

# Livelihood Bases, Risks and Adaptations among the Older Persons in Turkana and Lamu Districts in Kenya

Dr. Kennedy Japhan Omoke

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya. E-mail: [jkomoke@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:jkomoke@uonbi.ac.ke), [kjomoke@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kjomoke@yahoo.co.uk); Tel.: 254-02-0733828314, 254-02-0726159658.

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**This paper is an extract from a study conducted by the author to examine population ageing in Kenya. It attempts to understand whether the needs and concerns of the older persons, in the leading ageing district of Lamu and lagging ageing district of Turkana in Kenya, are entirely borne by the communities of which they are part. Using a population of all persons aged 60 years and over in Turkana and Lamu based on the 1999 Kenya population and housing census<sup>1</sup> data, a selected sample of 100 older persons from Lamu and a similar one from Turkana district were deemed large enough to allow for estimation of parent population parameters. Respondents were selected using respondent driven and simple random procedures, and then descriptive and inferential data analysis used to realize desired outcomes. The socio-economic livelihoods of the older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts were compared in the contexts of their livelihood bases such as pastoralism, irrigated agriculture, fishing and some business ventures. The study also examined vulnerability to particularly drought/floods, insecurity and famine as well as their coping mechanisms. This paper provides some critical analysis and insights on demographic characteristics, living arrangements and support systems, gender and role differentiation with ageing, older people's participation, as well as their economic and health issues. It is concluded that the traditional family set up still plays a significant role in the lives of the older persons as they find, to a great extent, satisfaction of their social and economic needs in the family.**

**Key words:** Older persons, age-structure ageing, livelihoods, risks, adaptations.

## INTRODUCTION

Gavrilov [1] has argued that there are discernible shifts in the age distributions of world populations towards older age groups. This phenomenon, referred to as population ageing, is not only a direct consequence of the ongoing global fertility transitions from high to low fertilities but also a result of declines in mortality levels mostly at older

ages particularly with improvements in medical interventions. Though to a small extent, population migration also explains this phenomenon. The UN [2] notes that increases in the proportions of older populations aged 60 years and above are accompanied by declines in the proportions of young persons aged below 15 years. Thus, the steady upsurge of the elderly populations, first witnessed in the developed populations, and now a characteristic of the developing nations, has

<sup>1</sup>This study was carried out prior to August 2010 when the 2009 Kenya population and housing census results were disseminated.

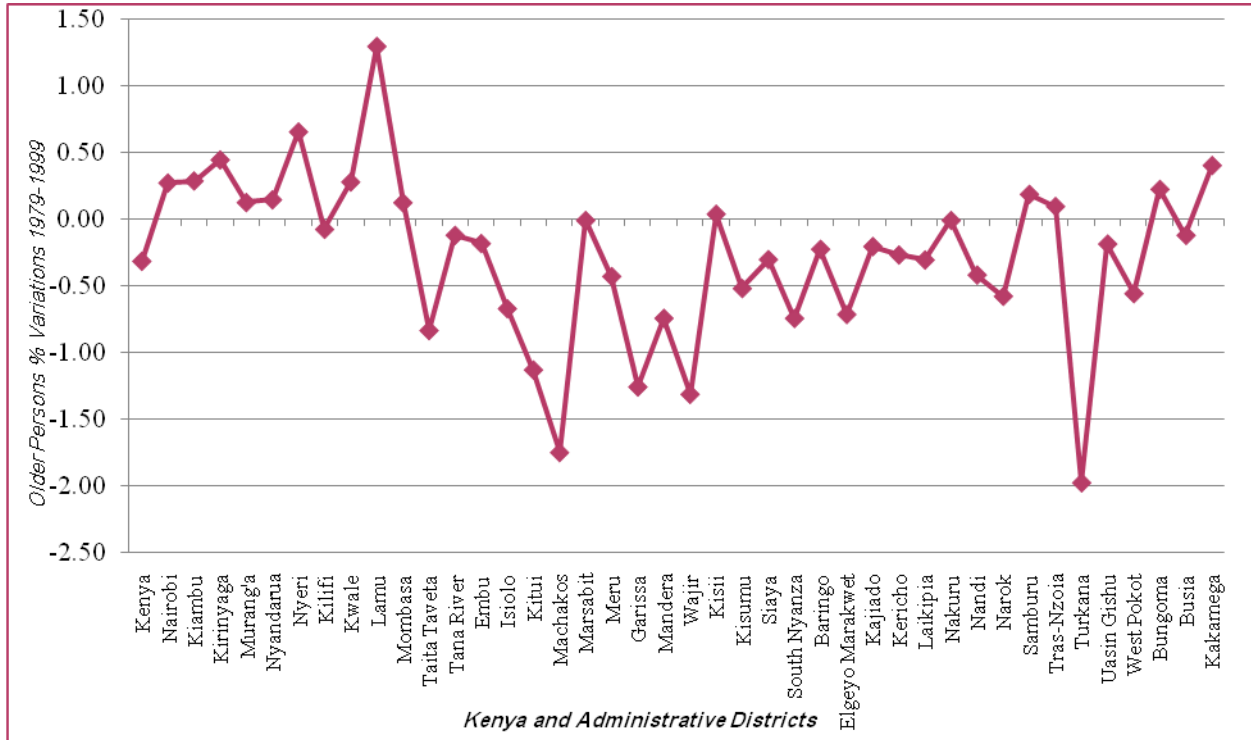


Figure 1. Overall Percentage Variations of Older Persons (from 1979-1999) in Kenya and Its Administrative Districts.

major consequences and implications in all areas of day-to-day lives. These are manifested in economic growth, savings, investment and consumption, labour markets, pensions, taxation, living arrangements and transfers of wealth, property and care from generation to generation. Adamchak [3]; and Kamuzora [4] separately argue that the Increasing numbers of older persons in populations has been primarily studied within the developed world. In relative terms, little research has been done on the ageing populations and their attendant livelihoods in the developing world and particularly in Africa as it is deemed an issue of the future. The WHO [5] has projected that between 1990 and 2025, Kenya like other developing countries such as Colombia, Malaysia, Thailand and Ghana will experience an increase of between 200 percent and 300 percent in their older persons populations over a period of only 35 years. Whereas Marcoux [6] emphasizes the need to worry about the medium and long-term implications of such numbers on their socio-economic lives, Sandra [7] notes that cultural values tend to influence attitudes towards ageing in terms of engagements and participation in society. Auvinen [8] also notes that an incorrect diet, little physical activity,

stress and pollution of the environment shortens lifespans. Adamchak [3] argues that in most societies the older persons are viewed as a group of low priority, an impediment to development, as victims of modernization, and as resources. This study considered the older persons as necessary actors in societal development and that as Khasiani [9] indicates, the family unit is critical in meeting the socio-economic needs of the older persons in society.

In Kenya, the older person's population constitutes 4.68 percent of the total population [10], with Turkana district lagging and Lamu district leading in the changes in these numbers. The overall percentage variability in those aged 60 years and over in the entire 1979-1999 national censuses period is depicted in Figure 1. As indicated in Figure 1, Lamu district with an overall change of +1.30 percent leads the pack in age- structure ageing and Turkana district, with -2.91 percent lags. Put differently, whereas the numbers of the older persons in Lamu district have been increasing over time, those in Turkana district have been decreasing. Lamu district had 3,455 older persons and Turkana district had 11,438 older persons [10]. Whereas the need to account for such variations is imperative, an examination of the livelihood

bases, vulnerabilities and adaptations/coping mechanisms of the older populations in these areas, which forms the focus of this paper, is critical. Given that the ageing of populations is a real phenomenon in Lamu and Turkana districts, this paper takes the view that the traditional community and/or societal responsibilities for the older persons populations are fast waning thus leaving these populations vulnerable to poor health, food deficiencies and lack of care and that the older persons populations are deemed to be a dependent lot and thus not engaged in meaningful productive activities in their communities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for the study was gathered during the fieldwork carried out both in Lamu and Turkana districts in 2007. The target population aged 60 years and over, which constituted the unit of measurement, was sampled using both Respondent driven Douglas2 [11]; and simple random sampling Blalock [12] techniques. A selected sample of 100 older persons from Lamu and a similar one from Turkana district were collected, using standardized questionnaires. In Lamu district, the older person's populations were drawn from four clusters namely Amu, Hindi/Kiunga, Matondoni/Mpeketoni and Witu areas. The Amu cluster has mainly urban populations in character and the rest of the clusters have rural populations. In Turkana district, such populations were drawn from five clusters namely the South, North, Western, Eastern and Central areas. The South cluster is mainly characterized by the pastoral area around Lokichar and the agricultural area around Katilu. The North cluster, exemplified by the mainly pastoral nature of the population, is the area around Kakuma and Oropoi. Whereas in the East, the population is partly pastoral around Kerio and partly agricultural, mainly engaged in fishing activities around Kalokol, the West cluster is both agricultural and pastoral around Turkwel area. The Central cluster, mainly around Lodwar town, is fairly urban in character. The socio-economic engagements of the older person's populations in the various strata, as depicted by their economic activities, were deemed to affect their livelihoods. Given that the requisite data was both qualitative and quantitative in nature, data processing and analysis made use of a diversity of skills

<sup>2</sup>Respondent-driven sampling (RDS), uses both "snowball sampling" (a peer driven intervention of getting individuals to refer those they know, who in turn refer those they know and so on until the desired sample is achieved) and a mathematical model that weights the sample to compensate for the fact that the sample may have been collected in a non-random way.

which included demographic, spatial, qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques.

## Overview of Study Area

The study was carried out in Lamu and Turkana districts in Kenya (see Figures 2 and 3). Lamu district lies between latitudes 1<sup>o</sup> 40' S and 2<sup>o</sup> 30' S and longitudes 40<sup>o</sup> 15' E and 41<sup>o</sup> 38' E and covers an area of 6,166.70 square kilometres. Administratively, the district is divided into seven administrative divisions namely; Kiunga (1,570.1 km<sup>2</sup>), Hindi (1,804.9 km<sup>2</sup>), Faza (74.8 km<sup>2</sup>), Kizingitini (18.1 km<sup>2</sup>), Amu (102.4 km<sup>2</sup>), Mpeketoni (1360.70 km<sup>2</sup>) and Witu (1235.70 km<sup>2</sup>). About 308 km<sup>2</sup> of the district is covered by open waters.

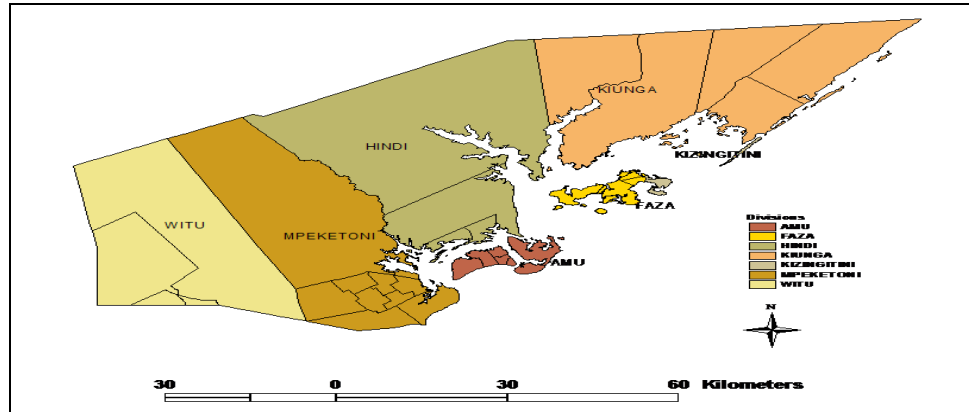
Turkana district lies on the 36<sup>th</sup> meridian between 10<sup>o</sup> 30' and 5<sup>o</sup> 30' north of the equator and covers a total of 68,387.80 square kilometres. The district has 17 administrative divisions namely; Central (799.6 km<sup>2</sup>), Turkwel (5,608.5 km<sup>2</sup>), Katilu (1,212.1 km<sup>2</sup>), Lokori (7,040.5 km<sup>2</sup>), Lokitaung (1,836.2 km<sup>2</sup>), Kakuma (3,695.2 km<sup>2</sup>), Kibish (5,684.2 km<sup>2</sup>), Lokichoggio (7,918.7 km<sup>2</sup>), Kaaling (8,145.2 km<sup>2</sup>), Kainuk (1,641.9 km<sup>2</sup>), Kalokol (2,132.4 km<sup>2</sup>), Kerio (2,750.1 km<sup>2</sup>), Lapur (2,274.5 km<sup>2</sup>), Loima (3,475.4 km<sup>2</sup>), Lokichar (4,504.3 km<sup>2</sup>), Lomelo (4,222.7 km<sup>2</sup>) and Oropoi (5,446.3 km<sup>2</sup>).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographic Profiles of the older persons: Comparative and Relational Perspectives

Household characteristics such as size, marital status and educational attainments among the older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts are presented alongside resource endowments with a view to establishing the existence of any significant relationship(s) between them. It is generally recognized that high household sizes tend to mirror high poverty levels in those households [13]. There are wide variations in household sizes between and within the districts. This variability is evident with Turkana and Lamu districts having average household sizes of 8.3 and 5.8 persons respectively. These variations, together with those of the various sampled cluster areas are illustrated in Figure 4.

The highest average household size in Lamu district is in the Mpeketoni/Witu area with 6.2 persons and the lowest is in the Hindi/Kiunga area with 4.8 persons. Interestingly, there are stark variations in resources availability between these areas as Mpeketoni/Witu is



**Figure 2.** Map of Lamu District and its Administrative Divisions.  
**Source:** Kenya National and Housing Census [10] data.



**Figure 3.** Map of Turkana District and its Administrative Divisions.  
**Source:** Kenya National and Housing Census [10] data.

fairly more agriculturally productive as compared to Hindi/Kiunga. Amu division, where Lamu town is situated,

has an average household size of 6 persons. In Turkana district, the predominantly agricultural communities

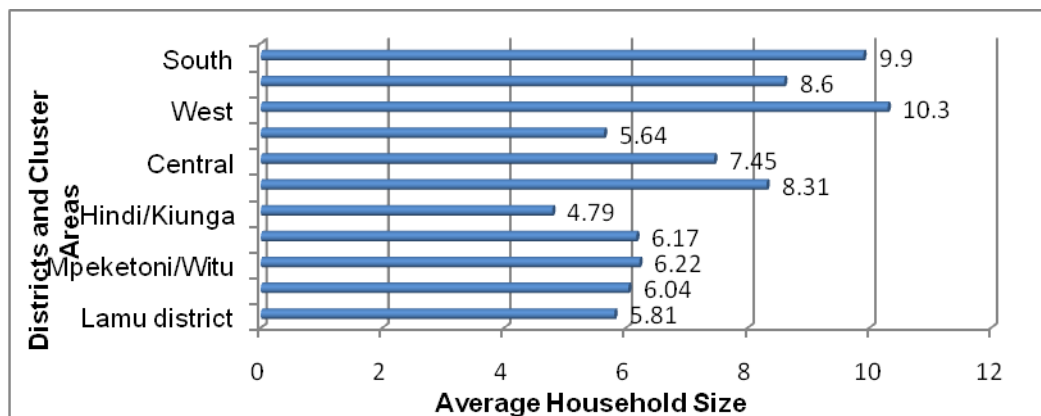


Figure 4. Household Size Variations in Lamu District and Turkana District Clusters.

exemplified by Katilu division (9.1) in the South, Turkwel division (10.3) in the West and Kalokol division (9.2) in the East exhibit relatively high average household sizes as compared to the mainly pastoral communities such as those in Lokichar division (9.9) in the South and Kerio division (8) in the East. In addition, the mainly urban populations such as the one in Lodwar Township (7.2) have relatively lower household sizes than the surrounding Kawalathe (8.2) area. Noteworthy, household sizes are proxy indicators of the economic and social wellbeing of the various communities. In the case of Turkana district, the availability of food in the mainly agricultural areas such as along the Turkwel river where farming is practiced and the Kalokol area where fishing is prevalent, allows for higher household sizes as survival chances are enhanced. Discernibly, availability of food and urban life both in Turkana and Lamu districts are considerations in explaining household size variations. However, in terms of gender composition, whereas the Lamu elderly population has more males (71 percent) than females (29 percent), the Turkana elderly population has more females (52.5 percent) than males who constitute 47.5 percent. In addition, the Turkana older population is characterized by 38.4 percent widows, a scenario possibly attributed to mortalities due to regular raids, clan hostilities, drought and hunger, among other considerations. The older person's populations in the comparative districts of Lamu and Turkana areas also exhibit various trends in their marital status, as seen in Figure 5.

Whereas Lamu district has the highest percentage of the older persons (70 percent) married, Turkana district has the least percentage with only 56.6 percent. Interestingly, Turkana district leads with widowed older person's populations (38.4 percent). Though divorce and

separation are characteristic features of many communities, even in old age, these aspects are not common in the communities in the Lamu and Turkana districts. Marriage as an institution is still upheld in these communities. In terms of levels of education attained by the older persons, a majority (72.3 percent) in Lamu district has no formal education, 23.8 percent has primary education and only 2 percent has secondary education. This compares well with the situation in Turkana district where 97 percent of the older persons have no formal education and only 3 percent have primary education. As can be discerned, Turkana district's older person's population has the lowest educational attainment, if any. Better educational attainment also mirrors the socio-economic life of people as education is a necessary ingredient in accessing many social and economic benefits in society.

#### **Socio-Economic Livelihoods: Bases, Risks and Adaptations among the Older Persons**

Most of the older persons find the satisfaction of their needs and concerns in the family relationships. The social and economic life of the older persons is mirrored in aspects such as their living arrangements and support systems, gender roles and differentiation, participation in community activities, productive economic engagements, and health issues.

#### **Living arrangements and Support systems among Older Persons**

The survival of the older persons both in Lamu and Turkana districts in Kenya almost entirely depends on the

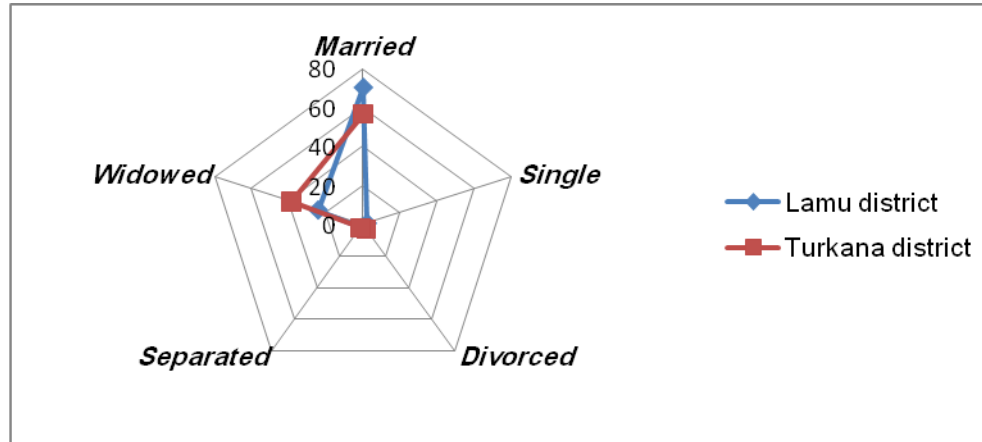


Figure 5. Marital Status (%) of the Older Persons in Lamu and Turkana Districts

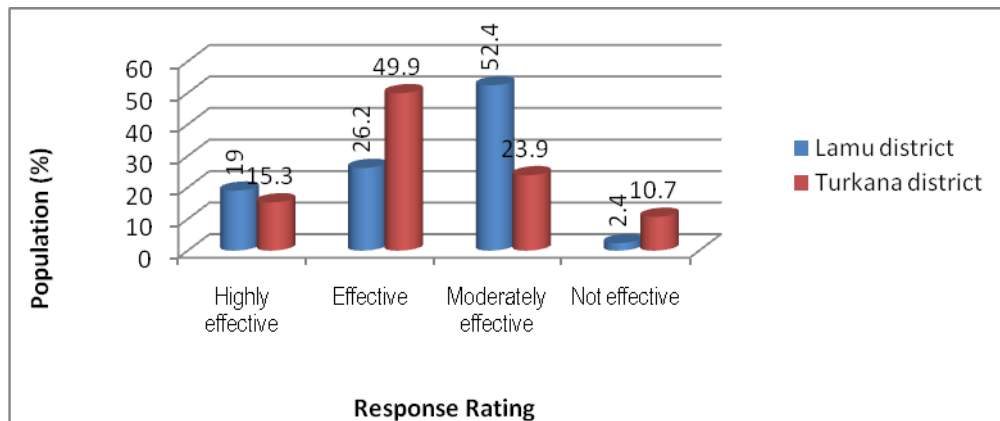
traditional family set up. As ageing takes place, most individuals in society are unable to support themselves in meeting most of their daily needs. In Lamu district, the older person's population has challenges as some of them (14.3 percent) live alone, 58.1 percent live with their families' spouses and children, and another 27.6 percent live with their relatives such as grand children, among others. In Turkana district, a small percentage (3.1) of the elderly population lives alone, a large percentage (83.7) live with the family members and another 13.2 percent live with other relatives among them the grand children. This living arrangement, mainly within the family set up, which still looks predominant, helps to cushion the elderly against inadequacies in the provision of their needs. Notably, whereas it is easier to live alone in Lamu district, the elderly in Turkana can hardly manage to live alone. This is perhaps explained by the harsh reality of life in Turkana compared to Lamu. The high percentage of those living alone in Lamu district indicates that most of these populations are still engaged in economic activities for their living. In addition, even when living within families, 73.3 percent of the elderly populations in Lamu district look after themselves and only 26.7 percent do not. For those who are not able to look after themselves, 60 percent of them have support from their children and another 40 percent get support from other relatives and well wishers. Comparatively, Turkana district leads in the population of the older persons who cannot support themselves at all as opposed to Lamu district.

An examination of the effectiveness of the family and other social support systems towards catering for the needs and concerns of these older persons shows that in Lamu district, 69.1 percent of the older persons rate such

systems as effective and another 29.1 percent as not effective. In Turkana district, those who support such an arrangement increase to 89.4 percent and those who do not reduce to 10.6 percent (Figure 6). The older persons' rating of the effectiveness or otherwise of the family set up as a social support mechanism (Figure 6) indicates that whereas in Lamu district 19 percent of them rate the effectiveness of the social support systems highly, only 15.3 percent do so in Turkana district. On the whole, Lamu district (52.4 percent) and Turkana district (49.9 percent) regard the support system as moderately effective or effective. Overall, the mean response for the two areas shows that the elderly populations regard the social support systems as effective. This response is based on the family support given to the older persons emanating from their love and concern for such populations, social responsibility by spouses, children, and general society for the old in most communities, together with the frailty and ailments which accompany old people seeking for the need to be attended to. The family is the source of security and support for the old as it provides the care and concern, help in domestic chores, and food requirements, among other considerations (see Figure 7). However, the older persons need to support themselves through meaningful engagements to earn their own living and think that family support is sometimes unreliable, insufficient or unavailable.

#### Gender and Role Differentiation among the Older Persons

In terms of roles and/or obligations performed at the household level by the older persons, it is indicated that



**Figure 6.** Effectiveness of social support systems among the older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts.



**Figure 7.** An elderly woman and her daughter preparing a meal of wild fruits in Turkana District.

such roles are redistributed with the ageing of spouses in the various communities. For example, whereas in Lamu district, 65.7 percent of the older persons attest to this change, 57 percent support this in Turkana district. The nature of roles and/or activities performed by each group of men and women varies significantly. These roles and/or responsibilities have conveniently been grouped under thematic areas namely; learning/schooling, farming and related activities, business activities, employment, domestic and/or household chores, religious duties,

leisure/idling, advisory, instruction and arbitration activities and leadership/headship roles. In these areas, farming and related activities entails engagements such as working in farms in planting, weeding and harvesting, scaring birds and wild animals such as baboons from the farms, tending livestock, hunting of wild animals for food, fishing and building animal sheds. Business activities include the burning and selling of charcoal, carpentry work, sand harvesting, weaving of mats, ropes and baskets, selling of coconuts and clothes, sculpturing,

**Table 1.** Role Differentiation and Variability among Men and Women (%).

<i>Role</i> <i>District</i>	Learning/ Schooling	Farming & Related	Business activities	Job/ Employed	Domesti c chores	Religious duties	Leisure & idling	Advisory/ Instruction/ Arbitration	Leader/ Head
<b>Young Men</b>									
Lamu district	15.5	45.2	22.6	8.9	3.6	0.6	3.6	-	-
Turkana district	-	75.8	1.2	-	23.2	-	-	-	-
<b>Older Men</b>									
Lamu district	-	36.8	18.4	11.5	10.6	1.8	3.5	16.6	0.8
Turkana district	-	20.0	1.2	-	-	-	15.2	31.8	31.8
<b>Young Women</b>									
Lamu district	10.6	15.0	18.6	-	54.9	-	0.9	-	-
Turkana district	-	36.2	4.6	-	59.2	-	-	-	-
<b>Older Women</b>									
Lamu district	-	14.8	33.7	-	44.5	-	2.0	5.0	-
Turkana district	-	6.0	11.0	-	46.4	-	9.9	26.7	-

Source: Omoke [14].

dressmaking, bee-keeping, making of hides and skins and other petty business ventures. There also exists a wide palette of domestic and/or household activities namely; fetching water and firewood, providing home security, conducting raids on other communities, running errands, providing for the family needs, building houses and sheds, cooking and washing, milking animals, gathering wild fruits and caring for children and the older persons at home. Leisure and idling involves activities such as the forming of clubs for playing and dancing, playing draughts/cards, courting, wrestling, social work, story telling, resting and relaxing, attending marriage ceremonies and other outdoor activities. Advisory activities include instructing and counseling of the young by the old on issues related to marriage and the general life, and preparing the young for transition to adulthood.

The variability in societal roles among the young<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>3</sup>Young men and women's roles were only used to provide comparison with the older persons as ageing progresses in society.

older men and women in the various communities in Lamu and Turkana districts is depicted in Table 1. As can be discerned (Table 1), schooling as an activity is clearly absent among the young Turkana males and present with 15.5 percent in Lamu district. The majority of youths (78.5 percent) in Turkana district are engaged in some sort of farming work. They are also predominant in the domestic chores but also absent in the leisure and idling category. The Lamu district male youths are engaged in farm work, business, domestic chores and also leisure activities. As for the older male, all participate in farm work and related activities fairly evenly, with their household leadership roles being clearly depicted. Whereas the young males in Turkana district have no leisure component in their daily undertakings, the older males (15.2 percent) have. On the whole, the majority of the older persons in the areas play the important roles of advising the young males, instructing and teaching them, as well as arbitrating in matters of disputes among members in their societies.

Among the young and older women, only 10.6 percent



go to school in Lamu district. Again in Lamu district, schooling among most young women involves learning and preparing for marriage. Whereas most of the young perform farm work and related duties, most of the older women do not. This trend is again reflected in the performance of domestic chores. Notably there are older women in business related activities in both areas than young women. Older women are more prone to leisure and idling though their male counterparts participate more in this. Older women also play crucial roles as advisors, instructors and arbitrators in the society.

### **Participation in community activities**

Participation in community activities, which is an indicator of active life among the older persons, shows that only 36 percent of the older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts take part in cultural activities. Such activities include weddings/marriage ceremonies, which incidentally form the bulk of their participation in Lamu (52.5 percent), and Turkana district (19.4 percent), initiation/circumcision ceremonies, religious celebrations in Lamu district as well as cleansing and/or casting away bad omen ceremonies and petitioning the supernatural/ gods ceremonies in Turkana district. Other ceremonies include childbirth, funerals, harvest ceremonies, arbitration in conflicts in local courts, as well as competition activities such as swimming, donkey competitions and dances in Lamu district. These older persons play varied roles which include beating drums and other related instruments, watching sporting events, parenting, dancing, singing, overseeing, facilitation, advisory and gift presentation roles. Some of these activities are performed during specific times of the year and others run throughout the year. Those performed at specific times include religious ceremonies such as Idd and Ramadhan in Lamu district.

### **Productive Economic Engagements of the Older Persons**

The economic life of the older persons is reflected in their participation in their respective areas. As ageing progresses in society, those in the upper ages can only participate in certain restricted economic activities owing to their reduced energy. This is done in order to ensure that their survival is guaranteed particularly in societies where the older persons are not taken care of adequately. The older persons engage themselves in various economic activities in order to meet their daily requirements. Most of the older persons are engaged in business activities, employment and farming and related

activities. In addition, they also receive help from their children and grandchildren, other relatives and the general public. Others get support from their pension schemes and others depend on the fruits from the wild. In terms of business engagements, the older persons undertake various activities such as selling water, local brew, stones and sand, as well as burning charcoal and weaving baskets. They also receive economic returns from their shop businesses and other investments such as houses for rent. Farming involves slight working in the farms, farming in cash crops such as cashew nuts and mangoes, and fishing. Employment entails casual jobs, sailors in charge of ships/canoes especially in Lamu district and working as security guards. Public assistance comes from the relatives of the older persons, well-wishers and relief efforts from the government and non-governmental organizations working in these areas.

In Lamu district, the older persons mostly depend on business (48.3 percent), slight cultivation and related activities (10.3 percent), employment and the assistance from children and grand children, together with public assistance and own savings. Whereas business (33.6 percent) and employment (39.3 percent) form an important source of incomes for the older persons in Turkana district, farming and pension as sources of income are clearly not sources of income for the older persons. Other available sources of income include children (8.2 percent), help from the public (3.3 percent) and gathering of wild fruits (8.2 percent) for food.

As already indicated, most of the older persons are not engaged in economic activities that can adequately sustain their lives in the light of their aged condition in life. They rely on sources of support that essentially emanate from family set ups. Such sources are, to some extent, unreliable and sometimes non-existent. This leaves most of the older persons in precarious positions as they fend for themselves given that most of their energies decline with ageing and debilitating age related diseases. In the absence of sufficient income, 89.6 percent of the older persons in Lamu district and 90.6 percent in Turkana district feel susceptible to growing old faster than they should. Most of the older persons indicate that their incomes are hardly sufficient to sustain them. In the light of this, some remain with no clear alternatives for their survival and others engage in activities too rigorous and demanding for their age. Such preferred alternative livelihood sources among the older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts include the following (see Table 2):

The older persons in Lamu seem to find alternative sources of livelihood in relief food (33.0 percent), 'Jua

**Table 2.** Alternative Livelihood Sources among the older persons (%).

<i>Alternative Source District</i>	Pastoralism	Irrigated agriculture	Small Business Enterprise	Industrial business e.g. Jua Kali	Relied Food
Lamu	1.0	0.0	11.5	12.5	33.0
Turkana	50.7	29.2	7.8	0.0	95.0

Source: Omoke [14].



**Figure 8.** Turkana district residents receiving relief food

*Kali*<sup>4</sup> businesses (12.5 percent) and small business enterprises. In Turkana district, the older persons mainly practice pastoral activities (50.7 percent), rely on relief food (95.0 percent) and practice some irrigated agriculture (29.2 percent) particularly along the water courses and also small business engagements (7.8 persons depending on relied food both in Lamu district and Turkana district is an indication of their vulnerability as this source of livelihood is unreliable and unpredictable. Even when it is available, the rations provided are hardly sufficient to sustain the older persons in these areas. Figure 8 depicts people receiving relief food from a

*Jua Kali* means “hot sun” in Swahili and refers to the informal manufacturing activities in Kenya.

distribution point in Turkana district.

Whereas 90.6 percent of the older persons in Turkana can afford at least one meal a day, 60.5 percent in Lamu district can afford two meals a day. Thus it is clearly indicative that the older persons in Turkana district are more vulnerable compared to their counterparts in Lamu district.

**Health Concerns among the Older Persons**

Health and ageing are inextricably linked components. Whereas 62.5 percent of the older persons in Lamu district indicated that their health condition is not good,

69.5 percent of the older persons indicated the same in Turkana district. The older persons advanced various reasons to support their perceptions regarding the condition of their health status. These include body aches such as pains in the chest, back and joints, together with general malaise are predominant as they account for 57.2 percent of the respondents in Lamu district and 52.2 percent in Turkana district. Poor eyesight and hearing problems also characterized the older person's populations in Lamu and Turkana districts. Insufficient food is a critical contributory factor to the poor health particularly in Turkana where it accounts for 22.2 percent of the reported cases, as opposed to 6.4 percent cases in Lamu district. Notably, physical disabilities among the older persons are also prevalent in Turkana and Lamu districts.

In terms of the availability and access to healthcare support programs for the older persons, it was clearly indicated that the elderly in all the two areas have no specific programs meant to address their peculiar health concerns. However, the available general health facilities were useful in partially meeting their needs. Overall, 81.1 percent of the older persons in Lamu district and 55.2 percent in Turkana district indicated that there are no health programs in place for them in their respective areas. In the absence of adequate medical care for the older persons, they have resorted to traditional medicine to meet their health needs. A wide palette of medicinal herbs used to address a diversity of health concerns is clearly known by the older persons. Whereas in Lamu district at least (46 percent) know some plants of medicinal value, in Turkana district 78.6 percent know such plants. This also indicates that older persons in Turkana district depend on traditional medicine than those in Lamu district.

## Conclusions

The older persons in Lamu and Turkana districts participate fairly actively in both social and economic engagements. Such activities, however, do not provide enough to sustain their livelihoods. Thus, these populations are prone to a wide palette of risks and vulnerabilities that largely touch on their personal lives, community, economic, food, health, environmental, and political insecurities. The traditional family set up plays a significant role in the lives of the older persons as they find, to a great extent, the satisfaction of their needs both social and economic in the family. Support for the older persons in the study areas is mainly sourced from family members. Overall, most of the older persons' needs are

borne by the communities of which they are part. Given that population ageing is now an inevitable phenomenon in Kenya as exemplified by increasing numbers of the older persons across the country, there is an urgent need to develop and implement a consistent set of socio-economic policies favourable for this population segment.

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