



Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC)
Social Justice Advocacy and Documentation of Rights Violations
0714738701
matharesocialjusticecentre@gmail.com
<https://matharesocialjusticecentre.wordpress.com/>

Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) and Mathare Radio.

(Written by Wanjiru Wanjira, Kinuthia Mwangi and Wairimu Gitau)

Dec 19th 2015 MLANGO KUBWA FORUM REPORT

#Tubonge

This initiative, #Tubonge, is to encourage dialogue on social issues including reproductive health and sexual violence.

Date: 9.00am-1.00pm

Pequininos Hall

Moderator: Juliet Wanjira

This forum was held on the 19th of December 2015 at Pequininos hall in Mlango Kubwa ward, Mathare Constituency. It was the last among four forums held by the Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) in 2015. Mathare Radio, whom we have worked with previously in MSJC's activities, and whom we partnered with in this forum, has been and was a great contributor, both in resource and solidarity towards effecting the push for awareness on social justice in Mathare.



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The theme for this forum, dubbed ' #TUBONGE ' was aimed at setting up a space for the community members to dialogue on the incessantly growing human rights violations in their Ward. This, like the preceding forums in the other wards, circled around thematic problems faced by the residents of this community, and which were chosen as the discussion point and agenda after a Participatory Action Research and mobilization done by members of MSJC. Essentially, this was a campaign against impunity especially that of **sexual violence** in Mathare ,Mlango Kubwa ward, where such cases have been on a plaging increase. Additionally, the other topics of discussion were **drug and substance abuse, extra judicial killings** and **Police Abuse of Power, political accountability** and also a guided referencing of **the Constitution of Kenya 2010**, and the **Kenya Police Act 2011**, to sensitize people on their rights.



The forum started at about 10:00am –with a patriotic singing of the National anthem of Kenya. Afterwards, Stephen Mwangi introduced MSJC to the public and briefly talked about the work done by MSJC and the need to stand and fight for social justice in Mathare. Wairimu Gitau, founder of Mathare Radio introduced the partners to this forum with an equally brief reminder to the unambiguous need to protect and create



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awareness about the dignity of human rights both through media and community dialogues. Later, Juliet Wanjira paved way to the discussion by talking about the petition for **11 year old Azumaira Lusyivi**, a victim of sexual violence and whom the Pangani police station have proved reluctant to assist in achieving justice- even after countless trips to the station and constant reminders about the already reported case.

The people in attendance signed the petition, in solidarity with the victim, and as a bid to push for the re-establishment of justice for the young girl. Additionally, Rahma Wako, a dedicated human rights defender, shared her experience and the need to create awareness against sexual violence, as was the case that ensued after the **defilement of Abdia Abdi, 17 years of age, at kariobangi, Kiamaiko Ward**. Her case was reported and filed under OB /47/4/3/2015 on alleged physical assault, later, it was filed under OB 23/15/4/2015, this was due to the earlier under-reported facts of the violation. Abdia was sexually assaulted by Hashim Hassan, aided by Abdi Godana, who reportedly, stood guard with a knife and gun to silence the victim as she got defiled. After a conflict that saw Abdia suffer both physically and psychologically, the perpetrators were arrested and are now in police custody. The aftermath, left Abdia impregnated and she managed to give birth to a child now 2 months.

Her experience, worked to inspire a spirit among the attendees of the forum to fight for justice for and with victims of similar violations abused by persons well-known to them.

Moreover, the people of Mlango Kubwa admitted to the ever increasing rate of sexual violence in their community and further cited some of the major causes leading to this, key among them being, the inadequate and rather lacking awareness on Reproductive Health and the advocacy for Women Rights and campaigns against Sexual Gender Based Violence.

Additionally, the discussion extended to the existence of classes and class struggles in Kenya. At this point, a rather scientific analysis was realized in the course of this discussion to the realities of the divisions amongst the Kenyan society, particularly, to the divisions amongst the residents of Mathare who evidently live along ethnic divisions. Optimally, an enlightening realization as to the cause of this division was made, and further, a finger was pointed against the sole and prevalent dividing factor existent in the entire Kenyan society; this was realized to be class division, the dividing line between the rich and the poor which has for a long time masqueraded in the face, body and language of ethnicity. This further manipulated the idea of 'democracy'



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by inciting ethnic blocks towards believing the fight for justice will be achieved through ethnic appointments of clan and tribal watchdogs to guard tribal interests. As Maina Wa Kinyatti puts it: 'To look at our struggles for national liberation in terms of ethnicity, is to fall into a pit of the vicious worms of ethnic nationalism.' As a way forward, the people set forth a commitment to elect leaders from Mathare- those who have lived in the community and who acknowledge the challenges faced by the residents of Mathare. And further, those who propose a sustainable and objective strategy to alleviate the suffering of the proletarian masses in the community.

Drug and substance abuse was further discussed to be the major contributor to crime, sexual violence, and delinquency in the community. A majority of the youth that are deviant are characterized with the frequent and almost addictive abuse of drugs and substances. The drinking of illicit brew, 'chang'aa' was mentioned as one of the contributor to unemployment and underdevelopment in the community. Most of the addicts were reported to abuse drugs in a bid to evade the realities of their class struggles and frustrations brought by it. In relation, more people keep joining crime gangs, thus the rise of cases of theft and rape.

Gacheke Gachihi, who has been a human rights activist for the last fifteen, nurtured new activists in the struggle for social justice. Members of MSJC form part of the many activists mentored under Gacheke's guidance. Further, he addressed the topic on drug and substance abuse. He also talked about **political accountability** and sensitized the people on choosing leaders who are available when needed and who are consciously aware of the needs of the people.

Stephen Mwangi, a student of law at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, addressed the public on police brutality and police abuse of power. Generally, It was noted that this is an issue experienced in most, and almost every part of Mathare (especially, due to the many killings of suspects by members of the police force). He sensitized the public on their rights, particularly, on the proper conduct when dealing with the police, and importantly, on what to do in case of an assault by the police and on other legal issues that pertains Human rights and the protection of Human dignity. The public was very engaging here. Asking questions and even challenging Stephen on how to go about the numerous issues they face with the police, whom they reported, sometimes act malicious to implicate them with charges to extort bribe. Ashamedly, the police were reported to treating the youth without regard to their human dignity and in total ignorance to their constitutional rights- they treat the youth as potential criminals and at times inflict them to torture,



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an outright violation to the Constitution of Kenya and the International Declaration of People on Human Rights.

The issue of Pangani police Officers taking photographs of the youth came up as a disturbing factor. Two young men expressed their fear as they do not know why the police took their photos upon arrest and furthermore, the use of the photos taken following their release. As a result, they use a different route going to town just to escape the possibility of meeting with a policeman. After much discussions, it was agreed that Mathare Social Justice Centre should organize a forum with the OCPD, Starehe Division and the Officer Commanding Station (OCS) Pangani, to also have a similar discussion with the people, particularly the youth, so as to answer most of their questions pertaining the conduct of the police service to them. Victim protection was raised as an area to discuss further.

Wairimu Gitau tackled the topic of extra judicial killings in Mathare. She mentioned the documentary that Mathare Radio has been working on to document the cases of young men and women killed by police or gangs. The audience also proposed that we dedicate a space/ wall in Mathare where we can write the names of the victims of extra judicial killings as a way of documenting their cases and marking the campaign to 'STOP THE BULLET' in Mathare. The documentary is almost done and will be released soon. To stop extra judicial killings she urged the audience to seek knowledge about their rights and to further stand up for the same. One person from the public shouted in Kiswahili saying, "kusimamia haki yetu ni kifo huku Mathare" meaning, "standing up for our rights leads to deaths here in Mathare". Wairimu proposed partnering with Cinema Politica to screen films around Mathare that will raise people's consciousness. Zahra Moloo a friend to the movement offered to bring and donate a projector and dvds to initiate this.

On the way forward to this discussion, the people agreed on the need for more community forums and need for community spaces that give children platforms to be creative, play and often times stay out of trouble. In addition to this, there was a general feeling that the leaders of Mathare should attend these community forums so that they can get to know the real issues that the people face. Those who had not done so signed the petition for Azumaira Lusyivi and most importantly agreed to fight for our rights as the people of Mathare, not under ethnic divisions but as one united lot.

Juliet Wanjira gave a vote of thanks and the forum was adjourned at 1 pm.



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Later on after the forum, and as a result of the forum and other works done by MSJC, there was a meeting between members of MSJC, Mathare Radio and Evans Odenyo, from Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) that highlighted the proposed partnership between the three to work against sexual gender based violence in Mathare. Reportedly, MYSA is setting up justice centres in Mathare to create awareness about human rights violations, to promote the knowledge of the law and to further spread the knowledge about the structure of governance. This supposed partnership could form another big and solid base towards the growth of the grassroots social movements in Kenya.

Special thanks to Naomi van Stapele and Owen Sheppard for their solidarity and contributions towards the planning of this forum.

A huge thank you to the area Member of County Assembly (MCA) for Mlango Kubwa ward: Mr. Andrew Macharia for his support and solidarity. Your insight is visionary !

A further vote of thanks to Sam Kairu for designing the poster for this event, even on short notice. Asante sana!

Also, we extend special thanks to those who attended this special #Tubongedialogue. We also wish to appreciate the efforts made by both members of MSJC and Mathare Radio towards ensuring a successful meeting with members of Mlango Kubwa.

Pamoja Tutasonga mbele, hatuwezi rudi nyuma.