



KIVULINI WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATION

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE LAKE ZONE, TANZANIA:

Prevalence and Responses of Local Government Authorities

Authors

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This study design was informed by the resources and tools used in 2005 study by the World Health Organisation (Garcia-Moreno et al) and guidance was provided from Usha George, Dean of Community Services, University of Ryerson, Ontario, Canada. Kellie Gray provided statistical analysis.

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Introduction

The government of Tanzania has taken important steps towards upholding gender equality. This study seeks to gain an understanding of the extent to which local government authorities (including street/village leaders, ward tribunals and ward executive officers) are applying existing policy and legal initiatives to address domestic violence (DV) within their communities.

Tools

Questionnaires were adapted from the WHO Violence Against Women Instrument and the Demographic Health Survey DV Module (Garcia-Moreno et al, 2005; Kishor & Johnson, 2004) to suit the needs of this study. The questionnaires were originally written in English and were translated by a team into Kiswahili. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure its validity.

Location

The catchment area for this study included four of the Lake Victoria regions; namely, Mwanza, Mara, Kagera and Shinyanga, as well as the region of Singida.

Limitations

It is likely that the rates of domestic violence (DV) are higher than that represented in this study. Although care was taken to ensure that confidentiality and safety were promoted throughout the survey, it is possible that respondents may have chosen not to disclose experiences of abuse. It is also possible that some respondents did not realise that a particular treatment is actually properly classified as abuse.

Summary of Key Findings

1. Prevalence of Violence Higher than Previously Studied

- The prevalence of violence against women found was higher than the rates obtained by the 2005 WHO study (Garcia-Moreno et al); it is possible that the rates of intimate partner violence are dependent on geographic location in Tanzania
- Of the women surveyed, 85% had experienced some form of *psychological violence*, 56% had also experienced some form of *physical violence* and 48% had experienced *sexual violence*
- Women from rural districts were significantly more likely to experience abuse than those from urban districts; 66% of women in rural districts had experienced some form of sexual or physical abuse while 57% of women in urban districts reported experiencing either form of abuse

2. Domestic Violence Seen as Acceptable by Women and Street/Village Leaders

- The view that women “deserve to be beaten” seems to be a typical and embedded part of the thinking among women and street/village leaders
- Of the women surveyed 20-54% of women believed physical abuse is an acceptable part of the culture
- Of street/village leaders surveyed, 12-38% said physical abuse is an acceptable part of the culture

3. Family and Friends Play Key Support Role while Other Services are under-used

- Family and friends play a large role in supporting women experiencing DV, about 70% of women surveyed reported seeking help from parents and other family members in situations of abuse
- Far fewer women reported turning to local government leaders for support; about 23% of those surveyed reported having sought help from local leaders
- Only about 2-6% of women surveyed reported turning to the police, health professionals, counselors, or the social welfare office for support
- NGOs and community based organisations are grossly underused by women possibly because of negative view of these groups by community

4. Services of Local Government Leaders Under-Used

- About 80% of women experiencing DV did not access local government leaders for support
- The under-use of local government leaders in cases of abuse seem to be due to women's fear of negative consequences, low level of comfort in approaching local leaders about DV and lack of perceived positive outcome
- DV needs to be very severe for women to approach local government leaders

5. Women Face Barriers to Accessing Local Government Leaders

- Fees charged by local government leaders for services seem to be impeding women from seeking their help
- Misconceptions exist among women in communities surveyed as to whether fees for service are actually charged
- About 15% of street/village leaders surveyed stated that they "don't listen to women" who seek their assistance for DV, while 30% of women surveyed reported that their street/village leaders do not provide them with service

6. No Standardized Practices Exist regarding Fees for Services

- It remains up to local government leaders to decide whether to charge fees for their services and if so, how much to charge
- Many local government leaders reported charging fees for service; while fees vary, they generally fall within the 1000-3500 Tsh range which women seeking support cannot afford
- A lack of standardised practice regarding fees creates opportunities for local government leaders to exploit vulnerabilities and weaknesses of women seeking assistance
- In rural areas where levels of violence tend to be the highest, local government leaders were found to be more likely to charge fees

7. Lack of Quality Training in Women's Rights and Legal issues limits local government leaders' ability to respond to DV

- **Legal Issues** - Many local government leaders were unable to address legal issues; only 17% reported having provided legal counsel to women. Only 10% of the street/village leaders surveyed who had attended any kind of training were taught about legal issues
- **Lack of Government Training** - Only 28% of local government leaders surveyed received formal training by any institution about women's rights, and only 16% surveyed received training from the government. Only a small portion of street/village leaders indicated that they were satisfied with the current level of support received by the government
- **Regional Variation** - Training of local government leaders varied by region; different regions tend to focus on different issues as such there is an inconsistency in the level and type of training received

- **Potential for Training to Improve DV statistics** - Local government leaders who had received training were generally more likely to respond to DV complaints and slightly less likely to suggest punishing a woman who reports abuse

Key Recommendations

- **THE TANZANIAN GOVERNMENT:**
 - Clarify the role of local government leaders in supporting women who experience DV so that leaders across all regions have a clear understanding of the obligations and duties as government representatives
 - Implement regulations regarding fees for services assisting women or consider paying local government leaders so that service in all areas is accessible to all; women should not have to pay for such services
 - Establish mandatory, standardised training for local government leaders across regions on DV and women's rights, counseling skills and legal issues in order to increase the effectiveness of the assistance provided by local government leaders
- **EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY:**
 - Civil Society Organisations and local government agencies should educate community members about DV so that women who experience abuse can access a sensitized network of support.
 - Civil Society Organisations and local government authorities should assist in normalizing help-seeking behaviors of women in the community
- **FUTURE RESEARCH:**
 - Additional information should be gathered by the government and/or civil society organisations around why women do not feel comfortable approaching local government leaders; results could be used to ensure that services are more accessible to women

Conclusion

Tanzania has made some positive responses to the issues of gender equality. The Tanzanian government has signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). By signing this, the Tanzanian government is required to report the steps taken to protect women's rights. In addition, the government has heard the outcries of the public and civil society organisations regarding the need to review, change and repeal some of the outdated and unfavourable laws impeding the rights of women and girls. However, our results show that far more still needs to be done, particularly in the areas of education for local government leaders and the public in general.