



ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR REFORMS NOW

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ACORN KENYA TRUST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT 2013

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Introduction

ACORN Kenya Trust is still organizing in Korogocho settlement. It is one of the mega slums in Nairobi City County with a population of 45,000 people, according to the 2010 national census. The organizing work started in 2009 by two organizers, Sammy Ndirangu and David Musungu. It started in a small way in two out of nine villages, that is Highridge and Kisumu Ndogo and that is where many members are drawn from. However, due to issues that are cutting across, the organizing work has extended to other villages and neighboring settlements.

Milestones

Membership building

The organization has recruited 600 members from Korogocho and neighboring estates like Kariobangi, Baba Ndogo and Dandora. Out of this number 240 are active and participate in regular meetings and campaigns.

Meetings

There are two levels of meetings.

- a) The executive committee meeting who meet every three months but can be called to meet at any time in case of an emergency.
- b) The general membership meetings who meets on monthly basis for the purpose of being given updates and to pay their dues.

Dues collection

Members of ACORN Kenya Pay Kshs. 20 as registration and also monthly subscription which is collected on the last week of every month during the general membership meetings. Though as little as that might be, many members are unable to pay due to massive poverty. Only 35% are able to subscribe but they turn up in large numbers to support ACORN activities. This year a total of kshs.10, 000 has been collected which has been used towards the payment of the office and to support the campaigns interns of transport and air time for communication.

Office set up

The Kenya chapter opened a field office at Kariobangi as recommended by the community in 2010. It is used for the administrative purpose and committee meetings. The rent is paid and maintenance done by dues collected from members although in most of the time the dues collected are never enough thus

forcing the two Cos (Sammy and David) to add from our little monthly allowance to offset the office rent and other current expenditures of the office.

Leadership development

ACORN organizers have built the capacity of the executive committee and issue based leaders through in depth training in leadership skills, conflict resolution and management, resource mobilization, lobbying and advocacy and Peace and reconciliation processes.

Last year we recommended Mariam Wanjiku, one of the members of Acorn for Community Organizing training and she is currently doing very well. This year we also recommended another member, a young lady called Naima Abdi who will be graduating in the month of August.

Campaigns

Environmental campaigns

The City County of Nairobi does not have enough staff to clean and collect garbage in Korogocho. This led to duty environment. A campaign was carried out by ACORN members where they confronted the ward manager of the area. Cleanups were organized and the ward manager was able to bring tucks for collecting the garbage and dumping in Dandora .Cleanups are now carried out on regular basis by the members after the sensitization and awareness campaigns that we undertook.

Education

Education is a serious problem in Korogocho especially the transition from Primary to Secondary school. Out of ten pupils who sat for the Primary Certificate of Education, only four proceed to secondary school. Though the government is offering free education at the primary level, there are other charges levied by schools and support learning materials of which the majority of parents can't afford, leading again to massive drop out of school. Majority of the children end up scavenging in the neighboring Dandora dump site. ACORN Kenya Cos and the executive committee carried out a survey on the education situation in Korogocho and came up with that startling information. The organization carried out a campaign on the same by sensitizing and creating awareness on the existing government devolved funds like Constituency Development fund(CDF), The local authority transfer fund(LATF) and bursary from the ministry of education. Through this campaign the CDF and LATF committees made the process of accessing these funds more transparent and about 240 children got assisted.

The organization again was able to identify 800 children from poor families who had passed their primary certificate of education but were unable to join secondary school. ACORN was able to link 65 of them directly to GUREC Centre for secondary education where they are currently going on with their education.

HIV/AIDS

ACORN Cos found out that some of its members were living with HIV/AIDS and was an issue that needed intervention. About sixty were organized, formed a sub group within ACORN and were linked to Mr. Tom, one of our partners who has initiated an income generating activity for them

Civic education and general elections

Kenya did its general elections on 4th March 2013 under a new constitution. The election was unique because for the first time Kenyans were voting in six civic leaders as opposed to the previous elections where they were voting in only three leaders. Apart from the president, members of the national assembly and the councilor, they were required to vote senator, governor and women representative. ACORN Kenya participated in the following ways;

- Mobilized youths who had no Identity cards as one of the requirement for voting to register in large number so that they could participate in the general elections
- Carried out massive civic education on the new constitution and to register in large number and how to vote.
- Educated the community on the need of voting in leaders who are transparent and accountable.
- A need of voting in their member at the ward level who will take care of their interest

Peace building activities

In the year 2007/8 Kenya experienced post election violence in which over 1000 people lost their lives and about 500,000 got displaced. To avoid a repeat of the some ACORN- Kenya engaged the community in peace activities by holding peace forums and trainings before, and after the general elections. Much of this was supported by the Friends Church under the programme of Alternative to Violence Project and Copa Kenya.

Networks

While working in Korogocho slums ACORN Kenya trust has been able to establish networks with other organizations working there. These organizations have assisted and funded various campaigns carried out by ACORN. The network includes, COPA-Kenya, Kutoka Network of St.Johns Catholic Church, City Council of Nairobi, Gurec Centre, Ministry of education and local administration.

Challenges

ACORN Kenya Trust faces challenges in the course of carrying out its campaigns and sustaining its membership.

- high conflict issues which requires a strong membership base and a well sustained campaigns
- A thin ACORN staff on the ground. Currently they are only 2 and are overwhelmed by issues
- poor payment of dues by members due to high poverty level
- lack of office items and equipment
- culture of handout created by the Non Governmental Organizations

Recommendations

- train more community organizers and ACORN staff
- more education and sensitization on the culture of handouts
- engage more like minded organizations to support campaigns