



MKOMBOZI JOINS THE “DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD”

Advancing child health and development on June 16, 2007

In association with the Arusha Municipal Council, Mkombozi is participating in a number of events on June 16, 2007 to mark the “Day of the African Child”. It was on this day in 1976 that thousands of black school children took to the streets of Soweto, South Africa to protest the inferior quality of education available to them and to demand their right to be taught in their own language. Devastatingly, hundreds of these young boys and girls were shot by police, and in the two weeks of protest that followed, more than 100 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured.

Since 1991, when it was first initiated by the Organisation of African Unity, the Day of the African Child has been celebrated on the 16th of June each year to honor the memory of those who died, to honor the courage of those who took part in the protests, and to draw attention to the lives of African children. This year, the local theme is “afya bora kwa watoto ni msingi wa maendeleo” (i.e. good health is the foundation of development for children). Specifically, in Tanzania, emphasis is being placed on the availability and delivery of quality health services so that children can thrive physically, mentally and psychologically. Good health reduces the occurrence of opportunistic infections and diseases, increases performance in school and increases children’s capacity to be creative.

This year’s theme is of particular relevance to Mkombozi, given its increasing its focus on supporting children’s mental health beyond offering basic services and meeting physical needs. For instance, in addition to the provision of shelter, food and healthcare for street children and youth, Mkombozi’s psychosocial support services and outreach activities include: delivery of non-formal education, family life education and business training; provision of counselling, mentoring and group therapy; facilitation of family reunification and recreation opportunities; as well as use of a “roving mobile school”^{*} to build the self-esteem of children on the street. Overall, Mkombozi’s goal is to help vulnerable and marginalised children and youth to improve their educational, social and psychological functioning, to become self reliant, and to transition to independent living.

On June 16th, Mkombozi will show its support of the Day and the current theme by organising the participation of a team of street children and youth in a football competition. Worldwide, it has been proven that engaging in sports has a positive benefit for children’s development and that sports build resilience, esteem and values for living. As such, this football team and this football competition is an important opportunity for children that have been excluded from society to be a part of “mainstream” activities and feel that they too are children with potential.

Mkombozi’s football team and Services Team staff will also participate in the Day’s parade, and will showcase the “mobile school” currently being used on the streets of Arusha to deliver literacy, health and human rights education as well as creative therapy to children and youth. The mobile school is a tool that enhances children’s knowledge while building their confidence and self esteem; in particular, children and youth are engaged in recreational activities, sports, play, arts and drama to build their resilience and help them explore their talents and potential.

For more information, and/or to learn how you can support Mkombozi on June 16, contact:

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^{*} The Mobile School is a non-profit organisation (and Mkombozi partner) that focuses on the improvement of life-circumstances of street children. In part, they do so using the “mobile school” - an educational instrument that was technically and pedagogically adapted to the reality of the street with the basic objective to facilitate street work and increase its efficiency. The Mobile School currently loans a mobile school to Mkombozi to facilitate street work in Arusha. To learn more about the Mobile School, visit: www.mobileschool.org