

Mkombozi

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MKOMBOZI'S NEW "MOBILE UNIT" HITS THE STREET:

The moveable classroom assists Street Educators work with youth

The street children of Moshi have a new daytime refuge... The "mobile unit" is here, and it provides a "classroom on wheels" where street youth and Mkombozi Street Educators can share a quiet space.

The fact is, working with street-based children is not easy. Especially when meetings between children and Mkombozi Street Educators take place in the noisy, busy environment in which the children spend most of their time. There is often little scope for a private conversation, a peaceful exchange of thoughts, or a relaxed setting in which to provide first aid. It was because of this need for a neutral and quiet place that Mkombozi came up with the idea for the "mobile unit" - a refuge from the streets available on the streets. This need has been felt in Moshi street work for years.

The "mobile unit" is actually the result of a long dialogue between Mkombozi and Standard Chartered Bank. As a part of their "corporate social responsibility" program, Standard Chartered agreed to support Mkombozi's work and the street children of Moshi by donating the mobile unit. The rationale and design of the vehicle is based on Mkombozi's long history of experience in street work.

On March 3rd, 2008, Mkombozi celebrated the arrival of the mobile unit with an opening ceremony which took place at the residential centre in Moshi. Among the many guests participating in the celebration were the Regional Commissioner of Moshi, Mr. Mohammed Babu, the CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Mr Hemen Shah, all staff and children at Mkombozi, as well as the street children that will benefit from the vehicle. The event included remarkable song and dance performances by some of the Mkombozi youth, as well as speeches and demonstration of the vehicle.

These days, Mkombozi's mobile unit has begun to park in different locations in Moshi town, allowing children and youth to enter for chaos-free teaching sessions off the street environment. It provides them with a place to come in contact with Mkombozi's staff while building trust, and it facilitates the relationship building between children and staff. Current plans are to involve Mkombozi's Street Educators, Social Workers and Nurse in the mobile unit's activities. With the help of various teaching materials, they will be providing street children with life skills teachings, health education, non-formal education and counseling several days a week.

Shermin Moledina, Mkombozi's Children's Programs Coordinator and designer of the mobile unit's interior, hopes that the new vehicle will once again put the street child issue on the public radar, and raise the profile of Mkombozi's street work. She also hopes that it will be a more effective way to meet and connect with the youth themselves: "Coming to the mobile unit will provide the children with a sense of ownership, dignity and pride. We hope that being able to engage them will spark a desire for something more in their lives."

