



New ways of working: Local initiatives response against crises in Nairobi's Informal settlements

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Practice: Urban planning, community-led development, infrastructure planning, frugal development, urban resilience, governance, collaborative research

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

O1

Introduction

- Informal settlements in Nairobi
- Vulnerability context
- CBOs; the indispensable role
- CBO trajectories

O2

CBOs context

- CBOs action arena:
 - Scales of action
 - Goal Framing
 - Mobilization strategies (how and when collaborations are formed)
 - Capacity limits
 - CBO struggles

O3

Reflection

- What do CBOs offer?
- Take-aways from the action arena
- Pointers to new ways of working with development partners

Informality in Nairobi



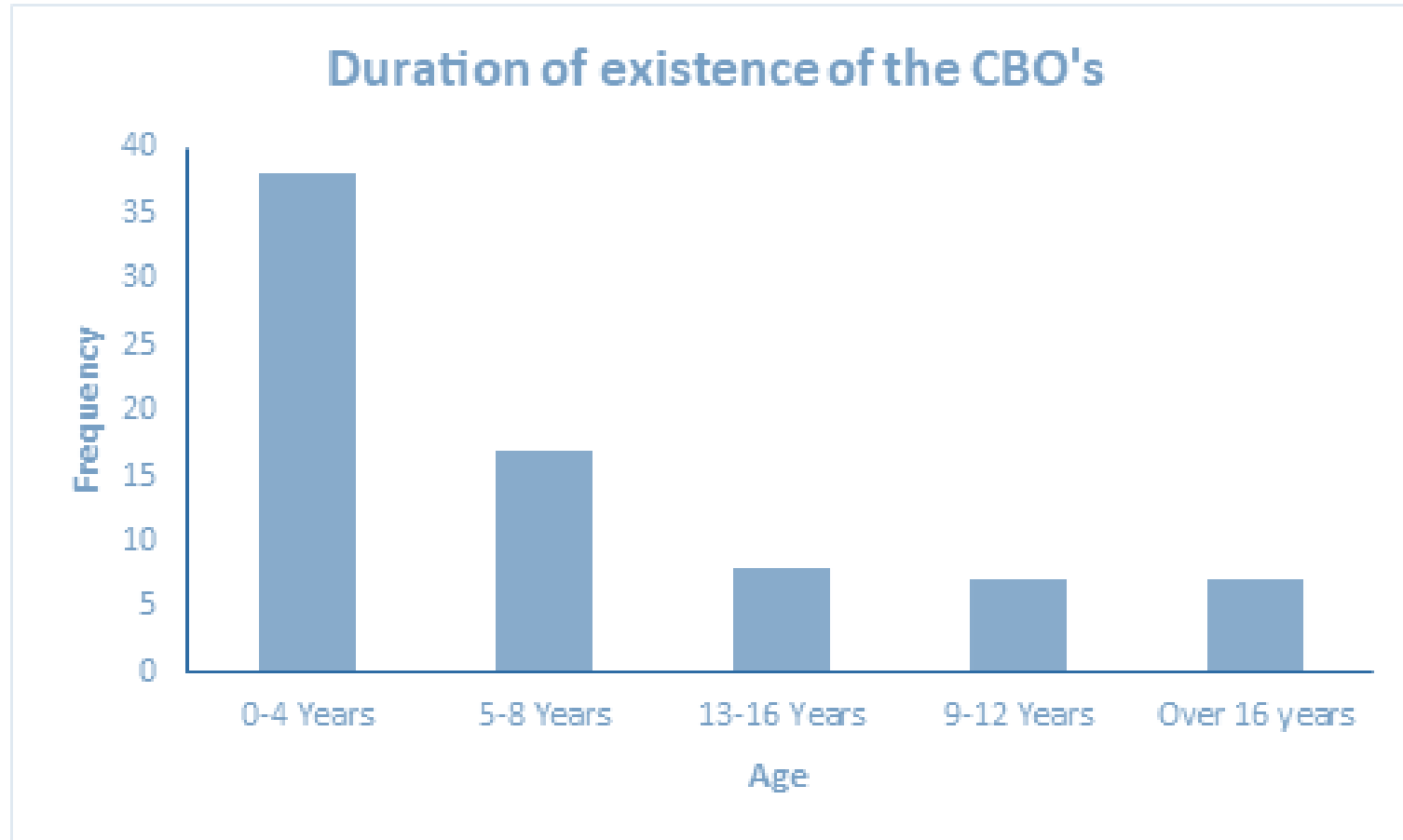
- **Rapidly urbanizing city** - growth rate per annum (3.95%) is relatively high compared to the national and global growth rates of 2.28% and 1.08% [1]
- The city houses 150 + slums and informal settlements (> 2 Million people)
- **Disaster vulnerability - Informal settlements (slums) are major frontiers of disaster risks.**
- Disproportionately affected by fires, floods, forced evictions, diseases`, economic stresses, social ills [2].
- ‘Innovation’ and ‘self-organization’ as the **reserve problem-solving capacity**



CBOs: the indispensable role

CBOs trajectories

- ▶ CBOs in Nairobi formed in the mid-1990s when informal settlements were under the greatest threat of clearance.
- ▶ Today, there are thousands of local groups that have increasingly become an indispensable partner in enhancing local development and general well-being of communities in Nairobi's urban poor settlements



Nairobi urban disaster risk reduction hub, 2020

But, how do CBOs in informal settlements of Nairobi respond urgently to crises?

What do CBOs offer?



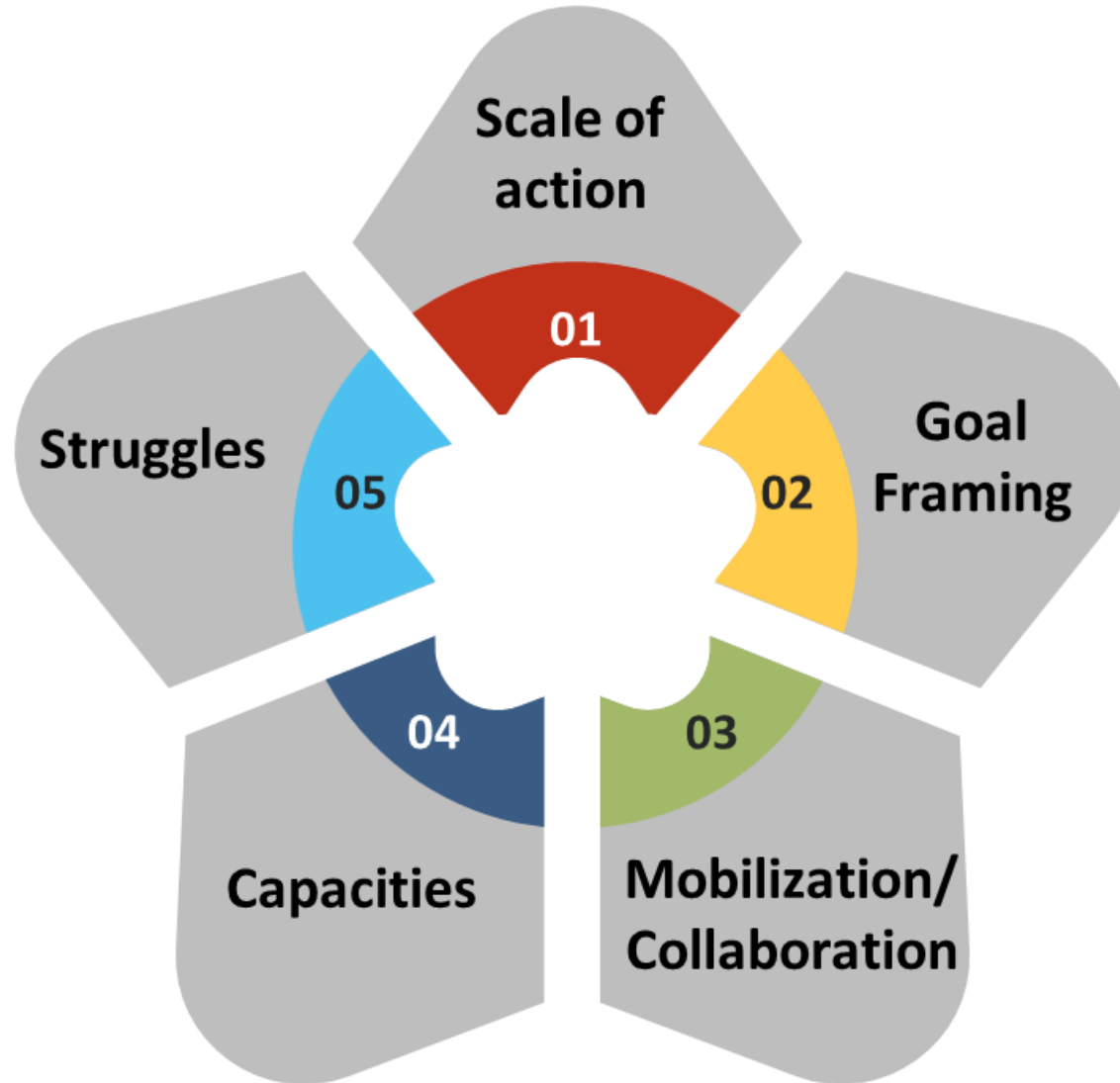
The CBOs playground is functionally and practically different from that of other development actors.

Using case studies from Nairobi, we demonstrate how attributes of the CBO action arena enables them to effectively respond to local challenges



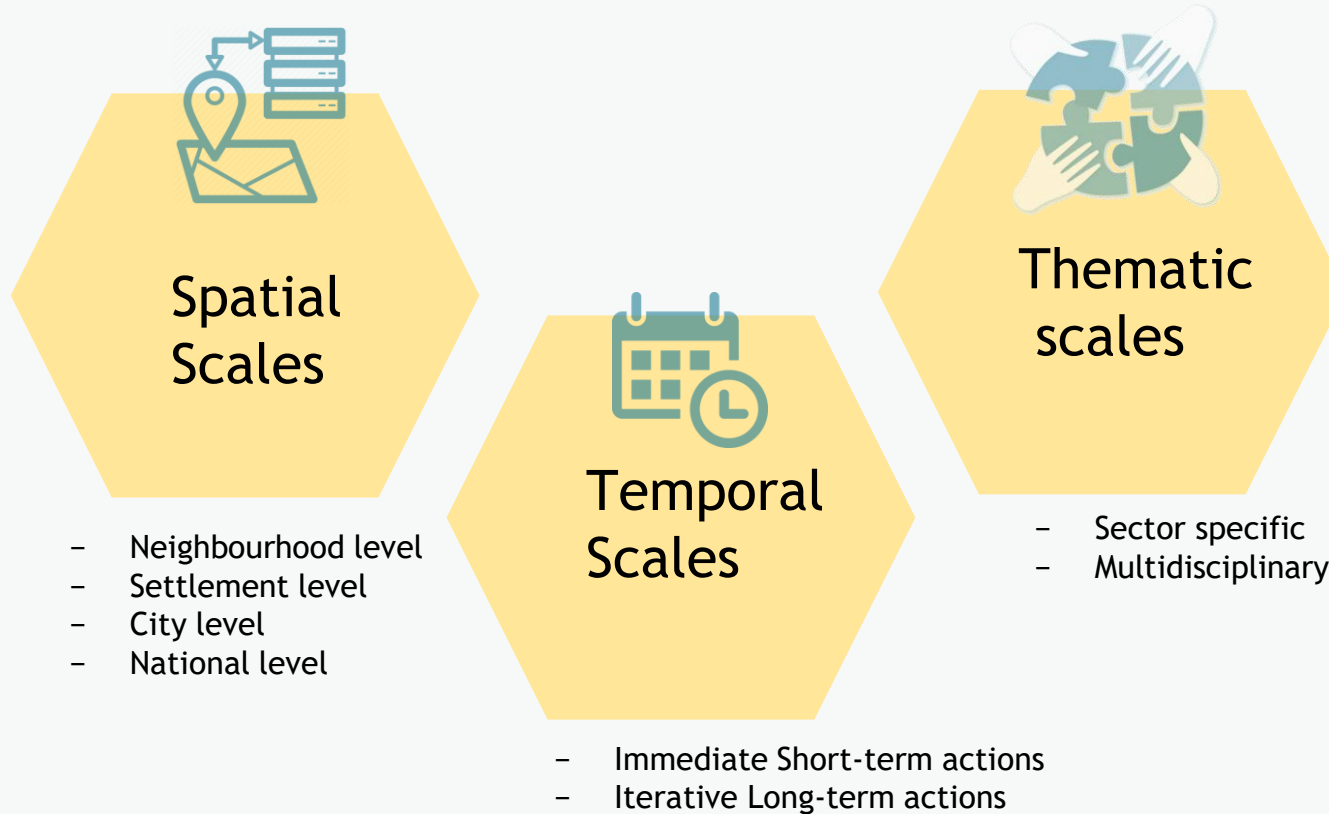
One of the major CBO local innovations against COVID19

CBOs action arena



1. Scales of action

- CBOs in Nairobi respond to disturbances at different scales and therefore different levels of complexity.



Scales of action

- Small scale, mainly at Court/neighbourhood level
- Case: Public space making initiatives by Mustard Seeds CBO
- Small projects, big impact.
- **Flexibility;** Within this scale projects traverse socio-economic, physical and environmental spheres.
- Greening public spaces, nurturing talent, youth economic empowerment



Scales of action

- Large scale, at the settlement-city level
- Case: Incremental settlement development initiative by Muungano wa Wanavijiji
- Temporal scales – Long term with short term targets.
- Thematic scope: multi disciplinary
- Improve the livelihoods by addressing the cross-cutting development challenges of poverty, gender inequalities, services deprivation, sustainability and economic development.



Scales of action

- Large scale, at the national level
- Case: community resilience initiative against COVID19 by Muungano wa Wanavijiji
- Temporal scales –Short term targets. urgent actions to curb health vulnerabilities in the midst of a pandemic)
- Thematic scope: Health and livelihood



2. Goal Framing

- How are CBOs able to remain **focused and relevant**? -Goals “frame” the way people process information and act upon it.
- Local initiatives are spurred by **Lived experiences** (“non-coded experiential knowledge”) and sustained by a **Normative goal frame**
- In the context of volatile slum context, firsthand experiences allows CBOs to respond proactively and flexibly (**through quick restructure and reorganization to address the most pressing need**).

Dandora Goal Framing

Vulnerability to environmental hazards :
Pollution and environmental degradation
Crime and insecurity



Dandora Goal Framing

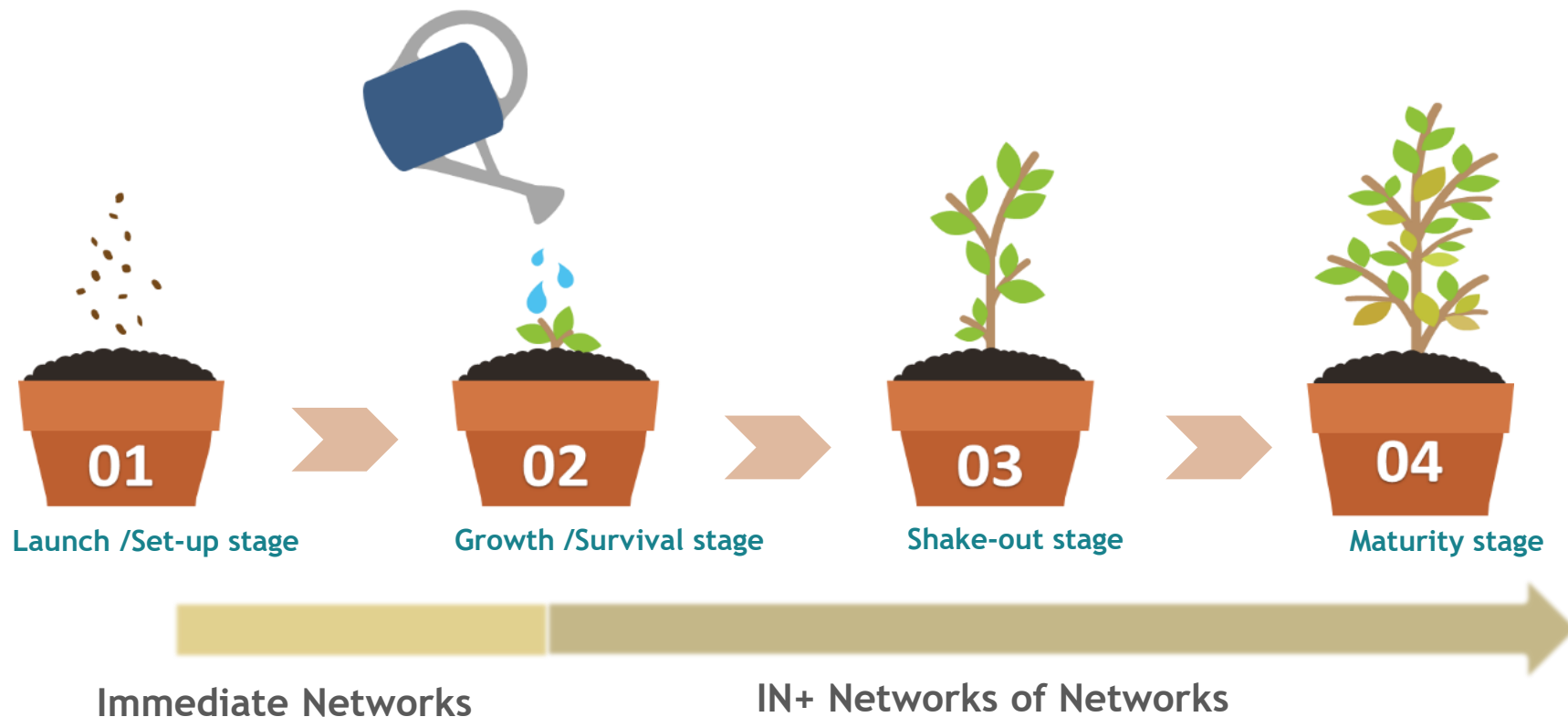
Local initiatives target to Reimagine, Recreate, Restore open spaces with hundreds of **jobs for the youth**



- **Quick response:** Minimize social decay and protect public space from encroachment/grabbing
- **Resource constraints:** Audit and use of locally available materials, use of local networks (frugality)

3. Mobilization strategies

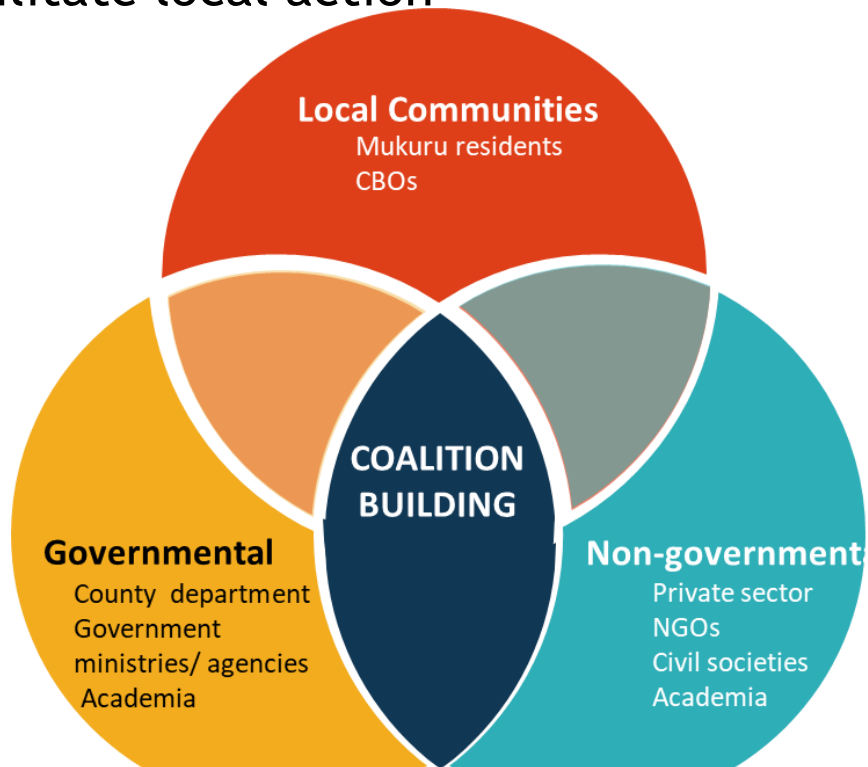
- CBOs in Nairobi demonstrate different capacities and willingness to forge strategic partnerships.
- **Urgency of action** - Collaborations tend to emerge from the 2nd face of local initiative development.



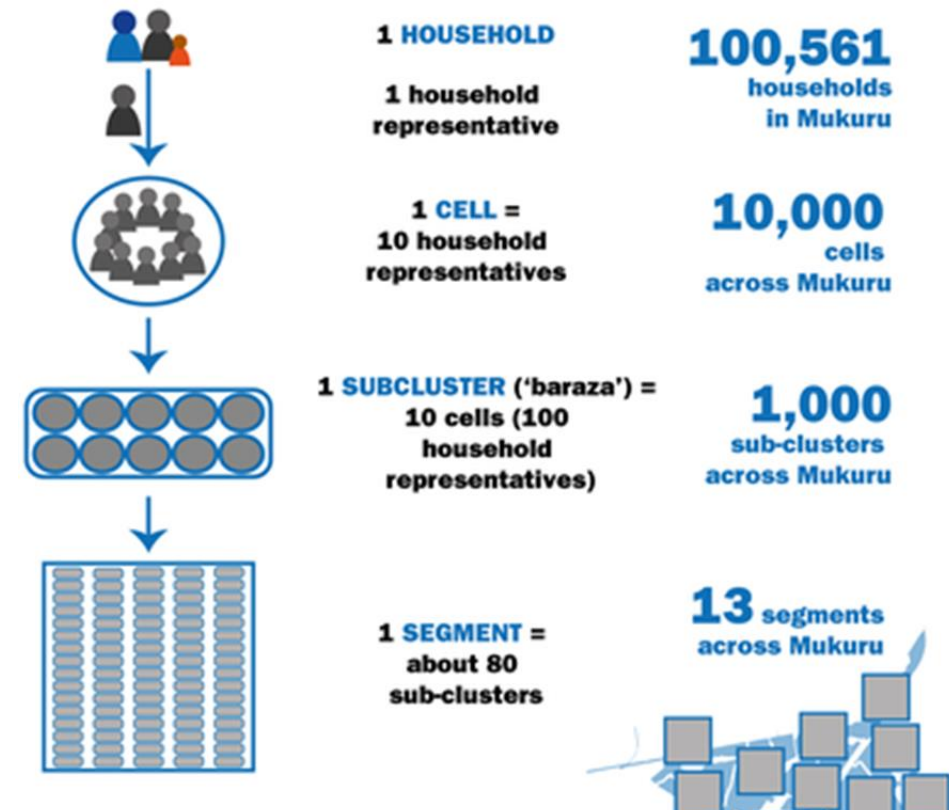
Learning from Muungano

“Cities are capable of being healthy, livable and resilient; only if and when they are created by everyone”

- CBOs adopt both simple and complex but functional bonding and linking mechanisms to facilitate local action



*“Leave No one Behind”
model of engagement*



4. Capacity Limits

- CBOs can only act within their technical and financial capacities - sufficient for immediate remedies but may not sufficiently strengthen systems and structures to embrace future change.
- This creates the need for **synergies with other development actors.**

When external resources are sourced, appropriated (localized) and properly managed, they can significantly boost the growth of local initiatives.

Without external support



With external support



5. Struggles of CBOs

❖ Boundary Spanners

- Integration with wider supportive and decision-making forums remains weak.
- A salient need for mechanisms to link internal networks and external networks

❖ Representativeness

- Target groups - hardly ever represent a full community
- Scope - many settlements without CBO's need support

❖ Going beyond individual rationalities

- Partners may find it individually rational not to cooperate.
- The 'Silent rivalry space' i.e. CBOs not understood by development partners, partners unable to localize 'new' reinvented models

❖ Leadership

- Leaders may have political or financial ambitions
- Many lack CBO's capacity

What do CBOs offer?

The capacity to spur initiatives
“Centers of implementation
for the 2015 SFDRR PoA- 'Build
Back Better'” NDRR,2020

*Nairobi river rehabilitation by @KombGreen Solutions
- CBO formed by Reformed youths in Korogocho*



New ways of working



Plugging in, NOT reinventing the wheel

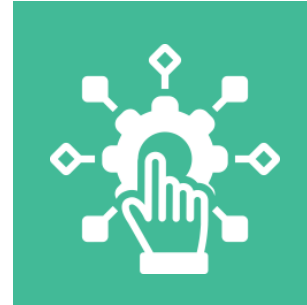
Understand the building blocks of CBOs normative goal frames

Possibly adopt into the iNGOs institutional configurations?



Flexibility

Development partners need to be flexible to ensure easy and urgent connection to local initiatives



Adaptive Structures

Localization

Urgent action requires catalyzing and expanding upon already existing local partnerships



Sustained cooperation

Necessitates reciprocity and trust

New ways of working

Are iNGOs willing and capable of plugging into the action arena of local initiatives and establishing synergies?



Not all local initiatives are progressive. iNGOs need to be selective in who they work with and who not

References

- [1] United Nations, 2019. World Population Prospects 2019. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/> [Accessed 2021].
- [2] Amnesty International. Kenya: The Unseen Majority: Nairobi's Two Million Slum-Dwellers; Amnesty International Publications: London, UK, 2019; p. 3.

THANK YOU!



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