



International Journal of Economics, Management and Social Science

Vol 9 No 2 June 2026

E-ISSN: 2614-3828 | P-ISSN: 2614-3887

Open Access: <https://journal.salewangang.net/ijemss/index>

Children Protection and Women Empowerment to Violence: A Community based Intervention

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Article Info :

Received:
10/04/2026
Revised:
12/04/2026
Accepted:
30/04/2026

ABSTRACT

Violence against women and children in Tanzania remains seriously issue in human right and public health, where one in three of women experience physical violence and children experience, physical, sexual and neglect. This study used a community-based intervention in Msalala District Council as an operationalization of Tanzania's National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (2024/25-2028/2029). By adopt qualitative method, study organized strategies such as community mobilization, strengthened support system, capacity building, and multi-sectoral coordination using interview with various stakeholders such as women, children, men, community leaders and service providers. Interventions like training protection committees, administering community-based reporting systems, creating safe space and economic empowerment through village savings groups. Findings showed increase of awareness, improved reporting systems and upgraded service coordination. Despite of coordination challenges, resource constrains and cultural resistance the study effective empowered communities as active agent change. Results illustrate, sustainable violence prevention demands, incorporated economic, social and gender-transformative aspects, while responding on power relations and structural barriers underlying violence.

Keywords: *Violence against women and children, Gender-based violence, Child protection, Community engagement, Prevention strategies.*



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Introduction

Violence against women and children in Tanzania was the most persistent issues, related to human right and public health. With the national surveys show that, approximately one in three women experienced physically violence and children often exposed to physical violence, sexual abuse, and neglect (Lukumay et al., 2023). These issues aggravated in Msalala district council due to urbanization which strains prevailing support systems, embedded patriarchal norms and harmful traditional practices that prolong violence, limited access of health, legal and social protection services for survivors. Tanzania's National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children of (NPA-VAWC I, 2017/2018 - 2021/22) revised in (NPA-VAWC II, 2024/25 - 2028/2029) offers holistic framework that integrates partnership, prevention, protection and prosecution, provide strategic approach for coordinated rejoinders at all levels (URT, 2024).

This study, operationalized the national framework at community level in Msalala District within Shinyanga region by empowering community and local stakeholders to be active agents of change. An approach underpinned by evidencing participatory and community based intervention, appropriately challenge harmful norms, creating safe environment and local building capacity (Lachman et al., 2020). Community empowerment represent key pathway to sustainable violence reduction since involvement were most powerful to tackle underlying power relations, involve both men and women, enhance support system, and customized to local realities instead of externally imposed. Through local capacity building and promoting ownership, communities can initiate environment, where women and children valued, protected and unlock full potential.

Implementation Methods

The study utilized a community-based intervention strategy by adopt qualitative research to comprehend and respond on violence against women and children applied in Isaka, and Segese among high-risk wards in Msalala District Council due to the high level of violence. These areas of priority where winning strategies which later virtualized in other areas.

Focus group discussion (FGD) was the main method of data collection, which involved various groups of stakeholders such as men, women, youth, religious leaders, and traditional leaders to obtain multiple views on violence and its catalyst. Baseline assessment examined occurrence, trends, and local causes of violence whereas smoothing dialogue on gender stereotypes and harmful norms

Use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques safeguard articulation from vital community groups and leaders. key respondents were 10 women and 05 children aged 09-60 who were exposed to violence and focus of the empowerment and protection efforts and 9 informants include community leaders, religious leaders, ward executive officers, social welfare officers, community development officers, teachers, health workers, police officers and magistrates who were vital in integrating violence prevention into the current community structures as well as facilitating wider social change. Interview conducted in local languages through trained facilitators in private and neutral venue to stimulate open discussion and diminish social desirability bias. Discussion directs on experiences, causes, reporting mechanism, and prevention approaches accepted iteratively depending on emerging findings. Participatory nature of FGDs facilitated serious assessment of deep-rooted beliefs and encouraged community-based solutions.

During research process the study prioritize ethical protection of participants such as standard of confidentiality, informed consent and sensitivity for the safety of participants. Design allows in depth context specific perceptions of community, seeking help on obstacles, and culturally sensitive intervention plans. Sometimes group dynamics restrict to reveal most sensitive information, the strategy has been effective challenge harmful norms and community capacity building to prevent violence (Taliep et al., 2020).

Thematic analysis revealed the common patterns and themes related to violence, which allowed drawing up specific community empowerment strategies. The methodology was consistent with Tanzania National Plan of Action framework, although remaining responsive to cultural context and local realities. community inclusion on data interpretation as a way of make sure that involvements were contextually relevant and sustainable more than external support.

Implementation Strategies

Mobilization and Awareness

Effective violence prevention premised on community mobilization and awareness campaigns which necessitate participatory, culturally sensitive and multi-channel strategies, to effectively change detrimental norms and the violence. Carrying out baseline assessments based on focus group discussions and household surveys provides the basis of understanding the prevalence, patterns, and local causes of violence and helps to build trust and make the interventions relatable to the community contexts (Leite et al., 2025). Community discussions that are organized around trained peer educators can be effective platforms to challenge harmful social norms and gender stereotypes to encourage critical thinking, empower collective action, and enable communities to challenge deeply ingrained beliefs.

Providing information, education, and communication resources that were culturally competent must be in Swahili and local languages so that can be more accessible, resonant, and co design processes, include community feedback to make them culturally competent, which were essential to uptake long

term effect (Kennedy et al., 2024). The use of community meetings, radio shows, and social media campaigns reach a broader audience and strengthen the main messages through various mediums, interactive and participatory approaches work effectively to attract a wide range of audiences and trigger social change.

Community meetings and local events give way to dialogue and critical thinking by engaging the audience through immersion, whereas radio programs, social media enhance the transmission of the campaign messages to larger audiences and generate the continuation of interaction among various demographic groups (Marian et al., 2025). Such multi layered approaches, particularly those communities based and participatory in nature, produce synergistic impacts enable critical thinking, disorder of harmful norms, sustainable behavior change, along with community capacity building in the process of continued violence prevention.

Capacity Building

Multilevel strategy which focuses on enhancing the capacity of various stakeholders to detect, react and avert violence within their localities. The mobilization of a variety of people to build leadership, collective response, enhanced local involvement facilitated by community ownership then effectiveness through training community protection committees of men, women, youth, religious leaders, traditional leaders on violence prevention, identification, and referral in preventions of violence. Developing the skills of local service providers, such as police, health workers, social welfare officers on survivor centered approaches can result in substantial knowledge, attitude, preparedness to attend to survivors with periodic refresher training, a system level contribution to maintaining skills and ensuring effective, coordinated responses (Dolan et al., 2024).

Establish mentorship programs that include positive role models, at risk youth to reduce the risk of violence, enhances management of behavioral risks, because youth together with adult partnership model mentorships show reductions in the violence rate, higher levels of bystander intervention behavior, particularly when youth actively engage in program development and implementation.

Trainings women groups in economic empowerment, leadership and advocacy not only combat the root causes of violence but also empower women, improve their agency, community position, with economic, leadership training potentially associated with lower levels of violence and community tenacity. These combined capacity building approaches produce synergies that reinforce community protection measures, enhance service delivery, empower marginalized communities enable safer together with more resilient communities that can sustain violence prevention activities even without outside assistance (Edwards et al., 2022).

Strengthens Support Systems

Firming up support systems was crucial in protecting violence against women and children, the challenges should be integrated with survivor focused strategies that support different aspects of safety, access, and empowerment. The establishment of a safe environment, where women and children can gain access to information, counseling, as well as peer support, offers trusted environments. minimizes isolation, enhances psychosocial wellbeing, empowers economically, raises awareness of rights and existing services, assists in challenging harmful gender norms plus helping to resilience in resource constrained or high-risk environments (Stark et al., 2021).

Implementing community based reporting systems with explicit referral routes to the police, health facilities, legal services, access to justice and support can be better achieved, since it allows survivors to seek therapeutic and legal services in a timely manner, connect them to other service providers, improve collaboration with other service providers, although the need to address barriers to access, which may include stigma, lack of legal literacy, ineffective system structures was critical to the development of truly accessible and culturally sensitive mechanisms.

Support and promote the formation of village savings and loan associates to foster economic independence of women further increases financial autonomy, minimizes vulnerability to violence, holds households together is associated with better wellbeing, risk reduction, and more access to health as well as legal services. Develop school-based child protection policies and reporting mechanisms which have opportunities that can be effective when combined with broader community

and family-based interventions that establish comprehensive protection networks (Owuor et al., 2025). These interdependent plans contribute to the resilience and better access to coordinated services and enhanced protection outcomes to women and children through establishing multilayered support systems that meet the immediate safety requirements but also develop long term empowerment and community capacity.

Multi-Sectoral Coordination

It was widely recognized multisector coordination as a key to effective violence prevention and response so that comprehensive, survivor centered, sustainable interventions can be executed in response to the heterogeneous characteristics of violence together with its interconnection. Developing village/mitaa, wards and district violence prevention and response coordination committee involves police, judiciary, health, education, and civil society representatives allows planning, sharing resources, providing services together, aligning their guidance, tools, in which such committees have demonstrated to be a key adapting tool, especially in keeping vital services active across sectors.

Generating of memoranda of understanding among relevant stakeholders such as police, judiciary, health sector, education sector, and civil society organizations helps to clarify the roles, establish accountability measures, facilitate easy handling of cases, and the effective collaboration, information sharing, coordinated intervention due to the formalization of the agreements together with the use of standard protocols. Also, conduct quarterly coordination meetings on track progress and solve problems is important to build trust between stakeholders, facilitate adaptation new realities, which may able to solve problems together and improvement of regular communication and joint consideration and review.

Advanced Standard referral protocols, case management systems with clear guidelines and data sharing mechanism improve access of coordinated services by survivors, systematic follow up, inter sectoral availability of services, improve accountability and the quality of services delivered All these interrelated coordination components work together to establish integrated, accountable, adaptive multi sectoral responses that can be more effective in serving survivors, enhance system capacity, eliminate service gaps and redundancy, also promote long term collaboration that required to address violence as a multi layered social and community health issue.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Efficient monitoring and evaluation were vital on understanding the impact of violence prevention programs which offer accountability, inform continuous of the program under systematic data collection, and engagement of stakeholders. Knowledge, attitudes, practices, prevalence of violence baseline, midline, and endline surveys are crucial sources of data needed to evaluate the efficiency of interventions. Usually accompanied by qualitative data collection and analysis methods, such as focus groups and interviews, to identify subtle changes and the views of stakeholders, standardized tools, repeated measures are preferable to achieve reliable tracking over the years.

Monthly, regular reports activity from village, ward and council protection committees were used to monitor the implementation progress, service delivery and keep communication between the field level actors and the program management. Survivors Case documentation, tracking systems, accountability, service quality delivery, coordination of referrals, legal procedures, digital tools, standardized procedures enhance the quality of data, confidentiality, usability, comply with ethical standards, including informed consent and data protection. Participatory monitoring (community members in data collection and data analysis) is a best practice that supports local ownership, context relevance, community capability to identify solutions, track their progress, enhances the program acceptability and sustainability with significant stakeholder engagement during the evaluation process. Annual joint review meeting reflects, implementation and responsive approaches to the adaptive management strategies, context specific, responsive nature of monitoring and evaluation systems can be promoted and conducted with all stakeholders to evaluate the progress against indicators. These combined monitoring and evaluation strategies operate in synergy to monitor project progress, demonstrate impact, hold themselves accountable to beneficiaries and funders, by generate evidence as well as create feedback which can able continuously learn and adapt programs effective in preventing violence.

Results and Discussion

The study attains various outcomes at individual relationship and community levels on the basis of community empowerment efforts which have been carried out in Tanzania. On an individual, the knowledge and awareness on violence prevention and services available empower survivors and bystanders to act, as well as the human capacity to influence understanding and increase responses dramatically. Economic empowerment programs involving women likely decrease financial reliance that tends to confine women in violent circumstances, but studies shown that effects differ depending on the situation and have to be closely balanced with social empowerment elements in order to be sustained. In relationship it, enhanced communication, conflict management among couples and families, as well as involvement of men and boys, which challenge traditional masculinity norms and reduce violence. These approaches demonstrated to alter attitude toward equitable gender. In the community level, formation of protection committees, safe spaces provide visible institutional backup, which enhances reporting and manages case among survivors, also, mobilizing traditional and religious leaders through their influence to change inappropriate practices through culturally relevant frameworks.

Multisector coordination in society by providing comprehensive and integrated services instead of fragmented ones, but effective implementation demands proper coordination systems, sufficient resources, and long-lasting involvement of the stakeholders. Evidence based and policy as well as practice must improve data collection and documentation on the district and national levels, may contribute to systemic learning and adaptive programming. A long-lasting change of all levels should include the integration of economic, social, and gender transformative elements as well as the confrontation of structural barriers and power relations as the basis of violence.

Challenges and Mitigation Tactics

Cultural Resistance

Cultural resistance was deep rooted on strong beliefs about gender roles, discipline, and a patriarchal authority as one of the major obstacles of violence prevention efforts in Tanzania, more than a third of the interviewees reported deeply rooted traditional beliefs as the main obstacle to change. Low education and awareness on gender-based violence, decrease the involvement of the community and the effectiveness of interventions, while fear of retaliation, stigmatization, and distrust formal systems disclosure survivors seek for help and communities to facilitate transformation (Mbwete & Kitali, 2025).

The project involves traditional and religious leaders as champions who frame the concept of violence prevention in the context of accepted cultural values, including dignity, respect, and family welfare, which increase the project legitimacy and community buy in although reduce the possible impact of leader ambivalence. Culturally competent programs that deploy participatory forums, local knowledge systems, proverbs, local storytelling traditions which challenge harmful norms and promote beneficial cultural resources, the interventions should resonate with the values of the community instead of enforcing external frameworks.

To build trust, conduct training to community members and law enforcement on confidentiality, sensitivity, survivor centered support was crucial to overcome distrust and create good environment and encourage vulnerable populations to report to the formal systems where in historical context failed to do so. A sustainable change requires long term, multifaction strategies that co-design interventions with communities, focus on harmful but also on protective cultural norms, while continue to engage with communities beyond short term project cycles.

Resource Constraints

Limited fund, human resources and inadequate infrastructure in Msalala District Council, were major challenges to effective service delivery, which result in delays of most cases, and quality of services provision in education and health sectors. These constrains caused by highly dependence of funding from the central government, which often arrived in delays and restrictive condition usage that limit local government autonomy and responsiveness (Kessy, 2023).

The study helps to reduce these challenges by focusing on the capacity building of existing structures, such as staff training, professional development and strengthening of the institution, which are shown

in the research to explain almost a half of the variation in local government performance with better human resource strategies.

Instead of establishing parallel systems that would further strain the limited resources, the initiative uses the available volunteers within the community to support capacity of service delivery, which has been shown to be effective both in the Tanzanian and international contexts to maintain and expand services where funds were limited (Brudney & Yoon, 2021). This dual strategy is reliant upon the ability to provide sufficient targeted funding to capacity building, volunteer has received clear role definitions, ongoing training and supervision, and high levels of integration into formal service delivery systems to increase sustainability along with community ownership.

Sustainability

Mostly project end when external sources of funding ceased, and course communities left without a long term protection system and continue to rely on the short term interventions which do not resolve the underlying causes of violence. Interventions should be incorporated into existing community organizations and leadership structures to ensure that protection mechanisms become embedded in common community practices and foster ownership which likely to endure and be replicated in another place. Community based approaches increase trust, relevance and minimize reliance on the external actors, which form the basis of long-term sustainability.

Building of local capacity using ongoing training, skills upgrading, empowerment of service providers and volunteer's increases communities' capacity to maintain and adapt the interventions over time since it increases awareness, skills and confidence to deal with violence. A strong local capacity enables preservation of institutional memory, facilitates the adoption of the best practices into the local policies, and enable communities to react flexible in changing needs. Budget allocation advocacy from local government was essential to the long-term financial stability, as sustainable violence prevention need entail shift of external funding, that generate programs with embedded costs in local budgets with political and institutional support (Morse et al., 2025). This initiative facilitates the sustainability through institutionalizing protection mechanism in prevailing community context, by establishing strong local capacity to sustain services delivery, ensuring long term financial stability and integration of policies even after the project was completed.

Coordination Challenges

Presence of conflict on interests, organizational priorities and different approaches towards operating, result in misunderstandings, competition, as well as makes multiple stakeholders with various mandates plus working cultures, struggle for effective coordination and resistance in collaboration.

Uncertainty of stakeholder roles and responsibilities leads duplication of efforts and gaps in service delivery, together with accountable issues, which destabilize project outcome (Ezenwaka et al., 2025). Fragmented patterns of communication, lack of effective protocols and irregular information sharing, negatively affect efficient cooperation and prompt decision making between sectors. The coordination mechanisms can be disrupted by power struggles, control rivalry, and political interference, as well as compromising collaborative agreements.

These challenges can be overcome by regular coordination meetings, which building relationships, trust, problems solving in right time, when supported by means of collaborative tools and clear agendas. Shared monitoring framework and clear protocol improve accountability, diminish duplication, and creation of standard operating procedures with clear lines of authority.

Conduct joint training, capacity building initiatives and participatory action research strategies, to enhance the common understanding among sectors and maintain collaborative practices over time. By focus on conflict resolution, and follow decisions brought by appointing specific lead coordinating bodies to ensures effective of multi stakeholder collaboration (Long et al., 2023).

Congruency with National Plan of Action

Study operationalize directly objectives of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in a comprehensive and evidence based approach which combines community level interventions per national policy framework. Community mobilization component discourse primary prevention, by adopting community ownership, generating safe spaces for dialog, and encourage collective action to change harmful social norms, which were more effective and sustainable than use of top-down approach alone (URT, 2024). Capacity building to service provider by improving skills and resources to the frontline in health, police, legal and social workers on

increase ability to identify, support survivors refer, according to the WHO guidelines and priorities of the national action plan.

Establishment of coordination tool improve multi-sectoral collaboration, by enabling effective partnership between health, justice, education, and community sectors through consistent communication together with shared protocols necessary for wide range service delivery. Documentation and monitoring activities add value to the evidence base, as demanded for policy development, progress tracking, and make sure accountability as per the requirements of the national and global action plans (Wolter et al., 2024). Concentrating on community empowerment, the study understands that, ending violence need changing the social ecology in its appearance, a principle central international framework. It's important views from author that, when bottom-up strategy works in collaboration with top-down policy and legislative change, it establishing synergy between national strategies and local action working to end violence against women and children and verse versa.

Conclusion

Women and children should not be subjected to violence. It is a human rights infringement which is preventable and undermine dignity, discourages development, health and social cohesion. The study in Msalala District Council reflects how the national policy frameworks can be brought into real life practice. The strength of the study recognizes communities themselves possess the knowledge, resources and agency to make change. Through capacity building, dialogue, and strengthening systems, the encourage communities to have ownership of violence prevention and response.

To sum up, achievement require persistent commitment from all stakeholders include community members, government, civil society, and development partners. The study suggests, ending violence against women and children are not only women or children's problem. It is social issue which needs collective action, when society empowered to protect their vulnerable members every person benefits and valuable because community free from violence are more prosperous and healthier.

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