Strengthening Child-Caregiver Relationships: Linking Evidence and Practice

Collaborative Action To Improve Young Pastoralist Children’s Early Care and Education and In cooperate Parenting Education

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Who is MPDI?

- MPDI is an NGO supporting Maasai pastoralist communities in northern Tanzania, to improve parenting knowledge for pastoralist community parents and their young children’s on:-
  - Early Care and Education
  - Children access, retention and completion of primary education
  - Strengthening skilful parenting knowledge among maasai parents

- MPDI values Maasai community culture, and supports pastoralist’s development by starting from who they are, acknowledging what they know and experience, and respecting what they want.
Why MPDI focuses on Maasai children’s Early Care & Education and Parenting Education?

1. During community participatory research before started the programme, Community and District stakeholders identified:
   a. Significant challenges
   b. Important opportunities for improving Maasai children’s ECCE in the families and communities and to ensure their smooth transition to formal school
   c. An opportunity of using elders as resources people to inheriting and strengthening acceptable traditionally parenting knowledge among Maasai communities.

For example,

- **Women explained that “…we know how to care for our children, but we have no time!”**

- **Elders admitted that children’s informal education is declining, and government agreed that, informal education is also an important foundation for formal education.**

- **In some communities, there is no grandparents who can guide young teenagers on good acceptable traditionally parenting education**

- **We learned that communities ARE interested in formal education for their children, but schools are far, and the syllabus is not relevant to their culture.**

- **Hearing the research findings, different stakeholders began to realise the importance of their learning to working together.**
MPDI also focuses on ECCE and Parenting Education because …

2. Early Childhood is included in Tanzania’s National Strategy for Growth & Reduction of Poverty.

3. The government of Tanzania committed to the six EFA goals, including Goal No. 1 for ECCE …
   - “expand and improve comprehensive ECCE, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” 0 - 8 years of age.

4. In some communities, there is no enough grandparents who act as resource people to guide young teenagers on good and acceptable traditionally parenting education.

What steps have we taken?

- At the launch of the participatory community research, a large number of stakeholders from community to national level, including the Director of Primary Education, endorsed communities’ call for different stakeholders to work together to “… bring formal and informal education together to develop a person who is confident in both”

- As a result, MPDI developed different proposals and share with development partners such as BvLF, GFC, ICS to mention few that aimed to …

   Improve pastoralist community parenting knowledge and improving as well the quality of ECCE for young pastoralist children, through nurturing a collaborative commitment between families, communities, and cross-sectoral service providers.
What have we achieved?

1. When we started ECD programme on 2005, there were 5 pre-school programmes in the Ward, with a total of 180 children. Today there are:-
   - 40 Community ECD centers involving 3,200 children, aged 3 – 10 years;
   - More than 2,300 children have passed ECD centers and joined formal schools today
   - We have one Skilful Parenting centre which serving more than 500 parents and community is using it as multipurpose centre. It serve as a community centre and uses as adult education class, HIV awareness raising centre, livestock upgrading training centre etc
   - We have 30 trained Community Facilitators working in the community
   - We have managed to form 40 parents groups and provide initiate parenting training while waiting the finalization of parenting manual with ICS. Community have been responsible for designing, constructing, managing, staffing and resourcing their ECD Centres, therefore their sense of ownership is very strong;

... Achievements ...

2. Community ECD Centers are an integral part of community culture, therefore programmes are locally informed and resourced. For example, ...

- The centres have community nominated teachers, as well as male and female elders as resource people
- The centres use the Maasai language, with Swahili introduced to prepare children for formal school.
- Organization use the centres on providing training for traditional/opinion leaders, community facilitators etc
3. Documentation of community knowledge, about traditional care and education practices has been ongoing, and phase I is collated in a DVD.

4. MPDI started documenting acceptable traditional parenting knowledge which is in the process of reviewing by opinion leaders and TBAs for approval to be collated in a DVD and shared widely.

\[ \text{... Achievements ...} \]

5. Community ECD centres have become important meeting points for Community members, Opinion leaders, Clinic and School staff, and Ward officials.

For example,

- Staff from dispensaries attend Community ECD centres on a regular basis to monitor children’s health, and provide health education services. This includes providing mobile clinics services. Nurses now report that they are reaching more young children than ever before.

- Primary school teachers act as resource people for the centres. This helps build stronger links between primary schools and communities, and contributes to young children’s smoother transition to school.

- Teachers are enrolling children to start school easily compared to previous where parents nominate one child to be enrolled even if he has many who are school age.
6. There has been a significant increase in the enrolment of 7 - 8 year old children in primary school compare to when we started a programme.

7. Following to programme lobbying and Advocacy, Village, Ward and District leaders have agreed to include ECD issues in their plans.

8. Monduli District Council, and the neighbouring Longido District, have called on MPDI to take the lead in expanding ECD and Skillful Parenting programme across both districts.

9. For the recognition of MPDI ECD initiative in Monduli District targeting marginalized pastoralist community, government have appointed Monduli District to be one of the eight nominated districts to pilot National Integrated ECD Initiative.

... Achievements.

Key Challenges:-

1. Communities have shown their commitment to establishing, resourcing and managing their ECD Centres. However, they are asking the District Council and others services to …

- Contribute to paying regular allowances for community-nominated ECD centre teachers, to assure the sustainability of the programmes.

- Support training of community ECD centre teachers and committees.

- Support in-service training for Standard 1 & 2 primary school teachers, to ensure children’s smooth transition to school.

- Contribute to providing food and water at the centres when circumstances are difficult.

- To pay for adult education teachers allowances to continuing teaching adult class. Illiterate rate in this maasai community is over 80%.
...Key Challenges...

2. Funding limitations...

- Have limited our progress in the ongoing documentation of community knowledge, beliefs and practices regarding ECD issues.

- Have limited our progress on inviting traditional / opinion leaders, elders and TBAs to review the documented acceptable traditionally parenting education and collate in the DVD and share widely.

- Are blocking opportunities for expansion these programmes (ECD and Skilful Parenting) to other Wards and Districts.

Forward Plans:

1. To work in partnership with resource people from communities level, Village and Ward officials, District Council and others stakeholders to:-

- Review and do necessary amendments to the developed locally–appropriate ECD Curriculum and teachers guidelines.

- Organizing ECD teachers and committees training to be able to manage and run their centres.

- With ICS, to finalize the development of Skilful Parenting manual to be used by community facilitators on organizing training for parent groups.

- Organizing training for community facilitators to be able to lead parents groups and traditional leaders to do community sensitization.

Mzee Kisyoki, who is one of community facilitators says:-

“If you have formal education but no culture, you are like half a person”.
2. To support family and community capacity development in Early Care and Education through locally-developed …

- Parenting Education programmes targeting families and communities.
  
  “There are resource people in the community available now for documenting our skilful parenting and child rearing knowledge, but with time, changes occur and we may not have old people for very long, who knows the details of these education. …...”. Says Mzee Lemomo.

- Adult Education (tailor made training).

- ECD centre committee training.

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Recomendations:

The 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report highlights that …

EFA means education for all, not just for some. It means all six goals, not just those related to primary school.

In order to realise EFA Goal No 1, we fully support the recommendations of this report that call for …

1. A high level political endorsement of ECCE.

2. An increase in national financing for ECCE, targeting the disadvantaged, including pastoralist children; and …

3. Donors to prioritise ECCE as the foundation to achieve EFA.
Conclusion:

As Mzee Lembira who is one of the Maasai traditional elder highlighted during community research that:

“We have discussed and agreed that it is important to bring formal and informal education together, to care for and bring up our children....

Let us then do it today and not wait till tomorrow because we don’t know what will happen tomorrow and things are changing quickly.

Our role is to take immediate action”

Our experiences have convinced us that, collaborative action led by communities themselves, is the way forward for ECCE and Parenting Education programme.

We invite others to join hands with MPDI and the Monduli District Council, as we continue to work with communities, other service providers and planners to improve young pastoralist children’s early care and education and Parenting Education.

Asanteni Sana / Thank You Very Much