



Twaweza Immersion

Southern Highlands,
Tanzania

informal observations by
participants, April 2012

The Community Together



What is Immersion?

- Allows people who are working in offices to experience the realities their activities are supposed to address.
- Helps us to be “tuned in” – to how people are living, how they communicate and express their aspirations.
- A chance to see what changes lives, how it is brought about and what it means to people.



The 2012 Immersion



Destination:

10 different villages, Njombe District, Southern Highlands, Tanzania



Number of participants: 22



Partner: Daraja





The main aim was to participate in and experience the daily lives of the host family and community members.

Each participant gathered information on issues that are important to Twaweza:

- Information
- Change
- Power
- Basic services
- Other issues of importance in the family or community

Methodology



- Three nights and three days with a host family in communities
- Participate in the families' daily lives, asking them to open a 'window' into their lives
- Meet community members, observe socio-economic life, governance, access to information, visit schools and clinics
- Each team took photos which they thought captured their experience best
- Participants noted observations on their surroundings for discussion afterwards
- Each participant recorded an audio story from their experience

Sharing experiences



After field immersion, we shared stories of our time in different villages. We compared and discussed our observations, compiled findings and sought to identify lessons for our work.

Access to Information



Mass media: mainly radio, only few newspapers, almost no TV sets.

Few printed materials available, people seem to read little.

Other sources: informal discussions at village barazas or shops, conversations with those who travel, mobile phone calls, drum-beating and megaphones.

Suggestion boxes at schools and village offices were the only way to send information back. Were they ever opened?



Lessons Learnt: Access to Information



Address written material to opinion makers: Headmasters, Village Executive Officers, Ward Executive Officer and religious leaders.

Concern: Possible suppression of information to public.

Observation: Small group discussions with community members could help spread messages in written material.

Identify rural FMC branded goods

Concern: Products in rural market not packaged – where to put information?

Observation: Salt may not be sold in packages, but exercise books are bought often. We need to identify popular products in rural areas.

Power

Observations

1. Male domination
2. Respect to age, position, wealth and education
3. Violence
4. Collective action



Categories of power

Hard Power: violent middlemen capturing the sale of farm produce

Soft Power: status derived from being educated or wealthy

Negative Power: domestic violence

Positive Power: head teachers influencing opinion among the community about the importance of education

Quiet Power: women challenging the idea of male domination in a non-confrontational manner





Change

Who are change-makers?



1. Young and educated villagers
2. The community as a whole
3. Missionaries/Church
4. Political parties
5. Extraordinary individuals





Change needs inspiration and motivation

- From stories of other villagers making change
- From instances of positive government responses to individual effort

Education, Health, Water: Some insights

Sector	Most problematic	Most Information
Education	1	9
Health	6	3
Water	5	0

Participants were asked to identify the sector which was most problematic in their village and the one which they had found the most information on.

Health and **water** were viewed as the most problematic in all villages. Most information was available on **education**.

Education



Capitation Grant: There is need for accurate information as most head teachers visited were ill-informed.



Community Contribution: While the villagers' contribution to 'fix gaps' is commendable, it should not replace government funding.



Teacher presence



Village	No. of Teachers employed	No. of teachers present	No. of Students
Igosi	8	8	378
Lupembe	7	5	350
Uhenge	8	7	515
Itanana	5	5*	161
Samaria	6	6*	287
Saja	7	5	418
Matumbika	4	4	301
Utelewe	6	6	343
Kulimambo	6	6	267

* plus 8 trainee teachers for 1 month

- While we found most teachers present, we heard from head teachers and villagers that absenteeism was high among both teachers and students.
- Understaffing was a major problem. Lack of motivation among teachers.
- Quality of education was suspect.
- Uwezo reports were not well-known among the communities.

Health



- Understaffing compounded by absenteeism of health workers
- Minimal awareness of preventive healthcare 
- Quality of services and supply of essential drugs were low
- Disparity among villages in healthcare available
- Citizens have taken action to build their own healthcare facility in some villages 
- In others, private entrepreneurship fills delivery gaps

Water



- Geography played a crucial role in access to water: “A huge issue or no issue at all.”
- Patchwork of government, NGO and church projects responsible for water delivery.
- Lack of awareness of connection of health issues with clean water.
- Water delivery and politics tied.
- Sustainability of water sources a major problem – installed taps run dry for long periods.



Other things we saw/were told



1. Citizens driven by the need for food security and economic sustainability.
2. Security of school children was a concern, especially for female students.
3. The number of shops was low and products were not many.
4. Pricing of agricultural products was a concern.
5. Facilities/place for active recreation for the youth were missing.



6. Domestic and public violence due to alcohol consumption a concern.

7. Violence had several sources but no police were present. Communities policed themselves.

8. Transparency and community mobilization were rare .



The Community Together

In our 2012 Immersion, we saw communities working together to bring change to their lives.

In the absence of specific services and facilities, the community works together with leadership from inspiring individuals to fill the gaps.