

## Reducing Poverty and Crime Through Positive Youth Engagement

### INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Demographically, Kenya has a youthful population whose 70% is under 30 yrs. The majority of these are severely hit by poverty, are either under or unemployed and hence disillusioned, angry and charged. A situation detrimental to the country's peace and security as these young people are vulnerable to manipulation by criminal gangs, politicians and religious extremists. With rural to urban migration still a continuing trend, most youth find themselves in the city and without jobs, thus ending up in slums or at best semi-slums. Crime rates are high in these, as well as other parts of the city. To address this growing trend of desperate youth, NCA and partner KYCN and St. John Community Centre in Pumwani initiated a youth engagement and empowerment project under the Economic Empowerment programme. NCA and partner provided the youth with training in business skills, as well as advocacy so as to engage the local authorities on issues affecting them and their communities.

### RESULTS:

In Pumwani Community in the capital city Nairobi, two (2) youth groups were supported to start and/or improve the quality and level of small businesses they had already started. The first being Uprising Youth Group which started with a video parlour and a make-shift car wash that at the beginning employed about 3 youth, but after training by NCA and partner, they currently run a modern car wash business, employing over 20 youth daily. The group has



One of the Pumwani youth using high pressure equipment to clean cars  
**Photo: Axel Fassio, /Norwegian Church Aid, Kenya**



done so well in the car wash business that they are now putting up a 5-storey commercial building. The building is partially completed and is rented out with the proceeding being channelled to complete the remaining floors. The group has further ventured into poultry farming which employs 3 youth and generates over Kshs 10,000 per week. This group has grown its combined income from about Kshs. 10,000 to over Kshs. 100,000 per month, with each group member earning approximately Kshs. 5,000 per month; **as well as providing employment to over 40 non-member youths.** In addition to increased income levels amongst the targeted youth, this has contributed to **reduced crime rates** in the project area according to the area Chief and other local administration officials.

Moreover, 26 youth groups (over 500 youth) under the Pumwani Youth Groups Network (PYGRON), also a part of the group trained by NCA and partner, are involved in environmental management initiatives like: Garbage collection, Management of community sanitation blocks and water points, Tree planting along Nairobi River, Recycling projects (briquette making), Monthly community clean up exercises, and Community sensitization on environmental issues among others. As a result, there has been; Increased demand for garbage collection services by the community members; By responding to the garbage collection demands, the youth have had an opportunity to earn an income from these services. Other wider positive effects for the community resulting from engaging the youth are as follows: there has been remarkable improvement of the public sanitary facilities managed by the youth due to increased community awareness on their role in environmental management and greater ownership of the facilities by the youth groups: Reduction of indiscriminate refuse disposal due to the awareness created and provision of central refuse collection bays by the youth groups. Further, there is improved positive image of the youth by the communities due to their role in environmental management.

## LESSONS LEARNED:

Understanding a target group and their needs, and designing projects meant to address their most pressing problems leads to success in achieving the overall goal of the project. While some of the group members dropped out and went back to drugs and crime, over 80% of those targeted are now in gainful employment or part of the businesses described above, and this has been sustained over the last 3 years.

## PROJECT/PROGRAMME SCOPE:

The project targetted approximately 600 youth in greater Nairobi, but this result focuses on the successes of the Pumwani area youth who were targetted. Total funding for these interventions over the last 3 years is **NOK1.535.178,00, funded by Norad**

## SOURCES:

The Kenya 4-year report (2011-2014): The NCA Global report 2011-2014.

## PARTNERS:

This project was implemented under the Economic Justice Programme, with NCA facilitating partners St. John Community Centre in Pumwani and Koch FM (A community Based Radio Station in Nairobi)

