



MKOMBOZI 1997-2007:

Celebrating 10 years of hope and healing

Mkombozi (meaning "liberator" or "emancipator" in Swahili) works to stem the tide of Tanzania's street children through housing, education, research, advocacy, and outreach. Initially established as a residential centre and safe haven for street children in 1997, Mkombozi has emerged as the leading child-focused agency in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions, helping vulnerable children and youth to grow in mind, body and spirit. The organisation works towards a world wherein children and youth are prioritised and can access opportunities to become well-rounded, inquiring and productive people.

A profile of achievement:

Mkombozi is the only NGO in Tanzania which is working with street children and actively involving communities in the work to prevent children from migrating to the streets.

Mkombozi has assisted over 1,000 vulnerable and street children since 1997 to secure their right to safety and development. Mkombozi prides itself on innovatively strengthening local systems for child protection.

Mkombozi is renowned, nationally and internationally, for the professionalism and seriousness of its approach and it is perceived as groundbreaking and innovative.

Mkombozi is results-oriented and perceived by both the children it works with and Government as an organisation that is "making a difference". Mkombozi is considered willing to challenge the status quo which accepts a culture of impunity around child abuse.

Mkombozi has extensive experience working with schools and communities in the education and children's sectors and is increasingly involved in pushing for legal reforms relating to children.

Mkombozi has extensive experience working with street children and youth who have been physically, sexually and emotionally abused.

Mkombozi is a unique Tanzanian organisation in that it is increasing its focus on supporting children's mental health, in addition to offering basic services and responding to physical needs. In fact, Mkombozi is entering a 5 year research partnership with the University of Zurich - Centre for Disaster & Military Psychiatry whereby we will conduct pioneering research to evaluate how Mkombozi's sports and play, education and mentoring programmes build children's resilience. This extends research at Harvard University which suggests Mkombozi's children outperform their peers (at home and on the streets) in educational aspiration and achievement.

Mkombozi is willing to take risks to build "best practice"; evidence of this includes the recent participatory action research it has undertaken to identify the causes of child vulnerability in 10 schools and communities. This research process involved a community-based research team of 60 teachers, students and school committee members and revealed real concerns about the incidence of child abuse in Kilimanjaro Region.

Mkombozi is one of the first NGOs working with street children to uncover empirical evidence of sexual abuse and to reveal its role in driving children out of school and to the streets. For example, to mark the 2006 Day of the African Child, Mkombozi worked with the street leaders, school teachers and District Education Officers in 4 primary schools to document their experience of child sexual abuse in the schools. Using Mkombozi's sophisticated and far-reaching e-mail network and website (www.mkombozi.org), this "Action Alert" was shared nationally and internationally and was featured on the Child Rights Information Network (www.crin.org).

Mkombozi has established extensive and active collaboration with civil society actors in Tanzania and beyond (including: the Consortium for Street Children, ChildHope, Tanzanian Education Network, the National Network for Organisations Working with Children, the Arusha Caucus for Children's Rights). This network places Mkombozi in an excellent position to learn from others' methodologies and approaches and to share its own experiences and "practices" working with children.

Transforming lives in 2006 - facts and figures:

- 17,836 meals were provided to children and youth.
- 17,717 bed nights were provided at Mkombozi's residential centre.
- 5,000+ children enrolled in Mkombozi's 10 "target schools" (i.e. schools where Mkombozi is actively working to understand and intervene causes of non-enrollment, truancy and drop-out).
- 80% reduction in truancy and drop-out rates in Mkombozi's 10 target schools.
- 423 children and youth made contact with Mkombozi social workers and educators on the streets.
- 34 children / youth were reunified with their families.
- 10 reunified youth had their "contracts closed" with Mkombozi and are progressing well at home.
- 14 children were placed in short-term foster care and 1 is in long-term.
- 11 youth began living in half way housing in preparation for leaving care at Mkombozi.
- 803 instances of first aid were provided to street children and youth.
- 409 visits to the doctor were arranged and provided.
- 18 children and youth were provided with mental health services.
- 10 adolescents received reproductive healthcare.
- 393 life skills education classes and 104 human rights education classes were conducted.
- 112 children / youth participated in educational activities.
- 65 children / youth participated in primary and secondary school.
- 19 children / youth participated in vocational training and self reliance activities.
- 6 youth graduated successfully from vocational training courses.
- 16 children participated in IT classes and 15 were paired with mentors in our e-Mentoring programme.
- 106 students studied and passed the Basic IT Applications course in our Computer Technology Learning Centers.
- 40 youth were employed or established small businesses. They work as cooks, mechanics, factory workers, gardeners, IT trainers, musicians, artists and in safari companies.
- 22 girls and 1 boy were trained in the Street Business Toolkit and given loans to establish a small businesses. They are now living independently and supporting themselves.
- 9 youth were given grants to enable them to rent housing while they work so that they are no longer living on the streets / at the centre.
- 21 children held leadership positions such as school prefects and members of Mkombozi's children's committee.
- 21 youth participated in the 2006 census of street children as interviewers collecting the data.

Life history and turning points 1997-2005:

1997

Events

- + Movement from soup kitchen on streets to daycare centre.
- Rape of street boys and prosecution of rapists.
- Ridicule and verbal abuse of street children.

Lessons learned

- Street work and building trust with children on their terms and in their environment is fundamental to our approach.
- Trust can only be built if the street children see tangible benefits accruing from our work.

Key changes

- Mkombozi focuses on building trust with street children and ensuring that we offer them protection as well as a safe space.

2001

Events

- + Lobbying against the round-ups of street children.
- + Development of joint work with other agencies.
- + Analysing the philosophy behind our work (PAR, Theatre for Development, Training for Transformation).
- Challenges in formalising child participation in the children's committee.
- Strategising how to devolve authority from the Directors.

Lessons learned

- The need to engage in advocacy... the challenge being "how?"

Key changes

- Strategic decision made to build a pan organisational strength which supersedes that of one individual.

2005

Events

- + EASUN intervention to evaluate Mkombozi's transition in terms of identity, governance, leadership and structure.

Lessons learned

- Poor communication and lack of empathy undermines participation and team work.
- Respect and care in all situations enables Mkombozi children and adults to express trust and to affirm each others' value.
- Cooperation with government, families and communities enhances ability to address the root causes of child vulnerability and migration to the streets.
- Skill-gaps in Mkombozi staff hinders a sense of ownership amongst our stakeholders.
- Reflective practice strengthens professionalism, self-awareness and ability to manage change.

Key changes

- Link between values and methodology made explicit through documentation of organisational "practice" and systems for staff support and development.
- Recruitment procedures improved to ensure we hire staff that uphold our values.

1998

Events

- + Children participate in the renovation of the new street children centre and move in.
- + Bus stand event of music & drama to raise awareness.
- + Establishing departments.
- + First internal review.
- Caring for children with life threatening illnesses.

Lessons learned

- The need to balance planned development and systemisation within the organisation with practical demand to "fire-fight" children's problems and issues on a continuous basis.

Key changes

- Child participation becomes key to our philosophy and approach.

2002

Events

- + Arusha Referral Service is started.
- + New partnerships with Maarifa and Pamoja.
- + Development of Board of Management.
- Donors and partners demand 100% accountability.
- Rapid pace of change within the organisation.
- Challenges of effective collaboration with other CSOs and local government.

Lessons learned

- How to undertake systematic change rather than always responding ad hoc.

Key changes

- Rapid change resulted in more responsibility and accountability.
- Mkombozi becomes more reflective in nature.

1999

Events

- + Mkombozi founds NNOC.
- + Quantitative research and analysis of the reasons for migration to the streets.
- + Some funding obtained from "development" donors: Save the Children UK, DFID Small Grants, Irish Embassy.
- Struggles with behavioural issues of older youth.
- Situation of dissatisfied staff member and his discipline issues.

Lessons learned

- Working in isolation inhibits our effectiveness.

Key changes

- Focus shifts to stakeholder involvement in addressing causes of street children (not just dealing with effects).

2003

Events

- + Registered as UK Charity and gain 501c exemption in US.
- + Start of quarterly monitoring and planning weeks.
- + Mkombozi conducts first-ever census of street children.
- + Start mentoring programme.
- + Withdrawal of CS Director from daily management.
- Start working with hardcore youths on the streets.

Lessons learned

- The need to extend our grassroots development work and explore alternatives to centre-based care for street children.

Key changes

- Rapid expansion and change, including increased hands-on management of staff, systematic planning and work monitoring.

2000

Events

- + Mkombozi registers as Trust.
- + Partnership with ChildHope.
- + CS project proposal is developed.
- Difficulty obtaining the necessary funding.
- Role of Kara Kirby as a CS Director is defined.
- To what degree do we involve all staff in direct care of the children?

Lessons learned

- The need to validate work that addresses the "push factors".

Key changes

- Mkombozi's independence increases and its governance, leadership and performance are challenged to be more accountable and professional.

2004

Events

- + Arusha Caucus is formed.
- + Start using RBM and M&E frameworks.
- + Strategic planning exercise.
- + Education project funded.
- + External evaluation of CS.
- + Work with local government.
- + Officially recognised as a COBET provider under MOEC.
- Restructuring of CS Department.
- Police round-ups of street children in Arusha.
- Health crises with 2 staff.

Lessons learned

- Other actors who ostensibly work with children do not necessarily share Mkombozi's values.

Key changes

- Organisational shift from fire-fighting to strategic planning.

