



Kivulini Narrative Report – In partnership with HakiElimu



Engaging communities in promoting gender equity at the households level in order to decrease gender disparities in education!

Introduction

HakiElimu supported Kivulini with a total of Three Million Nine Hundred Fifty Two Thousand Tanzanian shillings for raising awareness amongst community leaders, teachers, parents and pupils on the importance of gender equity in relation to education in three wards of Pamba, Mbugani and Mirongo.

This narrative report summarises and discusses successes, lessons learned and challenges faced during implementation of activities for period of January 2003 – March 2003. The reported activities were **community dialogues, student debates, impromptu discussions using HakiElimu publications, and theatre performances.**

Organization Information

Kivulini is a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1999 based in Mwanza, Tanzania. In Kiswahili “Kivulini” literary means “in the shade” It implies a relaxed place where women, men and children feel supported. Kivulini is creating opportunities for community members to come together to talk, organize and work together to prevent gender violence in order for women to enjoy their rights as stipulated by international human rights conventions. The organization’s vision of creating violence free communities is closely linked with women’s empowerment.

Kivulini works in three wards: Pamba, Mbugani and Mirongo (areas of residential communities) in Mwanza City. Here, Kivulini systematically addresses the root causes of domestic violence by working closely over an extended period of time with a cross-section of community members and leaders to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women.

Kivulini chose to focus on violence against women--particularly domestic violence--because it is a cross cutting issue that affects women, men, families and the community at large. Kivulini does not just enter the community and talk of women’s rights, gender equity and equality and then urge for an end to domestic violence. Instead, Kivulini works *with* community members, slowly facilitating a process of change within the community. The efforts to prevent domestic violence are strategically planned along a five-phase process, which carefully recognizes where community members are in their own thinking and moves along with them to change attitudes and behaviours that are harmful to women. The five-phase process is important because Kivulini recognizes that changing behaviour based on deep-rooted cultural practices is a long-term process. Kivulini’s activities, therefore, work steadily to facilitate a process of change by raising awareness, building up support in the community, discussing viable alternatives to domestic violence and helping community members and institutions make and sustain meaningful change.

IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

1.0 Community dialogues

Specific Objective: To organize 14 community dialogues with cross session of the key target groups.



1.1 Workshop with community leaders

Kivulini facilitated a 3-day workshop for community leaders on domestic violence, gender issues, women rights and their specific links to education rights for girls.

Different participatory methods including dialogue, role-plays, group work and games were used.

The workshop benefited 17 community leaders and 2 ward education coordinators of Mirongo ward.

Success: Through the participatory approach, the leaders got a much deeper understanding of inequality between women and men. They realised that women have same rights to education although they are constrained because of social and cultural barriers. Discussing further they became creative, searching for solutions and interventions. The important point is how are they going to implement changes in their community! Kivulini will continue to monitor this with regular follow-ups through one to one support.

Session with DFID and EU Delegation



Nineteen community leaders participated in a session that discussed on the progress and impact of the poverty reduction strategy and related planning and budgeting processes with DFID and EU delegation (Fiona Shera – Economics Adviser, Isabella Cardinal – Civil Society Adviser and Axel Delamaisonneuve – Economist – European Commission). The discussion also availed opportunity for leaders to be informed about PEDEP and its implementation processes in the community. Although most of them admitted that there are some improvements, especially in the number of pupils enrolled, they were not aware of their role and not even the councillors have ever seen a school budget.

Lesson learned and challenges: Involvement of streets leaders is important in reaching people in the streets. However, street leaders lack resources that enable them to function fully. They are valued by those interested in collecting levies, but are not informed on the decisions on expenditure of those levies. If leaders at the community level do not have information about reforms, they cannot, for example, ask schools about accountability and press for improvements. The best school reform is, thus, only worth as much as is it is really implemented in the community. How to involve the community directly in school issues is still also a major challenge.

1.2 Community dialogue with grassroots members from the streets



Kivulini was able to ‘piggy-back’ 6 dialogues into street meetings called by street leaders to discuss the constraints of girls and women to accessing education. The meetings aimed to inform people of the rights of girls to education and also to encourage them to implement changes in their families.

Lessons learned:

- Participants (grassroots members) are very much used to leaders informing them in terms of directives or orders. They were not familiar with participatory methods that aimed engaging them in finding their experiences and opinion. In all occasions it took some time to get them motivated to speak. After a while the groups found their momentum and even when the meetings ended, discussions continued. They, in return, requested leaders to have a more participatory style to their meetings and they also requested to be involved in making decisions on matters concerning them.
- Piggy packing dialogues in street leaders meetings needs patience. There were times when we got the notice of the meeting in the last minute and had to change other activities. However, these meetings are very effective mechanism of involving and informing the community at the grassroots.

Challenge: How to motivate participants to take a more active role in community decisions and community meetings without threatening the position of the leaders and thus losing their support!

1.3 Community dialogues with parents, teachers and school committees

Kivulini conducted 3 meetings with school committees on equal education for boys and girls. In two schools it was easy to get permission from school head-teachers. In one school permission was required from the District Education Officer.

Lessons learned: There are huge differences about the awareness of problems girls are facing in school. Some schools are very interested in dealing adequately with these problems and have already introduced some improvements while other schools think that they have already enough other problems. However after the session most of them were aware of their role in improving the situation. As one teacher put it: *“Unequal education starts in small daily habits. For example I am always choosing girls for doing small duties like cleaning, dong message service etc. Overall this reduces the time girls are in classroom and their chance to keep up with the boys.”*

Student Debates

Specific objective: To facilitate 3 student debates (one per school) on gender and gender equity



So far Kivulini has organized student debates in 3 different secondary schools. For every debate we had at least one meeting with the debate club to raise awareness about gender inequality and to prepare the motion. Students proposed their own motions and in the end voted to select one of the following.

- *Education of girls is a waste of time and money (Mwanza Secondary School)*
- *Pregnant girls should be expelled from school (Thaqaafa and Pamba Secondary schools).*

Success

Students in all three schools proved to be very much motivated in participating in debates. School clubs have few members, but when Kivulini started debates, other students not belonging to the clubs also attended.

Girls from Mwanza Secondary School have shown an interest in forming girls group, where they can discuss their individual problems, gender issues and girl's rights aiming to support to each other. Kivulini will provide support.

Motion: To educate a girl / a women is a waste of money and time (Mwanza secondary school, 7.3.2003)

TRUE

- If women get higher education, she will work instead of looking after her children. With the money she is earning she will only buy useless things like perfumes and make-ups.
- Girls are mindless. They have an empty mind. I have the proof. A girl can stay till Form 4. Then a man is coming and says, "I love you". She will leave school 2 weeks before final exams and marry him.
- Girls do not know what they want to do after school. They have no focus. They are just passively attending classes.
- There is not enough money for good education for boys and girls. If girls are getting better education they use the money intended for boys. That's why they should stay at home.
- If God did not want any differences between girls and boys he would have created only one sex.

UNTRUE

- We are made by God and should work hand in hand. Everything else is just ignorance.
- Watch the role, which is played by women in this society. Women are raising children and give early education. Even the most successful man, he got his first education from women – his mother. If you educate women, you educate the whole family.
- I am coming from the village. If you look around, most of the working people are women. Men are sitting in clubs, are drinking and enjoying. If you educate women, you increase the knowledge of a working person and so you increase the economy of our country.
- If you are saying education of women is a waste of time and money, I feel so bad. It means women are useless. Are you saying your mother is useless??

Lesson learned: Successfully organizing student debates depends mainly on the motivation and cooperation of the headmaster and teachers. However students in general are extremely motivated and have already a lot of experience with gender inequality, although they are usually not aware of it.

Regional and District Education offices were very supportive towards Kivulini's efforts to involve students to debate on equal opportunities in education. This has also opened the way for future collaborations.

Challenges and way forward: We have realized that youth are much more motivated and therefore the key to implement changes in gender roles and behavior. However, Kivulini did not reach this target group before, so now plans are to continue working with them. Two more debates will be held in April for Thaqafa and Pamba while at Mwanza secondary the girls group, mentioned earlier, will be formed.

Impromptu Discussions

Specific objective: To incorporate learning materials relating to gender equity in education into 15 – 20 impromptu discussions with community members.

Four Kivulini community volunteers trained in conducting impromptu discussions engaged grassroots groups in discussing education by using HakiElimu publications and Kivulini leaflets. These informal sessions were conducted in three wards of Pamba, Mbugani and Mirongo. Sessions targeted gatherings of people congregating in different public places i.e. markets, schools, evening coffee sessions and second hand markets. Topics of discussion included the following: equal education opportunities for boys and girls, how to enable students to be creative, how can the voice of the marginalized be heard in education, how do you participate in your school committee, do you know how your school funds are spent, how can communities access information on education policy, registering STD I pupils, teacher, what have you learned from your students today and what has your child learned in school today? The publications were carefully distributed and logged.

Recurring themes and questions:

- Kuna haja gani kumsomesha mtoto wa kike elimu ya juu? Mtoto wa kike akisoma elimu ya juu atafaidisha kule anakoolewa.
- Kuna umuhimu gani wa mtoto wa kiume kufanya kazi za nyumbani kama vile kuteka maji, kupika? Kwa kufanya hivyo hamuoni mtoto wa kike anaweza kumdharau mtoto wa kiume?
- Kuna umuhimu gani kwa wazazi kufahamu matumizi ya fedha za shule?
- Ingawa elimu ni haki ya kila binadamu bado mila na desturi zinawakandamiza wanawake. Mwanamke anaandaliwa kuwa muolewaji, wakati mwanaume anaandaliwa kuwa mrithi.
- Watu wengi wamekuwa hawasomeshi watoto wao wa kike kwa sababu ni rahisi kudanganyika mfano; kuna bwana mmoja alimsomesha mtoto wake wa kike, alipofika darasa la 12 akapata mimba kwa hiyo hata mtihani hakuweza kufanya fedha zake zikawa zimepotea.

Key conclusions from the discussions:

Parents are forced to pay contributions while registering Std. I pupils.

Most head-teachers and school committees are not open to parents

The majority of participants did not understand that they also have rights to access policies. They believed only teachers are allowed.

Disparities in education are the results of traditional norms and culture.

Successes: A total of 2755 people participated. After receiving information they agreed that they would not allow themselves to be misled in school issues. Many participants requested further sessions to discuss sexual and gender issues.

Observation: The ratio between women and men attending indicates 1147:1047. This is a very small difference and is very encouraging. This means that during impromptu discussions, men are becoming aware of the sensitive issue of gender equity in relation to education.

Challenges: When we talk about gender issues we are touching people's culture, which is deep rooted. To mobilize communities to change their culture is a long process. Can Kivulini acquire enough resources to continue with this activity?

Lessons learned

- Most of the parents and students are not aware of the importance of gender equity in relation to education.
- Women need to be empowered to have confidence in decision-making
- We need regular mass education of gender equity in relation to education

Theatre Performances

Specific objective: To stage 9 performances of dramas depicting gender roles and gender inequalities

Community members skilled in theatre and traditional drumming performed shows based upon the Kivulini booklet, *Safe Families Safe Communities*. The drama performances educated the community on how domestic violence affects the community at large and, ultimately, challenged them to take action. Gender inequity in relation to education rights and the effects that domestic violence has on children's ability to access schooling were an integral part of the community theatre. Community members were encouraged to join the role-play and hold discussions about the issues raised. The players asked questions after every scene in a show of seven scenes.

From the discussions there was a general consensus that violence affects everybody in the community and that it comes in the different faces of physical, psychological (emotional), sexual and economical.



Issues that came up repeatedly that have significance in relation to gender and education were:

- When parents fight, especially when the mother is physically abused (beaten), children sympathize with the mother. Children suffer terrible psychological trauma and this affects children's academic performance in schools.
- Children learn from their parents that hitting is a best solution when one does a mistake. This builds fear among them; especially girls and they fail to be creative in classes or during manual work fearing that once they make mistakes they will be beaten.
- Hitting at homes (since was perpetrated by men) was also found to make girls subservient and perpetually worried, causing girls to perform poorly in class due to lack self-esteem and confidence.

Most people agreed that it is a community responsibility to prevent violence.

Lessons learned:

- Drama is among the best strategies to get the message across especially if one wants to get the audience actively involved.
- Unlike modern media (radio and TV), with live theatre you can vividly see the number in the audience and measure retention, perception and other comments instantly.

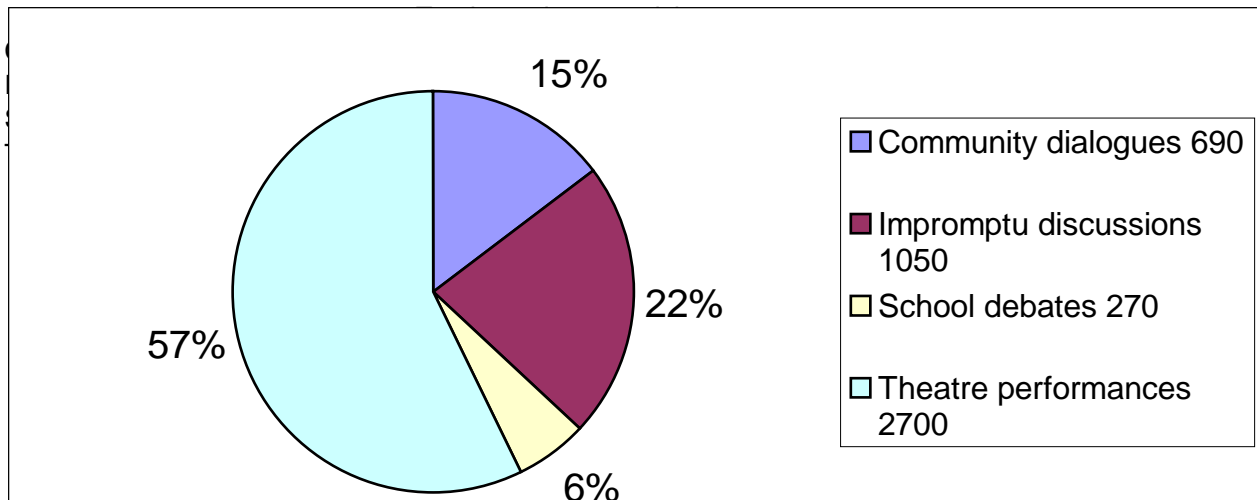
- The majority of the audience understands the importance of education to a girl child while they acknowledge that the practice/tendency of some parents to value girls more than boys is there.
- Relating and mainstreaming gender issues to domestic violence has received significant acceptance and support from the community.

Challenges

How to motivate more men to participate in theatre made dialogues? The majority of participants were women and children.

How to make the theatre group sustainable in terms of taking our agenda on board and continue educating the community about girl child education and domestic violence!

Summary of people reached in three wards of Mbugani, Mirongo and Pamba



Conclusions

1. In Mwanza girls continue to be less valued compared to boys because of strong cultural and traditional beliefs that dominate people's mindset.
2. Open forums that involve the community in dialogues are important mechanisms to inform and encourage action for change. Kivulini strongly believes that the media employed in these activities are very powerful in terms of getting messages across and aiding internalisation and retention. Kivulini will continue to use these strategies to inform and engage the community.
3. Broadening the scope of the problem of domestic violence to include gender disparities has made community leaders more aware of gender issues.
4. Networking and coalition building between national NGOs and grassroots NGOs/CBOs can narrow the gap that exists between those advocating for changes to national policies, budgets etc. and those working directly with the local communities to inform and encourage change. The majority of people at the community level are not aware of the details of national efforts to change policies because there are no mechanisms to pass information back and forth.
5. Gender inequity in education is another category of domestic violence, which should never be ignored. Domestic violence can also directly result in a child, often girls, performing poorly at school. Thus while it is important to look into national policies, it is equally important to look at the cause and effects at grassroots and to continue to work with the community to bridge the gaps.
6. Kivulini recognizes the significance of HakiElimu support that has enabled it to reach thousands of people at grassroots to make them aware and understand the importance of education to a girl child.