



# MSc. Thesis

A qualitative research on COVID-19 induced mobility trajectories and livelihoods of Kenyan labor migrants

Prepared by:	Marit Meijer (6680038)
Supervised by:	dr. Guus van Westen
Date:	August 05, 2022
Course:	Msc. Research thesis (GEO4-3509) International Development Studies Faculty of Geosciences University of Utrecht

Page intentionally left blank.

## Abstract

In 2020 lockdown measures such as curfews and the temporary closure of outbound movement in urban nodes have resulted into widespread loss of employment, increased food and tenure insecurity and human right violations, further exacerbating existing inequalities. The influx of return migrants from urban to rural areas have spiked an interest amongst academics and journalists at the onset of the pandemic, but little remains known about how the migrants are faring now (2022). This research looks into the mid- and long-term socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 measures and policies on mobility patterns and livelihoods of labor migrants in Kenya that travel between Nairobi City and rural areas. The research asserts the need for looking into their mobility trajectories through qualitative methods such as (life-history) interviews, mobility mapping activities and focus group discussions to lay bare how the migrants and the caregivers that took them under their wing in times of crisis, were impacted. The research contributes to the debate of analyzing migration through the mobility lens in which there is an eye for how mobility is inextricably linked to the daily lives of these migrants and emphasizes the interconnectedness of urban and rural space through analyzing both the perspective of the migrants as their caregivers. In addition, the research analyzes how social support packages could be tailored to better fit the needs and reach these vulnerable groups.

**Key words:** Kenya - Sub-Saharan Africa • regional migration • return migration • rural- urban migration • COVID-19 • multi-locational households • mobility trajectories • livelihoods • labor migrants



## Road

You have the roads and the grasses alongside them  
And your urge to start an endless argument  
Which one to take and not to take:

Here is one road that leads to the creeks and springs  
And rivers and the limitless sea of your childhood  
Full of thrills and joys and occasional despair  
Against the sand and corals and your own imagined weaknesses

Here is one road that leads to the caves  
And mountains and forests of our youth  
Full of risks and despair and occasional triumph  
Against the wind and rain and your own recklessness

Here is one road that leads to the city of your dreams  
With its bright lights and temptations that match your longings  
Full of pleasures and earthly pursuits and occasional regrets  
Against the noise and squalor and your own sinfulness

Here is one road that leads back to your home village  
And the familiar childhood trees, flowers and fruits  
Full of reminiscences and delights and occasional grief  
Against selective memories and your own forgetfulness -

You pause and decide to take one road at your own risk:  
The only one that leads to your inner self.

(Old Warrior's Poems and the Bohol Quake Assistance Story -  
Nestor Maniebo Pestelos; Milwida Sevilla-Reyes)

## Acknowledgement

I tend to radiate towards those who inspire me, but sometimes it requires a bit of help. A big, warm thank you to Chantal Wieckardt for introducing me to an amazing group of people working on such an important topic. To dr. James Wangu, an incredible and indispensable support from the day I set foot on Kenyan soils until the last words I have put on paper. And who introduced me to the women of GROOTS Kenya: Naomi Wanjiku Njuguna, Grace Wanjiku Njogu, Hannah Wanjiku Muiruri, Fridah Githuku, your passion for putting women in their power is infectious. Joan Alberts Ngote and Eric Otieno, there is a pride and a power in you that fires me up to work even harder for whatever comes next. Dr. Guus van Westen and Rob de Groot for always lending a critical eye or a change of perspective when needed. To the women of MO-TRAYL, dr. Valentina Mazzucato, dr. Laura Ögden, dr. Sarah Anschütz and dr. Joan van Geel who selflessly offered me their time and advise, despite being in the midst of completing their own research. I don't think any of you realize how grateful I am for your guidance and support and how much this research means to me.

I started this course three years ago so I could seize an opportunity to do field work abroad and just when I thought COVID-19 had thrown me for a loop, I was allowed to go unexpectedly after all.

I planned my trip within two weeks. I re-wrote my research plan in between flights on airports. I was going to be able to talk to people face-to-face, rather than conducting interviews through digital means. However, none of that, would have been possible without those mentioned above, who guided me and connected me to people that have gone and continue to go through so much, but never cease to amaze me in their capacity to pull through. Their stories are relevant and too often overlooked. Acquiring the skills necessary to shed a light on these narratives is something I hope to continue to do in the near future as I take a turn towards the next chapter. Lastly, to my biggest inspiration of all: Nes, this and everything that follows will always be because of you; who showed me the road to my inner self.

## Table of content

Abstract .....	1
Acknowledgement.....	3
Table of content .....	4
1. Introduction .....	8
1.1 Outline research .....	10
2. Theoretical and conceptual framework .....	11
2.1 COVID-19 measures and policies .....	11
2.2 Migration through the mobility lens .....	12
2.3 Urban-rural connections and trans-regionality .....	14
2.4 Livelihood strategies and the sustainable livelihood approach .....	16
2.5 Research questions.....	18
2.6 Theoretical framework and conceptual model .....	19
2.7 Operationalization of variables .....	21
3. Regional thematic framework .....	25
3.2 Kenya and the COVID-19 pandemic .....	26
3.3 Exploring Nairobi and Murang'a as potential research sites .....	28
3.4 Partner organizations: LANDac .....	29
3.5 Partner organizations: GROOTS Kenya.....	30
4. Methodology .....	31
4.1 Mobility- and network mapping.....	32
4.2 (Life-history) interviews.....	33
4.3 Key informant interviews.....	34
4.4 Focus group discussions.....	35
4.5 Target population and sampling .....	36
4.6 Rationale data analysis .....	38
5. Research results: Impact COVID-19 measures and regulations .....	40
5.1 Mobility restrictions .....	40
5.2 Curfews and restrictions on social gatherings.....	44
5.3 Direct impact of COVID-19.....	46
5.4 Externalities .....	47
5.5 Conclusion.....	49
6. Research results: Government support .....	50
6.1 Labor migrants .....	50



6.2 Government support: Tailoring to the needy .....52

6.3 Government support: Facilitating access .....54

6.4 The gap between what is given and what is needed .....56

6.5 Conclusion .....57

7. Research results: Mobility trajectories .....58

7.1 Pre-COVID-19: The promise of greener pastures .....58

7.2. Mobility patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic .....59

7.2.1 Mobility .....60

7.2.2 Immobility .....63

7.3 Post-COVID-19: Take-aways and future perspective .....64

7.4 Conclusion .....66

8. Research results: Livelihoods strategies .....67

8.1 Activities and strategies .....67

8.1 Activities and strategies .....68

8.2 The importance of social capital .....71

8.1 Conclusion .....73

9. Research results: Impact livelihood outcomes migrants and caregivers .....75

9.1 Reduced vulnerability and food security .....76

9.2 Well-being: Household dynamics .....77

9.3 Well-being: Mental health .....79

9.4 Conclusion .....81

10. Conclusion and discussion .....82

10.1 Results and relevance for broader debates .....82

10.2 Limitations .....87

10.3 Future research .....88

11. Literature .....90

Annex I. Search strings for literature research ..... 101

Annex II. COVID-19 measures Kenyan government..... 103

Annex III. Privacy, safety and informed consent form ..... 106

Annex IV. Interview guide (life history) interviews ..... 107

Annex VI. Focus group discussion interview guide ..... 111

Annex VII. Characteristics participants ..... 114

Annex VIII. Codebook ..... 115

Annex IX. Livelihood strategy codes ..... 145

Annex X. Mobility maps participants Murang'a ..... 146

Annex VII. Mobility maps participants Mathare..... 156

## Figures and tables

Figure 1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework .....	11
Figure 2. Conceptual framework .....	20
Figure 3. Map of Kenya Regional Division and Ethnic Distribution.....	26
Figure 4. COVID-19 cases and RRPS timeline in Kenya.....	28
Figure 5. Example mobility trajectory Ghanian youth.....	33
Figure 6. Murang'a county map; constituencies.....	37
Figure 7. Map Mathare informal settlement.....	37
Figure 8. Hierarchy chart code 'Livelihood strategies'.....	69
Figure 9. Hierarchy chart code 'livelihood capitals'.....	73
Figure 10. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant001_Maragwa].....	62/144
Figure 11. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant002_Maragwa].....	63/144
Figure 12. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant003_Maragwa].....	145
Figure 13. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant004_Maragwa].....	145
Figure 14. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant005_Kigumo].....	146
Figure 15. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant006_Kigumo].....	146
Figure 16. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant007_Kigumo].....	147
Figure 17. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant008_Kigumo].....	147
Figure 18. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant009_Kigumo].....	148
Figure 19. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant010_Kigumo].....	148
Figure 20. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant011_Kiharu].....	149
Figure 21. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant012_Kiharu].....	149
Figure 22. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant013_Kiharu].....	52/150
Figure 23. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant014_Kiharu].....	150
Figure 24. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant015_Kiharu].....	151
Figure 25. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant016_Kiharu].....	151
Figure 26. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant017_Kiharu].....	152
Figure 27. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant018_Maragwa].....	152

Figure 28. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant019_Maragwa].....	153
Figure 29. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant020_Kigumo].....	153
Figure 30. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant021_Mathare].....	154
Figure 31. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant022_Mathare].....	154
Figure 32. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant023_Mathare].....	155
Figure 33. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant024_Mathare].....	155
Figure 34. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant025_Mathare].....	156
Figure 35. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant026_Mathare].....	156
Figure 36. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant027_Mathare].....	157
Figure 37. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant028_Mathare].....	157
Figure 38. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant029_Mathare].....	158
Figure 39. Mobility trajectory [MM_Participant030_Mathare].....	158
Table 1. Operationalization of important concepts.....	22
Table 2. Sub questions and research methods applied.....	33
Table 3. Target population and sampling methods.....	38
Table 4. Search strings for literature research.....	99
Table 5. COVID-19 measures Kenyan government.....	101
Table 6. Characteristics participants.....	112
Table 7. Codebook.....	113
Table 8. Codes 'Livelihood strategy'.....	143

## 1. Introduction

In March 2020, the prime-minister of India announced a nation-wide lockdown, leaving his people with merely 4 hours to prepare. Images of labor migrants rushing to catch the last overcrowded trains back to their home-villages spread across media platforms world-wide (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2021; Gupta et al. 2021). Although the media was fixated on the South-Asian context, similar humanitarian crises occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bhalla, 2020; Wasike, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020).

This research explores how the mobility flows of labor migrants affect livelihood strategies applied in times of crisis. The following research question has been formulated: "What are the COVID-19 induced mobility trajectories of Kenyan labor migrants travelling between Murang'a county and Nairobi and how did these movements impact their livelihood strategies throughout the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic?" It is aimed at contributing to several knowledge gaps that have been identified through earlier work by LANDac, "a partnership between Dutch organizations and their Southern partners working on land governance for equitable and sustainable development" (LANDac, d.u.).

In January, 2022, LANDac initiated a research across 5 different Sub-Saharan African countries in which the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on rural households and their access to land was analyzed through focus group discussions in rural communities. In doing so, they have made some of the first efforts in collecting primary data which, according to a systemic literature review by Wieckardt (2022) is still very limited to date. In addition, most of the literature available focusses on the South-Asian context and the immediate, rather than the mid- to long-term impacts of COVID-19. This research hopes to contribute to these gaps by analyzing how labor migrants, that have received so much media attention at the start of the pandemic, have been faring ever since. It does so by collecting primary data through (life-history) interviews, focus group discussions and mobility mapping activities in Murang'a county and the capital of Nairobi in Kenya. Furthermore, the research aims to contribute to the discourse around the use of a mobility, rather than a migration perspective in which academia such as Schapendonk (2014; 2021) and van Geel and Mazzucato (2017) stress to look beyond migration as a linear trajectory with a clear and fixed start- and ending point.

In Kenya, much like the rest of the world, lockdown measures such as curfews, the closure of shops, markets and eateries and the temporary cessation of outbound movement in urban nodes such as Nairobi and Mombasa, have resulted into widespread employment losses, increased food insecurity, housing and tenure insecurity and human right violations. This further exacerbated existing inequalities in the country (Ministry of Health Kenya, 2020).

Newspaper articles reported how informal settlements were destroyed on the ground of being infection-prone environments, leaving informal dwellers without a home, amongst which women and children (Wasike, 2020). Much like in India, the impact of COVID-19 measures resulted into thousands of people flocking to bus terminals to escape to home-villages. The effects of these regional migration flows were also felt in rural areas where households feared a sudden influx of migrant returnees would result into an increase of infections in areas where the access to health facilities are already limited (Wasike, 2020; Bhalla, 2020). Furthermore, worries were expressed by academia on how losses in remittances from labor migrants and the additional mouths to feed, would eventually push rural households into the distress selling of land, livestock and other assets (LANDac, 2021; LANDac, meeting February 22, 2022).

The examples above do not only show the ways in which COVID-19 measures and policies have impacted labor migrants and rural households, but also lays bare the interconnectedness between urban and rural space. Desai and Potter (2014) point out a trend in which income diversification increasingly involves farm as well as non-farm employment, resulting into livelihoods spanning across urban and rural areas. This makes it more and more difficult to distinguish between urban and rural livelihoods. Furthermore, Awumbila (2017), Mberu et al. (2012), Flahaux and de Haas (2017) and Ramisch (2015) all express how regional migration in Sub-Saharan African countries has always played a major role in securing and advancing livelihoods amongst these multilocational households. Equally important, however, are the ways in which households in the rural context play a role as a social safety net that working adults and youth can fall back on in times of crisis (Posel & Csale, 2021; Awumbila, 2017; Mberu et al. 2012).

This research aims to provide insights in this interconnectedness through analyzing regional mobility flows of Kenyan labor migrants travelling between Murang'a, a rural county in Kenya, and the capital city of Nairobi. A focus on Nairobi and Murang'a county was determined through what information could be found in newspaper articles, blogs and the preliminary field research results from two LANDac-fellows who conducted focus group discussions in Murang'a county in January and February, 2022 (Githuku and Wangu, 2022). Considering the close proximity of Murang'a county to the city of Nairobi (around 50 kilometers) and a likelihood that labor migrants from rural Murang'a travel between the county and the city, it was considered as a potential research site. Initial results from the focus group discussions later confirmed there are migrants with family-ties in Murang'a present at the proposed site.

Two years in the COVID-19 pandemic it has become clear that although the direct effects of the pandemic in the Sub-Saharan African context seem relatively lower than in Europe (Bamgboye et al. 2021; Quaife et al. 2020; Gesesew et al. 2020), indirectly, the COVID-19 regulations are exacerbating existing problems and may do so for years to come (Githuku & Wangu, 2022). The Kenyan labor migrant has proven vulnerable, because they often live in precarious situations in the city (e.g. low living standards with high living expenses) and cannot necessarily be reached effectively by government support systems due to their informal status (UN Migration, 2018; Kohnert, 2021; Corburn et al. 2020). Being double-rooted and mobile further complicates it for advocacies and programmes to reach them and the households they are part of. This has been asserted before in research by Nchanji et al. (2020) and Paganini et al. (2020) in which nationally implemented social support packages were available, but generally did not reach the most vulnerable groups through communication sources and databases used. Gaining insights in the mobility trajectories of Kenyan labor migrants and how these affect livelihood strategies applied in times of crisis, may therefore lay the groundwork for adjusting programmes in such a manner that is best tailored to their needs.

## 1.1 Outline research

The following chapter explores theories and debates relevant for important concepts in this research. A conceptual model is laid out explaining how different concepts relate to each other and research questions are formulated. The third chapter goes into geographical demarcation of the research and provides general information about the context of the study. The fourth chapter is an outline of the methodologies used to conduct the research, the positionality of the researcher and the limitations of the methodology applied. Chapters five to nine answer the sub questions of the research by presenting the research results and diving into each component of the conceptual model. The last chapter goes into answering of the main question and relates research results back to theory. It also discusses the limitations of the research and the methodologies used as well as the positionality of the researcher. Lastly, suggestions are made for future research.

## 2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

The following chapter discusses the most important concepts used in the research. The concepts are explored according to recent literature and different debates surrounding the concepts are used to demarcate them. Finally, a conceptual model is presented that illustrates how the different concepts relate to one another.

The research builds on research implemented by LANDac in January and February 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 policies and regulations on rural livelihoods and land. The research looks beyond rural households and takes into consideration the interconnectedness of urban and rural space through analyzing the experiences of labor migrants that work in Nairobi, but are part of a household in a rural village. The research also looks beyond the initial act of moving at the onset of the pandemic and takes into consideration the complete trajectory of movements throughout the last two years and how these movements have played a role into livelihood strategies that were applied by migrants. The following concepts are, thus, deemed crucial for the research and are explored in literature: (sustainable) livelihoods, rural-urban connections and mobility trajectories. Furthermore, existing literature surrounding the impact of COVID-19 is taken up. Information on search methods applied can be found in Annex I.

### 2.1 COVID-19 measures and policies

In the past two years literature around the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 has been slowly surfacing. Geographically, literature that emerged, focused largely on countries in South-Asia. Research has been done in Myanmar (Boughton et al. 2021), India, Nepal (Gupta et al. 2021; Ceballos et al. 2020), Indonesia and to a much lesser extent in the Sub-Saharan African context (Paganini et al. 2020). Though similar rules and regulations of COVID-19 have been reported across different localities, the impact of these rules and regulations were much more heterogeneous across different literature. Paganini et al. (2020) and Gupta et al. (2020) concluded that the degree to which people were able to cope with the shocks of the crisis in rural areas had much to do with the livelihood capitals they had at their disposal. Both articles do not only refer to capital in a financial sense, but also relationships that allowed for example for borrowing or finding employment opportunities or whether they were capable of owning, renting or sharecropping on a plot of land. Gupta et al. (2021) even reported falling back on subsistence farming was the most frequently used coping strategy.

However, several articles reported that external factors may influence the degree to which these assets could actually be utilized. In some literature it was reported that the implementation of restrictions on mobility coincided with (environmental) hazards such as droughts, heavy rainfall or pests or important days (e.g. planting or harvesting) on agricultural calendars (Nchanji et al. 2020; Gupta et al. 2021; Ceballos et al. 2020). Other literature geared towards Kenya and the urban context, specifically, also points out the ways in which the COVID-19 measures have exacerbated existing inequalities (Nyadera and Onditi, 2020; Pinchoff et al. 2021). However, such literature often focusses on the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to a much lesser extent the mid- and long-term impacts. Looking into the experience of labor migrants throughout the last two years of the pandemic, may therefore offer a clearer view on how these vulnerable groups are faring, two years (2022) after the initial lockdown measures have been implemented.

## 2.2 Migration through the mobility lens

In exploring and demarcating the concept of migration, the research will draw from the work of Schapendonk et al. (2014; 2021) and literature published through the MO-TRAYL project (van Geel and Mazzucato, 2017; Anschütz and Mazzucato, 2021; 2022; Ögden and Mazzucato, 2022) who propose the use of a mobility lens within migration studies. It is asserted that before the 'mobilities turn' in social science, migration was too often viewed as a single, unique act of moving at a set time, following a sequential process of clearly defined phases and with a clear start and ending point. This view limits the way in which migration is conceptualized when, in reality, the 'migration journey' has proven much more heterogeneous and 'messy' (Schapendonk et al. 2021). This resonates with existing literature on seasonal, circular and internal return migration in which the continuity of mobility flows forms an inextricable part in the lives of labor migrants (amongst other people) in the Sub-Saharan African context (Geschiere and Gugler, 1998; Falkingham et al. 2012). Within this work there is a recognition that this continuity of flows between multiple localities that are important to the mover is fueled by changing socio-cultural, economic, political and structural factors. Furthermore, this continuum is fueled by social connections of the individual such as sentimental bonds of identity with the place of origin or the maintenance of social ties in these localities (Falkingham et al. 2012; Geschiere and Gugler, 1998; Cattaneo & Robinson, 2020; van Geel and Mazzucato, 2017). Through the suggested mobility lens, an approach is applied that does no longer view migrancy as a momentous event or a special occurrence, but as a 'normative artefact' that is inextricably linked to the lives of the movers.

Researchers from the MO-TRAYL project have put the mobility lens into practice by what Schapendonk et al. (2021) refer to as trajectory ethnography, in a research about Ghanaian youth moving between Ghana and the Netherlands. Through the use of grids, van Geel and Mazzucato (2017), Anschütz and Mazzucato (2021; 2022) and Ögden and Mazzucato (2022) take into account years of moving between different geographical spaces, multiple moves, moments of mobility as well as moments of immobility, the social ties people relied on and the possibilities for return migration. The 'im/mobility trajectories' are defined by Schapendonk et al. (2021) as follows:

*'Im/mobility trajectories are open spatio-temporal processes with a strong transformative logic. They may include multiple journeys across various places, and do not necessarily follow a linear directionality. These im/mobility trajectories represent the outcome of multiple intersections of individual aspirations, social networking, policy interventions and mobility regimes. [...] As such they are deeply entangled with trajectories of other people, capital rules and information.'*

Another aspect in conventional migration theory which is considered limiting, is the persistent focus of international or inter-continental (cross-border) flows rather than regional flows. Conventional notions of migration still bleed into contemporary policy within which effects of development on migration are both viewed as a means to avoid people from migrating to Western countries as well as viewed as a stimulus for migration (Schapendonk et al. 2021). Awumbila (2017) and Flahaux and de Haas (2016) describe how a persistent focus within migration debates on international flows and remittances within (development) policy fail to recognize the importance of regional flows within the Sub-Saharan African context. Within the context of COVID-19, too, much of the debates revolve around the loss of international remittances as financial support to the home-base and the vulnerability of labor migrants that work outside their country or even continent of origin (Boughton et al. 2020; Guadagno, 2020; Abejide & Simpson, 2021; Murzakulova et al. 2021).

However, it is asserted that regional migration continues to be an important means of securing, diversifying and advancing livelihoods amongst urban and rural populations. And regional flows between (neighboring) and within countries still make up the largest amount of migrant flows on the African continent, contrary to what mainstream media frequently portrays (Mberu et al. 2012; Awumbila, 2017; Flahaux and de Haas, 2016).

These labor migrants also often remain in close association with households in rural areas. One reason for this, as pointed out by Mberu et al. (2012) is that labor migrants that move to urban areas may do so under vulnerable conditions (e.g. high costs of living, higher crime rates, insecurity of labor markets). In the absence of social security (e.g. unemployment insurance) or direct support from the government, their family-ties in rural areas may be their only social safety net. Building on this, it is the regional mobility flows that often consist of people who do not have the financial means to study or work abroad and who may be the most vulnerable in case of crises (Awumbila, 2017; Flahaux and de Haas, 2016).

Literature by Nyadera and Onditi (2020) offer insights on the impact of COVID-19 in the urban context of Nairobi in which this vulnerability of labor migrants in informal settlements is reasserted and where it is pleaded to tailor social support from the government to better fit the needs of people living in these areas. The most poignant example is the social support of the government in Kenya in the form of tax exemptions, something that is irrelevant to a population that is predominantly working in the informal sector. Pinchoff et al. (2021) even offer insights in the regional mobilities limited to the scale of a single informal settlement. Although this focus on regional mobilities is uncommon in existing literature, the movements are only limited to a period of 24 hours during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2.3 Urban-rural connections and trans-regionality

In accordance with literature by Schapendonk (2014; 2021) there is an increasing recognition for the interconnectedness between the mover and the ones that stay behind. In much the same way this applies to the connectedness of livelihoods in urban and rural areas (Desai & Potter, 2014; Tacoli, 1998; Awumbila, 2017; Flahaux and de Haas, 2016; Winters et al. 2021; Posel and Casale, 2021). As early as 1998 Tacoli asserts that the dualist notion of what is considered urban and what is considered rural is problematic in the sense that it forces development practitioners to focus on either of the two, not recognizing the interrelations. Another reason why the dualist notion of urban and rural space poses difficulties is because different countries use a wide range of definitions. Tacoli (1998) uses the example of how, according to Latin-American and European standards, the majority of China and India would be classified as urban, because it is based on the amount of people living in a single hectare. Whereas in Nigeria, an urban area is classified not only based on the amount of people living in one hectare, but also on the presence of certain facilities (e.g. post office, bank, running water supplies, electricity).

In addition, in literature there is a recognition that livelihoods are becoming increasingly intertwined. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown this in terms of sectoral interrelations in which disruptions brought about by restrictions on mobility both impacted the access and the affordability of food amongst urban dwellers as well as the livelihoods of farmers in rural areas (Béné, 2020; Gupta et al. 2021; Ayanlade & Radeny, 2020). Aside from this sectoral interconnectedness migration is also often a means to diversify livelihoods amongst rural households, according to Awumbila (2017), Mberu et al. (2012), Posel & Casale (2021) and Flahaux and de Haas (2016). The importance of taking into account how the poor are supplementing incomes through travelling as labor migrants results into people no longer being rooted in a single place, but attached to many other places. Ramisch (2015) reports that in Kenya, over a third of Kenyan households divide their members over urban and rural residences.

A last point that arose is that it would be wrong to assume that decision-making on migration by means of expanding the livelihood portfolio rests on the decision of an individual, as it is often made within the household (Levine, 2014; Winters et al. 2021; Ramisch, 2015). This means that the decision to migrate to the urban areas also affects the people that are 'left behind', as asserted by the work of Winters et al. (2021) on Nicaraguan labor migrants. This way, although people move, there still remains a strong connection to their family-ties which is described in their work as an 'enduring development corridor'. Awumbila (2017), Mberu et al. (2012) and Flahaux and de Haas (2016) express how this interconnectedness also encompasses families in rural households simply relying on urban areas for financial capital (e.g. remittances).

Rural households play a major role in ensuring social safety nets working adults or youth can fall back on in times of crisis (Posel & Casale, 2012; Awumbila, 2017; Vancluysen, 2020). This is particularly important within the context of COVID-19 where inter-provincial migration flows have largely proven to rely on these ties when employment opportunities were hampered due to mobility restrictions. In some cases this even resulted into reversed migration flows comprising not just of financial means, but also in terms of basic needs such as food (Wangu, personal communication, January 20, 2021; Awumbila, 2017; Mberu et al. 2012). In times of crisis, Desai and Potter (2014) even go as far as to say that social capital is the most important of all capitals people may tap into with regards to the topic of migration. With regards to the context of Kenya, Ramisch (2015) explores how multilocational households are better able to manage livelihoods across spatially separated residences now that widespread cellphone access and transfer technologies allow for staying connected and transferring money more easily.

## 2.4 Livelihood strategies and the sustainable livelihood approach

Conventionally, in order to demarcate a concept as complex as 'livelihood', the sustainable livelihood approach is used (Bohle, 2009; Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014; Desai and Potter, 2014). The approach emerged in the 1990s in response to the disappointing results of previous efforts in development to alleviate poverty in rural areas (Desai and Potter, 2014; Levine, 2014). The holistic and multi-disciplinary model is deemed suitable for this research, because it takes into account the interplay between structure and agency rather than treating both concepts separately or as a concepts that oppose one another. Conventional theories make use of the following definition of a livelihood (Desai and Potter, 2014; Serrat, 2017):

*"A livelihood comprises of the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base."*

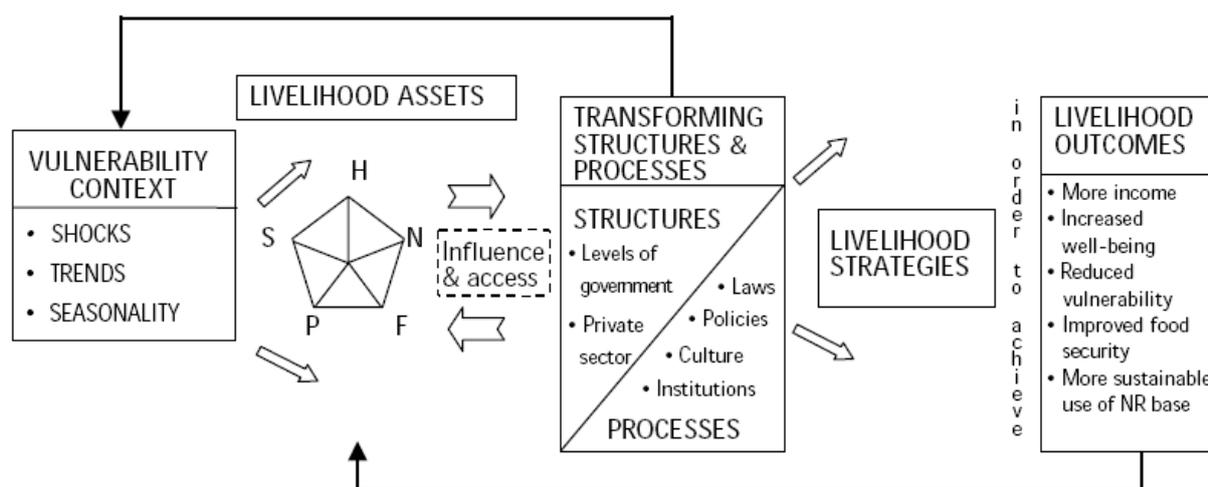
Levine (2014) asserts how too often livelihoods are merely seen as realizing economic means for living, whereas according to the sustainable livelihoods framework, different types of capitals may be deployed by households or individuals to reach the desired livelihood outcomes. In this, the agency of the individual or household is being recognized in using these capitals in the most effective way to reach their individual goals. The following types of capitals are being recognized:

- Social capital: networks and connections (e.g. patronage, kinships or neighborhoods), relations of trust and mutual understanding, support from formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviors;
- Human capital: health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills of an individual or group;
- Natural capital: land and produce, water, aquatic resources, trees, forests and wildlife;
- Physical capital: infrastructure (e.g. roads, vehicles, secure shelter, sanitation, tools and technology);
- Financial capital: savings, credit, debt, remittances, pensions and wages.

In research by Gupta et al. (2021) and Agoramoorthy and Hsu (2021) on COVID-19 and rural households, it was described how Indian labor migrants fell back on their family ties in rural areas (social capital) in order to secure shelter and food, because they still owned a plot of land that could be cultivated (natural capital). The ways in which people have access to and are able to deploy capital is versatile per individual and may even differ between different members of the same household. COVID-19 in this example can be described as the ‘vulnerability context’ in which communities exist and the policies and measures as the transforming structures and processes they need to navigate through. These structures and external forces may be the causes of people getting pushed in and out of poverty (Desai and Potter, 2014; Levine, 2014; Serrat, 2017).

It must be asserted, however, that external shocks such as the pandemic, cannot be viewed separately from existing forces such as environmental shocks, trends and seasonality (e.g. price changes or employment opportunities). Previous research in the context of India and Nepal showed the COVID-19 pandemic and measures that were put in place coincided with environmental shocks during (heavy rainfall and pests) important dates of the agricultural calendar, all of which can be viewed as part of the vulnerability context within the framework (Agoramoorthy and Hsu, 2021; Gupta et al. 2021).

Figure 1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Source: DFID. (1999).

Building on this, a common criticism on the sustainable livelihoods framework voiced by Levine (2014) is that the framework of the DSID (see figure 1) is often too complex to apply within research. Going through all laws, policies, cultural aspects and institutions of the researched context that may potentially affect livelihood outcomes, may be unfeasible. Therefore, Levine (2014) proposes the model is merely used to explain the interrelations between these factors. Another argument for using the arrows (processes) rather than the boxes of the model, is that it will reveal the heterogeneity of livelihood strategies deployed in times when external forces are highly dynamic. The different infection waves and the associated lockdown measures of COVID-19 alone are highly diverse in time-span and rigidity (Pape et al. 2020; Ministry of Health Kenya, d.u. and Annex II.), which may call for flexible use of capital assets and livelihood strategies in order to cope with the impacts of these and other crises.

## 2.5 Research questions

Based on the literature review above, the following research and questions and sub questions are formulated:

*What are the COVID-19 induced mobility trajectories of Kenyan labor migrants travelling between Murang'a and Nairobi and how have these movements affected livelihood strategies of the migrants throughout the first 2 years of the pandemic?*

*SQ1: What related COVID-19 measures and regulations were in place and how have they impacted the livelihoods of Kenyan labor migrants throughout the first 2 years of the pandemic?*

*SQ2: What government support was in place to support the labor migrants in the first two years of the pandemic and to what extent did it reach them?*

*SQ3: At what moments in the first 2 years of the pandemic did Kenyan labor migrants move between rural counties and Nairobi and what were the motivations for moving?*

*SQ4: What livelihood strategies were applied throughout the mobility trajectory of Kenyan labor migrants in the past two years of the pandemic?*

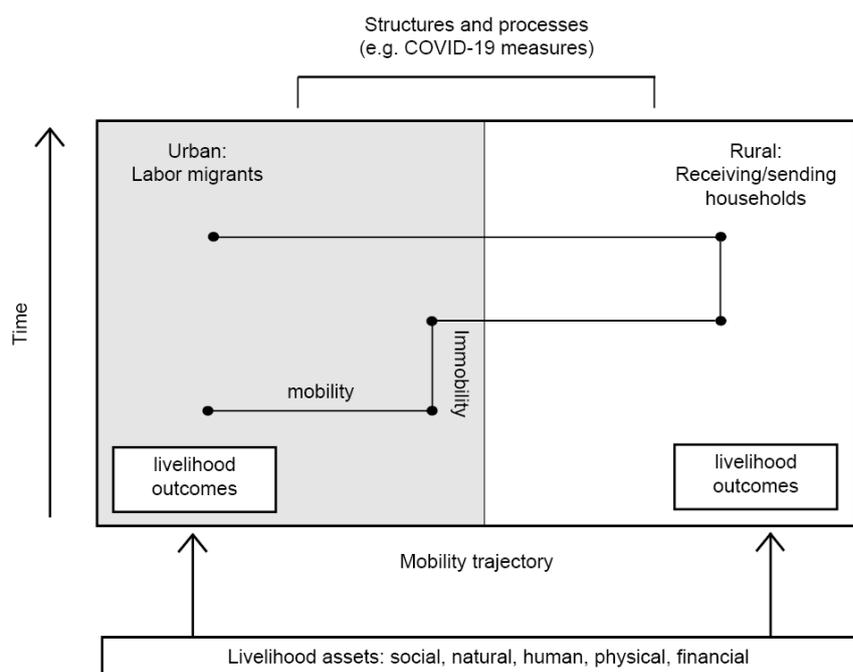
*SQ5: How has the mobility trajectory of Kenyan labor migrants impacted the livelihood outcomes of labor migrants and that of the households in rural areas in the past two years of the pandemic?*

## 2.6 Theoretical framework and conceptual model

The conceptual framework in figure 2 shows the interrelation between important concepts that were identified through the theoretical debates above. The model builds on the sustainable livelihoods framework (Levine, 2014; Bohle, 2009; Serrat, 2017; Desai and Potter, 2014), the mobility lens as proposed by Schapendonk et al. (2021) and notions of urban-rural interconnectedness (Winters et al. 2021; Tacoli, 1998; Desai and Potter, 2014). Within the mobility lens clear linkages can be found with the sustainable livelihood framework in which both actor- as well as aspects at structural level (e.g. institutions, cultural norms) are taken into consideration that may either pose opportunities or barriers to securing livelihood outcomes.

In much the same way, Schapendonk et al. (2021) takes into consideration individual aspirations and access to social networks as well as policy interventions and mobility regimes in place. Furthermore, the work of Winters et al. (2021) take into account how one person's migrant trajectory may hinder those of others, something the sustainable livelihood approach has been criticized for overlooking (Levine, 2014). This also marries well with the ideas of the interconnections of rural and urban space.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework. Source: Author. Inspiration from van Geel and Mazzucato (2017) and the DSID sustainable livelihoods framework (Levine, 2014).



Although livelihood assets are taken into consideration in the sustainable livelihood model, it is hypothesized that social capital will play the most prominent role in facilitating mobility trajectories (Desai and Potter, 2014; van Geel and Mazzucato, 2017; Ögden and Mazzucato, 2022). The concepts of time and space are added to the model in which the interconnectedness between urban and rural areas is shown through the mobility trajectories of labor migrant between these spaces. It must be taken into consideration that urban and rural areas are not easily defined and that some labor migrants may move beyond the scope of this duality (e.g. cross-border migration), though the conceptual model only takes into account regional migration between these two geographical spaces (Tacoli, 1998).

The volatile context of COVID-19 may allow for the use of different livelihood assets and different strategies used at different times and places. The sustainable livelihoods framework asserts that this depends on the vulnerability context as well as on structures and processes that are in place. Structures and processes, especially, have proven to affect the degree to which mobility trajectories as well as livelihoods are facilitated or disrupted though they may coincide with externalities that exacerbate the impact (Levine, 2014; Serrat, 2017; Gupta et al. 2021; Agoramoorthy and Hsu, 2020; Ayanlade and Radeny, 2020). An example is the occurrence of pests or environmental hazards that may affect the extent to which farmers can make use of natural assets for their livelihoods and which occurred simultaneously with restrictions on mobility during the pandemic, making it difficult to distribute harvests on local markets (Meijer, 2021).

Equally important, however, is the recognition of individual agency. Randell (2015) asserts that in many migration studies migration decisions are often viewed as solely driven by external factors, especially in the context of forced migration largely leaving the “power of individuals to freely make choices and perform actions that affect the course of their lives” out of the picture (Giddens, 1984; de Haas, 2010). Taking into account both factors of agency (individual and household-level decision-making, actions and wishes) with livelihood capitals that are at an individual’s disposal, structures (e.g. economic, political, environmental) and externalities gives better insights into motivations behind decisions to move and the livelihood strategies applied. It also gives insights in how people individual maneuver within, or even outside, the structures (e.g. COVID-19 measures and policies) that are in place.

Lastly, inspired by the grids of the work of researchers in the project MO-TRAYL the black line shows an example of a trajectory that includes both moments of mobility and immobility and leaves room for multiple movements in time (van Geel and Mazzucato, 2018; Anschütz and Mazzucato, 2021; Ögden and Mazzucato, 2021). It is hypothesized that subsequent lifting and imposing of lockdown measures may result in continuous mobility flows without a clear beginning and end.

## 2.7 Operationalization of variables

The following table outlines the most important concepts identified in the sections above and how these concepts are defined and measured within the research.

Table 1. Operationalization of important concepts. Source: Author.

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
(Im)mobility trajectory	“Open spatio-temporal mobility processes with a strong transformative logic that may include multiple journeys across various places and do not necessarily follow a linear directionality.” (Schapendonk et al. 2021).	The mobility processes of a labor migrant from January, 2020 to the date of interviewing (period March to May 2022).
COVID-induced migration	Urban-to-rural migration as a result of COVID-19 measures and its impact on food security, tenure security, employment opportunities and health risks.	Motivations of labor migrants to migrate to rural areas.
Labor migrant	An adult with family-ties and roots in a rural area (Murang’a) who moved to an urban area (Nairobi) for employment opportunities and has moved back to his or her home-village at least once after the onset of COVID-19 (January - March, 2020) in Kenya.	Place of origin, mobility trajectory and livelihood.



<p>Receiving or sending household or caregiver</p>	<p>A person who lives in a rural area (a.o. Murang'a county) and has a social connection with a labor migrant that works in an urban area and returned to his or her home-village after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in January, 2020 (see COVID-19 induced migration). The caregiver is a person who has provided some sort of care to the labor migrant (e.g. shelter, food, consolidation, financial means).</p>	<p>Household composition and mobility trajectory of household member identified as labor migrant.</p>
<p>(Sustainable) livelihood</p>	<p>The capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from <b>stresses and shocks</b> and maintain or enhance its <b>capabilities</b> and <b>assets</b> both now and in the future while not undermining the natural resource base (Serrat, 2017).</p> <p>Stresses and shocks: refer to vulnerability context.</p> <p>Capabilities: freedom of doing or being what an agent has reason to value (Desai &amp; Potter, 2014).</p> <p>Livelihood assets (refer next section) people own or are capable of mobilizing.</p>	<p>Stresses and shocks: refer to vulnerability context.</p> <p>Capabilities: freedom of doing or being what an agent has reason to value (Desai &amp; Potter, 2014).</p> <p>Livelihood assets (refer next section) people own or are capable of mobilizing.</p>
<p>Livelihood assets:</p>	<p><b>Social asset:</b> Networks and connections (e.g. philanthropy, neighborhoods, families), relations of trust and support, formal and informal groups, shared norms and values, collective representation, leadership (Serrat, 2017).</p>	<p>Networks and connections (e.g. philanthropy, neighborhoods, families), relations of trust and support, formal and informal groups, shared norms and values, collective representation, leadership (Serrat, 2017).</p>



	<b>Natural capital:</b>	Land and produce, aquatic resources, produce from forests and trees, wildlife, biodiversity, environmental services (Serrat, 2017).
	<b>Physical capital</b>	Infrastructure, shelter, water supply and sanitation, energy, tools and technology (Serrat, 2017).
	<b>Financial capital</b>	Wages, savings and (in)formal credit and debt, remittances, pension (Serrat, 2017).
	<b>Human capital</b>	Health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work and adapt (Serrat, 2017).
Livelihood strategy	Strategies applied to aim livelihood outcomes; the use of livelihood assets are at the base of the strategies applied. Livelihood strategies in this research are viewed in terms of the individual, rather than viewing the household as a single unit, because different household members may have different opportunities to access certain assets. Multiple strategies may be applied, especially in the urban context (Serrat, 2017; Desai & Potter, 2014)	Any natural-resource-based activities, non-natural resource-based and off-farm activities, migration and remittances, pensions and grants both in the urban and rural areas (Serrat, 2017; Desai & Potter, 2014).
Livelihood outcome	The desired output of livelihood strategies applied (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).	Increased income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, more sustainable use of natural resource base, recovered human dignity (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).



<p>Vulnerability context</p>	<p>Insecurity in the well-being of individuals, households and communities in the face of changes in their external environment (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).</p>	<p><b>Shocks:</b> conflict, illnesses, floods, storms, droughts and pests. <b>Seasonalities:</b> prices and employment opportunities <b>Critical trends:</b> demographic, environmental, economic, governance and technological trends (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).</p>
<p>Processes and structures</p>	<p><b>Structures:</b> public and private sector organizations that set and implement policy and legislation, deliver services, purchase, trade and perform all manner of other functions that affect livelihoods. <b>Processes:</b> Laws, regulations, policies, operational arrangements agreements, societal norms and practices that determine the way in which structures operate (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).</p> <p><i>Within the scope of this research the emphasis will be on the policies surrounding the COVID-19 measures.</i></p>	<p>Structures: government and private sector organizations Processes: Policies and laws, culture and institutions (Serrat, 2017; Levine, 2014).</p>

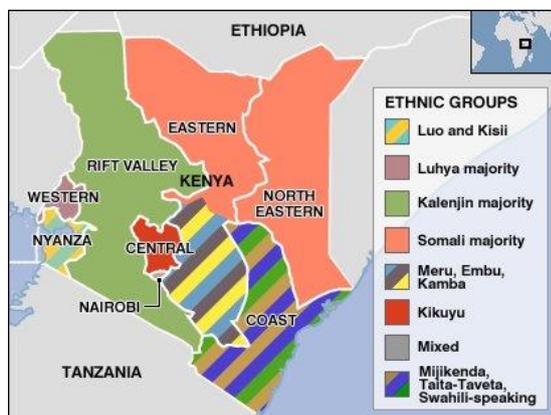
### 3. Regional thematic framework

The following chapter offers an overview of the geographical context in which the research will be conducted and demarcates the research sites. Lastly, it introduces the partner organizations with whom collaborations have been sought with for the implementation of the research.

#### 3.1 General overview

Kenya is an East-African country bordered by Tanzania, Uganda (and lake Victoria), South-Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Indian Ocean. It is part of the East African Community (EAC), an inter-governmental organization that has the ambition to shape an East-African economic bloc alongside Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and South-Sudan (East African Community, d.u.). Kenya is home to a wide range of cultural groups of which the largest are the Bantu, Nilo-Saharan and Afro-Asiatic people all of which are made up by over 40 different tribes. Swahili and English are the most widely spoken languages in the country (Ominde et al., last adaptation, September, 2021).

Figure 3. Map of Kenya Regional Division and Ethnic Distribution.



Source: Okilwa, 2015. Adapted from GeoCurrents Maps.

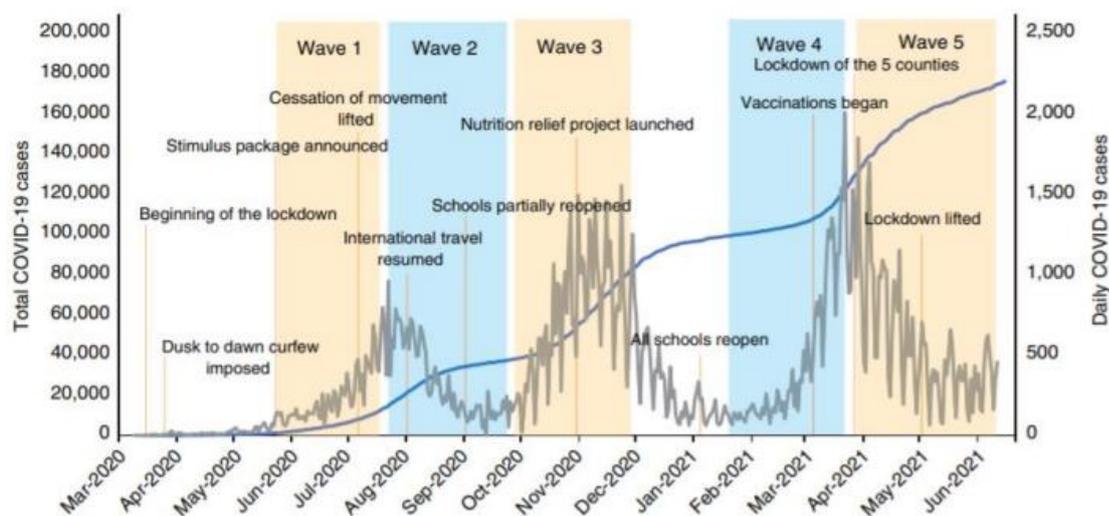
Governments of Kenya are actively supporting the development of export-oriented industries with products such as clothing, cement, tires, batteries, petroleum and steel. The Kenyan economy also largely builds on the agricultural sector providing raw materials for manufacturing firms and tea and fresh flowers being key products for foreign exchange. Sisal, cotton and fruits and vegetables make up a large portion of cultivated cash crops in the country (Ominde et al. last adaptation, September, 2021).

Although the Kenyan economy is industrially developed, the agricultural sector still makes up a large portion of the GDP. Conversely, only a tenth of the land in Kenya is made up of arable land and this scarcity is compounded by insufficient water resources and infrastructure to support agricultural growth. A high growth rate (2.3%), though on the downturn the last few decades, further increases pressure on land resources due to an increased demand for fuel and settlement areas (Ominde et al. last adaptation, September, 2021; World Bank, 2021). Furthermore, Kohnert (2021) projects that the combination of the COVID-19 crisis and the Brexit may further put stresses on land resources as foreign land deals (e.g. Qatar-Kenya deal) may be initiated to cope with the economic downturn (e.g. reduced remittances and access to export markets).

### 3.2 Kenya and the COVID-19 pandemic

The government in Kenya has taken a range of steps to reduce the spreading of the virus, such as restrictions on movement in areas with high infection rates (i.e. Nairobi, Mombasa and Kilifi county), the closure of schools, restaurants, markets and other businesses and bans on social gatherings (see Annex II). These restrictions were put in place first on March 12, 2020 and were gradually eased towards the end of 2020. From March 2020 to June 2021 data collected through phone surveys amongst Kenyan households revealed a total of 5 infection waves that have taken place with the continuous putting in place and lifting of lockdown measures versatile in duration and rigidity (see figure 4 and Annex II). An officially imposed lockdown lasted from April until July 2020 and curfews from March until October, 2020 putting considerable strains on Kenyan livelihoods (Pape et al. 2020).

Figure 4. COVID-19 cases and RRRS timeline in Kenya.



Source: Pape et al. 2020.

The pandemic resulted in large employment losses in which the percentage of the population that was (formally) employed dropped from 71% in the last quarter of 2019 to 50% in May-June, 2020. The largest employment shock was felt amongst urban populations (Pape et al. 2020).

Most of Kenya's population (72% in 2021) is categorized as rural and lives in settlements scattered across the country, with concentrations located in areas that have favorable climate and soil conditions (World Bank, 2021). Following the independence in 1964 migration from rural to urban areas increased significantly, resulting in basic services like education, health, sanitation, water and electricity being unable to keep up with the inflow (Ominde et al., last adaptation, September, 2021; World Bank, 2016; Falkingham et al. 2012). This has resulted in over half of the urban population (56%) residing in informal settlements according to the UN-Habitat count in 2014 (World Bank, 2016). These informal settlements are not recognized by the government and at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis are largely excluded from rescue packages (Kohnert, 2021; Corburn et al. 2020; Oxfam Novib, 2020). Their insecurity is compounded by a limited access to employment security and health services. In addition, it was reported by Pape et al. (2021) and confirmed through informal conversations with a LANDac-fellow (dr. Wangu, personal communication, January 27, 2022) that commonly applied coping strategies involve cutting back on food consumption.

The increased pressure of job loss, health and tenure and food insecurity have resulted in residents taking refuge in rural areas. The lifting of the travel ban in Nairobi, Mombasa and Mandera by the Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta in July, 2020, resulted into thousands of people flocking to bus terminals to escape to home-villages (Wasike, 2020). Wasike (2020) further reported that it has resulted in fear amongst the rural populations, stating that the influx of migrant returnees may result into an increase in infections in areas where health facilities are already scarce.

### 3.3 Exploring Nairobi and Murang'a as potential research sites

Recent field research conducted by LANDac-fellows looks into the impact of COVID-19 on rural households in two rural counties in Kenya, namely Kilifi and Murang'a county. Upon consulting one of the two researchers, it was suggested that Murang'a may be a favorable research site when trying to find participants that have family-ties in rural areas whilst working in the capital city of Nairobi, due to its close proximity to the capital city (around 50 kilometers).

Murang'a is a predominantly agricultural county located in the Central Province of Kenya. The Murang'a County Government (2018) reports that agriculture is the main activity in the country and that the government actively supports the development of the agriculture sector in a sustainable way. The agricultural activities largely take place in the upper parts of the county where the soils are fertile. Common livelihood strategies in the lower parts largely make up of informal businesses such as boda-boda riding, quarry mining and bee keeping. Other livelihood activities comprise of small-scale fishing, banking and some tourism-related activities (Murang'a County Government, 2018). Despite the active development of the agriculture sector, increasing pressures on land and a lack of employment opportunities to accommodate to an excess labor force, people from Murang'a tend to out-migrate in search of employment or business opportunities in urban areas such as Nairobi (UN Migration, 2018; Murang'a County Government, 2018). Kagunda (2012), through literature research and a quantitative analysis of census data from 2009, reported that migrants tend to be young and better educated in comparison to non-migrants, though other sources assert it is the unskilled, landless and poor who mostly migrate regionally (Awumbila, 2017; Mberu et al. 2012). Kagunda (2017) speculates the reason for this is that family strategies often involve sending young people off to the urban areas in order to secure better employment opportunities. The areas where these people migrate to tend to be regions that border the capital city of Nairobi.

Within the urban context of the research the informal settlement Mathare was deemed as a suitable research site. The settlement is reported as an area where labor migrants flock to from all over the country in search of employment opportunities, resulting in a densely populated area with a high variety of people from different ethnic backgrounds. It is therefore hypothesized that labor migrants can be found there that have family-ties in rural areas. UN Habitat (2020) classifies the informal settlement as Kenya's second largest after Kibera and the Population Census (2019) estimates a total of 206,564 residents are living in the area, though highly migratory. The fast growth of the informal settlements in Kenya have resulted into inadequate facilities, insufficient schools and an economic sector that is largely built on informal work which has been largely disrupted by COVID-19 measures imposed by the Kenyan government to curb the spread of the disease (Nyadera and Onditi, 2020).

### 3.4 Partner organizations: LANDac

LANDac or the Netherlands Land Academy is "a partnership between Dutch organizations and their Southern partners working on land governance for equitable and sustainable development" (LANDac, d.u.). The LANDac network brings together stakeholders that collaborate in conducting research and contributes to knowledge sharing on new pressures on land and natural resources. A call for research proposals prepared by LANDac-fellow Chantal Wieckardt asserted the need to look into mid- and long-term effects of COVID-19 on Sub-Saharan African countries on rural livelihoods, land access and use. Five professionals were assigned to collect data in specific field sites between January and February, 2022.

Upon connecting to this partner organization it became clear that a focus on mobility trajectories of labor migrants between rural and urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa fits with the aims of the research proposal and could contribute to the research since evidence of the impacts of COVID-19 in this context remain "anecdotal and scattered" compared to the South-Asian context. Two LANDac-fellows, dr. Wangu (Coordinator at LANDac's professional learning network) as well as Fridah Githuku (executive director of women-led NGO GROOTS Kenya) were conducting research in two rural areas in Kenya. A potential overlap in research interests was sought as well as the possibility to tap into the local networks needed in order to find participants for the research.

### 3.5 Partner organizations: GROOTS Kenya

GROOTS is nation-wide movement of “grassroots women-led community-based groups (CBOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Kenya” that has a mission to facilitate the effective engagement of women in development through the building of movements, creation of leadership roles and advocacy. GROOTS Kenya applies the Champions for Transformative Leadership model since 2008 in which women leadership and governance is enhanced through organizing a critical mass of organized groups women, youth and men. Each village in Murang’a county has assigned a woman ‘champion’ that represents the village as a community leader (GROOTS Kenya, 2017). Three women from these group of champions served as gatekeepers in four different rural localities in Murang’a county, to know: Maragwa (Grace Wanjiku Njogu; sub-county champion Maragwa), Kigumo and Kandara (Naomi Wanjiku Njuguna; county director Murang’a county) and Kiharu (Hannah Wanjiku Muiruri; sub-county champion Kiharu). In the urban context Eric Otieno and Joan Albert Ngote, both community organizers and youth leaders at the Mathare Mother’s Community Centre, represented the informal settlement Mathare. Each of the gatekeepers have been chosen to represent those areas they also represent through GROOTS Kenya.

## 4. Methodology

This qualitative research looks into the experiences of labor migrants in Nairobi that have moved back to their home-villages at least once since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. It also sheds light on how the mobility behavior influences livelihood strategies that were adapted throughout this period. The quickly changing context as a result of the imposed regulations and policies implemented to curb the spread of the virus requires an approach that is able to examine complex concepts such as livelihoods, mobility and urban-rural connections in detail over a selected period of time. Hennink et al. (2020) argue that qualitative research is a research approach that is suitable for this. It has also been deemed suitable in examining behaviors of individuals and their personal experiences.

Qualitative methods range from interviews to focus group discussions, ethnographic work and more. Methods chosen for this research have been inspired by work from Winters et al. (2021), van Geel and Mazzucato (2017), Ögden and Mazzucato (2022), Anschütz and Mazzucato (2021; 2022) and Schapendonk et al. (2014; 2021) who have made use of methods such as trajectory ethnography, life-history interviews and even creative workshops using visual methods like mobility-, network- and social mapping when looking into mobility patterns and livelihood strategies applied by migrants. The work by the MO-TRAYL project in particular, also takes into account the concept of time in which moments of mobility and immobility are mapped alongside other dynamics (e.g. family-ties and dynamics, education) that may have played a role in the shaping of a person's trajectory (MO-TRAYL, d.u.; Ögden, personal communication, February 11, 2022; Anschütz, personal communication, February 16, 2022).

Additionally, input was sought from previous master dissertations in the context of Uganda (Knirsch, 2021; de Vreede, 2021) and from the preliminary results from focus group discussions that have been conducted in Murang'a county by LANDac-fellows dr. Wangu (personal communication, February 17, 2022). The preliminary results both shaped the sampling process and determined the characteristics of the research participants that were sought. The methods that were applied in the study are outlined in the table below.

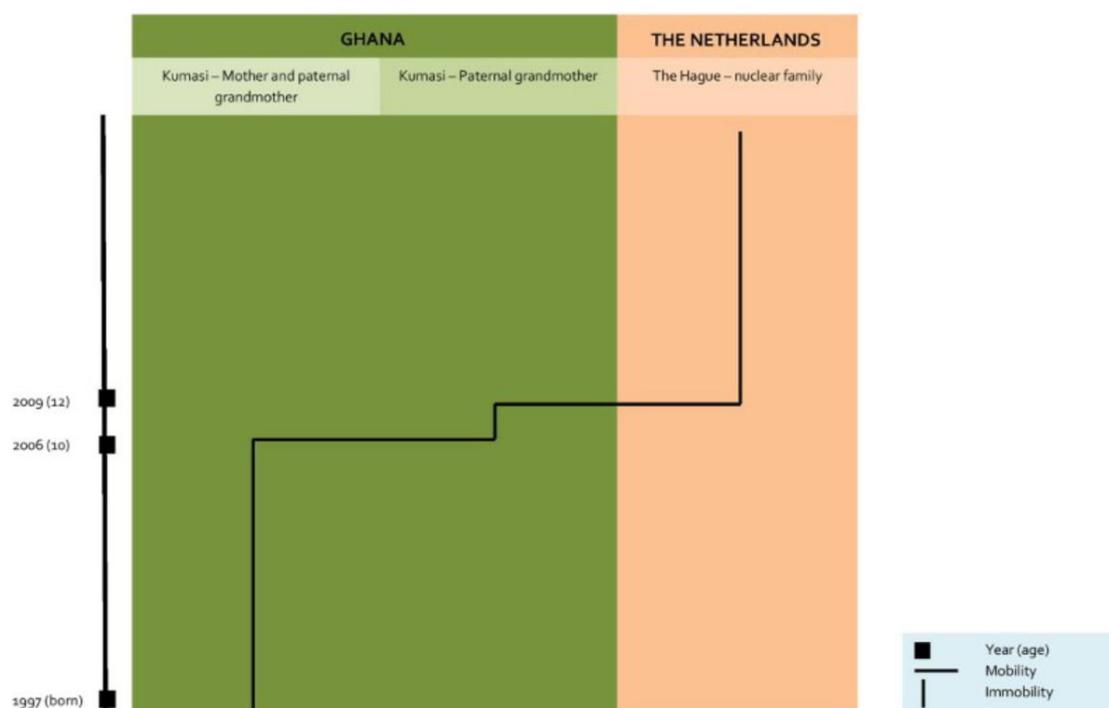
Table 2. Sub questions and research methods applied

SQ1	(Life-history) interviews, key informant interviews, secondary literature and grey literature
SQ2	Mobility mapping, (life-history) interviews and key informant interviews
SQ3	Mobility mapping and (life-history) interviews
SQ4	Mobility mapping and (life-history) interviews and key informant interviews
SQ5	Focus group discussions, (life-history) interviews and key informant interviews

## 4.1 Mobility- and network mapping

The mobility mapping activities done through the MO-TRAYL project were utilized to gain insights in the different complex dimensions that influence movement behavior. Mobility maps utilized were inspired by the Ageven-grids (see figure 5), a tool that was developed as early as 1987 to get detailed information on mobility patterns and the socio-economic conditions that were present on the moments of moving (Antoine, et al. 1987; Ögden, personal communication, February 11, 2022).

Figure 5. Example mobility trajectory Ghanian youth. Source: van Geel and Mazzucato (2017).



There are several reasons why the mobility mapping activities were deemed suitable for this research. Firstly, Ögden (personal communication, February 11, 2022) and Antoine et al. (1987) assert that since the mapping activities cover a time-period from the past, much of the output gathered through mapping activities are based on memory. A tangible tool such as the map (see example figure 5) can help verify whether the interviewer has interpreted the story of the participant correctly and allows the participant to add or adjust any important (aspects) of events that were forgotten.

Secondly, the input of the mobility mapping tool can be utilized to probe the interviewee to elaborate on certain events or moves that may have been crucial in his or her trajectory. It helps understand why certain decisions were made with regards to movement, adaptations of livelihood strategies and how it affected the labor migrant and the households they are part of (Ögden, personal communication, February 11, 2022).

Thirdly, and not to be underestimated, the tool provides a hands-on activity for the interviewee and the interviewer that can help in building rapport while talking about subjects that may be sensitive to the participant (Ögden, personal communication, February 11, 2022; Anschütz, personal communication, February 16, 2022).

Aspects that will be looked into throughout the model involve moments of (im)mobility, length of immobility, livelihood strategies adapted to support oneself or household members and COVID-19 measures that were in place during these moment of movements. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach model will be utilized to cover livelihood strategies and corresponding capitals utilized in its broadest sense, from waged labor to the selling of land and other assets, borrowing of money and building on (reversed) remittances. The mobility mapping activities were used to answer sub questions 2, 3 and 4 (see table 2).

## 4.2 (Life-history) interviews

Adaptations at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR, 2018) developed a handbook for life-history interviewing in which researchers shared practical experiences of using the method in the field. Through this method participants provide a subjective narrative of a certain period in their lives. Though the method is difficult to generalize, because the story of each individual is very different, it can be used effectively in exploring how life-events and behaviors have shaped an individual's choice and actions.

Furthermore, it is frequently used to help understand why and when individuals move through different periods of vulnerability and resilience and is used to describe how the context in which the individual 'operates' affects their livelihoods and that of those the individual interacts with or is connected to (ASSAR, 2018).

The method proposed is an extension of the mapping activities which, in combination with an interview guide (Annex IV), has shaped the input for semi-structured interviews. The participants were asked to elaborate on his or her experiences throughout different moves or 'instances of change' (ASSAR, 2018). Concepts from the conceptual model were included in the interview guide which, in combination with the map, helped steering the participant towards topics important to the research and supported the participant in narrating his or her experience. Questions were asked on how COVID-19 regulations and policies have affected the participant's ability to make a living, what their motivations were for moving, how these moves changed their strategies for making a living and how they themselves and the households they are part of were affected.

The questions posed in the interview will help gaining a better understanding in how the mobility trajectory impacted the livelihood security of the labor migrants and those of the households they are part of, thus answering sub questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (see table 2).

### 4.3 Key informant interviews

The purpose of the key informant interviews was to get a better idea of the context of the research site and to put the narratives collected in the methods above into a broader perspective. Informants targeted were community organizers that have practical experience in both organizing and implementing field work as well as being a gatekeeper to communities a foreign national may not have had access to. Furthermore, the method lends itself for a better view on the policy-focused research (Lokot, 2021). However, it is also asserted that the choice of key informants may be biased and that there is a choice to be made when a person's knowledge is considered important enough and whose knowledge is not.

In getting to understand the context of the localities visited, key informants chosen were women champions of GROOTS Kenya and staff members of the organizations. These are people that work closely with community members, but have a clear oversight of what is happening in the community as a whole as representatives of the respective counties they live and work in.

Interviews were focused on the impact of COVID-19 on labor migrants in the communities in general, the degree to which and the efficiency with which social support was implemented by the government in times of COVID-19 and how dynamics within the community changed throughout the pandemic (see Annex V). In so doing, it offered inputs in answering sub question 2, 4 and 5 (see table 2).

#### 4.4 Focus group discussions

In order to get a better view of how migrant returnees have affected the family-dynamics at the household level, focus group discussions were organized in Murang'a county and conducted with the help of a focus group discussion guide (see Annex VI). Upon speaking to the gatekeepers of GROOTS Kenya, it became apparent that women might offer a unique view on these household dynamics compared to men. Furthermore, research by the MO-TRAYL-team as well as Winters et al. (2021) asserted the importance of looking into both the person moving as well as the people 'left behind'.

Based on this was proposed focus group discussions be held amongst women in the community that have at least one household member that is a labor migrant in order to get a more holistic view of how their return impacted the households. The focus group discussions were utilized to find out to what extend the choices for migrating were actually a choices made at an individual's or at household level, thus answering sub question 5 (see table 2).

## 4.5 Target population and sampling

A total of 30 (life-history) interviews were conducted while sketching up the mobility trajectories with the participants. Out of 30 interviews, 20 interviews were conducted in rural Murang'a (see figure 6), across 4 different sub counties (Kigumo, Kandara, Kiharu and Maragwa).

Figure 6. Murang'a county map; constituencies



Source: Murang'a county government. (d.u.).

10 Interviews were conducted in Mathare informal settlement in Nairobi, spread across different wards within the settlement (see map): Mathare 4A, Gitathuru, Mathare 4B and Mathare 3C (see figure 7).

Figure 7. Map Mathare informal settlement. Source: UN Habitat (2020).



The network of GROOTS champions allowed for finding participants geographically spread over the rural and urban localities. This, in turn, allowed for a better coverage of both areas and a higher chance of getting a large variety in experiences shared. In addition, in the rural context 4 focus group discussions have been held in Kigumo, Kiharu and Maragwa with caregivers of labor migrants. Lastly, 5 key informant interviews were done with two representatives (youth leaders/community organizer and community health worker) from Mathare informal settlements, 1 representative from Maragwa (sub county representative GROOTS Kenya), 1 representative from Kigumo and Kandara (County director GROOTS Kenya) and 1 representative of Kiharu (sub county representative GROOTS Kenya).

Table 3. Target population and sampling methods

<b>Research method</b>	<b>Targeted population characteristics</b>	<b>Sampling method Murang'a</b>	<b>Sampling method Nairobi</b>
1. Mobility and network mapping	People aged between 15 and 64 years old; (Male) labor migrant; Who moved to the city for employment opportunities and has family-ties in Murang'a county; Residing either in Nairobi or Murang'a present-day; Must have moved at least once from Nairobi back to Murang'a as a result of COVID-19 policies and regulations; In the period between 01/2022 until present-day.	Selection through participation of gatekeepers in the selection process.	Selection through participation of gatekeepers in the selection process.
2. (Life-history) interviewing		Characteristics of targeted populations were shared (see target population characteristics) and gatekeepers from 4 different localities in Murang'a county (Kiharu, Kigumo, Kandara and Maragwa) identified the participants accordingly from their network.	Characteristics of targeted populations were shared (see target population characteristics) and gatekeepers from Mathare identified the participants accordingly from 4 different wards in Mathare (Mathare 4A, Mathare 4B, Mathare 3C and Gitathuru).



3. Key informant interviewing	Staff members of GROOTS Kenya (GROOTS community champions) that are active on the ground, but have a good oversight on what is happening within their respective communities.	Staff members were selected through members of LANDac.	Staff members were selected through snowballing method in using the gatekeepers network of women champions to find someone in the urban locality.
4. Focus group discussion	Female caregivers of labor migrants which could range from (grand)mothers, siblings or other family members to friends or acquaintances who had taken or are still taking care of labor migrants that have returned home from the city in the last two years.	Selection through participation of gatekeepers in the selection process. Characteristics of targeted populations were shared and gatekeepers from 3 different localities in Murang'a county (Kiharu, Kigumo, and Maragwa) identified the participants accordingly from their network.	Not applicable.

#### 4.6 Rationale data analysis

Interviews were recorded through verbal or written consent of the participants (see Annex III). Transcripts were hand-written by the interviewer as close to the date of the interview as possible to get familiarized with the data whilst simultaneously taking memos of potential main and sub-themes that may emerge. As proposed by Hennink et al. (2020) upon completion of the transcripts a third of the interviews were chosen to create a code book (see Annex VIII). A selection was made of the transcripts that were most likely to offer the widest variety of codes with regards to gender, age, household composition and locality (urban or rural) of participants as well as interview types (e.g. focus group discussions, key informant interviews and interviews with the labor migrants).

Furthermore, deductively, codes were developed based on topics from interview guides and concepts from literature and theory (Hennink et al. 2020). Codes that shaped common themes were clustered in and elaborated on in memos whereby quotes were saved that could best represent these themes. Furthermore, memos were used to save off-record field notes (of which verbal permission for the usage has been asked) and to identify commonly used language, expressions or metaphors used by participants that may be important for interpretation at a later stage of analysis (commonly used phrases such as 'hustling' or 'shamba', 'chama', 'putting all eggs in one basket', 'the rural', or 'the village', 'the urban' and so on and so forth).

Analysis of data has been done through the software Nvivo. Within the software a set of characteristics of each participant was also recorded in order to run queries on specific type of interviewed groups (e.g. single mothers, urban as opposed to the rural context, business owners as opposed to waged employees) of which some queries proved more significant than others. Categorizing type of migrants has proven the most problematic. The participants were categorized as a) participants that moved from the city to rural areas and stayed in rural areas until the time of interviewing, b) participants that moved from the city to rural areas temporarily before having moved back to the city at the time of interviewing and c) participants that have (in)voluntarily stayed in the city for the duration of the pandemic until the time of interviewing. The high versatility of mobility trajectories in the maps made it difficult to distinguish especially the first two categories as it could not always be distilled from the interviews or maps to what extent the movements were COVID-19 induced or not.

The mobility maps were drawn up in collaboration with the participant during the interviews and actively reflected upon while talking. The maps were digitalized through the software InDesign and layers were added covering livelihood strategies, moments of movement and moments in which the COVID-19 lockdowns were implemented. The maps were printed out and studied individually, taking into account 1) livelihood strategies and activities prior, during and after lockdown, 2) how COVID-19 measures impacted movements and, in combination with the transcripts, 3) the motivations behind the different moves. Special attention was also given to those households who had multiple household members returning during the pandemic, to view the interaction and collaboration between these different members.

## 5. Research results: Impact COVID-19 measures and regulations

The following chapter answers the sub question: “What related COVID-19 measures and regulations were in place and how have they impacted the livelihoods of Kenyan labor migrants throughout the first two years of the pandemic?” It takes into account both COVID-19 measures as well as other externalities (e.g. political unrest, market prices of commodities, environmental hazards) that have played a role in the lives and livelihoods of labor migrants during the lockdown period and until 2022. Daily reports of the Ministry of Health in Kenya (d.u.) have been used to reconstruct which measures were implemented when (see Annex II) and partially shaped the input for the research tools.

### Box 1. Field observations: Family visit

*The conductor of the matatu made sure the vehicle was filled up to the rim. Bodies packed so closely together seatbelts had become an unnecessary. My friend GD ensured that, as a guest, I had the lucky seat up front, next to the driver. We chatted about what had been keeping him busy while the matatu made swift, but calculated decisions in overtaking its fellow motorists. Left, right, didn't matter. GD was on his way to visit his family in the rural and to talk to a friend whom he had started a business with. A side-hustle, he explained. He is one of the few young labor migrants who had gotten regular income after graduation and moving to the city. Nevertheless, he still “hustles” to pay for his living expenses. Whatever he saves, he invests in grass cutters and motorbikes which he rents to farmers and boda-drivers in the rural. While passing through Kiambu county, a large bonfire made up of old tires blocked the highway, people shouting and blowing whistles around the commotion. I asked GD what was going on, while the driver cursed and complained in unity with the passengers. Something about traffic jams and the recent rise in fuel prices. Whatever it is, it is probably political, GD said. Elections are coming up, after all.*

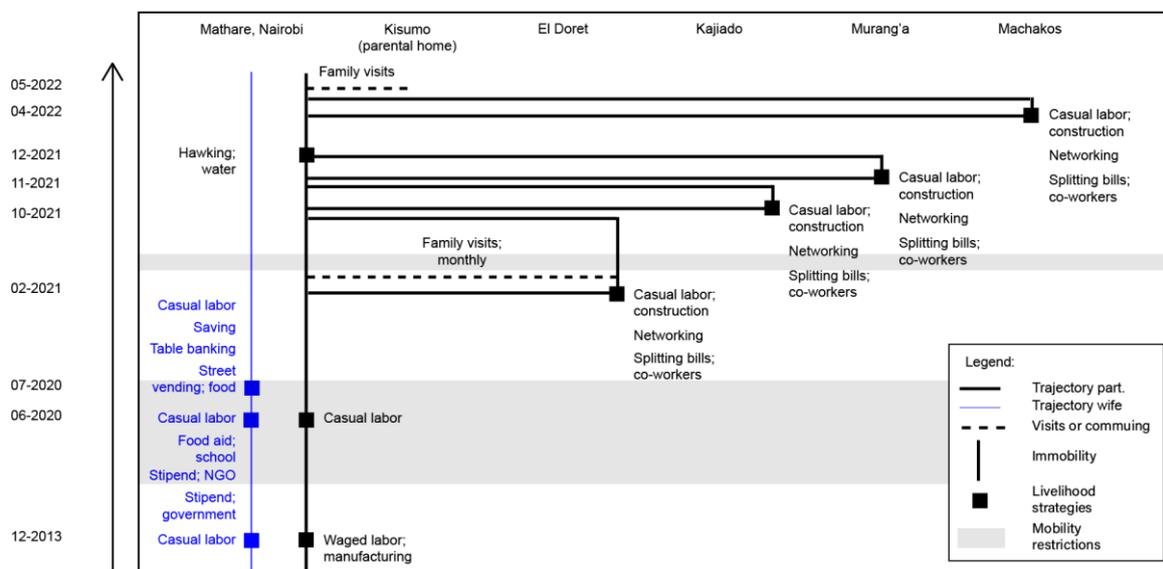
### 5.1 Mobility restrictions

The Kenyan government implemented the lockdown from April 6 until July 6, 2020. Mobility restrictions specifically targeted areas with a high population density. For the duration of the lockdown period movements in- and out of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi were prohibited (see Annex II; Ministry of Health, d.u.). For Nairobi the neighboring five counties of Nakuru, Machakos, Kajiado and Kiambu were open to inter-county movement of people residing in these areas.

On an even smaller scale, specific restrictions on urban-to-urban movement were also imposed in the areas of Old Town in Mombasa and Eastleigh in Nairobi. Closure of markets and businesses such as barber shops, salons, take-aways, butcheries and cyber cafes were enforced and hawking activities in Eastleigh banned. On all scales, urban-to-rural, rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban movement, participants have reported considerable, and in some cases, long-lasting impacts on their livelihoods and the degree to which they have been able to cope for the duration of the lockdown and beyond.

From the narrative above (see Box 1) it is clear that aside from having family-ties in rural areas, labor migrants also remain connected to rural space by being engaged in livelihood activities that span across different counties, much like suggested in the literature (Awumbila, 2017; Mberu et al, 2012; Posel & Casale, 2021; Flahaux & de Haas, 2016; Ramisch, 2015). The mobility trajectory shown in Figure 37 shows a labor migrant who relies on frequent movements between a variety of counties in order to make a living in construction work:

Figure 37. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

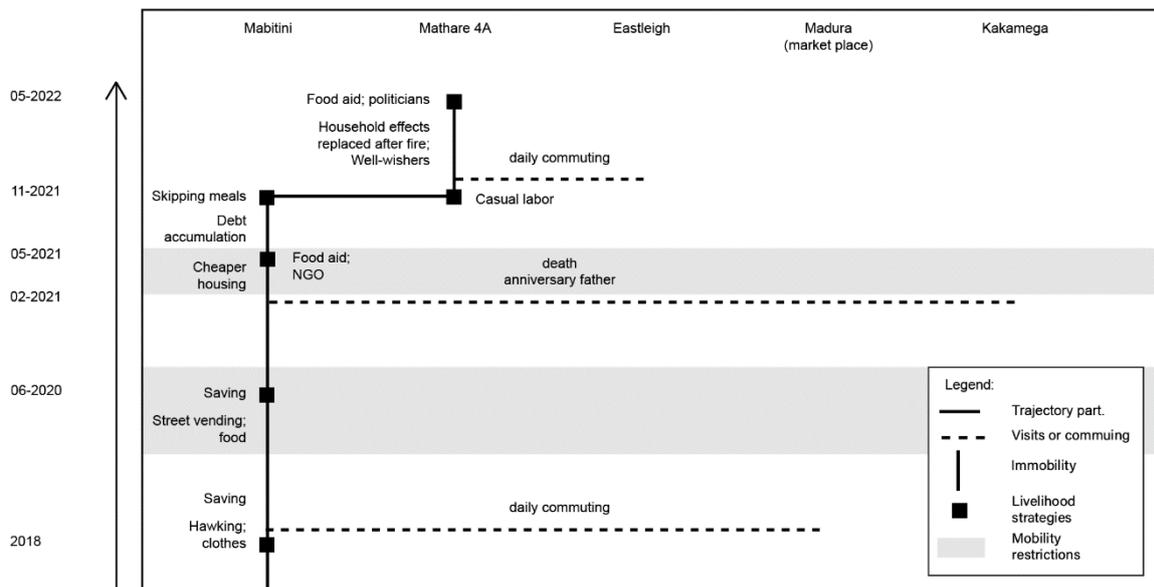
Another participant travelled between Murang'a county and Kiambu for construction work before becoming stranded in Thika town for nearly three months after lockdown measures were imposed [MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo]. Other than travelling for work, participants operating businesses experienced difficulties sourcing their supplies from the city in order to sell in rural counties or towns surrounding the areas [MM\_Participant\_009\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant007\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa]. As narrated by one participant: *"As well as this place [Maragwa, Murang'a county] was also affected, because people are not moving and almost a hundred percent of these people depend on moving for business and work elsewhere. They [just] come to sleep here. So, the whole chain was affected."* [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa].

The measures resulted into loss of employment and businesses and forced labor migrants to use what little savings they had to get by, insecure of how long the measures would remain imposed and unsure whether they would be able to resume their livelihoods once the lockdown was lifted. To some participant this meant sacrificing savings meant for future plans: *"So, the reason why I was saving, was not because I was planning for this. There was other things I wanted to do to make sure that you even improve your, the way your family. Maybe you want even to move from this place to another place to set up a good house. I had many plans for this family, and all of a sudden this is killed, because you don't know whether you are going back."* [MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu].

In some cases, like [MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo], the continuous reliance on the family's savings and subsequent distress selling of livestock as a result of an inability to return home, made participants resort to extreme measures: *"The river is big and they are telling me: We risk ourselves and move. I told them: Now, do this. Show me what you are doing. One person go inside that river and crossed. So myself, asks: If I go there [and] I met a crocodile or a hippo, what about my family? I told them: To me I am not doing it. It is either I go to the police [and] they jailed me or they do anything with me instead of killing myself with what I am seeing."* Three participants reported repeatedly taking illegal routes offered by motorbike taxi drivers (boda-boda drivers) in order to keep seeing family members, attend business commitments in other counties or to escape from high living expenses and an inability to make money in the city. Something that often went hand-in-hand with the bribing of local officers. These migrants also faced the risk of getting caught by those authorities that were less 'accommodating'. Participants, especially in the urban context of Mathare, have reported the occurrence of extortion, beatings and even killings of those who did not comply to the COVID-19 measures [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant012\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant017\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant026].

Much like the importance of inter-county mobility flows between Nairobi and its surrounding counties, important socio-economic nodes for urban-to-urban mobilities and livelihoods also revealed itself through the mapping activities (see figure 30).

Figure 30. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant021\_Mathare]



Source : Author.

The map above shows how a labor migrant from Mathare frequently commutes between Mabatini and Madura for the selling of second-hand clothes and, later, between Mathare 4A and Eastleigh in order to be employed as a casual laborer. Mobility patterns are also observed between Nairobi and her ancestral land in Kakamega, a rural county in Western-Kenya, where she goes to less frequently for family occasions.

All 10 labor migrants and/or their household members in the urban context were regularly employed as casual laborers in the area of Eastleigh either before or after the lockdown period. The closure of this specific area over the course of four months of lockdown had, in some cases, long-lasting impacts, most of which had to do with housing, food insecurity and loss of business and employment.

Participants in urban and rural areas reported having accumulated considerable debts due to an ongoing inability to pay for rent or the continuous purchasing of food on credit [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare; MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant014\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant023\_Mathare; MM\_Participant028\_Mathare]. Key Informants in Mathare stated this frequently led and still leads to selling whatever the migrants have left to pay off outstanding debts or even eviction: *"So I give you my money when I used to work, but now I don't have a job. There is no hope I will pay you. So you will just have to come to my house and then pick anything. And let me say, for the landlords, you find [...] those landlords that don't have the heart to help someone. They are so cruel. You find I am owing him, like, six months of rent. He will just come, close my door and then pick everything and then go sell and then tell me: Go."* [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare]. Though there have been accounts of migrants who, with thanks to a good relationship with their landlord, were able to negotiate and navigate through times of insecurity, many participants were left with debts they had accumulated present-day: *"She has a lot of debts. Like now, she is saying the debts have been accumulated to nine thousand five hundred. Whereby she cannot pay, but those money has got interests. So, she managed to get the money and pay the interest, but the debt still remains."* [MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa].

## 5.2 Curfews and restrictions on social gatherings

Participant 004, once a business owner in Nairobi, was one of many participant that explained how other mobility restrictions, such as curfews and the restrictions on social gatherings and hawking caused her business in Nairobi and other business attempts that followed in Murang'a county, to go down. The curfew measures took place from April and lasted beyond the lockdown until October 2020. The measures were eased as time passed (subsequently 7PM until 5AM, 9PM until 5AM and 11M until 4AM). Participants mentioned the difficulties of operating in their businesses that typically have their peak hours from 7PM onwards: *"Yes, it was, it was not the best of times, because businesses used to finish so early when actually the businesses should be starting. If you go to the streets in Nairobi, the businesses start working at 19:30, 19:00, 20:00, 21:00, 22:00 is when they are closing. And that is when they just started. [...]. And even in the rural areas it was just the same. Because on a market day when are you going to buy? Some of them are selling fish at 18:00, so when is there time to buy, to sell? It was bad!"* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare].

Typically, businesses of the labor migrants that were interviewed required an investment of anything between one thousand and ten thousand shilling (currencies fluctuated between €1/120KSh. - €1/125Ksh.; March 11 - May 30, 2022). Labor migrants frequently (10 out of 30 participants) invested through the use of savings or asked another household or family member to invest in setting up the enterprise. Activities were diverse and ranged from small restaurants operated in shacks outside the homes, barber shops and the street vending of (street) food, second-hand clothing, beauty items and sanitary products and carpentry tools. Within small and medium enterprises that required a larger start-up capital such as technical repair shops, hardware and tailor shops, the consequences of the measures were felt in both in urban and rural areas as well. The ongoing COVID-19 measures resulted into people budgeting what they had to spend on necessities like rent and food, resulting into a lack of consumers interested in what was now considered a luxury (e.g. clothing, construction materials, electronics): *"Until now, COVID came, these people are not paying, they don't even know when it is going to end. And especially when there was a lockdown, people would not bring to repair electronics when they are even hustling for food."* [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa]. In both scenario's, businesses frequently got affected up to a point that business owners had to close their businesses and sell or throw out (if perishable) their stocks to survive [MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant005\_Kandara; MM\_Participant012; MM\_Participant015].

Participants disagree about to what extent the lifting of the curfew in the years after the lockdown resulted into an improvement. Some stated they have witnessed businesses slowly starting to pick up, especially the micro-enterprises which require little start-up capital [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare; MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant012\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant024\_Mathare; MM\_Participant029\_Mathare]. A key informant in Mathare stated enterprises that used to provide a lot of employment have not taken up the capacities they used to have, ultimately resulting into ongoing consequences for those who have lost employment: *"He is saying, that uplifting with the curfew didn't bring a lot of change. Even the lockdown didn't bring a lot of change, because you are not sure what you are going to do or even if the jobs will come back for you. [...]. The hotel [...] used to employ a hundred people, now it will have to reduce to 30 people. So you find you are not amongst those people chosen to go and work there."* [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; MM\_Participant013\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant015\_Kiharu].

As a result of employment loss, many labor migrants, much like former business owners, have resorted to casual labor present-day, a type of informal employment that is described by participants as often irregular, poorly paid and insufficient to provide for living expenses [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant023\_Mathare; MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]. Some success stories, however, were also observed by people who used to be employed in formal enterprises and utilized the social networks they build up to set up their own business ventures [MM\_Participant018\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant026\_Mathare].

### 5.3 Direct impact of COVID-19

Only 3 participants from interviews (30) and focus group discussions (17 participants) reported having been directly affected through a COVID-19 infections. All three participants could be found in Murang'a county. In the urban area the key informants explained that, contrary to how it is portrayed in the news, the direct impacts of COVID-19 in the informal settlements of Mathare have been very limited. A community health worker, employed at the health center in Mathare 4A for over 20 years, reported not having seen any severe cases of COVID-19 in the hospital. Only 20 test cases were reported positive in a population of over 200.000 people [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. This low infection rate can have many reasons. Firstly, the population in Mathare, according to the gatekeepers, is very young and perhaps better capable of fighting off the disease without a need for hospitalization [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. In addition, testing brings along a mandatory 14-day quarantine at own expenses in a government facility; costs many participants in the interviews were unable to carry and shying them away from testing at all. Perhaps severe cases also did not look for help or even recognized their sickness as being COVID-19: *"We did not get COVID [laughs]. [...] Even for us we can survive with COVID and you won't even know we have COVID, because we are so strong. So then, the people who are, sorry, we used to say: COVID is for the rich. Leave us alone, for us, who are poor. We have been living with COVID since we are born."* [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare]. It is a stark contrast to the perception of the direct impact of COVID-19 in rural areas, where focus group participants narrated how they themselves shied (or even ran) away from migrant returnees and their families in the first few months of the pandemic for fear of getting infected, though most participants agreed that this receded in the months after the lockdown [FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare; MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo].

For the three cases that did get infected with COVID-19 the consequences were considerable and long-lasting. Caregivers of family members coped with high expenses of hospitalization, commuting regularly to hospitals, payment for medication and burials on top of, in some cases, going through the emotional distress of losing a family member [MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant007\_Kandara; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. Interestingly, although one participant stated making use of health insurance, any COVID-19 related health care was not covered. The participant reported that as a result of high expenses, she had to plead for her mother to be released from the hospital against the advice of health care professionals and at her own risk [MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo]. Another participant reported being forced to use title deeds to her ancestral land as collateral after having accumulated a debt of 1.5 million shilling. Though, according to a key informant in Mathare, some hospital bills were waved, participant 007 was unable to retrieve her land titles back at the time of interviewing [MM\_Participants007\_Kandara; March 28, 2022].

## 5.4 Externalities

Within the sustainable livelihoods framework the 'vulnerability context' describes the context in which the labor migrants exist. The COVID-19 measures are a part of such structures that can influence livelihood strategies and movements (see figure 1). Other externalities, however, have also been observed and, much like in the work of Gupta et al. (2021) affected the degree to which people were able to bounce back after the lockdown measures had been lifted

The most prevalent externality was a sudden price hike in fuel that occurred during the time the research was conducted (March 2022 to May 2022), resulting in long lines at petrol stations and disrupting the livelihoods of a major industry of boda-drivers (motorbike taxi's) and matatu operators (passenger vehicles). It also indirectly affected the livelihoods of labor migrants making use of these transportation modes for their own livelihoods. It remains unclear what exactly caused the petrol shortage. Some participants and non-participants of the research stated it was due to the recent developments of the war in Ukraine whereas others mentioned such hikes occurred quite regularly as a result of the power of oil giants over the Kenyan government.

Price hikes in basic staple goods were also mentioned by participants [FGD\_003\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant020\_Mathare; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant030\_Mathare]. This affected participants at household level in providing food for their families, but also those migrant engaged in micro-enterprises selling chapati, chips or other goods that required oils and flours: *"She is saying the reason why the business started dropping, the commodities started rising up. The potato's, the oil and everything so you find it was so expensive to buy potato's."* [MM\_Participant030\_Mathare].

What was frequently mentioned in the rural context, was the recurrence of droughts [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant020\_Kigumo]. During the research it was planting season and many (non-participant) farmers mentioned the rains had been inconsistent and staying off-put. In some cases during the COVID-19 pandemic these droughts coincided not only with price hikes in basic food staples that could not be cultivated, such as cooking oils and sugar, but also with labor migrants and their family members returning home [FGD\_001\_Maragwa]. This exacerbated an increase in expenses that was already a result of having more mouths to feed. The occurrence of drought was observed only in selected areas, however, and may play a much larger role in rural areas outside Murang'a county where the climate is more arid.

Lastly, the research was conducted during times of elections. This played a particular role within the urban context of Mathare. According to both key participants, Mathare is a node in which labor migrants flock to from all over the country. This results into large population of different ethnic groups living in a small and congested area and although key informants report it does not cause any problems on a daily basis, elections are often a cause of people reasserting their ethnic background and form camps: *"We have so many tribes. You find Kikuyu, there is Kamba, there is Luo, there is Luhya, there is Maasai. [...] But when it comes to elections you find they start fighting. Between Luo's and Kikuyu's. They are the majority."* [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare]. Four participants have mentioned and shared their experiences in the 2007 post-election violence period when election results caused a wave of violent encounters between people identifying with the Luo and Kikuyu tribes. Upon being asked, participants stated they would not be expecting the same violence this election year, while others talked about preparing household members to temporarily migrate to rural areas just in case [MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]: *"And also as you can see, elections are here with us. You don't know how they will be. So that is the only time that you can run. And if you have not invested in a house [in a rural area], and eh, as she has said, that was her dream. The mom to build a house. [...] And also, during the period of election, the kids can run, for the safety."*

## 5.5 Conclusion

The example in the grey box illustrates the importance of mobility in the lives of Kenyan labor migrants and the structures (e.g. COVID-19 measures) and externalities (e.g. price hikes of commodities and political unrest) that can play a role in disrupting it. Not only does it exacerbate existing inequalities, but it also affects the degree to which labor migrants are capable of bouncing back after a loss of business or employment opportunities. The most poignant example is the closure of Eastleigh, an important provider of employment opportunities for the labor migrants living in Mathare. Although the informal sector is becoming increasingly recognized as playing an important role in the generation of income, the creation of jobs and reduction of poverty (ILO, 2021), the disruption of movement between important economic nodes have affected multi-local livelihoods during the lockdown period and long after the COVID-19 measures were lifted (e.g. debt accumulation, housing insecurity, distress selling).

## 6. Research results: Government support

The following chapter answers the sub question: “What government support was in place to support the labor migrants in the first two years of the pandemic and to what extent did it reach them?” The chapter discusses the characteristics of the labor migrants interviewed for this research and to what extent the government support given out during and after the COVID-19 pandemic supported their needs. In addition, it discusses the degree to which government support reached the labor migrants that remained in the urban areas as opposed to those that remigrated to rural areas. Lastly, suggestions by participants are discussed on how this group of people can be reached better and more effectively.

### Box 2. Field observations: Food aid

*Bobby stumbled upon yet another familiar face, seated between a group of men playing a game of cards. After cracking a few jokes and explaining what he was doing around Mathare with a ‘white’, he led us off the main road down a steep and unpaved side-way. The participant I was to meet that day has walking difficulties, but I am convinced she manages better than I did. Meticulously following Bobby’s exact footsteps to avoid slipping, I stupidly attempted to make it look as easy for me to walk there as my guides, who have lived in Mathare all their lives. Concentrating on maneuvering down, I barely missed the construction of iron sheet fences to my left. Inside the compound some abandoned crops typically grown in the rural: maize, beans, cassava and bananas. Enough to sustain a few families, but inaccessible to the households in the near surroundings. The participant explained she used to feed her family with ease using that compound, but that it was fenced by the government’s Nairobi Metropolitan Service, because the community was using the land illegally. Food aid was distributed, by the way, she said, but she herself never got it.*

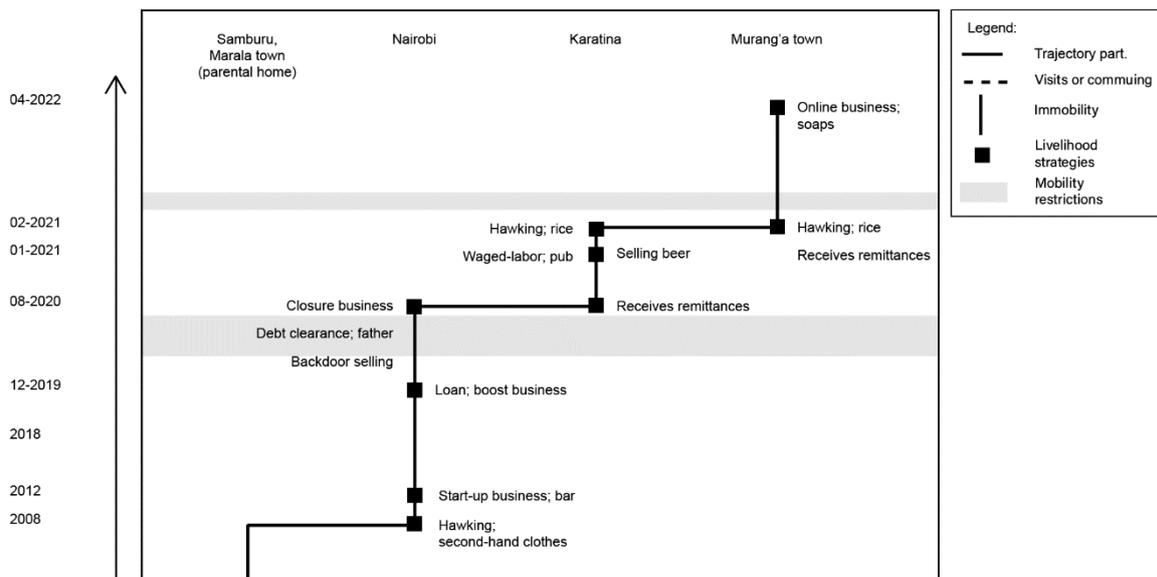
### 6.1 Labor migrants

At the time of the interviews (March to May, 2022) all but one labor migrant had built their life in Nairobi on what could be perceived as a temporary and unstable foundation. Key informants in Mathare narrate how labor migrants from rural areas typically flock to informal settlements such as Mathare looking for employment opportunities while taking advantage of relatively cheap living expenses, compared to other areas in Nairobi [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare;

KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. The promise of “greener pastures” is one mentioned by both labor migrants and their caregivers and is one of the enduring kind in which it is believed labor migrants can work from the ground up with Mathare as a starting point: *“Over a long time it has been a trend. People are going, people are coming in [...]. It is migratory. People who found work [...] have improved their social status and are moving out of Mathare, but there are others coming in. [...] So that has been the nature of Mathare.”* However, contrary to the popular discourse, all labor migrants in the urban context were relying on informal, ‘casual’ labor during the time of the interviews, often described as being irregular, poorly paid and insufficient to cover monthly expenses (e.g. housing, food, childcare). Upon being asked whether labor migrants send home remittances regularly, a focus group participant replied: *“There is very little. Very little money there! [...]. There you need to, they need to pay rent and food and maybe where you are staying is not where you are working, so you have to go with a car. Yeah. So you, at most times, you can find one is only working for themselves. He cannot sustain even the family [household members].”* [FGD\_001\_Maragwa].

Prior to the lockdown, a higher variety of stable income-generating activities were observed in which participants were engaged in small- and medium enterprises (10 out of 30) or earned a more regular income through waged labor (5 out of 30).

Figure 22. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant015\_Kiharu]



Source: Author.

The example above shows a former business-owner who attempted several new micro-enterprises over the course of the last two years in different localities varying from illegal selling of liquor to hawking of rice and an online business of selling soap [MM\_Participant015\_Kiharu]. The mobility trajectory also shows relative stability prior to the lockdown period where she had operated a pub for the duration of eight years. Something that was found amongst other participants as well is that although the labor migrants were living in a vulnerable situation, most of them managed to cope in the urban context. It was not until a sudden employment loss that the ongoing expenses became unmanageable to a point some of them felt forced to fall back on their family-ties in rural areas: *"[...] And you are not expecting to lose your job suddenly like that. Without any plan. And here, now the job had gone and what is next? You need to pay rent, you need to feed people in Nairobi, you need to feed people in the countryside. You need to wash. It was chaotic."* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. In many ways, therefore, the COVID-19 measure worsened what was already a vulnerable situation, remigration to rural areas being a last resort when money ran low.

## 6.2 Government support: Tailoring to the needy

Over the course of the last two years the Kenyan government has implemented an economic stimulus package in response to the expected economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The package covered eight pillars of what were identified as the most vital economic sectors in the country (i.e. agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, education, health care, environment, manufacturing and small- and medium enterprises). In the presidential statement on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2020 attention is being paid to the long-term and (in)direct impact of COVID-19 for vulnerable groups in society in which the youth (Kazi Mtaani programme), the elderly (Inua Jamii programme), smallholder farmers and vulnerable households are targeted through employment creation, direct cash transfers, e-vouchers for farm-inputs and weekly stipends (Government of Kenya, 2020; IMF, 2021; Ministry of Health Kenya, 2020). Many of the people interviewed (10 out of 30), participants of focus group discussions [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu] and key informants [KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare] belonged to one or more categories of the vulnerable groups described in the statement, but pointed out that the support that was given to them was insufficient or did not fit their needs.

The nature of the support given out by the government, according to one key participant in Mathare was predominantly to curb the spread of the direct impact of COVID-19. Government support mentioned were trainings for health care professionals, setting up quarantine facilities and ambulances on stand-by, the promotion of hand-washing practices and immunization as well as wide-spread provision of soaps and water: *"The government made it possible for everybody to get soap and water everywhere. The masks. The production was high and the price was kept low so that everybody could afford."* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. Other support mentioned was food provision and weekly or monthly stipends, though most participants agree that it was incidental, the distribution was poorly done, inconsistent and non-transparent: *"The elderly [inaudible] is somehow old. They used to be given flour or porridge, porridge flour. They were given by the administration. But not all. Not all of them benefitted. They used to give them, that one family has been given, that one has not. So, we don't know they used to work. It was being given by the government."* [FGD\_002\_Maragwa].

The mobility patterns of the participants further revealed that most government support was given out during the lockdown period of April, 2020 to July, 2020 and in a second lockdown in March, 2021 when the counties of Nakuru, Kajiado, Kiambu, Nairobi and Machakos were temporarily locked until May, 2021. However, many participants (17 out of 30) had not stabilized their income by the time of the interviews in 2022 and were still struggling to pay ongoing costs, especially when the schools started re-opening in April, 2022: *"They need school fees, they need books, they need uniforms. Who is going to do all that for them? They should be helped. [...]. We are just coming out of COVID. Their parents still have no work. How can their children go to school? How can they be cushioned against, eh, the effects of the pandemic and the fact that they don't have income right now?"* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. The key participant goes on to explain that the ongoing costs in the city often prompted patients, who visited her in the health center, to re-migrate: *"The patients who came here, the people who came here and said: I can't afford it here, I just want to go home. It is easier to just give them 5.000 for transport than to pay them and they pay rent for the next month. Yeah. So they went and when they went they are settled there. Some of them called and said we are not coming back."*

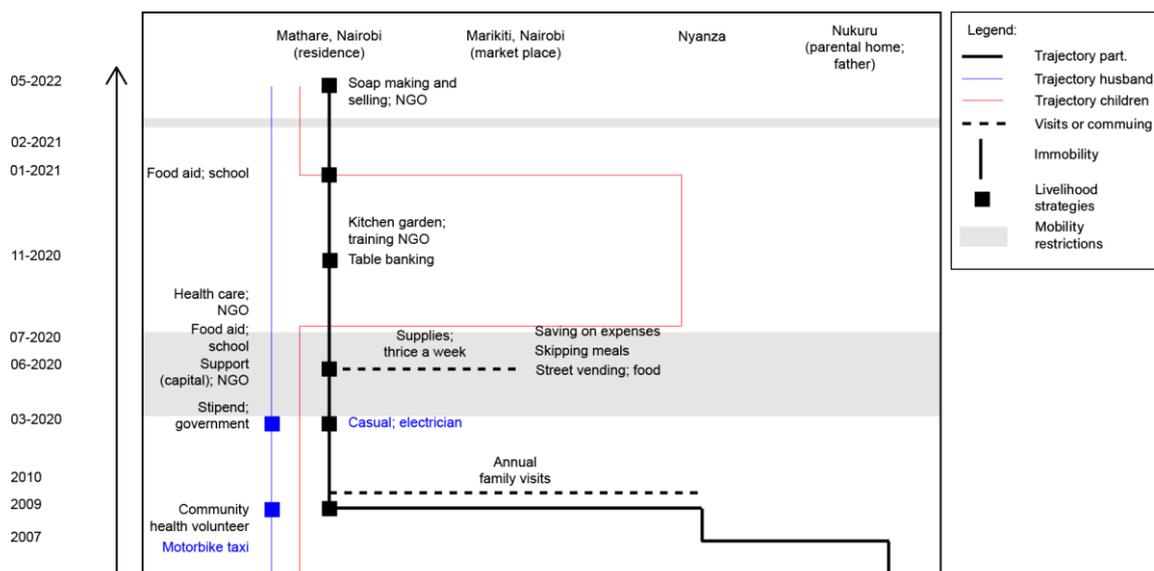
Building on this, and the last point being made, is that it has become clear that much government support also did not support the multi-locality of households and the role receiving household played in being a safety net to those labor migrants that returned, if available to them. Many caregivers explained how they had to take in not just one labor migrants, but entire families with children, causing congestion in homes, extra mouths to feed and, ultimately, an increase in living expenses while the extra household members were unable to work for a considerable

amount of time during and after the lockdown period [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. In fact, as will be elaborated on in the next section, despite these caregivers playing a major role in cushioning labor migrants against the effects of COVID-19, it became clear that participants living in the urban context were much better reached through government support than the participants in rural areas.

### 6.3 Government support: Facilitating access

The differences between urban and rural is best described through the example of the Kazi Mtaani programme. The Kenyan government announced the target of creating 200.000 jobs for the youth during the COVID-19 pandemic by injecting 10 billion Kenyan shilling into the programme. Although it sounds like a hefty investment, it would only cover for 0.5% of what makes up the population of Kenyans aged 35 years or below (Population Census, 2019). This is reflected in how well the participants were reached through the programme. Although many people were familiar with it, it became clear that only very little opportunities were given out per subcounty and that whether you gained access to such an opportunity was a matter of knowing the right people: *“You need to have a network, by the way, so you can get that money. Someone must have written your name, because the government does not have your ID, your name, your phone number. You understand?”* [MM\_Participant024\_Mathare]. A focus group participant from rural Murang’a described how a thousand youth flocked to the county offices when the Kazi Mtaani programme was announced, but that only 20 spots were given out. The only participant in the research (1 out of 30) that was able to get into the programme lived in urban Mathare, in close proximity to the chief’s office and the head office of a non-governmental organization, through which she was able to arrange both a job for herself and another household member [MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]. It reiterates the importance of social capital to the migrants, which has been suggested by Desai and Potter (2014).

Figure 34. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]



Source : Author.

The mobility map above too, shows how one participant in Mathare has been able to gain access to food aid, weekly stipends and trainings from a myriad of stakeholders. The participant lives in urban Mathare and is connected to a group of community health workers as a volunteer, involved in informal (women) groups and connected to the schools where her children are enrolled. It is a stark contrast to the responses from participants (10 out of 20) in rural areas who expressed not having tried to gain or gained access or simply not having heard about any support given out. This was also reasserted in focus group discussions and through key informant interviews [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare].

The perceived reason why the participants did not get access to these funds is frequently mentioned and reflected well in the following statement by [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]: *“There was [social care]. [...] But what it happened, it didn’t reach the targeted people, because of corruption [...]. The programme was brought to the administration office, so the DCC used the chiefs to map the most affected. And also the needy. But what they did, they mapped their families. And the exercise [programme] took almost three months and they were receiving a thousand every week [...]. But most of the people who were affected, were not reached.”*

Some participants also mentioned how the more recent efforts to distribute support were merely a result of the upcoming elections in which politicians attempt to win votes by giving out food or money to supporters [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant001\_Maragwa]. The lack of trust in the government officials and local leaders to distribute support to the most vulnerable groups also poses a problem because it affects the degree to which people attempt to apply for potential funds that may be available. Two participants and caregivers in multiple focus group discussions [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu] had the perception that applying for support is a “waste of time” [MM\_Participant020\_Kigumo], because of corruption and bureaucracies, resulting in participants not trying at all: “[...] *you get these things from the government it is very difficult to get them because of protocol. Maybe someone up there has said something, but he has to use chief and then chief has to use village elders and then village elders have to use someone in that ward. So, you find that it is so difficult for someone like me or her to be reached.*” [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare].

#### 6.4 The gap between what is given and what is needed

Upon being asked 10 out of 30 participants in the urban and rural context stated that present-day (2022) they would be helped most through start-up capital for a business venture. *“There are those who are not able to raise the capital again, but will have to struggle a lot. So, let’s say, if there can be something that can help these people to try and start up their businesses again. There were people who had businesses, but they can’t reach where they were.”* [KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu]. Other key informants stated the need for sensitizing labor migrants about public participation in which local leaders can be held accountable more effectively through critically questioning the county budgets [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]. A third suggestion frequently mentioned by participants was the need to improve mapping activities of vulnerable groups [KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. It was suggested this would be done through stakeholders that were more closely connected to the community at a much smaller scale. Stakeholders suggested in the urban context were community health volunteers [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare] whereas in the rural context the church was often perceived to be best able to target the right people [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu].

A final suggestion came from the two participants in urban Mathare and was further emphasized by some participants who mentioned struggling with feelings of stress, anxiety or depression which will be elaborated on in a later chapter: *"So, later on, eh. For us for the youth we came up with and decided to do, we mentor young people, because there was a lot of mental issues, depression. So that is when we came, discussed with [participant's name] and the team and then we decided mentorship. Just to help them because you find people are going through mental illnesses. They are killing themselves, they are committing suicide. So that is when we came up with doing mentorship in school and other places."* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare].

## 6.5 Conclusion

A number of government initiatives that have been implemented by the Kenyan government throughout the last two years were recognized by the labor migrants. However, the extent to which these initiatives reached them and to what extent it was tailored to their needs is perceived as insufficient. The government lacked in terms of accessibility, which largely depended on the extent to which a labor migrant could tap into his or her social networks. In addition, though measures for the (in)direct impact of COVID-19 were widespread, it proved incidental in nature and focused on the temporal relief from socio-economic impacts that last beyond the lockdown periods. Though the multi-locality, housing insecurity (e.g. illegal and rental housing and land occupation) and job volatility of the group of labor migrants may play a large role in the reason why they are reached with much difficulty it, nonetheless, concerns a vulnerable group of individuals and their families. Though the effects of public participation and mapping activities by grassroots organizations on the accessibility of government support is unknown, it is something worth looking into. Considering these individuals are dealing with long-lasting impacts, there must also be more room for the impact of COVID-19 on mental well-being, a subject that will be further explored in Chapter 9.

## 7. Research results: Mobility trajectories

The following chapter seeks to answer the question: “At what moments in the first 2 years of the pandemic did Kenyan labor migrants move between rural counties and Nairobi and what were the motivations for moving?” Through the use of mobility maps, co-created with the labor migrants that were interviewed, mobilities (and immobility) and motivations prior to and during the COVID-19 have been captured and analyzed. Furthermore, in order to find out how mobility will also play a role in their future livelihood strategies, take-aways from the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed as well.

### Box 3. Field observations: Youth unemployment

*The matatu made a steady climb up. The young woman seated next to me skillfully wrapped the blanket around her infant a little tighter as the air grew colder and the environment turned a vibrant green. As I would later learn, returning home with a bag of macadamia’s and fresh eggs, though money in the area is low, food is plenty. The focus group discussion that day took place underneath a large avocado tree. As we were arranging the chairs for the participants, Pastor P spoke to me about the problem of youth unemployment in the area. They come when it rains, he said. The clattering of heavy rainfall on iron sheet rooftops allows them to move undetected. They take hens, banana’s, avocado’s anything they can get their hands on, and sell it by the roadside the next day. Though clearly a victim, I could detect hatred nor judgement in his voice. With so little jobs in the country, you can hardly blame them. He simply expressed his worries; about how the country would be left with a generation unable to sustain themselves, and in the process, placing a heavy burden on the caregivers that take them under their wing. After the discussion, three young boys entered the premise. Pastor P had hired them to harvest the avocado’s for him.*

### 7.1 Pre-COVID-19: The promise of greener pastures

The promise of ‘a better life’ is most frequently expressed by participants as a motivation for labor migrants to move to urban areas. It is mentioned both by the migrants themselves, but also fueled by what is promoted by their caregivers: “Eh, when children are in school, we normally tell them: Step it up! Get education. So that when you grow up, you are going to be like so and so. So, this question of the message we promote to them, are those people working in the city.”

[FGD\_001\_Maragwa].

Another reason why migration to the city is promoted, is because young people grow up watching their parents struggle to get by. A participant in Kigumo explains how, although she keeps her and her family afloat, the selling of commodities in her area has proven a struggle, because there are so many people that are selling similar produce in rural areas like Murang'a. It has caused her son to leave for Thika to find better job opportunities [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]. The perception is that both job and business opportunities in the city are more plentiful. A high population density in the city makes it easier for people to set up a business using a small and low-risk investment [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. Furthermore, the presence of large industries and corporations could offer (white collar) jobs [FGD\_004\_Kiharu; Mm\_Participant023\_Mathare].

Though it fuels common perceptions around classic push-and-pull theories (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016), some participants also mentioned reasons that were less conventional. Firstly, living and working in the city brings along with it a certain status: *"They are mesmerized by the people of the city that come here. They are smart and free. They drive vehicles."* Another participant, a migrant returnee, explains how difficult it was to return to his home village no longer being able to live up to these perceptions: *"Because I am in Nairobi and I am better off and I am paid well. So, whenever I used to come home mostly I would come for a fundraiser. [...]. I will be called as a guest. And I will do them five thousand. And things are OK. And now the similar person is now begging for food [sighs]. That thing was, that, eh, even when I remember how we used to live, eh? Whatever transpired after that, it is something that hurt me a lot."* [MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa].

Another motivation for being drawn to the city, according to a participant from a focus group discussion, is that Nairobi is perceived as a hub where different ethnicities can interact with each other, resulting into the exchange of knowledge [FGD\_001\_Maragwa]. Lastly, caregivers mentioned actively promoting their children to migrate, because they fear being idle, as a result of a lack of employment opportunities for the youth in rural areas, will result into them getting involved in drug and alcohol abuse [FGD\_003\_Kigumo].

## 7.2. Mobility patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic

Labor migrants in the rural and urban context have been interviewed to cover both those migrants that have remained in the rural areas as labor migrants who have returned to the urban areas at the time of interviewing (March to May, 2022). Through data collection, it became apparent that in both contexts (in)voluntary immobility also played an important role in the lives of the participants.

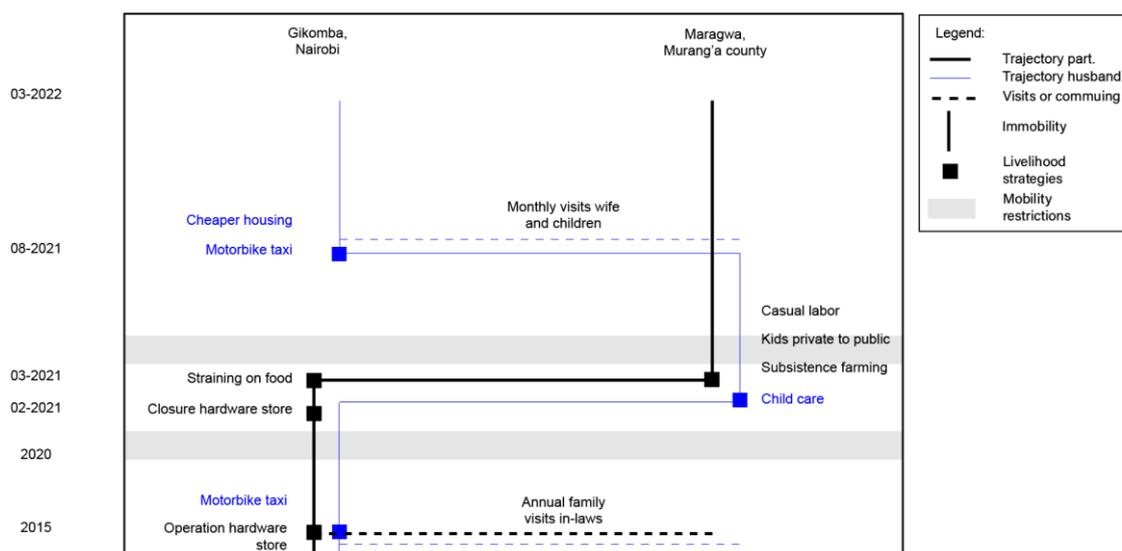
### 7.2.1 Mobility

The majority of labor migrants (14 out of 20) that were interviewed in Murang'a county had lived and worked in the city for many years, the longest having worked there a total of 16 years before remigrating [MM\_Participant014\_Kiharu]. To the labor migrants that moved back this meant they had to get reacquainted to the lifestyle and the type of work typically done there. In some cases, a new social network also had to be established [MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant012\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant014\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; FGD\_001\_Maragwa]. One participant, a former business owner of a technical repair shop in Nairobi, explained: *"I had to check with the workshops here. Whether they would give me some work. And because they didn't know me and the majority of the people who are from here, they had already left Nairobi to come here. They gave those people, they gave the opportunities to the people they knew."* [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa]. Another important aspect raised here was that employment losses impacted a large group of people over a short time-span, ultimately feeding into a slack in the labor market which increased competition even in the casual labor market. Participants in interviews and discussions [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant008\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant014\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant026\_Mathare; FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare] stated that the lack of skills of people that have lived in Nairobi for a considerable time, mainly performing in industrial or service jobs, further contributed to the degree to which they would be able to partake in any employment opportunities in rural areas which often involved farm work: *"But they are not used! But you cannot say someone from Nairobi who has stayed in Nairobi for about 20 years to take up a plough and work."* [FGD\_002\_Maragwa].

Nevertheless, what was perceived as favorable about rural areas during the pandemic, as mentioned by many participants that owned a piece of land or were able to cultivate on land owned by their family-members, was that even though money may have been scarce, food was plentiful. Of course, this applies to the rural context of Murang'a county which has a favorable climate food production. The close proximity of Murang'a county to cities like Nairobi and Thika town further played into how mobility was used to stabilize livelihoods during and beyond the COVID-19 lockdown. The mobility map below (see figure 10) shows the mobility trajectory of a family who moved back to rural Murang'a in March 2021 when the male participant lost his job and the female participant was forced to close down her hardware shop. After moving to live with the in-laws where food and shelter could be provided for the family of five, the husband decided to move back to Nairobi after six months to pick up his work as a boda-driver. Wife and kids were left behind to tend to land and ensuring the kids could be well-fed.

It was a strategy commonly observed by focus group participants too [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]: “Also, most of the young men, instead of keeping their wives in town and they are jobless, they have left them home to start a new life. Yes. So that, if such pandemic comes again, you can find somewhere to go. And not stressing the parents.” [FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. In the city similar practices were found where just children were send to live with caregivers in rural areas for the duration of the lockdown period [MM\_Participant024\_Mathare; MM\_Participant023].

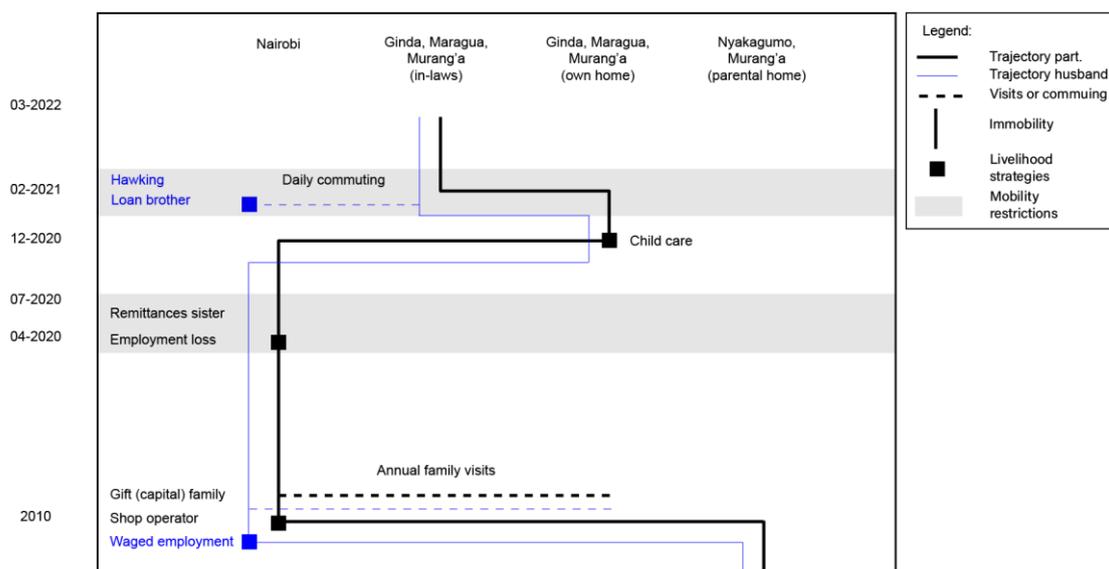
Figure 10. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa]



Source : Author.

The second mobility map below (see figure 11) is an example of how the close proximity of Murang’a county is used to save on high living expenses in Nairobi. The mobility map shows how a labor participant, a former baker, shifts to selling fruits collected in rural Murang’a and selling them in Nairobi through commuting on a daily basis. In doing so, shifting from having his home-base in the city, to having his home-base in Murang’a [MM\_Participant002\_Maragwa].

Figure 11. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant002\_Maragwa]



Source: Author.

Though scholars such as Awumbila (2017) and Mberu et al. (2017) have expressed how regional migration within the Sub-Saharan African context has always played a major role in securing livelihoods amongst urban and rural populations, participants (11 out of 30) observed that an increase in risk-aversity amongst labor-migrants and their wish to secure a social safety net in the rural areas, has been a direct consequence of the COVID-19 measures that were implemented, often framing it as a lesson learned. It has also been mentioned in 3 out of 4 focus group discussions: “[...] I think we have learned a lot. [...] Because I could see so many people I am working with them in that place in Nairobi, being here. That’s when you came to realize that home is the best. So. Even if you are at Nairobi or wherever you are working, remember, to make a good ground at your home. Where you can have, where in the village is a, eh, whether it is a house or whatever. Those basic needs, you [must] already have set up at home.” [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare].

### 7.2.2 Immobility

During the interviews in the urban context, it became apparent that a lot of migrants have also stayed immobile (in)voluntarily. The most poignant example is that of a labor migrant who got stuck for the duration of the lockdown period in a town where he was doing construction work [MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo]. In the urban context much of it had to do with the access of people to what in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is identified as natural, financial and social capital which prevented them from moving even if they had a wish to do so. It reasserts what has been found in research done by Paganini et al. (2020) and Gupta et al (2020).

The importance of land-ownership (an example of natural capital) has been reasserted by scholars (Githuku & Wangu, 2022; Cotula et al. 2004; Wiley, 2011; Boto et al. 2012) and reoccurred during conversations with participants as well. Though it is not unthinkable that a sudden influx of migrant returnees to rural areas may increase the pressures on land and cause a rise in land-related conflicts, most participants asserted that household members that returned found ways to collaborate and share the resources. It is important to point out, however, that the degree to which participants had access to this livelihood capital, did play a role in their ability to return to rural areas when they wanted to. Two participants in Mathare, both single women whose husbands had passed years before [MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare], shared how long-standing conflicts with their in-laws regarding the land of their deceased husbands re-ignited during the pandemic. One of the participants narrated how she had been trying to regain title deeds over a piece of land of 0.8 hectares once owned by her husband and sold by her in-laws during the pandemic. However, it would require her to collect a considerable amount of money to take the matter to court without the certainty of even acquiring the land. To another participant, whose children had the right to the land titles once they would become of age, this was not an option either. She advised her children to save up and invest in a different piece of land rather than going up against the in-laws. A key informant in Kigumo explains that only roughly 5% of title deeds are owned by women in Kenya, most of which are single women: *"But what we usually do [...]. We have been training women in the area, because when a man dies, mostly the family has been denying the women and they harass her which makes the woman to leave her place. We have been training them to know their rights. It is her right to own her husband's property, to own her father's property."* [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]. It is clear that even though the women in the examples were aware of their rights to the land, they still needed the capital necessary to assert these rights.

Other participants asserted that poverty had run through the family, resulting into the land owned by the family being too small to cater for all of them and not having the financial means to sustain them either [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare]. In some cases, this resulted participants to choose to remain immobile too: *“What I was saying, it was going to be a burden. When they adopt here, it was going to take some time. So when we relocate together, it will be a burden to them. So I said me, I will stick to Nairobi and we will see how our family will survive.”* [MM\_Participant027\_Mathare].

A last reason mentioned why people in urban areas have remained immobile, is because of a group of people that had little to no connection to their family in rural areas. According to a key participant in Mathare, now that the informal settlement had existed for over 50 years, a new generation of people has emerged that were born and raised there. Many of which had never even met their family in rural areas: *“[...] I was asking them, do you know your origin? Do you know where you come from? And it was a very emotional session, because some of them said: OK, I was taken to a home when my parents died and I was shown my grandfather and I have been here now. This is the sixth years since I have lost my parents and I have not gone back since. Then I ask them: Don’t you think it is not wise to move back and identify with that rural home? Because you are not young forever. You are going to age and where would you like your children to finish their lives? Well, there is a lot of space in the rural area as compared to here.”* [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. It is important to take this group of people into consideration who might not even have access to the social safety nets other labor migrants rely on during times of crisis. Though the same key informant favors the process of deurbanization it is undeniably a process that requires considerable capital too [MM\_Participant005\_Mathare].

### 7.3 Post-COVID-19: Take-aways and future perspective

Building on the previous, the labor migrants were asked to express lessons they have learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and what their future perspectives were. A first lesson that was mentioned consistently in both urban and rural contexts is the need to invest in rural areas by means of creating a social safety net (11 out of 30 participants; 3 out of 4 focus group discussions; 3 out of 5 key informants). Either through investing in the cultivation of land or by building a home: *“[...] COVID came and it was a teacher. It was! We learned. [...]. Because there is where we found a home is very, very important. A home. Haba, home. [...]. Your own home, eh? Because like, the people who were at Nairobi, they have houses, not homes. [...] many of them, they just rent houses.*

*So, the people who rent houses, those ones, were very, very much affected and that is why they end up coming back home.*" [FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. Whether this was a lesson learned by the COVID-19 pandemic or not, remains unclear since there had also been a participant who had invested early on. Participant [026\_Mathare] explains how his brother, who used to send him food from his home-village in times of need, inspired him early on to invest in land in case of an emergency. His future plans are clear: *"What I was thinking is to start farming. After building my house I want to start eh, farming. Keeping birds, chickens. And eh, rearing pigs. You know pigs have a lot of money. So that's what is my plan. I want to move from Nairobi to the rural."* Other participants (7 out of 10 in the urban context) have also expressed their interest in moving back to rural areas eventually, though it is often referred to as something they would do many years from now, slowly building up.

Another lesson commonly expressed is not to rely on a single income for your 'daily bread' or commonly referred to as 'not putting all eggs in one basket' in focus group discussions and interviews [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant006\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant012\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. Interestingly, investing in small business opportunities in this context was perceived as less risky than having a stable income through employment [MM\_Participant008\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant017\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant023\_Mathare; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]. Operating small businesses would allow participants to be in charge of their daily earnings and would safeguard them from a sudden loss of income. In addition, businesses could be operated alongside other activities such as casual labor: *"You only look at carpentry alone and maybe you don't have a side source of income. Maybe you are selling something in the evening from work. When the main income is shut down then you don't have any other source, you will really struggle before you stand on your feet again. So I think people are eh, learning to juggle between two, between the main employment and the another one. They are becoming more creative."* [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo].

Much like the diversification of livelihood and the investment in social safety nets in rural areas a third lesson commonly mentioned was the importance of saving which was mentioned in all four focus group discussions, amongst 7 out of 30 participants and by key informants in Maragwa and Mathare. Participants in focus group discussions frequently mentioned how money earned in the city was spend immediately by labor migrants, resulting in them having little to no income left when a sudden crisis hit. It is clear all three lessons are all related to an increased risk-aversity and a clearer focus on what a current unstable situation could mean for a potential new crisis in the future.

## 7.4 Conclusion

The mobility patterns reasserted the interconnectedness of urban and rural space even when the mobility restrictions were imposed and how migration is used as a livelihood strategy both for saving and making money. In addition, the chapter sheds a light on how the group that remained immobile is just as important as the group that moved. For those who remained involuntarily immobile it is important to realize much of it had to do with the lack of access to livelihood capitals (e.g. natural, social and financial) necessary to make such migration decisions. In addition, though the group of people that were born and grew up in Mathare cannot be recognized as a labor migrants, it is important to note that this particular group may also not have access to the social safety net that others had in the future. It builds on the argument of the previous chapter, that this group needs to be recognized and properly reached once a similar crisis strikes again. Lastly, the chapter sheds a light on the lessons learned in COVID-19 of which investing in rural areas by labor migrants, saving up for a rainy day and the importance of livelihood diversification all point into an increased risk-aversity amongst the migrants as a result of the pandemic.

## 8. Research results: Livelihoods strategies

The following chapter answers the sub question: *“What livelihood strategies were applied throughout the mobility trajectory of Kenyan labor migrants in the past two years of the pandemic?”* A couple of things have already been established in the previous chapters. Firstly, the diversification of livelihood strategies was perceived by focus group discussion participants as a take-away from the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, relocation has posed as a livelihood strategy in saving costs and stabilizing vulnerable living situations in numerous ways (see Chapter 7). Lastly, it has been established that many labor migrants that have lost (stable) jobs and business ventures have resorted to casual labor to earn a living, which most of them were still doing at the time of interviewing.

### Box 4. Field observations: Livelihood diversification

*Mathare is buzzing with activity. Hand-crafted market stands are lined up along paved and unpaved roads, selling supplies for carpentry, second-hand clothes or vegetables. Street vendors sell chapati and mandazi to passers-by and boda-drivers honk or whistle at them so they can quickly finish up their deliveries. We are on our way to a participant whose house had burned down recently. The cause, either a stove left unattended or an illegal connection to the grid. Although the participants point out their situation is far from ideal, there seems to be a pride in knowing “the way of hustling”. Bobby shows me his kinyozi [barber shop]. He invested in the equipment and hired a barber who gradually taught him how to eventually groom customers himself. He also knows how to assemble furniture. That table I am seated at? That is his doing. He starred in a documentary about Mathare once, knows how to make soaps, entertains kids and coaches youth in the community center on the weekends. And I definitely was not the first researcher he had facilitated interviews for. Now, why was I not sketching up his mobility trajectory, like I did with the other participants?*

### 8.1 Activities and strategies

The following chapter answers the sub question: *“What livelihood strategies were applied throughout the mobility trajectory of Kenyan labor migrants in the past two years of the pandemic?”* A couple of things have already been established in the previous chapters.

Firstly, the diversification of livelihood strategies was perceived by focus group discussion participants and key informants as a take-away from the COVID-19 pandemic [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. Secondly, relocation has posed as a livelihood strategy in saving costs and stabilizing vulnerable living situations in numerous ways (refer to Chapter 7). Lastly, it is established that many labor migrants (16 out of 30 interviewed) that have lost (stable) jobs and business ventures have resorted to casual labor to earn a living, which most of them were still engaged in at the time of data collection (March- July, 2022).

## 8.1 Activities and strategies

By drawing up mobility trajectory maps with participants a wide variety of livelihood strategies were inventoried (see Annex IX). The most frequently coded livelihood strategies are illustrated through the image below:

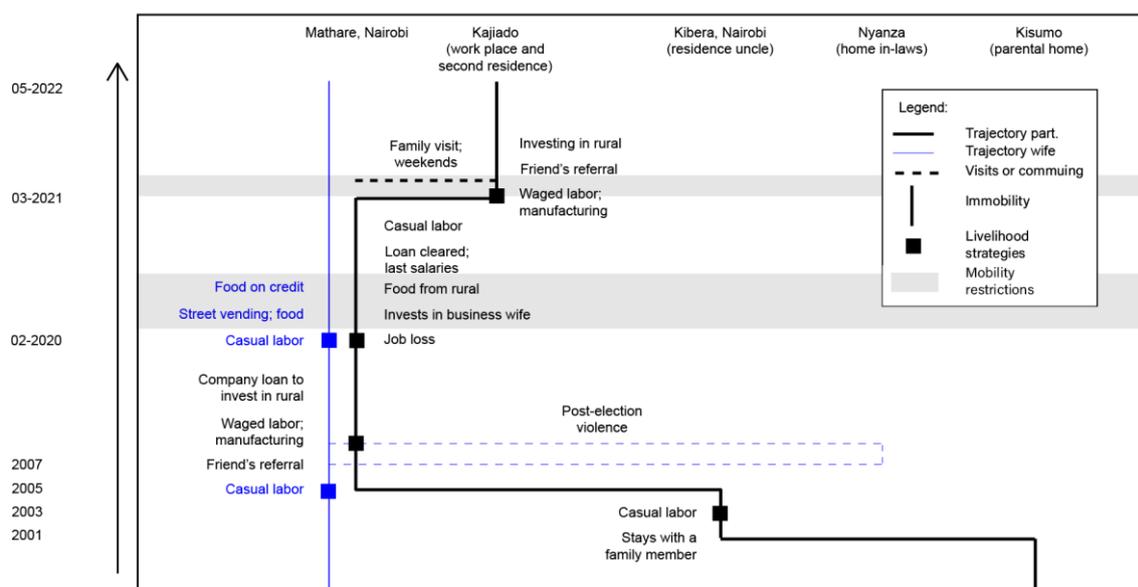
Figure 8. Hierarchy chart code 'Livelihood strategies', compared by number of coding references. Source: Author.



*Complete code names from left to right, top to bottom: Casual labor, setting up a business, saving, waged labor, livelihood diversification, subsistence farming, splitting household, food from rural, accessing funds, (re)schooling and training, reduction of food intake, hawking, remittances, investing in a family member, table banking, kids from private to public school, selling of furniture, loans or borrowing, debt accumulation, expanding businesses, change of home-base, loans or borrowing, cutting costs, move to cheaper housing, community health volunteer.*

The following example (figure 35) will be discussed to demonstrate how one person applied multiple livelihood strategies and capitals available to him to cope during the pandemic. In addition, it demonstrates how frequently these strategies shift in the short time-frame of the last two years after having had a somewhat stable income (one job or business for a duration of 2 years or longer) in the years prior to the pandemic. Something that stood out amongst 14 out of 30 participants. Lastly, the example emphasizes the importance of social capital in particular, which will be further elaborated on in the next section.

Figure 35. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant026\_Mathare]. Source: Author.



The participant, a 39 year old labor migrant and a father of two, lives with his wife and children in Mathare and has remained there for the duration of the lockdown period until March 2021. He first came to Nairobi in 2001 to find employment opportunities and managed to stay with an uncle in the informal settlement of Kibera before moving to Mathare to live with his wife. He was employed in the industrial area of Nairobi in the industry of paper making for thirteen years. He used his social-ties at work (social capital) to gain access to a corporate lending scheme (financial capital) so he could purchase a piece of land in rural Kisumo (natural capital), where he was born and raised. He described the lending scheme as a 'chama' (a table banking initiative), but for larger scale investments in which funds are collectively gathered and lend out to participants of a group, typically against an interest rate, so that upon settling the debts, the profit can be divided amongst the members.

Similar strategies to gain access to small credit have been observed amongst focus group participants [FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu] labor migrant [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant024\_Mathare; MM\_Participant026\_Mathare] and key informants: *“So, for me. I could come. My family has come back home. I don’t have food for them. So, I could come to the group, borrow some money, go and buy food for my family. When the lockdown was removed and our markets were opened, I could go and sell my bananas, come and pay the debt that I have borrowed from the women.”* [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]. Similar initiatives have also been observed in which dried food staples served as currency [MM\_Participant030\_Mathare].

The participant lost his job in February, 2020 and used up two thirds of his last earned salary to repay the remaining debt for the piece of land he invested in. It left him with little money to survive through the lockdown, which is why he decided to invest in his spouse’s business of street vending chips: *“[...] from the money I got from the company after paying the loan. So I have 60.000. When I came here my wife was still doing that business of chips and whatever. So I said eh, I told her, I buy you three sacks of potato’s and eh, 2, 20 liters of cooking oil so that you can continue with your business while I am searching for another job.”* The investment in family members or the borrowing from family members to start micro-enterprises was another livelihood strategy mentioned by labor migrants (10 out of 30), in focus group discussions [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo] and by a key informant in Mathare [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. The motivation for investing in a family member ranged from keeping youth or partners in distress occupied during the lockdown, to (mostly) earning an extra income that could be effectively combined with casual jobs. Another two participants narrated how friends or family members invested in them in terms of skills (i.e. human capital) [MM\_Participant020\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa]. One participant narrated how his sister taught him how to be a broker between farmers and buyers trading in bananas after having lost a job as a construction site manager in Nairobi [MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa].

The participant remained financially reliant on his wife until March 2021 and frequently appealed to his cousin, who was well-connected to matatu-drivers in their home-village (i.e. social capital), in sending him food parcels whenever money was low. This was another strategy frequently applied by rural households (7 out of 30 interviews with labor migrants) that were supporting families in the city during the lockdown. In focus group discussions [FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu] and amongst all key informants it was narrated how chairs were taken out of local busses, turning them from passenger into transport vehicles, partially because the demand was high, but also because social distancing measures restricted drivers from allowing enough passengers into busses to make the trips profitable until long after the lockdown was lifted:

*"They could just call: Mom, mom! We are starving, we are starving. If the parents here could organize how food will go to them. So, there is a kind of project that is fixed here a lot. [...]. Food was coming from rural area to urban."* [KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu].

On March 2021, the participant received a call from an old colleague who had invested in a business similar to the job at the paper-making factory. First, the colleague used his acquired skills and the network of his old employer so set up a small shop. Then, he started calling former employees that he knew had lost their jobs during the lockdown, but had the type of skills he was looking for (social and human capital). A success story like this was also observed by another participant, who started a business in the food industry. Exempted from the mobility restrictions on the base of being categorized an essential service, the participant was able to utilize the network he had built as a production manager over the last 15 years to start a business venture during the COVID-19 pandemic which services now span across several counties [MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu]. Half of the labor migrants that were interviewed reported setting up a business venture or having plans to do so during the last two years. These businesses ranged from the one described above to micro-businesses in hawking and street vending.

In the most recent months of the mobility trajectory the participant relocated to an area in closer proximity to his job in order to save on costs for commuting. From March 2021 onwards, he started travelling between his workplace in Kajiado to his family in Mathare in the weekends. Once he has acquired enough capital, expressed the participant, he would like to return to Kisumu: *"What I was thinking is to start farming. After building my house, I want to start, eh, farming. Keeping birds, chickens. And eh, rearing pigs. [...]. I want to move from Nairobi to the rural."* Within 5 out of 10 interviews in the urban contexts, participants or household members of participants expressed having the same wish to start cultivating in rural areas once having acquired sufficient capital. Within the rural context, the majority of labor migrants (16 out of 20 participants) were engaged in subsistence farming at the time of interviewing or expressed a wish to acquire land to do so.

## 8.2 The importance of social capital

As illustrated through the example above and asserted in the literature (Desai and Potter, 2014; van Geel and Mazzucato, 2017; Ögden and Mazzucato, 2020) aside from natural capital, social capital played a very prominent role in securing livelihoods amongst the labor migrants interviewed (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Hierarchy chart code 'livelihood capitals', compared by number of coding references.



Social connections played a role in securing housing in which, for example, the nature of the relationship with your landlord determined whether you could be granted extra time to pay for accumulated debts [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare] or whether you would be locked outside the home [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; MM\_Participant023\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare; MM\_Participant030\_Mathare]. Social connections determined whether you had access to support from non-governmental organizations, informal (women) groups, government support and school feeding programmes [FGD\_003\_Maragwa; [KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo]; [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare]; [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant21\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant023\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant024\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]; [MM\_Participant030\_Mathare]. Participants (11 out of 30) mentioned using their network from previous jobs, family-ties or friends to set up new business ventures or find employment opportunities. In the mobility map in figure 37, for example, a participant had reported using each casual job at a construction site to build relationships with fellow casual laborers in order to gain access to the next opportunity. At the same time, he shared costs of rent and food with them while living and working in different counties [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare].

In a last example mentioned a participant reflects on the importance of her social connections in overcoming a 3.5 million shilling debt after her parents had been hospitalized with COVID-19 in 2021: *“So, we went, we started opening groups. WhatsApp groups of which even now I have never deleted those WhatsApp groups. They helped me a lot. A lot. Because in the hospital where my dad was, that doctor told me, each and every day you will be coming with one hundred thousand. Every day. Less than that, we will disconnect. And my friends and my dad’s friends and my mum’s friends and the family’s friends, did this.”* [MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo]

It has to be emphasized though that specifically in the period right after the lockdown was imposed, some participants mentioned not being able to rely on friends and co-workers as they used to, because all of them were facing the same problem of unemployment [MM\_Participant008\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant017\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant023\_Mathare]. The same can be said about those participants who asserted they could not rely on family-ties in rural areas, simply because they themselves were unable to cope with the situation at hand either [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare]. As counts for all capitals in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, there is a need for being capable of accessing these different capitals, but even though this is true, social capital, as found in this research, has proven the most accessible and most frequently used (24 out of 30 participants mentioned making use of social ties for the above mentioned reasons).

## 8.1 Conclusion

The most frequently mentioned livelihood strategies (see figure 8 and Annex IX) are casual labor, subsistence farming (though it must be noted 20 out of 30 participants resided in rural Murang’a at the time of interviewing) and setting up micro, small and medium business ventures. Nearly half (14 out of 30 participants) that had a relatively stable (2 years or longer) source of income have resorted to casual labor since the lockdown and were still doing casual work at the time of interviewing, some of which in combination with micro business ventures. Though poorly paid, highly competitive and infrequent, the casual jobs have low barriers for entry, making them accessible to the labor migrants. Other livelihood strategies, as established in previous chapters, are related to relocation such as moving to cheaper houses, changing the home-base from urban to rural places or splitting up the household.

Though these livelihood strategies, in which livelihood diversification and the spanning of these livelihoods over spatially separated residences has been reported as an ongoing trend in Sub-Saharan African countries in literature (Ramisch, 2015; Desai and Potter, 2014), the focus group participants described it as a COVID-19 take-away. Perhaps the immediacy of a loss of income reasserted the need to spread risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, other livelihood strategies were related to the most frequently mentioned livelihood capital (26 out of 30 participants), namely social capital. Examples are the receiving of (reversed) remittances (food, but also money), the use of loans or borrowing of money from social connections, investments in business ventures of family members, (re)schooling and training, table banking and gaining access to funds from different stakeholders. Much like casual labor, social capital seemed the most easily accessed by the targeted participants in this research.

## 9. Research results: Impact livelihood outcomes migrants and caregivers

As asserted by Winters et al. (2021) in their notions of development corridors the mobility flows of labor migrants cannot be studied without taking into account the impact of their movement on family-ties in their places of origins. This became especially clear during the focus group discussions with caregivers from labor migrants that had returned (temporarily or permanently) to rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following chapter discusses how their return impacted the livelihood outcomes of themselves as well as their caregivers by answering the question: *“How have the mobility trajectories of Kenyan labor migrants impacted the livelihood outcomes of themselves and that of the households in rural areas in the last two years of the pandemic?”* Though the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework discusses a myriad of outcomes ranging from reduced vulnerability to a more sustainable use of natural resources, this chapter will focus on those aspects most frequently mentioned by participants in the research.

### Box 5. Field observations: Coping strategies

*The rain had come, though later than usual. The farmers I spoke to started to get uneasy as the hot sun shriveled up the crops they had planted after the first shower a few weeks earlier. I was hiding underneath a shed at the local market and decided to wait until it would become acceptable, to Dutch standards, to face the weather and hurry my way back home. My neighbors invited me to come and say hello. They were surrounded by woven baskets with green leaves and twigs which I noticed they had been chewing on since I left town this morning. Though it made their eyes look tired, they guaranteed it gave them some sort of hyper focus which may have played a role in them remembering my unconventional name the first time I had met them. If I had not known better, it looked like a herb that could be used in a home-cooked meal which is why I almost accepted their invitation to try some. When I talked to Bobby and Joan, I asked whether they thought men could share their worries in the same way women could. They replied that they could, but that, unfortunately, they often do so in bars while drinking or chewing on mira, to relief anxiety or simply pass the time.*

## 9.1 Reduced vulnerability and food security

The following quote stems from a participant who is the eldest sister to two labor migrants that returned home during the pandemic. In addition to her own four kids, her two siblings brought six more kids into her home: “[...]. I have a small house, two bedroom, which is not very much. So, it was, eh, hectic, feeding those children, washing for their, their clothes, washing them. Taking care of them. To go out of the compound which is not fenced. It was really hectic. And then, the parents, they were not in a position to assist me in any way. [...]. One was a bar maid [laughs]. So, the bars were closed. Now, she become unemployed. The other one had a green grocer. Even the green grocers in Nairobi were affected so much. So, it was really hectic.” [FGD\_004\_Kiharu].

The quote raises a few important points. Firstly, all labor migrants that were interviewed had multiple children under their care (see Annex. VII). This meant that most of them did not remigrate by themselves. They often brought their spouse and multiple children, which ultimately congested the house of the caregiver where they took refuge. And although the labor migrants may have decreased their living expenses considerably by no longer having to pay for expensive rental fees in the city, living expenses of caregivers who took them in, rose considerably. Having lost employment or business ventures, it also meant that the labor migrants who returned to rural areas were not very well capable of making financial contributions to the household.

Another point that can be made, is that the caregiver in this context, can be broadly defined and was not limited to mainly fathers and mothers of labor migrants. Though this group was particularly problematic according to some participants for being aged and not too well off themselves [FGD\_003\_Maragwa; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa], siblings and friends of labor migrant have also been reported taking labor migrants in [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa]. In some cases, specifically when it concerned labor migrants that were single mothers, the children of labor migrants were also forced to step in to take care of their mothers and younger siblings while their parents tried to search for livelihoods in rural areas [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare; MM\_Participants025\_Mathare; MM\_Participant013\_Kiharu]. Some participants noted that this childcare resulted into them missing out on opportunities to save and opportunities for jobs and business ventures. In later stages of the pandemic, when schools re-opened, it also affected education opportunities for young caregivers [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant025\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare].

With regards to food security, land has proven of enormous value, since the 'shamba's' or kitchen gardens were key to providing enough food for an expanded household during the pandemic [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. Participants of several focus group discussions also reported sending food to those family members that (in)voluntarily remained in urban areas. It was reported how passenger busses were turned into food transport vehicles during the lockdown period and how transport fees raised, because of the increased demand for this transport services [FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant001\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare]. In most cases the return of migrants resulted into an increased demand for land for cultivation. To some participants it was a positive outcome that land, previously idle, was now being made productive by their children who started to invest in it where they had not done so before. To others, it meant that the little land they had, had to be shared amongst a larger amount of household members. However, in most cases in the rural context household members cooperated: *"[...] So, when they came we are still working together with them. We cooperate. We also keep livestock. And we are able also even to feed them. So we get to eat from our meat. So, we get food from our shamba's, so, we minimize the work of going out and buying. So, we get vegetables, maize and beans. And maize also bring us flour. [...]. So, we not all day struggle, although it is a struggle, because five people are coming to your family at once. And the parents are also growing old. And they are the person to sustain them."* [FGD\_002\_Maragwa]. Participants who had no access to land, frequently reported a wish to acquire it or invest in the keeping of chickens and in livestock to secure food provision for the family [MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant002\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo].

## 9.2 Well-being: Household dynamics

Interestingly, many focus group participants pointed out that male participants, specifically, struggled with getting used to the rural lifestyle [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; FGD\_004\_Kiharu]. They clarified that during the first few months of the lockdown (April, 2020 onwards), with no outlook of when the pandemic would end, many men expected to be able to go back to work in the city within a short time-frame. This was perceived as the reason why they were reluctant at first to find work.

In addition, it was tied to feelings of embarrassment: *"You know my son would look for, maybe, grass for the cows. But still it feels embarrassing. It feels like it is not the right thing to be done. He needs to be in the city where he used to, where he has got a job. People used to see him smart, now he is collecting grass. You know. It disturbs him."* [FGD\_001\_Maragwa]. The embarrassment plays into the drastic change in lifestyle in which the lifestyle of the city is perceived by the migrants as superior (see Chapter 7). One participant even mentioned getting counselling for his children who were born and raised in Nairobi and unable to understand why they were forced to live in rural areas where *"students are not wearing shoes"* and the *"school doesn't have a floor"* [MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa]. This participant also experienced feelings around shame, as being unable to sustain his family like he used to, being the breadwinner of the house. It was also frequently mentioned amongst key participants [KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant002\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare] and something that affected 5 other migrants interviewed for the research: *"It was terrible for me. Because you know I am supposed to be the breadwinner and now I can't do anything in the house, only my wife doing a job. It is like now my wife is feeding me, you see? So, I felt very bad. That's why I say I look for something to do."* [MM\_Participant026\_Mathare].

The man's duty as a breadwinner is a perception not just shared amongst men, but also amongst women. According to focus group participants, this frequently led to a lack of understanding between husbands and wives and an increase in broken families. Two male participants explained how their inability to make money during the lockdown period, was a result of their wives leaving them and bringing their kids with them. In even more dire situations, a lack of understanding and an increasing pressure on the household members, led to increases in substance abuse and/or domestic violence: *"[name participant] has married me, yeah? We are staying in the same house. I used to see [name participant] waking up every morning going out to find something to put on the table. But now COVID is here with us. He can't move, he can't go out to find something. He has to sleep from noon to noon. Just sleeping. So, you find, [...] we start quarrelling, the first thing that [name participant] will do, because he is so hungry. He will just slap me. And start fighting, fighting, gender based violence. That is what was happening."* [KI\_Participant004\_Mathare]. One of the focus group participants in Maragwa also explains how this affected her as a caregiver, who took the quarreling household members in: *"So you can see. The tension becomes very high. So, this man, he is my son. [...] he used to have some money, now he doesn't have. What will he do? He will go and drink beer. And where does that money come from? It comes from me, because he comes and says: Mom, I just feel like I want to go there, to the town, to meet some people and I have nothing in my pocket."*

*So, you get it from your pocket even though you are so hungry. [...] Then, by the time he comes back home is already drunkard. [...] There is so much disappointment, because the wife will ask: Why is he getting money to drink and he is not working? [...] You know. That discomfort."*

[FGD\_001\_Maragwa].

Those households that managed to collaborate, expressed that a mutual understanding between husband and wife about the crisis situation, resulted into a temporary change in household dynamics: *"But she was caring, though. Because she was looking for what I was caring for her when I am at work. Whatever she was needing, I was providing. So, when that time come, she is the one who was providing for me. [...]. Feeding me, feeding the family, to the little I was giving her."*

[MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo]. Husbands remained at home, tending the land or looking after the kids while women stepped out looking for support from table banking groups or used their network to get access to employment opportunities. Ultimately, it became their job to find the money or other means to feed the family [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_002\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant001\_Kiharu; KI\_Participant002\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant014\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant016\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant026\_Mathare].

To some caregivers, upon being asked about the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, the return of their children, friends or other extended family meant a greater unity between them [FGD\_001\_Maragwa], parents spending more time with their children [KI\_Participant005\_Mathare] and family members increasing contact frequency since the COVID-19 pandemic: *"There is also a family, a neighbor, they came after COVID-19 they went back to Nairobi. Now I see every end of month, they come to see their mother, because of how their mother treated them. They were given a house [...]. . So, after going back to Nairobi they are coming over now to see their mother."* [FGD\_001\_Maragwa].

### 9.3 Well-being: Mental health

Though this research, by no means, is qualified to make assumptions on the state of mental health and mental health care in the country or diagnose participants included in the study, it is important to note that the issue of mental health and the lack of support or recognition for this impact on both labor migrants and their caregivers is highlighted as this, too, can be recognized as an impact that has long-lasting effects on the well-being of the targeted population.

The issue was raised by key informants, focus group discussion participants and the participants themselves, some of which were officially diagnosed with a mental health illnesses (e.g. depression and suicide ideation) whereas others were not, but reported experiencing mental health problems such as prolonged feelings of stress and anxiety [MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant013\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant016\_Kiharu; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare; MM\_Participant028\_Mathare KI\_Participant004\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare].

According to one key informant in Mathare and focus group participants in Murang'a, what is often referred to as being 'psychologically' or 'mentally disturbed', occurred especially amongst labor migrants who were under the continuous stress of providing housing, food and school fees for their children after suddenly losing their means of making a living in the last two years: "OK. She is saying, it is like the husband was affected psychologically. Since he came back home, he was not even moving outside of the house. He could only stay at the house. I think he was challenged. This is the daughter who came back home, the other kids are [out of] school, this house is a rental house and now, as a father, as a husband, he is not able to provide." [MM\_Participant016\_Kiharu]. Another participant described how she had to consolidate her daughter, a labor migrant who returned home and was unable to grapple with the fact that she had lost her job and had to leave her child into the care of her mother in order to keep surviving in Nairobi and providing for her [MM\_Participant013\_Kiharu]. The participant reported it took her nearly a month before she was in a state where she was able to start helping her mother on the land and in the house. In an even more severe case, a participant describes how she was diagnosed with depression after her teenage daughter had arranged for her mother to speak to a counsellor after showing signs of suicidal ideation: "But when I came back here October 2020, kind of, I just felt, I had no interest in living anymore. So my daughter is big, she was in form 4, talked to a lady, and that lady took me to the hospital then I started medication for depression. [...] I also went to the counseling. Which I still do up to [this] day. [...]. Though it got to a time that the county cannot give us the medication, so it's been hard, because there is no way I am going to sell clothes and get money for depression and at times those drugs are very moody. I cannot be able to wake up and make money for my young ones. So I just stopped taking the medication." [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa]. Even though this participant was able to get help to some extent, many participants who have lived under a continuous amount of stress and anxiety, in some cases up to the time the research was conducted (March-May, 2022), have not been able to access this or, alternatively, had to rely on family and friends to consolidate them when they were in distress.

Though key participants in Mathare were making efforts to set up support groups for youth and women and the Kenyan government set up a hotline for people suffering from mental health problems illnesses, it was agreed too little had been done to address these issues.

## 9.4 Conclusion

Caregivers that have taken labor migrants in have been impacted considerably with regards to increases in living expenses, taking care of extended family (especially children who remained at home), sharing of natural resources that in some cases were already quite limited, living in congested homes and dealing with changes in household dynamics; some severe cases mounting into substance abuse, conflict and the breaking of families. In addition, consolidating those family members that have experienced (and may still be experiencing) the emotional distress that comes with a sudden loss of income, change of lifestyle or/and an inability to provide for the family as is expected from them. The lack of attention or recognition that goes out to these psychological impacts, according to them, is compensated by the ability to tap into networks of friends, family and support groups, though some diagnosed mental health illnesses require professional help or medication most of the labor migrants have insufficient access to these.

## 10. Conclusion and discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of people all around the world. Though reversed migration flows spiked an interest amongst scholars and journalists in the first months of the pandemic (Kharthikeyan & Jain, 2020; Lee et al. 2020; Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2021; Bhalla, 2020; Wasike, 2020), little remains known about how the people returning from the city to rural areas have been faring after the first and subsequent lockdown measures were imposed. Even more so, the onset of the Ukrainian war and the rising concerns surrounding climate-change induced migration (Randell, 2015), often perceived to be international though the Groundswell Report (World Bank, 2021b) asserts much takes place internally, may shift the focus from internal to international migration even further away in (development) policy.

This research looks into the lives of Kenyan labor migrants travelling regionally between Nairobi and rural counties in Kenya. It researches how COVID-19 induced mobility flows impacted livelihood strategies applied, with a focus on this much researched immediate impact, but also on how their lives transpired beyond the first few months of 2020.

The qualitative research made use of (life-history) interviews, mobility mapping activities, focus group discussions and key informant interviews to answer the question: "What are the COVID-19 induced mobility trajectories of Kenyan labor migrants and how did these movements impact their livelihood strategies in the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic?" The research contributes to the limited body of knowledge surrounding mid- to long-term impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups by providing primary data collected in Kenya from March to May 2022. According to a literature review done by LANDac (2022) primary data has been limited to date (2022), especially in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. With regards to societal relevance, gaining insights into mobility trajectories of labor migrants in Kenya may lay the groundwork for adjusting social support packages and programmes in such a manner that is better tailored to their needs in a crisis situation.

### 10.1 Results and relevance for broader debates

Mobility trajectories collected and studied in this research reiterated the point made by van Geel and Mazzucato (2018), Anschütz and Mazzucato (2022), Ögden and Mazzucato (2021) and Schapendonk et al. (2021) in which migration should not be viewed as an isolated and incidental activity, but something inextricably linked to the daily lives of labor migrants.

This became apparent during the lockdown measures in which the livelihood strategies of labor migrants that spanned across different localities became unavailable to them. And after the lockdown measures when the labor migrants made use of their family ties in rural areas as a social safety net. Mobility patterns revealed important economic nodes within Nairobi (e.g. Eastleigh) and between different counties (e.g. Nairobi and neighboring counties) that provided an explanation as to why the migrants in this research have been affected disproportionately. After all, the Kenyan government closed exactly those nodes important for their daily survival for a considerable amount of time (6 months). In addition, an already unstable foundation of most labor migrants, most of whom lived in rental homes in informal settlements, worked in the informal sector or ran informal businesses, could not weaponize themselves against the immediacy of a sudden loss in income.

Equally important and asserted by Carling (2002) and through the work of Schapendonk et al. (2021) is (in)voluntary immobility. For those remaining involuntarily immobile, it is important to realize much of it had to do with a lack of access to resources necessary to make such migration decisions (de Haas, 2010). A lack of access to land (natural capital) in this study occurred most often amongst single mothers who had lost or were no longer in contact with her spouse. Competing interests between the mothers and their in-laws and a lack of financial capital at their disposition, made it impossible for them to reassert their right to land. To many others, there was insufficient financial capital to build on land or make it productive. Some could not even pay for the transportation fee to return to home-villages. In some cases social connections (social capital) with family in rural areas were also reported weak or problematic for other reasons than competing interests in land [MM\_Participant024\_Mathare; KI\_Participant005\_Mathare; MM\_Participant028\_Mathare; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare].

Interestingly, a small group of people also emerged from the research that did not fall under the definition of a labor migrant, but were involuntarily immobile nonetheless. A key informant in Mathare explained that because the informal settlements had existed for over 50 years at the time of interviewing (April, 2022), a generation now resides in the area that has been born and raised there, rather than having moved. It raises a point where not just the trajectory of a migrant must be taken into consideration, but also the way in which localities where migrants reside have developed over the years. This point was raised through the work of Kleinman (2019) in her ethnographic work on the lives of Northern and Western African labor migrants through Gare du Nord in Paris, a space utilized by migrants for creating meaningful social encounters and gathering opportunities.

The reason this group of people, too, is important to take into consideration, is because as time passes and the process of urbanization evolves, an increasing group may not have access to the social safety nets described in literature by Awumbila (2017), Mberu et al. (2012), Flahaux and de Haas (2017) and Ramisch (2015) in which they are described as a phenomenon that has always played an important role in the lives of internal migrants. Although this might be true, the accessibility to these social connections must not be taken for granted in the future.

The access to these important social tie are also restrained, because some families in rural areas may not be capable of acting as such a social safety net [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant021\_Mathare; MM\_Participant022\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare]. Notions of development corridors rightfully address there is a two-way traffic between localities which possesses opportunities to gain access to, diversify and enhance livelihoods (Zoomers & van Westen, 2011; Winters et al. 2021). Many participants, for example, have asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted into an increase in investment in land and houses in rural areas [FGD\_001\_Maragwa; FGD\_003\_Kigumo; KI\_Participant001\_Maragwa; KI\_Participant003\_Kigumo; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant026\_Mathare; MM\_Participant027\_Mathare; MM\_Participant029\_Mathare]. This also means, however, that both localities can be impacted negatively (Winters et al. 2021). Insights into these relationships are important, because participants have consistently criticized social support packages and programmes by the government to be lacking in terms of distribution, which was often inconsistent and incidental in nature, and for being focused mostly on the mitigation of the virus spreading rather than the relief of negative long-term socio-economic impacts.

Equally important is the lack of recognition that went out to those caregivers who carried the burden of catering to a sudden influx of labor migrants who, more often than not, did not travel alone, but brought their entire household with them. Participants in focus group discussions reported how extra mouths to feed had put strains on natural resources, how their homes became congested and how they had to navigate changes in household dynamics, how living expenses increased and how they had to take on the care of children. Their vital role in ensuring the living situation of labor migrants and their families stabilized and that they could, to some extent, rebound after the lockdown period, has been overlooked or is perhaps not even recognized by the caregivers themselves. Aside from being recognized as a vulnerable group that needs access to social support programmes, the caregivers were also situated in rural areas which, as has been found in the research, was an area more poorly reached by government support than urban areas.

In more severe cases, caregivers also offered consolidation to labor migrants that had been victims of domestic violence, substance abuse or were struggling with or are still struggling with mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, depression and suicide ideation. The emotional distress, as mentioned by some participants, was a result of a sudden loss of income which, in turn, resulted into sudden and drastic changes in the ability to provide as a breadwinner, changed lifestyles and affected the dynamics in the households. Jaguga and Kowbah (2020) asserted early on that psychological first aid was not offered during the crisis. Though Jaguga and Kowbah (2020) stress the need for an increase in mental health facilities and workers in Kenya (the psychologist to population ratio is dire, with 1 psychologist for every 4,600,000 people), they point out that at a global level the WHO Global Influenza Preparedness Plan also lacked components for mental health care. Though some initiatives have been set up by grassroot organizations, such as GROOTS Kenya, whose youth leaders and community organizers set up youth coaching programmes during the pandemic, and though some participants found access to counseling [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa; MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa], others had been unable to get access to these services or the proper medication necessary to cope with these problems which may have long-lasting effects on their well-being that go beyond the pandemic.

The lack of government support does not imply participants have been unable to organize themselves. The most commonly mentioned livelihood strategy was getting access to casual labor, which ranged from household chores to construction work or other odd jobs. Though this type of work offers low pay, is temporary and irregular in nature and does not include any formal working agreement or social security, it is also easily accessed and combined with small business ventures. Participants (14 out of 30) that used to work in micro-, small and medium enterprises or used to be employed with fixed wages, have started new (often smaller) business ventures and combined such activities with casual work. The perception is that participants are no longer at the mercy of an employer for their daily earnings and that they spread the risk over several sources of income. Livelihood strategies outside the scope of (informal) employment and businesses has proven to revolve much around the active use of social capital, as asserted by Desai and Potter (2014). Social capital has been used to relocate to rural areas, to gain access to government support, school feeding programmes, small credit (chama or table banking) or programmes implemented by non-government organizations. It is used to obtain new skills (human capital), to pay off outstanding debts or ask for debt relief, to purchase food on credit and to exchange food and other products.

Though much can be said about the way of 'hustling', this belief over a person's autonomy to make life changes, must not be romanticized. For as much as it means people are capable of thinking of creative and inventive ways to survive, 'hustling' also implies that people are merely coping (Desai and Potter, 2014). Neither must a focus on structural problems such as poverty and corruption lead to arguments of futility. Randell (2015) argues that theories on forced migration largely focus on structure, rather than agency within this debate, in which there is a lack of recognition of how individuals may respond differently to the same external conditions. Though this research was simply too limited to make any hard conclusions on how ongoing structures and structural changes have impacted labor migrants, the entry-point of the research was the agent and his ability to cope. Of course, it is to be debated whether a focus on labor migrants has filtered out 'the most vulnerable' in society, but it is a start in recognizing individual agency within migration theories. If anything, migration fuels the dynamics between both structure and agency (Randell, 2015; de Haas, 2010) which is why it is proposed that policy implementers learn from the ways in which individual agents take charge of their lives in times of crisis and should complement these efforts with support packages that are tailored to their specific needs.

The research shows this requires much complex and detailed information. Firstly, it requires knowing a locality and how this locality has developed throughout the years. Think of programmes for 'slum upgrading', for example. Without knowing which parties actually are in ownership of the slums (e.g. renters and landlords in this study) and what this powerplay means to the 'truly vulnerable' such an intervention may not lead to the desired outcomes [MM\_Participant029\_Mathare]. Secondly, it requires knowing the target population of the support packages. Being offered tax exemptions does little for a group of people largely employed in informal sectors (Nyadera and Onditi, 2020). Thirdly, it requires knowing how the targeted individuals connect to people in localities outside their residences. Lastly, on a structural level, it requires knowing how existing structures are keeping barriers up for people to rebound from crises. Think of corruption in the distribution of support and knowing which players might benefit from keeping such barriers up.

Gaining insights in the lives of this vulnerable group of people and listening to their needs can improve how best to aid them in the next crisis. Within and outside Kenya, the COVID-19 pandemic is largely declared as over. To many participants, however, the consequences are still felt in 2022 (e.g. job volatility, accumulated debts, housing and food insecurity, mental health problems).

By describing the pandemic as 'tired' or finalized, the subject is declared irrelevant for future research and policy and as such, a group of people that is still suffering from these consequences is denied from receiving help in rebounding from the current crisis and being cushioned against the next. In the run up to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, most importantly, it is stressed that we therefore continue to live up to the promise of 'leaving no one behind'.

## 10.2 Limitations

The methods used in this research were inspired by methods applied by the AGEVEN-grids (Antoine et al. 1987) and dr. Mazzucato and her phd-students in the project MO-TRAYL. It must be asserted that this study was ethnographic, took 14 months of field work, was focused on mobility trajectories of the entire life-span of Ghanaian youth and tailored to both internal and international migration (Anschütz, personal communication, date; Ögden, personal communication, date). Applying such a method to a smaller scale (internal migration), a shorter time-frame (2020-2022) and conducting it in merely two months plays into the degree to which the research subject could be explored. Furthermore, Levine (2014) rightfully points out that in order to fully grasp a concept as broad and versatile as livelihoods, longitudinal studies are necessary. This also concerns the degree to which impacts into people's lives can be isolated as being solely driven by measures and regulations from COVID-19. It has become clear from this research and research done by Wangu & Githuku (2022) that the measures and regulations, in many cases, exacerbated inequalities that already existed. A last limitation to the methodology used, is the fact that much of the data gathered is based on memories. It can be argued that behavior, feelings and decisions made can be best captured in the given moment, rather than looking back on a period in time. It also plays into the degree to which a person can remember exact dates and events. More than once, participants were confused in what year the COVID-19 pandemic had started (2019, 2020 or 2021) and it reasserts that this may affect the degree to which the data is reproduced according to what actually happened when.

With regards to participant selection, gatekeepers were all closely connected to grassroots women organization GROOTS Kenya, resulting into some participants being part of their inner circle, ultimately affecting representation. A greater diversification of entry-points within the community may have led to an even greater variety of participants. Some participants also did not fit all characteristics described in the methodology section (Chapter 4).

Some participants in focus group discussions, who were supposed to be caregivers to labor migrants, were actually labor migrants themselves (limiting caregivers and labor migrants expressing their opinions about each other freely). Other participants had not moved back to rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic, though this also revealed a new group of participants and asserted the importance of looking into (in)voluntary immobility as well. With regards to the demarcating the geographical area of the research, it became clear that many labor migrants had social connections in rural areas other than Murang'a county.

The close proximity of Murang'a to Nairobi and the climatic conditions of the county play into the livelihood strategies and mobility patterns applied by participants which complicated finding commonalities amongst different participants, though this study, if anything, showcases versatility rather than homogeneity. Being a qualitative study and containing only 30 participants, furthermore, the research does not allow for generalization to a larger study population. Though the aim was to contribute to research in Sub-Saharan Africa, the high versatility of climatic conditions in rural areas of Kenya alone makes it difficult to make generalizations, especially on a subject matter as livelihoods, which is complex and versatile.

A last point made is that the participants and gatekeepers of the research have been given a reimbursement for their participation. Gatekeepers received a daily fee for their help with facilitating interviews, to cover for travel expenses and meals, for translating when necessary in interviews and introducing the researcher to participants. Participants were given a reimbursement for the time they spend on the interview which could sometimes take up to 1.5 hours of their day. Furthermore, focus group participants specifically were also reimbursed for travel expenses made to the central location where the discussions were being held. Participants were not informed about these reimbursements until after the interview to try, as much as possible, to avoid them from giving 'the right' or 'socially acceptable' answers.

### 10.3 Future research

Building on the previous, efforts can be made in future research on how the methodology used in this research can be applied on other types of regional migration patterns that have not been covered, such as seasonal, circular or cross-border migration. In addition, research can be done on the role of public participation on corruption and transparency of aid distribution and public spending. Corruption has been a conversation killer in many interviews that were conducted. The perception is that it cannot be addressed and that things will run the way they always have even after the 2022 elections.

Even though at a national scale this problem may not be solved in a lifetime, a key participant mentioned how sensitizing inhabitants in rural areas on their right to participate and critically question the county budget expenditures, may pose opportunities in ensuring local leaders can be held accountable for their expenditures. The activity of public participation and its effect on transparency of county budgets amongst local leaders is something that can be further explored, especially when it comes to distribution of aid programmes. Lastly, an increase in investment flows in rural areas as a result of an increased risk-aversity amongst labor migrants in times of crisis, spikes an interest in what could be the potential of deurbanization in the wake of growing urbanization globally.

## 11. Literature

- Abejide, L. E. O. & Simpson, A. (2021). Impacts of COVID-19 on migration dynamics and remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*. 4 (4). P. 126-139. Doi: 10.52589/AJSSHR-TOIKMMAV
- Agoramoorthy, G. & Hsu, M., J. (2020). *How the Coronavirus Lockdown Impacts the Impoverished in India*. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 8 (1), p. 1-6.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-020-00905-5>
- Amnesty International. (2020). *Kenya: Forced eviction leaves 3000 people homeless*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr32/3151/2020/en/>
- Anschütz, S. and V. Mazzucato. (2022). Travel and personal growth: the value of visits to the country of origin for transnational migrant youth. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2022.2036593.
- Anschütz, S. & Mazzucato, V. (2021). Reconceptualizing family reunification from a youth mobilities perspective: transnational youth between Ghana and Belgium, *Children's Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2021.1919998
- Antoine, P., Bry, X. & Diouf, P., D. (1987). The 'AGEVEN' Record: A Tool for the Collection of Retrospective Data. *Statistics Canada*. 13 (2). 163-171.
- ASSAR. (2018). Conducting Life History Interviews: A how-to guide. Found on [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325967603\\_Conducting\\_Life\\_History\\_Interviews\\_A\\_How-to\\_Guide](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325967603_Conducting_Life_History_Interviews_A_How-to_Guide)
- Awumbila, M. (2017). *Drivers of Migration and Urbanization in Africa: Key Trends and Issues*. International Migration. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/27/papers/III/paper-Awunbila-final.pdf>

- Ayanlade, A. & Radeny, M. (2020). COVID-19 and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa: implications of lockdown during agricultural planting seasons. *Science of food*, 4 (13). 1-6. 4:13 ;  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41538-020-00073->
- Bamgboye, E. L., Omiye, J. A., Oluwasegun J, A., Davids, M. R., Tannor, E. K., Wadee, S., Niang, A., Were, A., Naicker, S. (2021). COVID-19 Pandemic: Is Africa Different? *Journal of the National Medical Association*. 113 (3). 324-335.
- Bhalla, N. (2020). *Forced evictions leave 5,000 Kenyan slum dwellers at risk of coronavirus*. Retrieved from <https://news.trust.org/item/20200506115554-bt2r5/?source=package>
- Béné, C. (2020). Resilience of local food systems and links to food security – A review of some important concepts in the context of COVID-19 and other shocks. *Food Security*, 12. 805-622. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-020-01076-1>
- Boughton, D., Goep, J., Lambrecht, I., Headey, D., Takeshima, H., Mahrt, K., Masias, I., Goudet, S., Ragasa, C., Maredia, M., K., Minten, B. & Diao, X. (2020). *Impacts of COVID-19 on agricultural production and food systems in late transforming Southeast Asia: The case of Myanmar*. *Agricultural systems*, 188, article. 1-9.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2020.103026>
- Bohle, H. (2009). Sustainable livelihood security: Evolution and application. *Facing global environmental change*. (pp. 521-528). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Carling, J. (2002). Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 28 (1). p. 5-42. DOI: 10.1080/13691830120103912
- Catteneo, A. & Robinson, S. (2020). Multiple moves and return migration within developing countries: A comparative analysis. *Population Space Place*. 26. p. 1-21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2335>

Ceballos, F., Kannan, S. & Kramer B. (2020). Impacts of a national lockdown on smallholder farmers' income and food security: Empirical evidence from two states in India. *World Development*. 136. p. 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105069>

Corburn, J., Vlahov, D., Mberu, B., Riley, L., Caiaffa, W. T., Rashid, S. F., Ko, A., Patel, S., Jukur, S., Martínez-Herrera, E., Jayasinghe, S., Agarwal, S., Nguendo-Yongsi, B., Weru, J., Ouma, S., Edmundo, K., Oni, T. & Ayad, H. (2020). Slum health: Arresting COVID-19 and Improving Well-being in urban Informal Settlements. *J Urban Health*. p. 348-357. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00438-6>

Desai, V. & Potter, R. B. (2014). *The companion to development studies*. (3rd edition). Routledge.

De Haas, H. (2010). Migration transitions: A theoretical and empirical inquiry into the development drivers of international migration. International Migration Institute working paper. 24 (46). Found on <https://www.migrationinstitute.org/publications/wp-24-10>

De Vreede, C. (2021). *Livelihoods on the road: COVID-19 induced return migrations in Uganda. An explorative research about how these movements laid bare translocalities and have impacted the livelihoods of both returnees and receiving communities*. [unpublished thesis]. Utrecht University.

East African Community. (d.u.). *About EAC*. Retrieved from <https://www.eac.int/about-eac>

Falkingham, J., Chepngeno-Langat, G. & Evandrou, M. (2012). Outward Migration from Large Cities: Are Older Migrants in Nairobi 'Returning'? *Population, Space and Place*. 18. p. 327-343. Doi: 10.102/psp.678

FAO. (2020). *Protecting land and natural resources tenure rights in the era of COVID-19 by heeding the lessons from the past*. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0706en>

Flahaux, M. & de Haas, H. (2016). *African migration : trends, patterns drivers*. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 4 (1). p 2-25. DOI : 10.1186/s40878-015-0015-6

Geschiere, P. & Gugler, J. (1998). The urban-rural connection: Changing issues of belonging and identification. *Africa*. 68 (3). p. 309-319. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1161251>.

Gesese, H., A., Koye, D. N., Fetene, D. M., Woldegiorgis, M., Kinfu, Y., Geleto, A. B. Melaku, Y. A., Mohammed, H., Alene, K. A., Awoke, M. A., Birhanu, M. M., Gebremedhin, A. T., Gelaw, Y. A., Shifti, D. A., Muluneh, M. D., Tegegne, T. K., Abrha, S., Aregay, A. F., Ayalew, M. B., Gebre, A. K., Gebremariam, K. T., Gebremedhin, T., Gebremichael, L., Leshargie, C. T., Kibret, G. D., Meazaw, M. W., Mekonnen, A. b., Tekle, D. Y., Tesema, A. B., Tesfay, F. H., Tesfaye, W., Wubishet, B. L., Dachew, B. A., Adane, A. A. (2020). Risk factors for COVID-19 infection, disease severity and related deaths in Africa: a systematic review. *BMJ Open*. 11:e044618. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2020-044618

Githuku & Wangu (2021). *The socio-economic effects of covid-19 the covid-19 pandemic in rural Kenya*. [Unpublished manuscript]. LANDac.

Government of Kenya. (2020). The seventh presidential address on the coronavirus pandemic: the 8-point economic stimulus programme. Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020. Found on <https://www.president.go.ke/2020/05/23/the-seventh-presidential-address-on-the-coronavirus-pandemic-the-8-point-economic-stimulus-programme-saturday-23rd-may-2020/>

Guadagno, L. (2020). Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis. Found on <https://publications.iom.int/books/mrs-no-60-migrants-and-covid-19-pandemic-initial-analysis>.

Gupta, D., Fischer, H., Shrestha, S., Ali, S., S., Chhatre, A., Devkota, K., Fleischman, F., Khatri, D., B. & Rana, P. (2021). *Dark and bright spots in the shadow of the pandemic: Rural livelihoods, social vulnerability, and local governance in India and Nepal*. *World Development*, 141 (5). Article 105370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105370>

GROOTS Kenya. (2017). Champions for Transformative Leadership. Found on <https://grootskenya.org/project/champions-for-transformative-leadership/>

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. (2nd edition). SAGE Publications Ltd.

ILO. (2021). *The informal Economy in Kenya*. Found on [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_ent/documents/publication/wcms\\_820312.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_820312.pdf)

IMF. (2021). *Policy responses to COVID-19*. Found on <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#K>

Jaguga, F. & Kowbah, E. (2020). *Mental health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya: A review*. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*. 14 (1). p. 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-020-00400-8>

Karthikeyan, P. I. & Jain, V. K. (2020). *COVID-19 and the plight of migrants in India*. *Postgrad Med J*. (97 (1149)). p. 471-472. Doi: 10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-138454

Kagunda, R. (2012). *Characteristics of Out-migrants from Nyeri, Murang'a and Kiambu counties in Kenya*. [unpublished thesis]. University of Nairobi.

Kohnert, D. (2021). *The impact of Brexit on Africa in times of Corona Crisis. The case of South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya*. AfricArxiv tdbgu, Center for Open Science. DOI: 10.31219/osf.io/tdbgv

Knirsch, L. (2021). *The informal sector of Kampala. Return Migrations and other Livelihood Strategies in response to the Covid-19 Crisis*. [unpublished thesis]. Utrecht University.

Kleinman, J. (2019). *Adventure capital: Migration and the Making of an African Hub in Paris*. (1<sup>st</sup> edition). University of California Press.

LANDac. (d.u.). *About us*. Retrieved from <https://www.landgovernance.org/about-us/>

- LANDac. (2021). *Blog Series : Land Governance and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.landgovernance.org/online-hub-land-governance-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/online-hub-land-governance-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-blogs/>
- Lee, J., Mahmud, M., Morduch, J., Ravindran, S. & Shonchoy, A. (2020). COVID-19 and the Great Reverse Migration in South Asia. Found on <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/covid-19-and-great-reverse-migration-south-asia>
- Levine, S. (2014). How to study livelihoods : Bringing a sustainable livelihoods framework to life. Working paper: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium Overseas Development Institute. UK. Found on <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/How-to-study-livelihoods-Bringing-a-sustainable-livelihoods-framework-to-life.pdf>
- Lokot, M. (2021). Whose voices? Whose knowledge? A Feminist Analysis of the Value of Key Informant Interviews. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 20. 1-8. DOI: 10.1177/1609406920948775
- Murzakulova, A., Dessalegn, M. & Phalkey, N. (2021). Examining migration governance : evidence of rising insecurities due to COVID-19 in China, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal and Thailand. *Comparative Migration Studies*. 9 (44). p. 1 -16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00254-0>.
- Mberu, B. U., Ezeh, A. C., Chepngeno-Langat, G., Kimani, J., Oti, S. & Beguy, D. (2012). *Family Ties and Urban-Rural Linkages among Older Migrants in Nairobi Informal Settlements*. *Population, Space and Place*, 19 (3). 275-293. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1002/psp.1711>
- Meijer, M. (2021). *Voedselzekerheid ten tijde van COVID-19. Een literatuuronderzoek naar voedselzekerheid van rurale huishoudens in lage- en middeninkomenslanden tijdens de COVID-19 pandemie*. [unpublished literature review]. Utrecht University.
- Ministry of Health Kenya. (d.u.). COVID-19 Situation Reports (SITREP). Found on <https://www.health.go.ke/#1621663241218-5a50bcac-41da>

Murang'a County Government. (d.u.). About the county. Found on  
[https://muranga.go.ke/?page\\_id=3130](https://muranga.go.ke/?page_id=3130)

Murang'a County Government. (2018). County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022. Retrieved from <https://cog.go.ke/media-multimedia/reportss/category/106-county-integrated-development-plans-2018-2022?download=311:murang-a-county-integrated-development-plan-2018-2022>

MO-TRAYL. (d.u.). Mobility trajectories of young lives: life chances of transnational youth in Global South and North. Found on <https://motrayl.com/research>

National Council for Population and Development. (2020). The state of Kenya population 2020. Found on [https://kenya.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/state\\_of\\_kenya\\_population\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://kenya.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/state_of_kenya_population_report_2020.pdf)

Nchanji, E., Lutomia, C., Chirwa, R., Templer N., Rubyogo, J. & Onyango, P. (2021). Agricultural systems. 188 (103034). p. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agry.2020.103034>

Nyadera, I., N. & Onditi, F. (2020). COVID-19 experience among slum dwellers in Nairobi: A double tragedy or useful lesson for public health reforms? *International Social Work*. 63 (6). 838-841. DOI: 10.1177/0020872820944997

Ögden, L. J. & Mazzucato, V. (2022). Changing relationships to the country of origin through transnational mobility: migrant youth's visits to Ghana. *Mobilities*. 17 (3). p. 397-414. Doi: 10.1080/17450101.2021.1935304

Ominde, Hongo, S., Ingham, K., Ntarangwi, M. (last update September 28, 2021). *Kenya*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kenya>

- Okilwaa, Nathern, S., A. (2015). *Figure 2. Map of Kenya Regional Division and Ethnic Distribution*. Adapted from GeoCurrents Maps. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318883233\\_Educational\\_Marginalization\\_Examining\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Possibilities\\_for\\_Improving\\_Educational\\_Outcomes\\_in\\_Northeastern\\_Kenya/figures?lo=1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318883233_Educational_Marginalization_Examining_Challenges_and_Possibilities_for_Improving_Educational_Outcomes_in_Northeastern_Kenya/figures?lo=1)
- Oxfam Novib. (2020). *COVID 19 and vulnerable hardworking Kenyans*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-kenya-social-protection-101120-en.pdf>
- Paganini, N., Adinata, K., Butheleze, N., Harris, D., Lemke, S., Luis, A., Koppelin, J., Karriem, A., Ncube, F., Aguirre, E. N., Ramba, T., Raimundo, I., Sulejmanovic, N., Swanby, H., Tevera, D., Stöber, S. (2020). *Sustainability (Switzerland)*. 12 (20). p. 1-26. Doi: 10.3390/su12208556
- Pape, J., U., Sinha, N., Delius, A., J. (2020). *COVID-19 Rapid Response Phone Survey Households 2020-2021 Panel. Kenya, 2020-2021*. Retrieved from <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3774/get-microdata>
- Pinchoff, J., Kraus-Perrotta, C., Austrian, K., Tidwell, J. B., Abuya, T., Mwanga, D., Kangwana, B., Ochako, R., Muluve, E., Mbushi, F., Nzioki, M. & Ngo, T. D. (2021). Mobility Patterns During COVID-19 Travel Restrictions in Nairobi Urban Informal Settlements: Who Is Leaving Home and Why. *Urban Health*. 98. 211-221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00507-w>
- Posel, D. & Casale, D. (2021). *Moving during times of crisis: Migration, living arrangements and COVID-19 in South Africa*. African Institute of Mathematical Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2021.e00926>
- Quaife, M., van Zandvoort K., Gimma, A., Shah, A., McCreesh, N., Prem, K., Barasa, E., Mwanga, D., Kangwana, B., Pinchoff, J., CMMID COVID-19 Working Group, Edmunds, W. J., Jarvis, C. I., Austrian, K. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 control measures on social contacts and transmission in Kenyan informal settlements. *BMC Medicine*. 18 (316). 1-11. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01779-4>

- Ramisch, J. (2016). 'Never at ease': cellphones, multilocational households, and the metabolic rift in western Kenya. *Agriculture and Human Values*. 33 (4). Doi: 10.1007/S10460-015-9654-3/FIGURES/3
- Randell, H. (2015). Structure and agency in development-induced forced migration: the case of Brazil's Belo Monte Dam. *Population Environment*. 37 (3). p. 265-287. Doi: 10.1007/s11111-015-0245-4
- Schapendonk, J., Bolay, M. & Dahinden, J. (2021). *The conceptual limits of the 'migration journey'. De-exceptionalising mobility in the context of West African trajectories. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47 (14), p 3243-3259.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804191>
- Schapendonk, J. & Steel, G. (2014). Following Migrant Trajectories: The Im/Mobility of Sub-Saharan Africans en Route to the European Union. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 104 (2). p. 262-270. Doi: 10.1080/00045608.2013.862135
- Serrat, O. (2017). *Proposition 5. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Knowledge Solutions*, 21-26. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9\_5
- Tacoli, C. (1998). *Rural-urban interactions: a guide to the literature. Environment and Urbanization*, 19 (1). 147-166. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ubc.ca/internationalwaters/files/2015/09/Rural-Urban-Interactions-a-guide-to-literature.-.pdf>
- UN Habitat. (2020). Informal settlements' vulnerability mapping in Kenya. Facilities and partners' mapping in Nairobi and Kisumu settlements. The case of Mathare. Found on [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/08/the\\_case\\_of\\_mathare\\_final.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/08/the_case_of_mathare_final.pdf)
- UN Migration. (2018). Migration in Kenya. A country profile 2018. Retrieved from [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp\\_kenya\\_2018.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mp_kenya_2018.pdf)
- Vancluysen, S. (2020). Deconstructing borders: Mobility strategies of South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. *Global Networks*, 22. p. 20-35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12322>

- Van Geel, J. & Mazzucato, V. (2017). *Conceptualizing youth mobility trajectories: thinking beyond conventional categories*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44 (13). P. 2144-2162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1409107>
- Wangu, J. (May 11, 2020). *The threat of Covid-19 in Kenya: thoughts and worries, and the urgent need for social protection and safety net plans*. Retrieved from <https://www.landgovernance.org/online-hub-land-governance-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/online-hub-land-governance-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-blogs/7713-2/>
- Wasike, A. (July 10, 2020). *Kenya: Exodus from cities creates anxiety in rural areas: As people leave cities to escape from COVID-19, financial hardships, fear of pandemic wave hang in rural areas*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/kenya-exodus-form-cities-creates-anxiety-in-rural-areas/1907564#:~:text=Many%20residents%20in%20the%20Kenyan%20capital%20of%20Nairobi,to%20unchecked%20arrival%20of%20people%20from%20affected%20counties.>
- Winters, N., Steel, G. & Sosa, C. (2021). Chapter 2: Moving far away to stay: translocal livelihoods, labor migration corridors and mobility in rural Nicaragua. In M. Zoomers, M. Leung, K. Otsuki & G. Van Westen (Eds), *Handbook of translocal development and global mobilities*. (12-26). Cheltenham/Northampton: Elgar Publishing.
- World bank. (2016). *Kenya urbanization review*. February, 2016. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/639231468043512906/pdf/AUS8099-WP-P148360-PUBLIC-KE-Urbanization-ACS.pdf>
- World Bank. (2021). *Population growth (annual %) - Kenya*. Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=KE>
- World Bank. (2021a). *Arable land (% of land area) - Kenya*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.ARBL.ZS?locations=KE&view=chart>
- World Bank (2021b). *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on internal climate migration*. Found on <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>

Zoomers, A., van Westen, G. (2011). Introduction: translocal development, development corridors and development chains. *International Development Planning Review*. 33 (4). p. 377-388.  
<https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2011.19>

## Annex I. Search strings for literature research

Table 4. Search strings for literature research. Source: Author.

Title	Writer	Search engine
Search string: kw: (urban) AND kw: (rural) AND kw: (COVID) AND kw: (Africa)		
Moving during times of crisis: Migration during times of crisis: Migration, living arrangements and COVID-19 in South Africa.	Posel & Casale. (2021). <i>South Africa</i> .	Mendeley
Family Ties and Urban-Rural Linkages among Older Migrants in Nairobi Informal Settlements.	Mberu et al. (2012). <i>Population, place and space</i> .	Worldcat
Slum Health: Arresting COVID-19 and Improving Well-being in Urban Informal Settlements.	Corburn et al. (2020). <i>Urban health</i> .	Worldcat
Search string: kw: (return migration) AND kw: (sub Saharan africa)		
Outward Migration from Large Cities: Are Older Migrants in Nairobi 'Returning'?	Falkingham et al. (2012)	Mendeley
The urban-rural connection: Changing issues of belonging and identification.	Geschiere & Gugler. (1998).	Through Falkingheim et al. (2012).
Search string: kw: (return migrations) AND kw: (COVID-19) AND kw: Africa		
Examining migration governance: evidence of rising insecurities due to COVID-19 in China, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal and Thailand.	Murzakulova et al. (2021).	Worldcat
Search string : kw : (regional migration) kw: Covid-19 AND kw: Africa		
Intra-African migration.	Rodrigues & Bjarnesen. (2020).	Google Scholar
African migration: trends, patterns, drivers.	Flahaux & de Haas. (2016). <i>Comparative Migration Studies</i> .	Through Rodrigues & Bjarnesen (2020).
Search string : kw : (forced return migration) AND kw: Africa		
The informal sector of Kampala. Return Migrations and other Livelihood Strategies in response to the COVID-19 crisis.	Knirsch. (2021).	Google Scholar
Search string: kw: (migration) AND kw: (covid-19) AND kw: (sub Saharan Africa)		
Impacts of COVID-19 on migration dynamics and remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).	Abejide & Simpson. (2021).	Mendeley
MRS No. 60 - Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis	Guadagno. (2020)	Through Abejide & Simpson

Search string: kw: (agency) AND kw: (structure) AND kw: (migration)		
Some reflections on structure and agency in migration theory	Bakewell (2010)	Google scholar
Structure and agency in development-induced forced migration: the case of Brazil's Belo Monte Dam.	Randell (2015)	Google scholar
Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences.	Carling. (2002)	Through Randell (2015)
Recommendations and grey literature		
Conceptualising youth mobility trajectories: thinking beyond conventional categories.	Van Geel & Mazzucato (2017). Ethnic and Migration Studies.	Lecture Utrecht University
Following Migrant Trajectories: The Im/Mobility of Sub-Saharan Africans en Route to the European Union.	Schapendonk & Steel. (2014).	Lecture Utrecht University
Livelihoods on the road: COVID-19 induced return migrations in Uganda.	De Vreede (2021).	LANDac recommendation
Voedselzekerheid ten tijde van COVID-19: Een literatuuronderzoek naar voedselzekerheid van rurale huishoudens in lage- en middeninkomenslanden tijdens de COVID-19 pandemie.	Meijer. (2021).	Own work
The threat of COVID-19 in Kenya: thoughts and worries, and the urgent need for social protection and safety net plans.	Wangu. (2020).	LANDac recommendation
Kenya: Exodus from cities creates anxiety in rural areas.	Wasike. (2020).	Through de Vreede (2021).
Intra-African Migration: structures and infrastructures for continued circulation.	European Commission (2020).	Through Flahaux & de Haas. (2017).
Growing and Eating Food during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Farmers' Perspectives on Local Food System Resilience to Shocks in Southern Africa and Indonesia.	Paganini et al. (2020). Sustainability.	Through Meijer (2021).
Dark and bright spots in the shadow of the pandemic: Rural livelihoods, social vulnerability, and local governance in India and Nepal.	Gupta et al. (2021). World Development.	Through Meijer (2021).

## Annex II. COVID-19 measures Kenyan government

Table 5. COVID-19 measures Kenyan government. Source: Author

Month	Description measures
Feb, 2020 - March 2022	Basic Health and Social Measures: use of face mask in public spaces, social distancing, handwashing or use of hand sanitizers at all times.
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Staying at home upon feeling unwell</li> <li>• Suspension of public and social gatherings, including weddings, funerals and religious gatherings</li> <li>• Curfew from 7pm until 5am</li> <li>• International flights suspended with exception of cargo; Kenyetta airport closed</li> <li>• Nairobi citizens advised not to travel upcountry</li> <li>• Closure of bars, restaurants are open for take-away</li> <li>• Mandatory 14-day quarantine for those tested positive</li> <li>• Mass testing amongst those who had entered the country</li> </ul>
April, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Imposing of formal lockdown on April 6 until July 6</li> <li>• Working from home; staying at home</li> <li>• Testing of border truck drivers</li> <li>• International flights suspended with exception of cargo;</li> <li>• Nairobi citizens advised not to travel upcountry</li> <li>• No movement in- and outside the city of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi</li> <li>• Facilities (restaurants or eateries) that wish to open must abide by the guidelines and be in possession of a certification to open</li> <li>• Limitations on public transport (boda-boda, matatu, buses)</li> </ul>
May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Working from home; staying at home</li> <li>• Closure of movement in and out of Eastleigh in Nairobi and Old Town in Mombasa</li> <li>• Closure of malls, markets, eateries, restaurants, business outlets such as cyber cafes, butchereries, barber shops, salons, take away shops</li> <li>• Cessation of cross-border movement between Kenya, Tanzania and Somalia</li> <li>• Limitations on public transport (boda-boda ; matatu, buses)</li> <li>• Prohibition of hawking within Eastleigh and Old Town Mombasa</li> <li>• Mentioned: disruption of livelihoods, employment losses, stress in the family unit, inability to pay rent, increased gender-based and domestic violence and politicians not following the rules</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentioned: social support packages such as Kazi Mtaani, weekly stipends, Inua Jamii social protection program</li> </ul>
June, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Some measures imposed on Kilifi, Old town Mombasa and Eastleigh in Nairobi were lifted</li> <li>• Curfew relaxed from 9pm to 5am</li> <li>• Working from home; staying at home</li> <li>• Mentioned: mental health and the provision of psychological support by the government through hotlines and MHPSS</li> </ul>
July, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Formal lockdown lifted</li> <li>• Containment measures inter-county movement restrictions Nairobi, Mombasa and Mandera lifted</li> <li>• Mentioned: balancing act between opening back up despite increased cases</li> </ul>
August, 2020	No newly imposed measures
September, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-opening of bars and entertainment joints</li> <li>• All bars, restaurants and eateries shall be closed at 10pm</li> <li>• Curfew relaxed from 11pm until 4am</li> <li>• Transport-sector guidelines are still in force</li> <li>• Mentioned: president considers re-opening modes of worship, attendance at funerals and the resumption of schooling</li> </ul>
October, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Health and Social Measures</li> <li>• Curfew lifted</li> <li>• Avoiding social and political gatherings</li> <li>• Mentioned: Second wave coming up</li> </ul>
November	Mentioned: Second wave coming up; and vaccine on the way
December, 2020	No newly imposed measures
January, 2021	No newly imposed measures
February 2021	No newly imposed measures
March, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-imposition curfew 8pm until 4am for Nairobi, Nakuru, Machakos, Kiambu and Kajiado</li> <li>• Ban on all movement by road, rail and air for the counties of Nairobi, Kaijado, Kiambu, Machakos and Nakuru</li> <li>• Mentioned: local transmissions reported at an alarming rate;</li> <li>• Mentioned: first phase of deployment vaccinations amongst health care workers and others offering essential services;</li> <li>• Mentioned: some citizens think COVID-19 is not real</li> </ul>
April, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passengers from India will be subjected to rapid anti-gen testing and quarantine periods of 14 days</li> <li>• Borders secured by medical teams; those traveling inland must abide by COVID-19 protocols</li> </ul>



May	No newly imposed measures
June	No newly imposed measures
July	Mentioned: Overstretched medical facilities in Nairobi
August	No newly imposed measures
September	No newly imposed measures
Oktober	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued appeals to get vaccinated</li><li>• Mentioned: Pfizer vaccine reaches the country</li></ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New variant Omicron in South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong;</li><li>• Enhanced surveillance protocols including quarantine and repeat testing amongst passengers from these countries</li><li>• Continued appeals to get vaccinated</li></ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First case Omicron virus detected</li><li>• Continued appeals to get vaccinated</li></ul>
January	No newly imposed measures.
February	No newly imposed measures.
March	No newly imposed measures.

## Annex III. Privacy, safety and informed consent form

The following serves to inform participants of interviews about what participation in this research entails. After reading the form the participant is asked if he or she agrees with the conditions described in the form. The form will be signed as a mutual understanding between participant and interviewer.

- The participant will engage in a research about labor migrants who are working in Nairobi, but have family-ties in rural areas in Kenya. It looks into the experiences of these labor migrants in the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research is part of a study at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and conducted by a student.
- Preferably, the participant is interviewed in a place where he or she feels comfortable and is able to speak freely about his or her experience without too many distractions (background noises or disruptions from e.g. family members and friends, children, music, traffic or customers).
- Moving towards this place should not burden the participant in terms of money, time and effort. Inevitable travel expenses will be covered by the interviewer.
- The participant reserves the right at any moment in time before during and after the interview to no longer participate or request recordings, transcripts, quotes and mobility maps to be deleted by the interviewer permanently.
- The participant will be informed that he or she is free to indicate when a certain topic discussed in the interview is off limit for them (e.g. loss of relatives during COVID-19).
- Before the interview starts, the participant will be asked permission to record the conversation. The conversation will only be recorded when permission is granted.
- The data collected from the participant through interviews and mobility maps will be made anonymous so that no information could be traced back to the participant.
- Transcripts, mobility maps and recorded audio's will be stored on an external hard drive that is secured with a password only known to the interviewer.
- Anonymized information from the interview will be used in a thesis dissertation of the interviewer. It will also be used in a communication product for NGO's GROOTS Kenya and Muungano wa Wanavijiji and potentially published in an academic journal.
- Any conversation made before or after the recording will strictly not be utilized by the researcher unless consent is asked from the participant.

Through signing this form the participant confirms to have read, understood and consented to the above and the interviewer confirms to abide by the above.

## Annex IV. Interview guide (life history) interviews

### I. General information interview

Interview number:	
File name transcript:	
Study site:	
Gender participant:	
Age participant:	
Household composition:	
Education:	
Current livelihood activities engaged in:	
Date interview 1:	
Duration interview 1:	
Date interview 2:	
Duration interview 2:	
Translator:	

### II. Introduction

I am doing research on the movements of labor migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to have a conversation with you about your life experience during the last two years. The questions I would like to ask you relate to where you were, for how long and what type of activities you did to support yourself and your family members during this difficult time.

I am doing this research for my course in the Netherlands. I am interested in speaking to people that were working in Nairobi in January 2020 and that have moved at least once in the last two years of the pandemic. This is why I was connected to you with thanks to [name]. Your experience can give me valuable insights on this.

In our conversation we will make a map of your journey together. I will draw while we are talking and you can see your journey appear on paper. You can stop me at any moment to tell me whether I am drawing your journey correctly. After all, you are the expert of your own journey. After making the map I would like to talk to you more about how you experienced your journey.

The drawing of the map will take about 1 hour. Then, I would like to spend another hour to talk more about your experience. This can be done either today or another day, depending on how you feel.

I would like to ask your permission for recording this conversation. The recording and the map will be used to make a transcript. This way I can look back at what you told me. The recording will be stored securely and deleted once the transcript is made. All your personal details will be removed from the transcript and the map and it will not be used outside this research. This means no one can identify you based on the answers you give me. I hope you will feel comfortable to share your story and your experience with me.

Do you have any questions before we begin? May I start the recording?

## Annex V. Key informant interview guide

I am Marit, a student from the Netherlands. I am doing research on the movements of Kenyan labor migrants in the last 2 years. At the start of the pandemic a lot of labor migrants working in Nairobi moved back to their home-villages, because of the COVID-19 policies and regulations. I would like to find out where they are now and how they are faring.

As a community organizer at GROOTS Kenya, you know much better than I do what has been going on in the community. This is why your expertise is very valuable to me!

Our interview will take about 60 minutes. I might take a few notes while we are talking, but I can't note down everything you say. So, I would like to ask your permission to record this conversation. I will keep this recording on a hard drive secured with a password and delete it once I have written it out in a transcript. I will remove any personal details so that the conversation cannot be traced back to you. Sections of our conversation may be used in the research report as quotes or through paraphrasing.

I also need to inform you that you can tell me at any time when you wish to stop participating in the research or whenever you feel uncomfortable talking about a certain topic. Do you have any questions for me before we begin? Do I have your permission to record this conversation?

### I. Introduction

I have introduced the research topic and myself a little bit. Now I would like to get to know you.
1) Could you tell me a bit more about you and the work you do for GROOTS Kenya? <i>Probe: community organizing; recent projects; projects during COVID-19; project partners; which communities; for how long; origins and goals of the organizations;</i>
2) Can you tell me something about the neighborhood/community? <i>Probe: what kind of people live here (household composition, gender, age, work); what are the living/working conditions; atmosphere; are there many labor migrants working in the city; who work in the city; livelihood activities people engage in;</i>
3) At the onset of the pandemic a lot of employment opportunities were lost or disrupted. Can you tell me how your organization helped the neighborhood/community in these past two years? <i>Probe: disruption of food (chains); land rights; hygiene products; health care sector; reversed remittances; social support government or compensation; borrowing/lending; reversed migration flows;</i>

### II. Key questions

<i>I am specifically interested in the people that moved back to Murang'a as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 policies and regulations. These were people that felt an increased pressure in the urban areas, because the costs of living there are high and they lost their employment opportunities. It was reported labor migrants returned to their home-villages to fall back on the households here.</i>
--



4) To what extent have you experienced in [locality] the situation I have described above? <i>Probe: how many migrants estimated to have returned; who were these migrants (characteristics); what were their motivations for returning; was it temporary or permanent;</i>
5) When and with what motivations did the labor migrants return? <i>Probe: employment; safety net; food; tenure; land;</i>
6) How did the community receive labor migrants from Nairobi that returned home? <i>Probe: infections; financial responsibilities; productivity; family reunification;</i>
7) What type of activities did the labor migrants who returned engaged in at the start of the pandemic? <i>Probe: productive/non-productive; borrowing/lending; making land productive; selling of livestock or land; engaging in household chores or child care; looking for new employment opportunities; starting businesses; selling of products and goods; exchange of products amongst community-members; collaborative land labor;</i>
8) What changes did you witness in household dynamics once (male, young) labor migrants returned home? <i>Probe: gender roles; mental health men; engaging in household chores or child care; education; land management; (idle) youth; financial dependency;</i>
9) Overall, how do you think the migrants returning has affected the well-being of the migrants themselves and of the households they are part of?
10) What changes did you see once restrictions were lifted? <i>Probe: (in)ability to re-migrate; productive or non-productive; change livelihood activities; increased/decreased pressures; how were people coping throughout these two years;</i>
<i>Now that I have an idea of how GROOTS tried to help the community members and how labor migrants have been able to fall back on family-ties, I was wondering what role the government has played.</i>
11) What type of support did the government offer? <i>Probe: social support/safety net; weekly stipend; Kazi Mtaani programme; youth employment in enhancing hygiene standards in urban centre; Inua Jamii social protection programme for elderly and vulnerable groups;</i>
12) What do you think about these programmes? <i>Probe: access; helpful/not helpful; do they reach or not reach the right people; is it enough</i>
III. Closing questions
13) In your opinion, what should be done in order to reach this particular group of people and help them in times of crisis?
14) Who do we need for this? <i>Probe: stakeholders; partners;</i>
15) It is clear that although the pandemic seems to be coming to an end, many people will still deal with the consequences for the coming years. How do you envision the coming years; what are your hopes for the community?
16) How will your organization contribute to this?



17) Do you know anyone else who could offer insights about what has been going on in the community?

*Thank you so much for your valuable input. Before I stop the recording I was wondering if there was anything else you would like to tell me.*

## Annex VI. Focus group discussion interview guide

FGD number:	
File name transcript:	
Study site:	
Amount of participants:	
Date:	
Duration FGD:	

### I. Introduction

Thank you all for agreeing to share your time and stories with me today. My name is Marit. I am a student from the Netherlands. I am collaborating with GROOTS Kenya and was introduced to you by [name]. For my research I am looking into the experiences of people that have worked in Nairobi in the past two years, but have family-ties in Murang'a county. I want to know how they coped during the last two years after the pandemic started. By coping I mean what they did in order to get bread on the table. The opinions of these people are important, but their decisions to work in Nairobi also affects you as family members and caregivers. So, I would also like to know more about how their journey affected your everyday lives.

I hope I can create a space where everyone feels safe and comfortable to share their opinions and experiences, because they are valuable to my research.

During the discussion I will take notes of the points we discuss. But I can't write down everything. This is why I would like to ask your permission to record the discussion. The recording will be anonymous, so none of the answers you give me now can be traced back to you. I will store the recording safely on a hard drive secured with a password and the recordings will be deleted once I have typed out the words in a transcript.

Do I have everyone's permission to record this discussion?

The discussion will take about 60 to 90 minutes. Please know that if you would no longer like to participate, you are free to tell me this and leave at any time you wish. Lastly, it is a conversation we have amongst each other, so feel free to respond to anyone, but please do so respectfully and allow each other to speak freely.

Does anyone have questions for me before we start?

## II. Building rapport: Opening questions

<p>Now that I have introduced myself, I would like to get to know you a little bit. Let's do an introduction round.</p>
<p>1) Can you tell me who you are and which of your household member has worked as a labor migrant in the last two years? <i>Probe: how do you relate to this household member; what does he or she do to bring food to the table; what do you do to bring food to the table;</i></p> <p><i>Note: Jot down the first names of the participants for reference!</i></p>
<p>2) As kin to these labor migrants: Why do you think people in your community would choose to migrate to the city? <i>Probe: employment opportunities; education; close proximity to Nairobi; a metropolitan lifestyle; ask individuals to elaborate;</i></p>
<p>3) What kind of people in your community move to the city? <i>Probe: age; gender; relationship to the household</i></p>
<p>4) Would you mind raising your hand if you feel that the decision to move to the city is a decision made by the household; Who thinks it is a decision made by the individual; Why? <i>Probe: ask individuals from both 'camps' to elaborate;</i></p> <p><i>Note: say out loud how many people voted what;</i></p>

## III. Specific questions:

<p><i>I would like to proceed asking questions about your experiences in the past two years. So, not only the start of the pandemic, but the last two years. We have seen a lot of labor migrants struggling to make ends meet in the city, because of the COVID-19 rules. Some of them came back to Murang'a temporarily or permanently. I want to know more about how their returning affected your household. Specifically, how it affected the ways in which you brought food to the table.</i></p>
<p>5) How did the community receive migrants that returned home? <i>Probe: if you feel comfortable you can share your personal experience; fear of infections; family reunification; how did you feel about the family being under one roof again; financial responsibilities; remittances</i></p>
<p>6) As kin to the migrants, can you think of ways how the responsibilities in the household changed when they came back? Specifically when it comes to bringing bread to the table. <i>Probe: if you are comfortable, you may share a personal experience; what did it do to the household dynamics/atmosphere/relationship; chores amongst men and women; extra hands to work; extra mouths to feed; livelihood activities; actively or not actively looking for new employment opportunities;</i></p>



6) What activities did the migrants engage in to bring bread to the table? Probe: productive or not; conflict; selling of land or livestock; borrowing; casual work; setting up of shamba's/kitchen gardens; setting up of businesses; <b>did it meet your expectations; why not?;</b>
7) How did this change over time in the last two years? Probe: migrants stayed or re-migrated; lockdowns imposed or lifted;
8) As kin of migrants, in what ways has their return affected your household's overall well-being? Probe: family reunification; family conflicts; divorce or breaking up of family; alcoholism and abuse; extra hands; extra mouths; financial responsibilities; remittances; fear of infections;
9) Where are your household members now? What activities are they engaged in? Probe: re-migration;

<i>I would now like to ask a few questions with regards to social support during the pandemic.</i>
10) What kind of help was received from the government during the last two years? Probe: Awareness programmes in community; helpful or not; were they able to apply for this help; why not; for whom were these programmes;
11) How could community members in need of help be reached better? Probe: what is needed; what could be improved; who did it reach; who did it not reach; why;
<i>I have two more questions just to round off our discussion!</i>
11) Now that are lives are slowly going back to normal, I was wondering what your hopes for your community are?
12) What do you think is necessary to achieve this? Probe: government support; ngo's; church organizations; more targeted social support; a better reach; more employment opportunities or security nets; awareness;
<i>I would like to thank you all for participating in this discussion. I am happy I got to hear your story and I have learned a lot. I was wondering if perhaps you still have questions for me? Or anything else you would like to add before I stop the recording.</i>

## Annex VII. Characteristics participants

Table 6. Characteristics participants. Source: Author.

Label participant	Age group	Category migrant	Children	Education	Household composition	Main source of income before lockdown	Main source of income after lockdown	Place of residence	Sex
MM_Participant_001	26-35	A	3	Secondary	Living with in-laws	Small- medium enterprise	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Maragwa (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_002	26-35	A	Yes	Primary	Living with in-laws	Waged labor	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Maragwa (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_003	36-45	A	3	Secondary	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Casual labor	Maragwa (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_004	46-55	A	Yes	Primary	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Maragwa (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_005	26-35	A	2	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking or street vending)	Boda driver (hired)	Kandara (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_006	n/a	A	2	Primary	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Kandara (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_007	36-45	A	4	n/a	Living independently	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking or street vending)	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Kandara (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_008	46-55	Not Applicable	2	College	Living independently	Waged labor	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Kigumo (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_009	n/a	Not Applicable	3	n/a	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Small-medium enterprise	Kigumo (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_010	46-55	A	2	Primary	Living independently	Casual labor	Casual labor	Kigumo (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_011	36-45	B	2	College	Living independently	Waged labor	Small-medium enterprise	Kiharu (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_012	26-35	A	Yes	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Boda driver (owned)	Kiharu (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_013	56-65	B	2	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Subsistence farming	Subsistence farming	Kiharu (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_014	46-55	A	5	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking or street vending)	Casual labor	Kiharu (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_015	n/a	A	1	Secondary	Living independently	Small- medium enterprise	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Kiharu (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_016	0-25	B	No	College	Living with parents	Waged labor	Casual labor	Kiharu (rural)	Female
MM_Participant_017	26-35	A	Yes	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Waged labor	Waged labor	Kiharu (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_018	n/a	A	2	College	Living with parents	Waged labor	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Maragwa (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_019	n/a	A	1	n/a	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Maragwa (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_020	36-45	A	2	Primary unfinished	Living with parents	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking or street vending)	Casual labor	Kandara (rural)	Male
MM_Participant_021	36-45	C	5	Secondary unfinished	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Female
MM_Participant_022	26-35	C	2	Secondary	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Male
MM_Participant_023	36-45	C	4	Secondary	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Male
MM_Participant_024	26-35	C	5	Secondary	Living independently	Casual labor	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Mathare (urban)	Female
MM_Participant_025	0-25	C	1	Secondary	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Female
MM_Participant_026	36-45	C	2	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Waged labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Male
MM_Participant_027	36-45	C	6	Primary unfinished	Living independently	Casual labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Female
MM_Participant_028	36-45	B	4	Primary	Living independently	Casual labor	Micro-enterprise (e.g. hawking, street vending)	Mathare (urban)	Female
MM_Participant_029	36-45	B	3	Primary	Living independently	Casual labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Male
MM_Participant_030	26-35	C	3	Primary	Living independently	Casual labor	Casual labor	Mathare (urban)	Female

Category migrant:

Category A: Participants that have moved back to rural areas and had remained there at the time of interviewing.

Category B: Participants that have moved back to rural areas temporarily and had moved back to the city at the time of interviewing.

Category C: Participants that have remained in Nairobi (in)voluntarily until the time of interviewing.

## Annex VIII. Codebook

Table 7. Codebook. Source: Author.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
Caregiver impact	Impact of labor migrants and their household members on caregivers (e.g. mothers, grandmothers, siblings, friends) that are taking them in temporarily or permanently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"So, it was hard for me also. It really affected me, because this is the family that was able to work for itself and feed itself. And when they come down to Murang'a, it meant that I had to take over their job. Food fee, school fee, and it was not easy for me. It is not easy for us. But through the mercy of God, we managed."</i> [FGD_001_Maragua]
Substance abuse	How substance abuse (e.g. alcohol and drug intake) affected caregivers or household members of labor migrants. This could either be during the last two years of COVID-19 or in general.	<i>"That is the only way you can remove the stress from your mind. Because you have a lot of, you have so many things you are thinking about, but you don't have money you have to go there, give anything even if it is a sweater or a watch. You are given alcohol. You drink. You relief stress."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Collaboration household members	On ways in which different household members collaborated to get food on the table during or after COVID-19.	<i>"I brought them this way: If you have, if you have money, you have to help each other. It is your money, but you help. That's how I brought them up. So, if I have, I give you. If she says: Mom, can we have a hundred shilling. And if I have, I do send it. Because even in Nairobi there is no money there. They are still struggling."</i> [MM_Participant_013]
Conflict	Tension and conflicts that arose in the family due to different reasons (e.g. congested homes, job and food insecurity) of both labor migrants and their families as well as in the homes of labor migrants and their care takers.	<i>But now COVID is here with us. He can't move, he can't go out to find something. He has to sleep from noon to noon. Just sleeping. So, you find, I start, we start quarrelling, the first thing that [name participant] will do because he is so hungry. He will just slap me. And start fighting, fighting, gender based violence. That is what was happening."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]



Consoling family members	Caregivers and household members of labor migrants talking about soothing migrants who are in emotional distress because of the impact of COVID-19 on their lives.	<i>"Ay, my experience was just bad. I had to talk to her. And tell her things are going to be okay. Because me I am a believer and I believe of my children. So we stayed there and we prayed, then this came. She started doing well. She started going to shamba."</i> [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]
Education and school fees	Participants mentioning education (e.g. ability or inability to pay for school fees or drop out) of children and how they cope with this during the last two years of the pandemic.	<i>"So she is saying, currently she has a girl a girl that came here. Not this one, the other one. So she is joining the upper, secondary school. So, eh, the school that the lady used to study she has a debt. So, she has school fees that she has to cover so that the kids can get the certificate to join the secondary school and currently she doesn't have any money."</i> [MM_Participant021_Mathare]
Finances	Financial burden of caregivers who took in labor migrants and their household members as a result of COVID-19.	<i>"Like now, that, my sister-in-law she had no house. She had nothing. So I had to accommodate her in my house. I give her food if she's sick it's me to cater for her. Everything. I had to give her everything. Even shelter. Yeah. Now, you see it had to increase my budget, if I was eating for 100 per day, I had to increase to 200 shillings. And my salary when I am given 500 it still remains 500. So you can see, it will affect you so much."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Food security	How caregivers and household members of labor migrants ensured the labor migrants remained food secure during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"They will move back to Nairobi. I don't know. Right now they are in Nairobi, they left last Saturday, but they may come back, because life is not favorable. They are comfortable here. There are a lot of bananas, they is maize, I cook for them!"</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Housing and space	How caregivers and labor migrants experienced having to live together in one home during and after COVID-19 in terms of living space and housing (in)security.	<i>"We are not even in a position to fit in a single room like this. We had to struggle to construct a single mabati-mabati iron sheets structure, because now we cannot sleep here with our children and my brother's children two ladies [inaudible]."</i> [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]



Inability to save	On the inability of caregivers to save as a result of being the breadwinner of the house. This code relates to either labor migrants taking care of household members in rural areas or household members in rural areas taking care of labor migrants in the city. It does not necessarily relate to the impact of COVID-19.	<i>"I was asking her if she used to save when doing the mentorship job. Then she has replied that she never used to save because she was the breadwinner of the family. So if you get small money you use it to support the family, because the family is so big." [MM_Participant025_Mathare]</i>
Missing out on job opportunities	On the inability of caregivers to take on job opportunities, because the care of labor migrants or their household members in general or during or after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Eh, it affected me because I was, even me I was going to a job somewhere else, I could not go. Because of the child." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</i>
Raising children	On the effect of child care given by caregivers to household members of labor migrants. Might be specifically related to the COVID-19 period or in general.	<i>"Also I was affected because I was having those children. You know they stay in here. This is not this thing. So I had to save, schooling them, I had to know what to do for that child to know [inaudible]. I don't sleep for maybe one month. You need to feed them, milk. So that if that goes to Nairobi she was employed maybe in the middle of the month, so I have to take care of these children." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu].</i>
Safety net	Caregivers and labor migrants talk about how they utilize their ancestral land as a safety net in times of crisis.	<i>"So, this is why you see I may feel that in my home, like I have given them shamba's now. I have asked them, come and live here, so that in the future you have no problems. Because anything can happen and you see it, and you will have a problem." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Taking care of sick	Caregivers and labor migrants who have been financially and emotionally burdened in taking care of household members who fell ill. Contains both statements from labor migrants taking care of those in rural areas as well as care takers in the rural areas taking care of people in the city.	<i>"He has got some problems. Sometimes he collapses and when he collapses. He do take a lot of medicine, which costs a lot of money of which I don't have. I am just being helped by somebody, because it takes a dose of six tablets per night and one tablet costs 110, yes 110, 90 shillings one, then 250, it takes about one month it takes tablets of 10.000." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</i>



Comparing urban and rural life	Participants compare urban and rural life on different aspects (view sub-codes).	<i>"Life there in Nairobi is a bit cheaper if you are getting something, but not when you are just idle. But here also life is smooth when there is food. You know?" [MM_Participant020_Kigumo]</i>
Business opportunities	Participants talk about how business opportunities in the urban context differ from the rural context.	<i>"But start it here, you go and put your wandizi's there outside, nobody will buy. But in town there are so many people they'll come and buy the wandizi's and the mango's. So even if you start like a small business at least you are going to earn in town, but not here." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Cultural diversity	On cultural diversity of ethnic groups in the urban as compared to the rural context.	<i>"Also there in town, in Nairobi, they interact with many tribes. So, they got to learn so many things. They interact with the Maasai, Luhya's, but when they stay here, they just interact with Kikuyu's. So, they don't know what the other tribes do. And they can also, they can learn there and they can come and do it here." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Food security	On food security in the urban as compared to the rural context.	<i>"Sometimes we even send food to them. Yeah. He cannot even be able to get food. You know you go to the city, everything is money. Even water is money. Everything." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Job opportunities	On job opportunities in the urban as compared to the rural context.	<i>"She doesn't want to go to the rural [laughs]. She is here to look for a job that can sustain her family and the baby. So, that is here plan." [MM_Participant025_Mathare]</i>
Lifestyle	On the differences in lifestyle between urban and rural areas.	<i>"That was my career. You can imagine now, being a broker, being a site supervisor and a site manager in a construction industry which is, closed me to a billion eh? Then you are back to home when even myself now I cannot wear good clothes. My lifestyle have to change." [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]</i>



Living expenses	On living expenses in the urban as compared to the rural context.	<i>"There you need to, they need to pay rent and your food and maybe where you are staying it is not where you are working. So you have to go with a car. Yeah. So, you, at most times, you can find one is only working for themselves. He cannot sustain even the family. Yeah. Because he is only earning very little." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Opportunities education	On education opportunities in the urban as compared to the rural context.	<i>"She is having a child and that time she was very, she was going to bring one to nursery school. And the hope she was having for her child, she wanted her child to go to school in town. So, I had to let her know that town is very expensive. To take your child to town is very expensive. So I had said to her, we have got a primary school here. Public." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</i>
Reputation	Participants talk about how living and working in the city brings along a certain social status in the home-village and how this perception of others affected them when returning home.	<i>"You know when you have get used to Nairobi when you go home in the rural area the people will think you have money. Because they believe central bank is in Nairobi, Cooperative Bank Headquarters, in Nairobi. So, everything comes from Nairobi. Now when you got home everybody looks at you like you have. Yeah. They don't understand you have come there because you don't have. So." [MM_Participant034_Mathare]</i>
Stability	Comparing stability in terms of income, food security and housing in the city as compared to the rural context.	<i>"And that's how I settled in Nairobi, because in that time I would work, get money, to pay my rent, to be able to upkeep myself. Then after that was gone, because some of the supermarkets actually here in Kenya they shut down. That's when I had enough saving and I was able to establish a small business. A place where I would stay and people would call me to gather things from there. As well as some of them would bring their, their stuffs in that shop and that's the way I used to survive. I had gotten established. I was OK. Very much OK." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>
Corruption	On corruption in government policy, politics and amongst other authorities in Kenya.	<i>"There was. Because, there was this we call covid-19, it was social support. But what it happened, it didn't reach the targeted people. Because of corruption." [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]</i>



COVID-19 impact	Participants on the different ways COVID-19 impacted them directly and indirectly through implemented measures (e.g. mobility restrictions and curfew).	<i>"So, also, my business was affected. I was going for materials in Nairobi. Now the lockdown is there, not going to Nairobi, no materials. No job. Because if you don't have materials, you can't work. So, I work with the materials I had in my shop."</i> [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]
Business goes down	On how COVID-19 measures impacted businesses of labor migrants.	<i>"Until now, COVID came, these people are not paying, they don't even know when it is going to end. And especially when there was a lockdown, people would not bring to repair electronics when they are even hustling for food. You know, it is like, business got down and I was really affected by it."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]
Closure of schools	On how the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted labor migrants and their household members.	<i>"We stayed with the kid, the other one was locked in Nairobi. That one that was in KU. She was locked in Nairobi. So, allow hat I could do. You know she is a student, she has nothing, no income. I have to pay for her rent, electricity, water bills, a lot of food."</i> [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]
Curfew	On how the curfew impacted labor migrants, their livelihoods and personal lives.	<i>"He is saying curfew affected him personally. Because you find here the business, and the business is a barber shop. You find so many customers come at night or in the evening. So during the day he doesn't have any customers. So you find curfew is from 7. And that 7 is when he is supposed to have these customers. So that was like closing down the business. Yeah."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Direct impact	On the direct impacts of COVID-19. Participants who have been directly impacted through COVID-19 themselves or through one of their family members or friends.	<i>"We lived with it, but it, it never. There were no many cases as like, people who were. Only rich people. Even for us we can survive with COVID and you won't even know we have COVID, because we are so strong. So then, the people who are, sorry, we used to say: COVID is for the rich. Leave us alone, for us who are poor."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]



Distress selling	Participants on being forced to sell quick and cheap for the sake of survival during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Selling of livestock, land, tools, furniture and other goods; both in urban and rural contexts.	<i>"And if it persists, that you can't pay for the rent. The family will decide to sell a goat or a sheep, so that they can pay for your transport fee to go back." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Employment loss	On employment loss as a result of the COVID-19 measures.	<i>"The boy was most affected, because he had just finished school and he was employed in Nairobi. When he was employed, he worked only for about two months. Then, he lost the job because of the COVID-19. He came back home and up to date, he has not come back there." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Food insecurity	On food insecurity as a result of COVID-19 measures.	<i>"They moved back to the rural areas because, you know, staying in town it costs a lot and now you have lost your job, so you have to go back to your area, because in the rural areas you will meet your parents there and your parents are farming, so, about food it was not. They could not lack food. So, that's why they were coming back to the rural areas, because in town they were suffering. Lacking food, lacking money." [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]</i>
Food waste	Food waste as a result of the disruption of the agricultural sector during the period COVID-19 measures were implemented, such as market closures and measures for social distancing.	<i>"There is so many waste. Also in Sama, people are very busy in the horticulture it's a horticultural area so there is potatoes, French beans and cabbages, nowhere to sell. Because they take it in Nairobi and the market was closed." [KI_Participant002_Maragwa]</i>
Future perspective	Mentioning of the insecurity surrounding the length of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this insecurity affected labor migrants.	<i>"It was not clear I was not given even the, the letter to tell me you are suspended to work or you have been given a termination, something like that. It was not something like that just being told the company for now is not able to pay us so you are requested to be on unpaid leave. Eh, and there was no specific period that you are going to stay home. You are given just to take an unpaid leave until further notice." [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]</i>



Housing insecurity	On how COVID-19 measures affected housing security of labor migrants both in rural and urban contexts.	<i>"He is saying it is so hurting because so many people travelled, including the brother. They had to sell their things so they can go back to the rural. When you find your landlord has closed the house for you, you have nowhere to go you just have to travel back to the rural."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Idleness	On feelings of idleness in general or as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.	<i>"I: Hi! So you were saying in the house you are feeling idle. P: Ha, it was bad. You get idle, you don't even think. You are not even working. You don't have money. You see, and for us parents, we survive from our pockets. So no job, no work, no salaries. No going out, you cannot even exercise. Anything. You cannot even sell. You cannot even train. You cannot even. Actually, I hate that time. I don't like remembering that."</i> [MM_Participant008_Kigumo]
Increased costs transportation	Increased transport costs as a result of mobility restrictions imposed by the Kenyan government.	<i>"Yes! It was so expensive, because a luggage of like 1 bag of 50 kg's we were paying about 600 and normally it is 100, so you see there is that breakages of finances all this."</i> [KI_Participant002_Maragwa]
Job volatility	How the COVID-19 measures affected the stability of jobs and on the frequent shifting of livelihood strategies amongst labor migrants.	<i>"Yeah, that's, because with these casual jobs you cannot get them every day. And again, at this area people go for casual jobs for five hours. For five years, for five hours you get, you get paid 500 shillings, then from there you come, have your lunch, get a bit of rest, then you go for that other small business. Yeah."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]
Living expenses	How COVID-19 measures made it more difficult for labor migrants to pay for living expenses both in urban and rural contexts.	<i>"But the unfortunate thing is that when you make that money by the end of the month you can not be able to keep that money and you feed on the same money. It cannot sustain you, because I have to pay this house, I have to take my kids to school, like, here where I am living there is no water, so you even buy water for drinking. Everything is about money. And it has not been high. It has not been easy."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]



Market closure	Closure of local markets for selling of produce as a result of COVID-19 measures.	<i>"There is so many waste. Also in Sama, people are very busy in the horticulture it's a horticultural area so there is potatoes, French beans and cabbages, nowhere to sell. Because they take it in Nairobi and the market was closed." [KI_Participant002_Maragwa]</i>
Migration to rural	How COVID-19 measures forced labor migrants from the city of Nairobi to family homes in rural areas.	<i>"Now what is our other option now? Because now the survival there we cannot sustain to pay the house to pay 40.000 we cannot sustain even food for ourselves. Then, we sat down and said: Now, east or west home is the best. Yeah." [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]</i>
Mobility restrictions	On how mobility restrictions affected the livelihoods of labor migrants both in the rural and urban context.	<i>"So, also, my business was affected. I was going for materials in Nairobi. Now the lockdown is there, not going to Nairobi, no materials. No job. Because if you don't have materials, you can't work. So, I work with the materials I had in my shop." [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]</i>
Positive impacts	Positive outcomes of COVID-19 measures mentioned by participants.	<i>"Yeah, there are some positive things like. Like me, my son and his wife here, other than just problems, there was something: Unity." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Shift household responsibilities	How COVID-19 induced urban-to-rural migration resulted in a shift in household dynamics.	<i>"So you can see, a lady can help a family, a man can do. So even today, her husband even relies on her. So, something like that. So, because of problems, you know when you have too many problems you find a way. She used to be just a housewife! But because of these problems this came up, that she started building up." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Violence authorities	How COVID-19 measures were reinforced and how this reinforcement impacted the lives of labor migrants.	<i>"Yeah, here in Mathare! So many people got beaten, so many people got killed. Even if you have been found without a mask. You pay a 1.000 shilling. Now you are asking, the person doesn't have a mask, he or she doesn't even have a job. Even a mask for 10 bob he or she can't afford. And now you are asking for a thousand." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>



COVID-19 take-aways	On the lessons learned amongst labor migrants and caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Also they have learned, you know those ones living in Nairobi they don't like doing farming. But for now, they have learned even if they are in Nairobi they have at least like a small shamba you have given him or her, she'll will be doing farming when still there [laughs]. So that when that place gets worse, she can come food here." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Business over waged labor	Participants mentioning they prefer business over waged labor as a livelihood strategy since the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"OK, for me I go for business. I go for business, because mm. If I decide to change, what would I do? If not business? You know in business, you can lack today, but tomorrow, you get. Eh, in employment, let's say like, on that time of pandemic, people lost jobs. Here in Kenya. Very many people. And most of them, they never resumed." [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]</i>
Hygiene and health	Participants talking about sticking to hygiene measures even after the COVID-19 pandemic and how this impacted their lives or the lives of others.	<i>"Now before, we were not knowing about the masks. We were not also knowing about our ears holding it. So, that our ears are not just for hearing, it can also hold masks. I: [laughing] Oh really! That is a good lesson. P1: Even when now we are spraying our shamba's we are using these for our health. See, that is something." [FGD_003_Maragwa]</i>
Investing in the rural	Participants mentioning how they invest or how they have witnessed investment in ancestral land and houses in rural areas by means of a safety net during crises since the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Let's say, the people who are living in Nairobi or any other time. They have now learned, when you get money you can invest at home." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
None or limited	Participants stating that people have not learned or did not learn that much from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"They just stay in Mathare. But amongst the youth, thinking about future pandemic. No, no. It is not in them. It is not in them." [KI_Participant005_Mathare]</i>
Risk aversity	On labor migrants growing more risk-averse to crises since the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"OK. But I am scared, because I wonder if I go back there and something like that happens again, how will it be for my children. As well as, I have no idea of how to restart my life again. It is just that I don't know how." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>



Saving for a rainy day	How participants have started saving or witnessed labor migrants starting to save since the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"People have learned it is not good to eat the whole spoon." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
take-aways_livelihood diversification	Participants mentioning diversifying livelihoods so they are not dependent on a single means of making money.	<i>"As I told you, I do casual jobs. There sometimes I have like three people I do laundry for on a weekly basis. Although there was like a group in church who give us some finances to start something. This things are there. Matumba clothes, those used clothes that I sell at times and I do hawking." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>
Wife stays in rural	Participants mentioning how, since the pandemic, women have stayed behind in rural areas tending the land rather than re-joining their husbands to urban areas to mitigate risk.	<i>"And most of them also has learned not to stay with their wives there in town. If the wife is not working she has to be left here in the village and you do something. You know most of them are living with the wives and the wife is not working. And she is so idle." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Cultural values	Participants talking about cultural values and customs either related to Kenyan or tribal culture.	<i>"What the Kikuyu do. Eh, after the son has left her or his primary education they usually build a house, because the boy is not allowed to be sleeping in the parents room, depending with the culture. So you have to build a house outside." [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]</i>
Demographics	Demographic characteristics of participants.	<i>"Translator! I am [name]. I used to live here with my mum, but now we are alone. My mum went to the rural area. Yeah. Because, she was a single mom, then life got hard. She had to go and leave us here. I am the first borne. We are five." [MM_Participant025_Mathare]</i>
Household composition	Description of participant's living situations and whom he or she lives with at the time of the interview.	<i>"I live with me and my two kids. Although, I am a mother of three children. Yeah. My first borne is an adult and currently after [inaudible]. I cannot afford to take her to a college. She took up the domestic work. So she is working as a house girl in Nairobi. Yeah." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>



Single-mother	Participants describing their experience as a single mother.	<i>"Yeah I have my kids. And I have to do that, because I am all single. And. Mm! I just found myself there. You know African men don't take responsibility and there is nothing, you know once you are a mother, you are a mother. There is nothing you can do about it. But it has been so hard."</i> [MM_Participant_Maragwa]
Eastleigh_employer	Participants mentioning the importance of Eastleigh as a locality that provides labor for casual workers living in Mathare.	<i>"He is saying in Mathare so many people work in Eastleigh and industrial area so you find eh, you find when, when Eastleigh was closed, no movement. So many people it was so difficult because Eastleigh has employed so many people. So you find people, they are not supposed to go to work until they opened. So it was very tough."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Employment loss_non covid-related	Participants mentioning employment loss that occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"When they discovered we had joined a union so they decided to fire us. We were almost 21, 22 workers. We were fired."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Externalities	Aspects that are not related to COVID-19 but may have exacerbated the impact on livelihoods of labor migrants in the last two pandemic years.	<i>"You know we are not like developed countries. You know we watch your elections on the BBC World. You see people agreeing that this is the way forward and they follow the constitution. Here, when you look at it, people do not follow the constitution. They only follow it is in their interest."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Costs basic food staples	Participants mentioning an increase in basic staple foods in the last two pandemic years.	<i>"I swear, the cost of life here is too high. Currently as we are speaking every commodity has hiked in terms of prices. You go to industries, like transport and infrastructure, there is no fuel, there is no gas. People are suffering a lot. A packet of [inaudible] last year was costing a hundred shillings, most families could afford, now it is going around a 150 shillings. The cooking oils, a liter was going to 150 currently it is going to 380 this is another closer to another 2 dollars up."</i> [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]



Drought	Participants mentioning how the occurrence of droughts have impacted their livelihoods or food security in the last two pandemic years.	<i>"According to me life in Nairobi when you are getting money it is bringing something to your pocket, and it is saving something, it is better here. Also here, it is better here when you have food in the shamba, but now there is no rain, you see, there is a lot of problems."</i> [MM_Participant020_Kigumo]
Politics	Participants mentioning the upcoming elections in August 2022 and how this has impacted their lives in the last two pandemic years or how it will impact their lives in the coming years.	<i>"Yeah! We have so many tribes. You find Kikuyu, there is Kamba, there is Luo, there is Luhya, there is Masaai. So you find there is so many tribes here. But when it comes to elections you find they start fighting."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Future plans	On future hopes and plans of labor migrants, key informants and care givers for the country or their personal lives.	<i>"There was other things I wanted to do to make sure that you even improve your, the way you family. Maybe you want even to move from this place to another place to set up a good house. I had many plans for this family, and all of a sudden this is killed, because you don't know whether you are going back."</i> [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]
Hospital bills_non covid-related	On the impact of hospital bills on the lives and livelihoods of labor migrants as a result of household members or labor migrants getting a non-COVID related disease or injured.	<i>"He is saying when he got the accident, he has a debt of 40.000 in the hospital which he has to pay. So he decided to come back to Nairobi to work so that he can pay the debt and help the family. So that he can help the family."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Hustling	Mentioning of the term "hustling", referring to a labor migrant hustling to get by in any way or form, usually by street vending, hawking or any other small business venture.	<i>"So it is not been easy it is like I have just forgotten, the last three years, I have just forgotten about the whole thing. And I have tried the way to hustle. Though I cannot make a comparison of the way I was stable there as I am here. So it is hard. But anyway, I know I am not the only one."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]
Job volatility_non covid-related	The instability or frequent shifting of livelihood strategies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Now, now the other challenge that came it is that eh, now we have a baby, but we don't have a job that is very secure. Every other time there is a job, off and on so when it comes to construction when the project is done eh, then you wait for another project to come."</i> [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]



Livelihood assets	The sum of capitals utilized by labor migrants to create livelihood strategies.	<i>"But for now, they have learned even if they are in Nairobi they have at least like a small shamba you have given him or her, she'll will be doing farming when still there [laughs]. So that when that place gets worse, she can come food here. Yes. They have started farming now. Some of them had started farming. You know most of them had land, but it was idle. Yeah. Now they have, when they went back there they have started farming in their farms, so that when [Swahili]." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Financial capital	Mentioning of the use of savings, credit, debt, remittances, pensions and wages as or in livelihood strategies.	<i>"People used to survive with the cash they used to save before COVID started. So that is the money they have been using, because you find so many hotels and so many companies have been closed down. So that little amount that you used to save that is the amount that you start budgeting." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Human capital	Mentioning of health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills of an individual or group as or in livelihood strategies.	<i>"It is somebody who taught me. I will used to go to a workshop, I pay that person and he will teach me how to do these electronics. I didn't go to a school. I used to go to somebody. So it is like I learned it practically, without the theory part of it." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>
Natural capital	Mentioning of land and produce, water, aquatic resources, trees, forests and wildlife as or in livelihood strategies.	<i>"She is saying when she at her place when she has a shamba, she can now work, without debt, because she has no rent to pay. At her house so she can plant some vegetables or whatever, so that the burden is lowered." [MM_Participant004_Maragwa]</i>
Land ownership	The ownership or the lack of ownership of land amongst labor migrants and other household members.	<i>"She is saying, when she was married, when he husband became so drunkard, he sold the shamba." [MM_Participant004_Maragwa]</i>



Sensitizing land rights	Sensitization of land rights amongst men and women in acquiring (shared) title deeds.	<i>"But what we usually do, we as GROOTS champions because we are undergoing the trainings of women land rights we have been training women in the area, because when a man dies, mostly the family has been denying the women and they harass her which makes the woman to leave her place. We have been training them to know their rights. It is her right to own her husband's property, to own her father's property."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Physical capital	Mentioning of infrastructure (e.g. roads, vehicles, secure shelter, sanitation, tools and technology) as or in livelihood strategies.	<i>"So, it has improved even the living standard, because when I am being left behind by the man, in the small house that he had there before, most of the women today are planning how they can build big houses. So, it is about even giving the man pressure, to build the house."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Social capital	Networks and connections (e.g. patronage, kinships or neighbourhoods), relationships of trust and mutual understanding, support from formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviours as or in livelihood strategies.	<i>"You know she is good. Now this lady started associating herself with the Somalis. You know the Somalis have a way of putting their people together, but it is really like Christians, there is these relations that puts Christians together. Now these relations look for their Somalis. Not anybody else. If you've landed like this one of ours was landed. She was given a job. She earned the job herself."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Livelihood strategies	Livelihood strategies applied by labor migrants during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>Youth that are without job end up selling small things even by stealing hens, avocado's or bananas from the farmlands of others, just to earn something small; When they go hawking they often do not have a license which is why they are being chased by the police; a massive amount of youth turn to boda-driving but the boda-boda is not owned by them, but hired or given out to them by the elderly. [Field notes_FGD003_Kigumo]</i>
(Re)schooling and training	Use of training or acquisition of skills to change livelihood.	<i>"Now I decided to make friendships with those people who were doing those constructions on site [talks in Swahili]. So during my work I started to see now can I not even use my own skill like the one is doing. I started like that. Now within three to four months I became a carpenter now."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]



Accessing funds	Acquisition or attempt at acquisition of funds from the government, NGOs or other institutions.	<i>"Then the government had introduced what we call eh, youth access to government programme that anybody that was under 35 years she was given the first priority of 30% of what was being procured by the company. So I gave him closely to 80% of the shares of the company." [MM_Participant018_Kiharu]</i>
Casual labor	Informal day-to-day work, usually without a fixed employer or contract ranging from construction work, washing of clothes and utensils, work as a house help or seasonal farm labor.	<i>"I am still struggling. I wash clothes for people, they know me, they call me. They tell me [name] there is clothes come for them. So that is what I do for living." [MM_Participant025_Mathare]</i>
Change home-base	Participants who have moved back to rural areas and start operating their businesses by commuting between urban and rural space (e.g. taking food from rural areas and selling it in the city on a daily basis).	<i>"Now, after the COVID they leave the job so they decided to come back here. Now after they stayed here, we see, hey, mzee, the father go back there, forth, back forth with the fruits." [MM_Participant002_Maragwa]</i>
Community health volunteer	Volunteer work as part of a network of community health workers in a locality amongst which usually a small fixed amount a month is provided.	<i>One day I saw an advertisement that they were recruiting new CHV's and that is how I decided to apply and I qualified." [MM_Participant024_Mathare]</i>
Cutting costs	Saving by reducing expenditures on things deemed unnecessary (e.g. clothes, expensive food products).	<i>"So that little amount that you used to save that is the amount that you start budgeting. You don't know when COVID is going to end, so you have to budget yourself and you don't know when the road will be open so that you can go back to work. And if it is not that, you don't know when you will be, when you will have another work." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Debt accumulation	Debt accumulation through, for example, hospital bills or rental fees that cannot be repaid immediately.	<i>"Mm. She is saying, by now she gets, 2 bags of charcoal, she sells it and gets like 3.000, but you know, she has so many debts because of that time eh? Now she sells and gives back to those people. Yeah." [MM_Participant004_Maragwa]</i>



Expanding business	Expansion of business ventures by using capital to invest in them.	<i>The business was thriving eh? Because eh, it is like a, we manage eh, to do the marketing for Nairobi. And many people we managed to convince eh? Almost like eh, 80% of the hotels in the city they buy from us. So that's when we decided, let us now explore now the market to Mombasa."</i> [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]
Food from rural	Receiving food from family or friends that has been send from the rural areas to labor migrants in urban areas.	<i>"So he is saying, people from the rural, the families from the rural used to support the children from the up-country. Because you find you are locked in the house, you have nowhere to go, so the family has to sell something so you can pay for the fare to come home. Some used to send food to you because you can't sustain yourself." [KI_Participant 004_Mathare]</i>
Food storage	The drying and storing of food products to mitigate the risk of becoming food insecure in times of crisis.	<i>"Now, you know, this season. We had a lot of maize and a lot of beans. We cannot send them out to sell, because if anything happens what are we even going to eat? So, there is a lot of storages in homes. That is what, as a family, we have done. Storage of food stuffs with your family so that if anything happens, at least there is something to eat in our home."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Hawking	Street vending of goods while walking; either in the urban or the rural context. Typically selling of food products, clothes or small electronic devices.	<i>"Matumba clothes, those used clothes that I sell at times and I do hawking. So I walk within the homes and sell for them whatever I sell."</i> [MM_Participant 003_Maragwa]
Investing in a family member	Investment in a business venture taken up by a household member.	<i>"I: Yes. So that's when you started the green grocer. How did you get started with the green grocer? P: My husband supported me with some, a little money, and then I started."</i> [MM_Participant024_Mathare]
Kids from private to public	Taking kids from a private school (which requires payment) to a public school without school fees to cut costs and enable children to keep going to school.	<i>"And the hope she was having for her child, she wanted her child to go to school in town. So, I had to let her know that town is very expensive. To take your child to town is very expensive. So I had said to her, we have got a primary school here. Public." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</i>



Livelihood diversification	The up-taking of different livelihood strategies to ensure the household is not building on a single income.	<p><i>"I: So you picked up from the community health work which means you get some sort of salary, right? And you are still doing the kibanda there I just saw it. Yeah. Why have you decided to keep it?</i></p> <p><i>P: Because it helped me manage my [laughs]. It paid for my. How do you call it?</i></p> <p><i>Gatekeeper: Chama's</i></p> <p><i>I: It paid for your expenses."</i></p> <p><i>[MM_Participant024_Mathare]</i></p>
Loans or borrowing	Getting a loan by, for example, buying food on credit from local shops.	<p><i>"So what she did, she borrowed money from her brother. Yes. To, that made her husband buy matunda's and go and sell in Nairobi."</i></p> <p><i>[MM_Participant002_Maragwa]</i></p>
Move to cheaper house	Moving to different housing with a smaller rental fee or closer to one's work place in order to cut costs.	<p><i>"I: Why did you move from that house to here?</i></p> <p><i>Gatekeeper 2: It's just that the burden of the rental fee is a bit lower."</i></p> <p><i>[MM_Participant004_Maragwa]</i></p>
Reduce or change food intake	Reduction of amount of meals per day or cutting out expensive food products from one's diet in order to cut costs.	<p><i>"I skipped meal" [MM_Participant025_Mathare]</i></p>
Remittances	Sending of money from one family-member or a friend to another. This can either be money send from the rural to urban areas or the other way around.	<p><i>"With them? Relationship. It is a good relationship with them, because if I don't have something and they have, they send me. Yeah. I told them, each of them, they all have a duty to do."</i> [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</p>
Saving	Saving money to mitigate risk during a crisis. Could also mean participants mentioning a lack of saving.	<p><i>"Ay, I don't save. I save what? 4.000 what am I saving? So I have to go to the shop to buy rice, to carry these hawking, sugar, squeezing, squeeze. And when I am squeezing like that I have to see that I my house I have maize and beans."</i> [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</p>



Scholarship or work abroad	Looking for job opportunities or scholarships abroad.	<i>"Yes, to take care of her. And her one kid. We lived with her, but her kid was blessed and she managed to go to Qatar. She left the mother." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Selling furniture	Selling of furniture to pay off debts or pay for the daily needs.	<i>"Now it forced us even to sell some things that we had bought for our use. You sell in order for you to survive. Like eh, cooking gas, sell it. Things like that." [MM_Participant023_Mathare]</i>
Setting up a business	Setting up a business.	<i>But even after that 1.5 month eh? Something bad was still going on in my mind, telling me: Is this now the best time for me to do the business. A business that I am not sure of. I didn't know what I start this." [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]</i>
Shared title deeds	Sharing title deeds of land between household members. By putting it on paper the risk is mitigated that someone loses the land in case a spouse comes to pass.	<i>"Because I am not arguing that I have to be written there because of this and this. But you give him fact, that anything can happen. To our country doing succession it has become a ery difficult process, but if we are joint titled, for me, I can leave you before. You can leave before. So if I'm left behind I don't have to go that process of, eh, succession. But I will just go to the office of lands, remove the name of my husband, the title remains mine. And I will share to my children." [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]</i>
Sharing costs or income	Sharing of costs with people within social network.	<i>"P: And we are sharing. Sharing the room. I: You are sharing the rent, sharing the costs. Is it allowed sharing the room. Your landlord is OK? P: Yeah." [MM_Participant017_Kiharu]</i>
Splitting household	Splitting up the household between urban and rural space in order to increase the income of the household or to safeguard property in rural areas.	<i>"And most of them also has learned not to stay with their wives there in town. If the wife is not working she has to be left here in the village and you do something. You know most of them are living with the wives and the wife is not working. And she is so idle." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>



Subsistence farming	Subsistence farming to remain food secure despite a lack of income or to send food to family members in the urban context.	<i>"Not very much, because they have their shamba, so they have everything. No food is going to Nairobi. If you have bananas, if you have if you have vegetables, you can survive." [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]</i>
Table banking_food	Collective saving of (dried or preserved) foods amongst informal groups. Food can be acquired from the bank by the members in case of crisis.	<i>"So she has learned on how to, like, to differentiate friends with seasons and then the other one she has learned on how to do food chama. Like, you buy food. There is a chama, where you buy food for someone." [MM_Participant030_Mathare]</i>
Table banking_money	Collective saving of money amongst informal groups. Money can be acquired from the bank by the members in case of crisis.	<i>"OK. We still have, there is a certain group we have. That one we deal with a kitchen garden, and table banking." [MM_Participant024_Mathare]</i>
Trading goods	Trading of any type of product for another.	<i>"Where you come you change your used clothes. The clothes you have been using and exchange for another. That is mare-mare. You give I give you. But it is not money." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Waged labor	Formal or informal employment with fixed working days and hours and a steady income.	<i>"She was employed at the hotel in Athinifa. So, when COVID-19 came they were sacked off. She stayed in Nairobi for a week, then she came here." [MM_Participant013_Kiharu]</i>
Wedding gifts	Utilization of wedding gifts (e.g. capital, furniture) to start a life in the city.	<i>"How did you started and how did you [Kikuyo]. She is saying, they go to Nairobi while she get married. She got married here. Then after the wedding, they had a gift. They had cash and eh, other gifts like cups, plates, from the cash they get from the wedding they go to Nairobi and start a living." [MM_Participant002_Maragwa]</i>



WhatsApp Groups	Acquiring funds from friends and family through WhatsApp Groups in times of need.	<i>"So, we went, we started opening groups, Whatsapp groups of which even know I have never deleted those Whatsapp groups. They helped me a lot. A lot. Because in the hospital where my dad was, that doctor told me, each and every day you will becoming with a 100 thousand. Every day. Less than that, we will disconnect. And my friends and my dad's friends and my mum's friends and the family's friends, did this."</i> [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]
Mathare informal settlement	General information about Mathare informal settlement provided by key informants and participants currently living in the area.	<i>"Mathare has been a nice place. People interact so well, until it comes to election. That is where we find a lot of tribalism. You find people are fighting here and there. But not all the time. After election everything will come back to normal. People will have their own peace. And also [talks in Swahili]. Gai."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Conflict and crime	Mentioning of conflict and crime within Mathare.	<i>"We have so many tribes. You find Kikuyu, there is Kamba, there is Luo, there is Luhya, there is Masaai. So you find there is so many tribes here. But when it comes to elections you find they start fighting. Between Luo's and the Kikuyu's. They are the majority. Here in Mathare the Luo and the Kikuyu they are the majority."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Inhabitants	Characteristics of residents in Mathare (e.g. age groups, livelihoods).	<i>"Mathare is home. As he is saying [laughs]. Mathare ,most people come from the rural to come to Mathare, because you can afford life there. You find houses are very cheap, food is very cheap. According you buy those food that are not that expensive. Life is so affordable in Mathare."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Living conditions	Living conditions in Mathare (e.g. housing, sanitation and how people interact).	<i>"Mathare is home. As he is saying [laughs]. Mathare ,most people come from the rural to come to Mathare, because you can afford life there. You find houses are very cheap, food is very cheap. According you buy those food that are not that expensive. Life is so affordable in Mathare."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]



Migration	Sum of mobility flows of labor migrants travelling between urban and rural space in the last two years of the pandemic.	<i>"At least, the others manage, but one came, because of COVID-19 he came back home with his family. And me my son is a father of four."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Ambition moving back to urban	Ambitions of labor migrants to move back to urban areas after having returned to rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"I really don't know if we will ever go back to Nairobi and I don't know when and how. Because if probably I had something that was promising like that business I would, I would have to opportunity to make the comparison whether the money I am doing the savings I will be able to go back to Nairobi."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]
Commuting	Participants mentioning commuting between urban and rural space.	<i>"I: Oh he travels back and forth! P2: Yes. He goes with mangoes. After finished selling the mangoes, goes back home. Gets mangoes, back to Nairobi. And so. Life continues."</i> {FGD_001_Maragwa]
First move to Nairobi	On the first time a labor migrant has moved to the city	<i>"2008. And eh, I was working with a certain eh, construction company having eh, graduated from the University of Kenyatta. My diploma is civil engineering. But eh, I struggled a lot. I was unable to secure a job. So I came to find for the greener pastures."</i> [MM_Participant018_Maragwa]
Household decision or individual	Debate whether moving to the city was a decision individually made by the labor migrant or collectively made as a household.	<i>"It is a family affair. Only a family affair! Like my son when he was going you know he had nothing. So you have to give him some pocket money, food, and then he goes and rents a house and he starts having."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Migrant returnees	On the labor migrants that have returned to rural areas during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"I think iN Kigumo, the subcounty is a diverse area. So, I think there were more than a thousand. Because the subcounty is divided in 5 areas, which we call wards. And in fact, if you take a rough estimate, there were more than a thousand. But as time goes, they have tried to go back to seek for jobs in towns."</i> [KI_Participant003_Klgumo]



Motivation for urban migration	On the motivation for migrating to the city amongst labor migrants.	<i>"Eh, let's say, back in 20, in the year 2020 and early 2021 there were many people, but currently they have started catching up so they have started returning to town to seek for job. But back in the year 2020 a lot of people came, in the rural areas, because in town life became difficult."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Remigration rural	Participants talking about (motivations of) labor migrants moving back from urban to rural areas.	<i>"The boy was most affected, because he had just finished school and he was employed in Nairobi. When he was employed, he worked only for about two months. Then, he lost the job because of the COVID-19. He came back home and up to date, he has not come back there."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Urban-urban migration	Migration of labor migrants within urban areas (e.g. moving to a cheaper home to save costs).	<i>"She was able to move from the previous house where she used to live, but she moved out with two months rent not paid. But no one is asking for that money. Yeah. But currently in this one that she is staying she has one month rent not paid."</i> [MM_Participant021_Mathare]
Lack of skills	Mentioning of the inability of labor migrants to find work in rural areas due to a lack of skills on farming.	<i>"She was just helping me with my household work. But they are not used. But you cannot say someone from Nairobi who has stayed in Nairobi for about 20 years to take a plough and work."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Lack of social network	Mentioning of the inability of labor migrants to find work in rural areas due to the limited social network they have in rural areas.	<i>"There are so many people who are, who are born for it, so you, you have been in the city. You are not known [laughs]. So those who are experienced here, those will get the job. You, you are not experienced, so you can't. It is very rare, not unless they want many laborers."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa].
Illegal routes	Routes taken to avoid authorities reinforcing mobility restrictions during the lockdown period.	<i>"I: So they told you to swim there to avoid reinforcement? P: Yeah. And the area is so dangerous, because you can swim, you can come across a hippo or a crocodile. And they are telling me."</i> [MM_Participant010_Kigumo]
Immobility	Participants mentioning being stuck or stranded in a locality as a result of mobility restrictions. Or notions of not moving.	<i>"So she couldn't leave. OK, so once the government allowed you to go and travel, you went. And that was December."</i> [MM_Participant002_Maragwa]



Post-election violence	Mentioning of the 2007 post-election violence and the expectations of the 2022 elections in August.	<i>"We have so many tribes. You find Kikuyu, there is Kamba, there is Luo, there is Luhya, there is Masaai. So you find there is so many tribes here. But when it comes to elections you find they start fighting. Between Luo's and the Kikuyu's. They are the majority. Here in Mathare the Luo and the Kikuyu they are the majority." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Public awareness COVID-19	Public opinion and awareness about COVID-19.	<i>"Counselling was offered by the churches and they were sensitizing people on COVID-19, because not everyone believe dit was true. This misinformation was also spread by politicians. These politicians tend to play into the youth and their lack of jobs in order to make sure that vote for them. They buy votes or allow them to campaign for them. Over time people started believing COVID was a thing, because people were dying." [field notes_Kigumo]</i>
Relationship family rural	Participants talking about the relationship between labor migrants and family and friends in rural areas.	<i>"Again, the movement was again a problem. Because for me moving from Kiambu county coming here, sometimes I could choose better I go back to Nairobi to the rental house and sleep there. I could not even be able to come and see my family, because of this lockdown." [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]</i>
Contact frequency	The frequency with which labor migrants and family and friends in rural areas contact each other (e.g. visits or communication through gadgets).	<i>"Yeah. We do talk. Probably like three times in a week and as we had agreed as a family I had told her to be submissive, to go down and work as a house girl, try to save some savings for her to also get some cost probably." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>
Family visits	Motivations for and frequency of family visits of labor migrants to family and friends in rural areas.	<i>"No money for transport [laughs]. Now instead of them coming, it is better to send money for their children, because from Nairobi up to here, it is 600. Coming in 300 and getting back is 300. And they are having children that are going to school." [MM_Participant004_Kiharu]</i>
Feelings of missing	How migration to urban or rural areas has impacted other household members in terms of feelings of missing.	<i>"When you are a family set-up. Of course when you are happy when you are all together, like now the way we are. But when you are said to move, they will feel the gap." [MM_Participant008_Kigumo]</i>



Financial support	Financial support provided by family and friends in rural areas to labor migrants in urban areas or financial support provided by labor migrants in urban areas to family and friends in rural areas.	<i>"Like my son when he was going you know he had nothing. So you have to give him some pocket money, food, and then he goes and rents a house and he starts having."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Reunification	Mentioning of reunification of family members either in rural or urban space as a result of COVID-19 measures.	<i>"Yeah, so when COVID came, there was no otherwise. He had to come home. And he settled fully [laughs]. Yeah! Yes. Yeah, it was an advantage for his mother. So, the mother had stayed for almost five years without seeing the son."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Responsibility as a parent or spouse	Participants talking about their experience as a parent, spouse or child in providing for their family members during COVID times.	<i>"I was thinking if this thing will continue for another two, three months, what do we use. Now I have the children, we have the school fees we need to feed them, I have other bills to pay. What will happen out of me? So, I have to do something that at least the family is catered and they get eh, whatever they get before they were able to get."</i> [MM_Participant011_Kiharu]
Social protection	Mentioning of (a lack of) social support systems in place to aid people in general or during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"And you know, in my life, there is one thing I will not forget. That friends are always good. Because friends are the ones who helped me. The government in Kenya never catered for COVID. They never. We have insurances, and all this. But they say for COVID, not covered. Other things, yes, but for COVID, no."</i> [MM_Participant009_Kigumo]
Stigma	Types of stigmatization that has occurred during the last 2 years of the pandemic and that have affected labor migrants.	<i>"Yeah, yeah! They could even ran away from you because you are from Nairobi [talks in Swahili]. So, when they see you they might feel you brought corona-virus to their place."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Broken families	The splitting of households as a results of increasing tensions (e.g. job volatility, food insecurity, inability to live u to expectations of household members).	<i>"She was OK. Until that she left. And they were very free. Very free. There was no problem between them. I did not hear any problem, I did not see any problem [cliques tongue]. That is why I am telling you, I also don't know what happened. And she refused to communicate."</i> [MM_Participant020_Kigumo]



Embarrassment	Embarrassment surrounding e.g. responsibilities as parents, returning to rural jobs after having worked in the city.	<i>"They tried to get work. You know, that my son would look for, maybe grass for the cows. But still it feels embarrassing. It feels like it is not the right thing to be done. He needs to be in the city where he used to, where he has got a job, people used to see him smart, now he is collecting grass."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]
Fear COVID-19	Fear within urban and rural communities for COVID-19 infections, for example, because migrants return from densely populated cities.	<i>"Yeah, yeah! They could even ran away from you because you are from Nairobi [talks in Swahili]. So, when they see you they might feel you brought corona-virus to their place."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Mental health	Mentioning of mental health problems e.g. depression and anxiety as a result of the impact of COVID-19.	<i>"OK. All was not good. OK. But when I came back here October 2020, kind of, I just felt, I had no interest in living anymore. So my daughter is big, she was in form 4, talked to a lady, and that lady took me to the hospital then I started medication for depression."</i> [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]
Support	Sum of support or lack of support provided by during and after the COVID-19 pandemic by various actors.	<i>"As you are saying, most of people have lost their jobs. And now, finding the capital to go back to start the business, it is very difficult. But, we are training the youths to start practicing this technical jobs. Even our country, is mobilizing on technical trainings."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Authorities	Participants talking about support given out during the COVID-19 pandemic by authorities such as police.	<i>"Or you can call someone from the police station and you will give them, but people will cooperate, because it is the police. Yeah. Once you are given, just go home."</i> [FGD_003_Maragwa]
Church groups	Types of support or lack of support provided by church groups to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"We used to do that. But in the churches. You know the priest used to tell us to come with offerings. When you take those offerings, you get them and you take it to the needy. Through priests. Those are the only people trusted and they can take to the needy."</i> [FGD_001_Maragwa]



Community health workers	Community health workers and volunteers are people within the community that identify and treat people in need of health care on a community-level. The health workers are assigned to a respective area that covers an area as large as a neighborhood and they are active both in rural and urban areas.	<i>"If you go to hospital, maybe you have kids being sick. Or your elderly, you are, if they can use health members, also health members will know very well how to help people, because they communicate with them then they know this person come from the urban area, that area is so dry, so we can help. That can also help. It will work well."</i> [FGD_003_Maragwa]
Family and friends	Types of support or lack of support provided by family and friends to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"I then got, I got very good friends, neighbors, they come in, they chip in. They contribute whatever they have. When I was in hospital, they contributed almost 10.000. Then they helped me. And I was at home, you see, people whom you have been living with now you have been at home for almost half a year then they are still supporting you, they still have you at heart. You can imagine such a friends are very good friends."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Government	Types of support or lack of support provided by family and friends to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"She got support from the government, the 1.000 that the government used to get. She got 4 times. Her brother also got it."</i> [MM_Participant025_Mathare]
NGOs	Types of support or lack of support provided by NGOs to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Shof co started immediately when they locked these barriers, shof co started. Yeah. Food aid, sanitizers and soap. And such."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]
Religion	Mentioning of the role of religion in the lives of labor migrants in coping with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Now you know, the best thing that supported me a lot is the church. Because I realized the best thing now is to go back to the church. To listen to the word of God, because there are these things that I could not manage to change."</i> [MM_Participant018_Mathare]
Schools	Types of support or lack of support provided by schools to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"They were serving those students who were learning there. Now, if your student were in Mission of Hope, they could do some budget for him, like, eh, maize. To support."</i> [MM_Participant023_Mathare]



Talking in research	Participants mentioning how sharing their story with a researcher has been helpful to them.	<i>"You have come to help us put out our bitterness. You know there is a lot of bitterness in our lives, and when we are talking, that bitterness goes out." [FGD_001_Maragwa]</i>
Well-wishers	Types of support given out by well-wishers to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>" Mm. Mm. She is saying, during that process they also gave, friends and well-wishers helped them to pay the hospital bill. But you see, no one could afford to pay the bus fare." [MM_Participant004_Maragwa]</i>
Women groups	Types of support or lack of support provided by informal women groups to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Actually we business women [inaudible]. So when it came to my time I was given around 15.000 shillings now I knew if I stay with that there, there was no. Otherwise if that was, if that money would finish I would struggle with my kids there. So I decided to use the same money to come and pay this, this house." [MM_Participant003_Maragwa]</i>
youth leaders	Types of support provided by youth leaders to labor migrants struggling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Actually he is saying he is a youth mobilizer. What he does is he brings youth together and then talk to them and mentor them. And also build their courage so that they can be able to speak." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
What do you need	Answer to the question what labor migrants would have needed during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and what they would need from the day of interviewing onwards.	<i>"He is saying, the government, there is a lot of money that came from, which the government used to borrow from all those countries for COVID pretending to come and help those people from the poor background. But the money was eaten by the government themselves. So I find it was very difficult." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Female leadership	Mentioning of the necessity for female leadership going forward.	<i>"He is saying, what men should do is, delegating duties to women. Like, for example, if it is in leadership. You give her a leadership position. So, you will see. And also, as that person, that woman is working on the leadership skills, she will also be learning." [KI_Participant004_Mathare]</i>
Mapping of vulnerable	Identifying the most vulnerable in society by using mapping.	<i>"I think the government can do the mapping. So that you know who are these people and where are they. Yes. After you did the mapping and you will come to know where they are and who are they at least you can give it to them. The government can give it to them." [KI_Participant001_Kiharu]</i>



Public participation	Mentioning of the necessity for public participation of labor migrants and other citizens to ensure transparent budgeting and provision of social support during times of crisis.	<i>"Because the one we are implementing currently is teaching people about participating in public, in county budgets. Because we understand that the money that the county has it is ours, because we are the one who, eh, who give the taxes. So we have been training people to be attending those forums. When the budgets are being set, so that they can know and also can give their priorities."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Reimburseries	Compensation for school fees.	<i>"Reimburseries, your local leaders, not Marit. He is asking about reimbursements for schools, but I told them it is for the government, not Marit. Because Marit is only on a research on COVID-19."</i> [MM_Participant014_Kiharu]
Start-up capital	Mentioning of the necessity for start-up capital to restart businesses that were lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"She is saying, if she had someone to boost her charcoal business, she would be able to set up everything."</i> [MM_Participant004_Maragwa]
Youth	Participants on the impact of COVID-19 on youth.	<i>"So, later on, eh. For us for the youth we came up with and decided to do, we mentor young people, because they was a lot of mental issues, depression. So that is when we came, discussed with [participant's name] and the team and then we decided mentorship. Just to help them because you find people are going through mental illnesses, they are killing themselves, they are committing suicide. So that is when we came up with doing mentorship in school and other places."</i> [KI_Participant004_Mathare]
Youth employment	Participants on the problems surrounding youth employment in general and youth employment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	<i>"Mostly, they are the youths. By youth I mean from 15 up to 40. That's the biggest number of people living in my area, because as we said, there is a problem of lacking jobs. So, most of the youth are still in the rural areas. Yes."</i> [KI_Participant003_Kigumo]
Teenage pregnancies	Participants on teenage pregnancies as an indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures.	<i>"Also the young girls. Yes. Some left school when COVID come. You will meet by between these two years, there are some girls under eighteen who are mothers. They get babies."</i> [FGD_002_Kigumo]



Crime	Notions about crime (e.g. stealing, illegal selling of goods, illegal travel routes during lockdown) indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures or in general (e.g. youth unemployment in Kenya).	<i>"Due to lack of jobs, she is saying, some gathers in a place discussing how they come to your place. They will carry your hens, even sheep. They go and sell, just to go and buy the bangi. The drugs! Yes." [FGD_002_Kigumo]</i>
Drop-outs	Participants mentioning youth dropping out of school as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures.	<i>"Yes, and they have left school. Even when the school was back, they refused to get to school, because they are used in the money." [FGD_002_Kigumo]</i>

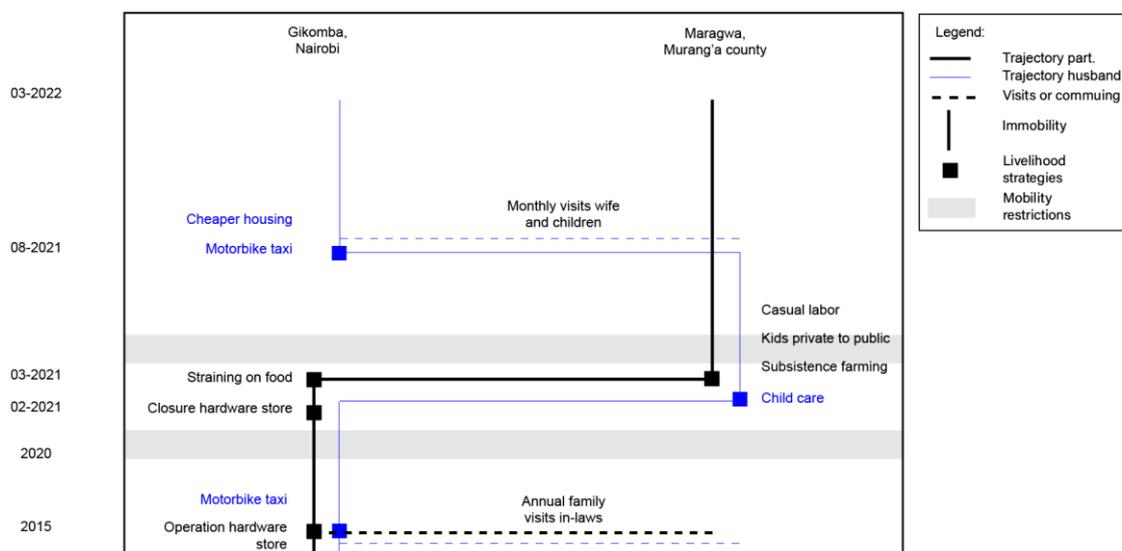
## Annex IX. Livelihood strategy codes

Table 8. Codes 'Livelihood strategy'. Source: Author

Livelihood strategies	43	358
(Re)schooling and training	6	12
Accessing funds	11	12
Casual labor	32	78
Change home-base	4	5
Community health volunteer	2	7
Cutting costs	9	13
Debt accumulation	9	13
Expanding business	5	8
Food from rural	15	17
Food storage	1	1
Hawking	29	68
Illegal selling	1	3
Investing in a family member	12	16
Kids from private to public	5	6
Livelihood diversification	18	32
Loans or borrowing	11	18
Move to cheaper house	4	7
Online shop or job	2	2
Reduce or change food intake	9	10
Remittances	18	25
Saving	23	39
Scholarship or work abroad	2	2
Selling furniture	4	5
Setting up a business	19	41
Shared title deeds	1	2
Sharing costs or profit	2	2
Splitting household	18	30
Subsistence farming	29	72
Table banking_money	6	9

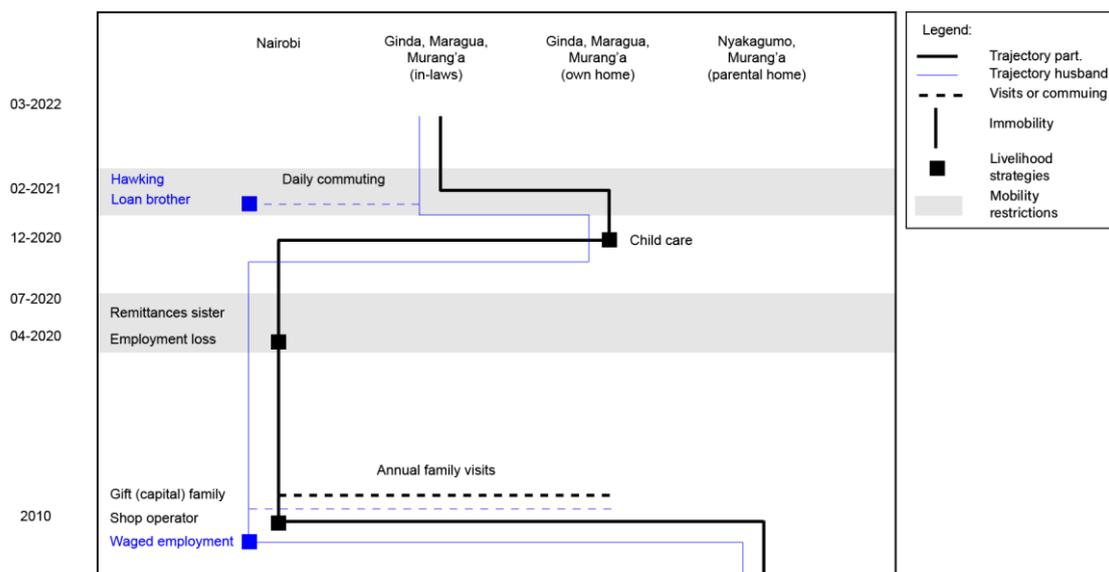
## Annex X. Mobility maps participants Murang'a

Figure 10. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant001\_Maragwa]



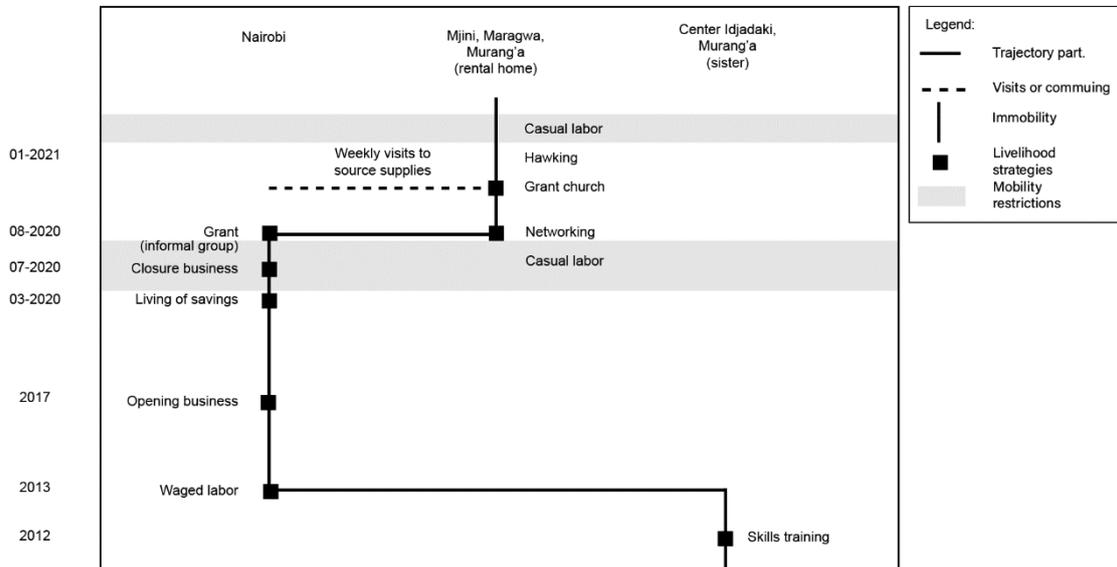
Source: Author.

Figure 11. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant002\_Maragwa]



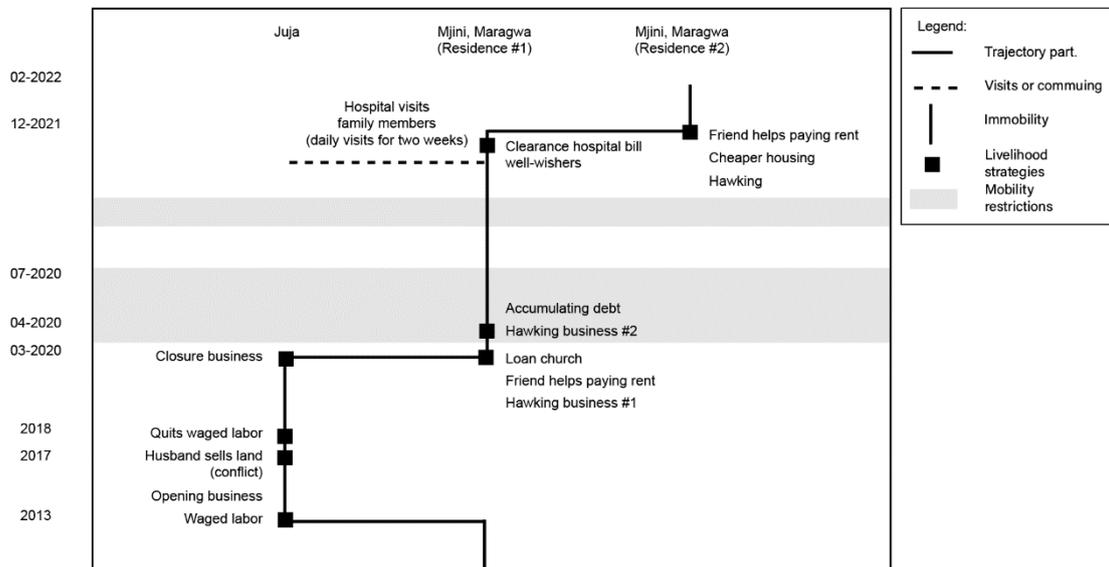
Source : Author.

Figure 12. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant003\_Maragwa]



Source : Author.

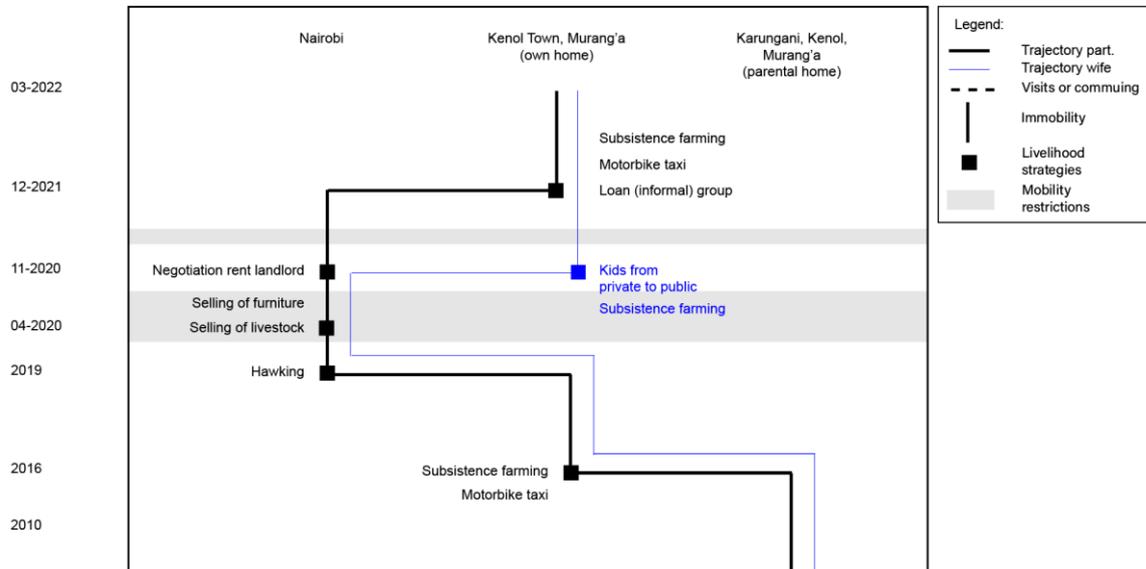
Figure 13. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant004\_Maragwa]



Source : Author.

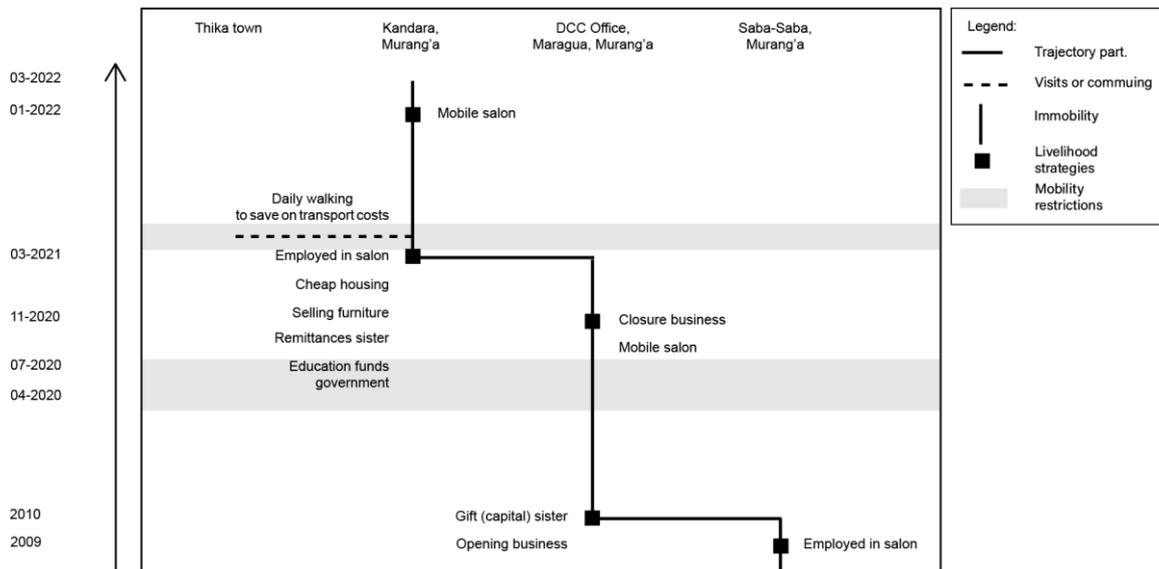


Figure 14. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant005\_Kigumo]



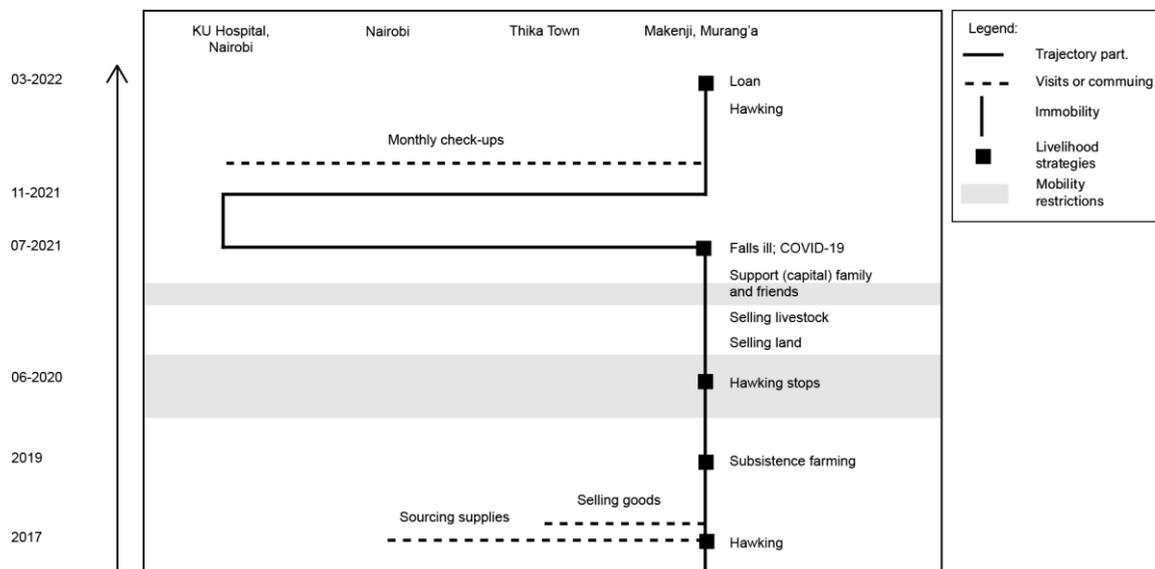
Source : Author.

Figure 15. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant006\_Kigumo]



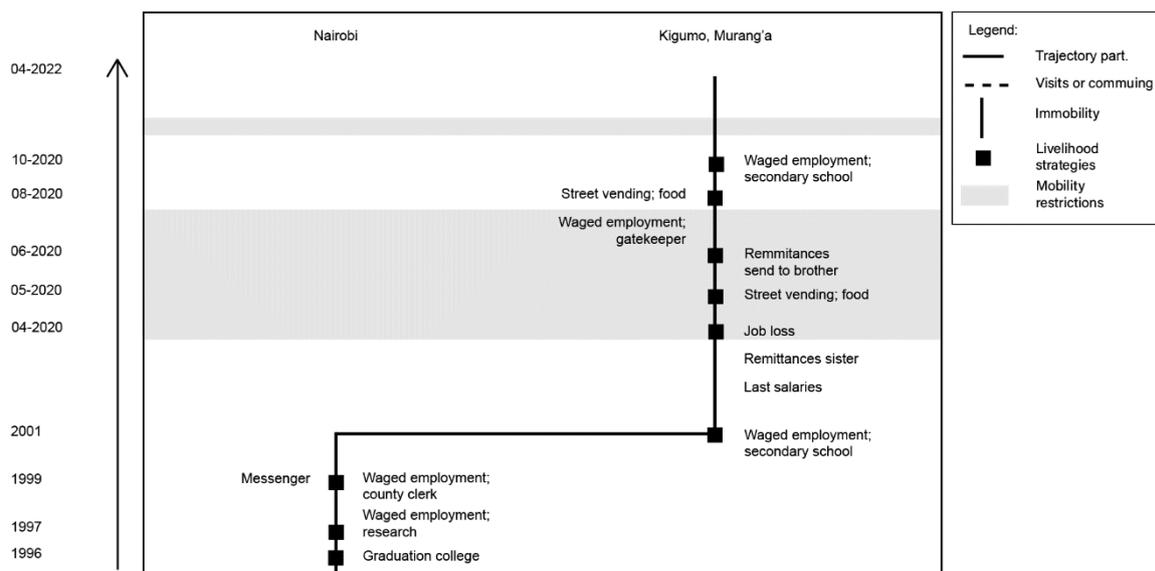
Source : Author.

Figure 16. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant007\_Kigumo]



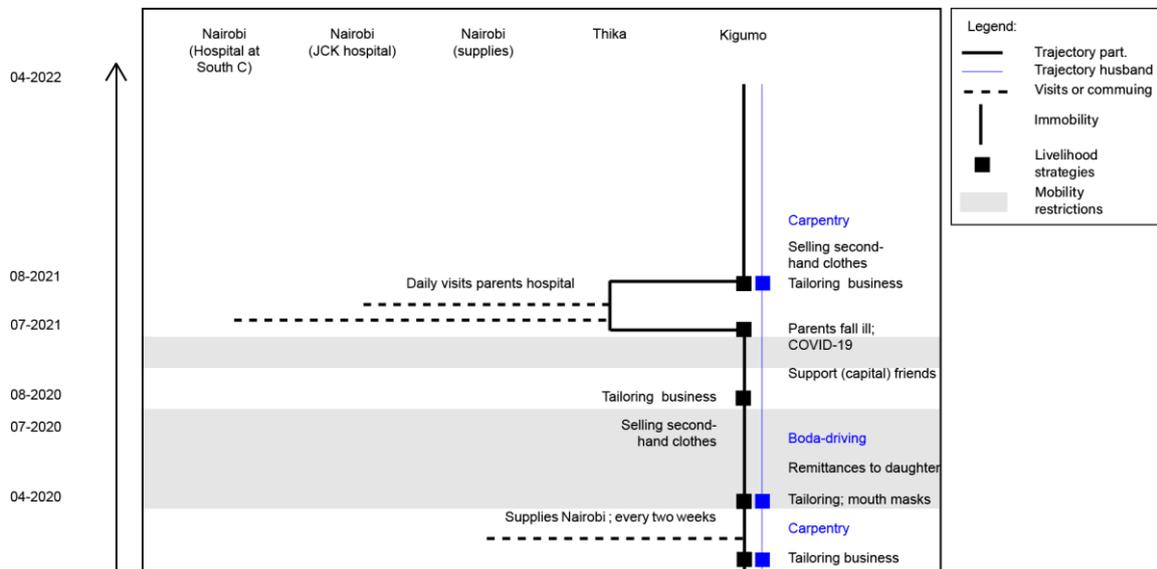
Author : Author

Figure 17. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant008\_Kigumo]



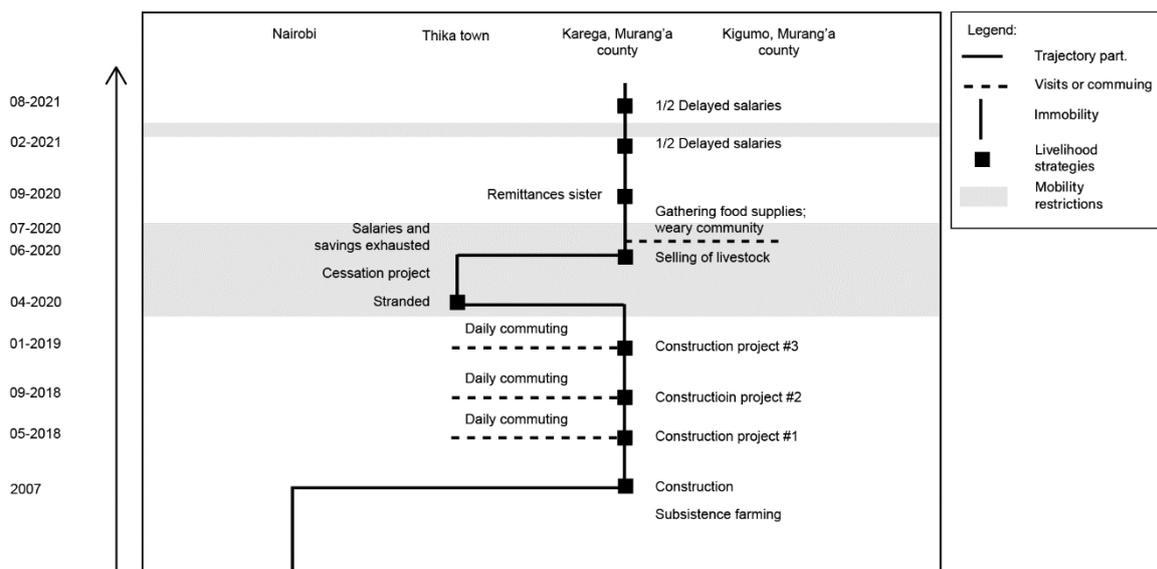
Source : Author.

Figure 18. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant009\_Kigumo]



Source : Author.

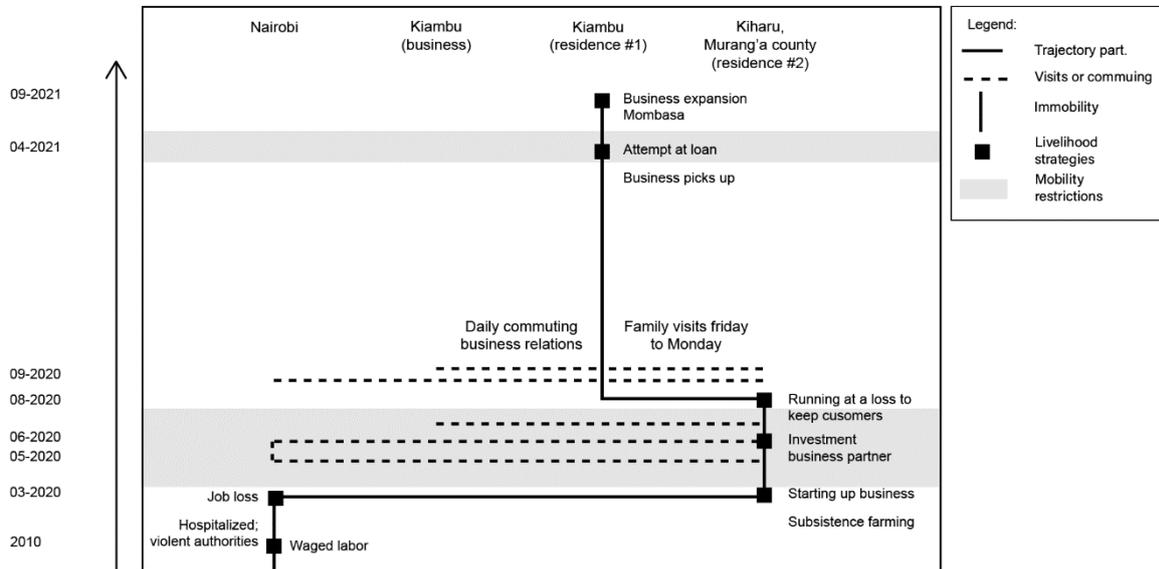
Figure 19. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant010\_Kigumo]



Source : Author.

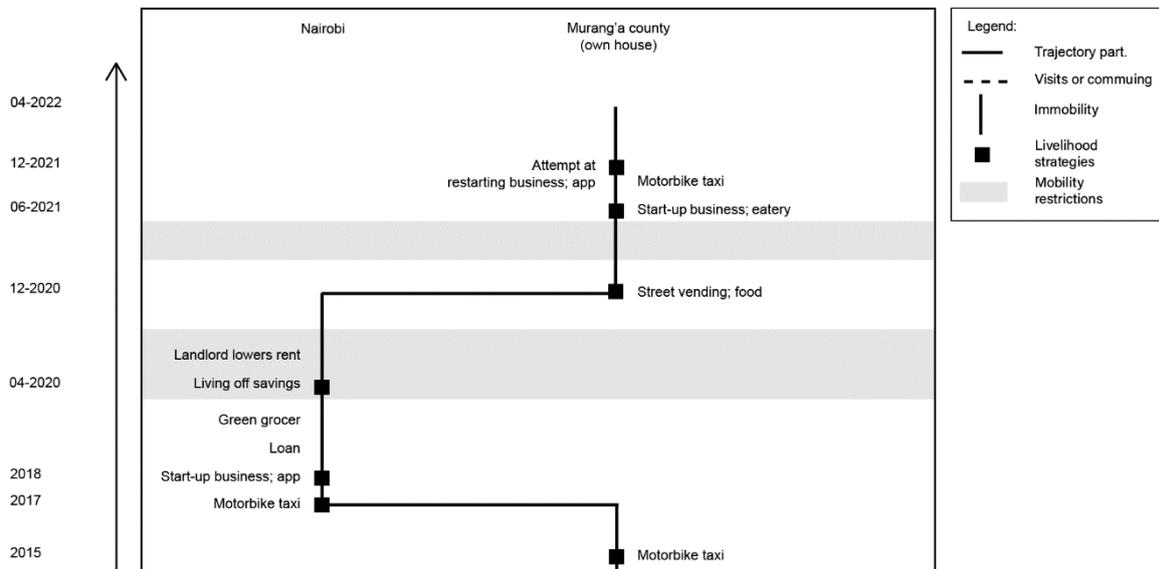


Figure 20. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant011\_Kiharu]



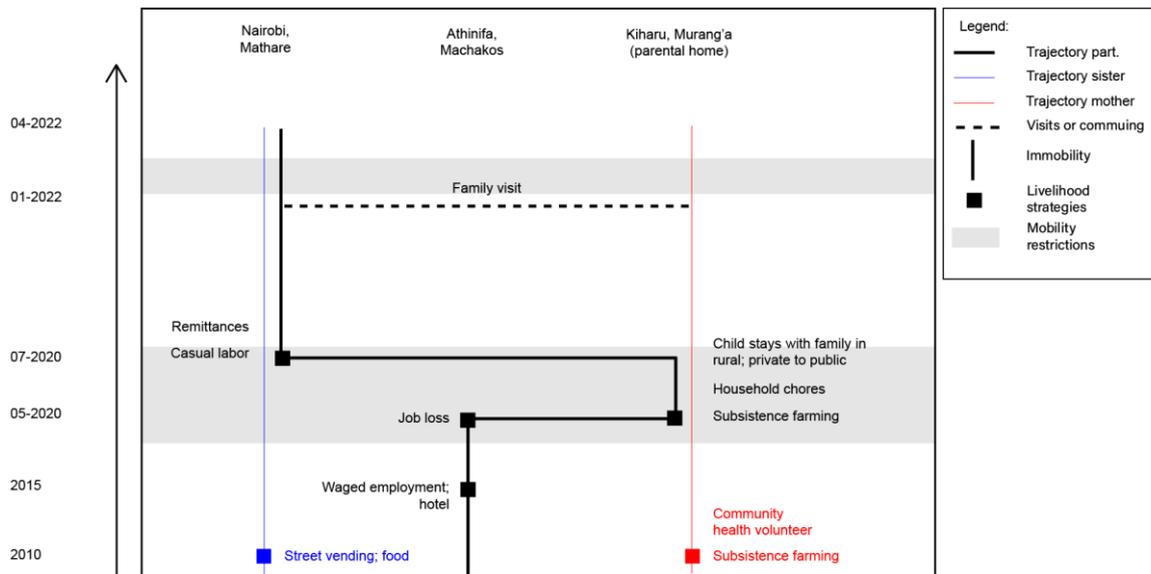
Source : Author.

Figure 21. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant012\_Kiharu]



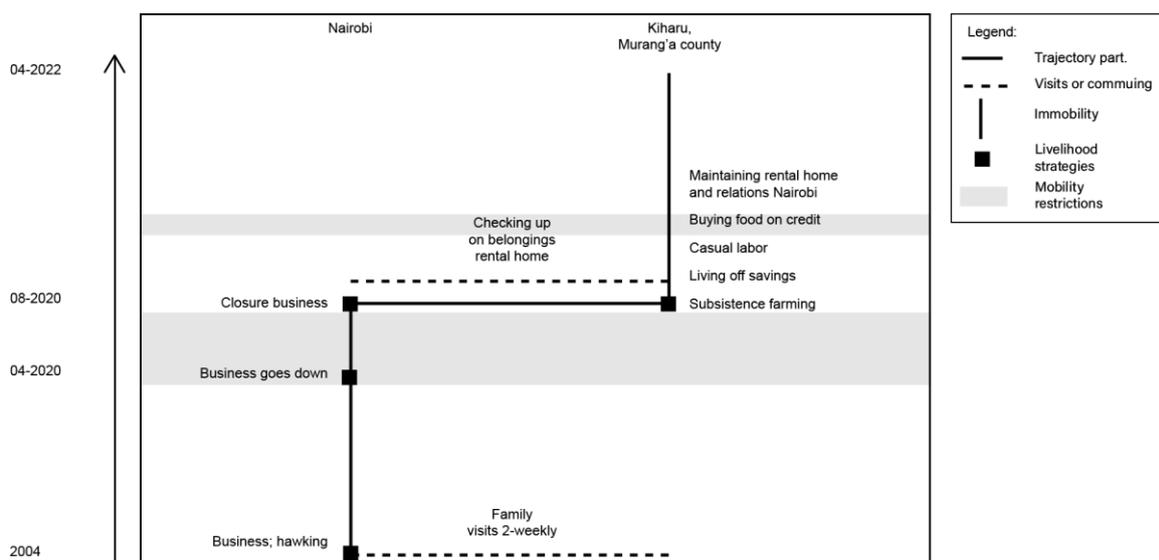
Source : Author.

Figure 22. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant013\_Kiharu]



Source : Author.

Figure 23. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant014\_Kiharu]



Source : Author.

Figure 24. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant015\_Kiharu]

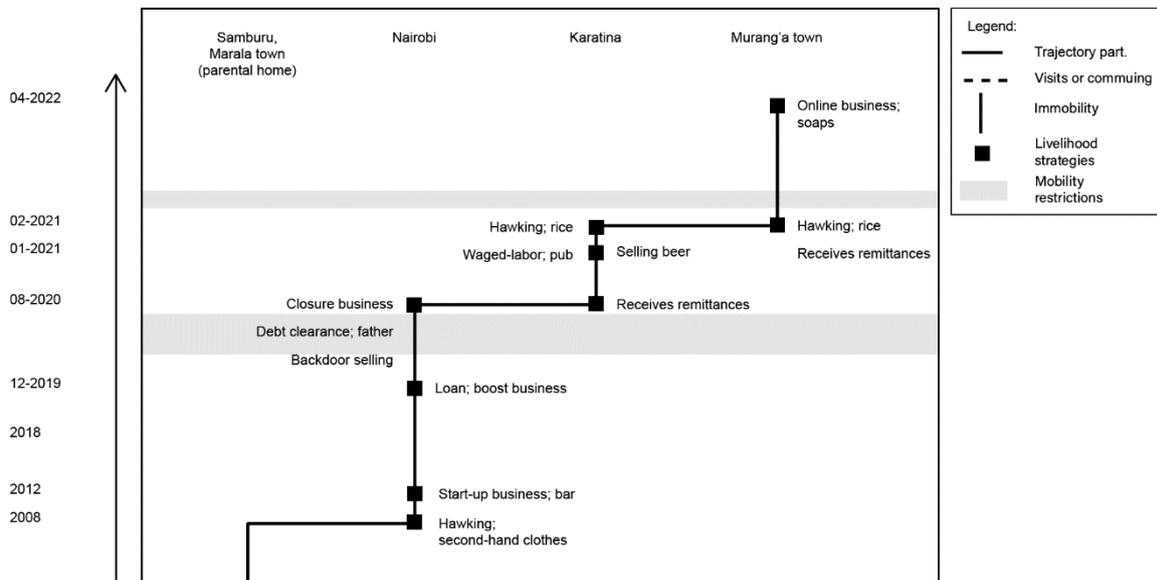
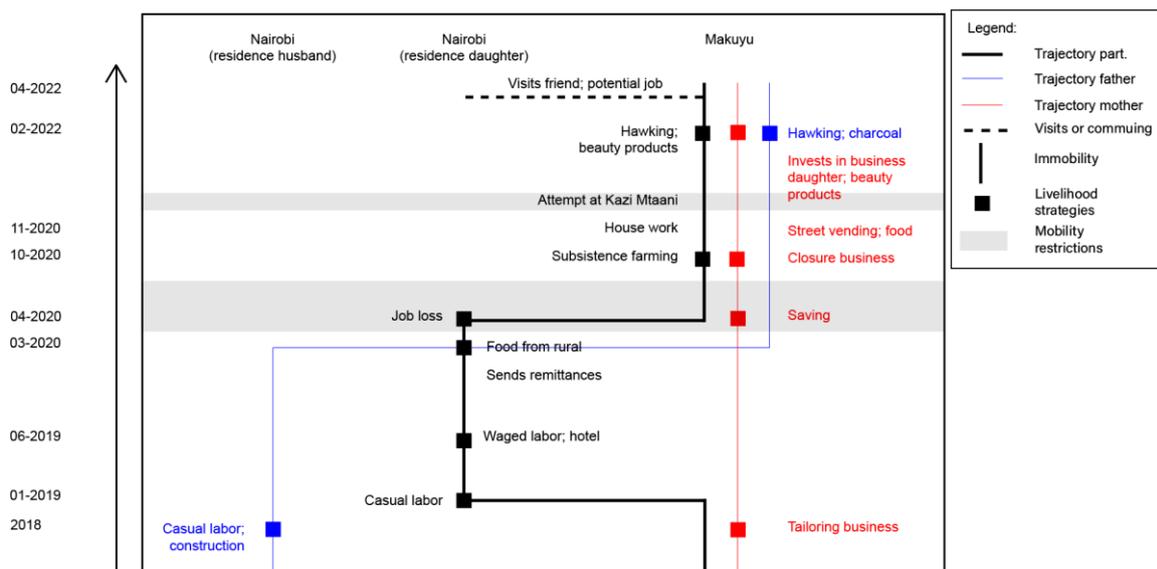
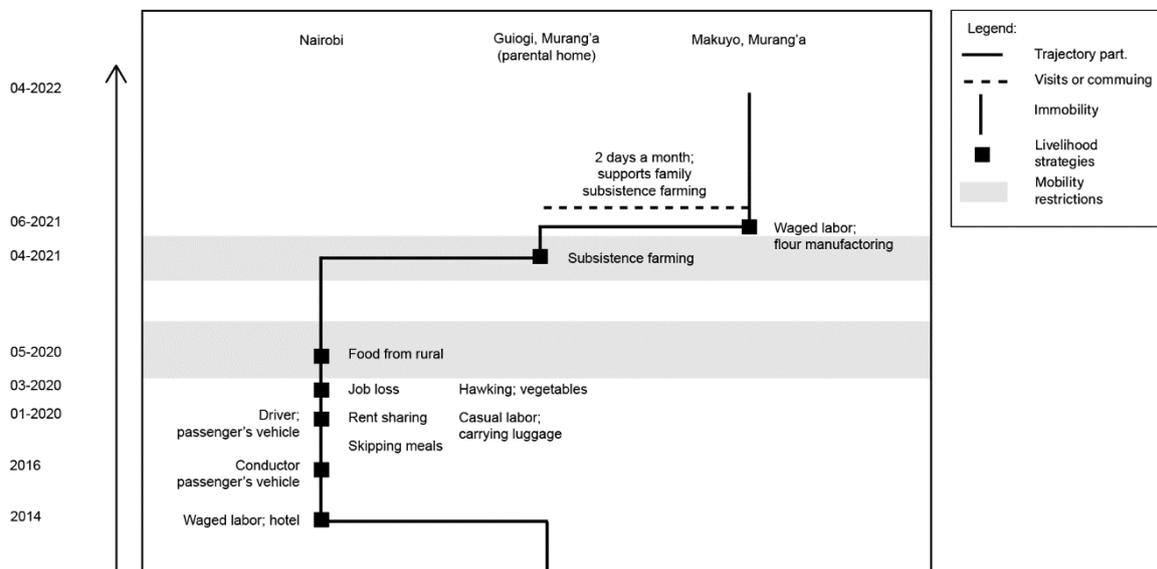


Figure 25. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant016\_Kiharu]



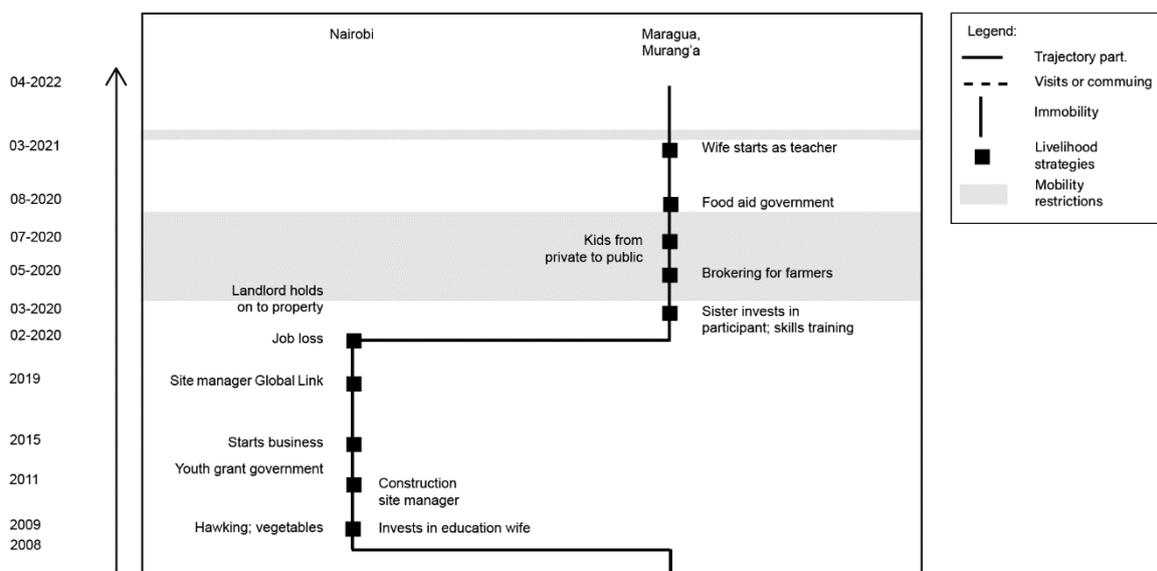
Source: Author

Figure 26. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant017\_Kiharu]



Source: Author.

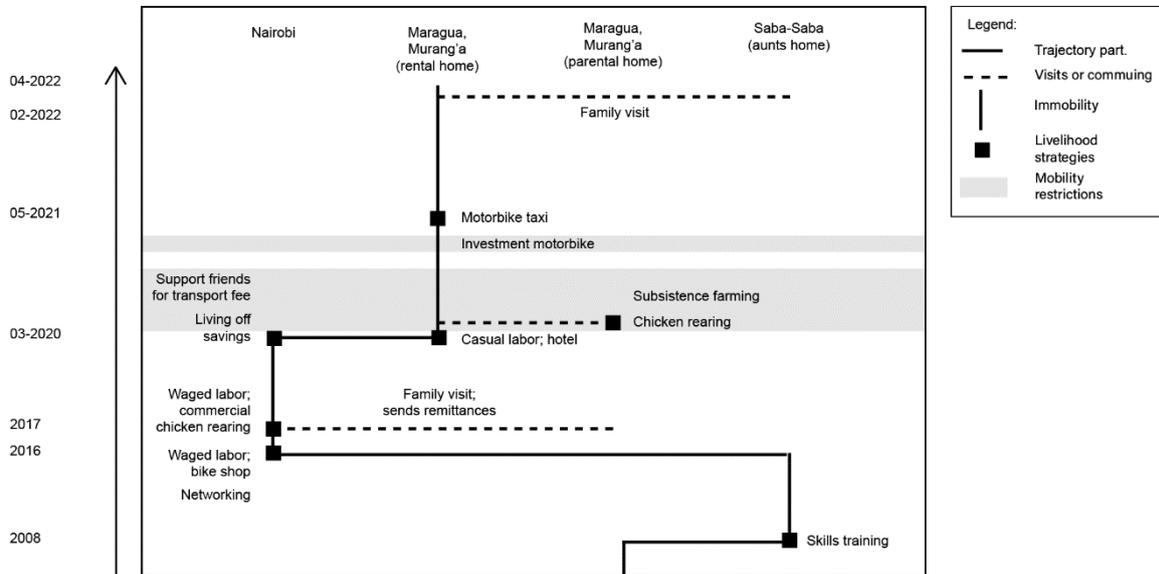
Figure 27. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant018\_Maragwa]



Source: Author.

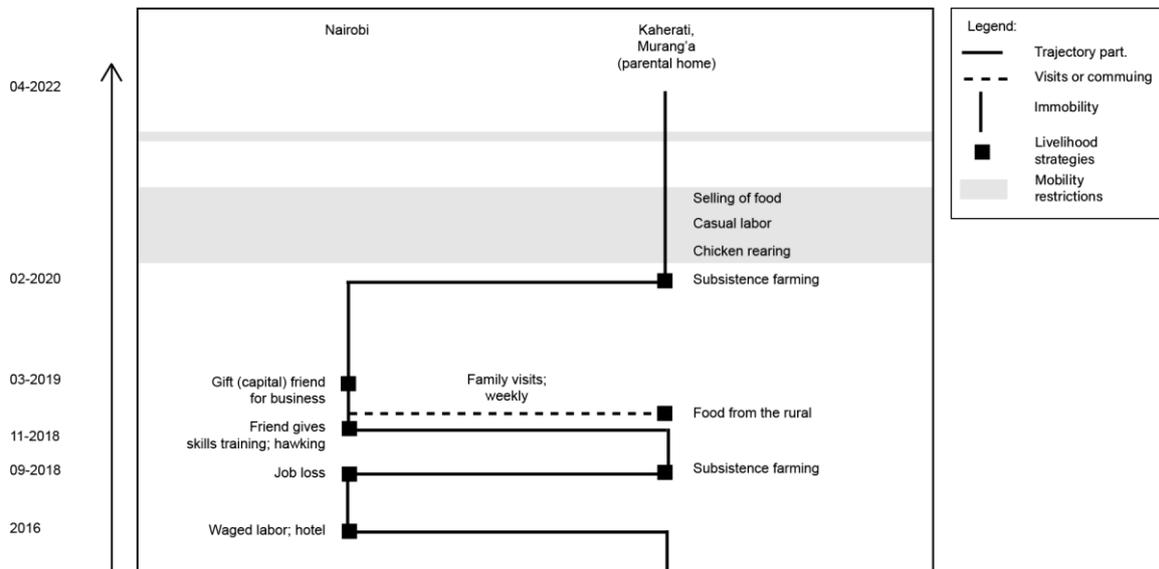


Figure 28. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant019\_Maragwa]



Source: Author.

Figure 29. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant020\_Kigumo]

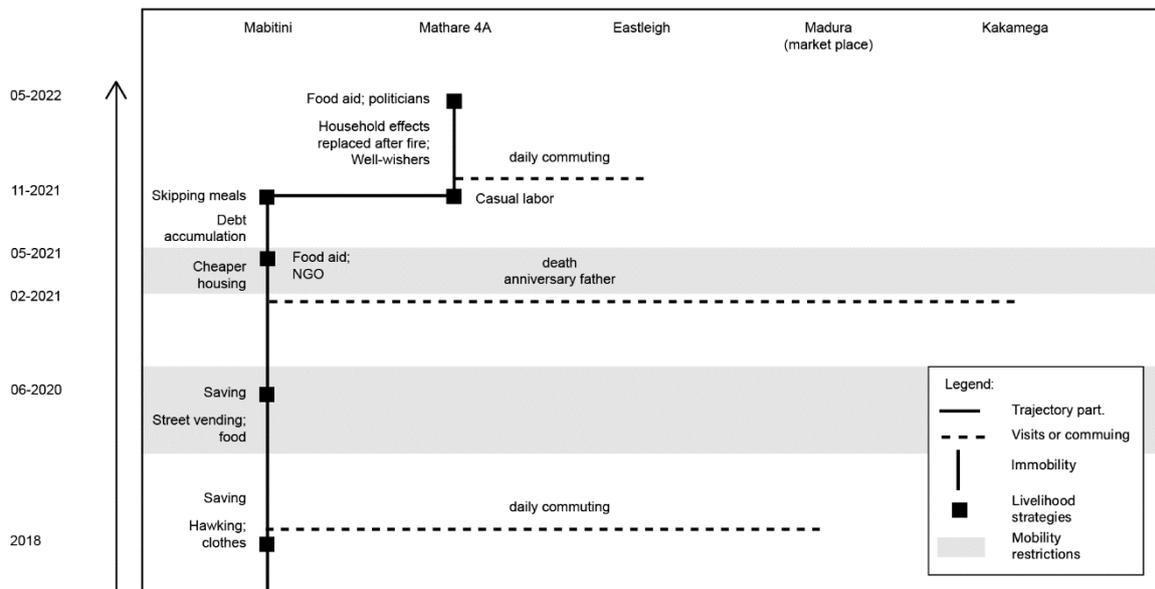


Source: Author.



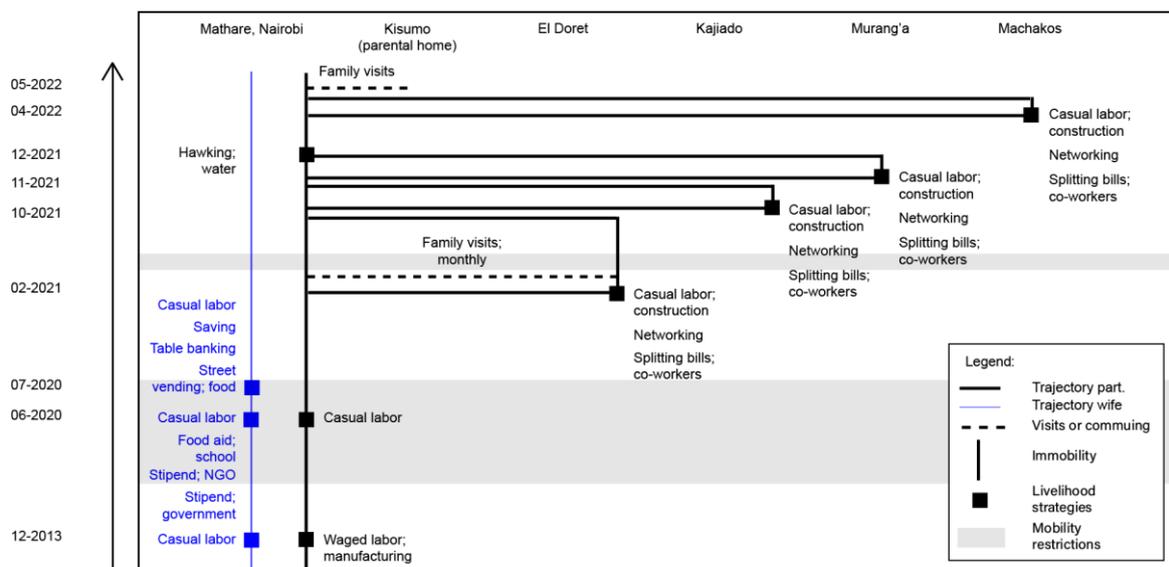
### Annex VII. Mobility maps participants Mathare

Figure 30. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant021\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

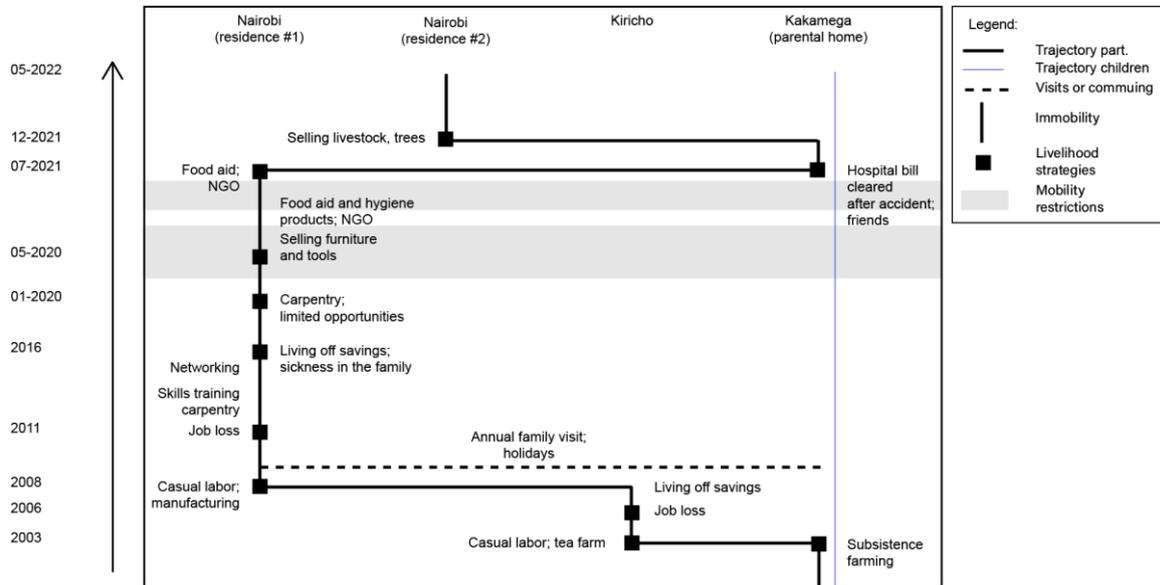
Figure 31. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant022\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

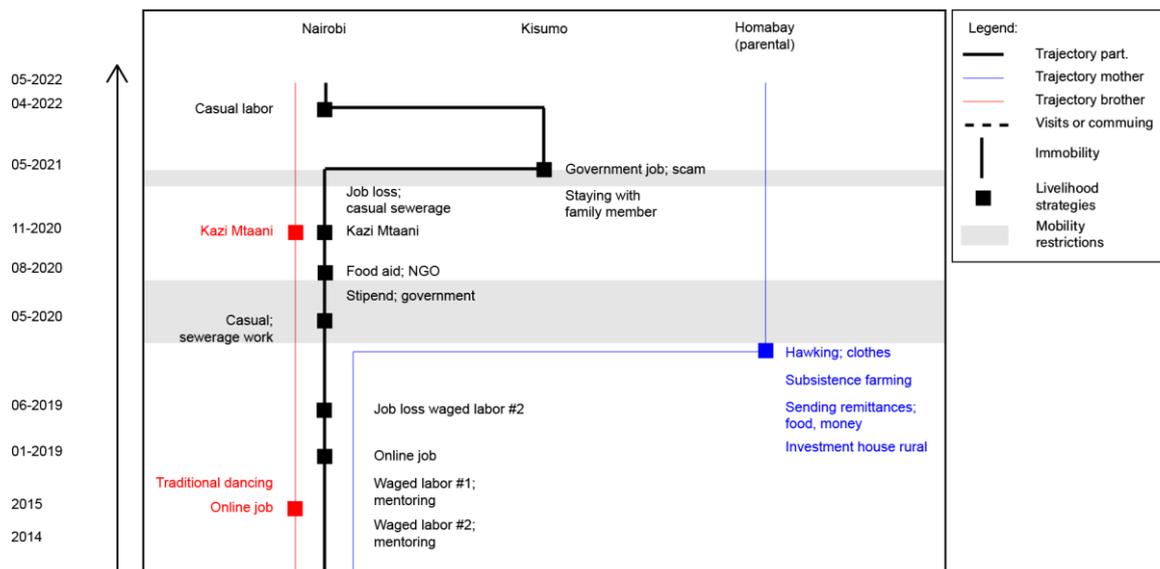


Figure 32. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant023\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

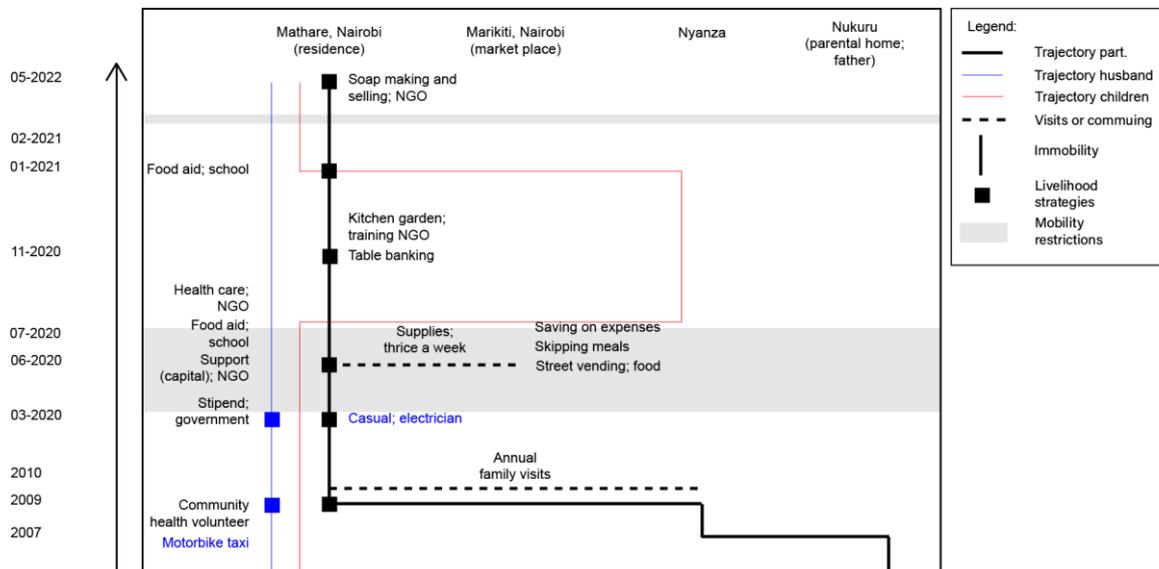
Figure 33. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant024\_Mathare]



Source: Author

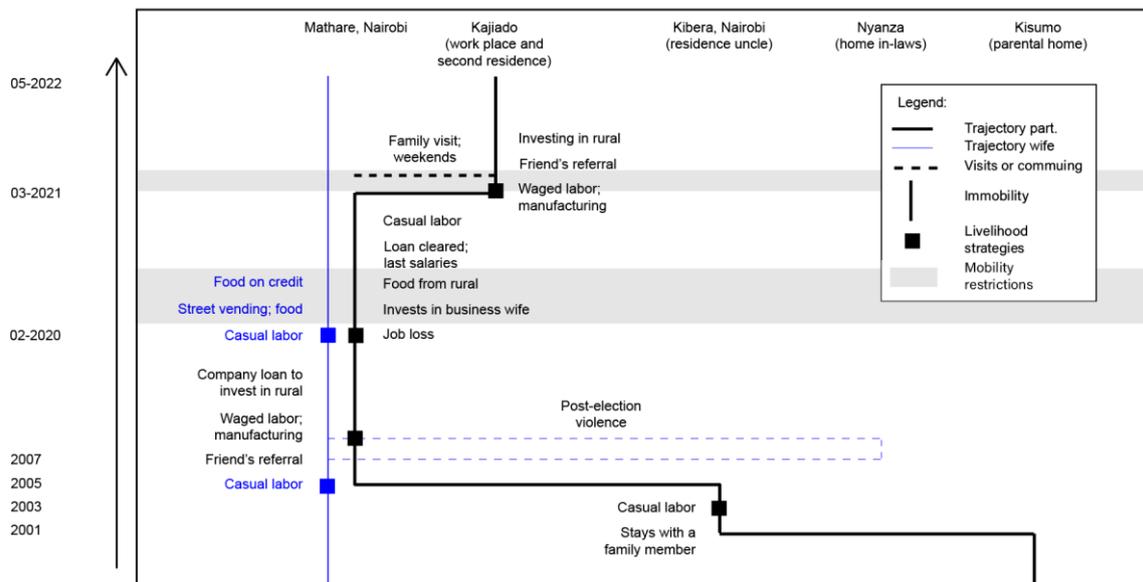


Figure 34. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant025\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

Figure 35. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant026\_Mathare]

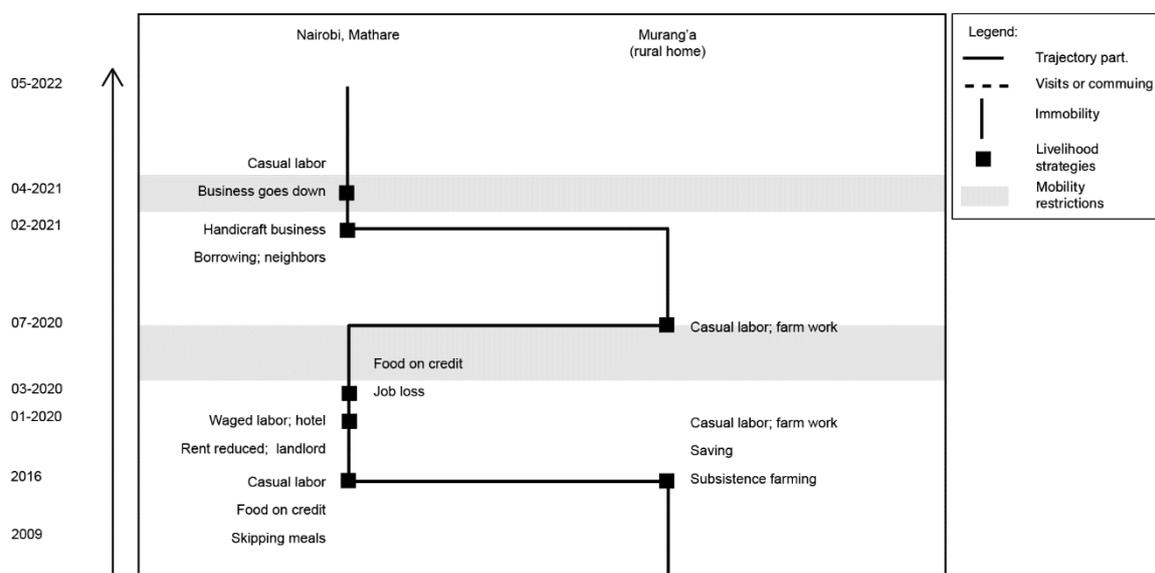


Source: Author.

Figure 36. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant027\_Mathare]

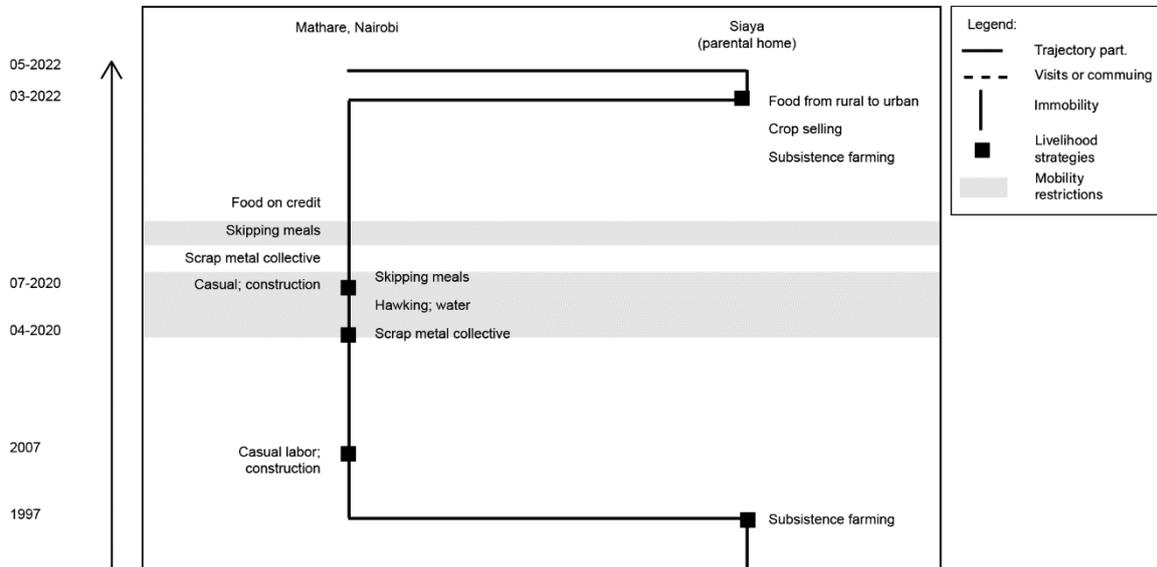
No mobility map available.

Figure 37. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant028\_Mathare]



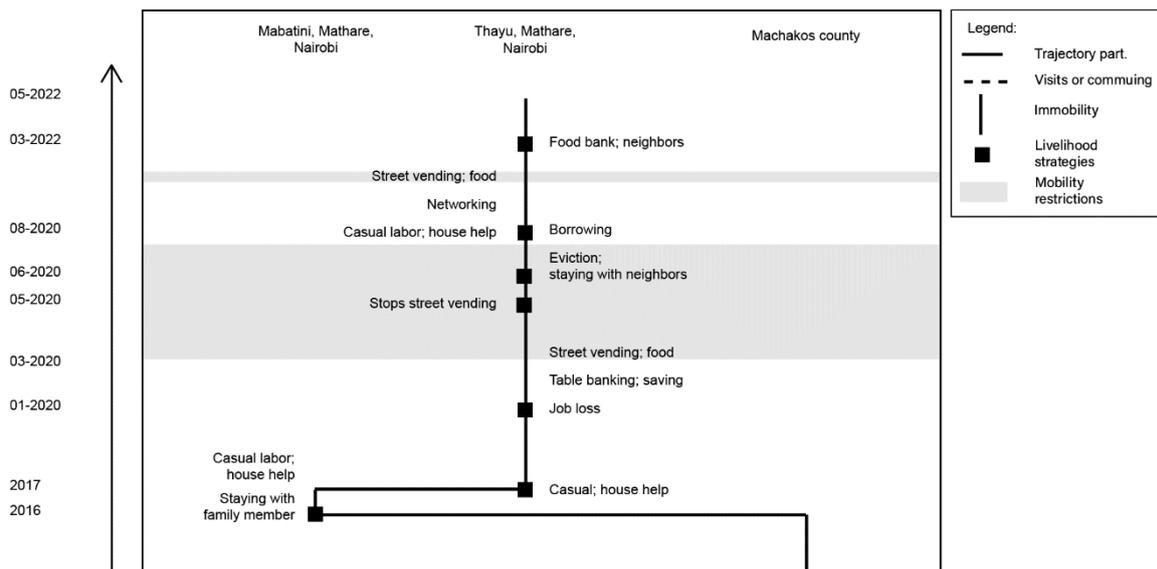
Source: Author.

Figure 38. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant029\_Mathare]



Source: Author.

Figure 39. Mobility trajectory [MM\_Participant30\_Mathare]



Source: Author.