



Dignitas Project

Dignity through empowerment

Community Scoping Report

Mathare Valley | Nairobi, Kenya

June 2008

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO – Community Based Organisation

KENWA – Kenya Network of Women with Aids

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

MSF – Medecins Sans Frontieres

MYSA – Mathare Youth Sports Association

Background

Dignitas Project has identified Mathare Valley informal settlement in Nairobi as its first project site. This scoping exercise is one of the initial efforts that is designed to inform a needs assessment of the Mathare community that will bring together community leaders from Mathare Valley as well as community development scholars and practitioners to exchange ideas and develop a common vision of the approaches to facilitating grassroots development processes for innovative educational programs.

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to gather data that will enable Dignitas to carry out an effective community needs assessment by providing information in following areas

- Schools
- Organisations
- Health
- Economic activities
- Demographics
- Power structures
- Challenges facing the community

Location and Population

Mathare Valley is situated five kilometres northeast of Nairobi's city centre. It is one of the largest slums in East Africa and the oldest in Nairobi.

Mathare Valley is enclosed by Pangani on the West. On the north, it is enclosed by the police depot, Mathare primary school, and Mathare Mental Hospital. Juja Road borders Mathare on the south, separating it from Eastleigh, an estate dominated by Somali immigrants and entrepreneurs. To the east, it borders Huruma estate. (See Medecins Sans Frontieres Community Map.)

Mathare is found in the two constituencies of Starehe and Kasarani. Mathare has several villages and wards. The bit of Mathare that lies with Starehe has two wards: Mabatini and Mathare wards.

According to the last official census conducted in 1999 by the Kenyan government, Mathare had a population of 69,003 people living in 24,525 households¹.

Most community sources put Mathare as home to about 600,000 people. This figure can be disputed with different people giving different figures that range from 300,000 to 900,000. According to the last official census conducted in 1999 by the Kenyan government, Mathare

¹ Kenya National Population Census 1999

had a population of 69,003 people living in 24,525 households. Children and youth (0 – 30 years) appear to make up the majority of the total population.

Major ethnic groups in Mathare include the Kikuyu and the Luo (the two biggest tribes in Kenya), the Kamba, Luhya and other smaller tribes such as the Somali. The Luo and the Kikuyu dominate two different regions of Mathare. This is not unique to Mathare. In most informal settlements and even some housing estates in Kenya, people from the same tribe tend to be the majority in one area.

Key actors

The main actors in Mathare can generally be divided into three broad categories: the government, Non Governmental Organisations and community initiatives.

Government

The government is represented by two different power structures. The first is the administrative arm that has a chief and an assistant chief as government representatives over Mathare *location* (see figure 1). The second is the political representation which is based on general elections held every five years. The elected officials for Mathare are councillors who represent wards and the Member of Parliament who represents the constituency (see figure 2).

At the grass root level Mathare has locals known as elders who head the different villages that make up Mathare. According to the views of some residents of Mathare some elders have in many instances being more of an impediment than a source of help. For instance some of them end up being used by different political camps to further political positions. Officially the elders do not hold any legal power though sometimes the government works with them to help mobilise the community around certain issues such as security.

Country administrative boundaries

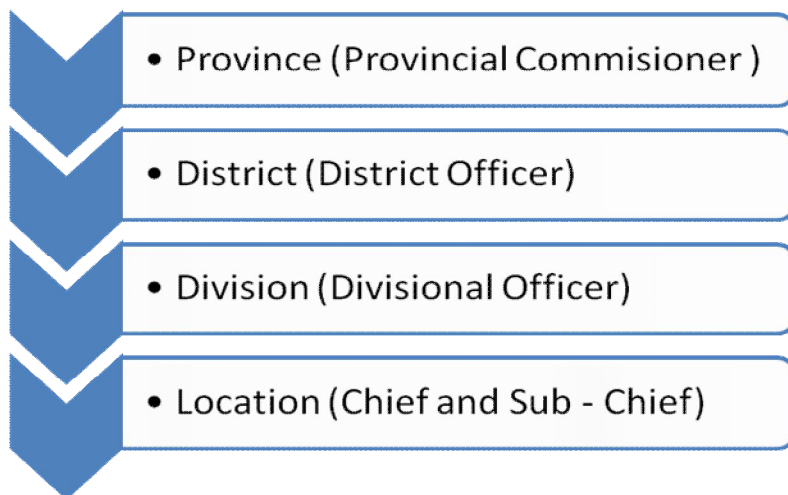


Fig 1

Elected officials

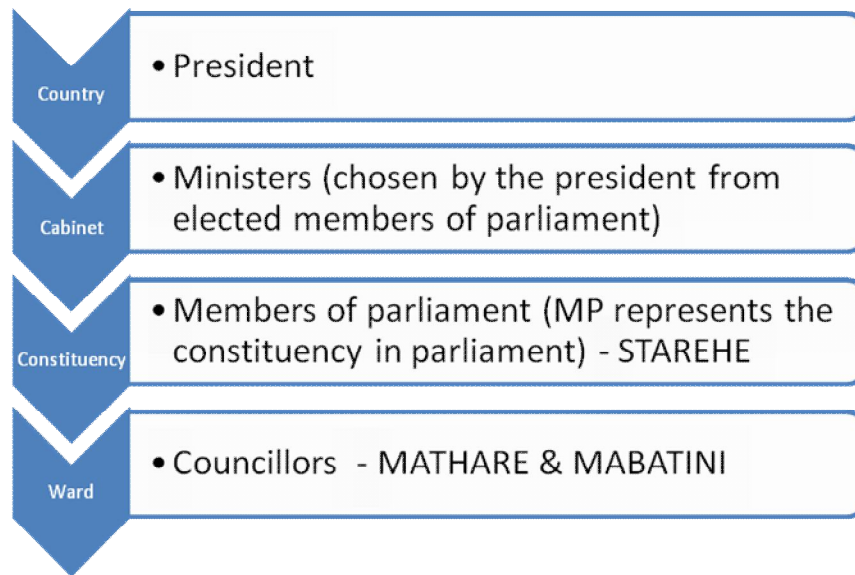


Fig 2

NGO's and Religious bodies

This category includes officially registered bodies that are non-governmental. Most are NGO's, churches and CBO's. One member of a local CBO mentioned that there might be as many as 700 – 1000 registered groups. Some individuals associate with more than one group. Though each CBO must be approved by the local chief it has not been possible to acquire a comprehensive list of such organisations.

Table 1: Non Governmental Organisations in Mathare

Organisation	Focus area
Mathare Youth Sports Association	Using sports to address youth issues such as drug abuse, environment, sexual matters
Medecins Sans Frontieres	Runs a clinic mainly for HIV/AIDS patients
The Catholic Church	Spiritual, Educational programmes (schools, bursaries)
Redeemed Gospel Church	Spiritual, Educational programmes
Compassion International	Child sponsorship mainly for Education support
Kenya Network of Women with Aids	Support of people living with AIDS – education, food, treatment
Jamii Bora Trust	Economic
World Vision	Educational sponsorship
Naioth Centre	Spiritual, Health, Education, Economic

Lepta CBO	Personal development, leadership, education
Roots CBO	Youth empowerment
Maji Mazuri CBO	Youth empowerment, education
Dreams Youth Group	-
Pequininons Youth Groups*	-
Mathare Mothers Development Center	-
Mathare Senior Self Help Group	-
Mathare Squatters women Group	-
Mathare Slums New Awake	-
Mathare Youth For action	-
Mathare Single mother	-
Majirani Women Group	-
Mathare Slums Youth Self Help Group	-
Mavuno Maji Mazuri Self Help group	-
Ushirika Mathare 4B women Group	-
You and I for our community mathare youth	-
Hope Ministries	Education, Spiritual
Hope World Wide	Child support

Community Initiatives

There are many initiatives that exist at the community level that are not officially recognised bodies. They include efforts by individuals/groups to organise the community for different reasons such as security, economic activities, education, spiritual growth, etc.

One of the most visible efforts are the women "chama" which are money saving groups. All individuals save a certain amount daily and the money is given to one member sometimes for a specified use such as buying food. Sometimes one individual is found in many different groups.

Community Resources and Infrastructure

The following are available within the Mathare community

1. Three government public schools and one youth polytechnic.
 - a. Kiboro Primary School
 - b. Mathare Old Primary School
 - c. St.Teresa's Girls primary and secondary school
 - d. Mathare Youth Polytechnic
2. Three playgrounds/open space
 - a. Police depot playground

- b. Kiboro playground/open space
- c. Chief's camp open space
- 3. Health centres
- 4. Private clinics - run by individuals and churches
- 5. Chief's camp
- 6. A police station
- 7. Post office
- 8. MYSA Library

Challenges facing the community

The majority of Mathare residents struggle in the following areas

- 1. Lack of food
- 2. Poor housing
- 3. Education
- 4. Health

As a community the greatest challenges appear to be

- Low income due to high unemployment/employment in low paying jobs
- Lack of infrastructure
 - o poor housing made mainly of iron sheets
 - o Non-existent sewer system and poor sanitary facilities
 - o Poor access to water, electricity
- Low quality education

Table 2: Major Social Problems

Major social problems (Based on 2006/7 research)	
Employment/Income	1
Education/Illiteracy	2
Malnutrition	3
Security	4
Alcoholism and related ills	5
Health especially HIV/AIDS	6
Housing	7

Statistics for Mathare ward by Andrew4mathare

Economic activities

The average person in Mathare earns about 3,000 – 4,000 Kshs monthly. But there are a handful of people who earn as much as 50,000 Kshs per month through illegal activities such as selling drugs and brewing alcohol. The Main economic activities in order of prevalence are

1. Casual labour: construction industry, washing clothes, etc
2. Small business – vegetable, food, shops
3. Illicit brewing and drugs
4. Formal employment

Table 3: Employment levels

Employment	
Casual labour and Hawking	10% (Ages 18-25 Hawking second hand clothes)
Illicit Brewing	6% (Over 25 years old)
Formal employment	2% (Ages 25-40 yrs)
Other	2%
Total Employed Population	20%
Unemployed population	80% Plus

Average income: Less than \$1 per day (live in abject poverty). High Unemployment rate Ages 25 – 40 Construction work and permanent casual jobs while 18 – 25 ages are actively involved in hawking and casual laboring

Statistics for Mathare ward by Andrew4mathare

For the majority the budgeting priorities appear to be

1. Food
2. Rent
3. Education

In families where both parents are available the men are usually responsible for the rent and food while the women cater school expenses.

The average housing cost is 1,000 shillings monthly. It costs about 100 Kshs per day to feed a family of five on one meal a day which is what most people get by.

Education

Mathare has three public primary schools and a youth polytechnic. There are a number of private nurseries and primary schools run by individuals or church organisations. The private schools are all considered Non Formal. Community informants regard some informal schools as purely commercial without the interest of the children at heart.

Table 4: Schools in Mathare

School	Type	Number of students
Kiboro	Public Primary – mixed	Approx. 900
Mathari Old	Public Primary Mixed	Approx. 900
St. Teresa's	Public Primary Secondary Girls	
St. James	Non formal Primary Mixed	
Genesis	Non formal Primary Secondary Mixed	
Valley View	Non formal Primary Mixed	
Mathare Community Outreach	Non formal Primary Secondary Mixed	
Hope School of Achievers	Non formal Secondary Mixed	
Mathare Youth Polytechnic	Public Tertiary Mixed	

Table 5: Education in Mathare

Education	
Literacy level: General population	Primary Level (65%) Secondary Level (25%)
Literacy level: Male	Primary Level (75%) Secondary Level (15%)
Literacy level: Female	Primary Level (55%) Secondary Level (10%)

Statistics for Mathare ward by Andrew4mathare

Cost of schooling

The Government pursues free education for all in its primary schools but the students still end up paying some money in the following areas

- Food – 120 Kshs per term

- Exam – 80 per term
- Tuition – 600 per term (for students in upper primary level)

Private schools on average cost about 1500 Kshs. per term

Other than that children who attend the public schools and most of the private schools are required to be in uniform which costs about 1500 Kshs per child.

Performance

The best performing school in Mathare is Valley View Academy which is a non formal primary school. Performance in the government schools is not very impressive in comparison to those of other government schools in different areas.

Out of school children, retention and progression

Walking through the slums even on a school day will reveal children of school going age who are not in school. Parents of such children claim that they cannot afford to send their children to school. Some of the children are already enrolled in public schools but talking to them reveals that they have been sent home due to lack of payment of the school food programme which cost 40 Kshs per month. It is also common to see young mothers who are supposed to be in school stay at home to care for their children.

One community informant² who works as a teacher believes that about 40% of the children are not in school. He also holds the opinion that only about half of primary school graduates proceed to secondary school while only about 10 % of those move on to university or professional colleges.

Roles of Youth

The youth are the majority in Mathare. They are also the easiest segment to mobilise within the community. Due to this fact, different power holders such as politicians, individuals and the elders have relied heavily on the youth to further their own interests. Most of the youth are unemployed and thus prone to being influenced easily by money.

Health

There are number of clinics in and around Mathare but most are not of good quality and lack some basics. Health services are also expensive for most of the residents. The government runs two health centres and offers subsidised health services but usually refer patients to get medication from pharmacies which are too expensive for some. HIV/AIDS is a major issue with high infection rates in the area. Two major players that assist those infected and affected are Kenya Network of Women Living with Aids (KENWA) and MSF. The latter runs a centre known as Blue House where those infected can access free medication.

² Dan, a teacher at a non formal school

Adolescent boys and girls in the slums also experience far worse reproductive health outcomes than their counterparts elsewhere in Kenya. They initiate sexual and reproductive activities much earlier and are at increased risks of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

According to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), common health ailments include:

Table 6: Common Health Ailments in Mathare

Ailment	Causes
Acute respiratory infections	Environment/pollution
Diarrhea, fever, vomiting	Poor sanitation/hygiene
Skin infections (Scabies)	Bacteria

Gender Roles & Equity Challenges

Women and the youth appear to be make-up a higher percentage of the population. Women more often than not play the role of the household head due to the absence their husbands or seemingly greater economic leverage. It is increasingly evident that many of the children are currently being raised up by single mothers or by their grandparents.

Most women are abused by their husbands or girls by their partners. To most this accepted as part and parcel of the relationship. Despite this the women are probably more actively involved in community life and in the lives of their children. On an individual level many girls have very low self esteem but are more reachable and open to positive influence. Discussions with one of the local school heads revealed that the number of girls is equal to that of boys in that particular school.

Migration patterns

According to the views of many Mathare grew due to the large numbers of migration from rural areas who had come to Nairobi in such of employment and economic opportunities. In the recent years this seems to have reduced but we now have a generation of young adults who have been either been born and/or raised up in Mathare for most of their lives.

Religion

The majority of Mathare residents are Christians – Protestants and Catholics. There is the presence of other smaller traditional religions and an even smaller number of Muslims. The churches are viewed and have acted as development partners with the community. Some of the greatest assistance in the area of education and health has been in partnership with the churches and NGOs. For instance, Compassion International which sponsors children acts solely in partnership with churches.

Table 7: Religion

Religion	
Christianity	55%
Islam	5%
Other	40%
Churches	20
Mosques	1

Statistics for Mathare ward by Andrew4mathare