



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

Body and Soul Development CC

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, SDA, and Muslim

Location of CC: Nansana, Kampala

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Approved: February 2001

Key Areas of Focus: Entrepreneurial Skills Development and Spiritual Development

Date: 18th July 2014

Summary:

Body and Soul Development CC is located in Nansana, Kampala, and was founded in 2000 as a result of a government programme centered on poverty eradication to target youth and religious leaders. The CC, through Religious institutions, religious leaders and youth leaders provides entrepreneurial skills development at the local level between different faith groups and communities.

...when one is sick, one cannot associate well with others, like wise without an upright soul, one cannot function normally; so both entities should be addressed simultaneously. Spiritual growth alongside bodily growth is what makes a complete human being. We cannot preach peace to a psychologically and spiritually sick, hungry and angry person. We call upon members to join hands and work together to contribute to the wellbeing of God's people. A reward is waiting in heaven. This why Body and Soul Development CC was founded; remarks Joy Kemirembe, one of the founder members.



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1. Can you please help me understand the current religious/cultural/political contexts in the area where your CC is working?

Like other regions of Uganda, Nansana Town Council, Wakiso district faces social problems ranging from religious and cultural differences, to power dynamics between men and women, youth, and children. Nansana Town Council is one of the suburbs of Kampala with a high population of about 89,900 people according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2011, the majority of who are women, youth and children. The area has people of diverse religions, the majority being Muslims and Christians, with a few other sects. In such an environment, religious intolerance is common at the individual level, where due to ignorance of the values and traditions of others religion, people don't associate easily in terms of interfaith. Everyone minds their own business, not endeavoring to learn about others religion. For instance, though Eid day is recognized nationally as a public holiday, the Muslims feast alone and the other religions continue to rest or work without participating in the feast. It is also rare to find non-Muslims eating together on Eid day or Christmas and Easter holidays.

The political arena is composed of people subscribing to different political parties, such as the; National Resistance Movement (NRM), Democratic Party (DP), and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). The political fever is normally high during general elections, the next due in 2016. During such times, the youth are more involved in campaigns canvassing votes, and in most cases they are used by politicians to incite violence against opponents.

2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed where your CC is working?

In an environment where people belong to different religious and cultural backgrounds, interfaith and intercultural bridge building is crucially needed to bring people together for a common cause. Murungi Mary asserts that, the problems that face community do not discriminate against religion, culture, and sex or otherwise. And when people come together on development causes, their standards of living are improved and harmonious co-existence is realized.

In Body and Soul Development CC bridges are built between the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, SDA, and Muslim faiths. Their founding history, informs a lot on every initiative that is made and it offers them the opportunity to tap from the existing synergies. *"...because of our different religious backgrounds, we are able to penetrate into society easily. Where I cannot manage to talk to a Seventh Day Adventist or Orthodox, my colleague from that faith can easily step in"*; Joy Kemirembe adds on the importance of interfaith bridge building.

3. Can you please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is doing this year?

The main activities for this year focus mainly on mushroom growing, bar and liquid soap making, and candle making. The organization hopes to have the addition of egg plants and peppers to widen the product base for more profits.

The organization is also planning to set up a demonstration site at Nansana (about 6 kilometers from the city Centre), where all activities shall be based in one location to ease implementation.



The readymade candles for the market

The demonstration site is also envisaged to provide additional profits from trainees who shall visit the site. The activities are implemented on a cost-sharing model where, the youth and women with small start-up capital are targeted to ease training production-inputs. We also provide book keeping lessons to the trainees, so they may manage their businesses profitably.

4. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?

Body and Soul Development CC is made up of five religions which include members from the Uganda Catholic Church, Church of Uganda, Orthodox Church, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council and Seventh Day Adventist Church. The based services are offered do not discriminate against any faith.



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5. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other.

Body and Soul Development CC cultivates the common needs as a binding factor for the work we do. According to Joy Kemirembe, “Sometimes we are driven by the needs of the time and you find that the question of religion or cultural background comes later or never surfaces at all. When a problem presents itself, it doesn’t ask for your religion or culture, it only requires a solution to address it.”

Our history serves as a major cornerstone for bridging traditional or religious differences. Body and Soul Development CC was founded on the cornerstone of five religions/faiths including; Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, SDA and Muslim; to assist with the outreach to people of different backgrounds.

The regular visits to the communities also enable members of Body and Soul Development CC to ensure cohesion of the members of their circle as they get reminded on the messages of peace through interactive dialogues that are conducted on different social issues.

The work of Body and Soul has been tremendous in improving cooperation among people of different traditions through the use of their own diverse religious composition as an easy entry to people of different religions. Whenever people look at us as subscribing to different religions and mixing easily, they tend to emulate us and live freely with each other. The diverse composition of our group also helps in widening our circle to more corners of society which we would not have reached if we were only composed of a few religions and traditions.

6. Given the current contexts, you described, what does your CC hope to achieve?

The goals to be achieved include having communities where there is respect for one another’s values, avoiding disunity and creating cultures of harmonious and peaceful co-existence of people from different cultures and religions. For instance, during the fasting season; as members subscribing to different religions, non-Muslims are free to eat and Muslims continue to honour their fast without any antagonism to each other’s values.

8. How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflicts?

Two major issues are addressed by Body and Soul Development CC: Poverty Eradication and Spiritual Development. This is alongside environmental conservation due to the rampant encroachment on the environment by human activities.



Joy Kemirembe rewards a student with note books in one of the school sessions. Paul Bulamu (IYPA) looks on

The community of Nansana Town Council comprises of majority women and youth. According to the Uganda National Household survey (UNHS) 2002/2003 females make up 51.6 % and males, 48.4 %, in Wakiso District with majority of the population being young (aged below 15).

These social groups grapple with survival means and languish in high levels of poverty, as most of the government programmes such as loan schemes and others require collateral security commonly obtained through properties such as land, which this social group widely lacks.

Body and Soul Development CC therefore empowers the most vulnerable groups, women and youth, into entrepreneurial skills development such as mushroom growing, bar and liquid soap making, candle making among other things. This is based on the backdrop that the basic needs of the people are attended to. Our work ensures that people cannot lack what to eat! The crops that are grown are highly nutritious and can grow anywhere and in any type of soil. By providing alternatives to help with survival we are transforming conflict in the area.

9. What are some indicators / observations you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?

The relations are improving at the individual and family level. In families, you notice that people are working together for the wellbeing of their family and are not driven by their faith or tradition.

Even during meetings, people are free to let anyone lead them in prayer and it doesn't matter if the one leading is a Muslim, Christian or otherwise.



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Body and Soul's impact cuts across individuals, members and the community at large. Through the entrepreneurial skills development, they are able to contribute to poverty eradication by offering people alternative means of survival; thus dealing with the rampant unemployment of mostly the youth. The type of business done; such as mushroom growing, candle and soap making enables people to earn a daily income. The people are afforded with nutritious crops which they have for meals.

The linkages to the market base of the farm supplies; is connecting the beneficiaries to experts in the agricultural sector whose interest lie in large scale production. For instance, the key informant states that the suppliers of mushroom seeds are initiating linkages with the ministry of Agriculture to widen the market base for Body and Soul's produce.

10. Do you have a specific short story you can share about your work that might inspire other CCs or teach us a lesson about interfaith?

One member once shared that as a staunch Christian, she used to detest the Islamic faith based on what she called "endless visits" to the toilets. Her problem was the use of the small jerrycans to the toilet, yet according to her knowledge; the same were used for the kitchen. However, once she joined Body and Soul she appreciated the Islamic value of cleaning oneself before talking to God. She also appreciated the practice as a hygienic one as it ensures one's cleanliness all the time. Today, she understands that it's better for one to learn about one's religious values and practices before judging them out of ignorance.

11. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?

Body and Soul is first of all interfaith in nature if you look at the membership composition of five religions and this complements the mission of URI. Our members note that they like the setting of URI, where it doesn't matter your background, you can easily fit in. It is not bureaucratic; anyone can contact San Francisco directly, without having to go through someone.

12. Within your CC, you have members from different faiths/cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation between these members? What are the challenges?

The cooperation of members so far is good as we have not noticed any problem as people of different faiths. As a sign of cooperation, people are committed to their work even on a voluntary will and they do not expect any remuneration until their objective is achieved.



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Joy points out that, the need for startup capital is enormous, thus requiring significant resource investment in equipment for making the above products. At the moment we are able to reach those who can afford to pay a training fee and are able to buy the equipment. This has made it difficult to reach more vulnerable people.

As trainers, we are scattered all over the country and are challenged with meetings to review and monitor progress. It's only those close to one another who meet regularly.

13. How is being part of URI helping your CC to achieve its goals?

Through URI, Body and Soul Development CC, is able to network and share experiences with people from like-minded organizations. This continued interaction has earned our organization a number of contacts.

The exchange visits have exposed our members to other traditions and faith, for instance the Hare-Krishnas. Our CC member Joy says; *I was humbled by the high-level of commitment and dedication the Hare-Krishna has for their God, praying very early in the morning. We noticed that, before this visit, we had thought of Christianity as the most dominant faith in the world but came across other people of a different faith from what we knew. We were humbled by their love for nature and taking every precaution to preserve it. Nowhere in India can you find anyone killing a snake or buffalo, unlike what we see here in our country.*

14. How can URI better support your CC in reaching its goals?

The saying that, none of us is smarter than all of us, suggests that URI can support CCs to network more, by sharing what we are doing and the different approaches or strategies used in addressing more or less the same problems. URI can facilitate exchange visits among CCs to meet regularly and share.

URI can also facilitate the CCs to tap from the existing expertise and so that such synergies are cultivated more. We are more than happy to share our expertise in the work we do at Body and Soul Development.