



1996

Child Development Policy

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“The implementation of the Tanzanian Child Policy will help to reduce and even eliminate problems facing children.”

The policy was developed in 1996 by the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children to safeguard the rights of the child and encourage education of all other sectors of society in their responsibilities. It recognises child protection as a vital element to create “intellectually, spiritually and morally” sound future citizens.

The paper aims to discuss and clarify:

- factors affecting the provision of child rights;
- measures to promote the rights of the child;
- definition of child survival and measures to promote this;
- important issues concerning child development and measures to promote this.

In all sections, the responsibilities of government, ministries, community, guardians, institutions, parents and the child are discussed.

The role of NGOs

The role of NGOs is not discussed at length throughout the paper as the policy focuses on other key players in the development of a child. NGOs are listed as organisations which are encouraged, under the supervision of government ministries, to:

- “establish centers for children in difficult circumstances; set up institutions to cater for children with particular problems; set up voluntary associations to serve and defend children”;
- “educate the public on the rights of the child and participate fully in defending interests of the child”;
- ensure they do not “violate the good customs and traditions of our nation” nor conduct activities for personal benefit.

Street children

With regard to street children, the paper says it is the responsibility of the Ministry for Child Development and Social Welfare to engage in research that can identify whether it is necessary to establish institutions for orphans and abandoned children (such as “SOS Children Villages”) or to look into “host families”.

Significantly, there is a commitment to ensuring a review and reduction of taxes on items and foodstuff relating to children.

Education

The policy specifically emphasises the need for all children to remain in primary education and encourages the development of alternative education / programmes for older or excluded youths. In Tanzania, basic education is a right to all below 18 years of age. The Ministry of Community, combined with Ministry of Education (and other departments), are deemed responsible for ensuring all children of school-age are enrolled and for supporting families that are unable to afford schooling.

These ministries should ensure a high quality of education which improves on the current curricula and service (circa 1996). It is also the responsibility of these ministries to ensure those who drop out or remain excluded from schooling receive an alternative, in coordination with parents. There is an emphasis on improving other services that schools can provide; namely, counseling / guidance services.

Child protection

Beyond education, there is extensive wording on the “right of all children (including street children) to be protected, receive legal protection and adequate human and material resources”. The paper covers a wide range of topics: poverty, maternal care, family planning, sanitation, gender rights, moral growth, community practices and legal rights of the child.

With a view to protecting all children from a range of physical and emotional vulnerability, some specific measures are detailed:

- Institutions / legal departments to review outdated laws, to pass stronger laws against those who violate child rights. Educate communities and employers to encourage protection and non violation of laws.
- Ministry responsible for Social Welfare, among others, should provide “a good system for taking care of children in difficult circumstances”.
- The government recognises a need for a “system of follow up and monitoring” in cases of abuse and to set aside resources within the community dedicated to counseling, guidance and other special services.
- The community is left to manage a great deal of duties. In general this is described as: “Abandon practices which endanger children, participate in a positive upbringing of children and provide services to those in need.”
- It is specified that the community and institutions should denounce child exploitation (especially rape) and law enforcement agencies should instill a system of harsh punishment for this.

As with many Tanzanian policies, it is held that success of the policy will depend on the participation of: “Every individual, family, community, institution, department, ministry, religious denomination and other people organisations”.