

Publication

Gender dynamics of community-led total sanitation interventions in Mpwapwa District, Tanzania

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4651879

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Year 2022

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Journal Glob Public Health

Pages / Article-Number 1-15

Keywords Clts; Participatory approach; Tanzania; community-led total sanitation; gender equity; health promotion

ABSTRACT Gender equity is an important element of health promotion and is vital to ensuring that the benefits and burdens of participation in health promotion activities are fairly distributed. Yet, the gendered consequences of participatory interventions are often overlooked. This is particularly relevant for water and sanitation initiatives, given that women are generally responsible for maintaining domestic hygiene and procuring water. This study uses a qualitative approach to assess the gender dynamics of participation in community-led total sanitation (CLTS) activities in Mpwapwa District, Tanzania. We used semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions to investigate men's and women's involvement in health promotion initiatives and their key motivators for and challenges to participation. We interviewed 77 community members from four villages and analysed the responses using qualitative content analysis. The study supports the notion that participation reinforces gender inequity and reproduces gendered norms due to activity-specific participation, women's passive participation within activities, and their limited opportunities for decision-making. However, there were also indications that participation provided a platform to increase the status of women, prioritise women's needs and demand a stronger position in decision making within the household and the community. CLTS organisers should, therefore, harness the opportunity to address gender inequalities within the community.

ISSN/ISBN 1744-1706 (Electronic)1744-1692 (Linking)

URL <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2022.2053733>

edoc-URL <https://edoc.unibas.ch/90970/>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1080/17441692.2022.2053733

PubMed ID <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/35319350>

ISI-Number WOS:000772276400001

Document type (ISI) Journal Article