

ESVAK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

1.0. History and Background

ESVAK (Ex-Spring Valley Kayole) is a Community Development Organization founded in August 2001. The establishment was initiated by Mary Alice Onyura, who was later joined by a group of Christian women with a calling to champion the development and empowerment of poor children within their communities. ESVAK was founded in response to finding a lasting solution to the problem of re-integrating street children and sometimes, street families. ESVAK's work with rural communities is partly aimed at containing rural orphans within their own communities thus forestalling their eventual displacement. The quality education programme with the rural communities has seen ESVAK expand programmes aimed at empowering women groups in the relevant communities through activities such as capacity building, formation of self help groups for income generating activities and eventually micro-credit and micro-loans.



ESVAK handing over ESVAK Community School to the community leaders

2.0. Target Group

ESVAK targets women, youth and vulnerable children in urban slums and marginalised rural communities.

ESVAK PROGRAMMES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

3.0. A Participatory Approach to Development:

ESVAK believes that it is difficult to empower a community or a group of people who have not yet identified their needs. In this respect the organisation only works with communities which have initiated some ‘development’ and taken the courage to invite others to facilitate them to identify their problems and recognise fruitful ways of trying to address them. This approach ensures that the community can sustain their activities after ESVAK’s exit. *People will sacrifice more for what they have played part to create, than for blue print plans handed down to them for implementation from ‘experts’.* Mulwa (2008: 18).

3.1. URBAN SLUM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

This has been ESVAK’s largest programme in Nairobi. The target slum is Spring Valley Kayole, with a current population of over 10,000 people. The slum is situated in the Kayole area, home to several slums. The development which ESVAK has facilitated is testimony to how effective Development Aid can be if local grassroots initiatives and participation are encouraged. Such cooperation must appreciate participation of the local NGO partner and the target community, which in turn must result in satisfying fundamental human needs: physical, social, psychological and spiritual needs. Right from inception ESVAK emphasised to the community the fact that no one can develop them; a community can only develop itself and ESVAK can only facilitate the process. Nyerere (1973) argues thus...*But people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves... by what they do... by making their own decisions... and by their own full participation – as equals.* The community has worked tirelessly to ensure that they realise their objectives towards development and empowerment. There is currently a very strong community leadership headed by a Development Committee. In partnership with ESVAK they have achieved the following:

- Building the Capacity of Community Leaders
- Facilitating the Community to Claim Right to Land Ownership
- Water for Health
- Quality Education
- A Revolving Micro-credit Scheme Fund
- Empowering OVCs and the Youth for Employment

ESVAK targets the bottom 10-20% of the population as exist in the urban slums and marginalised rural communities.

