
Collapsing Livelihoods and the Crisis of Masculinity in Rural Kenya

Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo
&
Paul Francis

Background

- Kenya's economy stagnated from the early 1980s, largely due to:
 - adverse world prices for its cash crops
 - corruption
 - mismanagement
 - failure of the government to identify and support indigenous institutions and capacity
 - Income poverty reached 57 percent in 2004
 - The country's Human Development Index declined from 0.533 in 1990 to 0.520 in 2004
 - It noteworthy that Kenya is the world's fourth most unequal society, with the top 10 percent controlling 48 percent of national income
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Background (2)

- 65 percent of Kenyans live in rural areas where agriculture remains the most important source of livelihood (supporting about 80% of the people)
 - In the last five years, the country has experienced a marked increase in rural crime
 - Changes in gender roles and relations in Kenya have occurred mainly due to:
 - intensifying poverty and inequality
 - increasing levels of unemployment
 - the erosion of livelihood systems
 - women's increasing participation in household provisioning
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Analytical framework for the study

- A three-pronged framework was adopted for the study - drivers, impact and responses
 - **Drivers** - the most important of the changing conditions that rural households have faced in the last two decades, which have often undermined their livelihood systems
 - **Impact** - traced to the household level in terms of increasing challenges and stresses that have had an influence on gender and intergenerational relations
 - **Response** - the way in which households and communities have actively responded to the drivers and the impacts of change
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Methods

- The study was conducted in 2005 in 6 districts of Kenya representing 6 of the 8 provinces
 - Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for data collection
 - Focus group discussions were held with 51 groups of men, women, male youth, female youth and solidarity groups
 - Other qualitative tools included social mapping, in-depth interviews, gender analysis, pairwise matrix ranking, seasonal calendars and historical timelines
 - Household interviewer-based questionnaires were administered to 710 people
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Social Mapping



Focus Group Discussion



Changes in sources of livelihood

- The six districts involved in this study had experienced changes in the nature and form of the main sources of livelihoods:
 - Decline in livestock economy due to conflict and drought
 - Reduced opportunity for migrant labor (increased levels of unemployment)
 - Collapse of agricultural industries (due to changes in world prices, official complacency, mismanagement and corruption)
 - Poor performance of the cooperative movement
 - The high prevalence of HIV (6.7 percent) which has affected all sectors of development including agriculture, health and education
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Development focus on women

- Women's status has been elevated through efforts of development agencies and the government:
 - gender empowerment/emancipation of women
 - girl-child protection
 - affirmative action (40% of all leaders should be women)
 - Ability for women to form groups and availability of support for such groups provides income and vital information to them
 - Women with access to their own income have become more assertive because they are more aware of their pivotal role in their households' well being
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Changes in marriage contracts

- Male power has traditionally been reinforced through rites of passage, bride wealth payments and patrilocal residence
 - Inter-marriages are becoming common, which is challenging culturally-based power and norms
 - Young men's inability to pay bride wealth (due to poverty and commercialization of payments) - this is a gain for elderly men in polygamous communities
 - '*Come-we-stay*' (informal) unions are becoming common and are posing challenges to patriarchy
 - Marriages that are not sanctioned through bride wealth have been found to deny men traditional rights over women
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Male disempowerment = women's vulnerability

- The diversification in agriculture and income-generating activities seems to have favored women (cash crop – subsistence farming, livestock - crop farming)
 - Men still control most household spending decisions even though women contribute significantly or are solely responsible for household welfare
 - Husbands claim credit for the achievements in their households – based on patriarchy (leading to feelings of anger and frustration among women)
 - Men's economic dependence on their spouses exacerbates violence against women in their homes
 - Some women engage in desperate and risky activities to generate income to avoid violence from their spouses (including commercial sex work)
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Domestic violence

- Domestic violence is a major problem in all the districts
 - Culture permits men to ‘discipline’ their wives and women seem to have accepted this as a way of life
 - Women in the wealthier category, well educated and in gainful employment experience more physical violence while the others experience more emotional violence
 - The findings illustrate the potential tension between the contribution of a working woman to her household’s income and the challenge this may pose to the man
 - The sense of irrelevance that men feel, coupled with poverty, undermines their self-esteem leading to disruptive behavior intended to “put the woman in her rightful place”
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Table 3: Marital Violence¹

Characteristics	Nakuru		Bungoma		Kisii		Kiambu		Kwale	
	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P
<i>Educational attainment</i>										
No education	28.7	10.2	29.9	10.0	42.0	69.2	0.0	0.0	33.2	25.9
Primary	25.9	25.3	52.4	74.7	38.5	52.9	19.3	44	14.4	21.5
Incomplete	23.7	22.6	52.9	79.6	48.4	64	31.5	48.2	16.5	24.3
Complete	28.2	28.3	51.4	64.2	23.5	35.9	9.8	40.7	6.6	11.4
Secondary +	33.7	46.0	42.4	51.4	47.2	66.9	16.7	28.5	0.0	0.0
Incomplete	29.4	36.0	59.2	68.6	53.9	79.7	21.1	41	0.0	0.0
Completed +	36.3	52.2	18.7	27.3	29.4	33	14.9	23.1	0.0	0.0
Complete	25.9	42.2	19.3	25.9	41.6	56.9	13.6	29.2	0.0	0.0
Higher	56.7	71.9	16.9	31.4	18.8	12.1	17.0	13.1	0.0	0.0
<i>Employment status</i>										
Employed for cash	27.7	39.9	52.4	56.9	38.3	56.3	19.5	37.7	32.8	29.1
Employed, not for cash	26.9	25.6	48.9	80.6	34.4	56.9	16.0	37.2	4.6	15.2
Not employed	30.8	23.2	41.4	73.9	50.3	55.8	14.9	26.4	14.1	17.4
<i>Wealth index</i>										
Poorest	0.0	0.0	51.3	80.1	60.8	77.1	0.0	0.0	26.1	32.5
Middle	7.2	17.9	43.0	71.9	43.1	61.8	35.5	46.7	23.2	30.3
Richer	41.9	28.0	57.6	66.1	14.7	28.8	18.6	38.0	18.3	15.6
Richest	29.6	46.8	43.4	33.4	30.6	54.7	13.8	30.5	0.0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	28.8	31.3	48.9	70.0	40.2	56.3	17.7	34.7	21.4	22.4

.Source: Central Bureau of Statistics *et al.* (2004).

Alcohol consumption

- Increased alcohol consumption is related to the collapse of the agricultural industry
 - “The men are idle most of the time and end up spending their time and the meager household resources on alcohol”
 - Male youth and adult men are the main consumers of alcohol whereas women are the main traders, which could be due to:
 - men have become increasingly idle and therefore pass the time drinking
 - women have turned to alcohol brewing in order to make a living, thus inadvertently increasing the amount of alcohol in the communities and reducing its cost
 - due to poverty, men can only afford local brews, which has enhanced the popularity of these drinks
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Depression

-The main causes of depression were poverty/
lack of finance and domestic violence

Reports of Depression by District (percent in community)

<i>District</i>	<i>Presence of Depressed People in Community</i>	<i>Ever Been Depressed</i>	<i>Household Member Ever Been Depressed</i>	<i>Know Someone Who is Depressed</i>
Isiolo	65.3	41.3	33.1	52.9
Nakuru	61.9	28.0	28.0	48.3
Bungoma	56.1	34.1	31.7	46.3
Kisii	68.1	33.6	28.6	54.6
Kiambu	90.0	58.3	61.7	74.2
Kwale	56.9	27.5	26.6	35.8
<i>Total</i>	66.3	37.1	35.0	52.0

Source: Authors

Youth as victims of male disempowerment

- Tension between parents and their children is high in the country (based on a media review conducted as part of the study covering 1999-2004)
 - Among the pastoralists, the education system alienates the male youth from the traditional way of life (herding) but does not provide them with viable alternatives
 - Households with fathers who abuse alcohol experience more tension and conflict
 - Tensions between children and their parents are more likely in polygamous households
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- Land is the leading cause of intergenerational tension, followed by alcohol consumption and lack of school fees

Causes of Intergenerational Violence (percentage of reports)

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Kiambu</i>	<i>Kwale</i>	<i>Isiolo</i>	<i>Kisii</i>	<i>Nakuru</i>	<i>Bungoma</i>
Lack of food	7.5	17.4	32.2	30.3	25.4	11.4
Inadequate access to livestock	0.8	3.7	12.4	7.6	15.3	6.5
Lack of access to land	65.0	9.2	4.1	48.7	33.1	32.5
Alcohol consumption	52.5	22.0	34.7	52.1	25.4	27.6
Lack of school fees	23.3	16.5	26.4	55.5	11.9	13.0
Money/finances	20.8	17.4	26.4	42.9	13.6	8.1
Arranged marriages	1.7	2.8	27.3	10.1	3.4	0.8
Parents' fighting	10.8	4.6	9.9	14.3	7.6	2.2

Source: Authors.

Implications of collapsing livelihoods

- The socio-economic changes have largely impacted aspects of male domain - cash crop farming, livestock and formal and informal employment
 - The disenfranchisement of men stems from their socialization, expectations of themselves and of the community regarding what a man should be
 - Impacts of social change clearly go beyond physical consequences to psychological and to the overall quality of life of the affected individuals
 - As men have opted out of their traditional responsibilities because of their inability to fulfill their roles, women have been forced to take on new roles under harsh conditions
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Implications of collapsing livelihoods (2)

- Men feel isolated in their homes, which could be due to a variety of factors:
 - children have been socialized to expect certain roles of their fathers and when these are not fulfilled they feel less responsive to their presence
 - due to their own frustrations, men pull away from their households and spend more time with their friends weakening their ability to relate to their children
 - children see and appreciate their mothers' struggle to fend for them
 - women may take every opportunity to tell their children and remind their husbands that they are responsible for the households
 - women may be exercising their dominance over their children (the weaker ones in the homes)
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Implications of collapsing livelihoods (3)

- Women's economic independence threatens male ego, worthiness and honor leading to tension and conflict
 - Well educated women and those engaged in income-generating activities were more susceptible to physical abuse
 - Men's feelings of frustration at their marginalization may lead them to aggressively dominate their children who are the most accessible and vulnerable targets
 - Fear and anger are common reactions to household poverty, especially among women
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Conclusions

- Men find themselves caught between cultural expectations that they can hardly meet and the powerlessness they feel due to their inability to meet their families' economic needs
 - Marginalized men look for different ways of asserting their authority – mainly through violence
 - Disempowered men increase the vulnerability of women to violence and other risky activities (including extra marital sex)
 - Disempowerment is related to increased alcohol consumption and depression for both sexes
 - The relationship between the generations has suffered due to the pervasive poverty in rural areas
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Conclusions (2)

- The focus of the government and development agencies on women and girls has largely sidelined men who are increasingly finding themselves dependent on the women who seem better able to develop alternative income-generation activities
 - Many poor men (and women) in rural Kenya are finding it difficult to survive, a situation worsened by the inadequate access to quality public services
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Key messages

- Development focus should target the poor in rural areas
 - Rural economies should be revitalized to generate opportunities for formal and informal income-generation
 - Economic empowerment should focus on both men and women in an effort to facilitate common grounds for development
 - A more household-oriented approach is necessary but would require reassessing the current approaches with a view to making them contextually relevant, and ensuring that new kinds of vulnerabilities are not created for women and children/youth
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Key messages (2)

- The rule of law should be enforced to improve security - there is need to better understand the causes of violence in rural areas
 - Mechanisms to address gender violence should be put in place taking into consideration the social, cultural and economic contexts
 - An analysis of the kinds of programs that can be effective in supporting the redefinition of male identities and their roles in Kenyan households is necessary
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Thank you!
Ahsante sana!!
