Theory on Demand #55
Communication and Social Change in Africa: Selected Case Studies

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1. COMMUNICATIVE INTERFACES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: TWO CASE STUDIES OF YOUTH ADVOCACY IN TANZANIA

CATALIN BRYLLA AND ROSE REUBEN

Introduction

How does positive social change relate to 'communicative interfaces' in advocacy initiatives that aim to improve the wellbeing of marginalized social groups? This chapter defines a 'communicative interface' as a nexus of contact through connection and interaction between different social groups, which results in the bidirectional production, consumption, and exchange of information. In terms of our case studies of advocating for the rights of young people with disabilities and young women in Tanzania, communicative interfaces have been used to challenge rigid, binary structures of identity and belonging, [1] in particular the binaries of ability-disability, European-African, privileged-disadvantaged, heard– silenced voices, and men-women. Such structures pose significant obstacles to social change, which is why our case studies demonstrate that rigid social group categories do not have to be singular and fixed but can be intersectional and transient. In this sense, interfaces of communication can strategically mediate dynamic configurations between different groups that connect and communicate with each other [2]. This is a prerequisite for social change that benefits the youth population in Tanzania.

The situation of young people in Tanzania is influenced by a variety of factors, including historical, economic, and social aspects. Tanzania has a relatively young population, with a significant percentage of the population being under the age of 30. This youthful demographic presents both opportunities and challenges. While it signifies a potential workforce, it also highlights the importance of addressing youth issues. The youth population aged 15 to 35 represents 34% of the total national population[3], but much of this youth faces economic marginalization due to high levels of unemployment and underemployment [4]. The lack of access to quality education, vocational training, and job opportunities contributes to their economic vulnerability. These barriers particularly affect the two vulnerable communities addressed in our case studies: people with disabilities and women.

1 Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Ingrid Brudvig, eds., *Mobilities, Icts and Marginality in Africa: Comparative Perspectives* (Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press, 2016).

2 Cees Leeuwis and Noelle Aarts, 'Rethinking Communication in Innovation Processes: Creating Space for Change in Complex Systems', *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension* 17, no. 1 (2011): 21–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/1389224X.2011.536344.

3 Rogers Rugeiyamu, 'The Tanzania Housing and Population Census 2022: A Panacea for Local Service Delivery and Development Drawbacks', *Local Administration Journal* 15, no. 1 (2022): 1–13.

4 Edwin Philbert, 'Factors Influencing Youth Unemployment in Tanzania' (The Open University of Tanzania, 2016).

The education, employment opportunities, and chances in life for people with disabilities are adversely affected in an ongoing vicious cycle of poverty in East African countries.[5] Low awareness and sensitivity to disability issues by government policy makers and other stakeholders intensifies this, alongside a lack of political will [6]. This is exacerbated by a social stigma based on misconceptions, underpinned by traditional cultural and religious beliefs [7] that result in marginalization and discrimination. This is analogous to women in Tanzania. Despite young women representing a higher youth population of 18.1%, compared to 16.5% of young men,[8] they face limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities due to patriarchal structures.[9] Early marriages and teenage pregnancies contribute to disrupting their educational and economic prospects.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, when considering the intersection of age, gender and disability, young women with disabilities face amplified social challenges and marginalization[10] because the mentioned negative implications overlap incrementally. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where access to basic services, infrastructure, economic opportunities, quality education and healthcare are lacking, in contrast to urban areas.[11] Tanzania has made efforts to tackle these issues and reduce youth marginalization through initiatives that center on education, healthcare and employment generation in tourism and agriculture. An example is the 'Building a Better Tomorrow Youth Initiative in Agribusiness' (BBT-YIA) which services young men and women, including those with disabilities. However, there is still work to be done in creating an inclusive and equitable society where all youth, whether male, female, with or without a disability, have equal opportunities and can actively contribute to the country's development.

Our first case study is the Youth Disability Advocacy and Research Network (YDAR),[12] on which co-author Brylla is Co-Investigator. This is a 2023-2024 collaborative project between Bournemouth University and ADD International, a global disability justice organization. Funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), this project facilitates active

5 Department for International Development's Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-annual-report-and-accounts-2018-to-2019

6 Brigitte Rohwerder, 'Disability Stigma in Developing Countries. K4D Helpdesk Report.' (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2018).

7 Mojdeh Bayat, 'The Stories of "Snake Children": Killing and Abuse of Children with Developmental Disabilities in West Africa', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 59, no. 1 (2015): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12118; Lily Kpobi and Leslie Swartz, '"That Is How the Real Mad People Behave": Beliefs About and Treatment of Mental Disorders by Traditional Medicine-Men in Accra, Ghana', *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 64, no. 4 (2018): 309–16, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764018763705; Rohwerder, 'Disability Stigma in Developing Countries. K4D Helpdesk Report.'

8 Rugeiyamu, 'The Tanzania Housing and Population Census 2022'.

9 Iffat Idris, 'Barriers to Women's Economic Inclusion in Tanzania. K4D Helpdesk Report.' (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2018).

10 Julie King, Nicole Edwards, and Hanna Watling, 'Leadership for Change: Pathways to Activism for African Women with Disability', *Disability & Society* 38, no. 7 (2021): 1164–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1994373.

11 Idris, 'Barriers to Women's Economic Inclusion in Tanzania. K4D Helpdesk Report.'

12 https://www.youth-disability.org/

communication between disability activists, academics, international campaigning organizations and disability networks in order to challenge the stigma of disability and change practices and policies that have marginalized the youth disability community in Tanzania and globally. The focus in this chapter will be on YDAR's support of two disability advocacy campaigns through the pioneering model of participatory grant making.

The second case study is the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA),[13] of which co-author Reuben is Executive Director. This is a membership, nonprofit and non-partisan organization registered under non-government law to accelerate national and global initiatives that promote the human rights of woman, girls and children through the use of media. For 36 years TAMWA has been an influential organization in Tanzania, advocating women's wellbeing, gender equality and the destigmatisation of women through various communicative interfaces by strategically employing different platforms and tools to engage with and educate the public. In this chapter we will focus on TAMWA's 2015 anti-FGM advocacy campaign.

The aim of this chapter is to formulate a tentative conceptual framework for studying the communicative interfaces established through the work of YDAR and TAMWA, all of which have facilitated participatory research, knowledge exchange, networking, mentorship and capacity building in the pursuit of social change. These interfaces have been connection and interaction points between a variety of social groups based on different demographics, such as institution (e.g. universities, NGOs, broadcasters), geography (e.g. West, South, rural, urban), nationality (e.g. British, American, Tanzanian), culture (e.g. European, African), bodily affordances (e.g. people with and without disabilities), age (e.g. young, middle-aged, old), gender (e.g. male, female) and profession (e.g. academics, activists, media makers).

The Communicative Interface

According to Galloway,[14] an interface is generally an autonomous zone of activity with particular effects. Thus, interfaces need to be studied not as a thing but as an effect. As such, communicative interfaces can be considered 'spaces of change' at which information and communication flow between a range of different stakeholders.[15] Such interfaces can include a wide range of types, such as technological, social, material, immaterial, virtual, objective-driven and process-driven interfaces. They can have a range of aims, such as knowledge exchange and capacity building, and they can have various constitutive factors, such as affordances, physicality, space, time and permeability. Understanding these cannot only illuminate the relationships between the components, but also how these relationships are generated, negotiated and constantly redefined, and how ultimately social change results from this. Thus, our focus is to analyze communicative interfaces in terms of how the participants on each side of the interface undergo some kind of change through interacting, and how that generates an overall change for the target community. After all, interactivity at the interface is transforma-

13 https://tamwa.org/a/

14 *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

15 Leeuwis and Aarts, 'Rethinking Communication in Innovation Processes', 5.

tional, relational and generative.[16] To explore this, we need to map the *social groups* involved in an interface and the change they experience.

Individuals tend to categorize themselves and others as belonging to various groups, based on gender, ethnicity, profession, religion or any other significant affiliation. Therefore, group belonging is an essential part of a person's sense of social identity distinguishing them from another person's social identity [17]. However, people are amalgamations of multiple, intersected social identities, such as age, disability, gender, ethnicity and religion. This is especially pertinent when considering the heterogenous, lived experiences of young, marginalized Tanzanian communities, and how overlapping social identities can exacerbate the stigma (e.g. young, disabled women) or can provide opportunities to challenge stigma (e.g. young, disabled activists).[18]

Furthermore, social identity formation is always contextual, based on how a particular situation crystallizes the perception of contrasting or matching social identities in the situation's participants [19]. For instance, in her work for TAMWA's FGM project, Reuben's interaction with young girls resulted in salient identities of her being middle-aged, a journalist, a researcher and an activist, in contrast to the girls. However, the overlap of their female identity, and the resulting sharing of numerous lived experiences, played a significant role in facilitating the interaction. In the YDAR project, Brylla's encounter with his Tanzanian collaborators was framed by disability advocacy in Tanzania. This meant that during this encounter and all related interfaces, he was aware of his social identity categories of white, Westerner, academic without disabilities, in contrast to the Black, Tanzanian, activists with disabilities.

Thus, interfaces are mediators of social identity formation,[20] generating the sense of social group belonging and by implication generating social borders that distinguish groups.[21] Social groups are formed and perceived in relation to either shared innate and immutable characteristics (e.g. being a woman) or shared common interests (e.g. having liberal values) or a combination of the two (e.g. engaging in Black activism).[22] It is the task of social-change-driven interfaces to carefully consider and instrumentalize intra-group characteristics and

16 Celia Lury, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*, International Library of Sociology (London: Routledge, 2004).

17 Henri Tajfel and John Charles Turner, 'An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict', in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1979), 33–47.

18 see Richard Crisp, 'Prejudice and Perceiving Multiple Identities', in *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, ed. John F. Dovidio et al. (SAGE, 2010), 508–25.

19 Galen V. Bodenhausen and C. Neil Macrae, 'Stereotype Activation and Inhibition', in *Stereotype Activation and Inhibition*, ed. Robert S. Wyer, vol. XI, Advances in Social Cognition (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

20 Lury, *Brands*.

21 Amalia Sabiescu, 'Assemblage Theory, Communicative Assemblages and Problematising the Notion of "Borders" in Community Communication', 2021.

22 Marilynn B. Brewer, Ying-Yi Hong, and Qiong Li, 'Dynamic Entitativity: Perceiving Groups as Actors', in *The Psychology of Group Perception: Perceived Variability, Entitativity, and Essentialism*, ed. Vincent Yzerbyt, Charles M. Judd, and Olivier Corneille (New York: Psychology Press, 2004).

common interests, as well as to align these across interacting groups in relation to the desired social goal.

Regarding our case studies, this precarious alignment challenges the binary social structures of "non-disabled vs. disabled" and "men vs. women", which have created and maintained the social stigma of people with disabilities and women. At the same time social boundaries are the very root of social identity formation, and sometimes binary social structures can be even conducive to successful cooperation and advocacy.[23] More so, significant intergroup differences in group proclivities and interests can be drivers for social change, as long as some level of coherence and complementarity is negotiated.[24] For instance, as observed in most interfaces of the YDAR project, a social division between scholars and activists is arguably necessary to design and execute successful cooperation between these two groups, whereby both fulfil different roles and functions that are nonetheless complementary and synergetic in the goal of social change. In the case of TAMWA, its workers are media professionals, whilst most women whose issues they advocate are not. This has enabled TAMWA to instrumentalize multiple media platforms and channels to raise awareness on social inequalities.

Of course, depending on context, group divisions can be more or less rigid, such as media scholars who are also disability activists. This is addressed by the permeability of the interface [25]. Low permeability maintains the distinction of social categories, whilst high permeability fosters the integration or blurring of social categories. Both instances can pose obstacles or opportunities for cooperation towards social change and thus require careful consideration. In addition, the symmetry of interaction is important to evaluate. Although interfaces by default enable contact and bi-directional exchange of information between different social groups, this exchange is not necessarily symmetric,[26] and the (a)symmetry plays a crucial role in social identity formation, permeability and the overall goals of social change.

The overall social change elicited through communicative interfaces needs to be analyzed by considering the change for each individual group involved in the interface and how (or if) these group changes align with the overall change pursued by the project goal. Measuring any social change requires the actual perspective of the group that is supposed to undergo the change. Without collecting data about their lived experiences, any conclusion about change is at best speculative, at worst wrong. Therefore, many advocacy projects do use robust models to measure the social impact on lived experiences of the group whose interest they advocate. However, they rarely pinpoint the smaller-scale changes for all groups connected by the project's communicative interfaces, and it is the amalgamation of these that enables overall social change in the first place. We therefore suggest that group changes through interfaces are captured and evaluated, either more precisely through surveys, focus groups or interviews, or more heuristically through team reflections and informal discussions.

23 Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Unabridged, 25th anniversary ed (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

24 Leeuwis and Aarts, 'Rethinking Communication in Innovation Processes', 6.

25 Erin Holmes et al., 'The Work-Family Interface', in *Cross-Cultural Family Research and Practice*, ed. Kim Halford and Fons Van De Vijver (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2020).

26 Lury, *Brands*.

In conclusion, mapping interfaces for advocacy and social change in relation to how they impact on all involved social groups can prove highly efficient in understanding the design of interfaces, which allows the strategic replicability of such interfaces in different contexts. With this in mind, we propose a tentative framework of questions to analyze one particular, or a set of communicative interfaces, which we will use in our case study analyses:

Project Goal

- What is the intended social change of the project?
- What is the overall advocacy goal to elicit that social change?

Interface Type

- What technology, platform or logistics constitute the interface?
- How does the interface enable communication and transfer of information?

Interface Aims

- What are the main aims of the interface?
- How do these aims align with the project goal?
- How do these aims align with the aims of other project interfaces?

Social Groups

- Which social groups does the interface mobilize and link together?
- What are the distinct characteristics and interests/goals of these groups?
- What are the existing social boundaries between these groups prior to the interface?
- What are potential restrictions to accessing this interface?

Mediation between Social groups

- How does the interface capitalize on the social boundaries between the groups to provide opportunities and mitigate obstacles for its aims and the overall project goal?
- How does the interface's permeability and bidirectionality operate towards its aims?
- How does the interface align intra-group characteristics and interests/goals with the interface aims and the project goal?

Social Change

- How does the interface elicit social changes for all groups involved?
- How do these changes relate to changes generated by other project interfaces?
- How do these changes lead to the project goal?
- What are the methods to evaluate social changes in the involved groups?

Youth Disability Advocacy and Research Network (YDAR)

Project Goals and a Network of Interfaces

The YDAR project has three main goals under the umbrella of disability advocacy. It aims to 1) enable young disability activists to influence governments, international development actors, and the private sector to adopt practices and design policies and services, at a local, national, and global level, which consider the needs of disabled people, 2) challenge the stigma of disability through developing public voice and influencing media outlets to increase and improve the representation of disabled people, and 3) establish a growing interdisciplinary and international network for the study and practice of disability advocacy, which enables the first two goals. These three goals have been pursued through a network of communicative interfaces.

The first interface was the AHRC grant **bid-writing process** itself, which served as a knowledge exchange process and a participatory research approach to involve researchers, the partner institutions, in particular ADD International, and young, disabled activists. The next interface was the four-day **festival** in Dar Es Salaam featuring capacity building and knowledge exchange workshops to connect international partners with grassroots disability activists in East Africa. The festival also set up another interface, which was the development of two ongoing **advocacy campaigns**, led by youth disability activists with support from the network, that advance disability rights and challenge stigma in Tanzania. In parallel to these campaigns, the project established the interface of an **online workshop series** for capacity building and networking, led by disability activists, academics, international campaigning organizations, and organizations of persons with disabilities. Lastly, the project's international and interdisciplinary network is embodied through a **website** that records all project activities, develops training materials and exhibits advocacy toolkits and case studies that can be used by disability activists in Tanzania and across the world. The website is accompanied by two **WhatsApp groups** that connect all network members and allows for quick, ad-hoc communication and dissemination. Due to the brevity of this chapter, we will analyze the communicative interface of the disability advocacy campaigns, examining it through the framework questions formulated earlier.

Disability Advocacy Campaigns – Interface Type and Aims

The advocacy campaigns started with in-person workshops at the festival in Dar Es Salaam. The workshops' aims were to build sustainable capacity [27] for disability advocacy within in the community of young, Tanzanian activists with disabilities. The first two days focused on the boosting of knowledge capacity, featuring knowledge exchange sessions, case study analyses, introduction of toolkits and basic training in media production with smart phones. The last two days focused on leadership capacity through the model of participatory grant making (henceforth PGM). PGM is a method for allocating funding by shifting decision-making

27 see A. N. Mohd Noh et al., 'Elements of Community Capacity Building (CCB) for CBET Development', *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology* 17, no. 9 (2020): 4970–81.

powers from grant makers to grantees.[28] Thus, the very community the funders aim to serve and that is most affected by the social issues, is included or indeed oversees the process of campaign funding allocation, campaign design, execution and evaluation through peer leadership and peer support.[29] This meant that the project team facilitated a group of young Tanzanian activists with disabilities to first form a Youth Grant Task Team that would oversee funding allocation according to their own, formulated criteria. Then, they prepared and submitted campaign applications that were evaluated and awarded by the Task Team.

Two campaigns were awarded the requested funds: The first, "Digital advocacy for youth with disabilities" develops training opportunities for young people with disabilities in Zanzibar to advertise their talents, business and skills by using digital platforms for inspirational and motivational purposes, as well as educating the society on disabilities matters. It is run by Yumna Mmanga Omar, a teacher and activist with albinism, Fakihat Omar Abubakar, an IT assistant and writer with multiple physical disabilities, Jamila Borafya Hamza, a writer and political activist with visual impairment, and Zakia Daudi, a program officer for the Organization of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Zanzibar (JUWAUZA).

The second campaign, "Tackling negative attitudes towards people with disabilities", aims to educate the Tanzanian society about the real lived experience of disabled people, dispelling negative, societal views of people with disabilities, such as perceptions of them being beggars or cursed. It launches a wide-spread awareness campaign in Dar es Salaam, involving meetings with parents of disabled people, radio and TV coverage, flyers and a music video. It is run by Eva Joseph Masanilo, a BA student with visual impairment, who studies Adult and Community Education at the University of Dar Es Salaam.

Both campaigns have been supported by YDAR's local partner, ADD International. The project team has provided mentorship and further knowledge capacity training through the online workshop series mentioned above. The aims of the festival, the capacity building workshops and the two campaigns were closely aligned with the overall project goals. Thus, three communicative interfaces have been working in synergy to directly address the first two goals of improving the lives of and social perceptions of disabled people. Indirectly, these interfaces also address the third goal of expanding the project network to an interdisciplinary and international level. After all, the campaigns constitute case studies that are discussed in several workshops and showcased on the website.

Disability Advocacy Campaigns – Social Groups Involved

The conceptualization process of the advocacy campaigns has linked together the following main groups: 1) Western academics from Bournemouth University and the American University in Washington, DC, 2) East African ADD International workers, and 3) young, Tanzanian

28 Charlotte Timson and Mohammed Awal Alhassan, *Participatory Grant Making Toolkit* (Norsaac, Transform Trade, 2023).

29 Cynthia Gibson, 'Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking' (New York: GrantCraft, 2018), https://doi.org/10.15868/socialsector.32988.

activists with disabilities. The Western academics do research in advocacy, disability studies, politics and media studies, and they are the AHRC grant holders, providing the funding for the advocacy campaigns. Their proclivities concern the advancements of research knowledge to conceptualize new models for implementing and studying advocacy interventions. These researchers are not the traditional ivory tower scholars, but they engage in interventional and practice-led research to use scholarly knowledge for social change. For instance, Principal Investigator Dan Jackson's audience research on Channel 4s TV coverage of the Paralympic Games has been used by Channel 4 to inform new disability stigma reduction initiatives.

In contrast, the ADD International workers aim to support people with disabilities in their daily struggles against an ableist society, and to strengthen disability rights activism through resourcing and capacity building in several African and Asian countries. Their interests concern immediate community support, lobbying for disability rights and inclusion, and fundraising. They also aim to give activists greater decision-making power through methods, such as the previously mentioned participatory grant-making. ADD's goals, thus, align well with the overall project goals, which has manifested in the work done by ADD staff on the project. For example, George Sempangi Katumba, the Global Young Leaders Advisor, and Elineca Ndowo, the Inclusive Education Technical Coordinator, have been supporting and mentoring the two campaign teams from the start, helping them with writing the grant proposals and executing the campaigns.

The young activists with disabilities are the grant receivers with the lived experience of the community which needs the social change. They are, thus, the largest stakeholders, and at the same time the most socially and economically vulnerable group in the campaigning interface. Their interests are focused on executing the campaigns and seeing social change that benefits them directly. This pursued change includes not only the actual outcomes of the campaigns, but also boosting the activists' employability and generating job opportunities for them, which is in line with the prevalent key challenges for young Tanzanians mentioned earlier. The selection of these young activists with disabilities to participate in the project has been strategically done by the ADD International workers to consider intersectionality. For instance, a higher proportion of young women was selected, given the higher stigma on women with disabilities. Similarly, the selection included an almost equal proportion of mainland Tanzanians, as well as Zanzibaris, to mitigate social divisions between these two geographically and culturally different locations.

Mediation Between the Social Groups

The communicative interface of the campaigns capitalized on blurred, as well as distinct social boundaries. For instance, regarding the distinct professional roles of the British scholars and the ADD International support workers, intergroup boundaries allowed for a synergetic cooperation. This has been established through yet another communicative interface of frequent team meetings, in which concrete concerns and action plans were mapped in relation to each stakeholder's role and function. But, at the same time, ADD International has been the main support mechanism and local port of call for the young campaigners with disabilities, partly because this support preceded the project and partly because there was no budget for the

UK academics to meet the campaign leaders in-person beyond the festival event. This has resulted in a disconnect between the British researchers and the campaign leaders, which, although a logical and desired outcome of the PGM concept, also posed some challenges in communication and monitoring campaign progress.

Regarding cultural and geographical differences, projects that use Western funding and knowledge to support advocacy campaigns in the Global South, are prone to manifest in social boundaries between the Western academics (grant holders), and the advocacy campaigners (grant receivers). The project's interfaces are thus likely primed in two ways. Firstly, the group boundaries remain solid and result in low permeability. Secondly, a high asymmetry results through the group who controls the funding deeming what kind of advocacy is eligible and how the funding would be allocated, resulting in predominantly top-down communication across interfaces. However, the YDAR academic team, who initiated the project, tried to mitigate this 'white savior' scenario of rescuing the Tanzanian disability community. This was done by embracing the PGM concept, which was suggested and implemented by the partner ADD International, and by the academics deliberately stepping back to a certain degree during the actual executions of the campaigns, which have been mainly supported locally by ADD International workers. This strategy, in terms of the funding context, resulted in a higher permeability between grant holders and grant receivers.

Still, the funding's origin and overall (or at least initial) control has been associated from the start with the British academics – a perception fueled by the colonial history's legacy of socio-economic inequalities and cultural stereotypes. This became apparent when the campaigners asked the academics for additional funding and support during a mid-campaign workshop. After the academics deliberated with the ADD International workers, the joint decision was taken to rather invest the remaining funding in the capturing of the campaign's social impact through short videos, which would allow for a more sustainable pursuit of the overall project goals.

Another instance of low permeability has been the social division between people with and without disabilities. Paradoxically, this is an inherent outcome of PGM, in which funding control is shifted to the community that is supposed to benefit from the funds. As mentioned earlier, this model is crucial for sustainable interventions initiated and executed across social groups that have been traditionally divided by distinct demographic boundaries. The fact remains, though, that from a stigma reduction perspective, the most effective way to reduce intergroup differences and corresponding prejudices is through close cooperation.[30] This was the scenario between the Western academics and the East African ADD International workers, but not between the academics without disabilities and the actual campaigners with disabilities. Therefore, PGM being at the center of advocacy campaign may inadvertently maintain the social boundaries it is trying to overcome in the first place. At the same time, it provides the maximum control and voice to the affected community to pursue a goal that primarily benefits them. Research on such implications of PGM and other forms of participatory research is scant, which is why our follow-up project will engage in a more rigorous study of PGM and the projected social change.

30 Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

All in all, communicative interfaces based on PGM and other types of participatory research are ambivalent in terms of permeability and symmetry, which is not to say that the likelihood of actual social change is ambivalent, too. On the contrary, ambivalence of intergroup similarities and differences can be a fertile ground for expanding networks and the mitigation of social boundaries through acknowledging cultural, geographical and dis/ability diversity under the common umbrella of the project's goal of social change.[31]

Social Change

The group changes directly related to the project goal have been mostly and unsurprisingly results of conscious choices by the team in the project's design. The Western academics have gained a unique opportunity to implement their research on disability in an East African context, thus, being prompted to test and adapt any models or approaches to a distinctly different community. Most team members' research previously focused on populations and case studies in a British and American context, so adapting these to an East African context was an insightful challenge. For instance, Brylla's research on the media representation of disability had to expand by media case studies with Black and African screen characters with disabilities. Another change for the academics has been the gaining of knowledge and contacts that has informed new, international and interdisciplinary collaborations and dissemination opportunities. For instance, the team and the local partner are currently working on a bid for a follow-up project that focuses on PGM in Tanzania.

Our partner, ADD International has also benefitted from the campaign interface in several ways. For instance, the AHRC funding helped boost their Young Leaders Program in East Africa through enabling campaigns that don't just pursue social change but also empower the young campaigners to become community leaders. The funding also covered part of ADD International's local staff costs, allowing to offer employment opportunities to several of their young service users with disabilities to work on the project's local administration side. In addition, it provided a good opportunity to pilot PGM, which was used by ADD International for the first time in an East African context. It also opened doors for future collaborations, such as the follow-up project to investigate the implications of PGM.

For the young activists with disabilities who have been involved in the campaigns, this interface allowed them to shape and pursue their advocacy goals in a manner that aligns with the overall project goals. From filmed interviews and discussions with them, it is apparent that they fully embraced the participatory research aspect of the project. They feel empowered to voice their lived experiences and have a stake in controlling the funding and shaping their own campaigns in relation to individual and localized needs. For instance, the campaign in Zanzibar specifically focused on social media skills training, which the campaigners identified as a large gap in the Zanzibari disability community.

In terms of the main project aims of improving the lives of people with disabilities, reducing disability stigma and expanding the YDAR network to achieve this, the project is still ongoing

31 see Crisp, 'Prejudice and Perceiving Multiple Identities'.

and the actual, overall social change needs to be thoroughly evaluated. To do so, the team is currently producing four short videos that will initiate a follow-up project centering on PGM and its real social impact: The first will be a video summary of the project, its research design and the new knowledge for scholars. This video is from the perspective of the academics and will be disseminated in scholarly contexts, such as conferences. The second will be a video summary of the entire PGM process from the perspective of ADD International, which will be used for attracting donors and initiating new advocacy projects. The third and fourth video will illustrate the two campaigns from the perspective of the campaign leaders. The aim is to promote and, thus, expand the campaigns in the local community, and to find new, local funding opportunities for this expansion.

Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA)

Organization Goals and a Network of Interfaces

TAMWA is a non-profit organization in Tanzania that advocates gender equality through challenging stereotypes and creating a more inclusive society where women, girls and children's voices are heard and respected, both in the media and in society. This mission is pursued through six goals: 1) *Promoting Gender Equality* within the media industry and through the society at large by ensuring fair and balanced representation of women in media content, addressing gender biases, stereotypes, and discrimination. 2) *Advocacy and Awareness* through public dialogue and influencing policies, laws, and practices to positively affect women's rights and gender equality. 3) *Capacity Building* of women in the media industry through training, workshops, and skills development programs, thus empowering female journalists and media practitioners to excel in their profession and contribute effectively to gender-sensitive reporting. 4) *Research and Documentation* of challenges women face in the media and society through collecting data, producing reports, and publishing information. 5) *Support* for female journalists, media professionals and women's rights advocates, and the fostering of networks and partnerships, both nationally and internationally, to collaborate on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment. 6) *Campaigns and Projects* aimed at challenging social norms, promoting women's rights, and fostering an inclusive and equitable media environment.

Some of TAMWA's communicative interfaces are ***traditional media campaigns*** through television, radio, and newspapers to disseminate information, raise awareness about women's rights issues, and challenge societal norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. Others involve ***social media campaigns*** by engaging with a broader audience through platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube. The organization engages young influencers to share stories, campaigns, and advocacy messages, reaching a younger demographic and facilitating discussions on critical gender issues. Another interface is ***community-based workshops and seminars*** to directly engage with local communities regarding the topic at hand, providing education and training within safe spaces for discussions on gender issues. These events aim to foster dialogue and empower individuals to act.

To create a scientific foundation for advocacy, TAMWA uses the interface of ***research studies*** on various gender-related topics and publishes corresponding reports and articles to present data-driven evidence. These publications are used to influence policies and drive change at a systemic level. The organization also uses interfaces of ***arts and culture***, such as art exhibitions, theatre productions, and cultural events, through which it raises awareness and challenges societal norms by using artistic expression as a tool for advocacy. Lastly, the interface of **legal aid services and counselling** directly supports women, who face gender-based violence or discrimination, navigate legal procedures and seek justice to.

TAMWA has used these interfaces to reach a diverse range of stakeholder groups, including governmental and non-governmental institutions to create alliances, share resources, mobilizing support mechanisms and advocating policy and societal changes that promote gender equality and empower women, girls and children in Tanzania. In terms of girls, it has focused on pertinent issues, such as preventing forced marriage, economic empowerment, leadership, political participation, combatting female genital mutilation (FGM), right to education, sexual reproductive health rights and prevention of gender-based violence against girls. Due to the conciseness of this chapter, we will focus on the communicative interface of the advocacy campaign towards zero tolerance for FGM in 2015.

FGM Advocacy Campaign – Interface Types and Aims

FGM relates to all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for nonmedical reasons.[32] This practice is an abuse of human rights and causes serious health complications, including fatal bleeding. The 2015 TAMWA Zero Tolerance for FGM National Forum report showed that an estimated 100-140 million girls and women have globally undergone some form of FGM, and if the trend continues, an additional 15 million 15-19-year-old girls will be subjected to it by 2030. [33] In Tanzania the number of these girls being circumcised in marriages is considerably higher than the number of boys. In general, one in ten have been subjected to FGM.[34] Of these, 35% were circumcised before the age of one in order to escape prosecution under the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998,[35] which criminalizes FGM. Substantial regional disparities exist in the practice of FGM with the highest occurrences taking place in the Manyara (58%), Dodoma (47%) and Arusha (41%) regions.[36] FGM is generally more prevalent within traditionalist communities predominantly found in rural, but also in several urban areas.[37]

32 World Health Organization, 'Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: An Interagency Statement - Ohchr, Unaids, Undp, Uneca, Unesco, Unfpa, Unhcr, Unicef, Unifem, Who', *Eliminer Les Mutilations Sexuelles Féminines : Déclaration Interinstitutions HCDH, OMS, ONUSIDA, PNUD, UNCEA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNCHR, UNICEF, UNIFEM*, 2008, 4.

33 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

34 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (2015-16): https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr321/fr321.pdf

35 http://tanzania.go.tz/egov_uploads/documents/The_Sexual_Offence_Special_Provisions_Act,_4-1998_en.pdf

36 https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr321/fr321.pdf

37 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.

The FGM advocacy campaign interface aimed to create awareness of the magnitude of the problem, empowering girls to resist this harmful traditional ritual and change practices, regulations, policies and laws. The main strategy was to develop a clear and concise message that defines the social implications of FGM, highlights its critical importance and fosters the desired change. This message would target different audience segments described by the social groups involved in this interface.

FGM Advocacy Campaign – Social Groups Involved

This campaign linked together the following groups: 1) TAMWA team, 2) Community proponents (including practitioners) of FGM, 3) Community opposers of FGM, 3) Victims of FGM, 4) Young girls who are at risk of FGM, 5) Community leaders, and 4) Anti-FGM activists. The TAMWA team consisted of three women and two men, who were researchers, journalists, lawyers and media content creators. Given their intersecting social identities, their interest was to sustainably raise awareness about the effects of FGM on a community level, a local government level and national government level.

The community proponents of FGM were, not surprisingly, interested in maintaining this practice. Being traditionalists, they were resistant to change. In particular, the practitioners, who carry out the ritual, believed in its prosocial effect. For instance, Ngariba, a former circumciser, explains in the TAMWA report:

> It is our tradition to conduct FGM. Without it a girl will not get married, as FGM in our society means to be clean and ready for marriage. Special knives, scissors, razors, pieces of broken glass, sharp stones or fire were used to conduct it. It causes a lot of blood flow [. . .] but we had our own means to control it, like chewing a piece of charcoal mixed with herbs, which we put on the head of a girl.[38]

The exact reverse was the case for opposers of FGM, who recognize the negative physical psychological and social effects on FGM victims. These include hemorrhage, infections, shock, anxiety, PTSD and depression.[39] As one victim reports:

> I was forced to do FGM. We were many girls. I didn't like it, but we were promised that soon after we will be clean and ready for marriage. They used a razor to cut us all. I experienced heavy bleeding, but they used some herbs to clear it. I can't express the pain I had, and I won't forget.[40]

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pdf

38 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

39 Sarah O'Neill and Christina Pallitto, 'The Consequences of Female Genital Mutilation on Psycho-Social Well-Being: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Health Research* 31, no. 9 (2021): 1738–50, https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323211001862.

40 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

In general, victims of FGM and young girls at risk of FGM may oppose, support or simply accept it as a necessary practice and culturally embedded tradition. Acceptance is often based on girls fearing personal and social consequences within their community if they do not conform.[41] These include perceived impurity, perceived immorality, perceived incapability to marry and have children, low self-esteem, feelings of guilt and shame, stigmatization and social sanctions. All these prospects represent obstacles to even interrogating the practice. As traditional social norms can be influenced by community leaders, this group was instrumental in TAMWA's campaign. Community leaders' interests usually lie in maintaining intragroup traditions, which is a strong part of a community's social identity, and improving the wellbeing of the group. Relating to FGM, these two objectives posed tensions, since community leaders in rural areas tended to be traditionalists and conservative. Nevertheless, with adequate intervention some of them did embrace social change.

The group of anti-FGM activists pursued similar interests to TAMWA, which facilitated group alignment and cooperation. Some of these group members were working directly with the communities, whilst others were dealing with law enforcement offices.

Mediation Between the Social Groups

Apparently, all the distinct and diverse interests and intergroup dynamics posed a considerable challenge to how the interface mediated between them and its aim to expose and reduce the practice of FGM. One form of mediation was media content to disseminate the main campaign messages and target all mentioned social groups. Such content involved different media channels, platforms and formats, including radio newscasts, talk shows, TV documentaries, social media videos, talk shows, newspapers articles, editorials, infographics and blogs. TAMWA either directly created or commissioned this media content, collaborating with a network of journalists and media houses.

TAMWA also made use of interactive media platforms to engage the affected communities, thus mitigating interface asymmetry and allowing for more permeability between the groups involved. In this sense they used social media groups, forums, live online chats and email newsletters to encourage critical discussions, the sharing of personal stories and the active building of a collective resistance against FGM.

All mediation channels disseminated not only information but also testimonials of lived experiences packaged in effective storytelling. The TAMWA members, most of which operate within the Tanzanian mainstream media, knew that this would be the best way to illustrate the problems, humanize the issue and emotionally connect with audiences. For example, the invitation of young women to directly interact with audiences in talk shows served as an important contact point of groups that are directly affected by FGM and groups that can initiate social change.

41 O'Neill and Pallitto, 'The Consequences of Female Genital Mutilation on Psycho-Social Well-Being'.

An important aspect of media content, in whatever form, was accessed to reach a diverse audience, such as people with disabilities and people with limited access to media technologies. This clearly enhanced the scope for signing petitions, donating, volunteering, attending events, or spreading the word through social media sharing.

Another form of mediation was through educational programs, which represented communicative interfaces between the TAMWA team, anti-FGM activists, journalists and young girls. These sessions aimed for solution-focused discussions and wellbeing interventions addressing the lived experiences of the people involved in terms of physical and psychological implications of FGM. Here, TAMWA collaborated with multiple, local organizations under the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)[42]. Whilst TAMWA was overseeing the educational programs in multiple geographical areas and disseminated them in mainstream media, the local organizations were operating directly in the communities to maintain alertness about and swiftly act against imminent FGM ceremonies. This synergy demonstrates again that some social group boundaries are necessary for effective advocacy.

Social Change

The group changes directly related to the campaign goals, and TAMWA meticulously used interviews with the interface groups to map changes. Perhaps the most powerful change concerned some FGM practitioners who abandoned the practice altogether. For instance, Ngariba, the former circumciser, said after the campaign:

> I decided not to conduct any more as I experienced a very bad situation as one among the 5 girls, I was circumcising had heavily bled to the extent of fainting. Later I realized that their other consequences like problems during delivery which was experienced by my own daughter hence I recognized that it is a very dangerous practice.[43]

Similarly, some FGM victims not only came to abandon traditional beliefs that justified FGM, but they also turned into activists themselves, thus demonstrating the permeability of the interface. As one victim stated after the campaign:

> As of now I have learnt that it is not true that being circumcised means being clean so I'm in a front line to speak out on all the evils on FGM and reporting whenever I hear it takes place.[44]

42 https://www.nafgemtanzania.or.tz/index.php

43 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

44 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

Crucially, this change also reached the community leaders, which entails the potential for sustainable impact within a community and across communities. One leader said:

> It is true that there are beliefs justifying FGM in our communities. However, since we were educated about the effects of FGM, we started taking action to influence our community to end it. We conducted awareness raising sessions to inform the general community, and we had some strategies to make sure that we end this practice in our society. This included making FGM a permanent item on the agenda of our local community development committee's meetings.[45]

As media professionals TAMWA members understand and work on the power of information and therefore uses their profession to campaign through the multimedia outlets. The organization's monitoring and evaluation framework maps changes on different micro and macro levels. In particular, at a community level and at a law enforcement level this framework allows effective follow-up investigative and public stories that emphasize an increasing social attitude against FGM and the legal banning of this practice.

Conclusion

We hope that both case studies provided an indicative overview of social change initiatives in Tanzania, based on communicative interfaces that reconfigure traditional and rigid intergroup boundaries. They advocate for two of the most vulnerable groups in Tanzania, young people with disabilities and young girls. At the same time, enabling equitable opportunities for these groups can significantly contribute to the country's overall social, economic, and political wellbeing. Both initiatives are work-in-progress with existing interfaces being either reconfigured, replaced or abandoned, and new interfaces emerging. Communicative interfaces that connect different groups cannot remain rigid, since they may reinforce traditional, or generate new, intergroup boundaries. This transience reflects the fast pace of societal, technological, and infrastructural developments, and is thus paramount to achieving sustainable, yet variable change, to marginalized communities. Our proposed conceptual framework is supposed to be tentative and flexible to cater for the pragmatic conceptualization, as well as the analytical study of advocacy campaigns that can be deployed in a variety of contexts beyond age, disability, and gender.

45 https://tamwa.org/a/images/pdf/Zero%20Tolerance%20to%20FGM%20National%20Forum%202015.pdf

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