Aspirations and sex: Coming of age in western Kenya in a context of HIV
Blommaert, E.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)
Chapter 7

City life in the village:
Youth speak about Yeshica

1. Introduction

Leaving the crowded market of Dhonam behind, I took the road going down towards Yeshica, locally called the “Youth Centre” or just the “Centre”, the community-based component of the Youth Intervention Program (YIP). I was heading there to attend the microfinance project (K-Rep)\textsuperscript{1} meeting of the Post-Test Club (PTC), which was part of the Yeshica ‘structural intervention’.\textsuperscript{2} The Post-Test Club’s (PTC) main objective was to promote Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) by openly bringing together people who had been tested for HIV and who were willing to share their HIV status. Walking with my bicycle, as the many big stones on the road made it difficult to ride downhill, villagers greeted me and inquired where I was heading. Once back on the bike, I went pretty fast on the dusty road. The wind on my face was warm but it still cooled my head a bit and, at least, I did not feel the burning sun as intensely. As I passed, people yelled to me, laughing because they were not used to seeing a white person riding a bicycle. After the bridge, it was uphill again, and I understood why people preferred walking; cycling uphill under the burning sun was not really pleasant. I turned left and bumped into Jeremiah (a 17-year-old young man who had just finished primary school), Okoth, and Ochien’g—all PTC members—who were also heading towards Yeshica to attend the meeting. The three young men were not bothered by my presence since we had met a few times before, and continued their conversation in their local language, Dholuo. Ochien’g said: “I wonder if we will get paid this time. Jerry (the local project manager) keeps telling us to wait because Kisumu office has not brought the money yet. I am sure that he just keeps the money for himself”.\textsuperscript{3} The youth usually received an amount of 200 Kenyan shillings (2.5 euro) each time they performed theatre at the Centre’s outreach events, but had not been paid for the last performance, and were irritated. Most PTC members tried to attend the weekly meetings since failure to attend the meeting meant that they had to pay a fine of 50 Kenyan shillings (about 60 eurocents).
On our way, we passed the Anglican Church and three cement houses that had been constructed for Yeshica’s local field staff. A bit further, the youngsters were gathering in one of the two *kibandas* (semi-open, round houses with roofs made of palm fronds). I put my bicycle against the wall of the Youth Centre, a rectangular, one-storey building, and joined the youths in the *kibanda* who were waiting for the arrival of Anuka, the person responsible for the microfinance project, who appeared to be delayed. The youths decided to begin the meeting without Anuka, starting with a prayer by the chairman or youth leader, Maureen. Maureen was about 19 years old and was elected as a chairman by the other PTC members. She announced that PTC members were invited to participate at the Amani (a faith-based youth centre) football tournament, which brought up the issue of transportation. Some felt that they should go by bicycle; others felt that they should walk since not everyone had a bicycle. Ochien’g then mentioned: “I heard that Yeshica got five new bicycles and they are in the storeroom. Why can’t we just go and ask for our bicycles and just use them?” Everybody laughed. Okoth responded: “You think that those are your bicycles, that you can just walk in any time and use them?” The transportation issue remained unresolved but a date was set to visit the Amani project. Anuka had arrived by this point, and began with the issue of loan repayment and savings. She inquired individually why they were not saving the required weekly amount of 20 Kenyan shillings (25 eurocents). Odich and Okoth said that they had no money: “Where can I find that 20 shillings if my family too has to eat?” Anuka was not happy with their answers since she (incorrectly) assumed that each member of the PTC group had received at least 200 Kenyan shillings each time they did outreach activities with the Yeshica staff, and she warned them that without sufficient savings, she could not give them a loan. However, not all PTC-members participated in outreach activities; those who did often did not receive their money on time, or at all. Although some of the PTC members were still hesitant to take out a loan, the idea of possessing 5,000 Kenyan shillings (62.50 euro) all at once sounded attractive. They joked about it in their local language: Okoth said: “If I get the loan, I will buy *mutura* (a meal made of an animal’s intestine and blood) in Kisumu and get so drunk—plus I will use the money on girls”. Josh chimed in: “I want the money to marry”. Since Anuka did not understand Dholuo, she could not follow their conversation; if she had, she would have disapproved of the young men’s’ jokes because she wanted them to start a business rather than using loans just for buying goods. In fact, if they did not start a business, they would face difficulties coming up with the required monthly instalments necessary to repay the loan.
This account of the meeting at Yeshica raises a number of issues related to youth participation in development interventions that will be discussed in this chapter. It shows that young people were willing to make a serious effort to get to the Centre, walking quite some distance on dusty roads, to be able to participate. But their participation is full of ambiguities as it signifies different things to the various beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project. Both the meanings and the terms of participation and ownership are continuously negotiated among participants, as well as between the youth and Yeshica staff. The opening vignette demonstrates the friction between the bottom-up ethic of the project—the youth are supposed to make decisions and become empowered—and the top-down logic inherent in the interventions, exemplified by the K-Rep microcredit program. All this creates an ambiguous mix of aspirations for a better life (imagining employment at the Centre or starting a business with a microcredit loan) combined with feelings of anxiety (being fined for not attending) and irritation (waiting on promised payments).

Youths’ narratives about Yeshica are an important piece of the wider argument of this dissertation because they illustrate how young people adopted (and adapted) the project as another way to improve their livelihood. This chapter raises the issue of how a development project obtains its own meaning in the life world of young people. Housed in its modern cement building with electricity, Yeshica is a substitute for urban life for most of the youngsters, offering what ordinary village life usually cannot promise: formal jobs, higher social status, and opportunities to expand livelihood networks. The youths felt that perhaps they no longer had to leave the village, as they found benefits through Yeshica that were usually associated with city life within their reach, in the village. To them, Yeshica was ‘city life in the village’, and thus wielded the promise of a better life outside Winam.

In the literature on development projects, there is often little understanding of the motivations of individuals for involvement or non-involvement in participatory projects (Cleaver 2001). This chapter digs into the complexities and contradictions surrounding young people’s motivations, which were very different than what Yeshica’s designers and its staff had planned. While most of the youngsters perceived the project as a ‘failure’ at the end, the project’s designers still considered it a ‘success’ even though it did not succeed in biomedical terms, as I elaborate further in this chapter. The greater issue, however, is not whether the project’s practices led to the desired impacts but
rather how ‘success’ or ‘failure’ were produced by different local actors (Mosse 2004: 646–647).

The chapter is structured as follows: I begin by sketching out the theoretical framework of the chapter, and then continue with an analysis of the implementation of YIP. This section makes clear what YIP’s main designers—epidemiologists—aimed to achieve and how it was conceptualized. Then, I elaborate on why some young people participated in Yeshica and why others never got involved. More precisely, I explain how Yeshica became young people’s ‘shopping centre’, a kind of city life in the village. In the fourth section, the stories of Ochien’g and the Post-Test Club (PTC) are set out as a case study to illustrate how Yeshica participants and Yeshica’s local staff both adapted the project to their own benefit. Then I continue with illustrating why, according to Yeshica participants, Yeshica did not provide what they expected and the consequences of this perception of ‘failure’. Based on this discussion, I conclude that development work suits different interests, projects are shaped and reshaped to better meet those interests, and, in the end, only what is in the interests of the most powerful stakeholders is communicated to the outside world.

2. Theoretical framework: The tension between policy and practice

The basic framework of this chapter is inspired by Ferguson’s (1990) and Mosse’s (2004, 2006) accounts of how development projects and policies are produced. While HIV/AIDS prevention projects are biomedically inspired, they do not differ much from other development projects regarding their design, planning, and implementation processes. HIV/AIDS interventions, just as any other development project, are usually conceived with an instrumental view of policy as problem solving, and are concerned with how to best realise program designs in practice. I argue that an actor-oriented perspective is central to understand these processes, and that such an approach recognizes the multiple realities and diverse social practices of a wide range of social actors. It also delves more deeply into the ambiguities inherent in the ‘battlefields of knowledge’ (Long and Long 1992) that shape relations between local actors, policy workers, and researchers. Long and Long’s (1992) notion of ‘battlefields of knowledge’ “conveys the idea of contested arenas in which actors’ understandings, interests, and values are pitched against each other [...] where struggles over social meanings and practices take place” (cited in Long 2002: 1). One such battlefield is related to the HIV epidemic, where
researchers from different disciplines search for the right policy models and practices to tackle this enormous problem.

With changing sexual behaviour as the cornerstone of HIV prevention, several interventions targeting young people have been established and tried out. From the point of view of the program designers, projects are ‘successful’ when the desired outcome of decreased HIV incidence is obtained. Several projects have combined diverse HIV interventions in the hope of being hailed as the most ‘successful’ HIV prevention project, which would mean professional recognition and large-scale ‘replication’ of the ‘best practice’ (Mavedzenge et al. 2010: 8–9). Yet, the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of biomedical and behavioural interventions is usually evaluated against the ‘gold standard’ of quantifiable evidence, through randomized control trials (RCTs). RCTs are scientific experiments that are most commonly used in testing and quantifying the effectiveness of health care services or health technologies (e.g., clinical trials of new drugs). Over the past two decades, several RCTs of different biomedical and behavioural approaches for young people have been carried out in sub-Saharan Africa: Mema Kwa Vijana (Tanzania), Stepping Stones (South Africa), Regai Dzive Shiri Project (Zimbabwe), and SHAZ! (Zimbabwe). Despite enormous efforts in setting up these projects, none of them could demonstrate any consistent impact of the intervention program on biological indicators, such as HIV incidence, the prevalence of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or pregnancy (UN 2003b). Only improvements in reported sexual behaviour were measured, yet as the Mema Kwa Vijana project acknowledged, “reported behaviour is notoriously unreliable in young people and may be subject to differential reporting bias (intervention versus comparison) in the presence of an intervention”.

RCTs rarely investigate the organisational processes of the project. In other words, the trials demonstrate whether the program works but not how it works, as an article in The Economist, ‘Untying the Knot: New Ideas about an Old Problem’ (20 April 2011) explains:

These trials, the critics point out, show whether a drug or remedy works, but not how it works. Even in medicine, a randomised trial can only show whether the average patient benefits, not whether any individual patient will benefit. Human physiology differs from patient to patient, so does the physiology of poverty.

In order to find out why and how HIV-prevention programs for young people function, it is necessary to understand the narratives and social significations that evolve during project implementation, including how management decisions interact with local perceptions of the program. Qualitative evaluations could have an added value in this
respect since they endeavour to give a ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) of the project. Yet, there are only few such studies. The reason for this is that they do not fit the logic of international funding schemes for HIV-prevention programs, which require quantifiable evidence to demonstrate and communicate results quickly and easily. My epidemiological colleagues saw disadvantages in qualitative evaluations, namely that they are time-consuming and therefore do not fit in the logic or structure of brief field missions. To be sure, evaluations frequently combine quantitative with qualitative methods, but the qualitative part is often limited to a number of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, and comprises less of the overall evaluation than the quantitative portion. There is usually no time devoted to participant observation, for example. In addition, projects tend to be narrowly evaluated, usually in terms of specific targets or goals, often using the ‘rapid appraisals technique’ (see also Dichter and Harper 2007; Bateman 2010).9

The above-described emphasis on RCTs emerges from an instrumentalist line of thought that sees policy as a rational means for problem solving, and as neutral and measurable. The other broad strand is a critical view that sees “policy as a rationalising discourse concealing hidden purposes of bureaucratic power or dominance” (Mosse 2003: 2), demonstrated by Ferguson (1990) in his study on Lesotho. Although Ferguson’s (1990) emphasis on the different power relations at stake in development projects is an important one to take into account, according to Mosse (2001, 2003, 2004, 2006), both strands—instrumental and critical—simplify the complex and ambiguous world of development. Mosse (2004: 639) tries to capture the apparent contradictions and invites us to ask: “What happens when development practice is not produced by theory or policy models?” The question here is not whether development works or whether the practices lead to the desired impacts. The main puzzle is, rather, how development projects work (in both their intended and unintended ways), and how ‘success’ or ‘failure’ is produced by the different local actors’ standards (Mosse 2004: 646–647). As Mosse (2003: 1–2) emphasises, there is no need to discuss the gap between intentions and results or the unforeseen nature of consequences:

It is not policy ideas or project models but the institutional realities of development funding and ‘cooperation’ that determine what happens in development. For another, it is not the failure of development projects that needs to be explained, but rather their remarkable success: not the gap between intentions and results, but its absence: not the unforeseen nature of consequences, but the production of predictable results. To be more specific, my focus is not on the way in which policy theory is implemented in practice, but rather on the manner in which development practices produce and reaffirm theory and models of development.
Even if a project fails in practice, it may still be labelled as a ‘success’. The ‘success’ and the ‘failure’ of a project is socially constructed: the success for one person can be the failure for another and vice versa (Mosse 2003: 1–2). This socially structured judgment means that for most designers of development projects the ‘success’ of a project arises from the project’s ability to continue recruiting institutional support (Latour as cited in Mosse 2006: 937–938). A project’s ‘success’ or ‘failure’ is not about realizing project designs: it is rather “a consequence of a certain disarticulation between practices, their rationalising models and overarching policy frameworks” (Mosse 2006: 936–937). Both ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ affirm and reaffirm policy theory and models of change (Mosse 2003: 2–3). This is because “their orientation is more upwards to validate higher policy goals or justify the allocation of resources than downwards to orientate action” (Mosse 2003: 5). Mosse’s work thus invites us to analyse development projects in a way that tries to explain the tension between policy and practice by examining how local-level actors define a project’s ‘success’ or ‘failure’.

Within this framework, this chapter explores the complex relationship between the various discursive constructions of the Yeshica project. It should therefore not be read as an evaluation of the project since it is not concerned with trying to determine whether or not Yeshica was a ‘success’. Instead, I focus on how YIP, and more particularly, Yeshica, affected the everyday lives of the youngsters in Winam.

3. The implementation process of the Youth Intervention Program (YIP)

Yeshica, an acronym for ‘Youth’s Economic, Skills, and Health Improvement Centre in Winam’, was the community-based component of the YIP, complementing the epidemiological component. Yeshica was set up after a study demonstrated the high HIV prevalence among young people in Nyanza Province (Buvé et al. 2001). A team of epidemiologists from the Belgian Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) argued that collecting samples for HIV- and STI-testing without the provision of improved services for prevention and care was unethical in an area with a high prevalence of HIV. As the YIP program coordinator, who was at the same time the principal investigator of the YIP Baseline Cross-sectional Survey (BCS), explained:

Although CDC had been working there for many years, more than 25 years now, we were struck by the lack of any service or intervention program in Winam, so that is how the Winam site was selected (in-depth interview, October 2006).
The Belgian team searched for a model of behaviour change that would identify and solve the causes of the HIV epidemic. The most important actors in the Belgian team were the YIP program coordinator, an epidemiologist from ITM who is based in Kisumu (Kenya), and her supervisor, a senior Belgian epidemiologist from the same institute, based in Belgium. Both designed the YIP protocol.

3.1. How are young people’s problems and needs identified?

Together with local field staff, the YIP designers employed a Belgian anthropologist and a Kenyan public health worker to carry out a ‘Rapid Needs Assessment’ (RNA) in 2001 in the hope of capturing the reproductive health problems and needs of the young people in Nyanza Province.\(^{12}\) The RNA highlighted that in addition to sexual and reproductive health problems, young people were concerned about the high level of poverty, the increasing number of school drop-outs, unemployment, the lack of recreational opportunities, the influence of alcohol and drugs, the violence and gender imbalances in sexual relations, and the intergenerational difficulties in communication about sexual matters. Health services available in the area were experienced as not youth-friendly. Youth-serving programs in Nyanza Province were focussing on HIV-awareness campaigns; other reproductive health issues as STIs, pregnancy, and abortions had less attention, and there was a general lack of individual guidance and counselling for youth (Njue 2001).

The Belgian researchers who developed the YIP protocol acknowledged that assessing changes in the knowledge and attitudes of young people was not enough and that several socioeconomic and cultural factors needed to be tackled at the same time. They believed that maximising young people’s participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs was “the key to success” (informal conversation with program designers). In most development projects, ‘participation’ is “something which is intrinsically a ‘good thing’; something we believe in and rarely question” (Cleaver 1999: 597). Participatory methodologies are justified in terms of sustainability, relevance, and empowerment (Cleaver 1999: 597–598). ‘Participation’ has become one of the buzzwords in development work (Cornwall 2007) and its use has become necessary to secure funding and acceptance. While RNAs are not inherently unable to capture key needs, we should be careful not to overgeneralize and overemphasize the needs highlighted in such rapid assessments.
3.2. The need for institutional and financial support

Participatory approaches often serve to legitimize and justify a project’s own development agenda, namely to bring together different interests around a causal model to justify the allocation of resources (Mosse 2001, 2003, 2005). Although projects try to highlight technical expertise, the reality shows that the ‘success’ of many projects lies in their ability to mobilize and maintain institutional support (Mosse 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006). The Belgian ITM, which has a policy based on institutional cooperation with a view to strengthen local capabilities and institutions, sought collaboration with two institutions who were already active in Kisumu: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which has its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia (USA), and the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). After more than twenty years doing research, the CDC has a dominating presence in Nyanza Province and could hardly be ignored. Locally, it was said that the “CDC owns the region of Nyanza Province”, since no investigation could be done in that area without the permission from its Institutional Review Board. ITM’s association with KEMRI was mandatory since it is the national institute responsible for carrying out health research in Kenya. Collaboration with CDC/KEMRI was necessary to obtain institutional support and funds from PEPFAR (the US Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). For ITM, it was therefore essential to respond in its program design to the priority issues of CDC’s agenda, which in turn was largely influenced by the policy of the US government. Anything not on the CDC’s priority list was not incorporated into their communal proposal to PEPFAR. Nevertheless, the Belgian team succeeded in incorporating a ‘structural intervention’ (in the form of Yeshica) in the YIP by relying on the funds of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGDC – Belgium). The collaboration between ITM and DGDC had existed for many decades and the researchers were confident of obtaining such funds.

In the sections below, I review the main considerations the Belgian team had to take into account in order to obtain institutional and financial support for the YIP. First of all, their collaboration with CDC/KEMRI prioritized epidemiological research and the selection of Winam as the research setting. Secondly, CDC/KEMRI had a significant influence on the selection of appropriate HIV-prevention models for young people in Winam. While all three institutes had a significant interest in the adaptation of two US evidence-based interventions (described later on), ITM could not count on the collaboration of CDC/KEMRI for the implementation of the Yeshica ‘structural intervention’.
At the end of this overview, I question whether the choices made were really in response to local needs or whether they were rather a reflection of outside institutional priorities.

3.2.1. Pre-defined choices (1): Research methodology and setting

The YIP protocol included an epidemiological component, namely a quasi-experimental study with a pre- and post-intervention cross-sectional survey. The pre-intervention was referred to as the ‘Baseline Cross-Sectional Survey’ (BCS), and the main objective of this large epidemiological study was “to evaluate [the impact of YIP] with scientifically rigorous methods”. The intention was to measure and compare behavioural and biomedical parameters (the prevalence of HIV and HSV-2) before and after the implementation of Yeshica, and in this way, to measure the impact of Yeshica on ‘risky sexual behaviour practices’ of young people. The hypothesis was that four years after the implementation of Yeshica, HIV and HSV-2 prevalence would be reduced among the target group and behavioural parameters would indicate the adoption of safer sex practices. The broader strategy was “to develop recommendations for scaling-up of feasible and effective prevention interventions targeted at adolescents in Kenya and other settings in sub-Saharan Africa”. The principal investigators of this epidemiological study were the same two-person team of epidemiologists from ITM and one American epidemiologist from the CDC.

The collaboration of ITM with the CDC and KEMRI also led to the selection of Winam as the first research location. Winam is part of Nyanza Province, where HIV prevalence was extremely high, and no HIV/AIDS prevention programs had been set up there yet. In addition, Winam was one of the villages where CDC and KEMRI had set up a health and demographic surveillance system, and this infrastructure would facilitate the implementation of the cross-sectional survey. For these reasons, the different institutional partners thought Winam to be an ideal place for the YIP.

3.2.2. Pre-defined choices (2): US Evidence-Based Interventions

The YIP designers together with their CDC colleagues believed that adapting existing ‘evidence-based interventions’ (EBIs) to different local settings would be more cost-effective and less time-consuming than developing new EBIs. They found this an important justification “in the face of an HIV/AIDS epidemic whose magnitude calls for immediate action” (Poulsen et al. 2010: 274). Another reason, and probably one of the most important related to the need for external funding, was that “the adaptation and
dissemination of effective HIV prevention interventions was a priority for the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)” (US State Department 2009). Adapting EBIs formed the basis for the CDC’s ‘Diffusion of Effective Behavioural Interventions’ policy (Dworkin et al. 2008: 51; Poulsen et al. 2010: 274). It was not only in the interest of the CDC but also of the Belgian team to replicate two evidence-based HIV-prevention interventions. For the CDC, it was a welcome opportunity to implement two EBIs—which they already had tried out among African Americans—in another setting, and, if proven effective, to increase support for the scaling-up of the CDC’s own HIV-prevention interventions. This was understood as a “win-win” situation because, for ITM, the CDC not only offered helpful experience and knowledge, but also access to PEPFAR funding.

The two HIV-prevention EBIs that were developed by the CDC for African Americans were the ‘Parents Matter! Program’ (PMP) and the ‘Life Skills Program’ (LSP). PMP was developed in order to improve effective communication about sexuality and sexual risk between the parents (or caretakers) and their children aged 9–12 years (Dittus et al. 2004; Forehand et al. 2007; ITM 2011: 7), whereas LSP aimed to equip adolescents with knowledge, skills, and confidence to abstain from sex and/or practice safe sex to reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. Two US curricula of the LSP, ‘Making a Difference’ (MAD) and ‘Making Proud Choices’ (MPF) (see also Jemmott et al. 1998), were adapted to the Kenyan context. For the adaptation of the PMP and LSP, technical assistance was provided by one of the programs’ designers from the US and her CDC colleagues, who came to Kenya for several short consultations. Every week, conference calls were organised between the American team and the Kenyan research staff at Yeshica based in Kisumu (locally called the ‘Kisumu team’), who were responsible for the adaptation of the curricula, to discuss the material and the outcomes in detail. At the time of writing the YIP protocol—sometime in 2002–2003—the RCT of the PMP was just starting; the trials were completed in 2004, and Forehand et al. only published their results in 2007.

3.2.3. Pre-defined choices (3): The structural intervention

Apart from the two US-based EBIs, the Belgian team also incorporated a so-called ‘structural’ intervention into Yeshica, their community-based component of YIP. However, for this intervention they could not count on the institutional support of the Kisumu CDC team since they had no direct interest in this intervention. Nevertheless, the Belgian team was convinced that this intervention was important for the
youngsters, believing that socioeconomic and environmental factors have an impact on young people’s (sexual) behavioural choices. Their hypothesis, which was supported by the latest specialist literature (for instance, Pronyk 2006; Urdang 2007; Lukas 2008; Kim et al. 2008; Hargreaves et al. 2010), was that a better economic future perspective, enhanced by access to microcredit, would decrease ‘sexual risk behaviour’ (Vandenhoudt 2004a). Therefore, the program designers wanted to implement a ‘structural intervention’, or as they more often called it a ‘livelihood intervention’, with vocational training and microcredit programs that would target older youth (between 16 and 22 years old) who had dropped out of school (Vandenhoudt et al. 2004a: 3–4).

The Belgian team managed to get the livelihood intervention funded through the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC), specifically the ‘5-year program II (2003–2007)’, as the intervention matched the main strategic objective of DGDC. This allowed them to include the vocational training and the microcredit programs, for approximately 50,000 Euros per year, in the YIP. To implement this intervention, the Belgian team partnered with a Kenyan NGO, the Kenya Rural Enterprise Program (K-Rep), that specialised in microfinance services. The idea was that K-Rep would help the youngsters form savings-and-loan groups and give them business training to further support income-generating activities. The vocational trainings, for instance in carpentry, tailoring, and bee keeping, were provided by local trainers who were carefully sought out by the local staff of Yeshica after requests by the youths (see Chapter 4).

3.2.4. The uneasy merger: Institutional priorities and local needs

To what extent did these proposed interventions meet the needs of JoWinam? The YIP protocol gives the impression that these interventions were carefully chosen in order to respond to the results of the Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA). But to what extent are those needs really ‘local needs’?

There is always an important element of selection and construction when RNAs are used to articulate ‘local needs’ within the design of a program. As Pottier notes (cited in Mosse 2001: 20–21), ‘local needs’ are often socially constructed. Projects not only influence the way in which people construct their needs, but people also shape their needs to match a project’s ability to deliver desirable goods in the short term. This ‘local knowledge’ is coined by Mosse (2001) as “planning knowledge” because the project’s institutional interests become incorporated into community perspectives. For instance, when young people in Winam were asked who taught them about sexual issues, they
usually mentioned peers or magazines as sources of information, but not their parents. This is also what the RNA (Njue 2001) reports. With this information, the YIP designers—already planning to adapt the ‘Parents Matter!’ Program—could confirm that, as in the US, there was also a lack of communication between Winam parents and their children about sexual issues. This confirms the guiding idea of most ‘sexual awareness trainings’, launched by several donors from the early 1990s onwards (see Chapter 1), that more open discussions of sexual issues were necessary in fighting the HIV epidemic. Consequently, because young people reported that they did not talk with their parents about sexual issues, the YIP designers could argue that there was a ‘local need’ for a parent-focused intervention to enable communication with youth about sexual health issues.

But an absence of discussion between parents and children about sexual issues does not mean that youth are not informed. Relationships of respect between parents and children severely restrict discussing sexual matters. Elderly people, including maternal aunts and grandparents, are, however, in a position to do this, and they do—although probably to a lesser extent than before (see Chapter 5). This ‘local need’ is actually manufactured, out of the Western notion that parents should discuss sexual issues with their children and the idea that HIV-prevention projects for young people need to improve this kind of communication between parents and children. The so-called ‘manufactured needs’ in the program design are to a significant degree shaped by the agency’s own objectives, their own ‘cultural baggage’ (i.e., the idea that parents are supposed to teach their children about sex), and funding pressures.

The adaptation of international template materials that were formulated by foreign health education experts has never been an easy endeavour in most of the development projects all over the world. Pigg (2005: 47), who carried out ethnographic research on AIDS prevention in Nepal, found that although such curricula seem to be easy-to-use, practical guides for local health educators “standardize information, priorities, and pedagogical techniques”. She further highlights that “understandings, explanations, objectives, values, and attitudes that deviate from the established norm of ‘facts’ and ‘non-judgmental’ attitudes toward sexuality cannot find a place in the curriculum because these are precisely the misconceptions that sex education is meant to correct” (Pigg 2005: 47). Although most of the curriculum of the US-based Parents Matter! Program had been adapted to the cultural context of Winam, many sexual issues remained too embarrassing for most AIDS workers to discuss. In addition, many of the Yeshica local staff often felt frustrated in their job, as it did not leave much room
for creativity. They were unable to memorize the curriculum and needed to continually refer to the instructions while facilitating group sessions with young people and their caretakers. They had not fully internalized what they were saying but rather recited it from pre-fabricated materials.

The ‘structural’ livelihood intervention responded to some extent to the local demands of JoWinam. My data demonstrate that both vocational skills and capital to start a small business indeed featured as prominent needs among young people, and were not merely a reflection of institutional priorities. Although the livelihood intervention was among the interests of the Belgian epidemiologists, it was not one of the priorities of CDC/KEMRI. Consequently, the livelihood intervention received the least attention within their collaboration, and the Belgian team were not supported in its implementation (see later in this chapter). Thus, the intervention that was most closely related to actually existing needs ranked the lowest in institutional priorities.

The YIP proposal, set up as a collaboration between ITM and CDC/KEMRI, was funded between 2003 and 2008 by the CDC through the PEPFAR. The livelihood intervention was not supported by CDC funding since it was not in their interest. The institutional priorities of the CDC, with its related ability to mobilize financial support, strongly influenced the chances for the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of any intervention, as we will see later in this chapter.

3.3. Making it all happen: The structure of the YIP on the ground

Yeshica, located in east Winam, was formally opened in July 2003. In order to reach the youngsters from other localities, three satellite centres in the form of shipping containers were set up near schools in west, south, and central Winam in March 2004. Together with the three different HIV interventions (Families Matter! Program (FMP), Life Skills, and Livelihood), Yeshica and its satellite centres offered youth-friendly services, including health education, counselling, general and reproductive health services (such as contraceptive services and antenatal care for pregnant teenagers), clinical services (treatment of STIs, common ailments, and opportunistic infections), and HIV and STI testing and counselling (Voluntary Counselling and Testing or VCT). In 2007, towards the end of the project, Yeshica staff also established support groups for HIV-positive youngsters. Additionally, ‘educational entertainment’ was provided through a library with TV, video, and sports/games facilities. Youth participation was promoted through the establishment of ten local committees and one Executive Youth Committee (Ex-Com) who gathered on a monthly basis. A Community Advisory Board
(CAB) was launched one year into Yeshica’s existence to create linkages between the program and the community (ITM 2011).26 Yeshica had two groups of field staff: the ‘Winam team’27 and the ‘Kisumu team’28:

Figure 4. Yeshica field staff

The ‘Winam team’’s members remained in Winam and were not allowed to commute on a daily basis to and from Kisumu, whereas the ‘Kisumu team’, focussed more on research, superior in the hierarchy, ferried in from Kisumu in white CDC-owned Land Cruisers. The members of the Kisumu team were divided into groups according to the research program for which they were responsible. Both the Winam team and the Kisumu team consisted of Kenyan people.

During the implementation of the YIP, the Belgian program designers aimed to develop an evidence-based program. A baseline pre-intervention survey was conducted (2003–2004) but the post-intervention survey planned for four years later was delayed and then cancelled due to lack of funding.29 This means that no final impact of the program was measured. From the baseline survey, only the HIV prevalence data were finally published in 2009.30 A key concern of the program coordinator was therefore to closely monitor outputs and to meet the targets set out in its Logical Framework. First of all, YIP staff aimed to reach 75 percent of all adolescents in Winam with one or more interventions. Secondly, they sought to reduce the proportion of adolescents aged 13–20 years who have ever had sex. Thirdly, they wanted to increase condom use (at last-reported sexual act) by 50 percent. Fourthly, they hoped to reduce the prevalence of HIV
and HSV-2 by 30 percent, and, lastly, they wished to reduce the prevalence of teen pregnancies by 20 percent. Following the cause-effect model of the Logical Framework, it was thought that by meeting output targets, the desired outcomes and impacts could be achieved. The Belgian team and its local staff assumed that as long as Yeshica offered certain benefits (such as HIV and STI reduction) to young people and their community, and gave them the ownership of the project, they would be interested in participating.

In the next section, I explain why some of the young people were eager to participate in the project—in ways different than anticipated by ITM and the local staff—and what their expectations were of the project, and show that the aims of the program’s designers stood in strong contrast to the purposes of their target group.

4. Yeshica: A one-stop shopping centre

For the young people of Winam, Yeshica was a unique place in the village because it provided access to considerable financial resources and high social status. Further augmenting its appeal, the name ‘Youth Centre’ was a foreign concept, new to the people of Winam, and was perceived as something urban. Yanow (1993: 51), who studied the setting up of a community centre in Israel and discussed how policy meanings are interpreted and communicated by various actors, compared the community centre with “a functional supermarket”. Her supermarket metaphor is also quite relevant to Yeshica, which similarly offered a large gamut of interventions to its clients who became customers in the process (Yanow 1993: 51):

[The interventions] were ‘pre-packaged’ and ‘ready to serve’. [...] Clients were to come into the centre, with ‘shopping lists’ (lists of desired courses), to ‘consume’ centre offerings: staff would ‘sell’ [the interventions] to clients [...] and centre success would be evaluated by ‘turnover of goods’ (numbers of registrants, inquiries or attendance figures).

Yeshica, housed in a concrete building, represented a city lifestyle for the young people, standing in contrast to the village’s open-air stalls. Just like a mall, it was a place to meet people and to hang out. Goods were offered, which did not meet the direct needs of the local people, yet, after some promotion, certain needs were created. Initially, young people from all over Winam were eager to ‘go shopping’ at Yeshica. They were curious and proud that ‘a Youth Centre’ was constructed especially for them—schoolgoers and out-of-school youth, alike—in their own village, and they participated in great numbers. Initially, most of the youngsters were invited to join Yeshica through their friends and family members, meaning that only those from the same social network were involved.
at first. But as time went on, the message about Yeshica was spread more widely. Although Yeshica was only designed for youngsters between 10 and 20 years old, the age limit for the livelihood intervention was extended to 22 years. Many of the youngsters who wanted to participate in Yeshica were above the age limit, and, as a sort of tactic, they lied about their age in order to be able to participate.

In development projects, people with distinct roles, such as staff, participants, and other stakeholders, form their own interpretations of policy language that may differ from one another and diverge from the intent of those who drafted it. These multiple interpretations can facilitate or impede the policy’s implementation (Yanow 1993: 42–43). To understand how Yeshica turned out in practice, it is necessary to examine the discrepancies between the expectations of the designers and the participants. Young people used Yeshica in their own ways, which were often not at all what the designers’ intended. While Yeshica aimed to improve young people’s sexual and reproductive health, the participants used the project for different purposes. Of course, the prospects of a job, vocational training, and/or loans were reasons to take part in Yeshica, but there were other, secondary reasons that made participation interesting for the youngsters.

4.1. Jobs, trainings, and loans

Most youngsters were drawn to Yeshica in the hope of making a better living by getting paid employment. Those who dropped out of primary school or who were unable to complete secondary school hoped that they might get an unskilled job at Yeshica, as a gardener or gatekeeper. The secondary-school leavers wished to be considered for the youth facilitator’s job or whatever might be available for someone at their education level. Their parents and other relatives also hoped that Yeshica would offer employment to the youth. Odera (19 years old, secondary school graduate, born in Winam but raised in Nairobi), for instance, came all the way from Nairobi because her stepmother, who lived in Winam, had told her that she could get a job at the Centre:

After finishing school, I was in Nairobi, then my mother asked me to come back home because there was a Centre and they were hoping that they would employ people. My mother thought that I could maybe get a typing job in east Winam. So I came to see if I could get employed. So the first reason I joined [Yeshica] was to get employed and the second for interaction (in-depth interview, May 2006).
Many youngsters realized that getting a job at Yeshica required them to fulfil a number of prerequisites, and they participated in Yeshica’s activities in the hope that this would increase their chances if one day a job opportunity arose.

Secondly, youngsters participated because of the variety of free vocational trainings, and the possibility of obtaining a microloan through K·Rep. The program designers thought that youngsters would pick out a vocational training that was of their immediate interest, and use that training to start a business or get a job, the young people reasoned differently and tried to attend all the different trainings on offer. They believed that having more skills might give them better job opportunities in the future (see Chapter 4). However, the duration of the trainings was too short to provide them with sufficient skills to open their own business or to be qualified for formal employment. As a consequence, the youngsters did not see much value in the training; instead, it was a nice kind of entertainment, with a free lunch. The microloans were highly valued, but very few knew how to make a good investment with a loan. Consequently, the program suffered from a high default rate; many defaulters could not be located, and so, for some, the loan became “free income”.

In late 2007, two new opportunities arose for Yeshica participants, namely the support groups for HIV-positive people and the vocational training for research skills, both of which promised to provide jobs for the most successful participants. In order to become part of the HIV-positive support groups, some HIV-negative youngsters falsified their test results and lied about their status. Although there was still stigma attached to being HIV positive, the fact that Yeshica staff had promised to create job opportunities for the group’s members was the biggest motivation to participate. The vocational training for research, which was intended to prepare youth to be employed by NGO projects, was a disappointment: although youngsters from Winam would have loved to participate, they were not selected, as most participants came from outside Winam and were secondary school graduates (see also Chapter 4).

### 4.2. Transportation money as micro-income

The ‘transportation compensation’ as envisaged by the program designers was a very attractive micro-income. It motivated the youngsters to participate in performing theatre sketches, in sport activities, and all sorts of other meetings. Every time the PTC members acted, they received an amount of 200 Kenyan shillings (about 2.5 euro). Every time the representatives of a certain youth group or community attended a meeting, they received the same amount as a form of reimbursement for their transportation
costs. However, by walking to meetings, the youth could save the ‘reimbursements’ for themselves. Even if they needed to spend money to hire a *boda boda* (bike taxi), it only cost about 50 Kenyan shillings (about 60 eurocents) to cross all of Winam. To the youngsters—and their parents and other community members—the 200 Kenyan shillings was a welcome salary that was perceived as their ‘daily bread’, or even weekly income. For most of them, it was their only source of income and their family members depended upon it. Although the local staff of Yeshica realised this, the Belgian program coordinator regarded the theatre performances as an entertainment that would keep the youngsters from idleness. I tried to explain to her how important the acting stipend and transportation reimbursements were, and how they were used, but she could not believe that they were one of the main reasons youth participated; she did not seem to realize that families in Winam often survived on only 100 Kenyan shillings (about 1.25 euro) per week. When the Kisumu team decided to increase the number of PTC-outreach sessions, the members could act, and get paid, twice a week. This resulted in an even higher salary of 400 Kenyan shillings (about 5 euro) per week, which was a substantial amount, especially considering that it did not entail hard manual labour.

4.3. Other material benefits

Other material benefits attracted many young people to the Centre, gave the youngsters a sense of ownership of Yeshica, and motivated them to invite new members. For instance, youth received Yeshica T-shirts, borrowed bicycles (for outreach sessions, but were used for many other activities, like fetching water and visiting relatives), accessed materials for the recreational activities, ate lunches that were provided after official meetings, borrowed books from the library, and received (or stole) medication from Yeshica’s pharmacy.

The documentaries on HIV prevention shown during *Abich Rawere* (Forum for the Youth) on Saturday afternoons also attracted a big number of children and youngsters to Yeshica, not because of its content but rather because the children were curious to watch a television, something to which they otherwise had no access. After several *Abich Rawere* sessions, the youth turned Yeshica into a local cinema. Youngsters from all over Winam came to watch Nigerian and war movies for free during *Abich Rawere*. Others also used the available electricity to charge the batteries of their mobile phones, something that is otherwise difficult or expensive given the lack of power and power outlets. Although these activities were not aligned with the objectives of *Abich Rawere*, the youth facilitator could attract a high number of young people in this
way, which was important for the records. The number of attendees during the project’s activities was a key concern for the program coordinator, as she wanted to meet the ‘output’ targets in order to maintain financial support and to achieve the desired impact.

4.4. Nonmaterial benefits: A larger social network

Apart from the material and financial benefits, young people participated in Yeshica to expand their social network and social capital. Most of Yeshica’s staff were from town or at least had studied there, and the youngsters admired them and enjoyed being associated with them, since it gave the youngsters a higher social status. They closely observed the different clothing styles and behaviour of the staff. Opiyo, the anthropologist who used to work at Yeshica, explained:

You won’t remember but they even know what you wore yesterday. They know the number of clothes you have because, as a girl, you might only have two clothes to interchange. That is why even the Yeshica T-shirt means a lot. You know, girls like changing clothes (in-depth interview, September 2006).

Moreover, Yeshica participants were invited to travel with Yeshica staff in the CDC car whenever they went to outreach sessions or other activities. They felt part of the Yeshica team, even though they were at the lowest level of the ladder. They could travel to different places all over Winam, places where they did not often go if they had to walk or cycle there. They usually combined outreach sessions with visits to their distant relatives or friends, and invited their girl- or boyfriend to watch them performing whenever they acted close to their girl- or boyfriend’s house. The representatives of the Ex-Com, the youth counsellors, and those who performed (usually PTC members) were admired by many people in the village. Community members wanted to be associated with them because they imagined that they were earning “a lot of money with CDC”. People believed that being connected to Yeshica participants could give them easy access to jobs at Yeshica. Members from Yeshica could therefore easily make new friends.

4.5. Unintended benefits: Extending the sexual network

In addition to expanding their social network, the youth participants of Yeshica also used this opportunity to enlarge their sexual network. Yeshica participants could easily find (other) girl- and boyfriends away from their home area due to their higher social status and access to money. They usually presented themselves to others as if they were Yeshica staff instead of just participants. By doing so, they were more sought out as a potential sexual partner (see the case of Okoth and Akinyi in Chapter 6). Moreover,
female participants of Yeshica also flirted with the salaried Yeshica staff and other CDC personnel, especially the CDC drivers. Young women would dress up to attend trainings at Yeshica in the hope of being noticed by CDC staff. There was a lot of jealousy among the female participants as they were competing with each other. Opiyo, the anthropologist who used to work at Yeshica, stated that Yeshica staff needed to be very responsible because they could easily misuse their position, and might attract a female participant to Yeshica just for having sex:

Actually, when you work in Winam, you need to be a very good person. If you are a very bad person, you can take advantage of the community because, first of all, like me, I work with parents in Parents Matter! and the mothers call you “my son-in-law” because they would be happy to actualize that. The women look at you, you are a hero in their eyes, and you are much better than them. But they don’t know that I am going to die next year. They just look at the car I am driven in and that it is a CDC car […] They just associate you with it, like it is yours. And when they follow me – they will find me in Rarieda where I spend my lunchtime. That place is fully packed with CDC cars. CDC people are eating food there, drinking sodas, and the meal is 100 [Kenyan] shillings [about 1.20 euro], which even some parents have not seen for decades, and the young girls have never seen. They monitor you and look at the way you dress and the shoes you are wearing. The perception is that people who come from outside, especially people who are working, they are doing much better and not just CDC people, so many people are coming from outside (in-depth interview, September 2006).

As Opiyo explained, for most female Yeshica participants, the staff members were potential boyfriends or even marriage partners: they had a good (i.e., well-paid) job, were in possession of a car, dressed well, could spend at restaurants, and were connected to town. Thus it was not difficult for Yeshica or CDC personnel to abuse their power and social status to win sexual partners among the community members. Opiyo commented further:

Today if I meet a woman of my age (around 35 years old) or maybe a girl who has come out of university, they will have so many questions [about my background and past relationships] but if I go for a teenager, it is much easier. […] If you follow that part, you are likely to end up with a young girl from Winam. When I just say to a young girl: “I want to have you for sex or I want to marry you”, they would agree very fast. So it depends with the way I want it, but you know, the men choose very young ones, so-called ‘for marriage’ (in-depth interview, September 2006).

The young women of Winam would not question the background or past relationships of a CDC employee, and their parents would encourage such relationships. The fact that he was a financially capable man coming from town was enough to satisfy any concerns. Although Yeshica participants who engaged with CDC employees expected more from that relationship, most were only “a hit and run” and did not last long. Thus while it did extend their sexual network, it did not produce a new livelihood path.
4.6. To participate or not to participate: That’s the question!

Although most of Yeshica participants had their specific reasoning about whether and how to participate, for a number of youngsters it was even easier or sometimes more beneficial NOT to participate. Young people’s deliberate nonparticipation could be attributed to their choice or expression of agency as well as to their “necessity by constraint” (Cleaver 2001), meaning that, forced by circumstances, young people often had to fulfil other duties rather than attend Yeshica’s activities. For instance, a number of young women did not participate in Yeshica’s activities because they had to help their mother or take care of their child. My female neighbour reasoned: “Those people of Yeshica, they have time. I am mostly busy”. In her eyes, Yeshica participants, certainly the female ones who had so many other domestic chores to fulfil, were just wandering around at the Centre instead of working. Adhis, a secondary school-leaver of 20 years old, was never really interested in participating in Yeshica since she preferred to spend her time looking for ways to get admitted into college. Others left Yeshica because they got married elsewhere or migrated to town, where they hoped to obtain better future chances. Lilly, Akinyi, and MinMercy, three young women who once had been members of Yeshica, mentioned that they had stopped attending because they did not really fit in with the group of Yeshica participants. According to them, most young women at Yeshica behaved childishly, too playful with the men, even though some of them were mothers. Lilly, Akinyi, and MinMercy instead behaved more reservedly and were more respectful; the Yeshica young women accused them of being boastful.

Many young men were not at all interested in joining, as well. There were not always profound reasons as nonparticipation could as well be “both a ‘rational’ strategy and an unconscious practice embedded in the routine” (Cleaver 1999: 607). Given that a big part of life in Winam was lying on the shores of Lake Victoria, and that many people lived from fishing, Yeshica did not succeed in reaching the important, heterogeneous group of fishermen and their wives. The fishermen considered Yeshica’s activities a waste of time because they worked hard at night, and during the day they wanted to relax and enjoy life (i.e., by smoking and drinking chang’aa) instead of going to meetings and rehearsals. They were also more independent as they managed to earn a living and did not depend on what the project could offer them. Furthermore, most of the fishermen and their wives associated Yeshica with unattainable things, and thought that the Yeshica staff, with their big Land Cruisers, were people they could not really relate to, as they were used to another way of life. In addition, they liked to communicate in their local language, Dholuo, and were not fond of using English or
Kiswahili, the languages often used at the Centre by the Kisumu team. While the K-Rep officer believed that the microcredit project could be of direct interest to them, the fishermen feared taking out a loan since they rarely saved any money. Their earnings were meagre, and supplemented only with a small catch of fish every fourth day they worked (see Chapter 4). Other youngsters of Winam also shared the fishermen’s view of Yeshica.

In summary, for those who participated, Yeshica clearly served other means than what Yeshica designers and staff had intended. Young people inventively transformed the project into a kind of ‘shopping centre,’ using offered services to advance personal goals. However, like any other shopping centre, only those who were able to pay for the consumption benefitted. Although attending itself did not cost money, it did have an opportunity cost since during that time no other income-earning activities could be pursued, which was also a reason why a number of youngsters never participated or dropped out. Moreover, as I will show in the following sections, with time, the project no longer met young people’s expectations and young people’s dissatisfaction grew exponentially once their patience with the project and the staff was gone.

5. Ochien’g’s story: The Post-Test Club from an actor-oriented perspective

Based on the actor-oriented approach to development interventions by Long (2001), the following case study of Ochien’g and the Post-Test Club (PTC) illustrates how one of the youth groups of Yeshica started up due to the need of Yeshica staff to mobilize youngsters for VCT. The case study moreover shows how the ‘beneficiaries’ of the project like Ochien’g, but also the local staff, creatively tweaked Yeshica’s arbitrary top-down aid to their own benefit. While the different project interventions were implemented, Yeshica participants continued with their daily struggles to make ends meet.

5.1. PTC and its members

One of the redefined goals of the YIP program designers was to establish or support several youth groups all over Winam. The aim was to reach Yeshica’s output targets by having active members in each location who would help with the implementation of the YIP and mobilize other youths. The Post-Test Club (PTC) was one of these youth groups, consisting of the first and most active members of Yeshica. The name suggested a major
difference from other groups: PTC’s main objective was to promote VCT by openly bringing together people who had been tested for HIV and were willing to share their HIV status. During PTC meetings, Yeshica staff’s intention was to facilitate discussions on HIV-related topics, and to invite HIV-positive people to encourage the members “to go public” with their HIV status. Given this particular focus of the PTC, it was the only one among several other youth groups that required members to have been tested for HIV. Although the PTC differed from other youth groups in this one respect, it illustrates how youth groups were created based on the goals of Yeshica staff. In this sense, it was not an exception among the other Yeshica youth groups, and, like other groups, PTC had weekly meetings. PTC had 15 to 20 members, most of whom were primary or secondary school-leavers, along with a handful of secondary school graduates.

PTC was created in response to a request by the Belgian program coordinator: after the carpentry and tailoring vocational trainings, offered at Yeshica from April until November 2003, the program coordinator asked the trainees to come together and register as a group in order to get access to the K-Rep microloans. She also invited them to go for VCT and to set up a ‘Post-Test Club’, with the goal, as she wrote in a progress report: “to create an opportunity for all the ones that have been tested to share ideas and also to counsel and encourage one another” (Yeshica 2003a: 4). However, only five people who had taken the carpentry and tailoring trainings were willing to participate in the PTC. They tried to invite more members, but asked for a registration fee of 50 Kenyan shillings (about 60 eurocents), in addition to requiring members to go for VCT. They decided to implement this membership fee in agreement with Yeshica staff, to give them a sense of ownership. The PTC members reasoned that if a new member wanted to benefit from the project, they should be “serious” and should show commitment by paying a low admission fee. This was also supposed to discourage new members from leaving too soon.

The group reached about 20 registered members but usually only about 10 people attended the weekly meetings. In the beginning, most of the PTC members were youth who had dropped out of primary school—the real target group of Yeshica (see also Chapter 1). One of the first members of both Yeshica and PTC was Ochien’g, who had only gone to school up to class three (departing at age eight), and who was actually one of the very few fishermen (in fact perhaps the only one) the project had reached. Unlike most fishermen, he believed that Yeshica might help him move up the economic ladder. Already 22 years old when he first began participating at Yeshica, Ochien’g was above
the age limit of Yeshica. Lying about their age was one of the strategies young people applied in order to be allowed to participate in Yeshica and thus to be able to benefit from the project’s activities. The local staff turned a blind eye to this in order to meet their targets for number of participants in activities.

5.2. Participation: Selective benefits and barriers

As a sort of compensation for the high barrier of entry to the group (i.e., getting tested), its members enjoyed selective benefits of the Centre’s facilities not available to other groups. Since PTC was the only youth group that gathered at the Centre itself, their members were usually among the first to be informed about the free vocational trainings. Consequently, they quickly claimed the available spots, no matter what the training was about. After they had secured their own spots, they informed their closest friends and discouraged others from going. Members also enjoyed the travel ‘reimbursement’ benefit, less explicitly contemplated by the YIP program designers, of financial compensation to take part in outreach sessions. Since most of the youngsters had only few clothes to wear, another attraction was that each Yeshica participant received a green T-shirt with the Yeshica logo. The idea behind outreach sessions and T-shirts was “to promote VCT and to strive towards the recruitment of more members into the Club” (Yeshica 2003b: 3–4). When K-Rep introduced microloans to the PTC members beginning in May 2004, PTC lost much of its original meaning, and was transformed into a savings-and-loan group. HIV-related issues from that point on were rarely discussed.

In the case of Ochien’g, he stated that his main motivation to join PTC was the possibility of receiving a loan. He also preferred performing theatre for Yeshica to fishing as he explained:

The big thing that made me decide to join was that there was a loan that was being promised to be given to youths. The other reason […] was that I am a born drama person (in-depth interview, March 2006).

Apart from receiving a loan, Ochien’g was also interested in the vocational trainings and had received instruction in hairdressing, bicycle repair, and organic farming. He hoped—like most of Yeshica participants—that one day Yeshica would change his life, ideally by getting a job at Yeshica, or at least gaining material benefits from his daily visits to the Centre.

Recruiting youngsters for PTC was not easy for a variety of reasons, including the typical attitude of members who wanted to limit access to the group because of the
selective benefits, as well as existing stereotypes around HIV, which meant that none of the youngsters felt free to share their HIV status. Most of the youngsters admitted that they found it hard to join PTC because of the requirement to go for VCT. Petrus, a 17-year-old primary school graduate, explained:

"Joining was hard because going for VCT yourself is hard and then also sharing your status with the rest is not easy. So maybe you mingled (i.e., had sex) and now you ask yourself what will happen if I am positive, it's like there is death ahead, and that can really stress one" (informal conversation, September 2005).

There was still a lot of stigma attached to disclosure of status and the project did actually not succeed in overcoming this problem, even within the PTC, since members did not open up to each other about their HIV status. The expectations for the PTC for Yeshica staff were different than for the youth who participated in it. As already explained above, most PTC members did not attend the PTC meetings because of the HIV teachings and behavioural change messages, but joined for different reasons, including priority access to trainings, the small stipends given to members, and access to Yeshica t-shirts. These reasons for joining PTC were why youngsters participated in Yeshica in general.

5.3. The downside of participation: Opportunity costs

Ochien’g’s life story shows how his participation in Yeshica interacted with his other activities at home. Participating in Yeshica meant making choices and not engaging in other income-generating activities, such as fishing. This is a classic example of opportunity costs, which denotes the income forgone by not choosing to pursue an alternative but mutually exclusive activity. In other words, Ochien’g could not continue fishing and participate in Yeshica. After Ochien’g became a participant, he only went fishing when Yeshica delayed paying his ‘income’ for his theatre performances. Ochien’g and his wife, MinMercy, hoped that one day Ochien’g could get a job at Yeshica and no longer need to go fishing at all. It would also mean an improvement of his social status:

"If Ochien’g goes to east Winam [where the Centre is located], I know that he has gone to work. I know that if he goes and comes back without a thing, that he is just searching. He also tells me that one day he may get lucky or he may get a place and get employed there. That is the reason why he puts some effort in order to get a job there. He tells me that he will get it, so I also say: “let it be” (MinMercy, informal conversation, May 2005).

In June 2005, Ochien’g successfully applied for a job opening to temporarily replace the security officer of Yeshica during his annual leave. For Ochien’g, it was a dream come
true, and he assumed that it would last forever because he imagined that if he did the job well, he would remain employed at Yeshica. He was grateful to Augus (a 22-year-old matatu conductor who recently had finished secondary school) for giving him some hints on how to prepare for his job interview. For about two months, Ochien’g worked at Yeshica, on a temporary contract. When his fishing mates asked him why “he is so lost”, he proudly told them that he no longer went fishing since he was now employed at Yeshica. The job gave him a number of advantages such as easy access to the clinic and the storage room, from which he stole contraceptive vaginal rings, malaria tablets, and spare parts to repair bicycles. With his new income, he moved to a bigger, two-room rental apartment. But when the Centre delayed in paying his salary, he could barely pay for food. He explained to me:

MinMercy is good. She does not make noise (i.e., quarrel). I told her that she has to wait, I promised her to do well. In the beginning, I was a fisherman and look, now I am not a fisherman any more, I have a job at Yeshica. Maybe another day, I will be working at Yeshica. Now I am happy but—bad luck, we have no food (informal conversation, August 2005).

While Ochien’g struggled to make ends meet, some changes occurred within Yeshica that were disheartening to most of the PTC members. Matin, who was hired to replace the original project manager, decided to cut some of the privileges of the PTC members. Matin realised that the PTC members took most of the vocational training spots, and used the facilities of the Centre for their own interests. In response, Matin only allowed youth who had not followed any training at Yeshica to sign up for future trainings, and insisted that PTC members use their bicycles rather than the CDC car to get to outreach sessions, even when the event was two hours away.

Under pressure from the Belgian program coordinator, Matin needed to reach a target for disbursing K-Rep loans, and he strongly encouraged the PTC members to take out a loan. He convinced them by saying that they could easily repay the loan with their weekly outreach travel reimbursements, and created such an agreement with Anuka, the K-Rep officer. Three months later (in September 2005), the program coordinator decided that she wanted to evaluate whether theatre sketches had any impact on VCT attendance; she put a halt to the sketches, and PTC members were left without a regular income to repay their loan.

Ochien’g had difficulty finding an adult guarantor to back up his loan of 5,000 Kenyan shillings (about 62.5 euro), which was required by K-Rep as a form of collateral. He solved his problem by ‘borrowing’ his best friend’s identity card without his knowledge. Repaying the loan was also difficult. Although Yeshica had intended youth
to use their loans to start an income-generating activity or enterprise, using the skills they had acquired during the vocational trainings, Ochien’g, like most of K-Rep participants, did it differently (see Chapter 4), spending most of his loan to buy a goat, three new sheets of iron for his roof, and a new dress for MinMercy. The iron sheets had to be sold soon thereafter, as he needed the money to pay for hospital expenses. In the end, very few of the benefits that Ochien’g obtained through his participation at Yeshica were left to improve his livelihood.

5.4. Expectations, discontent, and fading away

Great expectations were generated but when participation did not yield what was expected, discontent grew, leading people to leave the groups, and diminishing the project’s relevance and importance.

A general discontent brewed among the PTC members. George, who owned a carpentry shop, explained: “Those people of Yeshica are not helping us. Had it been that K-Rep was not there, I would have left Yeshica long ago” (informal conversation, July 2006). Participants no longer wanted to attract new members because they did not want to share the few benefits with more people, and they increased the admission fee to discourage new members from joining. Following the example of another youth program (Ruma, outside Winam, sponsored by the German Development Foundation), some youth wanted to become independent from Yeshica, and opened their own office separate from the Youth Centre. Ochien’g explained: “The Centre confines us so much. If we rely on it, we wouldn’t go far”. Wanting to emerge as independent development actors, they started to write a proposal, but this was not easy since the youth had no experience in writing proposals, and very few donors accepted proposals from local youths. So this attempt went nowhere.

In the meantime, the PTC members had disagreements and the group was divided. Matin urged Ochien’g to get the youth to solve their conflicts, and threatened to stop all PTC activities at Yeshica if they did not. Matin gave the PTC members the impression that they were no longer needed, telling them: “There are many youths in Winam, not only the 18 who are in PTC”. Matin’s top-down management style conflicted with what was promised to the PTC members: the program coordinator had always told them that the Centre was theirs and that their voices would be heard. The PTC members felt that this was no longer the case. Consequently, one after another dropped out of the PTC, and the project faded away. What about Ochien’g?
I want to cut all ties with Yeshica. Before I was so committed (i.e., I would work for Yeshica without pay) and at times, my wife and daughter even had nothing to eat in the house. Now, my heart doesn’t welcome PTC anymore because depending on the manager who was brought to us, he is a person who wants to control the minds of the youths. I decided to leave Yeshica. I remain calm but still I can’t leave because I have a loan there that I want to finish paying so that I can separate from them. I cannot leave because first, Yeshica is a place of pride but Doctor A. (the program coordinator) doesn’t follow up on her work. After she has said how things need to be done, she thinks that the things happen [that way]... However, even if things are being spoilt, she doesn’t know and when she comes, she doesn’t want to know how the youths are doing. So that is why youths nowadays, many of them run away from Yeshica (informal conversation, April 2006).

Yeshica remained just one aspect of young people’s lives, and the activities there were overshadowed by more serious life events: for instance, Ochien’g’s wife MinMercy suffered from a severe malaria attack, and he needed to sell some of their belongings to pay the hospital bills, including the iron roofing sheets he had bought with the K-Rep loan. He could not go back to fishing since someone else took his place in the boat. To make things worse, MinMercy’s mother fell ill but they had no money to visit her. Even if Ochien’g had the money, he did not want his wife to go visit her mother, as he feared that she would never return because he was unable to provide food for her. Indeed, since Ochien’g did not manage to take care of his family as he was supposed to do, MinMercy decided to leave him and marry someone in town because she imagined that life in town was much better.36

When Yeshica stopped the theatre performances, leading to the loss of participants’ regular ‘income’, the harshness of their daily life just continued. One could even argue that life became more difficult since the participants had incurred opportunity costs, such as losing one’s place in a fishing boat, making the transition to other income-generating activities more difficult. Ochien’g felt “cheated” by the project. His participation had only been rewarded for a very short time, and his life afterwards went in a downward spiral. He had no job, and his wife and daughter left him. He started drinking heavily, and begging for money and food. Although he had been one of the most active members of Yeshica, once he was no longer needed, he felt as if he was left alone to solve his problems. Although Ochien’g’s livelihood options differed from the other youths’, his case was not exceptional.

To summarize, there was a discrepancy between the expectations of Yeshica’s staff and those of the ‘beneficiaries’, both the young people and JoWinam in general. While Ochien’g’s main concern was how to make ends meet as a responsible father, for example, the priority of the YIP program designers was to mobilize certain actions among as many young people as possible (e.g., in the case of PTC, to encourage them to
YOUTH SPEAK ABOUT YESHICA

go for VCT). The life worlds of everyone involved and affected—the youth, JoWinam and the staff—reached far beyond the ‘projects’ and ‘interventions’. As Long (2002: 4) explains, ‘beneficiaries’ such as Ochien’g do not “reduce or limit [their] perception of reality and its problems simply to those defined for [them] by the intervening agency”.

The YIP program designers usually did not bear in mind that by implementing a certain project they were creating new ‘local needs’, leading to (sometimes unrealistic) expectations. In order to reach project targets, staff made promises to the target group, creating expectations, but they could not always fulfil their promises. Yeshica participants did not realise that once the interventions had been tested and their impact measured, the project would come to an end. In their reasoning, Yeshica was set up for them and it would always be there, just like most of the shopping centres in town. For them, this project did not have a clear beginning or end, in contrast to what project documents envisaged. “This boxing in of space and time” (Long 2002: 4) and neat delineation of project boundaries—all related to funding requirements—is characteristic of many development projects but looks quite different from an actor perspective. Let us therefore analyse in more detail what contributed to the general malaise of the participants of Yeshica.

6. Youth perspectives on Yeshica

6.1. Discrepancy between policy and practice

Overall, Yeshica was an innovative project, one that tried to move away from biomedical and behavioural approaches and to incorporate broader contextual factors into its project design. Yeshica intended to invite all community members to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the project’s different activities. It expected community-wide participation and hoped that HIV transmission was recognised as a community problem. In line with state-of-the-art development theories, the program designers believed that involving the ‘beneficiaries’ in program implementation and evaluation would ensure the sustainability of the interventions and the proper allocation of services and resources. So, why were the youngsters unhappy about the project and why did they drop out at a high rate?

The participants of Yeshica were less dissatisfied with the content of the interventions than with the promises of a participatory approach—or, more broadly, the discrepancy between policy and practice. The participatory activities of Yeshica were constrained by organisational procedures. The program designers of YIP were extremely
concerned with adapting and implementing evidence-based HIV interventions to the Kenyan context, which left little room to actually examine whether the structures of their participatory project secured the interests of the young people (see also Odingo and Lefèvre 2006). The program designers had to ensure they would receive their annual financial support by monitoring and achieving their output targets. Both the Winam and Kisumu teams of Yeshica’s local staff had a number of requirements to fulfil for the Belgian program coordinator. They worked to meet their targets, under pressure, and within a specific time frame. Yeshica staff often took direct control of the program activities and their implementation, leaving no space for the youngsters’ creativity or for goals to be adjusted in accordance with actual needs.

6.2. High expectations

Yeshica staff members were often under intense pressure to obtain a minimum number of participants for their activities since they were concerned with meeting the output targets. Yeshica staff realised that they easily could recruit by delivering desirable goods as T-shirts, transportation reimbursements, and training certificates. The youngsters of Winam agreed to ‘participate’, i.e., to attend meetings and trainings, and to be Centre members, because they knew that only by fulfilling their role as ‘clients’, could they make legitimate claims on program resources (see also Long 2002). At times, the staff also promised items to soothe tempers and to win sympathy in the short run. One of the members of a youth group, Bishop, a 19-year-old secondary school graduate, recounted the difficulty getting activity resources from the Centre, and even the gifts promised by the staff:

We had been asking for balls but Yeshica never came up with it. We managed to get balls and nets from the library instead. Matin came to me some time back, and he had asked me to write down the names of the active members [of our group] because there were T-shirts to be issued. That was some months ago, but up ‘till now the shirts have never come (informal conversation, May 2006).

Yeshica staff also often withheld money that was promised as transportation reimbursements or stipends for participation.

In the long run, unfulfilled promises created an atmosphere in which the youngsters did not trust the staff anymore, or feel that the staff took their activities seriously. For instance, if Yeshica organised an “open day” of sport competitions, the youngsters thought that the staff should provide a kind of trophy for the winner, just like at school competitions. Without such, they felt little desire to mobilize youths from
their neighbourhood to watch, since the game was not perceived as something serious. Owino, a 19-year-old secondary school graduate, who worked as a barber and also made money charging batteries, described such open days:

When there is an open day, there is nothing serious that happens. It is more like an outing. We are just going to have a walk, we go and have a soda and bread. Then after a few minutes, you are told that the thing is over. Even the participants do not get something to recognise their efforts, like a ball, a trophy or maybe a football uniform. So maybe, people are not taking it seriously now (informal conversation, March 2006).

Yeshica participants wondered why they should continue promoting the activities of Yeshica and attract new members if promises were not fulfilled, activities were not taken seriously, and the paid staff was not responsible. Okoth summarized the situation:

Yeshica is not helping us at all. We ask to use bicycles, and to get T-shirts and transport to visit other groups, but we are denied. People around [east Winam] do not like Yeshica and CDC since they were told at first that the program is for Winam people, yet no one from around east Winam has been employed there. They always apply for jobs but always fail at the interview level... The staff really do not do anything. Just come for outreach, you will see: we act, then we and the VCT counsellors walk around to get people for VCT while the staff just sit and read newspapers. They really do nothing, yet they get paid at the end of the month (informal conversation, October 2005).

Even at the second Youth Festival in 2005, according to the participants of the festival, the staff—especially the Kisumu team at that time—did not show a professional work attitude. Instead of joining the youngsters during lunchtime in a show of unity, the Kisumu team members went somewhere else for lunch, riding off in the CDC cars. They came back drunk and continued drinking at the Festival. Yeshica participants felt that the staff sent the wrong message by not setting a ‘good example’.

6.3. A tipping point

Many development projects generate expectations as part of their design and sometimes through unintended consequences of funding pressures (see also Gibbs et al. 2010). When frustrations piled up and reached a tipping point, it became nearly impossible to win back the participants.

6.3.1. Unintentional harm

Between the period of 2003 and 2008, two project managers had overseen Yeshica. Jerry, the first one, left Winam sometime in 2005 in order to assist with the start up of a second Youth Centre (which was meant as a comparative study) in another district.
within Nyanza Province. Matin, Jerry’s successor, had previously been part of the mobilization team of the Baseline Cross-sectional Survey (BCS). From the beginning, Matin was not very popular among the youngsters or among his colleagues.

According to other staff members, the handing over of the project manager position was poorly coordinated. They believed that Jerry did not sufficiently inform Matin about the program policies because he did not agree with Matin’s hiring and wanted him to fail. Jerry had wanted to stay at Yeshica, and to manage both of the Youth Centres, since this would give him an additional income. Additionally, a number of other staff members did not agree with Matin’s promotion within the CDC. They mentioned that Matin, who had an educational background in biology and no previous experience in management, was not well qualified to manage a social centre such as Yeshica. This situation left Matin in a difficult position.

Matin took his job seriously but his colleagues and the youngsters both felt he had a ‘bossy’ attitude. At the start, he immediately reported a number of organisational errors and corruption cases to the Belgian program coordinator. He noticed that the VCT counsellors exaggerated the number of people tested for VCT. One counsellor had ostensibly seen 50 clients per day, an unrealistic quantity, Matin explained in an informal conversation (August 2005), because—if done correctly—only three to four persons could be counselled per hour. Matin’s revelation shocked the program coordinator, who was expecting a visit from the CDC director who was interested to know how Yeshica staff managed to reach so many VCT clients.

Soon after reporting these issues to the program coordinator, Matin realised that he had violated the organisational culture of Yeshica where the staff had refrained from informing the program coordinator about what was not functioning. Whenever there was a problem, they tried to solve the issue among themselves and only permitted Sheriff, the protégé of the program coordinator, to communicate with the program coordinator. By stepping on many people’s toes right from the start, Matin made himself unpopular with both the Winam and Kisumu teams. The staff made clear that if he continued like this, they would simply ignore him, making his work even more difficult.

Similarly, Matin was not very popular among the youngsters. From the beginning, he wanted to make clear that his way of management was different than Jerry’s: he no longer would tolerate the passive participation of people who just came for the material benefits. His approach to the youngsters was authoritarian. His style left little space for ‘participation’ where youngsters’ opinions and preferences were taken into account. Various misunderstandings and frustrations between the participants and
staff arose. For instance, Matin decided single-handedly to dissolve one group, the youngsters’ Executive Committee. On another occasion, without discussing a problem—too much material was disappearing from the storage containers—Matin installed new locks. The youth representatives who were in charge of the containers were very angry, as one of the youth facilitators explained:

The youth feel bad because Matin is acting without consulting them, and by locking the containers without their consent, we (the youth facilitators) cannot even show our faces by those containers anymore because it will be generalized that we have locked out the youth from the containers – and I can even be beaten up in the field by the angry youth, yet we were not party to that decision (informal conversation, October 2005).

Matin also expected the youth representatives to be present at the containers on a daily basis to avoid theft. One of the youth representatives, Ouma (22-year-old operating his own barbershop), felt that this could not be expected from them: “Whenever [Matin] found the container locked, he went to ask me to go and open it. I chased him away. Is it my job just to sit the whole day in that container, when I am not paid? I am planning to leave Yeshica and let them get new members” (informal conversation, October 2005).

Because it was a participatory development project, Yeshica participants expected another kind of leadership and not Matin’s authoritarian approach. Ochien’g stated:

The management at Yeshica is bad. We are treated badly and our views and needs are not taken into consideration. We are just expected to sit back and do all we are told even if it is bad. It is like a dog that is called by his master and comes and bows and coils his tail under the legs in fear (in-depth interview, March 2006).

Bishop (19 years old) agreed:

Jerry was bad but not compared to Matin. Matin is much worse. Leadership is also something inborn. A leader should not be too authoritative and also not too democratic such that he listens to what everyone says, like even what a little baby says. Those under a leader should not be shouting his name and [not showing respect] like that (informal conversation, August 2006).

Although Matin’s interventions might seem reasonable, even necessary, and the youngsters acknowledged that a somewhat authoritarian attitude was expected from a leader, his actions nonetheless undermined Yeshica participants’ ownership of the project. According to Yeshica participants, Matin did not treat the youngsters as valuable partners but as low-status participants. While Matin may have had good intentions, his lack of experience and his failure to communicate effectively meant that he started out on the wrong foot with virtually everybody and caused lasting damage to the project’s ability to mobilize participants.
6.3.2. Only good news for the king

Management problems are of course common in development projects, but in this case they were made worse because of another not infrequent issue, namely the fear to deliver negative news to the foreign program coordinator. Participants recognized that the program coordinator was not getting the whole story but did not find the courage to approach her and inform her about what was really going on at the Centre. They often were timid, believing that their knowledge of English was not good enough to express themselves. They felt the staff tried to prevent them from voicing criticism, and believed that the staff thought such criticism was disrespectful:

We wish to have a meeting with Doctor A. (the program coordinator), and that no staff member or Matin should attend. We feel that whenever we want to talk to Doctor A. when she is around, the staff do not let us, or when she comes to us, they also follow her to the room or the banda (hut), thus we cannot freely talk to her. We really do not want Matin because he is arrogant and never listens. He is a stupid person! (Okoth, informal conversation, October 2005).

When an anonymous threatening letter was sent to Matin, the program coordinator rushed to the Centre. The author of that letter had threatened to “chase Matin out of Winam, dead or alive”. When the youngsters heard about it, they hoped, as Mary, one of the PTC members, expressed “that what was written in that letter would happen for real. When things do not improve, then one day a human body part will be found at the Centre” (informal conversation, March 2006). Fortunately, nothing happened, but for Jerry, Yeshica’s project manager prior to Matin, it confirmed again their feeling that “the youngsters of Winam are really a difficult group” (informal conversation, October 2005). Failures in communication, and distrust and animosity on all sides resulted in problems not receiving the attention they deserved. The absence of effective, open communication was startling since the project was explicitly designed to be participatory and to give local youths and their communities a voice. In the next section, I discuss the organizational tools implemented to facilitate this participation.

6.4. The ‘Executive Committee’: Participatory organ without participation

Participation is usually envisaged “through democratic representation and [based] on the election of representatives” (Cleaver 1999: 602). In development projects, elected representatives are typically invited to participate in the different phases of the program: planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. However, as Cleaver (1999: 597) puts it, “participation has become an act of faith in development: something we believe in and rarely question”. Stating that participatory features exist in a project
is often already enough to claim that it is community-based and participatory. However, the way participation is realised on the ground is often unclear. The actual mechanisms and impact of participation, and the potential scope of the empowerment that is supposed to take place through a project, requires more exploration. The following story of one of the participatory organs of Yeshica, the Youth Executive Committee (called “Ex-Com”), illustrates that the term ‘participation’ covers a vast range of activities, including some that hardly qualify as ‘participatory.’

According to the project design, the aim of the Ex-Com was to promote young people’s participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Yeshica. Ex-Com consisted of elected representatives from each local committee. Participation was voluntary and members’ commitment and dedication were awarded with an annual certificate of participation, identification badges, and T-shirts.

In practice, an Ex-Com meeting was not a participatory event during which staff and youngsters together planned upcoming activities. Instead, Yeshica staff imposed a predetermined agenda that left little space for the youngsters’ input. The staff used the meeting to announce their decisions. The task of the youth representatives was to mobilize their peers from each of their locations and, later on, to report on the general progress being made by their local members, any problems faced, and materials needed for implementation. In addition, the youth representatives submitted a monthly action plan that was aligned with the programs’ objectives. For instance, during the Ex-Com meeting in September 2005, one representative mentioned that a large number of female participants in her group had dropped out, that the storage containers were placed too far from the local Centres, and that more bicycles were needed for youth to use to get to farther away places. Although the Ex-Com members could only make minor changes to planned activities, youth group members did not hesitate to tell their Ex-Com representatives their opinions, which they in turn reported to Yeshica staff. It was unclear whether those opinions eventually reached the Kisumu office and the program coordinator. At the first Ex-Com meeting that took place after the second Youth Festival, representatives critiqued the staff’s behaviour at the event:

Ramba representative: “First of all, the staff should learn to work well with one another and with one voice. Secondly, the festival committee did not liaise well with the staff: it lacked ownership on the youth’s side. It was like the staff hijacked our festival”.

PTC representative: “I got very embarrassed when the staff started quarrelling in front of the youth in the kitchen, until those who were waiting for plates just returned their plates and watched the staff quarrelling. I felt pity. It was a
big shame on the staff’s part”. [...] The staff should also equally share responsibility and not leave everything to one person” (fieldnotes, September 2005).

Criticisms of the staff and the project that were voiced during meetings were not reported in the minutes and thus did not reach the program coordinator. As a consequence, no remedial action was ever taken.

Yeshica staff expelled youths with critical perspectives on the project by suddenly organising new Ex-Com elections: according to Odera (19 years old) some “big mouths” were “a threat to their work”. 42 The selection of candidates did not happen democratically: one day, the staff simply picked new committee members, choosing from youngsters who were attending a football match. After the game, one of the adult facilitators asked the youth to form groups, saying, “We have money to give you”, 43 and requesting people to come forward to be elected. The youth had not been informed that there were going to be elections, as mandated in the bylaws. Petronella overheard youths asking each other what those who were being elected would be required to do, and what Yeshica would do for them in return. The staff selected three youths for each local committee, to serve as chair, secretary, and vice-chair, and tried to include a young woman, a school-going man, and a young man who was not attending school, but there were few young women to choose from. The newly chosen committee members were shy, and many had not been involved in any of the youth groups before.

The same approach to elections happened in other regions, making Yeshica participants very unhappy. Mary, an active PTC member, complained that the new elected Ex-Com representatives were still in school and might not be able to attend the Ex-Com meetings. She further mentioned that the staff elected young and more inexperienced people; they were too shy to complain about anything since they were lacking the backing of their peers, which democratically elected leaders might have had. Owino explained:

The last time that I went to Yeshica was last year. We were sent away last year because those people (the staff) had discovered that we have known their shortcomings and we had started talking back and asking why things were going wrong. Yet, they told us that they had sent us away because we were over age, but that was not the case this time. They just wanted people that they can manipulate because at the last meeting, we really talked openly about the bad things that Yeshica was doing and the staff was not happy with us. Therefore they have elected new people, some young children who will not speak out and some school-going children who cannot even address people (informal conversation, April 2006).

Yeshica staff did not see the need to use participatory methods. On paper, the result looked just the same as it would have if the matter had been handled democratically: a
report was sent to the Kisumu office listing the names of the different newly ‘elected’ youth representatives. For the local staff, appointing youth rather than holding elections had three advantages: it was quick and simple, it yielded representatives unlikely to cause trouble by voicing negative opinions, and it enabled the continuation of claims about participatory development. Without direct supervision or observation in the field, participatory mechanisms on paper could mean anything in practice. Staff had strong incentives to tweak ‘participation’ to suit their own interests. In fact, unchecked ‘participatory’ mechanisms could increase the power of local staff over participants, as they had more room for manoeuvre. When participatory methods were hijacked, it became more likely that decisions that ran counter to the program designers’ intentions would follow, as well as unprofessional behaviour among the staff.

One could conclude that all actors involved in Yeshica had their own hidden agendas. Both the participants and the staff wanted to assure their position or job. Each of them tried to benefit through manipulation, and, in a way, they all were playing the same game. Some even played ‘the game of sex’ while Yeshica promoted ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful and Condoms).

6.5. Unintended consequences: Yeshica, “the people who have sex”

JoWinam and the parents of Yeshica participants often called the Yeshica participants “the people who have sex”. Maduong, one of the two youngsters that worked at the library of Yeshica, told Petronella the following story:

Kelly of PTC has been sleeping with [a CDC staff person] in Matin’s house. Kelly does not care what people say. She walks around saying that she has not gotten a house. Kelly goes to her home during the day but at night she goes back to Matin’s house. She had two children but one died so only one remains. Kelly is an ‘I don’t care’er’ and her parents cannot condemn her behaviour, they just leave her alone. Once girls grow up, they will have boyfriends and it is up to them to choose whom they want once they are big, and there is nothing you can do about it. You know, one day, when we were seated at the hut with some of the Winam girls, an old man passed by and greeted them like this: “amosou jo dicho” (I greet you people who have sex). I did not understand why the old man greeted them like that, but, later, after what has been going on with Kelly, I understood why the old man called them like that. I wonder what is wrong with those girls in the Centre, that they are allowing themselves to be used by the male staff at the Centre! Definitely these guys have other girls in Kisumu so they are just wasting their time with the Winam girls. Sheriff (a Kisumu staff member) is married but he dates girls in Winam. In the end, Sheriff is just spoiling the name of Yeshica. One day, one of the new staff members asked me why I am always serious and he told me that he had heard [from other male staff] that I am very strict and difficult [and unapproachable]. Imagine! Here [at Yeshica], if you are not patient, you cannot stay (i.e., if you are not strict/able to resist men’s advances; you cannot survive). I am actually thinking of withdrawing from PTC because if something goes wrong with Yeshica, like now, people will say “Yeshica people do this”. If the people who are supposed to be teaching us behavioural change are behaving like
YOUTH SPEAK ABOUT YESHICA

this, how do you expect us, the youth, to take what they teach us seriously? Some parents are even discouraging youths from going to the Centre because they say: “You are going to learn prostitution there”. In addition, those at the primary school in east Winam were warned not to be seen at the Centre. The numbers are going to drop because of the staff’s own behaviour. When the numbers of attendees goes down, Sheriff will ask me why people are not going to the library anymore. I cannot lie about the numbers, I will just write the correct figure, even if only two people come (informal conversation, June 2006).

As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why young people participated in Yeshica was to expand their sexual network. A number of youngsters were said to have had sex with staff members, in the staff housing next to Yeshica. At the Centre, young women also flirted with the theology students whose college was in the building behind Yeshica. The containers that were used as satellite offices for Yeshica services were ideal places for meeting lovers and “playing sex”. Ironically, Yeshica—the place where young people were supposed to be taught HIV/AIDS prevention—turned into a place abounding with opportunities for sex. Everyone knew that this was happening but nobody discussed it because they did not want to be accused of misbehaving. Bishop told us:

I used to go to the container but I stopped going because I did not want to clash with people: people would say that I had gone to chat up girls at the container. You know, it is said that people go to meet girlfriends and boyfriends at the container, and that would really taint my name (informal conversation, November 2005).

Not only did sexual relationships between staff and participants occur, but also sexual relationships among CDC/KEMRI staff were very common. In the Kisumu office, jokes were made about “practicing zero-grazing within CDC”. According to Opiyo, the anthropologist who used to work at Yeshica, HIV-prevention programs could not succeed when the staff behaved differently than the messages they promoted:

Now imagine that you are my female colleague, and both of us are working with CDC, and you are very serious about your work: you are trying to help young people, how they are living, developing life skills so that they learn how to negotiate, and you are helping them to have a better livelihood – but me, your male colleague, I am going behind your back by having an affair with this young girl. Do you think you can succeed? You cannot succeed. Now, that is how you can explain the failure of intervention because the message is important. You are carrying the message but I am sending other messages because I am having an affair. But none of us has ever lost his job because he was having an affair (in-depth interview, September 2006).

In the end, both Yeshica staff and its participants contradicted the very purpose of the program. Some female participants tried to seduce salaried staff members, but many participants of Yeshica were seduced by the sexual advances of the CDC staff, who had a responsibility to refrain from abusing their power and engaging in such behaviour. I know only of one staff member who had married a participant after she was
found pregnant. For the others, sexual adventures with CDC staff only brought temporary financial benefits but no long-term enhancement of their livelihood opportunities. Instead, Yeshica participants were given the sobriquet of “jo dicho”, the people who have sex.

These unintended consequences do not mean that the project necessarily ‘failed’. Clearly, the story is more complicated than that, and I am not concerned with making a judgment about the success or failure of the project. What my fieldwork shows—beyond any progress report from the project—is that both participants and staff used the project in their own interests, whether or not those were aligned with the project’s goals. Indeed, plenty of people got from Yeshica what they wanted, at least in the short term.

6.6. The fallacy of participation

Interactions between actors with different interests and constraints impacted the participatory mechanisms in the project. This chapter mainly examined the interests of Yeshica participants: I only briefly touched upon the perspectives of the YIP program coordinator and Yeshica staff. The youngsters’ stories made apparent that the program coordinator mainly relied on reports from her staff since she had many other tasks to fulfil in Kisumu, making it difficult for her to visit the project regularly on the ground. In the end, for her, ‘participation’ came down to reporting large numbers as evidence of project ‘success’ to the donors.

The main concern of the staff, by contrast, was promoting the ‘success’ of the project to the program coordinator in order to secure their jobs and livelihood. Therefore, the field staff seemed to care little about the interests of Yeshica participants and did not communicate their criticisms to the program coordinator. Their solution was to creatively meet their job targets by promising material benefits, which they could not always provide, and by artificially inflating the numbers they reported. This proved to be quite effective as virtually no signals reached the program coordinator that things were not going well on the ground. For staff, ‘participation’ meant reporting the desired numbers while making sure that no criticism was heard.

The young people sought a means to make a living but also opportunities to have fun and make friends. They were not passive victims and found their own ways of benefitting from the project. Having said that, they bore the consequences when others’ interests tweaked the actual content of the project. They muddled through the project, grasping on to any advantage they could seize. For the youths, the idea of participation generally meant that their voices were heard, but at Yeshica, ‘participation’ was reduced
to just being physically present at Yeshica, waiting from some kind of opportunity to arise.

Participation in projects should involve more than sitting on committees or speaking at meetings. Participation does not need to be limited to formal moments; often, really meaningful participation, for example influencing decisions, occurs in informal settings, outside of a project’s structures (Cleaver 1999, 2001). Participation at Yeshica was an illusion and often served as a façade.

7. Conclusion

When I have talked about Yeshica to development practitioners, including my ITM colleagues, I have often been asked to reduce my conclusion to answering a simple binary question: Has Yeshica ‘failed’? My intention has never been to evaluate the project, hence I will not make a judgement or answer this question. Instead, by using an actor-oriented approach, this chapter sheds light on the complex web of meanings given to Yeshica’s ‘success’ or ‘failure’ that was produced by the program management, its local staff, and the participants or ‘beneficiaries’.

Latour conceptualized the ‘success’ of a project as arising from the project’s ability to continue recruiting institutional support (cited in Mosse 2006: 937–938). By doing this he approached the issue from the perspective of program designers and managers. My work not only shows how programs are shaped through their interaction with local power structures, but also that even less powerful actors are able to make these interventions fit their own interests by using their own “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990). While the YIP designers hoped that Yeshica would have an impact on HIV/AIDS incidence, the participants and staff of Yeshica were more occupied with how Yeshica could improve their livelihood and their daily life.

If Yeshica’s ‘success’ is defined in biomedical terms, the program management might consider it as a ‘failure’. Due to the lack of financial resources, the evaluation of the program’s impact that was to be conducted four years after the implementation of Yeshica never took place. By 2010, policy priorities of donors had changed, with the result that no extension was funded under PEPFAR 2. In the end, there was no hard statistical evidence of impact as initially promised by the project. However, the qualitative information I obtained from working with the youngsters does tell us something: Yeshica became a fertile ground for new sexual relationships, which could be at odds with the goal of reducing HIV/AIDS risk.
While it was not a ‘success’ in biomedical terms, if we look at the project from the perspectives of the youngsters, it was a ‘success’, certainly at the beginning, since Yeshica provided many things that were important to the youngsters. The project provided (some) youngsters with new skills, higher social status, and, for young women, opportunities for sexual liaisons with salaried men from town, which could improve their livelihood, even if only temporarily. After some time, Yeshica no longer conformed to the expectations of some members of the project, which caused them to leave the project and search for something else to make a living.

We might also go a step further in our analysis. While in biomedical terms, Yeshica could be called a ‘failure’, the program designers managed to describe it as a ‘success’ story in the epidemiological community. Having seen the reality in the field, one may wonder how this is possible. The answer is simple: When the program designers published their ‘success’ story, they only talked about one of the HIV-prevention interventions of Yeshica, namely, the ‘Families Matter! Program’ (FMP).\textsuperscript{45} The evaluation of FMP—published in an article called ‘Evaluation of a U.S. evidence-based parenting intervention in rural western Kenya from Parents Matter! to Families Matter!’ in \textit{AIDS Education and Prevention}—showed a positive effect on the intergenerational communication between children (10-12-year-olds) and on parenting skills (Vandenhoudt et al. 2010). However, any ‘impact’ attributed to FMP may have been influenced by the impact of the other interventions. Furthermore, beyond the problem of untangling impacts, the evaluation did not recognize that it was culturally inappropriate in Winam for parents to talk with their children about sexuality issues.\textsuperscript{46}

In the end, FMP was a ‘success’ for the program designers because they succeeded in obtaining funding (and thereby legitimacy) and maintained good institutional relationships. However, interventions that were less popular among donors, like the ‘livelihood intervention’, were easily discarded as ‘failures’.

\textsuperscript{1} K-Rep stands for the Kenya Rural Enterprise Program that specialises in microfinance services. The participants of Yeshica usually referred to it as “K-Rep”.

\textsuperscript{2} This anecdote comes from my early fieldnotes (June 2005) when I was not yet accompanied by my research assistant Petronella. Petronella only joined me in August 2005. When I did not understand what the youngsters were saying in Dholuo, I just asked the person sitting next to me to translate. During this meeting, I received most of the translations from Onyango’s sister (a secondary school graduate), whom I already knew quite well since she was one of my neighbours in Dhonam.
The youth were paid for participating in outreach sessions, locally referred to as “outreaches”; these were precisely what the word suggests: a form of reaching out to the community by going into surrounding villages to offer VCT, clinical services, and leisure activities.

Mutura is not considered to be a rich man’s meal nor a poor man’s meal. It is a common meal for those who like meat, including those who can’t afford large cuts of meat. Okoth cannot afford to buy mutura very often. He associates mutura with food from town, although mutura is usually prepared in the village and not in town.

Policy by Mosse (2004: 1) is defined as “development models, strategies and project designs”.

Several reasons have been given for the limited impact of behavioural interventions, including timing of intervention delivery and the breadth of focus. The majority of HIV-prevention efforts reached young people after they had already begun having sexual intercourse. Additionally, most behavioural interventions did not take into account contextual factors (Mc Leroy et al. 1988; UNAIDS 1999b).

The ‘rapid needs assessment’ (RNA) was funded by the CDC, more specifically by the GAP/LIFE project, and was carried out in five districts of Nyanza Province in August and September 2001. The selected sites represented the variety of environments (rural, urban, peri-urban, and lakeside). Focus group discussions with in- and out-of-school youth between the ages of 10–24, interviews with key informants, and observations were used to generate qualitative information on youths’ sexual and reproductive health problems and needs (Vandenhoudt et al. 2001).

The CDC started to work in Winam in 1984, carrying out research on malaria. After 2000, when HIV/AIDS became rampant, more and more research projects were set up (see Chapter 3).
together in Kenya as part of PEPFAR programs (Government Agencies, http://www.pepfarwatch.org/about_pepfar/government_agencies/).


16 “Quasi-experimental studies aim to evaluate interventions but do not use randomization. Like randomized trials, quasi experiments aim to demonstrate causality between an intervention and an outcome” (Harris et al. 2004: 1586). Randomized control trials (RCT) are generally considered to have the highest level of credibility with regard to assessing causality (Harris et al. 2004), however in a village like Winam, it is often impossible or unethical to randomly select people for a ‘treatment group’ (where they will get access to the project’s so-called benefits, for instance, training or medication) and a ‘control group’ of people who won’t receive the ‘benefits’ that the ‘treatment group’ receives. Quasi-experimental evaluations get around the issue of selecting people at random by using statistical techniques to ensure that both groups are as comparable as possible, though this is often limited by factors not included in the statistical tests. This is because it is impossible to define, quantify, and include everything that makes up a person in some sort of statistical calculation.


18 Ibid.

19 Later on, in July–August 2005, another place in Siaya District was chosen as the second field site since the CDC had also started to work in that area.

20 In the PMP, parents were given tools to build a positive relationship with their pre-teens, and to communicate with them about sexuality prior to the onset of sexual risk. The intervention was delivered to small groups of parents in five sessions of three hours (ITM 2011: 7).

21 The abstinence-based approach of the ‘Life Skills Program’ however, did not completely fit with the philosophy of the Microbiology Department of the ITM because they preferred the ABC campaign instead of only promoting abstinence. This stood in contradiction to the PEPFAR policy of the Bush administration, and, in order to secure funding, ITM changed the ‘Life Skills Program’ from an abstinence-based approach to an abstinence-focussed approach. This was much more than just a shift in semantics since it meant that abstinence became the central aim of the program. An abstinence-based approach in contrast began with positive assumptions about abstinence and built upon that to achieve wider impacts.

22 The adaptations were called ‘Healthy Choices for a Better Future I’ (HCI), which was an abstinence-focussed intervention targeting in-school adolescents aged 10–14 years, and ‘Healthy Choices for a Better Future II’ (HCII), which promoted abstinence alongside other safer sex strategies among ‘out-of-school youth’ aged 13–17 years (ITM 2011: 7–12). Both HCI and HCII were delivered to small, mixed-gender groups in eight modules of one hour (ITM 2011: 7).


24 Parents were not directly interviewed for the RNA (in 2001) so their perceptions about whether there was a lack of communication between them and their children were not mentioned (Vandenhoudt et al. 2001). Only later, in 2003, when the adaptation of PMP was already decided upon, the YIP team held small-group discussions with parents, teachers, community leaders, and adolescents. The goal of these discussions was to grasp the changing context of sex education and the role of parents in it (Poulsen et al. 2010: 278). However, after these discussions, when YIP staff concluded that there was a lack of communication between parents and children about
sexual issues and that “elders no longer play a major role in communicating with youth about sexuality” (Poulsen et al. 2010: 478), parents acknowledged the relevance of a parent-focussed HIV-prevention intervention in their community. This ‘need’ was clearly socially constructed: it was hard for the parents to say “no” to a foreign intervention that offered to help them “protect their children from the dangers of early sexuality” (Poulsen et al. 2010: 278). Not only might the program characterize their non-participation as ‘irresponsible’ (see also Cleaver 2001: 47–48), but parents also might not want to miss the possible job or learning opportunities that this intervention might offer them and their children in their community. The PMP promised to provide parents with knowledge, skills, and confidence to undertake the program’s created role of ‘sex educators’ for the youngsters (PoulSEN et al. 2010: 278).

25 The ‘Parents Matter! Program’ (PMP) was adapted to the Kenyan context and its name changed to ‘Families Matter! Program’ (FMP).

26 A Community Advisory Board (CAB) was felt as an urgent necessity once the BCS research team experienced serious problems with the implementation of the BCS in Winam (see also Chapter 3). Soon after its implementation, a CAB was used in several CDC research programs in Kenya, for the same reason: to avoid situations in which the community members could expel the research team from their local area because they felt they had been used as “guinea pigs” (see also Chapter 3 on medical research in Winam). The role of the CAB members was however, rather confusing. In the beginning, they were asked to mobilize and inform the youngsters about Yeshica but once there were some disagreements and unhappiness among some CAB members, Yeshica staff only wanted them to act as a reflection board, which would report the complaints of the community members and advise the staff on how to better implement their activities.

27 The local staff at Yeshica, who were based in Winam, were locally referred as the ‘Winam team’. They consisted of a local project manager who was supported by a nurse (later replaced by a clinical officer), a social worker, and later, four youth facilitators, four (later eight) adult facilitators and four VCT youth counsellors. The task of the youth facilitators at the start of the project was mainly mobilizing young people to form youth groups and to participate in the offerings of Yeshica. Later, they were responsible for the implementation and adaptation of the ‘Life Skills Program’. The adult facilitators were responsible for implementing and adapting the ‘Families Matter! Program’. The job of the VCT Youth Counsellors was to invite people to receive VCT through ‘behavioural counselling’. This consists of walking or cycling distances to encounter youths, and approaching them with the words: “I know my HIV status, do you too?”. They also gave health talks in school. Youth and adult facilitators were paid about 20,000 Kenyan shillings (250 euro) per month; the VCT Counsellors were paid about 100 Kenyan shillings (about 1.20 euro) per client seen and tested (which resulted, as noted earlier, in inflated reporting of clients seen).

28 Apart from the local staff at Yeshica, one administrator and eight research assistants were hired to form the research team of Yeshica. All of the research team members were based in Kisumu and commuted between Winam and Kisumu. Due to their different work location compared to the ‘Winam team’, who were required to remain in Winam, they were referred to as the ‘Kisumu team’. The staff members of the Kisumu team were divided according to the research program they were responsible for: one who held a Bachelor in anthropology led the ‘Families Matter! Program’ (FMP) together with three research assistants, and one who was holding a Bachelor in was leading the ‘Life Skills Program’ together with three other research assistants. Both the ‘Kisumu team’ and the ‘Winam team’ were operational staff but the Kisumu team was higher up in the hierarchy, and had more general overview of the program compared to the Winam team. The Kisumu team was more involved in the analysis of the different research projects.

29 ITM had submitted a proposal to conduct the final survey but by the time the IRB of the CDC finally approved it, the deadline for spending the funds under PEPFAR 1 (March 2008) had already passed. ITM did not receive any funds for the program under PEPFAR 2.
The survey showed an overall HIV prevalence among adolescents aged 15–19 years in Winam of 8.6 percent among females and 0.7 percent among males; by age 19, one in five young women was infected (Amornkul et al. 2009; Vandenhoudt et al. 2004b).

Youth participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities was promoted through the establishment of ten local committees and one Executive Youth Committee (Excom) who gathered on a monthly basis. At the community level, YIP received advice from the CAB that was comprised of youth representatives, parents, teachers, church leaders, and community leaders.

Not everyone could benefit from a lift from the CDC car, as strict US security rules prohibited the driver from carrying non-CDC-staff.

Lilly started to participate in Yeshica around June 2005 because she was interested in joining the Yeshica Festival in August 2005. After the vocational training for organic farming in December 2005, Lilly left Winam because she had problems with her uncle with whom she was staying. Akinyi actually never participated at the Yeshica as an active member but was familiar with it through her boyfriend Okoth who was an active member of Yeshica (see Chapter 6). MinMercy, the wife of Ochien’g, took part in one vocational training on hair styling in June 2005 but stopped going because she had to take care of her one-year-old child Mercy, and did not have enough time.

Yeshica was located in east Winam. The staff also set up three satellite centres in the form of shipping containers near schools in west, south, and central Winam in order to reach youngsters from outside east Winam. In addition to meeting at the containers, youngsters also met at market places, nearby churches, and other public places.

Between June and August 2005, the lake was “closed,” i.e., fishing was not allowed during and after spawning in order to let the fishing stock recover; during this time, Ochien’g relied entirely on income received from Yeshica.

MinMercy’s wish did not differ much from most of the other young women of Winam (see Chapter 6).

According to the Yeshica Constitution, the Youth Festival was to act as a General Assembly but it never did function as such. The Festival was begun in 2004, and was supposed to provide a forum where young people (out-of-school youth and school-goers between 10 and 20 years old) could express their talents, learn from one another, and share experiences (Yeshica 2005). At the same time, Yeshica staff used this opportunity to provide information on YIP’s activities and to attract new members. In August 2005, the majority that attended the Festival were ‘school-goers’ and only a few ‘out-of-school’ youth were reached. About 300 participants attended from all over Winam and from even further away. The students from school prepared a theatre sketch or a song on HIV prevention.

It was common within CDC projects in Kenya that staff was ‘recycled’, moving easily from one project to another. Although this gave the staff some kind of stable employment, it was noteworthy how few of the local staff actually had long-term contracts.

Since the VCT counsellors were paid according to the number of people they had recruited to get VCT (100 Kenyan shillings per person), they simply invented a higher number to get a higher salary.

The threatening letter was probably written by one of the four adult facilitators, as a high level of disrespect toward Matin existed among them.
The Ex-com consisted of ten local committees, spread over Winam. Each local committee consisted of various youngsters that participated in Yeshica. Out of this group, one youth representative was supposed to be elected on a democratic basis every year.

The elections in December 2005 occurred unexpectedly for the youths in Winam: new youth representatives were chosen without actually announcing new elections. The Yeshica Constitution mandated that "the secretary must give a twenty-one day notice to all members before the General Assembly" (Yeshica Constitution 2005: 9) before new elections could be organised.

This was an example of how the staff made false promises to the youth: there were no funds to be given out at that time.

In development circles, “zero grazing” was often equated with abstinence (zero sex). However, “zero-grazing” was a slogan borrowed from Ugandan AIDS-intervention efforts (see Chapter 5), which refers to the circle, or ‘zero’, that results from tying a cow to a peg while it grazes. The cow can eat the grass in a circular area around the peg and this is a metaphor that people can ‘eat’ or have sex as much as they like, but they should keep it local and close to home.

This was the US evidence-based intervention that was widely deemed successful before it was adapted to the Kenyan context. The CDC – being a very powerful stakeholder – has managed to scale-up this so-called effective HIV/AIDS intervention all over Kenya and the African continent. The Yeshica staff member responsible for the implementation and adaptation of FMP in Winam were hired in 2012–2013 to consult in different African countries based on this ‘success’, and I noticed on the internet that FMP was even implemented in Singapore in order to build “strong, happy families” (Ministry of Social and Family Development of Singapore 2013).

Yet, in the evaluation of FMP the authors assume that “the reported increases in sexuality communication also suggest that the intervention may have helped overcome traditional cultural barriers that restrict parent child communication about sexuality” (Vandenhoudt et al. 2010: 340) but no details are given on how they came to such a conclusion. ‘To overcome traditional cultural barriers’ is not something one easily can effect, or demonstrate.