REPORT

A FAIR CHANCE TO LIFE:

YOUNG CARELEAVERS IN KENYA

20.12.2011

KENYA NETWORK OF CARELEAVERS

CONTACT US:

Kenya Network of Careleavers (KNCL)
info@kenyanetworkofcareleavers.org
www.kenyanetworkofcareleavers.org

Elisabeth Roeber
MA in Children, Youth & International Development
elisabeth_roeber@yahoo.co.uk

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2   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1   Summary: Research Topic And Brief Overview Of Outcomes

Careleavers in Kenya are in need of attention. The process of leaving care is understood to be a difficult and complex process across the Global South where young people's voices are often not heard. Research examining the well-being and situation of young people leaving institutional care in Africa remains a little noticed field of study. There is hardly any research documenting young people's transitions from care to adulthood in the sub-Saharan context, especially in Kenya, there are no policies or regulations on after care life for young people who have exited institutional care. That is why young care leavers continue to suffer silently.

The study wishes to improve the understanding of the experiences of careleavers in Kenya during the transition process, by allowing them to have their own voices heard. In so doing, the research concentrates on building a holistic insight into the young people's social, economic and cultural circumstances. The study is concerned with documenting the young people's own views of what has happened during the time of leaving care and afterwards. Moreover, it explores in-depth the experiences of care leavers during the dynamic phase following their separation from an institutional care setting. It argues that many care leavers end up finding themselves in a difficult transition process blurring the boundaries between youth and adulthood.

This report is a result of questionnaires that were filled in by young careleavers from different care institutions in Kenya, a photo project, semi-structured interviews and a participatory workshop held with members of the *Kenya Network of Careleavers* (KNCL). All in all 177 young people participated in the research project. The focus of the interviews was on the struggles and challenges in the care leavers' daily lives, with an emphasis on housing and coping, health, education and employment, as well as their progress in advancing life skills and in being active members of the Network.

The study suggests that the majority of the young people who participated are somehow stuck in transition and are vulnerable to exclusion from a society they neither feel well equipped nor prepared for having left a care institution. Many of them lack social and psychological coping strategies; they do not have adequate jobs or job skills; and there is no safety net or supportive network in the communities that could assist the young people when leaving a care institution. Generally, it is understood that a person who turns 18 does not need any assisting services. However, KNCL believes that at this crucial stage young people need support, as many of them are searching their idendity and at the same time trying to be independent.

In addition, many of the participants were markedly creative in finding options to further their education or creating activities for their living. Informal networks proved to be helpful in this context providing crucial support for daily life. The use of photography, chosen to encourage youth-led activities and reduce the researcher's influence, led to important insights documenting young care leavers' perceptions directly. Overall, it is hoped that this study provides a number of useful insights into youth transition from institutional care and that it makes a contribution for further scholarly investigation of the subject.

2.2 Careleaver And Leaving A Care Institution

In general, the term "careleaver" refers to young people "who leave care because they have reached the age when they are no longer entitled to special protection and assistance within the care system" (Council of Europe, 2009: 38). When it comes to young careleavers, Stein and Carey (1986: 21) stress they are "expected to assume instant maturity". In Kenya, "careleaver" describes young people who were in institutional care and for various reasons have exited from care. When young people reach the age of majority (18) the institutions can no longer support them financially, socially, etc. Some are also re-unitedwith their family. A young person might also have ran away from an institution for different reasons.

In the process of leaving a care institution young persons should receive support in order to "make a smooth transition from care to independent living" (ibid. 37). Having a care plan, which Kenya does provide youth who graduate from an institution, is seen as a crucial part of a holistic after care support. When outcomes such as good health, employment or relationships do not materialise, careleavers might be viewed as having "somehow failed the independence test" (West, 1995: 40).

2.3 Research Site And Issues Facing Young People: Nairobi, Kenya

Kenya is situated in East Africa and has a population of 38.6 million people (DFID, 2011). The medium age of the Kenyan people is estimated to be 19.8 years. About 3.4 million people live in the capital Nairobi, where KNCL is based (CIA, 2011). Supposedly, 1.5 million of the Kenyan population live with HIV and 1.2 million children are orphaned by AIDS (UNICEF, 2010). According to UNAIDS (2010), 42,000 young people aged between 14 and 24 are infected with HIV. Young people in Kenya face a difficult and challenging life. Many of them who are "productive and energetic remain unemployed, continue to suffer from poor health, and lack of sufficient support" (MSYA, 2006: 1).

Though young Kenyans form the largest part of the population and are recognised as a major source for labour and future economic development, they still belong to the most marginalised (ibid.). DeBoeck and Honwana (2005: 3) argue that the category of young people is vastly heterogeneous and "difficult to grasp and pin down analytically". O'Brien (1996) describes this group as a *lost generation*, as young people who have finished school but do not find any jobs and are therefore "unable to set up independent households or acquire the resources needed for obtaining social positions as adults" (Langevang, 2009: 44).

Though young people find it problematic to maintain a livelihood and manage their adulthood given increasing uncertainty as well as social and economic change, they nevertheless understand themselves as active and competent agents who shape and cope with their environment (ibid.). As Skelton (2002: 105) puts it, "they are living their present and making the most of the time they have".

2.4   Case Study: Kenya Network Of Careleavers

KNCL is the only community-based organisation in Kenya that brings together young individuals who grew up or spent part of their life in an institutional care setting. The formally registered youth-led network was set up by a small group of careleavers in 2009 and has about 75 members at the moment, with a continuously growing number. The oldest member is 32 and the youngest is 18 (Ucembe, 2010).

The objective of the group is to advance the well-being of careleavers by striving for transformation in legislation, policies and practical change, as well as advocating the rights of children and young people in care. The network wishes to empower young people with care experience to live meaningful lives and participate actively in their communities (KNCL, 2011). They provide the young people with a platform where they can speak about their hopes, dreams and experiences; most importantly KNCL is recognised as a place where their voices get heard (Ucembe, 2010).

KNCL offers life skills training to help the careleavers to overcome their daily problems and support young people who experienced the same situation. Some of the members of KNCL who have been empowered are also organising trainings in different care institutions once a month where they facilitate sessions with children in care about how to tackle problems that occur when they leave the care setting. Another initiative are drama classes, the objective of which is to improve lifeskills among careleavers. KNCL is involved in advocacy and awareness work where careleavers are invited to the regular meetings to share their experiences and recommendations to the members of the group. KNCL has also been involved in developing standards and guidelines that concern children in institutional care. Moreover, the network has set up a cyber café which supports the group financially to carry on with its activities (ChildOut.org, 2011). Youth-led development initiatives are understood to be valuable for young careleavers, as "youth empowerment and participation is a dynamic circle" (MSYA, 2007: 16). However, existing social structures make an empowering environment for young people's participation difficult in Kenya (ibid.).

See the KNCL website for more detailed information: http://www.kenyanetworkofcareleavers.org/

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants – Sample Description

3.1.1 Questionnaires

A total number of 122 young people who graduated from care filled in questionnaires that were specifically designed for this report. Out of the participants, 84 were male and 33 female, five made no comment on their sex. The oldest participant was 32 years old, the youngest 16. Most participants were between 19 and 24 years of age. The majority (89 people) lives in Nairobi; 30 stay outside the capital (only one person did not give any information). 111 of the participants said they do not have any disabilities. Nine young people stated that they are disabled but only one receives some kind of support. One person did not give an answer to this question. Again the majority (108 people) was not married; 12 stated that they got married. 106 young people did not have any children; 12 made known that they do have children; two participants did not comment at all.

Female	33	Male	84
Youngest participant	16 years old	Oldest participant	32 years old
Nairobi	89	Outside Nairobi	30
Disabled	9	No disability	111
Married	12	Not married	108
Children	12	No children	106

Table 1: Participants of the questionnaires

3.1.2 Photography And Semi-Structured Interviews

Twelve young people were given a single use camera during the data collection field trip in summer 2011. The developed pictures were used as a basis for the semi-structured interviews. The majority of the participants of the photo project were involved in different kinds of unskilled or casual jobs, mostly on a day-to-day basis (in total five careleavers). Two were employed. Two were attending colleges and another two were enrolled in universities, doing a Bachelor's and a Master's programme. Two of the participants were attending form three and four in secondary schools. One of the participants was a disabled person. All participants were staying in or around Nairobi in houses made of iron sheets in slums or areas with similar living conditions; only one was living in a house made of stone. The majority was struggling to pay the monthly rent and getting money for their daily food.

Secondary school	College	University	Employed	Unskilled jobs
2	2	2	2	5

Table 2: Current living situation of participants of the photo project

3.1.3 Participatory Workshop

Altogether 45 young people participated in the participatory workshop that was divided into three groups. Information on the composition of the group was received from the chairman of KNCL. The participants were between 18 and 25 years old; two thirds of them were male, one third female. Generally, it can be noted that the majority of the young careleavers face many obstacles and problems in their daily lives.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are "essentially descriptive tools, generating information on what people do […] and in their views, thought or beliefs about certain issues" (McQueen and Knussen, 2002: 13). This research method was chosen because it is a quick and straightforward method where large numbers of forms can be administrated simultaneously (ibid.).

However, questions about complex topics are not easy to compose and the participants' responses can be difficult to categorise. Moreover, short answers often fail to show diverse depth or complexity of feelings. Lastly, the researcher is the one who sets the purpose of the research, not the respondents. Though the gathered information is often limited, it can be still very useful, as this method makes it possible to reach a wider sample than by (for example) personal in-depth interviews (Woods, 2006).

3.2.2 Photography, Semi-Structured Interviews And Personal Stories

Photographs increase "accessibility and transcending barriers of language and literacy" and thus photography was chosen as one of the main research methods together with interviews (Cahill, 2009: 99). Photography reduces the influence that the researcher usually has over the data collection. At the same time, the young people were given more freedom in gathering the data (Barker and Weller, 2003).

Participatory photography is understood to be an appropriate way to explore and record a diverse range of young people's lives and simultaneously enables them to share personal stories and feelings (Barry *et al.*, 2005). In other words, young people are not just subjects but social actors who participate actively in the research process (Croghan *et al.*, 2008). They undertake the control and implementation of the research methods (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). This allows them "to construct accounts of their lives in their own terms" (ibid: 8). The photographs of the young careleavers also represent a way to make their voices heard and provide other people with an access to their world that would otherwise remain hidden (Cook and Hess, 2007).

Semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with 12 participants were conducted based on the photos taken by the young people. Another interview with the chairman of KNCL was also part of the data collection in Kenya to receive more background knowledge and vital insights into the topic of young careleavers.

Kihato (2006: 42) describes semi-structured interviews as "a half formatted and flexible approach that allows for dynamic communication [...]. It provides room and time for new themes that might arise during the interviews." This is also seen to be a major advantage of semi-structured interviews; they allow "research participants to explore themes on their own terms [and] [...] introduce themes and make connections which simply had not occurred to the researcher" (Heath *et al.,* 2009: 81).
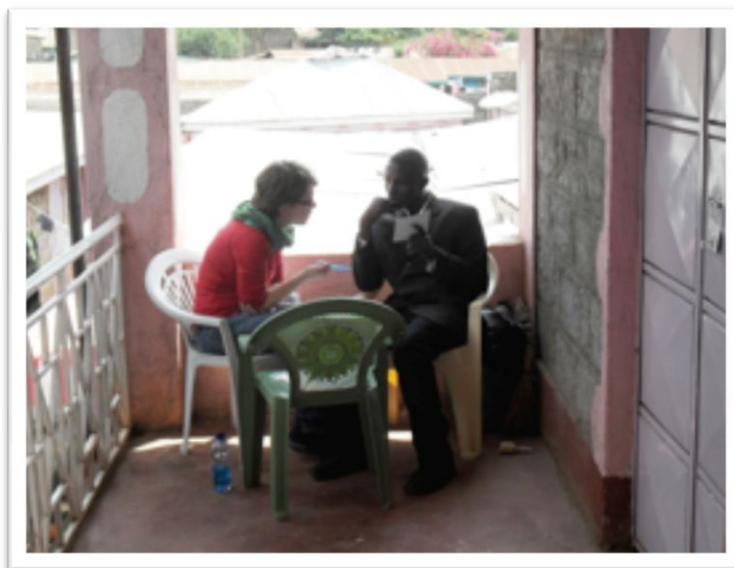
Photo 1: Semi-structured interview with one of the participants

Additionally, eight young people were asked to share their life stories in written form. The short statements are focused on life in and after care. In doing so, the young careleavers were able to write briefly about their challenges in daily life and give some recommendations.

3.2.3 Participatory Workshop

The intention behind the peer-led participatory workshops was to give the young people the opportunity to share their views and get to know the other participants' opinions. It was fascinating to observe how the young people interacted with each other.

According to Langevang (2009), a group discussion has the great benefit to empower young people and make them feel to be in control, especially since I was not leading the groups but in the back observing. They also found it important to be in dialogue with their peers. One participant said after the workshops were finished that he really enjoyed talking to the others, as this was a new way of exchanging their ideas, problems and challenges in a smaller group.

Photo 2: Participatory workshop with members of KNCL

3.3 Ethical Issues And Constraints

3.3.1 Research Standards And Gaining Consent

Every research study has its ethical challenges where specific issues need to be considered. This is particularly the case when "the researcher is an outsider and the participants an excluded population" (Young and Barret, 2001: 150). The most important task of a researcher is to minimise and control problems that are related to ethical issues.

According to Alderson and Morrow (2011: 3), "[r]esearch ethics is concerned with respecting research participants throughout each project, partly by using agreed standards [...] [and] to protect researchers and their institutions as well as the good name of the research." Gaining consent is understood to be crucial, especially when dealing with young people. As Boyden and Ennew (1997) state, it is vital that they understand the research, which needs to be sufficiently explained in a youth-friendly way. Therefore, a consent form was designed that was understandable for the young careleavers and they were able to make an informed decision whether to join in the research project. It was also important to respect the participants' rights to privacy. The young people were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time (Monteith, 2004).

3.3.2 The Role Of A White Young Researcher

Being a young person was a helpful blessing which made me feel accepted by the young people right from the beginning. However, I had to think about many difficulties since I am not a black careleaver myself or part of this under-represented group (Agyeman 2008).
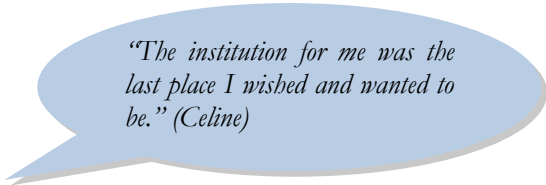
According to Kaufman (1994: 1), it is tough for any researcher who is seen to be an outsider to gain, build and maintain trust. Agyeman (2008: 78) argues that to "[a]ccessing the *Life Worlds* of [...] marginalised groups presents a significant challenge for researchers who are not part of these life worlds and who want to be credible in their representation of the *Other*". An important way for me to solve the problem was to deepen my "understanding of an appreciation for the cultural make-up of [...] the black community in which they reside" (Lahston, 1973: 1). I put myself in the situation of a listener and learner. The young people were the ones who explained and introduced me to their challenging lives.

3.3.3 Limitations

This report should be seen as a starting point for further research and discussion, not an ultimate answer. The scope of the research project was too limited for drawing more generalisable conclusions. The aim of this study was to provide the public (Kenya Government, United Nations agencies, NGOs, other donors etc.) with more detailed information about the daily lives of the young care leavers. This was possible through the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. After all, it was one of the first research studies that has been carried out on young careleavers in Kenya. The interest for the young people leaving care should continue, as there is a need to keep putting them in the focus and make their problems and challenges known to the public.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the following section the young people's life in *institional care* and *after care* will be described and discussed. However, the main focus will be on life after leaving a care institution. For this analysis, the young people's voices are of greatest importance. The data, which is of qualitative and quantitative nature, will be presented in text, figures/graphics and photos.
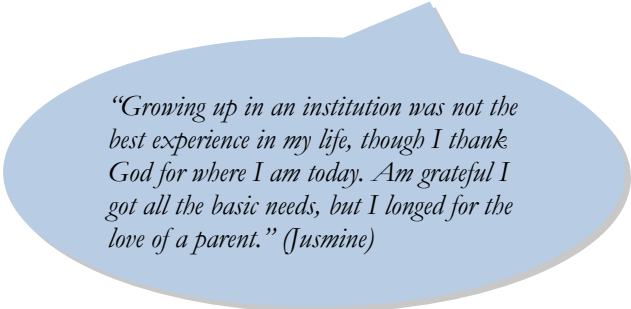
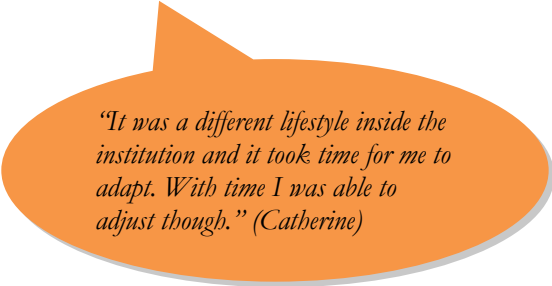*"The institution for me was the last place I wished and wanted to be." (Celine)*

4.1 Life In Institutional Care

Traditionally in Kenya, children who lost both their parents were absorbed by their extended families and/or communities (Skovdal, 2010). Due to poverty, HIV/AIDS, and other social challenges many children have been forced to grow and develop in institutions.

It is difficult for many children to adapt to the life in the institutions, and many institutionalized childreh suffer from the "stigmatisation, struggle over belongings and disruption of community and family ties" (Freidus, 2010: 297).
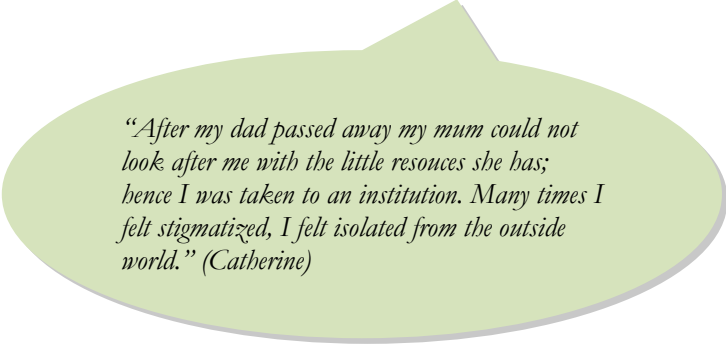
"Growing up in an institution was not the best experience in my life, though I thank God for where I am today. Am grateful I got all the basic needs, but I longed for the love of a parent." (Jusmine)

"It was a different lifestyle inside the institution and it took time for me to adapt. With time I was able to adjust though." (Catherine)

In recent years, the number of residential care institutions appears to have steadily increased in the sub- Saharan context (Save the Children, 2003). This is a big concern, as they seem "to impact negatively on children, to operate as *magnets* for children growing up in poverty-stricken environments, and to be disproportionately costly" (Meintjes *et al.*, 2007: 8).

"After my dad passed away my mum could not look after me with the little resouces she has; hence I was taken to an institution. Many times I felt stigmatized, I felt isolated from the outside world." (Catherine)

The majority of the young care leavers stated that they missed their family and freedom

most while living in the institution.

What did you miss in the institution?

(bar chart: Food ≈16, Affection ≈33, Family ≈64, Protection ≈21, Freedom ≈62, Privacy ≈31, Friends ≈27, No comment ≈4; y-axis 0–70)
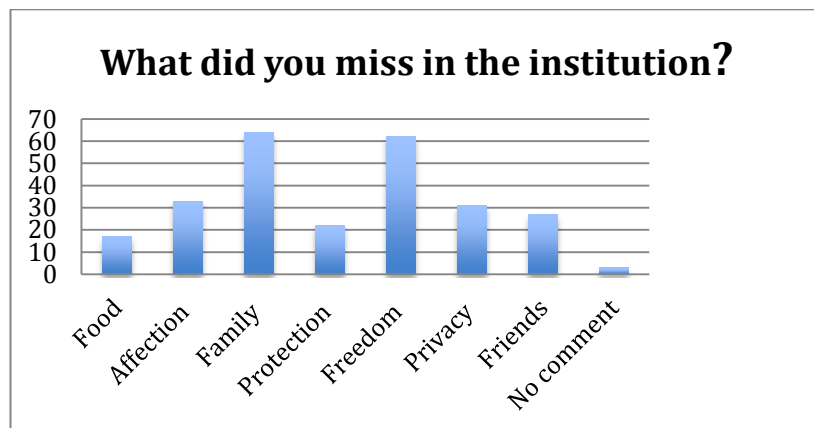
Another difficulty is the lack of individual care by the care takers.

"Life was not bad nor was it very good. The good thing is that I had an education. The bad side of it was the lack of proper personal attention to my needs both materially and emotionally." (Emma)

And as Freidus (2010: 301) puts it, "[b]eing designed an orphan is becoming a valued identity for some [...], and a source of vulnerability and exploitation for others".

"I felt like a beggar because I had to depend on other's support for everything. Sometimes the housemothers in pretense that I was rude mistreated me; I was never rude. I lacked even the basic commondities." (Lucy)

Browne (2009) concludes that the young care leavers' social, intellectual and behavioural abilities are reduced (see figure below):

Do you think the way you were treated as a child by the caregivers has affected your life now?

(pie chart: Yes 61%, No 39%)
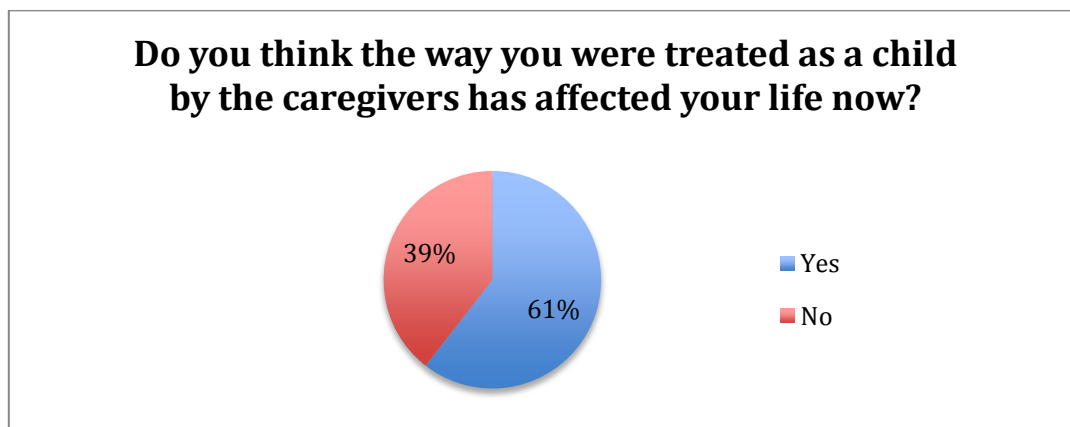
4.2 Life After Care

4.2.1 Situation Of Leaving Care

The young people described the time of leaving care as a very challenging period in their lives, with numerous obstacles and little advice or preparation. The majority sta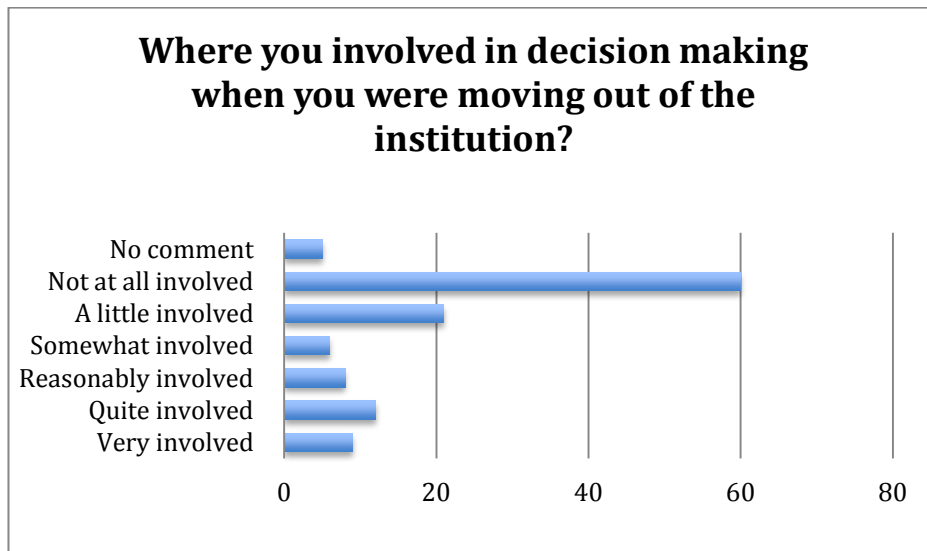ted that they were a little or not at all involved in the decision making process when moving out of the care setting (the numbers in the chart below refer to the numbers of respondents).

Where you involved in decision making when you were moving out of the institution?

Category	Value
No comment	~5
Not at all involved	~60
A little involved	~21
Somewhat involved	~6
Reasonably involved	~8
Quite involved	~12
Very involved	~9

(Scale: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80)

Most found themselves lacking necessary life skills when they left care. Nobody felt sufficiently prepared to master life outside. Many stated that there should have been better preparation with a focus on practical daily living skills.

In fact, leaving a care institution was seen as the most demanding time of exiting from the care system (Verweijen-Slamnescu and Lerch, 2010). As one young person stated:

"I faced several challenges after leaving the institution. For instance, I faced a reality shock with the 'outside world'. I was not well prepared to face life after the institution." (Emma)

Another care leaver added that the young people were not given any support when entering the society they did not know much about.

"...for the long time I spent in the institution, I was never advised or guided of what life was about. I wish I could have been prepared psychologically, so as to know what I should expect out there. My life was so uncertain." (Jusmine)

Where you supported after leaving care?

■ Yes ■ No ■ No comment

4%

29%

67%
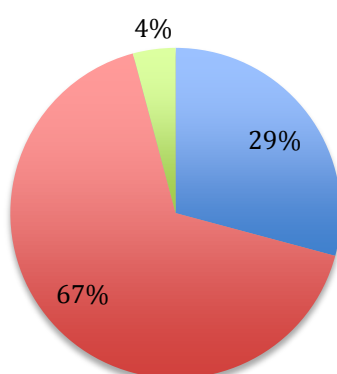
This quote clearly shows that the young people often do not feel well prepared when graduating form a care institution. They struggle and are uncertain as to what will happen to them, as institutions rarely explain or introduce the young people to life after care.

Another major issue is that young people start living in a community where they barely know anybody. Everything is new and unfamiliar to them. Many feel lonely and not understood by the people surrounding them. Hence, they have various unanswered questions about their lives, as the next quote shows:

"Life after care became lonelier; the void inside me could not be filled by friends or any activity. I looked back and I felt sad, I looked ahead and I saw no future. Each day I am striving to know who I am my purpose in life, what life is all about." (Joseph)

The process of leaving care is a final experience and the young care leavers in many cases are not able to return to the institutions and ask for help or assistance in times of trouble (Dixon and Stein, 2005). The next quotation describes a young person ending up (again) living on the streets and feeling stranded and overwhelmed after graduating from care.

"When I left care, I didn't know where to start. But the more I stayed alone I adapted the life of the community. The children's home left me alone. I even went back to the streets after leaving care. I felt it will destroy my life. Then, a bit later, I got counselling from an organisation and started to change my life." (Jake)

This rather sorrowful quote describes the difficulties young people face with the adjustment to life outside the institution. Sadly, many children's homes are not realistic about the future perspectives of the young people ageing out of care (Freidus, 2010). Frequently, only help from outside (e.g. NGOs or international organisations) reaches and motivates young care leavers, e.g. through seminars or other events. There, the young people feel like they can seek advice for their difficult lives.

To sum it up, it can be stated that most young people left care with not much or no preparation and/or assistance at all. They felt neither well equipped nor prepared for living in society.

> "I lacked even the basic needs." (Alex)

4.2.2 Housing And Coping

The two themes of housing and coping that will be discussed in this section are major issues in the lives of young care leavers.

4.2.2.1 Housing

Many live in difficult neighbourhoods, such as various slum areas. This is different from the living standards of the children's homes often full or partly funded by Western NGOs or individuals, as it is described in the quote and shown in the picture below:

> "I call the place where I live ghetto. It is not a house and it does not feel like home." (Alex)
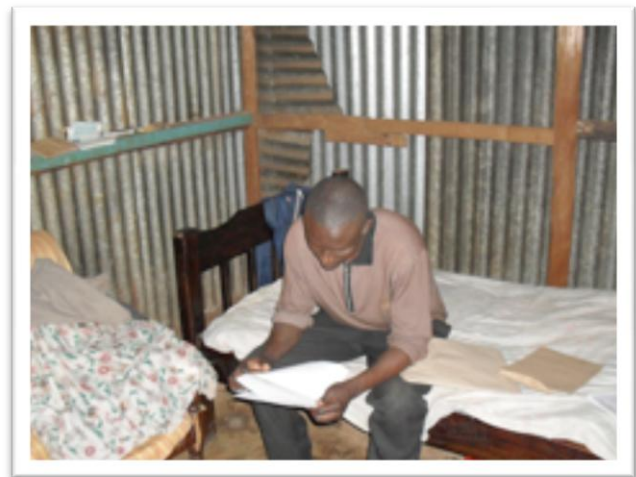
Photo 3: *This is where I stay. I call it ghetto. (Alex)*

Some of the participants live in hostels or boarding schools and get their monthly costs covered by the scholarship they receive for their college studies. Some of the young people went back to the streets after leaving care. Many felt left alone while moving from care without assistance or planning. The majority did not receive any support; only a few had their rent paid for the first three months after leaving the institution by the children's home. Many young people struggle a lot to find the money for the monthly rent.

Are you able to pay for your rent?

Yes   No   No comment

5%

26%

69%
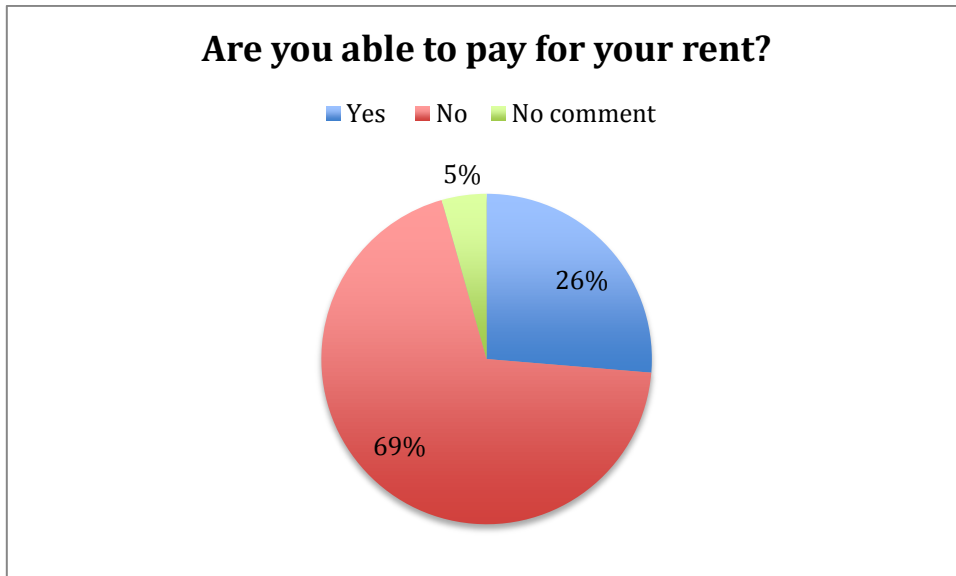
What often happens to the care leavers when they cannot pay for their rent is described in the following quote and shown in the next photo:

"This day, I came from school and saw that the landlady locked my house with two padlocks because I didn't pay the rent. This day, I went to a friend. I was very hungry. This is not a solution and a very difficult situation. It is the toughest thing that is disturbing my head now. This is the main problem I have in life. Sometimes I feel like giving up and try things which are not good. But I pray to God and ask him to help me." (Jake)

Photo 4: Paying rent is very difficult. It disturbs me and I can't concentrate in class. (Jake)

4.2.2.2 Coping

One can say that access to basic supplies is very difficult for the young people. Many cannot afford food or shelter. The journey of leaving care was by most care leavers described as a very complex time (Stein, 2006). It seems that there are too many changes in the young people's lives at the same time. This makes it difficult for them to cope with the life outside care, as it is stated in the next quote:

> *"At some point in my life, I lacked direction; it came to a time after exiting care when I lacked even the basic needs. It was hard to find food, a place to sleep and clothes to wear. My head was so confused because nobody at some time could help me to pursue my career." (Dennis)*

Another young person stated:

> *"My life has been full of challenges and struggles. It became even harder. I could hardly go to hospital when I became ill. I never had enough food; at times, I could go to bed hungry. I wish I was prepared to live outside the institution. I wish I had skills to cope." (Emma)*

As it was said before, there were too many problems and changes at a time. This is also shown in the next quotation:

> *"But after I left the institution, I was fraught with so many challenges. I lacked food, and the only people who took me were my friends. I missed so many of the friends I had from the institution, it's the only family I had." (Nixon)*

However, many of the young care leavers had faith in God and went to church every Sunday. The following quote can be seen as some kind of strategy for living outside the institution:

> *"God, faith and hard work have helped me cope." (Pauline)*

The difficulties young people face when entering a community is described below, especially when a young person has a *street* or *care* background. This makes many feel stigmatised by the society.

"Having been brought up in the streets, then from the institution, the perception is that 'once a street boy always a street boy and a bad boy'. Few people could trust me, few people could understand me, I felt more depressed and more of an outcast. I am trying to accept who I am, I have made friends and that is helping me a lot to stand on my own." (Job)

To conclude, many of the young care leavers are still struggling with life in the communities. It seems that some of them did not arrive or find their place in society. It can be argued that the majority is somehow stuck in the transition process to adulthood and is not able to live an independent life. There are different routes along the continuum to adulthood—often with no clear point of arrival (Wyn and White, 1997).

"Nothing to keep you busy." (Pauline)

4.2.3   Education And Employment

Education, in the sense of receiving qualifications, was described by many as key to getting access to employment and income. This is shown in the following quotation:
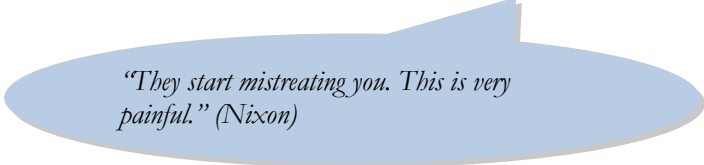
"I wanted a scholarship for a college and I got it. I am almost done with my diploma; with the diploma, I believe I have chances for a better life." (Pauline)

However, many left care with no sufficient school qualification, as it is shown in the figure below.

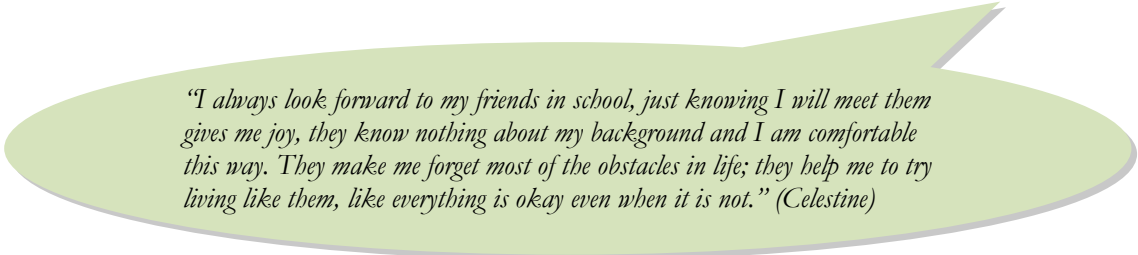**What was your educational level when you left care?**
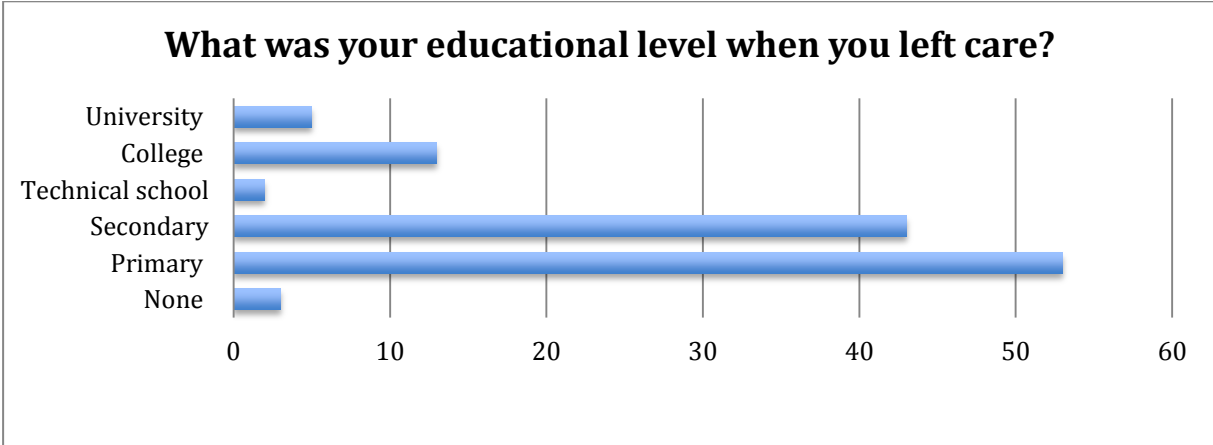
Quite a few of the participants who were enrolled in an educational institution had a scholarship to cover the school, college or university fees. A major problem is that these scholarships frequently do not cover any food or accommodation costs. The majority were encouraged to continue with their education or try to find a scholarship for high school, college or university.

Many of those who are in school did not want their class mates to get to know that they were from care. An explanation can be found in the quote below:
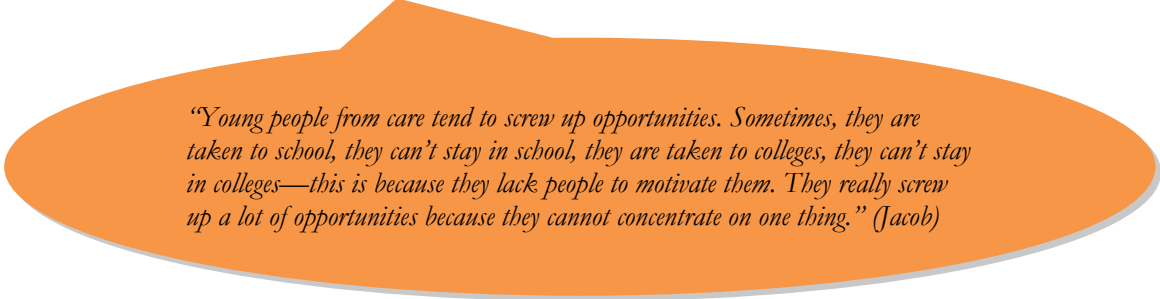
"They start mistreating you. This is very painful." (Nixon)

Another participant talked about the differences between the classmates and herself. It seems that young care leavers somehow *play a role* only to fit in the wider picture:

"I always look forward to my friends in school, just knowing I will meet them gives me joy, they know nothing about my background and I am comfortable this way. They make me forget most of the obstacles in life; they help me to try living like them, like everything is okay even when it is not." (Celestine)

Since young care leavers do not know many people in the society, they often lack the motivation that they would need to keep on going. Some of their main problems are described in the quote below:

"Young people from care tend to screw up opportunities. Sometimes, they are taken to school, they can't stay in school, they are taken to colleges, they can't stay in colleges—this is because they lack people to motivate them. They really screw up a lot of opportunities because they cannot concentrate on one thing." (Jacob)

Another participant describes the young care leavers who are in school but lack the financial assistance for their daily living. The next quote and the photo below show the way the young people struggle to succeed and not fail in their daily lives.

"Many of my classmates stay with their parents. Their parents provide them with food and shelter—things I don't have. After coming from school, I change and go outside for hustling to get some money for supper. Sometimes, I come back later than 11pm. There is not much time left for doing any homework. I also cannot concentrate and usually go to sleep, because I am tired. I get up at 5am the next morning." (Jake)
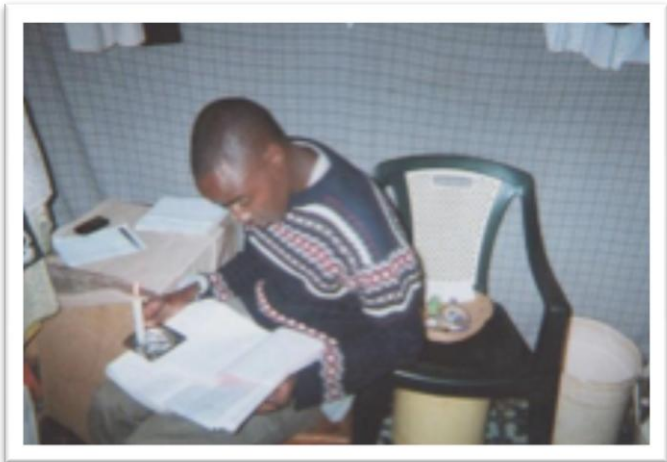
Photo 5: Revising for exams, using a candle is not easy. (Jake)

Having a *job* is understood by most of the young people to be the best means of income. Hence, finding a work placement was of particular interest to the young care leavers. The majority (see graphic below) was unemployed and wanted a job. Only some of the participants were currently in permanent work; the others had casual jobs on a daily basis which are poorly paid.

Are you employed at the moment?

■ Not employed   ■ Casual job   ■ Permanent job   ■ No comment

2%
7%
20%
71%
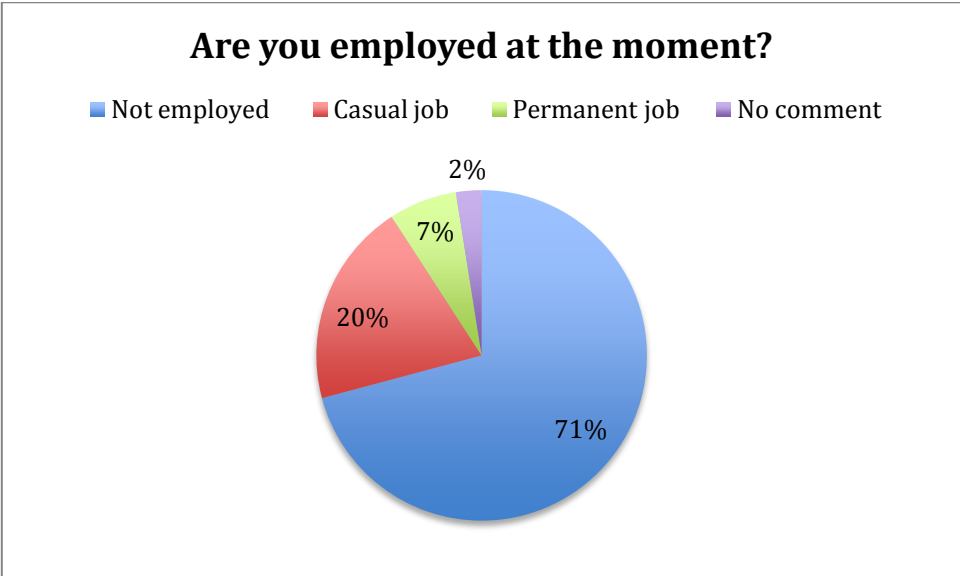
Income was a key issue. The money earned with a casual job is often not enough to pay for rent and food. Many had faced the difficult situation of having no money at all, as stated in the following quote:

> *"There is no work. And if I get the work, it is not well paid. We have no perspectives. Sometimes I get KES 100; I can buy th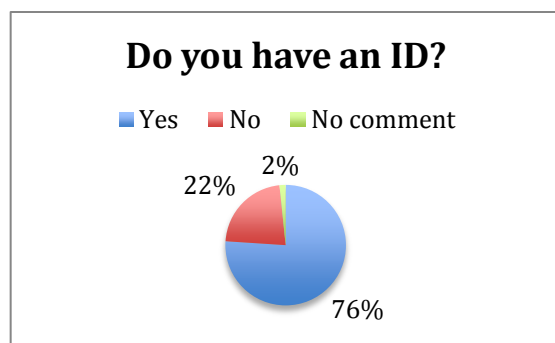ings like oil, tomato and some maize beans. The money gets finished too fast. Even tomorrow, I don't know what to do; I don't know where to start again. Instead of going to school, I go hustle. I can't concentrate when I am hungry; I don't hear anything what the teachers say." (Jake)*

The majority found that it is not easy for care leavers to find a job in the community. They stated that care stigmatises them when trying to get a work placement. Many did not receive any help to find a job.

> *"I wish the institution could have helped me get a job. Life was tough because I had no job skills." (Emma)*

Having no job or vocational skills is another very challenging point. Many of the care leavers have neither documents nor certificates to show that they have gone through some education. At times they even lack their birth certificates and/or identity documents (IDs). Lack of primary and secondary school certificates spells doom on a young person's efforts to find job opportunities, since most employers demand that employees have this basic education qualification, which is not always the case. In addition, in most cases it is a requirement that you have a certificate of primary and secondary education for you to be accepted in colleges or higher education institutions. Lack of national identity documents also predisposes young people to fewer job opportunities. Only an identity card can prove how old you are in order to get a job. Young people without identity documents are also very insecure, for without a national identity card you are not a citizen and you might be mistaken for a fugitive, a thief, a cheat etc.

Do you have a birth certificate?

■ Yes ■ No ■ No comment

4%
45%   51%

Do you have an ID?

■ Yes ■ No ■ No comment

2%
22%
76%

Some participants reported that young people, especially boys, got involved in drugs or stealing after leaving care. This is seen as a way to forget about reality and get money to survive. As one participant summarised (see also the picture below):

"[The picture] is about jobless people. You can see they are now big. They didn't get married and live alone because they are loosing hope. Sometimes, it seems they don't have any hopes or wishes; their time has gone. They can' t do anything. Many of them are school drop outs. They don't have any course in life. Most of them just smoke marihuana or take a lot of drinks; sometimes they even steal from people. They don't care; these boys just don't care. Life is very difficult." (Nixon)

The picture below shows the so-called *job-corner* where many young people go in the morning. There, they have to wait to get a casual job on a daily basis.


Photo 6: Young people waiting in the job corner to get any kind of work. (Nixon)

The problem is that there are few casual jobs available, and too many people who need them. Another issue with these jobs is that they are physically bad for the young people. Below we see what the main problems are when care leavers are involved in casual work:

"Doing manual jobs is not always safe for them because they are young people and normally exploited. If they only get the casual jobs, they cannot pay their rent. It is very difficult for them. They have problems with accessing medical care, so the young people can only go to friends. This is very difficult again." (Stephen)

Many young care leavers cannot access basic needs and rely on other people's—mostly friends' or guardians'—help or assistance which is described in the following graphic:

Who do ask for help when you are having problems?
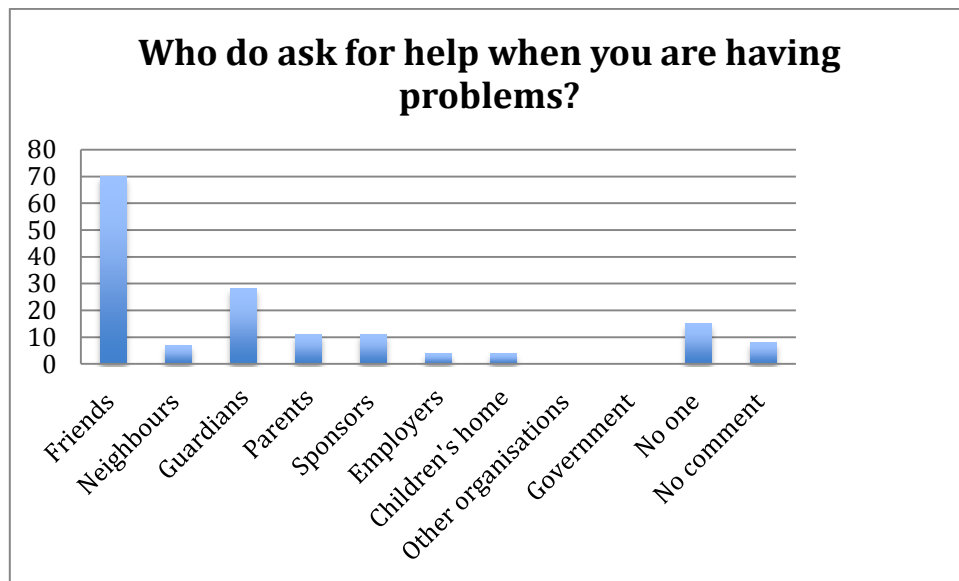
In conclusion, as the voices of the young people have shown, young care leavers face major challenges when it comes to education and employment. Most young people obtain low-skilled jobs and struggle with their daily living.

However, many of the participants are creative in finding options to continue with their education or creating activities for their day-to-day lives. It can be argued that there are two "broad outcome groups of transitions to adulthood; those *moving on* from care, [...] and those who are *struggling*" (Stein and Munro, 2008: 2)

> *"I knew no one, had no one to turn to." (Emma)*

4.2.4 Dealing With People Outside Care

Since many care leavers were not well prepared for living in the community, adapting to the life outside was somehow possible, but by many described as a difficult and hard journey.

> *"Living in the community was at first difficult because people are not as loving and caring as those I grew up with at the institution. In the institution, I had so many brothers and sisters who would treat me well. I found the outside world so cruel and aggressive." (Emma)*

Another young person talked about his experiences and the difficulties he had when living with the people outside care:

"After care, I had to face a new world outside the institution. It was a new environment with new faces and a different lifestyle. I was short of skills to relate and connect with people, and there was no one around to seek support or guidance from. I feared people and I felt that they feared me, too." (Job)

After some time, many of the young people got involved with the people of their communities. Many have made friends in the community and only some of these friends had a care background, too (see the picture below). Many were involved in social activities, especially those organised by KNCL. The following quote and picture show young people talking about their challenges in their daily lives:

"These are my friends who are hustling for breakfast. You can't go to church when you are hungry. I try to tell them they should go to church on Sundays." (Alex)

Photo 7: These are my friends. We hang out together to discuss life issues. (Alex)

However, many were not satisfied with their present situation. They wanted their social lives to be improved. Quite a few were still struggling to adapt to the life of the society.

"The community was a strange place for a long time, I had to learn to survive outside the institution, I had to learn to protect myself and look after myself." (Albert)

Most felt stigmatised by the public. The majority of the young people would not tell anyone that they are from care.

"My greatest fear was being discriminated against the community because of my upbringing." (Emma)

Many found that the public knows not much about the problems and challenges of care leavers when entering the society. Some mentioned that they had to live with their relatives, which was a difficult situation and sometimes painful experience, as the next quote describes:
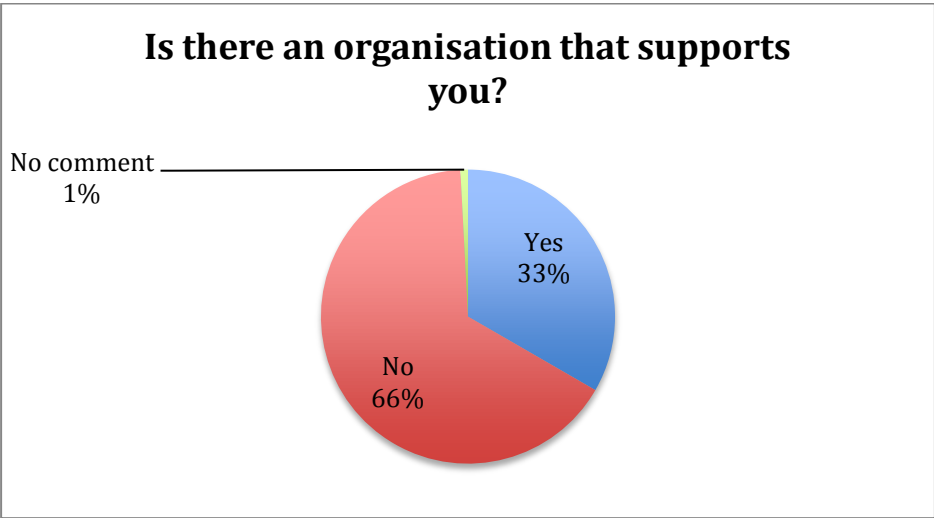
"I was taken to go and live with my relatives who felt like I was a burden to them, in every way they showed me that I was not wanted." (Jusmine)

Finally, it can be stated that young care leavers are vulnerable to exclusion within society. As Stein (2006a: 423) puts it, young people leaving care are a group of people who are understood to be "at risk of social exclusion".
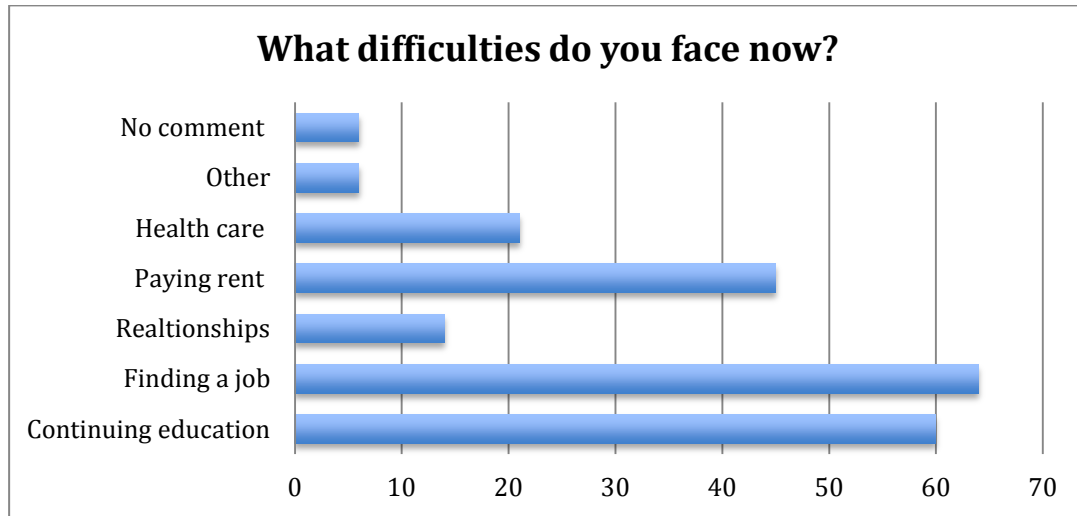
"They help me so much." (Pauline)

4.2.5 Supportive Networks

While interviewing the young people, it became apparent that there are three main challenges that care leavers are facing when they exit an institution. Many of them lack social and psychological coping strategies, they often do not have proper jobs or job skills, and there is no safety net or supportive network in the communities that would assist the young people when entering the new outside world.

Is there an organisation that supports you?

No comment
1%

Yes
33%

No
66%

The following graphic shows what difficulties the young people face at the moment:

What difficulties do you face now?

Category	Value (approx.)
No comment	6
Other	6
Health care	21
Paying rent	45
Realtionships	14
Finding a job	64
Continuing education	60

(horizontal axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70)

As it was mentioned before, KNCL is an informal youth-led network with its main objective to "transform the lives of young people from institutional care" (KNCL, 2011). Moreover, young care leavers are not identified by the Kenyan government as a vulnerable group of young people.

> *"Though the government does not support us, I think it is already offering some kind of support that is by giving us a platform." (Stephen)*

Coming to Kenya and doing research with the members of the network was welcomed by everybody. The young people think that research is needed to be able to say what is happening and what are the challenges the young people face with care experiences in Kenya. Many people think that when a young person turns 18, s/he does not need any support or assisting services. This is seen to be difficult, as at this crucial age of 18, many are searching their identity and at the same time trying to be independent. KNCL thinks that support is vital at this stage.

> *"The challenges for young people from care are, first, they don't have mentors in their lives and, second, they lack access to the basic needs. The network is there to help highlight the challenges that we face in life but also trying to develop projects or activities that help them live a meaningful and independent life in the community." (Stephen)*

As the network has its focus on young people, it seems difficult to get funding:

One of the major challenges that we are facing is that the network is for young people and it is difficult to get funds for young people. The system is such that it is easy to get funding for children." (Stephen)

The peer support that is provided by the network assists the young people to overcome the major problems they face in their lives. The next quote shows the activeness and creativity of the members of KNCL.

"Among the members of KNCL, it is rare that you find a person doing nothing. There are people who are working or learning at school, college or doing self-businesses. If you are hard working, clear-minded and self-arranged, you can be a role model to the others." (Jusmine)
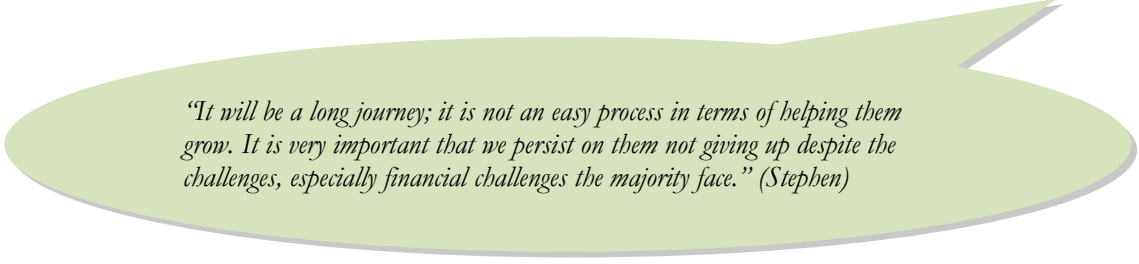
One reason for creating KNCL was to be able to follow up and protect the young people who grew up in care. KNCL would like to be a link or *referring centre* for the institutions. It is important for the network to help young care leavers adjusting to society, as it is stated below:

"When they are moving from the children's home, we don't want them to be like us, the way we were thrown away like papers; left with nothing." (Alex)

The network also helps the young people to understand that they are not the only ones who came through an institutional system. They can share their stories and experiences. This is seen to be the most important aspect. This is what the whole network is about:
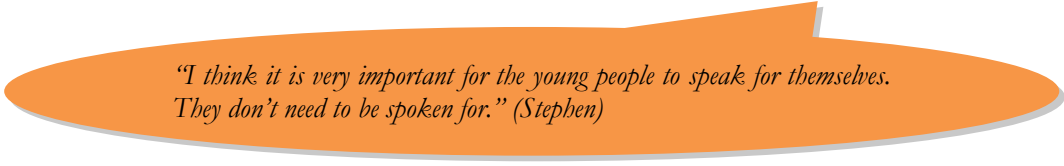
"We think it is therapeutic for them sharing their stories and experiences. Because you find that the majority have never told their stories and they have a lot of anger, a lot of content to people and also to the institutions that brought them up. And this affects the way they live their lives at the moment, because they spend much of their energy not on the present but on their past. They should look forward and not concentrating on what happened but concentrate on what they can do now to live better lives; being able to move on." (Albert)

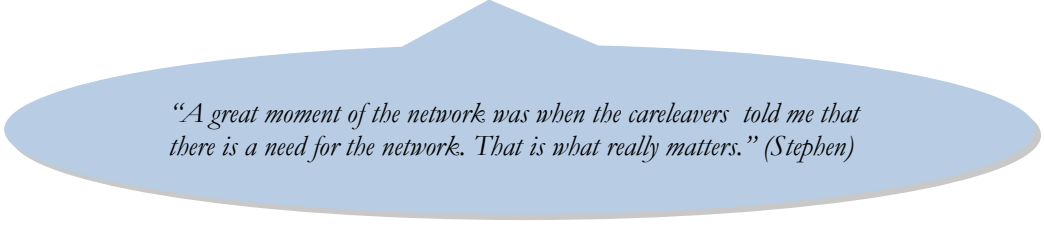It is, however, understood to be a challenging journey of helping the care leavers grow:

"It will be a long journey; it is not an easy process in terms of helping them grow. It is very important that we persist on them not giving up despite the challenges, especially financial challenges the majority face." (Stephen)

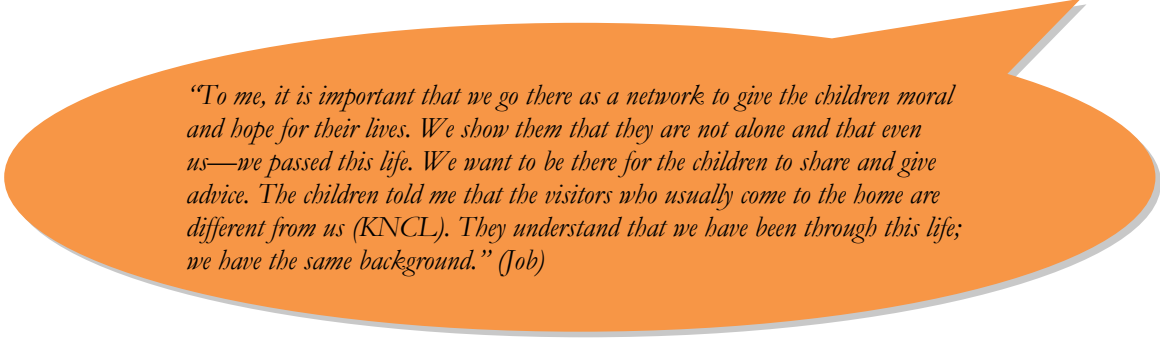It is crucial to empower them and make them advocates for themselves.

"I think it is very important for the young people to speak for themselves. They don't need to be spoken for." (Stephen)

The young people are passionate about their network and what they do in order to help others who are in a similar situation.

"A great moment of the network was when the careleavers told me that there is a need for the network. That is what really matters." (Stephen)

Once a month, a group of 10 to 15 people goes and visits a care institution. How they feel about what they see in the homes is described in the next quote and the picture below:

"To me, it is important that we go there as a network to give the children moral and hope for their lives. We show them that they are not alone and that even us—we passed this life. We want to be there for the children to share and give advice. The children told me that the visitors who usually come to the home are different from us (KNCL). They understand that we have been through this life; we have the same background." (Job)

Photo 8: My new friends from an institution we visited with KNCL. (Emma)

Other important activities of the network are the motivational talks and drama groups. These events and classes have very positive impacts on the young people. Many people stated that the KNCL sessions have changed their lives for the better and helped them to be stronger. The young people are certain that KNCL as a youth-led network has a future which the following quotation shows:

"Things that I gained from KNCL are encouragement and friendship. I learnt something about time keeping and self management. I think as a group we are going far because we are serious about it. I love this group." *(Jusmine)*

Another care leaver explained how KNCL has supported him:

"It is good to have networks. They help me a lot. I attend the meetings because I always get good advice and I feel comfortable among my fellows; we always share. I like KNCL because they have a future. I love them because they have done something good to me; they have sent me back to school. When I see my fellows, I see and feel that I am not alone in this world." *(Jake)*

Quite a few care leavers mentioned that the network is like a family to them which gives them hope and a platform to talk about their dreams. See the following quote and photo:]

"Today, I am glad, I have found a big family of care leavers, I can share my past, I can tell of my dreams and hope, even though they seem to be unrealistic." (Emma)

Photo 9: KNCL is a family. I call it my home. (Albert)

5 CONCLUSIONS

This report wished to improve the understanding of the experiences of young care leavers in Kenya during the transition process and allowed them to have their own voices heard. It documented the young people's personal views on what has happened during the time of leaving care and afterwards. In doing so, the research concentrated on building holistic insight into the young people's social, economic and cultural circumstances.

With regard to the report's aim to explore the concrete living experience of care leavers in Kenya, it can be concluded that the majority of the young people are somehow stuck in their journey to adulthood. They are not able to live an independent life but a life with many obstacles. The study has shown that the distinction of care leavers' biographies in separate transition phases seems difficult, as many of them find themselves in a grey zone between youth and adulthood having exited institutional care. Most of the participants were vulnerable to exclusion from the society they entered after having left care—not knowing much about the community they were supposed to live in. After leaving a care institution, the young people felt neither well equipped nor prepared for living in society.

The study also aimed to examine the role of informal youth-led networks in supporting care leavers in their transition to adulthood. Clearly, the findings suggest that these networks, in particular KNCL, play a crucial role in helping young people managing their lives after the departure from care. The fact that the network is led by fellow care leavers and that it provides a platform for regular interaction with peers, seem to be vital in assisting care leavers psychologically and socially. Thus, active participation in the network becomes a central coping strategy for care leavers.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 To Charitable Children's Institutions (CCIs) and Rehabilitation Centers

➢ CCIs should respect and uphold minimum standards of residential care and operate in transparent manner, respecting the local and international child protection conventions.

➢ Develop a data base and reporting mechanism in each institution and in the community for children in institutional care and care-leavers as well.

➢ The CCIs board should ensure representation and involvement of the key community members as well as decision makers for the best interest of the child (e.g. representatives of Parliament and government, care-leavers, biological and adoptive parents, counselors and priest/pastor, etc.).

➢ Social workers and care-givers should be trained on how to deal with, meet the needs, communicate with, and to enhance the normal development of an orphaned, abandoned, or street children. All care-givers should have been trained on early child development and have some basic skills on the psycho-social development of a child.

➢ The talents, skills and potential of the children should be identified and enhanced so that they can deem themselves important and have their interests cultivated.

➢ Opportunities should be created for recreational activities.

➢ The individual's choice of denomination/ religion should be respected. Some of the institutions force the children to adopt a specific religion that suits the institutions.

➢ Adequate supply of basic needs should be looked into considering that, in some cases, there is no food or not enough food for the children, lack of adequate clothing and lack of adequate health care.

➢ The right attention and protection should be given to every child. The indivinduality of the child should always be supported.

➢ The relationship between the care-givers/social workers and children; between the children and the parents/guardians; as well as the children and community should be enhanced.

➢ Siblings should not be separated and their relationship should be enhanced and maintained

➢ Counseling should be given to the children, as well as to their families, in order to overcome their problems and restore their relationship, with the aim towards family reintegration.

➢ The children should not be criticized but helped to improve and made to feel important.

➢ Adequate education and support should be provided to empower the children and young people in order to avoid dependency in their adult lives.

➢ Job skills and internships should be provided to young people about to exit care.

➢ CCIs should identify the family roots early enought and connect the children with their parents and /or extended family where it is for the best interest of the child.

➢ CCIs should ensure that a young person is stable socially and emotionally before leaving the institution.

➢ There should be open communication between the staff and the Administrator/Board of the CCIs in order to share problems and improve the quality of the services offered.

6.2 To Government (Services of Children's Department)

➢ There should be policies in place to support care leavers with the objective of integrating them into the community, helping them to become independent, supporting them in the achievement of their dreams, and protecting them from abuse and mistreatment.

➢ The government, together with local NGOs, should launch a special job program for care leavers in order to ensure that they can at least meet their basic needs and avoid being exploited and dependent.

➢ The government, together with local NGOs, should launch a special education program for care-leavers in order to help them complete their basic education and go to college.

➢ The care-leavers should temporarily be included in the Cash Transfer Program, especially those who have left care and have no one to support them, at least for the first year after they have left care.

➢ The government should provide the care-leavers (particularly double orphans) with legal assistance in matters of inheritance and in obtaining birth certificates, death certificates of the parents and identity documents. CCIs should encourage the government to produce these documents on behalf of the children.

➢ The government should ensure that children abandoned or rescued in a specific area are placed in an institution in the same or neighboring area. Children are often rescued and in placed in care in different area/neighborhood. This makes the promotion of the family reunification difficult, as well as the possibility of establishing a bond with the extended families or neighbors, and contributes to the loss of the culture and traditions of the area.

6.3 To The Community

➢ Children leaving care should have a guardian or mentor who can supervise and mentor them, which will help guide their development and protect them from truancy and other social challenges.

➢ Children living in institutions should be integrated within the local community. They should be invited by the community to take part in community events, churches, and groups so that they can socialize and find support outside the institution.

➢ The community members should be educated and sensitized about the problems of children in institutions in order to prevent of child abandonment and discrimination, and promote alternative family- and community- based care (kinship care, adoption or foster care).

➢ The community should ensure solidarity among and between the care-leavers.

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8 APPENDENCIES

8.1 Questions Of The Three Hour-Long Participatory Workshops

1) Tell us about your experience of leaving the care institution/ children's home? What was good and what went wrong?
2) Do you think that networks such as KNCL are supportive and meet the actual needs of the young people who left care?
3) What needs to be done to make it easier for care leavers when they come out of the care institution/ children' home?

8.2 Eight Short Stories Of Young Careleavers Quoted In The Report

(The names indicated are not their real names)

8.2.1 Daisy 30 Years

"Growing up in an institution was not the best experience in my life, though i thank God for where i am today. Am grateful i got all the basic needs, but i longed for the love of a parent. For the long time I spent in the institution, I was never advised neither guided of what life was all about. A time we stole to survive because some resources were limited, like clothes and food. I dread the time I left care; it was the most devastating moment of my life. I knew no one, had no one to turn to, and left with one option that I knew, i had to get married, something that I would not like to talk about. Yes, at least to have a roof over my head, and food on the table. I felt out of place in the community with no job, no education, ashamed of life and myself. I felt traumatized, sad and lonely even in the marriage relationship. I wish i could have been prepared psychologically so as to know what i should expect out there. My life was so uncertain. Today, am glad, i have found a big family of Careleavers, I can share my past, I can tell of my dreams and hope even though they seem so unrealistic."

8.2.2 Salim 29 Years

"You do not choose where you are born and thus personally I chose to turn the negative to positive. It was never easy growing up in an institution. There are things I loved such as education, sports, drama and music. These things made my life meaningful. The caregivers in my life were not proactive; the care that I got was not as good. At some point in my life I lacked direction, it came to a time after exiting care when I lacked even the basic needs. It was hard to find food, a place to sleep and clothes to wear. My head was so confused because nobody at some time could help me pursue my career. After leaving care I was placed in a half-way house, but even before completing I was exited, with little knowledge to cope and adjust to a new life in the community.

Am grateful to friends who have continued to help me keep going in life, this has been really helpful. I would love to go further in my nursing profession. I still have a dream and a hope of finding my siblings if they exist and my parents if they are out there."

8.2.3 Jack 22 Years

"Growing up in the institution was the best thing I could ever get considering my background, though it had its own advantages and disadvantages just like in an ideal family setting. Life was not bad nor was it very good. The good thing with it is that I had education. The bad side of it was the lack of proper personal attention to my needs both materially and emotionally. This is due to the fact that we were so many, hence difficult to get that one on one attention that I needed on a daily basis. I faced several challenges after leaving the institution. For instance, I faced a reality check with the 'outside world', as we would often refer to the outside world. I was not well prepared to face life after the institution. I did not know how to relate to people mostly those of the opposite gender since our orphanage was strictly limited to the male gender. I felt like I was starting life from a scratch. My confidence was also low in that I could not imagine competing with a child who had been brought up in an "normal" family, whereby such a child has somebody beside him to encourage him and to look up to. Living in the community was at first difficult because people are not as loving and caring as those I grew up with at the institution. In the institution I had so many brothers who would treat me well. I found the outside world so cruel and aggressive. What I would have liked done to me to cope in the community is simply increasing my confidence level and make me a competitive person in the society. My greatest fear was being discriminated against in the community because of my upbringing. Care leavers should be encouraged that they are capable of doing anything that any other person can do. They should also be presented with opportunities to succeed in life. My dream is to become a successful person in this society and be an encouragement to the rest of care leavers."

8.2.4 Nathan 25 Years

"Growing in institution was not an easy thing for me. Sometimes it feels good but most of the time it feels like you had better be in at home with your family. I felt like a beggar because I had to depend on others support for everything. Sometimes I was mistreated by the house mothers in pretense that I was rude, I was never rude. I never had the freedom to move around as I would have wished and sometimes we lacked even the basic commodities.

The good thing about the institution was that i got the education that I really wanted. But after I left the institution I was fraught with so many challenges. I lacked food, and the only people who took me in were my friends. I missed so many of the friends I had from the institution, it's the only family I had. The community was a strange place for a long time, I had to learn to survive outside the institution, I had to learn to protect myself and look after myself. I wish the institution could have helped me get a job. Life was tough because I had no job skills.

My greatest fear was that I did not know who was going to help me get a job so as to cater for my needs. Even though I hoped that one day I would get the job and would then plan to move on with my life. I hope to get a job within my profession as an accountant and do masters in strategic management. It's my hope and I wish it one day happens."

8.2.5 Shirleen 24 Years

" The institution for me was the last place i wished and wanted to be. Am grateful to God i was only there for four years. I loved school, I never lacked school fees, I had friends in school that I regarded as my brothers and sisters. It was great that school was not in the institution. I always looked forward to my friends at school, just knowing I would meet them gave me joy, they also knew nothing about my background and I was comfortable that way. They made me forget most of the things in the institution, they helped me to try living like them. like everything was Okay even when it wasn't. I never liked the food and some of the stringent rules imposed by the housemothers therein. I miss most of the friends I had back there, my time there with most of them was exciting. My greatest fear at exit was now what will happen for me, i didn't want to go live with any of my relatives and i thank God i didn't. After exit it wasn't easy coping in the

community but am managing it. I wanted a scholarship for college and I got it, and am almost done with my diploma, with the diploma I believe I have chances of a better life.

God, Faith and Handwork have helped me cope. I want to be successful, get good education, skills, and a well-paying job and have a family of my own."

8.2.6 Hilary 19 Years

"I grew up in a place that I never wanted and that was the institution. After my dad passed on my mum could not look after me with the little resources she had, hence, I was taken to the institution. It was a different lifestyle inside the institution and it took time for me to adapt. With time I was able to adjust though. I enjoyed the education I was provided, I also came to understand my mum did not have an option but to take me to an institution for me to be able to go to high school. Many a times I felt stigmatized, I felt isolated from the outside world. I trusted God all through; I believed and still believe He has a purpose for my life.

After leaving the institution, life became even harder, I could hardly go to hospital when I became ill, I never had enough food, a time I could go to bed hungry. I was taken to go live with my relatives who felt like I was a burden to them, in every way they showed me that I was not wanted. I went to live with my mum, although poor she took me in. I felt like I was in a new world outside the institution, I used to get everything but now I was struggling even with the basic needs, Currently my life has been full of challenges and struggles. I wish I was prepared to live outside the institution, I wish I had skills to cope.

I did well in High School and am praying that I will find a sponsor for me to go to college, right now am depending on my mum and it's my hope that one day I can depend on myself and be able to assist her."

8.2.7 Jack 27 Years

"I joined the institution in 1993 after being rescued from the streets. My first days and months in the institution felt good, but as time passed by, I started feeling low because I was not staying with my biological parents, it was a mixed feeling of solitude and isolation. The institution never lacked its good side, I had friends, plenty to eat from donors and visitors who used to come, in addition, we had a lot of games to keep us occupied.

Life was not all happy in the institution, we were overworked, the caregivers were sometimes very harsh, I lacked guidance and often I was bullied by the older boys, which contributed to my low self-esteem I believe. The many years that I spent in the institution, I never felt cared about neither by the institution nor anyone.

After care I had to face a new world outside the institution. It was a new environment with new faces and a different lifestyle and I was short of skills to relate and connect with people, and there was no one around to seek support or guidance from. I feared people and I felt that they feared me too. Having been brought up in the streets then from the institution, the perception was that "once a street boy always a street boy and a bad boy". Few people could trust me, few people could understand me, I felt more depressed and more of an outcast. I am trying to accept who I am, I have made friend and that is helping me a lot to stand on my own. I still feel like I need to advance my education, to start a family of my own and be a better parent. My hope and my determination is to learn life-skills to cope with the low self-esteem I have and to know how I can solve my personal problems."

8.2.8 Smith 27 Years

"During my childhood, I thought life was the way it was meant to be, as I grew up, my consciousness grew and the more it grew the smiles and the laughs I had enjoyed as a result of my ignorance started fading,. I grew up never questioning, never asking why, but accepting everything I was told, I was bullied by the older boys in the institution; they used to instruct us to steal, they used to make us fight when the caregivers were not around in the night. And sadly, some of the boys were even being sodomised by the older boys silently. At around 6pm for almost 8 years we used to be herded back to the dormitories, our pants removed to avoid us sneaking out, for 8 years I was not an individual but a group of children in an orphanage. No one knew my dreams and hopes, and I can't tell if I had either of the two. But each day that beckoned was hope enough.

I was a very withdrawn child; each day that passed in my life was cluttered with joy and sadness. I remember making bows, and arrows to imitate the famous "William Tell" I would always look forward to sneaking out to go cling on the windows grills to watch the favorite Television Programs. At the age of 8, i was happy when visitors came with sweets and biscuits and cooked food for a change of diet, I was glad I had a friend in the institution who died of spinal muscular dystrophy, who used to teach me how to read even before I went to school in exchange I used to help him when he called me below the bunk bed in the middle of the night to turn him around on the bed and I used to wash him, because he couldn't, I was glad at Christmas for the new clothes we got and the shoes that I got, and more fun is that I could eat a lot of different foods which was brought by the visitors.

Life after care became lonelier, even with my education, the void inside me could not be filled by friends nor any activity. I looked back and I felt sad, I looked ahead and I saw no future. I got ulcers, i cried the tears that I held back in my childhood in the nights. I think life without a person you can call a dad or mum, without a place to call home, without a person to love you in all seasons is a hard one. Each day am striving to know who I am, my purpose in life and what life is all about."

8.3 Questionnaire

Kenya Network of Care Leavers
"transforming the lives of young people from institutional care"

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, To everyone you can."
— Ancient Advice

	A. Demographics		
Q1	Sex	☐ Female	☐ Male
Q2	Date of birth	Day	Month
Q3	Where do you live at present? (select only one)	☐ Nairobi ☐ Outside Nairobi ☐ Other _____	
Q4	Do you have a disability?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Q5	Do you receive support for this disability?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Q6	Are you married?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Q7	Do you have child(ren)?	☐ Yes	☐ No

	B. Life in Institutional Care/Children's Home	
Q8	How old were you when you were taken or admitted to the institution?	
Q9	What were the reasons for admission into institutional care? (select all that apply)	☐ Separation of parents ☐ Poverty ☐ Death of parents ☐ Abuse ☐ Parents imprisoned ☐ Neglect ☐ Conflict at home ☐ Other _____
Q10	How many years did you spend in institutional care?	
Q11	At what age did you exit or move away from institutional care?	
Q12	How was life in institutional care? (select only one)	☐ Excellent ☐ Quite good ☐ Good ☐ Not so bad ☐ Bad ☐ Very bad
Q13	Did you feel stigmatized for living in institutional care?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q14	How do you feel about the housemothers/ housefathers/ teachers/ guardians in the institution? (If necessary feel free to tick more than one box.)	☐ Loving ☐ Very friendly ☐ Friendly ☐ Cold ☐ Strict ☐ Violent
Q15	Do you think the way you were treated as a child by your housemother's/ housefather's/ teacher's/ guardian's has affected your life now?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please specify how:
Q16	What did you miss in the institution? (select all that apply)	☐ Food ☐ Freedom ☐ Affection ☐ Privacy ☐ Your family ☐ Friends ☐ Protection ☐ Other _____
Q17	What did you like most in the institution? (select all that apply)	☐ Material support ☐ Friends ☐ Education/school ☐ Care ☐ Activities ☐ Other _____ ☐ Protection
Q18	What did you dislike most in the institution?	☐ Material support ☐ Rules

	(select all that apply)	☐ Education/school ☐ Activities ☐ Caregivers ☐ Other _____
Q19	How often did you see your family? (select all that apply)	☐ I did not receive any visits from my family ☐ I was visited by my family on special occasions ☐ My family visited me regularly
Q20	How often did you go home? (select all that apply)	☐ I went home only during Christmas holidays ☐ I went home during school holidays ☐ I never went home
Q21	Were you involved in decision-making about your care in the institution?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q22	How involved was your caregiver in your life in the institution? (select only one)	☐ Very involved ☐ Quite involved ☐ Reasonably involved ☐ Somewhat involved ☐ A little involved ☐ Not at all involved
C. Life After Care		
Q23	Do you have an ID (identity document)?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q24	Do you have a birth certificate?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q25	Do you have any siblings? (select only one)	☐ Yes, and we are in contact ☐ Yes, but we are not in contact ☐ No ☐ I do not know If you are not in contact, please specify how:
Q26	Do you feel discriminated as an orphan in the society?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q27	What difficulties do you face now? (select all that apply)	☐ Continuing education ☐ Paying rent ☐ Finding a job ☐ Health care ☐ Relationships ☐ Other _____
Q28	Are you able to afford food?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q28	Are you able to pay for your rent?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q30	Are you able to pay for your health care in case you are sick?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q31	Is there anyone or any organization that supports you?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, specify who and what kind of support:
Q32	Is the government doing anything to support you?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q33	Do you have a family now? (select only one)	☐ I have no family ☐ Mother and father ☐ Mother only ☐ Relatives ☐ Father only ☐ Non relatives
Q34	Are you in contact with your family?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q35	Do you have a mentor in your life?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Q36	How confident do you feel about finding a place to stay or rent? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident

Q37	How confident do you feel about furthering your studies? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q38	How confident do you feel about finding a job? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q39	How confident do you feel about managing budgeting your money? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q40	How confident do you feel about looking after yourself? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q41	How confident do you feel about contacting your family members? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q42	How confident do you feel about contacting your friends and guardians? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q43	How confident do you feel about accessing support services like health, housing, employment, education, etc.? (select only one)	☐ Very confident ☐ Quite confident ☐ Reasonably confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ A little confident ☐ Not at all confident	
Q44	What was your education level when you left care? (select only one)	☐ None ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Technical school ☐ College ☐ University	
Q45	Are you currently going to school? (select only one)	☐ None ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Technical school ☐ College ☐ University	
Q46	Are you employed at the moment? (select only one)	☐ Not employed ☐ Casual employment ☐ Permanent employment	
Q47	With whom are you staying with at the moment? (select all that apply)	☐ Alone ☐ Adoptive family ☐ Foster family ☐ Siblings	☐ Friends ☐ Parents ☐ Relatives
Q48	Do you know what a care plan is?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Q49	Did you have a care plan after admission to the institution?	☐ Yes	☐ No

Q50	Were you prepared to face life outside the institution?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, how:
Q51	What are the main challenges you faced after leaving care? Please list three.	1. 2. 3.
Q52	Were you involved in decision making when you were moving out of the institution? (select only one)	☐ Very involved ☐ Quite involved ☐ Reasonably involved ☐ Somewhat involved ☐ A little involved ☐ Not at all involved
Q53	Were you supported after leaving care?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, how? If no, how has this affected your life now?
Q54	Who do you ask for help when you are having problems? (select all that apply)	☐ Friends ☐ Employers ☐ Neighbors ☐ Children's homes ☐ Guardians ☐ Other organizations ☐ Parents ☐ Government ministries ☐ Sponsors ☐ No one
Q55	Do you know other organisations in the society that can help you as a Careleaver if you have problems?	☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, specify:
Q56	How would you describe your life now? (select only one)	☐ Very good ☐ Quite good ☐ Reasonably good ☐ Somewhat good ☐ A little good ☐ Not at all good
Q57	In one sentence: What would you want to see changed for you in your life?	
Q58	In one sentence: What would you say about your life now?	
Q59	**Final Comment** Tell us in brief your dreams and hopes. Thank You	