



Methodological Approaches to Assessing Community-Led Health Initiatives in West Africa: A Framework for the Tanzanian Context

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Abstract

Robust methodologies for assessing community-led health initiatives are lacking in West Africa, particularly in settings like Tanzania where formal health systems are often overstretched. This gap hinders the systematic evaluation of such initiatives' processes and impacts on maternal and reproductive health. This article aims to develop a methodological framework for the systematic assessment of community-led health initiatives in Tanzania, focusing on maternal and child health. Its objective is to provide a structured approach for evaluating initiative design, implementation fidelity, community engagement, and health outcomes. The framework was developed through a synthesis of participatory action research principles and realist evaluation. It integrates qualitative and quantitative methods, including stakeholder workshops, participatory observation, key informant interviews, and analysis of routine health data. The design emphasises iterative feedback loops with community actors. As a methodology article, this paper presents a framework rather than empirical results. A core component is the identification of specific indicators for community ownership, including a proposed threshold where at least 60% of initiative leadership roles must be held by local community members for classification as 'community-led'. The framework offers a structured, culturally adaptable methodology for assessing community-led health initiatives. It addresses a gap in evaluation practice by prioritising local context and community agency within the Tanzanian setting. Researchers and practitioners should pilot and adapt this framework in diverse Tanzanian districts. Further refinement should involve co-development with community health workers and local leaders to ensure its practical utility and sustainability. community health, methodology, evaluation framework, participatory research, maternal health, Tanzania This article contributes a novel methodological framework tailored for assessing community-led health initiatives in Tanzania, bridging a gap between participatory practice and rigorous evaluation in low-resource settings.

Keywords: *Community-based participatory research, Sub-Saharan Africa, Health systems strengthening, Mixed-methods evaluation, Implementation science, Community health workers, Tanzania*

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