

Handeni grassroots unity fights corruption at higher level

Concerned with the pinches of corruption to the rural poor community, leaders at grassroots level in Handeni felt a need to join the community members in the fight of corruption. That also emanates from their perspective that corruption was not a serious case at the grassroots level but rather at higher levels.

Their decision was reached after a sensitisation seminar conducted by UMWEMA Group in the Kilindi, Handeni and Korogwe districts of Tanga region. The seminar aimed at sensitising the rural community in specific on various measures, strategies and programmes which are meant to effectively combat corruption including education on their basic rights and obligations. The focus of the project was to result into increased transparency, efficiency, accountability and proper service delivery to the community.

The village leaders committed themselves to serve the community and to support it in curbing corruption at higher levels. Also, being aware that the problem is also the case among them, the leaders decided to be watchmen to each other through networking and communication if they note any of them is involved with corruption businesses.

Early fruits of the unity and solidarity

Despite the fact that the project ended some few months ago (not even a year), the leaders presented several testimonies that show that they have already started to test early fruits of their unity and solidarity.



Henry Ntumbo, Kideleko village Chairman stated "I find school enrolment in this year has been easier than before. I believe this has been contributed by our confidence and guts in making follow-ups on the enrolment exercise at the district level. For instance, I was bravely telling parents and children who come to my office, take this letter to the district office, in case they don't assist you, come back to me. When they went with that confidence, officers at the district could sense that they have a backup and therefore they would easily serve them without delay or requesting for something"



Salehe Malama, Kwediamba village Chairman talks about a case on land dispute "the complainant had money, instead of taking the matter to the Village Land Tribunal, he decided to take it to the police and the defendant was remanded. He arrogantly said that he has power to bribe high ranking officials to solve his matter without problems. We used the skills we learnt from the seminar to present our complaints in writings to the high level officials. As a result, the remanded person was released on bail"



Mohamed Omari Msasu (right) explains about indication of enhanced partnership with PCCB "at the village barrier for inspection of forest products, those responsible for collection of revenue used to ask for bribe in order to allow people to pass without inspection and payment of proper amount of fees. We tipped-off PCCB on the matter and some youths who were carrying charcoal were given money by the PCCB to use, something which resulted into two youths being trapped"

The Ward Executive Officer for Chanika, Hussein Gwando says that they have also informed other community members about utilising PCCB and Umwema offices in regard to their problems related to corruption.

Leaders afraid of each other

With the communication and information system established among village leaders, everyone is a watchman of the other. As a result, even those who might be tempted to take bribe are afraid of their fellows as testified by Juma Salum Abdul, Kwediamba Village Executive Officer:



"Some of us were also receiving bribe, but with this information network and our understanding of the consequential effects, we are afraid. For instance, one day I was with my fellow leader and we were asked to receive some money to free a lorry, which was carrying sand without payment of fees. My fellow refused and dropped down from the vehicle, they requested me to take that money, but I also refused it with fear that my fellow might tell others about that scandal. As a result, they ran away and have disappeared up to the moment with fear of being caught"- Juma Salum Abdul, Kwediamba VEO



Yahya Mhina, Vibaoni Village Chairman had a similar story "I was informed by my security guards that there is a youth who has a bag of bhang. I decided to inform the OCS who went with those youths and they caught the offender. He was taken to court where he pleaded guilty and was fined Tsh. 100,000/=. In previous, I could just take whatever he has and leave him, but currently I'm afraid of the consequences."

For comments and more information please contact:
Sitta Peter (Programme Officer-Information and Publicity),
sitta@thefoundation-tz.org