

How to win support for a people's movement against Alcohol Abuse: Seen during Iringa visit with IOGT help

The inclusion of a focus on alcohol consumption within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ illustrates the increased diversity of the new global development agenda. Recognition of alcohol as a development issue reflects its multiple social and economic impacts as well as the 3.3 million annual deaths, or 5.9% of all global deaths, that result from its consumption.² SDG 3.5 aims to “strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol”.

IDYDC (Iringa Development of Youth & Disabled Children's Care) decided to follow ideas originally from Thailand which John Nkhoma visited as part of preparation. Before taking contact with the villages it is important to have a good contact with the District Authorities and get their approval for the project. This leads to having an introductory letter from the District Authorities to show up when having the first visit to the village in question. There is also a place for getting interest in what is coming through using the media including the radio with “radio talks” to kindle interest in the subject of alcohol and its benefits, but above all its dangers in a community.

The initial tone in the discussions with communities is not to denounce all use of alcohol and it may even be beneficial to give some credit to the value of alcohol in some settings. Much of the initial contact is to offer the community the expertise of a sociologist to help them identify the main problems of the community and the main barriers that stop progress to improve things for the people and for the whole village. This is called the **Community Based Approach (CBA)**. This will use all the skills of the sociologist in mapping the alcohol situation in 3 villages initially. (These villages were identified as having the highest prevalence of alcohol abuse of the whole area). The sociologist used such Qualitative methods such as Focus group Discussions in smaller groups of the same age and sex, Key Informant Interviews, questionnaires with bigger groups in the village, participatory observations etc. which gave the overall picture of what was reality in these 3 villages. In a wider discussion meeting with the village leaders it was decided not to attack all use of alcohol but rather to engage even alcohol abusers and producers in the discussion by admitting that alcohol may have some benefits in certain circumstances and then to focus on the major problems that are seen in the village. In order to get as many of the leaders to come to this discussion they offered them 5000 - 10,000 Shillings for attendance so as to compensate any

loss of income by taking them away from other activities. They included in this group the village council, owners of bars, teachers, health workers, traditional healers, cultural authorities e.g. Chiefs, big land owners etc. They got the group to list all the village problems as they see them. These problems were then ranked. Then a discussion was opened up about the ultimate causes behind these problems. Surprisingly many of the problems, when analysed carefully revealed alcohol abuse as being a major factor. Then started a discussion about how to reduce these problems. This might even include introduction of new by-Laws about better control of production, selling limits relating to age of customers, hours of sales, advertising of the product, alternative come generating activities for those producers who wish to stop brewing beer and instead get training to another trade. Related to this question they were able to offer microcredit to those who underwent training and showed the capacity of making a success of their new trade. In the long and essential process of engaging a whole village they were able to engage well trained doctors to show the health consequences of alcohol abuse. Many of these health risks were new to these communities. According to WHO alcohol increases the risk of 60 diseases and abuse is an important causative factor in ill-health. Apart from its health risks alcohol abuse has negative effects of economy, social behaviour, child rights, and development within a village.

When these 3 villages were visited prior to the studies they found that many people were drunk already during the morning hours, many of their children could not attend school because their parents couldn't afford even the low school fees needed. many families found it difficult to feed the family adequately because so much of the cereals produced went into the production of beer.

The long process of **CBA** led to discussions about possible establishment of new by-laws to control alcohol production, opening and closing times of selling outlets, protecting children from alcohol exposure, etc. They found that in one village there were 20 alcohol producers each producing 20 tins = 1 drum. The discussions with producers lead to a consensus of reducing the number of those simultaneously producing with very small profits from 20 to 1 producing 1 drum which led that one to make a much better profit. The person chosen rotated but only one was allowed to brew beer at a time. This was made in consensus of all who brewed beer and included in the new by-laws. There were marked effects of this new by-law: there was suddenly better profit for the one whose turn it was to brew beer, there was enough

food for the families of those who all had brewed beer using cereals that should have gone into making food for the families. All those who brewed beer were now offered training as entrepreneurs and at the end of this training they were granted a microcredit loan in order to launch new Income Generating Activities. These loans always went to the wider family who took responsibility collectively to see that the new venture was managed properly and that the loan was paid back at the right time. These ventures included chicken farming, goats, other new farming projects. These microcredit loans are organised under an independent department within IDYDC

Many saw how families became more peaceful instead of having frequent conflicts. Many of those who had been alcohol abusers became abstemious. One of these is now a village leader. At first he was very antagonistic to the new thinking but later became one of the strongest enthusiasts in spreading these ideas to other villages. The group received good advice and good teaching about the risks with alcohol abuse from a doctor with Psychiatric experience. It is now clear that the economy of the first 3 villages in this pilot project is flourishing and now they have requests for the same initiatives to start in surrounding villages. It has even spread wider to another ward. They are now working to establish a similar project in a ward famous for its production of wines.

To encourage the participation of young people there has been a focus of initiating football clubs and other sports with trainer support and spreading training manuals. Within these clubs there is given information about the negative effects of alcohol even when used by sporters. "Alcohol is like trying to play football with a monkey tied on your back." "Get the team to close their eyes and then try to score from a penalty kick. That is how alcohol damages you in sports."

On 11th November 2015 we visited Kisinga village on the main road going to Mbeya. we met up at the village office with Lemord Musenga, the ward executive officer, Mohammed Nwibanjo, the village chairman, Jesaya Mulisi the Village executive officer. The community is divided into Villages → Wards → Division → Districts.

This village was the leading village in Alcohol abuse in the area and to begin with it was very difficult to start the project. Being on the main road and having most of the alcohol being produced industrially change involves other powers that do not want alteration. There was a long preparatory stage of helping the villagers to see their problems in the community and trace them back to their origin. This helped them to see how many of their problems that

had their roots in Alcohol abuse. During the process they also got good information from a doctor (The District Medical Officer) who educated them about all the harmful effects of overuse of alcohol in the individuals' body, their family, community, economy, and impact on children in the society. There was access to radio talks about the dangers of alcohol abuse. Many still used the argument from the industrial producers that alcohol consumption was a part of the local culture. It was important to win the confidence of the leaders that alcohol abuse was stopping the community from developing and advancing their well being. The question became a focal discussion in the village and finally led to their being debate about alcohol misuse at all gatherings in the cells, village, ward, division and district. They appointed a committee to suggest new by-laws to control alcohol production and sales including stricter controls of the ages of those buying alcoholic drinks and the hours of opening for outlets for such sales. There was encouragement and advice from IDYDC about how to win broad consensus about new by-laws. However these by-laws are still subject to national laws and a few sellers of alcohol took shelter from the terms of their alcohol licences which did not always copy the local by-laws. The official process followed a pattern of first getting a draft of by-laws from the committee which was discussed in the villages council, then at a General Meeting of the whole village, and a District Lawyer helped them to check that the draft was in line with national laws. Any amendment suggested was then brought back to the village, read to a General Meeting. The Village chairman has a crucial role in winning consensus from everyone about the benefits of the draft. When all are agreed the committee is given the responsibility to see that the by-laws are implemented everywhere. This committee meets every month to follow this up. The report goes to the village council. Security guards are selected for the village to ensure peace in the village and to sort out any conflicts. Surprisingly there were few contentions and most saw quickly all the benefits of their new policy contained in the by-laws. The villages saw how family conflicts faded away, food availability increased, the economy of the village thrived as alternative enterprises to alcohol production and selling matured, children attended school as hoped now that their parents could afford school fees, abusers received help from a doctor with psychiatric training to support their resolve to break with alcohol. Many became enthusiastic supporters of temperance. The news spread about the positive benefits experienced in this first village. All 6 villages in the ward followed their example in introducing their by-laws. Now the District Office chooses representatives to go to other

villages who are keen to hear of their experience and there are even visitors from other distant areas who have heard about their successes. In many areas most alcohol came from local breweries and they were encouraged to see the benefits of reducing the number of producers by a rotation system after achieving consensus. Each producer who had his/her turn in this rotation found that he/she make more profit in this way

Those working in town were impressed by these developments and were encouraged to change their ways as well. Anyone who abused alcohol and caused conflicts was fined. Politicians did not block the suggestions for new local by-laws as the representative, the village councillor was involved. In the first village the Chairlady of the council was so popular after the changes that she was voted in again at the next elections. Young people were encouraged to become involved through the support for their sports interests, such as football and netball, which included discussions about the negative side of alcohol. In many of the sports they used action examples to emphasise the dark side of alcohol e.g. they would ask a footballer to kick a penalty goal blindfolded or to run the length of a football pitch carrying a weight on their shoulders ("like having a monkey clinging to your back"). They also had fun events like a tug of war between various groups, running to catch a chicken etc. Many churches who were taught about the **Community Based Approach** took part in giving support to these ideas and used their widespread network to encourage others to get involved. These churches included: the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church called Compassion, The Tanzania Assembly of God Church and others.

Some youth groups started bee-keeping projects. Previously the honey from such projects were often used to make strong alcohol drinks. Now the honey is sold as it is collected in town. These projects were advised in preparation for a project to start with receiving new knowledge about the venture, creating committees who will oversee the launching and the continuation of the project and then use a maturing venture to inspire others to make similar changes to the way of developing income-generating activities. The focus within the Community Based Approach is always to start at the grass-roots level and then slowly go upwards.