

# TURNING THE TIDE KENYA Newsletter

September 2019

## When Development Projects Cause Harm

Sometimes, well-meaning development projects can cause direct harm to the communities they are supposed to benefit.

That is the sad story of residents of a village in Malava sub-county, Kakamega County in Kenya.

From January 2017, the government commissioned the construction of the Kakamega-Webuye highway. The project aimed at opening the western section of Kenya by linking the two major towns of Kakamega and Webuye.

The project contractor, a Chinese company, would later buy and set up a quarry to provide ballast for road construction. However, they failed to involve and consult the community on the quarry project from the onset.

"The Chinese company used too much explosives in the quarry. As a result, we have suffered greatly", shared a community member living near the quarry.

### Great loss and pain

The quarry and the blasting was a source of great despair for many community members. They suffered from flying rocks, ground tremors and dust.



*Cracked wall for house near the quarry (By Benson Khamasi)*

For a community that does not have much, they were losing the little they had left- and their dignity. The roofs of their houses were destroyed from the flying rocks, the tremors led to cracks on the walls and the community members, including women and children were suffering from respiratory complication due to inhaling dust.



*House roof damaged by flying rock (By Benson Khamasi)*

In one instance, a family lost their cow, which was hit by a flying rock. In another, a couple had a pregnancy miscarriage- a fact they attribute to the stress from the blasting especially at night.

### Violence is not the answer

When pushed to the wall, most would break and retaliate. Gladly, there is always another way. Nonviolence.

Turning the Tide (TTT) Kenya supported the community to stand up against the horrors caused by the quarry. TTT Kenya is a nonviolence campaign training program that equips and supports communities and grassroots organizations to identify and address violence and social injustice.

"At first, the company's management didn't want to address the harm they had caused. The local authorities were on their side. We were the small people. Powerless", explains Kenneth Shikuku, a long-term TTT trained campaigner.

Through training on nonviolent social action, the community used the acquired knowledge to identify the pillars that supported the injustice. The skills they received enabled them undertake a successful campaign.

The campaigners convinced community members not to burn the company's trucks and property in retaliation, fearing that this tactic would only lead to a brutal crackdown by the police. The campaign found allies in the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and in the Department of Mines and Geology, who were sympathetic to the plight of the community. They advised and helped.

As a result, the quarrying was stopped when NEMA officials found that the company were operating without the necessary documentation. The community conducted a series of peaceful marches and wrote petitions to authorities, in order to add more pressure on the contractor.

Finally, the company caved. An assessment was conducted and a first round of compensation was paid. 20 families who reside 200 meters from the quarry, each received USD 3600 as compensation for damages. Additionally, the quarrying is now done with less explosive, causing no disturbance to the nearby community. The authorities, supervising the project, promised to withhold one million dollars to compensate affected families after the project is complete around March 2020.

In conclusion, a community member shared: "We are not opposed to the construction of the road. It is beneficial to us. We just wanted it to be done with humanity, compassion and without harm. TTT helped us do that". The campaign is ongoing until the community members' grievances are amicably addressed.



*Illicit brew found during a raid by Government officials.*



## How a Community Stood Up Against an Illegal Brewery That Was Extremely Harmful to the Community

14,000. This is the number of young people in Kenya who were buried by their loved ones in 2018 as a result of drug abuse.

The National Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA), is a national governmental agency which is responsible for tackling this serious problem. Over the past year, NACADA reported an increase of anti-social behaviour among the youth, a fact linked to substance abuse.

For the residents of Manyatta, an informal settlement in Kisumu County, Kenya, this is a story they know all too well. They witness on a daily basis the effects of this menace that has resulted into increased crime, sexual abuse and poverty in their community. They are determined to stop it, one step at a time.

"There is need to take control. Illicit brewing, alcohol and substance abuse is complicating an already bad situation", narrates Boniface Opondo.

Boniface was trained on nonviolence campaigning by Turning the Tide (TTT) Kenya. Today, he is a Community Resource Person (CRP), training others on how to bring social justice by using nonviolent tools. Boniface is also a member of a community group in Manyatta called Gonda Residents Association.

After the TTT training on nonviolent campaigning, Gonda Residents Association decided to launch a campaign against illicit alcohol brewing in their community. There were reports that children as young as four years would return home smelling of alcohol. TTT supported them in their campaign.

At first, they approached the lady running the illegal brewing, asking her to close the business. She was arrogant, informing the group that she was going nowhere. True to her words, she had the support from the local police and the local administration who she bribed.

Using the knowledge and skills from the nonviolent training, the group wrote and submitted a petition to the County Commissioner on their plight. Aside from the petition, the campaigners approached the media to report on the issue. Their work was successfully reported on Daily Nation newspaper, highlighting the campaign.

One of the campaigners explained their strategy: "When you cannot break the pillars that support the injustice, elicit the help of a higher placed ally, who will crush the whole system and its support."

On realizing that the County Commissioner was informed and involved in the campaign, and that the police and local authorities no longer took her bribes anymore, the lady closed shop and fled from the area.

Another result of the campaign was also that the County Commissioner ordered more police patrols in the mornings and in the night. The community members reported that this significantly increased the security in the area.

"We are happy our concern has been dealt with. However, there are still other places where illegal brews are being sold. They harbour thugs and contribute to insecurity", concludes Boniface Opondo.

The campaigners' experienced threats and intimidation from hired thugs and opponents of the campaign. While the number of campaigners decreased, the remaining campaigners sought alliances with other community groups, the media and civil society groups.

The campaigners told us that they will continue with the campaign against other illicit brewing in other areas within Manyatta. The campaign has also grown to involve other community groups like Disability Agenda Kenya, Amani Caregivers Group and Kondele Social Justice Centre.

Going forward, the campaigners will pursue collaborations and dialogue between the community and police on this matter.

*"Using the knowledge and skills from the nonviolent training, the group wrote and submitted a petition to the County Commissioner on their plight"*



# Stepping Ahead: Campaign Against Sexual Abuse of Teenage Girls

**D**uring the last three decades, Mt Elgon region in Kenya has witnessed two spates of violent conflict.

In early 1992, the region suffered from land instigated tribal clashes. This conflict was never amicably solved. Later, from 2006 to 2008, the conflict escalated to a full blown armed conflict between the militia group Sabot Land Defence Force (SLDF) militia and Kenya Security Forces.

The result was the loss of lives and property, displacement and disintegration of communities residing in the area. The effects of the violent conflicts are still being felt today. For example, there has been an increase in incidences of sexual abuse against school-going teenage girls.

Turning the Tide (TTT) Kenya is a nonviolence campaign training programme that equips and supports communities and grassroots organizations to identify and address violence and social injustice.

In Mt Elgon, TTT Kenya trained and continues to support the grassroots organizations like the Kapkateny Peace Right Initiative (KPRI).

Fred Kereroi is a TTT campaigner and facilitator. Fred told us that the TTT trainings and the TTT supported campaign had led to a significant decrease in teenage pregnancies in the community.

"There has been a significant number of teenage girls dropping out of school because of unwanted pregnancies. This is directly linked to the conflicts in the area and cultural indifference that encouraged sexual abuse against teenage girls", noted Fred.

On average, 20 teenage girls would drop out of each school by mid-year. Kapsokwony sub-county in Mt Elgon has over 60 primary and secondary schools.

With the TTT training on nonviolent social action, the community conducted a campaign against sexual abuse. The campaign targeted the community and two schools in Kapkateny area.

"We realized that this was more of a battle of the mind than might. There was need to address the cultural factors that promoted sexual abuse of teenage girls and the resultant effect of violent conflict in the area", narrates Fred.

The community group engaged respected community elders in community gatherings that they organized. They were able to convince these elders to support their cause and gained important



*Campaigners discussion for campaign – Picture by Benson Khamasi*

*"With the TTT training on nonviolent social action, the community conducted a campaign against sexual abuse. The campaign targeted the community and two schools in Kapkateny area..."*

allies in their fight against sexual violence.

In addition, the campaigners worked closely with allies in the school's board of management, department of health and the parent association to integrate their nonviolent campaign with health education messages and counselling sessions. They addressed topics on effect of teenage pregnancy on growth and development, exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the correct use of contraception and emergency pills.

As a result of this campaign, Kapkateny Primary and Secondary Schools have recorded zero teenage pregnancies as of August 2019. This illustrates the success of the nonviolence campaign and tactics

the campaigners used.

"As a group, we intend to upscale this campaign to reach more schools after the success we experienced in the pilot phase. Nonviolence works. Involvement and integration of the community in our campaign is a key success factor", concludes Fred.

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## Our Trainings and Campaigns in Pictures



A procession held by Nairobi TTT groups within Kawangware led by Transmakueni Self Help Group, to create Peace awareness during and after the 2017 General Elections.



This was the first ever Nairobi campaign held in Kamukunji to create awareness over youth opportunities in government offices. Most of the youth did not know about these opportunities and were not going for them hence leading to the funds being misused by the parties incharge.



A TTT basic workshop being offered to EGAN group in Lenana of which some of their members in green overalls had come from a community cleanup to join in the process.



A participant making a presentation during a workshop, on Social speedometer which factored in the people they would consider working with on their issue within Kibra.



Ms. Betty Atieno, Nairobi P/O emphasizing a point during a workshop.



At the Chief's Baraza in Kangemi where TTT had a chance to speak to the gathering on the importance of keeping Peace during and after the general election.



A photo capturing a group of Nairobi CRP's during a top up training at Rosa Mystica retreat Center along Ngong road. This was during a group discussion on Pillars of power which requires a lot of thinking in breaking down the issues picked by a group and despite the tough task, they threw in happy moments to smoothen the process.



During a light and lively 'House, Tenants and Earthquake' at a workshop with EGAN group.

### How to Support Us

- Supporting 3 weeks Trainer of Trainers (ToT) for Community Resource Persons costs USD 15,000.
- Supporting a basic 3-days nonresidential training for 20 participants costs 700 USD.
- Supporting one-day pre-action meetings for planning campaign costs 200 USD.
- Supporting a one-day local grassroots campaign costs 150 USD per campaign activity.
- Supporting a one-day regional activist gathering costs 600 USD.

If you want to support us, please feel free to reach out!

### Our Contact:

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