

## Census reveals alarming increase in street children since 2003

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Mkombozi's recently released Census Report 2005\* follows up the census conducted in June 2003, providing a detailed, comparative analysis of the situation of Tanzania's most vulnerable children over an 18 month period. Specifically, the Census documents: the number of children on the streets in Moshi and Arusha Municipalities; the number of full-time and part-time street children; the gaps in current services and interventions for street children; and the impact of Mkombozi's Community Strengthening and Education projects in the schools and communities of Kibosho, Majengo, Machame and Uru.

Census findings indicate there are currently **1416 street children in Moshi** (i.e. 457 girls and 959 boys) and **2103 street children in Arusha** (i.e. 662 girls and 1441 boys). These numbers can be broken down to reveal dramatic increases in both Municipalities since 2003:

⊙ In **Moshi**, there has been a 26% increase in female and male part-time street children, a staggering 92% increase in female full-time street children, and a 60% increase in male full-time street children.

⊙ In **Arusha**, there has been a 62% increase in female part-time street children, a 40% increase in male part-time street children, a 51% increase in female full-time street children, and a 39% increase in male full-time street children.



Such significant increases compound an existing problem - the numbers of full-time street children far exceed the capacity of residential care centres. For example, in Moshi there are currently three residential care centres with a combined capacity of 170 children, but there are 169 full-time children on the streets and 170 children already in care. Additionally, given the startling increase of female street children in both towns (currently totalling 52 in Moshi and 145 in Arusha), lack of care services specifically for girls is now also an urgent issue.

Importantly, when figures are analysed across age groups, the Census shows that more than 54% of street children are actually over 15 years of age. This means they are adolescents in need of social services geared toward employment, skills development, psychosocial care, and independent living, and that Government and Civil Society Organisations must look beyond residential care as the "solution" to the current street child issue. In fact, the Census indicates that the "street-based approach" currently used by Mkombozi in Arusha (i.e. focussing on family and community-based support and particularly employment opportunities) is regarded by street youth as valuable and capable of meeting their immediate needs.

There is evidence also that early community intervention (i.e. focussing on strengthening community and family support mechanisms) has a direct impact on reducing child vulnerability, and in turn, on reducing the number of children who migrate to the streets. Specifically, child migration to the streets from Mkombozi's four target communities has reduced by as much as 70% in Moshi and 94% in Arusha.

As a point of interest, Census findings indicate that the numbers of out-of-school children in both Moshi and Arusha have increased significantly, despite the Primary Education Development Plan to achieve Universal Primary Education. The number of children over the age of 14 who are not attending primary, secondary or any further form of education is a remarkable 352 in Arusha and also in Moshi.

It is perhaps not surprising then, that in both Moshi and Arusha there are a significant number of children (489 in Moshi and 565 in Arusha) who spend time on the streets in the course of normal and legitimate activities. This group has increased by 66% in Moshi over the past two years, and by 54% in Arusha. Although there is a tendency to blame these young people for loitering on the streets, the reality is a profound lack of alternative ways for them to spend their time (e.g. free education, community centres, youth employment programs).

Recommendations from the Census emphasise cooperation of Government, Civil Society and the general public to ensure that strategies detailed in the National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP / MKUKUTA) are integrated and practiced - especially those related to improved quality of life, social well-being, and care of vulnerable social groups.

\*Download in PDF format (4.1MB): <http://www.mkombozi.org/pdf/200510census.pdf>

