

Nairobi, Kenya

“To me, well-being is peace. I have never had peace in my life.” These are the words of Mary, a 24-year-old woman from Nairobi, Kenya. From having a tumultuous and unstable childhood, to her parents separating at a young age, to living in between her parents’ houses and foster homes all her life, Mary states that she will achieve well-being when she affords a home that she can call her own. Her life story is one for the books, it seems nearly impossible that so much can happen to one person at such a young age. *“My mother had not told her husband that she had grown children from a previous relationship. I remember when I visited her, she ended up having a huge disagreement with her husband. This affected me negatively since I wished I had just stayed at my father’s house or at the orphanage”* Mary recalls her shaky relationship with her mother, who had been absent for a greater part of her childhood. *“I enrolled for a Certificate in Education because that is what the Orphanage’s Director wanted me to study, I was not given the chance to choose my area of interest.....After completing the Certificate, I could not proceed to do my Diploma despite having a full scholarship, since the Director wanted me to sleep with him. That is how I discontinued my education.”* She recounts how living in an orphanage and being at the mercy of a stranger, meant that she could not make her own decisions on her preferred area of study, and she could not proceed with her education after turning down the Director’s advances. *“My life experiences”, she concludes, “have affected me greatly. Since I did not complete my education, I cannot gain meaningful employment. I can only be employed as a nanny or an informal worker. What I have gone through has also affected me mentally since I now look like a confused person. When you compare how I looked when I was in school, and how I am now, you will notice a big difference.”*



Just like Mary, Joe's definition of well-being is peace. However, unlike her, he states that he has achieved his well-being since he is doing what he dreamt of while growing up and is at peace while at it. Joe is a 30 year old male Pilot working for Kenya's flagship carrier airline. He attended relatively good schools and was able to pursue his dream career: aviation. *'In flying, only a few subjects are regarded as important including Maths, English, Physics and Geography. Luckily, Kenya Airways only looked at those subjects while hiring, hence, I was able to get employed without necessarily having scored a high overall grade. This has helped me excel in my career.'* He believes that his education influenced his employability since had he not pursued flying, he would not have managed to get a job as a pilot and would not have led a fulfilled life.



The lived experiences of Mary and Joe are representative of several other Kenyans who majorly attach their well-being to their socio-economic status. Those who claim to have achieved their well-being on the one hand, seem to be pursuing careers that they are passionate about and that are in line with their education. While those who state that they have not yet achieved their well-being on the other hand, believe that their education or lack thereof has affected their employability which has in turn adversely affected their well-being.