

CHILDREN'S DIGNITY FORUM



REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GIRLS' NETWORK IN TARIME DISTRICT, MARA REGION, TANZANIA

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Introduction

This is a brief report on the establishment of the Girls' Network in Tarime district, Mara region, Tanzania. The training on the formulation of the network was conducted in two days from 26th –27th June 2009. In total 22 girls aged between 13-25 years whom participated directly in the peer research conducted in the district between March-May 2009 were involved. All girls were trained on child marriage, Human rights particularly children's rights, decision making skills, leadership skills and how to establish and run a girls' network.

Background

The idea of establishing girls' network in Tarime district emanated from the PEER research, which was conducted in the district by CDF in partnership with FORWARD to obtain relevant, valid and precise data regarding child marriage in Tarime district and to secure appropriate recommendations on how to end child marriages. It was recommended from the research that it would be of vital importance to establish a structure which will assist girls in coordinating their activities; provide girls with an avenue of information sharing/exchanging ideas; and act as a focal meeting point of girls from various areas especially for those whom living far from Tarime Town. Therefore, formulation of the network is a response to the PEER research recommendations.

The methodology involved

The training was highly participatory where by trainees themselves did most of the talking in providing most of the answers, case examples/illustrations and the insights. Thus the methods used during training involved a lot of group works and presentations, questions and answers sessions, drama and personal reflections. For the sake of having enjoyable training, lots of dancing, singing and games were involved to cheer people up. During the training the trainer (Grace Mghamba) from CDF was a female to whom girls were free to express their perspectives, experiences and understanding without restraint.

Content of the training

As mentioned earlier, the training was conducted for two days. Therefore, each day had its own contents or targeted areas.

DAY 1.

- The **First day** of the training covered an introduction to the network and an overview of the concept of human and children's rights, their roles and responsibilities. The main aim of this theme was to acquaint trainees with the concepts and general understanding of human rights and see how child marriage violates their rights. It was expected that such general understanding would raise their general awareness on the human rights, effects of child marriage and enable them to spread the knowledge they got to other girls that did not attend the training and those that would like to join the network in the future.
- Trainees were also facilitated on how to set goals and depict possible source of information they should get especially when they encounter problems. On this topic the discussion was on how to set general goals, specific goals and how to accomplish and achieve their goals. After the discussion girls split into three groups and each group was tasked to think about any business or activity they can do as a group, set their general goals, specific goals and the means to achieve their goals. It was very fortunate that after the group work each group made a good presentation and showed high capacity of understanding. The main aim of this theme was to enable girls to have the tendencies of setting goals in their lives as well as using same skills when they will be running the network. They also mentioned places where they can go when they encounter problems. Girls explained a good example of a problem a girl may encounter and where she can go for assistance, advice or any useful information. *A girl is crying and complaining that she would like to continue with education but her father wants her to get married. So she is seeking help from the trained girls (trainees). What will be their advice to this girl?* Girls explained that they would take their friend to the Ward Executive Officer; if they will be aggrieved then they will go to the Community Development and children Welfare to seek more assistance. The aim of this discussion was to encourage girls to report their problems to the relevant authorities.

- On the first day, girls were also taught about Decision making skills. They were facilitated on the four steps to making decisions: (1) Explain/identify the problem or decision they want to make (2) Think properly about their problem (3) Ask themselves the importance of the decision they want to make (4) What are the important things do they need to be familiar with before making their decision. This subject was very important for the trainees as they face different challenges in their daily lives and need to make critical decisions on those challenges. They were emphasised that on the whole process of decision making, self-realisation is very important. Trainees were facilitated to explore their potentials, understand themselves better and the environment in which they live and how best they can navigate the two to achieve personal development despite cultural setbacks surrounding them. It was expected that after gaining some sense of personal awareness and control, girls can work hard in school, in business or whatever trade they decided to involve themselves to achieve a better future and avoid abuse, poverty and abandonment.
- Finally, girls were taught about communication skills. They were trained about three communication behaviour: (1) Extrapolative: This is a communication behaviour where a person is so polite to the extent that she cannot express her views; (2) Self-assurance/confidence: This is a communication behaviour where a person expresses her views and feelings freely without fear and without irritating another person. Normally people would love to hear what this person is trying to express; (3) Aggressiveness: This is communication behaviour where one communicates with other people in an aggressive way. This person might have good ideas but she is unkind so no one would love to hear what she is speaking. After the discussion trainees conducted role-plays on the three-communication behaviour and identified that behaviour (2) is the best communication behaviour and they would like to apply this behaviour in their daily life and in the network.

DAY 2

- Day 2 was about forming and managing a girl's network. This day was dedicated to helping trainees understand the importance of the network, how to start, what to do and how, mechanisms of follow-up their timetables and how to be committed when performing their network. Specifically they were supervised on to:
 1. Select their leaders democratically. Before selecting their leaders, the trainer taught girls about leadership skills including who is a good leader. Thereafter the section took place whereby voted by raising their hands. The selected leaders included chairperson, secretary and treasurer of the network while Ms. Restuta Mpate was selected to be a chairperson, Ms. Rhobi John-Secretary and Ms. Magreth Yusuph-Treasurer. Originally, the idea was to select the chairperson, assistant chairperson and secretary but things changed as trainees themselves wanted to have a treasurer instead of an assistant chairperson. This was due to the fact that they will be doing some income generating activities in the network therefore it was important to have a treasurer.
 2. Choose the name of the network. Girls agreed that the name of the network to be "*Tunaweza Girls' Network*". *Tunaweza* is a Swahili word means 'we can'.
 3. Spell out what they intend to do in the network. Trainees pointed out the following objectives of their network:
 - (a) To create a supportive group for victims and potential victims of child marriage;
 - (b) Empower its members individually and in solidarity;
 - (c) Exchange ideas and share experiences;
 - (d) To help other girls and to know their rights;
 - (e) To be empowered economically and psychologically;
 - (f) To eradicate child marriage;
 - (g) To attain development for everyone.

Time Frame

Trainees agreed on the time frame that after 1 year, 1000 girls would have been educated on child marriages i.e. its effects and how to eradicate it.

Strategies

Trainees pointed out their strategies to achieve their goal of educating 1000 girls after 1 year:

1. To invite other girls to the network to discuss their problems and to visit those girls who have problems.
2. To use cartoons and posters with positive message on the campaign against child marriage.

Income generating activities

Trainees were given opportunity to come up with proposals which included activities they thought could be done within their communities to raise awareness on the impacts of child marriage and help them make money with which they can take care of themselves. It was very fortunate that **Sigrid Rausing Trust** funded the photo-voice training and consequently provides cameras to the trainees as gift for attending the training. Thus trainees proposed that they would use their cameras to raise awareness on the impacts of child marriage and at the same time generating income. They also agreed that through their cameras they would be contributing Tshs. 1,000 to the network every month to enable them to pay for electricity bills of their office before getting money from somewhere else. *More explanation on the list of activities proposed by trainees is attached herewith.*

Way Forward

- Start taking photos
- Educating other girls
- Hold meetings with each other every Saturday with girls in their areas
- Whole network will meet last Saturday of every month.
- Document all discussions and events that take place in the network

Conclusion and Recommendations

In her conclusion, the trainer reminded the trainees that the network would be coordinated and managed democratically with respect of each member and care for one another. Therefore they should appreciate each other, act as a team and be proud of themselves. They should also avoid gossiping, which might disunite their network. It is important for them to have their own system of solving their disputes amicably. As girls they are the ambassadors of the network so they were urged to love and help each other within and outside the network.

Recommendations

It is recommended that for the sake of the girl's network sustainability, CDF should make follow-ups by visiting the network frequently. This will help to evaluate its progress and identify what is needed or what should be done in the network. Besides, further trainings should be conducted so as to cover more skills that were not covered in the current trainings.

APPENDICES

I. Proposed Income Generating Activities by using cameras

Participants got the chance to highlight possible activities they would start doing after establishing “*Tunaweza Girls’ Network*”. The general idea was to think of any activity, which is simple to start, and which does not require a big capital. Trainees proposed the following activities:

- Taking photos during the weddings, workshops & seminars, FGM ceremonies, churches, graduation, market scenes (on Sunday), funeral ceremonies, *litungu* dances, birthdays, women group events and baptisms. In this group of activities, girls will be taking photos and being paid by those who wanted photos.
- Taking photos when there is accidents and violence e.g. domestic violence and clan fighting for cows. For this activity, girls will be taking photos and sell them to media companies. They will also remain with copies for the network office documentation.

II. List of girls participated in the establishment of girls’ network:

1. Colleta Selemani
2. Restuta Mpate
3. Noela Kisyeri
4. Magreth Yusuph
5. Asina Zacharia
6. Neema Julius
7. Magreth Kibasa
8. Lucy Julias
9. Naomi Nashoni
10. Rhobi John
11. Mgya Iddi
12. Sikujua Makabwa
13. Tabitha Abuya
14. Pilly Stephano
15. Anna Rafaeli
16. Bhoke Peter
17. Melinda Manyori
18. Anna Mairo
19. Tabitha Abuya
20. Happy Yoda
21. Ghati Mwita
22. Basilisa John