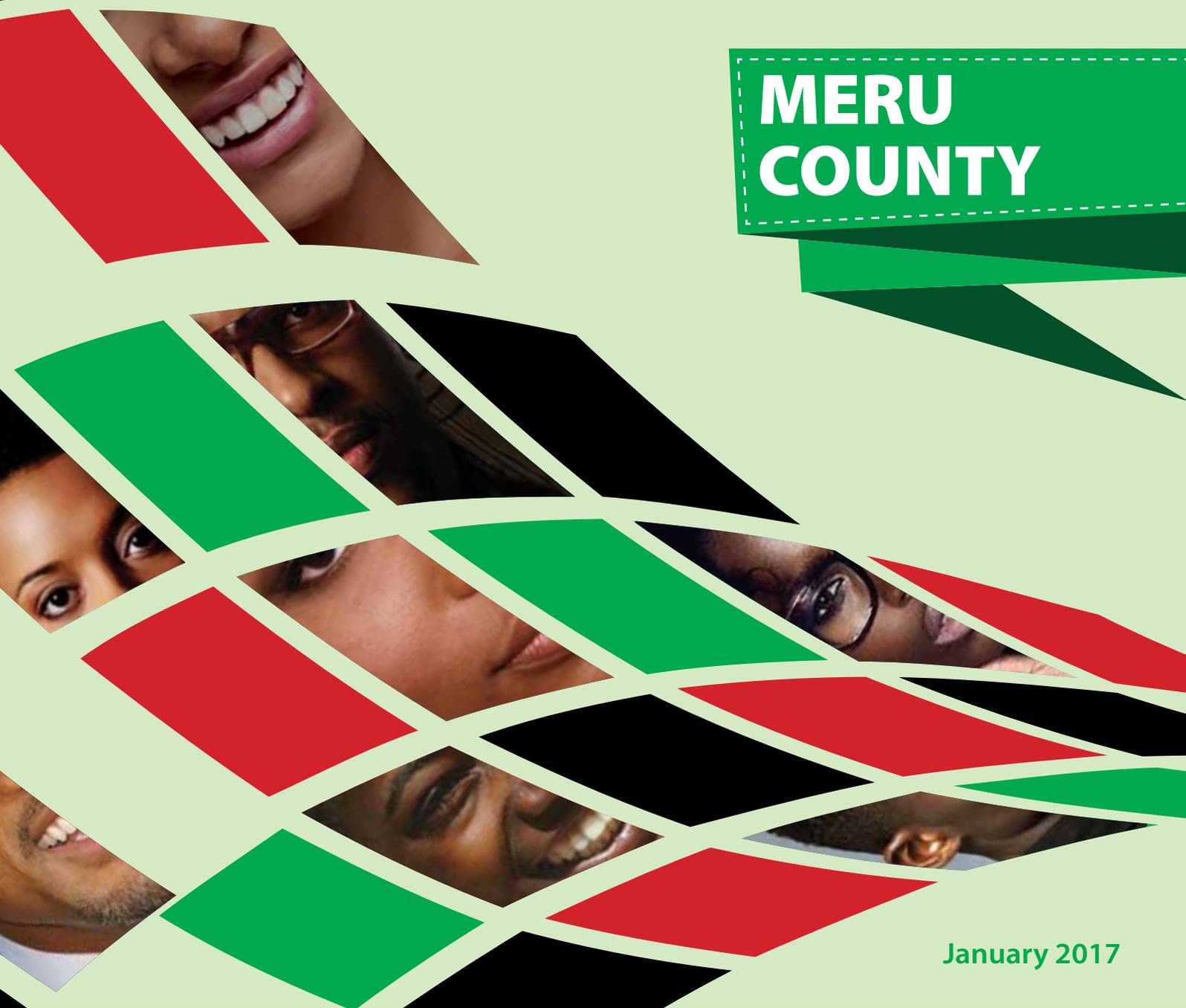




2015 KENYA NATIONAL **ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH** SURVEY (NAYS)

MERU
COUNTY



January 2017



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2015 KENYA NATIONAL
ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH SURVEY
(NAYS)

MERU COUNTY

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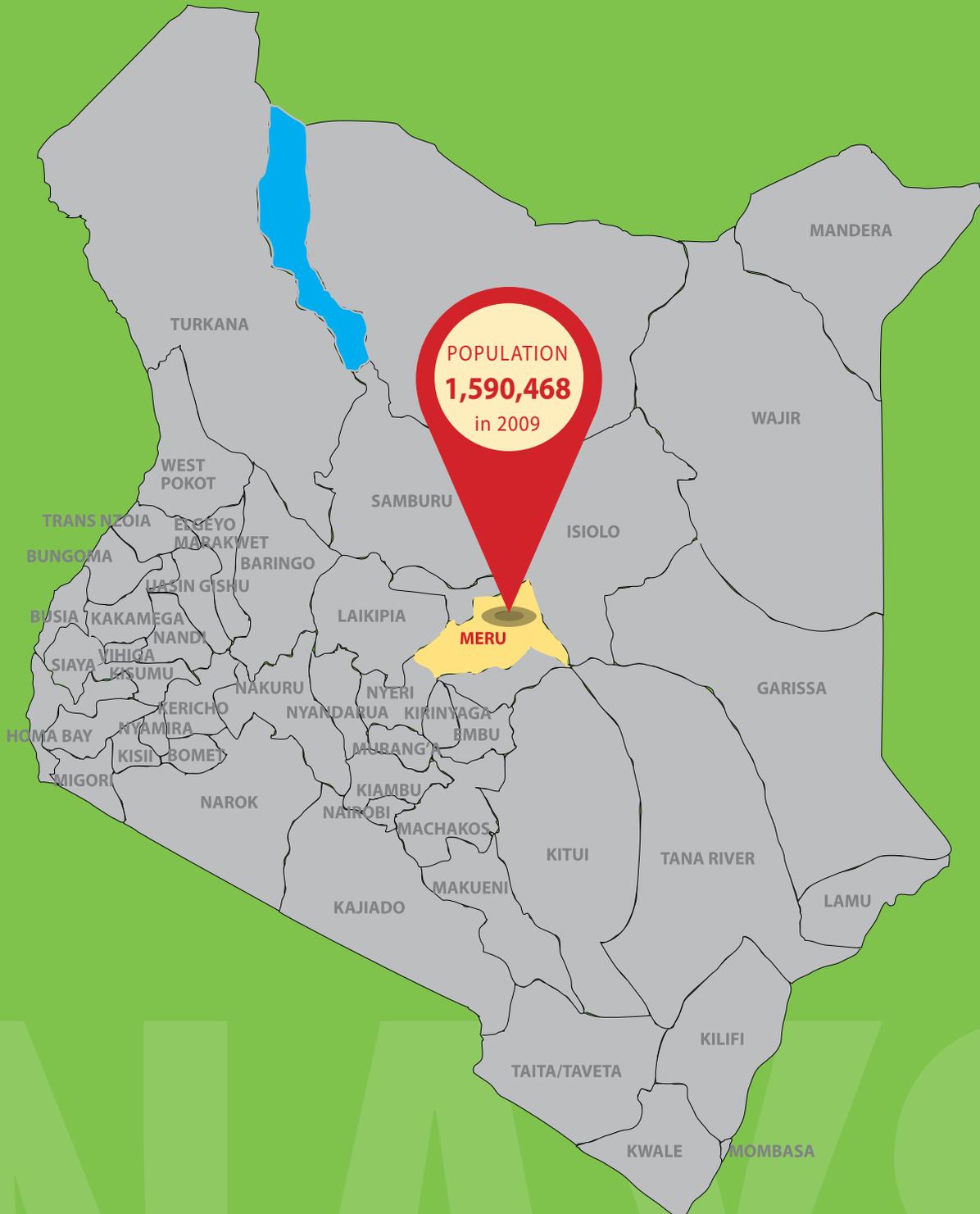
Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFIDEP	African Institute for Development Policy	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome	NASSEPV	National Sample Survey and Evaluation Programme
AGPO	Access to Government Procurement Opportunities	NAYS	National Adolescents and Youth Survey
CBO	Community Based Organization	NER	Net Enrolment Rate
CDF	Constituency Development Fund	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CPC	County Population Coordinators	NYS	National Youth Service
CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate	PADIS	Population, Administration, and Decision Information System International
DemDiv	Demographic Dividend	PWDs	People with Disabilities
DSA	Drug and Substance Abuse	SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
FHOK	Family Health Option Kenya	TFR	Total Fertility Rates
FP	Family Planning	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FPE	Free Primary Education	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate	WEF	Women Enterprise Fund
HDI	Human Development Index	YEDF	Youth Enterprise Development Fund
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus	YFS	Youth Friendly Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology		
IDI	In-Depth Interview		
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey		
KII	Key Informant Interview		
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research & Analysis		
KKV	Kazi Kwa Vijana		
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics		

Glossary of Terms

Demographic Dividend	The accelerated economic growth that is achieved through a reduction in the population growth rate coupled with strategic investments in the health, education, and economic opportunities for the population.
Demographic Window	Period when the proportion of a country's population aged below 15 years falls below 30 percent of the total population while at the same time the proportion of those aged 65 years and above is still below 15 percent of the total population.
Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)	This rate identifies the number of children newly admitted to the first year of school, regardless of age as a percentage of children who are entitled to admission.
Human Development Index	The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and income per capita indicators, which are used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores higher HDI when the life expectancy at birth is longer, the education period is longer, and the income per capita is higher.
Mwongozo	Code of governance for state corporations in Kenya.
Net Enrolment Rate (NER)	Age-specific corresponds to the legal admission age. Ratio of children of official school-age who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding school age.
Nyumba Kumi Initiative	Security model that encompasses groups of 10 houses with the aim of enhancing security.
Transition Rate	The proportion of children admitted, relative to the number of those who were, the year before, in the final school-year of the preceding level.

MERU COUNTY



Foreword

Kenya has a large population of young people below the age of 35 years. Three in every four Kenyans are young people. This population segment presents both a challenge and opportunity to the country's development agenda. The main challenge brought about by this population is the ever growing need for social services such as health, education, and other social amenities. Each year, an increasing number of these young people graduate from educational institutions thereby necessitating an increase in the creation of employment and income opportunities to meet the demands of this group. On the other hand, if Kenya can meet the social and economic needs of this population, then the socio-economic development of the country will be greatly enhanced. In this case the large population of young people will become an asset to the country. It is in recognition of this that the Government of Kenya has put in place several initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic opportunities and well-being of young people.

The demographic dividend concept advocates for strategic investments in health, education, economic and governance with a view of ensuring that the population of young people is healthy, well-educated, trained for the job market, and economically engaged in a well governed environment. Kenya subscribes to the ideals of this concept whose eventual outcome is accelerated socio-economic growth and improved quality of life which is in line with the aspirations of *Kenya Vision 2030*. In this regard, Kenya's challenge is to match the population growth rate with the available resources.

Results from the modelling of Kenya's demographic dividend potential, which was done in 2014, showed impressive results that the country can achieve on the social and economic fronts when strategic investments are made in these sectors. However, for Kenya to realize these benefits, each of the forty seven counties in the country will have to make strategic investments in health, education, economic, and governance so that the full potential of young people can be harnessed and socio-economic growth accelerated. The 2015 Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey (NAYS) was occasioned by the need to provide each county with information on their respective demographic dividend potential and the specific actions that they need to undertake to realize this potential. This report will therefore be very useful to counties when planning for their respective development activities. It is my hope that each county will make use of this report and contribute to making Kenya a better country where citizens enjoy a high quality of life in a safe environment.

Mr. Saitoti Torome, CBS
Principal Secretary
State Department of Planning

Acknowledgment

The Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey (NAYS) was conducted in 2015 with the goal of contributing to the country's efforts of harnessing the potential of the young people in accelerating national development. Results from this survey will inform counties on the actions that they need to undertake in order to achieve accelerated economic growth

The 2015 NAYS was implemented through a collaborative effort between NCPD and various partners and stakeholders. In this regard, NCPD would like to thank the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Norwegian Government, through the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), for both their technical and financial support to the survey.

The implementation of the 2015 NAYS was guided by a Task Force made up of two committees, namely; Steering and Technical Committees. The Steering Committee provided advice on the conceptualisation and the implementation strategies and modalities while the Technical Committee was responsible for the development of the survey tools, recruitment and training of the research assistants, coordination, and supervision of data collection, data processing, analysis and report writing. NCPD is grateful to members of the two committees.

The NCPD's County Population Coordinators (CPCs) were responsible for introducing the research assistants to the various counties under their jurisdiction and ensuring their smooth movement within the counties. They were also responsible for conducting the Key Informant Interviews. Given the success of the fieldwork, NCPD would like to thank all the CPCs.

Finally, NCPD would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council of Governors and the individual Governors for facilitating the entry of the research teams into the counties, and the respondents in all the counties who participated in the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and the key informant interviews. These respondents include community members, pupils, students, health workers, and heads of learning institutions, programme managers, employers, and government officials. The information that was provided by these respondents facilitated the development of this report. It is therefore NCPD's hope that this report will be useful to all the counties as they contribute to the national efforts towards harnessing the demographic dividend.

Dr. Josephine Kibaru-Mbae, OGW
 Director General
 National Council for Population and Development

Executive Summary

This report presents the Meru County profile based on the findings of the 2015 National Adolescents and Youth Survey conducted by the National Council for Population and Development, (NCPD), in conjunction with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Youth Department, KNBS and various development partners. The survey covered all the 47 counties with the multiple objectives of examining what potential exists for a demographic dividend in each of the 47 counties, identify health, education, economic and governance issues that affect young people in each county, identifying what specific investment opportunities that could accelerate achievement of the demographic dividend and providing policy and programme recommendations based on the survey findings.

This report interrogates the demographic profile of the county and the prevailing socio-economic indicators of the county and further identifies the challenges and opportunities that exist for harnessing the benefits of a growing youth population. The report therefore presents an overview of the demographic, health, education, economic and governance indicators which are the main sectors whose performance impact on building a county that would be responsive to the young people.

The total population of Meru County in 2009 was 1,590,468 people and is projected to increase to 2.2 million by year 2030 and to 2.6 million by year 2050 if the current fertility and mortality levels persist. The County has a high proportion of the population (39.5 percent) below age 15 but this population is projected to decrease to 28.9 percent and 22.5 percent in the year 2030 and 2050 respectively. As the proportion of population of the young people declines, it is projected that the working age population will increase from 56 percent in 2009 to 68.9 percent in 2050 and the aging population from 4.6 in 2009 percent to 8.6 percent in 2050. These population changes will result in the dependency ratio declining from 78.7 to 45.2 over the same period. Consequently, the county's demographic window of opportunity is projected to open in the year 2023 and close in 2063.

Meru County has a fertility rate of 3.1 children per woman and is one of the few counties in the country in which the majority of married women are using contraception. Seventy-eight percent of the married women in the county are using contraceptives. Eighty-three percent of all births in the county are delivered by a skilled health worker and 84 percent of the children 12-23 months are fully vaccinated. The prevalence rate of HIV is 3 percent compared to the national level of 6.4 percent.

In regard to education, the primary school net enrolment rate is 94. This means that about 6 percent of the primary school age children are out of school in the county. However, the secondary school net enrolment rate secondary level is much lower (57.5 percent) than the primary school net rate. This implies that the county has a low primary to secondary transition rate. It is estimated that 52,757 secondary school age children are out of school.

The Human Development Index (HDI) which is a composite index that measures the levels of literacy, health and economic well being stands at 0.551 which is close to better than the national average of 0.520.

In the context of the four pillars of the demographic dividend, the survey found the following findings:

Health Issues affecting Young People

The main health issues affecting young people are drug and substance abuse, STIs and HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy. These issues have led to the deterioration in health standards in the county and are mostly caused by poverty and lack of jobs which have rendered youth being idle. For the health situation of young people to improve, there is need to create employment opportunities, conduct public health awareness on health issues and provision of counselling services to the young people.

Issues affecting Education of Young People

The main issues reported to be affecting the education of young people in Meru County included lack of school fees, drug and substance abuse, child labour and absenteeism by teachers and students. These have mainly been caused by peer pressure, poor parental guidance, poverty and lack of good role models and have led to increase in school drop outs and poor education standards. To reverse the situation, there is need to create awareness on the dangers of drug and substance abuse and invest more on education.

Economic Issues Affecting Young People

The survey revealed that young people in Meru County are mainly involved in business, farming and boda boda. The main challenges encountered in engaging in or searching for economic opportunities include poor pay and harassment /exploitation by employer, lack of business capital, lack of necessary skills for employment and boda boda accidents. For the economic status of young people in Meru to improve, there is need to create more employment opportunities, to provide affordable loans, enforcement of laws on child labour and empower youth with entrepreneurial and vocational skills.

Regarding ICT, the main challenges affecting the sector in the county were mentioned as high cost of connectivity such as TV decoders and lack of skills to use internet. It is recommended that connectivity be improved and the government to ensure lower cost of ICT connectivity and provide skills in schools.

Governance issues Affecting the Youth

The main cases reported to be prevalent in Meru County include land disputes, crime, family disputes and SGBV. These issues are mainly solved by council of elders, administration and courts of law. The processes are hampered by certain challenges the main ones being corruption, lack of knowledge on land boundaries and cost of solving the cases. For the governance situation to improve there is need to address corruption in courts and administration, increase public awareness on cohesion, issue title deeds and empower youth with skills for employment.



INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Youth in Kenya

The United Nations uses the terms youth and young people interchangeably to mean people aged 15-24 years with the understanding that member states and other entities may use different definitions. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) defines youth as those individuals who have attained the age of 18 years but have not attained the age of 35 years. Those aged 18-34 years constitute about 30 percent of Kenya's total population while those aged 0-34 years constitute 78 percent of the population. This youthful population is a demographic asset and investing in their education, health, skill development and employment prospects will accelerate a demographic dividend. To reap the benefits of this dividend, Kenya must make sound investment in health, education and economic development.

1.1.2 The Demographic Dividend

The demographic dividend refers to the accelerated economic development that a country can attain by slowing down the pace of population growth while at the same time making strategic investments in the health, education, economic, and governance sectors. The demographic dividend concept is being popularized in developing countries as a potential solution to their development challenges. In embracing this concept, Kenya modelled the demographic dividend in 2014 using the DemDiv Model that was developed by Futures Group. The modelling of Kenya's demographic dividend was supported by USAID through the Health Policy Project. Results from the model showed that Kenya could achieve the following results by 2050 through implementation of activities aimed at achieving the demographic dividend: Investments per capita will increase to about US\$ 2,000 from the current figure of about US\$ 200; Fertility levels will decline to an average of 2 children per woman from the current 4 children per woman thereby decreasing the dependency ratio: Even with an increase in the population size, the employment gap (i.e. people in the labour force who are not active) will be 8 million which is less than the current gap of 10 million. These results are consistent with the aspirations of *Kenya Vision 2030*.

1.1.3 Population Size, Growth and Composition

The population of Kenya was enumerated at 38.6 million during the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census. It was estimated to be increasing at a rate of 1 million people each year representing a

growth rate of about 2.9 percent annually. From the census results, the dependency ratio was recorded at 87 dependents for every 100 people in the working ages (15-64 years). The same census also indicated that Kenya's population-age structure is youthful because the population of children below the age of 15 years was 43 percent, way above the cut-off limit of 35 percent. This was corroborated by the fact that those aged below 35 years constitute 78 percent of the country's total population. This population-age structure does not lend itself to the country's efforts to attain a rapid economic growth because most of the resources are spent on meeting the ever increasing social needs (health, housing, education, water and sanitation) of the fast growing population.

Kenya's Population Policy for National Development recognizes that the rapid growth in the population size is a constraint to national development. To counter this, the policy proposes a reduction in the fertility levels from 5 children per woman in 2009 to 2 children per woman in 2050. According to the 2014 KDHS, the fertility level was 4 children per woman in 2014 which is a clear indication that the fertility levels are dropping. If this trend continues and Kenya achieves a fertility level of 2 children by 2050 then the population size will increase to 59 million in 2030 and 75 million in 2050 with the proportion of those aged below 15 years decreasing to 33 and 25 percent respectively. The dependency ratio for the country in 2030 and 2050 will be 57 and 45 dependents for every 100 people in the working ages (15-64 years) respectively.

1.2 Survey Rationale

In 2014, NCPD and various partners modeled Kenya's demographic dividend using the DemDiv model. The impressive results from the modeling exercise showed that Kenya could achieve accelerated socio-economic growth through targeted investments. However, it was recognized that for this to happen, each of the 47 counties would have to play a role. Unfortunately, information on the demographic dividend potential for each county and the specific activities that they each need to implement so as to benefit from this potential was largely lacking. Given the differences in the health, education, economic and governance status of the counties, it was necessary to conduct this survey to generate county specific information on the demographic dividend potential and activities that need to be implemented. With this information at hand, each county would know what they need to do to harness the potential of their youthful population.

1.3 Survey Goal and Objectives

Survey goal

The goal of the 2015 National Adolescents and Youth Survey was to provide solid evidence on how the growing youth population can be harnessed to accelerate economic growth and achieve a demographic dividend.

Survey objectives

The objectives of the 2015 NAYS were:

- a. To generate a profile of adolescents and young people in each county. This includes the population size, age distribution, and socio-demographic characteristics.
- b. Identify Health, Education, Economic and Governance issues that affect young people in each county.
- c. Identify investment opportunities in the key sectors in each county.
- d. Provide policy and programme recommendations based on the survey findings.

1.4 Survey Organization

The implementation of the survey was facilitated by two committees; Steering and Technical committees whose members were drawn from different organisations representing the different sectors that have a key role in the country's efforts to harness the demographic dividend. Members of the Steering Committee were involved in providing policy guidance and field work monitoring while members of the Technical Committee were involved in giving technical input and supervision of field teams alongside the NCPD County Population Coordinators.

1.4.1 Pre-test

The survey pre-test was conducted in April 2015, where 26 Technical Committee members and a selection of research assistants participated. The purpose of the pre-test was to check on the flow and meaning of questions, language used in the tools, and the time it would take to administer each tool. During the pre-test, the programme for the fieldwork training was developed and reviewed to ensure that the training for the fieldwork would cover all the necessary aspects that are required to fully equip the research assistants in readiness for the data collection exercise.

1.4.2 Trainings

The Technical Committee members were trained for three days, in February 2015, on demographic dividend and its applicability in the Kenyan context so that they could be conversant with the concept before embarking on the development of the survey tools. This enabled the Technical Committee members to develop the data collection tools that responded to the objectives of the survey.

In April 2015, thirty-four (34) research assistants were competitively recruited for data collection in the 47 counties. They were trained from 29th April to 9th May 2015 in Nakuru. The trainees were taken through the survey tools, materials and modalities of recruiting the respondents for the different tools that were to be administered. They were also trained on how to conduct interviews. Different methodologies and approaches were used in the training to ensure that the research assistants were well equipped to collect quality data.

1.5 Survey Methodology and Implementation

The NAYS survey used two methodologies namely; quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative methodology involved the desk review of secondary data from the *2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census*, the *2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS)*, the 2014 Economic Survey and the *2014 Basic Education Statistical Booklet*. These sources were used to generate information on population, health, education, and economic issues at both national and county levels. It presented a synopsis of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the country and each of the counties. The quantitative methodology also involved the generation of population projection data for each of the counties using **PADIS software**. The qualitative methodology involved the collection of qualitative data through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews.

1.5.1 Survey Tools

In collecting the qualitative data, the following tools were used:

- a. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) guides for conducting focus group discussions.
- b. Key Informant Interview (KII) guides for conducting key informant interviews with policy/ decision makers at county level.
- c. In-Depth Interview (IDI) guides conducting in-depth interviews with service providers in health, education, and economic sectors.
- d. Check list for youth-serving organisations.

The FGD, KII, and IDI guides were used to solicit information on the key issues affecting the wellbeing and participation of young people in terms of health, education, economic opportunities and governance. In addition to this, the tools were used to collect information on how the identified issues could be addressed. The checklist for youth serving organisations was used to assess the state of health and education facilities and services for young people.

1.5.2 Sampling

The sample for the qualitative component of the survey was national in scope covering the 47 counties in Kenya. These counties were clustered into 16 survey regions based on social-demographic characteristics. Table 1.1 shows the clustering of all the counties from which the set of all the tools were administered.

Table 1.1 Cluster counties by study regions

	Region	Counties
1.	Nairobi	Nairobi
2.	North Eastern	Garrisa, Wajir, Mandera
3.	Upper Eastern	Isiolo, Marsabit
4.	Central Eastern	Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi
5.	Lower Eastern	Kitui, Makueni, Machakos
6.	North Rift (1)	Trans Nzoia, West Pokot, Turkana,
7.	North Rift (2)	UasinGishu, Elgeiyo Marakwet, Nandi
8.	Central Rift	Nakuru, Kericho, Bomet, Baringo
9.	South Rift	Kajiado, Narok, Samburu
10.	Western	Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, Busia
11.	Nyanza South	Kisii, Nyamira, Migori (Kuria)
12.	Nyanza North	Kisumu, Siaya, Homa Bay, Migori (Luo)
13.	Central (1)	Kiambu, Murang'a, Kirinyaga,
14.	Central (2)	Nyeri, Nyandarua, Laikipia
15.	Coast (1)	Mombasa, Kwale, TaitaTaveta,
16.	Coast (2)	Tana River, Lamu, Kilifi

In mapping out areas where the data was collected from, the survey was guided by the National Sample Survey and Evaluation Programme (NASSEP V) which is developed and managed by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Each tool was administered to targeted respondents who had been determined using criteria that had been set prior to the survey field work. The criteria used to recruit those who would participate in the focus group discussions were age, sex, and schooling status. FGDs were conducted for the following age groups 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-34 and 35-60 year olds. Given the survey objectives, the young people responded to issues on health, education, economic, and governance that touched on their daily lives. The older age groups (35-60 years) gave their perceptions on health, education, economic, and governance as it relates to the young people. In order to triangulate the information collected, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were used to collect information from key informants and service providers respectively. The KIIs

were administered to policy makers' in-charge of the specific sectors of interest in the counties. The respondents to the IDIs were service providers in the health, education and economic sectors.

Table 1.2 and 1.3 show that the target for each county was 8 Key Informant Interviews, 8 In-Depth Interviews, and 9 Focus Group Discussions.

Table 1.2 Key informant interviews and in-depth interviews sample frame for each county

Sector	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)
Health	County Executive Committee Member (CEC) – Health OR Chief Officer Health OR County Director of Health	1. Health Facility In-charge 2. Manager In-charge of Youth Serving Organisation in Health
Education	1. County Director of Education (CDE) 2. County Executive Committee Member (CEC) - Education	1. Primary School with Pre-primary – School heads (1 public School) 2. Secondary School – Principals (1 public school) 3. Tertiary Institutions – Dean of student (1) 4. TVET (1)
Economy	1. County Director of Youth Development 2. County Executive Committee Member (CEC) - Youth Affairs 3. CEC to be selected depending on the main economic activity of the county	1. Enterprise Development Fund Representative (UWEZO, YEDF, WEF etc) 2. A leading employer in the County
Governance	1. County Commissioner 2. County Executive Committee Member (CEC) – Public Administration	N/A

Table 1.3 Focus group discussions sample frame for each county

Group	Additional Criteria	No. of FGDs	Place
Young people, Age 10-14	1 for males and 1 for females	2	School
Young people, Age 15-19	1 for males and 1 for females	2	School
Young people, Age 15-19	1 mixed group out of school (male & female, married & unmarried)	1	Community
Young people Age 15-24	1 for marginalized populations	1	Community
Young people, Age 20-24	1 for married and unmarried youths	1	Community
Young people, Age 25-34	1 for married and unmarried youths	1	Community
Older people, Age 35-60	1 for older people (male and female)	1	Community

1.5.3 Data Collection

Data collection was done by 16 teams, each consisting of two research assistants. The fieldwork commenced on 11th May and ended on 31st July 2015. Each team was assigned two or three counties for data collection. In addition to this, each team had a vehicle and a driver to ensure smooth movement during the data collection exercise. Using the field work plan developed during the fieldwork training, the research assistants systematically collected data from their assigned regions. Throughout this process, they were guided by their respective supervisors. At the end of each day the team members got together to share their experiences and prepare the day's summaries. This sharing helped the teams to strategize the next day's work. Table 1.1 summarizes the response rate for the interviews conducted using the FGD, KII, and IDI guides.

Table 1.4 shows that IDIs had the highest response at 93 percent followed by FGDs at 92 percent. KIIs, which targeted the policy makers at county level, had the lowest response rate at 78 percent.

Table 1.4 Survey response rates

	Focus Group Discussions	Key Informant Interviews	In-Depth Interviews
Interviews Targeted	423	376	376
Interviews Conducted	389	294	348
Coverage (percent)	92%	78%	93%

1.5.4 Data Processing and Analysis

As part of the data collection exercise, the interviews were captured using both digital recorders and note books. The data was then transcribed in the original language of the interview after which it was translated into English language in cases where the interview language was not English. The hard copies of the English scripts were then typed using Microsoft Word to convert them into soft copies. This was done by the research assistants. On receipt of the data at NCPD headquarters, the same was handed over to data clerks for checking, cleaning and processing.

The quantitative data was processed using SPSS and PADIS while the qualitative data was processed using NVIVO QRS (version 10) software. NVIVO software was used to access, organize, manage, shape, code, explore, extract and analyse the textual data. A team of thirteen (13) data clerks were trained on how to process the data using this software. To ensure consistency and quality, two supervisors reviewed and verified the coded data.

2

MERU COUNTY SURVEY FINDINGS

2.1 Background

Meru County lies to the east of Mt. Kenya and straddles the equator. It shares borders with Laikipia County to the west, Nyeri to the south west, and Tharaka Nithi to the east and Isiolo to the North. The County has a total area of 6,936.2 km² out of which 1,776.1 Km² is gazetted forest. The County receives moderate amounts of rainfall except for the lower parts of Buuri area bordering Isiolo County which are arid. The County comprises of nine administrative sub-counties namely, Tigania East, Tigania West, Igembe North, Igembe South, North Imenti, South Imenti, Buuri, Igembe Central and Central Imenti.

2.2 Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics

2.2.1 Population Size and Age Distribution

Population size and structure are important factors that affect economic development. Table 2.1 presents the population size and structure of Meru County.

Table 2.1 Population size and structure

Demographic	2009	2030	2050
Population Size	1,590,468	2,159,359	2,585,662
Proportion of Population Below Age 15	39.5%	28.9%	22.5%
Proportion of Population Above Age 64	4.6%	4.6%	8.6%
Proportion of Population in the Working Ages (15-64)	55.9%	66.5%	68.9%
Dependency Ratio	78.7	50.5	45.20%
Year Demographic Window of Opportunity Opens	2023		

The total population of Meru County in 2009 was 1,590,468 people according to the Population and housing census (2009). This population is projected to rise to over 2 million by year 2030 and over 2.5 million by year 2050 if the current fertility and mortality levels persist. The County has a high population (39.5 percent) below age 15 but this is projected to decrease to 28.9 percent and 22.5 percent in the years 2030 and 2050 respectively. As the proportion of population of the young people

declines, it is projected that the working age population will increase from 55.9 percent to 68.9 percent and the aging population from 4.6 percent to 8.6 percent, between 2009 and 2050, respectively. These population changes will result in the dependency ratio declining from 78.7 to 45.2 over the same period. Consequently, the demographic window of opportunity is estimated to open by the year 2023.

2.2.2 Socio-economic Characteristics

Social economic characteristics partly show the level of wellbeing of the population. Table 2.2 presents social economic characteristics of Meru County.

Table 2.2 Meru county's socio-economic indicators

Socio-economic characteristics	Indicators	
Health	Average Number of Children Per Woman	3.1
	Proportion of Married Women Using Contraception	78.2%
	Proportion of Births Attended by A Skilled Health Worker	82.8%
	HIV Prevalence	3.0%
	Children 12-23 months fully vaccinated	83.9%
Education	Primary School Net Enrolment Rate	93.6%
	Primary School Pupil-Teacher Ratio	27.8
	Number of Primary School-Age Children Out of School	19,245
	Secondary School Net Enrolment Rate	57.7%
	Secondary School Pupil-Teacher Ratio	19.3
	Number of Secondary School-Age Teenagers Out of School	52,757
Socio-economic	Human Development Index	0.551

Meru County has a total fertility rate of 3.1 children per woman. This figure is lower than the national TFR of 3.9 but higher than what is witnessed in other counties like Kirinyaga (2.3). The proportion of women using contraceptives is high (78.2 percent) and this should result in reduction in TFR. Similarly, the proportion of births attended by a skilled worker is high as well as the percentage of children 12-23 months fully immunised. The prevalence of HIV stands at 3 percent compared to the national level of 6.4 percent.

In regard to education, the primary school net enrolment ate shows 93.6 percent of children who should be in school are enrolled. This means that about 19,245 (6.4 percent) school age children are out of school. Net enrolment at secondary level is much lower (57.5 percent) than the primary school

net enrolment rate. This implies a high dropout rate after the completion of primary education. It is projected that 52,757 secondary school age children are out school in the county.

The Human Development Index (HDI) which is a composite index that measures the levels of literacy, health and economic well being stands at 0.551 which is close to better than the national average of 0.520.

2.3 Health and Young People

The health of young people is an important factor that ensures full their potential is utilised. The survey participants were asked matters regarding health in the County; the issues affecting them, their causes and consequences and possible ways of addressing them. The main findings are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Health and Young People

Main Health problems	Causes	Consequences	Ways of addressing these problems
Drug and Substance abuse	Poverty	Mental health	Create employment
Communicable diseases	Idleness	Poverty	Public education and awareness
STI and HIV/AIDS		Poor health	Counselling
Teenage pregnancy			Provide life skills
SGBV			

Drug and substance abuse, STI, HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy were the most commonly mentioned health issues in the County. Alcohol, bhang, khat and kuber¹ were the highly mentioned drugs by the participants. These problems were generally said to be common and are caused mainly by idleness and poverty. Other causes include lack of adequate drugs in hospitals and corruption whereby government drugs are diverted to private health facilities. The issues in turn have resulted in deeper poverty levels and poor health, with some victims suffering mental health.

“As I support what he has said, sometimes you go and get a prescription and asked to buy medicines out there. Out there they give you directions to somewhere, like go to his / her shop or to someone, to show that may be there are some issues it’s like doctors have connects between the hospital and that chemist. Because he directs you to a particular place you will get that medication. Now that should be looked into.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

¹Kuber is basically a drug which is either sniffed or put under the tongue. Nowadays, there is a brand that is actually mixed with bhang and cocaine.

One of the facility in charge interviewed mentioned that family issue are also rampant and affecting health in the County.

“The family issues are many and we deal with them almost every day in this clinic. Sometimes we are forced to re-book the appointments. And usually most of these health issues we book for a minimum of four sessions.”

(Health Facility in-Charge, Meru)

2.3.1 Access and Availability of Health Information and Services

The respondents were asked about access and availability of health information and services and the main findings are shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Main sources of health information and services

Sources of health information	Types of Health Information & Services	Usefulness of Information	Preferred Sources
Health facilities	STI/ HIV	Increases knowledge	Media
Media (Radio, TV)	Drug and substance abuse (DSA)	Right diagnosis	Health facility
School	Sexuality education	Disease prevention	School
Religious organisations	Disease prevention and diagnosis	Behaviour change	Public forums
Public health talks	Hygiene and sanitation		

The main sources of health information and services in the County were health facilities, media, schools and religious organisations. However, information from these sources was said to be rare. Participants indicated that their preferred key sources of information were media, schools and health facilities including outreaches. According to the FGD respondents, these organisations mainly deal with issues of STIs, HIV and AIDS, DSA, sexuality education, disease prevention and hygiene. A manager of one of the Youth serving organisations also mentioned that they conduct a lot of work in counselling in reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP) including HIV counselling and treatment for most-at-risk population (MARPs). However, the facility in-charge feels that the word MARP is scaring away potential clients although uptake of commodities is high as indicated by one health facility manager.

“Uptake is very high, actually we live out condoms ‘hapa’ (here in a dispenser), they just disappear, they just go, there is a time also we had tried to introduce the female condoms also but they didn’t do so well.”

[Manager in charge of youth serving organisation in health, Meru]

The participants appreciate the information provided and highlighted that these has increased awareness on health issues thus preventing the spread of diseases. In turn the behaviour of the residents change hence improving the health situation. However, some participants felt that the health centres are not youth friendly.

“You know first it is hard to explain to the health providers in public hospitals here in Meru. For example a pregnant girl might go to the hospital and even before they assist her, they condemn her. I don’t know what age is this. So you see in such a case it is hard to explain yourself.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

The participants also indicated that there are health services for disabled people in form of wheel chairs and financial assistance from CDF.

The respondents were also asked about sexual and reproductive health (SRH/FP) information and services available, the challenges in access and possible solutions. The findings are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 SRH/FP information and services

Main SRH/FP information & services available & accessible	Challenges in accessing SRH/FP information & services	Addressing Challenges
Condoms Contraceptive pills Injectables	Stigma and Fear Inadequate health facilities Lack of enough drugs Time constraints Ignorance Cost of services Negative attitude by providers Inadequate personnel	Youthful health care providers Youth friendly services Create public awareness Provide free or subsidised services Gender preference for health care providers

The findings showed that the main SRH/FP information available is on contraceptives and specifically condoms, pills and injectables. Several challenges hinder full access to the information and services and these include stigma, inadequate health facilities, and lack of sufficient drugs among others. The recommendations that were highly mentioned include establishment of youth friendly centres, creation of awareness to general public, provision of free commodities, gender balance of health care providers.

“If the games were revived and then the staff should be young people because at times you find that it is a youth friendly but the health providers is an old woman two or three years to retirement. To express yourself to this woman is hard, you feel like you are talking to your mother. So you can tell her everything. If it was a young man or woman, someone who you can share with anything you cannot hesitate to go.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

A health policy maker interviewed during the survey recommended that,

“Our community strategy needs to be strengthened and identify community health workers who are able to carry out the mission of the strategy...we set it out such that they understand their areas of coverage in disseminating health information and services. This strategy need not to be uniform for every sub county because of the uniqueness of some areas, this strategy can also be replicated in other sectors like education and agriculture.”

[KII. Health Policy Maker, Meru]

2.3.2 Organisations Addressing Health

The respondents were asked to name the organisations dealing with health issues in the County. The ones that were mentioned most include government, Religious organisations and NGOs. These organisations are addressing specific health issues e.g. cancer and care for orphans. Some respondents however said that they have never heard of such organisations especially in their areas of residence.

“Also NACADA helps but it does not help the youth much. For example they visit offices offering drug abuse awareness. Their work is not campaigns. They give documents like calendars and books but getting to the youths is on neutral knowledge.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

The participants feel that the organisations are increasing awareness on health issues and improving the general health and living standards of the County. One of the officers in charge agreed with the FGD participants and said that the partnerships have assisted a lot in behaviour change.

“Actually they have assisted because like this one (referring to R11) when they were being trained by Samaritan PAS. They were training many people and to create awareness and how a person can protect from HIV AIDS and they have helped people a lot. IF you look at Giving Hope even the children that are orphans if only you are registered or you get a person to guide you to there, they take you, and pay for you school fees, they also make for these children uniforms and a child is able to get assistance to a certain age. With those we are with them in different ways, in vocational training, you will see a person being trained on shaving (Kinyozi) and starts his own business. Others are trained on tailoring and they can make clothes. Furniture, mechanic, such things they are assisted those who can be reached.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

2.3.3 Opportunities for Improvement

The participants identified areas that could improve the health situation of the County. Key areas that were mentioned include more awareness creation on health issues, availability of adequate medicine and guidance and counselling. In addition, there is need for creation of youth friendly environment.

“Like you said earlier, if they can provide those youth friendly centres it can help. And in the community, education and training is given to the youths in churches. If it was given by the government through chiefs and sub-chiefs, it can help because not all youths go to church.”

[FGD.. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

2.4 Education and Young People

2.4.1 Issues Affecting Education

The respondents were asked to highlight the main issues affecting the education sector, their causes and consequences and possible ways of addressing the issues. The key findings are shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 Issues affecting education

Main Education Issues affecting Young People	Causes	Consequences	Ways of addressing these problems
Lack of school fees	Peer pressure	School drop outs	Public education on DSA
Drug and substance abuse (DSA)	Poor parental guidance	Poor academic results	Invest in learning institutions
Child labour	Lack of role models	School absenteeism	Relax school punishments
School drop outs	Myths	Lack of concentration	
Absenteeism by teachers and students	Poverty		
Corporal punishment			

Survey findings reveal that the major issues affecting the education sector are lack of school fees, DSA, child labour, school dropouts and absenteeism by teachers and students. Punishment including corporal punishment was also an issue affecting education since it leads to student fearing attending school. There have been efforts by some vocational training institutions to encourage girls to enrol in male dominated course such as electrical installation. The main drivers of these issues were said to be peer pressure, poor parental guidance, lack of role models and poverty. The issues have resulted in poor academic results in the County.

To demonstrate the magnitude of the problem of DSA, a county health policy maker interviewed for the survey stated:

“As you may see these are miraa (khat) areas, one of the thing people has developed as a culture and miraa farms have taken over all the land so the community is not growing local foods for their consumption...in order to do miraa farming you find that children labour is required especially harvesting where they climb the miraa trees. You find that the children get paid to do the work so at the end of the day they don’t see the reason why they should go to school if they can get money easily. Miraa harvesting is done throughout the day so it interferes with their schooling. Many youths are involved those 10 years and above...those involved in it will be poor performers in school or they drop out of school. They are involved in chewing miraa, cigarettes smoking and alcoholism which in return leads to unwanted pregnancies and early marriages.”

[KII. County Health Policy Maker, Meru]

The main proposals for improvement include investing more on education facilities, relaxing of school rules on punishments and public awareness on issues such as DSA. One of the head teachers interviewed also mentioned the importance of getting role models and proper remuneration for teachers. He stressed that there is need to review the areas considered as hardship areas to include places like Timau. A county policy maker in education summed it up:

“What I would say is that for provision of quality education in the county it’s not an affair of the national government alone it’s a collaborative effort that will encompass all the players, the county government, churches and all the private sector because the outcome of education will have effect on all those other sectors. And those who have benefited from education should go back and be role models and give back to the society and especially those who are less fortunate.”

[KII. County Education Policy Maker, Meru]

2.4.2 Availability and Accessibility of Education Services

When asked about adequacy of education facilities in schools, there were mixed reactions whereby the facilities were thought to be enough in one school/classroom and inadequate in others. For the people with disabilities, the respondents said that there are facilities mainly for primary school pupils and a few for secondary schools.

“We have St Lucy for the visually impaired and it’s a public school in Imenti south, we have Meru School for the physically challenged, we have Kaga School for the hearing impaired which is near Meru town. We have primary schools that have integrated some aspects of the special needs program into their curriculum.”

[KII. County Education Policy Maker, Meru]

One of the facility in-charge interviewed said that youths are shunning away from polytechnics due to the notion that they were established for failures; they would rather train with an established technician through mentorship. One of the managers in a vocational training college said that the curriculum is relevant but there are discussions to revise it.

2.4.3 Organisations and Individuals Addressing Education and Training Challenges

When asked about organisations assisting in the education sector, they mentioned government, private organisations (Equity Bank's Wings to fly), NGOs, and religious organisations. The organisations are mainly helping with bursaries to poor students. However, participants also indicated there was a decline in the number of available NGOs while some said they were not aware of any organization. The participants appreciate that the organisations are helping to improve education status of the County.

“Okay I would say the bursaries, Organisations they help many students pursue their dreams and then they change many peoples’ lives.”

[FGD. Female young people 15-19, Meru]

2.4.4 Opportunities for Young People to Gain Skills

Most groups interviewed said that there are very few chances for mentorships and internships in the County. The available opportunities were said to be in private sector mainly.

“Like for me I med clothes or have a salon, instead that child to be taken to college for tailoring or hair dressing, you bring them to me. When they come we make clothes, I teach them how to do and when they learn they go and put up their own business, or get employed.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 25-34, Meru]

Some of the respondents indicated that the courses taught are not relevant to the market needs but some were quick to blame competition for jobs.

2.5 Economic and Young People

2.5.1 Main Employment and Income Opportunities

The respondents were asked about the main employment and income generating opportunities in the County. The survey findings reveal that the main economic activities in the County include farming (maize, bananas, tea, Coffee, miraa etc), boda boda, construction industry, trade/business and formal sector employment. The construction industry was said to be ad hoc since some of the youth wait when there is construction of new infrastructure.

2.5.2 Challenges in Accessing Employment and Income Opportunities

The key challenges hindering access to the economic opportunities were reported to be high taxation by government, lack of business capital, lack of information on business diversification, poor infrastructure and insecurity.

“In the area down here, Kithanga, going down here. You cannot put up a business of even like twenty thousands. You put it up today and they come at night, and they can come and you are found with nothing, so there is fear.”

[FGD. mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

On infrastructure, it was reported that bodaboda riders are incurring huge maintenance costs due to regular breakages. Corruption was also mentioned as a key factor in hindering youth access to jobs.

The respondents mentioned that the main interventions to address the challenges include Kazi Kwa Vijana, micro finance, NYS, Uwezo, WEF and YEDF. Access to these interventions have challenges which include corruption which results to despair in applying for loans and, program restrictions especially the requirement for beneficiaries to be in groups.

The major challenge is that money is accessed in groups. Sometimes these groups get dissolved so it becomes a problem. Most of the times, the young people are in school and they leave about 4 or 5 people in the group to take care of it. When you go back to school the ones that are left mismanage the business or the money. So it becomes an issue. You will find others get the money but instead of implementing what they intended to do, misuse the money.

2.5.3 Economic Activities Young People are Engaged In

The respondents were asked what economic activities that youths are engaged in, their challenges and recommendations. The key activities are presented in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 Economic activities young people are engaged in

Main economic activities	Challenges encountered	How to address the challenges encountered
Business	Poor pay and harassment / exploitation by employer	Creation of employment opportunities
Agriculture	Financial constraints	Government aid
Boda boda	Lack of necessary skills	Enforcement of laws on child labour
Casual jobs	Boda boda accidents	Formation of empowerment groups
	Losses in business	Capacity building
	Health complications	Public awareness

The survey findings show that the youth are involved in all the economic opportunities available in the County apart from the formal employment which was rarely mentioned. The youth are experiencing several challenges which include poor pay and harassment by authorities (being asked to abide by law is considered as harassment), financial constraints, lack of necessary skills and boda boda accidents. Poor infrastructure and lack of driving qualifications were blamed for the accidents.

2.5.4 Interventions and Programmes Addressing Youth Unemployment

The survey sought to establish the key interventions in addressing the challenges youth are experiencing and the findings are presented in table 2.8.

Table 2.8 Interventions and programmes addressing youth unemployment

Main cases	Challenges in accessing the interventions	Ways to address these challenges
Kazi kwa vijana	Lack of awareness on interventions	Ease access to funds
Micro finance	Program rules	Take services close to the people
WEF	Corruption	Increase public awareness
NYS	Long time for loan processing	Ease business registration
YEDF		
Uwezo fund		

The survey revealed that the main interventions that are in place to address youth unemployment issues include Kazi kwa vijana, micro finance, WEF, NYS, YEDF and UWEZO fund.. These interventions have been useful in creating employment and providing soft loans to the youth. However, some participants mentioned that the interventions are not reaching all deserving cases and blamed this on lack of awareness, strict programme rules and corruption.

“For example there are those that were started by the government but it wasn’t able to reach us (which?) Like the government has said they will give UWEZO fund for the young people to organize themselves and be given. When they came to give it here, it was politically influenced and no young people got it, they lose hope, and those group as they had organized they break them and each goes his was because they were looking for support and you never got it.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

“Another challenge is lack of awareness by the youths on existing opportunities. And also lack of capacity to do the work. Because youths may get tenders but they don’t have the financial and technical capacity to do the work...”

[County Policy Official, Youth Affairs, Meru]

The respondents therefore proposed the need to bring services closer to the communities, create more awareness on existence of the interventions, increase in resource allocations and review of the terms of getting the loans among other recommendations.

“To reach these interventions, unless they come here and open an office in this place because there are no such things here, in that way we will get to know. People will get time to go and check such things in the office.”

[FGD. Marginalised mixed group 15-24, Meru]

2.5.5 Availability and Access to ICT Services

On ICT, the respondents mentioned that the main ICT services in the County include Radio, Telephones, Television and computers/Internet. Mobile phones are the ones preferred most by the young people. Internet services are mainly in large towns and not available in rural areas apart from those who have smart phones. The respondents said that most users of internet are interested in social networks, watching news, job adverts and entertainment. Some participants indicated that some youth are watching sites showing bad morals but some felt that it depends on one’s mind hence internet cannot spoil the person.

“It depends on you and the group that you decide to join. For example there is one for Kimeru proverbs. You can join that or the misleading one. Actually it all depends on you. So I think they are helping.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

It was also reported that some people are not able to buy TV decoders hence are not using their TV sets currently. Other challenges encountered include lack of technical knowhow on use of internet on phones. To address some of the problems in ICT access, respondents recommended for establishment of more computer outlets e.g. in social halls, training on use of computers and improvement in infrastructures such as increase in transmission boosters.

2.5.6 Access to ICT services in schools

The respondents were asked about ICT services available to school pupils, it was reported that the schools were about to start computer lessons. However, cyber café services are available in the town centres. At secondary level, the FGD participants interviewed said that computer classes are available for those taking the subject. At TVET level, one of the managers said that computer knowledge is compulsory in his institution. The computer classes were said to be promoting computer literacy and exposure to job vacancies.

2.5.7 Organisations and People Addressing Youth Economic Empowerment

The key institutions reported to be addressing economic concerns in the County include business people, government, NGOs and Religious organisations. These organisations are assisting in job creation and credit facilities for business people and assisting in capacity building in business. Some of these organisations were said to have challenges in accessing them due to the strict rules they have.

“There is like the one he mentioned, there is SMEP, Faulu, but you have to form a group and you will need a constitution, but because of poverty, many are not able to make a constitution. Even if you form a group and be given a loan, you will see them coming for those things they have given you.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

2.5.8 Potential Areas to Increase Employment and Income opportunities

The respondents were asked to identify potential areas that would increase employment opportunities for young people, the major ones are agriculture, ICT and improvement of education infrastructure. Other area mentioned was on improvement of road network;

“I would like to say that they build our roads and install water for us, when we get those two, people will help themselves (repeating), with good road, we can venture in transport, vehicles, bodaboda, and mikokoteni.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

Another potential area is agriculture, sports and transport:

“Export is another potential area. Yes, we sell our produces outside the county in fact there are those who sell outside the country because of ICT services. People export like horticulture; greens, bananas and flowers beyond borders. Those are viable projects bringing a lot of money. Tea export is also an area that brings revenue.”

[KII. County official, main economic activity, Meru]

“The Bodaboda sector is a sector we have realised is engaging so many young people. So as a county we have put up shades so that they are operating in friendly environment and also assisting them in getting skills on life safety. Another sector is sports; so many young people are engaged in various sports; soccer, baseball and its creating employment. Last year we had a whole team representing the whole country in the African championships held in Meru University, we had teams from across African countries. This sector is untapped we want to harness the sector. We are putting up a baseball complex it’s in progress we hope next year it will be complete so we hold matches. As a county we are encouraging young people to get involved in national championships and earn some income. We sponsor them so that they earn some income from sports. In addition we have an academy for sports; music where we get youths during school holidays put them in an institution like Meru University. Like 400 of them have graduated from football and volleyball and have been absorbed in major teams and they are earning 10000-15000 shillings per month. In music we partnered with permanent presidential music choir and graduates who graduate perform during our events and even outside and are paid handsomely...they don’t have the time to indulge in drugs and alcohol.”

[KII. County Official, Youth Affairs, Meru]

2.5.9 Savings and Investments for Old Age

The survey sought views on savings and investments for old age to understand what young people think of their future and provide possible recommendations. It was clear from most participants that young people are thinking about their old age and have vision of what they want to be. It was mentioned that young people are aware that they will not be working in old age and some respondents said that if one uses their money wisely, they will be able to live a comfortable life in old age.

The young people are said to be investing for their old age especially through Post Bank which is accepting savings from.

“You know they do because banks, like Post Bank, come here to offer services and you find youths though in high school making efforts to save. In the long run it will help you later on in life. Saving is part of thinking about their future.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

The respondents said that youths encounter several challenges while trying to save for future. Some of the youth are unemployed and those employed can only earn enough for a day. The situation is worse since the cost of living has been high. Also, business uncertainty was mentioned as a hindrance to one starting business.

The respondents suggested that the challenges could be addressed through sensitization on importance of saving for future and awareness on available opportunities for saving.

“Okay for advertisements okay like post bank they have started advertising they have started going around the schools telling the students the importance of saving yah.”

[FGD. Female young people 15-19, Meru]

2.6 Governance and Young People

2.6.1 Rule of law

2.6.1.1 Justice system

The respondents were asked about the justice systems applied in the County. Table 2.9 presents the main cases in the county, challenges encountered in solving them and recommendations on how to improve them.

Table 2.9 Justice system

Main Cases Prevalent	Challenges encountered in solving cases	Ways to address these challenges
Land disputes	Corruption	Address corruption
Crime including murder	Lack of evidence	Increase public awareness
Family disputes	Costs involved	Issue title deeds
Rape	Lack of justice	Youth empowerment
	Illiteracy – in land demarcation	

The survey revealed that the main cases prevalent in Meru County include land disputes, crime including murder, family disputes and rape.

“Land issues, (M. repeats), you find that the if land people think that am not able and my land is in a good site, they can allocate someone else in your land and you remain without knowing someone else has been allocated your land. Now when you will find someone fencing your land is the time you will be told that your land is been allocated to someone else and you will be shown another land downside “Mporokeni”. They first establish your weight then carry you.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 25-34, Meru]

Most of the cases are solved through traditional systems as was mentioned by most FGDs interviewed. Other channels of solving cases in the County include administration, judiciary and religious systems. The challenges encountered while trying to solve the cases involve corruption, lack of knowledge on land demarcation and costs involved, among others.

These respondents mentioned that to address the challenges, there is needed to deal with corruption issues, demarcate land and empower youth for business and employment.

“You know title deeds, if I grab someone’s land, through corruption I can acquire the title deed. May be this other person is poor. So if we appear before the court, I defeat him through corruption, so if the society was able to appoint credible leaders. They pass through a vetting that is public to all the people and then come up with the leader the society is sure is credible. So that would end corruption. The officials in the land commissions are corrupt because they were appointed through corrupt means.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

2.6.1.2 Security

When asked about the security situation in Meru County, most respondents were of the view that there is high insecurity. The situation is worse in the regions that border other counties especially in Igembe. However, some respondents indicated that they are comfortable with the security situation. The main reasons given for insecurity include delayed response by police, lack of proper equipment for vigilantes or private security agents and corruption.

“And also corruption. Let’s say I have been reported I have done something, I will bribe the police and they will release me. Insecurity continues.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

The government has addressed the insecurity situation by initiating Nyumba kumi initiative, construction of more police stations involvement of communities in community policing and vigilante groups among other strategies.

“The Nyumba kumi initiative but where I come from, I have not seen it happening. The problem is that we say as County there will be a Nyumba kumi initiative but it is only Nairobi that will implement that.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

The youth are involved in fighting insecurity through community policing and responding to insecurity situations.

The respondents gave some recommendations for improving security situation the most commonly mentioned being rotation of police officers to avoid befriending criminals, more police commitment and motivation of community policing.

“But for us to continue with our jobs, we would like the government to look at, if it’s community policing sometimes we used to do a lot, but we were felt strained, why? There is rain and no coats, so we ask the government to provide us with coats and to provide us with a little support, and some little money so that we are also interested and find security important.”

[FGD. Mixed young person’s 25-34, Meru]

2.6.1.3 Cohesion

When asked about issues that have affected unity in the County, the main ones mentioned were closely related and included hatred and jealousy, family misunderstandings and social class differences. The respondents said that there are programmes in place to promote cohesion and the most commonly mentioned include family gatherings, social activities and sports.

“Still about clubs and bars it doesn’t have to be necessarily a pub. In some places people start businesses, if there is pool like he said; you know not everybody is a fun of pool. So you may go and sit there and know people.”

[FGD. Male young people 15-19, Meru]

They recommended for civic education on cohesion, promotion of sports and cultural festivals as ways that would improve cohesion in the County.

2.6.2 Transparency and Accountability

The survey sought to get the views of participants in regard to transparency and accountability in use of public resources. Particularly participants gave views on information of ongoing activities, mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and transparency and how transparency and accountability could be promoted.

Mechanisms in place to inform young people on planned and ongoing activities

The respondents mentioned the main communication channels as being print media, public forums, electronic media and service delivery charters. It was however mentioned that the public forums are rare and some service delivery charters are positioned in places not visible to the public.

“Unless when there is a meeting and the DC is coming, an MP is coming or somebody else senior in the government, that time we can get an announcement and are told there is a meeting for a particular leader. But to be gathered to talk your community issues it’s very rare.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60. Meru]

Mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and transparency

The most commonly mentioned mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in the County include disciplinary action and stepping aside for investigation though rare at the County level. However, some of the respondents felt there was no mechanism to address the issues.

How these mechanisms can be improved

The respondents highlighted some recommendations to improve the situation. The ones most commonly mentioned include taking responsibility by management and change of leadership after certain number of years.

“There should be changes in the leadership. Like for certain; there are those who are called managers. If the managers doesn’t cooperate the management changes because he will get used to that company and make it his, like in our place there are the Tea factories, coffee factories some of the managers belong to 1800 Century, so we want changes to be done after a specific time.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 25-34, Meru]

Consensus, equity, inclusiveness, participation and responsiveness

The respondents were asked issues on youth participation in project implementation including roles played and whether projects address young people’s needs.

Youth involvement in budget process, project identification, design and implementation

The survey revealed that young people are mainly engaged in employment and not in project design and planning. However, it was also reported that youth are not involved at all in project processes since the same old management does not change.

“Yeah, in our schools, you might see a committee and that committee you have seen from time in memorial, like twenty years ago, they are the same people, unless one dies is the times is exchanged with another. Now I ask, do they force election, if they have forced election, that when you get who you want.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

Roles young people would like to play in projects and programmes

The respondents were asked which roles young people would like to play in project management. The highly mentioned roles included involvement in the entire project process, involvement in governance and political issues and, in management. Also mentioned was for youth to be given employment opportunities.

“The youth would want to be given a chance to come up with projects that would benefit us. For instance in Agro-business most of the youths are jobless. Identifying such a project and we be given a chance to all our views. We will know the project that is well positioned and equipped to finance to get income for ourselves.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 20-24, Meru]

There was consensus that the projects are addressing the young peoples’ needs since they are able to get employment.

Challenges young people face during their involvement in project implementation

The survey revealed that young people face several challenges in project implementation. The ones most commonly mentioned include corruption and discrimination or views not considered. The youth said that some of the jobs are given out through corrupt means and at times jobs that should be done by them are given to older people.

“What happens is that the government approves projects. Sometimes things are done, the young people are removed and the old are employed. For example, when Mau Mau money was to be given, the youths were supposed to collect data. They were to visit the villages to know who participated in Mau Mau, but after one week the old people were given the job.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

How young people's involvement in project process can be improved

The interviewed groups indicated that young people's involvement in projects can be improved through openness, fairness in allocation of available jobs and promoting their involvement.

“I would like youths to be elected in different positions even those with older men and women, so that even ourselves we allow them to be leaders there, in that way they will learn from these older people.”

[FGD. Mixed older people 35-60, Meru]

2.6.3 Effectiveness and Efficiency

How Available Resources are allocated to Target the Young People

It was mentioned in one of the FGDs that there are some funds set aside for youth but they can only access the funds through formation of groups and not as individuals. However, some respondents indicated they were not aware of any resources targeting youth. However, it was mentioned that there are no monitoring mechanisms for utilization of the funds.

“When it comes to the mechanisms for example the UWEZO Fund the youth Fund. There is no follow up to ensure that the money that was given out was used for the target purpose. And then CDF money it depends with whoever is in position because there is no ration in place that states what percentage activity so that brings about skewness in regard to the projects that are there.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 20-24, Meru]

What can be done to Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness in Utilization of Resources?

On ways of improving efficiency and effectiveness, the respondents expressed the need to make proper follow ups on how the youth are utilising the funds and provide clear guidelines or policies on how to punish the ones misusing the funds.

2.6.4 Political Leadership

Role political leadership play in management of youth affairs

Political leaders in the County are seen by many people to be creating jobs especially in pre-primary education, sponsoring needy students and engaging youths during political campaigns. However, it was also reported that the politicians just engage youth in shouting and they are provided with beer.

In addition, it was also mentioned that the politicians are doing nothing in management of youth affairs.

“For example, down here, there is a quarry. The road there is just rocks. It has not been constructed but the other roads have tarmac. The other one is neglected and yet it is where mining takes place.”

[FGD. Mixed young people 15-19, Meru]

2.7 Population Structure

Perspectives about growing population of young people in relation to health

When asked about the growing population of youth and the implications on health, the respondent pointed out that the health facilities are getting stretched and experiencing congestion.

Thoughts about growing population of young people in relation to education

When asked about the growing population of youth, the FGD participants were in agreement that there is need to build more schools but none talked of population management. One of the dean in a technical college said that reducing the population is not the issue but there is need to empower youth with skills especially for self employment. However, one primary school head teacher said there is need for family planning to ensure that one can cater for their children’s needs.

Thoughts about growing population of young people in relation to economy

The respondents indicated that the growing population will result in rising unemployment, competition of the available jobs and unequal distribution of resources.

“If you want to get a job, with the government, you use corrupt means to get there. And then the one who is qualified misses the opportunity.”

[FGD. Female young people 10-14, Meru]

Thoughts about growing population of young people in relation to governance

The respondents pointed out that most of security issues emanate from youth. If the population of youth rises with no employment opportunities, the rate of crime would increase. The respondents therefore recommended for more involvement of youth in economic activities.

2.8 Conclusion and Recommendations

Health

The main health issues affecting youth in Meru County include DSA, Teenage pregnancies and STI/HIV infections. There is need to increase awareness on these issues and provide more counselling and guidance.

1. Provide youth friendly services.
2. Strengthen community strategy to engage trained community health workers (CHWs) to disseminate sexual and reproductive health information and services in the community.

Education

The main issues affecting education in Meru County include child labour particularly in Miraa plantations and business, lack of school fees to further high education due to poverty in some parts of Meru, drug and substance abuse among others. These problems have contributed to school dropouts. There is need to:

1. Enforce laws on child labour.
2. Provide bursaries to disadvantaged students to further their education.
3. Increase awareness on importance of education to ensure lower dropout rates by use of role models in education.
4. Eradicate DSA through guidance and counselling and enforcing law on drug trafficking.

Economic

Young people in Meru County are mainly engaged in farming, trade, commuter transport including boda boda and export business. There is need to:

1. Introduce new farming techniques such as greenhouse technology, fish farming, poultry, beef keeping to expand agriculture.
2. Promote sports.
3. Promote trade and export including training in entrepreneurship.
4. Establish more ICT centres to increase access to knowledge and information.

Governance

The main cases in the County involve land issues and crime. There is need to:

1. Involve youth in gainful employment and project processes to reduce crime.
2. Address issues of land e.g. issuance of title deeds to avoid land grabbing and ensure proper land demarcation.

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Annex 1: County Demographic Windows

The United Nations defines the demographic window as the period when the proportion of those aged below 15 years permanently falls below 30 percent of the total population while the proportion of those above 64 years is still below 15 percent of the total population. This period is estimated to last about 40 years and it presents an opportunity for a country to achieve a much faster economic growth driven by the large population of people in the working ages. Table A1.1 below shows that Kenya's demographic window will open in 2038. The proportion of those in the working ages will be 66 percent of the total population and the dependency ratio will be 52. An analysis of the beginning of the demographic window for each of the 47 counties in Kenya shows that the window will open at different times for each county.

Table A1.1 Demographic dividend window opening year

2010s	2020s	2030s	2040s	2050+
Kirinyaga	Kiambu	Makueni	Lamu	Mandera
Nyeri	Embu	Machakos	Nandi	Marsabit
Murang'a	Taita Taveta	Nakuru	Elgeyo Marakwet	Migori
	Meru	Nyandarua	Kajiado	Tana River
	Nairobi	Tharaka Nithi	Kitui	Garissa
	Mombasa	Uasin Gishu	Bomet	Narok
		Laikipia	Siaya	Samburu
		Kisumu	Kakamega	Turkana
		Nyamira	Vihiga	West pokot
		Kericho	Baringo	Wajir
		Kisii	Busia	
			Isiolo	
			Kwale	
			Bungoma	
			Homa Bay	
			Kilifi	
			Trans Nzoia	

Annex 2: Survey Personnel

Central Eastern Region Survey Personnel

Table A2.1 Central Eastern Region

Counties	Technical Committee Member	County Coordinator/ Supervisor	Research Assistants	Data Clerk
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Annex 3: List of 2015 NAYS Participants

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MERU COUNTY