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PRIORITISING Children

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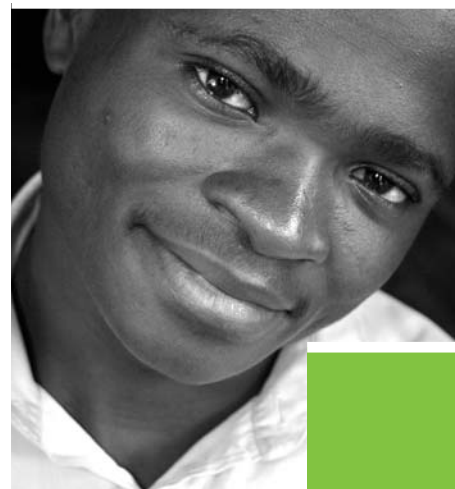
Youth independence is a growing priority

Social Welfare, Mkombozi, youth and community in joint efforts

Current shift in practice focus: Through years of practice with children who live in the streets, Mkombozi has learnt that children who stay for longer periods in the residential centre develop a strong attachment to the organisation, and as a consequence, a resistance to return to the community. Mkombozi has, for some time, been shifting its focus from residential care for extended periods, to prompt prioritisation of opportunities for reintegration. In fact, the organisation is gradually working towards lowering the average age of children who stay at the residential center, and shortening their stay with the organisation. This way, Mkombozi will be in a better position to protect younger children from the dangerous environment of the streets, while also effectively empowering them to exist independently.

Intensifying outflow-process of youth: By establishing movement toward youth independence, improvements have been made in the practice of "out flowing" those who have graduated from Form IV of secondary school. During the first few months of 2009, independent living was successfully achieved for several youth who had been residing in Mkombozi's group housing. The process consisted of intense meetings between Mkombozi and the youth to discuss mutual expectations and goals - thereby emphasising the importance of efforts toward sustainability in career and finances. In fact, intensifying this process creates a more stable continuance of their independent lives; one youth will soon study music composition and production, another is in journalism college in Dar Es Salaam, and a third has undertaken a second hand clothes business.

Social Welfare in Moshi signs MoU with Mkombozi: Starting this year, the Regional Social Welfare office of Kilimanjaro region has moved closer to Mkombozi by becoming involved in the caseloads of social workers. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the two organisations, detailing that one Social Welfare Officer is to be availed to work with Mkombozi social workers on a weekly basis. This regular cooperation adds an official element to all case work, such as family reunifications and linkages with relevant local authorities, and it increases transparency and accountability for all parties working with children and their families. For example, a Social Welfare Officer played a role in the outflow process of the form IV graduates mentioned above - thereby strengthening the youth's ownership and feeling of seriousness in the situation. Overall, this new cooperation is a good example of how Mkombozi and government can add value to each others practice.



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IT'S A FACT:

The Caucus for Children's Rights (CCR), of which

Health and education
enable children to
stay safe...

Accessing health care in case of sickness or injury cannot be taken for granted by all children in Tanzania, or in the rest of the world for that matter. Not only is it a challenge for low income families to seek expensive treatment for their children; but for young people who have actually become dislocated from their families and live unprotected in the streets of various cities, how to receive help remains a question. In many ways, children in the streets live excluded from mainstream society, and from accessing basic rights to health and survival. Mkombozi therefore works in its two regions of operation to ensure that children who are in the streets can access medical care when they are sick or injured. In addition, the organisation also delivers health education as a means to teach children and youth how to protect themselves from preventable illnesses related to diet, hygiene, drug use and sexually transmitted infections. In fact, session topics have this year largely been guided by the

children's own requests and preferences about what they would like to learn. During the first six months of the year, through Mkombozi, 113 children and young people received health services in clinics and hospitals, 228 received first aid from Mkombozi staff members, and 130 attended Mkombozi's health care education sessions. The staff has noticed that the children in the centre, if regularly encouraged and informed, can maintain good hygiene and take their medicines under very little supervision. Although many of the children in the streets have learnt to better protect themselves from ill-health, it still remains a challenge for them to keep good hygiene and protect themselves from harmful elements of the environment.



MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY:

"A change of attitude towards street children"

Mkombozi continuously collects so called "Most Significant Change Stories" from its constituents as part of its monitoring and evaluation. The following was written by a research assistant who, in 2009, worked with Mkombozi to collect data for the study on children's resilience patterns. It provides a powerful example of how an individual can come to change their perception of children in the streets, and it inspires Mkombozi to keep raising awareness. Societal change for children starts with people who become convinced that all young people carry equal rights.

"I worked as a research assistant, interviewing children at the Mkombozi Residential Centre in Moshi, and those living in the streets in Arusha. As a result of this, my attitude towards street children has significantly changed. The insights I gained in the course of my work impacted me profoundly. Now I clearly see the need to sympathetically do all I can to help and advocate for children's rights.

I always thought street children were there to wreak havoc on anyone approaching them and so I thought they should be avoided at all costs. But now I know that they have feelings, ambitions, are considerate, have potential to play

prominent roles in the society or become champions - just like any other child. They ought to be listened to and their talents ought to be nurtured for Tanzania to develop as a nation.

At the moment I am doing my best not to avoid any street child, and to give them a little time, to listen, and to give them hope. I also talk to other people about street children in a positive way. This is significant to me because I perceived street children very wrongly. I thought they were

naughty naturally and that nothing could be done to change them. Bravo to Mkombozi! They are doing a commendable job.



Now I have a different attitude towards street children, my sympathies lie firmly with the belief that though street children look vulnerable they can be helped out of

their problems.

Mkombozi has shown the dawn of street children's bright futures - let's join and make a change!"

INCREASING LOCAL COMMITMENT FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN THE STREETS:

Moshi and Arusha residents are encouraged to become donors

From experience, Mkombozi knows that building sustainable solutions for vulnerable children can be initiated partly by sharing the organisation's ownership with the surrounding community.

While Mkombozi is primarily oriented toward the empowerment of children, the fact remains that Mkombozi is also a deliverer of services for those who have ended up in the streets. Mkombozi's residential center provides a transition point for young boys who are being reintegrated into the community. These days, very few institutional donors are interested in funding such basic services.

Thus, in order to increase the public commitment toward children, and find increased financial sustainability for

Mkombozi, the organisation is now approaching local individuals and companies for donations of money, food items, clothes and other materials which are constantly needed at the residential center.

Since Mkombozi is mainly a receiver of institutional grants, creating a pool of local donors gives the organisation a welcome alternative income which means more than money - it serves as a barometer of the public's commitment, awareness and perceptions surrounding the organisation's interventions.

A desired scenario is that giving to Mkombozi will enhance

people's sense of responsibility for children who are living in a state of separateness from the communities which they came

We urge all supporters, locally and abroad, to help guarantee Mkombozi's capacity to deliver crucial services to children. Make a contribution towards Mkombozi's reserve funds. Donate via >>> www.mkombozi.org/donate

from.

What have people been donating to Mkombozi so far this year? For example, one person brought a sack of maize, another decided to give the children bread and juice, and a local Moshi

company donated a large supply of t-shirts. Local donors such as these truly express the support of the community, and we hope they will keep spreading the word to others. Ideally, in the future, Mkombozi's main sources of income - especially for service provision - would be emerging from within Tanzania.



ACTT TO PILOT "BANDA BUSINESS" following youth apprenticeship



In Tanzania, Information Technology (IT) is a market on the rise - and yet, employment cannot always be guaranteed, even for skilled people. Thus, ACTT has realised the importance of integrating entrepreneurship into its apprenticeship programme.

Given the current emergence of smaller stalls ("bandas" in Swahili) that sell mobile phone cards and refills in most town centers, the idea arose that the same concept could be applied to IT services. Such a stall, a "Banda Business", might include a computer that burns CDs and DVDs, prints documents and scans, and it could also sell products such as memory sticks and empty discs. In an ideal scenario, the technician in the stall would also offer repairs and maintenance on the spot and in the field.

Since the beginning of 2009, six youth have joined ACTT's hardware programme with the aim of eventually becoming self-reliant technicians. So far, five of them have received basic skills on

how to maintain a capital in a small business, and the plan is that two of these youth will pilot this new business concept by the end of 2009.

In fact, ACTT has already begun sourcing for suitable locations for these initial businesses, specifically considering locations near schools where the organisation already performs IT maintenance - thereby creating the possibility for these youth to take over current ACTT maintenance contracts as part of their business.

By thematically extending Mkombozi's "Street Business Toolkit" intervention, these youth will be lent or given the necessary tools for starting up their Banda Business, and they will also be supported in their transition into independent living. Not only can an income significantly improve their lives, but also make an important contribution to the country by spreading IT to growing town areas.

Data collection for resilience research has begun...

During the first half of the year, Mkombozi began carrying out data collection as part of a research project investigating the resilience patterns of children with whom we work. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the significant risks of adversity as well as the protective factors that are experienced by children and young people who have “de-linked” from their families and spent time on the streets. It further seeks to identify and understand children’s current resilience patterns and to discover whether those youth who receive an integrated package of care services from Mkombozi demonstrate more positive resilience trajectories than those who receive only occasional services and remain in the streets. Exploring the effectiveness and impact of our interventions in children’s lives through research is significant since it enables Mkombozi to learn, and most importantly, to improve its work.



A preliminary lesson which was learnt through the focus group discussions that have been carried out in Arusha and Moshi was that all the children and youth saw and described life on the streets as filled with adversity - as a cumulative negative situation.

As for the data collection process itself, which was carried out through interviews by external research assistants, children in the residential center generally expressed that they enjoyed being interviewed about their lives and feelings. However, the youth who are currently on the streets of Arusha participated in the exercise with ambivalence. Some expressed frustration over the fact that different researchers in the past have come to learn about their lives, yet bringing little actual assistance to the youth themselves as a result of their participation.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters expand into Moshi’s Rau Primary School

As of 2009, the majority of Big Brothers and Big Sisters are linked to children who live in the community, and who (in most cases) have not lived in the streets or in Mkombozi’s residential center. For some vulnerable children, having a mentor who offers them friendship and support can be of great significance in their lives, and even prevent them from going to the streets.

In the first half of this year, Mkombozi recruited 34 mentors - 32 of which were paired with seven children from the residential centre and 25 who study in Rau Primary School in Moshi. Rau Primary School, located nearby Mkombozi’s head office, is part of an area that the organisation has worked with for years to address issues of child education and protection. This long cooperation now makes out a steady foundation for encouraging connections between vulnerable children and supportive people from within the community.

The children from Rau, together with those in the residential center, were paired with mentors through a ceremony which was led by the Regional Social Welfare Officer and attended by other government officials, a local pastor and Mkombozi staff. Actually, after having been equipped with mentoring skills and guidelines, the mentors took the initiative to form a fundraising committee with the aim of raising funds for different activities with the children.

These new strategies which enhance the integration of the program into the community has been successful; when people are facilitated to reflect on the problems affecting their communities, they take ownership and participate actively in addressing them. In fact, another welcome addition to the mentorship programme this year is the fact that several Mkombozi staff members have set a good

example by volunteering as mentors themselves!



This study, enabled by youths’ contributions, will provide Mkombozi with valuable new insights about the quality of its interventions -

thereby making it possible for children to be helped in more effective and targeted ways.

Did you know?

MEMKWA IS A SWAHILI TRANSLATION FOR CoBET...

Complementary Basic Education System (CoBET) is a Non-Formal Education (NFE) system which enables out-of-school children to reach a basic competence level from which they can be mainstreamed into the formal education system. The governments AE/NFE Medium Term Strategy, which carried MEMKWA-centers located across the nation through the period 2003-2008, has now shifted to a new mode of operation. It has been decided that the responsibility for the delivery of complementary basic education is now at the municipality-level. This change has caused a lack of clarity among local MEMKWA centers; some operate as usual and others on an ad-hoc basis. Mkombozi, a registered MEMKWA provider, continues advocating the importance of MEMKWA centers, citing MEMKWA as an important opportunity for the community to identify and support children who are vulnerable and at risk of going to the streets.