agreement as a community, if people can agree together in that community and then have a discussion on what can be done, but if you can’t agree and children can’t get education then poverty will still increase (man, early 70s, 32 years in Manyatta, *translated*).

The poor infrastructure and lack of participation was seen by some as a consequence of high levels of corruption at the government level. Hence, some people also suggested as a solution to fight corruption. For example, Participant #70 suggests, “One measure is condemning corruption. That is where a lot of funds get lost. Yes. Maybe... maybe... punish those involved in corruption.” (man, mid 30s, whole life in Manyatta) Lastly, one person suggested legal reforms to bring about laws and regulations that would create “an enabling environment for more investment in the community” (Participant #02).

What is the justification behind better governance as a solution to reduce poverty? We think that participants see the government as being able to achieve much more than it is doing at the moment in terms of poverty reduction. The government has the power to build infrastructure that can improve the situation of the residents of Manyatta B. In their eyes, better infrastructure would

make the community more accessible and bring more investments. For example, better roads would open up Manyatta B, and reduce transportation costs. It would attract more businesses and new shops would open. More economic activity means more employment for the locals, as Participant #09 explains:

That [tarmacked roads] would open up Manyatta and make Manyatta accessible even from outside. Even communities from other parts of the county will be able to bring their goods to Manyatta without any problem, especially perishable goods like milk. Remember Kisumu is a consuming town, it is not a producing town. So most of the things come from outside, and they don't reach the outskirts of Kisumu because of poor infrastructure. So once Manyatta becomes accessible because of the good infrastructure, it will open up Manyatta, open up transport business and all that... It will even attract foreign investment, people will come open companies and shops where they will provide employment to the locals. (man, late 30s, 10 years in Manyatta)

Moreover, better infrastructure would also improve the security situation in Manyatta. Tarmacked roads would reduce the risk of car hijacking since vehicles would move faster, while street lights and police posts would deter crime at night, allowing people to do business 24/7. Right now, people fear doing business at night because of insecurity. Better drainage would also improve the health of the community. It would reduce stagnant water, which brings about waterborne diseases, such as bilharzia. Having good, accessible and affordable health facilities within Manyatta would also improve the health of the community by making it easier to access nearby health facilities. This would reduce health-related expenses, which would allow people to save money. All in all, even though they have limited resources, residents of Manyatta have to take on the financial burden that the lack of good infrastructure creates. If the government would provide better roads and better health facilities, it would help people save money that they could then use to improve their situation.

Some respondents mentioned better governance because they see lack of political will and corruption as reasons why they are not getting the infrastructure and the services that they deserve. For them, reducing corruption would bring about an enabling environment for development in the community. A large quantity of funds that should be used to fight poverty are lost due to corruption, and more money would be available to fund services if these funds could be recovered. Moreover, less corruption would bring about a more conducive environment for businesses to operate, which would create more jobs in the community. Participant #50 explains:

If the government especially can do away with the issue of corruption and empower the people, we can sustain ourselves. The solutions to all this are within us. But you find because of the infiltrations, the loopholes, due to corruption is what is affecting us. I believe so, because we can do agriculture, we have the fish, we have the need, so if the loopholes can

be sealed, we have the solutions, yeah, if the government cooperates. So that is our urge, especially to our local governments. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

Finally, better political will would favour better government policies to reduce poverty. Policies that have the potential to empower people and make them more self-reliant. Participation of the community is an important part of that. For some respondents, the community should come together and share ideas in order to have a stronger voice with local officials.

In sum, better governance is seen as a solution by several respondents because they see the government as responsible for the poor infrastructure in Manyatta. The current state of infrastructure is making Manyatta less accessible, less secure and less healthy than it should be. The residents of Manyatta expect better, since they see the government as having the power to build infrastructure that can improve their situation and reduce poverty. In their eyes lack of political will and corruption are two issues that explain why the government is not fulfilling its mandate.

#### **2.3.4.7) Other Solutions**

A few interviewees also suggested measures that could reduce the cost of living. Paying rent was seen as an issue at the moment, so a few participants suggested building affordable housing as a solution. For example, Participant #27 suggests, “There are people with land that can be developed, if they can be assisted to build rental houses, then that will reduce poverty” (woman, late 60s, 37 years in Manyatta, *translated*). This is something that the local government has started doing according to Participant #50, who explains:

Another thing, which I thank God for the county government is doing, has been housing. Yeah, if they can come up with some housing project, whereby you find the housing is quite low, it is pathetic, so if they can come up with a way of cheap, affordable housing projects, it can also help. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

A few people also suggested subsidizing basic commodities or to lift the sales tax to help reduce the food prices that were high at the moment of fieldwork. For example, Participant #31 claims, “let them [government] help us reduce commodity prices. They can help us. [...] When life is very expensive, that also brings problems” (woman, early 30s, 10 years in Manyatta). We believe that this solution was motivated by the inflation crisis that was ongoing during the fieldwork. Life was expensive at the moment of data collection, since prices had risen substantially in a very short amount of time. We do not think that we would have heard this solution if it had not been for the inflation crisis that started in 2022 and was happening during fieldwork. The respondents who



mentioned this solution all referred to the current situation to justify their idea, which shows the focus on the present moment. Participant #50 is an example.

Like right now, let's say we have somebody who is earning 200 shillings [about US\$2] per day. Around one year ago, that would be enough maybe for the food for the family that day. But right now you find the prices of commodities have gone two times, to the point that 200 shillings can only buy one item. Yeah, so you find you can already see a disaster. The rent will be a problem at the end of the day. I was dealing with another case the landlord had to lock him out, because there's no option. Yeah, so if that can do something, at least they can have some little savings. You find in most cases, the husband is working, the wife is at home. Majority, so very few will you find the husband is working, the wife is working. Yeah, so that has been the challenge. So the people barely live from hand to mouth. And in fact right now, whatever you get, you still have to maybe live on debts or live on loans to feed, not even pay rent, just to get the food, because the prices have gone much too high. (man, early 30s, 3 years in Manyatta)

Other solutions that were not mentioned often included diversifying income, donations, praying, forming banking groups and regulating churches. These last solutions were not mentioned enough times to get a good understanding of the reasoning behind them. Hence, we do not offer an interpretation.

## **2.4) Discussion**

### **2.4.1) Key Insights**

This section revisits the three research questions in light of the results and discusses the key insights that emerge.

#### ***2.4.1.1) A Multidimensional View of Poverty***

The first research question considered how residents of Manyatta B perceived poverty and development efforts in their area. Drawing on 32 interviews with residents, this study reveals that nearly all respondents defined poverty in terms of an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and education. Moreover, every respondent saw poverty as an issue in Manyatta and deemed the current poverty reduction efforts as insufficient. Participants believed that more efforts should be put into reducing poverty, and nearly all stressed the responsibility of the government. These last findings show a clear disconnect between the priorities of the Manyatta B residents for poverty reduction and current governmental poverty reduction initiatives.

Definitions of poverty can be compared with different approaches that are found in the literature. Laderchi et al. (2003) and Wagle (2002) identified three main approaches to define poverty:

monetary, capability and social exclusion. The results show that the capability approach is dominant among the respondents. The capability approach, also known as multidimensional, is based on the influential work of Amartya Sen (1987, 1992, 1999). It rejects the sole use of income as a measure of well-being. It instead invites people to see poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. To define poverty with this approach, a set of basic capabilities must be agreed upon. Poverty is then characterized as deprivation in one or more of these basic capabilities. The dominance of poverty definitions centred around basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and education can be seen as the basic capabilities that are valued by the residents of Manyatta B, confirming the multidimensional aspect of their perception of poverty. Similar definitions of poverty have been documented in other studies. In Krishna et al. (2004)'s study in Western Kenya and in Kristjanson et al. (2010)'s study in rural and urban regions of Kenya, being able to afford food, clothing, shelter and education (in that order) were defined as the first four stages of progress out of poverty. While not always in the same order, other studies done in Kenya also contained these four basic needs in their stages of progress out of poverty (Radeny, 2011; Watete et al., 2016). In his study in Nigeria, Akindola (2009) also found "inability to meet basic needs" as one of the main understandings of poverty among his sample. "Lack of money/means of livelihood" was another understanding that was mentioned just as often in his study. The latter understanding would fall under the monetary approach, which can be defined as a lack of consumption or income relative to some poverty line. With this approach, the well-being of an individual is generally measured by her/his income or consumption level. The monetary approach was also used by some of the Manyatta B residents, but it was not as common as the basic needs definition. The social exclusion approach was absent from the participants' definitions. This approach considers poverty as the result of a process of marginalization "through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live" (European Foundation, 1995). Social exclusion is more commonly used in rich countries, and it does not necessarily translate well to the Manyatta context. The absence of the social exclusion approach from the participant's discourse indicates a disconnect between this "top-down" approach and the reality of the Manyatta B residents. Since poverty is widespread in Manyatta, participants do not perceive poverty as an issue affecting specific groups in the community, but rather as an issue affecting the community as a whole.

In sum, this study adds further evidence of the importance of multidimensional definitions of poverty, as it was the dominant understanding of poverty among the residents of Manyatta B interviewed. Additionally, the study also demonstrates a disconnect between the other two “top-down” approaches (monetary and social exclusion) and the definitions voiced by the participants. The disconnect can also be extended to current governmental efforts to reduce poverty, since all respondents deemed current poverty reduction efforts as insufficient and accused the government of not doing enough.

#### ***2.4.1.2) A Broad Understanding of Solutions***

The second research question inquired about the ideas that Manyatta B residents have on ways to improve the poverty situation in their area. Based on the interviews with residents, this study reveals that nearly all respondents see employment as the key to reducing poverty in their area. Many also see sensitization and business as other avenues, while several respondents mentioned the importance of youth education, empowerment and better governance to improve the poverty situation in their area. Employment and business are two solutions that are in agreement with the literature on poverty dynamics in Kenya, which has identified these solutions as pathways out of poverty. In their study of households across Kenya, Kristjanson et al. (2010) find that regular employment was mentioned by 62 percent of respondents as a reason for escaping poverty in urban zones, while at least 62 percent of respondents also mentioned business progress in community-based or city-based enterprises as a reason for escape. These findings are corroborated by Krishna et al. (2004) in their study of rural villages in western Kenya. They find that 73 percent of households that escaped poverty mentioned obtaining a job as a reason to explain their situation, while 42 percent of households mentioned escaping poverty by diversifying their income through setting up a trade or craft in the city. Studying households in northern Kenya, Watete et al. (2016) also find that 13 percent of households escaped poverty through getting employment in government or private institutions. Yet, these studies only document the pathways of people who escaped poverty over a given period. They are not meant to be an exhaustive list of ideas on how to reduce poverty. This study is the first to document the ideas that Manyatta B residents have on ways to reduce poverty in their area. The fact that some of their solutions have also been documented in the literature shows that the respondents are aware of some of the evidence-based pathways out of poverty. While people are ultimately looking for a source of income that can either

come through employment or business as highlighted in the literature, it is important to note that the participants gave a more complete picture of poverty issues in their community and also suggested solutions that are meant to enable individuals to attain these goals, such as sensitization, youth education, empowerment and better governance. First, sensitization would address a general lack of knowledge on poverty, poverty eradication, rights, urban farming or opportunities available. Participants believe that this knowledge has the capacity to help people get out of poverty. Second, education was perceived as making a person more likely to find employment. Youths that are out of school do not develop their potential and the absence of a formal education makes it almost impossible for them to compete for the few job opportunities available. However, a diploma does not guarantee employment, as participants felt that there were often no job opportunities in the field that they had studied in, indicating a mismatch between their formal education and the job market. This mismatch contributes to the youth unemployment issue in the community. Yet, education is still seen as part of the solutions since it can also help someone create their own employment by giving her/him knowledge that can be used to create a livelihood. Third, empowerment would help people with low self-esteem to become more confident in their abilities and take control of their lives. This solution was concerned with the psychological aspect of poverty, which is often forgotten according to them. Last, better governance would help improve the poor infrastructure in Manyatta B, making the area more accessible, more secure and more healthy. This would create an enabling environment for economic growth in the area, which would help reduce the poverty rate. Hence, the community seems to have a broad understanding of solutions. Their understanding does not limit itself to what people can do to generate income, but also considers how people can be helped to get the skills, resources, confidence and knowledge needed to have the potential to create their own livelihood.

#### ***2.4.1.3) A Clear Sense of Problems in the Community***

The third research question contemplated the reasoning behind the solutions proposed by the residents of Manyatta B. Based on interviews with residents, this study reveals many issues in the community that are perceived by the respondents as causes, consequences or both cause and consequence of poverty. Four main issues came back frequently to justify the solutions proposed: unemployment, idleness, poor governance and lack of knowledge.

*Unemployment.* The high rate of unemployment was seen as the most pressing issue by many respondents, and this issue was judged to be most severe among the youth. Kenya's unemployment challenges are well documented in the literature (Gachari & Korir, 2020; Godia, 1987; Muiya, 2014). However, the situation in Kisumu is believed to be more severe. It is estimated that the unemployment rate in the city is between 30 and 40 percent (C. Mireri et al., 2007; Phil. C. Mireri, 2013; Opiyo et al., 2018), compared to the national average of 13 percent (World Bank, 2016). The findings in this study expose the perspective of the community about this situation and show that the residents of Manyatta B are well aware of the unemployment issue in their area and in Kisumu more generally. While the unemployment situation worsened following the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents perceived this issue as persistent and structural. A consequence of a generalized low labour demand, which explains why they advocated for more opportunities.

*Idleness.* For respondents, idleness signifies not being engaged in any productive economic activity, and it is both seen as a cause and consequence of poverty. It is perceived as a consequence since the high rate of unemployment puts many people in a situation in which they are not engaged in any income earning activity, making them more susceptible to experience poverty and an idle lifestyle. Yet, idleness is also seen as a cause of poverty, since spending too much time idling can foster an attitude of laxity, in which people become content with their situation. The problem was judged to be most severe among the youth, which is something that has also been documented in other studies (Dolan & Rajak, 2018; Hope, 2012; Meinema, 2020; Winter et al., 2022). Idleness is thus another issue that the community is aware of and that overlaps with the literature. Moreover, drug abuse was a problem frequently mentioned with idleness. Respondents saw the excessive consumption of drugs as both a consequence and a cause of poverty linked with idleness. As a consequence, the residents made a clear link between idleness and being lured into drugs. Yet, as a cause, once someone becomes addicted, drug consumption will often worsen their situation as they start diverting their limited resources away from basic commodities towards more consumption. The participants' account of the drug situation seems to fit with other studies about trends in drug abuse in Kenya (Kahuthia-Gathu et al., 2013; Kamenderi et al., 2019; NACADA, 2012) and Kisumu (Otieno & Ofulla, 2009; Syvertsen et al., 2015, 2016), which continue to identify drug abuse as a serious challenge for the country despite some progress in the past 15

years. Furthermore, specifically talking about the idleness among the youth, several respondents also made a clear link between the idle youth and the level of crime in their area. This understating was also documented in a study with women in the Mathare informal settlement in Nairobi (Winter et al., 2022). In this study, most women that were interviewed identified idle youth as the main source of violence and crime in informal settlements, and they suggested youth employment as the key solution to reducing crime and violence in the slums. Young men in informal settlements are often perceived as being responsible for crime (Izugbara & Egesa, 2020), and this study suggests that the residents of Manyatta B interviewed also share this perception. The link that the participants drew between idleness and bad behaviours, such as drug abuse and crime, explains the use of the expression “the idle mind is the devil’s workshop” by a few respondents.

*Poor governance.* Nearly all respondents put the responsibility of reducing poverty on the government, and several of them also highlighted how poor governance was contributing to the poverty situation in Manyatta. Poor governance prevents people from accessing public services that they are entitled to and economically isolates the community due to poor infrastructure. Kenya’s governance issues regarding corruption, poor service delivery and lack of public participation have been present since independence and are well documented in the literature (Hope, 2014; Ngigi & Busolo, 2019; Odhiambo-Mbai, 2003). A significant change in governance has been the devolution of power to local county governments as per the new constitution established in 2010. However, the devolution has not changed the situation aside from bringing the problems down to the county level (D’Arcy & Cornell, 2016). Respondents mainly mentioned the county government in their answers, showing that they perceived the responsibility of reducing poverty as falling mostly on their local government. Participants feel neglected and abused by their government, which manifested itself through severe distrust towards their local representatives, whom they accused of being only concerned with enriching themselves. This lack of trust in government can likely be explained by informal settlements’ long history of marginalization, stigmatization and exclusion from formal services and public investment since the colonial period (Fox, 2014; Wanjiru & Matsubara, 2017). Yet, the results present an interesting paradox. On one hand, the people interviewed identify a disconnect between their understanding of poverty and the government’s “top-down” action, but on the other hand, participants believe it is the role of the government to alleviate poverty. Hence, even though they want their “bottom-up”

voices to be heard, participants seem to believe that “top-down” action from the government is necessary to fight poverty.

*Lack of knowledge.* Ignorance about poverty and the potential pathways out of it was also perceived by some as an issue within the community. It is treated as both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Respondents viewed this lack of knowledge as a cause of poverty because many people lack the knowledge and tools to escape poverty. They claim that the poor are not aware of the pathways out of poverty and the things that could be done to improve their situation. To address it, respondents suggested sensitization with information or awareness campaigns. A type of initiative that has helped in the past, such as in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region (Frölich & Vazquez-Alvarez, 2009). This lack of knowledge is also seen as a consequence of poverty since children who grow up in poor families are often out of school, which denies them the tools that can maximize their chances of escaping poverty as an adult. The problems of access to education for the most deprived households as well as quality of education in public schools have also been documented (Josephine et al., 2020; Sifuna, 2007; Somerset, 2011). Some households in the community do not send their children to free public schools because of the inability to afford school uniforms or learning materials. Moreover, despite their limited resources, many households in Manyatta send their kids to private schools because of a perceived lack of education quality in public schools, which are often overcrowded and lack resources.

In sum, this study is the first to document the main problems in Manyatta B as perceived by the residents. This research offers a view from the ground of the challenges that the community faces and how the residents think that they should be addressed. The fact that many of these problems have also been documented in the literature shows that there is some overlap between the understanding of the participants and existing scholarship.

## **2.4.2) Practical Implications**

While the nature of the study does not allow generalizing beyond the study sample, we believe that the main solutions proposed by participants are transferable to the rest of the community given the high frequency in which they were mentioned during the interviews and the diversity of profiles of the interviewees. Hence, for current or future development actors in Manyatta, three main practical implications come out of this study.

First, the issues that the respondents would like to see addressed are clear. Residents want efforts to be put towards reducing unemployment and idleness, improving governance and public infrastructure, and addressing a lack of knowledge among the poor. Development initiatives that address one or more of these issues will likely be accepted and supported by the community, and have a high potential for cooperation.

Second, respondents have been clear about how and by whom they would like to be helped. While the help of humanitarian actors is welcomed, residents of Manyatta B would prefer if poverty reduction efforts are led by the government and/or the community. Development actors should therefore seek the participation of residents in their poverty reduction initiatives in such a way that the community can feel a sense of ownership towards poverty reduction efforts in their area. Initiatives addressing one or more of the six main avenues given by respondents to reduce poverty (employment, sensitization, business, education, empowerment and better governance) have the highest chance of motivating the locals to get involve since these solutions are already desired by the community.

Third, given the severe distrust that residents have for their local government, any government initiatives to reduce poverty in the area should first focus on devising effective strategies to rebuild trust with the local community and address the existing disconnect. Without this crucial first step, any government initiative is likely to be met with scepticism and suspicions, which will likely prevent any form of meaningful engagement from the community. Potential avenues that could be explored to foster trust building include improving transparency, having systems of accountability, and showing a clear commitment to long-term investment in the area to bring a real change in the community.

All in all, I cannot claim that the answers given by our respondents are representative of all Manyatta B residents. The findings are valid only for the study sample. Yet, I encourage any future development efforts in the area to acknowledge the views expressed by the residents of Manyatta B in this study, and explain to the community how the project that you may be proposing intersects with the important issues and poverty reduction avenues that have been identified in this study. There is an obvious disconnect between the priorities of the residents of Manyatta B and current poverty reduction efforts, and this gap needs to be addressed before any meaningful poverty reduction efforts can be undertaken.



### **2.4.3) Using Bottom-up Approaches for Poverty Reduction**

While the findings of this bottom-up exercise to understand local strategies for poverty reduction have documented a multidimensional view of poverty, a broad understanding of potential solutions, and the local view on the main problems in the community, it is important to realize that all these findings represent local narratives about these topics. They are not born out of scientific evidence but rather out of the lived experiences of the participants. Moreover, during interviews, some participants talk about their personal experience, while others talk about others in the community. These two speeches do not have the same value. Personal experiences are a clear account of the lived experience of an individual, while discourse about others represent an outsider's view on the lived experience of someone else. Direct accounts of lived experiences are clearly more accurate than indirect ones. For this reason, we do not believe that bottom-up approaches should be used on their own. The main reason being that there is no way of discerning true from false narratives. Bottom-up approaches should be used in conjunction with other approaches that can offer a way of triangulating the results. However, a lot can be learned from both true and false narratives. True narratives offer a cost-effective way of learning about the situation in the community. For example, in this case study, there was broad agreement among the participants interviewed. No significant disagreements emerged, which hints at a shared understanding of the local situation. In such a case, the chances of the local narratives providing accurate information about the community are high. On the other hand, false narratives can help identify the shortcomings in the local understanding of strategies to reduce poverty, while also offering insights into potential pre-conceived ideas about poverty that need to be dealt with. This information can be useful for communication campaigns during poverty reduction interventions.

While local narratives may not always represent the complete truth about the situation in the community, we think that it is crucial that they be understood and acknowledged before any meaningful poverty intervention can take place. For government, UN agencies or other organization aiming to reduce poverty in the region, I believe that the lived experiences of the people should be the starting point of any initiative. The local narratives have to be understood to avoid a mismatch between a poverty reduction program and the local understanding of the situation. Investing the time to properly document the local understanding of poverty and the strategies to reduce it limits the chances of a disconnect developing with the intended beneficiaries of a poverty

reduction program. The challenge with such an approach is to find a way to scale it up at a regional or country scale. Local understandings and narratives may vary between communities, and centralized programs would not provide the flexibility needed to adapt to varying local narratives. Using bottom-up approaches for poverty reduction programs thus requires a decentralized system where power is giving to local offices or teams to adapt to the local context. This makes bottom-up approaches more resource intensive in terms of initial time and money invested compared to traditional approaches. Yet, they might be more cost-effective in the long run as, by limiting the chances of a disconnect developing, they maximize the success rate and impact factor of a project.

#### **2.4.4) Limitations**

The strength of this research lies in the opportunity it gave participants to openly discuss their solutions to the poverty issue in their community. By using semi-structured interviews, a great diversity of solutions were uncovered and an in-depth understanding of the reasoning behind those solutions was obtained. However, the study is not without its limitations. First, because a local school was used to integrate into the community and recruit participants, one limitation of this study is that it is likely that the whole sample shared a value for education. The sample was comprised of people who had family members going to the school, or staff members working at the school. Most children in the community go to school, so we believe that this value for education is shared by the majority of people in the community. However, it is important to stress that people who do not value education or cannot access it are not represented in the sample. Second, the alleged idle youth engaged in drug abuse or crime was also excluded from the sample for safety reasons. Hence, while the study establishes that the community perceives the idle youth as a problem in Manyatta, this group did not get an opportunity to present their view of the situation. Third, interviews and analysis were carried out by a team of two men: the researcher who is foreign-born and White, and the research assistant who is Kenyan-born and Black. The White researcher was an outsider to the community, but was familiar with Kenya. He was visiting the country for the third time and had spent about six months in East Africa in his life. The research assistant was an insider to the community, having lived in Manyatta for the past eleven years. He was the director of the local school and a trusted figure in the community. There are several implications that the positionality of the researcher, research assistant, and participants may have had on the collection and interpretation of data. For example, while we were always transparent

about the context and aim of the research project, some participants hoped that the researcher, being a *mzungu* (local term for white foreigner), would bring support in the form of money or development projects in the community after the end of the research. We would end interviews by inviting respondents to give comments or ask questions, and several respondents turned to the *mzungu* researcher to ask what he would do or give to the community after the project. This dynamic may have influenced answers to some questions, such as on the perception of current development efforts and solutions to reduce poverty. Fourth, data analysis was conducted and discussed as a team. The positionality of the researcher as outsider and research assistant as insider to the daily lived experiences of the participants thus also played a role in that step. The final interpretation is the combination of our two perspectives, which we believe is more complete given our two different positionality. Fifth, few disagreements among participants emerged during the analysis of the interview transcripts. This led us to conclude that there was broad agreement among the study sample. However, a one-on-one semi-structured interview is not a method that favours the uncovering of disagreement among participants, since participants are not exposed to the views of others. Hence, the broad agreement that we witnessed in our data might have been influenced by the chosen methodology. Finally, all data were collected at a specific time and place in the Manyatta B informal settlement. Hence, results should not be generalized to all informal settlements or to other time periods.

## **2.5) Conclusion**

To conclude, this case study in the Manyatta B informal settlement investigated residents' understanding of poverty, perception of development efforts, solutions to reduce poverty and the rationale behind the solutions proposed. Drawing on 32 interviews with residents, this study reveals that respondents generally defined poverty as an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and education. Residents interviewed all saw poverty as a problem in Manyatta and considered current poverty reduction efforts as lacking. They stressed the responsibility of the government to be leaders in the fight against poverty, but also highlighted the responsibility of the community members. The main solutions proposed by respondents were employment, sensitization, business, youth education, empowerment and better governance. Participants mainly justified these solutions by raising one or more of the following issues: unemployment, idleness, poor governance and lack of knowledge. This study is the first to document the views of Manyatta

B residents regarding potential pathways to reduce poverty in their area. The results show the complementarity of bottom-up approaches to top-down approaches. Understanding local narratives can avoid a mismatch between a poverty reduction intervention and the lived experiences of the beneficiaries. Hence, investing the time to document the local understanding of poverty and its solution can reduce the likelihood of a disconnect developing. Finally, while the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, I do not believe that the crisis had a significant impact on the results. Instead, I think that these findings may be transferable to other informal settlements in Kenya and East Africa. Hence, investigating other research contexts in the region could be an avenue for future research.

## **Appendix A: Interview Guide**

### Perspectives on Poverty and on Development Efforts

1. How would you define poverty?
2. Is poverty a problem in this area? [Yes/No]
3. Should there be efforts to reduce it? [Yes/No]
  - a. [If yes] Should there be more, less or the same amount of efforts to reduce it?
  - b. [If yes] Who should be working on reducing poverty in this area?

### Solutions to Poverty

4. When you look at yourself and the people around you, what are some measures that you think could reduce poverty?
  - a. Why do you think this/these solution(s) would work?

### Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

5. Are you comfortable discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic? [Yes/No]
  - a. Did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the quality of life of the people in this area?  
If yes, how?
  - b. Would you like to tell us how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your quality of life? [Informant is free to refuse]

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## Chapter 3—Summary and Final Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore local understandings of poverty reduction solutions. A case study in the Manyatta B informal settlement of Kisumu City in Western Kenya was conducted using semi-structured interviews with family members and staff members frequenting a local school. A total of 32 interviews were conducted with a balanced sample of men and women, and participants from different age groups. All 32 interview transcripts were analyzed and co-coded by my research assistant and myself using NVivo qualitative analysis software version 12 (Azeem & Salfi, 2012). The codebook was produced using an inductive (data-driven) approach.

### 3.1) Key Findings

The findings were the following.

*Perspectives on poverty.* Nearly all respondents defined poverty in terms of an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and education. This perspective, which adopts a multidimensional view of poverty, was dominant during the interviews. In addition, several respondents also defined poverty in terms of feelings, such as struggling or hopelessness. Some participants suggested a monetary definition of poverty, classifying it as a lack of money. Some people also added a relative component to the definition of poverty by using the concept of living standards, and describing poverty as a state of deprivation relative to others in their society.

*Perspectives on development efforts.* Every respondent saw poverty as a problem in Manyatta B and considered the current poverty reduction efforts as insufficient. Participants believed that more efforts should be put into reducing poverty in their area, and nearly all stressed the responsibility of the government. Respondents perceived the responsibility of reducing poverty as falling mostly on their local government. Participants mentioned feeling neglected by their government, and expressed distrust towards their local representatives, whom they accused of being only concerned with enriching themselves. There exists a clear disconnect between residents' priorities and current governmental efforts to reduce poverty, since all respondents deemed current poverty reduction efforts as insufficient and accused the government of not doing enough. Yet, while the participants interviewed identify a disconnect between their understanding of poverty and the government's "top-down" action, they still believe that it is the role of the government to alleviate poverty. Hence, even though they want their "bottom-up" voices to be heard, participants seem to believe that "top-

down” action from the government is necessary to fight poverty. In addition, many participants also mentioned the responsibility of the locals in the fight against poverty. They believe that the community and its individuals should also make efforts to reduce poverty in the area. Finally, several people also talked about humanitarian actors. NGOs were the most mentioned. Nonetheless, most people highlighted that NGOs should be a secondary actor, and that the government should be the one leading poverty reduction efforts. A few people highlighted the shared responsibility between the government and the community to reduce poverty, stressing that both actors are part of the solution and their cooperation is crucial.

*Problems in the community.* The findings reveal many issues in the community that are perceived by the respondents as causes, consequences or both cause and consequence of poverty. Four main issues were raised by the participants and came back frequently to justify the solutions proposed:

- *Unemployment:* The high rate of unemployment was seen as the most pressing issue by many respondents, and this issue was judged to be most severe among the youth. Respondents perceived this issue as persistent, structural, and a consequence of a generalized low labour demand in Kisumu. These findings are in agreement with previous research conducted on Kenya’s unemployment challenges (Gachari & Korir, 2020; Godia, 1987; Muiya, 2014), and the situation in Kisumu (C. Mireri et al., 2007; Phil. C. Mireri, 2013; Opiyo et al., 2018).
- *Idleness:* For respondents, it signifies not being engaged in any productive economic activity, and it is both seen as a cause and consequence of poverty. It is perceived as a consequence since the high rate of unemployment puts many people in a situation in which they are not engaged in any economic activity, making them more susceptible to experience poverty and an idle lifestyle. Yet, idleness is also seen as a cause of poverty, since spending too much time idling can foster an attitude of laxity, in which people become content with their situation. Idleness was frequently associated with drug abuse and crime. The problem was judged to be most severe among the youth, which is something that has also been documented in other studies (Dolan & Rajak, 2018; Hope, 2012; Meinema, 2020; Winter et al., 2022).
- *Poor governance:* Several respondents also highlighted that poor governance was contributing to the poverty situation in Manyatta B. Poor governance prevents people from

accessing public services that they are entitled to and economically isolates the community due to poor infrastructure. Participants feel neglected and abused by their government, which manifests itself through severe distrust towards their local representatives, which they accuse of being only concerned with enriching themselves. These findings agree with Kenya's history of governance issues regarding corruption and poor service delivery documented in the literature (Hope, 2014; Ngigi & Busolo, 2019; Odhiambo-Mbai, 2003).

- *Lack of knowledge*: Respondents viewed lack of knowledge as a cause of poverty because many people lack the knowledge and tools to escape poverty. Respondents think that the poor are not aware of the pathways out of poverty and the things that could be done to improve their situation. Lack of knowledge is also seen as a consequence of poverty since children who grow up in poor families are often out of school, which denies them the tools that could help them escape poverty as adults. These findings agree with other studies that have been done on Kenya's problem with access to education and education quality for the most deprived households (Josephine et al., 2020; Sifuna, 2007; Somerset, 2011).

*Solutions to poverty*. Nearly all respondents see employment as the key solution to reduce poverty in Manyatta B. Many also see sensitization and business as other avenues, while several respondents mentioned the importance of youth education, empowerment and better governance to improve the poverty situation in their area. Each solution proposed has its own reasoning.

- *Employment*: Respondents perceive unemployment as a key issue in the community, which is the source of many other problems, such as crime, idleness and drug abuse. Creating more job opportunities would thus address one of the root causes of poverty according to the participants.
- *Sensitization*: A solution that is perceived as addressing a lack of knowledge in the community on poverty and the pathways out of it. Respondents believe that this knowledge has the capacity to help people get out of poverty. Moreover, sensitization is also seen as a potential tool to bring about a change of attitude in the community and fight the laxity that comes with idleness, helping people become more self-reliant.
- *Business*: A solution that is seen as having the potential to reduce unemployment. Through business, people can employ themselves and others, which would create the employment opportunities that are missing at the moment. If a business is successful enough, it can

provide sufficient income to afford basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and education. Lack of capital to start or boost a business is a major issue, and loans are a concrete example of a measure that could help reduce poverty in Manyatta B by encouraging business activity.

- *Youth education:* Participants think that education should be more accessible so that children are kept in school as long as possible. In their minds, keeping a child in school maximizes her/his chances of escaping poverty someday. Education expands a child's mind, makes her/him more likely to find employment, and gives her/him knowledge to find or create a livelihood. Without schooling, a child risks becoming idle and getting into undesirable behaviours, such as stealing, drug abuse, early pregnancies or early marriages.
- *Empowerment:* Empowering vulnerable groups such as women or youth is seen as a solution by several respondents because it would help people with low self-esteem to become more confident in their abilities. This could help curb unemployment since people who are more confident in themselves have a higher chance of starting their own business or finding employment. If empowering people makes them more engaged, idleness in the community would decrease, reducing the likelihood of youth falling into bad behaviours.
- *Better governance:* The government is perceived as responsible for the poor infrastructure in Manyatta B. The current state of infrastructure is making Manyatta B less accessible, less secure and less healthy than it should be. The residents of Manyatta B see the government as having the power to build infrastructure that can improve their situation and reduce poverty. In their eyes, lack of political will and corruption explain why the government is not fulfilling its mandate. The residents of Manyatta B expect much more from their politicians, showing a clear disconnect between their priorities and current governmental actions.

Other solutions that were mentioned by a few included reducing the cost of living, diversifying income, donations, praying, forming banking groups and regulating churches.

In sum, this study documented several central themes regarding solutions to poverty in Manyatta B (employment, sensitization, business, empowerment, youth education and better governance). Moreover, investigating the reasoning behind these solutions also exposed the community's

perspective on the most pressing issues that need to be addressed to alleviate the poverty situation in Manyatta B (unemployment, idleness, poor governance and lack of knowledge).

### **3.2) Contributions to Scholarship**

These findings contribute to scholarship in several ways. First, this study adds further evidence of the importance of multidimensional definitions of poverty. Multidimensional definitions of poverty fall under the capability approach. This approach, based on the influential work of Amartya Sen (1987, 1992, 1999), encourages people to see poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond income. According to this approach, development is about expanding the capabilities of people so that they can live the kind of life that they have reason to value. Defining poverty with this approach requires a set of basic capabilities to be agreed upon. Poverty is then characterized as deprivation in one or more of these basic capabilities. The residents of Manyatta B identified some of these basic capabilities as access to food, shelter, clothing and education. This multidimensional view of poverty was the dominant understanding of poverty among the residents of Manyatta B that were interviewed. Next, the findings also show a disconnect between the two other “top-down” approaches (monetary and social exclusion) and the definitions voiced by the participants. The monetary approach can be defined as a lack of consumption or income relative to some poverty line. With this approach, the well-being of an individual is generally measured by her/his income or consumption level. It is the most commonly used in practice. Yet, in this case study, while it was used by some of the Manyatta B residents, it was far less common than the multidimensional definitions. The monetary definition of poverty was thus absent for most of the sample. Additionally, the social exclusion approach was completely absent from the participants’ definitions. This approach considers poverty as the result of a process of marginalization “through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (European Foundation, 1995). Social exclusion is more commonly used in high-income countries, and it does not translate well to the Manyatta B context. Since poverty is widespread in Manyatta, participants do not perceive poverty as an issue affecting specific groups in the community, but rather as an issue affecting the community as a whole.

Second, this study adds further evidence of the value of the participatory approach. This approach has taken many different forms since Chambers (1994) defined Participatory Rural Appraisal

(PRA) as “a family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act” (Chambers, 1994, p. 953). However, the essence of the approach has remained the same: give a space to local people to share their knowledge and voice their priorities. In this case study, the respondents have shown a broad understanding of solutions and clear priorities. Their understanding includes not only what people can do to generate income but also how people can be helped to get the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to have the potential to create their own livelihood and escape poverty. In other words, participants acknowledge the many dimensions of poverty and look at the issue from many different perspectives. These perspectives include economic (job creation and business), educational (sensitization and youth education), psychological (empowerment) and political (better governance). However, it is important to realize that these findings represent local narratives. They are not born out of scientific evidence but rather out of the lived experiences of the participants. For this reason, I do not believe that participatory approaches should be used on their own. They should be seen as complementary to other approaches, and they should be used in conjunction with other methods that can offer a way of triangulating the results. The main reason being that there is no way of discerning true from false narratives. However, a lot can be learned from both true and false narratives. True narratives offer a cost-effective way of learning about the situation in the community. For example, in this case study, there was broad agreement among the participants interviewed. No significant disagreements emerged, which hints at a shared understanding of the local situation. In such a case, the chances of the local narratives providing accurate information about the community are high. On the other hand, false narratives can help identify the shortcomings in the local understanding of strategies to reduce poverty, while also offering insights into potential pre-conceived ideas about poverty that need to be dealt with. This information can be useful for communication campaigns during poverty reduction interventions.

Third, this study is the first to document the main problems in Manyatta B as perceived by the residents. This research thus offers a bottom-up view of the challenges that the community faces and how the residents think that they should be addressed. Participants have mentioned issues of unemployment, idleness, poor governance and lack of knowledge about poverty and the pathways out of it. The fact that many of these problems have also been documented in the literature shows

that there is some overlap between the lived experiences of the participants and existing scholarship.

### **3.3) Practical Implications**

The findings also have several practical implications for current and future development actors in Manyatta B. Several lessons can be drawn from this case study:

- (1) *Clear priorities*: Residents want efforts to be put towards reducing unemployment and idleness, improving governance and public infrastructure, and addressing a lack of knowledge among the poor. Development initiatives that address one or more of these issues will likely be accepted and supported by the community, and have a high potential for cooperation.
- (2) *Community participation*: Residents of Manyatta B would prefer if poverty reduction efforts are led by the government and/or the community. Humanitarian actors should thus seek the participation of residents in their poverty reduction initiatives in such a way that the community can feel a sense of ownership towards poverty reduction efforts in their area. Initiatives addressing one or more of the six main avenues given by respondents to reduce poverty (employment, sensitization, business, education, empowerment and better governance) have the highest chance of motivating the locals to get involve since they are already desired by the community.
- (3) *Rebuild trust*: Given the severe distrust that residents have for their local government, any government initiatives to reduce poverty in the area should first focus on devising effective strategies to rebuild trust with the local community and address the existing disconnect. Without this crucial first step, any government initiative is likely to be met with scepticism and suspicions, which will likely prevent any form of meaningful engagement from the community. Potential avenues that could be explored to foster trust building include improving transparency, having systems of accountability and showing a clear commitment to long-term investment in the community.
- (4) *Avoiding disconnect*: While local narratives may not always represent the complete truth about the situation in a community, I think that it is crucial that they be understood and acknowledged before any meaningful poverty intervention can take place. For government, UN agencies or other organization aiming to reduce poverty in the region, I believe that



the lived experiences of the people should be the starting point of any initiative. The local narratives have to be understood to avoid a mismatch between a poverty reduction program and the local understanding of the situation. Investing the time to properly document the local understanding of poverty and the strategies to reduce it limits the chances of a disconnect developing with the intended beneficiaries of a poverty reduction program.

These lessons are meant to promote community engagement. This case study showed that the residents of Manyatta B have knowledge to share and priorities to voice. Their engagement in development initiatives should thus be seen as crucial.

### **3.4) Direction for Future Research**

Finally, since all data were collected at a specific time and place in the Manyatta B informal settlement, results are not generalizable to other informal settlements or to other time periods. Future research could reproduce this study in other areas of Manyatta B to measure how representative of the wider community the results of this case study are. These findings may also be transferable to other informal settlements in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, another avenue for future research would be to reproduce this study in other settings in the region to understand how context-specific, or not, the solutions that were proposed by the residents of Manyatta B are. Additionally, future research could also dive deeper into the solutions proposed by the residents of Manyatta B and test their implementation. Would they have the intended effect? Participants had a clear sense of problems in their community and how they should be addressed, and it would be interesting to see if their solutions would produce better results than current poverty reduction efforts.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A. Oral Consent Script

### Purpose of the Study

Hello. My name is Julien Greschner. I am doing interviews about local ideas for poverty reduction. I'm doing this for my master's research at McGill University in Montréal, Canada. I am a student in the Department of Geography. I'm working under the supervision of Prof. Jon Unruh of the same department.

### Study Procedures

I'm asking you to do a 30-minute face-to-face interview. I will ask you general questions about poverty, such as how you would define it. I will then ask you questions about poverty in this area. For example, your opinion on the situation and your ideas about how to improve the situation. Finally, if you are comfortable, I will ask you about the impact of COVID-19 on the community. I will take handwritten notes to record your answers. With your permission, I will also use an audio recorder to make sure I don't miss anything you say. We can do the interview now, or at a later time and place that works for us both.

### Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide to stop at any time, even during the interview. If you choose to take part, you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to withdraw, please let me know at any point during our interview. You can also contact Julien Greschner ([julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca)) if you decide to withdraw after the interview.

If you decide to stop, we will ask you how you would like us to handle the data collected up to that point. For example, destroy it or use it for the study.

Please note that after publication, it will no longer be possible to destroy the data per university policy. Hence, withdrawal won't be possible after October 2022.

### Potential Risks

There are no anticipated risks to your participation in this research. If you find some questions uncomfortable to answer, you do not have to answer them. If you experience any negative effects following this research, please contact Julien Greschner ([julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca)).

### Potential Benefits

Participation in the study will have no direct benefit for you. This research aims to understand local perceptions and ideas on poverty reduction. We hope this research may be able to impact future policy for this area.

### **Compensation**

You will receive school tuition for a half-semester for one child as a compensation. If you withdraw from the study, you will still receive the compensation. If you decide not to answer some questions, you will still receive the compensation.

### **Confidentiality**

Your responses will remain confidential. Your name will not appear on the interview transcript. A code will link your name and interview transcript. The code sheet will be destroyed after the fieldwork. The record of your oral consent will be stored separately from the transcript. No association will be possible.

Your answers will only be accessible to the researcher and research assistant. If you consent to being audio recorded, the content of the recording will only be used for data analysis. The transcripts and recordings will be stored in an encrypted folder. The folder will be on the main researcher's (Julien Greschner) password-protected laptop for seven years.

Do you consent to being audio recorded? [Y/N]

### **Dissemination of Results**

The information you provide will be used for my thesis. I may also present it at conferences or publish it in academic journals. Identifying information will not be published or shared beyond the research team. Any published or shared data will be the combined data of all participants. That means it will show the whole group and not individuals. If we use a quotation that you provided, you will not be identified.

I will give back a summary of the results to the community, which will be available at the local school.

### **Contact for Questions**

If you have any questions, you may contact Julien Greschner ([julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca)).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints, you may contact Julien Greschner ([julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:julien.greschner@mail.mcgill.ca)). If you want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at +1 514-398-6831 or [lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca](mailto:lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca) citing REB file #22-01-069.

### **Consent**

Do you have any questions or would like more details? [Answer questions.]

Do you agree to participate in this study? You can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you.

- [If yes, begin the interview.]
- [If no, thank the participant for their time.]

## Appendix B: Codebook

Theme	Definition	Subtheme	Codes
Definition of poverty	Passages where participants describe what poverty is according to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic needs</li> <li>• Feelings</li> <li>• Monetary</li> <li>• Relative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food, clothing, shelter, education accessibility, healthcare accessibility, functional roads, rights, safe community</li> <li>• Struggling, hopeless, stressful life, undesirable life</li> <li>• Lack of money, need outside help, unable to help others</li> <li>• Low living standards, unable to live comfortably</li> </ul>
Poverty situation	Passages where informants give their assessment of the poverty situation in Manyatta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problematic</li> <li>• Current development efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread, big problem, slum</li> <li>• More efforts needed</li> </ul>
Responsibility	Passages discussing who should be working on reducing poverty and who should be leading poverty reduction efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Local</li> <li>• Humanitarian</li> <li>• Government &amp; Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government, national government, county government, leaders, local authorities, elected officials</li> <li>• Community, individual, parents, richer individuals, relatives</li> <li>• NGOs, churches, religious people, well-wishers, CBOs</li> <li>• Teamwork, collective responsibility</li> </ul>

Poverty solution	<p>Passages mentioning individual ideas on how to reduce poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Sensitization</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Youth education</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Better governance</li> <li>• Reduce cost of living</li> <li>• Other solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job creation, develop local industry, look for jobs, increase salaries</li> <li>• Poverty eradication, character development, hard work, agriculture, rights, health, recycling, gender-based violence</li> <li>• Encourage entrepreneurship, loans, agribusiness, subsidize seeds, diversify business activities, more markets</li> <li>• Easier access to education, free learning materials, encourage schooling, more school resources, reform education system</li> <li>• Initiatives for youth, initiatives for women, support women groups, initiative for the elderly</li> <li>• Better infrastructure, better roads, better health facilities, more police posts, more street lights, waste management, more participation, fight corruption, legal reforms</li> <li>• Affordable housing, subsidize basic commodities, lift sales tax</li> <li>• Diversify income, donations, pray, form banking groups, regulate churches</li> </ul>
Cause of poverty	<p>Passages mentioning factors that, according to the participants, contribute to the poverty situation in Manyatta B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Poor governance</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge</li> <li>• Social factors</li> <li>• Lack of capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Corruption, political abuse, poor infrastructure, poor healthcare</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge, ignorance</li> <li>• Bad influences, single parent, early pregnancy, many dependents, congregant abuse, early marriages</li> <li>• Lack of capital for business</li> </ul>

Consequence of poverty	Passages mentioning problems within the community that are, according to them, created by poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecurity</li> <li>• Schooling</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Prostitution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theft, stealing, violence</li> <li>• Out of school, dropouts, crowded public schools</li> <li>• Disease, hunger, mental health</li> <li>• Prostitution, young girls, lack of alternatives</li> </ul>
Cause and consequence of poverty	Passages discussing factors that are mentioned both as a cause and a consequence of poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idleness</li> <li>• Drug abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idle, idleness, laxity, lazy, content, waiting mentality, dependent on handouts</li> <li>• Alcohol (Changaa), cannabis (Bhang), hard drugs, cocaine</li> </ul>



Impact of COVID-19	<p>Passages describing the impact that COVID-19 had on the quality of life of people in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Regulations</li> <li>• Psychological</li> <li>• School</li> <li>• Home life</li> <li>• Migration</li> <li>• More idleness</li> <li>• Survival skills</li> <li>• Church backsliding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job loss, business loss, inflation, unable to pay rent, cutting expenses, death of a breadwinner, reduced salaries, cost of facemask, costly local remedy, longer work hours, new business opportunities</li> <li>• Mortality, more hunger, sickness, health expenses, vaccine hesitancy, more HIV, lack of care, overloaded hospitals</li> <li>• School closure, curfew, lockdown, masks, border closure, police harassment, quarantine, church closure, sanitization, market closure, social distancing</li> <li>• Fear, stress, depression, frustration, stigma, suicide</li> <li>• School dropouts, delayed graduation, move to public schools</li> <li>• Domestic disputes, staying indoors, more dependents</li> <li>• Migration to rural, moved to a cheaper place</li> <li>• More early pregnancy, more insecurity, more drug use, more prostitution, more early marriages</li> <li>• Survival skills, income diversification, alternative livelihood</li> <li>• Church backsliding, church absentees, fewer worshippers</li> </ul>
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