



To The Clerk
County Assembly of Laikipia
28th May 2025

**MEMORANDUM TO THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF LAIKIPIA ON THE LAIKIPIA
COUNTY BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR FY2025/2026**

Subject: Recommendations and Observations on the Proposed FY2025/26 County Budget

INTRODUCTION.

Laikipia County Civil Society Forum (LACCSOF) is a membership forum of a network of Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) that are based and working in Laikipia County hosted by Pathways Policy Institute with the objective of creating synergies for effective delivery of their respective mandates, promoting constitutionalism, creating awareness on civilian oversight, promoting public participation and contributing positively to the development of the county.

The HENNET Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) Advocacy Champions are a collective of health-focused civil society representatives and community advocates committed to enhancing Kenya's capacity to finance its health sector through increased domestic resource allocation and utilization. Operating under the umbrella of the Health NGOs Network (HENNET), these champions engage in evidence-based advocacy, policy dialogue, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at influencing health policy, planning, and budgeting processes at both county and national levels. Their work focuses on increasing government investment in health, reducing reliance on external funding, and promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in health financing. By collaborating with diverse stakeholders and pushing for policy reforms and budget allocations that prioritize essential health services—including reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, adolescent health and nutrition- (RMNCAH+N)—the HENNET DRM Champions play a critical role in advancing sustainable health financing and achieving Universal Health Coverage in Kenya.



This memorandum presents a consolidated set of recommendations and observations drawn from an in-depth engagement session and analysis of the FY2025/26 Programme-Based Budget between LACCSOF, NCKK, CERA-Rights, Tribeless Youth, L'ARCHE Kenya and HENNET. It highlights gaps, sector underfunding, and implementation inconsistencies that require the attention and action of the County Assembly to enhance inclusive, transparent, and effective budget execution.

This memo also cross-references allocations presented in the **Annexures** section of the "Programme-Based Annual Estimates" to validate community and stakeholder concerns.

SECTION 1: SECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS & BUDGET ANALYSIS

1. AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER.

Agriculture is recognized as the backbone of Kenya's economy¹², has been significantly underfunded in the proposed budget, receiving only 1.68% of the total allocation. Particularly concerning is the minimal funding directed toward extension services, which are critical for promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Allocations stand at KES 1.35 million for crop production and KES 3.65 million for livestock. This translates to a per capita investment of only KES 14.92 and KES 53.44 respectively for the targeted households—90,457 in crop production and 68,306 in livestock farming. The budget lacks allocations towards food security investments and drought mitigations measures.

Equally underfunded is the Water, Environment, and Natural Resources sector, which has been allocated just 1.73% of the total budget. Given its role as a key enabler of socio-economic development, this allocation should be reviewed upward to support environmental sustainability and ensure water security for all residents.

Issues Identified:

¹ <https://www.centralbank.go.ke/2024/02/09/agriculture-sector-survey-of-january-2024/>

² <https://www.fao.org/kenya/fao-in-kenya/kenya-at-a-glance/en/>



- The agriculture sector, a backbone of Laikipia's economy, receives only 1.68% of the total budget.
- Critical programs like **extension services** are grossly underfunded: KES 1.35M for crop and KES 3.65M for livestock.
- Water and natural resource management, key to climate resilience, gets only 1.73%.

Budget Comparison:

- **Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries:** KES 117.39M (KES 16M Recurrent, KES 101.39M Development)
- **Water, Environment and Natural Resources:** KES 121.1M (KES 16.1M Recurrent, KES 105M Development)

Recommendations:

- Increase the sectoral allocations to align with agriculture's economic importance.
- Prioritize budget lines for **extension services**, climate-smart agriculture, and water harvesting and storage systems and infrastructure.
- Introduce a dedicated fund for **agro-ecological resilience and environmental protection**.

2. HEALTH AND SANITATION

Overview: Kenya's health sector is currently navigating critical systemic and financing challenges compounded by declining donor support due to the country's shift to lower-middle-income status. For Laikipia County, these dynamics necessitate bold domestic health financing strategies, a renewed focus on Primary Health Care (PHC), and substantial investment in both infrastructure and human resources. The proposed FY2025/26 budget should serve as a pivotal vehicle for strengthening the health system's resilience through



comprehensive and inclusive reforms. These include prioritizing preventive and promotive services, addressing the gaps in human resources for health, and boosting immunization efforts amid GAVI transition plans. It is equally vital to align with national frameworks like the Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) by ensuring widespread citizen onboarding and service quality improvements. Furthermore, the budget must commit to completing stalled health facilities, addressing equipment failures, and enabling transparency and public accountability in infrastructure spending. Overall, the FY2025/26 health budget must be strategically positioned to advance Universal Health Coverage (UHC), with equity, sustainability, and service delivery at its core.

The proposed budget highlights several gaps in the health sector that must be addressed to improve service delivery and inclusivity:

Key Gaps:

- **Domestic Health Financing:** The contraction of donor funding, paired with classification of Kenya as a lower-middle-income status country, jeopardizes the sustainability of essential health programmes and underscores the imperative to strengthen domestic revenue streams for health.
- **Primary Health Care & Preventive Services:** Investment in PHC—including community participation, health education, nutrition, sanitation, and early disease detection—remains insufficient, limiting cost-effective preventive and promotive strategies that underpin Universal Health Coverage.
- **Human Resources for Health (HRH):** Staffing shortages are exacerbated by the absence of clear pathways for promotion, inadequate professional development, and delayed absorption of casuals into permanent, pensionable positions, undermining morale, retention, and service quality.

- **Infrastructure & Technology Transparency:** Significant allocations (KES 293M for NTRH; KES 204M for Igwamiti; KES 200M countywide) earmarked for Purchase of Essential health Technologies, equipment and Infrastructure improvements (AIA) lack disaggregation, despite continued absence of ECG, MRI, oncology, and essential equipment/machinery in Level 4 hospitals. Additionally, the purported the “Equipping of the five (5) newly constructed dispensaries (Male, Sanga, Kiamariga, Njoguini, Endana” funded at KES 11M, raises eyebrows since preliminary spot check on some of these facilities like Male do not exist, necessitating a public registry detailing project names, locations, allocated budgets and completion status.
- **Disability-Inclusive Services:** The county not only lacks a Persons with Disability policy/legislation but also lacks adequate disability-friendly sanitation facilities (particularly at NTRH), prosthetic services, and disability access desks staffed by sign-language-trained personnel, hampering equitable service delivery.
- **Community Health Promoters (CHPs) & HFMCs:** CHPs require integration into the SHIF framework especially community buy in, onboarding and mass enrollment campaigns, clearance of stipend arrears, and regular capacity-building. Simultaneously, Health Facility Management Committees need training ahead of their term renewal/fresh elected members to ensure effective facility governance.
- **Immunization & Maternal-Child Health:** Despite Kenya’s ratification of the Addis Declaration on Immunization, both vaccine financing and equitable access fall short. The Family Planning, Maternal and Child Health subprogramme (currently KES 4M) must be renamed to include nutrition and scaled up, with Reproductive Health funding increased from KES 2M to KES 4M to serve the growing population of women aged 15–49³. While Beyond Zero programme whose initial objective was to heighten

³ KPHC- Kenya Population and Housing Census 2019, Laikipia County Statistical Abstract 2023, County Government of Laikipia:Third County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027 © 2023



advocacy efforts aimed at reducing preventable maternal and child deaths, as well as elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and Syphilis⁴ should be budgeted separately.

- **Emergency Medical Services & Disease Programs:** The current KES 16M allocation for a single ambulance must be revised to procure at least three units—potentially via PPPs—while HIV/AIDS and TB budgets (KES 500K each) should be significantly enhanced.

Rationale

Domestic Health Financing: The decline in donor support, alongside Kenya's classification as a lower-middle-income country, threatens the continuity of critical health programmes and signals the need for robust domestic financing mechanisms to sustain the health sector's resilience.

Primary Health Care: PHC represents the first line of defense, emphasizing community engagement, preventive services, and affordability. Strengthening PHC is essential for early disease detection and reducing long-term curative care costs.

Human Resources for Health: A motivated, well-trained, and adequately staffed workforce underpins service quality. Investing in HRH through fair career paths, continuous development, and incentives drives retention, morale, and improved patient outcomes.

Preventive & Promotive Investment: Prioritizing health education, immunization, nutrition, sanitation, and early detection reduces the disease burden, empowers communities, and lowers overall healthcare expenditures.

⁴.POLICY BRIEF Nov, 2022 - Improving Quality of Care: The Key to Ending Preventable Maternal and Neonatal Mortality (<https://www.health.go.ke/sites/default/files/2023-06/Maternal%20Newborn%20Heath.pdf>)



Immunization Commitment: Kenya's ratification of the ADI underscores its pledge to strengthen vaccine financing and equitable access, critical for reducing preventable diseases and child mortality.

SHIF & Citizen Onboarding⁵: High registration but low active NHIF coverage in Laikipia as at 2023⁶ (43% coverage vs. 60% registration) highlights the importance of linking financing reforms with demonstrated service improvements to drive enrolment and sustainability. These financing reforms are expected to reflect in significantly higher registration numbers under SHIF.

Budget Snapshot:

- Total: KES 1.061 B
 - Recurrent: KES 187.32 M
 - Development: KES 873.69 M

Recommendations:

1. **Domestic Financing:** Create dedicated county health fund streams (e.g., levies, PPPs) to offset donor declines.
2. **PHC & Prevention:** Establish budget lines for community health education, nutrition, sanitation, immunization, and CHPs-led outreach.

⁵ Dr. Amoth Opinion Piece – Kenyans Should Embrace Change To Social Health
<https://mgr.ctnt.pesaflow.com/cms/assets/uploads/2024/09/Dr-Amoth-opinion-piece.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.laikipia.go.ke/1662/laikipia-leads-country-in-nhif-coverage/>
Saturday Nation August 5 2023.



3. **HRH Strengthening:** Absorb professional casuals into permanent schemes, recruit replacements, implement structured promotions, and provide performance incentives and continuous development.
4. **Infrastructure & Equipment:** Complete stalled facilities with a public registry; disaggregate and clarify with specifics *Purchase of Essential health Technologies, equipment and Infrastructure improvements (AIA)*; allocate funds for sterilizer repairs and prosthetic machines.
5. **Inclusive Services:** Construct accessible sanitation at NTRH; establish disability desks with trained staff and interpreters; procure prosthetic equipment.
6. **CHP & HFMC Governance:** Integrate CHPs into SHIF, clear arrears, reassess stipend levels, and train CHPs and Health Facility Management Committees.
7. **Maternal, Child Health & Nutrition:** Renaming and expanding the current RMNCAH subprogram to incorporate nutrition would reflect the full spectrum of maternal and child health priorities. Additionally, a clear differentiation between Beyond Zero and Reproductive Health budget lines would improve transparency and program accountability. Given the increasing number of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) in Laikipia County, strengthening resource allocation for reproductive health services is critical to meeting current and future demand. Consider Reproductive Health allocation to KES 4M to address growing population of Women of Reproductive Age (15 – 49yrs)⁷ needs.'
8. **Immunization Scale-Up:** Establishing a dedicated and incrementally increasing budget for immunization could support continuity and sustainability of services, particularly in the context of anticipated GAVI transition planning.

⁷ KPHC- Kenya Population and Housing Census 2019, Laikipia County Statistical Abstract 2023, County Government of Laikipia:Third County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027 © 2023

We propose the RMNCAH allocations to be tabulated like this

Programme	Sub-Programme	Code	Projects	Location / Ward	Recurrent	Development	Total
Public Health & Sanitation	RMNCAH+N	0405014510	Family Planning & Reproductive Health	County Wide			
			Beyond Zero Programmes Operations	County Wide			
			Immunization	County Wide			
			Nutrition	County Wide			
			Cervical Cancer Screening	County Wide			
			Programmatic Goals	County Wide			

9. **Ambulance Fleet & HIV/TB Funding:** Increase the ambulance budget to procure three units via PPPs; boost HIV/AIDS and TB programme funding beyond the current KES 500,000 each.

2. YOUTH, GENDER, SPORTS, AND EDUCATION

In recognition of the vital role that youths, women, persons with disabilities, and technical educational initiatives play in socio-economic development and social cohesion, the FY2025/26 budget should address outdated equipment, machinery and infrastructure, unclear planning, and insufficient funding. To empower youth inclusively—ensuring that those with disabilities benefit equally—promote gender equity, and enhance learning outcomes, targeted investments are needed in technical skills development, early childhood education, rehabilitation support, and accessible sports and cultural spaces and activities.



Issues Identified:

- **Vocational Training Centres (VTCs):** Tools and machinery are obsolete, failing to meet current industry standards and limiting employability.
- **Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE):** Project locations are described only at ward level, hindering community awareness and participation in planning.
- **Youth and Women Empowerment Funds:** The current KES 200,000 allocation for Youth groups mentorship and empowerment programmes is inadequate to support meaningful skills training, internships, or micro-enterprise grants. Same with the KES Women groups mentorship and empowerment programmes,
- **Rehabilitation Centre (Nanyuki):** A central facility to address youth substance abuse and psychosocial support remains unfunded, despite demonstrated need.

Budget Comparison:

- **Total Allocation:** KES 185.5 M
 - Recurrent: KES 114.5 M
 - Development: KES 71 M
- **Vocational Training Centres:** KES 41 M via transfers (primarily operational costs).
- **KICOSCA & Unity Cup:** KES 8.5 M (KES 6.5 M to inter-county participation; KES 1.5 M for local tournaments).

Recommendations:

1. **Youth, Persons with Disability and Women Empowerment Fund:** Consider allocating a modest amount of KES 500,000 per ward and establish transparent selection criteria, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks.



2. **VTC Modernization:** Allocate capital funds for up-to-date equipment and introduce digital learning hubs to align training with market needs. This is also an area that County Government of Laikipia can explore Public Private Partnerships.
3. **ECDE Clarity:** Specify exact locations for all ECDE centres in budget schedules and community briefs to facilitate public oversight and infrastructure delivery.
4. **Rehabilitation Facility:** Allocate capital and recurrent funding for a Nanyuki youth rehabilitation and reintegration centre, including staffing and counselling services.
5. **Sports and Arts Inclusion:** Diversify beyond football by ring-fencing funds for volleyball, athletics, drama, and creative arts programmes to foster talent and community engagement.
6. **Sports and Social Centre Infrastructure rehabilitation:** Consider specific budgets for rehabilitation, repair and renovation of these facilities. The Proposed PBB FY2025/26 has KES600,000 for Upgrade and maintain existing recreational facilities. This lacks clarity and should instead be disaggregated to specific facility, location, description of works and amount.

SECTION 2: COMPARATIVE TABLE – MEMO VS BUDGET ANNEXURE

Sector	Memo Observation	Annexure Budget Data (FY2025/26)	Gap/Comment
Agriculture	Only 1.68% allocation; extension services underfunded	KES 117.39M (16M Recurrent, 101.39M Development)	Confirms underfunding; needs targeted reallocation

Water & Environment	1.73% allocation despite key enabling role	KES 121.1M (16.1M Recurrent, 105M Development)	Budget confirms low allocation; aligned with memo recommendations
Health & Sanitation	Lack of detail on allocations for Purchase of Essential health Technologies, equipment and Infrastructure improvements (AIA); Missing funds for Immunization, Inadequate Reproductive health budget, HIV/TB, Missing disability-access, prosthetics, ECG, MRI	KES 1.061B (187.32M Recurrent, 873.69M Development)	Budget high, but non-disaggregated; lacks essential PHC investments, lacks inclusivity focus
Youth Women and Persons with Disability Empowerment	Fund too low (KES 200K); lack of clear beneficiary criteria	Confirmed KES 200K per category; unclear disbursement framework	Needs increase to at least KES 500K with transparent criteria

Vocational Training Centres	Obsolete equipment; need for modern and digital upgrade	KES 41M (via transfers)	Operations funded; no evidence of equipment modernization
Sports (KICOSCA/Unity Cup)	Imbalanced allocation; Lacks diverse disciplines	KES 8.5M (6.5M KICOSCA, 1.5M Unity Cup)	Confirmed; should rebalance towards local youth sports in all disciplines.
Rehabilitation Center	Nanyuki rehab center proposed but not funded	Not captured	Omission aligns with memo concerns
ECDE Locations	Location info vague; recommend specific naming	Ward-level references only	Aligns with concern; recommend naming exact sites.
Social Halls (Youth Hubs)	Upgrade needed to resource centers (internet, accessibility)	Not detailed	Supports need for reallocation and programming clarity

Out of the above highlighted, We further recommend the following:

1. That in the spirit of transparency and principles of Programme Based Budgeting, County Assembly of Laikipia in its oversight role ensures the budget is arranged around a set of programs and objectives that are clear and specific. all the allocations

be specified from Programme, Sub Programme, Projects, Expected Outcomes, Indicators, Specific Location, Amount allocated and Timeline.

2. That as Laikipia County enters this critical budgeting phase, it must prioritize the settlement of verified pending bills to strengthen fiscal discipline and support local businesses. Accumulated bills continue to hurt SMEs and undermine trust in county governance. Through the County Debt Management Strategy, Laikipia has a clear framework to address these obligations. By committing to clear pending bills and control rising wage costs, the county can free up resources for development, improve service delivery, and boost confidence in its financial management.
3. Cognizant and Pursuant to Gazette Notice⁸ Nos. 159878, 15979 and 15980 by HE The Governor Joshua Irungu on transfer of functions from County Government of Laikipia to Nanyuki Municipality Charter, Rumuruti Municipality Charter and Nyahururu Municipality Charter respectively pursuant to Article 184 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, as read with sections 20 and 21 of the Urban Areas and Cities Act, 2011 and section 2.3 of the 3 Municipalities, we recommend a deliberate and strategic objective on enhancing smooth, efficient and effective transfer of functions, resources (budget), assets and staff. This includes all allocations in the other County Departments that lie within the precincts of the 3 Municipalities.
4. That to facilitate our continuous social accountability activities, budget tracking and public expenditure tracking, the County Assembly of Laikipia publishes the public participation report for the proposed budget for FY2025/2026 and additionally ensures that The County Treasury publishes the County Budget Implementation Review Reports for FY2022/2023. FY2023/2024 and first 3 quarters of FY2024/2025.

SECTION 3: CONCLUSION

⁸ <https://new.kenyalaw.org/akn/ke/officialGazette/gazette/2023-11-24/249/eng@2023-11-24/source>



The proposed FY2025/26 budget, while broadly aligned with County goals, underrepresents the lived realities and voiced priorities of Laikipia residents. This memorandum serves as a technical and participatory reflection intended to strengthen fiscal equity, transparency, and targeted investment.

The County Assembly is urged to:

- Revise allocations for proposals upwards for underfunded yet impactful sectors aforementioned herein.
- Demand greater transparency in budget line-item details.
- Ensure inclusive and participatory implementation of funded projects.
- Schedule a sitting with members of LACCSOF to deliberate on the contents of this memorandum

We recommend incorporating this memo and comparison table into budget deliberations and sectoral committee reviews.

Should you need further information or clarification, kindly contact the undersigned for and on behalf of **HENNET, Laikipia County CSO Forum (LACCSOF), Pathways Policy Institute, CEDGG** and others signed overleaf.

Mr. Peter Ngure: Founder Pathways Policy Institute and Chair LACCSOF. Tel. No. 0720245732.

Mr. Peter Wagutu: County Coordinator CEDGG and Vice Chair LACCSOF. Tel No. 0723601453

Ms. Annrita Njoroge: Regional Associate- HENNET Tel. No. 0727846704



PATHWAYS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PROGRAMME

DATE 27/05/2025

ACTIVITY: _____

NO	NAME	TITLE	LOCATION	CELL NO.	SIGN
1	Mollyne Otiemo	Community Organizer	Nanyuki	0722655443	
2	Danson Mylwa	Community Organizer	Thimithu	0746509 049	
3	Fatuma Nancy	Community health promoter	Thimithu	0796752163	
4	Evelynne Mwaruro	Community Organizer	Nanyuki	0740903937	
5	Eduard Nyalia	Community Organizer	Nanyuki	0795859303	
6	Ian Meina	Community Organizer	Thimithu	0700 066 884	
7	Bahati Amina	Community health promoter	Thimithu	0790469484	
8	Mary Murethi	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	0797420755	
9	Anthony Ndumila	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	0769218158	
10	Cliff Opete	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	07276922830	
11	Mary Ndungu	Budget facilitator	Thimithu	0790264887	
12	Joseph Kariya	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	0700168923	
13	Joseph Muthuri	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	0724040722	
14	Peter Wachira	Budget facilitator	Nanyuki	0702360153	
15					
TOTAL					

Prepared by:

Sign

Date

27/05/2025



PATHWAYS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PROGRAMME _____

DATE 27/05/2022

ACTIVITY: _____

NO	NAME	ORGANIZATION/TITLE	LOCATION	TEL NO	SIGN
1	DORCAS ACHENGE	MARCHES KENYA LIGHT FOR THE WORLD	NYAHURURU	0716775314	
2	DAVID N. ADUANGU	AMUKTAN	LAIKIPIA	0720769857	
3	MAHEUNDE M. KENYA	NYSC'S HANDS IN HAND EASTERN AFRICA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER	LAIKIPIA	0725669224	
4	SUGUA KAMAU	PATHWAYS (CHAMPION)	LAIKIPIA	0757319214	
5	JOSEPH NACHUA KAGHA	CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY IN HUMAN RIGHTS	LAIKIPIA	0724924540	
6	JOSEPH LOMARET	AFDP Program Manager	LAIKIPIA	0701836645	
7	JOSEPH GIKAGA	LMF - FINANCE OFFICE	LAIKIPIA	0717109190	
8	KESE KUMULI	Mashimoni Youths Network	LAIKIPIA	0791197152	
9	CAVIN WIRASSA	SAUTI YANU + PPI JASIELI CHAMPION	LAIKIPIA	0726549423	
10	CYNTHIA MUMDIA	BINTI MUMANGAZA - Admin	LAIKIPIA	0769108581	
11	WAMBUI GIKENO	Faith Champion - Pathways	LAIKIPIA	0727846104	
12	MICHELLE MAINA	HEMNET	LAIKIPIA	0727358037	
13	JOHN EGYEN	United Assisted in Laikipia	LAIKIPIA		
14	AMARIKA KIMARI				
15	PETERSON KAUHUKI				
TOTAL					

Prepared by: _____

Sign Shiray Njiru Mwangi Date 27/05/2022



PATHWAYS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PROGRAMME _____

DATE _____

ACTIVITY: _____

NO	NAME	ORGANIZATION/TITLE	LOCATION	TEL NO	SIGN
1	LINET A. DIKAND	UNITED DISABLED PERSONS OF LAIKIPIA	Laikipia	07114290391	
2	Ruth Tegan	Pathways - Champion	Laikipia	07441589247	
3	Abasi Mwangi	Pathways Policy Institute	Laikipia	0702378806	
4	Betty Mwangi	Pathways Policy Institute	Laikipia	0720945750	
5	Michael Gakoni	Pathways Policy Institute	Laikipia	0112900666	
6	Daniel Mwangi	Pathways Policy Institute	Laikipia	0710469088	
7	DENIS KAMAU	Pathways Policy Institute	Laikipia	0720249977	
8	Kenia Hani	GROOTS KENYA	Laikipia	0702926432	
9	VALENTINE WANDIRI	GROOTS KENYA	Laikipia	0704155305	
10	JANET WATINI WANDIRI	GROOTS KENYA	Laikipia	0110236910	
11	HENRY MURITHI MURUGI	ANTI KENYA YOUTH	Laikipia	0748492036	
12	Brian Mwangi	Activist	Laikipia	0111618541	
13	Joseph Mwangi	Activist	Laikipia	0723235796	
14	Joseph Mwangi	Activist	Laikipia	0740903932	
15	Freya Mwangi	Activist	Laikipia		
TOTAL					

Prepared by: _____

Sign _____

Date _____