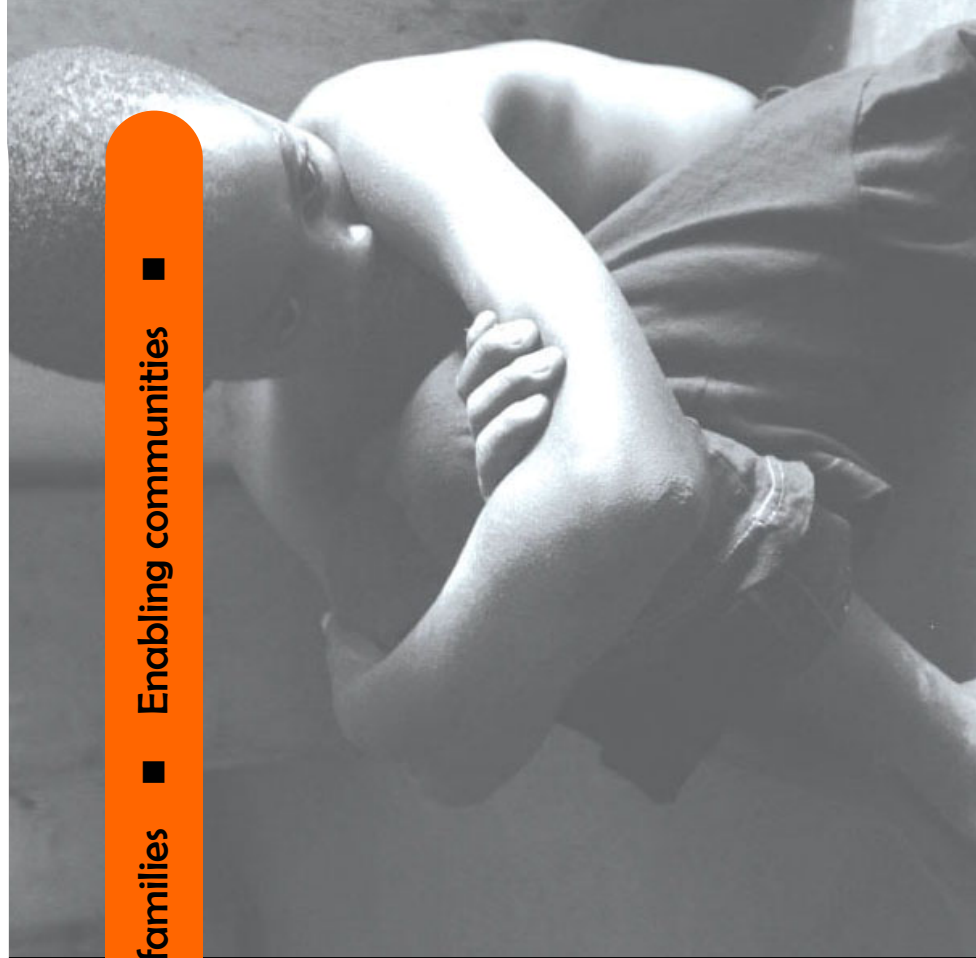


Groups and teams: A new way of working for Mkombози

- Empowering children
- Engaging families
- Enabling communities



About the Mkombozi Centre for Street Children

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.

Mkombozi's mission is to help vulnerable children and youth to grow in mind, body and spirit and to build a more caring society for all. We capture local potential through learning and reflection and act as a catalyst for holistic development.

Mkombozi's vision is 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.

What is a team?

“Placing people in the same room and calling them a team does not make them one”

(Johnson and Johnson, 2006, p. 532)

What's the difference between teams and groups?

- People often use the terms “team” and “small group” interchangeably. But although a team is a group, not all groups are teams.
- Whilst in a group the Mkombozi’s mission is the group’s mission a team has a specific, well defined purpose that is unique to the team.
- Combined with this a team is marked out by both individual and team products – i.e. what they produce.
- “For a real team to exist there must be a compelling team purpose that is distinctive and specific to the small group and that requires its members to roll up their sleeves and accomplish something beyond individual end products” (Johnson and Johnson, 2006, p. 534).
- The concept of teams having a defined purpose above and beyond that of the organisation and a finite life is the key distinction between a team and a group.

Differences between teams and groups (continued)

- Teams can be classified by their setting, by how they are used and by what they do.
- Self-managed teams “appear to be the future of business organisations” since they change the way that work is organised, increase productivity and improve quality.
- Mkombozi believes that “team-based” working will resolve many the challenges we face as an organisation moving to an integrated phase of development.
- We are planning a move from an individualistic mode of operation to one where the primary grouping of people is in “teams”.
- Although “organisations are well advised to use teams, because teams are the basic unit of performance for most organisations” and teams promote positive relationships, social support among members, greater psychological health, self esteem and social competencies (Johnson & Johnson, 2006, p. 545) there is an important proviso.

Differences between teams and groups (continued)

- There will be times when teams are not appropriate for the task in hand.
- Teams do not replace departments or small groups.
- Rather teams are relatively small groupings that are peopled by people with appropriate and necessary skills.
- Their mission, goals and tasks are carefully planned.
- “The best teams invest a tremendous amount of time and effort exploring, shaping and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them both collectively and individually. This purposing activity continues throughout the life of a team” (Johnson and Johnson, 2006, p. 550) and whilst in a group members discuss, decide and delegate in a team they discuss, decide, and perform real work together.

Moving to a team-based way of working

- At Mkombozi we are planning a move from a traditional hierarchical structure to a more team based, high performance organisational structure.
- In undertaking this restructure we have been considering different ways to view this conceptually.
- Self managed teams flatten organisations and there has been some tension in trying to conceptualise a flatter structure with the basic hierarchy of Board of Trustees, management board, operations and support staff that is pre-determined by Mkombozi's governing documents.

A new structure

- We would like to use a new organisational structure that is called the “Matrix Structure”.
- This was developed by Likert who conceptualised a hierarchy of work teams tied by linking individuals or “linking pins” (Likert, 1961).
- Those who are leaders in one team, but peer group members at the next highest organisational level (Johnson and Johnson, 2006, p. 537).
- So an individual could be a leader in one team and a peer member in another.
- Staff will be members of multiple teams so that they can share and build a number of different skills.
- Coordinators will be overall responsible for the performance of their working group, but not necessarily sitting on every team. In fact, Coordinators may sit on teams from other groups.
- “Likert’s model emphasises group goals, leadership, and group responsibility rather than individual concepts such as personal motivation and responsibility” and this structure could be an important step for enabling Mkombozi to become an organisation that works more effectively in group situations.

More reading...

References:

- *Johnson and Johnson, Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills, 2006, Pearson International Edition*
- *Morgan, Gareth (1996); Images of Organisation*