

Preventing Domestic Violence in Mwanza, Tanzania

a partnership of Kivulini Women's Rights Organisations and Raising Voices

Background

In July of 2000, Kivulini established a partnership with Raising Voices to prevent domestic violence in Mwanza. The project is guided by the Resource Guide and aims to work with a wide range of community members from the pilot area within Mwanza city to prevent domestic violence.

Partners

Kivulini is a registered nongovernmental organisation (NGO) established in 1999 to prevent violence against women and girls in Mwanza, Tanzania. Kivulini addresses the root causes of domestic violence by working closely with community members and leaders to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women.

In Kiswahili, Kivulini literally means 'in the shade or shelter'. It implies a safe place where women, men, and children feel supported. Kivulini creates opportunities for community members to come together to talk, organise, and work to prevent domestic violence. Its work is based on promoting international conventions such as CEDAW (signed and ratified by Tanzania) and pro-women national laws and by-laws. Kivulini has extensive roots within the community in Mwanza including a network of over 20 community-based groups. The organisation believes that creating violence-free communities involves empowerment of entire communities to promote women's rights.

Raising Voices' goal is to work in partnership with local organisations to assist them to mobilise their communities to prevent domestic violence. Raising Voices develops programmatic tools and works with partner organisations to build skills to implement holistic, integrated, and preventative programs that address domestic violence.

Goal

Inspire and support communities in Mwanza region to prevent domestic violence.

Objectives

- Mobilise communities in Mwanza to change the attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate domestic violence.
- Build the capacity of community leaders to understand the impact of violence against women and motivate them to initiate change within their own environments that uphold women's rights and priorities.
- Advocate for change within existing community structures to create an environment supportive of women's rights and priorities, particularly the right to safety.
- Improve women's socio-economic status through legal support, counselling, and life-skills training.

Population and Geographical Location

Mwanza is located in the northwestern part of Tanzania on the shores of Lake Victoria. It is a picturesque city with a complex coastline surrounded by steep hills and beautiful rock formations. It is the second largest city following Dar es Salaam. The project works in three wards of Mwanza city: Pamba, Mbugani, and Mirongo. The population estimate from the ward offices for year 2000 is 59,342 of which 55 percent were female 45 percent male. The wards are low-income, densely populated urban area with the majority of community members living in poverty.

Project Overview

Kivulini is the primary implementor of the work, with Raising Voices involved in program and technical support. The Project Coordinator is responsible for day-to-day project management, supervision, and support of staff. All activities in the project are organised under six key program departments: Capacity Building, Media/Learning Materials, Advocacy, Social Counselling and Legal Clinic, Community Awareness, and Economic Empowerment. The Project Coordinator, three program officers, and three support staff have been vested by the Board of Directors with the responsibility of day-to-day implementation.

Capacity Building

This department works to build the capacity of Kivulini's staff, community members, and strategically targeted professionals in the community to take action to prevent domestic violence. The program works to deepen conceptual understanding of domestic violence and uses a rights-based approach. In this way

the participants build practical skills and can go on to apply these concepts in their workplace or within the community.

Key achievements include:

- Forty community leaders, including Ward Executive Officers (WEO), street leaders, local police militia (popularly known as “Sungusungu”), and professionals from the WEO’s office participated in the Community Activism Course that focused on understanding ‘Domestic Violence in our Community’. They each developed an Action Plan to influence practice within their work environment. More than 50 percent of community leaders (as of 31 June 2002) are implementing their Action Plans and fill in Activity Reports. Activities implemented include organising street meetings, conducting home visits, reconciling partners, and making referrals. A total of 822 local community members were individually reached and participated in discussions on domestic violence through this mechanism.
- Fifteen religious leaders (both Muslims and Christians) participated in a workshop aimed at developing basic conceptual understanding about domestic violence, its causes, and its impact on women in the community they live in (CAC1). These leaders are also involved in discussions on domestic violence that are broadcast nation-wide on Star TV. They have also invited Kivulini staff to participate and present topics for discussion in their ongoing meetings.
- Ten community volunteers (CVs) attended a three-day workshop (CAC1) aimed at building their community organising skills. CVs are implementing their Action Plans and also fill in the Activity Reports. CVs reached 470 local community members. In another effort to select the remaining balance of 10 CVs, a five-day preparatory session was conducted.

Media/Learning Materials

This department works with the print and electronic media to promote discussion and public debate about domestic violence and to engage journalists and the media establishment in an analysis of how women are portrayed in the media. A variety of radio programs are currently aired on Mwanza-based Radio Africa that has a significant national coverage. The media team is also working to create a forum for prominent journalists and editors to discuss the portrayal of women and violence in the media.

14 journalists participated in a two-day seminar exploring their understanding of domestic violence, international conventions, and national laws. A media checklist has been developed to assist journalists analyse the stories they write about violence against women. The checklist is being widely shared among national journalists and journalism colleges for input and adoption.

This department has chosen to use the learning material designs suggested in the Resource Guide with contextual modification. A story booklet will soon be printed in Kiswahili with a smaller text translation in English. Five designs of murals have been painted on prominent buildings within Mwanza city to engage community members in a dialogue. Six other murals located at Mirongo and Mbugani wards are currently being drawn.

Social Counseling and Legal Clinic

An important component of Kivulini’s work is the establishment of a Social Counselling Center and a Legal Clinic. A trained counsellor is available on a daily basis at the centre for women experiencing domestic violence. Referrals are made to health care centres, the police, or social welfare offices and the counsellors often accompany clients to provide support and help them negotiate the system.

Women and men can also access the Legal Clinic if clients choose to pursue their cases in courts of law. The services are free, and Kivulini has a small fund to support extremely poor clients with hospital and court fees, or even food when necessary.

As of 30th July 2002, a total of 940 regular and new visits were recorded at the Centre for the year. 68 visitors came for basic information, while 449 received social counselling.

The Legal Clinic provided services to new and regular clients in a total of 433 visits to 161 clients, with matrimonial cases ranking highest, followed by inheritance/denial of properties, physical harassment, abandonment, and other domestic violence cases that affect children as well (e.g., rape, sodomy, mistreatment of domestic workers, etc.). The existence of the clinic is now well known within the community, and most clients learn about the service from word of mouth.

Advocacy

This department aims to influence local ward leaders, professionals, NGOs, and community members to take action to prevent domestic violence within their communities. In Tanzania, the Local Government

leaders are usually the first people to respond to family violence. Three preparatory sessions for Mbugani and Mirongo wards were held. A total of 42 leaders attended the first session, 51 attended the second session, and 20 attended the third session. These community leaders have established Policy Review Committees that have so far met several times to review by-laws that affect women and children within their streets.

The Advocacy department also connects with other national and international NGOs to share experiences and bridge the gap from grassroots to national policy level work.

Community Awareness

The Community Awareness department works with the community at the grassroots level to promote women's rights and prevent domestic violence. Specifically, the department works with groups of women and men who want to address the issue of domestic violence and work in their communities, with their neighbours, friends, and families, to create a climate that is receptive of women's rights, particularly their right to safety. There are now 20 groups in the communities with about 15 members in each group.

Twenty CVs are at the forefront of the effort and meet regularly with Kivulini staff during capacity building sessions about human rights, legal rights, women's rights, sexual and reproductive health, decision-making, and self-esteem. These groups play a key role in 'getting the word out' to other community members. They organise community dialogues, public events, video shows, impromptu discussions, community theatre, domestic violence watch groups, exhibitions, songs, and ngoma (traditional drumming and dancing) to create awareness about and action against domestic violence. CVs also act as resource persons and counsel, refer, or accompany women who need services. The CVs are highly motivated and are recognised as community resource persons who can be approached for help and advice.

Economic Empowerment

Violence against women is critically linked to women's financial dependence on their partners. This department works with women who access credit for income generating activities to enable them to develop basic business skills and life-skills. The aim is to empower women to more fully participate in developing income for their family in order to reduce dependency. Key achievements include:

- Training on basic business management skills benefited 263 women (majority are from 20 community action groups).
- Establishment of a small craft shop (within Kivulini office) to help women engaged in craftwork to market and sell their products.
- Women's groups are mobilised to participate in local and international trade fairs.
- One staff member has been trained on the use of internet to find markets for various products.

Documentation

A brief Activity Report is written after each activity conducted by staff, CVs or other partners. Each department compiles these reports every two weeks, and the Project Coordinator writes a project summary at the end of each quarter. A report that describes the implementation experience and identifies lessons learned is written at the end of each phase. This report is widely shared with key allies including community leaders of the three wards.

Implementation Time-frame

July 2000

- area of implementation identified
- proposal developed for phase 1
- funding not secured, so four staff worked on a voluntary basis

May 2001

- secured partial funding.

July 2001

- planned for Community Assessment phase
- staff capacity building

August 2001 to December 2001

- building relationships with community leaders and members
- conducting Community Needs Assessment

January 2002

- analysing research findings
- writing reports
- community events to share findings and develop responses
- project officially launched by community leaders (Resident Magistrate of Mwanza)
- secured additional funding

January 2002 to July 2002

- Implementing Raising Awareness phase activities through the six departments
- Identifying and building capacity of CVs and resource persons
- Developing action plans and establishing collaborations with selected resource persons

Lessons Learned

1. Organisations need to have an in depth understanding of the cultural norms and religious practices before embarking on advocating for women's rights and promoting gender equity and equality within the community. Only when the religious and cultural context is understood, can organisations develop programs that speak to the community. In this way, we must be seen as working within the culture and the faiths and to be striving to strengthen our community, not to destroy it. This requires considerable diplomacy and care when raising sensitive issues.
2. Working with religious leaders could be easier and more effective by approaching the issue of domestic violence through the issue of family harmony or women's health. Many leaders are more willing to discuss issues related to the well-being and quality of family life rather than women's rights. Therefore, it can be useful to approach women's rights through the 'back door' of another related yet less controversial issue. However, we must remain vigilant against diminishing our core message.
3. Talking about domestic violence is challenging. Those of us who raise issues about gender equity and equality are often the targets of insults and isolation, or we are seen as defectors from the culture and faith. Women and men addressing domestic violence within the community need courage, boldness, and support from others.
4. Many of our cultural and religious practices can be appropriated to sanction inequality of power and support violence against women. We need to engage religious and local leaders to re-examine the Holy books and identify specific and related references. We need to illustrate how peaceful and equitable conflict resolution are encouraged by holy texts which advocate for laws or religious practices that protect the rights of both women and men. It is important to emphasise that culture and religions revere human life and promote the value of each human being, regardless of race or sex.
5. Broadening the scope of the problem by formulating it as the community's problem can mean that a wide range of people may get involved in solving the problem.
6. Securing adequate funding for a long-term project is a challenge and requires patience and resourcefulness.
7. In the struggle for promoting women's rights, men, regardless of their standing in society or religious affiliation, need to be partners to affect change. If we can include men who are courageous enough to stand against practices that hurt women and who are willing to stop ignoring the violence of their peers and friends, we can create effective and sustainable change that benefits us all.

Maimuna Kanyamala, Coordinator; Cunegunda Ngereja, Accountant/Administrator; Barnabas Solo, Program Officer, Capacity Building; Jimmy Luhende, Advocacy Officer, Media/Learning Materials; Yusta Ntibashima, Program Officer, Community Awareness; Kulwa A. Said, Assistant Program Officer, Community Awareness; Justina Mitti, Assistant Program Officer, Economic Empowerment; Anna Chambo, Assistant Legal Officer/Counselor; and Edmund Novaita, Part-time Lawyer.

Kivulini
PO Box 11348
Mwanza, Tanzania
Tel/Fax: 255 (0)28 2500961
Mobile: 255 0744 367484
email: admin@kivulini.org