



Strategy for Youth Empowerment & Entrepreneurship: An assessment of WOW Outreach, Flint, MI

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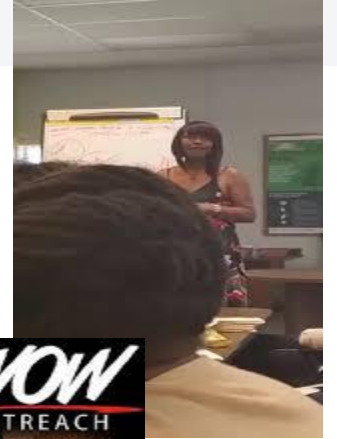
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Background

- ♦ Flint, MI – Challenges for Youth Empowerment and Community Development
- ♦ Structural Violence
 - ♦ Flint Water Crisis
 - ♦ High levels of poverty
- ♦ Subjective Violence
 - ♦ High crime – Recurring levels of violent crime, murder rates
- ♦ How can organizations intervene to provide hope, and break cycles of violence, create the conditions for entrepreneurial development?
- ♦ Address this through an assessment of WOW Outreach -- a non-profit and community organization

WOW Outreach

- ♦ Established in 2007, WOW Outreach is dedicated to
- ♦ 1) building “safe neighborhoods”
- ♦ 2) “igniting action and collaboration among people and organization” and
- ♦ 3) “giv[ing] hope to youth and families”
- ♦ (from Website -- <https://www.wowoutreach.org/about>).



Key Questions for this Assessment

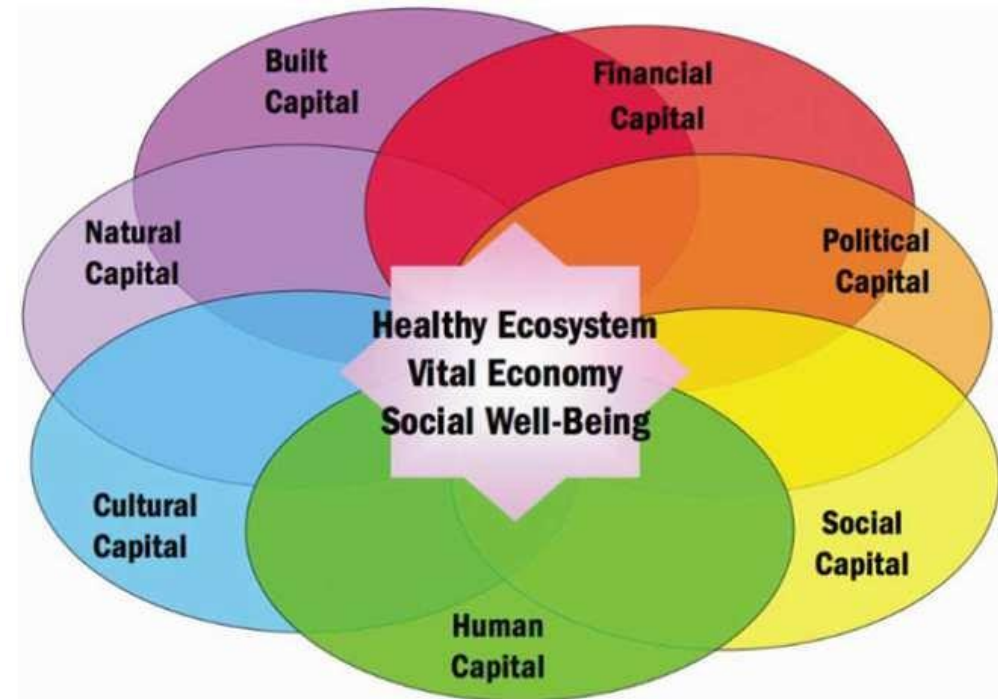
- ♦ How does a community based organization:
 - ♦ Interrupt and prevent violence?
 - ♦ Build the assets that support and affirm life?
 - ♦ Build on existing community assets to create opportunities for empowerment and development?
 - ♦ Integrate with community wide development initiatives?

Violence Prevention, Community Development, Youth Empowerment Building on Literature

- ♦ Violence as structural, not just interpersonal (Farmer 1999; Galtung 1969)
- ♦ Violence prevention – engaging – involves engaging with community to address factors that may create conditions for community violence (Bowen 2004; Fowler and Braciszewski 2009)
- ♦ Empirical evidence shows that community development interventions – including urban greening – reduces crime and violence (Sharkey, et al. 2017; Garvin, et al. 2012; Sadler, et al. 2017)

Community Asset Development

- ♦ Community Capitals Framework (Flora, et al. 2016; Green and Haines 2016)
- ♦ Stocks of assets that can be developed in tandem for community outcomes
- ♦ Seven Capitals –
 - ♦ Interconnected
 - ♦ Create conditions for development
 - ♦ Are built through development



Methods of Inquiry

- ♦ Initial Methods: Direct engagement and interviews with WOW Outreach to understand programming, goals, outcomes, etc.; Interviews with key informant residents
- ♦ Met with Board – but COVID-19 “Stay at Home, Stay in Place” order prevented further face to face interaction
- ♦ Plan B – analysis of project documents
- ♦ Employed the community capitals framework (CCF) in the analysis of written notes and reporting documents provided by WOW Outreach.

Key findings

- ♦ Multiple types of initiatives are utilized to mitigate structural violence and development individual and community assets
- ♦ Projects intervene at the local human needs level
- ♦ Projects also develop social systems and networks that support youth as they develop
- ♦ Provide opportunities for advancement

Project Activities & Capital Relations

WOW Program	WOW GOALS	ACTIVITIES	CAPITALS IN ACTIVITIES	SUPPORTING CAPITALS
Clean & Green	Contributes to cleaner community and infrastructure	Managing overs 70 community lots, mowing, yard work,	Human capital- manual labor skills, Cultural capital – service and community care; Natural capital – the importance of soil, well cared for yards	Built capital – cleaning lots, natural capital - yardwork
Destiny House	Serve Foster youth who age out of the system	Providing housing for foster youth in the community	Human capital; Cultural capital – ways of acting and behaving	Built capital – housing for specific community in Flint
Youth Ambassadors	Engagement with community Youth for development	Developing skills in leadership and resilience	Human capital, social capital	Built capital – facility Natural capital –transportation & production of goods
Living Room Conversations	Practice outreach & engagement	Programs & activities that promote health & well-being	Human capital – Social capital	Financial capital – donors & sponsorships; Political capital – access to programs; Human capital – health services
Tendaji Talks	Practice outreach & engagement	Members of the community to learn about the diverse ethnic groups residing within the City of Flint	Cultural capital Social capital	Human Capital - community members gain knowledge on different cultures and expose themselves to ethnic information
Unity March	Practice outreach & engagement	Residents address problematic issues that persist in the community and define new opportunities to implement positive change	Social capital Political capital	Human Capital, Financial capital Social Capital– connecting neighborhoods

Project outcomes

- ♦ WOW Outreach engages in the critical activities that help communities define Community Development to solve problems, improve quality of life for residents, (re)create positive social interaction, oppose negative development, create economic vitality and create local opportunities (Green & Haines, 36).
- ♦ Programming for underserved youth and community development has leveraged almost all of the assets.

WOW & the Flint Master Plan

- ♦ The City of Flint Master Plan is a blueprint for the future, guiding development and investment in the City for the next 20 years. It is a vision of what the community desires to become in the future.
- ♦ The Flint Master Plan seeks to increase North Flint residents' satisfaction with the quality of life in their neighborhoods by:
 - ♦ advocating for and supporting policy, systems and environment changes that provide equitable access to safe, healthy and vibrant communities.
- ♦ Goal to improve the overall quality of life and enrich the human experience in North Flint.

WOW and Flint Master Plan

- WOW Outreach is committed to the same priority through offering services in which Youth are provided support and opportunities to invest in their human capital.
- WOW Outreach is also aligned with the guiding principles of Adapting to Change, Quality of Life & Youth listed in the City of Flint Master Plan summary.



Empowering Residents, Preventing Violence

- ♦ WOW Outreach generates constructive conversation around difficult topics, ignites action and collaboration among people and communities, and most importantly gives hope to youth and families living in historically disinvested neighborhoods.

Creating opportunities for Entrepreneurial Development in Flint

- ♦ At the center of programming for undeserved youth are residents of the community that have gifts and skills
- ♦ “Flint’s neighborhoods need community anchors,” and “quality of life is key to keeping our youth here.”

Relationship to Entrepreneurship

Alleviates violence and minimizes crime in neighborhoods

Ensure appropriateness of individual violence free lifestyles plans and referrals to community resources.

The relationship continues to grow as we develop programming to ensure youth and community are engaged to the protective factors necessary for resiliency.

Conclusions

- ♦ CCF is built on a web of relationships that exist within any given community that allows people to succeed or advance through associating together.
- ♦ The commitment by WOW Outreach to achieving community-oriented change and improved quality of life enacts violence prevention through multiple areas of programming.
- ♦ This empowerment of youth can create conditions of entrepreneurial development in Flint.

Thank you

Questions?
