



NCCK

National Council of Churches of Kenya

Youth Policy & Engagement Framework

Partnership Between
Youth & Adults



Rights Based
Approach



Life Cycle
Approach



Positive Youth
Development



Effective
Collaboration



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Word from the General secretary

This Youth Policy and Engagement Framework are the official documents of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and the common guides for its Member Churches/Organizations on youth. The Council recognizes that young people are the most important resource in any society and therefore, has developed these documents to set forth the authority by which NCCK will design its interventions and future programs for youth at all levels. The development of both the Youth Policy and the Youth Engagement Framework was inspired by the 2021 theme of NCCK, "Wholesome Youth for a Wholesome Society" (1 Timothy 4:12).

NCCK is the largest umbrella church organization in Kenya. Formed in 1913, it serves as a Secretariat to its Protestant member Churches and Organizations to implement their development and ecumenical initiatives. It brings together 32 Member Churches and 18 Christian-based Organizations and since its formation, NCCK has been a key player in mobilizing Kenyans for social, economic and political development issues that have confronted the nation.

According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, 75% of Kenyan population is composed of people below 35 years. The youth aged 15 – 34 years constitute 36%; the children below 14 years constitute 39% of the total population. The NCCK in her planning and programming takes cognizance of the implications of this youth bulge on the socio-economic and political development of the country. Admittedly, Kenya's youth bulge presents an opportunity for economic, social and political development while at the same time portending risks and threats to the country's social cohesion and stability if not adequately empowered and supported. It is evident that over the last decade, the youth of Kenya have been going through difficult social, economic and political challenges, and NCCK is aware that unless pre-emptive steps are taken, the youth bulge may become a curse instead of producing a development dividend for our country.

In this regard, both the Youth Policy and Engagement Framework will facilitate NCCK to integrate the youth voices into its structures, programs and activities; promote public and private partnerships in youth engagement/empowerment; and enhance community understanding and participation on issues affecting the young people. It will stimulate effective coordination and maintain standards of youth programming within NCCK and its membership. It is envisaged that the policy and the engagement framework will offer direction on diverse issues affecting youth, streamline the operations of NCCK and enable young people to advance their own livelihoods and help solve their country's development challenges. It will provide the basis for resource mobilization, capacity building and mentorship for youth by NCCK.

We are grateful to the Lord God Almighty for enabling us to develop these documents and continue to rely on His provisions as we embark on its implementation. Special gratitude goes to the consultants that walked with us on this journey - Dr. Katindi Sivi and Vincent Kimosop.

Rev Canon Chris Kinyanjui
General Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has been concerned about the bulging youth population in Kenya. NCCCK is aware of the short window of opportunity and blessing this phenomenon presents as more young people enter the working age and the country's dependency is reduced thus increasing incomes, savings and investments. In addition to economic opportunities, it also contributes to social and political development of the country through meaningful social and civic engagement. However, large youth numbers can also present a demographic time bomb if this young working age group is not adequately empowered, supported or gainfully employed. It creates a large mass of frustrated youth likely to become a potential source of social and political instability. NCCCK and the church at large recognizes that unless pre-emptive steps are taken and urgently, the youth bulge may become a curse instead of producing a development dividend for our country.

NCCCK has focused on and supported the youth in Kenya to live wholesome lives for more than one hundred years!

Background

NCCCK has focused on and supported the youth in Kenya to live wholesome lives for more than one hundred years in line with her motto, "For Wananchi". The focus on the youth has always been inspired by the message of God to the youth recorded in 1 Timothy 4: 12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

This inspiration to the youth is repeated in the words of the elder of the early church, Apostle John, who wrote:

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one - 1 John 2:14

Recognizably, the youth are expected to be actively involved in the spiritual and social-political life of the society. The past NCCCK engagements include the campaign against recruitment of boys to work away from their homes in 1913; advocacy against inadequate housing in townships in 1918; advocacy for provision of equal education opportunities for boys and girls in 1919; establishment of Alliance High School, the first one for native Kenyans, in 1920; establishment of a rescue center for women in the 1920s; the Urban Mission in the 1950s; advocacy against the Emergency Laws in 1950s; and establishment of the Village Polytechnics in the 1960s. Prior to setting up the Village Polytechnics, the NCCCK carried out a study titled "After School, What?", which continues to influence government policy on technical training.

In line with this rich history of youth engagement, NCCCK commissioned a Youth Fragility Study in December 2020 which sought to assess levels of youth fragility, vulnerability and participation in governance processes in Kenya. The study included a literature review and nine focus group discussions of one hundred and sixty four (164) young people organized by the Regional Offices of the NCCCK. The study revealed that youth in Kenya are not adequately involved in governance and decision making processes, and are not adequately given opportunities to assume positions of leadership and responsibility. The insufficient opportunities for skills development and training for appropriate livelihoods consigns the youth to a perpetual life of poverty. This makes them amenable to manipulation by political and business actors so that they act both as perpetrators and victims of violence in the society. More specifically, the young people identified eight main issues which include:

- i. Poverty, which encapsulates challenges related to unemployment, underemployment, lack of opportunities, lack of support for young entrepreneurs and talented youth
- ii. Poor education and training
- iii. Crime and insecurity, which they experience as both victims and perpetrators, high-handed treatment and harassment by security agencies and government officials, as well as their increased indulgence with drugs and substance abuse
- iv. Exclusion from governance, politics and decision-making processes
- v. Mental health issues leading to stress, depression, suicide and murders
- vi. Family Life Challenges marked by moral decay, marital breakdowns, casual sex, teenage pregnancies, and illicit sexual relations
- vii. Sexual and Gender Based Violence including Female Genital Mutilation
- viii. Health related challenges especially sexually transmitted diseases

NCCK's strategic response moving forward

Based on these concerns and the future implications for young people and the country, NCCK has resolved to theme the 2021 64th General Assembly as **'Wholesome Youth for a Wholesome Society'**. The conference will profile the key role that the youth play in promoting the wellbeing of the society as well as in the County Coordinating Committees, Regional Conferences, NCCK Month, The Youth Pre-Assembly and also during the inter-assembly years (2021 – 2024). Apart from reflecting back on the initiatives and engagements NCCK has had that targets and empowers the youth, NCCK developed a Youth Policy and a Youth Engagement Framework to provide general guidelines as well as practical interventions that will facilitate it to integrate the youth voices into its structures, programs and activities. Through these interventions, NCCK envisages that it will: foster public and private partnerships in youth engagement/empowerment; enhance community understanding and participation on issues affecting the young people; help streamline the operations of NCCK and stimulate effective resourcing and coordination while maintaining standards of youth programming within NCCK and its membership; as well as enable young people to advance their own livelihoods through capacity building and mentorship. We hope that through this elaborate youth engagement process, we shall contribute to solving the country's development challenges.

The Youth Engagement Framework

This youth engagement framework documents practical ways of engaging diverse views, experiences and needs of young people and mainstreaming their concerns in all NCCK member churches, leadership, organizational activities and strategies. The work specifically documents principles and administrative actions that guide decision-making and programming to achieve effective youth development and youth inclusive outcomes.

The youth engagement framework was developed from the results of a countrywide survey among 900 respondents that corroborated the findings of the youth fragility study and, in addition, identified more issues of concern among youth like identity crisis, reproductive health related challenges, social vices like gang membership, debt and gambling, drugs and alcohol abuse, a values and a faith crisis, as well as technology addiction. The outcomes of the survey guided the relevance of the responses and priority actions that must be taken to improve youth engagement.

This kind of framework is important because it provides a wholistic approach to youth development. It takes a general approach at this point so that every youth worker is armed with general principles

of what works, with room to domesticate the framework to context specific situations. It is envisaged that a general training of trainers will be carried out on how to use the framework. The trained youth officers will then add context specific information to the Youth Engagement framework to produce a context specific document that will be used to further train sub-regional youth officers to the lowest level and for implementation. Prior to that, NCCK will hold a Youth Pre-Assembly just before the General Assembly, followed by Regional Youth Conferences after the General Assembly. These are intended to further amplify and actualize the General Assembly focus on the youth.

Section 1:

Foundational matters

“Let us strengthen our efforts to include young people in policies, programs and decision-making processes that benefit their futures and ours ...”

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

1.1 Conceptualizing youth engagement

What is youth engagement?



Youth engagement is often used to mean anything from enrolling young people as program beneficiaries to involving youth in more meaningful ways, such as through decision-making, program design, policy making and advocacy efforts (USAID, 2014). When youth are just beneficiaries, it means that youth programs are prescribed from the top, by people with little knowledge of the real situation of young people and seldom are the services relevant to their needs. As such, youth become passive recipients of these programs hence their ineffectiveness in resolving youth challenges. That is why, in this engagement framework, the prioritization of youth engagement is based on three lenses – youth as beneficiaries, youth as collaborators and youth as leaders in facilitating effective youth development.

Three Lenses of youth engagement

Figure 1: Three lenses of youth engagement

Source: UNAIDS, 2019



Beneficiaries



Collaborators



Leaders

This youth engagement framework defines youth engagement as “the active, empowered, and intentional partnership with youth as stakeholders, problem solvers, and change agents in their communities” (Youth Leadership Institute's, 2009, p.13).

To this end, the youth engagement framework adopts the Youth Leadership Institute's (2009) definition of youth engagement as “the active, empowered, and intentional partnership with youth as stakeholders, problem solvers, and change agents in their communities” (p.13).

Why is youth engagement important?

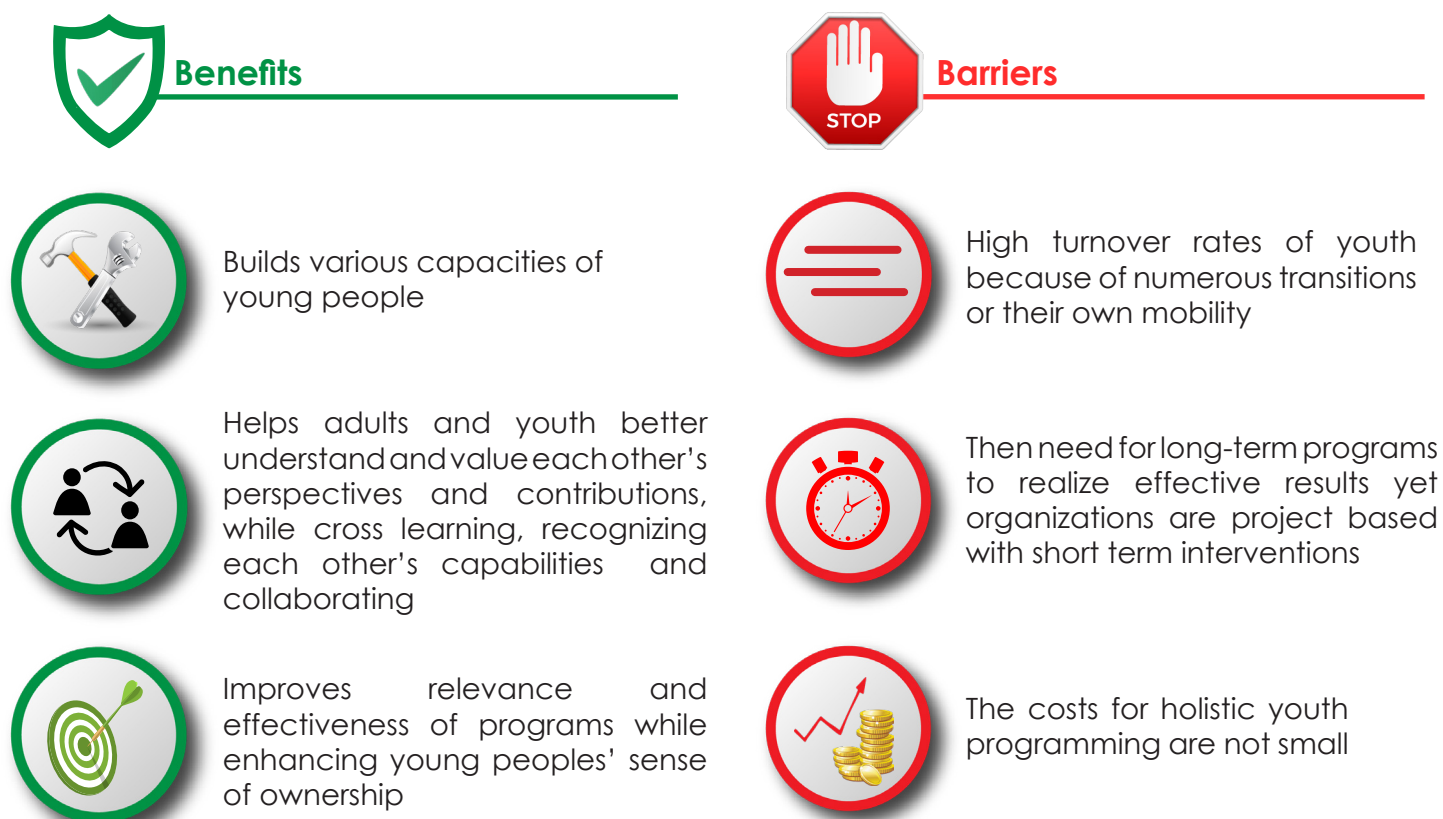


Ensuring the healthy development of young people and including them meaningfully in positive ways is vital. First, for young people to be truly engaged, they must be active and informed participants who are aware of what they are doing, and why they are doing it. Second, young people are the experts of their own issues and even the most in tune adults working with young people may not have the same influence in some aspects as a peer would. Third, young people have historically been excluded from policy formulation, program design, implementation, and monitoring as well as in decisions making yet their inclusions is advantageous because it facilitates cross generational learning. While there is no rigorous evidence that supports the hypothesis that youth engagement leads to better program outcomes and impacts, anecdotal evidence shows that there is increased effectiveness of programs when young people are involved (National Youth Agency, 2010) partly because young people often have an openness and willingness to take risks, and they have great potential to come up with outside the box, innovative ideas.

Benefits and barriers of meaningful youth engagement

Figure 2: Benefits and barriers of meaningful youth engagement

Source: FHI, 2008

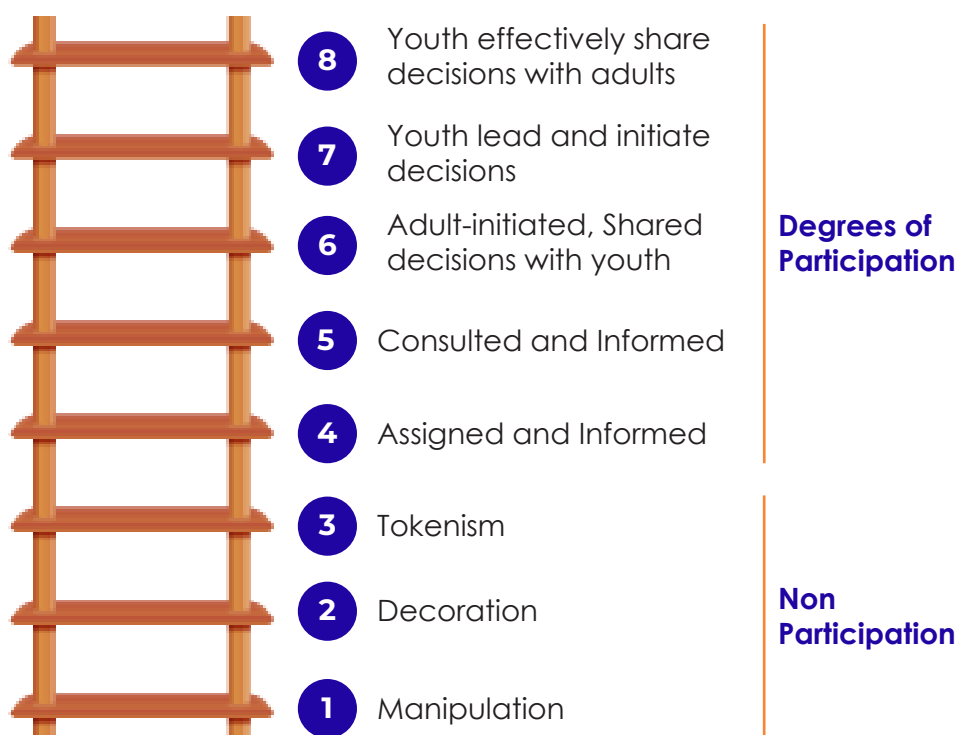


Levels of youth engagement

Figure 3: Harts ladder of participation

Source: USAID, 2014

Dr. Roger Hart, developed a widely used conceptual model for youth engagement called the ladder of participation. The ladder is a continuum that defines levels of youth participation or non-participation from manipulation and tokenism, which do not constitute real participation, to higher and ideal levels of participation in which young people initiate, direct, and share decisions with adults.



The ladder of participation highlights an important characteristic about true youth engagement. First, engagement is not an either/or phenomenon. Simply having a young person present does not result in true participation. Young people must have a certain level of empowerment, responsibility, and decision-making power to participate meaningfully.

1.2 Theory of change

The theory of change describes how NCCK envisages the transformation process and therefore spells out their pathway of intervention to achieve sustainable and effective youth development within its structures, programs and activities. To this end, NCCK will effectively collaborate with all actors in their local communities. NCCK will endeavor to contribute to families and communities that have a more positive attitude towards the value of youth, their leadership and decision-making. NCCK will also engage, through advocacy, to ensure that existing policies, laws, budgets and programs at the national government and county levels, are adequately implemented to achieve equitable and inclusive outcomes. Where these do not effectively exist, NCCK will work with other stakeholders to advocate for new policies, laws, budgets and programs. NCCK will ensure that existing youth serving community systems and institutions like education, health or justice systems have strengthened capacities to offer quality, inclusive, and relevant youth interventions. Within the NCCK structures, we will offer specific youth programs to young people not adequately served in churches and communities – to build their individual capacity and mentor them into quality citizens, able to engage effectively in the society. It is envisaged that through this pathway, the resultant effect is young people with improved agency to seize opportunities as well as engage and influence decisions and society outcomes in a healthy and responsible way



Goal: All young people have improved agency to seize opportunities, engage and influence decisions and society outcomes in a healthy and responsible way.



Figure 4: NCCK Theory of Change

1.3 NCCK's strategic approaches to effective youth development and inclusion

Youth engagement has been ineffective because it is predicated on certain assumptions. On many occasions, youth are treated like a stand-alone group and their issues as detached from the rest of society. Youth are also viewed negatively most of the time and they are seen as incapable of effectively engaging because they are young and inexperienced. These perspectives undermine basic truths such as the fact that youth-hood is connected with other stages of life and therefore a life-cycle approach to youth development and inclusion would yield better results. For example, the foundational life of a young person determines the general quality of life the person will have. If they did not have the right nutrition between the age of 0 and 5 years, they will grow up sickly and generally unhealthy. If they did not receive adequate education, they will have few opportunities in the formal sector of employment. If they grew up in an abusive home, chances of being abusers also increases compared to youth who grew up in a healthy family environment. Issues of youth development are also so many that they cannot be fully solved by one entity. Partnerships between adults and youth as well as effective collaboration with other actors in the sector is crucial to achieve optimum results. Youth also have a right to express themselves, be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and be active participants, in addition to being beneficiaries of programs created for their benefit hence the rights based approach. These strategic approaches are therefore vital as foundational anchors to effective youth engagement.

Youth engagement Approaches

Figure 5: Youth Development approaches

**Partnership Between
Youth & Adults**



**Rights Based
Approach**



**Life Cycle
Approach**



**Positive Youth
Development**



**Effective
Collaboration**



Strategic approach I: Partnership between youth and adults

Figure 6: Partnerships between youth and adults
Source: Pittman, Martin, & Williams (2007)

Young people and adults working together to create the necessary conditions for the successful development of themselves, their peers, their families and their communities



There are power dynamics that exist between youth and adults, usually rooted in cultural norms, that define how the two view one another and relate. Youth for example see themselves in a much more positive light (and often cite attributes like innovative) when self – describing. Older generations on the other hand see: **youth as objects** – “where adults believe they know what is best for young people, they attempt to control situations involving youth, and believe that young people have little to contribute” (FHI, 2008, p. 6); **youth as recipients** – “where adults believe they must assist youth to adapt to adult society. They permit young people to take part in making decisions because they think the experience will be good for them but also assume that youth are not yet self-sufficient and need practice to learn to think like adults” (FHI, 2008, p. 6); and **youth as partners** – where “adults respect young people and believe they have significant contributions to make now. These adults encourage youth to become involved and firmly believe that youth involvement is critical to a program’s success” (FHI, 2008, p.7). This divergence may be explained by the fact that the sum total of a generation’s experiences shapes their ideas and values thus, people of different ages have different approaches and priorities based on their changed circumstances (Sivi, 2021). This difference in perspectives constrains both generations from acknowledging and responding to difference, and therefore serves as a foundation for exclusion (McDonald, 2009), never mind that structures of official intervention in a society like policy-making processes, or decision making ones are often controlled by older generations.

Sharing with youth the power to make decisions means that adults respect and have confidence in young people’s judgment. It means that adults recognize the assets of youth, understand what youth can bring to the partnership, and are willing to provide additional training and support when youth need it. Both youth and adults may need to embrace change in order for the partnership to work.

Elements of Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships

- i. Establish clear goals for the partnership. Youth and adults should understand the reasons and objectives for establishing the partnership.
- ii. Share decision-making power. If youth have no power to make decisions, their participation is not one of partnership.
- iii. Have commitment from highest level. The highest level of the organization should commit fully to meaningful partnerships.
- iv. Be clear on roles and responsibilities. Be clear on which youth and adults have partnership roles and ensure that those persons in partnerships know everyone else's roles and responsibilities.
- v. Be selective. Select the appropriate youth and adults for the partnership. Youth vary widely in their level of development and readiness to assume responsibility, and adults vary widely in their degree of commitment to work with youth.
- vi. Provide training. Young people may need training in communication, leadership, assertiveness skills, and technical areas. Adults may also need training in working with youth as well as in technical areas.
- vii. Be aware of different communication styles. Different styles of communication do not necessarily imply disrespect, disinterest, or different goals and expectations. Asking questions and communicating clearly can help diffuse conflicts that arise from different communication styles.
- viii. Value participation. Part of valuing youth involvement is to hold young people accountable for their responsibilities, just as one would with adults. The skills and commitment that adults bring to the partnership should also be valued.
- ix. Include room for growth. Establish ways for youth to advance to increased levels of responsibility, including opportunities for advancement.
- x. Remember youth have other interests. Youth may not be able to meet high levels of obligations, due to other commitments and priorities. Work with youth to develop a level of responsibility that matches their time and commitment.



Figure 7: Elements of effective youth-adult partnerships

Source: FHI, 2008

Tips for adults and youth when working together

Tips for Adults Working with Youth

1. Be open to and nonjudgmental about young people's insights and suggestions. Let them know that their involvement is important.
2. Take advantage of the expertise that youth offer. Young people know about and should be encouraged to share the needs of their peers and community. Affirm this input.
3. Make sure youth will participate in meaningful ways. Young people should be involved in making decisions from the beginning therefore actively ask for their opinions.
4. Be honest about expectations for the project, what you want youth to contribute, and how you hope to benefit from their participation. Do not expect more from a young person than you would from an adult. Keep expectations realistic; hold young people to your expectations. Do not patronize youth by lowering your expectations.
5. Integrate young people into group and coalition efforts. Schedule meetings when youth can attend and in a location accessible to youth. As with adults, keep young people informed about plans and meeting times in advance.
6. Treat young people as individuals. Do not assume one young person represents the views of many youth. Assure the young person that you are interested in his or her individual opinion and do not expect him or her to speak for an entire population.
7. Be prepared ahead of time to offer support. Think about the kinds of support (financial, logistical, training, emotional, etc.) it will take to involve youth in the project and who will be responsible for providing this support.
8. Make the work interactive, fun, and valuable. Like adults, youth are more likely to get involved and remain active in projects that are interesting and fulfilling.
9. Many youth feel intimidated by adults and are not used to participating in discussions with adults. Time and commitment are needed to get the input of these youth. Be aware of this factor and work to overcome it.
10. Do not make assumptions about what individual young people are like.
11. Do not move too fast. Develop trust and rapport with youth before expecting too much. Take the time to explain why actions are being taken. Youth may interpret an adult who is abrupt and hurried as a sign of disinterest in youth's participation.
12. Remember that there are times when youth need to say "No." They have many competing interests among family, school, and community.

Tips for Youth Working with Adults

1. Most adults have good intentions. Remember that they are simply not used to working in partnership with young people.
2. Criticism does not necessarily mean condescension or that an adult does not value your contribution. It may mean the adult is treating you the same way he or she would an adult colleague. Remember that adults are used to critiquing each other's work and offering constructive ideas to improve. Just because an adult does not agree with a young person does not mean that he or she disrespects that person.
3. Adults may not be aware of the capabilities of young people. They can be told many times that young people are immature, but youth showing their capabilities is the best way to emphasize it.
4. Adults often feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. This is what makes it hard for them to share power. They may need reassurance that you are committed, and willing to share in both the successes and the failures.
5. Adults are often just as uncertain as youth and so working together should be a learning journey for both youth and adults.
6. Sometimes adults use phrases and expressions, whether consciously or not, that suggest they are not treating youth as partners. Be prepared to point out to adults such use of language (e.g., using words like "kids" to describe youth).
7. Do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Adults often use words, phrases, and acronyms that you might not understand. Adults new to the program may not understand them either.
8. Do not be afraid to say "No." Adults will understand that you have other important commitments, like your education, family, friends, hobbies, and sports.

Source: FHI, 2008

Strategic approach 2: Rights-Based Approach

Figure 8: Rights Based Approach empowerment
Source: UNICEF, 2018

A rights based approach leads to various forms of youth empowerment.

Empower within:

- Self confidence
- Enhanced knowledge
- Raised dignity and self-worth

Empower with:

- Have a shared understanding on issues
- Recognition of common strengths & experiences
- Be in solidarity on common issues
- Building partnerships and collaborating

Empower to:

- Challenge Violations
- Influence decisions affecting youth
- Inform policies & legislation
- Realise youth rights
- Hold duty bearers accountable

In this approach, youth engagement is viewed as a basic human right. In this approach, young people are expected to express themselves and to be heard, be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and be active participants, in addition to being beneficiaries of programs created for their value. The right to participate is based on the belief that involvement of young people in decisions that affect them raises their self-esteem because they feel empowered that they are listened to and valued by other members of the society. Through the right to participate, they also realize that they can collaborate to strengthen their voice and present their issues more effectively, which gives them more power. With this collaboration, they can hold those in power accountable to deliver their rights or account for their actions or non-actions, which is central to young people growing their capacity for self-determination and achieving their collective dignity.

Rights Based Approach in Practice

The right conditions have to be created for a rights-based approach to work. This means that we have to identify the barriers that make it challenging to create this conducive environment or for youth rights to be realized. Capacity is needed to recognize and acknowledge the existence of these barriers, how these barriers affect diverse groups of youth differently, and the action to decisively remove these barriers. For example how does a lack of the right to education affect boys and girls differently, or youth with disability compared to able bodied youth, or the marginalized compared to the youth from affluent backgrounds?

Essential conditions for effective Rights Based Approach implementation

Addressing socio-cultural norms and barriers

Young people experience cultural values and social practices that hinder their right to participate. For example, traditional gender roles in a community may dictate that a girl's place is in completing household chores and not participating in a public meeting to discuss a water or education project. Identifying these socio-cultural barriers and addressing them will increase the rights of young people to participate.

Establishing the legal and policy environment

If the rights of all young people are to be guaranteed, they need to be anchored in laws and regulations of the land. However, a country can have the right laws and regulations on paper but implementation becomes a challenge hence the need to have the necessary budgetary support but also the right implementation procedures with staff that have the right attitude and capacity. The initiatives also require institutionalization so that they are not one off short term projects that come and go. In Kenya, some legal and institutional developments include but are not limited to:

- 1. The Constitution of Kenya:** Articles 10 and 27 calls for inclusivity, non-discrimination, equality and freedom from discrimination on the basis of age. Article 55 holds that the State shall take measures, including affirmative action programs, to ensure that the youth: access relevant education and training; have opportunities to associate, be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life; access employment are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation; develop their cultural values, languages and practices; and have reasonable access to water, health services and infrastructure; among others.
- 2. The National Youth Council Act, No. 10 of 2009:** The Act established the National Youth Council (NYC) to facilitate, co-ordinate, promote, monitor and advocate for youth issues and youth led initiatives under the Ministry in charge of youth. The NYC was established in 2012 to ensure effective coordination of youth related interventions and involvement of the youth in planning, monitoring and evaluation of youth interventions.
- 3. The Kenya Youth Development policies, 2007 and 2018:** The policies were aimed at ensuring that youth play their role in the development of the country. The specific Policy goals were to promote youth participation in community and civic affairs to ensure that youth programs are youth centered. It spelt out the strategic areas that must be addressed and implementation mechanisms. The 2018 policy considers emerging issues affecting the youth.
- 4. The Kenya Vision 2030:** The Vision envisages responsible, globally competitive and prosperous youth. Among the specific interventions under the vision are: establishment of youth centers, mentorship, development of creative industry hubs and youth enterprise financing.
- 5. The Employment Act, 2007 & the Industrial Training Act:** The Employment Act protects the lower cadre of youth by providing that a person below the age of 16 cannot be employed. Furthermore, it is provided that those of the ages between 13 and 16 can only perform light work. Pertinently, a child below 13 years cannot be employed. On the other hand the Industrial Training Act provides that a child below 15 years may be trained as an apprentice. These laws affirm the fact that children ought to be protected and allowed to access education before they are subjected to the rigors of the employment world.
- 6. Public Procurement & Asset Disposal Act, 2015:** The Public Procurement & Asset Disposal Act also identifies youth as part of the "disadvantaged group" that is denied access to resources and tools for survival. As part of the social objectives included in the text of the Act, preference is given to the youth in procurement by both levels of government. As a matter of fact, Section 142 of the Act excludes youth from the requirement for Performance Security in reserved contracts

These policies and laws need to be audited at the lowest levels to ascertain their implementation or effectiveness in transforming lives. NCCCK can advocate for new ones in cases where there is a dearth of laws and policies to adequately support aspects of young people's engagement.

Economic as well as the social conditions to participate

Young people are sometimes unable to exercise their rights because they do not have the means to or because the social systems and structures act as a barrier. For example, public physical structures that are not accessible to people with disability locks them out from effectively being engaged. An unsafe environment or inaccessible technical jargon may be a social barrier for some youth to meaningfully engage in a meeting while economic barriers like lack of resources to commute to venues for public meetings may deter them from coming for public forums. It requires that we invest time and resources to improve the economic and social conditions that deter their optimum participation. From the above examples, the institution can ensure that the right infrastructure is made to accommodate people with disability, it can ensure young people's safety by providing safe spaces for youth or make these meetings accessible like in nearby schools, churches and markets to attract more young participants, or availing technical information in more simplified terms and local languages to enable more youth to contribute their views.

Promoting awareness of the right to participate

It is not possible for young people to exercise their fundamental rights if they are not aware of those rights, their relevance on day-to-day living or how they can benefit from those rights. This calls for adults to build young people's knowledge, skills and capacities on their rights in the entire spectrum of their lives. It requires adults to encourage young people to build their confidence, question, speak out, express views, and make decisions, and to overcome the fear of meaningfully engaging.

Essential commitments necessary for meaningful engagement

Figure 9: Commitments for Rights Based Approach to work

Source: UNICEF, 2018

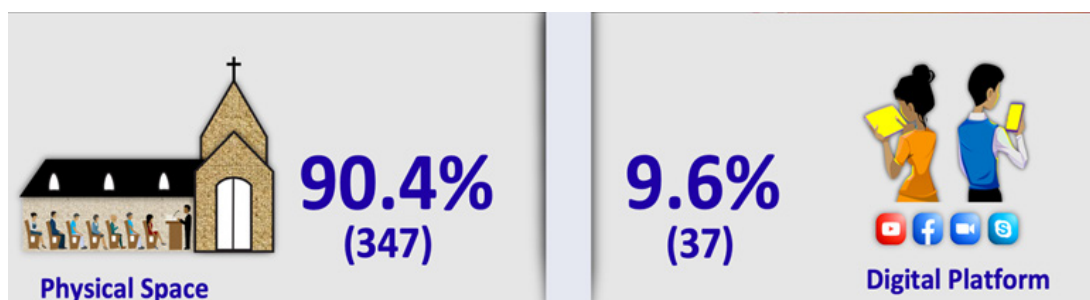


Safe space:

Youth need time and space to learn, grow and cultivate their confidence. Youth responsive physical facilities work well to help channel young people's energy and actively engage in matters that influence them. In the NCKK (2021) survey, 90% of young people preferred meeting in physical spaces rather than the digital space to carry out activities of interest to them including religious ones.

Figure 10: Preference of youth engagement

Source: NCKK survey, 2021



According to USAID (2016) safe spaces suitable for youth engagement must be: located in a convenient place; the hours of meeting must be friendly to both female and male youth; the space must be adequate and with sufficient privacy; have comfortable surroundings for youth; be affordable; the space must be multi-purpose, providing interesting options for youth to engage in a variety of activities such as sports, reading in a library, computer facilities, counselling services, affordable eateries, meeting rooms, art rooms etc.; and the facility staff need to treat youth with respect, honor young people's privacy and confidentiality; as well as offer services in a youth friendly manner. The youth must also treat the center and its staff with respect while honoring the rules set by management of such facilities.

Voice:

Young people often express themselves or speak out through multiple media. Adults need to be able to create opportunities for young people to form their views especially through providing appropriate and accessible information. Young people must also be enabled to freely express these views through reaching out, interacting with their peers or networking with others in accessible languages and forms of communication. There needs to be room for them to raise issues confidentially, or through different forms of expression, like dance, poetry, writing, song etc.

Audience:

Every young person desires to know that when they express themselves, they will respectfully be heard by the relevant people to whom the message is directed like parents, peers, schools or teachers, the police, politicians etc. and the message taken with the seriousness it deserves

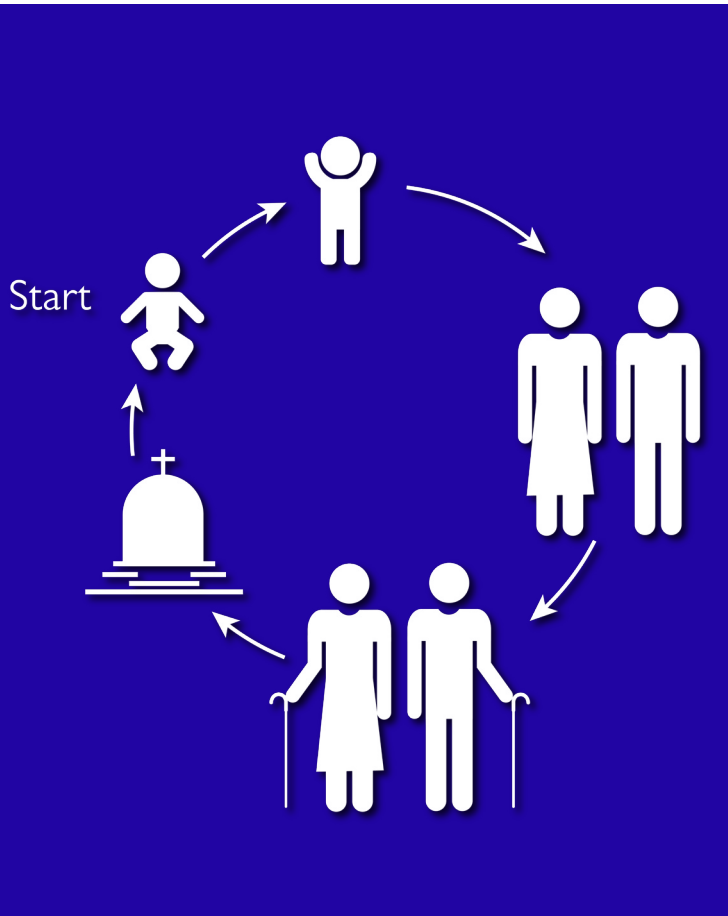
Influence:

Young people need the assurance that even if adults do not fully agree with some of the issues raised, that their issues are given due consideration and when a decision is made, that there is honest feedback on how the decisions were arrived at. Youth will continue to effectively participate when they get the sense that there is transparency and that their input matters and is making a difference.

From rights, to roles and responsibilities.

Young people are entitled to certain basic elements of life or that help include them and equalize them with others, and which are granted by governing bodies as rights such as right to education, right to participate and to be heard etc. However, young people also have roles and responsibilities to play: by actively following and exercising those laws e.g. by going to school as required, or by voting or by freely expressing themselves; by respecting the rights of others to fulfil those rights e.g. allowing people with contrary opinions to your to also express themselves; or by protecting those rights from being taken away e.g. by actively defending rights granted to young people by governments that would want to claw them back, such as peacefully protesting when governments deter young people from exercising their right to participate through peaceful protests and picketing. Just because young people have rights does not mean they exercise them irresponsibly. For example, the right to participate through protests and pickets does not warrant them to cause havoc. They are required to exercise these rights responsibly.

Strategic approach 3: Life-cycle approach



The life cycle approach of youth engagement acknowledges that youth-hood is a life stage that is inseparable from the continuum of the human life. The transition of young people from childhood to adulthood also involves multiple and overlapping physical, cognitive, emotional, economic, political, social and cultural changes that happen at different times for different youth depending on an individual's context and experiences. For these complex transitions to be easier at the youth stage, deliberate attention needs have been paid at the formative years of an individual because what happens to people in their childhood has a profound impact on their development in future stages of life. For example, malnutrition during childhood will perpetually affect education outcomes later in the school years of the young person. It is therefore unrealistic to expect quality young people who are healthy, responsible, and effectively participating if there was no investment in nutrition, good education, safety and protection, or skills training. We also cannot expect healthy responsible adults, raising healthy families and creating a peaceful civic environment, if they did not have quality childhood and youth-hood.

Strategic approach 4: Positive youth development



During adolescence young people go through numerous physical, mental, psychological, and social changes including a lot of pressure that comes with making serious life choices on school, career, friends and social groups. Life at this stage is also made more exciting but also complex by young people's curiosity to experiment with many issues like sex, alcohol and drugs, etc. amidst so much uncertainty in the environment. While experimenting is not bad in itself, it has in some instances led to youth becoming victims of circumstances outside their control. In other instances, experimenting has caused one form of crisis or another like dealing with unwanted pregnancies, HIV or STI infections, various addictions, mental health related challenges, becoming victims or perpetrators of crime etc. Sometimes even when they had the best support. As some young people try to conceal their wrong doing and find ways of getting out of the crisis, they can create even worse problems for themselves. Both situations may need adult help to manage and successfully navigate out of.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) which is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that empowers them to reach their full potential (USAID, 2016) is recommended here. In the context of this framework, PYD is used in addition to USAID's definition to help young people find solutions to the crisis they find themselves in and helping them get restoration back to the "right" path.

PYD therefore constitutes: care rather than condemnation for productive and constructive help. It ensures young people take **responsibility** for their actions to promote positive outcomes now and in the future; it offers **rehabilitation** through offering practical services that help youth deal with the issue / challenge e.g. providing rehabilitation centers for those with drug addiction challenges or getting teenage girls back to school after giving birth; in some instances, enabling **reconciliation and re-integration** to foster positive relationships; and reparations in cases where youth are victims, and justice has to be administered for them as well as a systems transformation effort to avoid future issues that perpetrate youth victim hood.

PYD as a system of care and restoration/ redemption for productive and constructive help

Figure 11: NCKK Positive Youth Development Model (adopted from the restorative justice framework)

01

Responsibility

Individuals take responsibility for their actions to learn from mistakes in a way that promotes positive outcomes

02

Rehabilitation

Offering practical services that help you deal effectively with the crisis e.g. back to school options after teen pregnancy

03

Reconciliation & Reintegration

Enabling reconciliation, or community reintegration to foster positive relationships

04

Reparation

In cases where youth are victims, justice has to be found for them and a systems transformation done to avoid future issues

Strategic approach 5: Strategic collaboration



Young people's lives are impacted, both directly and indirectly, by factors throughout the social environment - whether it is people, institutions, laws, or cultural norms. Youth issues are also numerous and they are not tackled by one entity in a community but different groups handling different aspects at individual, peer, family, schools, youth agencies, faith organizations, community government, and business levels.

One effective way of enhancing youth engagement is by mapping key stakeholders operating in a locality to understand who is doing what, where and how. This way, an organization like NCCK is able to map out what and who to engage top-down, bottom-up, and horizontally. Additionally, through this approach, NCCK gets a golden opportunity to strategically map out the services that are within their mandate that only they can provide while complementing the work of others and actively collaborating with them for optimum results. In this case, the strategic collaborations take the shape of a cross.

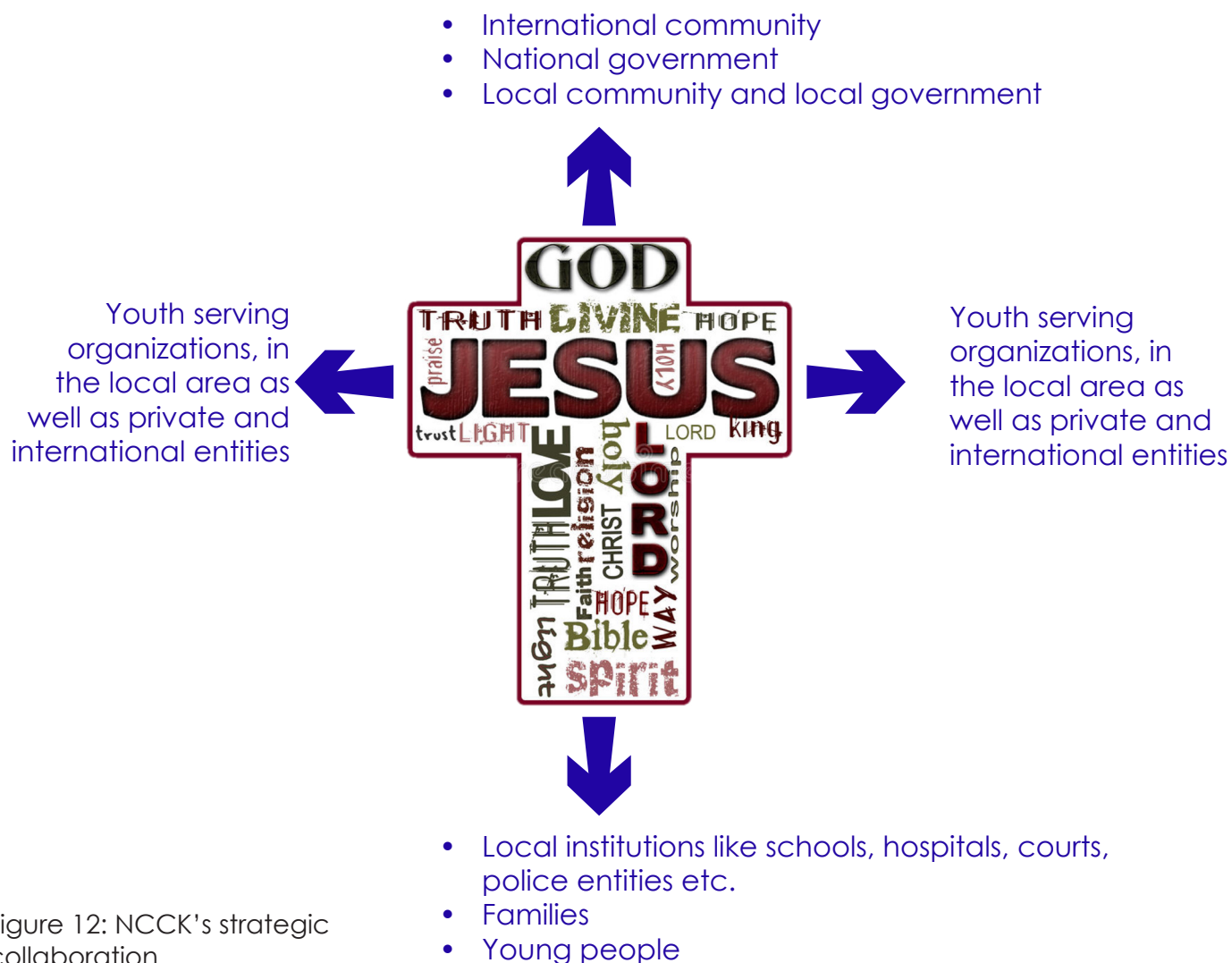


Figure 12: NCCK's strategic collaboration

Section 2:

Situating youth and youth-hood

“Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death”

- **Koffi Annan**

2.1 Defining youth

Definitions are used by society to “assign people to particular positions that imply certain rights and duties, moral and social expectations, and experiences that differ from other groups in the society” (Ungruhe & Esson, 2017). Youth for example connotes a transition phase from childhood into adulthood, which presupposes a change from being dependent on others to being independent and taking effective control of one’s own life while assuming other social responsibilities (The World Bank, 2007). This transition is therefore marked by certain cultural rites of passage or other defining events such as gaining employment or establishing a family. Because this shift does not occur at the same time for all youth, there is no universal consensus on a clear-cut indicator of what constitutes the beginning of youth or the end of youthhood, thus making the concept of youth problematic and ambivalent to define.

To make it easier, youth definitions in national contexts are mostly determined by chronological age to provide some degree of objectivity though these age categories also differ. Whilst the UN General Assembly for example defines youth as individuals aged between 15 and 24, the World Health Organization (WHO) includes 10 to 19 year old's due to the health challenges that adolescents face. International Labour Organization's (ILO) configuration of the working age population starts from 15 years old hence the inclusion of 15 to 17 year old's in its definition. The Common Wealth defines youth as the age bracket between 15 and 29 years while Kenya's Constitution defines youth as all individuals in the republic who have attained the age of 18 years but have not attained the age of 35. With these valid but varying definitions, it is vital to recognize that youth belong to wider social, cultural, political, and economic structures, and therefore definitions of youth have to be contextualized within the locality where the conversations or the work is taking place.

It is vital to recognize that youth are embedded in wider social, cultural, political, and economic structures, and therefore definitions of youth have to be contextualized within the locality where the conversations or the work is taking place.

2.2 Youth diversity

It is also vital that youth are engaged as a diverse group and not one homogenous group. Recognizing diversity enables us to be cognizant of young people's unique differences, the challenges they face, the expectations they have, and opportunities available to them. The Kenya Youth Development Policy (RoK, 2019) recognizes different categories of the youth. These categories include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Male and female; | j) Migrant and non-migrant; |
| b) Educated and uneducated; | k) Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled; |
| c) Formally trained and informally trained; | l) Street and vagrant youth; |
| d) Rural and urban residents; | m) Youth infected and affected by HIV/AIDs; |
| e) In-school and out-of-school; | n) Youth in humanitarian settings |
| f) Adolescents and young adults; | o) Youth from minority and youth from majority ethnic communities |
| g) Physically challenged and able-bodied; | p) Orphaned youth |
| h) Employed and unemployed youth (Economically engaged or not); | q) Intersex (which is recognized in the 2019 census) |
| i) Incarcerated and not-detained youth; | |

This list is by no means exhaustive but it is a starting point for mapping out the diverse groups of young people in the specific contexts this work will be carried out.

Reasons for recognizing diversity

Recognizing diversity requires a paradigm shift towards openness, and a willingness to address historical, current and systemic obstacles. Recognizing diversity also helps us to effectively build the right mindset and character for healthy social development in ourselves and young people so that we are able to successfully navigate this rapidly changing and complex globalizing world. More specifically, understanding diversity among youth helps them navigate the disconnect between the local and the global or manage the *glocalization* effect; it helps them to be less discriminating and more appreciative of difference so that they are not hostile to one another; and inclusion of these youth issues in mainstream systems and structures helps increase transformation opportunities and acceptance.

1. To help young people navigate the disconnect between the local and the global.

Young people even in the most marginalized localities are exposed to the global world through their mobile phones. They therefore have regular exposure to people, cultures, traditions, and practices that are unlike their own. The more marginalized a youth is, the more the disconnect, but the influence of this world on the young person's mindset, values, dreams, desires and aspiration is very great. A big gap between the young person's reality and the young person's aspirations occurs which often creates a crisis, hence a concept referred to as *glocalization*. Without the adequate skills to interact with these different cultures, practices, and belief systems in a balanced, and informed way, the more the youth crises gets unmanageable. We have a responsibility to help young people build the right mindset and character for healthy social development so that they are able to successfully navigate this rapidly changing and complex world.

2. To diminish discrimination

Recognizing diversity means accepting that people are different but difference does not have to be a problem, a barrier, or a threat. Often, our commonality as human beings with basic dignity, cultivates acceptance that facilitates a sense of belonging, shifts our hostile perspectives, and reduces the misconceptions and prejudices we have against those who are not like us.

3. Enhance inclusion

Recognizing diversity means a willingness to learn about others and make visible what was hidden from mainstream systems and structures. This inclusion means increased opportunities for youth with fewer chances or more disadvantages compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors and obstacles. It also means increased opportunities for transformation and acceptance. Jesus and the story of the woman at the well is a classic example of diminishing discrimination, inclusion and transformation.

2.3 Youth demographics trends and characteristics

Youth demographics are specific population characteristics of a society. These characteristics include population growth or decline or how the population is structured or distributed across different age groups at any given point in time. Understanding population characteristics is vital because people's socio-economic behavior and needs vary at different stages of life. A country or county therefore needs to understand these population dynamics in order to adequately respond in terms of policies, budgets and programs to these needs for purposes of effective planning and service delivery.

Understanding these population dynamics enables organizations to adequately respond to the specific needs of youth in terms of policies, budgets and programs for purposes of effective planning and service delivery.

Population growth

Kenya's population has been growing. As shown in figure 12 Kenya's population was 28.5 million in 1999, 38.5 in 2009 and 47.5 million in 2019, which means we grow by 1 million every year. The data also shows that, overall, there are slightly more men than women, although there are slight variations within different age groups.

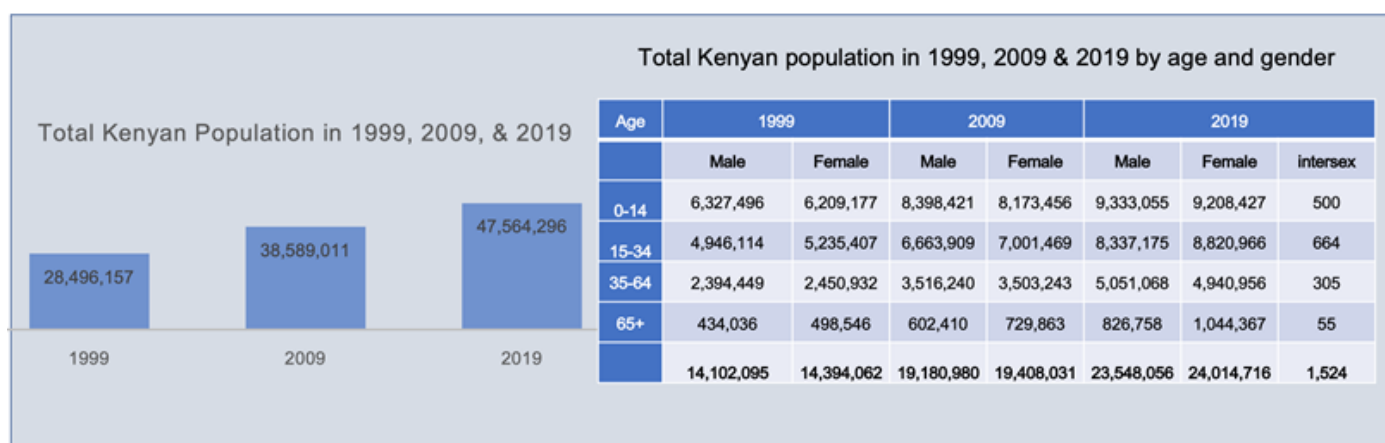


Figure 13: Total Population in 1999, 2009 and 2019

Source: Various census reports

Characteristics of the youth population

As shown in figure 13, 75% of Kenya's population is below 35 years old. However, the child population (0-14) has been declining (by 4 percentage points between 2009 and 2019) while the working age population which consists of 15-64 year old's has been increasing (by 3.5 percentage points between 2009 and 2019). Of the working age group, the majority are young people aged between 15 and 34 who form 36% of that group and are 17 million compared to the older folk aged between 35 and 64 who form 21% of the working age group and are 10 million.

*Youth aged 15-34 are 17 million and form 36% of the total population.
The youth have grown by 3.5 million between 2009 and 2019.*

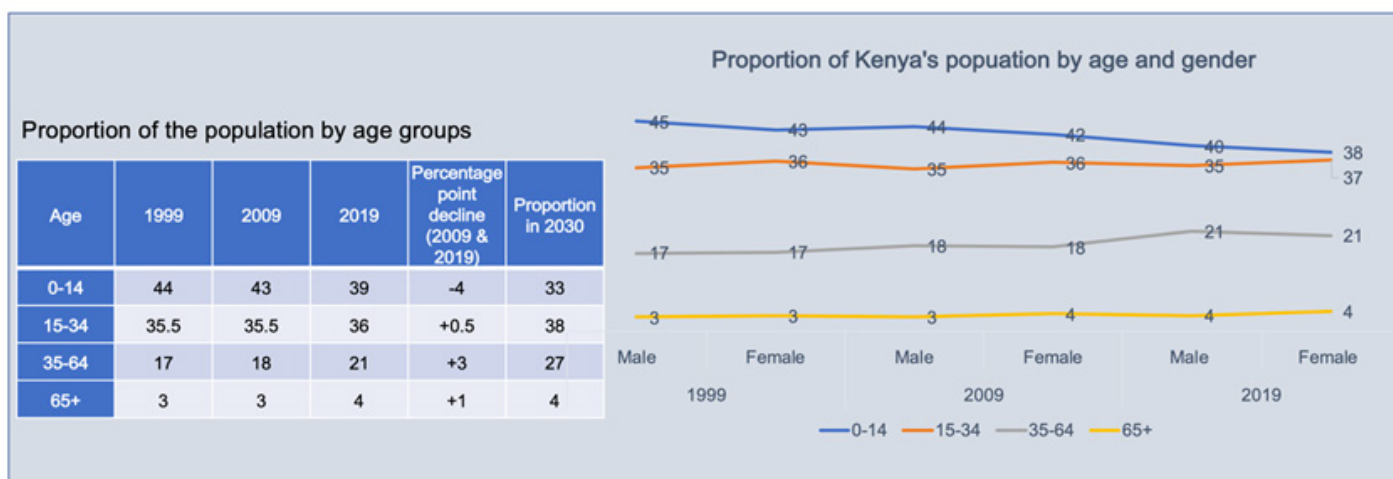


Figure 14: Proportion of the population by age groups

Source: Various census reports

The data also shows that youth have grown by 3.5 million between 2009 and 2019 which is 350,000 people joining the youth bracket annually and by extension the labor force. According to UN (2007) projections, by 2030, 15 to 34 year old's will form the majority of the population (i.e. 38% which is approximately 25 million youth compared to 17 million in 2019). This exponential growth of youth numbers is referred to as a youth bulge and it occurs when the youth population share is at least 20% of the total population or 30% of the adult population (Urdal, 2006). It is a phenomenon that presents a demographic opportunity if utilized well but it could also become a demographic challenge.

Section 3:

Frameworks for actual engagement – Some case studies

Youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities are less likely to engage in risky behavior. They tend to have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show greater commitment to friends, families and communities, and are more likely to achieve healthy development

- UN, 2004

3.1 Youth identities

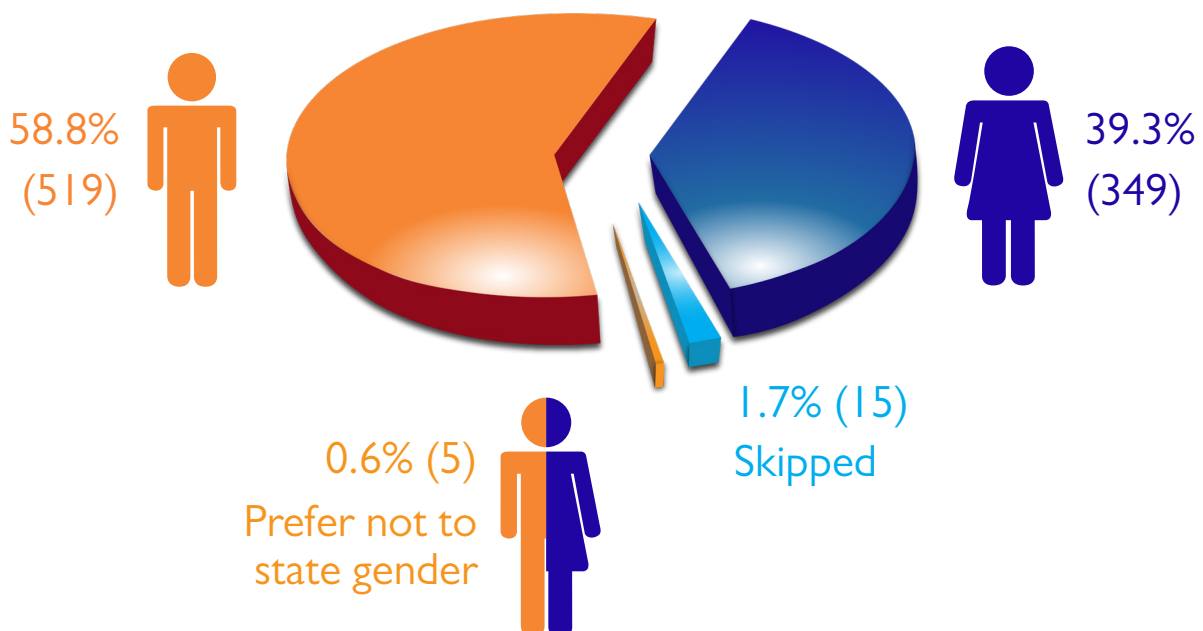
The question among young people of “who am I?” is very crucial during adolescence. The combination of physical, mental, and social changes that occur during that time, plus the serious life choices the young person has to make on career choices, life partner etc. amidst so much uncertainty in the environment often results in an identity crisis among young people. Identity formation is therefore a critical “developmental task” that has to be paid attention to.

Identity formation determines how young people define themselves, how they think or feel about themselves and the issues around them as well as how they position themselves when navigating a complex environment (Walsh, & Gordon, 2008). Identities are also central in how young people behave or respond towards certain situations, for example, by how they conform to or defy stereotypes in a given situation (Chen, & Li, 2009). An emerging trend confronting young people is the non-binary gender identities. These non-binary identities defy traditional distinctions of gender as male or female and identify with more than one gender or no specific gender so that the individual can have the freedom to have fluid identities at different points in time.

In the youth survey conducted by NCKK (2021), 0.6% of respondents preferred not to state their gender. Even if this might be statistically insignificant, it is a growing trend worth monitoring and one that warrants engagement with young people on the formation of gender and other identities according to Gods word.

Figure 15: Respondents of the NCKK youth survey by gender

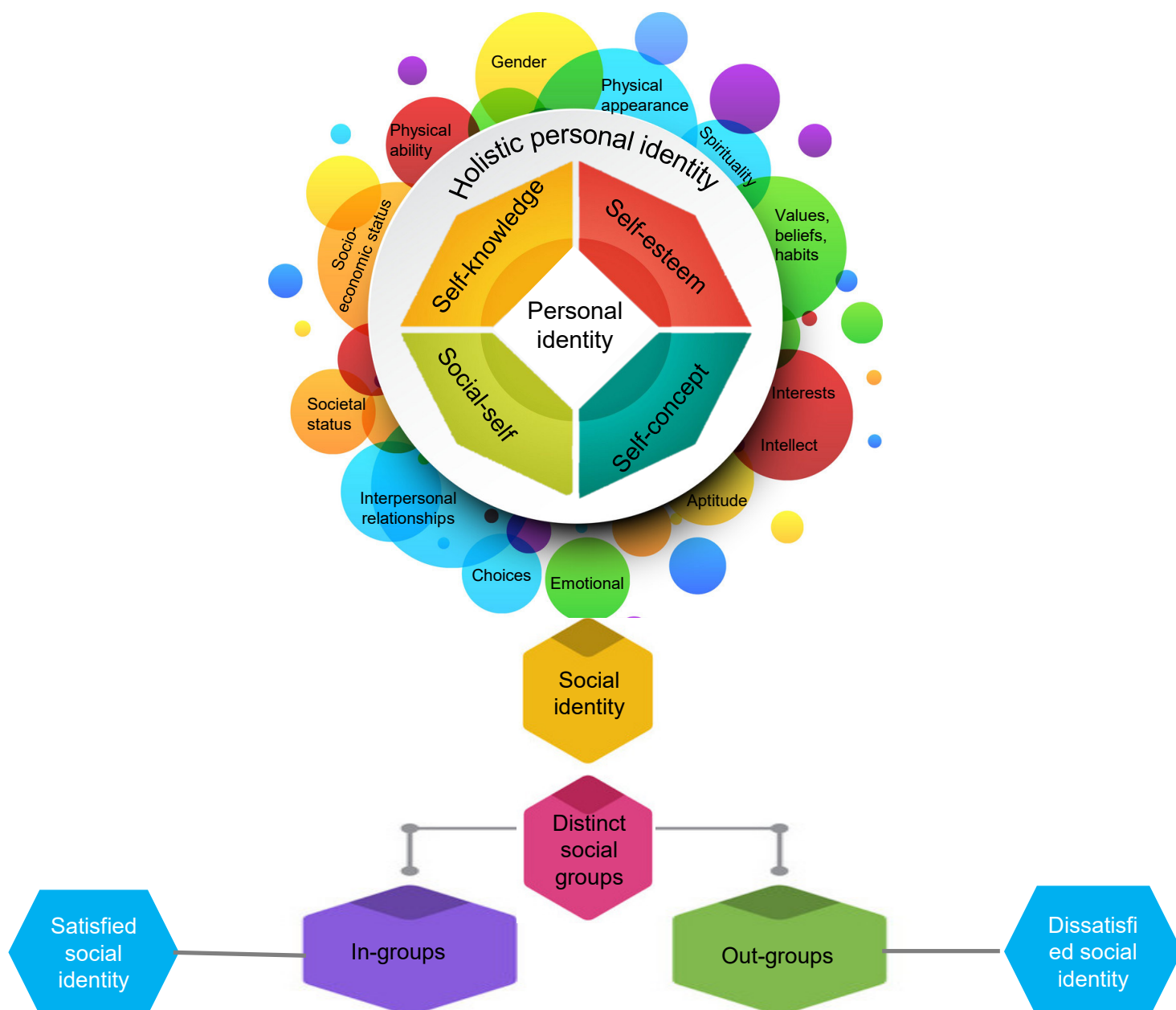
Source: NCKK, 2021



Identity formation usually occurs during adolescence when young people increasingly go through a process of deeply reflecting and defining things for themselves to form their values and ideals (self-esteem) in an array of things like gender roles and responsibilities, physical appearance, spirituality, interests, inter-personal relationships, careers, sexual opinions, politics, etc. (Buckingham, 2007). "This process enables them to be independent-minded and more self-aware (self-knowledge) as they arrive at an integrated, coherent sense of who they are (self-concept) and want to become" (Buckingham, 2007, p. 218). While the process is mostly an individual's mental journey, it occurs through interaction and various social influences like family, religion, media, friends, and hence the social nature of identity formation (social-self). When a young person's interaction are with social entities they relate with and affirm their beliefs, they have a satisfied social identity. The opposite is also true – young people are more dissatisfied when their interactions are with unrelatable social as depicted in figure 15.

Figure 16: Personal identity

Source: Buckingham, 2007



Additionally, identity is what distinguishes us from other people, yet identity also implies “we-ness,” collectiveness, or what we share with others such as our gender, national or cultural identities (social identities). Individuals, therefore, have multiple identities, but not all identities are valued the same because different identities stand out than others at various points.

An Africa-wide study carried out in 2018, for example, indicated that while good careers or jobs, high educational attainment, and religion were highly valued by Africa’s youth, the most critical personal identity was not their socio-economic status or religious affiliation but their youthhood (30%), their African-ness (21%), their nationality (16%), their gender (13%) and being global citizens (12%) (Sivi, 2017). What it means to be a young African male or female from a particular country existing in a global world is something that needs to be unpacked.

In many cases, though, identities change depending on the context such that if the same respondents were to be asked their most crucial identity during the Covid-19 period when quarantines are enforced worldwide, and job status is uncertain, perhaps health or work-related capabilities would feature as important identities more than being male or female or being youth.

Young people who cultivate a clear and positive identity after their developmental struggles during adolescence often advance more smoothly into adulthood than those who do not.

3.2 Mentorship

Young people who cultivate or are enabled to nurture a clear and positive identity after their developmental struggles during adolescence often advance more smoothly into adulthood than those who do not. Role models or mentors can help adolescents imagine different roles or identity options for their future selves.

The NCKK (2021) survey reveals that most youth look up to professionals in their community (23%), their parents (18%), teachers (15%), religious leaders (13%), government officials or politicians (11%), business people (6%), sports or arts personalities (6%), and siblings or relatives (3%). There are some (5%) without any role models.

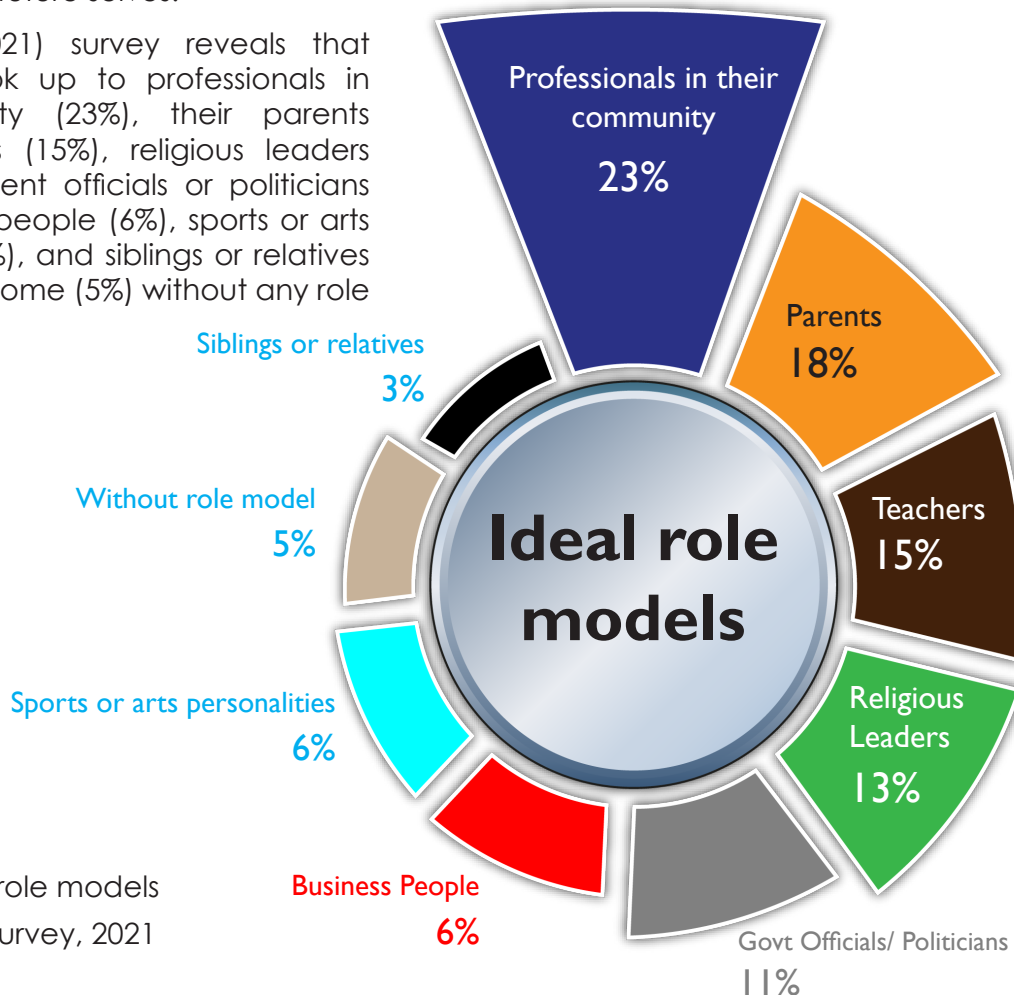


Figure 17: Ideal role models

Source: NCKK Survey, 2021

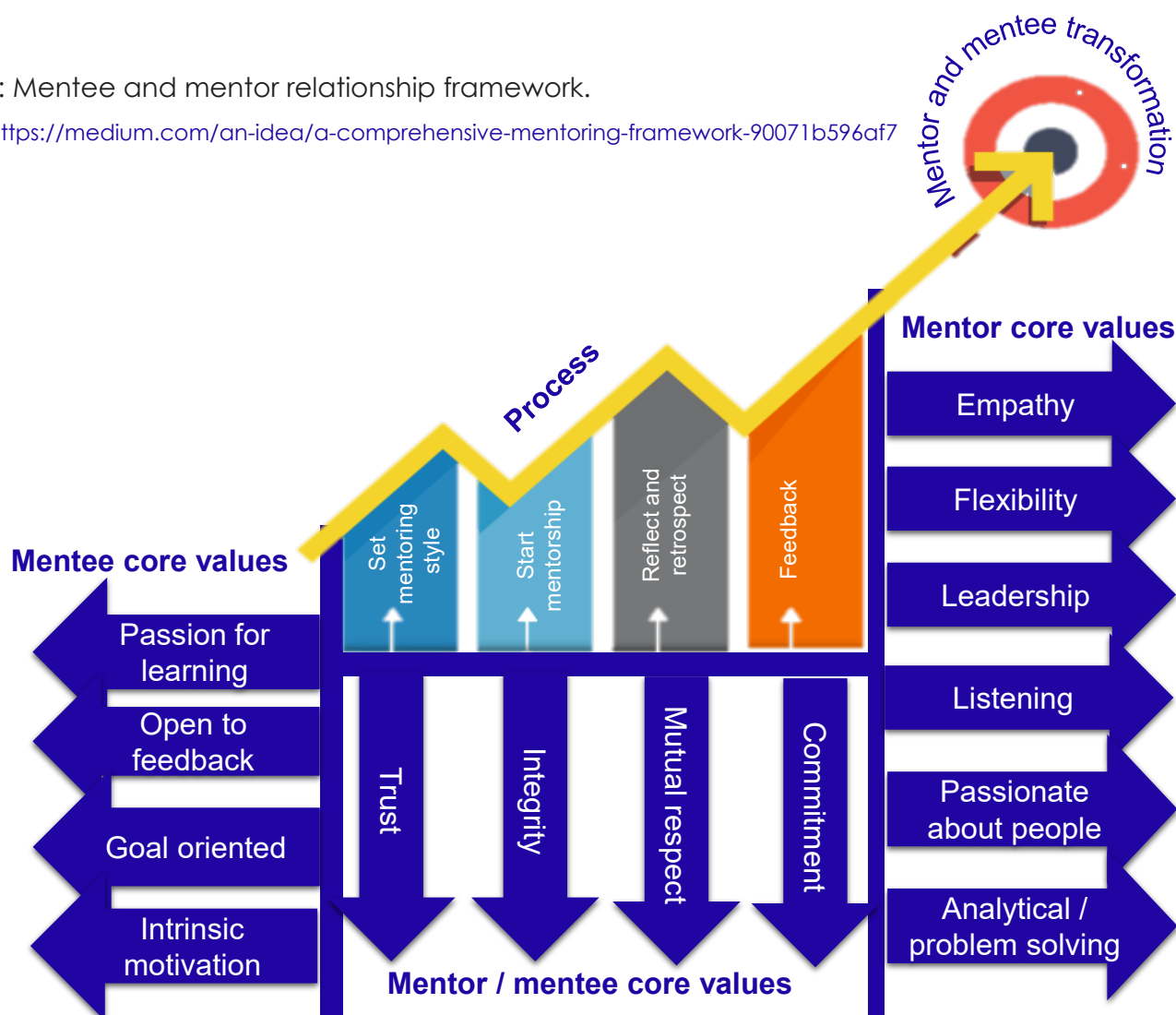
Mentorship is a relationship between two people with a deliberate plan to learn from each other. Admiring someone from a distance based on what they do or how they carry themselves around is not mentorship. Having the right person coaching or mentoring usually accelerates a young person's learning process and helps to make their transitions easier. In order for mentorship to work effectively, there are several things that have to be in place. First, there has to be clarity about the type of mentorship that is being sort. Is it a one-off meeting with specific advice? Is it coaching on a specific issue or a long-term mentorship relationship over the course of many months in life? It is vital that both the mentor and the mentee align their expectations right from the start. Second, both the mentor and the mentee need to get to know each other if they are not familiar with each other. This is best done through spending time talking about each other's backgrounds and interests, in informal settings. Third, both the mentor and the mentee have to be committed to certain actions as espoused in figure 18 and the next page.

Values compatibility of a mentor and a mentee, the process and the outcome

The mentee has to be passionate about learning, open to feedback, goal oriented and intrinsically motivated. The mentor on the other hand has to be empathetic, flexible, a good listener, passionate about young people but also a good problem solver. Both the mentee and the mentor need to have a relationship of mutual respect, trust, integrity, and commitment. In the end both the mentee and the mentor learn from each other and in the process should be transformed.

Figure 18: Mentee and mentor relationship framework.

Source: <https://medium.com/an-idea/a-comprehensive-mentoring-framework-90071b596af7>



Mentor

1. Is consistent and available, able to commit to relatively frequent meetings
2. Empathizes with where you are as a young person and does not look down on you with judgement
3. Doesn't give answers to the challenges you're facing but rather listens, asks the right questions, and suggests the right framing of things or challenges your outlook of the issue to help you expand your perspective while coming up with solutions yourself.
4. Acknowledges that they do not have all the answers and is able to refer the young person to other resources or people to get more support
5. Is willing to be vulnerable, for example share struggles or failures as a way of sharing their learning journey
6. Can be trusted and provides a safe space for the young person not to be taken advantage of and with the assurance of confidentiality

Mentee

1. Is enthusiastic about the mentorship and therefore drives the process through ensuring regular meetings and conversations take place with a pre-set agenda
2. Understand their mentor in a way that makes the relationship work e.g. when it is easier to set up meetings (weekends, after work, early morning), and how they communicate best (Emails vs. WhatsApp, or calls vs. in person meetings).
3. Doesn't expect their mentor to give them all the answers, but rather teach them how to think in novel ways so they can solve their challenges themselves
4. Keeps their mentor informed of their work progress and achievements so they have as much context as possible; Also educates the mentor because they too have something to offer
5. Isn't afraid to be vulnerable and truthful with their mentor meaning that trust has to be a top value between the two
6. Provides their mentor with feedback on how they could be better supported as a mentee

Source: hadardor.com/mentorship

CONCLUSION

This youth engagement framework gives general but practical ways in which youth engagement will be effected in different contexts. This engagement framework will be the basis for producing customized engagement frameworks at the local level with context specific data, it will guide programming and also the production of implementation plans. It will also be used to train regional youth leaders as Training of Trainers (TOT) who will be expected to cascade the training of local youth pastors so that there is able capacity to lead the youth engagement transformation processes throughout the chain. While the authors have not exhausted the frameworks that could be developed, it is envisaged that more customized frameworks will be co-developed with youth leaders on specific issues identified in the survey like: employment; sexual reproductive health; gender based violence; political participation; and navigation of faith crisis especially when it comes to exegesis of God's word to tackle contemporary issues and deliberately helping youth navigate the uncertainties they experience. The survey shows that Kenya's youth are religious and they value their faith.

This presents a window of opportunity for NCK members to entrench effective youth engagement before that window closes with rising trend of secularism among youth.

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