

**International Expert Consultation  
Meeting to Strengthen Communities  
To secure Children's Rights to  
Freedom from Violence**

**CBCPMs Traditional Practices**

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## **Introduction**

In diverse contexts, Tradition means for community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) are front line efforts to protect children from exploitation, abuse, violence, and neglect and to promote children's well-being.

Tradition CBCPMs include all groups or networks at grassroots level that responds to and prevent child protection issues and harms to vulnerable children.

The CBCPMs includes clan and family support, tribe and community groups such as elderly men and women's roles, religious groups, and youth groups, as well as traditional or endogenous community processes.



The CBCPMs mechanisms are interlinked to national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). government mechanisms, and non Government led system of child protection and supports--such as tribal Chiefs and elders in the Tanzanian context

In a more complex, the tradition CBCPMs in particular is embedded in a community structure which is inclusive and integrated in the Government led structures (CPT,MVCC, CLC, AAC, School committees etc) and civilian led initiatives to protect children ( Mama Mkubwa, Papa, Kungwi etc ), who are officially recognized by the

government and by the people of the tribe (132 tribes in Tanzania)

## **2.Tradition Child Protection Mechanisms' are Categorised by Age and Sex**

### **1. Childhood and Child Development**

Traditionally families defines a child as being dependent on their parents for basic needs, physical support and being taught what is right and wrong.

Children Are seen as people who could not comprehend or do anything by themselves, and who had limited responsibilities.

Childhood is supposed to stop when one is able to provide for himself the basic needs and is in a position to make judgment and differentiate what is wrong and/or bad.

**2. Birth and the First Year of Life.** Children by 35 % usually are born at home in Tanzania. Following the birth of a child, a variety of rituals are performed. For example, for boys, the grandmother covers the child's umbilical cord to ensure that it did not touch his genitals lest he become infertile. For both boys and girls, a *zindiko* (charm) is tied to the child's arm to protect him/her from any evil spirits. On the first day of life, the traditional birth attendant gives the child traditional medicine made from local plants to protect the child from evil intentions. The father is not allowed to enter the house again or to have sex with other women.

Around the fourth day to seven days when the umbilical cord falls off, the child is given a name during the naming ceremonies by either their fathers, mothers, or grandparents and relatives. The child is then dressed and taken around for everyone to see. To celebrate, a goat or many chickens are slaughtered, and people eat, drink, and dance.

**3. One to Four Years.** By two years of age, mothers had stopped breast feeding, and boys and girls had typically began to play with each other. At around three years of age, children are given small tasks such as fetching utensils, thereby beginning the engagement in household chores that increased as children grew older and larger.

**4. Five to Seven Years.** The circumcision of boys, frequently occurs during this period, although circumcision sometimes occurs at later ages (up to 19 years) as well. Boys' circumcision is done on some boys soon after birth, and for other boys at about three years of age.

The gendering of chores is prominent at this phase. Girls learn to do the household chores of fetching water, cleaning the house, pounding maize, washing the dishes, and taking care of younger children.

Boys began to help their fathers in the *shamba* with farm work, and they also learn how to graze the cattle. Boys learn these

roles from their fathers and older boys, while girls are taught by their mothers and sisters .

Around age seven , children starts lower primary school. In Tanzania boys and girls enrollment is equal at this stage

Often Starting around eight years of age, the child don't sleep with the parents in the same room.

***5.Eight to Twelve Years.*** By the ages nine to twelve years, the children becomes larger and are seen as knowing right from wrong and being able to take on additional responsibilities.

For those in school both boys and girls performs their chores before and after school.

Boys are provided a lot of help to their fathers in the *shamba* and with grazing the cattle.

Girls had learned all the household tasks, including cooking, cleaning the house,

washing the clothes, fetching water, and caring for younger siblings

Gender differences became more pronounced physically during this time, as girls develop breasts and start menstruation, and boys develop pubic hair. And this is the time boys and girls are not allowed to play together as they used to do when they were younger

**6. Thirteen to Fifteen Years.** Between thirteen and fifteen years of age, children in school completed upper primary, usually by age 13-15. Only a few (50%) proceed to Government secondary school and few parents could afford the fees.

Children who do not continue with secondary school are considered grown they are in transition from childhood to adulthood

Girls who are pregnant or boys who have impregnated girls are not considered children. At this point many girls are married off



## **7. Sixteen to Nineteen years**

This is a group of children and adolescents who are in secondary schools and those not in school are left to find their way to adulthood .

Most girls in some of the tribes are confined in the house for more than 30 days to be told about a good woman a good mother and a good grand mother and boys are affirmed with their roles as fathers of the house, in some tribes like Masai, Makonde and kyuras are sent to bushes for circumcisions rituals .They are guided as well to become head of

the house and piece of lands are allocated to them to build their own houses and start families.

Also During this period, many girls become pregnant. Boys at this age also impregnated girls, and if the boy accepted responsibility and married the girl becomes a member of adult men

### **3.Important positive lessons can be learnt from the experience of community-based child protection responses in Tanzania**

Foremost is the experience that the traditional community based child protection mechanisms' are built in the local government structures, equipped and supported , to take a leadership role in protecting children.

Capitalization on the traditional structures and practices as as the powerful forces at the local level and leveraged within the child protection actors and duty bearers including the government when are considering how to mitigate practices which are harmful and not always the

best interests of children such as FGM, early child marriage etc

Continuous Improvement of standards of child protection systems which also emphasize the child participation strengthening their capacities to ensure their own protection life-skills training, sexual-risk prevention strategies, and supporting means for positive economic empowerment of young people.

Building Efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms which are grounded in a realistic understandings of why children are facing the risks they currently are, and why community-level support is not adequate by improving child friendly budgets at all level ( Local government, Municipal and central government ).

Strengthen community based existing child protection mechanisms such as child protection committees. (MVCCs , CPT) Attending meetings, conducting awareness-raising, following-up on individual cases

Strengthening procedures and conducts on the effective output of the child help line the 116 which

requires proper coordination, referral systems and follow-ups on individual cases

Defining the roles and responsibilities of community-based child protection mechanisms were Government considers carefully what are the most appropriate roles and responsibilities for community-based child protection mechanisms. Such roles are highly dependent on the local context,

Engage with key community leaders , actors, duty bearers and community stakeholders as a measure for sustainability and effective, modes of CBCPMs were child protection actors should engage more actively with local leaders such as local authorities, religious leaders, health workers and educational actors. The engagement of local leaders is essential in efforts to change attitudes and behaviours, to reduce stigma, and to respond to crisis and emergencies

Linkages With the Formal Aspects of the Child Protection System through numerous linkages between community-based child protection mechanisms and the formal system are evidencing the existing connectors such as the National Social

Protection Framework (NSPF), the National Costed Plan of Action (NCPA) for the most vulnerable children (MVC),The MVCC,CPT, and The child act