

BOMAREGWA WELFARE ASSOCIATION (BWA)

Report #K13

ABSTRACT

The Bomaregwa Welfare Association (BWA) is a community or clan-based organization that seeks to link its members that work in Nairobi and those that reside in Bomaregwa Village in Kisii County with the ultimate aim of bringing development and social cohesion among its members. It is not a Christian organization, but Christians participate in it, and it receives limited church support.

HISTORY

In the traditional African community, settlements were divided based on clans. One such clan is *Bhooch* clan found in Kisii County, Bomachoge and Borabu Constituency. *Bhooch* is one of the four clans in Borabu Constituency and occupies a quarter of the constituency with a population of 16,000 people. The clan has seven sub-clans with the biggest being Bomaregwa; It resides on five square km of land and has approximately 6,000 people. It is from this sub-clan that Bomaregwa Welfare Association (BWA) originated. This association is not a Christian organization but a community or clan-based organization that seeks to link its members that work in Nairobi and those that reside in the rural area with the ultimate aim of bringing development and social cohesion among its members.

BWA was an active association in the 1890s but went dormant due to disunity and individualism in the community. The movement for its reformation began in Nairobi in 2010 by some individuals who saw the need to unite the community. Whenever any member of the clan was sick or bereaved in Nairobi, they were alone and would struggle to raise funds on their own. Most families and individuals were unable to defray most of these expenses. This led to coming together of 45 Bomaregwa sub-clan members and the formation of BWA Nairobi chapter on 20th October 2010.

The association was formed as a platform where people from Bomaregwa living in Nairobi could support one another. It was in the course of their meetings that members realised that people in the village were not united and that education standards had fallen with many students dropping out of school before completing high school. Alcoholism was also a major social problem, and girls were married off at a very young age. Further, students who completed high school were not doing anything due to lack of information on available opportunities. Those who were educated left for Nairobi and never went back home. The poverty levels in the village increased as well as illiteracy.

Even within the association, most members were poorly educated, lacked self-esteem, and had lost hope for the future, as most of them were unemployed. The association required every member to contribute Kshs. 100 shillings per month with a purpose of empowering members. In late 2011, BWA started organizing motivational talks for the members.

MISSION/VISION

The number of members increased from 45 people to 110 people. The association, therefore, crafted a mission. The mission was to empower members financially. One way of empowering the members was coming up with a savings and credit organization (SACCO) and developing a school fees bursary scheme where bright students in the village could access school fees which would have to be paid later once they got a job.

Back in the rural village, the Nairobi group organized and brought together parents, teachers, and school board of governors to form the local chapter in the village. This strengthened the unity of community members, changed the community perception of education and supported both teachers and students in schools. This unity also strengthened community leadership (both political and administrative) and formed a formidable structure where the community could channel its aspirations and issues up to the national level with clear coordination between the association at the village level and the one in Nairobi.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITH SIMILAR FOCUS/MISSION

Since its inception, other sub-clans have approached BWA to learn from them with the intention of starting theirs. One such group that has been formed is Bhogetha self-help group.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

BWA at the village level works informally with the current leaders in Nairobi. The Nairobi leaders were appointed during formation of the association. Similarly, BWA village chapter conducted its election when it was revived. The leaders are composed of the patron, chairperson, secretary, treasurer and committee member. There is also a council made up of learned people within the community. The leadership of the association seeks counsel from this 'think tanks' before an idea is presented to the members.

On the education level of the leaders:

Patron	Bachelor of Commerce
Chairman	Bachelors of Education
Secretary	Diploma in Analytical Chemistry
Treasurer	Plumber
Committee member	Paralegal

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

BWA key partners are friends who share their ideas with the members and assist them financially during fundraisings. Friends also assist by approaching potential donors. The villagers are stakeholders in all the activities of BWA. The village nominates four people to be members of the village polytechnic committee. Similarly, the village committee members oversee all the projects and account for the money used in the projects. The villagers also contribute bricks for building while some contribute timber and wood while others make

financial contributions. BWA, therefore, works in unity, and members contribute both financially and in kind.

The church also contributes in kind. During meetings in the village, the church provides chairs without charging, members of the church also provide labour for construction and other activities.

The government through the Ministry of Education is a major stakeholder in education. In partnership with the community members, the Ministry has been able to reshuffle teachers as requested by the parents hence the improvement of the schools' performance. Further, BWA is talking with the relevant Ministry to take over the management of the polytechnic. The government through the Constituency development Fund (CDF) has greatly assisted in renovation and construction of classrooms and staffrooms.

Currently, the association is looking for partners who can help in capacity building of its members both in Nairobi and in the village, partners who can take over the construction of the library and finish it and also expand the Polytechnic.

FINANCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

The BWA Nairobi branch is the one offering most of the financial support from its monthly contributions and well-wishers. Occasionally, members also conduct fundraisings.

The money raised is used in development projects or used when there are problems such as sickness or death. The treasurer keeps a note of all the finances that come in and the expenditure and informs members of the status. The records kept shows the members contributions, fundraising amount, account balance, the amount banked and the amount of money sent home to support projects.

SWOT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

Board Management SWOT Analysis

Strengths/Achievements	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same structure in Nairobi and at home. • Seeking counsel from experts. • Motivational talk for leadership mentoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No election. • Differences of opinion • Inadequate training.
Opportunity	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building on leadership. • Election of new leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political involvement. • Dependency on current leaders.

General SWOT of the association

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats (Challenges)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Unity✓ Village support✓ Sense of purpose among members✓ Good will from members✓ Commitment among members✓ Faithfulness✓ The group supports itself to a large degree✓ Good climatic condition for farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Lack of capacity to run the Polytechnic.✓ Unregistered polytechnic✓ High level of poverty hence dependency of members✓ Gender imbalance among members and leaders in Nairobi chapter (all are men).✓ Lack of finance✓ Overdependence of members on current leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Economic empowerment of members, villagers and students✓ Improve education standards✓ Talent tapping and development✓ Operating a sports academy✓ Capacity building of members and villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Political involvement of members which has divided the group into two✓ Low fees at the Polytechnic that cannot manage the Polytechnic.

IMPACT/SUCCESS/ASSESSMENT

Some of the development projects initiated by the welfare association include a youth polytechnic built in the village in 2012 to cater for those students who do not make it to secondary school. The construction of community library is also under way. Currently, BWA Nairobi chapter meets bimonthly while the village chapter meets on a need basis.

Some of the significant milestones include

- a. The association increased in number from 45 members in 2011 to 110 members currently.
- b. The revival of BWA village chapter. The earlier one collapsed in the 1890s.
- c. Community library; BWA initiated a library project which they have contributed 40% of its construction, and it is to be completed by the community, government through constituency development fund, and well-wishers.
- d. Ritembo community youth Polytechnic; this was fully constructed by BWA. It has two classrooms and two offices. It is currently managed by the associations committee, but members expect it to be taken over fully by the government. It offers the following courses;
 - Tailoring and dressmaking.
 - Knitting
 - Motor vehicle mechanic
 - Driving
 - Joinery and welding

- Carpentry
 - Masonry and sculpture
 - Hairdressing
- e. BWA Nairobi chapter have established a data bank of all its members; place of residence and phone numbers. This has made it easy to coordinate activities.
 - f. The association has been able to bring all stakeholders together to improve the quality of education.
 - g. They have also been able to construct three toilets, bought books, past examinations and engaged the teachers through the provision of required stationery, foolscaps, printers, and printing papers for exams.

The Nairobi chapter has been able to look for employment for some its members. This was based on networking and reference of members to various organizations. The unity of the members both in Nairobi and at home is another achievement. In Nairobi, members know each other well and assist each other when there is a problem. This scenario is repeated in the village. There has been improved academic performance due to BWA mentorship and parental involvement in children's education. Parents' attitude towards the schooling has also changed. This led to an increase in enrollment from 40 to 120 students within the local secondary school in a span of a year.

The welfare has also initiated the construction of a community library and successfully built the youth polytechnic with two learning classrooms and two offices. Currently, the Polytechnic has 90 students.

FUTURE PLANS

BWA plans are to ensure all children go to school, do better academically and attain university education. Through capacity building and entrepreneur skills, the welfare seeks to ensure its members are a more unified and economically self-sustaining people. This is to avoid dependency and to eradicate poverty.

REPORT PREPARATION INFORMATION

Report Prepared By; Michael Bowen
 Persons Interviewed; Mr. Samule Nyabere and Samuel Okemwa
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