

# **MVC/PSW Program: Successes, Lessons Learned and Program Recommendations**

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## **A. Program Successes**

PSWs are providing a valuable contribution to the management of MVC in the villages of Dodoma, Iringa, Mtwara and Mwanza regions. They are filling a gap in the current social welfare service system. More than 70% of PSWs provide psycho-social support (PSS) and service referrals for MVC and their caregivers; we recognize there is a need to assess the impact of introducing a PSW and the quality of their psychosocial support, care and case management on the lives of MVC and their families. The following **successes** have been recorded (M&E data available to substantiate the following):

- Success in linking MVC to educational resources;
- Success in linking MVC to health resources;
- Success in inspiring village and ward leaders to establish “community funds” to support work on behalf of MVC;
- Success in co-creating work plans, crafted together by PSWs and ward officials to work collaboratively in the provision of social welfare services;
- Success reflected by PSW participation in WDC meetings and working with MVCC committees;
- Success in PSW trainees liaising effectively with other OVC/MVC actors in the district, both NGO volunteers as well as village and ward leadership

In addition, the provision of social welfare services has become a national priority; the central government has made numerous public commitments and its importance is taken seriously by some districts, for example:

- Significant trend of budget increase for MVC/PSW activities (tracing from 2009-2012)
- The government has significantly increased the numbers of Social Welfare Officers recruited and hired at District Council level especially in the regions with the PSWs
- There is even a start in recruiting Social Welfare Assistants (SWA). SWA posts were recently advertised by the LGA in Ruangwa District, Lindi.
- MVC actors recognize the importance of LGA relationships and program ownership by government and are seeking guidance on how to make these work successfully

## **B. Lessons Learned**

The following lessons learned are culled from three years of program implementation to develop a cadre of Para-social workers in four regions and to strengthen the local government infrastructure necessary for sustainability.

### **1. LGA systems strengthening needs to go hand in hand with service activities**

- Working together with LGAs on the process of PSW programming (sensitization, planning, training, follow up, M&E) is crucial for the potential continuation and support of PSW activities at the village level
  - Working with government partners at all levels (national, regional district and community level) is paramount for program success, however messages and program information need to be consistent
  - District Councils are willing to support PSWs, especially if there is a co-funding arrangement, and when planning coincides with the LGA budget cycle. District social welfare units do not have enough budget and resources to perform their functions (from their own sources) but when Councils are sensitized, they are willing to budget for MVC and support PSW
  - District Councils can become advocacy agents. They have advocated for other programs to utilize PSWs rather than develop and train new volunteers, for example in Njombe DC, the authorities have encouraged Pamoja TUWALEE (AfriCare) to not recruit new volunteers but use PSWs in their service programs
2. **Advocacy needs to be a dedicated program component** (with dedicated human and financial resources)
- MVC and social welfare issues need constant advocacy. Program staff, or MVC actors/representatives, need to consistently voice MVC issues, identify ways to support PSW, be part of planning for social welfare services; advocate to merge MVC planning process with LGA/O&OD planning process to capture LGA attention and reliable resources.
  - Formation and training of District Advocacy Teams has helped the program to advocate for social welfare services to MVC more effectively (improved LGA coordination and dedicated pool of resources)
  - The PSW network (PASONET) has contributed a much needed voice of the community; the network can stimulate and facilitate district interest. Through its formation and support PASONET can spearhead the MVC agenda at district and community levels. There is a need to strengthen PASONETs systems through organization development for sustainability.
3. **PSW need support from professional Social Workers.** PSWs need frequent and timely follow up on services rendered; the goal is supervision by a professionally trained and certified social worker.
- Need to strengthen supervision; to reinforce content learned during training, reinforce use of standard tools for managing individual situations and strive for quality counseling. Early in the program (2009), the need for individuals to be identified with supervisory responsibilities was recognized and curriculum for supervisors improved. Individuals with the bigger picture, supervisors, have the opportunity to identify program challenges in a timely way; for example, it took some time for program management to realize that information was not being reported (push) or collected/demanded (pull) by the district.

- PSWs need coaching and feedback; Need to identify individuals who can support PSWs especially in the initial management of sensitive cases. Despite revised training curriculum PSWs need reinforcement in key content and skills in areas such as gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and child protection.
- Recognize that PSWs and supervisors work in a challenging environment frequent with long distances between villages. This has proved to limit the ability of supervisors to visit PSWs timely and routinely. Need creative cost-effective solutions to transport limitations. PSWs need the tools to be successful.
- Manage local and government expectations of what PSWs can do. PSWs are not professionals and are not technically prepared to manage difficult individual cases directly but should be facilitated to offer the first minimum services and link to appropriate support. They provide a critical resource to the community but accountability should be related to referrals and appropriate linkages.
- PSWs need district back-up on sensitive issues like child protection(e.g. with cases of sexual abuse)

#### **4. PSW Identification**

- Does every village need a volunteer?
- Does every PSW need to be a Form Four leaver? The program needs to revisit identification criteria for PSW with all MVC actors. The current Form Four standard does not provide room for other volunteers with existing experience of working with children or building the skills of other volunteers already in the community. Lowering the educational standard might increase the number of female volunteers; however it limits the potential for PSWs to pursue a career path and job opportunities as SWAs. (Would it be cost effective and/or feasible to consider fewer trained volunteer PSWs working with many volunteers with lower education level who still receive some basic training?)

#### **5. NGO Partnership**

- Partnering with local NGOs, including other USAID-funded implementing partners, at all levels is important for linking PSW within existing system of community services and potential organizational resources
- Identifying local NGO networks needs to be a proactive activity (by PSWs) following that initial mapping that occurs during training
- USAID-funded OVC implementing partners recognize the role of PSW in supporting MVC and are recruiting PSW in their program where feasible; however, these groups do not have the budget to train PSWs to the standard of one PSW based in every village.

## 6. Need for Ongoing Community Sensitization

- The community has high expectations of the PSW in terms of financial and material support; when PSWs do not provide direct support in relation to community expectations, the community may not cooperate, withhold information and support.
- Active MVC Committees can advocate for MVC and PSWs. In Iringa Region, District Councils have formulated volunteer MVCC in each village. As a result there is high community awareness on MVC issues compared to Dodoma and Mwanza regions. There may be lessons to learn for replication.
- In Mwanza region especially in rural areas, most MVC are still cared within the extended family despite the high poverty at family levels. Family-focused economic strengthening initiatives should be given a priority where feasible.

## C. Program Recommendations

The following recommendations are both short-term and longer term. Several can be incorporated into the 2012/2013 program implementation year; others entail change in the current program design and need dedicated resources. The development of the national SW Workforce strategy should address recommendations that entail systems strengthening.

These recommendations are aimed at enhancing identified best practices and addresses key challenges. The following address advocacy at all levels, support of the implementation of NCPA, enhancing and replicating PSW best practices, linking MVC with other government and community initiatives including economic strengthening, child protection, mitigation of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS prevention.

- Develop simple job aides for PSWs
- Continue to strengthen monitoring and reporting processes
- Develop some a case book to capture individual, albeit qualitative, stories
- Strengthen role of the RSWO. This position needs to provide more support to districts for supervising PSWs and MVC identification and services. Potentially add review of PSWs as part of RSWO responsibilities. Strengthen RSWO engagement in monitoring and reporting
- Establish a focal person, a 'mentor' at within the region to work with RSWO to reinforce responsibilities and help reinforce SWO responsibilities at regional and district levels
- Develop a series of exchange visits between districts, particular to demonstrate the how the work of a district advocacy team can be successful
- Develop multiple advocacy strategies:
  - Advocacy at ward level, Need to avoid duplicating committees or take advantage of existing committees to advocate for MVC and PSWs

- Incorporate advocacy strategies that target key policy makers across different central and sectoral ministries consistent with LGA advocacy activities;
- Include advocacy at national level for the need to structure social welfare units and the provided services in a consistent fashion across districts;
- While advocacy for social welfare planning and budgeting with LGAs continues; there is a need for increased mobilization for community funding schemes to supplement the formal and annual LGA budget. These schemes could assess available opportunities eg. TASAF, WDF, PEDEP/kilimo kwanza and link with MVC.
- Increase community level advocacy and sensitization to counter the belief of some communities that NGOs are the entities with responsibility to support MVC;
- Given the identified gap in PSW supervision, design coaching and mentoring guide for trained supervisors and/or Social Welfare Assistants once in place.
- Build the capacity of PASONET to mobilize resources, and develop strategic links with TASWA.
- Collaborate with ISW to assess the social welfare gaps and relevant training needs of NGOs and other community organizations (or individuals) working with MVC; design inservice training package accordingly.
- Continue to revitalize MVCC in those areas where not active and facilitate PSW to assist MVC identification process
- Strengthen and/or link income generation activities for poor families to strengthen their access to resources (link with related activities planned within the NCPA II)
- Develop tracking system to capture PSWs who leave the program (especially in urban areas) to potential link them with relevant programs in their new location
- Need to clarify expectations of role of USAID-funded Pamoja Tuwalee programs. The anticipated collaboration with Pamoja Tuwalee programs hasn't reached the expected results; there is a need to invite IP's during MVC program review meeting and accommodate their concerns and refine collaboration strategies.
- Some regions/districts was merged/split e.g Geita, Mwanza, Iringa and Njombe; there is a need to orient the new leadership on the MVC/PSW interventions.
- Design a strategic link for PSWs to access programs at the Kisangara Training Institute and back to the LGA for recruitment hiring as a SWA. Other NGOs need to collaborate with the current ISW, DSW and THRP partnership for this certificate program (to be reflected in the SWW strategy); they could provide scholarships, hire certificate grates as Social Welfare Assistants and provide opportunities for field practica.