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Voices From a Slum: Poverty Solutions According to Residents of 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.

Keywords: Poverty reduction, local solutions, informal settlement, western Kenya

1) Introduction¹

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 has not 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). The poverty rate continues to rise 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). Hence, despite recent progress, poverty remains an important issue for Kenyan society. 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

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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? Their 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 verify that their policies and programs are compatible with local realities.

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, 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) Methods

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, and 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 was 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) 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. 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).

2.3) 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 languages other 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 the codebook uniformly 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 solutions proposed.

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.

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.

3.2) 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.

3.2.1) 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 1.

Table 1. 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

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participants. For example, Participant #09 said they were, “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

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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.

3.2.2) 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.

3.2.3) 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 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 humanitarian actors. The coding of their answers is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. 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.

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(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.

3.3) 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 3. 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 3. 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

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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

3.3.1) Employment

The most common solution given by respondents was employment. Nearly all interviewees claimed that the solution to reduce 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 youth who experience 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.

3.3.2) 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 A, B, C, D, 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 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 their 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 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 avenues other 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.

3.3.3) 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 support 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)

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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.

3.3.4) Youth Education

“Knowledge is power” (Participant #64). Several informants also mentioned formal education as a way to reduce poverty. Many people who suggested the 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, competencies, 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

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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.

3.3.5) 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 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. Empowerment is perceived as having the potential to be a catalyst that could change people's mindset, helping them to believe in 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.

3.3.6) 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)

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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 included having more police posts and more streetlights 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 streetlights 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.

3.3.7) Other Solutions

A few interviewees also suggested measures that could reduce the cost of living. Paying rent was seen as an issue now, 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. Since prices had risen substantially in a very short amount of time when we collected data, life was expensive. 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.

4) Discussion

4.1) Key Insights

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

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 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 high income countries, and it does not 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.

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 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. Youth that are out of school do not develop their potential and the absence of a formal education makes it difficult 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 healthier. 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.

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,

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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 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.

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

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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.

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 involved 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 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 to explain to the community how the proposed project 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.

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 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.

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 positionalities. 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 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.

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 this study does not allow a generalization of the results, I think that it would be worthwhile to study other informal settlements in Kenya and East Africa to see if results may be transferable to other areas. Hence, investigating other research contexts in the region could be an avenue for future research.

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