TUL655 – Project1D

Spring 2014

Upgrading Majengo-Pumwani Slum

Internship Report for TUL655: Advocacy and Urban Environment

By Forrest Cammack

Nairobi, Kenya

**Project Description**

This semester, I, Forrest Cammack, did the internship for my advocacy course at St. John’s Community Center, which is an Anglican NGO working in the Pumwani-Majengo Slum in Nairobi. St. John’s performs several different functions within this community. It operates a school for slum children, and does microfinance with various women and youth groups. It also has an office that works specifically on advocacy issues in the community. It is an organization that tries hard to work closely with the slum’s leaders and empower processes of community-led development. As Pumwani-Majengo Slum is primarily a Muslim community, community-led development within the slum is by necessity an interfaith effort. St. John’s Community Center also tries to stay on good terms with both the government and private stakeholders, as they recognize that development is a complicated task which requires a unified vision and full cooperation from all parties in order to be effective and successful.

Pumwani-Majengo slum has been undergoing a slum upgrading project for several decades now. This process began shortly after Kenyan independence and has been slowly dragging on, with mixed results. The government, as well as slum residents, agree that the project plan is extremely outdated and that the project should be re-planned. The two parties, however, have differing opinions regarding what the new plans should entail.

A few months ago, Omar Abdullah, a local Imam who is also the head of the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants association, came to St. John’s Community Center with the request that they help him draft a petition to the government which lays out the wishes of the community concerning the new slum upgrading plans. This petition would then be turned in to the appropriate government office so that decision-makers would have an idea of the wishes of slum residents while working on the new plans.

Helping Omar put together this petition was my main task during this internship with St. John’s Community Center. Omar and I spent quite a few hours walking around Majengo slum together, conducting interviews with residents, and having lively discussions about Christianity and Islam. Omar thought that it would be great if I could interview some of the oldest community members and write down as much of the history of Majengo Slum as they could remember. He thought this would be a great thing to record, not only for the petitioning process, but also for the general edification of the people who currently live there. He does not want that history to be forgotten. Because of this, I did several interviews with Majengo’s oldest residents, and a couple more with members of the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association. I was thus able to get a good idea of the history of the slum and also of the current situation and the wishes of slum dwellers concerning the new slum upgrading plans.

Finally, I typed up summaries of my interviews and drafted a petition on behalf of Omar and the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association. This petition was approved by both the Tenants Association and St. John’s Community Center, and was subsequently signed and submitted.

**Interview Summaries**

**Interview with Omar Abdullah, Simon Rurungá, and Omar Saidi of the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association**

The Pumwani-Majengo slum upgrading process began in the Tom Mboya era. Mboya made a very good agreement with Majengo residents about how their slum would be upgraded. Slum residents, including both tenants and landlords, were counted and had their names recorded by the government, and a deal was worked out to the satisfaction of all involved. Each tenant was to be given a unit in a new housing complex, to be bought on a lease agreement, and each landlord was given several of these which they could then rent out. The project began well, but over the years since Mboya was assassinated there has been some corruption during this process. About 20% of the subsidized housing units have been sold to people from outside the slum.

Each slum tenant was to get one unit, and each slum landlord was to get a number of units as well. Once the high-rise projects began to go up, however, the rules changed. In the latest phase, renters are being charged up to 13,000 ksh per month for each unit, which only a few can afford (this does not include utilities). So, while the landlords have been able to benefit from the agreement, many of the tenants have not. The high-rise projects have just about come to an end, and now the government wants to give out title deeds to the landlords on the remaining Majengo land so that they can self-develop. In this situation, it is again the landlords who benefit and the tenants who do not. Even for those tenants who are benefiting from the housing project, there are some issues. The government counted slum tenants and put together this plan over a generation ago. The children of these old tenants, who are now young adults, have not been taken into account. Also, entirely new people have moved into the slum.

The Tenants now are trying to claim their rights. They want to be consulted in the next stages of this slum-upgrading project, and want to be a part of the planning process. All tenants could be housed in just a few more high-rise projects, which leaves a lot of Majengo land left over. Tenants are afraid this will be taken by land-grabbers, and that slum dwellers will not benefit from it. They want to make sure that does not happen. It is with these complaints that the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association is coming forward, and wants to send a petition to the government in order to get their voice into the mix before the March 10 deadline.

Some other complicating factors: The marketplace doubles as both a place for business, and a housing area. People who live there usually work outside somewhere, and people also come from outside to do business in the marketplace. When the government starts zoning this place, that arrangement will be tricky. The government wants them to pick which it will be: a residential area or a marketplace. Secondly, most slum-dwellers do an informal business of some kind, either right outside their shack, or along the road somewhere. This is harder to do in high-rises. There will not be much space for the informal economy there, and landlords may not allow it. Where will the people do business?

Majengo slum consists of about 147 landlords, and around 12,000 adults. There are roughly 20,000 people all together.

**Second Interview with Omar Abdullah**

There have been several high-rise phases, of which Phase 1 is actually the third. During the Tom Mboya Era, a deal was made with the slum-dwellers, both landlords and tenants, which was meant to satisfy all. During this time, the first two high-rise projects, called California and Biafra, were built. All of the slum landlords were to get 12 units apiece in California. Biafra, then, would be the first stage in housing the slum’s tenants, who were each to receive one unit in a high-rise at some future date. The units were given out on a lease-to-own agreement, in which the recipients would pay 2,000 shillings per month per unit. After 20 years, they would be given a title deed, and the unit would be theirs.

Biafra, being the first of the tenant high-rise projects, has finished that process successfully, and tenants in Biafra now have their title deeds. Later, the government built High-rise Phase 1, and moved more tenants in. It has now been twenty years since the construction of this phase, and many of the tenants have paid off their units. A few are lagging behind on their payments, and the government is waiting to hand out title deeds until all have finished.

Phase 1 was an ideal model for slum-upgrading, and was a solution that both the tenants and government were happy with. Before Phase 1 was constructed, there was a consultation between the government and the community and it was agreed that the high-rises would be constructed at a low cost and that tenants were to pay low, standardized rents during their 20-year lease-to-own agreements. 2,000 shillings per month was manageable. During the planning process for High-rise Phase 2, however, no consultation took place, and the government did not give the housing corporation any kind of guide for fixing the price of rent.

The housing corporation had apparently been given government money, which helped subsidize Phase 1 back when it was built during the Moi era. However, nothing was given for Phase 2. This gave the housing corporation a dilemma. They needed to get their money back from the project somehow, and so they decided to charge each tenant 11,000 ksh per unit per month – over 5 times the rent for phase 2.

Understandably, the new tenants were very upset. They banded together and agreed that they would refuse this offer. They were told to go pick up keys for their new homes, but most people chose to boycott the housing corporation and left their keys right where they were. There were a few, however, who had the money to pay the 11,000, and these few retrieved their keys, which broke the unity of the tenants and weakened the protest of the majority. After 3 months, those who were still refusing were told that they were still being charged their monthly rent, and that if they continued to refuse to pay and move in, they risked losing their new home altogether. Most finally decided to move in, but they filed a petition in court to try and get the rents lowered.

Since then, there has been a long legal battle between the tenants and the housing corporation which continues on to this day. Many were eventually kicked out of their units after not being able to pay the rent. Slum-dwellers are saying that if the rent was cut in half, to about 6,000 ksh per month, it would be much more manageable. There are three rooms per unit, so they could sublet two of them, which would allow them to be able to afford staying there.

Meanwhile, construction has stopped. The housing corporation had cleared ground for phase 3, but when they found out they were being taken to court, they stopped everything. The empty ground is still sitting there, waiting for a resolution.

**Amina Asman Sharifu**

Amina was the first-born of several children, and she was born in Pangani. Pangani was a place where lived the people who had been relocated from Kileleshwa, which used to be an enclave for Africans during the colonial era. Many of those who lived there were porters and soldiers for the Queen’s African Rifles, and they came from all over – especially from Tanzania, and Nyasaland in Malawi. They intermarried with local women, particularly Kikuyus. Amina says that in Pangani there were mud houses much like the ones in Pumwani-Majengo slum today. There were also a variety of mosques, one for each tribe. The first mosque was built for the Kikuyus. There was also one for the Swahilis, and one for the Kambas.

After a while, the colonial administration decided to relocate residents of Pangani to a place called Shauri Moyo, on the other side of the Nairobi River. The administration first built a bridge so that people could cross back and forth easily. The Swahilis objected to being relocated to Shauri Moyo. In those days, sewer lines were rare and much of the waste from surrounding areas was dumped in Shauri Moyo. Many refused to go, and kept asking their neighbors “will you go?” “I don’t know,” came the reply. “I have to consult my soul.” That is where the name Shauri Moyo came from. It means “consult your soul.” The Swahilis took an oath not to go to Shauri Moyo. Many from other tribes, however, ended up going. These were Kikuyus, Kambas, and Nandis. Even some of these, however, opted to go elsewhere. Many went to Thika, and others went to a Muslim village in Kiambu called Karai. One of the sheikhs, while moving from Pangani to Karai, died on the way, on a hill now known as Hajj hill.

During the relocation, the people were compensated in one small way or another. Those who moved to Shauri Moyo were given an administration-built shack, and those who chose not to go were given a small sum of money. It was then that some of the Swahilis moved to Pumwani-Majengo area and began to buy some mud houses there. Meanwhile, in Shauri Moyo, the people had no unity. They had cooperated well enough while in Pangani, but after the move, they never managed to agree. They had foolish arguments and were plagued by disunity and never even managed to cooperate enough to build a mosque. This disunity continues among the Muslim community in Majengo to this day, and is one of the contributing factors to its problems.

One other (very sad) historical fact is that when the Queens African Rifles were told to move from Pangani, many got tired of moving and decided to go home. They had already been relocated once, and they had had enough. They made their way back to Tanzania and Nyasaland, and left behind their women in Nairobi to raise the children alone. That is most of what Amina can tell us of the history of the people who eventually came to Pumwani-Majengo. She herself stayed in Shauri Moyo many years, and only recently moved to Majengo.

**Mwanaidi Nyakinywa Jasho Abdullah**

Mwanaidi was born in Kileleshwa. She says that people came from all over the place, even Tanzania and Malawi, to join the Queen’s African Rifles (as porters or as soldiers), and all of these lived in the African enclave in Kileleshwa. There were also construction workers living there, working on the Kenya-Uganda railroad or on Nairobi’s roads (like Uhuru Highway). All were settled in Kileleshwa by the Colonial Administration.

Eventually, the Colonial Administration decided to use Kileleshwa for housing white settlers, and moved the Africans out. The people from Kileleshwa were moved to two different locations. Some were taken to Kabete, where there was a big Muslim village close to where Uthero Girls’ High School is now. Most of those taken to Kabete were railway workers. The rest were taken to Pangani. In Pangani, people from many different tribes were there. The Swahilis, who were mostly from Tanzania, had their own mosque, as did the other tribes. At that time, tensions were building between the colonists and the Kikuyus, and many Kikuyus fled to Muslim communities to hide from the harassment of the colonists. In the process, many converted to Islam.

Mwanaidi’s father was a QAR soldier from Nyasaland, Malawi. He served both as a soldier and as a Swahili teacher for other recruits. QAR conscripts often could not speak either English or Swahili, but came from other Bantu tribes which had some language similarities. Her father was able to use these similarities to teach them Swahili. Kileleshwa was a farming village, so when the Africans were forced out, they told the Administration that they still wanted land to farm. This was why they were moved to Pangani. There, they had plenty of farmland, and used to cultivate all of the surrounding area, including areas that are now in and around Mathare slum.

While in Pangani, some of the workers were used by the colonists to build what is now Moi Airbase, and Wilson Airport. These workers were supervised by the QAR. Eventually, however, work ran out. Work on the railroad ended, and the highway and airport projects were also finished. As their usefulness was at an end, many of the soldiers and workers (who were now beginning to age) were being urged by the colonial administration to leave Pangani. They had a choice: either to go back to wherever they came from, or to move to houses which had been constructed in Shauri Moyo. There was much resistance from the Swahilis and even from the Kikuyus on this issue. The Wazees (elders) said “how can we go occupy those goat-sheds?”

It ended up that the weaker folks (who had no financial muscle), were the ones who had to settle in Shauri Moyo. There was also a group who went to settle in a village in Karai. While in Pangani, the people had been fairly stable and had had a pretty unified community. After the move, however, there was a lot of disunity. The people could not be mobilized, and no mosques or schools were built in Shauri Moyo. Those who opted not to go to Shauri Moyo received a small amount of financial compensation instead. Many of these decided to use the money to go back to Malawi or Tanzania. There were also a few who convinced the colonial government to let them go buy some mud houses in the Pumwani area. These were the original residents of Pumwani, but they were relatively few; only the people who had some financial muscle.

Those who went back to Malawi and Tanzania left behind their local women and children. Their wives had no proper travel documents, and so the colonialists did not allow them to leave. Mwanaidi’s father took his family as far as the Kenyan border, but when they got there, she, her siblings, and her mother were all turned back. They were told “you are Kenyans, he is from Malawi. He must go, you must stay.” They were loaded into a government vehicle, driven back, and turned over to their village chief to be looked after. Their father ended up at a new post in Tanzania and years later they learned of his death from an obituary in the newspaper.

After independence, there was freedom to move anywhere, and it was at that point that Mwanaidi and her family moved to Pumwani-Majengo, where they could be tenants and rent from some of their old neighbors. Even after independence, however, the troubles of the people were not completely over. There was one relocation from Pumwani-Majengo by the new government, in which Nairobi City Council moved some people to the Kariobangi area near today’s Kariobangi Mosque.

The Queen’s African Rifles used to have people from all over the place – even the Komoros Islands, and Zimbabwe. For this reason, those who lived in Pangani were a mix of people from all tribes and nations – very cosmopolitan. There were many Muslims there, but also some Christians. It didn’t matter to the colonial administration. All of the people living there had to be relocated. Mwanaidi, who these days is bedridden, still maintains a dignified air. She reminds us that her ancestors, and the ancestors of many others in Majengo, played a very important role in the history of Kenya. They are the ones who fought the country’s battles, laid its railway lines, built its roads, and constructed its airports. These forefathers did a lot for this country and were never thanked for it. Now, their descendants should be respected.

Mwanaidi lived for many years as a tenant in Majengo slum. Eventually, however, she and her family were able to benefit from Pumwani-Majengo’s slum-upgrading process, and were moved into a unit in High-rise Phase 1.

**Mwanaidi Amir**

This elderly lady, also called Mwanaidi, was born in Pangani. Her mother was a Kikuyu from Nyeri. Her father was a Digo from Mombasa, and he had a few houses there in Pangani. She was a toddler in those days, and so she doesn’t remember much about Pangani. She does know that there were 3 villages there, one of which was called Mji wa Mombasa, which was where they lived. After the construction of Shauri Moyo, the colonial administration demolished all of the mosques in Pangani and forced everyone to relocate. Some cooperated and went to Shauri Moyo, and others refused and went to Pumwani-Majengo instead.

Most of those who went to Majengo were from the coast – Swahilis, etc. Since her father was a Digo, he stuck with the other coastal peoples and went with them. Her family moved to Majengo and began renting from one of those wealthy enough to own a house. They continue to be tenants there to this day. Mwanaidi and her siblings are still tenants in Majengo, as are her children and grandchildren. Their names are on the list of people who are to benefit from the slum-upgrading project at some point in the future, but for now they are still waiting.

**Petition**

The following petition was presented to the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan (NuPLAN) on the 12th of March, 2014 as a part of assisting the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association in advocating for the rights of Pumwani-Majengo residents in the slum upgrading program. This petition was written by Forrest Cammack, and was submitted by the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association in conjunction with St. John’s Community Center.

**To the Honorable Members of NuPLAN:**

We the people of the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association bring this petition to you for your consideration as you move towards making decisions about the future of the Pumwani-Majengo Slum Upgrading Process. We, the tenants, ask that you listen to our voices and allow us to take part in the decision-making and planning processes as you move forward, because this project will only succeed if there is cooperation between all parties; the government, the housing corporation, the development partners, and the tenants.

**Who We Are**

Before Kenyan independence, the Colonial Administration used Kileleshwa, Pangani and a few other locations as an enclave for African workers. These villages were home to the vast majority of soldiers and porters in the King’s African Rifles, and the workers who built the Kenya-Uganda railway and Nairobi’s Roads and Airports. As the city grew and expanded, the Administration relocated the African Enclave several times. Those who lived in Kileleshwa and Pangani were forced out of their homes, and given the option to move to Shauri Moyo, Pumwani, or towns and villages outside of Nairobi.

Most of those who moved to Pumwani were Muslims from the coast. Those who could afford to buy houses did, and the rest were forced to rent from their more fortunate neighbors. In this way, Majengo slum began to form. After independence, the new government of Kenya began to dialogue with slum residents and to form a plan on how to upgrade the Pumwani-Majengo slum. This process is still ongoing. As we continue to move into the future, we ask that the current administration remember who we are. We are the descendants of the askaris who served this country and of the workers who built it. As such, we deserve respect, and we ask that you allow us to participate in planning our future.

**The Pumwani-Majengo Upgrading Process to Date**

During the Tom Mboya Era, a deal was made with the slum-dwellers, both landlords and tenants, which was meant to satisfy all. During this time, the first two high-rise projects, called California and Biafra, were built. All of the slum landlords were to get 12 units apiece in California. Biafra, then, would be the first stage in housing the slum’s tenants, who were each to receive one unit in a high-rise at some future date. The units were given out on a lease-to-own agreement, in which the recipients would pay 2,000 shillings per month per unit. After 20 years, they would be given a title deed, and the unit would be theirs. Biafra, being the first of the tenant high-rise projects, has finished that process successfully, and tenants in Biafra now have their title deeds. Later, the government built High-rise Phase 1, and moved more tenants in. It has now been twenty years since the construction of this phase, and many of the tenants have paid off their units. A few are lagging behind on their payments, and the government is waiting to hand out title deeds until all have finished.

Phase 1 was an ideal model for slum-upgrading, and was a solution that both the tenants and government were happy with. Before Phase 1 was constructed, there was a consultation between the government and the community and it was agreed that the high-rises would be constructed at a low cost and that tenants were to pay low, standardized rents during their 20-year lease-to-own agreements. 2,000 shillings per month was manageable. During the planning process for High-rise Phase 2, however, no consultation took place, and the government did not give the housing corporation any kind of guide for fixing the price of rent. The housing corporation had apparently been given government money, which helped subsidize Phase 1 back when it was built during the Moi era. However, nothing was given for Phase 2. This gave the housing corporation a dilemma. They needed to get their money back from the project somehow, and so they decided to charge each tenant 11,000 kshs per unit per month – over 5 times the rent for phase 1.

Understandably, the new tenants were very upset. They banded together and agreed that they would refuse this offer. They were told to go pick up keys for their new homes, but most people chose to boycott the housing corporation and left their keys right where they were. There were a few, however, who had the money to pay the 11,000, and these few retrieved their keys, which broke the unity of the tenants and weakened the protest of the majority. After 3 months, those who were still refusing were told that they were still being charged their monthly rent, and that if they continued to refuse to pay and move in, they risked losing their new home altogether. They were told either to move in to the new houses, or leave the slum.

Most people finally decided to move in, but they also filed a petition with the courts to try and get the rents lowered. Since then, there has been a long legal battle between the tenants and the housing corporation which continues on to this day. Many people have not been able to pay the 11,000 ksh and have subsequently been evicted. The housing corporation had cleared ground for phase 3, but when they found out they were being taken to court, they stopped everything. The empty ground is still sitting there, waiting for a resolution.

Meanwhile, the Pumwani-Majengo slum has changed a lot. The last survey of the slum was over a generation ago, and the list of names of those who are to benefit from the slum upgrading project is now outdated. Some people have moved away, others have moved in, some have died, and many of those on the original list now have adult children who have families of their own and are also in need of housing.

Because of these problems, the government wants to use a different solution. They want to give out title deeds to the landlords of the remaining Pumwani-Majengo land so that they can self-develop. Some of the landlords however, are choosing to sell their plots instead, leaving the tenants with no place to go. This is not an appropriate slum-upgrading solution.

Slum residents want a plan that will benefit not only the landlords, but the tenants as well. They also want to ensure that no land-grabbers are allowed in on this process. There has been some corruption in the previous housing projects, and some of those who received units are people who came from outside of the slum. Residents also want solutions that fit with their lifestyle. Most slum-dwellers survive on an informal business of some kind, either right outside their shack, or along the road somewhere. This is harder to do in high-rises. There will not be much space there, and landlords may not allow it. Residents need a marketplace.

**Demands**

1. The Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association demands that tenants be consulted by the government and developers before drawing plans for new construction. The slum-upgrading project should be planned by the people whom it is meant to benefit.
2. Before construction even begins, the price of each unit should be sorted out. It should be one of the first things discussed. Future residents of these units must be consulted *beforehand* about monthly payments, and a price must be agreed upon which is fair, practical, and affordable. If these payments are not affordable to residents, the project will fail.
3. The government’s current plan for future slum-upgrading construction does not include multi-storied housing. The slum residents want multi-storied housing in order to save space.
4. With multi-storied housing, there will be extra land left over. Pumwani-Majengo tenants ask that this land not be left to land-grabbers, but that it be used for the benefit of the residents. Tenants want a marketplace where they can do business, and spaces where their children can play. Tenants should be consulted about land usage, and they should come to an agreement with the government and development partners about how to maximize the space available.
5. Pumwani-Majengo tenants ask that the government work to curb corruption in the National Housing Corporation. If possible, they request that the government use a different company for future construction in this slum.
6. The government should consult the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association in order to find out which people are the genuine descendants of the original Pumwani-Majengo tenants. These are the people whom this slum upgrading project was meant to benefit, other than displace, aggravating their misery.

**This Petition created by the people at the Pumwani-Majengo Tenants Association,**

Omar Abdullah, Simon Rurungá, Omar Saidi

**Pumwani-Majengo Wazee (Elders):**

Amina Asman Sharifu, Mwanaidi Nyakinywa Jasho Abdullah, and Mwanaidi Amir

**And Consultants from St. John’s Community Center and St. Paul’s University**

Stella Nzoi, Maryann Sambigi, Lawrence Okowa, and Forrest Cammack

**Appendix A: Interview Questions**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself, your history, and your involvement in Majengo Slum.
2. Has the Majengo-Poumwani slum upgrading process been of benefit to you and your family? Why or why not?
3. Who are the main people who have benefitted from this process, and whose desires have been ignored?
4. From your perspective, has the government fulfilled its promises during this process? How so, or how not?
5. What are community needs which the slum-upgrading process has met or not met?
6. In what ways do you think this process could be improved for the benefit of all parties involved (landlords, tenants, developers, and government). List two or three.
7. What do you think of the government’s current plan for the future of this upgrading process?

*\*Note: These questions were used only as guidelines – It was important to get the answers to these questions at some point during each interview, but the interviewer focused on hearing each interviewee’s story and did not follow a consecutive structure.*