Understanding how communities in Shinyanga district, Tanzania resolve the complex collective action problem of violence against women & children.

Learning from the application of Theory U

Research Design

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Project information

- Estimated duration: 21 months
  - Start date: 1st April 2021
  - Completion date: 30th December 2022
- Research conducted: Shinyanga Rural District, Lyabukande, Mwakitolyo, Salawe, Solwa, Iselamagazi, Lyamidati, Mwalukwa, Pandagichiza, Didia, Ilola, Mwamala, Nyamalogo, Puni, Itwangi, Masengwa, Nyida, Tinde & Usule.
- Host institution: Citizens 4 Change
- Sponsor: Women Fund Tanzania Trust
- Field of study: Social Studies
- Research team: Dr Kate McAlpine, Dr Matthew Senga, Mathias Mkude, Njeri Kagucia Omesa, Rita Kahurananga, AnnaGrace Rwehumbiza; Raphael Denis, Janeth Semwene, Collin Smith.
- Referees: Dr David Blake Willis; Fielding Graduate University

Abstract

- A 2-year action research project that establishes a social lab (Hassan, 2014).
- Studies the mechanisms & effectiveness of home-grown & district initiatives that aim to combat violence against women & children in 18 wards of Shinyanga District Council, Tanzania.
- Applies the Theory U process (Scharmer, 2007) and a social network analysis in 18 wards of Shinyanga Rural District.
- Seeks to understand how people resolve the complex collective action problem of violence against women and children. Specifically,

  - Who are the actors within the system? How prevalent is VAWC and is it maintained by social norms?
  - What is the nature of the system in which violence occurs?
  - What are the research participants' intention for change?
  - How to navigate the complexity of violence against women and children in a way that catalyses collective action?
  - What works to prevent or respond to violence against women and children under different conditions?
- Innovation lies in facilitating transformative processes in complex situations using digital tools.
- Contributes to building safer & more inclusive communities. Generates evidence of progress in achieving Tanzania's aspirations to protect women & children from harm. Contributes to a decolonized understanding of violence prevention & response in the East African context.
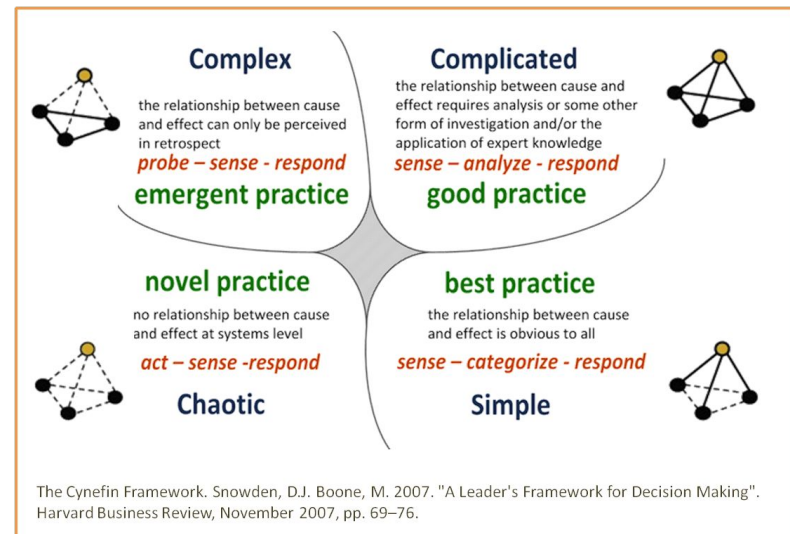
Background

- Violence against children & women is prevalent & costly.
  - 73% of children reported being a victim of physical violence, 27% of sexual violence, 40% of emotional violence (URT, 2011).
  - Violence thrives when the interests of a few prevails over the interests of the many (McAlpine et al, 2016).
- Opportunities to better protect women & children from harm exist.
  - Tanzania is committed to Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 that promotes peaceful & inclusive societies (United Nations, 2015)
  - Has developed a National Plan of Action to eliminate violence against women & children (NPA-VAWC) (URT 2016).
  - Citizens *do* take action to protect children & are motivated by their *Ujasiri* mindset [courage or bravery in Swahili]. (McAlpine, 2015)
  - WFT-T works at the intersection of children's & women's experience of violence; supports grassroots activists with funding, inspiration, & tools & wants to learn how to adopt a more holistic approach as an intermediary.
- Cognition, coordination & cooperation problems continue to create disincentives for joint action in pursuit of the common goal to eliminate violence against women & children.

The Problem

Global, national & district level commitments to end violence against women & children are hindered because they start from the perspective that the issue is complicated & thus can be resolved by identifying & applying good practice.

Violence has always been with humanity (North, Wallis Weingast, 2009).

It is a complex issue where the relationship between cause & effect can only be perceived by the people in "the system" who are affected by the problem. They can only do so by probing & sensing their own behaviour & responding with emergent solutions.

The Cynefin Framework. Snowden, D.J. Boone, M. 2007. "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making". Harvard Business Review, November 2007, pp. 69–76.

Objectives

The intent is to understand the complexity of violence & to create the conditions for citizens to promote protective norms. Specifically, the project intends to

1. Facilitate a process that gets the system affected by violence in the room, that enables them to make sense of their experience, intuit, prototype & scale solutions - Theory U.

2. Describe the unfolding of this process & understand how the district authorities & communities in Shinyanga district resolve the complex collective action problem of violence against women & children.

3. Build a cohort of Tanzanian researchers & facilitators who can work with complexity.

4. Innovate in the use of digital methods in facilitating transformative change in complex settings.

5. Facilitate generative learning within WFT-T, its grantees, & the Shinyanga District Council so that they adopt a reflexive practice; & scrutinise the assumptions that they make about ending VAWC.

6. Enrich the NPA-VAWC & inform the feminist & child rights movements.

Theory U process

Fieldwork Objective: To facilitate collective action that enables women & children to thrive.

Research Objective: To understand how people in Shinyanga resolve the complex collective action problem of violence against women & children.

1/ Co-initiating:
Build common intent

5/ Co-evolving:
Embody the new

2/ Co-sensing:
Observe, observe, observe so that the system sees itself

4/ Co-creating -
Prototype & explore the future by doing

3/ Presencing - Actively retreat & intuit the emerging future

1/ Who are the actors within the system? How prevalent is VAWC & is it maintained by social norms?

5/ What works to prevent or respond to VAWC under different conditions?

2/ What is the nature of the system in which violence occurs?

4/ How to navigate the complexity of VACW in a way that catalyses collective action?

3/ What are the research participants' intention for change?

Scholar-practitioners' praxis

Facilitators

1. Responsible for structure; process; group dynamics & eliciting content.

2. Meta-skills - neutrality, super listening, compassion, breath, trust the group.

3. Hold the space for multiple differing views, for the group to move into the 'groan zone' & to then converge with new insights that support good decisions - "the diamond of participation"

4. Bring what is unconscious in the group, the information that exists in resistance, into the group consciousness.

5. Enable the group to self-manage their decision-making.

Researchers adopt an Integral Activist Epistemology

1. Generate critical knowledge about the system in order to change it, premised on an ontological belief that individuals groups make meaning, & thus create their own multiple realities.

2. Conduct studies that have personal integrity, that generate meaningful social change, & that are practical & credible

3. Make sense of questions that are posed by an integral perspective that takes up a multi-paradigmatic worldview.
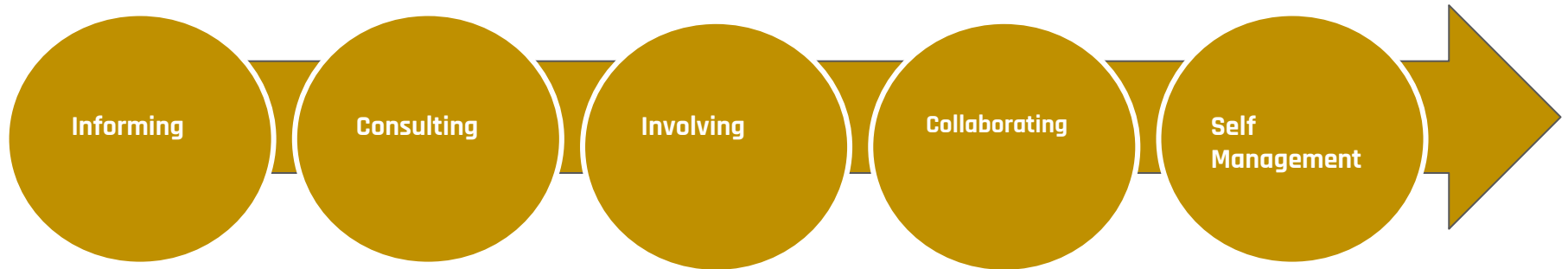
Research participants

5,513 people recruited representing the system in which violence arises because they possess these characteristics:
- Authority to act on their own
- Resources of time, money, access & influence
- Expertise - social, technical - in the topic
- Information that others need
- Are affected by the topic

All will receive 9 SMS surveys to seek out as many differing voices as possible & learn from the wisdom of the crowd

180 will participate in 6 workshops where they proceed through the U process

Informing **Consulting** **Involving** **Collaborating** **Self Management**

Benefits & risks

Benefits

1. Children & women will be safer.
2. Participants will access new knowledge & skills that supports them to adopt protective behaviours & to champion inclusion & safety in their community.
3. The Tanzanian Government will obtain evidence of progress in achieving its aspirations to protect women & children from harm.
4. WFT-T will better understand the mechanisms of change & become able target their support to grassroots child rights & feminist activists.
5. The Global Partnership to End Violence & the Elevate Children Funders group will benefit from a decolonized understanding of violence prevention & response in the East African context.

Risks

1. Participants may disclose the experience of violence & may identify the perpetrator.
2. Adults may feel threatened at the topic & coerce others not to participate in the study.
3. Participants may feel that pressure themselves & not honestly disclose their experience.
4. The inclusion criteria that participants must have an interest in the topic may result in a disproportionate enrolment of people who are ready for change.
5. A prevalent narrative of claimed values that promote protection may make it challenging to unearth the actual values in action, many of which are harmful.
6. Reflection & discussion about violence may trigger stressful thoughts & memories; or make participants uncomfortable.
7. Personally identifiable information may not be sufficiently protected putting participants' anonymity at risk.

Assumptions - that will be tested throughout

- VAWC is prevalent & normalised

- VAWC may be maintained by social norms

- It will be challenging to access minority voices

- We are up against a design challenge, which lies in

  - Not wanting to design anything that will cause secondary trauma

  - How to generate useful data without relying on researcher-defined constructions of violence

  - How to ensure that the informed consent process is meaningful

  - How to ensure that the F2F is Covid safe

  - How to design digital tools [and not online tools] that help participants to make sense of & transform their understanding of their lived experience.

Procedures

1/ Co-initiating:
Build common intent
1 month

Facilitation Objective: To get the whole system in the room & identify a focal question that will create a common agenda.

Research Question: Who are the actors within the system? How prevalent is VAWC & is it maintained by social norms?

Participants: Junior Council, WFT Grantees, Shinyanga District Council, Citizens, Schools, Service providers, & Ward leadership

Methods

1. Online kick-off meeting to form the backbone of the project & map stakeholder groups.

2. Recruit participants via a household survey where a social network analysis and Sprockler Narrative Inquiry will seek to understand their stake in the issue of violence, their reference group & whether violence is maintained by social norms.

3. Debrief with Shinyanga District Council, using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of the household survey for the District plan to address NPA-VACW.

4. Online meeting with WFT-T using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of these findings for WFT-T as an intermediary.

Data generated: data collectors' journals & stakeholders' informed consent, experience of VAWC, reference groups.

Research deliverable: Mapping of stakeholder groups, recruitment of participants, Analysis of the prevalence of VAWC, people's reference groups and whether VAWC is maintained by social norms.

Procedures

2/ Co-sensing:
Observe, observe, observe so that the system sees itself

4 months

Facilitation objective: To help the system make sense of its own experience of VAWC.
Research question: What is the nature of the system in which VAWC in Shinyanga occurs?*
Participants: The same 15 people in each ward, each of whom represents a group who is affected by VAWC, will participate in 3 sense-making workshops between July & Oct.
Methods

1. Make sense of the Sprockler inquiry & Social Network Analysis: via one ½ day workshop in each ward & one SMS survey.
2. Make sense of when & why women & children thrive in the community: via one day ½ workshop using Appreciative Inquiry methods & 1 SMS survey.
3. Make sense of others' experience of power: via SMS request to go on an empathy & power walk & to share their reflections.
4. Make sense of the experience of minority voices: via supporting 18 victims to interview each other & 18 perpetrators to do likewise.
5. Make sense of the unconscious fears that prevent people from achieving their desire for change: via a ½ day workshop & SMS surveys that use the Immunity to Change methodology (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).
6. After each workshop a debrief with Shinyanga District Council, using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of the workshops for the District plan to address NPA-VAWC.
7. Online meeting with WFT-T using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of these findings for WFT-T as an intermediary.

Data: Facilitators' journals, workshop proceedings, SMS responses, narrative interview transcripts.
Research deliverable: An explanation of the system's perspective on why & how violence against women & children manifests.

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Procedures

3/ Presencing -
Actively retreat &
intuit the emerging
future

1/2 day @ each ward
at the end of the
co-sensing phase

Facilitation objective: To support the system to actively withdraw & see what emerges.

Research question: What are the research participants' intention for change?

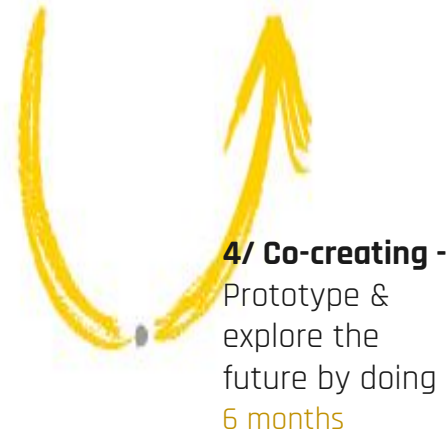Participants in the Immunity to Change workshops will be asked to stay for an additional ½ day.

Method:

A silent nature walk will take place where they meditate about the future. This will prime them for the next stage of the U process when they will generate ideas for action.

Data: Facilitators' journals & participants' insights.

Research deliverable: A description of the U process thus far & reflection on how it is playing out.

Procedures

Facilitation objective: To prototype ideas that the system thinks could support women & children to thrive.

Research question: How to navigate the complexity of violence against women and children in a way that catalyses collective action? Specifically, what relational shifts are required for participants' vision to be enacted and what multiple and reinforcing actions are required to achieve change?

Methods:

1. The same 15 people in each ward who participated in the sense-making workshops will be invited to a ½ day idea generation workshop where they will brainstorm ideas & decide as a group which to pursue.
   a. Piloting a collaboration with SparkTank to adapt their digital brainstorming tool https://www.sparktank.com.au/ so that we can use it in a F2F setting.
2. Over the next six months they will prototype these ideas.
3. SMS surveys will be sent to the wider stakeholder group to gather feedback from users about the performance of these prototypes.
4. The facilitators will conduct two field visits to see the ideas in action.
5. A final ½ day workshop will be held to engage in adaptive learning.
6. Debrief with Shinyanga District Council, using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of the prototype ideas for the District plan to address NPA-VAWC.
7. Online meeting with WFT-T using Kolb's action learning cycle to explore the implications of the prototypes for WFT-T as an intermediary.

Data: Idea rating scorecard; design briefs for each prototype, facilitators' journals, user feedback & proceedings from the adaptive learning workshop.

Research deliverable: A solutions portfolio explaining the assumptions that are being made; the mechanisms put in place & the outcomes being achieved.

4/ Co-creating -
Prototype & explore the future by doing
6 months

Procedures

5/ Co-evolving:
Embody the new

Facilitation objective: To enrich the National Plan of Action with home-grown community solutions to ending violence against women & children.

Research question: What works to prevent or respond to VAWC under different conditions, which prototypes could scale or be institutionalised & how?

Participants: Research participants, duty-bearers, those with influence identified in the SNA; funders & academics

Methods:

1. Document the unfolding of the project & the U process via newsletters, blogs, film & photography.
2. Hold a 3-day solutions summit to profile the prototypes; understand which worked under different conditions & why; & agree how to proceed with institutionalising & /or scaling up the solutions.
3. Work with the Shinyanga District Council to integrate the solutions into their strategic plan & strategize on how to get the project learning into the wider community of district governments via PO-RALG.
4. Disseminate research outputs via webinars, conferences, journal articles & book chapters; & within Government via quiet chats that explore how to integrate the process & solutions into the delivery of NPA-VAWC.

Research deliverable: The Solutions Summit documented, with documentation of how WFT conducted its intermediary role and the effectiveness therein. A grounded theory developed about how more women & children can be better protected

Process

Outputs

- 9 online learning meetings
- 1 household survey, Sprockler report
- 1 Social Network Analysis
- 6 workshops with 280 people
- 36 interviews
- 2 field visits to 18 wards
- 1 Solutions Summit with 100 people
- 1 dashboard of participants' survey responses
- 8 video clips from the field, photo library, B roll, edited 5-10 minute video of the process & outcomes.
- 9 SMS surveys sent to 5,513 people

Data Analysis

3 Analytic lenses

Data consists of
- Facilitators' journals
- SMS responses
- Sprockler report
- Workshop & online meeting proceedings
- Narrative interviews
- Design briefs for prototypes

Grounded theory analytic process
- Open code data
- Write memos
- Identify participants' main concern
- Write theoretical memos

The power framework

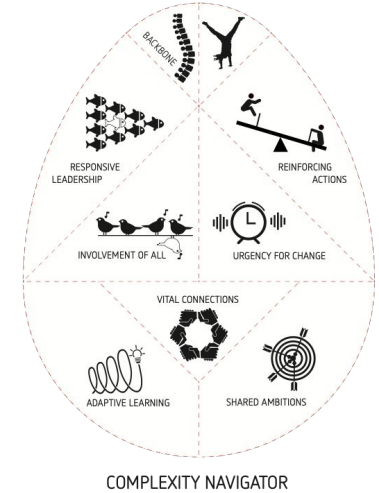| My power [or perceived lack of it] lies where?	My power takes what form? How do I negotiate others power over / with me?
Our collective power is used how to oppress / emancipate?	The States power over citizens is used how?

The INSPIRE framework

1. Implementation & enforcement of laws;
2. Norms & values;
3. Safe environments;
4. Parent & caregiver support;
5. Income & economic strengthening;
6. Response & support services;
7. Education & life skills;
8. Coordination

The Complexity Navigator

COMPLEXITY NAVIGATOR

Research products - summary & dates

- Research design & its innovations: April 21

- Analysis of the prevalence of VAWC, people's reference groups and whether VAWC is maintained by social norms: July 21

- Dashboard of participant responses to SMS surveys: Sept 21

- Analysis of the system's perspective on why & how VAWC manifests: Nov 21

- Description of the U process & reflections on how it is playing out: Dec 21

- Solutions portfolio explaining the assumptions that are being made; the mechanisms put in place & the outcomes being achieved: May 22

- The Solutions Summit documented & a grounded theory developed about how more women & children can be better protected: July 22

- Quarterly newsletters & blogs: Ongoing

Roles

Research team

Dr Kate McAlpine; Fellow of the Institute of Social Innovation at Fielding Graduate University & Primary Investigator.

Dr Matthew Senga; University of Dar es Salaam; Social Network Analysis.

18 students from the Department of Sociology of Dar es Salaam University under the supervision of Dr Matthew Senga who will conduct the household survey & be invited to participate as student observers in the workshops & online learning meetings with WFT-T (at their cost).

Collin Smith; from The UK-based Information Lab, who will conduct data analytics on the SMS responses & create the interactive data visualisations.

Facilitation Team

Facilitators will work in pairs in the same wards, over the whole process. The lead facilitators are

Mathias Mkude from Mwl Nyerere Memorial University, Rita Kahurananga from Kageni Consulting & Njeri Kagucia Omesa.

Their co-facilitators are Janeth Semwene (Citizens 4 Change) & Raphael Denis from Citizens 4 Change & the Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam & AnnaGrace Rwehumbiza from Herdignity consulting.