

## ENHANCING CHILD PARTICIPATION IN MBEYA, IRINGA and NJOMBE

### INTRODUCTION

The involvement of children in decision making and in matters that affect them is a growing realization in Tanzania following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991. In response to its commitments to the human rights of children that came with ratification of the CRC in 1996 the Government of Tanzania developed a Child Development Policy that was later reviewed and revised in 2008. This policy provides for the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation. Further to this, in 2002 the Government realized the need to involve children in decision making and matters that affect them in a more consistent and meaningful way after the involvement of children in the UN Special Session on Children (UNGASS) and therefore suggested the creation of a permanent representative body of children in Tanzania.

Through the initiation of NGOs, in consultation with the children who participated in the Special Session, the Junior Council structure was created. Since its creation, it has developed into the Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania (JCURT), also known as Baraza la Watoto under the leadership of the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC). The aim of the Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania (JCURT) is to establish forums at District, Regional and National levels through which the elected representatives of children will be able to contribute to discussions and decisions on issues affecting them. The Community Development Officers, Local Government Officials, NGO's working for and with children are expected to establish, strengthen and support the Children's Councils within their areas. The importance of establishing the Children's Councils is to enhance child participation in Tanzania so as to advocate children's rights where the society will respect listen and engage children in various development planning activities.

The expectations are for each and every village, ward, district and region in Tanzania to have children councils but so far, JCURT and its activities is yet to be known to most of the Tanzanians.

## **CHILD PARTICIPATION BASELINE SURVEY IN MBEYA, IRINGA and NJOMBE**

In responding to this, CDF in collaboration with the UNICEF and Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC) conducted a child participation baseline study that sought to assess the existing structures and levels of child participation, as well as awareness and potential good practices in the Mbeya Rural, Mbarali, Njombe Rural, Makete, Iringa Rural and Mufindi, and provide relevant information for the establishment of the children's councils as well as for local government officials responsible for facilitating child participation..

### **Objective of the Study**

In late 2013, UNICEF entered into a Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Children's Dignity Forum (CDF) to provide support to the establishment and/or strengthening of JCURT structures in the UNICEF focus regions of Mbeya, Iringa and Njombe. As an important first step in this process, a baseline of the enabling environment and perceptions with regards to child participation will be conducted to provide an initial situation analysis in areas where UNICEF and CDF will be working. The study will be implemented by CDF as part of the PCA with UNICEF. Given this background, the general objective of the study is to conduct child participation baseline study in Mbeya, Iringa and Njombe with the aim of screening all child participation structures in the six selected districts (e.g. type of structures, mandate, support needed and linkages with the JCURT) to inform policy makers and future programming.

### **Specific objectives**

Specifically, the study aims:

- i.** To conduct child participation situational analysis and establish the state of child participation in Mbeya, Iringa and Njombe.
- ii.** To establish a baseline on existing child participation structures, awareness and best practices in the six focus districts of Mbeya Rural, Mbarali, Njombe Rural,

Makete, Iringa Rural and Mufindi, to be used as the basis for measuring the progress of support from CDF and UNICEF over the duration of the PCA.

- iii. To inform and advocate with policy makers to enhance child participation in UNICEF programming areas.
- iv. To provide baseline information for the establishment of the children councils in Mbeya, Iringa and Njombe.
- v. To provide baselines information for the LGA's and CSO official capacity building on child participation.

### **Target Group**

The target audiences of the study findings are children, Central and Local Government, CDF, UNICEF, and other stakeholders involved in the areas of child participation as described below.

- JCURT members, children's councils members, children outside JCURT/ children's councils and all other categories of children- its empowerment and attainment of the relevant information is very potential as it will add children relevant perspective and experience that will be considered in decision making structures and forums.
- MCDGC and MoHSW-potential as ministries with mandate and responsibilities in addressing children issues, MCDGC the potential guardian of the JCURT.
- Social Welfare Officers and Community Development Officers, CSOs and NGOs working on child participation
  - potential in providing logistics supports i.e facilitating meetings of the children councils, providing meetings venue, support in terms of funding by linking up the children councils with potential supporters
- Guardians of the JCURT and Children's Councils- This includes parents, teachers, LGA's officials and NGO's officials working with Children councils, the involvement of these groups is essential feature of children council development as they will assists in providing guidance, advise and mentorship during the process of the formation of children councils as well as functioning and sustainability. Most important is the permission of the children to attend CC's meetings.

- Children Agenda (CA) members, the engagements of CDF (child participation task force leader) and children agenda members with the experience on child participation create conducive environment that promotes and easier follow up actions on child participation in Tanzania.

### **Scope and focus**

The study is focused on collecting information on the current situation including current perceptions and structures existing as of the time of the study. Information to be collected includes the following:

- i) Basic knowledge on child participation amongst the interviewed community members<sup>1</sup>.
    - Understanding of the Law (LCA 2009) , Child Development Policy (2008), CRC, ARCRWC
    - Country Strategies, Plans, Guidelines and Tools on Child Participation.
  - ii) Mapping of Child Participation structures within the focused districts
    - Presence of the JCURT at all levels, School baraza, clubs, committees.
    - For the existing ones examine the nature and type of child participation i.e child led initiatives, adult led initiatives, or both etc
    - Leadership structure, election, number of children, modalities of inclusion, means by which issues of gender and vulnerability are addressed.
    - Linkages/ networking with other structures including LGAs, NGO's, CBO's
    - Best practices and challenges experienced amongst existing child participation stakeholders.
  - iii) Assessment of the capacities of existing structures (Institution level)
    - Technical capacities – understanding of the existing documents and tools regarding child participation in Tanzania i.e Child Participation Action Plan, Child Participation Toolkit, Guidelines for the Establishment of the JCURT.
-

- Resources for Child Participation/ Finances for the activities
- Engagement of the children in LGA activities/ what decisions within the LGA's powers affect children.
- Case studies of outcomes of support to child participation
- Community engagement and support – perception on child participation i.e parents and members of the community.

Thus, after the results obtained from the Child Participation baseline study there was a need of conducting capacity building workshops for LGA's officials and CSO's representatives on how to establish, facilitate, coordinate and strengthening children councils with special focus on Child Rights and Participation in their areas of jurisdiction and this was done by CDF.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS TO TRAINERS OF TRAINEE (ToT) IN MBEYA, IRINGA and NJOMBE (MIN)**

In **June - July, 2014** CDF conducted a two days capacity building workshop in each district for 126 Local Government Authority officials and Civil Society Organizations on establishment of the Junior Councils to enhance Child Participation. The six districts included; Njombe, Makete, Mbeya, Mbarali, Mufindi and Iringa. Category of people who received the trainings were the Ward Executive Officers, Ward Education Officers, Ward Community Development Officers, District Community Development Officers, Social Welfare Officers, District Education Officers, Non-Government Organizations, Community Based Organizations, Journalist and PO's. During the workshop, different topics were covered which included; Rights and responsibilities of Children, 2009 The Law of the Child Act, 2008 Child Development Policy, Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC), Africa Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Children (ACRWC), Child Participation /National Child Participation Toolkit, Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania establishment guidelines, Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania Constitution, What is Children Council, Function and Importance of the Children Council, Stakeholders responsibilities in the formation of the Children Council, How to conduct and manage Children Council elections at all levels, How to

set up and strengthening Children Councils, Discussing child participation with children, Agreeing on the roles and responsibilities of the Children Council, Setting Children Council rules, Game on inclusive and fair elections, Game on leadership, Making decisions as a group and Learning about child rights.

Moreover, to make the participants understand and implement what they have been trained more effectively, different training materials were distributed which included; National Guidelines on how to establish children councils at village, ward, district and regional level, National Child Participation Toolkits- Swahili Version, Constitution of the JCURT, Simplified copies of the 2009 LCA, CRC & ACRWC and Why invest in children booklets.

**Challenges encountered:**

- Inadequate training and facilitation materials comparing to the demands of the same, only few copies of the child participation toolkit, guidelines for the establishment of the Children councils and the constitution of the JCURT were available to trainees. To resolve this, a number of important tools were photocopied to cover the existed demands.
- Distance from village to village and ward to ward pose a serious challenge as well as increase the transport cost.
- Poor commitment of some of the CDO's, SWO's , WEO's and DEO's as well as lack of awareness in few CDO's and SWO's on their mandate, roles and responsibilities on children rights / Poor fulfilment of their duties and responsibilities. These were resolved by informing the responsible officers on their duties and responsibilities particularly on the establishment and facilitation of the children councils.
- Hunting for per diems by LGA's officials, per diems and allowances made the work difficult as each and every proposal was given monetary cost implications; even where money was not necessary like assembling children in street, money was mentioned as setbacks. To resolve this, all participants of the training were

assured that they will be reimbursed their transport cost and given their daily allowance after the trainings. On top of this each training sessions has a special sessions to discuss activities that can be conducted without necessarily having the monetary implications.

## **Recommendations**

- Community mobilization and engagement to address cultural sensitivity- the use of role models in the community to promote child participation from the family settings to the community settings i.e. strong advocacy through campaigns and public meeting is needed on the importance of child participation.
- Strengthening children councils through regularly capacity development and link the councils with the existing child protection structures as well as other initiatives that supports children development in the districts.
- Child participation materials have to be printed and disseminated to the local authorities with the orientation to the responsible officers who will be using the materials. The materials referred here includes: National Child Participation Toolkit – Swahili Version, Guidelines for the establishment of children councils at all levels, simplified copies of the Law of the Child Act 2009 , Convention on the Rights of a Child and Africa Charter on the Welfare and Rights of a Child. It is further recommended that a child friendly version simple book on child participation right must be produced covers a child rights to participate, children councils elections, importance of children councils and its functions.
- Exchange visit study is very important for the LGA's officials from the newly established councils to visit other part of the country where there are well established children councils for the learning purposes.

## Way Forward

- Children's Councils members from 18 selected wards are able to raise key issues of children in LGA forums, Children Agenda meetings and other national forums.
- Children council's members from 18 wards councils participated in the Children Agenda Quarterly meeting and discussing their wards status on the top ten investment areas.
- Community mobilization to address culture sensitivity- the use of role models.
- Advocating for children participation in village meetings.
- Strengthening children councils

After the trainings the participants were to establish children councils in their areas of jurisdiction starting from the village to ward levels by following the guidelines and constitutions for establishment of the junior councils that they were given. Establishment of the junior councils and elections were done and reported. During the elections different challenges came up these included;

- Inadequate participation of the children with special needs and children outside the school in the election process of the children councils. Special measures were taken by ward executive officers and ward education officers in Mbarali and Mufindi to make sure that all children participated in the election and exercise the right to vote and being voted to the councils.
- Insufficient community awareness on children rights whereby few parents resisted to give permission children to participate in election. Child labour in farms, homes makes difficult children to get permission to participate in children meetings.
- Lack of awareness on children rights among children, to resolve this, the first session with the children councils were to introduce child rights and



responsibilities, laws and policies governing children rights and international conventions on the rights of a child.

After the establishment of the junior councils, the next trainings were on assessing how the councils were formed and strengthening the established junior councils.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP TO 504 ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE WARD JUNIOR COUNCIL**

In **September - October, 2014** CDF conducted capacity building workshops for 504 elected children representatives on management of the councils in 18 wards namely; Nduli Kising'a, Mseke, Luhota, Utengule Usongwe, Inyala, Swaya, Matembwe, Mtwango, Igongolo, Iwawa, Lupalilo, Tandala, Imalilosongwe, Ubaruku, Rujewa, Igombavanu, Rungemba and Sao Hill.

During the workshop of two days in each ward, children council representatives were trained on; Rights and Responsibilities of a child, what is children councils and why children councils?, the function and the importance of the children councils, how to set up or strengthen a children's council?, the roles of the children's councils, responsibilities of the council's members to the council, setting children council's rules and regulations, 2009 Law of the child, 2008 Child Development Policy, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a child, Convention on the Rights of a child, 10 Investments Areas in Children and on how to prepare the work plans.

Training materials distributed included: Law of the Child Act 2009 in a simple language 30 Copies, Declaration of the Child rights 30 Copies, Training notes 2 copies and the children council's secretary was given a folder for keeping documents and reports 1pc.

### **Challenges encountered**

- The election was not free and fair in some villages and wards, a number of election irregularities were noted. Few elected council leaders were not aware if they were elected. To resolve this, community leaders agreed to call the elections

again and the elected leaders were trained on their roles and responsibilities in the children councils.

- Inadequate participation of the children with special needs and children outside the school system in children councils since most of the elections were conducted in schools. In resolving this, the ward executives officers, community development officers and ward education officers agreed to work on the inclusion of the children with special needs and those outside the school in the councils so as they can be included in the councils.
- In some wards for instance Luhota and Inyala wards, children councils were not established at the village level, in resolving this, the ward executive officers, community development officers and ward education officers in Luhota and Inyala agreed to call for the election and establish children council at the village levels.
- Distance from villages to ward offices pose a serious challenge for children to attend meetings on time as well as the increase the transport cost. To resolve this, number of guardians escorting children to ward meetings were cut down and allow more children to participate and escorted with few guardians. On top of that, cars were hired to pick children from all the centres to one centre.

## **Recommendations**

- Special priority must be given to the children with special needs as they are forgotten group in the 18 wards. There is need of special training on the importance of including children with special needs in various development process i.e. being admitted in schools and being members of the children councils.
- The roles of the guardians and coordinators need to be clarified in details and explanation on their specific duties in relation to children councils to be clear to them.

- Clear demarcation of the duties and responsibilities of all key stakeholders regarding children councils is necessary and it has to be brought into attention of the children. Information and communication between children, children council coordinators and children council's guardians has to be improved to easier their work.
- Strengthening children councils through regularly capacity development and link the councils with the existing child protection structures as well as other initiatives that supports children development in the districts.
- Exchange visit study is very important for children council representatives from the newly established councils to visit other part of the country where there are well established children councils for the learning purposes.

### **Way Forward**

- Field visit to see how the established councils are working
- To establish other children councils in the areas where there are no children councils in MIN.
- Conducting more capacity buildings to children and community so as to raise awareness on issues concerning child rights, protection and participation.

### **CHILDREN COUNCIL MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN THE CA QUARTERLY MEETING ON OCTOBER 30<sup>TH</sup> 2014 AT UNICEF OFFICES**

One of the outputs in enhancing child participation is involving children council members in the CA meetings so that they can be able to raise key issues affecting their lives. In achieving this output, members of the children councils (ex-baraza and the current ones) were invited to participate in the Children's Agenda meeting where they discussed different matters. The key matters discussed included; Violence Against Children (VAC), Child Survival, upcoming national election 2015 and development of the visibility materials for JCURT.

In discussing the VAC issues, members of the children councils explained the real situations on how violence against children exist in their areas. They explained what is VAC, mentioned different kinds of violence against children that exist and the roles of different stakeholders in eliminating VAC. By definition, they define VAC as a bad action that is done to a child, it can affect the child psychologically, physically or sexually. VAC can be either gender violence, psychological violence or physical violence. To eliminate VAC; children, parents, government and NGO's should play role because VAC affects everybody.

Also, members of the children councils discussed on the issues around child survival. They argued that currently, the situation is worse since children and mothers died everyday due to various challenges they face based on their survival. Some of the challenges mentioned were; poor nutrition, health centers being located far from their residential areas, shortage of medical equipment, parents not attending clinics etc. Thus, to save the lives of the children and mothers, all these challenges must be solved effectively and the community must be responsible for the survival of all children and mothers.

Regarding the upcoming election, children defined what election is, who is a leader and what things for children should be given first priority by the elected candidates and leaders. The areas that should be given priority in the upcoming election were; building schools with friendly infrastructures for all children, teachers must be responsible by attending into classes and teach the children in order to improve the level of education, health centers to be built near to where people live, children to be given opportunity to participate, listened and involved in decision making, there must be community mobilization and awareness on how to elect a good leader who will consider children in different plans and allocates budget for children concerns, to have evaluation committees that will work on VAC at street/ ward levels and to conduct dialogues with the candidates on issues around children. Thus, for them a country with leaders who

consider children are the best leaders since in many years children have been marginalized.

At lastly, members of the children councils discussed on IEC materials that can be used to raise awareness on the important of the junior councils to children and in the community in general. The aim of developing these EIC materials is to make junior councils visible. They mentioned having brochures, fliers, t-shirts, vitenge, handkerchief, newspapers, magazines, journals about children councils and develop an advertisement that will motivate the community on understanding the functions and importance of the junior councils. Not only that but also the government and other stakeholders of children to make sure that guidelines for establishment of JCURT are available and disseminated at all levels starting from the street, village, ward, district and region levels.