



## MKOMBOZI CELEBRATES THE “DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD”

### June 16th proves to be a day of fun, festivities and football

Hundreds of children from schools and institutions around Arusha gathered in front of the Regional Commissioner’s office on the morning of June 16 to form the much-anticipated “Day of the African Child” parade. The children chanted and sang songs while a brass band from one of the primary schools led the way through the centre of town.

Arusha’s parading children carried banners with urgent messages, such as: “Good health is the foundation for child development!” and “Street children: Whose responsibility are they?” Mkombozi’s staff and children proudly marched along, showcasing the new “mobile school” currently used to deliver literacy, health and human rights education as well as creative therapy to children and youth on Arusha’s streets. Indeed, it was an important day for Mkombozi - street children were the centre of attention because of their potential, talents, and voice, and not because they are a nuisance or a “problem”.



In fact, the entire town was brought to a standstill as their attention was captured by the sights and sounds of the children’s parade. When the parade culminated in a final display at the Sheik Amri Abeid Stadium in front of Arusha’s District Commissioner, Municipal Director and numerous community development officers, the Master of Ceremonies read each of the children’s banners to the guest of honour, Arusha’s Regional Commissioner.

Following the parade, Arusha’s “Day of the African Child” celebration - held each year to honour the 1976 child protests against inferior education in Soweto and to draw attention to the lives of African children - included a variety of child-focused games and sports such as 50-meter races, “sack” races, and “chasing the chicken”.

The festivities also included a spirited football match between Mkombozi and the Rolling Stones. Mkombozi’s team was dressed in a striking black and white uniform generously donated by Media Works Corporate Outfitters, complete with shoes and socks by KK Security, the Arusha Hotel, and Zoom Photo Gallery. Mkombozi’s professional uniforms earned as much attention as their determined and focussed football playing.



Although Mkombozi’s team played hard and ultimately lost 0-3, they were undaunted by the defeat, and held their heads high as they voiced a determination to win the next time! Indeed, win or lose, the victory in the day lies in the opportunity Mkombozi’s youth had to demonstrate their resilience, talent and potential for healing while thousands of Arusha’s citizens cheered them on.

Overall, this year’s local “Day of the African Child” theme - children’s health - was of particular relevance to Mkombozi, given its increasing focus on supporting children’s mental health beyond basic needs and services. In addition to shelter, food and healthcare for street children, 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.

Mkombozi’s holistic objective 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.