

# *As We Speak...*

*Community Conversations as Evidence of Social Change  
in Pangani*

Innovative Research for Tracking Behavior Change in Action  
UZIkwASA 2017



**UZIKWASA's Community Diary Study** is a bold long-term experiment in both social science research and monitoring and evaluation. The study collected over a thousand diary entries, conversations recorded by members of Pangani communities themselves, over a five-year period of integrated interventions and messaging campaigns to promote gender justice and reflective leadership. The results paint a complex portrait of the dynamic social fabric underlying the challenges UZIKWASA seeks to address, and validates the organization's work by showing strong evidence of positive change.

### **About UZIKWASA**

UZIKWASA is an independent non-profit organization established in 2004 in Pangani District, Tanzania. Its aim was to strengthen voices in rural communities by engaging them to find their own solutions to development challenges through encouraging empowerment and developing capable and committed leadership.

### **The Study: the first of its kind**

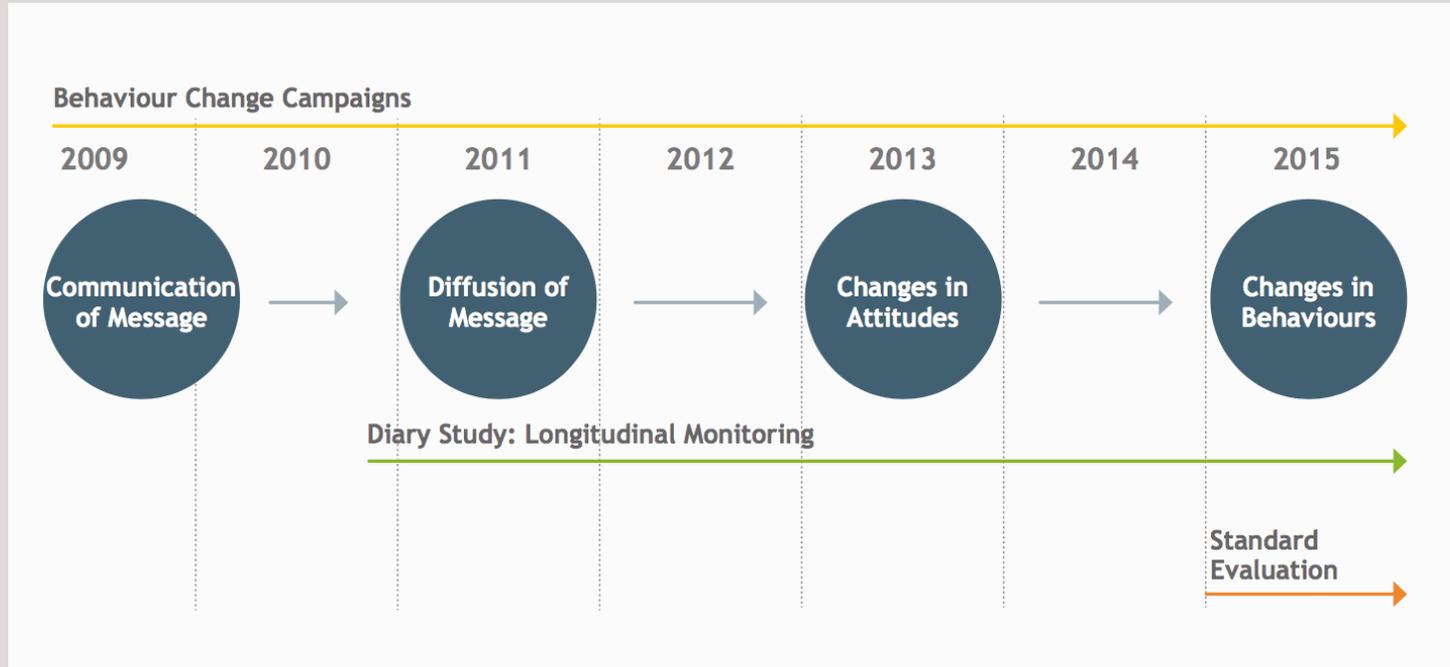
This report summary<sup>1</sup> presents the findings of UZIKWASA's innovative longitudinal conversational diary study, the first of its kind in the study of attitudinal and behavioural change. The diary study collected over a thousand conversations, recorded by trained community members, without an intermediary, over five years (2010-2015). In addition to being an innovative method for social science research, UZIKWASA is the only organization to employ such a community-focused tool, with evidence produced directly by its intended beneficiaries, as part of a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) system.

### **The UZIKWASA MERL Approach**

The UZIKWASA MERL approach involves the program team, community, stakeholders and partners in a participatory feedback and mutual sharing process using a set of process and impact monitoring tools. These include the diary study, collection of case studies, radio monitoring and feedback data, activity

<sup>1</sup> The full study report is available upon request:  
[vpieroth@uzikwasa.or.tz](mailto:vpieroth@uzikwasa.or.tz)

**2009 anticipated timeline for attitude and behaviour change and longitudinal monitoring**





reports, and other tools used periodically, such as serial participatory action research (SPAR), radio listener groups and thematic focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) as well as leadership coaching reports. UZIKWASA acknowledges that transformation is a long process and this is reflected in strong emphasis on tracking impact while the intervention is ongoing to see changes emerging over time. This is quite different to conventional M&E that defines distinct end points that are to be achieved within a given time frame. The study sought to capture evidence of progress in the form of changes in attitudes and behaviours.

The diary study, in harmony with other tools in UZIKWASA's MERL system, fills the gap by revealing the context of social challenges, and, most importantly, showing progress. The method's revelation of change also promotes responsive programming as UZIKWASA seeks to use its embedded MERL system to learn, reflect and grow as interventions are implemented and new ones developed based on learning from those interventions, not just measure outcomes with it.

## Thematic areas in UZIKWASA's result frameworks

As a monitoring tool, the diary study responds to four thematic areas in UZIKWASA's logical frameworks:

1. Caregiver Responses to Sexual Abuse & Early Pregnancy
2. Early Forced Marriage
3. Support for Education & Gender Equitable Parenting
4. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Although community conversational diaries have been used by social science researchers in Malawi to understand the construction of social norms around HIV/AIDS,<sup>2</sup> to our knowledge it has never been used as a longitudinal tool to understand change, nor to assess the impact of behaviour change interventions.

### Key questions the diary study responds to

As a pioneer study using conversational diaries for the first time to record evidence of attitudinal and behavioural change on the social normative level, the study sought to answer two questions. Owing to the

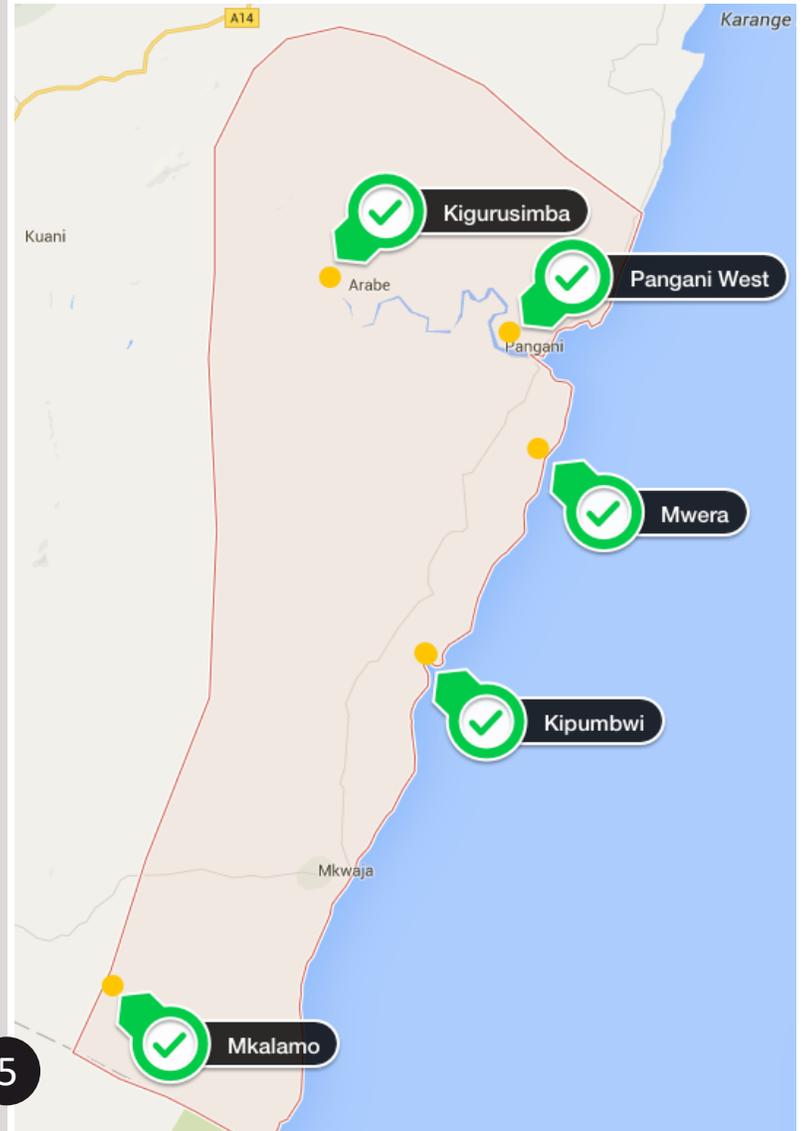
<sup>2</sup> Watkins, S.C., Swidler, A., 2009. Hearsay Ethnography: Conversational journals as a method for studying culture in action. *Journal. Poetics* 37, 162-184.

novelty of the approach, the first is methodological; the second responds to the four thematic areas of UZIKWASA's logical framework.

1. Has the method produced evidence of change in attitudes and behaviours over time?
2. What does the evidence reveal about changes in attitudes and behaviours around each of the four thematic areas?

## Methods

In 2010, UZIKWASA intensively trained ten community diarists, one man and one woman from each of five purposively selected villages in Pangani District, on the topics of interest for the study, data collection methods and research ethics. Over five years of 30 two-month data collection rounds from 2010 to 2015, the diarists wrote over a thousand entries ranging from a few sentences to several pages. These were transcribed, translated and coded using a mixed inductive and deductive approach based on topical adherence to the themes (deductive) and free coding based on emerging themes in the data (inductive).





## Key Findings

### **Conversational journals are highly successful in assessing change over time.**

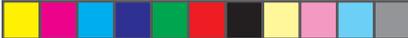
The methodological finding of the diary study, and answer to the first of two questions posed, is that it is a highly appropriate tool for assessing longitudinal change in attitudes and even behaviours.

This experiment in collecting and analysing conversational diaries to understand change was a highly successful innovation in research methods and institutional learning. In fact, the diary method was sensitive enough in our case that it revealed patterns in attitudes toward farming that reflect actual rainfall data for the region. Additionally, for UZIKWASA, it is a very useful tool for understanding the complexity of the social context in which they work, and the potential areas of impact. In the contestation and the fluidity of social norms, revealed by the diaries, lies the space to design messages that resonate among diverse members of a community, and thus the opportunity to impact on attitudes and behaviours toward positive outcomes.

## What changes does the study show?

Although the evidence is stronger on some topics than others, the long-term attitudinal changes evident in the diaries are remarkably greater than the uncertainties of the data in each thematic area.

We see parents taking more responsibility for their children's wellbeing and institutions like village leaders, the police, courts, and school committees improving responses to sexual abuse. In the early diaries, the gender dynamics among parents are often replicated in outcomes for children as fathers force their daughters to be married or deny them education over the objections of their mothers. By the end of the data collection period, structural improvements empower women to defend the rights of their daughters, inverting the power dynamic within households by allowing women to invoke institutions like the police and courts as they argue for their daughters' rights. There are changes evident among men as well. Groups of male youths in the early diaries overwhelmingly express negative attitudes about the roles of women in society, including their own sisters, and show a dangerously high level of entitlement to girls' and women's



bodies. In the final rounds, even groups of young men use rights-based vocabulary to discuss their responsibility in ensuring gender equity, reflecting on their own behaviour change and advocating for their male friends to change theirs.



The cumulative narrative of the 1,000+ entries over five years is difficult to delink from UZIKWASA's highly targeted work in the district over the data collection period: Its phase two campaign *Banja Basi* focused on encouraging Pangani community members to speak out, while its phase three campaign *Banja Basi... Halafu?* promoted not just speaking out, but taking action against injustice and rights violations. The changes between the first, second and third analysis periods of the diary evidence follow a remarkably similar progression of social change, first toward speaking out, then toward action. The data shows attitudinal change preceding behavioural change, practice confirming theory and evidence supporting the hypothesis that UZIKWASA's set of interventions and communications would yield social change in Pangani District.

The diary evidence shows that social norms overall shift toward those that promote gender justice and away from those that promote the acceptance of rights violations.

Although the diaries are not sensitive enough to capture individual or household level change, they do provide strong evidence on the social normative level of changes reflected in commonly expressed and shared attitudes and, sometimes, behaviours. Further, though the diary tool does not track the performance of local institutions, it does provide a wealth of evidence on how people talk about institutions, reflections that reveal how communities think their leaders and institutions have changed, which are useful for understanding change in structural responses, and how communities regard institutions.

### Changes by thematic areas

**Caregiver Responses Sexual Abuse & Pregnancy:** Blame for sexual abuse and early pregnancy is shifted from victims to parents and perpetrators. Although improvements in structural support through police, courts, schools and village leadership are evident, there is may be problematic institutionalization of impunity for wealthy or influential perpetrators. Understanding this progress on both the community and structural level, it appears that the

## The Journey - Footprints of Change

### Story 1: Round 2, January 2011, Mwera Village:

A 13-year-old girl is forced to marry after having passed standard seven exams, meaning she is eligible to continue to secondary school. When the girl begs her father to let her continue with school and not force her to marry, he asks her, "To do what? To get pregnant without some guy? It is better you get pregnant while you're with your husband. There's no such thing as a school or a class for you."

### Story 2: Round 12, September 2012, Mkalamo Village:

A mother resisting her husband's intention to marry off their daughter threatens the use of institutions to support her: "It is impossible! This year we will take you before a legal authority." Following their argument, the couple goes to the ten-cell leader, who not only supports the mother's resistance, but threatens follow-up via the police: "The ten-cell leader said that if such issues are taken to him again, he will have to take them to the police."

### Story 3: Round 21, April 2014, Pangani Town:

Family members arguing over the potential marriage of a young girl. The girl's grandfather says that the father "has the right to have her get married." But the mother responds, "Excuse me, uncle, but he has no right to my child! She is not going to be married, and if he has taken people's money [as dowry] it's best he returns it." An aunt who is also present supports the girl's mother, saying, "For your bad habits we will take you to court. We can't agree to this."





complementarity of UZIKWASA’s leadership and gender interventions along with the radio and other multimedia communication tools is effective in making changes toward positive outcomes like increased protections and decreased vulnerability.

**Early Forced Marriage:** Economic justifications of the contested practice of early forced marriage in the early diaries renders it as the inevitable outcome of widely understood pressures of poverty. By the third analysis period, these justifications are overwhelmingly displaced by rights-based vocabulary that puts the wellbeing of girls at the centre of conversations about how to ensure their rights are protected. Structural support to protect young girls by preventing early forced marriages is strong enough to change household negotiations about it: The final rounds of diaries show household negotiations in which the invocation of system-level support by mothers and daughters themselves inverted the power household structure traditionally controlled by the father and protected against early forced marriage.

**Support for Education and Gender Equitable Parenting:** In the initial rounds of diaries, the legitimacy of caregivers absolving themselves of parental responsibilities,

engendered partly through the shared understanding of the challenges of poverty, weakened the status of childhood as a sheltered period for development. Childhood in the first analysis period was fragile and subject to vulnerabilities related to poverty, education, alcohol, sexual development and obedience. Through the second and third analysis periods, attitudes around parental responsibility shift, not only blaming parents for negative outcomes but obligating parents to provide support and ensure positive outcomes for children. There is evidence of self-reflection among caregivers about their role in the harms children face. Shared responsibility for providing support among community members, beyond the household level, is demonstrated in entries about actions, not just attitudes like the second analysis period. Even male youths reflect on their role in posing harm to school girls, realizing their role in creating barriers to education for girls.

**Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** Early entries on rape and gender violence show nearly ubiquitous victim blaming, both at the community and structural levels. Women and girls are permitted



very limited sexual expression, and rape and gang rape are commonly understood, particularly among men, to be tools for controlling women's sexual choices and, ultimately, their bodies. The assertion that sexual violence is perpetrated to teach the victim a lesson is also very common in the early rounds of diaries. Criticisms in the early diary entries focuses almost solely on the chance of perpetrators contracting HIV, displacing the victims from the centre of conversations that erased their suffering. By the final rounds, communities are empowered to resist, making explicit references to Pangani FM, and adopting rights-based vocabularies to support victims and shift blame to perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. Members of the community themselves reflect on changes in their own communities and themselves, often citing decreases in rape and gang rape, including that of men, and demonstrating higher expectations and confidence in the police in particular to respond to cases of violence.

## Conclusions

The diaries show unambiguous positive progress toward gender justice in each of the thematic areas analysed in this report: sexual abuse and early pregnancy,

early forced marriage, support for education and gender equitable parenting, and sexual and gender-based violence. The innovative tool, designed to capture attitudes, does so successfully, and also captures convincing evidence of reflections of actual behavioural changes at the social normative level. The results validate both the innovations of UZIKWASA's messaging campaigns and set of interventions, and the methodology of the study itself. These are the main conclusions from each of thematic area.



## From the Director

This brochure is a summary of a report that covers a five years period of rigorous behavioural research done among Pangani communities. This innovative work demonstrates the power of community voices in understanding social transformation as it happens. By sharing it we hope to inspire others who seek to learn about new ways of monitoring behaviour change in their communities.

We are indebted to Dr Nicola Desmond, Medical Anthropologist and Senior Lecturer, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Wellcome Trust Fellow & Head of Behaviour and Health Group, Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome Trust, for her dedication to UZIKWASA. We appreciate her willingness to think with us “out of the box.” It was thanks to her guidance and support that we were ready for the adventure of taking a new and unprecedented approach to impact monitoring. Thank you, Nicola for developing and setting up the research and supporting us throughout its implementation, including providing guidance in data analysis and writing this report.

Our heartfelt thanks to Mark Marchant, political scientist from Vassar College, USA, for the immense work he has put into the finalization of this report. Mark, without your tireless efforts to painstakingly organize over 1000 diaries, re-code them and develop best ways to analyse this huge amount of data, we would not have made it. Thank you for writing this excellent and comprehensive report.

Thank you, UZIKWASA team for never giving up believing in the value of this research despite challenging times and set backs on the way. Your determination and endurance have finally paid off.

We owe the Pangani communities tremendous thanks for participating in the research during all these years. We are extremely grateful to all the young women and men who actually wrote the diaries in the five villages where the research took place.

Finally, we thank Bread for the World, our partner in Germany, not only for their financial support to the study, but for their trust in UZIKWASA. This trust has granted us the liberty to explore new ways of behaviour tracking. Thank you for your patience to see this adventure through to a successful end.

UZIKWASA is extremely happy that everyone’s contribution led to success and enabled us to say to any interested organization: In Pangani, the use of community journals has proven highly effective in tracking change in attitudes and behaviour over time.

Dr Vera Pieroth  
Executive Director  
UZIKWASA.



ISBN 978-9987-9732-4-8



**UZIKWASA**  
PO Box 1, Pangani - Tanzania.  
Tel: +255-27-2630303 or 2630203  
[www.uzikwasa.or.tz](http://www.uzikwasa.or.tz)

*Watch UZIKWASA films, trailers and TV spots. Visit our YouTube channel: UZIKWASA Pangani*