



Summary Report on three-week training and supervised implementation of Interactive Theatre with VSO Tanzania

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1. Background

In June 2017, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and Theatre for a Change (TfaC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together in partnership, with TfaC providing training and technical support to VSO staff, volunteers and participants in the use of interactive theatre for advocacy and behaviour change related to VSO's adolescent youth sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

VSO Tanzania, along with VSO in Bangladesh, Rwanda, Swaziland and Nepal, was chosen as the site of a 3-week interactive theatre training (hereafter referred to as 'pilot project'). The training was led by Ryan Borcharding and Titan Madomba of Theatre for a Change, and was delivered from 22nd January to 9th February 2018 in Lindi, Tanzania.

Participants took part in a series of 20 skills-building workshops during the first two weeks. These workshops focused on building their capacity to devise, rehearse, perform and facilitate interactive theatre workshops and performances for reducing teen pregnancy in Lindi region.

The third week saw the group organise and deliver community performances and workshops, which aimed to pass on interactive theatre devising and performing skills to their peers. Both trainers supported the group in planning, delivering and evaluating these workshops and performances to ensure a smooth transition from the training into its implementation.



2. Planning

Planning for the pilot project had three main areas:

1. The first involved formative research and content planning, ensuring that the needs of the group and community were integrated into the design of the training, and that training aims and outcomes were clearly defined. A project implementation strategy was also developed, which would see a 'core group' of 20 facilitators trained to facilitate the interactive theatre devising process with their peers in the community. VSO Tanzania staff in both Lindi and Dar es Salaam were involved in the planning stage of the project.
2. The second involved developing a training curriculum and related handouts, which were translated into Swahili before the training began.
3. The third involved logistical planning including participant recruitment, venue hire and travel logistics.

3. The aim and indicators of the training

VSO and TfaC agreed on the following aim and indicators in advance of the training:

Overall (VSO) aim: to reduce incidence of pregnancy among adolescent girls in Lindi region, Tanzania.

Training (TfaC) aim: 20 facilitators develop the ability to devise, perform and facilitate interactive theatre for reducing teen pregnancy in Lindi – and to lead this process with others.

Indicators:

1. Knowledge- No. of facilitators demonstrating knowledge of how to devise, perform and facilitate interactive theatre, and how to lead this process with others.
2. Attitudes- No. of facilitators demonstrating the awareness and confidence to devise, perform and facilitate interactive theatre, and to lead this process with others.
3. Skills- No. of facilitators demonstrating the skills needed to devise, perform and facilitate interactive theatre, and to lead this process with others.

TfaC conducted a baseline and endline assessment before and after the training to measure the achievement of this aim and these indicators. Results of this assessment will be included in the 5-country Pilot Project Impact Assessment that will be produced by the end of March 2018.

4. The group

TfaC trained a group of 20 participants made up of 10 community volunteers (3 females and 7 males) and 10 national volunteers (5 females and 5 males).

The community volunteers came from Lindi and spoke Swahili. The national volunteers came from other regions of Tanzania and spoke both Swahili and English.

The youngest participant was 20; the oldest was 35. The average participant age was 26.

In terms of response to the training, the group as a whole did very well – they were clearly motivated and willing to learn, and had already begun to develop the relationships and team work needed to enable cooperation and trust within the group before the training began.

They also showed great energy in trying out and leading activities, and displayed openness to accepting feedback and making changes to their work.

Their performance skills improved greatly as the training progressed, as did their ability to facilitate learning energisers, devising activities and interactive theatre performances. Specific areas of improvement included their ability to give clear instructions, ask open-ended questions and participate equally as a team.

We are confident that this group will be able to successfully implement this training in their communities with proper guidance and support.





5. Needs Assessment findings

All participants completed a Training Needs Assessment before the training began.

Feedback from this assessment indicates that participants had a range of facilitation experience prior to the start of the training – 5 participants said they had never facilitated before, while 7 participants indicated 3 or more years of experience. On average, the group had 1.5 years of previous facilitation experience.

Of the participants with facilitation experience, many of them listed children, youth and women as the main groups they're working with. Other groups include Makavu Live Group, ARFM, ERFM, Swiss TPH's Health Promotion and Systems Strengthening (HPSS) Project, the Mwalimu Nyerere Idea Forum, Youth of United Nations Association (YUNA), Tanzania Youth Vision Association (TYVA), Save the Children, UMATI and Pathfinder.

Participants indicated that the key SRHR issues for their participants and communities are: early pregnancy, early and forced marriage, lack of family planning, HIV and STIs, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, sexual violence and rape, drug abuse leading to careless sexual behaviour, poor health facilities, lack of SRHR education and a lack of awareness of basic human rights.

Participants indicated that they would like to develop the following skills as facilitators: creativity, the ability to adapt to new environments, leadership skills, inclusiveness, time management, communication skills, the ability to speak in front of large audiences, cooperation, participatory facilitation approaches, neutrality, eye contact, open-mindedness, organisation and interactive skills, relationship and interpersonal skills, understanding of different issues and improving physical posture.

Almost every participant mentioned confidence as a skill that they would like to develop.

Many participants expressed excitement at being able to use this training with their communities. Some of the potential barriers that participants thought they might face when implementing the training included: resistance to/rejection of change from community members, lack of cooperation, language barriers, religious beliefs that underpin harmful social norms, misunderstandings, superstition, (unspecified) political barriers and transport.

These needs were addressed throughout the training in the following ways:

1. *Developing participatory community development skills* – At the start of the training, the group had the impression that they would be producing message-based theatre, which tells audiences what they should and should not do. Once the group learned how to engage audiences in a more participatory way through interactive theatre, these fears about communities resisting or rejecting these messages went away as the group realized that interactive theatre allows social change to be generated from within communities themselves.

2. *Giving the group more leadership responsibility as the training progressed* – The group was given responsibility over leading energisers, activities and the facilitation of performances as the training progressed. This allowed them to develop their confidence as facilitators and leaders, and helped them develop performance and facilitation skills through experimentation, reflection and feedback.
3. *Working at the group's level* – Throughout the training, we worked with each individual facilitator to support them in taking the next step on their facilitation journey. Whether that was learning how to bring a group together for an activity, learning how to turn a closed question into an open one, or learning how to facilitate a live performance with an audience, both new and experienced facilitators were given the chance to further develop and refine their skills.

6. The training

The training covered the following 10 modules over the 3-week, 15 day training period:

1. Team Work and Communication Skills
2. Participatory Approaches to Facilitation
3. Open-Ended Questioning
4. Participatory Approaches to Formative Research
5. How to Devise Stories for Interactive Theatre
6. How to Develop Characters for Interactive Theatre
7. How to Rehearse and Perform Interactive Theatre
8. How to Facilitate Interactive Theatre with an Audience
9. Reflective Learning Practice
10. Implementing Interactive Theatre Performances and Workshops in our Community

7. What went well and what was challenging?

Successes include:

- *The practical nature of the training* – The VSO team in Lindi cited this as a major success of the training. The training was designed to be very physical and practical, and achieved its aim through a combination of exercises and activities designed to build the group's capacity to devise, perform and facilitate their own interactive theatre performances and workshops. There were clear objectives and learning outcomes for each training day, with time to reflect at the end of each day on how these objectives and outcomes were achieved.

- *Participant motivation* – The group was motivated and eager to take part in the training, and to share what they learned with the community and their peers. Group attendance and participation was consistently high each training day.
- *Increasing the confidence and skill level of the group* – The participants’ growth and ability to perform and facilitate interactive theatre was evident via demonstration of these skills during workshops and performances, along with their increased ability to reflect on their work as the training progressed.
- *High level of engagement among project staff in training and implementation* – The trainers felt well-supported throughout the training due to both Mwita Isaya (VSO Project Officer) and Irene Bitumbe (VSO Team Leader) participating in the training from start to finish. This high level of engagement among project staff should help enormously with the organisation, management and monitoring of the quality of the work moving forward.
- *Positive feedback from audience* – The first community performance in Mpilimpili had a noticeable impact on the audience of around 200 people who gathered to watch. During the interactive part of the performance, several women and men volunteered to take on the role of different characters in the drama, and they showed what they could do differently as those characters to change the story for the better. After the performance, one audience member and former VSO volunteer in Lindi wrote an e-mail to project staff praising the intervention and its impact on the community, and urging the work to continue.

Challenges included:

- *Group structure* – Although the group as a whole worked very well together, there were two challenges that emerged related to the group being half national volunteers, half community volunteers:
 - *Language* – The national volunteers spoke both English and Swahili, while the community volunteers spoke only Swahili. The first day of the training, when the trainers asked questions in English, the national volunteers would respond in English, and then their answers were translated into Swahili. This slowed down the training’s delivery, and also made the community volunteers feel slightly inferior to the national volunteers. Starting from Day 2, we decided to ask the whole group to speak only Swahili. This meant that Mwita and Irene only needed to translate into English for the two trainers, which meant the group could work at the pace they wanted to in Swahili without needing to wait for the Swahili translation.



- *Ability* – As the facilitation training became more advanced, it became clear that the majority of national volunteers had the understanding and the confidence to practice facilitating in the workshops, while the majority of community volunteers struggled to understand what they were being asked to do. Several community volunteers withdrew from participation in some activities by the end of the training due to a lack of confidence, despite encouragement from the trainers and other group members. All facilitators during the community performers ended up being national volunteers because no community volunteers felt able to facilitate. Hopefully this will change over time as the community volunteers develop the confidence and understanding needed to facilitate devising workshops and performances.
- *Peer groups* – The team struggled to organise performance groups in their community during the third week of supervised implementation. This was mainly because other youth club members refused to participate in workshops led by their TfaC-trained peers due to hurt feelings about not being chosen for the TfaC training. There was also the perception that the community volunteers who were chosen for the training were being paid to participate. The team tried to mobilize other participants to take part in the workshops during the third week but were unsuccessful due to time.
- *Time management* – The group struggled with punctuality and overall time management, frequently showing up late to workshops at the start of the day and after breaks. Lunch was also served at unpredictable times, which made planning and delivering activities around that time challenging.
- *Gender awareness* – There was a strong sense within the group that the male participants were more capable of participating in training activities than their female counterparts. Some of the men sometimes displayed openly hostile attitudes towards the women in the group – an example of this was on the first day when the group played a game called ‘ball up’, which asked them to keep an inflatable ball in the air for as long as possible using only their hands. Each time the ball dropped, the male participants blamed the female participants, calling them “weak”. At one point, two men even changed their position in the circle to be closer to the female participants in order to “help them” succeed.

The trainers responded by pausing the activity and asking the group what they were noticing about gender and participation. Earlier that day, the group had agreed that equal participation was a key ground rule they wanted to follow, so the trainers reminded the group of this rule, and asked them what they would need to change about their attitudes and behaviours in order to put this rule into practice. Several female participants commented that they felt intimidated and limited by the men’s dominance in the activity, and said that if the men would allow them the chance to



participate equally, they would do a much better job. A few women in the group also said that if they changed their own behaviour by playing the game with more energy and confidence, then this would also allow for more equal participation to unfold.

As the game went on, the women found the confidence to play as equals with the men, paying closer attention to the ball and taking more physical risks to ensure that the ball was kept up in the air. We reflected with the group at the end of the activity about how they managed to change their behaviour, and what affect this had on them as individuals and as a group. Several men commented that playing as equals actually helped the group succeed. This learning, however, would need to be reinforced again and again as the training progressed.

- *Facilitating Touch Tag* – The group found the interactive theatre facilitation process challenging due to the high skill level it requires. By the end of the training, only 1 facilitator could demonstrate an ability to do this successfully. This should change, however, as the group has more practice and becomes more confident and experienced interacting with audiences.

8. Next Steps and Recommendations

Theatre for a Change would recommend the following:

- *Sustainability* – The group has been divided into 5 groups of 4 facilitators each (made up of 2 community volunteers and 2 national volunteers). We suggest that each group develop an action plan for the duration of the project that includes the following points:
 - number and location of planning sessions, workshops and performances each month;
 - specific aims and indicators for these workshops and performances;
 - workshop and performance planning and organising tasks and deadlines; and
 - monitoring strategies and tools to use, and when, and by whom.

The national volunteers are well-positioned to build the capacity of the community volunteers to eventually take over leading the peer group workshops and performances once the national volunteers return home. This can happen by letting the community volunteers take increasing responsibility for the planning, delivery and evaluation of workshops and performances over the coming weeks and months. The national volunteers could also be encouraged to introduce the training to their home communities once they are back, and stay connected to the group through the WhatsApp and Facebook groups that have already been created.



- *Peer groups* – It was agreed at the end of the training that VSO would form their own peer groups rather than using the existing structure of youth clubs in Lindi. This will likely make the groups easier to manage and will also help to ensure their sustainability since many of the youth clubs seem to be hardly functioning due to poor attendance and governance. A peer group database will also be created and managed by the local team.
- *Further facilitation training* – We would recommend further facilitation training for the more serious and committed members of the group – especially once their peer groups are up and running – in 6-12 months’ time. Part of the strategy could involve inviting facilitators to participate in this training who represent target communities in the greater Lindi region, to enable them to take the training back to their communities and implement performances involving their peers. The strategy could also include training in how to use community radio to scale up the reach and impact of this work, since live performances in the more rural areas of Lindi region could prove challenging.
- *Relationship building* – Developing alliances with key stakeholders and power holders in target communities will help in the planning and delivery of interactive performances and support the channelling of enthusiasm and energy generated by the performances into real action in support of preventing teen pregnancy and early marriage. Specifically, the group identified 3 key groups that have tremendous power over adolescent girls’ behaviour: parents, traditional leaders, and men/boys. Developing relationships with these 3 key groups - as well as local government, media and civil society - will increase the project’s advocacy and behavioural change impact on individuals and the wider community.
- *Following up on commitments made by power holders during performances* – Several power holders made commitments at the end of the performances to take action to prevent teen pregnancy in their communities. These commitments should be followed up to ensure that they are being turned into action and having the intended impact.
- *Global VSO-TfaC webinar to coordinate MEL strategy and tools for 5 pilot projects* – This will support each office in developing their MEL plan and will hopefully save time by avoiding duplication of resources.

9. Feedback from Participants taken from Evaluation Forms

Having read the Evaluation Forms which the participants completed on the final afternoon of the two-week training, feedback is mostly very positive, with the average score for each

section as follows (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree):

Statement	Average score
1. The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	4.8
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged.	5.0
3. The topics covered were relevant to me.	4.7
4. The content was organized and easy to follow.	4.5
5. The materials distributed were helpful.	4.8
6. This training experience will be useful in my work.	4.9
7. The trainers were knowledgeable about the training topics.	4.8
8. The trainers were well prepared.	5.0
9. The training objectives were met.	4.4

When asked how this training impacted them personally and professionally, participants responded in the following ways:

“The training has helped me understand how I should challenge my own attitudes towards causes and effects of early pregnancies and how my attitude can drive my actions in supporting girls to overcome this problem. Professionally I am aware and confident that I can address and lead this process in the community and how to help the community find lasting solutions and behaviour change.”

“The training has helped me to increase my confidence and to share with my friends and the community. I have also developed facilitation skills and ability to encourage equal participation.”

“The training was a great platform for exploring new ways of facilitation and developing confidence in theatre performances. It has helped me to be a good team player and a leader.”



“The training has built a lot of confidence and the spirit of daring in me. It has made me to be more creative than before and taught me how to work in a team and achieve our goals. It has also helped me to know the difference between teaching and facilitation.”

“The training has helped to be flexible and try to apply new skills in theatre performances. Professionally it has helped me increase my self-confidence and ability to work in a team.”

10. Conclusion

It is clear that this training was very successful, both in terms of its impact on the participants, and enabling them to have impact on the communities they serve. At the time of writing, the group has just performed in Mtwara at VSO’s annual conference involving all staff, international and national volunteers, and one youth/ICS team of over 100 people. Feedback has been very positive, and their performance seems to have catalysed new learning about the needs and aspirations of young people, and how theatre can bring communities together towards the achievement of common development goals.

The group was an absolute joy to work with – their spirits always high, and their energy never ending. They will need continued support and further capacity building to reach their full potential as facilitators and interactive theatre practitioners. This can be done through a combination of monitoring/mentoring, gaining practical experience facilitating workshops and performances, reflecting on and learning from those experiences, and receiving further, more advanced facilitation training.

We look forward to following and supporting the group however we can, and building on the success of this pilot project together.

