

## **TOURISM, CHARITY, AND FATHERS' FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION ON THE KENYAN COAST**

**Njeri Chege and Cornelia Schweppe**

**Abstract:** Increasing empirical evidence shows that child-raising and children's formal education are influenced by and embedded in cross-border processes and constellations. In Kenya's South Coast region, widespread support for children's education is taking place through the long-term relationships local men and women are establishing with tourists from the global North. In this regard, seemingly casual beach encounters initiated by local fathers — who invite western tourist acquaintances to visit their villages and homes — have become a common parental strategy for engaging with tourists who have the potential to become sponsors for their children. In this article we look at the social, economic, and political background against which the quest for sponsors through “village visits” has emerged. We unveil the complex and interrelated factors at global, national, and local levels that shape these livelihood strategies. Based on a case study in which we analyze a beach worker's efforts to engage tourists as sponsors for his child's formal education during a village visit, we argue that these village visits are fundraising strategies that are similar to those employed locally by child-oriented non-governmental organizations, and are shaped by the region's deeply rooted “culture of charity”.

**Keywords:** tourism, charity, Kenya, transnational childhood, children, education, sponsors, village visits, poverty, social inequality

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It was a hot afternoon on the Kenyan South Coast, a prominent and wealthy international tourist destination marked by both extreme poverty and social inequality. We were seated at a beach bar, talking to Rajabu<sup>1</sup>, a beach worker in his mid-thirties. As a father to three daughters, his eldest was attending a private primary school, while the younger two were attending a government-funded school. He was narrating to us how he managed to have the eldest daughter attend a costly private school, despite the fact that he was not employed and did not have a stable source of income. His daughter's schooling was being financially supported by a German couple who were visiting the South Coast when Rajabu met them.

Since the turn of the century, “transnational childhoods” has become a prominent field of research. Empirical evidence has shown that children's upbringing and formal education are influenced by and embedded in cross-border processes and constellations. Such evidence is provided by, for example, studies on parents who emigrate with the aim of securing better living conditions and especially better formal education for their children (Parreñas, 2005); or who relocate their children abroad in efforts to offer them high quality education (Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Sun, 2014; Tsong & Liu, 2009; Yeoh & Lin, 2013; Zhou 1997, 1998). Rajabu's narrative points to another related phenomenon: support relationships that emerge when tourists from Northern countries and the local inhabitants of the locations they visit in the global South, come into direct personal contact<sup>2</sup>. Transnational child-raising and transnational educational support develop through the long-term relationships the local men and women establish with tourists from the global North (Chege, 2014).

In this article we look at how seeking to establish transnational support relationships has become a popular practice among struggling households in Kenya's South Coast region. We specifically focus on “village visits”, which have become increasingly common among local parents, especially fathers, in their attempts to secure the financial support of western tourists<sup>3</sup> for their children's formal education. During village visits, men take tourists for walks in their

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<sup>1</sup> To assure the research participants' anonymity, “Rajabu” and other names used in this article are pseudonyms. Similarly, any information that could be used to identify the participants has been removed or altered.

<sup>2</sup> By global South we refer to countries and regions of the world that today are also referred to as “developing”, “less developed”, or “least developed”. Previously, they were termed “third world”. They include those in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and socioeconomically poor regions within richer countries of the global North. Our use of global North refers to countries and regions of the world that are termed “developed” and were previously termed “first world”. They include Canada, the USA, Western and Northern European countries, New Zealand, and Australia.

<sup>3</sup> In this article we use the terms “western tourists”, “western sponsors”, and “westerners” in a large sense in reference to white men and women from European or North American countries. In Kenya, the popular term used to designate them is *wazungu* [white people]. In doing so, we do not discount the fact that there are significant social, cultural, and geographical heterogeneities among people coming from the different countries. Similarly, we use the terms “local parents”, “local fathers”, and “local men and women” in reference to Kenyan men and women living in Kenya's South Coast region, who are predominantly Mijikenda.

residential neighbourhoods, popularly termed “village(s)”, and visits to their respective homes are often included. We unveil the complex and interrelated processes at the global, national, and local levels that inform and influence these livelihood strategies.

In particular, we show how conditions within the Kenyan South Coast region — a high level of poverty, social inequality, and a history of limited access to formal education, alongside its inhabitants’ high dependency on tourism — have provided a fertile ground for the massive entry of charity organizations<sup>4</sup>, many of which are particularly active in the field of formal education, both primary and secondary (Berman, 2017). As elsewhere in the country, private schools — low cost and high cost schools that promise, and are perceived as offering, better quality education compared to public schools — have increased in number (Berman, 2017; Ngware, 2015). A number of studies show that such private schools offer better quality education when measured by students’ success rates in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations<sup>5</sup> (Berman, 2017; Ngugi, Mumiukha, Fedha, & Ndiga, 2015; Ngware, 2015; Ngware, Abuya, Admassu, Mutisya, & Musyoka, 2013; Sang & Kipsoi, 2017). However, the financial burden for children’s access to private schools is (expected to be) borne by parents and families (Ngware, 2015; Ngware et al., 2013). We show that in this respect, parents resort to a model that is already present in the region: looking for sponsors among tourists from the global North (Berman, 2017). As such, the aforementioned village visits are a fundraising strategy, one that is shaped by the region’s deeply rooted “culture of charity” (Berman, 2017).

In what follows, we situate the focus of our paper theoretically within the literature on transnational childhoods and children’s education in cross-border constellations. We then present our research methods. We move on to provide the contextual backdrop by discussing the dynamics of education and humanitarianism on the Kenyan South Coast. This provides the social, political, and economic background to explain the local parents’ search for western tourists’ financial support for their children’s education. The presentation of our empirical findings follows, with a case study of how Rajabu found the German couple who were sponsoring his daughter’s private school education. We then tease out some similarities between the strategies employed by him and many other men to secure support for their children’s education from western tourists, and those employed by some of the local child-centred non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their fundraising appeals for donations from sponsors from the global North. We conclude that village visits are a fundraising strategy of individual

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<sup>4</sup> Concrete examples of charity organizations include the German association Watoto e.V. which founded the Mekaela Academies, comprising a total of five schools (three primary and two secondary); Projekt Schwarz-Weiß e.V. which founded the Nice View children’s village, kindergarten, and primary school; Girls Hope e.V. which started the Diani Maendeleo Academy (a secondary school for girls); the Italian NGO Fondazione Germano Chincerini, which founded a children’s village and primary school; and the French association Hakuna Matata which, among others, supports existing struggling community schools.

<sup>5</sup> KCPE is a nation-wide examination taken by students at the end of their 8 years of primary school education.

struggling households and are derived from the practices of charity NGOs in the region, whose activities focus on assuring a continuous flow of donors and donations from the global North.

### ***Child-Raising and Children's Education in Cross-Border Constellations***

As a field of research, transnational childhoods came into focus mainly through the attention given to the migration processes of parents whose children remained in their countries of origin (see Heymann et al., 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Lahaie, Hayes, Markham Piper, & Heymann, 2009; Mazzucato, 2014; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001; Parreñas, 2001, 2005, 2008). Research has shown that children often provide the motivation behind such migration; many parents emigrate in order to provide better quality education and better living conditions for their children and, more specifically, to improve their financial situations (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011; Parreñas, 2001, 2005).

Research findings have also shown that geographical distance by no means signifies the fading away of parental responsibility. Emigrant parents maintain diverse relationships with their children and engage in their care and upbringing in many ways (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Nobles, 2011; Parreñas, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Studies have highlighted the enormous and rapidly growing financial transfers from immigrants to family members and especially to children left in the regions of origin (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005; Mazzucato & Schans, 2008; Schweppe, 2011). This has led to concepts like “transnational motherhood” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), “transnational fatherhood” (Parreñas, 2008; Pribilsky, 2012), and “transnational parenthood” (Carling, Menjivar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012).

Findings on the impact of migration and subsequent transnational family constellations have been ambivalent. It has been shown that there are significant material improvements in the upbringing of children as a result of parents' financial transfers, which can have positive effects on children's schooling and formal education. However, parents' prolonged absence can also result in high emotional costs, coming from feelings of abandonment and parental avoidance (Borraz, 2005; Donato & Duncan, 2011; Dreby, 2007; Graham & Jordan, 2011; Heymann et al., 2009; Lahaie et al., 2009; Mazzucato, 2014).

Other studies situated at the intersection of migration, family, and education in East and Southeast Asia have shown that over the last three decades, children's education has gained a very significant place for parents, warranting the relocation of individual children (aged between 7 and 18 years) with or without a parent, to another country. Through these migration processes parents seek to offer their children high-quality education abroad; they consider that foreign educational qualifications and cultural capital will increase their children's chances of future socio-economic success (Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Proyrungroj, 2017; Sun, 2014; Tsong & Liu, 2009; Yeoh & Lin, 2013; Zhou, 1998).

In addition, there are other forms of cross-border child-raising and educational support constellations that necessitate neither parents' nor their children's international migration.

International tourism and humanitarian activities are key to the existence of these other forms. An example can be seen in orphanage “voluntourism”, where travellers from the global North combine their desire for travel within a Southern country with working as volunteers in children’s orphanages, schools, or after-school centers (Guiney, 2012; Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Proyrungroj, 2013; Sinervo, 2011; Voelkl, 2012). These child-oriented organizations raise funds through the significant amounts volunteers from the global North pay in order to participate as volunteers (Cheney & Rotabi, 2014; Guiney, 2012; Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Voelkl, 2012). Additionally, as scholarly, governmental, and intergovernmental organizations’ research points out, organized trips and visits to orphanages are often offered to tourists who, once on site, are encouraged to make generous donations. Children are thus used as income-generating resources for the orphanages (Cambodia MoSVY & UNICEF, 2011; Guiney, 2012; Reas, 2015).

Research conducted by scholars and developmental organizations, and press reports on orphanage tourism and voluntourism in countries of the global South, indicate that significant numbers of children in orphanages are not orphans, but rather are entrusted to these institutions by parents who are poor and who particularly want their children to have access to formal education, English language learning through contact with volunteers, health care, and, overall, better life chances (Cambodia MoSVY & UNICEF, 2011; Forget Me Not Australia, 2016; Guiney, 2012; Holmes, 2016; Pattison, 2014; Schyst Resande, 2013).

In this article we look at a different form of cross-border child-raising and educational support, one that is to be found when tourists from more economically affluent countries come into direct contact with the residents — parents and children — of the touristic regions they visit in the global South. The transnational upbringing and educational support of children then develops through the long-term relationships local men and women (who are dependent on tourism for subsistence) establish with tourists from richer countries (many of whom are return tourists or reside in the area for longer periods). Reference to the existence of such constellations is implicitly made or presented as a side-issue in studies on sex tourism in, for example, Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand (Ervik, 2013; Hoang, 2010), and Central America and the Caribbean (e.g., Brennan, 2004; Cabezas, 2009, 2011; Frohlick, 2007; Sanchez Taylor, 2006), where the focus is specifically on the relationship dynamics between tourists and sex workers or persons employed within the tourism sector. These studies show how sex workers or persons working within the tourism sector seek to establish relationships with people from richer countries (which often takes the form of intimate relationships or marriage), as a means of lifting their families out of poverty-related living conditions.

More concrete evidence of these child-support-oriented constellations is presented in the work of Chege (2014, 2017), whose focus is on male beach workers on Kenya’s South Coast region. Chege shows how these men’s quest for long-term relationships with tourists is to be understood as part of their livelihood strategies that are specifically geared to securing or improving their children’s access to quality formal education. Children are made a part of these

relationships, not only because they benefit from the material resources, but also because they serve to create stronger ties between the parents and the westerners (Chege, 2014, p. 284, p. 288). These long-term relationships may be sexual, or may be based on non-sexual friendships, with tourists who locally are termed “family friends” (Chege, 2014, 2017). Our study picks up on the education component of these relationships.

### **Sources and Methods**

This paper presents partial results from our study entitled “Transnational upbringing in Kenya”, which analyzes the roles and significance of relationships between tourists and local inhabitants in the upbringing of children in Kenya’s South Coast region. The project’s focus is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at a deeper understanding of the social and political factors that have led to the emergence of transnational educational support between local parents and tourists from Western countries on Kenya’s South Coast. On the other hand, it focuses on understanding the strategies involved, and the negotiations that go into establishing this support, as well as the significance of the ensuing relationships for children’s upbringing.

For data generation we conducted narrative-generating guided interviews with male beach workers<sup>6</sup> in Kenya’s South Coast region in 2016. Beach workers were chosen as interviewees as they had already been identified as the main link between tourists and local inhabitants (Chege 2014, 2017; Eid Bergan, 2011; Peake, 1989; Tami, 2008). The interviews aimed at generating narratives about the men’s family and parental lives, their contact and interactions with tourists, and their views on the support received for their children from visiting westerners. In addition, we asked about each interviewee’s socio-demographic situation (age, family status, occupations and sources of livelihood, number and age of children).

Data generation took place during a four-week field stay in the region. Gaining access to the interviewees involved two different approaches. First, we established contact with some participants through spontaneous encounters on the beach. Second, contact with other participants was facilitated by Mwaka — a beach worker and father who was receiving support from a German sponsor for his daughter’s primary school education.

We conducted a total of 19 interviews with male beach workers. This number was based on having reached saturation in relation to the identification of new themes across the interviews. The men’s ages varied from late 20s to early 40s. None had post-primary school education, with the large majority having had only a few years of primary school education. All interviewees had children (aged between 2 and 15 years), and most were living with a wife or “girlfriend” (mother

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<sup>6</sup> One of the 19 men had stopped working on the beach several years earlier.

of their children). The interviews were conducted in English and/or in Kiswahili<sup>7</sup>, and were transcribed verbatim.

In addition to the interviews with beach workers, we also conducted interviews with three mothers, a village head (chairperson), two teachers, the headteacher of a public school, and the manager of a western-funded community school.

Our data analysis followed a two-step approach. The first step consisted in a close, comprehensive reading of each interview transcript, identifying key themes within each interview and coding them respectively. This was followed by a comparison of the themes we identified across the different interviews, the aim being to check for variations and commonalities in the men's practices and experiences.

Since village visits emerged as a prominent topic in the first part of the analysis, in the second step we wanted to get a deeper understanding of the social meanings beach workers ascribe to their involvement with tourists for their children's educational support and the processes involved. We therefore selected those parts of the interviews in which the interviewees focused on village visits. Data analysis then followed a sequence analytical approach (Schütze, 1983). As a prominent method of data analysis in qualitative research this approach is particularly suitable for reconstructing meanings of social actions and social processes. It consists in a line-by-line interpretation through which the underlying patterns and processes, as well as the meanings of a social phenomenon, are reconstructed on a step-by-step basis. At the end of this second step we condensed our results into comprehensive case studies.

In order to understand the local parents' search for western tourists' financial support, particularly in relation to their children's education, we will first discuss the social, political, and economic background against which this support is pursued, before presenting the research results.

### ***Dynamics of Education and Humanitarianism on the Kenyan Coast***

Since Kenya's independence from British colonial rule in 1963, the South Coast region has developed into a prominent and wealthy international tourist destination. However, it is simultaneously characterized by extreme poverty and social inequality (Berman, 2017; Chege 2014). It is part of what was formerly administratively known as the Coast Province<sup>8</sup>, which was one of the country's most neglected regions with regard to the central government's spending and its provision of basic services (education, health care, water, electricity, and transportation), relative to the region's economic contribution to the country (Chege, 2014; Eisemon, 2000; Meilink, 2000; Mghanga, 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> As is common in everyday verbal communication in Kenya, the interviews involved code mixing and code switching, that is, constant mixing of, and switching between the two languages.

<sup>8</sup> Under the former highly centralized system of governance.

The first two post-colonial Kenyan governments (under Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi) identified tourism as a potential driver for socio-economic development (Kibicho, 2009). However, through tourism development and political patronage, in the coastal region, members of the local Mijikenda communities have been progressively losing ownership of, and access to significant amounts of land, notably seafront land (which is the most profitable), to expatriates as well as to the Kenyan political and economic elite (Berman, 2017; Chege, 2014, 2017; Kanyinga, 2000; Syagga, 2006, 2011). As several scholars have shown, access to education in the coastal region is marked by a long history of neglect and inequality relative both to other regions of the country and to its contribution to the country's economy (Alwy & Schech, 2004; Chege, 2014, 2017; Eisemon, 2000; Mghanga, 2010). This has been attributed to a combination of factors. First, while formal education was introduced to the coastal region by Christian missionaries much earlier (in the mid 19th century) than within the Kenya interior, it did not flourish. The region had been under Islamic influence for centuries, hence Christian missionaries' educational initiatives were resisted by the then dominant Afro-Arab community (Eisemon, 2000, p. 251). Second, under British colonialism Kenya had racially segregated schools and different education systems for Europeans, Asians, and Africans (Alwy & Schech, 2004; Chege 2014, 2017; Eisemon, 2000). Following Kenya's political independence, unfruitful attempts were made by the first and second post-colonial governments under Presidents Kenyatta and Moi to address educational inequalities across the country (Alwy & Schech, 2004, p. 270). Third, the political dynamics and implementation of the post-independence education policies were such that the regions and ethnic communities that benefited the most from educational resources and opportunities were those that had well-placed civil servants and strong political figures within the government — predominantly those of Kikuyu and Kalenjin ethnicities (Alwy & Schech, 2004, p. 269).

With particular reference to the South Coast region, Chege (2014, 2017) shows that, among other factors, the cumulative effect of the Mijikenda's poor access to formal education since the country's independence has led to very limited employment possibilities for both men and women in the formal employment market (including within the formal tourism-oriented business in the region), thus compromising their life chances and overall social well-being.

Like elsewhere in the country, access to formal education for South Coast inhabitants has been influenced by national and international policies. Kenya was among the 189 member states of the United Nations (UN) who committed themselves to ensuring the attainment of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015; attainment of universal primary education was a central component (Kenya Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2013; UN-MDG, 2010). It is also one of several African countries to have performed remarkably well with regard to the attainment of the education component of the MDGs. As a presidential candidate in 2002, Mwai Kibaki promised Kenyans free primary school education during his presidential campaign. Once in office, his government implemented the free primary education policy in

2003<sup>9</sup>. From an international perspective, the government worked to conform with internationally defined development goals, by showing its commitment to achieving universal primary education (UPE; Chege, 2014, p. 285).

In 2003, the government began subsidizing the cost of children's public primary education. Concretely, this meant that poor or struggling households that previously could not afford school-related costs in public schools were able to send their children (back) to school. The subsidized primary school education attracted massive enrolments and re-enrolments in public schools (Chege, 2014, p. 285; Kenya Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MoEST], 2005; Ngware et al., 2013, Somerset, 2008). According to Kenya's Ministry of Education, prior to 2002, the gross enrolment rate (GER) for primary education was on the decline; however, in 2003, that of public primary schools rose to 98.1% , and to 101.5% in 2004 (Kenya MoEST, 2005, p. 9)<sup>10</sup>. In the coastal region, between 1999 and 2002, GER for primary schools also showed a downward trend and the GER for boys remained superior to that of girls. Following the reforms, boys' GER increased from 68% in 2002, to 90.8% in 2003, and remained at 90.8% in 2004, while that of girls for the same period was 57%, 67.8%, and 77.6% (Kenya MoEST, 2005, p. 10)<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, according to the country's 2013 MDG status report, there was a remarkable improvement in the primary education net enrolment rate, from 67.8% in 2000 to 95.9% in 2013 (Kenya Ministry of Devolution and Planning 2013, p. 8).

However, what these figures do not reveal is the fact that the rapidly increasing enrolments were not complemented by the building of new schools and hiring of more teachers. This resulted in very high teacher–pupil ratios in public schools countrywide, with particularly high ratios in certain rural areas, remote, and informal settlement areas (Chege, 2014, p. 288; Kenya MoEST, 2005; Ngware et al., 2013; Somerset, 2008). Hence, while Kenya attained a high score where the UPE goal is concerned, the quality of education did not follow suit, since on promising free primary school education, the Kibaki government — as research indicates — had not effectively anticipated and planned for the corresponding additional infrastructure, human, and financial resources (Ngugi, 2015; Ngware, 2015; Ngware et al., 2013).

As an unequally developed peri-urban region, where the large majority of local inhabitants' residential areas are remotely situated, the South Coast saw the entry and subsequent burgeoning of charity initiatives (by individuals and organizations) into the field of pre-primary, primary, and secondary school education. The founders and participants of these initiatives were mainly from Germany, Switzerland, France, and Austria, but some were also from the UK and

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<sup>9</sup> This was not the first free primary education initiative in the country's history. The first and second initiatives were launched in 1974 and 1979 during Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi's respective presidencies (Somerset, 2008, p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> For a concise explanation as to why GER may exceed 100%, refer to <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/114955-how-can-gross-school-enrollment-ratios-be-over-100>

<sup>11</sup> GERs for primary schools that are specifically for the South Coast are unavailable.

the USA. The entry of these education-oriented charity initiatives has to be considered as part of the already significant presence of humanitarian activities in the region (Berman, 2017).

Berman (2017), who conducted research on the social and economic involvement of Germans<sup>12</sup> in the South Coast region, points out that:

Today Diani<sup>13</sup> is characterized by a pervasive “culture of charity” ... shaped primarily by expatriate residents and repeat visitors who initially came as tourists.... [The] culture of charity, in one way or another, structures most social and economic relations in Diani, for there is no family in the area that does not benefit from the formal and informal humanitarian activities of Germans and other Europeans. (p. 73)

Berman sees this as closely linked to the touristic development of the region, as tourism is often the point of contact for humanitarian activities. When tourists become aware that even seemingly insignificant amounts of money can have a significant impact locally, they enthusiastically engage in philanthropic activities that include financially and materially supporting schools, children’s homes, orphanages, and dispensaries, and supporting the provision of clean water (Berman, 2017, p. 78).

In the field of education, humanitarianism is at work both publicly and privately. Berman (2017) notes that, “There is not a single public or private school in the area that does not have a sponsor, usually European, whose name is stamped on school desks or acknowledged on the entrance wall of the building” (p. 78). Most of these activities are carried out by what she terms “contraband humanitarians”. She uses this term “because most of the activities of contraband humanitarians occur outside the official structures of development (be they governmental or non-governmental) and at times include outright illegal activities.”<sup>14</sup> (2017, p. 78). These humanitarians raise their funds exclusively through private donors in their countries of origin. Berman affirms that almost every family in the Diani area has been touched in some way by their work and that, in the absence of such donor support, the projects would fall apart, with erected infrastructure crumbling from lack of maintenance funds (2017, p. 79, p. 88).

According to the regional Kwale County government (2018), there are currently 415 primary schools in the South Coast region, of which 363 are public and 52 are private. The GER is estimated at 99.7%. The government cites “the performance in national examinations which is very poor” as a major concern. Poor and inadequate school infrastructure (classrooms, toilets,

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<sup>12</sup> Included are Germans, Austrians, and Swiss-Germans.

<sup>13</sup> Diani is one of the many areas that make up the South Coast. Others include Tiwi, Galu, Kinondo, Msambweni, and Ukunda. The bulk of tourist activities, amenities, and businesses are concentrated in the Diani area.

<sup>14</sup> She uses the term in reference to what Polman calls MONGOS (My Own NGO; Polman, 1979, cit. in Berman, 2017, p. 79), whereby individuals rather than governmental or non-governmental organizations are the driving force behind the humanitarian activity.

and desks) and an insufficient number of teachers are considered to be the main additional challenges. In citing a teacher–child ratio of 1:52, the local government makes no distinction between the high ratio that is characteristic of public schools and the lower one that characterizes private schools. Through such generalizations, the complexity of inequality in education provision and schooling in the region is obscured.

In the South Coast region, humanitarian activities concerned with education have led to an increasing number of community schools that are financially and materially supported by European individuals and European associations. There has also been an increase in the number of private schools, both low cost and high cost, that are financially and materially supported, run, and/or owned by European individuals, associations, or by small NGOs. This has resulted in what one could consider to be a three-tiered system of schools in the region: public schools, low cost private schools, and high cost private schools<sup>15</sup>. A number of private schools in the latter category are more successful in qualifying pupils in national examinations, given their lower student–teacher ratios; their better paid, and therefore more motivated, teachers; their adequate learning materials and equipment; and their provision of other social or health services (Berman, 2017; Motuka & Orodho, 2016; Sang & Kipsoi, 2017). Hence, numerous parents in the region seek out possibilities for their children to attend costly private schools. However, due to their limited resources, this is only possible with financial support.

### Findings

All the men we interviewed were engaged in relationships with tourists at the time of the interviews or had been in the past, and were receiving or had received some form of financial support from them. Those who were not engaged in relationships with tourists at the time of the interviews said they were actively seeking new ones. When asked about their reasons for pursuing these relationships, the explanation they gave was almost uniform: “To support the education of my children.” The large majority linked this support to their children being able to attend a private primary school. Their relationships with tourists were either intimate/sexual or *family friend* (Chege, 2014, 2017) relationships. They were not limited to the duration of the tourists’ vacation period and varied from a few months to several years in length. Village visits were a common strategy in the men’s attempts to engage tourists in providing longer-lasting financial support. Given the popularity of village visits in the region, we chose to learn more about them and their rationale, so as to understand why they are prevalent and why they have become a “successful” way “to find a sponsor”. What follows is a detailed analysis of an excerpt of Rajabu’s narration in which he described how he was able to secure the financial support of a visiting German couple during a village visit, which then enabled him to enrol his eldest daughter in a private primary school.

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<sup>15</sup> For a comparison with schools found in informal urban settlements, see Ngware et al., 2013.

### *Rajabu's Case Study*

Like hundreds of other men seeking tourist-oriented livelihoods informally on the beach, Rajabu explained that he was a versatile worker and was always ready to offer his services to tourists. They ranged from preparing coconut drinks or a meal of fresh sea food, to acting as a middleman for foreign visitors and beach workers selling artisan products or those organizing tours and game-viewing safaris, to procuring small amounts of drugs for tourists' personal consumption<sup>16</sup>.

He explained why he worked on the beach, ascribing his presence there to the lack of an alternative. "You must have a certificate and then you get a job but me I have no certificate so I have to come on the beach ...". He saw having a job and the corresponding generation of income as ultimately dependent on formal education, and attaining a certain level of it, which could be attested by a certificate<sup>17</sup>. Given the place accorded to education certificates in securing jobs requiring skills in the region's formal hospitality sector, for someone like him who did not have any certificates, this implied "that he has to come to the beach". He therefore pointed out two clear-cut alternatives: to secure a job one required a school certificate, and in the absence of a certificate, one had to come to the beach. That one "has" to do so implies that Rajabu saw no other alternative.

### *How to Get a Sponsor: The Village Tour*

Rajabu began his narration on how he found a sponsor as follows:

So I meet these tourists here [on the beach]. As you know on the beach if new tourist come on the beach many people go everywhere asking for the business ... but for me the tourist I didn't show them the business. I just took [them on] some walk on the beach just to see the beach.

He indicated the close connection between tourists and business, categorizing tourists as a group that was linked to the generation of income. He also specified that it was not only he who went to the beach, but that it was a place that was frequented by "many people", and consequently "asking for the business" (understood as seeking to sell goods, services, or both to tourists) was a common practice.

In contrast to the many people who sought to sell goods or services to tourists ("asking for the business"), Rajabu did not try to sell his services to the tourists in question ("I didn't show them the business"). Instead, he "just took [them on] some walk on the beach just to see the beach". Although his way of approaching the tourists sounds and appears to be casual and

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<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive presentation and discussion on what beach workers' activities and their tourist-oriented livelihoods entail, see Chege (2014, 2017), Eid Bergan (2011), and Tami (2008).

<sup>17</sup> He did not specifically refer to a primary school or a secondary school certificate. One can infer that he was referring to the latter, as this could have enabled him to secure low-skill jobs in the formal sector.

insignificant (through his repeated use of “just” and because he did not “show them the business”), Rajabu did take an active part in the encounter: he accompanied them on a beach walk, which tends to facilitate rapport-building.

Rajabu continued, “Then the next day I took them to the village.” By the “village”, he was referring to the neighborhood where he lived, situated roughly 400 metres from the beach<sup>18</sup>. His initiative to take the tourists to the village the following day is a manifestation of his continued active involvement in shaping the encounter. The significance of taking them to the village became apparent in the succeeding part of his narration, in which he indicated that the walk through the village included a visit to his own home. This home visit proved to have been of central importance in securing support for one of his children’s primary school education.

An important element that is inherent in taking tourists to the village and to one’s home is a pattern that one can describe as “showing, seeing, giving”.

### *Showing, Seeing, Giving*

Rajabu continued his narration: “Then the next day I took them to the village and then they saw my family. I showed them that I have children.” Thus, the visit to the village was closely related to his private life: the tourists “saw” his family and he “showed” them that he had children. It is interesting to note that Rajabu said he showed the tourists “that” he had children. As such, what seems most important, is not, for example, that the tourists and his children met and talked on that day, but rather that he made the tourists aware of his status as a father. Seeing that Rajabu had children led to the tourists asking Rajabu questions about them. This is evident in the immediate connection Rajabu made between having shown them that he had children and their questioning him about the children: “So they ask me the questions about the children,” which was presented as an almost automatic reaction to the German couple having been made aware of his status as a father.

Prior to mentioning the questions the tourists had asked him, Rajabu interjected, “As you know, the tourists, they like the children to learn.” While this statement was used by Rajabu to introduce the topic of “children’s learning”, which seemed to be of key importance during the village visit, it also shows that he had specific knowledge about the importance western tourists placed on children’s learning. With this knowledge he was able to view the situation from their perspective (partly) and contextualize (as well as explain to the interviewers) the tourists’ next questions. The couple then asked about his children’s schooling: “So they ask me how they go to school, my children,” and Rajabu contextualized this question (for us) by mentioning that his children were not in school on that day. He explained the tourists’ question against his background knowledge of the importance westerners are generally known to place on children’s learning, and the fact that the German couple had seen that his children were not in school.

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<sup>18</sup> Most villages are situated further inland (at least a kilometer or more from the beach).

Hence, what the tourists saw did not match their presumed favourable attitude towards children's formal education and school attendance.

Rajabu did not give a direct answer to the tourists' question. He rather contextualized his children's school attendance through his personal attitude towards their formal education and his personal life situation: "I told them how I am poor, I like my children to learn but I can't afford; because there were three children." In vocalizing his positive attitude towards his children's learning, he positioned himself as a father who considered his children's education important. In this regard, his attitude towards his children's learning coincided with that of the tourists. Simultaneously, he informed the tourists of his poverty-stricken life situation that did not allow him to reconcile the importance he placed on his children's education with their actual school attendance. In pointing out this discrepancy, he implied that his children's absence from school was not the result of him being unfavourable towards their schooling and education but was rather a consequence of his very restricted financial resources.

In the last part of his narration, Rajabu took stock of the village tour. He implied a close relationship between "seeing" — a sensory experience — and "giving" when he said, "So the tourists they saw my living situation how I live with my family (...) and then they decide to promote my old girl [eldest daughter]." A crucial precondition for securing the tourists' support was Rajabu's initiative to take the tourists to his village and to show them his family's living environment.

### ***Similarities between Local Inhabitants' and NGOs' Fundraising Strategies***

Rajabu's narrative reveals a number of elements that were important in securing the tourists' financial support for his daughter's education. First, by showing the village, his home, and his family to the tourists, Rajabu exposed them to different aspects of poverty and a social reality that was different from their own.

Second, of equal importance was Rajabu's knowledge about what tourists "like" and his subsequent positioning of himself as a father who placed high importance on his children's learning, but who lacked the financial resources to send them to school.

Third, the preceding was conveyed and experienced as a very personal, direct, and sensory encounter. For the tourists, village visits included a direct visual and physical exposure to different aspects of poverty, as well as a personal interaction with those affected by it.

In this regard, there are striking similarities between how Rajabu engaged the support of tourists for his daughter's private school education and the fundraising strategies employed by charity organizations in the region, notably, those supporting schools, children's homes, or both. In what follows, our analysis is based on an examination of how child-oriented charity organizations position themselves (principally through their websites) as well as their concrete fundraising practices. The following passages, in which some of these organizations introduce

themselves on their internet home pages are insightful with regard to how they position themselves:

Shikamana Primary School ... was founded in May 2002 ... in order to provide education for children, who due to poverty would otherwise not be able to attend school. (<http://www.shikamanaschool-dianikenya.com>)

Founded by Kerry Wanjala (Watson) from Burton-on-Trent, England – [Footprints Orphanage] provides not only shelter, food and water for orphaned and vulnerable children, but also the quality education, love, security and hope for the future they truly deserve, in a family environment. ([www.footprintsorphanage.com](http://www.footprintsorphanage.com))

The Diani Children's Village was started in 1994 with an objective of providing orphans, neglected and abandoned children with a home. The home caters for basic needs; health care, education, recreation, skill building opportunities etc. This is to give the children hope and provide a foundation for a future independent life. (<http://www.dianichildrensvillage.org>)

Two elements are at the heart of these introductory messages. First, they indicate that the organizations address existing unfulfilled basic human needs in the region (food, water, shelter, health care, and education). Second, they point out their actual work in mitigating these social hardships: they provide formal education, contribute towards educational infrastructure, and intervene in assuring child protection and children's future well-being.

As part of charity organizations' fundraising strategies, the visual and personal exposure of potential donors to the organizations' work has become a common strategy. As an example, let us consider Footprints Orphanage, a child-centered not-for-profit organization that is registered in both Kenya and the UK as a children's charity organization. Alongside the orphanage, which is situated in a rural part of the South Coast, it also previously ran a primary school. Like other charity organizations in the region, it is perpetually seeking sponsors from the global North for its projects, as well as for individual children. To this end, it encourages tourists (via its website) to pay them a visit through its "Visit Footprints for the Day Programme", which is announced as follows:

Let us show you a slice of the 'real' Kenya during your holiday. If you are staying in the Diani area on holiday we welcome you to visit Footprints Orphanage for the day.... Kerry will show you around Footprints Children's Home where you will meet our 'family' of staff and children, and see how we overcome the challenges of our rural location, where there is no mains electricity or water supply.... The afternoon can be spent visiting the local village or playing with the children before being taken back to your hotel.

(<http://footprintsorphanage.com/visit-us-and-volunteer.html>)

Two points are important in relation to this citation. First, it is suggested that being shown Footprints Children's Home would amount to seeing "a slice of the 'real' Kenya". Given that the organization devotes itself to "orphaned and vulnerable children" and is located in a rural area "with no mains electricity and water supply", it is implied that the organization's intervention is a response to a social reality of the "real" Kenya, with social problems such as the presence of orphaned and vulnerable children and a severe lack of basic infrastructure and public services. Also implied in this formulation is the idea that the living conditions tourists are generally exposed to, through their stays in tourist resorts, beachfront hotels, or private holiday rentals in the region are far from representative of life in the region or in the country as a whole.

The second point is related to "seeing" the contribution Footprints is making towards alleviating these socio-economic problems ("see how we overcome the challenges of our rural location, where there is no mains electricity or water supply"). As pointed out before, these two dimensions (exposing human hardship and showing the contribution of the organization towards its alleviation) are at the core of charity organizations' fundraising strategies. In this respect, the visits are a very personal, direct, and sensory exposure to these dimensions.

Tourists' visits to schools and children's homes in the region are often effective in perpetuating respective organizations' fundraising. The following comment titled "Sponsorship of a School near Ukunda" posted by a traveller from the UK on a popular travel website is one of many that give insights into the functioning and effectiveness of tourists' visits to schools and orphanages:

Myself and my husband have just returned from a holiday in Diani. Whilst there we visited a school about 15 minutes away from Maweni, called Millennium Children's Rescue Academy. We were so taken with the school and what they had already achieved in a short time and how little the school had in the way of resources, that we decided we would like to help.<sup>19</sup>

It shows how the personal and sensory experience (seeing) evokes strong feelings ("we were so taken") which in turn triggers the decision to help.

Other related fundraising strategies are pursued through the websites of charity organizations running orphanages and schools in the South Coast region. Children's photos are characteristic of almost all home pages belonging to these organizations, and readers are encouraged to browse through images of children via links titled "our children" or "meet the children". For example, on the Footprints website, readers can not only view group and individual photos of children, but can also familiarize themselves with the children's development, presented in terms of from where each child started her or his life, to what she or he has achieved while living at the orphanage.

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<sup>19</sup> [https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g775870-i12044-k5098303-Sponsorship\\_of\\_a\\_School\\_near\\_Ukunda-Diani\\_Beach\\_Ukunda\\_Coast\\_Province.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g775870-i12044-k5098303-Sponsorship_of_a_School_near_Ukunda-Diani_Beach_Ukunda_Coast_Province.html)

Such are the logics and practices underlying charity organizations' showing, and tourists' seeing and giving. These logics and practices are similar to those underlying the showing and seeing that takes place during village visits initiated by beach workers. In contrast to the NGOs, Rajabu could not yet show the tourists the positive impact of donations. However, by positioning himself as a father for whom his children's education was important, but who lacked the financial means to assure their schooling, he presented himself as a father worth trusting.

What can be inferred from the similarities between the practices and logic behind the fundraising strategies of charity organizations, and the village visit initiated by Rajabu to secure financial support for his daughter's education? At first, Rajabu's narration of his encounter with the tourists comes across as singular and coincidental. However, the active role he assumed in shaping the encounter (initiating the village visit and showing the tourists his family and children) suggests that there might be more to it. In fact, later in the course of the interview, Rajabu mentioned that, "At that time I had no sponsorship (...) I really looked for a sponsor." The village visit can thus be considered a part of his active and intensive search for, and intentional effort towards securing the support of visiting westerners.

Rather than a singular or coincidental encounter, the village visit can be considered a fundraising strategy; in this case, not pursued by charity organizations but by individuals whose practices and strategies are similar to those used by charity organizations. Our analysis suggests that the strategies of charity organizations in the region, whose activities are dependent on the continuous flow of donors and donations from westerners, have spread beyond the boundaries of organizations and have been adopted and incorporated into the livelihood strategies of the local population. In other words, faced with unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities, poverty, social inequality, and inadequate support from the government, the local inhabitants have resorted to what has been developed in the region as an answer to inadequate and unfulfilled basic human needs and poverty: the search for donors from the global North.

### **Conclusion and Perspectives**

On the Kenyan South Coast, village visits as a fundraising strategy are a manifestation of parents' struggles with poverty and social inequality, and of their desire and efforts to assure brighter futures for their children, through quality education. In this region that is highly dependent on international tourism and has a deeply rooted culture of humanitarianism, village visits can be considered microcosmic representations of the complex interrelations between the global, national, and local.

Village visits are at the end of a long chain of interrelated developments. The visits are framed by the strong emphasis on and importance accorded to formal education worldwide, as expressed through global instruments and policies such as the MDGs promoted by the UN and their implementation and impact at the national level. The Kenyan government's implementation of the educational component of the MDGs resulted in high rates of enrolment and re-enrolment

in primary schools that were not accompanied by a corresponding higher quality of education. In areas like the South Coast, a historically neglected region, formal education remained precarious.

Alongside the pre-existing significant presence of humanitarian activities in the South Coast, the free, low quality primary school education has attracted the inflow of a large number of charity initiatives from the global North, whose activities include setting up schools beyond the existing public schools. Differences between public and private schools continue to deepen, with the latter being considered by far the better option. Given the importance accorded to formal education in relation to children's future life prospects, as well as what is valued as good quality education, it comes as no surprise that parents strive to have their children attend private schools, as these are perceived as the more promising option.

However, these private schools are not free and enrolling one's child in them entails much higher costs relative to public schools. It is left to the responsibility of individual parents or households to generate the funds required for their children's enrolment and participation in private schools. Given the limited economic resources of households in the region, this is not possible without external sources of income. Therefore, struggling fathers like Rajabu resort to the tried-and-tested practices of charity organizations: they seek western sponsors to enable their children's access to private schools.

The widespread practice of village visits as a means of finding individual donors from the global North indicates that both the provision of schools that offer good quality education, and access to good quality education have fallen into the realm of charity. This reality explains the efforts by the region's local inhabitants to establish long-term relationships with western tourists, who then become determinant actors where children's education and life prospects are concerned.

The support offered is not risk-free. Our research indicates that parents whose children's education was being catered for by individual sponsors or *family friends* were involved in imbalanced, paternalistic relationships, since significant components of parental responsibility were yielded to sponsors. This can be seen in the tendency for sponsors to select the private school that the child will attend; pay school fees and other education-related expenses (transportation, uniform) directly to the school; and define conditions for maintaining their support, notably those requiring fathers to communicate their sponsored child's academic progress to them on a regular basis. For instance, Rajabu had to send a weekly fax to the *family friends* with a report from his daughter's school, so that they could "see how she [his daughter] learns and how she did".

The men we interviewed were conscious of the fragility of the educational support their children were receiving from sponsors. Failure to comply with a sponsor's wishes (whether related or unrelated to a child's education) and misunderstandings between the father and the sponsor, resulted in sponsors' withdrawal of support. Furthermore, some fathers felt obliged to

stay in imbalanced, psychologically challenging relationships with their donor *family friends* due to their financial dependence on them for their children's educational support.

At the community level, there are indications that such child-specific educational support creates and reinforces social inequality. Some children received support from sponsors while others did not, thus creating education inequalities among children in the same village or residential area. Also, through particular strategies, fathers whose children were getting educational support were able to receive some of the superfluous money sent to their children's schools by the respective sponsors, which they then allocated to household consumption. This resulted in improved living conditions for certain households, but which, as offshoots of the educational support, remained volatile.

Furthermore, child-specific educational support creates inequalities within households. When one child is attending a private school and her or his siblings are not — as was the case for Rajabu's children — it creates education inequality not only in the present, but also in relation to each child's life prospects. One cannot overlook the frustration unequal support generates among the unsponsored siblings attending public schools. Indeed, Rajabu told us that his other two daughters also wanted to attend private school and that “the young one also cries sometimes”. Much remains to be learned about how the children involved, experience the support as well as the inequality it generates.

Together, the children, their parents, and sponsors make up child-raising constellations that are embedded in charity. This comes with its inherent risks of dependency and power relations, as well as funding insecurity.

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