

2020 TatuTano as a tool for psychosocial support

440 TatuTano-groups count around 2'600 children and youth – 55% girls and 54% boys – organized in 16 clusters. Each month there is a cluster meeting with the participation of the groups where we from the office have the possibility to exchange opinions and to inform the children about processes in the office, and to hear the opinions of the children.

TatuTano was initially formed in 2008 by children living with grandparents (because parents died mostly because of HIV/AIDS) or children living in a household with a HIV-sick person.

TatuTano-members represent part of the poorest section of the rural area in Muleba district. A recent survey showed that only 28% members live in complete families, the others live in a female headed household (35%), with the grandparents (24%), in a child headed household (4%) or with relatives (9%)

Criteria for TatuTano

TatuTano is only possible with the great commitment of the children where **organisation**, **participation** and **material support** plays a central role. Organisation refers to mobilisation of children and youth into their own organization (actually 435 groups) around common interests, participation refers to the degree of meaningful engagement, agency and autonomy these children have within the organisation, and material support refers to the critical need many vulnerable children in crisis have for support, mainly as education support, prevention and different training.

TatuTano as a psychosocial tool

TatuTano has also to play an important role as psychological support. In the our African rural area there are no psychologist, no social workers etc.

Robert Jay Lifton did much research on living and dying. He describes in “Broken Connections” that death and life appears in each live as “death” in the form of feelings of isolation, of disintegration and of immobilization, but also as “life” in the form of connection and continuity, of integration and of being purposeful. Child-led organizations are an excellent tool to realize in the life of many children the “feeling” of life (as our evaluation of the VSI from Humuliza where the tool of child-led organization was developed, could show clearly). In another book, Lifton mentions the “internal plan of action”(in “Home from war”). Our experience with thousands of children is, that the VSI and the TatuTano provided possibilities for children to come closer to the “life” and to realize at least part of their “internal plan of action” e.g. to be safer (girl empowerment), to find friends or to do agriculture (TatuTano projects), to strive for an other male role (PiaD) or to find trustful people which take them serious (“I feel it”).

Antonowski's view about what constitutes health and keeps children healthy was very useful for the understanding of the psychological role of a child-led organization and its contribution to psycho-social well-being. His three main concepts are:

- comprehensibility which looks at the internal and external stimuli which can be integrated in an emotional and cognitive framework and support consistency and structure. Our intimate knowledge of the older people, sick people (HIV/AIDS) and children in hundreds of

meetings helps us to understand the local framework and its changes as well as its existing stimuli.

- manageability takes note of the resources which are somehow adequate to meet the demands. To understand and to explore the situation of different children led us to understand and to use existing resources in an adequate form (girl empowerment, Peace is a decision, PAMOJA etc.)
- meaningfulness makes sense emotionally and give the feeling that it might be worthy to invest energy and commitment. The huge commitment of the participants (nearly 300 volunteers as assistant trainers, agricultural facilitators etc.) is for us an indicator that it “is worthy to invest energy” (eg. agricultural activity, gender activities).

Central for our understanding of the psychological role of a child-led organization is also the work of Peter A. Levine (“Sprache ohne Worte – Wie unser Körper Trauma verarbeitet und uns in die innere Balance zurückführt”). He says that we could understand a trauma as the difficulty to anchor ourselves in the actual world and to get involved with other people. We need to have the possibility to “switch” between a secure situation and the situation which was traumatic for him or her”. In our case – in the absence of any psychotherapists and in the presence of many cases (loss of parents, sexual and other abuse etc.) -, we can offer this possibility of “tritation” - the chemical process of a slow dilution of two properties: create secure sub-organizations such as self-defense, PiaD, I feel it, project-groups, learning groups etc. which allow and train the “switching” and can increase the “inner balance”.

It is significant that e.g. the children from Kishanda feel now in a safe condition because they have a strong child protection system including also parents and the community through PAMOJA.

Our ultimate goal: building and strengthening resilience and capabilities

What is resilience? In short: “Resilience means being able to adapt the life’s misfortunes and setbacks” (Mayo Clinic). The “Center on the Developing Child” (Harvard University) visualize resilience with a balance scale: Protective **experiences** and **adaptive skills** on one side counterbalance significant **adversity** on the other side

The children and youth in TatuTano are facing many significant adversities: poverty, loss of parents (only around 28 % live in a “complete” family”), violence in school and families, sexual violence against girls (63 % of the members of TatuTano are girls), difficult perspective of employment (44% of the around 60 millions inhabitants in Tanzania are below 15 years)(Read concerning the problem of millions migrants in the cities “Planet of Slums” by Mike Davis). Additionally they might face important problems in the future with the changes of the climate and with a restricted access to land.

How do we try to build resilience?

TatuTano is strongly influenced by Luc Ciompi and Antonio Damasio which postulated the emotional bases as being central for the cognitive thinking and its development. Groups, projects, self-defense, learning groups etc. are based on ACTIVITIES and take note of the feelings of the children..

The Mayo Clinic and Harvard University mention the following elements as resilience-building elements

1. Get connected: building strong positive relationships with other members which can provide you with the needed support and acceptance in good and bad times. The TatuTano members mentioned as strength of their groups the cooperation, love, peace, and discipline. They indicated that they got support from other members in the case of the feeling of disappointment (90%), of feeling rejected (86%), feeling powerless (80%), feeling sad (79%), feeling stressed (81%). For 10 difficult feeling 77% of the members got support from other members of TatuTano (2015 PSS Intervention).
2. Learn from experience: Consider the skills and strategies that helped them in difficult times. We asked the groups from where they got the different competences: XXX only from TatuTano, or: XX other persons have also contributed, but TatuTano is important, or: X we learnt it from other persons, but TatuTano gave us the possibility to practice, or finally: O no influence of TatuTano. 74% of the groups consider that they got the competence for breeding animals and for agriculture *only* from TatuTano, 49% for trading, 60% for financial literacy, 59% for giving and receiving support and 66% for self-confidence and self-esteem. Only 1 groups said that TatuTano had no influence (2015 PSS Intervention).
3. Resilience requires supportive relationships as well as opportunities for skill building.
 - a) Training: TatuTano was providing the following courses: in *agriculture* 72 courses with totally 1'906 participants – 58% girls; in *self-defense* 117 courses (TatuTano 62, Primary Schools 39, Secondary Schools 16) for totally 5'312 girls, in 46 villages weekly training rehearsal on Saturdays for around 1'700 girls; in "*Peace is a decision*" (*PiaD*) (for boys): 58 courses (TatuTano 18, Primary Schools 22, Secondary Schools 18) for 1'312 boys etc.
 - b) Opportunities for skill building: We offer many opportunities. We are e.g. happy that around 150 groups want to initiate in 2020 new or additional small animal breeding and some few groups make first experiences with the "push-pull – technique".
4. Resilience results from the dynamic interaction between internal predispositions (Lifton calls it "internal plan of action") and external experiences. TatuTano can present a number of external experiences which correspond obviously to the internal predisposition and seems "attractive" for them (see Antonovsky)
5. Learning to cope with manageable threats is critical for the development of resilience. TatuTano must be careful to define activities which are in the "internal plan of children" and are feasible to do for children. We are conscience that there are threats which are beyond of the capacity of TatuTano to treat them.
6. Be proactive – to figure out whats need to be done. From September 2019 until the end of the year the groups of all the clusters paid from their own income about two millions TZS for education and health of their members.

The Center on the Developing Child (Harvard University) observe that individuals never complete their ability to improve their coping skills. This observation gives as the hope and the strength to continue....