

PRACTICE BRIEF

“HOUSE OF LOVE” MENTORSHIP APPROACH STRENGTHENED CHILD-PARENT BONDING AT REUNIFICATION FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN RISKY ENVIRONMENTS OF DODOMA CITY.



Context

Research evidence on healthy relationships between children and parents in social economically deprived environments point to the need for bonding and attachment in early childhood (Cooper et al, 2009)¹. Moreover, some children in Tanzania for different reasons are living under alternative care arrangements instead of natural family environments, which has deprived them of emotional connection and bonding with their parents.

In 2011, Tumaini Foundation in collaboration with Amani Center and Watoto Foundation conducted violence against children assessment on institutionalized children in Babati district, Arusha. Assessment findings

showed that 72 out of 84 children in total; 49 male and 35 females had their families in existence; 70% were from poor families, lacked emotional support and were unhappy living in institutional care. Findings further revealed that parents relinquished their child care role to orphanages with a perception that children would live better lives where food, clothes and good housing were assured. On the basis of assessment findings, Tumaini Foundation which operated an orphanage center at the time opted to set up the Care and Education initiative as a start of its program shift from institutional care for children to supporting and protecting vulnerable children within communities in Ihumwa, Gairo and Kiyerele wards of Dodoma from all forms of violence.

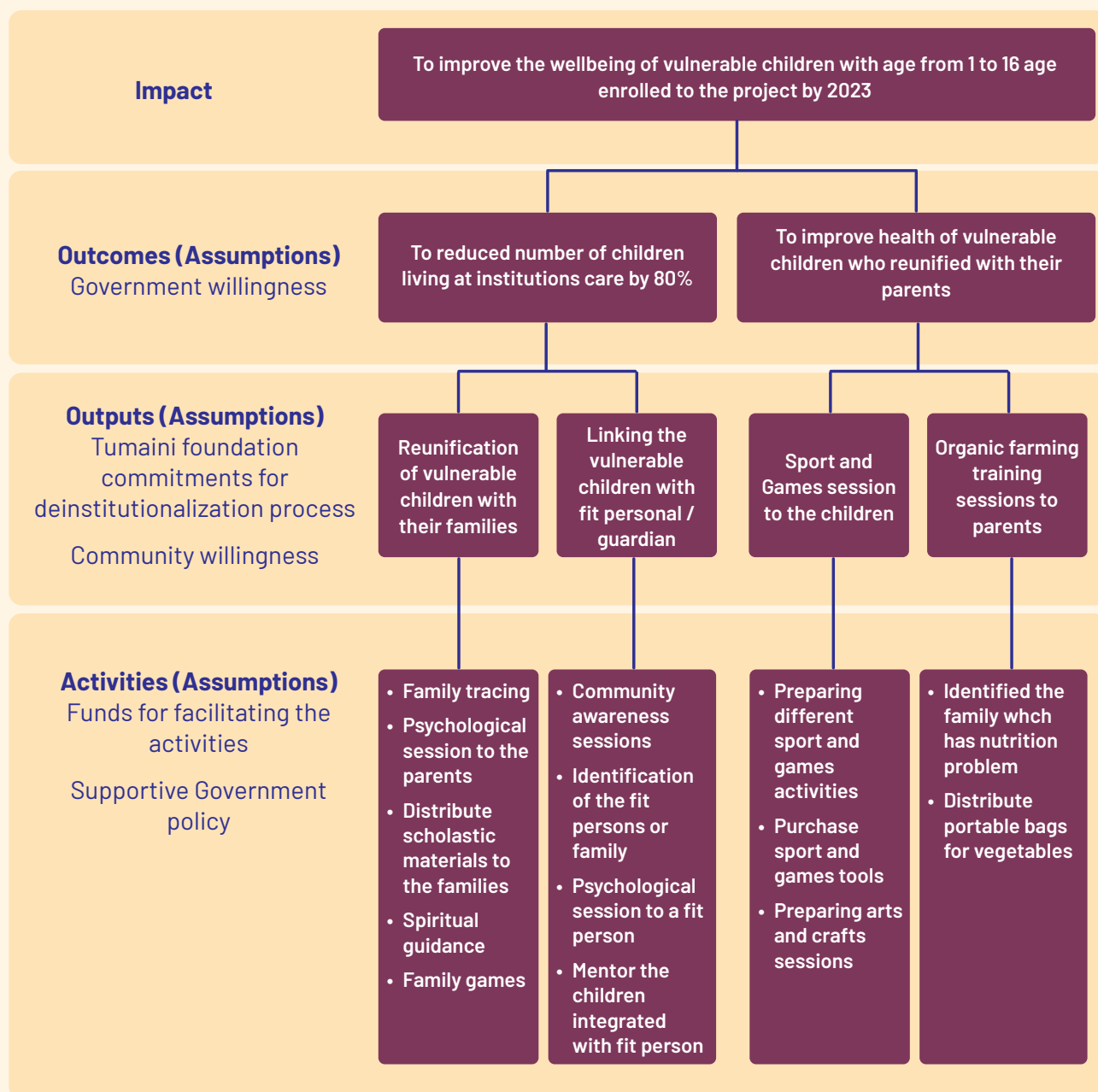
¹ Cooper, P. J., Tomlinson, M., Swartz, L., Landman, M., Moltano, C., Stein, A., McPherson, K., & Murray, L. (2009). Improving quality of mother-infant relationship and infant attachment in socioeconomically deprived community in South Africa: Randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*, 338, b974

Tumaini Care and Education Initiative

The Tumaini Foundation served Care and Education Initiative all kinds of neglected and abandoned children through provision of age specific services. Under 5 toddlers abandoned by the roadsides, market places and dumping areas received nutritional support within Tumaini Foundation short term care center. Children aged 10-15 years from a considered risk environment such as street life were reintegrated into families that had been prepared psychologically to receive them through the 'home sweet home' Initiative.

The home sweet home Initiative started in 2019 as a step towards deinstitutionalization of children and was implemented through a mentorship program led by Tumaini Foundation social workers. The social workers visited families of children rescued from risky environments in advance of reunification, and had weekly mentorship sessions with children under temporary care at Tumaini center.

Tumaini Foundation Care Education Initiative Theory of change



Within the home Sweet home initiative, the 'attachment theory' introduced to Tumaini Foundation by US-Germany volunteers was integrated on basis of its strength in stimulation and bonding for children separated from their natural families as it was known for its ability to increase children's interest to meet their parents and made reunification process easy and successful.

Subsequently, local communities in the project area were sensitized on need for their direct involvement in mentorship and social support for children rescued from risky living environments outside family care through sessions referred to as, 'House of Love'. Interested community members confirmed by Tumaini Foundation as FIT Persons for child mentorship were recruited under house of Love and trained in psychosocial support. The Community FIT person – child counselling sessions under House of Love were conducted as part of preparation process for children reunification with their natural (biological) families. House of Love activities were guided by a manual developed by Tumaini Foundation.

Overall, a total of 350 children within the age range of 1-16 years from Ihumwa, Gairo and Kiyerele wards of Dodoma City enrolled in Tumaini Foundation Care and Education Initiative.

Of the total children enrolled, 120 were registered under House of Love mentorship program where spiritual guidance, family games, discussions and problem-solving activities were undertaken by community members. The community – child engagement within House of Love mentorship led to bonding between children and their community mentors which made it easy for them later on to bond with their natural families at reunification. Additionally, the mentorship imparted positive values useful in promoting peaceful co-existence.

Results and Change in Violence against Children

Data from routine monitoring of violence against children enrolled under Tumaini House of Love mentorship approach across Ihumwa, Gairo and Kiyerele wards of Dodoma City indicated that out of 120 children enrolled to House of love program, 96 children remained stable under care by their families.

Additionally, there was observed reduction in all forms of violence against children. Out of 350 children identified at the start of Tumaini Foundation Care and Education project as experiencing multiple forms of abuse; the number dropped to 66 at programme end line assessment.

Ward name	Type of Violence	Before Year 2011	After Year 2023	Difference
Ihumwa	Sexual abuse	33	4	29
	Physical abuse	148	46	102
	Neglect	9	2	7
Gairo	Sexual abuse	25	2	23
	Physical abuse	88	8	80
	Neglect	2	0	2
Kiyerele	Sexual abuse	10	1	9
	Physical abuse	31	2	29
	Neglect	4	1	3

The difference realized when subjected to a T-test shows a P-Value lower than 0.05 indicating that there was significant effect on violence reduction as a result of Tumaini Intervention.

Description	Before	After
Mean (M)	38.8889	7.333333
Standard Deviation (SD)	45.8414	13.84839
P-Value		0.015

Tumaini multi-pronged approach that combined four program strategies (Nutrition, home sweet Home, House of Love, and sports/games), proved effective in reducing violence against children in the project area. The findings indicate that the average level of violence before intervention was $M=38$ with $SD=45$ as compared after intervention where the average level of violence was reduced to $M=7.3$ with $SD=13.8$. The average magnitude of change was 31.5 with $P\text{-value}=0.015$ which confirms that the intervention had a positive effect with a significant change.

Programming Lessons

The synergy of support strategies around a core program approach as the case was in Tumaini multi-pronged approach registers greater results in violence prevention, whereby violence reduced from 190 to 52 (72 %) in Ihumwa ward; 115 to 10 (91%) in Gairo ward; and 45 to 4 (91%) in Kiyerelo ward.

Information sources:

1. Tumaini Foundation (2011) Tumaini Baseline Assessment Report.
2. Tumaini Foundation (2019) Tumaini Midline assessment report.

3. Tumaini Foundation (2023) Tumaini End line Assessment report.
4. Tumaini Foundation (2011) House of Love Mentorship Program for vulnerable children Guideline.
5. Watoto Foundation (2011) Deinstitutionalization of children Report

Author: Tumaini Foundation & IIDC VaCNets Virtual hub (2023), "House of Love" mentorship approach strengthened child-parent bonding at reunification for children living in risky environments of Dodoma city.

Alignment to INSPIRE Seven strategies: Parent & Caregiver support

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