



THINK PIECE:

Discussion of possible directions for Mkombozi's advocacy work

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1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to learn more about Mkombozi's past, present and potential engagement with advocacy so as to help inform the planning of future organisational interventions. Without analysing specific policy issues or going into the details of advocacy work, it briefly explores the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in national development, presents some key considerations, concepts and approaches relevant to Mkombozi's advocacy, and also gives a brief overview of possible policy themes. Most importantly, it argues that advocacy is a logical extension of Mkombozi's work which acts as a complement to its programmes for vulnerable children.

Tanzania, as well as the rest of the world, is seeing rapid local changes in its social situation as economic globalisation affects the power and direction of the national government. In this environment, "the challenges for improving political structures and relationships grow" (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 25). CSOs are becoming more and more aware of the need to effectively influence policy and decision-making processes that concern their areas of work, whether this might entail representing the needs of their interest groups or ensuring that new policies are based on evidence and research. What such organisations have in common is the desire to use their insights to make a political impact through the process of advocacy (Start & Hovland 2004, p. 1). Mkombozi - being partly a service-oriented and partly a research and advocacy-oriented organisation - works in this rapidly changing environment with the overall mission of helping children grow by creating a more caring society characterised by communal cohesion, holistic development and legal support mechanisms.

Clarifications on policy, advocacy and research

A policy is "a plan, course of action, or set of regulations adopted by government, business or an institution, designed to influence and determine decisions or procedure" (Sprechmann & Pelton 2001, p. 2). In this paper, "policy" is used in the widest sense of the word to describe the direction (or the lack of it) of government institutions - whether written or unwritten, explicit or concealed.

Advocacy is a deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions with the aim of creating, reforming or ensuring the implementation of policy in a certain area. (Sprechmann & Pelton 2001, p. 2). As part of preparing the ground for advocacy, building evidence through research and making this relevant to the policy sphere is an integral and necessary part of advocacy work (Start & Hovland 2004).

In this paper, research refers both to analysing policy by gathering information on its origin, design, gaps and issues of implementation, and to the process of collecting evidence about people affected by certain policy with the aim of informing and influencing public and governmental direction.

2. Background: How has Mkombozi engaged in advocacy in the past?

Even though Mkombozi started out being a service-oriented organisation, it soon after began involving itself in research and advocacy around the root causes of child migration to the streets - mainly through its Community Engagement group. In addition to such preventative work, some of its advocacy efforts have been steered towards education and protection of children who have already ended up living in the streets. Several past initiatives have taken place in cooperation with other stakeholders, e.g. governmental institutions, Tanzania Education Network (TenMet) and the National Network of Organisations working with Children (NNOC). The following paragraphs make out a few key examples of Mkombozi's previous involvement with advocacy.

Building on the findings of Mkombozi Census (2003, 2005), which recorded the socio-demographic characteristics of children in the streets, the organisation identified a number of geographic areas in Moshi that produced higher levels of children dropping out of school and leaving home. These areas, labeled as “target communities”, came to be central to Mkombozi interventions with the aim of enhancing responsibility and facilitating the establishment of mechanisms that protect children on a community level. In connection to this, another important area of work for Mkombozi’s Community Engagement group has been to lobby the local government to better include vulnerable children in its budgets. In 2009, for example, a successful outcome of Mkombozi’s intervention was that the Moshi Municipal Council committed to budget for children’s welfare and protection, and to appoint a staff member to handle cross-cutting children’s issues.

A related strategic area for Mkombozi’s prevention work has been the involvement with education, in particular with MEMKWA - an education programme developed by the Ministry of Education to fast-track out-of-school children and mainstream them into primary school. Not only is the organisation the first NGO in the country to become a registered MEMKWA-provider, but it has also played a part in building the capacity of other schools in delivering participatory and integrated learning to out-of-school children.

In 2008, Mkombozi began conceptualising an awareness-raising campaign that aims to educate local target audiences around the nature and effect of violence against children. The campaign, known as “Tulinde Watoto Sasa!” is implemented through innovative communications tools with the overall goal of changing communal perceptions, norms and actions that cause harm to children.

Through convening the establishment of the Caucus for Children’s Rights, Mkombozi together with other organisations attempted to achieve a reform which would illegalise local authorities round-ups and detention of children who are in the streets. Following extensive research and over two years in the High Court, the case in 2009 turned out to be unsuccessful in striking laws that permit the forceful detention of children. In relation to this, the organisation has adopted more aggressive measures in putting an end to round-ups in Arusha town by publishing press-releases which openly criticise the local government authorities. One such press-release in 2008 led to a critical conflict situation between Mkombozi and the Arusha Municipal Council, but at the same time, it seems to have had contributed to a sudden decrease in organised round-ups of children.

In 2009, as the bill supplement of the Law of the Child Act was released by the government, Mkombozi again involved itself in the area of legal reform. By joining with other CSOs in the Civil Society Children’s Bill Taskforce, Mkombozi was able to contribute towards amendments prior to the passing of the act. This process reminded the organisation that a united civil society can reach very far in national advocacy processes.

3. Why should Mkombozi continue engaging in advocacy?

Mkombozi must reconnect with the purpose of its key advocacy interventions - doing so will enable new ideas that match the current situation of our external environment as well as the design of our internal one. This section offers a refreshed rationale as to why Mkombozi should do advocacy work at all.

CSOs in development: reducing poverty and promoting democracy through empowerment

The rationale behind research and advocacy work does not merely have to do with the chosen orientation of a single organisation - rather, it concerns the very important function of civil society as a key actor in national development. In the rapidly changing context of developing countries it has become a widespread agreement that CSOs play a crucial part in poverty reduction and the promotion of democracy. Also, the experience of many initiatives have proven that CSOs, when gathering and communicating information through effective means, have a significant impact on “pro-poor” policy (Start & Hovland 2004, p. 2). Mkombozi, a progressive CSO in the field of children’s rights, has the opportunity of being such a CSO in local and national development for children.

Service provision can be balanced with development work

Mkombozi partly provides direct services to children in difficult situations, and plays an important part by doing so. Although such interventions bring significant transformation into the lives of individual children and their families, it carries quite limited potential in bringing sustainable change to the very communal and societal systems and cultures that created and allowed their situations in the first place. When social service delivery is mainly carried by the efforts of CSOs, without an active and constructive promotion of change, the risk becomes simply maintaining an undesirable status quo for children.

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If Mkombozi's future direction is to continue as a development-oriented organisation in the field of children's rights, there is a call for streamlining its advocacy efforts and relating its service provision to detected gaps in the formulation or implementation of national policy. Unless we work systematically with the government in our service provision, our organisational efforts might go unaccounted for as part of official regional efforts. Most importantly, Mkombozi should consciously strike a balance in "how to combine development and service provision activities with political organising and policy influence (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 2)".

Children as a group can only be empowered if the environment supports it

Mkombozi is oriented towards the empowerment of children and young people. Empowerment is a concept that, when speaking of individuals, can refer to gaining skills and education, economic advancement and different forms of personal growth that all work to improve one's life and degree of independence. While this is important, it must not be forgotten that the lives of children who are vulnerable, and who live in the streets, are the product of a wider social, economic and cultural system that trickles down to immediate family conditions. In many ways, children are an excluded group in decision making and, to some extent, in active development agendas. In that sense, it can be well argued that the limited opportunities and lack of protection that affect the lives of children in difficult situations are a reflection of a system which currently disempowers them as individuals.

Creating an empowering environment - coloured by governmental and communal priority and commitment for children as well as the upholding of children's rights - is therefore key to increasing the well-being of children as well as strengthening their position and participation in society.

4. The approach - issues of focus, level and children's involvement

Linking the global, national and local: on which level can Mkombozi advocate?

In today's world, there are a number of forums where organisations are able to voice their concerns for vulnerable groups and unite in efforts which play key roles in the development of national as well as international policy - a level on which Mkombozi can play a part in influencing macro-level processes for children. However, if the announced direction of governments and agencies is going to lead to impact, it must be understood and implemented by authorities and concerned populations on a grassroots level. Engaging in lobbying may change policy, but without the participation and organisation of citizens, lobbying "will not address the roots of exclusion and discrimination that shape power" (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 37). Mkombozi, with its history of working directly with children and communities in Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions, can continue playing an important role by facilitating change for children on the ground of local communities.

While working, it is crucial to make a conscious linkage between the local, national and international levels. This means somehow relating community work to existing, or desired, governmental programmes, policies, legislation and regulations in efforts of implementing lasting change on a local level. More specifically, it means facilitating the community to detect "policy issues" and working together with those concerned towards achieving locally desired change that considers the wider context of development.

Mkombozi could develop its local advocacy work, which is carried out through the Community Engagement group, by further basing it on specifics of the local context and power relations that exist between children, adults and institutions in Kilimanjaro and Arusha communities. Most importantly, the source of detecting "issues" to engage with should be the ongoing discoveries made during social work interventions with vulnerable children and their families and communities. Mkombozi can continue playing a key role as a collector of evidence and as a monitor of local conditions, and turn such insights into information which is valuable to policy formulation and evaluation.

Advocacy for children, with children or by children?

"Advocacy is both about changing specific decisions affecting people's lives and changing the way decision-making happens into a more inclusive and democratic process (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 1)". In other words, Mkombozi is faced with parallel roads of advocacy: one can work to address concrete policy issues and the other to enable children to create, or participate in, forums which can influence their situation. The latter opens up for advocacy by children - the most participatory level of creating change in the community. By-youth and for-youth organisations are playing an increasingly important part in development as a link between civil society and government (African Child Policy Forum 2006).

Children and young people gain both power and visibility through coming together as an entity that can tackle problems from within an enabling and safe environment (Diemer 2006, p. 1). Also, youth who are enabled to organise themselves through youth-led organisations can “try to find collective solutions to individual problems and to take individual responsibility for collective problems” (ibid).

Although it can be argued that some situations call for it, advocacy for children is the least participatory and probably least powerful form of advocacy. On a community level, how are children going to gain a stronger position if they are excluded from setting the direction for their own development? If Mkombozi wants to promote a citizenship for children which recognises their rights and value as being equal to that of adults, children themselves must be allowed to be a key driving force in advocacy.

Which children are the focus of Mkombozi’s advocacy?

On one hand, Mkombozi can take the direction of advocating for vulnerable children including those who live and work in the streets since they are the main target group of its programmes. Most likely, local advocacy efforts in practice need to work with a clearly defined target group - especially since the change that is being strived for involves considerations of these children’s specific conditions and the government institutions which play a part in their lives. On the other hand, current academic discourse reveals that a strong orientation around the social construction of the “street child” influences and informs national and organisational interventions which focus on a minority of children at the expense of others whose conditions are just as serious, but less obvious (Moura 2002, Panter-Brick 2002). It can be argued that an advocacy focus that not only aims to improve conditions of children who live and work on the streets, but the rights of all children might work to reduce inequalities among children rather than emphasising on them. Ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups in local and national processes should work against their stigmatisation - not enforce it.

5. Mkombozi, vulnerable children and policy themes

The Tanzania development vision 2025 (URT 1997, p. 3) emphasises the importance of empowerment and effective democratic participation of all social groups in society, including “men and women, boys and girls, the young and old and the able-bodied and and disabled persons”. By 2025, it envisages Tanzania as a country where “all social relations and processes which manifest and breed inequality, in all aspects of society (i.e. law, politics, employment, education, culture), will have been reformed. When it comes to children, and especially those who live in difficult situations, an advancement of children’s rights through legal, social and cultural processes must surely be one of the driving forces behind social well-being and a balanced national development.

Translated into policy areas, Mkombozi is an organisation which is oriented towards realising children’s rights through education for vulnerable out-of-school children, social and material welfare and protection from abuse and exploitation. In addition to this, stating to be an empowerment-oriented organisation, children’s participation can be identified as another overall policy area for Mkombozi. The following sections provide a brief overview of these themes. From an advocacy perspective, what is Mkombozi’s role in relation to these policy areas, and what specific ends does it want to meet?

International legal direction and The Law of the Child Act (2009)

Advocacy focuses on legislation and policy change when “rights are not enshrined in law - as is the case with most economic, social and cultural rights” (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 25). The Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter of Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) are leading child rights instruments in relation to which Tanzania has committed to harmonise its laws and policies to uphold children’s rights in all areas and levels of society. Even though its provisions are clear, the CRC does not bring a universal model of application, but rather, implementation methods remain at the discretion of each individual state (African Child policy Forum, year unknown). In other words, the joint efforts of government and civil society are key in crafting solutions for implementation which remain relevant to the local context.

After many years of research and preparations, and as a way of domesticating the CRC, the government in July 2009 introduced the bill to enact The Law of the Child. A few months later, it was passed by parliament in a reviewed version after a number of advocacy efforts and joint consultations between civil society and government wherein Mkombozi participated (Civil Society’s children’s bill taskforce 2009). Even though this is a huge step in the right direction, research by REPOA states that “the long delays which have characterised progress towards a children’s statute are testimony to the lack of priority accorded to children” (Tumbo-Msambo & Leach 2009, p. 18).

The Law of the Child Act addresses most of the serious issues and challenges that Tanzanian children are faced with today, but at the same time, it still has shortcomings that need to be addressed (UNICEF 2009). If progress for children is to be realised following the legal reform which is taking place, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of “the social and cultural reasons for the reluctance to take on issues of children’s rights” (Tumbo-Msambo & Leach 2009, p. 18) . In other words, facilitating changes in local perceptions and priorities seems crucial as a way of preparing the community to accept children as formal right holders. Most importantly, it is now critical for CSOs and other actors to strategise around the local realisation of the children’s statute - its implementation depends on strong and consistent public pressure (Mamdani & Omondi 2009).

Education for vulnerable children

Under the implementation of the Primary and Secondary Education Development Plans (PEDP, SEDP), Tanzanian children have experienced much quantitative progress towards ensuring that all children go to school (URT 2006). At the same time, the quality of education in secondary and primary schools unfortunately remains a central concern (Rajani 2009). As for finding a link between child vulnerability and education, some steps have been taken.

The past decade, “Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania” (COBET), in Swahili known as MEMKWA, has made out a national strategy for providing quality education and life skills to out-of-school children - most of whom can be considered vulnerable (URT 2006, p. 7). In the recent event of de-centralising the responsibility for MEMKWA provision across Tanzania, Mkombozi has experienced that local authorities and schools express uncertainties on its continuation. As many vulnerable children are still out of school, the question arises as to how local MEMKWA centers can be strengthened to continue playing a crucial part in ensuring education for children who have been excluded from formal education.

Overall, efforts to mainstream out-of-school children into the education system still stand insufficient. Research from REPOA asks not only how more funding can be allocated to the inclusion of children affected by difficulties, but how children’s well-being can be promoted through specific policies, interventions and mechanisms for accountability so that change in this area can be structural, lasting and well-spread (Rajani 2009, p. 11). A new education policy, “Education and Training Policy 2009”, containing many improvements for Tanzanian primary and secondary education, is about to be put in place. Can Mkombozi’s advocacy play a part in strengthening its implementation in local schools?

Social protection and welfare - the “Most Vulnerable Children”

The social and economic crisis that Tanzania has undergone during the past couple of decades has caused a deterioration in the standard of living which has strongly affected family life, the welfare of children and former social safety nets within the community (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). Unfortunately it seems that the social welfare of the community is not improving; around one third of the population live below the poverty line (Mamdani & Omondi 2009), and the perception of the majority of people is that their economic condition has been stagnant or declining over the past three years (RAWG 2007). Data from the Household Budget Survey in 2000/01 showed that around 4 million children were living below the food poverty line and were in other words not even getting their most basic needs met (Mamdani & Omondi 2009).

The social, political and economic state of the country, in combination with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, has come to cause the emergence of what is commonly known as Tanzania’s Most Vulnerable Children (MVC’s) - i.e. children with minimal access to protection, education, health care, nutrition, shelter and property and legal rights (Mamdani & Omondi 2009, p. 22).

There is a clear linkage between children’s welfare and protection and every one of the Millenium Development goals - global targets which are meant to increase the welfare of the world’s population as a whole through national strategies of implementation (UNICEF 2006). In addition, Tanzania in 2006 committed itself to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) obligations to an increased national response to orphans and vulnerable children (Mamdani & Omondi 2009). As a step towards fulfilling this comittment, the department of Social Welfare led the development of a costed National Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children which aims to strengthen the policy and service environment through the implementation of an MVC-programme. In many places around the country the programme has been piloted and implemented on community level by the establishment of local support functions, wherein so called Most Vulnerable Children’s Committes at ward and village levels make out the corner stone.

Today, the MVC programme is modest in scale, coverage and impact, and Tanzania thereby still lacks a public system for properly supporting its population of most vulnerable children (ibid). There are multiple challenges in the implementation and up-scaling of the MVC programme, and additionally, the programme is seen largely as an “issue” of major donors which is somewhat remote from public engagement (ibid, p. 38). Even so, Mkombozi could explore how it can consider or link up to this national programme in its Community Engagement strategies as well as Children’s Programmes case management in Moshi and Arusha communities. It might be a mistake to work in isolation from such existing national strategies that aim to ensure child social services and protection.

Protection from abuse and exploitation

Abuse and exploitation of children are rampant in Tanzania, and it has been proven through extensive research (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003) that it is one of the major direct reasons for which children leave their homes or drop out of school, and in some cases end up living in the streets. During the data collection for Mkombozi’s census 2006, the majority of children living and/or working in the streets of Moshi and Arusha stated that they had experienced violence in their homes (McAlpine 2006). The exercise of corporal punishment in the home is a common practice, and even though it has been banned in schools of more than half of the world’s countries, the new children’s statute in Tanzania still allows it to happen (UNICEF 2009). The study “Views of the Children 2007” (RAWG 2008) show that school children are frequently exposed to corporal punishment, and that the fear of this in their own opinion makes it more difficult for them to learn. These are an indicators that there is still a long way to go before prevailing power relations and norms in society will be shifted towards prioritising for the realisation of child protection.

The attention surrounding the UN Secretary General’s study on violence against children (Pinheiro 2006) has put the elimination of child abuse on top of the international agenda. This study recommends that governments should support initiatives that aim to raise awareness on children’s rights and promote change in social and cultural norms that allow violence against children to take place. Likewise, the World Health Organisation (WHO) encourages public awareness raising and media campaigns which highlight the extent and nature of violence against children at the same time as encouraging social services to families (Butchart & Harvey 2006). Recommendations such as these encourage Mkombozi to continue raising awareness in the media and local communities. As of recently, however, it can do so with reference to elements of the Law of the Child Act, thereby fulfilling its mission through working towards realising child protection supported by the rule of law.

Children’s participation

One of the most revolutionary elements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is children’s right to participation in matters that affect them - a key to meaningful development for young people. This right, among others, is however still far from being realised for children in Tanzania. A children’s opinion poll performed in 2006 showed that only a quarter of Tanzanian child respondents believed that their opinions were sufficiently considered by the local authorities when decisions are made concerning children in the community (African Child Policy Forum 2006). The study “Views of the Children 2007” (RAWG 2008) proves that while children often feel listened to by their parents in matters of education, schools in many cases lack institutional structures for listening to children.

Only two out of 18 sample schools in the study had children’s representation in the school committee, most schools did not have barazas (assemblies) which promote children’s participation, and it also appeared that the selection of class leaders (prefects) was done by teachers. Child respondents in this study almost unanimously expressed that they would like to take part in processes and forums that affect their lives. The study concluded that quality two-way communication between children and adults is uncommon, and that schools are currently not nurturing children’s capacity to participate in the institution.

As previously mentioned, a crucial part of empowering young people lies in developments in their participation and status in their family, community and society. As part of Mkombozi’s programming, how can children be empowered to organise themselves and become community members who can influence situations and decisions that directly concern them?

“Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, acceptable and safe” (Veneklasen & Miller 2002, p. 49)

This is why children should be empowered as individuals and in groups, in the context of the very power dynamics / norms that so often exclude / discriminate them.

6. Overall recommendations for Mkombozi's advocacy

In the light of the topics mentioned in this paper, the following paragraphs are some of the directions that can be recommended for Mkombozi to adopt. Note that these do not include recommendations around specific thematic interventions, but rather offers a way forward in regards to organisational issues of approach, methodology and required infrastructure. Forming an evidence base that can prepare the ground for detailed intervention strategy lies beyond the scope of this paper, and should rather be seen as a part of future organisational plans / objectives.

- Since scanning the external environment and the prevailing government direction is key to achieving an impact in communal and national settings, systematic policy analysis and nurturing institutional political awareness should first and foremost be made integral parts of Mkombozi's interventions.

- The fact that many well-intended government policies face challenges in implementation calls for civil society to focus around strategic local interventions. Mkombozi's Community Engagement group could take the track of becoming a specialist in community-level evidence collection and advocacy work which is conducted in clear relation to public policy and legislation.

- It can be argued that children's participation should be central to Mkombozi's advocacy work since participation is one of the corner stones of empowerment. Therefore, Mkombozi should strategise around how to engage in advocacy with or by children.

- Since power relations and authority are significant parts of what stands in the way of children's empowerment, Mkombozi's advocacy should look through the lens of power relations, and design its local interventions into initiatives that facilitate children, adults and institutions to bridge the gaps between them.

- Internally, Mkombozi should strengthen the linkage between its different departments and functions in order for the organisational advocacy to run effectively - something which currently merely happens on an ad-hoc basis. This would mean consistently adhering to Mkombozi's Programme Process Cycle, wherein Community Engagement and other advocacy interventions are informed by Children's Programme's field observations, and wherein any action or intervention is preceded by evidence collection, communication and collaborative strategic planning with stakeholders.

- Mkombozi should consciously review all advocacy-related interventions that are located in different parts of the organisation and create an overarching strategy where different departments work together in accomplishing the same larger objectives.

- Since Mkombozi for several years has been on the road towards becoming a more advocacy-oriented organisation, it might be sensible to assess its internal capacity in terms of skills, manpower and institutional knowledge so that it may enter its next phase with realistic expectations and readily identified gaps.

7. Conclusion

Policy, or the lack of it, is largely the root of the problems that actors of civil society are trying to solve. Therefore, CSOs stand a much better chance of engaging in advocacy by reaching a clear understanding of how the policy process works, and assessing whether they have the capacity to generate high-quality research (Start & Hovland 2004). However, there is also more to advocacy than this. People often fail to do the right thing - not due to lack of knowledge - but because the action they strive for is not in the interest of existing institutional dynamics. In fact, these might even work against change. "Capacity building, therefore, is less about establishing systems and providing manuals and training, and more about enabling people to develop resourcefulness to discern power relations and act creatively" (Rajani 2009, p. 10).

Mkombozi has the advantage of being an organisation with a well formulated value base which can be consciously brought into an advocacy that aims to address unequal relationships of power which negatively affect children (Veneklasen & Miller 2002). After all, the organisation intervenes and engages with social dynamics and relationships from the highest level of the government to the family and the way that children are seen and treated - all with the aim of accomplishing social transformation. If the organisation can further professionalise and systematise its advocacy work, it stands a good chance of strengthening familial, communal and societal safety nets for children.

FIGURE: On which levels can Mkombozi advocate?

This graphic shows how a child is connected to the policy environment on different levels. While working in these different environments, it's important for Mkombozi to consider how they link together in specific issues in order to create structural and lasting change for children through advocacy.

The child: Mkombozi Children's Programmes works directly with children to facilitate them towards a better life. For children to grow in mind, body and spirit, they depend on a supportive environment.

The family environment: Children's Programmes works with the child's immediate environment - the family - and its social, cultural and economic support for the child. However, some families can only be empowered to properly care for their children with the right support and opportunities in their communal environment.

The communal environment: Community Engagement actively advocates for children and families in the communal environment, consisting of: local government policy and budget; implementation of national policy and law; local governance (street, village, ward, district etc); institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools, police, prison, remand home, recreation facilities etc); support systems for children & families (e.g. vulnerable children's committees, volunteers, foster carers, mentors etc); attitudes, norms and cultures; power relations between children and adults; political power relations. In order for advocacy work in this environment to be effective and lasting (or even replicated to other areas), Mkombozi should link it to developments in the national environment.

The national environment: Mkombozi advocates in the national environment consisting of: laws concerning children; national policies and programmes for children; resource allocation to local government budgets; national development strategies (e.g. MKUKUTA); central institutions (ministries, high court, parliament); political power relations. Many things that happen in the national environment change as a result of experiences from local communities, but also under the agendas of the international environment. Importantly, national direction can potentially influence the lives of children in local communities.

The international environment: The international environment consists of: bilateral budget support for children; international policy (e.g. MDGs, UNCRC, ACWRC); international institutions (e.g. United Nations, World Bank, IMF etc); political power relations. Mkombozi should remain aware of the international environment and its influence. For example, the concept of children's rights was introduced from the international environment and is now becoming a fact in local communities.

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