

**A POVERTY ERADICATION AGENDA: PERSPECTIVES ON YWCA IN BOTLOKWA
AREA**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The young Women Christian Association (YWCA) is one of the old associations (NGO) from more than a century old in the world. It was started in Great Britain in 1855 by Mrs Emma Robert and Lady Kinnaird. The world YWCA was formed in 1894 by the National Associations of Great Britain and USA, Sweden and Norway (SA YWCA Brochure , Anon) YWCA believes in empowering young people with leadership skills at an early age as one of the best ways to build commitment and sustain the organization overtime, as well as preparing leaders of the present and future. South African YWCA started in Cape Town in 1886. By 1930 there were seven YWCAS in the larger towns of South Africa. There are now eight YWCA regions in the country. The affiliated regions are interalia:

Amathole –Bokwe (Ciskei)

- Durban kwa-zulu Natal
- Free state
- Gauteng
- Limpopo
- Kwa-zulu Natal North
- Nelson Mandela Metropole
- Transkei

What propelled the two women to embark on the first project was after realizing hunger which had prevailed in the families in the absence of fathers who had gone for war, living the women (wives) as providers for the families alone. The women were then not employed and it was rather a too heavy task for them to carry . In order for the children to at least survive, these women started a soup kitchen and committed themselves to provide soup to the hungry children from poor families.

2. YWCA IN BOTLOKWA AREA

The YWCA stretched to Limpopo Province, then (Northern Transvaal) under the auspices of the late YWCA veteran and parliamentarian-Ellen Kuzwayo who touched areas such as Vhaldezia in Vhembe District Municipality, Lenyenye then Phusela Location and others in Mopani District, Maphahlele area in Capricon District, the list goes on. This NGO was in Botlokwa area introduced by the late Mrs Eunice Meela (nee Mamabolo) the wife of the late Rev.Jacob Meela in 1960. She also touched areas such as Mamabolo and Zebediela, Bakenburg in waterberg District. Mrs Johanna Rapakuana (Nee Machaka) was always with her when they went from village to village promoting YWCA and it's commitment to community Development. These two torch bearers were implementing the global mission of YWCA , which is : “ LIFT up as youth CLIMB” for the purpose of empowering women in various ways, youth and children inclusive. Botlokwa area falls within Molemole Local Municipality in Carpricon Distric. It is along N1 Road within the tropic of Carpricon-55km from Polokwane and 54km from Makhado town in Vhembe District Municipality.

The following are the objectives of YWCA which they highlighted to the women as they walked and drove from village to village Mrs. .Meela was the first woman to get driver's license in Botlokwa area during the 1960S.

3. OBJECTIVES

To encourage women participation in leadership positions by providing training which prepares them to develop potential in their communities.

To provide skills development to the youth.

To participate in effective advocacy work to achieve harmony, peace and justice.

To mobilize women's collective power of action on issues of vital concern such as women's rights, Human Rights, peace and the integrity of the environment.

After the death of Mrs .Meela Johanna became the president of Botlokwa Club affiliated to SAYWCA and internationally. She initiated literacy classes and cookery demonstration is and practical sessions in handicraft activities also, as well as Communal Gardens for household food security and as income generating activity.

Johanna's biggest achievement was when she was motivated to establish a crèche in 1976-which was the first one in the rural village within Capricorn District Municipality and other areas in Limpopo Province. The reason for such an establishment was amongst other s that most unemployed women were leaving their small children alone when going out by trucks to the farms as early as 5h00 in search for food by working in the farm and getting paid in order to support their families.

When the government started with pre schools, the Department of Education's office in the area consulted the YWCA president for transforming their crèche into the pre school and that the government was going to be responsible for everything including paying teachers, which was a big relieve to the organization as the members were responsible for maintaining the crèche from their meager salaries.

The following are some of the programmes and projects offered by YWCA in South Africa.

Education and Training

Income generating Projects (skills)

Advocacy and Awareness

Youth Programmes.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS OF YWCA

The achievements of YWCA in Botlokwa which resulted in sustaining the organization while all others in the province have collapsed are the following:

- Monthly contributions to run the organization
- Fundraising activities
- Presidential Award for community Initiative – 1998
- Creches and pre-schools establishment
- Botlokwa special school
- Botlokwa Centre for Disabled Persons
- Ramotjowe Food Garden
- Molemole Indigenous Agro Processing Cooperative
- Voter Education
- Adult Education
- Event on Human Rights and Fighting against gender biased violence

Through all the five physical projects created in Botlokwa (Limpopo Province) by YWCA, various employment opportunities have been created—such as ten teaching posts at Botlokwa Special School, 2 drivers, 2 Care Takers, 2 gardeners, 2 Hospitality service managers.

All the employees in all the projects have been exposed to training relevant to their projects. They have also been exposed to places and institutions for workshops and to crown it all, some are even remarking that by working at where they are provided them opportunities of getting at the hotels where they would never dream of going. All these promoted self reliance to the self employment and those employed by department of Education. The projects resulted in promoting freedom of speech even to the disabled children who are being taught on a daily basis.

The centre for the disabled youth who are above 18 years which focuses on skills training have and is still exposing the participants to various activities such as beads making and selling of the articles, vegetables production, painting and sewing.

YWCA has further achieved in provision of shelter through establishment of the mentioned institutions.

Empowerment of the minds has been achieved through literacy programmes for the adults, Voter Education and through crèches and pre schools as well as Leadership Training Workshops and those for gender Issues for women emancipation. The above mentioned are some of the many activities YWCA is engaged with.

The Botlokwa club has lastly, through their achievement in Sustaining their obligation saw themselves being given autonomy by Gauteng Province and National Office as Limpopo Region which was inducted on the 13th May 2012. They have already achieved in inducting a sub region in Vhembe District (Thulamela YWCA) in March 2012 as well as Tunfloop Club in 2011.

The YWCASA has tremendous indicators of success. Some of the most significant achievements are:

- Having National Office in Braamfouentein (Gauteng).
- Office in Botshabelo in OFS
- Dube Centre in Gauteng which is a big establishment which used to amongst others house Wits students during Apartheid era (1970s and 80s). when Blacks could not be accommodated in the residents of the then white Dominated higher institution of learning . it is presently accommodating students of University of Johannesburg who through their payments help in maintaining the building. There are other facilities such as a hall and dining areas as well as a kitchen, leisure room. YWCA has also Trust Fund through which many projects have been funded such as combis and vans in various regions, establishing crèche in Benoni, funding Limpopo province during their inauguration as a new region, you name them.

5. CHALLENGES

There can never be achievements in the absence of challenges. The following are the YWCA's challenges:

- Lack of funding. The YWCA commitment is done voluntarily, sending crèche teachers for training during the establishment of the crèches for transport, tuition fees, pocket money. When going for conferences members pay a lot for themselves. Fundraising activities don't raise attractive amounts. The organisation is still struggling. The members are therefore failing to reach their vision as aspired because of lack of funds.
- Another challenge is that of continuous recruitment of members which is not an easy commitment. It needs time, full commitment, good strategy for mobilising and others. For that matter this work is done by the working people mostly. However, because YWCA is committed to DEVELOPMENT in their communities and NATIONALLY, they try what they can with their whole hearts always and see to it that they succeed in what they are doing.

6. STRATEGIES TO OVERFCOME POVERTY AND EQUALITY

It is envisaged that for consistent commitment towards promotion of quality life holistically in terms of eliminating of poverty and reducing inequality by 20030 optimum engagement towards challenging this though there in a need for deepening and refining strategies and collaborative efforts to achieve this goal.

The following are amongst others the strategies which could be implemented for the success of poverty eradication by 2030.

Corruption in the public sector should seriously be looked into as it contributes towards poverty and inequity because money which was supposed to be helping the poor is being stolen.

Short-term employment schemes should be sustained through another form by the decision makers

The priority system as well as procedures for monitoring the impact of government policy on poverty and inequality should be established.

Intensification of nutrition Education Programme is imperative. With respect to diet, instead of being concerned only with whether people were getting enough energy, development practitioners are challenged to also be concerned themselves about whether people are getting enough micronutrients the vitamins and minerals that help the body function.

- **The Rural-Urban Connection**

Better channels of communication between farmers and the cities and new methods for transporting food cheaply from rural areas to cities are crucial for stimulating economic growth in the rural sectors and low food prices throughout the country.

For farmers to take advantage of markets in urban areas, they must have education and other assistance. We can have great roads, but if we are poor, small farmers with no access to credit or the right seed so one is not healthy enough to farm one's land, these issues will not in any way help. Government need to invest in rural people so that they can gain access to Agricultural market.

Agricultural growth and development must be vigorously pursued in low income regions for alleviation of poverty through employment creation, to meet growing food need driven by rapid population growth and urbanisation, to stimulate overall economic growth and to conserve natural resources. Furthermore, an accelerated investment in agricultural research is particularly urgent for low-income developing countries, partly because these countries will not achieve reasonable economic growth and poverty alleviation without productivity increase in agriculture.

- **Rural Financial Services for Poverty Eradication**

For poor rural families in developing countries, access to credit and savings facilities such as banks within their reach has the potential to make the difference between grinding poverty and an economically secure life. Well-managed savings facilities permit households to build up funds for future investment or top finances beyond their own resources and take advantage of profitable investment opportunities. Unfortunately rural financial services are inadequate. It is therefore encouraged that credit and savings facilities, particularly to women be promoted. Furthermore, programme should be in such a way that their designs harness a community's particular strengths based on for example local resources, historical and cultural experience, ethnicity and occupational patterns in order to reduce costs.

- Export industries which usually create more employment than imports and inward industrialisation policies.
- Many people have however turned to the informal sector for survival and are active in informal economic structures and in collectives at local levels
- The inward industrialisation strategy is also seen as a cure –for many structural economic problems into effective demand.

- **Literacy and Capacity**

Poverty is often accompanied by low levels of literacy and lack of capacity to access economic and social resources. It is therefore, recommended that literacy programmes, from primary schools should right away include skills envelopment activities as it used to be in the mid and late 20th century. Skills training enhances livelihood in the communities.

- **Intervention for sustainability.**

For the projects in the country to achieve their objectives and to be sustainable, there is a need for a long term intervention. The projects have to be nurtured for a period of at least three years as this period would facilitate the establishment on a sound system for managing and implementing the projects.

- **Community involvement in Projects**

In order for the projects to have an impact a development, the communities be well vested in everything to do with the projects from start to finish to install a sense of ownership. Furthermore, there should be an ongoing capacity building of the participants because through this process, they become updated on the new paradigm shifts and other new developments.

- **Mental Training**

The hands on skills training should also include as issue of mental training. This means building of a positive attitude (paradigm shift) as stated above, particularly to youth.

For the NGOs to programmes they should be funded consistently to avoid them collapsing.

Strategies to attract youth in self employ have to be put in place. Attractive approaches especially in agriculture should be promoted in order for the youth to be engaged in farming.

- **Institutions and Policies**

Institutions and policies that sustain economic development and create employment opportunities are urgently needed in South Africa. Municipality to improve the lives of present and future generations. A policy framework that enhances growth rates is important to develop an enabling environment for the creation of more labour-intensive, employment. Sustainable economic growth is the best solution to reduce poverty over time.

Future growth and quality of life are dependent on the quality of the environment. The solution to environment problems can enhance the productivity of resource and improve living conditions among the poor. Development is about people and this kind of development policy is important to eradicate poverty in the country and beyond. The strategies and policies in terms of poverty eradication projects by NGOs mentioned above would ultimately ensure sustainability of the projects beyond the provided grants and they would thereby bring about the desired permanent reduction in the demand for financial support from the government.

7. THE CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE OF Carnegie and YWCA

Both Carnegie 1-3 and YWCA's obligations and ideologies are similar because they are committed towards if it was 100% possible to chop the enemy poverty with the most sharpest axe so that it could never be possible to all together rid off the devastating problem of poverty eradication, if those that are concerned one day stop to continue strategizing it's eradication, then the situation will continue to worsen until the government altogether fails to controls it. Therefore, let the good fight goes on till some signals and indicators of improvement start to show.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion on the whole, South Africa and its citizens are called upon to participate optimally and with passion in the development of an equitable people-centred social development system. The goal of the system should put in place the ideology of the caring society which facilitates the meeting of basic human capacity and self-reliance as well as participating fully in all spheres of social, economic and political life.

South Africa has not been able to supply sufficient employment opportunities for all who want to work. Unemployment has increased the vulnerability of many households. The formal sector is able to provide employment for only half of the labour force. It is up to South Africa, regional and international development agencies and interested parties in poverty issues. In conjunction with the poor communities to concomitantly and consistently, using divergent strategies to implement programmes that address poverty eradication problems more seriously.

This is even great concern raised during the Millennium Summit in 2000- whereby the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by member countries of the United Nations. They set targets in eight areas of Human Development. These included amongst others the "Eradication of extreme Poverty and Hunger". However, despite targeted efforts over several decades, all billions spent on attempts to improve people's standards of living, every report seems to indicate that the poverty situation is worsening. A key challenge therefore, facing South Africa is to ensure that redistribution and development takes place between population groups and between sexes.

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