New ways of working: Local initiatives response against crises in Nairobi’s Informal settlements

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

O1 Introduction
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- Vulnerability context
- CBOs; the indispensable role
- CBO trajectories

O2 CBOs context
- CBOs action arena:
  - Scales of action
  - Goal Framing
  - Mobilization strategies (how and when collaborations are formed)
  - Capacity limits
  - CBO struggles

O3 Reflection
- What do CBOs offer?
- Take-aways from the action arena
- Pointers to new ways of working with development partners
Informality in Nairobi

- **Rapidly urbanizing city** - growth rate per annum (3.95%) is relatively high compared to the national and global growth rates of 2.28% and 1.08% [1]

- The city houses 150 + slums and informal settlements (> 2 Million people)

- **Disaster vulnerability** - Informal settlements (slums) are major frontiers of disaster risks.

- Disproportionately affected by fires, floods, forced evictions, diseases`, economic stresses, social ills [2].

- ‘Innovation’ and ‘self-organization’ as the reserve problem-solving capacity
CBOs: the indispensable role
CBOs trajectories

CBOs in Nairobi formed in the mid-1990s when informal settlements were under the greatest threat of clearance.

Today, there are thousands of local groups that have increasingly become an indispensable partner in enhancing local development and general well-being of communities in Nairobi’s urban poor settlements.

But, how do CBOs in informal settlements of Nairobi respond urgently to crises? ..........
What do CBOs offer?
The CBOs playground is functionally and practically different from that of other development actors.

Using case studies from Nairobi, we demonstrate how attributes of the CBO action arena enables them to effectively respond to local challenges.
CBOs action arena
1. Scales of action

- CBOs in Nairobi respond to disturbances at different scales and therefore different levels of complexity.

**Spatial Scales**
- Neighbourhood level
- Settlement level
- City level
- National level

**Temporal Scales**
- Immediate Short-term actions
- Iterative Long-term actions

**Thematic scales**
- Sector specific
- Multidisciplinary
Scales of action

- Small scale, mainly at Court/neighborhood level
- Case: Public space making initiatives by Mustard Seeds CBO
- Small projects, big impact.

- **Flexibility;** Within this scale projects traverse socio-economic, physical and environmental spheres.
- Greening public spaces, nurturing talent, youth economic empowerment
Scales of action

- Large scale, at the settlement-city level
- Case: Incremental settlement development initiative by Muungano wa Wanavijiji
- Temporal scales – Long term with short term targets.

- Thematic scope: multi disciplinary
- Improve the livelihoods by addressing the cross-cutting development challenges of poverty, gender inequalities, services deprivation, sustainability and economic development.
Scales of action

- Large scale, at the national level
- Case: community resilience initiative against COVID19 by Muungano wa Wanavijiji
- Temporal scales – Short term targets. urgent actions to curb health vulnerabilities in the midst of a pandemic

- Thematic scope: Health and livelihood
2. Goal Framing

- How are CBOs able to remain **focused and relevant**? Goals “frame” the way people process information and act upon it.

- Local initiatives are spurred by **Lived experiences** (“non-coded experiential knowledge”) and sustained by a **Normative goal frame**.

- In the context of volatile slum context, firsthand experiences allows CBOs to respond proactively and flexibly (through quick restructure and reorganization to address the most pressing need).
Dandora Goal Framing

Vulnerability to environmental hazards:
- Pollution and environmental degradation
- Crime and insecurity
Local initiatives target to Reimagine, Recreate, Restore open spaces with hundreds of **jobs for the youth**

- **Quick response**: Minimize social decay and protect public space from encroachment/grabbing
- **Resource constraints**: Audit and use of locally available materials, use of local networks (frugality)
3. Mobilization strategies

- CBOs in Nairobi demonstrate different capacities and willingness to forge strategic partnerships.
- **Urgency of action** - Collaborations tend to emerge from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} face of local initiative development.
“Cities are capable of being healthy, livable and resilient; only if and when they are created by everyone”

CBOs adopt both simple and complex but functional bonding and linking mechanisms to facilitate local action.

“Leave No one Behind” model of engagement

- **Local Communities:** Mukuru residents, CBOs
- **Governmental:** County department, Government ministries/agencies, Academia
- **Non-governmental:** Private sector, NGOs, Civil societies, Academia

- **1 HOUSEHOLD**
  - 1 household representative
  - 100,561 households in Mukuru

- **1 CELL**
  - 10 household representatives
  - 10,000 cells across Mukuru

- **1 SUBCLUSTER** ('baraza')
  - 10 cells (100 household representatives)
  - 1,000 sub-clusters across Mukuru

- **1 SEGMENT**
  - About 80 sub-clusters
  - 13 segments across Mukuru
4. Capacity Limits

- CBOs can only act within their technical and financial capacities - sufficient for immediate remedies but may not sufficiently strengthen systems and structures to embrace future change.

- This creates the need for synergies with other development actors.
When external resources are sourced, appropriated (localized) and properly managed, they can significantly boost the growth of local initiatives.
5. Struggles of CBOs

- Integration with wider supportive and decision-making forums remains weak.
- A salient need for mechanisms to link internal networks and external networks.

- Target groups - hardly ever represent a full community.
- Scope - many settlements without CBO’s need support.

- Partners may find it individually rational not to cooperate.
- The ‘Silent rivalry space’ i.e. CBOs not understood by development partners, partners unable to localize ‘new’ reinvented models.

- Leaders may have political or financial ambitions.
- Many lack CBO’s capacity.
What do CBOs offer?

The capacity to spur initiatives

“Centers of implementation for the 2015 SFDRR PoA- 'Build Back Better'....” NDRR, 2020
New ways of working

Plugging in, NOT reinventing the wheel
Understand the building blocks of CBOs normative goal frames
Possibly adopt into the iNGOs institutional configurations?

Flexibility
Development partners need to be flexible to ensure easy and urgent connection to local initiatives

Adaptive Structures
Localization
Urgent action requires catalyzing and expanding upon already existing local partnerships

Sustained cooperation
Necessitates reciprocity and trust
New ways of working

Are iNGOs willing and capable of plugging into the action arena of local initiatives and establishing synergies?

Not all local initiatives are progressive. iNGOs need to be selective in who they work with and who not
References

