

Mkombozi

**Handbook for local
and international
volunteers**

**Empowering children
Engaging families
Enabling communities**



MKOMBOZI'S MISSION

To help vulnerable children and youth to grow in mind, body and spirit and to build a more caring society for all. We believe that we can promote social justice through participation and collaboration. We capture local potential through learning and reflection and act as a catalyst for holistic development.

MKOMBOZI'S CORE VALUES

- ▶ **Capturing Tanzanians' potential:** through opportunities for the development of children and young people.
- ▶ **Facilitating the transformation of individuals' knowledge, attitudes and practice:** through collaboration with people locally, nationally and internationally to work towards a common goal.
- ▶ **Facilitating sustainable change:** by transferring our innovative and creative good practice to others.
- ▶ **Life-long learning:** by shared commitment to new action and by building inquisitive learners.
- ▶ **Promoting social justice:** by behaving with integrity, fairness and non-discrimination.
- ▶ **Building a caring society for all:** where the dignity of vulnerable groups is upheld and respected.
- ▶ **Commitment:** as demonstrated by professionalism, seriousness, honesty, communication, motivation and initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mkombozi...

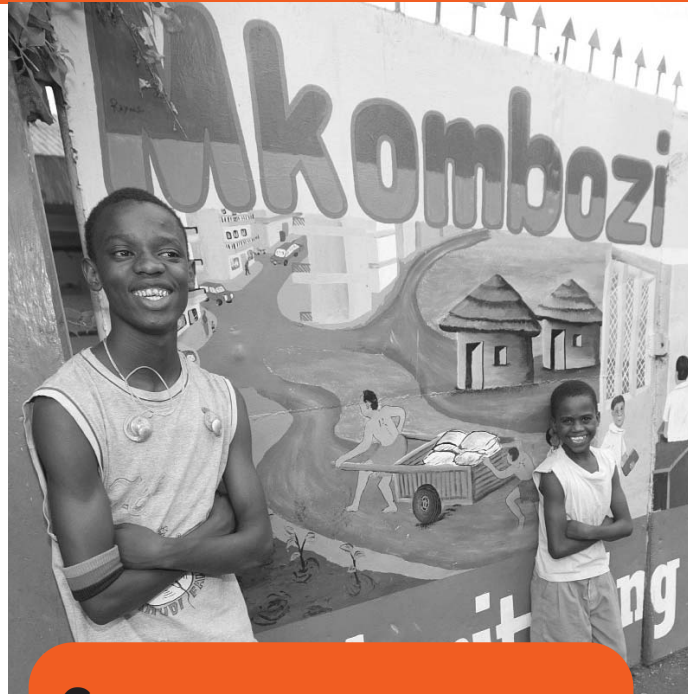
Mkombozi (meaning “liberator, emancipator” in Swahili) supports Tanzania’s vulnerable youth, including those at risk of vulnerability, through housing, education, research, advocacy, and outreach. Initially established in 1997 as a live-in residential center and safe haven for children living on the streets, Mkombozi has expanded its vision over the years. In addition to working with children already living / working on the streets, Mkombozi works to end the abuse and neglect of children, to ensure that children’s rights are recognised, and to identify opportunities for intervention before a child migrates to the street. Today, Mkombozi is one of the leading child-focused agencies in northern Tanzania, working with over 1,000 vulnerable children and families a year in the Kilimanjaro and Arusha Regions.

Volunteers are an important asset for Mkombozi. The organisation welcomes volunteers of all nationalities, religions, races and creeds and is open to differing levels of skills and experience in a variety of fields, including (but not limited to): social work, counseling, nursing, HIV/AIDS awareness, education, curriculum development, training, research, communications, drama and the arts.

What is the purpose of this handbook?

Because Mkombozi works hard to achieve a difficult and important **MISSION**, the organisation must actively ensure that all staff and volunteers consistently practice Mkombozi’s **CORE VALUES**. Mkombozi does this by supporting staff and volunteers and by monitoring their performance.

This booklet is designed to assist local and international volunteers who offer their time to Mkombozi’s offices (in Moshi and Arusha) and to Mkombozi’s children. Specifically, the purpose of this handbook is to help volunteers understand how they are accountable, and the skills, values and practices that are expected of them. It is also intended to provide information that will assist preparation for and enjoyment of the Mkombozi volunteer experience.



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KEY VOLUNTEER QUALITIES

The following qualities are highly valued at Mkombozi (and are, in fact, primary expectations of all Mkombozi staff). Mkombozi volunteers are encouraged to periodically assess how effectively they are demonstrating the following...

- **STRONG WORK ETHIC:** Are you motivated and dedicated to getting the job done?
- **POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Are you optimistic and upbeat?
- **GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Are you both verbally articulate and a good listener?
- **TIME MANAGEMENT ABILITIES:** Do you use your time on the job wisely?
- **PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:** Are you resourceful and able to creatively solve problems?
- **ACTING AS A TEAM PLAYER:** Do you cooperate and work well in groups and teams?
- **SELF-CONFIDENCE:** Do you project a sense of calm and inspire confidence in others?
- **ABILITY TO ACCEPT CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM:** Are you open to learning and growing?
- **FLEXIBILITY / ADAPTABILITY:** Are you able to adapt to new situations and challenges?
- **WORKING WELL UNDER PRESSURE:** Do you effectively manage the stress of deadlines?
- **SELF DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH:** Do you further your knowledge and skills?
- **INITIATIVE:** Are you willing to share your ideas and think “outside the box”?
- **LANGUAGE SKILLS:** Do you speak Swahili? Are you willing to study and practice it?
- **DEDICATION TO RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING.....**



Volunteers are encouraged to build creative and trusting relationships with Mkombozi children, staff and beneficiaries based on cultural awareness.

These relationships should seek to:

- prioritise the needs and interests of Mkombozi’s children;
- encourage self-reliance and self-help and discourage dependency;
- respect and foster internationally recognised human rights (both socio-economic and civil-political);
- enhance child rights and gender equity whenever possible.

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

All volunteers must respect the following guidelines and regulations during their work with Mkombozi. Please read this Code of Conduct (and the Consequences for Misconduct that follow) carefully and take the information seriously...

~ Guidelines ~

Volunteers must achieve a delicate balance between acting as a “friend” and a “role-model” to Mkombozi’s children. A good practice is to think of yourself as a secondary school teacher, and the children as your students.

In Tanzania, children and young people are expected to defer to their elders, regardless of their education. As a volunteer, you must actively seek to understand the cultural context and to work within its parameters.

In addition to the cultural context of Tanzania, always bear in mind the context of the children’s lives on the streets.

Do not make any promises to children that you cannot fulfil.

Do not discipline children. Refer the case to a staff member.

Do not take valuables to Mkombozi or to the field. We will not compensate you for any loss of property or money.

Mkombozi does not take responsibility for your personal safety during your time at the Centre or off-campus.

When in doubt, ask a staff member.

~ Regulations ~

You are answerable to the Programme Coordinator in your department. A Programme Coordinator’s decision is final.

You are requested to work together with project staff and other volunteers.

Mkombozi projects are defined with specific objectives and activities. If you are a long-term volunteer please make yourself aware of the project aims. Do not initiate new activities without prior consultation and agreement from the Programme Coordinator.

Volunteers are expected to abide by all Mkombozi policies. You are responsible for acquainting yourself with these policies (and with national laws). Ignorance is not an excuse!

Do not buy gifts for the children other than small candies and chewing gum. (Never give them alcohol or cigarettes.) If you wish to give gifts to the children, you must do so via your Programme Coordinator.

Do not host Mkombozi children at your house. This is for your protection and theirs.

The Mkombozi Volunteer Code of Conduct applies to all (long-term, short-term, local and international) volunteers and obliges them to:

- **uphold the organisation’s mission and values;**
- **uphold the guidelines and principles herein stated;**
- **abide by Tanzanian law;**
- **avoid involvement in party politics and refrain from public comment on political and religious matters; and**
- **refrain from any conduct or wrongdoing which may bring Mkombozi, its programs, staff or children into disrepute.**

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEERING

The following advice* is designed to assist Mkombozi volunteers to effectively manage the experience of working at the Centre, regardless of whether they are long-term, short-term, local or international volunteers.

1. START WITH WHAT YOU CAN DO / DON'T OVERBURDEN YOURSELF

Offer only those skills and abilities that you feel comfortable to share. Avoid the temptation to be overly ambitious at the outset of your placement, particularly if you are a long-term volunteer. Modest, consistent activity will win the trust of Mkombozi staff and children most effectively, and will ensure that you will be able to remain involved over time. Have the courage to say “no” to what you think is beyond your ability.

2. PUT YOURSELF IN THE OTHER PERSON'S SHOES

As you begin to grapple with the learning curve incurred by your work at Mkombozi, children at the Centre, life in Moshi, Tanzanian culture (and so on...), it is possible that you may occasionally lose sight of your placement objectives. Remember that volunteer work always involves two parties: those who are in need of help and those who are trying to help them. The will, needs, history and context of the person(s) whom you are trying to help should always be your first and foremost priority.

3. KEEP YOUR PROMISES

It goes without saying that you must keep your word regarding when you will attend Mkombozi and what kinds of services you are going to provide. But you must also be sure to never break promises you may make to staff and children, even if they seem to be trivial. In particular, Mkombozi's children will grow to expect and rely on your help and your presence. In this regard, your responsibility is a significant one -- the establishment of a trusting relationship with Mkombozi staff and children is key to your success as a volunteer worker.

4. MANAGE YOUR TIME AND ENERGY

There is a limit to both the number of places where you can be involved and the amount of time that you can spend on your volunteer activities. Be aware of the limits, and match your efforts to your goals accordingly.

5. UPHOLD THE TRUST PLACED IN YOU

Volunteers learn various sorts of information through the course of their work. You must not pass this information on, formally or informally. Protecting the privacy of Mkombozi and the confidentiality of Mkombozi's children is paramount to respecting their rights, to creating trust and to maintaining a fruitful volunteer experience.

6. COMMUNICATE WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY

Obtaining the understanding and support of your friends and family is an important, early step for both local and international volunteers. Local volunteers need to ensure that their support system will accommodate the changes to their daily schedules and increased absences from home. International volunteers must ensure that they have an emotional support system upon which they can lean when and if they find themselves feeling overwhelmed by the challenges and adaptations they inevitably encounter.

7. MAINTAIN RELIGIOUS & POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

People may become interested in volunteering because of religious beliefs or a sense of justice. Whatever your primary motivation, Mkombozi appreciates your desire to offer a helping hand to those who are vulnerable. However, Mkombozi requires that, during the course of your work, you do not attempt to persuade anyone to join a religion of which you are a member, or to support a political party that you favour. To show respect for basic human rights, you must respect the rights of all people to freedom of religion, thought and belief.

8. DON'T EXCHANGE MONEY OR GOODS

Volunteer activities are not coerced, and you can not be compelled to do anything in this context. In order to maintain the independence and freedom of your activities, you should not accept any kind of compensation or remuneration. Nor should you give any money or goods as assistance. Volunteer workers help others through their emotional support and good will. (With respect to specific and incidental costs incurred during your volunteer activities, such as transportation costs, these should be discussed with your assigned Programme Coordinator.)

9. LEARN & GROW FROM THE EXPERIENCE

Volunteer activities are not "charity". Pushing kindness on others is not only a nuisance, but also an obstacle to establishing a personal relationship on equal terms, since it divides the parties involved into a superior "giver" and a subordinate "receiver." Bear in mind that volunteering is an "exchange" and a "mutual activity" whereby you learn as much from those you are trying to help as you will be able to give to them. This means that your volunteer experience at Mkombozi should be a valuable and important opportunity for you to develop, learn and grow personally and professionally.

10. COMMUNICATE WITH THE PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR OR HR / ADMIN MANAGER

It is important that your volunteering experience meets your needs and expectations. By communicating any problems, issues or suggestions to the Programme Co-ordinator or to Human Resources, you can deal with them as they arise and ensure that you are receiving the support you need.

FAQS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER

The following is intended to answer some of the most common questions posed by (short-term and long-term) international volunteers who travel to Tanzania to work at Mkombozi. Please note that this information is provided as a courtesy and in no way strives to be a comprehensive review of everything the foreign volunteer must learn in order to make their international travel and work experience a success. Recommended resources for further research are provided.

Q: Can I work for Mkombozi in Arusha or Moshi?

A: Mkombozi volunteers can choose to live and work in either Arusha or Moshi, since the organisation has offices in both locations. Note however, that the Arusha office is primarily geared toward volunteers who will be doing street outreach and/or administrative duties, whereas the Moshi office can accommodate volunteers in these and most other capacities (from communications and research to health education and teaching). Your preferences for work and location should be discussed and planned with Mkombozi well in advance of your placement.

For your information, Arusha is a bustling, mid-sized city with a fairly large expatriate community and numerous international development organisations. The city sits in the lush countryside at the foot of Mount Meru (4556m) and enjoys a temperate climate throughout the year. Life in Arusha is geared toward those who enjoy living in the commercial hub of northern Tanzania and who prefer greater variety in shopping, dining and entertainment options. It should also be noted that Arusha is the traditional launching point for tourist safaris to locations such as the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater and Arusha National Park.

Approximately 2 hours (by bus) outside of Arusha, the small, quiet and more authentic Tanzanian town of Moshi lies at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. Although small, Moshi is home to a large number of development organisations in the fields of public health, children and youth, small business and agriculture. Life in Moshi is geared toward those who prefer a more relaxed and informal pace, as well as those who prefer extracurricular activities such as day-hikes, nature walks and even night-clubs. There are also many safari companies based in Moshi, willing to arrange trips for you.

Q: What are my housing options?

A: If you are not traveling with a volunteer-sending organisation, or if the organisation does not plan your housing, there are several options available for you to choose from, whether you volunteer in Arusha or Moshi. An apartment in town will cost you over US \$100/month. A “chumba” (room) of your own will cost you US \$5-\$10/month (note that you will have to furnish this room for at least another US \$100, and that this will be very basic accommodation with a shared bathroom and other facilities). A room at a “gesti” (guesthouse) would be approximately US \$3-5 per night. Finally, for stays of 6 months or longer, it is possible to rent a house for US \$150-200/month. Remember that other international volunteers may already be renting a house in the area and may have a spare room available to rent if this is an option that appeals to you.

Q: What's the money situation?

A: The currency in Tanzania is the Tanzania shilling (Tsh). The exchange rate is approximately US \$1 = Tsh 1,017. Living costs are considerably lower than in the West, however your monthly expenditure will depend very much on your lifestyle. The costs below should help you to plan your budget for your stay.

With respect to food, note that your lunch will be provided by Mkombozi whether you volunteer in Moshi or Arusha. Also, if you buy local products and cook for yourself you can get by spending approximately Tsh 50, 000 per month for food. Imported products are obviously more expensive (e.g. Tsh 3,000 for a packet of cookies). Meals in local restaurants cost about Tsh 2,000. Restaurants serving Western style food will charge approximately Tsh 5,000+ for a main course.

With respect to transportation, note that taxis within town (both Moshi and Arusha) cost Tsh 2-4,000. Dala dala (local buses) journeys cost Tsh300.

If possible, use an ATM/debit card to withdraw cash for exchange to local currency. Both MasterCard and Visa ATM/debit cards are accepted in Arusha and Moshi. Banks and Bureaus de Change will exchange cash and some will also exchange traveller's cheques, although in Moshi there are limited places that will exchange traveller's cheques. Be aware that commission charges can be high.

It is also possible to open a Tanzanian bank account at Standard Chartered (a major bank in both Moshi and Arusha) by having money wired into the account or with travellers' checks, but be forewarned that the fees associated with this transaction tend to be variable and extremely high.

A final money-matter to consider is that you must remain financially aware and alert throughout your stay in Tanzania, so that you can defend yourself from being "ripped off". The fact is, foreigners in Tanzania are seen as sources of income, and it will be assumed that you do not know the correct costs and conversions for various items. While this shouldn't prevent you from interacting and integrating with your community, it is something that you must understand and be aware of. You should also be aware of how you act with money (e.g. flashing cash in town is asking for trouble).

Q: Can I e-mail / telephone home?

A: Communication with friends and family by post, telephone and e-mail is possible in both Moshi and Arusha.

POSTAL MAIL:

Stamps for regular letters are currently Tsh 800 = US \$0.75, and for postcards, around Tsh 600 = US \$0.50. Letters and postcards take approximately 1 to 2 weeks to go to and from the States and Europe.

With respect to receiving "care packages", it is important to note that there is a customs fee when receiving parcels (i.e. anything larger than a lightly packed, padded envelope). Delivery time for larger packages can be anything up to 2 months so it is generally best to send a couple of smaller envelopes than one large package. If necessary, you can use the Mkombozi mailing address (your name, c/o Mkombozi, P.O. Box 9601, Kilimanjaro Road Post Office, Moshi, TANZANIA) to correspond with friends and family.

TELEPHONE:

There are several places in town that you can phone home for 1 minute (i.e. long enough to tell your recipient the number to call you back). The cost to you for that 1 minute call is Tsh 3500 = US \$3.50, which is why it's usually not a great idea for you to stay on the line and continue to talk for several minutes at that rate. Many volunteers opt to get a cell phone once they arrive (or to bring one from home and then buy a pay as you go sim card with a local service provider). The cost of phones starts at about Tsh 30,000 or US \$30 for a very basic mode. Using a cell phone to call the States is costs about US \$2-\$3/minute, but of course, people can call you on your cell at no cost to you.

Family and friends should be able to find calling cards for about US \$0.20/minute. There are also a number of companies who offer reduced rate phone calls from the UK (and possibly the US) by dialing another number first, details of these change regularly so it is worth checking periodically. Details can be found online by doing a search for e.g. "cheap calls to Tanzania". Note that the time difference between Tanzania and the Eastern US is 8 hours during standard time, and 7 hours during daylight savings time (late April to late October). There is a 2 hour time difference between Tanzania and Europe. Please provide Mkombozi's number to family for **emergency purposes only**. The number is 255 (TZ country code) 27 (Moshi locality code) 2754793 (Mkombozi's line).

SKYPE:

If you are set up on Skype, you should be able to find facilities in both Moshi and Arusha to contact friends and family this way.

E-MAIL:

E-mail is the cheapest and fastest way to communicate with friends and family back home, and internet cafes are widely available in both Moshi and Arusha. On average, you will be able to get an hour of surfing/e-mailing time for Tsh 1500/ US \$1.50. Offices in both Moshi and Arusha are wireless-enabled.

Q: Can I / should I bring my laptop?

A: You have probably already heard about the risks associated with bringing expensive electronics to Tanzania. It is true that there is risk associated with carrying a laptop (and other devices) and storing it in your temporary home. As a foreigner, your temporary home is a natural target because it is assumed you have more money and personal belongings than most of the local population. If you are seen carrying a laptop computer around town, you may increase the likelihood of theft or robbery. There is also a risk in terms of power surges; Tanzania's power supply can be very unpredictable, and you may want to invest in a voltage stabilizer. Bearing this in mind, and if you are willing to assume the responsibility and extra precautions associated with bringing your laptop to Tanzania, the fact is that it can be an incredibly useful tool for your work at Mkombozi. This is especially true if you will be working in areas of research, writing, communications or website design. Mkombozi has only a limited number of computers for staff to use, and many of these are older computers that may not include the software you require for your work. The bottom line is that it is possible to bring your laptop and to remain safe and productive. But you must commit to consistently use discretion and common sense when carrying it to work and when storing it at home.

Q: Will I need to speak Swahili?

A: At a minimum, you will need to know basic vocabulary in order to live independently in Moshi or Arusha for any period of time (and especially if you are a long-term volunteer). Swahili is also particularly crucial if you will be working directly with Mkombozi's children on the streets and/or at the Centre. The children speak only Swahili, and you can't rely on the English they may have picked up over time in order to do your job. The more you can communicate with the staff and children of Mkombozi and the local community, the more you will get out of your time here. It is highly recommended that you study Swahili before (and even after) your arrival in Tanzania. MS-TCDC outside Arusha runs an intensive residential language school that may be of interest to you (see <http://www.mstcdc.or.tz> for more details). You should be able to find a private tutor for approximately Tsh 3,500 (US \$3.50)/hour in either Moshi or Arusha. Remember also that the best way to learn a language is to practice, and Tanzanians are very willing to help you along. Be brave enough to say as much as you can to whomever you meet; your mistakes will be happily corrected!

Q: What vaccinations do I need?

A: It is essential that you arrange a consultation with an appropriate tropical health travel clinic to determine the vaccinations and medications that you require, and in order to determine the proper schedule by which these should be administered. In general, it will be necessary for you to be immunized against Yellow Fever, Typhoid Fever, Hepatitis A and B, Meningococcal Disease (Meningitis), Cholera and possibly Rabies (and to be able to show proof of some/all of these vaccinations in order to enter the country).

You should also investigate options for Malaria Prophylaxis; some volunteers who are here for a long period of time prefer not to take Malaria pills during their stay. **This is a decision for you to make along with the advice from a overseas physician.** You should investigate the situation thoroughly before making a decision. If you do choose to take Malaria pills you should bring enough to last for the duration of your stay in-country (and possibly for some time after you return home).

Bear in mind that the vaccinations you receive prior to arrival are not a guarantee of perfect health. In order for you to maintain your health in the developing world, it is necessary for you to be proactive and informed in order to prevent a host of possible infections, including HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, Dengue Fever, Giardiasis, Traveller's Diarrhea and Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia).

Q: What should I / shouldn't I pack?

A: For your convenience and reference, a suggested packing list is provided on pages 14 and 15 of this handbook. Note however, it is very important that you determine what you will need to remain happy and healthy during your stay in Tanzania. The fact is that it will get lonely at times, and that there are fewer options for entertainment and relaxation than you're used to. So, feel free to bring your games, books, music, journals (or laptop!) -- whatever you need to cope and stay sane.

Q: What information should I learn about Tanzania before I arrive?

A: To help prepare you to live and work overseas, it is important to learn as much as possible about your host country before arrival. In particular, you should gather information and knowledge about Tanzania's geography and statistics (population, natural resources, religions, political structure), history, human profile (attitudes, values, cultural traits, traditional family organisation), current events and cultural norms (manners, expected behaviours, unspoken rules).

Q: Where can I find additional information about international volunteering and about Tanzania?

A: See the book, *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas*, for a variety of volunteer resources, including evaluations of over 80 volunteer-sending programs such as the Peace Corps. The book can be previewed / ordered online: www.volunteeroverseas.org/html

For information about Tanzania, go to:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tz.html>
<http://www.tanzania.go.tz>
<http://tanzaniatouristboard.com>
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/tanzania>
<http://allafrica.com>
<http://www.arushanet.com>
<http://www.kiliweb.com>

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST FOR TANZANIA VOLUNTEERS:

■ Clothing

Shorts / skirts, at least knee-length
Capri-style pants
Lightweight hiking/cargo pants
Lightweight, breathable dress pants
Jeans
Short-sleeved shirts, breathable
Blouses and collared shirts
Cotton t-shirts and tank tops
Long-sleeved shirts or sweaters for evenings (especially in Arusha)
Fleece or light jacket
Rain coat or poncho (with hood)

× Note that Mkombozi does not require formal work attire. It is acceptable to wear comfortable, clean Western style clothes to work at Mkombozi in both Moshi and Arusha.

× Note that tank tops and skirts are acceptable, but tank tops should cover the stomach, and spaghetti straps should be avoided.

× Note that the clothes you bring should be lightweight and easy to wash -- clothes are hand-washed in Tanzania, either by you or by someone you pay. By the end of the year, your clothes will likely be faded by harsh detergents and the sun.

× Note also that there are shops and markets where you will be able to buy Western style clothes once you arrive.

■ Footwear

Sturdy, comfortable shoes or sandals (preferably waterproof) that can be worn to work and around town
Hiking or athletic shoes
Flip flops

× Note that you will likely do a lot of walking during your time in Tanzania. It is important that your shoes are comfortable, durable and (ideally) washable.

■ Optional items

Day pack or book bag
Large duffel bag or backpack
Sleeping bag
Pocket knife
Water bottle
Sewing kit
Laundry bag
Bedding (sheets, blanket)
Sun hat with brim
Bandanas, head wraps (for dust)
Sunglasses
Headlamp, small flashlight
Tupperware, Ziplock bags
Camera, film/disks
AM/FM short wave radio
CD player and speakers, CDs
Electricity adapter (same as the UK)
Alarm clock
Batteries, chargers
Notebook, journal
Maps, guidebooks
Playing cards, games, books, frisbee
Photos of your home country
Energy bars, candy, comfort foods
Recipes

■ Documents

Airline tickets
 Passport
 Extra passport photos
 Proof of immunisation
 Tanzanian visas
 Details of medical / travel insurance
 Travellers cheques
 Checkbook
 Credit cards
 List of contacts
 Copy of ID cards (e.g. birth certificate)
 Int. Student Card (if applicable)
 Embassy Addresses
 Maps, guidebooks

× Make copies of passport, visa, medical insurance policy, airline tickets, travellers cheques numbers and essential ID. Leave a copy with someone at home and put a copy in a separate place in your luggage. You may also want to scan these documents and keep a copy in your email account.

Tanzania's typical "seasons"

■ **December - February** is the hot dry season (average high = 92 degrees F).

■ **March** has intermittent rains; expect spring-like conditions moderated by cool nights (average high = 90 degrees F).

■ **April - May** is the heavier, rainy season; expect difficult, muddy road conditions (average high = 84 degrees F).

■ **June - October** is the cool, dry season; expect dusty roads (average high = 75 degrees F).

■ **November** brings short rains; expect nice greening of plants, intermittent showers and some flash flooding (average high = 89 degrees F).

■ First Aid & Toiletries

This is a list of suggested items, not required items:

Alcohol wipes, Aloe vera gel, Antibiotic ointment, Antibiotics (talk to doctor), Antihistamines, Baking soda, Band-aids, Benadryl*, Brush, comb, Cotton swabs, Diarrhea medicine, Elastic bandage, First-aid tape, Gauze pads, Gauze roll, Glasses*/contacts*/solution*, Hand-wipes, Hand sanitiser, Hydrocortisone cream*, Ice-pack, Insect repellent, Latex gloves, Lip balm with sunscreen, Lotion, Malaria pills* (talk to doctor), Mole skin, Prescription drugs (talk to doctor), Safety pins, Scissors, Sewing needle, Sleep aid, Small mirror, Soap, Sunscreen* (SPF 35+), Syringe, Tissues, Toothbrush and toothpaste, Towels (face, hand, bath), Triangular Bandage

× Note that you can buy the majority of first aid and toiletry items in Arusha or Moshi, although some items may be more difficult to locate (marked with an asterisk *).

× Note that it may not be possible to buy brand name items in Tanzania so if you are used to using a certain product you may want to bring a supply of that with you.

× Note that if you are taking prescription drugs you should speak to your doctor before you leave your home country.

FINALLY, FROM ONE VOLUNTEER TO ANOTHER...

Your mere presence at the Centre every day puts you in a position of influence in the lives of Mkombozi's children. To them, you are a "mlezi" (parent/guardian/guide). There are some that will escort you home every day of your stay, if you let them; there are others who will remain aloof until you approach them, if you ever do.

The fact is that some of these children have seen violence, pain and suffering beyond anything we can imagine, and they continue to laugh. At the same time, there are others who may laugh, but the emotional damage done to them is visible in every interaction. The point is that they are all the children of Mkombozi, and thus yours for however long you stay. This means you must always remember to be careful with them -- particularly since there are others who will not be kind to them.

Overall, you need to remain sensitive to the children's histories and boundaries. But you have to maintain your own boundaries too -- of time, energy, knowledge, goals and abilities. If you can strike this balance, then Mkombozi's children (especially the older ones) can become great friends. Like the friendships you build with staff, you can enjoy these relationships and make an important contribution.

The bottom line is that you're here to do very difficult, but incredibly rewarding work. So, go ahead and make an emotional investment...

- **Get close** to the kids and staff and let them into your life;
- **Care** about them intensely and let them care about you;
- **Invest** everything you have in the Centre and the aspirations of its managers;
- **Make Mkombozi a very difficult place for you to leave;** it is worth every stress, every frustration, and tear that falls as you say goodbye...

Tips on "cultural awareness" for new volunteers...

- In Tanzania the clothes that you wear are not seen as being an expression of an individual's personality as in most Western countries, but an indicator of the respect you accord the people around you. As such, it is important that the clothes you wear are modest (e.g. knee length or longer), smart and clean.
- Be prepared for the fact that as a Mzungu (foreigner) you will attract a lot of attention. It can be frustrating when locals assume you are a tourist and try to convince you to book safari/visit their curio shop etc but replying in Swahili can be an effective way of dealing with it.
- Great importance is given to greetings in Tanzania; make sure you greet people properly before e.g. asking something from them. It is also very important to remember that great respect is given to elders in Tanzania.
- Be aware that your dealings with the opposite sex might be interpreted differently here than at home, and friendliness may be misinterpreted as an invitation of more. There is a careful balance to be struck between being friendly and polite and maintaining your boundaries - if you feel uncomfortable in a situation you should distance yourself from it, as a Tanzanian would. This is particularly true for women, but also holds true for men.
- It is a good idea to try to be as self aware as possible - ask others for feedback on how you are perceived to ensure that you are not inadvertently causing offence.

Mkombozi...

is one of the leading child-focused agencies in northern Tanzania, working with over 1,000 vulnerable children and families a year in Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions. We help vulnerable children and youth to grow in mind, body and spirit and to build a more caring society for all.

We want a world where...

all children and youth are prioritised and can access opportunities to become well rounded, inquiring and productive people, who are working towards a more just and democratic society.

We believe that...

we can promote social justice through participation and collaboration. We capture local potential through learning and reflection and act as a catalyst for holistic development.

Our “change vision” of the future...

is to move ahead in a determined and proactive way as a leading NGO in the field of child rights. This vision defines our intentions to be an innovative, grassroots NGO that others choose to follow and it inspires our work to change the public perception of vulnerable children and youth.

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