
Knowledge Sharing Workshop – Narok, Kenya

March 12 – 16th 2018



Executive summary

The Knowledge Sharing Workshops (KSWs) in Narok in March 2018 combined the introduction of UNICEF's Six Elements of Abandonment with opportunities for participating organisations to share their experiences and approaches to ending female genital cutting (FGC). The approach has developed progressively since 2016 through a process of reflection by the facilitation team and feedback from participants, with this being the fifth series of KSWs in Kenya developed and facilitated by Orchid Project.

The key developments in the last year include:

- extending the length of the workshops to five days
- framing the workshops more explicitly within a social norms context
- simplifying the language used to describe UNICEF's Six Elements of Abandonment, giving more equal coverage to the elements and the links between them
- increasing the focus on supporting changes in the approaches adopted by participating organisations through critique, action planning and developing a supportive network

Overall, the knowledge sharing workshops were extremely successful with positive feedback from all participants and the facilitation team members. The action plans produced were considered and focused on adapting their overall approaches rather than just incorporating activities from the workshops. The development of an active network to end FGC among Maasai was supported by all organisations with contact people and intended outcomes.

What made it work?

There were three key elements which contributed to the success of the KSWs:

1. The facilitator team

The team consisted of:

- two members of the Maasai community, one male (Amos Leuka) and one female (Sarah Tenoi), from SAFE Maa, with expertise in facilitation and well-respected in their community
- two representatives from Orchid Project, (Jenna Richards and Katy Newell-Jones) who were able to bring the Orchid model of knowledge sharing workshops and approach to ending FGC and also expertise in facilitation skills.

The Maasai team members saw their facilitation as a gift to the Maasai community and were able to support the multilingual nature of the workshops. There was no dominant language and participants used whatever language they felt was appropriate (Maasai, Swahili and English) with translation where necessary provided by participants or the facilitators.

The team met prior to the workshops to finalise the programme and regularly throughout the workshops to respond to suggestions from participants and to respond to issues arising.

Throughout the workshops the team worked collaboratively, to the benefit of the group, recognising each other's strengths; stepping up to support each other and stepping back to allow each other space.

The team was also supported by Hannelore Van Bavel, an intern with Orchid, who is currently undertaking a PhD into FGC, who provided valuable insights from her observer/participant perspective which helped shape the programme.

12. The participants

The 19 participants from 7 organisations were all Maasai and had significant roles within their communities. They included cultural leaders, religious leaders, CBO staff and activist volunteers. This cross-section of Maasai community meant that there was a shared culture which resulted in a genuine openness about the positive aspects of Maasai culture and the challenges in ending FGC.

All participating organisations already had an approach to ending FGC which is based on engagement with all sections of the community, changing attitudes and resulting in women and men making decisions not to cut their daughters. Although some of the organisations see rescue as a solution in some situations, none of them adopted this as their main approach. All, therefore, came committed to community dialogue, though for most non-judgemental open dialogue was a new concept.

SAFE Maa selected the participating organisations partly on the basis of being interested in working collaboratively and forming a supportive, collaborative network. This resulted in a group of participants all of whom were passionate about seeing change in their communities and committed to working without rivalry but through collaboration and supportive networking.

The 19 participants from 7 organisations included Coalition on Violence Against Women - COVAW (Alice and Nelly), The Red Tribe (Jacob and Nontinana), Marua girl child education (Anastacia and Tito), The Maa Trust (Ntimama and Seleyian), Erasaroto (Agnes and Nchoe), SAFE Maa (Christine, David, Kencha, Joyce, Naserian and Shashon) and Loita's cultural leaders (Edward, Kosiom and Saningo).

3. The workshop content

This was the first time that the knowledge sharing workshops took place over five days. This enabled more space for critique, reflection and making links between workshop activities and the subsequent changes participants wanted to make in their approach to working with communities.

The programme was continually evolving over the five days as a result of suggestions and feedback from participants and reflection by the team. Participants appreciated this flexible approach and were delighted that space was made in the programme to adapt to arising issues, like the right of girls to choose whether or not they are cut and the value, or not, of using videos of girls being cut as workshop materials.

Participants related strongly to each of the UNICEF Six Elements of Abandonment, the wording of which has been simplified by Orchid. The change to introduce social norms as an underpinning concept framed the workshops well. The additional time allocated to role playing and discussing non-judgemental open dialogue resulted in a deeper level of understanding of, not only the value, but also the skills and techniques required to facilitate it. This became the core message of the workshops which participants anticipated incorporating into every aspect of their work. Examples included the Cultural Leaders who now plan to change the way they conduct themselves at community meetings to adopt a more non-judgemental open dialogue approach, asking the community their opinions rather than just telling them to stop cutting.

Other tools and techniques which participants particularly valued included: visioning, storytelling and drama.

Action planning has been gradually enhanced over the last 3 knowledge sharing workshops. In Narok, an iterative approach was adopted starting with each organisation sharing their strategies, followed by the introduction of action planning, critique of their own approach over subsequent days and the development of a final action plan on the final day of the workshop. This process has resulted in the action plans being more focused on making significant changes in the approach adopted by each organisation arising directly from their learning in the workshops. All participants engaged in the action planning process with enthusiasm, energy and commitment.

It was clear from the first morning that participants wanted to see a network formed of organisations working to end FGC among Maasai communities. This theme gathered pace as participants learned more about each other's work and also as they explored the UNICEF elements on collective action (element 3), enough people knowing about change (element 5) and enabling environment (element 6). Working collaboratively become an essential aspect of not only building the capacity of each organisation, but also advocating for change from a critical, judgemental national environment to one which is respectful of communities where cutting continues, whilst supportive of change.

The workshops finished on a positive note of increased awareness and skills of individuals, strengthened strategies of participating organisations and a unanimous commitment to developing a supportive network to enhance the move towards ending FGC among Maasai communities.

Even better if.....

At times during the workshops, male participants were more vocal than female participants. This required active facilitation to ensure the views of all were fully heard.

The participant pack needs updating to reflect the most recent development of the Knowledge Sharing Workshops in both English and Maa.

Articles from the media on FGC and possibly other materials would be valuable in communicating the national messages about communities who continue to cut as this aspect of enabling environments was new to many participants.

The end-line questionnaire to assess the learning of participants was useful as a discussion point, however, it did not fully capture the complexity of the learning of participants and the changes they intend on making in future. The combination of the organisational strategy maps, the action plans and the individual learning journeys reflect the learning and intended changes more accurately and fully. **See our case study for an example from the Coalition for Violence Against Women (COVAW).**

Looking ahead

The participants will be establishing a network to end FGC. They already have a name 'Maasai End FGC Network', contact names and an anticipated first network meeting in July 2018. Each organisation will take forward their commitments to the *Low Cost – No Cost Exchange* and Orchid will coordinate reports on these activities in 3 months. Orchid will circulate the organisational action plans and follow up with progress against these after 6 and 12 months.

Conclusion

The recent developments of the KSW framework has resulted in workshops which were more focused on participating organisations critiquing and adapting their approach to increase their effectiveness in ending FGC in their communities.

The framework for Orchid Project's knowledge sharing workshops has now been developed to a stage where the facilitation team feel it could be implemented in a wide range of contexts, obviously with adaptation to the individual context, but using the current overall framework.