



Community's Involvement in Implementation of INSPIRE Strategies for Reducing Violence Against Children. A Case of Mbeya City

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Abstract

Community participation in preventing and responding to violence against children has recently become popular. Tanzania has realized it hence formulated a comprehensive National Plan of Action to end Violence Against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC) through which children protection committees were established in different districts including Mbeya city council. This study was carried out in Mbeya city in Mbeya region, specifically at Kalobe and Iyunga wards. It examined community's involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies for reducing violence against children. The study employed Probability sampling through simple random to obtain 100 respondents and non-probability sampling through purposive sampling technique to obtain the key informants. Data from primary sources were collected through survey, interview and focus group discussion methods using questionnaire and checklist tools, also data from secondary sources were collected using documentary review. Statistical Product for Service Solution (IBM-SPSS) version 20. computer software was used to facilitate data analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The study findings revealed that; community's involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies varies from one strategy to another, they involve more in education and life skills and less in response and support services and in implementation and enforcement of laws. The study concluded that, community's awareness and positive attitude on INSPIRE strategies influence their involvement. Therefore, the study recommended that; community's awareness should continue being raised so as to maintain positive attitude and enhance involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies.

Keywords: *Violence Against Children; INSPIRE Strategies; Community's Attitude; Community's Involvement*

1. Introduction

A meaningful social change cannot be achieved by involving only external experts in development process, regardless of whether development is taking place in developed or developing countries (Ako, 2017). The concept of participation started in 1970s as a concern expressed about giving voice to voiceless. In 1980s, there was a change from top-down to bottom-up as an acknowledgement of the value of local indigenous knowledge which gained momentum in 1990s when development partners started to demand as a mandatory for funding (Chambers, 1993). Recently, participation has gained increasing usage in academic literature and policy documents as a key element to attain sustainable development in African countries especially when used both as a means and as an end (Chirenje *et al.*, 2013; Bikuba and Kayunze, 2019).

Globally, community participation agenda in child protection is traced back to 1990s and 2000s when many works of international agencies on child protection solely focused on child labour, child trafficking, street children and sexual exploitation. But recently, it has become a fundamental element in child protection against exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect (Reuben *et al.*, 2022). Its importance has been recognized by different scholars. According to Fazzi (2019), Effective measures of protecting child well-being must include both formal and informal broader systems. Kostelny *et al.* (2020) also added that, Child violence prevention is possible through community participation which plays a crucial role in children protection and development. According to Plan International (2017) it facilitates identification of vulnerable children, mobilization of resources, development of the most appropriate solution and taking appropriate action to prevent and respond to Violence Against Children (VAC).

The global concern for children's welfare is reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) and INSPIRE strategies. The INSPIRE are seven strategies launched by WHO and other international organizations in 2016, it includes; Implementation and enforcement of laws; Norms and values; Safe environments; Parents and caregivers' support; Income and economic strengthening; Response and support services and Education and life skills with the aim to prevent and respond to violence against children from birth to 18 years by involving multi-stakeholders (WHO, 2020).

Tanzania is among the path-finder national governments committed to implement INSPIRE strategies to end violence against children. The country had a total population of 44.9 million in 2012 (URT, 2012) and approximately 50.6 million people by 2016, where children under the age of 18 constituted 50.1% of the entire population (NPA-VAWC 2017/18-2021/22). Violence against children is a threat in Tanzania. In 2018, a total of 6,376 child violence incidents were reported, 1648 more compared to the same period in 2017 (Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), 2018). In Mbeya region, 441 child rape incidents, more than 30 child neglect cases and 33% early pregnancies among girls aged 15-19 which exceeds the National average which is 21% were reported (LHRC, 2021).

Tanzania has realised the need of community participation on implementation of strategies for reducing violence against children. The government formulated Child Development Policy in 1996 which was reviewed in 2008 which emphasizes on involvement of different stakeholders in protecting children from different evils including violence, also a comprehensive National Plan of Action to end Violence Against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC 2017/2018-2021/2022) was developed which resulted to the establishment of women and children protection committees in different councils including Mbeya city. Despite the government efforts, still VAC is a problem in Tanzania and in Mbeya Region. It is from this point, the study was conducted in Mbeya region, Mbeya city to examine community's involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies for reducing violence against children.

According to Gwanyemba et al. (2016), community participation through CBCPMs has increased community's awareness about where to report violence cases, although their involvement in reporting is still low due to fear to be blamed. In another instance Ezekiel (2017) found that, there was low reporting rate of violent incidents to police due to fear and lack of awareness on children's rights. In addition, WHO (2020) found that, community's involvement in creation of safe environment is low in most of the countries which implement INSPIRE strategies as they agreed by only 30%. However, community's involvement in abolishing unfavourable norms and values which perpetrate violence against children was moderate. Furthermore, Reuben et al. (2022) revealed an increase in community's involvement in implementation of all strategies under INSPIRE which is a result of the increased level of awareness on the strategies.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mbeya city, Mbeya region. Mbeya was selected because it is among the regions and districts which experience high rate of child violence incidents (LHRC, 2018: 2021). It is also among the selected the areas which children protection committees were established so as to enhance community participation in children protection (NPA-VAWC 2017/18-2021/22). Mbeya city had a total population of 385,279 people, in which 202,659 were females and 182,620 were males. Among those 169,908 were children. (URT,2012).

2.2 Research Design and Approach

The study employed cross-sectional research design to obtain data from both community members and key informants including; WEOs, CDOs, SWOs, WECs and police officer in police gender and children desk. Data were collected once from both community members and the key informants, then organized, analysed and reported. The design was chosen because it allowed collection of data from different groups in one point at a time, gave a room to make comparison and determined the relationship between variables in time and cost efficiency, with a greater degree of accuracy and precision as well as quick results.

The study also adopted a mixed research methods approach in which con-current mixed approach was used where qualitative and quantitative data were collected separately and combined during data processing. In addition, the approach employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods which included survey, key informant interview and focus group discussion. This was done so as to allow triangulation of information. Further, descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data.

2.3 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling procedures. In probability sampling, multistage sampling technique was employed to select Mbeya region, then Mbeya city from which Iyunga and Kalobe wards were chosen as representatives. On the other hand, non-probability sampling using purposive sampling technique was employed to obtain 9 key informants including; 2 WEOs, 2 CDOs, 2 SWOs, 2 NGOs staff and 1 police officer in police gender and children desk. The sample size of the study were 100 respondents estimated by using Yamane (1967) formula for known population.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n= is the sample size, N= is the total adults' population in Mbeya city which was 215,371 and e= 10% (0.1) allowable error at 90% confidence level.

2.4 Data Collection Methods and Tools

The study employed survey, key informant interview (KII) and focus group discussion to obtain data from primary sources and documentary review method to obtain data from secondary sources. Questionnaire was used as a tool for household survey and checklist for key informant interview and focus group discussion.

2.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics through computation of frequencies and percentages was used to analyse demographic characteristics of the respondents and community's involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies. Further, Content Analysis was used for qualitative data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The findings in table 1. indicate that, out of 100 surveyed respondents, more than a half (53.0%) were males, in which more than three-quarter (79.0%) aged below 50 years, with very few (3.0%) aged above 70 years. The study findings in table 1 also reveal that majority of the respondents (41.0%) had primary education, with very few (6.0%) having non-formal education. This implies that, more than a half of the respondents (53.0%) had at least secondary education.

However, the findings in table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents (47.0%) were married, with very few (6.0%) separated. The findings further indicate that, more than one-third (37.0%) of the respondents were entrepreneurs, with very few (3.0%) engaged in other occupations, including tailoring and driving.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (n=100)

Variable/ Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	53	53.0
Male		
Female	47	47.0
Age (in Years)	25	25.0
20-29		
30-39	28	28.0
40-49	26	26.0
50-59	10	10.0
60-69	8	8.0
70+	3	3.0
Education Level	6	6.0
Adult Education		

Primary education	41	41.0
Secondary education	28	28.0
Tertiary education	25	25.0
Marital Status	39	39.0
Single		
Married	47	47.0
Separated	3	3.0
Widow/widower	11	11.0
Occupation	28	28.0
Peasants		
Civil servants	15	15.0
Businessmen/women	10	10.0
Entrepreneurs	37	37.0
Livestock keepers	7	7.0
Other (tailor, driver)	3	3.0

3.2 Community's Involvement in Implementation of INSPIRE Strategies Results

The study examined community's involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies in the study area. The findings in Table 2 indicate that, more than 50% of the respondents were involved in implementation of Education and life skills (87%), Parents and care-givers support (83%), Income and economic strengthening (85%), Norms and values (80%) and Creation of safe environment (68%). On the other hand, community members involve less in Implementation and enforcement of laws (47%) and in Response and support services (39%).

3.2.1 Implementation and Enforcement of Laws

The findings in Table 2 indicates that, less than a half (47%) of the respondents are involved in implementation and enforcement of relevant laws for reducing violence against children. Community members participate less in reporting, exposing perpetrators and in case management. In addition, Majority of the respondents ever reported child violence incidents to the wards and mtaa's offices with very few to social welfare offices and police station. Also, few respondents reported to involve in case management at lower levels including; family, mtaa and ward with very few at police and court level. The stated reasons for less involvement were fear, mistrust and shame.

3.2.2 Norms and Values

The findings in Table 2 reveals that, majority of the respondents (80%) are involved in abolishing unfavourable norms and values which perpetuate violence against children. They pointed out that, culture of silence (not talking openly to children), normalizing violent acts and unacceptable household sleeping pattern such as combining children and visitors' rooms were among unfavourable norms which are not practiced.

3.2.3 Safe Environment

The findings in Table 2 reveal that, more than a half (68%) of the total respondents are involved in creating safe environment. They involve in creating safe environment by identifying risk prone to child violence. Majority of the respondents identified old and unfinished buildings, along rivers and bushes as the most risk areas in both wards.

3.2.4 Parents’ and Care-Givers’ Support

The findings in Table 2 reveals that, more than three quarter (83%) of the respondents are involved in implementation of parents and care givers’ support strategy for reducing violence against children. Community members pointed out that, they involve in escorting children to school, providing basic needs and building close relationship so as to easy note in case of any changes.

3.2.5 Income and Economic Strengthening

The findings in Table 2 indicates that, more that three-quarter (85%) of the respondents were involved in implementation of Income and economic strengthening strategy. Majority pointed out that, they are engaged in Village Community Banks (VICOBA) from which they save to get loans and profit which in turn help them to get capital to invested in income generating activities from which the income earned and profit obtained is used to get basic necessities for them and their children. Moreover, poor families are economically supported by Non-Governmental Organizations working in the wards, including; ADP-Mbozi, also, very few get support from TASAF.

3.2.6 Response and Support Services

The findings in Table 2 indicates that, less than a half (39%) of the respondents were involved in implementation of response and support services strategy. The respondents who ever sought help and support services pointed out that, they sought help and support services in healthcare facilities than in police station and social welfare offices.

3.2.7 Education and Life Skills

The findings in Table 2 indicates that, majority of the respondents (87%) were involved in implementation of education and life skills strategy with very few (13%) never. The respondents pointed out some issues which they were educated on, including; types of violence and violent acts, prevention, disclosure and support services. In addition, very few respondents ever educated on all issues. Education is provided by social welfare officers and community development officers in collaboration with ADP-Mbozi and SETA Non-governmental organizations working in the wards.

Table 2. Community’s involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies (n=100)

S/N	Practices	Yes	No
1	Implementation and enforcement of laws	47(47.0%)	53(53.0%)
2	Norms and values	80(80.0%)	20(20.0%)
3	Safe environment	68(68.0%)	32(32.0%)
4	Parents’ and care-givers’ support	83(83.0%)	17 (17.0%)
5	Income and economic strengthening	85(85.0%)	15(15.0%)
6	Response and support services	39(39.0%)	61(61.0%)
7	Education and life skills	87(87.0%)	13(13.0%)

Source: Field data (2022).

During KII, the participants quoted that;

‘... We provide education and life skills to parents, care-givers and children themselves so as to build their capacities so that they can be able to report and take relevant actions whenever child violence incidents occur. The frequency of reporting keeps on increasing day to day. It is different from the way it was before, so there is improvement...’ (KII participant, March. 2022).

Furthermore, focus group discussion was conducted with some members of Women and Children Protection Committee who were non-key informants. The focus group consisted of seven (8) participants, including; 1 representative of ADP-Mbozi NGO, 1 representative of SETA NGO, 1 religious’ leader, 2youths, 1 representative of women, 1 representative of men and 1 teacher. In FGD, pairwise ranking method, a participatory tool was used to identify the strategy in which community members were mostly involved in its implementation.

Table 3 indicates that; Provision of education and life skills was the most strategy in which community members are involved in the study area. It was followed by income and economic strengthening, parents’ and care givers’ support, norms and values, safe environment. Community members involved less in implementation and enforcement of laws and leastin response and support services.

Table 3. Pair-wise ranking Method

S/N	Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Scores	Rank
1	Implementation and enforcement of laws	1	2	3	4	5	1	6	1	6
2	Norms and values		2	2	4	5	2	7	3	4
3	Safe environment			3	4	5	3	7	2	5
4	Parents’ and care-givers’ support				4	5	4	7	4	3
5	Income and economic strengthening					5	5	7	5	2
6	Response and support services						6	7	1	7
7	Education and life skills							7	5	1

Note:

1. Implementation and enforcement of laws
2. Norms and values
3. Safe environment
4. Parents’ and care-givers’ support
5. Income and economic strengthening
6. Response and support services
7. Education and life skills

During Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the participants quoted that;

‘...We have been provided education by our leaders and different experts including ADP-Mbozi and SETA staff to be close to children...We do so to protect them from violence and this has helped even the children to be free to report to us in case of any violent act...We also educate our fellows...’ (FGD participant at Kalobe ward, March. 2022).

This implies that, community members use education provided to them in building good relationship with their children so as to reduce fear to children totell them about any violent act against

them, it also enhances parents and care-givers to have close-supervision and follow-up to children, hence become easy to notice in case of any change.

During KII, another key informant also quoted that;

“...*Community members attend highly in seminars where we provide them knowledge and skills essential in dealing with VAC prevention. Parents and care-givers have now break-the ice, they play a great role in educating their children about violence and measures to be taken. Although, reporting is still low as some fear to report to higher levels and they are behind especially in making follow-up, they leave us at dilemma...*”(FGD Participant at Kalobe ward, March. 2022).

Discussion

The study findings are in line with Pundir *et al.*(2020) who revealed that, education and life-skills were mostly used and widely populated intervention, followed by income and economic strengthening. Similarly, Reuben *et al.* (2021), found that education and life -skills was mostly used in raising awareness to fight violence against children which was supported by majority of the respondents (96.2%), followed by parents and care-giver support through provision of advice by 82.1%. Moreover, the findings are supported by Lachman *et al.* (2021) who found that, income and economic strengthening were effective for reducing violence against children through addressing poverty and gender inequality and Reuben *et al.* (2022) who found that, community participation has increased community’s involvement in abolishing unfavourable cultural norms and values including use of leaves ‘*Masale*’ to ask for forgiveness by the family of the perpetrator to the family of the victim child and culture of silence on cases related to sexual violence in Rombo district. On the other hand, the findings are contrary from Abeid *et al.* (2015) whose findings revealed that, there was increased community’s involvement in reporting where the number of reported incidents increased by more than 50% with significant effect of the level of awareness which indicates moderate community participation in implementation and enforcement of laws strategy under INSPIRE. Further, the findings are in line with Gwanyemba *et al* (2016) who found that, parents, caregivers and children were able to report incidents of violence because of awareness about where to report, although a lot of incidents were not reported to authorities due to fear to be blamed. Most of the incidents were reported to village executive officers than to the police and other places.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Community’s involvement is essential in violence against children reduction through preventing and responding to violent acts. It is determined by the extent community members are engaged, their awareness and attitude towards strategies. It is a cornerstone in child violence prevention as it enhances reporting and increase commitment to parents, care-givers and other actors, it helps to abandon traditions and customs which perpetuate child violence, promotes transparency through which parents and care-givers build good relationship and ensure close supervision of children.

Therefore, the following are recommended;

Parents, care-givers and other actors should be actively engaged in children protection so as to enhance their involvement in implementation of INSPIRE strategies which are relevant for reducing violence against children. There should be collaboration among different actors as VAC prevention requires joint efforts of different stakeholders as it occurs at different levels from individual, family to society level. Hence the implementation of INSPIRE strategies should cut-across all levels to enhance effective child protection.

Social welfare officers, community development officers and NGOs staff who work at wards level should continue creating awareness to community members on INSPIRE strategies so as to ensure that they actively take part in implementation of those strategies.

In addition, Mbeya city council should continue creating conducive environment to NGOs found in the city which deal with children protection through implementation of INSPIRE strategies. This will encourage them to sustain the struggle to VAC.

Moreover, Women and children protection committees in ward level should be well capacitated by the district government, NGOs and other stakeholders so that they can effectively take part in implementing INSPIRE strategies and be able to educate and support other community members in protecting children.

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